

## IN THE NEWS

## Israeli police block Gaza entry

Israeli police blocked protesters opposing Israel's Gaza-withdrawal plan from entering the coastal strip.

On Wednesday, an estimated 15,000 police squared off against protesters near the town of Ofakim, about half an hour from the strip.

Meanwhile, 20 opponents of the withdrawal were arrested Wednesday at a crossing into Gaza on charges of entering the closed area, Israel's Ha'aretz newspaper reported.

## Senate confirms new envoy to Israel

The U.S. Senate confirmed Richard Jones as ambassador to Israel.

The confirmation of Jones, who replaces Daniel Kurtzer, came last Friday, just four days after President Bush nominated him.

Jones, 54, previously was ambassador to Kuwait and Lebanon and was a senior adviser to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

This is his first post in Israel.

## Georgia prisoner can wear yarmulke

A Georgia man will receive a yarmulke in prison after winning a court battle.

Robert Benning was to receive the yarmulke Wednesday after the Georgia Department of Corrections determined he could wear it within the prison system, according to the Washington-based Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which aided his lawsuit.

Benning filed suit against the Georgia prison system in 2002.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a separate case earlier this year that prisoners' religious needs should be accommodated unless they conflict with a compelling government interest.

Benning still is seeking kosher meals in prison.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Youth find meaning, Judaism by helping the less fortunate

By TZVI KAHN

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — With flecks of paint peeling from the walls, cases of supplies strewn haphazardly about the stained tile floors, and ceiling fans circulating hot air, this dilapidated building in an impoverished Brooklyn neighborhood hardly is the ideal venue for a late-night stroll.

But for hundreds of local residents, it's one of the few places they can turn to for help. And for Denise Marsh, an Urbana, Ill., native who graduated last year from Grinnell College, it's a place where she can combine her passion for social justice and Judaism on a daily basis.

Marsh has signed on as a community advocate at Neighbors Together — a soup kitchen and social-service agency that serves hundreds of low-income Brooklyn residents. Marsh has been sent to the center by Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps., a program that places some 30 recent college graduates at various social service programs in Washington and New York for one year.

Avodah is one of a number of programs that have emerged within the past decade with the goal of integrating Judaism and social action. Indeed, of the 50 programs recently named as the most innovative in the Jewish community by the Slingshot guide, several focus on Jewish service.

One of these is the Jewish Coalition for Service ([www.jewishservice.org](http://www.jewishservice.org)), an umbrella organization for Jewish service groups.

Avodah provides participants with liv-

ing expenses and a stipend. Participants also are required to attend weekly seminars on social issues, where they are encouraged to frame their day-to-day work experiences within a Jewish context.

"I think a lot of this program is focusing on what are Jewish values and how can we apply them in our daily lives," Marsh says. Avodah encourages participants to "connect work with spirituality," she says. "It's really been able to connect me with a lot of different worlds that I fit into."

In addition to providing daily meals, Neighbors Together helps indigent and homeless people navigate the complexities of Social Security, Medicaid, education, immigration and other government programs.

One client, Janie Daniel, 85, is visiting the center to seek help after a fire destroyed her apartment, leaving her homeless and with no possessions. The organization helped the overwhelmed senior find a new apartment and obtain basic necessities.

"They have helped me rebuild my life," Daniel says. "They have helped me in every area of my emergency."

Another key aspect of the program is its emphasis on community. All participants — who come from a wide range of religious backgrounds — live together.

Aaron Divine, who has spent the past year working at the Washington Jewish Community Center's Behrend Builders Program, which serves the capital's low-income housing community, says of Avodah: "I thought it was a chance to be part of a community my age with similar passions and motivations."

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## ■ Youth combine social activism with Jewish values

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You meet really inspiring people who are doing the kind of work you want to be doing.”

Other Avodah participants are working at the Medicare Rights Center, the New York Legal Assistance Group and the Urban Justice Center, all located in New York City, and some are at Metro TeenAIDS and For Love of Children in Washington.

The principles underlying Avodah are finding similar expression at a Washington summer program geared toward high school students.

Micaela Klein had always been interested in political and social activism. But rarely had Klein, who will enter her senior year at Edgemont High School in Edgemont, N.Y., this fall, ever had the opportunity to channel her enthusiasm into direct political engagement in Washington — and within a Jewish framework as well.

“I was looking for a program that would cater to my interests in activism,” she says. “Judaism has played a big part in my life, and I thought the combination of Judaism, activism and community service would be positive.”

Fortunately for Klein, that combination constitutes a core element of Summer Jam, a leadership-training program for high school students organized by Panim: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values. The program brings some 60 students from across the country to the U.S. capital every summer for

three weeks of intensive seminars on Jewish perspectives on political issues, meetings with politicians and Jewish leaders, and hands-on work at social-service agencies fighting poverty.

“The idea for them is to explore the connection between Jewish service work and political activism,” says Rabbi Jason Kimmelman-Block, who directs Summer Jam. The program aims “to show how Judaism and Jewish ideas can apply to every aspect of their lives.”

The seminars address a wide array of topics, including Judaism and the environment; war and peace, and global justice and poverty. Guest speakers have included Ruth Messinger, the president of the American Jewish World Service; Steve Culbertson, the CEO of Youth Service America; Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.); and Jeffrey Berkowitz, the White House liaison to the Jewish community.

This year’s Summer Jam participants also visited an impoverished neighborhood on the outskirts of Washington, where they helped out on a local construction project.

“I really thought I was making a difference,” says Annie Ben-Ami, who will be a senior at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Md. “I can’t describe in words how amazing it was. My eyes have been opened to the terrible poverty.”

Similar activities comprise a key component of Tiyul, a summer program that brings about 30 high school students to Maine, Colorado, Georgia and other states for six weeks of various community-service projects and leadership training.

Organized by the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan, Tiyul, Hebrew for “journey,” seeks to apply Jewish principles to social action and to promote a pluralistic Jewish world view that encourages respect

and appreciation for various modes of religious observance.

“Tiyul is six weeks of changing the world,” says Tamar Gersh, the director of the program. “We want these kids to feel that the world is open to them and that they are open to the world.”

In Portland, Maine, the Tiyul group worked at a soup kitchen, volunteered at a camp for children with brain tumors, and took blind

adults to a baseball game. In Boulder, Colo., the group visited Attention Home, a shelter for abused and neglected students.

“At the end of the summer, the kids will be able to realize that every single person has a unique gift which only they have, and that they can use that gift to make the world a better place,” says Tiyul’s founding director, Sharon Goldman, now the program director of the 92nd Street Y’s Bronfman Center for Jewish Life.

The program attracts students from across the denominational spectrum, which Gersh says reflects Tiyul’s philosophy of Jewish pluralism.

Rachel Oscar, a Tiyul camper from Cleveland who is entering her junior year of high school, says the experience of interacting with other students in various programs was particularly meaningful for her.

“It really helps to open my eyes to discover what other people have to say about different aspects of Judaism,” she says.

Zachary Fenster, soon to be a junior at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City, says one of his most memorable Tiyul experiences was the time he spent repainting the home of an elderly woman in Savannah, Ga., who had been shot during a robbery.

“Our Tiyul’s imprint is probably going to be on that house for the rest of her life,” he says. ■

‘I really thought I was making a difference. I can’t describe in words how amazing it was. My eyes have been opened to the terrible poverty.’

**Annie Ben-Ami**

Senior, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School  
in Rockville, Md.



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# North American immigrants adjust to Israel

By CHANAN TIGAY

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Steve Accardi recently brought his car to a muffler shop in Jerusalem for a little maintenance.

When he got there, recalls Accardi, a 45-year-old psychologist who moved to Israel three summers ago from Monsey, N.Y., he saw the shop's proprietor, a tough, secular-looking guy, barking orders at his employees.

A few minutes later, Accardi says, "I went back to his office, and he's got all these pictures of rabbis all over the place. He says, 'I'm a famous hazzan in the Syrian community,'" using the Hebrew word for "cantor." "And he owns this muffler place!"

"This is one of those everyday occurrences that make me smile and shake my head and say, Wow, classic Israel."

The "only-in-Israel" story is a popular genre among olim, or immigrants, like Accardi. They often revolve around a stranger's kindness, a chance encounter with a long-lost friend or an outward appearance that proves the opposite of the underlying truth.

Though terrorism is a topic that's front and center in Israeli newspapers, only-in-Israel stories don't often touch on that subject. Asked whether terrorism affected their decisions to move to Israel, almost everyone interviewed for this article said no.

"The world should be very, very well aware" of terrorism "everywhere in chutz aretz," or outside of Israel, says Accardi, whose wife has given birth to two children since the couple made aliyah. "People should be feeling very, very unsafe."

Israel, he adds, "is the safest place to be. This is the land that Hashem watches year round."

Accardi came with his wife, Esther, on the first flight sponsored by Nefesh B'Nefesh, a private organization that helps North American Jews make aliyah.

The group since has chartered numerous planes. On July 12, Nefesh B'Nefesh and its partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel, brought over two planes carrying some 500 olim in the largest single-day aliyah from North America in Israel's history. In late July, about 200 North American immigrants came on another Nefesh flight.

Three further flights are expected to

arrive by Sept. 7. Nefesh B'Nefesh says one or two flights are also possible this winter.

Nefesh B'Nefesh and the Jewish Agency for Israel say they expect 3,200 North American immigrants this year, the first time since 1983 that the figure has topped 3,000. That will bring the number of North American olim to more than 6,700 since Nefesh B'Nefesh began operating in 2002.

The increasing number of North Americans is seen as a great success in Israel, since they're often financially and socially comfortable at home and generally have been harder to attract on aliyah than Jews from other parts of the world.

Tali Berman, who made aliyah two years ago with her husband, Joshua, and the couple's young daughter, chose to live in a moshav, which shares some similarities with a kibbutz, rather than in a city. They don't take public buses, which have been frequent targets of Palestinian suicide bombers.

"We've created a bubble we feel safe with," says Tali Berman, 29. "The reality is, there's nowhere in the world that's safe right now."

Still, Berman says, when she gave birth to a son nine months ago, the matzav, or security situation, did come to mind.

"There was a bit of a difference when we gave birth to a boy," she says. "We realized that having a boy serve in the army is different" than having a girl serve. Boys, who serve longer than girls, also are much more likely to end up in combat situations.

But the main surprise she's faced since making aliyah is just how smoothly the process has gone.

Shortly after arriving, Berman, who brought a unique approach to working with autistic children, was the subject of an article in an Israeli newspaper. The family of an autistic child saw the piece and contacted her.

Through referrals, the nonprofit organization that Berman founded now works with six or seven families.

"I imagined moving here to be a lot more complicated, bureaucratic, a lot more waiting in line just for them to tell you they're closed," Tali Berman says.

"I've been really amazed at how simple things have been. Of course, I'm saying that after it took me three days to get an Internet connection."

The Bermans also arrived on a Nefesh B'Nefesh flight.

"We just work on it really, really hard," says Nefesh B'Nefesh spokesman Charlie Levine. "We have identified where the pitfalls" of aliyah are, "and that's exactly

the places we've tried to bolster, to build bridges over."

It seems to be working. Nefesh says that more than 99 percent of the North Americans they've brought on aliyah have remained in Israel.

"As recently as 15 years ago, it was well known that it was 50 percent for Americans," he says, though he acknowledges that the retention rate still could drop over time.

Nefesh says that 94 percent of its family units — either a single oleh or a family of olim — have at least one member employed.

Last year, 70 percent of North American olim who came over with Nefesh B'Nefesh called themselves Orthodox. Fifteen percent said they were Conservative, 10 percent said they were Reform and the rest were secular or unaffiliated.

For many years, the Jewish Agency was the sole organization providing aliyah services. Recent partnerships with foreign groups like Nefesh B'Nefesh and France's Ami represent a shift for the organization.

Karen Brunwasser, who is originally from Philadelphia, made aliyah in July. The night she arrived, she was interviewed on a prime-time Israeli television news program.

Since then, she says, "I've been walking down the street and people are saying, 'Weren't you on the news? Welcome to Israel!'"

"This is like red-carpet aliyah," she says. "Other people said to me, 'When I made aliyah, they disinfected me and put me in a transit camp.' When I made aliyah, the prime minister came to greet me at the airport!"

Now that's an only-in-Israel story. ■

'This is like red-carpet aliyah.'

**Karen Brunwasser**  
Recent immigrant to Israel

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

**Palestinian rocket kills Palestinian boy**

A Palestinian rocket fired at Israeli settlers protesting the upcoming Gaza withdrawal killed a Palestinian boy.

Nine other Palestinians were wounded Tuesday when the rocket fell in Gaza instead of hitting the Israeli town Sderot, where anti-withdrawal protesters were rallying.

Some local Palestinians called on the Palestinian Authority to take measures to stop the attacks.

**'Masada' at sea?**

A group of settler youths reportedly is considering mass suicide to protest the upcoming Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Ha'aretz reported Wednesday that between 10 and 12 youths from Gaza settlements, all of them surfers, have discussed drowning themselves at sea after the evacuations begin later this month.

The report drew comparisons to the Roman-era mass-suicide of Jews in Masada and sparked uproar among Israeli officials.

"The implementation of the disengagement plan has nothing in common with the story of Masada, so suicide as a tool of resistance should not be part of the protest arsenal," said Ehud Yatom, a Likud Party lawmaker. "I call on the rabbis of the Yesha settler council to come out against such threats, and to choose the life of the nation over the premature death of youth."

A Yesha official said the Ha'aretz report was being investigated.

**Crossing the Gulf**

An Israeli Arab town reportedly will receive millions of dollars from Qatar for its soccer facilities.

Ha'aretz reported Wednesday that the Gulf emirate wants to help Sakhnin, whose soccer team has swept national tournaments, land "firmly on the Middle East sports map."

At least \$10 million in Qatari money is expected to go into refurbishing the Galilee town's stadium and investing in other sports facilities. Israel has low-level diplomatic ties with Qatar.

## MIDDLE EAST

**Senators urge terrorist designation**

More than 50 U.S. senators called on President Bush to designate Hezbollah's television station as a terrorist body.

"We strongly support the global war on terrorism and continuing efforts to stop terrorists wherever they may be," the senators wrote Tuesday. "Stopping Al-Manar's broadcast of hatred and violence is an integral part of the global war on terrorism."

Designating the Lebanon-based television station a terrorist body would enable the U.S. government to act against its funding sources and the groups associated with it.

Efforts to halt Al-Manar's broadcasts have succeeded in the United States, Canada, Latin America and parts of Asia, according to the Coalition Against Terrorist Media, which is located in Washington.

The station can still be viewed in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia, thanks to satellite firms owned by the governments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

**Poll: Americans admire Jews**

More Americans admire Jews than Catholics, Muslims, evangelicals or atheists, a poll showed.

Jews received a 77 percent favorable rating in a poll published last week by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life that assessed attitudes toward Muslims. Catholics scored 73 percent, Protestant evangelicals and Muslims each got 57 percent earned 35 percent.

Pew described the figures as stable in recent years.

## WORLD

**Germany sends equipment to P.A. police**

Germany will contribute communications equipment to Palestinian troops before Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip begins later this month.

Germany's contribution this week of \$400,000 worth of equipment is in response to a request from Gen. William Ward, the top U.S. security envoy to the region.

Ward has been canvassing U.S. allies for assistance so the Palestinians are better equipped to police Gaza after Israel leaves later this month.

The Israeli government agreed to allow some non-lethal equipment into the Palestinian areas this week, after pressure from the Bush administration.

**Flooding woes for Indian Jews**

The Jewish community of Mumbai was hard hit during recent flooding in western India.

The flooding, which has killed more than 1,000 people and destroyed at least 10,000 homes, has forced many Jews to relocate to neighbors' houses and has caused widespread power outages, according to a memorandum issued by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Initial reports "indicate that there has been considerable water damage to homes and buildings in low-lying areas, including the synagogue in Thane and in Panvel," the JDC stated.

In the latter, water damaged Torah scrolls and prayer books, the group said.

**Rome council backs Holocaust museum**

Rome is one step closer to having a Holocaust Museum. The municipal council this week unanimously approved purchase of a 3,000-square-meter site for the museum.

The location, on the grounds of Villa Torlonia, is symbolically significant: Villa Torlonia was Mussolini's residence.

"This new, fundamental place of memory will be added to other sites that recall the darkest years of Roman history and the terrible suffering inflicted on Roman Jews," Mayor Walter Veltroni said.

By the end of the year a foundation to oversee the project, composed of representatives of the city and the Jewish community, is to be set up.

Jewish community spokesman Riccardo Pacifici said the museum would detail the story of all those who suffered at the hands of the Nazis and Italian fascists, including Gypsies, homosexuals and the political opposition, as well as Jews.

**Calm in Mauritania despite coup**

Israel's ambassador to Mauritania said all was well despite a military coup there.

"The embassy is open and operating, but we are staying inside the embassy. We are avoiding going out," Boaz Bismuth told Israel's Yediot/Ynet news site in an interview from Nouakchott, where troops staged a coup Wednesday while the president, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, was attending the funeral of Saudi King Fahd.

Taya has been heavily criticized in Mauritania for opening diplomatic relations with Israel six years ago.

Television footage showed cheering Islamists in the streets of Mauritania, many of them bearing portraits of the slain Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

But Bismuth played down the possibility that the instability could threaten him and his staff.