



## IN THE NEWS

### Accept gays, Yoffie presses evangelists

The president of the Reform movement brought a message of tolerance for gays to the university founded by televangelist Rev. Jerry Falwell.

Delivering the weekly convocation Wednesday at Liberty University, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said Reform Jews and evangelical Christians had much in common.

However, he pointed out differences on issues such as abortion and gay rights.

"Gay Americans pose no threat to their friends, neighbors or coworkers. When two people make a lifelong commitment to each other, we believe it is wrong to deny them the legal guarantees that protect them and their children and benefit the broader society," he said.

### Israeli forces foil Holocaust day attack

Israeli security forces foiled a Palestinian terrorist attack planned for Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Troops captured three would-be suicide bombers near the West Bank city of Nablus on Tuesday as they tried to circumvent military checkpoints.

The detainees, from the Fatah faction, said that they were headed for an attack on Israel.

### American Jew wins London Marathon

A 33-year-old Jewish woman from California became the first American to win the London Marathon. Deena Kastor's time of 2:19:35 on Sunday was nearly two minutes better than her closest competitor's.

Kastor was favored to win the women's race after her victory in the Chicago marathon last year and second place finish in the Berlin half-marathon in April.

The former track runner earned a bronze medal for America in the 2004 Olympics.

# WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler/JTA

Chasidic reggae singer Matisyahu performs at a Jerusalem club in December 2005.

## Popularity of Jewish culture poses challenges for those with the money

By CHANAN TIGAY

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — Heeb. Matisyahu. Guilt & Pleasure. Times are flush if you're a young, culturally minded Jew.

Indeed, the last few years have seen an explosion in artistic and cultural activity by and for Jews. Matisyahu, a Chasidic reggae singer, for example, has sold more than 500,000 albums. And Heeb, a Jewish magazine aimed at young hip Jews, is the subject of much chatter and numerous articles in the mainstream media.

"There's a mammoth market for this," said Roger Bennett, publisher of Guilt & Pleasure, which defines itself as "a magazine for Jews and the people who love them" and which sold out its first issue in November.

With intermarriage rampant, synagogue membership among young Jews on the decline and a general sense that younger Jews are less connected to Judaism, Jewish communal

leaders are on the lookout for ways to get the younger generation to connect and to engage in a conversation about Jewish identity, community and meaning.

Some of these young people, and, increasingly, some of their elders, say that the way to their hearts — and minds and pocketbooks — is through artistic and cultural exchange: Jewish music, books, movies and art.

But along with the explosion of Jewish arts come many questions. At its recent conference in Denver, the Jewish Funders Network offered several panels and discussions on

the place of arts and culture in today's Jewish milieu. At the conference and beyond, Jewish thinkers are asking whether the arts should be viewed as a gateway to further Jewish involvement or are valuable as a destination in and of themselves.

The debate may be meaningless to a group of Jews dancing at a Matisyahu concert but it

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FOCUS  
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## ■ Jewish arts and media have exploded recently, but who is going to pay for it?

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has practical applications in terms of funding for Jewish culture. Artistic endeavors cost money, and the people with the money tend not to be the same young people attracted to reggae music, even if it is being sung by a guy in a long beard and black hat.

"There is no easy way to quantify the value of art," Connie Wolf, director of the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, said during one such panel at the gathering of Jewish foundations. "When it comes to art, there are always more questions than answers."

But others, while acknowledging culture's appeal, wonder whether such pursuits are likely to produce committed Jews or are apt to fizzle out.

"I think everything that we've learned in the last hundred years teaches us that the bonds of religion are actually much stronger than the bonds of culture," Jonathan Sarna, a professor at Brandeis University and a leading commentator on American Jewish history, said in an interview.

Still, Sarna believes that just as venture capital firms fund numerous startups knowing that only a few will succeed, some Jewish cultural initiatives — those that appear to be successful and cost-effective — ought to be funded by the Jewish community.

It is clear these cultural endeavors are popular. Ari Kelman, a research fellow at Hebrew Union College, recently completed two studies of contemporary Jewish cul-

ture in New York along with sociologist Steven M. Cohen. He discussed the findings at the funders conference.

"The numbers exceed anybody's expectations," he said "People are dying for it."

Young Jews, the studies found, are less and less interested in taking part in activities that are strictly Jewish. And while taking part in a Jewish cultural activity may not spur many to join a synagogue or give to their local federation, they may go to another cultural event.

"It gets them to do other Jewish stuff in this sphere," said Kelman, author of the forthcoming book, "Station Identification: A Cultural History of Yiddish Radio." "If they go to a concert, they'll go to another concert — including people who have never been to one before."

Funders young and old are grappling with this new phenomenon.

"The generation that is older has to understand that engagement that looks different than the way they engaged is still engagement," said Danielle Durchslag, 25, of New York, a board member of the Nathan Cummings Foundation and a founding member of Grand Street, a network of twentysomethings who are involved in their family philanthropies.

As Jewish artistic expressions proliferate, many of these older funders — from wealthy individuals to family foundations to Jewish federations — are beginning to come around to the idea.

"It seems to me that our elders are at a point where they're beginning to listen to the message," Durchslag said, on the sidelines of the funders conference.

But Bennett, also senior vice president at the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, acknowledged the difficulties inherent in pushing this trend.

"For this to work," he said, more established donors "have to essentially support projects for which they are not the desired end users. It's a very hard emotional thing for a funder."

Richard Siegel, executive director of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, said that convincing people to allocate their

dollars to the arts has not been easy.

"There's tremendous resistance, as a general statement, to funding this sort of culture in Jewish life," he said. "But I'd say that there is also significant resistance for the support of culture in the broader American society. I don't necessarily think that we're a unique community in that regard."

"There's a sense that culture is entertainment and if it's entertainment, then those who are entertained should pay for it," Siegel added. "But culture is far more than entertainment. It's about education. It's a means of values transmission. It's a means of looking into the nature of the

community in a new and open way."

Alisa Rubin Kurshan, vice president for strategic planning and organizational resources at UJA-Federation of New York, said her group has been funding cultural projects for years. She cites as examples an annual Jewish cultural festival in New York and a Jewish record label.

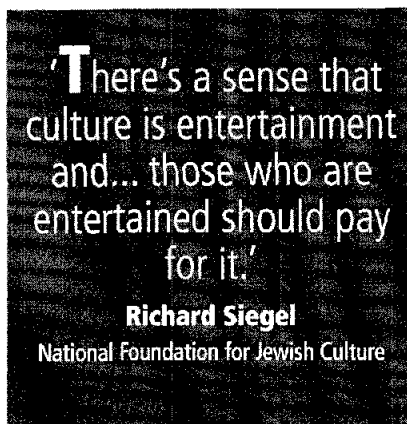
"We are, in fact, funding these culturally rich Jewish experiences because we understand that they lead to higher forms of Jewish engagement," she said. "We also have other strategies that try to reach the affiliated Jews that help them become more engaged and connected to Jewish life."

For Sarna, the long-term implications of approaching Jewish culture as a destination rather than a gateway to involvement are troubling.

"If it remains a destination, then I fear that we may find that many of these Jews deeply committed to secular, cultural Judaism may discover that their children and grandchildren are happy to view that culture as part of their ancestral background but will not see the same need to pass it on to their generational offspring," he said.

But for Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, all this represents an enormous opportunity.

"Gen. X and Gen. Y are extraordinarily self-confident; we have to present a self-confident Judaism," he said. "As we begin to measure connection between these portals and connection to Jewish life, donors will start to say, 'I get it.'"



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# Study: Lesbians, gays don't feel welcome

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's hard to make good decisions without all the facts.

That's the message that a team of researchers studying lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews hope to send to the organized Jewish world as it grapples with its approach to homosexuality.

Mosaic: The National Jewish Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, a Denver-based advocacy group, in March released the first of three studies it plans to undertake in the coming year on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews.

The preliminary study looked at the interplay between Jewish organizations and the LGBT community in the Denver/Boulder area. Surveying 32 Jewish communal professionals who represent roughly 40 percent of the region's Jewish organizations, the report determined that Colorado's Jewish institutions have a long way to go in terms of LGBT inclusion.

Shawn Landres, a Mosaic board member who serves as research director of Synagogue 3000, a trans-denominational synagogue revitalization effort, applauded the studies for providing data for the public debate.

"This is an important first step in changing the conversation about what we know and how we know it," he said.

"We don't know how many LGBT Jews have given up on Jewish life because they feel so excluded that all the pictures are of the husband and the wife and the 2.5 kids, and how many LGBT folks are sitting there feeling simply fantastic that their synagogue has got it right," he continued. "We're flying blind right now."

Whether the situation in Denver is mirrored at the national level is unclear.

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said that though Conservative synagogues have made strides in including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews, there's still more work to be done.

"It's a real challenge to help people feel better and more involved and more closely connected to the synagogue, he said. "We can't use halachah as an excuse for not reaching out in any way that you could."

The Conservative movement is in the

midst of re-evaluating its approach to homosexuality, with a decision expected in December.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said the study results were "not surprising."

"We've been conscious and concerned about this question for a long time," he said. "But there are pockets in our movement that could do better."

The Colorado study, conducted from December 2004 to December 2005, found that while many of the institutions considered themselves open and welcoming, lesbian and gay Jews disagreed.

The 21 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender Jews surveyed communicated feelings of alienation from the Jewish community at large.

Gregg Drinkwater, Mosaic's executive director, said the tension stems from an inherent misunderstanding of the meaning of inclusiveness.

"For Jewish community professionals, being welcoming is being blind to difference," he explained. "The LGBT community wants a step beyond tolerance. They want inclusive and welcoming — affirming difference, not ignoring it."

Drinkwater said lesbian and gay Jews can't help but stand out in Jewish life, which emphasizes heterosexual rituals like weddings and singles events.

Affiliation rates in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community remain lower than for other Jews. For example, the "overwhelming majority" of Denver/Boulder's LGBT Jews — which Mosaic estimates at 5,000, out of a total Jew-

ish population it sets at 75,000 — are unaffiliated or minimally involved, according to the study.

"Why would you want to be a member of a club that doesn't want you?" Drinkwater asked.

Sharon Kleinbaum, senior rabbi at New York City's Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, which serves primarily gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Jews, also described an air of exclusivity.

"It's a little bit like a WASPy country club," she said. "They say, 'Of course we'll allow Jewish country club members, as long as they act and talk and walk just like us.'"

Drinkwater said Mosaic plans to use the findings to spark dialogue among staff in synagogues, JCCs and local federations.

"We want to show them, 'Here's what you've been doing, here's what's been effective, and here's what needs to be done to be five times more effective,'" he said.

Mosaic's future projects, slated to begin this

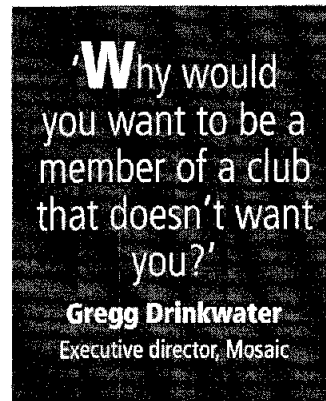
fall, should help facilitate the discussion.

One initiative would institute a national rating system for synagogues based on receptivity to LGBT Jews. This directory will be published online with a clickable map, Drinkwater said.

A second project aims to create a catalogue of best practices for inclusion. To do so, researchers will study three model synagogues where LGBT Jews are fully welcomed into Jewish communal life.

"We need a realistic understanding of the level of current participation, what's working and what's not," Drinkwater said. "It's about being informed decision-makers."

FOCUS  
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ISSUES



## Jewish student fights tolerance policy

NEW YORK (JTA) — A U.S. Jewish student is the co-plaintiff in a suit against her university's tolerance policy.

Orit Sklar and Ruth Malhotra, a Christian, are suing the Georgia Institute of Technology for unspecified damages, saying that the school's ban on hate speech due to sexual orientation infringes on their religious freedom.

Both students are members of the Georgia Tech College Republicans. Malhotra was reprimanded by the school for violations of its tolerance policy, including a letter she sent to gay activists in 2004.

The letter, sent on behalf of the student Republicans, referred to the campus gay-rights group Pride Alliance as a "sex club" that "can't even manage to be tasteful." ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Shootout at Gaza crossing

The Palestinian Authority said it prevented a terrorist attack Wednesday on the border with the Gaza Strip. P.A. policemen stationed on the Gaza side of the Karni border crossing spotted a suspicious car, and opened fire.

The vehicle's occupants shot back, wounding three policemen, and then fled. P.A. officials said the car probably was loaded with explosives to be detonated next to the Israeli installation at Karni, which terrorists have targeted repeatedly in the past.

It was not immediately clear to which Palestinian faction the escaped gunmen belonged.

#### Zarqawi threatens Israel

The leader of Al-Qaida in Iraq threatened a holy war on Israel. Appearing unmasked for the first time in a video statement released this week, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi decried a supposed "Zionist and Crusader" plot against the Muslim world.

"Holy Jerusalem will be liberated only through jihad," he said. "To the U.S. administration, to Bush the commander of the Crusader assault, to his Jewish personnel, to the Crusaders and to the traitorous Muslims, we say: They will not enjoy one moment of quiet as long as there is blood in our veins."

Osama bin Laden named the Jordanian-born Zarqawi to lead Al-Qaida's contingent in the Iraqi insurgency.

#### Palestinian gunman killed

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian gunman during a West Bank raid. Commandos swooped on Yamoun village near Jenin on Wednesday, detaining a wanted Islamic Jihad terrorist.

Coming under fire from local gunmen, the troops shot back, killing a member of the Al-Aksa Brigade. There were no Israeli casualties.

#### Olmert, pensioners agree

Ehud Olmert signed up his first partner for Israel's coalition government.

Gil, the pensioners party, joined forces with Olmert's Kadima Party on Wednesday, expanding the prime minister's parliamentary command from 29 to 36 seats.

Olmert still is courting the Labor Party and two smaller factions in hope of clinching a Knesset majority.

Gil has been promised two Cabinet portfolios in the next government — the Health Ministry and the custom-made Pensioners Ministry.

#### Israelis undeterred in Sinai

Hundreds of Israeli tourists remain in the Sinai despite this week's terror attacks there.

According to Foreign Ministry figures, just a few dozen of some 1,700 Israelis currently vacationing at Red Sea resorts returned home after Monday's triple bombing in Dahab, which killed 24 people and was followed by two explosions Wednesday that caused no fatalities.

An estimated 17,000 Israelis visited Sinai over the recent Passover holiday and Israeli officials noted that the visits continue despite regular alerts of impending terror attacks in the peninsula. Three Israelis were wounded in the Dahab bombings.

#### Another Likudnik in trouble

A former lawmaker from Israel's Likud Party was convicted of impropriety. Jerusalem Magistrate's Court on Wednesday found Yehiel Hazan guilty of double-voting on a 2003 resolution in the Knesset

and then trying to gain access to the ballot board to erase evidence of his wrongdoing.

The counts against him — fraud, forgery and breach of trust — carry heavy potential jail sentences.

#### Israelis in more pain

Israelis have a higher incidence of chronic pain than do people in other countries, a study found. According to Ben-Gurion University data released this week, 46 percent of Israelis report suffering from chronic pain, while such complaints occur in only 10 percent to 40 percent of foreign populations. Two-thirds of Israeli sufferers are women, and 40 percent fall between the ages of 25-50. The most common form of Israelis' chronic pain occurs is back pain — connected, perhaps, to training during mandatory military service.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### NASA consults on Shabbat in space

NASA is looking into making its international space station amenable to Torah-observant astronauts.

The space agency is planning to consult rabbis on issues such as determining the station's position so Jews know where to face while praying; making kosher food available; and observing Shabbat in space, according to Yediot Achronot's Ynet Web site.

The space station is expected to host astronauts from other countries, and efforts have been made to include Israelis. Similar questions arose when Israeli astronaut Col. Ilan Ramon went to space. Ramon brought kosher food with him and is said to have kept Shabbat.

### WORLD

#### More Chernobyl kids to Israel

Chabad brought another 23 children from Chernobyl to Israel. The children arrived on Wednesday, 20 years to the day since the nuclear meltdown in the Ukrainian city.

Chabad has brought 2,371 children to Israel since the disaster. According to a recent Greenpeace report, the number of blood and nervous system disorders and other conditions has risen in neighboring Belarus, which received 70 percent of the nuclear fallout from the accident.

The incidence of a variety of cancers also has risen dramatically. Chabad's effort to bring children to Israel began in 1990 after Jewish parents in contaminated areas, fearing for their children's lives, appealed to the Lubavitcher rebbe.

#### Yom Hashoah siren in South Africa

In what is believed to be a first outside Israel, a siren was sounded for a minute from Cape Town's Jewish community center to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

At the same time, parliamentarians in the city interrupted their proceedings and stood for a minute's silence.

The siren was switched on by Holocaust survivor Mike Breslin at 10 a.m., the same time it's sounded in Israel.

The event was covered by local media and the siren was broadcast on national radio, meaning that it was heard nationwide.

The move was the initiative of David Hersch, chairman of the Western Province Zionist Council, who heard the sirens last year in Israel on Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron — the memorial day for Israel's fallen soldiers — and said he was "very touched."

Plans were afoot to install a permanent siren to be sounded by the Cape Town Jewish community on Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron. "It is our ardent hope that it will come to be sounded around the world," Hersch said.