

IN THE NEWS
**Delay planned
in Gaza disengagement**

Israel is expected to postpone the Gaza Strip withdrawal by three weeks.

Israeli sources said Thursday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would announce after the Passover holiday that the start date for withdrawals from Gaza and the northern West Bank had been rescheduled from July 20 to Aug. 15.

The decision was made Thursday, after officials realized that the original schedule clashed with the traditional three-week Jewish mourning period before Tisha B'Av. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter called for the postponement.

**AIPAC fires
top two staffers**

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee fired two top employees because of information learned during an FBI investigation into their alleged mishandling of classified information, JTA has learned.

The dismissal of Steve Rosen, AIPAC's policy director, and Keith Weissman, its senior Iran analyst, suggests that the pro-Israel powerhouse wants to distance itself from the two before its policy conference.

**U.N. blasts
anti-Semitism**

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights condemned anti-Semitism in three separate resolutions.

The condemnation was noted in resolutions on the incompatibility between democracy and racism, on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, and in a condemnation of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.

■ MORE NEWS, Pg. 8

REMINDER: In observance of Passover, the JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, April 25, and Tuesday, April 26.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

World Bank head brings his charm to role as Quartet's Mideast envoy

By RON KAMPEAS

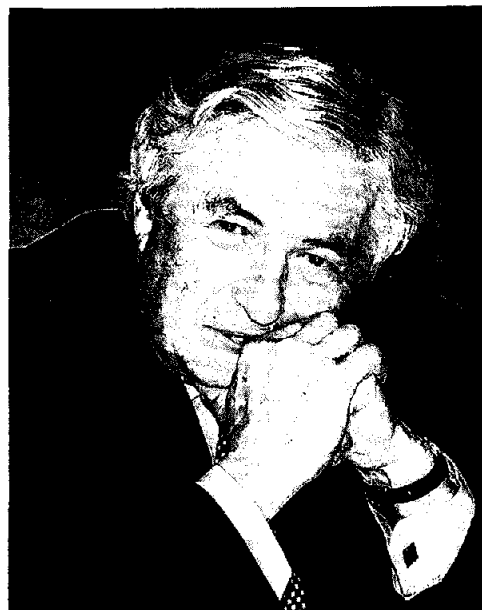
WASHINGTON (JTA) — James Wolfensohn, the Jewish president of the World Bank named by President Bush to midwife Israel's exit from Gaza, has spent a lifetime reconciling worlds that often clash: rich and poor, Arab and Jew, black and white, and the gamut of Jewish denominations.

Wolfensohn, who ends his 10 years at the World Bank on May 31, already has stepped into his new role as the envoy brokering Israel's planned Gaza Strip withdrawal this summer for the Quartet, the diplomatic grouping of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations that is driving the "road map" peace plan.

The Australian native, 71, has spent his decade at the world's leading development institution gently nudging the developed world away from the "tough love" that characterized its attitude to the developing world and toward an approach that is more accommodating and forgiving of debt.

"We must rebalance our world to give everyone the chance for life that is secure," Wolfensohn said in a 2003 speech to the bank and its sister lending institution, the International Monetary Fund, "with a right to expression, equal rights for women, rights for the disabled and disadvantaged, the right to a clean environment, the right to learn, the right to development."

Wolfensohn has tirelessly applied that outlook to the World Bank's role in reviving



Courtesy of The World Bank Group

James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's special envoy for Gaza disengagement.

the Palestinian economy, a role he helped launch when he became World Bank president in 1995, at the height of the Oslo peace process.

"I believe that there is no more important issue for global peace than an equitable and secure solution to this problem," Wolfensohn said last week when his new job was announced. "I look forward to assisting the Israelis and the Palestinians as they strive to reach and implement a peaceful solution that restores hope and confidence to the people of the region."

His first trip as envoy starts next Monday.

Continued on page 2

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ *New envoy to Mideast comes from World Bank*

Continued from page 1

He will spend 10 days in Israel and the Palestinian areas on a listening tour.

All sides welcomed the appointment, a positive and rare sign at a time when Israelis and Palestinians are trying to organize an orderly transfer of assets when Israel withdraws.

"I was very happy to hear of his appointment," Daniel Ayalon, Israel's ambassador to Washington, told JTA. "He is a man of honor, experience and deep commitment. I wish him well in his new appointment and will be happy to offer any assistance he might require."

Edward Abington, a lobbyist who represents Palestinian Authority interests in Washington, said Bush's choice was inspired.

Wolfensohn "has a lot of experience in working the issue since 1995," when the World Bank first set up shop in the West Bank and Gaza, Abington said. "Just appointing him is good, because it forces both sides to start facing up to the issues and responding, especially the Palestinians."

Wolfensohn has an avuncular approach but is also known for his bluntness.

"If the current conditions prevail, I don't think you'll get much money," he said in December during a visit to Israel and the Palestinian areas to assess the likelihood of investment in the region.

An experienced reconciler, Wolfensohn has won over some of the World Bank's fiercest critics among poverty and environmental activists. Costa Rican sci-

entists named a beetle species for him to honor his environmentalist approach. In some African countries, he is a hero for organizing debt forgiveness.

Wolfensohn's views on poverty and peace are rooted in the values he learned from his parents, British Jews who immigrated to Australia. They were instrumental in bringing Jewish refugees from Europe to Australia.

He has given generously from the \$100 million he amassed as an investment banker before joining the World Bank. His three children, Naomi, Adam and Sara, administer the family trust.

The trust's choices reflect the concerns Wolfensohn brought to his job at the World Bank — gender equality, reconciliation, poverty relief and the environment — but often within a Jewish context.

What makes each gift remarkable, many beneficiaries say, is the Wolfensohns' insistence on reaching out to all denominations, a rarity in the often fractious world of Jewish giving.

"They seem deeply committed to Jewish causes and will not allow denominational barriers to stand in their way to promote those causes," said Rabbi Saul Berman, whose group, Edah, is using Wolfensohn funds to design educational programs on Judaism and the environment. The group is Orthodox, but reaches out to all denominations.

Berman's view is echoed across the Jewish theological spectrum at Kolot, a center for Judaism and gender studies affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement.

"Kolot and Edah are organizations about making Judaism meaningful and relevant for all Jews," Kolot director Lori Lefkowitz said. "It testifies to the breadth of the Wolfensohns' commitment to Jewish causes, ensuring Jewish continuity through creativity."

The Wolfensohns attend Congregation Or Zarua, a Conservative synagogue on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and Wolfensohn's wife Elaine is a member of the Jewish Theological Seminary's board of overseers.

The family's reconciliation brief extends beyond intra-Jewish disputes: Elaine is the sole non-Arab leader on the advisory council of the World Links Arab Region, which promotes technological education in the Arab world.

The family foundation funds "Operation Understanding," which brings together 30 Jewish and black teenagers for an intensive six-month course that culminates in a three-week civil-rights tour of the United States.

"They have been very supportive," said Rachael Feldman, the

program's director. Not just in terms of finances; the Wolfensohns have helped the group network, and Sara Wolfensohn has joined the teenagers at their retreats.

Wolfensohn found out about Operation Understanding from Vernon Jordan, a close friend who was part of President Clinton's inner circle.

That background made Wolfensohn's appointment by Bush, who generally has shunned Clinton appointees, even more remarkable. Wolfensohn technically may answer to the Quartet, but the appointment was essentially made by Bush, who has much at stake in this summer's planned withdrawal.

Bush hopes Israel's pullout from Gaza and a portion of the northern West Bank will turn the recent Israeli-Palestinian quiet into long-lasting peace, reinforcing his quest for a democratic Middle East and building international support for U.S.-led efforts to rebuild Iraq.

Working with Gen. William Ward, the special U.S. envoy covering military aspects of the disengagement, Wolfensohn might be the man to make Bush's dreams come true, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"He has the right connections, he has credibility with the Palestinians and with the Europeans," Hoenlein said. "What's most important is his ability to tell the Palestinians what they need to hear" about reforming their institutions. ■

'I believe that there is no more important issue for global peace than an equitable and secure solution to this problem.'

James Wolfensohn

Envoy for Gaza disengagement

WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Kosher gospel rocks; Jewish diversity rules

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Fifty years ago, Joshua Nelson's grandmother would not have walked up to a synagogue in her New Jersey neighborhood, entered and prayed. That's because she was black, Nelson says — and black Jews didn't generally pray at shuls dominated by white, Eastern European Jews.

"It was unheard of," Nelson says. "A lot of the Jersey people went to New York for shul. The black Jewish community, although it was small, they tended to worship with other black Jews."

Fast forward half a century.

Today Nelson, a 28-year-old musical virtuoso who says his family's been Jewish for centuries, teaches in the Hebrew school at Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel in South Orange, N.J. — a Reform congregation — and spends the high holidays davening in one of the Garden State's Orthodox shuls.

In his spare time, he tours synagogues, JCCs and the occasional church performing his unique brand of soul music. He calls it kosher gospel — it's a rollicking hybrid of church tunes, Motown and Jewish-themed lyrics.

His muscular voice, commanding stage presence and flamboyant performance garb have won him plaudits from Jewish leaders to such black luminaries as Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey, on whose show he performed his energetic "Elijah Rock" last October.

With Passover approaching, Nelson says his family's journey feels especially poignant. The Haggadah's injunction instructing Jews to feel as if they themselves were freed from bondage, he says, hits home when you're from a long line of black Jews.

"For some people, slavery happened thousands of years ago. But just 140 years ago, there was slavery in America," he says, waiting backstage before a performance Tuesday night at a "Liberation Seder" at the JCC of Manhattan. "For some people, religion is myth and fable, but for us, observing Passover is about slaves being freed. It's reality."

"When we celebrate Passover," he adds, "we *really* celebrate Passover."

Nelson is one of a growing number of Jews of color in the United States. The San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish & Community Research estimates that there are

about 400,000 such Jews in the United States today, including converts, those adopted by Jews, the children of interracial couples and the descendants of Jews of color.

Still, many of these Jews say that despite some improvements, fitting into the American Jewish community remains a challenge.

"People were kind, but there definitely was a feeling of dissonance around race," says Yavilah McCoy, an African American Jew who studied in a yeshiva in the Borough Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, known for its large population of fervently Orthodox Jews.

"I didn't see people of color as Jews in the way I was being taught," she continues. "I didn't feel that people of color had a place in the Jewish community."

This feeling of isolation, says Gary Tobin, director of the research institute, flies in the face of centuries of Jewish history.

"Jews are the most racially and ethnically diverse people in the history of the world," he says. "The notion that Jews are white is a recent phenomenon, post-World War II."

This might surprise many Americans.

"Most people think Jews are white," Nelson says. "I have friends that are Iranian Jews who go through the same thing. You get tired of people saying, 'How'd you become Jewish?'"

It's a problem, Tobin says, that Jews would do well to overcome.

"I think it's really important that the Jewish community embrace diversity," Tobin says. "African American Jews are the best bridge builders

to the African American community. Latino Jews are the best bridge builders to the Latino community. Arab Jews are the best bridge builders to the Arab community."

The Liberation Seder was imbued with the music and liturgies of several ethnicities.

The Four Questions were asked in both Ladino, a Spanish-Hebrew fusion, and Judeo-Arabic; Nelson rocked the house with several spirited gospel numbers, and Yoel Ben-Simhon, an Israeli of Moroccan descent, added a tinge of Middle Eastern musical flavor with his Sultana Trio.

McCoy, who studied in the Brooklyn yeshiva, is the founder

and director of Ayecha, a New York-based group that offers resources on Jewish diversity to the Jewish community and provides advocacy and support for Jews of color. Ayecha joined forces with the JCC of Manhattan to organize the seder, which drew about 150 people — and drew a link between racism and anti-Semitism.

"Anti-Semitism is the oldest form of racism," McCoy said during the portion of the seder where a matzah is broken in half. "Anti-Semitism and racism have a lot in common, and when you look at your two matzahs, I want you to think" of the two scourges as two sides of the same matzah. ■

'For some people, religion is myth and fable, but for us, observing Passover is about slaves being freed. It's reality.'

Joshua Nelson
Jewish gospel singer

PASSOVER FEATURE



Laura Mozes

Jewish gospel singer Joshua Nelson performs at the JCC in Manhattan on April 12.

A tale of two cities: Cooperation and competition

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — In February, 40-year-old Oliver Bradley celebrated his bar mitzvah at a Chabad center in Berlin.

“You are just made to feel at home when you walk in the door,” says Bradley, an American ba'al teshuvah, or returnee to the faith, who has lived in Berlin for 13 years.

Chabad is becoming the most identifiable expression of Judaism in this city — and throughout Germany.

That is partly due to Berlin's Chabad representative, Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal, who arrived here in 1996.

While the long-established German Jewish communities remain somewhat insular and publicity shy, Teichtal pounds the pavement looking for new recruits and donors, and actively seeks the endorsement of public officials. Except on Shabbat, his cell phone is constantly ringing.

His working style differs from that of Germany's first Chabad shaliach, or emissary, Rabbi Israel Diskin, who arrived in Munich 17 years ago.

Whereas Teichtal has opened several new institutions in Berlin, Diskin and his wife, Chana, work within the existing Jewish community. Whereas Teichtal

leads his own services and even used to send Chabad yeshiva students to recruit congregants away from the city's other Orthodox rabbi, Diskin has only a youth minyan, not wanting to offer a competing service.

The difference in style between Teichtal and Diskin can be seen throughout Europe: While some Chabad rabbis compete with — and in some cases try to supplant — existing communal structures, others choose to cooperate with them.

In the 15 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany's official Jewish population has nearly quadrupled to a postwar high of more than 100,000, thanks to the mass immigration of ex-Soviet Jews.

Despite these numbers, only a portion officially register with the Jewish community, which has implications for state funding, an important source of revenue for local communities.

Munich's Jewish community today has about 9,000 official members, while Berlin has more than 12,000. Across Ger-

many, there are only about 20 rabbis affiliated with the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the community's umbrella organization, available to serve more than 80 Jewish communities.

At the same time, there are 13 Chabad couples serving as emissaries today in Germany, and new couples are settling in Nuremberg and Hanover. Despite

the recent tightening of Germany's immigration law, which is expected to stem the tide of Jewish arrivals from the former Soviet Union, Chabad continues to expand.

In fact, Germany represents the biggest area for expansion in Europe today, says Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, the New York-based development director for Chabad's international emissary network.

Some observers view Chabad's expansion in Germany as part of a larger political agenda. They criticize what they consider the group's pandering to the powers-that-be, using their connections to bolster their influence and access. Some say Chabad has an unfair advantage with its wealthy donors, while Germany's established communities are largely dependent on limited funds from the state religion tax.

Chabad and its supporters see the movement's growth as a sign that their product is wanted. In 2004, Kotlarsky met with the board of the Central Council.

“I will never forget; he said it very clearly: ‘We are coming, and we want to work with you,’” recalls Nathan Kalmanowicz, a board member. “‘Even if you don't allow it we will come anyway, but we don't want to fight you. We will never take any rabbi's place from him.’”

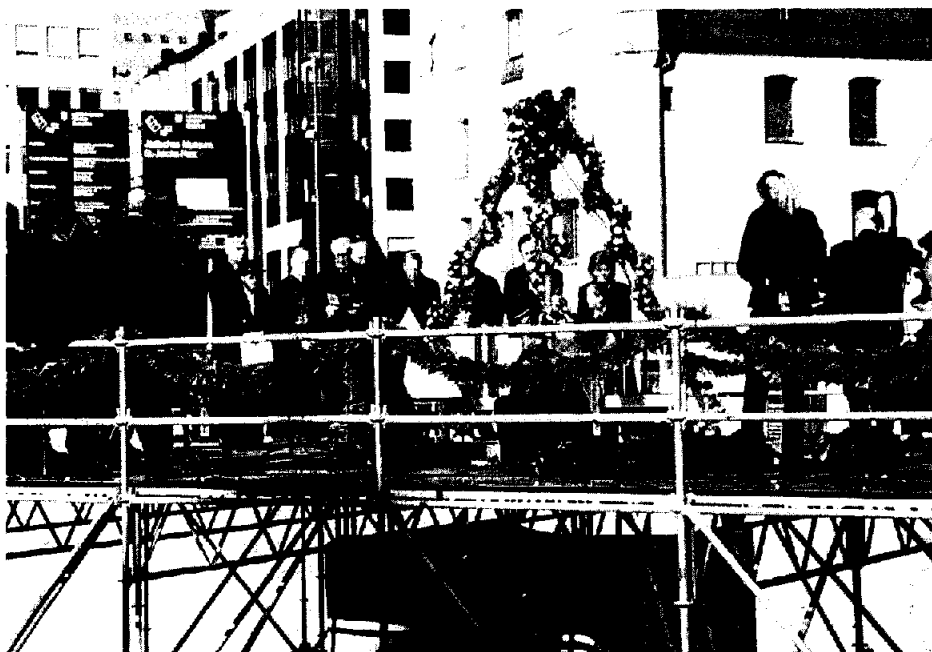
And, says Kalmanowicz, Kotlarsky kept his word.

But the contrast in relations between the established community and Chabad in Munich and relations in Berlin is stark.

Diskin, 40, and his wife Chana, 37,

‘I will never forget; he said it very clearly: “We are coming, and we want to work with you.”’
Nathan Kalmanowicz
 Chabad board member

BATTLING FOR EUROPE'S JEWS
PART 3



Chabad.org

The cornerstone-laying ceremony took place on Nov. 9, 2003 amid the scaffolding for the new Munich Jewish community center in the heart of the city.

were sent to Munich as newlyweds in 1988. The city's community rabbi has changed three times since then, but they are a constant. The Diskins are well integrated into the life of the Jewish community, teaching, providing Friday evening Shabbat services for youth six times a year, running a weekly Shabbat meal and a monthly minyan with some 50 teenagers.

They minister to the ill and help children prepare for bar and bat mitzvah. Chana Diskin teaches religion to the Jewish community and at a public high school. Both receive salaries from the Jewish community, and raise funds locally to pay for their own programs.

Although each Chabad rabbi maintains operational independence, as the country's senior Chabad rabbi, Diskin counsels his colleagues on questions of general import, including on relations with other Jewish groups.

One main rule is, he says: Always work with the local community.

"The rebbe was very, very adamant" that Chabad "not split the community," Chana Diskin says, referring to the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

■
Rabbi Steven Langnas, the Philadelphia-born head of Munich's Jewish community, confirms that the Diskins' activities supplement those of the pre-existing community.

"We work very well together. This is nowadays atypical."

In the capital city of Berlin, Teichtal, 33, and his wife, Leah, are also busy ministering to Jews. They run a busy kindergarten and day-care center, both housed in a mansion reportedly used 60 years ago as a retreat for SS storm troopers.

"There would not be half as much going on here in Berlin if Chabad didn't do it first," says a Berlin parent who is considering the Chabad kindergarten for her toddler.

Teichtal notes that the official Jewish community was launching its own preschool group. "Competition breeds success," he says.

Some call Teichtal's style chutzpadik: Recently he pulled strings in the office



Toby Axelrod

Chana and Rabbi Israel Diskin, Chabad's first emissary couple in Germany, have worked there since 1988.

of German President Horst Koehler, and flew in the presidential jet to Krakow, Poland, for ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Last winter he convinced the Berlin authorities to allow a public Chanukah celebration at the Brandenburg Gate, a national symbol, insisting that this would symbolize the rebirth of Jewish life in Germany.

And he managed to get the Berlin electrical company BEWAG to sell its unused building to Chabad at a cost of close to \$2.3 million. It now houses the Shlomo Albam Jewish Family and Education Center, dedicated last year to honor the donors whose foundation paid for the building.

Political connections are important, Teichtal says, in accomplishing certain goals. Many Germans think Jewish life should be limited to memorials, he says, but "remembering the past can't be everything. You have to invest in the future and we have to show" the public that once again, "Jewish children are learning every day in Berlin."

■
For its part, the long-established Jewish community cannot afford to renovate buildings in former East Berlin that were returned to the community after German

reunification. There is talk of closing the community library, and even the community kindergarten.

Privately, some in the Jewish community describe tensions between Teichtal and Berlin's senior rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Ehrenberg.

Last month, for instance, Chabad held its own Purim celebration at the same time as the community's Purim party.

Some parents who send their children to the community preschool programs worry that the cash-strapped Jewish community is only too happy to let Chabad run all Jewish kindergarten classes; they see this as a step toward a "takeover" of Jewish life in Berlin.

Among the leaders of the Jewish community, there is disagreement over Teichtal's style.

"It would be preferable to hear that the other Chabadniks would work like Diskin," says Charlotte Knobloch, longtime president of the Munich Jewish Community and vice president of the Central Council of Jews.

Others disagree.

"Rabbi Teichtal happens to be very efficient," Albert Meyer, president of the Berlin Jewish community, says, noting that many in the Russian immigrant community go to him.

"He is really competition, and competition is good for us. It shows us where we are negligent."

■
For its part, Chabad is clearly here to stay. "Until the Moshiach comes, we know we will stay," Teichtal says, using the Hebrew word for messiah.

There would not be half as much going on here in Berlin if Chabad didn't do it first.

Berlin parent

Matzah versus wine, via iPod

By RABBI JOSHUA HAMMERMAN

STAMFORD, Conn. (JTA) — As Passover approaches this year, I find myself particularly conflicted.

I am usually a big fan of matzah, that perfect embodiment of stability and steadfastness, that essence of uniformity and flatness.

Matzah never changes. Put a box of Manischewitz in a time capsule, and in 1,000 years it will taste as fresh as the day it was made.

Matzah is indelible. Wherever it goes, it stays; whether that be on the dining room rug, the school cafeteria or the human digestive system. That's why it is such a powerful visual aid in retelling the story of the Exodus. You can't avoid it. Its crumbs are everywhere!

Matzah is the symbol of planned perfection. If the operative word for Passover is "order" — seder in Hebrew — matzah is quintessentially controlled; scrutinized closely from its formative stages through the baking process. And on the seder table it is handled delicately, uncovered ceremoniously and raised and broken with ritualistic precision.

When it is discovered that the middle matzah has been hidden, that is the one moment of the seder when all heck breaks loose.

Jews aren't the only ones with an obsessive need for order. Life is chaotic, after all. Or, as the latest iPod ad campaign puts it, "life is random."

Therein lies my dilemma.

As much as I like matzah, I must admit it



Rabbi Joshua Hammerman

—I'm beginning to love my iPod even more. I've stored more than 1,000 selections on it, a veritable musical autobiography; songs from the pacifist anthems of my college days to the ones that pacified my kids on their high chairs.

In my iPod, David Broza lies with "The Lion King," Cat Stevens makes way for the Palmach anthem and Kol Nidre shares some disk space with Gregorian chants. I've even downloaded the audio broadcast

of the Super Bowl. And when I put it all in "shuffle" mode, these memories flow past me indiscriminately, the boundaries separating decades and continents dissolve and my whole life flashes before my ears.

There are those who claim that the "shuffle" is not so random after all. I must admit, it does seem strange that certain songs are repeated more often than others. My iPod seems to have a special affinity for Broadway.

"It's part of the magic of shuffle," Greg Joswiak, Apple's vice president for iPod products, told Newsweek, assuring us that the algorithm that does the shuffling has been thoroughly tested. "Random is random."

Technology writer David Bennahum said, "Life is random is a really great way of shrugging your shoulders in a Buddhist way of nonattachment."

And Roger McNamee, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, was quoted in The New York Times as calling the iPod ad campaign "existential marketing with maybe even a touch of nihilism."

Doesn't sound so Pesachdik to me.

Ah, but it is.

Right across from the matzah on your seder table is the wine. The wine is the counterpoint to that unleavened cracker, the yin to matzah's yang. Ever changing, ever flowing, entropy in a bottle, it embodies randomness.

That line from the movie "Sideways" comes to mind, where Maya speaks sen-

suously of how a bottle of wine is actually alive, constantly evolving and gaining complexity.

Right across from the matzah on your seder table is the wine. The wine is the counterpoint to that unleavened cracker, the yin to matzah's yang.

The wine is there to teach us that Judaism, like life, is infinitely too complicated for human beings to be able to impose total order on it.

Judaism breathes through us. Watch how the wine and matzah vie for attention in the seder's drama. When one is raised, broken or poured, the other is covered, ignored or

left empty.

This epic battle between constancy and chance is like a blast of warm weather from the Gulf meeting a cold Canadian high over New England in early spring.

And in the end, look which one triumphs. No sooner are we finished with the bread of affliction, finishing the last morsel of the afikoman; then the third cup of wine is poured.

Serendipity gets the last word. The wine wins.

Maybe the message here is that what's most constant, even in this world of extreme, superimposed order, is change itself. No matter how much we try to hermetically seal our lives from yeastiness, chametz happens. The perfection of matzah turns out to be the ultimate illusion — but that doesn't prevent us from striving for it all the more.

My iPod's song list is quirky, but there is an internal logic to my tunes. The only way to decode the randomness is to run each song through the prism of my life. When you do that, it all makes perfect sense.

Similarly, the uniformity of the Passover rituals masks the internal effervescence that is bubbling up within each participant, at every seder table, every year.

So, while I won't bring it to the table, the iPod is definitely kosher. I've already downloaded "Dayeinu."

(Rabbi Joshua Hammerman is spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Stamford, Conn., and author of "thelordismyshepherd.com: Seeking God in Cyberspace.") ■

PASSOVER
FEATURE

FIRST PERSON

An oleh looks
for a wife
from home

By JONATHAN UDREN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — During my first visit to Israel when I was 24, fantasies of aliyah and Israeli women captured my imagination.

I pictured myself waking up every day to the tangerine Jerusalem sun in a narrow Nachla'ot apartment that overlooked the city.

Then I imagined falling in love with one of those loud, rosy-cheeked, Tevasandal-and-flowing-skirt-wearing Israeli girls with wild curly hair and big dusty backpacks.

I knew I would find myself back in Jerusalem. But marrying a native Israeli, speaking only Hebrew together and building a home removed from the Western Anglo community and culture where I lived my whole life somehow seemed unrealistic.

Inherently I knew I would end up marrying a woman with a similar world view. But only recently, after becoming engaged to an idealistic, American-born high-school English teacher named Dena Stein, do I realize how our similarities, the big ones as well as the seemingly minute ones, make all the difference.

As we walked along the beach boardwalk in Jaffa, it seemed that our shared vision of building a home in the Judean Hills charged the salty air between us. It was those two points, religion and Israel, that I assumed were the magnets that drew our futures together.

But looking back on our magical summer, our complaints about the small struggles in Israeli culture — like having to push people in the bakery line to place an order — allowed us to forge an even deeper connection.

We share the dream of a beautiful young woman in a flowing skirt and wild curls, but she's the vision of the daughter we hope to have.

And in a culture that always will be somewhat unfamiliar, all the cultural references and American slang that pepper our speech will provide a sense of comfort and safety. ■

Karaites recall their own exodus

By LOOLWA KHAZOOM

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Tradition teaches that on Passover, all Jews must embody the experience of Exodus, feeling as if we ourselves have gone through it. For the Karaite Jews from Egypt — a community that rejected rabbinic law from the start — no imagination is required.

"Every year at Passover," says Sara Mousa, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area, home to the largest Karaite community in the United States, "we tell the guests at our table that our ancestors were kicked out of Egypt thousands of years ago, then we were kicked out one more time just a few decades ago. We never forget that."

Moussa left Egypt in 1966 at age 16. Like Remy Pessah — who also lives in the Bay area — she recalls the anti-Semitic taunts, intimidation and violence from her Egyptian neighbors that prompted her family to flee.

But for Moussa, Pessah and other Karaite Jews, Passover is not just a painful trip down memory lane, it's also a time of celebration. ■

Unlike at a rabbinic celebration, however, the Karaite seder does not include four cups of wine — or any alcoholic beverage, for that matter.

"We don't allow anything that has fermented," explains Neria Haroeh, grandson of one of chief hakhamim, or spiritual leaders, of the Karaite community in Israel.

"How do you make wine? You take grapes and let them ferment. The process is forbidden on Pesach," he says.

Though wine is out of the question, says Hakham David Elisha, one of the community's spiritual leaders in Israel, Karaites do drink grape or raisin juice — the latter because in Egypt fresh grapes were hard to come by during Passover season.

Only one cup of this juice is sipped, during the ritual blessing before the meal.

Karaites do not have a seder plate, an afikomen or charoset. They do have maror made of lemon peel, bitter lettuce and an assortment of other bitter herbs, which together look like a salad.

While the rabbinic Haggadah starts

with the story of Exodus, the Karaite Haggadah opens with something older still.

"It begins with the prophecy of Abraham: 'Your children will be slaves in Egypt for 400 years,'" Haroeh says. "Then it tells the story of what happened in Egypt, all the things the Pharaoh did, how the Jews suffered, and finally, how the Jews left." ■

"We celebrate Pesach in the most natural way possible, like the nation of Israel celebrated it during ancient times," says Yosef Davir, official spokesman for the Karaite community in Israel.

"It's the holiday of spring and renewal. Nature renews itself now, too, so we use food that is from nature — fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, juice."

The most significant dish was barbecued meat, seasoned with salt, pepper and lots of onions.

Around the world, Elisha says, Karaites

still eat this dish at the conclusion of the seder, in honor of the pascal sacrifice.

"In the Torah it says there is a sacrificial animal that every family has to slaughter," he says. "We no longer have the Temple, but we have continued to preserve this tradition. In Egypt we would raise our own goats, then have the community shochet slaughter them. Every year, since I am a shochet, I still buy a sheep and slaughter it myself."

Most Karaites don't bother buying sheep or goats to slaughter, but they do preserve other important Passover traditions, such as throwing or giving away all chametz.

For Karaite Jews old enough to remember their own personal exodus from Egypt, nothing beats the feeling of freedom.

"I am very blessed in the United States," concludes Pessah, "not only to celebrate Pesach, but to live as a Jew without being persecuted." ■

Loolwa Khazoom (<http://www.loolwa.com>) has published in periodicals including *Marie Claire*, *The Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *Seventeen*, and *The Boston Globe*. She is the editor of *"The Flying Camel: Essays on Identity by Women of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Heritage"* and author of *"Consequence: Beyond Resisting Rape."*

'We celebrate Pesach in the most natural way possible, like the nation of Israel celebrated it during ancient times.'

Yosef Davir

Karaite spokesman

PASSOVER
FEATURE

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon looks to West Bank

Ariel Sharon vowed to make every effort to maintain Israel's hold on part of the West Bank.

Speaking to the Jerusalem Post on Thursday, the Israeli prime minister described the looming Gaza Strip withdrawal as a strategic necessity and suggested it would relieve pressure on Israel to quit extensive areas of the West Bank.

"I don't see, looking at the long-term picture, any possibility of a community of a few thousand Jews, for all its achievements and its special heroism, remaining in Gaza," Sharon said.

By contrast, in the West Bank, he said, "I am doing everything I can to save as much as I can."

Rabbi for the rules

One of Israel's chief rabbis urged religious soldiers to follow orders to evacuate settlements.

"Insubordination must be banned unequivocally," Israel's Sephardi chief rabbi, Shlomo Amar, said in an open letter released for Passover.

He took issue with rabbis who have ruled that the government's plan to quit the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank violates Jewish law and should be resisted.

"Every misbegotten call, or irresponsible statement, risks igniting hatred and danger," he wrote. "There are very important rabbis who think otherwise, but the vast majority forbid any action that could bring about bloodshed and civil war."

Jordanian prisoners freed

Israel freed nine Jordanian security prisoners. Of the prisoners freed Wednesday as a goodwill gesture to Amman, seven returned to Jordan while two remained with relatives in the West Bank.

All nine had been serving sentences on terrorism charges but were not convicted of attacks that caused Israeli casualties.

Another nine Jordanians involved in terrorist attacks remain in Israeli jails.

Diplomat in passport flap

Israel's consul general in The Hague was arrested on suspicion of taking bribes.

Uriel Yitzhaki, who is accused of issuing as many as 150 Israeli passports to ineligible applicants in exchange for money, was arrested Tuesday as he arrived in Tel Aviv on a visit from the Netherlands.

Israeli police said the probe against the consul was conducted over the past year in coordination with Dutch counterparts.

NORTH AMERICA

French railroad won't be tried

The U.S. Supreme Court refused an appeal against the French national railroad that said the railroad profited from transporting Jews during World War II.

The judges this week refused to overturn a lower court's decision that said the SNCF railroad could not be charged in a U.S. court, The New York Times reported.

The lawsuit alleged that the railroad charged the Nazis commercial fare for train tickets for Jews deported in cattle cars.

Patriots owner to calm Columbia?

The owner of the New England Patriots is donating \$500,000 to Columbia University to build cross-cultural understanding.

Robert Kraft's donation, announced by the university Thursday, was matched by a contribution from the university to create the \$1 million Kraft Family Fund for Interfaith and Intercultural Awareness.

The fund will support student-initiated programming to foster

dialogue on issues such as race, religion and culture.

A nine-person committee comprised of students and administrators and chaired by the university chaplain will allocate grants.

The move follows controversy over charges that Middle East studies professors at Columbia intimidated pro-Israel students.

Kraft, a Columbia alumnus, donated \$11.5 million to establish the university's Robert K. Kraft Center for Jewish Student Life.

Lawmakers seeking Azerbaijan embassy

A group of U.S. lawmakers wrote to the president of Azerbaijan, asking that the country open an embassy in Israel.

"We are concerned with the lack of any progress on your government's commitment to open an embassy in Israel, as was publicly promised by then-Foreign Minister Guliyev on behalf of your father, former President Heydar Aliyev," U.S. Reps. Joseph Pitts (R-Pa.), Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) and Robert Wexler (D-Fla.) wrote Tuesday to President Ilham Aliyev.

The Azerbaijani government pledged in 2001 to open an embassy in Israel, and the younger Aliyev told members of the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish groups in 2002 that he backed the plan.

New leader for Canadian Jewish group

Gerry Weinstein replaced Harold Davis as national president of B'nai Brith Canada.

Weinstein has served many communal organizations beside B'nai Brith, including the Jewish Hospital of Hope Foundation, Jewish Eldercare Center and the Foundation for Research into Children's Diseases, which sponsors an annual Telethon of Stars.

Diabetes robbed Weinstein of most of his vision 15 years ago, but neither that nor a recent kidney transplant has slowed him down.

WORLD

Moscow aids Abbas security

Russia reportedly plans to give the Palestinian Authority two transport helicopters and 50 armored vehicles.

According to Jane's Defense Weekly, Russian President Vladimir Putin will sign off on the gift when he visits Israel and the Palestinian Authority next week.

Israeli officials did not comment on the report immediately, but Jerusalem already has voiced unhappiness with Russian military aid to another of its neighbors, Syria.

Media reports said the helicopters and APCs, surplus items from the Russian military, are intended to help protect Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas as he travels through the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

E.U. to help P.A. police

The European Union agreed to support and train Palestinian Authority police.

The agreement establishing the E.U.'s Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support was reached Wednesday.

The office will attempt to train Palestinian police and offer them better equipment.

French Jewish TV station in trouble

The Tribunal of Commerce of Nanterre, France, called for a French Jewish television station to be sold off.

The tribunal made the call after an investigation was launched into alleged irregular accounting practices at the station.

The station's principal shareholder, Societe Charisma Films, also is under investigation.

The station's president, Ghislain Allon, announced yesterday that the station would oppose the tribunal's call. According to Allon, the station has approximately 1 million viewers in France.