

Events Program for the Fifth World Litvak Congress in Vilnius

May 23

Opening ceremony for the Fifth World Litvak Congress

The Lithuanian Jewish Community invites Litvaks living around the world to return to Vilnius May 23 to May 26, to visit the land of our ancestors and to attend the Fifth World Litvak Congress.

One of the main events is the opening ceremony in Constitution Hall at the Lithuanian parliament. Prior registration is required by sending an email to rsvp@lzb.lt.

Please have a valid identification document or passport on your person to gain entry.

Program:

9:30 - 10:00 A.M. Registration of attendees

10:00 - 10:30 A.M. Opening of Lithuanian Jewish exhibit "Chronicle of Litvak Culture in the 21st Century". Location: foyer of Constitution Hall.

Opening of conference:

10:30 - 10:35 A.M. Welcome speech

Lithuanian parliamentary speaker Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, patron of the Fifth World Litvak Congress, welcomes participants.

10:35 - 11:40 A.M. Welcome speech

European Commission coordinator for combating anti-Semitism Katherina von Shnuberin (video recording)

11:40 - 11:55 A.M. "Thirty Years of the History, Problems and Challenges of the Lithuanian Jewish Community"

Faina Kukliansky, attorney, chairwoman, Lithuanian Jewish Community

11:55 A.M. - 12:00 noon Welcome speech

Mickey Kantor, president, Association of Jews from Vilna and Vicinity in Israel (Beit Vilna)

12:00 noon - 12:05 P.M. Welcome speech

Arie ben Grodzensky, president, Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel

12:10 - 12:20 P.M. "Human Rights, Anti-Semitism Today and Its Expression"

Irwin Cotler, professor emeritus, Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; former minister of justice and attorney general for Canada, member of federal parliament from 1999 to 2015 (via remote video link)

12:20 - 12:35 P.M. "Survey of Solving Restitution Claims and Associated Problems over the Past Twenty-Five Years: What's Been Achieved and What Remains Unfinished"

Rabbi Andrew Baker, director, International Affairs Department, American Jewish Committee

12:35 - 12:45 P.M. "The (YIVO) History of Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania"
Jonathan Brent, Ph.D., director, New York YIVO

12:45 - 1:20 P.M. Lunch

1:20 - 1:30 P.M. "Litvaks, Israel and Historical Memory"
Yossef Avni-Levy, Israel's ambassador to Lithuania

1:30 - 1:40 P.M. "The School of the Future: What Is It?"
Ruth Reches, Ph.D., doctor of psychology, principal of the Vilnius Sholem Aleichem ORT
Gymnasium

1:40 - 2:00 P.M. "What is a Litvak?"
Dr. Ben-Tsiyon Klibansky, researcher of Lithuanian Jewry, master's course lecturer on
Lithuanian Jewish history, Efrata College of Education, Jerusalem

2:00 - 2:15 P.M. "The Jews in Lithuania: A Shared History Still Undiscovered, or Already Lost?"
Vytautas Bruveris, political analyst, reporter

2:15 - 2:45 P.M. "Non-Invasive Holocaust Research on Private Plots of Land: Past and Future"
Richard A. Freund, Ph.D., director of Jewish Studies Center, Hartford University (via remote
video link)

2:25 - 2:40 P.M. "Memory of the Shoah"
Professor Violeta Davoliūtė, International Relations and Political Science Institute, Vilnius
University

2:40 - 2:55 P.M. "The Lost Shtetl Museum of the History of the Jews of Šeduva: History, Goal
and Progress"
Milda Jakulytė-Vasil, senior curator of exhibits, Lost Shtetl Museum

2:55 - 3:15 P.M. "The Story of the Litvaks at the POLIN Polish Jewish History Museum"
Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, advisor to the director of the POLIN Polish Jewish
History Museum, senior curator of main exhibits (via live video link).

3:15 - 3:30 P.M. "Recording the Features of Litvak Culture"
Professor David Fishman, historian, teacher, professor of Jewish history at Jewish Theological
Seminary of America (via live video link)

5:00 P.M. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony

Location: Lithuanian Jewish Community, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius

As we do annually, the Lithuanian Jewish Community in concert with students from the 7th
grade of the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium celebrates a bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. This is
the day when we mark the coming of age of Jewish children who will take part in the rite and
read passages from the Torah. Progressive Judaism Rabbi Nathan Alfred from Israel will lead
the ceremony.

Concert by cantor Joseph Malovany (USA) at the Tahat haKodesh Choral Synagogue in Vilnius.
Malovany is a famous performer of Jewish liturgical music, a tenor and a cantor. Pianist Doron
Burstein.

Location: Tahat haKodesh Choral Synagogue, Pylimo street no. 39, Vilnius
Prior registration required by filling out the form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>

May 24

A Date with Vilne. A walking tour of Jewish Vilnius.

During this tour we will talk about people and their fates, daily life and holidays and will look at surviving buildings. We begin our journey through the historical sites of Jewish Vilnius at Cathedral Square in the center of Vilnius.

- We will look for figures from Jewish history in the façade of the Cathedral in Vilnius.
- We will learn where Jews first settled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and more specifically where they first settled in Vilnius.
- At the Presidential Palace we will talk about the fate of Jews in the Russian Empire during Tsarist times.
- We will walk from there towards Jewish Street, into the Jewish quarter, where we will learn why Jews settled there specifically, how long the community there survived and what sort of authentic trace can still be found in this neighborhood of brick and mortar from the Middle Ages. Jewish shops, courtyards, gates and of course people on the small historical streets Yatkova (Butchers'. now Mésinių street), Shavl (Szawelska, now Šiaulių street) and Strashun (now Žemaitijos street).
- We will stop at the monument to one of the greatest Jewish sages, the Vilna Gaon.
- We will visit the site of the former Great Synagogue of Vilnius, recalling its glory which was recounted even in the most remote corners of Europe.
- We continue our journey on Vokiečių street (formerly Deitse gas), visit the courtyard of the former Holocaust-era Judenrat (Jewish council) and will remember the ghetto leaders and their controversial decisions..
- We will walk to the Vilnius ghetto theater and there will learn why it was unique throughout occupied Europe.
- Outside the Ghetto Library we will learn about the cultural and spiritual life of the inmates in the ghetto. We will complete the tour at the Bagel Shop Café where we will have the opportunity to sample perhaps the most delicious traditional bagels in Vilnius and other Litvak treats.

Tour begins at 10:00 A.M. at the clock tower on Cathedral Square

Tour concludes around 1:00 P.M. at the Bagel Shop Café at the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius

Prior registration required. Send an email to rsvp@lzb.lt to register.

Jewish Theater and Drama: Why Are There No Jewish Comedies in Lithuanian Theaters Today?

The discussion club #ŽydiškiPašnekesiai [Jewish Conversations] presents a new topic for discussion, "Jewish Theater and Drama: Why Are There No Jewish Comedies in Lithuanian Theaters Today?" for the Fifth World Litvak Congress.

Directors, actors and dramaturgs will participate in the discussion.

Moderated by writer, actor and publicist Arkadijus Vinokuras.

Location: Bagel Shop Café, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius

Prior registration required by filling out the form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>

5:00 P.M. Opening of Saul Kagan Welfare Center at the Lithuanian Jewish Community (by invitation only).

A memorial plaque commemorating Saul Kagan will be unveiled by LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky, attorney at law; Arie Buchesiter of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany; Julia Kagan Baumann, his daughter and Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Yossef Avni-Levy. The Jewish song and dance ensemble Fayerlakh will perform (under the direction of Larisa Vyšniauskienė).

Location: Lithuanian Jewish Community, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius.

Opening of Israel street-food stand Tzvi in the Park.

From 7:00 P.M. onward. Authentic Israeli street food, good music and cosmopolitan culture--that's what we invite you to experience Tuesday evening at the Tzvi in the Park Israeli street-food stand (in the square formerly known as Cvirka, across the street from the Lithuanian Jewish Community at Pylimo street no. 4).

Band Baltic Balkan from Lithuania to Hold Concert

Historically the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, was a huge melting pot where Baltic, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, German, Jewish, Tartar, Karaite, British and Roma cultural influences met and mixed. In those same courtyards where once upon a time was born the legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz, son of a klezmer musician, and where live world music broke out from the East, comes the Baltic Balkan project, seeking to harmonize the rhythms of contemporary dance music with the musical legacy of this land. This music and performance project takes inspiration from Yugoslavian punk rock and a plethora of interesting shows taken in at European festivals, and from films which reflect the true Balkan (and Baltic) spirit.

<https://soundcloud.com/baltic-balkan>

Prior registration required. Fill out the form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVdKKnAs6>

We also invite you to visit the newest exhibit of paintings by Litvak Leo Ray who was born in Vilnius and immigrated to Israel at the AP Gallery located at Polocko street no. 10 in Vilnius. <https://www.facebook.com/galerijaap/posts/3267281386888282>

May 25

Fifth World Litvak Congress: Tour of Panevėžys

The program of the Fifth World Litvak Congress to take place over four days includes visits to historical sites and a variety of cultural activities focused on the Jewish legacy in Lithuania and Litvak achievements in the world at large.

One of the education components is a tour of Jewish Panevėžys, Pakruojis and Šeduva. Prior registration is required by sending an email to rsvp@lzb.lt

Program:*

Meeting location: parking lot at Cathedral Square in Vilnius

Meeting time: 9:00 A.M.

After an hour-and-a-half journey by bus, we begin our date with the city of Panevėžys.

- First stop: Ponevezh (Panevėžys) Yeshiva, which continues to operate today in Bnei Brak in Israel. There we will learn the story of Rabbi Khaneman and the footsteps he has left behind in the city of Panevėžys.
- A visit to the main market square of the city once upon a time crowded with Jewish shops. A visit to the building which once functioned as synagogue before World War II.
- Visit to memorial plaque commemorating Aleksander Ziskind, victim of Stalin's repressions.
- Tour of the Jewish cemetery brutally destroyed by the Soviet regime and commemoration of Holocaust victims at the "Sorrowful Jewish Mother" monument.
- 12:00 noon, visit to restored Pakruojis synagogue.
- 1:00 P.M., lunch at the Pakruojis manor.
- 2:40 P.M., tour of the Šeduva Museum with museum founder Sergejus Kanovičius.
- ~6:00 P.M., return to Vilnius.

*slight alterations to this program might occur

Fifth World Litvak Congress: Tour of Kaunas

The program of the Fifth World Litvak Congress to take place over four days includes visits to historical sites and a variety of cultural activities focused on the Jewish legacy in Lithuania and Litvak achievements in the world at large.

One of the education components is a tour of Jewish Kaunas and Žiežmariai. Prior registration is required by sending an email to rsvp@lzb.lt

Program:*

Meeting location: parking lot at Cathedral Square in Vilnius

Meeting time: 9:00 A.M.

After an hour's journey by bus, we begin our date with the city of Kaunas, the European Capital of Culture for 2022.

- First stop: Aleksotas (panorama) viewing platform. Here we'll learn why Jews call this location Mapu Mountain and will learn about the history of the city of Kaunas. From the viewing site we will be able to see Kaunas's three main neighborhoods, including Slobodka (Vilijampolė), the former Jewish quarter.
- We will visit the working Jewish cemetery in Kaunas and visit the graves of the two most famous rabbis from Kaunas, Yitzhak Elkhanan Spektor and Avraham Dov-Ber Kahana.
- Continuing the tour of Kaunas, we will visit its most famous sites, including the town hall, the Cathedral and many others.
- We will stop on Vilniaus street at the Jewish intersection with Mapu and Ludovik Zamenhof streets at around 1:00 P.M. for lunch at the restaurant Kauno bokštas [Kaunas Tower] located at Kęstučio street no. 86 in Kaunas.
- After lunch we will walk Kaunas's famous promenade Laisvės alėja [Freedom Alley]. We will hear the story of Lithuanian hero Romas Kalanta. We will pay our respects to Dutch counsel to Kaunas Jan Zwartendijk who saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.
- We will visit the home of famous Israeli poetess Lea Goldberg.
- From the center of the city of Kaunas we continue on to Slobodka, the old Jewish neighborhood which became the Kaunas ghetto during World War II. We will stop briefly at the

square where the ghetto gates once stood and walk along the streets of the ghetto. We will also learn about the Slobodka Yeshiva.

– ~4:00 P.M. the bus leaves Kaunas for Žiežmariai. In this small former shtetl we will visit the recently restored wooden synagogue of Žiežmariai. We will learn the interesting history of the Jews of Žiežmariai and drink herbal tea and eat fresh Litvak bagels.

– Return to Vilnius scheduled for around 7:00 P.M.

*slight alterations to this program might occur

Exhibit of Paintings by Aleksandras Ganelinas

6:00 P.M., Exhibition of paintings by Aleksandras Ganelinas. Opening ceremony for exhibition. Lithuanian Jewish Community, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius.

Location: Jascha Heifetz Hall, Lithuanian Jewish Community, Pylimo street no. 4, Vilnius.

Prior registration required by filling out form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>

May 26

Commemoration of Holocaust Victims at Ponar Memorial Complex

Ceremony to commemorate Holocaust victims at Ponar Memorial Complex outside Vilnius. Prior registration required by filling out form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>

Prayers at the grave site of the Vilna Gaon

1:00 P.M., Visit to grave of Vilna Gaon. Prayer.

Vilnius Jewish Cemetery, Sudervės road no. 28, Vilnius.

Prior registration required by filling out form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>

Concert for closing ceremony the Fifth World Litvak Congress and party/feast.

Fifth World Litvak Congress closing concert.

Performers:

St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra
conducted by Modestas Barkauskas

Rafailas Karpis (tenor)

Dalia Dėdinskaitė (violin)

Gleb Pyšniak (cello)

Rūta Lipinaitytė (violin)

Darius Mažintas (piano)

Masters of ceremony: actress Jovita Jankelaitytė, director Gintaras Varnas

Lithuanian Radio and Television material to be employed at closing concert.

A Date with Vilne concert program:

Oleg Bogod's "Yerushalayim de Lita" performed by the St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra

Alexander Olshanetsky's "Vilne, Vilne," words by A. L. Wolfson, performed by Jovita Jankelaitytė and Rafailas Karpis plus ensemble

Anatolijus Šenderovas's "In memoriam Jascha Heifetz" performed by Rūta Lipinaitytė

Anatolijus Šenderovas's "Daina ir šokis" [Song and Dance] performed by Gleb Pyšniak, Dalia Dėdinskaitė and Tadas Motiečius

Anatolijus Šenderovas's "... ir ištiesiau rankas -- miražas" [...and I stretch my hands, it's a mirage], performed by the St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra

Anatolijus Šenderovas's "Iš užmirštos knygos" [From a Forgotten Book] performed by Rafailas Karpis, Darius Mažintas, Gleb Pyšniak and Dalia Dėdinskaitė

Max Bruch's "Kol Nidrei" performed by St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra and soloist Gleb Pyšniak.

Excerpt from the play "Getas" [Ghetto], the Hermann Kruk scene, monologue.

Prior registration required by filling out form at <https://forms.gle/cFNNVxEZLVDkKnAs6>