

Karaite Jews of America (KJA) "Foundation for the Future" Campaign 2016-2017

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

What is the KJA "Foundation for the Future" Campaign?

The \$1.2 million "Foundation for the Future" Campaign is transforming Congregation B'nai Israel – the only Karaite synagogue in the United States - by renovating the Synagogue and expanding it to establish the new Karaite Jewish Cultural Center as a lively gathering place for learning and fellowship. By increasing the capacity of B'nai Israel and renovating it to better serve our community in the Bay Area, nationally, and internationally we will ensure the vibrancy of our community's future for generations to come.

The project budget of \$1.2 million allows us to renovate Congregation B'nai Israel and its sanctuary, expand the building with a 960 sq. ft. multi-purpose social hall, and modernize facilities through much-needed maintenance and repairs; and it will allow us to establish the new national Karaite Jewish Cultural Center. As this first phase of the project is completed, a programmatic strategic plan and long-term budget will be developed for new and expanded educational, cultural and social programs designed to bring together members of the Karaite Jewish community with the larger Jewish world.

What is the Progress Toward Fundraising Goals?

Since the \$1.2 million Foundation for the Future Campaign began in May 2016, nearly all but \$100,000 of the goal has been committed from within the Karaite Jewish community, including gifts from donors throughout the United States and internationally. With this important benchmark reached, we now continue to seek support at every level from individuals, families and foundations within the Karaite and broader Jewish community to help us reach our Campaign goal and to plant the seeds for new programming through the national Karaite Jewish Cultural Center.

Additional financial support is vital not only for construction and renovation. It is also needed to sustain long-term objectives that include hiring a permanent Rav/Congregation Director to lead spiritual activities and cultural programs, to significantly increase education for the young, and to implement an enhanced communications strategy.

What is the Progress Toward Construction Goals?

Prior to the fundraising campaign ramping up, Campaign Director David Ovadia (a licensed civil engineer) worked with the project's architect and engineers to develop and submit all design plans to the Daly City Building Department, which approved the plans in late October 2016. Following a complex and thorough bid process, a highly respected contractor has now been selected, and the necessary building permits have been secured. The building will be expanded by approximately 30% through the addition of the multi-purpose social hall, the existing sanctuary will be renovated through much-needed maintenance and upgrades, and the facilities will be modernized. Groundbreaking will take place in late February, and will be completed in time to celebrate the High Holidays in Fall 2017 in the renovated building. Construction updates will be posted regularly on www.Karaites.org.

Why Have We Launched This Effort?

We are committed to sustaining our congregation as a lively place of community, as a symbol of our heritage, and as a link from our forefathers to our children. With young Karaite Jews telling us they want to be more closely tied to their roots, the time to achieve this is now.

As refugees from Egypt, Karaite Jews have found great success in the United States. Now, we are at a turning point in our journey – ready to look to the future as we honor our proud heritage. Our organization, Karaite

Jews of America, was founded by first-generation immigrants in San Francisco in 1982, but will the founders' children, or their children's children, continue to be engaged not only as proud Jews, but also as proud Karaites? It is critically important that we not only preserve the best of our traditions, but also that we evolve in order to provide meaningful engagement for the young who are maturing in an environment very different from their parents or grandparents. Without the young, there will be no one left to carry on.

So, through our Foundation for the Future Campaign, we are setting the stage to provide inspiring learning opportunities, social activities, and spiritual experiences that speak to the needs of the next generation of our family, in a home that is truly welcoming - in a revitalized Congregation B'nai Israel and the new Cultural Center for the Karaite Jews of America. As well, the larger Jewish world has much to learn from the remarkable history of the Karaite people. By establishing B'nai Israel as KJA's national Cultural Center we can have an impact beyond our small number by communicating the inspiring but largely untold story of our refugee community's endurance and triumphs having fled Egypt in the "second exodus" (roughly 1956-1967,) for a new life in the United States, Israel and elsewhere.

What Is the Financial Strategy Underpinning the Campaign?

Following several years of strategic thinking and discussion that engaged many community leaders, we are now on track to reach our construction budget by combining \$350,000 in unrestricted funds from prior donors, with \$400,000 in Campaign-generated leadership challenge pledges, and matching broad-based support from the community. (A generous \$250,000 matching pledge from a prominent KJA member who lives outside the Bay Area was made in May 2016 to launch the quiet phase of the effort, and an additionally generous \$150,000 matching pledge was made in Fall 2016 to launch the public phase of the Campaign). We are rapidly moving forward on an accelerated time line to raise the remaining \$100,000 needed by late March 2017 in order to complete construction, and to celebrate the High Holidays with a grand re-dedication of B'nai Israel and the establishment of the Karaite Jewish Cultural Center in Fall 2017. At the same time, we are developing the pilot programs and long-term strategic funding plan needed to phase in and sustain a comprehensive array of activities for the community in the years ahead.

What Are the Strengths Upon Which We're Building the Campaign?

We are conducting the Campaign on the foundation of a strong community-building effort; reaching out to the younger generation who represent our future, and to all members of the Karaite community as well as anyone interested in learning more about Karaite traditions. Thus far, all activities are being implemented through volunteer efforts and donated funds, as no members' dues are currently charged. Going forward, only continuing investment and dedicated management will ensure sustainable programming in the new Cultural Center.

New and enhanced activities already underway, include modernized learning tools and prayer materials, and a new liturgy for Family Shabbat Services. We have expanded our website, with links to learning videos, audios of the Karaite Parashot and Haftarat, and many other materials. We are working closely with Karaite leadership in Israel to develop innovative programming for all our members, and are providing adult education courses for those interested in learning more about our traditions, all around the Bay Area. We have also enriched our focus on publications through the new Karaite Press, creating, for example, a new illustrated Karaite Haggadah; the new books, *Esther Explained* and *Royal Attire*; a new blessings book and Shabbat prayer books; as well as English translations of Hebrew and Arabic Karaite texts. During our Shabbat services we continue to perform blessings for the sick or for other special requests, and Zekher memorials for those we wish to remember around the world.

New plans are being developed to establish more youth and family-focused celebrations and social activities, to revive summer camps for children, and to enrich educational resources for young people through summer visits of representatives from the Karaite community in Israel. And, we are significantly expanding learning opportunities to encourage Bar and Bat Mitzvahs in the Synagogue. In early January 2017 we celebrated a

particularly joyous Bar Mitzvah with over 150 people in attendance. The service was led by a young member of our congregation, Zachary Lichaa. Zachary's Bar Mitzvah is an inspiration, and he is a role model for other young men and women who are coming of age in our community, as well as for their families.

How is the Campaign Helping Build Bridges to the Larger Jewish Community?

We are making great strides in engaging the larger Jewish community in our effort. The Jewish Federation of the Bay Area has heartily endorsed the project, with the Federation's Rabbi in Residence Marvin Goodman serving as a strong advocate on our behalf. The Federation has also approved the project as an official grantee of its Donor Advised Fund Program, through which gifts have already been received from community leaders such as Brian Lurie and Bernard Osher. JIMENA has endorsed the program and is partnering with KJA to honor the late Joseph Wahed, by establishing the Joseph Wahed Memorial Library Fund. Our newly established Karaite Press is getting a great response to its publication of new works of scholarly, liturgical and cultural importance. And the KJA is in the early stages of working with the Magnes Museum in advance of a potential exhibit to focus on Karaite archives and artifacts sometime in 2018-19; research is currently underway for that project.

See the cover story about our Campaign effort broadly described to the larger Jewish community in the February 16th edition of the J Weekly, the Jewish News of Northern California: at <http://www.jweekly.com/2017/02/16/a-karaite-prayer-little-known-jewish-community-builds-center-to-tell-its-story/>

What New Activities Will Be Sponsored by the National Karaite Jewish Cultural Center?

Our Board and KJA leadership is committed to preserving and enhancing our community and traditions, and to revitalizing Congregation B'nai Israel through the establishment of the national Karaite Jewish Cultural Center. The Center will allow us to host lectures, dialogues, and possible exhibitions of historical and archival material from members. And it will allow us to continue strengthening our relationship with the community in Israel and the rest of world Jewry. We are a small but vibrant people within the larger Jewish world; representing a link to a past of great intellectual, literary and cultural achievement as exemplified by the inclusion of medieval illuminated Karaite manuscripts in the recent exhibition in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Jerusalem 1000-1400 – Every People Under Heaven".

The Center will provide increased opportunities to reach a broader audience, both in the new Social Hall, and through an expanded focus on social media and Internet communications. Anticipated new activities include advocacy efforts on behalf of the global Karaite Jewish community, increased youth education resources, new adult educational courses, and an augmented program of lectures and events to engage the whole family. Understanding that our community includes members who live far beyond the Bay Area, we envision an expanded web presence for a national and international audience to help maintain identity and preserve traditions for the coming generations. We intend to expand the recording of oral and video histories of Karaite Jews to sustain and share our legacy. We will continue to expand our focus on publications through our new Karaite Press, and we hope to create an archive of historical artifacts for scholarly use and for possible exhibitions in the Social Hall. Ongoing funding will be sought to hire a permanent Rav/Congregation Director, whose leadership and management will be key to sustaining increased programming.

What are Future Plans for Karaite Jews of America Once the Campaign is Complete?

As a Jewish minority with a long history in the Middle East we also have unique insights into a geographical region that is impacting the global scene in unprecedented ways. We have much to contribute in terms of understanding this region and the diverse people within it. Thus, we have the capacity to reach beyond ourselves and to help strengthen the larger Jewish community as we strengthen our own. Through the resources being developed, our young people will have more opportunities to learn about where they came from and who they are. Our "Foundation for the Future" Campaign 2016-2017 is just the start of a renaissance for the Karaite Jewish community in the United States.

Where Will Services and Other Synagogue Activities Take Place During Construction?

We are working with the Jewish Community Federation to organize temporary locations for prayer services in other synagogues. Special events will be celebrated in rented spaces or individual homes as appropriate. All updates regarding services and events will be publicized in weekly e-newsletters. Torahs and other valuable religious items will be stored in secured private locations. A storage space will be rented for other furnishings as necessary.

What are Leadership Gifts and How Will They be Recognized?

While gifts at every level are much needed and greatly appreciated, all gifts of \$2,000 and above will be recognized on B'nai Israel's Tree of Life. Leadership Donors providing support of \$5,000 or more will receive special recognition in locations such as the Sanctuary, the Social Hall, Bimah, Entryway, Kitchen, Library, Patio, Conference Room/Classroom, Office/Rabbi's Room, Children's Play Area, Pews, and so on. New Torah and Torah Ark naming opportunities are not part of the \$1.2M goal but can be discussed as separate objectives. We encourage families to join together in shared support of our Campaign. In doing so, all joint Leadership Donors will receive personal recognition for their gifts, and at the same time collectively "name" a location in honor of their family as a whole. Support can also be provided through business matching gifts, foundation gifts, memorial gifts, and gifts celebrating weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and other simchas. Donations can be made through stocks, bonds, and IRA allocations.

How Else Can People Get Involved?

We need volunteer support as well as financial support during the Campaign, and in the years to come. We need help to spread the word about the Campaign, both within the Karaite Jewish community and beyond. We need parents to involve their children, and we need our children to help educate their parents about what they want as young Jewish Karaites. We need volunteers to help provide educational resources, and to facilitate and sponsor cultural events, celebrations, and youth programs. Visit www.Karaites.org for updated information and developing news on the Campaign, and to learn about how you can make an important difference in our community's future -- as a donor and as a volunteer.

Karaite Jews of America, 1575 Annie Street, Daly City, CA 94015

• KJA1575@att.net • 650-994-9757

KJA's Foundation for the Future Campaign is a 501©(3) non-profit charity.

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