

Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America Brief History of Scholarship Awards

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The following review of the establishment of many of the Brotherhood Scholarship awards is taken from information gathered by Robert Bedford, Joe Halio, Scott Alfassa-Marks and Rhonda Murrell, for the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, Inc., from 2001-2004. Brotherhood officers, Joe Soury and Marius Pilo, and others contributed.

April 15, 1934, the Central Council established a Scholarship Committee. Two awards totaling \$25 were distributed.

1942, the Scholarship Fund received its first endowment – The Joseph and Maurice Sasson Award. Prior to establishing endowed awards, scholarships each year were financed by individual donations by members and appropriations by the Brotherhood and the Junior League. There were at first two statutory awards: the Nissim Behar Award, established in memory of the recently deceased distinguished Sephardic proponent of education and unity throughout the Sephardic Community in New York and Israel, and the Junior League Award, financed by twenty percent of the dues of Junior members.

1950 the second permanent endowment Scholarship Fund was established: The Congregation Beth El Award. In 1951 a self-liquidating endowment was created: The Juliette G. Besso Award which was distributed over 10 years. In 1952, the Lena and Henry J. Perahia Scholarship Foundation Award was established as a permanent endowment.

Another permanent endowment was established in 1959: the Delicia and Abraham Nathan Award, which replaced the sustaining grant of the former Delicia Nathan Award.

In 1960 the fourth permanent endowment was established: The Saadi Gerassi Scholarship Foundation Award.

As the Brotherhood continued to raise funds for scholarship, in 1961 another permanent endowment was established: The Henry J. Perahia and Joseph Soury Scholarship Foundation Award.

In 1962 the Esther and Jack Eskenazi Scholarship Foundation Award was established followed by the Matilda and Joseph Saporta Scholarship Foundation Award. Jack Eskenazi, Bension Grotas, David N. Barocas and Victor Matatia, were honored at a banquet.

In 1967, the Central Council added \$500 to be awarded from general funds for scholarships in addition to the endowed awards. The estate of Matilde Saporta established a yearly scholarship award. Jack Nathan donated \$50,000 to establish a scholarship award.

In 1968, as a tribute to Bension Grotas, who was named Honorary Financial Secretary, the Central Council established the Bension Grotas Scholarship Award.

In 1969, the estate of Morris Raphael established a yearly scholarship award. The Merits and Awards Committee was reconstituted and financial need was eliminated as a condition for scholarship award eligibility. However, at the same time a fund for the aid of students in financial need was established under the auspices of the H.J.P. Funds for the Needy.

In 1971 the Central Council established the Victor Matatia Scholarship Award, and he was named Honorary Treasurer.

In 1972 Mrs. Rebecca Mayorkas established a scholarship award in memory of her husband David Mayorkas. The estate of the recently deceased Henry J. Perahia increased the endowment of the Lena and Henry J. Perahia Award.

In 1973, through the generosity of Victor Besso, The Anna and Nathan Waller Scholarship Award was established.

In 1978 a large sum of money was received from the estate of Morris Raphael to establish the Morris and Reina Raphael Memorial Scholarship Award.

In 1979 the Mary S. Abrams Cohen Memorial Scholarship and the Allegra and Leon Saady Memorial Scholarship Awards were established. Additional funds augmented the Morris and Reina Raphael Memorial Scholarship Award.

In 1982, long after the closing of the Berith Shalom synagogue at 133 Eldridge Street, the Downtown Sisterhood gave its remaining funds to the scholarship program to establish the Downtown Sisterhood Scholarship Award. The Sabetay Isaac Abrams and Mary S. Abrams Cohen Scholarship award was established along with Flaminio and Ida Corcos Scholarship Award. The Eli Bensignor Scholarship Award was funded in his memory by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Moise Bensignor.

In 1983 the Allegra and Joseph B. Nathan Award was established.