

IN THE NEWS

Records don't solve Arafat death mystery

The cause of Yasser Arafat's death is still unclear, despite the release of his hospital reports.

Having obtained records from the French hospital where the Palestinian leader died last November, Ha'aretz quoted Israeli experts on Thursday as saying Arafat's symptoms were consistent with advanced AIDS or the effects of a poison such as ricin.

French and Palestinian Authority officials have said there was no evidence of either cause in Arafat's death.

The New York Times, which also had access to the hospital records, quoted its own independent experts as saying Arafat died of internal bleeding caused by an unknown ailment, and called AIDS or poison highly unlikely.

Israel sends aid to Katrina victims

Israel dispatched aid to New Orleans to help victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Thursday's airlift, supervised by military logistics officers and representatives of the Health and Foreign Ministries, included humanitarian and medical experts.

Also sent were 80 tons of food packages, diapers, beds, blankets, generators and other essentials.

The Jewish National Fund helped fund the shipment.

Foundation offers Katrina assistance

The Avi Chai Foundation is launching an emergency grant program for Jewish day schools that enroll students affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The organization is offering \$3,000 per student to schools taking in fourth- through 12th-graders evacuated from New Orleans and other areas battered by the storm.

Schools seeking funds should write to Avi Chai at 1015 Park Ave., New York, N.Y., 10028.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**

WORLD REPORT

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



Brian Hendler

A displaced family from the former Gaza settlement of Elei Sinai sleeps in a tent near the Yad Mordechai junction in southern Israel.

Hurricane, political questions may impede aid to Israel and P.A.

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The success of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip depends, all sides have said, on the day after.

But unresolved border questions, a climate of political uncertainty and even the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina have cast shadows over how the United States will help fund the next stage.

The United States may delay sending funds to Israel and the Palestinians, insiders say, because of concerns about the Palestinian Authority leadership, a wait-and-see attitude as Israelis and Palestinians both head into elections and discomfort over how

Americans transfixed by Katrina's devastation will view money spent thousands of miles away.

Senior congressional officials from both the Republican and Democratic parties, who declined to speak on the record, said it would be considered bad taste right now to announce a major aid package in the Middle East as Congress scrambles to assist hundreds of thousands of people made homeless across the Gulf of Mexico. Some predicted a delay of at least two weeks.

Israel wants cash — reports have suggested more than \$2 billion — to help resettle the 9,000 settlers evacuated from Gaza and a portion of the northern West Bank, as well

Continued on page 2

NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ Katrina throws a wrench into aid for Israel and the Palestinians

Continued from page 1

as to rebuild military bases inside Israel. The Palestinians are hoping for funds beyond the \$50 million they received last month.

Larry Garber, director of the New Israel Fund and formerly an administrator of U.S. assistance to the Palestinians, said the "smell test" for projects in the wake of Katrina would be tougher.

Aid to either side could be questioned "if it gets into issues that seem extravagant compared to what refugees are receiving, if for example housing was made available to Palestinians beyond what we were providing to American citizens," Garber said.

Israeli officials say they're not concerned about the assistance for now, and instead are preoccupied with helping Americans made destitute by Katrina. A 40-50 ton planeload of supplies from Israel — including water, powdered milk, beds, blankets, mattresses, baby food and diapers — was due to arrive in the United States on Thursday, one Israeli official said.

The aid Israel is requesting "doesn't matter right now," the official said. "What we've been focused on is how we can help the United States."

U.S. officials charged with disbursing aid to the Palestinians say they're watching how P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas spends the \$50 million he got last month in U.S. assistance before dipping into another \$300 million appropriated for the Palestinians by Congress.

"Given the checkered past of the Palestinians, there's a sense of guardedness" about disbursing the money, one administration official said on condition of anonymity. That reflects not a lack of confidence in Abbas but concerns about the limitations he faces, the official said.

U.S. officials are concerned that Abbas is not doing enough to contain terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Hamas, which has distributed propaganda suggesting that Israel pulled out because of Hamas terrorist attacks, says it will observe a cease-fire only until the beginning of 2006.

"The administration is caught between these two challenges," Garber said. "One is to learn the lessons from U.S. experience not to invest money until conditions are right with security, the movement of people and goods, and internal good-governance conditions.

"On the other hand," he continued, "there is a desire to be associated with moving the process forward, and the easiest thing for the administration is to announce that money was being made available."

In addition to the \$50 million already sent to the Palestinians, the United States also is committed to building an aqueduct for Gaza, a commitment that Garber estimated ultimately will run to at least \$50 million more.

Another concern is that, despite the conclusion of the Gaza settlement evacuation, the withdrawal is not formally complete, since Israel, the Palestinians and Egypt have yet to finalize control of the borders. The Palestinians want control of the Rafah-Gaza crossing, while Israel already is building a new crossing adjacent to Gaza and is insisting that it maintain control of goods and human traffic as a security measure.

James Wolfensohn, the former World Bank president appointed as the chief envoy to the region from the "Quartet" — the diplomatic grouping of the United States, Russia, the European Union and

the United Nations, which is driving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process — is in the region trying to accelerate a conclusion to the issue.

His mission is critical, said Arie Arnon, an Israeli economist associated with the Peres Center for Peace.

"Although disengagement is perceived by many today as a complete deed, in fact some of the most important elements are not yet clear, including the links of Gaza's economy with

Israel, the West Bank, Egypt and the rest of the world," Arnon said. "There is no agreement yet, and this is very dangerous."

Arnon is a member of the Aix Group, which brings Israeli, Palestinian and international economists together to discuss the best ways to promote peace in the region through economic assistance. Members of the group are due in Washington later this month to meet with State Department, Treasury and White House officials.

The group would advise the United States to take the long view in distributing funds, said Arnon, who explained that he would warn officials against using money to put out fires.

"Those funds, in order to play a positive role, should be invested in infrastructure, creating new employment opportunities and not wasted on emergency cases," he said. "We're trying to raise those questions and convince people to help in creating a more positive atmosphere for the new economy."

U.S. officials have another reason for holding back right now, said David Makovsky, a senior analyst with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Palestinians and Israelis are headed into elections. Palestinian legislative elections are scheduled for the beginning of 2006, and Sharon faces a tough primary battle in his Likud Party — a date hasn't been set — where many members opposed the withdrawal.

"The United States needs to think about how to bridge over the political season," Makovsky said. "Expectations are going to be limited." ■

U.S. expectations for progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front 'are going to be limited.'

David Makovsky

Senior analyst, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

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.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

For Israel, U.N. reform a mixed bag

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — As the United Nations gets ready to mark its 60th anniversary, the buzzword around the halls of the world body — and in capitals from Washington to Jerusalem and beyond — is “reform.”

President Bush pushed the controversial appointment of John Bolton as America’s U.N. representative in part, he said, because Bolton “would provide clear American leadership for reform at the United Nations.”

In a report urging governments to work for change at the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on member states to adopt “the most far-reaching reforms in the history of the United Nations.”

Dan Gillerman, Israel’s U.N. ambassador, said firsthand experience has made the need for U.N. reform very clear to him.

“From Israel’s perspective, it needs urgent, dramatic and very serious overhaul,” he told JTA in a recent interview.

Some Jewish and Israeli leaders wonder how such changes might affect Israel. Long a pariah at the United Nations, Israel has been singled out time and again for disproportionate opprobrium, underrepresented on important committees, denied full membership in powerful regional groupings and constantly attacked by a bloc of Arab states and their supporters.

“Generally, our greatest hope is that reform in the work of the General Assembly and its various bodies also brings an improvement of the way that Israel, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab conflict, is being treated in the United Nations,” said Marco Sermoneta, political counselor in Israel’s U.N. mission.

It’s not the first time that reforming the United Nations has dominated discussions about the body, whose critics describe it as corrupt, bloated, inefficient, feckless and biased.

In a position paper addressing Annan’s reform proposals — laid out in a March document called “In Larger Freedom” — the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said, “All talk and no action is the bumper-sticker history of reform at the U.N.”

When world leaders gather along the East River from Sept. 14-16 for the 2005 World Summit as the 60th U.N. General Assembly

opens, there was hope that they would sign on to an “Outcome Document” — the contents of which are still being hammered out by member nations — that proposes significant changes for the United Nations.

With both Bush and Annan firmly supporting reform — and an embarrassing oil-for-food scandal keeping the U.N.’s problems in headlines around the world — those pushing reform say a window has opened.

The 39-page draft Outcome Document isn’t country-specific,

and many of the reforms Israel is hoping for do not appear in its pages.

The document’s ultimate fate is uncertain. According to a New York Times report, the United States recently recommended jettisoning more than 400 passages of the document. Proponents fear more countries may follow suit, objecting to elements they feel aren’t beneficial to them and demanding that other items be added.

Israel has been lobbying quietly to have its issues included on the agenda. Beyond a general change in an organizational culture that often has sanctioned hostility to Israel, insiders cite several specific areas where reform could boost the Jewish state’s standing in the United Nations:

- Israel would like to see the end of four U.N. committees established specifically to aid Palestinians. The one-sided attention of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices is unique in the world body.

“The U.N. spends an exorbitant amount of time and money on Israel-bashing,” Gillerman said, adding that these committees cost the United Nations \$6 million a year.

- Along with the United States and other nations, Israel would like to see changes to the U.N.’s Commission on Human Rights, which includes some of the world’s worst human-rights violators, including Syria, Sudan, Libya and Cuba.

“They spend days talking about Israel

and 13 seconds talking about China,” lamented Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference.

- Israel would like to see the number of anti-Israel resolutions passed by the General Assembly each year — currently about 20 — drastically reduced. Israel is hoping that the secretary-general will be given power to revisit mandates that are more than 5 years old — which would include some anti-Israel resolutions that have lingered for years.

- Israel wants the United Nations to take a

new look at its regional grouping system. After decades of being blocked by Arab countries from the Asian bloc, Israel recently was included in the Western Union and Others Group, but it’s still excluded from U.N.-sponsored organizations and conferences outside of New York. That means, for example, that Israel can’t take part in the substantive consultations of the Human Rights Commission, which take place in Geneva.

But Israel isn’t thrilled about all aspects of reform, such as a proposed expansion of the Security Council. The council now has five permanent members with veto rights and 10 members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

Names bandied about as potential members of an expanded council include South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, India, Brazil, Germany and Japan. Israel is concerned that unfriendly nations could make their way onto a body already seen as antagonistic to Israel.

In any case, insiders say it’s unlikely that the Security Council will be expanded in the near future.

Hillel Neuer, executive director of U.N. Watch in Geneva, said that reforming the Human Rights Commission carries with it both hopes and risks. On the one hand, he said, eliminating human-rights violators from the body may lead it to act more rationally. There also is discussion of giving the group a mandate to look at all states, rather than the select few it now investigates, Neuer said.

On the other hand, he said, if the group is enlarged and empowered to meet more frequently without its root problems being addressed, that could bode ill for Israel. ■

The U.N. spends an exorbitant amount of time and money on Israel-bashing.

Dan Gillerman
Israel’s U.N. ambassador

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

Despite Katrina, wedding goes on

By MICHAEL C. DUKE
Houston Jewish Herald-Voice

HOUSTON (JTA) — The invitations were mailed. The gown had been fitted. The rings, engraved with each other's Hebrew names, were ready for exchange. Then, an uninvited guest arrived.

Jennifer Pollack and Andrew Friedberg would have been married this past weekend at New Orleans' Temple Gates of Prayer had Hurricane Katrina not turned their city into a wreck. It took the couple 12 hours to evacuate the Crescent City on Aug. 28, and they now are living with Andrew's parents, Dr. Michael and Linda Friedberg, in Houston.

As Andrew and Pollack received a special blessing at Houston's Temple Emanu El two days after their arrival, they were still hopeful for a New Orleans wedding. Next morning, however, the levees were breached — and their plans, along with most everything they owned, were sent adrift.

Yet, it did not take Friedberg and Pollack long to make up their minds on where to go next. After discussing it with their parents, they chose to drop anchor in Houston and move forward with their wedding plans. The challenge would be to have everything ready in five days time.

"There are several different reasons why we decided not to postpone our wedding," explained Pollack last Friday, just two days before the ceremony took place. "It's a mitzvah to be married, and Friedberg and I feel that by still having our wedding this weekend we will be doing something good for our families, and something particularly special for the entire New Orleans Jewish community. We believe that this might be a

source of hope for the many who are feeling hopeless. Jewish tradition says to go on."

At the wedding itself, they decided not to make Katrina the focus of their joyous occasion. But in their respective wedding vows, each referred to Katrina and they still possessed despite the storm.

Pollack said that they "lost everything . . . yet lost nothing at all . . ."

Though the future is certainly unclear, the newlyweds at least know they will have each other — "through health and high water," Friedberg said.

Pollack and Friedberg both attended the University of Texas. After graduation, in 2002, they moved to Boston, where Pollack wrote for the Milford Daily News company and Friedberg enrolled in law school. In May 2005, the couple relocated to New Orleans, Pollack's hometown.

Pollack's father, Jack, called the couple on Saturday morning, advising them to evacuate the city. Pollack said she thought he was kidding and hung up the phone. Her mother, Peggy, called next, and told them to turn on the news.

Before evacuating New Orleans with their extended family, Pollack and Friedberg made a trip to Lowe's Home Improvement, where they bought plywood to protect their home from Katrina's torrents. "And, of course, this turned out to be a complete waste of time and energy," Friedberg lamented. "These were precious hours that we could have used to pack our things. But we thought that we'd only be gone for two or three days, so we essentially left everything behind."

Everything would include Pollack's wedding gown (and accessories), Friedberg's tuxedo, their wedding rings, ketubah and wedding gifts.

"Looking back though, I'm just glad we made it here safely," he said. "This whole experience puts life into perspective. We lost more in one day than most people will lose in a lifetime. Yet, we made it out with each other, and that's all that matters. 'Stuff' can always be replaced."

In terms of re-planning the wedding ceremony for Houston, Pollack and Friedberg have been overwhelmed with things to do. One of the reasons they chose this particular date in the first place was because Friedberg's parents were married the same weekend 27 years before.

Of the 240 guests invited to New Orleans, Pollack and Friedberg expected to have at least 140 attendees, plus those Houstonians

who otherwise would not have been able to make the trip east. Though the reception would not be as elaborate as they had originally planned, the couple said they are in no way disappointed. "Rather than having the reception overlooking the

Mississippi River, we instead will have it at the shul, which we are very grateful to have," Friedberg said.

Though it took Pollack more than a month to choose her wedding gown, she was fortunate enough to find a replacement in three hours. Her new dress is fairly close to the first one, she said, and it still makes her feel like a bride. "Of course, it's not the dress that counts," Friedberg told his future wife. "It's the bride inside."

The Men's Warehouse came to Friedberg's aid by giving him a complimentary tuxedo rental, for which he is very thankful. He and Pollack also picked out temporary replacement wedding bands from James Avery. The ketubah, they noted, might take a bit more time to find. The couple had a honeymoon to Aruba planned, but decided to cancel. "It just wouldn't feel right going; we wouldn't be able to enjoy ourselves. Besides, we need to be here with our family right now," Pollack noted.

Since being in Houston, Pollack and Friedberg feel very fortunate for having a place to stay, and for having family, friends and the local Jewish community close by for emotional support. The couple is fairly certain that they will stay in Houston and not return to New Orleans. Pollack said she will look for work as a journalist, and Friedberg will finish out the year with the Fifth Circuit (and, perhaps, study for the Texas Bar).

Having given tzedakah their entire lives, Pollack and Friedberg said that they are uneasy with being on the receiving end for the first time. "We helped out with the recent tsunami relief effort in Southeast Asia, and I remember thinking, Wow, that could be us — and now it is us," Friedberg pointed out. "This whole experience makes me want to volunteer and help others even more, which, I guess, is the best way we can show our appreciation for all that has been done for us."

The devastation
of a hurricane
can't stop love.



Courtesy Houston Jewish Herald-Voice

Jennifer and Andrew Friedberg.

Louisiana synagogue cares for Katrina evacuees

By MATT SAMUELS
Houston Jewish Herald-Voice

BATON ROUGE, La. (JTA) — Pardon Rabbi Barry Weinstein if he looks like he hasn't slept in a couple days. The truth is, he hasn't had time for rest because he is too busy making sure others are given that opportunity.

Weinstein and his congregants at Congregation B'nai Israel in Baton Rouge, La., started a grass-roots shelter operation for evacuees fleeing the New Orleans area during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. With designated Red Cross shelters reaching capacity all around Louisiana, Weinstein has opened his arms and his doors to anyone that needs a place to stay or food in their mouth.

"As a student of the Holocaust, I know full well how Jews and others were abandoned so often during the war years and so many people were bystanders and couldn't find a way to help," Weinstein said. "This whole episode reminds me of the sufferings. It really is a parallel — a storm, a threat, poor, underprivileged people. What some of these kids went through we can't even imagine."

More than 100 people are passing through the synagogue each day, while up to 70 are spending the night every evening. Congregation members are answering the call with donations and food, while others are volunteering their time around the clock.

Sleeping bags and cots fill rooms where religious school would normally be taught. Diapers and baby clothes line the area where they have oneg Shabbats. And a conference room has been converted into a makeshift hospital room.

A neurologist in the Jewish community is treating those who need medical attention. A local man spent time cooking large pots of chicken soup. Another man drove his school bus down to New Orleans to pick up those in need.

Even younger groups are lending a hand. A 9-year-old prepared and served scrambled eggs for breakfast one morning. The youth group is helping out by baby sitting some of the smaller children. A local Boy Scout troop provided tents that are being used for overflow guests.

Dorothy Marshall, a schoolteacher from Williamsburg, Va., decided to come to the area because she felt her help was needed. When she couldn't get all the way down to New Orleans, she wound up at B'nai Israel.

"Everybody back home thought I was crazy for coming all the way here," Marshall said. "They said I would be bitten by alligators." Instead, she has become another welcoming face at B'nai Israel that is helping hundreds cope with our nation's greatest natural disaster.

"It's fantastic," Weinstein said. "The fact that we are all from different backgrounds. People of all colors, Christians, Jews, Muslims all working together to lift the hearts and souls to handle this catastrophe."

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of Weinstein's magic is how he has worked with other synagogues and Jewish organizations around the country to help many of the people get back on their feet. He has arranged

for several families — both Jews and non-Jews — to be flown out using the charity group Angel Flight to bring them to destinations like Miami where they will be housed, fed and employed for a full year.

And believe it or not, it all started when Weinstein went out to walk one of his dogs. Since power was out at his own

house, Weinstein had his three dogs staying at the synagogue with him. During a trip to deliver some soup and challah to an ailing congregation member, he stopped to walk one of the dogs. At a nearby gas station he spotted a van that was seemingly broken down with a family standing nearby. Weinstein walked over to see if he could help, and as he puts it, the rest is history.

"That family was on the rafters above floodwaters filled with sharks on Wednesday, and then Saturday they are on a plane to Miami and are now in an apartment with everything cared for," Weinstein said.

Weinstein helped another family, Keith and Kim Parker, reunite with their 18-year-old son, who was bused to a shelter in Dallas. Angel flight flew the son to Baton Rouge and the rabbi had arranged for the entire family, including a 2-year-old daughter, to be flown to Miami on Monday.

Another family, headed by Larry and



Courtesy Houston Jewish Herald-Voice

Rabbi Barry Weinstein takes a moment to give a child a push in the synagogue's play yard.

Nancy Krinsky, found their way to the Reform temple after evacuating their home in Slidell, La. They were staying in Picayune, Miss., with some friends, but were almost trapped in the woods from all the destruction.

American Second Harvest has also been housed at the synagogue, helping coordinate some of the larger food distribution in the area.

"We are trying to get as much as we possibly can to the upstanding agencies that are running and they can get it out as fast as they can to the people who are coming in and out of the area," said Joycelyn White of American Second Harvest.

With countless New Orleans Jewish evacuees joining the Baton Rouge community, it is expected that the congregation at B'nai Israel — one of only two synagogues in the city — will grow.

One congregation member came to the temple Monday looking to purchase a mezuzah to give to a New Orleans Jew who they found a temporary apartment for. With the temple store closed because of everything else going on, the Sisterhood simply gave the man a mezuzah as a token of good faith.

That was only a small gift considering what Weinstein and B'nai Israel have already contributed to the community.

"Others would do the same," Weinstein said. "I can just sense how it multiplies — It's exponential."

(Marc J. Samuels contributed to this report.)

'This whole episode reminds me of the sufferings' of the Holocaust.

Rabbi Barry Weinstein
Congregation B'nai Israel

Ukrainian Jewish artist makes life-size dolls

By YULIANNA VILKOS

ODESSA, Ukraine (JTA) — Ukrainian Jewish artist Mykhailo Kolomey painted churches, made theatrical costumes and even ran a local TV channel before he turned to making enormous, nearly life-size dolls of well-known figures a year ago.

"I've been everything during my life, and now I have reverted to childhood," the 54-year-old Odessa native says.

Seventy of his dolls, portraying well-known literary and political characters, went on permanent display last month at Odessa's literary museum, where they occupy their own room.

The exhibition, a veritable Madame Tussaud's of Odessa history, illustrates the rich Jewish heritage of this southern Ukrainian city. Odessa once counted Jews as one-third of its residents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when it was known as an intellectual incubator of Jewish cultural and political thought. Today, there are an estimated 30,000 Jews among its 1 million inhabitants.

There is the likeness of early 20th-century writer Isaac Babel, the chronicler of Jewish life in pre-Russian Revolution Odessa. Over here are characters from Konstantin Paustovsky's "Time of Great Anticipations," a Russian-language novel about Odessa and its Jewish community during the Civil War years. A puppet portraying a well-known local rabbi who left the city abruptly a decade ago shares the stage with the puppet likeness of Boris Berezovsky, a Russian oligarch with Jewish roots, shown with a beggar at his side asking "for 1 million dollars," according to the artist.



Natalia Kravchuk

Ukrainian artist Mykhailo Kolomey lights a cigarette for one of his lifelike dolls.

"Berezovsky is very popular in Odessa, and the locals have a lot of jokes about him," Kolomey says, adding that he likes Berezovsky more than the other oligarchs.

Kolomey, who is not involved in Odessa's Jewish community, says that when he was rejected from university in the 1970s because he was Jewish, he had no idea how he would make a living. Now he's found his calling in making people smile.

The exhibition, which he calls "Art EL," or "Odessa in Dolls," has already become a popular stop for school groups and tourists.

"School teachers tell me they love bringing kids here, because the students are more eager to learn about a person or read a book when they have a colorful image in their mind," he says.

Odessans are known for their humor, and Kolomey's work is no exception. Each puppet, whether it represents a world leader or a character from a novel, is given a light-hearted interpretation. Viktor Chornomyrdin, Russia's ambassador to Ukraine, is shown daydreaming in a rocking chair made of gas pipes, alluding to the ongoing gas wars between Russia and Ukraine. Nineteenth-century Jewish musician Alexander Pevzner is shown in Chagall fashion, flying through the air with his violin.

Kolomey says his next project is a puppet of Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. It will be, he says, "witty and funny," in line with the politician's public image.

"The dolls are quite ironic, but it's not a mockery," Kolomey insists. Some of the dolls, he says, have already been acquired by their real-life prototypes, mostly businessmen and politicians. Viktor Yanukovich, who ran unsuccessfully for the Ukrainian presidency last fall, is now the proud owner of his puppet, a gift of the artist. Berezovsky, however, has not stepped forward to buy his doll.

Each doll is unique and, therefore, quite expensive, costing up to \$15,000 depending on its size and the amount of work involved. Kolomey says he and his team — Odessan sculptor Ihor Nosyk and costume designer Antonina Suvorkina — use a technique he created himself, using a secret combination of polymers and other materials, that makes the dolls practically unbreakable and conveys more realistic facial expressions.

What began as a hobby has become a round-the-clock activity.

"We run to the city's flea market during the day to hunt for costume fabrics and accessories, and we make the dolls during the night," Suvorkina says. She says it can take up to three months to finish a single puppet.

Suvorkina quit her design job to work for Kolomey, and she says she loves her new work. But sometimes the dolls are too lifelike. Suvorkina recalls being afraid to stay alone in the room with the President Bush puppet, whom she was outfitting. And she nearly fell in love with one of the other male dolls.

"Each doll has its own character, and you have to deal with it," she says.

Though doll-making of this kind is new to Ukraine, Kolomey says, he hopes to generate interest in his passion, and is looking for municipal support to open what would be the country's first doll museum. He dreams of a contemporary building with glass walls and a studio where students could learn the art of making life-size dolls.

"So far, the authorities are not really interested," Kolomey says. All of his funding comes from unnamed local sponsors. "In the West, collectors go crazy about dolls, they build whole castles for their collections. Here, it's not yet that popular," he says.

If the Ukrainians do not help take care of his collection, it will most likely be transferred to private collections abroad, an alternative Kolomey views with some dismay. "I wouldn't like the collection to be sold outside of Ukraine," he says. "I want it to stay in Odessa as an example of the city's uniquely ironic and creative atmosphere."

The dolls are quite ironic, but it's not a mockery.

Mykhailo Kolomey
Ukrainian Jewish artist

AROUND THE
FORMER
SOVIET UNION

FIRST PERSON

Rabbi's daughter looks at her guilt feelings

By RUTH ANDREW ELLENSON

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — I've spent this past year editing a book titled "The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt," so it may not be such a surprise that I spend an awful lot of time feeling guilty, thinking about why I feel so darn guilty, and wondering why I'm so thoroughly guilty that I'm willing to devote a year of my life to the topic.

The High Holidays offer an especially rich opportunity to dwell on why I am so consumed by this particular obsession.

The conclusion I've come to is this: I will never, ever, be as good a Jew as my parents are.

There are two possible reasons why: I like bacon cheeseburgers too much, and they are both rabbis.

Maybe this predicament is shared by all children of rabbis. When your parent lives a life devoted to Torah, good deeds and Am Yisrael, how do you top that?

When Eema and Abba are both rabbis, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to live up to their legacy. Unless by some miracle I am elected to the rabbinical court of Israel — and I'm fairly certain that's not in the cards — I'll never top their achievements. I will always be the child who failed to make aliyah, who neglected to provide grandchildren before I was 30 and who only eats "kosher style."

I've also chosen to be a journalist in Hollywood. Occasionally I'll call up my father to announce with great excitement that I'm profiling Ben Affleck or Brad Pitt. He'll reply with enthusiasm and support even though he clearly has no idea who either man is.

For a moment I'll bask in the warm glow of parental pride — and then I'll ask what he's doing.

"I'm about to go off to Moscow to a conference on saving world Jewry from anti-Semitism," he'll respond. "Have a great interview with Brad Affleck, honey!"

The shallowness of my life suddenly overwhelms me.

The worst part of all my failures as a Jew is that my parents have rarely, if ever, given me a hard time about it. ■

Jews see grim border scene

By LARRY LUXNER

NOGALES, Mexico (JTA) — Mexican migrants fleeing economic hardship risk their lives every day to cross the harsh Sonoran Desert into the United States, where they hope to find jobs and prosperity.

But unlike the ancient Jews who wandered in the Sinai Desert for 40 years after fleeing Egypt, today's Mexicans have no manna from heaven to sustain them.

That symbolism was very much in evidence last week, when national Jewish leaders for the first time joined their Christian brethren on the heavily guarded U.S.-Mexico border to condemn what they called an unjust U.S. policy that leads to suffering and even death for illegal immigrants.

"There's been an explosion in human catastrophe," said Ethan Felson, assistant executive director of the New York-based Jewish Council for Public Affairs. "Between 300 and 400 people will die horrific deaths this year as a result of an immigration policy that's in total failure."

Felson was part of a 30-member interfaith delegation that converged Aug. 29 on Tucson, and from there traveled south to the sprawling, dusty Mexican border town of Nogales.

There they visited a faith-based center that provides free lunches for hungry children, as well as a government shelter for 35 to 40 undocumented youths deported back to Mexico by the U.S. Border Patrol.

They also visited a remote water station in the Arizona desert set up by a nonprofit group called Humane Borders that works to prevent migrants from dying of thirst on their trek north.

The visit made a profound impression on Rabbi Bill Berk of Phoenix.

"We know what it feels like to be border crossers," said Berk, whose congregation, Temple Chai, is one of the largest in Arizona, with more than 1,100 families. "There's the issue of 'tzelem Elohim,' " the idea that all people are created in the image of God.

"The Talmud's take on this is that every human being has infinite worth," Berk said. "So to see human beings dying in the desert is an impossibility for a Jew of conscience." ■

According to the Tucson-based nonprofit group No More Deaths, 229 migrants have died in the Arizona desert so far this year — far more than the 200 men, women and children who died in Arizona in all of 2004 while trying to make the trek north. Nationwide, more than 2,600 migrants have perished along the entire U.S.-Mexico border since 1995.

The reason for the sudden jump in deaths, immigration activists say, is that the U.S. government has instituted an aggressive policy that has forced illegal migrants who might otherwise have been able to cross through urban areas like Nogales, Ariz.; El Paso, Tex.; or San Diego into dangerous deserts.

Most of the migrants died of dehydration, a grave risk in the Sonoran desert, where summer temperatures routinely exceed 110 degrees and water is scarce.

Jose Garza, a spokesman for the U.S. Border Patrol in the Tucson region, said that immigration-control policies were "working very well" in addressing a massive problem.

In the Tucson region alone, border patrol agents have apprehended more than 400,000 potential immigrants so far in 2005, and have saved 810 people suffering from se-

vere dehydration, Garza said.

"What we're seeing here are ruthless smugglers motivated by greed," he said. "They're willing to move these illegal aliens to the harshest regions of our desert to get them in to the U.S."

Before leaving Mexico, the Christian and Jewish leaders held a prayer service at the 14-foot-high wall in Nogales separating the two countries, then crossed the border and drove back north for a final gathering at El Tiradito, a Catholic shrine in downtown Tucson.

After various Christian leaders read passages from the Christian Bible and the sun began to sink over the distant mountains, Josh Protas, director of the local Jewish Community Relations Council, blew the shofar as a symbolic call to action as Catholics and Protestants from a half-dozen denominations looked on. ■

'To see human beings dying in the desert is an impossibility for a Jew of conscience.'

Rabbi Bill Berk
Phoenix-area rabbi

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Reform Jews organize relief efforts

The Reform Jewish movement established a project to help organize its Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

As part of Jacobs Ladder, the movement will stock supplies for those affected by the hurricane in a Mississippi warehouse close to the Union for Reform Judaism's Henry S. Jacobs Camp.

In addition to collecting monetary donations, the union is accepting donations of items such as bottled water, diapers, medical supplies and new blankets.

More information on donating is available at www.urj.org/give.

New Orleans synagogue OK

A historic synagogue in New Orleans suffered internal damage due to Hurricane Katrina, but its exterior is unscathed.

Rabbi Andrew Busch of the Touro Synagogue told JTA that a local police officer with ties to congregants was able to verify the building's condition.

Synagogue leaders hope to return soon to the shul to safeguard Torahs and other items; much of the staff is using temporary space in Congregation Beth Israel in Houston.

The synagogue bills itself as the oldest Jewish house of worship in America outside of the 13 original colonies.

Jewish chaplain off to New Orleans

A Jewish military chaplain was ordered to report to duty in the region hit by Hurricane Katrina.

Col. Jacob Goldstein was scheduled to leave Thursday for Ft. Gillem, Ga., where he was to be briefed on the situation and given necessary immunizations from an army doctor, www.Shmais.com reported.

Goldstein will then head to New Orleans to organize services for Jewish military personnel and emergency workers in the area.

MIDDLE EAST

Abbas cancels U.N. trip

Mahmoud Abbas called off a trip to the United Nations, citing mounting chaos in the Palestinian Authority.

Abbas was to attend next week's opening of the United Nations General Assembly, an event that would have allowed him to hold talks on the sidelines with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

But Abbas called off the trip Thursday after Gaza Strip gunmen assassinated a former P.A. security chief, Moussa Arafat.

Abbas is under pressure to demonstrate that he can rein in chaos in Gaza as Israel completes its withdrawal from the territory.

Disgraced former general keeps rank

A former Israeli defense minister convicted of sexual misconduct will be allowed to keep his reserve military rank.

A special army committee decided Thursday against demoting Yitzhak Mordechai, who was found guilty in 2001 of twice molesting female subordinates — once as head of the Israeli army's Northern Command and the second time as defense minister.

The convictions ended Mordechai's political career, which included a brief run for prime minister.

The army noted that Mordechai had paid a price for his crimes in terms of prestige and said there was no need to strip him of rank.

Tourism up in Jerusalem

Jerusalem hosted one million visitors this summer.

The Jerusalem Municipality said Thursday that visits this summer by both foreigners and Israelis were up as much as 84 percent over last year.

Especially popular attractions were the new museum at Yad Vashem and the Israel Museum, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Mayor Uri Lupolianski pledged that the municipality will work to encourage the trend during the coming year.

WORLD

Ukrainian Jewish government official resigns

The top Jewish aide to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko resigned.

Petro Poroshenko, head of the Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, quit Thursday amid allegations that Yushchenko's administration is mired in corruption.

Yushchenko later fired his entire Cabinet.

Poroshenko told the media he resigned to avoid accusations that he might pressure a team investigating corruption allegations.

Charges dropped against French comic

Charges were dropped against a French comic who was on trial for anti-Semitic comments.

A French appeals court ruled that Dieudonne was not attacking Jews as such, but rather a "small fraction of that community who profess extreme opinions and don't hesitate to turn to violent actions."

In releasing him from the charges, however, the presiding judge told Dieudonne, "Just because our court of justice is not sanctioning you does not make you right."

Dieudonne was being tried for comments he made during a sketch on a French television show, in which he dressed up as a rabbi and denounced "the American-Zionist Axis" and made a Nazi-style salute accompanied by "Isra-Heil!"

France 3, the channel that aired the show, publicly apologized for the offense.

Irish leader lauds Jews

The Irish Jewish community has made a tremendous contribution to the country, Ireland's prime minister said.

Speaking during a visit to the Irish Jewish Museum in Dublin, Bertie Ahern praised the Jews' role in the development of Irish life, especially in the first half of the 20th century, when the country experienced significant Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe.

Ahern helped mark the opening of the museum's new showcase on Jewish life in Cork, which was home to Ireland's first settlement of Jews in the 16th century.

Housed in a former synagogue in what was once Dublin's Jewish quarter, the museum celebrated its 20th anniversary in June.

Hungarians praise Gaza withdrawal

Hungary's top politicians praised Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

In meetings with European Jewish leaders this week, the politicians, including the prime minister, also assured European Jewish leaders that they would fight anti-Semitism.

A delegation of the European Jewish Congress, led by the EJC's new president, Pierre Besnainou, spent two days in Budapest and met with the prime minister, foreign minister and main opposition leader, as well as with Jewish community leaders.

The EJC also opened an office in Budapest, which it said would serve as a bridge between the EJC Paris headquarters and the small Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe.