



## IN THE NEWS

## Israel frees Palestinian prisoners

Israel released 398 Palestinian prisoners.

The prisoners, most of them convicted of attacks that did not cause major casualties, were bussed out of the Ketziot jail in southern Israel to various checkpoints throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Thursday.

The move marked the completion of the goodwill release of 900 prisoners that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon undertook as part of his cease-fire declaration with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in February.

Two prisoners declined to be freed.

## Outposts to go after withdrawal

Israel plans to crack down on illegal West Bank outposts after completing its Gaza Strip withdrawal, a senior adviser to Ariel Sharon said.

Dov Weisglass said Thursday that the logistical challenges of preparing for the Gaza withdrawal, which is due to begin in mid-August, had prevented Israel from devoting itself to removing the outposts as required by the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan.

## Former Nazi's citizenship revoked

The American citizenship of a former Nazi concentration camp guard was revoked.

Yugoslavia-born Josias Kumpf, 80, had testified in a federal district court that in 1943 he stood guard at a pit containing dead and wounded Jewish civilians, with orders to kill anyone who tried to escape.

The case was litigated by the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, which has won cases against 100 former Nazis since it was established in 1979.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**

# WORLD REPORT

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



Brian Hendler

Outgoing Jewish Agency chairman, Sallai Meridor, speaks to students at the launch of the Masa program before a ceremony at Beit Guvrin near Kiryat Gat on May 29.

## Israel hoping long-term stays by Diaspora youth will pay dividends

By DINA KRAFT

**T**EL AVIV (JTA) — Ben Russell helped deliver two babies, taught English to Druse children, worked with Ethiopian immigrants, led coexistence workshops with Arab students and met Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during his "year off" in Israel before college.

"I always felt like I knew bits of Israel, but not well," said Russell, who grew up in London and will study at Cambridge University in the fall. "I wanted to spend some real time here and get to know the country."

Russell, 19, is one of some 5,600 young Jews from around the world who came to Israel this year for long-term study or vol-

unteer programs. The sense of connection and adventure these extended visits create are seen as a safeguard against climbing intermarriage rates and a drop in Jewish community involvement among young people.

Israeli officials believe that longer stays in the country are the best way to cement Jewish identity and commitment to Israel — including an interest in aliyah — among the next generation of Jews. They don't merely trust that such programs are the way to go; they're banking on them.

On Sunday, the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel launched an ambitious program called Masa, or Israel Journey, in which they plan eventually to

*Continued on page 2*

**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## ■ Israel invests in long-term stays by young Jews from abroad

*Continued from page 1*

invest \$100 million a year to help subsidize semester and yearlong programs for Diaspora youth.

Program fees paid by participants are expected to reach another \$100 million a year.

The goal is to bring 20,000 young Diaspora Jews to Israel each year on long-term visits.

■

Allan Hoffman, director general of JAFI's Education Department, said the goal of having one in five young Jews from the Diaspora in Israel for a long-term program will have a "transformative impact on Jewish life.

"I believe this is one of the few avenues open to us to really build a next generation of Jewish people into the future," he said.

Hoffman said coming to Israel for an extended stay takes the experience to a different level than coming as a tourist.

"You can have a wonderful experience as a tourist, but you're always an outsider looking in," he said.

The gap can be narrowed, he said, "if we can create a generation of young Jews who feel like insiders in their experience with Israel and Israelis."

Participants, aged 18-26, have dozens of programs to choose from, ranging from studying at Israeli universities, yeshivas and music conservatories to volunteering on kibbutzim, working with immigrants and underprivileged youths or doing professional internships.

During the 2004-2005 school year, Ma-

sa's pilot year, \$10 million was invested in the program.

On Sunday night, more than 2,000 students who had spent all or part of the year in Israel gathered at an amphitheater at Beit Guvrin National Park south of Jerusalem to celebrate the official launch of Masa with music, dancing and speeches.

Sharon met with the young people and encouraged them to continue their connection to Israel, either by making aliyah or becoming community leaders and supporters of Israel back home.

"Today, we are taking a giant step toward the time when living in Israel for a period of time will be an inseparable part of the life of every Jewish youngster around the world, just as the Land of Israel is an inseparable part of our identities as Jews," Sharon said.

The program marks the first time the government has allocated such a large sum of money specifically for the Diaspora, Cabinet secretary Yisrael Maimon said.

"There is a lot of criticism of the government about the decision at a time when there is poverty and budget cuts," Maimon said.

But citing the rise in intermarriage and the decrease of young Diaspora Jews remaining active in their communities, Maimon said the government decided it was time to act.

■

Masa is the brainchild of Sallai Meridor, the outgoing head of JAFI. Meridor made an emotional speech to the Masa participants.

"You, the Jewish youth, you are the future of the Jewish nation. We all have just one country. We will safeguard it forever. The government of Israel and the Jewish Agency are with you in safeguarding the future of the Jewish nation. We will bring together tens of thousands of Jewish youth to Israel," he said.

The crowd applauded wildly with Meridor's final words, "Am Yisrael Chai."

Researchers have found that Jews who spend extended stays in Israel when they are young have a higher chance of either

making aliyah or becoming active, committed members of their communities back home.

According to a study of participants in the Young Judaea year course — a program for North American high school graduates who spend a year in

Israel before going to college — 91 percent go on to marry Jews.

A study of another post-high school program, Machon LeMadrechai Chutz LeAretz — which Russell was on this year — found that 40 percent of graduates have made aliyah.

Elan Ezrachi, director of Masa, described birthright Israel — the free, 10-day trips to Israel for Diaspora youth — as an "appetizer" for Masa. On birthright, young Jews often get their first taste of Israel, but longer experiences are needed to cement the connection to the country and their Jewish identities, Ezrachi said.

Russell said he was amazed by the range of experiences he had in Israel.

He changed locations about every six weeks. Among the places he stayed was the city of Sefad in the Galilee. It was there that he volunteered to teach English to Druse children as part of the United Jewish Israel Appeal's work in the region. The UJIA, Britain's largest Jewish philanthropy, invests in Jewish education in the United Kingdom and Israel.

Like Russell, Robin Zebroitz, 23, of Atlanta also had a busy year — teaching swimming and English, hauling plants in an organic greenhouse and living in a center for new immigrants from Ethiopia, France, South Africa and Yemen.

"It's an absolutely phenomenal, invaluable experience," Zebroitz said of her year in Israel. "The things I have done here, the friends I have made, the connections are something you can only do if you are here for longer." ■

**'You can have a wonderful experience as a tourist, but you're always an outsider looking in.'**

**Allan Hoffman**

Director general, JAFI's Education Department

### JTA 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

**Noa Artzi-Weill**  
Marketing 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](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

# White House names new Jewish liaison

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House has switched its main contact with the Jewish community once again, this time looking to a 26-year-old from the president's scheduling office.

Jeffrey Berkowitz was named the White House liaison to the Jewish community Tuesday, replacing Noam Neusner, who held the position for a year and now serves as spokesman for the Office of Management and Budget.

Berkowitz had served as Neusner's deputy for Jewish issues in recent months, familiarizing himself with the community. He spoke to several groups last week at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference, and has been consulting with Jewish leaders in Washington.

The appointment of a liaison with little connection with the Jewish organizational world may raise some eyebrows, given the Republican Party's push to make inroads into the Jewish community. But Jewish leaders stressed that many organizations have connections to senior people in the White House, including Neusner and other high-level Jews in the administration.

The naming of a Reform Jew also is interesting, given the broad support President Bush has received from Orthodox and more religiously conservative Jews. It comes at a time when Bush may need to court support from more liberal Jewish groups, who say they have been shunted aside and shut out of meetings with senior administration officials.

Many of these liberal groups are more supportive of Israel's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, which Bush has endorsed, than the Jewish groups and leaders Bush has formed ties with.

Berkowitz, who declined to comment on the appointment, will maintain his main job as associate director of scheduling, where he coordinates and vets appointments for Bush and helps plan major events.

He previously worked for the Republican National Committee as a foreign policy and defense analyst, and on the 2005 presidential inaugural committee. He worked briefly earlier this year as press secretary for the Republican Jewish Coalition.

William Daroff, the RJC's deputy direc-

tor, said Berkowitz's energy would make up for any lack of institutional relationships.

"Jeffrey Berkowitz is an incredibly hard-working, intelligent and articulate professional," Daroff said. "His time at the RNC brought him into the room with the top people and government leaders of our party."

Berkowitz is the fourth man to hold the portfolio under Bush. Neusner's predecessor, Tevi Troy, returned to the White House earlier this year as deputy director of domestic policy. Adam Goldman, Bush's first liaison, is a consultant in Austin, Texas.

Rabbi Levi Shemtov, Washington director of American Friends of Lubavitch, has met with Berkowitz, and said knowledge of the Jewish community is not as important as access to the president and other senior administration officials.

Berkowitz's scheduling job may give

him such access. Indeed, Jewish leaders worked well with both Troy and Neusner, who took on the Jewish portfolio in addition to their senior administrative roles.

"Jeff knows the community somewhat and is eager to learn more at this point," Shemtov said. "But what probably matters more is how close he is to the president."

Berkowitz, a New Haven, Conn., native, attended American University in Washington and worked at several think

tanks and trade associations before joining the RNC in July 2002. He was active in Hillel in college and is a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, a Jewish fraternity.

Berkowitz is not expected to take on any Middle East policy tasks in his new position, despite his background in the area, sources told JTA. Traditionally, Jewish liaisons have tried to steer away from national security issues. ■

'Jeff knows the community somewhat and is eager to learn more at this point. But what probably matters more is how close he is to the president.'

Rabbi Levi Shemtov

American Friends of Lubavitch



Photo courtesy Jeffrey Berkowitz

Jeffrey Berkowitz, the new White House liaison to the Jewish community, attends the White House Chanukah party in December 2004.

# Reform temples delay confirmation

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — As part of ongoing efforts to stem post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah dropouts, some Reform congregations are delaying confirmation, traditionally held at Shavuot, from 10th to 12th grade.

This does more than keep adolescents involved in religious school longer, adherents say: It also makes a qualitative difference.

Rabbis who have made the switch say that high school seniors take the commitment ceremony more seriously, and those two extra years allow for more sophisticated and intellectually rigorous Jewish learning.

In fact, two such congregations have seen 80 percent of their Bar Mitzvah classes stay through 12th grade, and a third synagogue retained more than 60 percent of its students. That's far above the usual numbers.

"The 11th and 12th grades are the most important years for developing a sense of who I am, for developing morals, ethics, and relationships," says Rabbi Fred Guttman of Temple Emanuel in Greensboro, N.C., which moved its confirmation to 12th grade four years ago. "Once you realize that only a few thousand kids nationwide are getting Jewish education during those years, you know we're in big trouble."

Guttman is referring to a 2004 United Jewish Communities study on part-time Jewish education, which looked at 46 Jewish communities representing 75 percent of the nation's Jewish population. The study collected data from both non-Orthodox and Orthodox religious schools, but did

not consider full-time day schools.

The study found that whereas 126,800 students are enrolled in supplemental Jewish education until they are 13, that number drops to 23,800 for post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah ages, and drops again to 3,600 students older than 16.

"Those numbers are appalling," Guttman says. In the Reform movement, he estimates, "if a congregation bar-mitzvahs 50 to 60 kids, then maybe they have five or six kids graduating high school."

In contrast, Guttman notes that his congregation confirmed 14 young people over a recent weekend, 80 percent of this year's Bar and Bat Mitzvah class. And he says other congregations that have made the same move are seeing similar success.

Moving confirmation to the end of high school is not a new idea; some shuls have been doing it for decades.

But increased interest in lifelong Jewish learning, along with a rash of new surveys like the recent UJC study, seems to be inspiring a groundswell of rabbinic interest in finding creative ways of keeping Jewish youth engaged longer and at a deeper level.

The Union for Reform Judaism doesn't keep tabs on how many member congregations have made the switch. Rabbi Jan

Katzew, director of the URJ's department of Lifelong Jewish Learning, questions whether it's even a definite trend.

"The situation is remarkably fluid, and there are contradictory trends," he says.

Some Reform congregations have extended high-school religious programming to the end of 12th grade. Some hold confirmation in 10th grade and a graduation ceremony in 12th grade, some just have confirmation in 12th grade and still others have kept to the tradi-

**'There is a precipitous decline in Jewish engagement' during adolescence.**

**Rabbi Jan Katzew**  
Reform Jewish official

tional schedule.

Reform movement surveys indicating that 50 percent of teenagers stop religious education within 18 months of their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs are "informal," Katzew warns. But he acknowledges the basic reality they illustrate.

"There is a precipitous decline in Jewish engagement" during adolescence, he says, and strengthening that link demands "doing what it takes to keep them involved."

One of those ways, he says, is extending formal Jewish education through 12th grade, so that it becomes the norm and "it's no longer just the extraordinary students who continue."

Another way is to extend the boundaries of religious school to include service learning, tikkun olam projects and participation in youth-group activities.

Two years ago, the URJ created the Kavanah program, he says, "to encourage congregations to support a multidimensional learning structure" by offering credits toward a certificate for extracurricular Jewish learning.

"This is all to recognize that we can't just focus narrowly on an adult agenda imposed on adolescents, and say, 'If you don't fit within that very narrow band we don't have anything for you,'" he says.

This has nothing to do with when — or even whether — a congregation holds confirmation, he adds.

Some cling tenaciously to tradition. Temple Emanu-El in Dallas is one of the nation's largest Reform congregations, with 2,700 member families. It sees no reason to change its 10th-grade confirmation, which this year was scheduled for May 22.



Courtesy of Temple Emanuel

Rabbis Fred Guttman, left, and Andy Koren, right, accompany the 2005 12th-grade confirmation class at Temple Emanuel in Greensboro, N.C. at a May 15 ceremony.

"It's a strong part of the Temple Emanu-El culture," says Rabbi Barry Diamond, its director of education.

But Emanu-El may be in a stronger position than smaller, struggling congregations.

"There's a growing number of us trying to come up with the right solution," says Rabbi Jordan Parr, spiritual leader of Adat Chaverim in Plano, Texas, an eight-year-old congregation with 200 families that moved confirmation from 10th grade to 12th grade two years ago.

"I think the reason it's starting in small congregations is that we don't have that many teenagers and we need to find a way to keep them involved," he says.

Parr hasn't held confirmation in the two years since Adat Chaverim made the switch. He expects to graduate "two or three" high school seniors next April in a ceremony he's calling "bagrut," after the Israeli high-school matriculation exam, to further distance it from the traditional concept of confirmation.

"I made a deal with the kids and their parents, that I could have them for two more years, but we'd do it on their terms," Parr says.

That means, he says, recognizing the increased pressures juniors and seniors have on their time, and developing a flexible curriculum that allows students to earn "credits" toward graduation by taking part in youth group conventions, doing mitzvah projects and acting as teaching assistants in the religious school.

Like Guttman, Parr says most of his teenagers are staying involved through 12th grade. And, he adds, they're learning at a more serious level: "What they're getting in 12th grade is light years ahead of what they'd get in 10th grade."

Some Reform congregations have done away with the term confirmation altogether, recognizing that it was created as an alternative commitment ceremony at a time when the Reform movement didn't celebrate becoming B'nai Mitzvot.

Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick, N.J. got rid of confirmation more than 30 years ago, when "a group of kids came to us and said confirmation is artificial, and it's done at the wrong time," Rabbi Bennett Miller says.

Since then, the large suburban Reform congregation has held "graduation" at the

end of 12th grade.

"It's not done with a lot of pomp and circumstance," Miller says. "It's usually on a Friday night, and some of the kids speak in a reflective manner about their temple experience."

The 10th- and 11th-grade curriculum is set, Miller says, but during 12th grade the students meet once a month at his home to talk freely "about choosing a college from a Jewish perspective, what does it mean to be in love, Israel in our lives, and the meaning of God."

Anshe Emeth also claims a high retention rate. It will celebrate 40 Bar and Bat Mitzvahs this year, and 17 young people will graduate from its religious school in June.

Like Parr and Guttman, Miller says the way to combat teenage drop-off is to treat high school students like the young adults they are.

"A lot of congregations set the bar of excellence low, and then choose not to meet it," he notes. "At one time, confirmation was seen as a real affirmation of faith. My question wouldn't be, why move it to 12th grade, but why have it in 10th grade in the first place?"

## Conservatives have no consensus on confirmation

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — There is no great movement among Conservative congregations to switch confirmation from 10th to 12th grade, but that's not because Conservative congregations don't hold the annual commitment ceremony.

The Conservative movement may officially disdain it — "We've never really 'owned' confirmation," says Serene Victor, national educational consultant for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism — but some member congregations still offer it. How many is unknown, but Wendy Light, of the movement's education department, says it's "a good number."

Confirmation was "made up by the Reform movement to keep their students beyond Bar and Bat Mitzvah," Light says, but Conservative congregations began adopting the practice shortly afterward. Still, "it's not a movement-wide thing," she says.

The Conservative movement tries to retain high-school students in ways other than confirmation.

One way is the Framework for Excellence, a four-year-old movement-sponsored program of self-evaluation for synagogue schools that involves a written commitment to continue Jewish education through 12th grade. Eighty-two Conservative congregations have signed on to it, and half of the movement's 610 affiliated congregations "are working on it," Light says.

Light acknowledges that most of those 82 congregations also offer confirmation, as well as some kind of 12th-grade religious school graduation.

"In practice, we now see confirmation at both the 10th and 11th grades, but our movement supports education through 12th grade," she says.

Rabbi Robert Abramson, United Synagogue's director of education, wrote in an e-mail that he doesn't know how many Conservative congregations offer confirmation, or how many Conservative shuls have moved the ceremony from 10th to 12th grades.

Privately, experts suggest that Conservative congregations that offer confirmation often are located close to popular Reform congregations, and are influenced by a certain spillover effect.

Conservative Congregation Bnai Torah in Boca Raton, Fla., with 1,300 families, holds confirmation in 10th grade. Students who wish to continue their religious education for another two years move to the federation-sponsored CHAI school, which serves 11th- and 12th-graders from several area synagogues.

Sinai Temple in Los Angeles also offers confirmation in the 10th grade. Eleventh- and 12th-graders meet once a month with the rabbi, or may study at a community school.

But Temple Beth Am, another Los Angeles Conservative congregation, does not offer confirmation. Its religious school ends at Bar Mitzvah, and students then have the option of enrolling in a Jewish day school or continuing supplemental religious education in a community school.

The Reconstructionist movement "never developed an attachment to confirmation," says Rabbi Shawn Zevitt, the movement's outreach director, "because the Bar and Bat Mitzvah has always been the centerpiece of our movement."

# In Gaza, reluctance on relocation

By DINA KRAFT

GADIT, Gaza Strip (JTA) — Yoav Elul surveyed his workers packaging plump heads of cabbage and organically grown red peppers, and announced that he's not willing to leave the Gaza Strip without a fight.

But, he added, he's a realist, so he decided to join approximately 1,000 families who live in Gaza Strip settlements — about half of the total number of 8,500 Jews there — in signing a document agreeing in principle to move as a community if the planned Gaza withdrawal is carried out.

In doing so, Elul and others stress that they're not giving up the struggle to save their homes and livelihoods in Gaza. As the document he signed says, "signing the form does not signify agreement to the disengagement plan."

In a move that has raised the ire of environmentalists, the Israeli government has offered Gaza settlers the opportunity to move to Nitzanim, a stretch of undeveloped sand dunes along the Mediterranean coast near Ashkelon.

Justice Minister Tzipi Livni had set May 26 as the deadline for Gaza settlers to sign up to relocate to Nitzanim, warning that if they missed the deadline they risked losing out on services such as interim housing there and arrangements for schooling.

Elul said signing the document was a type of insurance plan: If the evacuation goes through, he and his family can remain with the community they've been part of for the past 22 years.

"People who say (signing) weakens the struggle and that we are in effect agreeing to be evacuated, it's not true," said Elul, 50.

Noting the failure of the settler movement to win the political battle in the Knesset to save the Gaza settlements, he said, "Until we went through all the democratic procedures, we signed nothing. Today, the request to sign on something like this is legitimate."

According to Elul, Gaza settlers are divided into two groups — those who have signed onto the document and those who have not.

Shlomo Wasserteil, who like Elul owns several acres of greenhouses, said he wouldn't think of signing any such document.

"Of course I didn't sign," he snapped. He said he is making no plans for "the

day after" withdrawal because he doesn't believe it will happen.

Gaza, he says, is part of the biblical Land of Israel, and as such he can't comply with anyone asking him to leave it.

"It's my right to live here as part of the Jewish nation," he said.

According to the document, the settlers demand that they be given homes on permanent plots of land in the new community. That would mean living in trailer homes on the plots until their new homes are constructed, settlers say.

"To save the community feeling we have, we are prepared to live in a trailer," said Elul, who has five children, all of them raised in the settlement of Gadit.

The home where he now lives is a spacious, two-story house surrounded by lush flower beds and citrus trees. Since arriving in Gadit in 1983, he has built a huge agricultural business selling vegetables and herbs to Israel's fervently Orthodox community, and shipping organic peppers to England.

Elul said his company takes in about \$1 million a year, but the government has yet to offer him a proper reparations package.

Meanwhile, Israeli environmentalists

are outraged by the plan to build housing in Nitzanim, which is adjacent to an area that long has been slotted to become a nature preserve.

"Nitzanim is important because it's one of the most unique desert environments in the entire Middle East and one of the only continuous strips of beach area that is still totally undeveloped in Israel," said Michelle Levine, a spokeswoman for the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel.

To build a community next to it will inevitably damage the ecosystem, she said.

But Dudi Michaeli, a farmer in Gadit who is acting as spokesman for families that have signed on for a possible move to Nitzanim, said it's one of the only solutions for relocation.

"It's the only place that most closely resembles where we live today, close to the sea and sand dunes," he said.

The increased willingness to sign on to the Nitzanim plan doesn't mean that settlers won't struggle until the bitter end, he said.

"I think the government hoped they wouldn't see the day that 99 percent of families remain in their homes, running their businesses," he said. "We will continue to live and develop Gush Katif." ■

BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## European Jews: We must lobby

By JACQUES WEILL

BASEL, Switzerland (JTA) — European Jewish organizations have to improve their lobbying abilities in order to be more successful in the European political environment and the wider Jewish world, where Israel and the United States are the dominant forces.

This was the conclusion of many of the 207 delegates to a gathering here over the weekend of top officials of the European Council of Jewish Communities.

Participants from more than 37 countries, representing 72 cities and 86 organizations, came to the city, which hosted the First Zionist Congress in 1897.

During the three-day conference, it was clear that there are many divisions among Europe's estimated 3 million Jews. Religiously, there are Orthodox, Conservative and liberal denominations.

Communally, Western European groups tend to have greater financial resources than the communities of Eastern Europe,

which are supported largely by organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Politically, there are differences among old members of the European Union, the 10 new members who joined last year and non-members.

At one session, "Governmental Relations and Lobbying," Emil Kalo, president of the Bulgarian Jewish communities, took issue with a remark by a Spanish participant in the audience, who wanted to teach Kalo about lobbying in Eastern Europe.

Kalo himself caused a controversy by claiming that Jews were the best lobbyists. "If we were so successful, why do we always have to talk about rising anti-Semitism?" someone responded.

The panel concluded that European Jews have a lot to learn from American organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The next meeting of European Jewish officials is slated to take place in 2006 in Berlin. ■

## COMMUNITY

## TRANSITIONS

- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee named JTA board president Howard Friedman as its president-elect.
- Morlie Hammer Levin was named national executive director of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.
- Simon Greer was named executive director of the Jewish Fund for Justice.
- Harlene Appelman was named executive director of the Covenant Foundation.
- Rabbi Menachem Genack will become CEO of the Orthodox Union's kosher division, and Rabbi Moshe Elefant will become the division's chief operating officer.

## HONORS

- The Anti-Defamation League gave awards to former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and German legislator Gert Weisskirchen.
- Manhattan's Jewish Community Center honored Ralph Goldman, former president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
- Hadassah gave its Citizen of the World Award to actor Richard Gere.
- Israeli Education Minister Limor Livnat received the Bnai Zion America-Israel Friendship Award.
- Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion gave its 2005 Roger Joseph Prize to U.N. official Jan Egeland and the Dr. Bernard Heller Prize to Yale University President Richard Levin.
- Jewish Theological Seminary professor Raymond Scheindlin was named a fellow at the New York Public Library's Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers.
- Edgar Bronfman and Jan Aronson were honored by the BIMA-Berkshire Institute for Music and Arts.
- Racelle Weiman, director of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Center for the Holocaust and Humanity Education, accepted the Philippines' National Order of Civic and Political Merit on behalf of the center.
- The American Friends of the Ghetto Fighters Museum gave its Korczak Award to Nazi-hunter Serge and Beate Klarsfeld.
- The UJA-Federation of New York honored Isaac Assael, board president of the Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Foundation. The federation's Russian division honored Wall Street leader Michael Vasinkevich, and its media and communications division gave Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone the Steven Ross Humanitarian Award.
- Yeshiva University's affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary gave its Eitz Chaim Award to Kurt Rothschild, and also honored Rabbis Melech Schachter, Moses Tendler, Joseph Weiss, Gershon Yankelevitz, Nathan Eli Zemel and Dale Polakoff.

## Yeshiva College marks 75th

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Before enrolling at Yeshiva University two and a half years ago, Sammy Samuels had never been to the United States.

At the time, says Samuels, 23, there were just eight Jewish families in his country — Myanmar, formerly known as Burma — in addition to employees of the Israeli Embassy and a handful of Jews from America.

Samuels' family served as caretakers for the beautiful local synagogue, where getting a minyan was no easy feat. But he began looking outside Myanmar for educational opportunities after a student revolution shut down local universities.

After meeting an American professor, who gave Samuels frequent-flier miles for the trip to America, Samuels landed at Yeshiva University, the flagship school of modern Orthodox Judaism.

Though it's difficult to be a Jew in Myanmar, members of the community keep their Jewish identity and heritage.

"We celebrate all our holidays," Samuels says. Still, he admits, "In Burma, it's such a small community you don't have a real sense of the holiday. But here you do."

As Yeshiva College — Y.U.'s undergraduate college of arts and sciences for men — celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, the school's student body is more geographically diverse than ever.

"There were kids in my class from Montreal," says Rabbi Yosef Blau, spiritual adviser to Yeshiva College undergraduates and to rabbinical students, who was a freshman at the college in 1955. "That was the international character. Now there are kids from around the world."

Fifteen years ago, 5 percent of the college's student body was from abroad, the school says. Since then, that number has doubled.

Today, some 10 percent of Yeshiva College's 773 students are foreign. Among them are 34 Canadians, 11 French, seven Moroccans, five Israelis and two students each from Australia, South Africa, Austria and Russia.

By comparison, 4 percent of undergraduates at New York University are foreign, as are 3 percent of undergraduates at the Jewish Theological Seminary and nearly 11 percent at Columbia University.

The geographical diversity is "all to the good because it keeps us nonparochial," says Norman Adler, the college's dean. "We're citizens of the world as well as citizens of yiddishkeit."

But school leaders say the diversity creates challenges.

"Yeshiva always struggles with what it means to be a big tent," Y.U. President Richard Joel told JTA. Students come from divergent backgrounds intellectually, religiously and socially, he says, and Yeshiva must serve them all.

"We're used to being a minority that breaks up into lots of subparts," he says. However, "there are different pressures placed on the institution when one hosts" students from diverse geographic backgrounds.

Yeshiva must be concerned with issues of acculturation, loneliness, separation from family and familiar

culture, something Joel calls "real challenging."

The college — which will hold its commencement ceremonies May 26 — has embarked on a yearlong celebration of its anniversary, during which time it has established two new classes to mark the milestone, one on Jewish New York and another on modern Orthodox thought.

It also has launched fund-raising campaigns to update the school's science and communications labs.

Yeshiva College has graduated more than 9,000 students since its founding. Graduates live in more than 30 American states and some 20 foreign countries, and almost 10 percent of college alumni live in Israel, the school says.

A geographically diverse student body helps the college achieve one of its major goals, Blau says.

"One of our understood goals is that graduates of Yeshiva will play leadership roles in the Jewish community," he says. "The broader their understanding of that community, the more they have to contribute." ■

**'We're citizens of the world as well as citizens of yiddishkeit.'**

**Norman Adler**  
Yeshiva College dean



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Air Force e-mail heightens tension

The top cadet at the Air Force Academy sent an e-mail with Christian quotations to thousands of fellow cadets on the eve of his graduation.

The letter, which contained several of Wing Commander Nicholas Jurewicz's favorite religious quotes, was sent Tuesday to a distribution list of approximately 3,000 students, The Associated Press reported.

One quote, taken from the New Testament's Epistle to the Galatians, contains an exhortation to "bear each other's burdens" as a fulfillment of "the will of Christ."

The academy recently has been the target of numerous allegations charging that evangelical Christians harass cadets of other faiths.

An academy spokesman said the charges would be studied and that action would be taken against Jurewicz if necessary.

### Yiddish paper's publisher dies

Gershon Jacobson, founder and publisher of a leading Yiddish-language newspaper in the United States, died Sunday at age 70.

In 1972 Jacobson founded Der Algemeiner Journal, which often focuses on tensions within the Chasidic community, The New York Times reported.

Jacobson, who had a graduate degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism, was born Boris Yacobashvili in Moscow.

He immigrated to the United States after World War II and after his father escaped from a Stalinist labor camp.

### People of the Book

A Jewish cultural project and a publisher joined together in a publishing venture.

Nextbook and Schocken Publishers will publish a series of books on Jewish cultural subjects.

The series will launch in the fall with books on King David and Maimonides, Publishers Weekly magazine reported.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Fraud in Zaka?

Israel's volunteer emergency relief service was accused of defrauding foreign donors.

In an expose published this week, the local Israeli newspaper Kol Hazman reported that in at least one case Zaka switched donor stickers on one of its ambulances so it could claim that the same vehicle had been paid for by two separate groups, the Israel Humanitarian Foundation and a Jewish school in California.

In another case, successive Zaka catalogs showed the same first-aid motorcycle bearing different donor labels, both of which apparently had been digitally imposed on the photograph, the weekly said.

Zaka, which gained international prestige over the past decade for its work at the sites of suicide bombings, denied wrongdoing.

It said some donors do not give enough to warrant buying new vehicles, and thus their money goes toward maintaining existing vehicles.

### Bought out by eBay

An Israeli-run price-comparison Web site was bought by eBay.

The online auction service announced Thursday it had paid \$620 million for shopping.com, which was publicly offered only seven months ago.

The buying price was 20 percent higher than the stock value of the Israeli site, which was part-owned by a German firm.

## WORLD

### Russian survivors go to Jewish camp

Child survivors of the Beslan terrorist attack will arrive at a Jewish camp in Hungary this week.

The Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities of Russia, as part of its charity campaign, Jewish Families to Children of Beslan, is bringing 75 children for three weeks to the Lauder International Camp.

On their way to Hungary, the children made a stop in Moscow for a ceremony Thursday at the World War II memorial in the Kremlin.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is bringing another 120 children to the camp for a week.

Some 350 people died in the September 2004 hostage-taking at a school in Beslan, a town in southern Russia.

### Study: Peace would bring jobs, money

Peace with Israel could create more than 1 million new jobs for the Palestinians, a new study found.

The study, carried out by Portland Trust, a British consortium, also found that the Israeli economy could regain \$5 billion a year as a result of peace, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The Palestinian "peace dividend" could be \$850 million annually, the study found.

### Austria pressed on war crimes suspect

The Simon Wiesenthal Center urged Austria to take legal action against a suspected Nazi criminal living there.

The center's Efraim Zuroff sent a letter to Kurt Hengl, Austria's ambassador to Israel, saying the country should prosecute Milivoj Asner.

Asner left Croatia in July 2004, where he was exposed as a war crimes suspect by the Wiesenthal Center's Operation Last Chance, a Nazi-hunting program.

### Students meet, learn in Ukraine

American and Ukrainian Jewish college students learned about human rights advocacy.

The students, who met in the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk on May 25-26, also had a cross-cultural dialogue on Jewish identity and community building.

The meeting is a part of an international student exchange program organized by NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, that mentors Jewish students in political issues and skills that form the basis of American Jewish lobbying efforts on Jewish issues in the former Soviet Union.

The program, which links students in the sister cities of Boston and Dnepropetrovsk and is organized by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston and the Hillels at Brandeis and Tufts universities, introduces American students to Ukrainian Jewish life.

### Germany honors Jewish editor

Germany gave its highest state honor to Ari Rath, a former editor of the Jerusalem Post.

Rudolf Dressler, Germany's ambassador to Israel, presented the Merit Cross of the Federal Republic to Rath in ceremonies Thursday at the German Press Center in Berlin.

Rath, who fled Nazi Austria in 1938 for pre-state Palestine, turned 80 this year.

He is the subject of a new documentary, "A Life of Many Lives," by Austrian historian Helga Embacher and filmmaker Hannes Klein.