

## IN THE NEWS

## Sharon warns U.N. about Iran

Ariel Sharon warned the U.N. General Assembly about Iranian nuclear ambitions.

The Israeli prime minister didn't mention Iran by name, but the target of his comments was clear.

"Even today, there are those who sit here as representatives of a country whose leadership calls to wipe Israel off the face of the earth, and no one speaks out," Sharon told delegates to the U.N. General Assembly in his speech to the body Thursday, the second day of the World Summit of international leaders.

## Bush condemns Gaza synagogue looting

President Bush condemned the destruction of synagogues in the Gaza Strip.

"We condemn the desecration of synagogues in Gaza that followed Israel's withdrawal," Bush said to loud applause Wednesday at a dinner, hosted in Washington by Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America and the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History to mark 350 years of Jewish life in America.

Before addressing the dinner, Bush paid his first visit to a U.S. synagogue as president, touring the historic Sixth and I Synagogue in downtown Washington and examining a Torah scroll that survived the Holocaust.

## House backs hate-crime expansion

The U.S. House of Representatives backed expansions to federal hate-crime laws.

The House approved the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act on Wednesday as an amendment to the Children's Safety Act of 2005, by a vote of 223-199.

The legislation would expand the definition of hate crimes to include those committed based on disability, sexual orientation and identity.

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# WORLD REPORT

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



Union for Reform Judaism

Volunteers in Mississippi prepare a warehouse as part of Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

## Groups ask: Will Katrina relief effort open door to faith-based expansion?

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Concern is mounting among some Jewish groups that the massive federal-relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina will become a launching pad for expanding faith-based initiatives and that some Jewish institutions might take federal money.

Congress already has approved \$62.3 billion in aid to the Gulf Coast region devastated by the late-August hurricane. Jewish groups say they expect the Bush administration to encourage faith-based groups to vie for some of that aid, which is available through Cabinet agencies.

Synagogues and Jewish day schools that

have set up shelters and other relief services will have to determine whether to accept the aid, and Jewish sites battered by the hurricane will have to decide whether to accept assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

There also is concern among liberal groups that future aid packages could contain specific provisions or grants for sectarian groups to provide government-funded relief efforts. That would put many Jewish groups and other opponents of faith-based initiatives in the unenviable position of opposing disaster relief.

"Obviously, Katrina will focus attention on the role of the faith-based community, because

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FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ Jewish groups wonder whether Hurricane Katrina will boost faith-based initiatives

*Continued from page 1*

they have so magnificently stepped up to the plate," said Rabbi David Saperstein, the director of the Washington-based Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

But, he said, the millions of private dollars religious groups have raised to date suggest that religious charities don't need federal aid.

Several Jewish groups worked to block legislation in President Bush's first term that would have allowed religious charities to compete with nonsectarian groups for federal aid. But the administration has circumvented Congress, creating offices in numerous Cabinet agencies to foster faith-based initiatives.

Liberal activists in the Jewish community fear there will be more opportunities for these groups to receive aid in Katrina's aftermath and that safeguards will be relaxed to expedite relief. That could set a dangerous precedent, they said.

"We're not going to sit on our hands, but it's difficult because we all feel the same about the human-needs aspect of this tragedy," said Michael Lieberman, the Washington counsel for the Anti-Defamation League.

At the same time, the Bush administration also set a precedent in 2002 by allowing the Seattle Hebrew Academy to receive FEMA aid after it was damaged by an earthquake a year earlier. Religious sites will be eligible for disaster assistance in the wake of Katrina, and many in the Jewish community view those programs as constitutional and proper.

"We decided we are not taking a formal position and letting our congregations decide for themselves," Saperstein said, adding that most synagogues in the New Orleans area had good insurance plans, including flood coverage, and may not need federal aid.

Many Jewish groups consistently oppose faith-based initiatives because they say such initiatives violate the separation of church and state. Specifically, they fear religious charities will proselytize with federal funding or discriminate against nonbelievers. They also say religious groups should not be allowed to receive exemptions from hiring-discrimination laws if they receive federal aid.

Jewish groups have struggled for some time to define what is a tolerable level of federal aid. Many groups advocated last year for federal aid for homeland-security appropriations for synagogues and other Jewish sites deemed high-risk terrorist targets. The Reform movement and the ADL, however, said that even that aid raised constitutional-policy questions.

Jewish social-service organizations routinely accept government aid; the church-state questions are limited to sectarian institutions, including synagogues and religious schools.

Orthodox groups take a different view, and the Orthodox Union has been an advocate for federal funding of faith-based initiatives.

"Many religious social-welfare groups are already on the ground," said Nathan Diament, the director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs. "They should be made equal partners."

The Conservative movement has not yet discussed the issue of federal aid, said Mark Waldman, the director of public policy for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. He said the organization and its partners have focused on relief efforts, deferring discussion of payments until later.

Jewish groups say their concern about faith-based initiatives doesn't focus on

FEMA, which long has operated in partnership with religious charities during natural disasters. FEMA guidelines state that charities that receive aid can't discriminate in providing assistance.

The concern is focused on other agencies, such as the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development, all of which have sought out religious charities in recent years.

"There may be a temptation to use the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina to forward unconstitutional and

discriminatory provisions of faith-based initiatives," Lieberman said. "We will resist any effort to use this tragedy to promote these suspect provisions."

Jewish leaders say they hope the focus on Katrina will expedite other legislation that could benefit the Jewish community.

The Charity, Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act would make charitable giving smoother by increasing tax incentives and easing donations from Individual Retirement Accounts.

Stephan Kline, the director of government affairs for the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group for North American Jewish federations, said he believed some elements of the act could be included in future Katrina-related appropriations.

The current CARE Act proposal does not include "equal treatment provisions" that indicate support for faith-based initiatives. Those measures were in previous versions.

Diament said he also hoped the disaster would expedite efforts to codify into law changes that Bush has made to FEMA regulations.

The Disaster Relief Equity Act would allow private, nonprofit facilities to receive disaster aid. It has been put forward by Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-La.), and officials say the legislation could get increased attention because Jindal represents Louisiana.

"It's just making clear that day schools in New Orleans would be eligible for FEMA dollars," Diament said. ■

**'There may be a temptation to use the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina to forward unconstitutional and discriminatory provisions of faith-based initiatives.'**

**Michael Lieberman**

Washington counsel  
for the Anti-Defamation League

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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).  
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# Austrian Jews hope to attract new immigrants

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

VIENNA (JTA) — Give us your tired, your poor, your Ukrainians.

Such is the vision of Ariel Muzicant, the president of Vienna's Jewish community. He hopes that its abundance of cultural, educational and social riches, coupled with Austria's healthy economy, will become a magnet for thousands of Jews living further east.

"We have the best infrastructure of any Jewish community in Europe. There are 14 rabbis, four Jewish schools, half a dozen kosher restaurants and 300 community events per year," Muzicant said. "This community is extremely rich — 7,000 is not enough."

The figure is the estimated number of Jews living in Vienna, with perhaps another 3,000 living elsewhere in Austria.

Muzicant sees no reason why Vienna's Jewish population can't reach 25,000 by 2020. Jews from poorer countries in the former Soviet bloc, particularly Ukraine, might be a source of new Jewish immigrants, he suggests.

Citing the recent rise of skinhead attacks against Jews in Ukraine — including one last month that left a student in a coma — Muzicant said, "We have fewer anti-Semitic incidents than anywhere else in Europe. Jews don't get attacked on the street here."

He shrugged off the stereotype of Austria as a hotbed of anti-Semitism.

"That was the old Austria. Now we have Europe's toughest jail time for Holocaust deniers and a government committed to fostering Jewish life," he said.

But Josef Zissels, a longtime Ukrainian Jewish leader and head of the Va'ad of Ukraine, an umbrella group for Jewish communities, said few Ukrainian Jews were looking to emigrate, despite their myriad difficulties.

"Jewish emigration from Ukraine is not dependent directly on the situation in Ukraine nor on the desire of Austrians. Most of those who really wanted to leave have left by now," he said.

According to Zissels, during the last year some 2,000 Ukrainian Jews made aliyah to Israel; 500 immigrated to the United States and 3,500 to 4,000 moved to Germany — just a fraction of the 40,000 Jews that were leaving Ukraine annually a decade ago. "Moreover, since 2000, Ukraine has

been showing a steady economic growth, and we even have over 1,000 Jews who come back to Ukraine each year," he says.

At the same time, he noted, "Austria could be an option for some Jews who have long wanted to emigrate to Germany and would find it increasingly difficult after Germany tightened its immigration policy toward Jews" earlier this year.

Austria was a beacon for Ukrainian and Polish Jews before the Holocaust. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jews from the Soviet Union made their way to Vienna and now account for the vast majority of Jews in the Austrian capital.

Muzicant also sees France as a potential source of Jewish immigration to Vienna.

"France is not a nice place for a Jew to live right now," he said, referring to anti-Semitic and anti-Israel attitudes there, particularly among Muslims.

Muzicant's comments puzzled at least one French Jew.

"I don't understand the reaction of Dr. Muzicant. His offer is very generous, but if we have anti-Semitism in France, we must try to understand it and fight it," said Marc Knobel, a researcher at the Representative Council of French Jewry. "It's not like we live in the USSR or Ethiopia."

Nonetheless, Muzicant says he will embark on a recruitment campaign in two years.

"There are 2.5 million Jews in Europe, and they don't all want to go to Israel," he said. "Ukraine has hundreds of thousands of Jews with no economic future, no Jewish future. They can have a more comfortable life here."

Muzicant, 53, a native of Haifa, in Israel, moved to Vienna as a child, with parents who hailed originally from Moldova and Russia.

One source of Muzicant's confidence may be his success in obtaining a massive compensation package for the Jewish community two months ago, after many years of struggle with the Austrian government.

A class-action suit against the government for Holocaust claims was settled in 2001, but the Vienna Jewish community was a holdout, arguing that the settlement did

not cover its property, which was confiscated by the Nazis or permanently "Aryanized."

"Muzicant is a fighter, and for what he has achieved from the government, he's to be admired," said Edward Serotta, the founder of the Vienna-based Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation on Jewish life.

Thanks to Muzicant's persistence, the Vienna community will receive about \$22.5 million from the state and a similar amount from the country's nine re-

gions as compensation for lost property.

"Now we have the necessary funds to rebuild our infrastructure," Muzicant said.

As the community's vice chairwoman, Erica Jacobovitz, noted, however, "It may look like a lot of money, but it is really far, far less than what the confiscated property was worth. Still, after 50 years of almost nothing, we should be thankful."

The amount of planning, building, repairing, and opening in Muzicant's Vienna community is dizzying.

In its first major renovation of a synagogue since the reopening of a temple in Graz seven years ago, the 200-seat Baden bei Wien synagogue, about 45 minutes south of the capital, was slated to open Thursday after a \$372 million renovation funded by the government. The town has only 45 Jews.

There were 79 synagogues in Vienna before World War II, only one of which still stands today, and a handful in other parts of the country.

The community's biggest real-estate undertaking is the construction of a Jewish school to replace an older one overflowing with 400 children, many of whom have to attend classes in mobile units.

The new school, which Muzicant hopes to start building in 2006 and finish the following year, will be twice as large as its predecessor and able to accommodate 600 children. Also funded by the government, it will feature a state-of-the-art sports-and-leisure center rivaling any such facility in the Austrian capital.

The community also is negotiating financing for a new home for the elderly to replace one that is 60 years old. So far, Muzicant has obtained two-thirds of the \$25 million he needs for the project. ■

Ukrainian Jews  
'can have a more  
comfortable life here.'

Ariel Muzicant

President, Vienna's Jewish community

AROUND  
THE JEWISH  
WORLD

# Scattered New Orleans leaders push on

By Gail Naron Chalew  
Baltimore Jewish Times

BALTIMORE (JTA) — Allan Bissinger was installed as president of the New Orleans Jewish Federation in an unconventional way last week.

At the hour that the federation's annual meeting was scheduled, he was having dinner in Baton Rouge with his predecessor, Bobby Garon, and several representatives of United Jewish Communities, the national organization for Jewish federations.

In lieu of a gavel, Garon passed Bissinger the reins of leadership by handing him a napkin wrapped around silverware.

Bissinger is living in Baton Rouge temporarily, the offices of the New Orleans federation are based in Houston and members of the New Orleans Jewish community are now living in 70 communities across the country.

This is definitely not business as usual.

When asked how the federation is handling this unprecedented situation, Sherri Tarr, the former Women's Campaign and Young Leadership director, said, "With a lot of patience, not much sleep and lots of sechel," or common sense.

In the first few days after Hurricane Katrina, "pikuach nefesh," the Jewish concept of the sanctity of a human life, was the federation's first priority. Adam Bronstone, the federation's community relations director, worked closely with the National Guard, directing it to the homes of stranded elderly Jewish shut-ins and helping in the evacuation to Houston of 300 residents of Woldenberg Village, a

Jewish nursing home. Unfortunately, two residents died en route.

Once everyone was evacuated, the focus shifted to finding out where people had relocated and helping people find their family and friends. Contact information for community members is updated daily on the federation's Web site, [www.jewishnola.com](http://www.jewishnola.com).

Just managing the flood of communication — from those offering to help and those needing help — has been overwhelming.

Eric Stillman, executive director of the New Orleans Jewish Federation, likens it to a "tsunami of communication, which has erupted from having 10,000 Jews scattered all across the country. Managing it requires a corps of volunteers from Houston and from New Orleans who have resettled in Houston."

The Jewish federation also is serving as a clearinghouse for community resources, matching people with available housing and jobs.

As they enter the third week of the post-Katrina era, the federation and its agencies are shifting focus once again, moving beyond survival needs to assessing the damage and planning for the future. The Jewish communal professionals charged with running these agencies are also gaining focus as well.

As Deena Gerber, executive director of New Orleans' Jewish Family Service, who is now living in Atlanta with her son and his family, said, "Before, I couldn't focus on anything for more than 15 seconds. Now I'm up to 60 seconds at a time."

Several factors make it so difficult to focus. The first is that the scale of the disaster is unprecedented in recent American history. How do you rebuild a

community from scratch when its leaders are located 80 to 350 miles away, and you're still looking for its members?

Furthermore, the cloud of uncertainty is all-enveloping, and the Jewish community is not the master of its own fate. Though much of the community's infrastructure seems to have fared relatively well, the decision to reopen buildings will be based on when basic services will be restored and when

the government will allow people to return.

What makes the task immeasurably more difficult is that the community leaders themselves are victims.

"How can I help Tulane students cope with their displacement when my family has been displaced as well, when my kids have been ripped from their lives too, and I need to help them adjust to a new home and a new school?" asked Paige Nathan, executive director of Hillel of New Orleans. "What I have been telling my four staff members over and over again is that they have to take care of their own needs first."

Added Jody Portnoff, Hillel's program director, "The students need me to build them up, to help them go forward with their lives. But I don't know if I have it in me to build them up when I need that support as well.

"And it is difficult for us in the helping professions, who are so used to giving help, to ask for and receive help."

Earlier this week, after receiving tetanus and Hepatitis A and B inoculations, Stillman, Bronstone and Mark Rubenstein, executive director of the country's third oldest synagogue, New Orleans' Touro Synagogue, flew into the flooded city with the Baton Rouge sheriff's staff to assess the damage.

Synagogues in the Uptown district, and the Uptown Jewish Community Center campus, suffered minimal damage. Synagogues in Metairie and the new Jewish community campus there — which houses the Metairie Jewish Community Center, the New Orleans Jewish Day School and the Jewish federation offices — took in

**'How can I help Tulane students cope with their displacement when my family has been displaced as well?'**

**Paige Nathan**

Executive Director, Hillel of New Orleans

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES



New Orleans' historic Touro Synagogue survived Katrina, but congregants were scattered across the country.

some water; flooring and sheetrock will have to be replaced.

Unfortunately, Beth Israel, the only synagogue in the Lakeview area near the levee breach, may have to be razed.

"We have unconfirmed information that because of the extensive flooding in that area, all the homes and buildings in that area will be razed completely. There was a large concentration of Jewish families in that area that will now be left homeless," Stillman said.

Baton Rouge, located 80 miles up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, is quickly becoming the nerve center of the area's Jewish community. Jewish Family Service, Jewish Endowment Foundation and the New Orleans Jewish Federation are in the process of setting up offices there, with assistance from United Jewish Communities and the local Jewish federation.

It's estimated that about 1,000 members of New Orleans' 10,000-member Jewish community now are living in the Louisiana capital, which has its own Jewish community of approximately 1,500. Some people speculate that many Jews from New Orleans will settle permanently in Baton Rouge

The only sure thing is that the face of New Orleans' Jewish agencies will change.

"Our clients will be different, our staff will no doubt be different as several may choose to relocate, and our services will be different," said Gerber of Jewish Family Services. "While we have always offered financial assistance, it has been for the very poorest of the poor Jews, for whom \$500-\$1,000 makes a big difference. Now we will need to get the middle class up and running, and those needs will be larger. We anticipate putting together packages of loans and grants for them, just like people put together for college.

"Before Katrina, we were already treating a six-year-old boy in counseling who had weather-phobia," she continued. "Can you imagine how he is faring and how many more children and adults will need such help?"

She went on: "Pre-Katrina, we had a very comprehensive teen-suicide prevention program that reached more than 7,000 high

school students each year. Next year, when the need will be stronger than ever, where will its funding come from? That is what keeps me up at night."

Hillel of New Orleans is connecting with the 2,000 Jewish students enrolled at Tulane University, albeit "virtually" for the most part — and from Baltimore, not from its building just off campus.

Nathan, Hillel's executive director, is staying in Baltimore with family members, and Hillel's program director, Jody Portnoff, will be relocating temporarily here.

"This is not the job we signed up for, but it is the job we need to do," Nathan said with a rueful smile.

The first priority is to identify where students are now enrolled and encourage Hillels on those campuses to reach out to them. One positive factor is that many Jewish students who had never before been involved in Tulane's Hillel have contacted Nathan, and she's adding them to her database.

In coming weeks, Hillel staff plans to go down the list and call as many students as possible, offering support and matching them with resources at the schools they're now attending.

In collaboration with Hillel International and relief agencies on the ground, Portnoff will be planning alternative winter and spring breaks for students from across the country to perform community service in devastated Gulf Coast communities.

In coming months, Nathan said she hopes to travel to campuses where there are sizable Tulane contingents, helping them strengthen not only their Jewish identity but also their Tulane Jewish identity.

The first such meeting was held at Chizuk Amuno Synagogue on Monday with about 35 Baltimore-area Jewish parents whose children attend Tulane, as well as Tulane students studying this semester



Michael C. Duke

Students from New Orleans show up on Sept. 6 at the Emery/Weiner Jewish Day School in Houston to enroll in classes.

at Goucher College and Johns Hopkins University.

Janet Kurland and Harriet Schlein of the Jewish Community Critical Incident Response Team, based at Jewish Family Services here, offered tips for coping with trauma and stress, and Nathan outlined New Orleans Hillel initiatives.

Madeleine Prior, a senior now studying at Johns Hopkins, had spent the spring semester in Europe and was looking forward to returning to Tulane.

"I am grieving for New Orleans, for the people I knew, for Tulane and for myself," she said, "and part of this grieving is that I am really angry, too, at how the government failed to respond to the victims."

Parents of freshmen who were in New Orleans just before the hurricane struck shared their evacuation experiences; those whose children did not evacuate with them shared their fears and worry. Yet all the parents interviewed for this article said they had no qualms about sending their children back to Tulane when the university opens.

Lee Meyerhoff Hendler, whose daughter, Josepha, is now spending the first semester of her freshman year at a university in Costa Rica, said, "Being in a city that is totally rebuilding itself will be a remarkable learning opportunity. If there is any silver lining in this disaster, it is the opportunity for students to become involved with and learn from this rebuilding."

Added Stephen David, whose daughter Julia is studying at Johns Hopkins, "Because of the experiences my daughter's class will have this year, they will have a very different perspective. They will return to Tulane with a real sense of purpose and will know that New Orleans is more than just Bourbon Street and the French Quarter."

**'We anticipate putting together packages of loans and grants for them, just like people put together for college.'**

**Deena Gerber**

Director, New Orleans' Jewish Family Service

# U.S. military will finally honor veteran

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — On Sept. 23, as Tibor Rubin enters the White House, generals will stand at rigid attention, President Bush will rise, and then he'll drape the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for gallantry in combat, around the neck of the 76-year-old Holocaust survivor and Korean War veteran.

Rubin and a legion of supporters have waited almost 55 years for this moment of triumph of camaraderie and persistence over bureaucratic lethargy and the prejudice that embittered the lives of so many old-time Jewish GIs.

Oddly, Rubin still does not know precisely which of his wartime feats met the Medal of Honor criterion of "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, in actual combat against an enemy armed force."

He guesses it might have been the time he secured a retreat route for his company by single-handedly defending a hill for 24 hours against waves of North Korean soldiers.

Or it might have been any of the other actions that earned him four recommendations for the Medal of Honor by his commanding officers or fellow soldiers, two times for the Distinguished Service Cross, and twice for the Silver Star.

Had he received all those awards, he would have become the most decorated American veteran of the Korean War. What

he actually got were two Purple Hearts for combat wounds and a 100 percent disability.

Rubin, known as "Tibi" to his Hungarian childhood friends and "Ted" to his army buddies, was born in Paszto, a Hungarian shtetl of 120 Jewish families, one of six children of a shoemaker.

At age 13, Rubin was transported to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, where he was liberated two years later by American troops. His parents and two sisters perished in the Holocaust.

In July of 1950, Pfc. Rubin found himself fighting on the frontlines of Korea with I Company, 8th Regiment, First Cavalry Division. There he encountered the terror of the company — First Sgt. Artice Watson.

According to lengthy affidavits submitted by nearly a dozen men — mostly self-described "country boys" from the South and Midwest — Watson was a vicious anti-Semite who consistently "volunteered" Rubin for the most dangerous patrols and missions.

Rubin's bravery during such missions so impressed two of his commanding officers that they recommended him three times for the Medal of Honor. Both officers were later killed in action, but not before telling Watson to initiate the necessary paperwork to secure the medals for Rubin.

Some of the men in Rubin's company were present when Watson was ordered to put in for the medals, and all are convinced that he deliberately ignored the orders.

"I believe in my heart that First Sgt. Watson would have jeopardized his own safety rather than assist in any way whatsoever in the awarding of the medal to a person of Jewish descent," wrote Cpl. Harold Speakman in a notarized affidavit.

Toward the end of October 1950, massive Chinese troop concentrations crossed the border into North Korea and attacked the Americans. After most of his regiment had been wiped out, the severely wounded Rubin was captured and spent the next 30 months in a prisoner-of-war camp.

Faced with constant hunger, filth and disease, most of the GIs simply gave up.

All except Rubin: Almost every evening,

he would sneak out of the camp to steal food from the Chinese and North Korean supply depots.

"He shared the food evenly among the GIs," Cormier wrote. "He also took care of us, nursed us, carried us to the latrine . . . He did many good deeds, which he told us were 'mitzvahs' in the Jewish tradition . . . He was a very religious Jew, and helping his fellow men was the most impor-

tant thing to him."

Survivors of the camp credited Rubin with keeping 35 to 40 people alive, and recommended him for the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star.

Sgt. Carl McClendon, a soldier saved by Rubin, wrote: "He had more courage, guts and fellowship than I ever knew anyone had. He is the most outstanding man I ever met, with a heart of gold. Tibor Rubin committed everyday bravery that boggles the mind."

For some 30 years after his discharge, Rubin lived quietly in a small house in Garden Grove, Calif. with his wife Yvonne, a Dutch Holocaust survivor. The couple reared two children: Frank, an Air Force veteran, and a daughter, Rosalyn.

It wasn't until the 1980s that Rubin's old army buddies started protesting the army's inaction in recognizing the man who had saved so many of their lives.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) introduced a special bill on Rubin's behalf in 1988. Former Rep. Robert Dornan (R-Calif.) pleaded for recognition of his constituent. Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.) and former Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) kept harassing the Pentagon.

The Jewish War Veterans have championed Rubin's cause for many years and at one point collected 42,000 signatures on a petition presented to President Reagan.

Then, in the mid-1990s, the U.S. military, now a model equal-opportunity employer, was forced to revisit its record of discrimination against minorities during World War II and the Korean War.

A list containing the names and wartime records of 138 Jewish veterans was sent to the Pentagon. All the men listed had received the service cross from one of the military branches. The exception was Rubin, though his file was the thickest of all. ■

'He had more courage, guts and fellowship than I ever knew anyone had.'

Sgt. Carl McClendon  
Korean War veteran

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES



Courtesy of Tibor Rubin

Tibor Rubin, in Korea in 1950.

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Surf's up at Orthodox shul in Maine town

By BRAM EISENTHAL

**O**LD ORCHARD BEACH, Maine, (JTA) — For close to a century, a tiny Orthodox synagogue on the edge of a clean, seven-mile stretch of beachfront jammed with resorts and motels has served the spiritual needs of thousands of Jewish vacationers from New England and Eastern Canada.

Thanks to the efforts of two brothers from Haverhill, Mass., whose childhood reminiscences of quaint Old Orchard Beach summers lured them back here permanently, Congregation Beth Israel is still able to serve those needs.

True, Jews don't flock here for vacations or to their summer homes, as they did during Old Orchard's heyday in the 1940s and '50s.

"People still come all summer, though, and we rely on the tourists for our services," said Eber Weinstein, 55, a real estate agent who has lived here since 1972. "We do get minyans for Shabbat and Sunday morning services."

Weinstein once owned a retail store nearby that sold anything kosher that he could get his hands on, until his market evaporated. Now, Old Orchard Beach is experiencing a renaissance.

Weinstein is one of five brothers living in the town, along with their mother, Beatrice. He and his brother Neil, a lawyer, have made the upkeep and operation of the synagogue their responsibility.

Virtually everything is donated, including the stained-glass windows that add to the synagogue's uniqueness.

There hasn't been a rabbi here for many years, so Eber Weinstein, who doubles as the synagogue's president, leads services and tutors Bar Mitzvah boys, while Neil Weinstein replaces lights and prepares kiddushim.

Most of the area's former Jewish businesses are gone. Where Freedman's Kosher Bakery and Shefshick's Kosher Meat Department once stood, you now find The Barefoot Boy eatery and Pierre's Restaurant.

Today the local Jewish community is small, made up mostly of Sephardic Israelis. ■

## Tsunami relief efforts pay off

By GUY SHARETT

KRABI, Thailand (JTA) — For Sukanya Waharak, a Thai villager in an area devastated by last December's tsunami, a scholarship provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee helps send her children to school.

"My husband does not work because of mental illness, so I have to take care of our two kids. I sell food, but things are not easy after the tsunami because so many of our fishing boats were destroyed," Waharak says. "Thanks to your projects, I can pay the school fees of 3,000 baht per term," or about \$75.

Then she starts crying. After a few seconds, she points at flowers that she cultivates.

"When I'm down, I take care of my flowers and then things look as if they would turn out fine after all," she says, managing a smile.

Waharak was speaking to a group of JDC board members who traveled to Thailand late last month to visit projects the organization is running for tsunami victims. Through early this month the JDC raised \$18.5 million for tsunami relief through its emergency mailbox, contributions raised by individual federations, foundations and private donors.

Only 5 percent of Thailand's population is Muslim, but they make up the majority in the south of the country, which was hard-hit by the catastrophe.

"Muslim suicide bombers do not represent us. We teach our children to be tolerant toward other religions. Islam wants all people in the world to be happy," says Abdul Ghoni Mukhura, imam of the mosque in the village of Khao Thong.

Mukhura was standing at the village school as JDC board members inaugurated a computer laboratory and a playground.

It's not clear if Mukhura knew that the JDC is a Jewish organization; like many locals, he didn't mention the word "Jews" when talking of the JDC's help, and the JDC doesn't flaunt its background in its relief projects.

In any case, religious differences don't seem to matter when it comes to relief in Thailand's ravaged areas.

The JDC and a local non-governmental organization, the Population and Com-

munity Development Association, or PDA, have been helping villagers with various projects.

"I like to study English, but unfortunately we don't learn that much nowadays as our teacher is very busy with other assignments," says Arirat Wutpram, 10. "I hope I can use the new computer lab so I can learn more. Thanks for thinking about us." ■

The 15 computers at the center will be used by children during the day, and can be used by adults at night.

Many local fishing villages are finding it hard to survive after the storm, which destroyed half of the fishing boats in Khao Thong. It also created drinking water problems.

"At first we wanted to help tsunami survivors around Phuket, where the damage was greatest," says Eli Eliezri, who runs JDC's projects in Thailand. "Then our local partner, PDA, recommended to us to go to places which are less developed and have less tourism,

where the government does not invest much and there are less activities by nongovernmental organizations, so here we are. I think it was the right decision. There is a sea of things to be done."

In addition to offering scholarships, the organization has started a village bank to lend money to fishermen who lost their boats.

In the coconut and rubber tree plantations in the village of Taling Chan, the tsunami killed a dozen villagers and destroyed one-third of the fishing boats. A pipe water system is being constructed with JDC funds that will provide drinking water for hundreds of families.

Another project is a two-day youth camp at the local school.

"It's not just about giving money, it's about collaborating with a local organization which shares our values and involves the local people," says Will Recant, JDC's associate executive vice president. "I actually had expected more of a cultural divide, but I see that there are more similarities than differences between us and our partners."

Eliezri hopes to help villagers in Bang Pat build a new mosque, as the old one is too small.

"We did it in Kosovo and it worked out beautifully," he says. "Why not here?" ■

'There is a sea of things to be done.'

Eli Eliezri

JDC Project Coordinator

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Blair: U.K. to work against Iranian nukes

Tony Blair said Britain would put its weight behind efforts to end Iran's nuclear ambitions.

In a meeting Thursday with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the British prime minister said Great Britain would wield its influence in the European Union to ensure that Iran is not let off the hook, a spokesman for Sharon told JTA.

"Britain's position is unequivocally against" Iran's nuclear aspirations, Ra'anan Gissin said. Sharon told Blair that Iran was reaching the "point of no return," where it will be able to produce nuclear materials, Gissin said.

### Chief rabbis meet pope

Israel's two chief rabbis called on the pope to condemn the Palestinian destruction of abandoned synagogues in the Gaza Strip.

In what was described as a cordial and heartfelt meeting Thursday with Pope Benedict XVI, the rabbis also urged him to establish an annual day for Catholics to reflect on Catholic-Jewish relations and join with Jews around the world to discuss how to fight anti-Semitism.

Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar met for 45 minutes with the pope at his summer residence south of Rome.

It was Benedict's first formal meeting with them and was part of commemorations marking the 40th anniversary of the Vatican's Nostra Aetate declaration that opened the way for Catholic-Jewish dialogue.

### Qatar, Israel may establish full relations

Qatar said it's considering establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The establishment of a Palestinian state would not be a condition of the upgrade in relations, Qatar's foreign minister, Sheik Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al-Thani, told Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom at a meeting Thursday at the United Nations, a spokesman for Shalom told JTA.

"It's great news," Shalom's spokesman said. "We were very delighted to hear it."

### Blair questions terror's cause

Tony Blair told the U.N. Security Council that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a root cause of global terrorism.

Offering a resolution on terrorism at the United Nations on Wednesday, the British prime minister insisted that Islamic fundamentalists are exploiting Middle East unrest to further their own cause and emphasized how, in the Palestinian territories, "terrorism does not create progress but destroys it."

Still, he said, the world had an obligation to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Security Council unanimously passed Blair's proposal to outlaw incitement to terrorism, though it failed to reach an agreement on a definition of terrorism.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Reform raises concerns on Roberts

The Reform movement expressed "strong concern" about John Roberts' nomination for chief justice of the United States.

The movement's Commission on Social Action did not vote to oppose the nomination but sent a letter Thursday to senators saying that Roberts holds "views in stark contrast to our own core values."

The letter, signed by Robert Heller, the board chairman of the Union for Reform Judaism, and Jane Wishner, the chairwoman of the

commission, expressed concerns that Roberts did not answer specific questions about his views on issues such as reproductive rights and the separation of church and state.

### House committee backs Israel on world panel

A congressional committee passed a resolution supporting Israel's accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The resolution, sponsored by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) passed the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations Committee on Thursday.

It says that the Jewish state has met the economic and institutional criteria to join the body and shares the commitment to a market economy of its other members.

### U.S., Israel update extradition treaty

The United States updated its extradition treaty with Israel.

President Bush forwarded the updated treaty to the Senate on Thursday for ratification.

The new protocol, signed in Jerusalem in July, "will, upon entry into force, enhance cooperation between the law enforcement communities of both nations and make a significant contribution to international law enforcement efforts," Bush said in a letter to the Senate.

### Security manual available for High Holidays

The Anti-Defamation League updated its security manual for Jewish institutions in preparation for the High Holidays.

"Protecting Your Jewish Institution: Security Strategies for Today's Dangerous World" is available at [www.adl.org/security](http://www.adl.org/security).

"Rather than allowing anxiety and fear to control how we live our lives, the manual contains some of the tools that will help Jewish institutions be a part of their own security solutions," said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

The High Holidays begin this year on the evening of Oct. 3.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Ex-settlers still unsettled

Most former Gaza Strip settlers are still living in Israeli hotels, without alternative housing.

According to government figures furnished Thursday, 80 percent of the 8,500 settlers evacuated from Gaza last month are being put up in hotels paid for by the state.

The government, which has accused many of the evacuees of foot-dragging in efforts to find new homes in Israel, has threatened to withdraw the hotel funding beginning Friday.

The settlers say too little has been done to keep their original communities intact in new accommodations inside Israel.

### Rabbis, imams meet

Eight rabbis and imams from the Middle East and Africa are meeting to discuss cooperation between Judaism and Islam.

The group meeting Sept 14-16 in Florence, Italy, forms the Executive Committee of the World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace, which was founded in January.

Executive member Rabbi David Rosen said the main purpose of the initiative is "to change perceptions, develop relations and convey messages within the communities about brotherhood, sisterhood, friendship and cooperation."

Rosen, the Jerusalem-based director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, is also the chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.