

## IN THE NEWS

**Deadly Gaza clash kills four Palestinians**

Israeli forces hunting rocket crews in the Gaza Strip killed at least four Palestinians.

Thursday's fatalities, three gunmen and a child, came as Israel tightened its hold on the Gaza refugee camp of Jabalya and the nearby town of Beit Hanoun in a bid to stop Hamas from launching rockets into the Jewish state.

Israel is on high alert for renewed terrorist attacks after its forces killed 14 Hamas men at their Gaza training field earlier this week. During Thursday's clash, Israeli troops reportedly discovered and demolished three Hamas rocket factories.

**Argentines protest after AMIA acquittal**

Thousand of Argentines gathered to express frustration with the lack of progress in the case of the bombing of a Jewish center.

Wednesday evening's rally came after five defendants were acquitted last week in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA center in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 people. More than 40 Jewish community organizations and 10 political groups attended.

**Aryan Nations founder dies at 86**

Richard Butler, founder of the Aryan Nations white supremacist group, died Wednesday at age 86.

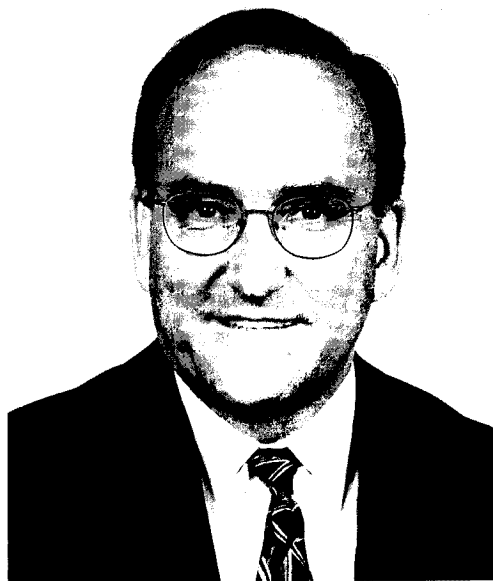
In the 1970s, Butler opened a compound in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, that became a center for his racist, anti-Semitic group.

Butler believed that Jews were descended from Satan and controlled the media and that African Americans were inferior "mud people."

In recent years, Butler's influence had waned, and he was forced to sell his compound after a court judgment against his group. His movement also spawned a tolerance movement in Coeur d'Alene, as locals established groups opposed to racism and anti-Semitism.

# WORLD REPORT

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Rabbi Harold Berman



Rabbi Marc Schneier

Hampton Synagogue

## Speaking words of wisdom, rabbis hone in on their holiday messages

By URIEL HEILMAN

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — With Rosh Hashanah just days away, rabbis across America are fine-tuning their High Holiday messages in preparation for the annual influx of congregants to their synagogues.

Issues of the day will figure prominently in many holiday sermons this year, as rabbis choose particularistic Jewish themes to address universal concerns in what they say is an age of uncertainty, materialism and danger.

"The need a lot of people have is to hear that God is with us," said Rabbi Harold Berman, spiritual leader of Tifereth Israel, a Conservative synagogue in Columbus, Ohio.

"This is a very scary world that we live in

— scary in the way that it was scary to our ancestors and has not generally been scary to us."

Citing anti-Semitism, widespread hostility to Israel and the consequences of the Sept. 11 attacks, Berman said that a Torah passage read on Yom Kippur, which provides appropriate solace for these times, will be the central theme of one of his major sermons.

"And God visited Sarah as He said, and God did to Sarah as He had spoken," reads the passage from Genesis, chapter 21, in which God fulfills his pledge to Abraham's wife and enables Sarah to become pregnant.

"I think they really need to hear that there's hope for the future, and that hope

*Continued on page 2*

**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## ■ *Rabbis craft their High Holiday sermons*

*Continued from page 1*

emerges from our tradition," Berman said.

Rabbi Marc Schneier, of the Hampton Synagogue in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., an Orthodox congregation, said crafting a High Holiday message is no small job.

"As rabbis, we must help our congregants recharge their spiritual batteries and mend their emotional lives. The sermon must impact on the lifestyle or mind-set of the congregant," he said.

"The congregation on the High Holidays is hungry for an understanding of existence and the meaning of human destiny. They are bewildered by the state of the world, the Jewish people, the family — and they are confused about their own ideals and beliefs."

Given such high expectations, coming up with the right message for what one rabbi described as the Jewish version of the State of the Union address can be a major source of anxiety for some spiritual leaders. "I know from personal observation how in these weeks rabbis become frantic in search of an idea or a story," Schneier said.

■

Judging from interviews with rabbis across the country, the messages this High Holiday season are as diverse as they are topical.

"For Rosh Hashanah, I'm writing a sermon about gratitude and thanksgiving," said Rabbi Michelle Missaghieh, associate rabbi of Temple Israel of Hollywood, Calif., a Reform congregation.

The sermon talks about "how life sometimes is very trying and very difficult, and

that we don't recognize the necessity as human beings to be grateful."

The Hebrew "word 'hodaya' means not only thanksgiving, but also means confession," Missaghieh noted, linking her sermon topic to another High Holiday theme: The Yom Kippur prayer service, as well as early morning prayers before and during the 10 Days of Repentance, include special confessional prayers detailing personal and Jewish communal sins.

Though Missaghieh said her theme was inspired by the personal stories of her own synagogue members, global developments have helped universalize the sermon's message.

"In the post 9/11 world, when we Americans are often very shielded, it's important to realize that life is so tenuous and be thankful for it," Missaghieh said.

As every year, Israel will figure prominently in many High Holiday sermons.

This year, Berman will be talking about how troublesome it is that many people around the world have a problem with Jews in Israel defending themselves.

■

Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon, one of three rabbis at New York's popular B'nai Jeshurun synagogue, a Conservative congregation in Manhattan, will be taking a slightly different approach.

"It's a catastrophe of the Jewish people that Israel has fostered policies that have been narrow-minded, that have brought economic disaster and the absence of peace, and have left violence to prevail," he said. "By trying to rule another people against its will, it has brought pain and violence and hatred."

Matalon has sent a letter to 1,800 congregant homes asking shul-goers to read a book by Great Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, called "The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations," which will serve as a primer for a text-study session during the holidays.

"We are entrenched in tribalisms and particularism, and we have not been able to unfold a vision that is larger, that is inclusive, that is conducive to peace, to human dignity," Matalon said.

The message applies not only to Israel, but to America as well, he said.

"The fact that there are nearly 40 million Americans in this country without health insurance in the wealthiest country on the earth is a catastrophe. It is a Jewish catastrophe, because Judaism teaches about dignity for all."

Many rabbis are deliberately steering away from current events in favor of more traditionally Jewish themes.

"I very rarely if ever will speak about current events or politics on the yamim noraim," said Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt of Agudas Israel in St. Louis, Mo., using the

Hebrew term for High Holidays, "because I think current events they'll get from other sources, and the High Holidays are days we need to be introspective."

Greenblatt, who heads what he calls a "yeshivish" Orthodox congregation, said that up to 95 percent of his congregants attend services weekly or daily, so his High Holiday sermons are not as freighted with importance as those of rabbis whose congregants go to synagogue only occasionally.

Greenblatt's sermons, which he says he doesn't draft very far in advance, focus on spiritual improvement, community involvement and personal introspection. The goal, he said, is to get people that are serious about observance of the mitzvot, or commandments, to the next level of observance.

Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, of Temple Beth Zion, a nondenominational congregation in Brookline, Mass., said he, too, is struggling to get congregants to the next level of observance — in his case, observance of the Sabbath.

"I'm making a big push for Shabbos again," Waldoks said. He'll talk about "why it's important, not only for themselves, but also for the community."

Ultimately, the more successful rabbis' High Holiday messages are at getting congregants back to the synagogue, the less central a place High Holiday sermons will occupy in the pantheon of American Jewish religious rituals.

But "the real issue," said Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, lead rabbi at Congregation Mount Sinai, a Conservative synagogue in Brooklyn, are "the invisible Jews, the Jews who are not there for Rosh Hashanah." ■

**'In these weeks, rabbis become frantic in search of an idea or a story.'**

**Rabbi Marc Schneier**  
The Hampton Synagogue

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# Envoy looks back on tightly knit U.S.-Israel ties

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Daniel Ayalon has served two years as Israel's envoy to Washington, presiding over extraordinary closeness between the United States and Israel and radical changes in the American approach to Middle East peace that largely favor Israel.

And he's worried it could all be a career killer.

That's because Ayalon, the first non-political appointee to Israel's most sensitive overseas posting, has been involved in an intensely political process — one that guarantees an end to his career as a diplomat at the tender age of 48.

"I ruined my professional career, because from here on in there's no going back," said Ayalon, a compromise candidate in 2002 between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of the Likud and then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader. "This is a post which is much closer to political than to professional. It is a very political theater."

Ayalon, speaking in an exclusive Rosh Hashanah interview with JTA, says he has to consider his options after his likely return to Israel in two years — the typical term for an ambassador is four years — and will not get specific as to the possibilities.

Given his experience, a political career must be one option. In that case, he has an impressive resume: Israeli voters place great stock in candidates close to the U.S. establishment. Ayalon has been a key player on a team that has seen unprecedented ties between the two countries.

In April, President Bush broke with decades of tradition and formally recognized that Israel was unlikely ever to return to the pre-1967 borders. He also rejected any right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel. Democratic candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) quickly echoed those assurances. Both Kerry and Bush have also pledged not to have dealings with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

"Israel-U.S. relations have never been better," Ayalon said, suggesting that in addition to Israel's diplomatic achievements, intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation was closer than ever.

"We pool resources together and a lot of work is being done."

Ayalon spoke just days before revelations of an FBI investigation into the al-

leged involvement of Israeli diplomats and pro-Israel lobbyists in the leaking of classified documents from the Pentagon.

Ayalon told an interviewer that the investigation was the result of either malicious intent or a misunderstanding of the nature of U.S.-Israeli intelligence sharing.

In a conference call with Jewish journalists sponsored by JTA and the American Jewish Press Association, Ayalon predicted that, paradoxically, the investigation would end up strengthening U.S.-Israeli ties.

"For too long there have been all kind of conspiracy rumors. This gave a chance for all of them to come out of the woodwork and try and jump on us and on these conspiracy theories," he said. "Once it is clear to everybody that this is just ridiculous and there is nothing there, I think the result will be that all these conspiratorial rumors will be put to rest for a long, long time."

In his interview with JTA, Ayalon stressed that bipartisan support for the Jewish state is critical.

"I'm always very impressed in all my meetings on the Hill, they will oppose each other on every issue except one which unites them, and this is Israel," he said. Such bipartisanship helped nudge through sanctions against Syria this year.

The reverse is also true, he said: Ayalon cultivates both parties and attended both the Democrats' and the Republicans' conventions this summer.

The ambassador likes to emphasize areas of cooperation that rarely get coverage: Israel, he says, accounts for a third of all U.S. imports to the Middle East, although its people make up only 2 percent of the population of the region. Israel is about to celebrate 20 years of a free trade agreement with the United States — the first of its kind, and the model for subsequent U.S. agreements with other nations.

"The good experience the United States had with Israel opened the way for the United States to have free trade agreements with other countries," he said, citing the North American and Central American agreements as examples.

Ayalon credits a number of factors contributing to the tight-knit relationship:

shared democratic values, shared strategic interests and, since Sept. 11, 2001, a shared understanding of the effects of terrorism.

"We came together," he said. "The same experience that Americans felt, the scourge of terrorism, bound us together even more than before."

Especially critical, Ayalon said, has been the role of the U.S. Jewish community. He expressed concern about the younger Jewish generation and data that show that Israel has dropped to second place as a priority for many younger Jews.

"The older generations had firsthand experience of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel, the existential threat against the Jewish people and then the miracle of the rising from the ashes, the redemption," he said. "The challenge is to explain no matter how far removed we are from these his-

toric events, the threats are still there and the opportunities are still there, there is a common fate."

He sees the key in Jewish education. Broader Jewish education would help Jews who face an onslaught of anti-Israel activity on university campuses, Ayalon said.

"The situation would change immediately," he said. "Oftentimes, Jewish students are dumbfounded and they are not retorting, they are not sure enough about the facts and the history. We have a very strong, compelling narrative and case and it is important that we all know about it."

Ayalon could be forgiven for perceiving much of that "compelling narrative" as taking place in the last two years. He recites a litany of mini-crises and triumphs: the intensification of the intifada in the spring of 2002; the run-up to the Iraq war and the war itself; the highs and lows of the "road map for peace;" the Israeli decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Chief among them — emotionally — is the saga of the first Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, who died in last year's Columbia space shuttle tragedy.

One hopeful outcome, he said, is increased closeness with Sean O'Keefe, the NASA administrator. Ayalon predicts more Israeli astronauts participating in space missions.

Israel unites both parties on Capitol Hill, Israel's man in Washington says.

# Some Russian Jews returning from Israel

By SUE FISHKOFF

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — Dasha Milevsky was 14 in 1998 when she left Kiev for Israel.

Although her mother is not Jewish, she enrolled in a religious high school in the city of Tiberias, where she converted to Judaism.

Milevsky finished high school, did her national service and planned to go on to medical school in Israel, but didn't have the money.

So early this year she returned to Kiev.

"When I came back, I was sure I'd return to Israel," says Milevsky, now 20 and a regular at Kiev's thriving Hillel, where she runs a program to teach Jewish identity through Hebrew song. "Now I'm not so sure. There's a lot of work I can do here. People need a Jewish education here more than in Israel."

More than a million Jews have left the former Soviet Union since 1989, most of them for Israel.

By the early 1990s, some of them began to trickle back home, mainly elderly people who couldn't fit into a new society, and young go-getters eager to make it in the newly booming business environments of Moscow and Kiev.

In 1998 the ruble crashed. Political unrest grew, crime increased and the economy grew worse.

None of that seemed to decrease the tide of returnees — it remained a quiet, steady flow.

Last year, Baruch Gur, of the Prime Minister's Department of Connection with the Jews of the Former USSR, told Ha'aretz that more than 120,000 repatriates had returned from Israel to the former Soviet Union.

What Jewish leaders in the former Soviet Union are beginning to notice, however, is that increasing numbers of those who are returning from Israel bring with them a heightened sense of Jewish and Zionist identity that they want to preserve. They're putting their children in Jewish schools so they won't lose their knowledge of Hebrew.

They're affiliating with their local Jewish communities, showing up for holiday celebrations, joining Hillel, or even taking jobs with Jewish organizations.

In fact, they're acting a lot like American Jews who make aliyah and decide to return to the United States. They keep ties

to Israel, they travel back and forth a lot, and they keep Israel consciousness high in their homes and their communities, local Jewish leaders say.

Dani Gechtman, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's director in Kiev, estimates that about 9,000 Jews have returned from Israel to Ukraine, most of them to Kiev.

While he believes most have come back for economic reasons, they are nevertheless infusing local Jewish life with a strong dose of Zionist energy.

"Many of those returnees bring a renewed sense of Judaism and Jewish identity back with them from Israel that works to strengthen the local Jewish community," he says.

Dasha Milevsky isn't making excuses when she says she feels more useful to the Jewish community in Kiev than she would in Jerusalem. She, and other Ukrainian and Russian Jews who have spent serious time in Israel, say that although they love Israel, they were often made to feel like second-class citizens there.

He says he did not choose his profession by accident. "All the work I do is connected to my knowledge of Hebrew and Israel. I feel like a bridge between the two countries, and I enjoy being useful in this way. I feel I've found my place."

Alex Rosen, the JDC's director in Odessa, Ukraine, a city with a strong Jewish history and a current Jewish population of about 35,000, notes that emigration from his city has slowed down.

Jews are returning from Israel, he acknowledges, but he insists that most of them maintain their dual citizenship so they can open businesses in Odessa and go back and forth to Israel.

"The more that Ukraine gains economic independence, the more this will increase," he predicts. "It's very easy to do business here when you have Israeli citizenship. Israel is close, it only takes two days to bring a con-

tainer to Odessa port."

It's not too difficult to understand why someone might return from Israel to Moscow, Kiev or even Odessa. But former olim are also returning to smaller towns in Russia and Ukraine, albeit in fewer numbers.

Pyatigorsk is a former spa town in southern Russia. An hour's drive from both Chechnya and Dagestan, it is plagued by spillover ethnic violence from across the border. Chechen suicide bombers blew up commuter trains just outside Pyatigorsk twice last winter, killing more than 100 college students on their way to classes.

More than a million Chechen and Dagestani refugees have poured into the North Caucasus region since 1992. Thousands of them were Jews. Many headed for the central town of Pyatigorsk, which became a way station for Jewish refugees on their way out of the country.

But some of them have come back. Pyatigorsk's Geula Jewish day school, with 232 students, is filled with children who speak fluent Hebrew, the result of years spent in Israel.

*(This article is part of a series of pieces on Jewish life in the former Soviet Union. This series was made possible, in part, by support from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.)*

## TALES FROM THE PALE



Sue Fishkoff/JTA

Students in Kislovodsk learn Hebrew in May 2004 as they consider making aliyah to Israel.

# At risk in Odessa: Young Jews getting aid

By SUE FISHKOFF

ODESSA, Ukraine (JTA) — Inside a beautifully renovated 19th-century building here, nine Jewish children are seated around a large wooden table, coloring with crayons.

An older woman enters the room and claps her hands, and the children rush past her, chattering loudly, each one eager to be the first to the dining room where a hot meal of soup and chicken awaits them.

For many of the children, this may be the only hot meal they eat all day. This is Beitenu, Hebrew for "our home," a children's program sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Every week, the program provides after-school activities and psychological care for 36 at-risk Jewish children, aged 7 to 15, who come from broken homes, whose parents are dead, poor, in jail or otherwise unable to care for them properly.

Open five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, Beitenu's building also boasts propane heat, allowing the children hot showers and washing machines for their laundry in a city where the hot water shuts off from April through October.

Beitenu isn't the only Jewish children's program in town. Chabad has been running a far larger one for years in Odessa, tied into its extensive day school system.

But for the JDC, Beitenu, which opened in Odessa in late January as part of the group's Children's Initiative project for the former Soviet Union, represents a new direction.

"This is a new focus for us," says Scott Richman, JDC's New York-based director for Russia. "From the time we opened our first Hesed" welfare agency in 1993 up until last December, "JDC programs in the former Soviet Union were exclusively focused on the disabled and the elderly."

That meant that for 10 years, the only Jewish children receiving Hesed aid in the former Soviet Union were disabled, and that help was limited to food packages and medicines delivered to the home.

At the time, JDC decision-makers felt that the elderly poor were the most vulnerable among more than 1 million Jews in need in the former Soviet Union. As such, the Hesed system was designed primarily with this demographic in mind.

But by 2001, Richman says, the JDC was ready to look beyond its traditional

mandate. "We wanted to help children in general, not just the disabled," he says.

A needs assessment was conducted that year in Moldova and a pilot Children's Initiative project was launched in 2002. Following its success, the first Children's Initiative programs were established in Russia and Ukraine last December, offering clothing, medical care, psychological help and home repairs to at-risk children and their families.

Programs now are operating in several dozen cities, with applications in for many more. In some places, like Odessa's Beitenu, in addition to these very basic, life-sustaining services, centralized after-school programs offer arts and crafts, Hebrew and English lessons, computer facilities and hot meals.

Sophia Fingerova is the director of Beitenu in Odessa, a city with 35,000 Jews, 11,500 of whom are on Hesed welfare rolls. Fingerova says that although Hesed has identified 60 Jewish children who are at risk, just 36 come to Beitenu.

"The others might have parents or grandparents who don't want them to come, or maybe they have no way of getting to our building," she says.

They also get free medical care, including vitamins, sessions with speech pathologists and visits from psychology students at the local university.

Boris, 13, has only been coming to Beitenu for a week. His grandmother, a fabric cutter in a local factory, brings him on the bus every day after school. Boris is developmentally disabled, his face bloated from the hormones he takes to counteract the effects of a brain hemorrhage he suffered when an umbrella spoke pierced his face.

Many Jewish children in Odessa, some of them disabled, are helped by Chabad.

Rabbi Avraham Wolff is the chief Chabad rabbi in Odessa. He runs five kindergartens and elementary schools, all of which feed into a central high school serving hundreds of Jewish children.

Wolff's schools are clean and well-run, with low teacher-to-student ratios and plenty of books and gym equipment.

Wolff runs two separate orphanages — one for boys and one for girls. Today, each houses about two dozen youngsters, who study together with the other students

in the Chabad day school.

Chabad's Odessa orphanage is one of 10 the organization runs throughout the former Soviet Union. The dormitories are plain, but the beds are cozy and warm, and each child has his or her own closet and desk.

"They have the same clothes as the day students, and no one knows the difference," Wolff says. "It's very important that they not feel second class."

The word "orphanage" is something of a misnomer, since some of the children have living

parents who simply are unable to care for them. For that reason, Wolff emphasizes that none of the children in his care is up for adoption. "If their mother comes back for them, I want her to know they are here and waiting for her," he says.

The children in both Chabad's orphanage and the JDC-run Beitenu program look remarkably well cared for. And except for the yarmulkes on the heads of the boys in the Chabad program, they are dressed similarly as well.

There is one difference, however. All of the children in the Chabad orphanage are halachic Jews, whereas Beitenu, in accordance with JDC policy, serves anyone who is Jewish according to Israel's Law of Return — which includes children with just one Jewish grandparent.

This difference has the potential of creating a two-tiered system, some locals acknowledge quietly, where children with Jewish mothers could gravitate to the Chabad schools, which are much better funded and offer a wider range of services, leaving the non-halachic children on the JDC roster.

It also penalizes orphans who only have Jewish fathers. Chabad won't take them, and Beitenu can't, since the JDC does not run orphanages in the former Soviet Union and Beitenu's program is only available to children whose parents or other family members are able to transport them to the center. Dozens of half-Jewish orphans languish in Odessa's state orphanage; the same situation exists throughout the region.

"The conditions there are awful," says Irina Zborovskaya, JDC children's program coordinator for southern Ukraine. "Some of them have no beds, they sleep on the floor."

Chabad's Odessa orphanage is one of 10 the group has in the FSU.

# Israelis making good old days trendy

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Dancing on long wooden tables, belting out the lyrics of songs written long before they were born, young Israelis pack into a darkened Tel Aviv club where celebrating the past has become trendy.

As Israelis head into the Jewish New Year — which also marks the outbreak of the second intifada four years ago — a sense of nostalgia permeates the national mood. Young and old both yearn for the days when Israel seemed a quieter, more innocent, more united place.

"People are looking back, musing on the days when we seemed to be strong and there were not wars and suicide bombings like this," said Danny Sides, a radio talk-show host and music editor. "People are looking at the past and saying how nice it was, how we were strong, we were heroes, optimistic and innocent."

At Stage, a seaside club in Tel Aviv with orange walls and swirling lights, Monday nights are dedicated to what Israelis call "shirah b'tsibur," or sing-alongs, led by Sarale Sharon, a longtime icon of the genre in Israel.

Sharon gets the crowd, 300 or so 20- and 30-somethings, going with a rousing opening number, "I was Born for Peace." Most of the songs sung this evening are folk tunes written between the 1950s and 1970s.

Everyone in the club is on their feet, clapping, cheering, dancing and singing

along word for word. Red and orange spotlights shine on smiling faces and rows of people sway arm in arm to the music.

With her cropped auburn hair and loose white cotton shirt, the middle-aged Sharon, from Kibbutz Ashdod Yaakov, seems an unlikely figure to have achieved near rock-star cult status among Israel's younger set.

Yet she's been known to draw crowds of thousands. "It's about feeling a connection, about feeling at home," Sharon said.

Assaf Tal, 32, is celebrating his birthday the night of Sharon's show. A regular here — he comes almost every week — Tal has brought along 27 friends.

"It's a trend people like. People want Israeli things and this is our music, developed here. It's the most Israeli thing there is," he said, before being swept into a tide of friends and song.

Shirly Maimon, a 22-year-old who works as a hostess at the club, says she also is a fan of the old-time music. "It's connected to the past. The past is very in right now," she said.

As she speaks of the past, Shimon Peres, a perennial political figure here who has remained on the scene throughout Israel's short history, enters the club and the young crowd suddenly notices him, rising to its feet in standing ovation.

Some swarm around Peres, jostling for a chance to shake his hand.

Other Knesset members, actors and songwriters are among the audience and among those who take to the stage to try their hands at leading everyone in song.

One of them is Maya Mofaz, daughter of Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, her magenta-sequined tank top glistening under the lights as she belts out cheery, patriotic songs in a clear, strong voice.

The grim mood and feeling of helplessness engendered by ongoing violence with the Palestinians, the economic downturn and a feeling of isolation from the international community, seems to have driven Israelis to look inward. The second most popu-

lar radio station after the main state news channel is Reshet Gimmel, dedicated exclusively to Hebrew music.

Other popular new additions to the cultural scene can be found on cable television, where one channel plays only Israeli music videos and another is dedicated exclusively to airing Israeli movies.

Israel Television airs a popular show called "In the Jewish State" that each week takes a long, fawning look at the history of Israeli comedy. There are stores specializing in Israeli products from the 1950s and 1960s, and Web sites dedicated to the period.

Advertisers also are tapping into the nostalgia phenomenon, with some brands setting their TV ads in the 1950s, trying to sell products as familiar items people knew when they were young.

David Tartakover, an Israeli graphic artist and designer, co-authored the best selling book, "Where We Were and What We Did," highlighting Israeli products and games from the 1950s and 1960s.

"I think nostalgia speaks to everyone," he said. "It works on connection of people to a place."

That "place," he said, is a lost Golden Age about which Israelis reminisce now that the Jewish state has been bogged down for 37 years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I think the political and social situation in Israel leads to missing the period when Israel was a small country, not a conqueror, that lived within borders that were defined," Tartakover said.

Dan Chamizer — known throughout Israel for the baffling riddles he writes, many of which are based on Israeli cultural history and humor — said Israeli culture feels in flux because it never had time to properly digest new waves of mass immigration.

"The nostalgia is for the days we once felt we shared something. Today everyone is in their own corner, living their lives. We have one destiny but not one culture," he said. "So people are escaping to things like folk dancing and sing-alongs."

Meiron Egger, 27, a musician who runs a business leading sing-along evenings, said the music speaks to his generation.

"The situation in Israel prompts a feeling that there is a need to return to a period that was good. And these old songs of the 50s, 60s and 70s, for the younger generation, they express what was good."



Brian Hendler

With the Jewish New Year coming up, Keren and Adley Marcus sing Israeli songs together with singer Sarale Sharon at the Stage night club in Tel Aviv on Monday.



## At U.S. Open, kosher stand serves up franks

By PETER EPHROSS

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — Strictly kosher food isn't just for baseball parks anymore.

Several years after a few baseball stadiums made headlines by adding kosher food stands to their culinary options, tennis fans at the U.S. Open in Queens, N.Y., can select glatt kosher items from the potpourri of food possibilities at America's flagship tennis event.

For Lilly Schwebel, 69, of Queens, the stand made her experience at the Open — and that of her grandson, Aidan Wind — more filling.

"It's wonderful for my grandson to be able to eat something here," Schwebel said as she purchased a hot dog for him on Sunday.

The stand has been up for a few years. During this year's tournament, which runs through Sunday, it's being operated by Kosher Sports. The firm also operates kosher concessions at two football meccas: Giants Stadium, home to the New York Giants, and the Philadelphia Eagles' Lincoln Financial Field. Most of the venues in the New York area have kosher stands, says Jonathan Katz, co-president of Kosher Sports. "There's a need for it."

Strictly kosher food became available at sports stadiums more than a decade ago, with baseball venues leading the way. Kosher food stands are currently running at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Shea and Yankee Stadiums in New York and Jacobs Field in Cleveland, among others.

Early Sunday afternoon, Katz estimated that he would sell about 700-800 hot dogs, 300 sandwiches, 500-600 knishes and 300-400 pretzels before the day was done.

The kosher food's not cheap: corned beef and turkey sandwiches cost \$12.00, hot dogs \$5.25, and a pretzel runs \$3.50.

But then again, a comparison price check showed that it was just a bit cheaper elsewhere: Just a few steps away at a non-kosher stand, a Coney Island footlong costs \$4.75, although a chicken sandwich "only" ran \$8.25. ■

## Israeli schools push pluralism

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The fourth-grade girl in pigtails pores over a page of Mishnah, shooting her hand in the air in response to the teacher's question — on how Jewish tradition was passed from generation to generation.

In other classrooms at the Frankel School in Jerusalem's French Hill neighborhood, second-graders are learning Rosh Hashanah songs for the school's holiday assembly, and first-graders are learning how to read.

The school, built in 1976, was the first of the increasingly popular school network called TALi — the Hebrew abbreviation for Enhanced Jewish Studies.

These schools, part of the secular public school system, are modeled in part on the North American day school system, where students receive both a Jewish and a general education.

The TALi schools now serve 20,000 students in its 70 pre-schools and 50 other schools.

In addition to the growth of other alternative school systems, the schools' popularity reflects a demand by Israeli parents for new educational options for their children.

The schools were founded by North American immigrants disappointed that it was impossible to find Israeli schools providing a pluralistic Jewish education.

Their only option at the time was either to send children to a religious school with an Orthodox outlook or to a secular school where little Jewish learning or practice was taking place.

"Parents are saying, 'Where is the Jewish education for our children?'" said Eitan Chikli, executive director of the TALi Education Fund. "We are trying to fill that gap."

According to Chikli, the Ministry of Education is now investing even less money in Jewish education than in past years, as it allocates increased funds to math and science programs.

Most of TALi's annual budget of \$1.6 million comes from North American Jews, among them many from the Conservative movement. The TALi Educational Fund is supported by the Schechter Institute for

Jewish Studies which is affiliated with the Conservative movement.

Through the fund, teachers and principals at TALi schools participate in leadership courses offered at the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem; special textbooks on Jewish themes are produced; and parent-child workshops are held.

Incorporating TALi schools, with their message of religious pluralism, into an Israeli society riven by a pitched secular-religious divide, has not been without battles.

Recently, some fervently Orthodox rabbis warned Israeli parents not to send their children to the schools, insisting in letters that the school network is part of the Reform and Conservative movements and would corrupt their children.

In one letter, parents were warned that sending their children to such a school would lead to "the destruction of Israel and assimilation." In bold print, the letter tells parents to "safeguard the souls of your children."

Among those warning parents to stay away from the schools this year was the Rabbinate of Givat Ze'ev, a West Bank settlement not far from Jerusalem.

In a letter to parents, the rabbinate said the new TALi school in their community would wreak damage and assimilation.

The Israeli Supreme Court ruled in July that prayer in TALi schools was legitimate and that the Ministry of Education was obliged to fund instructional hours for prayer in these schools as it funds such sessions for state religious schools.

"The school's curriculum is infused with Judaism," said the school's principal, Batia Bar, saying that even subjects like zoology are taught with an eye toward Judaism, examining, for example, what animals lived in the Land of Israel during the biblical times.

Strengthening the idea of the Jewish people as both a community living in Israel and abroad, there are classes on the Jewish Diaspora. Contacts have also been forged with two Jewish communities in Long Island — one in Roslyn, the other in Dix Hills.

The school is named after the Frankel family in Detroit, which has helped build it and continues to help fund its activities. ■

**Israel's Supreme Court ordered the Education Ministry to fund these schools.**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Setback in 'Jerusalem' case

A U.S. court ruled against two couples seeking to have "Jerusalem, Israel" placed as their birthplace on American passports.

In a ruling Tuesday, Judge Gladys Kessler said the federal court does not have jurisdiction over the matter of how Jerusalem should be identified on federal documents.

Kessler also said the couples suffered no injury from the fact that the documents read only "Jerusalem." A 2002 law said U.S. citizens born in Jerusalem could choose to have "Jerusalem, Israel" on their passports, but President Bush, in signing the legislation, said the measure would be taken as "advisory" because it interfered with the executive branch's jurisdiction over foreign policy.

The case is expected to be appealed.

### Jews press for assault weapons ban

Several U.S. Jewish groups are pushing Congress to renew the ban on assault weapons.

At an interfaith news conference Thursday, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, said Congress' failure to renew the ban is "ensuring the tragic and violent deaths of an unknown number of Americans across this country."

Sammie Moshenberg, Washington director of the National Council for Jewish Women, said, "The idea of having these military-style assault weapons readily available in this country to extremist groups, many of whom target Jews and other minorities, is a very frightening thought."

The 10-year ban expires Monday, and Republican congressional leaders have said they do not expect renewal legislation to be voted on.

### Let our students go

Jewish groups launched a campaign to urge North American universities to remove barriers to study abroad in Israel.

The Israel on Campus Coalition brought together some of the top leadership of its member groups — 26 Jewish organizations on campuses — to give prominence to the campaign, launched Thursday at Columbia University Hillel in New York.

Citing security concerns amid the ongoing intifada, some universities have "created obstacles that have impeded or at times prevented students from pursuing their desire to study in Israel," the coalition said.

The campaign urges Jewish groups to work with students, universities and community leaders to promote study in Israel.

## MIDDLE EAST

### P.A. donors' conference delayed

A Palestinian donor conference slated for next week in New York was postponed until after the U.S. elections.

Following the postponement, American official William Burns, who is visiting the Middle East, canceled a planned visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The donor conference was delayed at the request of the Palestinian Authority, which hopes to avoid infighting between West Bank and Gaza leaders, Ha'aretz reported.

### Land leasing halted

An Israeli court called for a temporary halt to land leasing in a neighborhood of Karmiel, a northern Israeli town, unless Israeli Arabs are allowed to lease land as well.

The order was issued Tuesday following a petition filed by groups that say the Jewish National Fund, which owns the land, forbids leasing to Israeli Arabs. JNF would not comment, citing legal reasons.

### Israeli MIAs buried

The remains of two Israeli soldiers missing since the War of Independence were laid to rest with full military honors.

David Shemesh and Gideon Ben-David were captured and killed by Arab irregulars while on a reconnaissance mission in Jaffa in 1947, but their bodies were only discovered this week in an unmarked grave nearby.

The two Iraqi Jewish immigrants, who volunteered for the Palmach and served as undercover agents because of their fluent Arabic, were buried at Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem on Thursday.

## WORLD

### AJCommittee praises France

The American Jewish Committee praised France's efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

Following meetings Thursday between AJCommittee leaders and senior French officials, including Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the AJCommittee's executive director, David Harris, told JTA that his organization "had walked away with the sense that the government and the prime minister understand the seriousness of the situation and are prepared to take measures to more effectively deal with the high rate of anti-Semitism."

"While there was 'no magic wand or silver bullet to defeat anti-Semitism overnight,'" Harris said, "we saw during all our meetings that there is a firm, unblinking recognition that the problem is there, it is real and serious and must be confronted."

Last year, the AJCommittee awarded its annual Simon Wiesenthal Prize to Nicolas Sarkozy — at the time, France's interior minister — for his "courage and determination" in tackling anti-Semitism in France.

### French Jews, Muslims talk

French Jewish leaders held groundbreaking talks with a radical Islamic group.

Following a meeting Thursday at the offices of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, Fouad Alaoui, secretary-general of the Union of French Islamic Organizations, told reporters that the talks had been "frank and calm."

Alaoui said both groups had to "live together in serenity and participate in bringing social peace."

He also condemned anti-Semitism, adding that "our religions were not created by God in order that there should be trouble in society."

Bernard Kanovitch, who heads CRIF's Commission for Relations with the Muslim Community, described the meeting as of "great importance," adding that the union's representatives had "shown proof of great maturity."

The meeting came after CRIF's president, Roger Cukierman, invited Alaoui to talk following a radio debate between the two men in July.

### Israel honors French soldier

A French Catholic soldier who headed an elite commando unit in Israel's War of Independence was honored by the Jewish State.

At a ceremony near Paris, Israel's ambassador to France, Nissim Zvilli, posthumously awarded a medal Thursday to Thadee Diffre in recognition of his service in the French commando unit of the Mahal foreign volunteers' service.

Diffre served as a captain in the French armored division that assisted in the liberation of Paris in 1944 before volunteering for Mahal in February 1948.

The highest-ranking soldier among some 400 French volunteers in the unit, Diffre took the name Teddy Eytan. He died in France in 1971 at age 59.