



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Association of Jewish Libraries Presents  
*Thirty Years of the Russian Library in Jerusalem***

The Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) was pleased to present *Thirty Years of the Russian Library in Jerusalem*, a discussion featuring Klara Elbert, founder and head of the Jerusalem Municipal Russian Library (Library or Russian Library); Igor Kogan, head of Russian projects at the Library; and Natan Sharansky, Israeli politician, human rights activist, author, and Soviet refusenik.

Established in October 1990 by Klara Elbert from her private collection of 300 books, the Russian Library has grown into one of the world's largest collections of books on Jewish topics in Russian, featuring more than 100,000 volumes. It is the largest Russian-language book collection outside of the former Soviet Union and is a center for the preservation and promotion of Russian language and culture for both the Israeli Russian-speaking community and the global Russian Jewish diaspora. As a cultural hub, the Library hosts clubs, studios, and art groups; literary and multidisciplinary events; and the Children's Center for the Arts, which fosters the creative development of Israeli children of Russian descent.

A two-volume publication marking the Library's 30th anniversary, *Jerusalem Russian Library: Pages of History*, was released this month. The publication traces the Library's history, as well as that of the Russian Jewish community in Israel, with special attention to the Library's many special collections, including those dedicated to the Soviet Jewish movement, Jewish studies, rare books, civil rights, and the arts.

This program was presented as part of the 2021 AJL Digital Conference: Moving Forward (#AJLForward21). AJL's 56th annual conference, which spanned five days and offered more than 40 sessions for librarians from academic, archival, research, school, center, public, and synagogue libraries, drew over 300 attendees and presenters from 14 countries. Participants from Israel included author Zvi Barski, professors Shalom Sabar and Dov Winer from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and representatives from the National Library of Israel.

Klara Elbert is the founder and permanent director of the Jerusalem Russian Library and is a member of the Trustees Board of the National Library of Israel. She was awarded the Russian Pushkin Medal.

Igor Kogan is the head of Russian projects at the Jerusalem Russian Library. After coming to Israel in 1992, he worked for IBM Israel; upon retirement, he began to work on Russian projects in the Library. In Moscow, he collaborated in various popular science magazines. He is author and co-author of a number of popular science books and has hosted the TV program *Dialogue with a Computer*.

Natan Sharansky was born in Donetsk, Ukraine. He was a spokesman for the human rights movement, a Prisoner of Zion, and a leader in the struggle for the right of Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel. After serving nine years in Soviet prisons, and following massive public campaigns by the State of Israel, world Jewry, and leaders of the free world, Mr. Sharansky was released in 1986, making aliyah—moving to Israel—on the very day of his release. In his first few years in Israel, Mr. Sharansky established the Zionist Forum to assist Soviet olim, immigrants, in their absorption in Israel and later established the Yisrael B'Aliyah party in order to accelerate the integration of Russian Jews. He served in four successive Israeli governments, as Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. He has received the Israel Prize, the Congressional Medal of Honor, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom and is the only living non-American citizen who is the recipient of these two highest American awards. Mr. Sharansky served as head of the Jewish Agency for Israel for nine years. After retirement, he continues to serve as chairman of the Shlihut Institute and chair of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy. Mr. Sharansky is also the author of four books: *Fear No Evil*, *The Case for Democracy*, *Defending Identity*, and *Never Alone: Prison, Politics and My People*.

### **About the Association of Jewish Libraries**

The Association of Jewish Libraries is an international, professional organization that fosters access to information and research in all forms of media relating to all things Jewish. The Association promotes Jewish literacy and scholarship and provides a community for peer support and professional development. For more information, visit [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org).

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