

## IN THE NEWS

**Labor joins  
Kadima coalition**

Israel's Labor Party agreed to join the new Kadima-led coalition government.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Labor leader Amir Peretz reached a deal Thursday morning and a public signing was done later in the day, a Kadima spokesman said.

Labor will be the biggest government partner for Kadima, which won last month's Israeli elections.

The Sephardi Orthodox faction Shas is in the last stages of coalition talks with Kadima.

Labor is expected to get seven Cabinet portfolios, including the Defense Ministry.

**Gaza air strike  
kills Jihad gunman**

A Palestinian terrorist died in an Israeli air strike on the Gaza Strip. Israeli aircraft fired missiles at two cars carrying Islamic Jihad gunmen in northern Gaza on Thursday, killing one and seriously wounding another.

At least two other terrorists escaped before their car exploded. Israeli security sources said the Islamic Jihad squad was en route to carrying out an attack.

**Study: Holocaust  
affects Jewish identity**

The Holocaust is proving more important than Israel in positively affecting Jewish identity among many young Jews, a new study found.

The American Jewish Committee study on young American Jews was released Thursday. However, the report continued, among the Orthodox and those who have traveled to Israel, Israel retains a powerful positive resonance.

The report also found that young Jews connect to Judaism in less conventional ways than their elders, and that young Orthodox adults are likely to be a much larger, and hence more influential, group in the future.

# WORLD REPORT

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## At evangelical school, Reform rabbi presses tolerance for gay marriage

By RON KAMPEAS

**L**YNCHBURG, Va. (JTA) — The band praised Jesus, the pastor prayed for the unsaved and the rabbi preached understanding for gay unions.

In what Jerry Falwell said was a first in the 32 years of his Liberty University, a rabbi helped the controversial televangelist deliver the weekly convocation Wednesday in the packed campus stadium.

But not just any rabbi: Eric Yoffie, leader of the Union for Reform Judaism, who sharply criticized the religious right in an address last November to the Reform movement's biennial convention.

Falwell's invitation was a signal of reconciliation after some difficult times between evangelicals and Jews, all sides conceded.

"To communicate our concerns to their flock is positive," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who like Yoffie has led recent Jewish criticism of the evangelical right.

"By going there, he did not give a hechsher," or stamp of approval, "to Falwell's views; he gave expression to Falwell's reaching out," he said.

Yoffie's appearance was a salve after a spate of differences over Christian proselytizing of Jews; evangelical enthusiasm for the Hollywood mega-hit "The Passion of the Christ," a film many Jews regarded as anti-Semitic; and Pat Robertson's recent suggestion that God struck down Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in retribution for last summer's Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Yoffie began by emphasizing common ground on issues such as Israel and defending persecuted religious minorities



URI

Reform Judaism leader Rabbi Eric Yoffie, left, stands with televangelist Jerry Falwell during an April 26, visit to Falwell's Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

overseas. He earned warm applause when he praised evangelicals for their resolute opposition to what he called "the moral crisis in America."

But he was equally resolute in laying out Reform's fundamentals, including church-state separation, a woman's right to be the ultimate arbiter in an abortion and legal protection for gay couples.

"Gay Americans pose no threat to their

*Continued on page 2*

## ■ Yoffie started with similarities between the two groups, then spoke of gay marriage

*Continued from page 1*

friends, neighbors or co-workers, and 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," Yoffie said to shocked murmurs, scattered hisses and boos.

Falwell chastised his students, telling them he had never been booed in a synagogue. Aside from that, the reception for Yoffie was warm.

Falwell said Yoffie's tone was as important as his message.

"He came across in a loving, respectful way," Falwell told JTA after the convocation.

Students said they were happy to hear differing views, and hoped to find common ground on other issues.

"This is an opportunity to respect and recognize as legitimate different viewpoints," said Jenni Thurman, a sophomore majoring in journalism.

Contacts with evangelicals are not unknown in the Jewish community; the Orthodox have maintained such ties for years.

"For a long time the Orthodox community has found opportunities to work on common goals with faith communities across the spectrum," said Nathan Diamant, director of public affairs at the Orthodox Union's Washington office. "We work on an array of issues, and also have our disagreements with evangelicals — and with Reform Jews, for that matter."

Yoffie's appearance was a novelty for students at Liberty's bucolic campus in central Virginia's rolling hills, where sports trophies are emblazoned with the slogan "Champions for Christ!"

The convocation began with an amplified hymn, students gently rocking and squeezing their eyes shut, some of them clutching black bibles in one hand and cell phones in the other.

The whole affair was run with the discipline that comes of years of televangelism: A teleprompter counted down each speaker's time — Yoffie got eight minutes and Falwell 25 — and singers, fiddlers and guitarists moved on and off the platform on cue.

Yoffie said he hoped Wednesday's appearance was the start of a relationship.

"I would hope as we move forward there will be follow-up and there will be coalition building," he said.

Falwell, who said the idea to invite Yoffie came during an interview with journalist Zev Chafets, was noncommittal about a follow-up.

He qualified future relations with those with whom he disagreed: "We can differ on many things not essential to the freedoms in our country."

Did those "essential" things include the continued denial of legal protections for gay couples? Falwell was

**'Gay Americans pose no threat to their friends, neighbors or co-workers.'**

**Rabbi Eric Yoffie**

President, Union for Reform Judaism

evasive.

"We do not believe in gay marriage or polygamy or any other family form than a man marrying a woman singly," he replied.

## The perils of Jewish e-commerce

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) —When Ilan Alon, a 27-year-old Israeli living in Los Angeles, decided to launch a Jewish version of eBay, he never intended to be a rabble rouser.

Unfortunately for Alon and three fellow entrepreneurs — Miron Moalen, 29, Daniel Scherl, 33, and David Stern, 37 — JewishBuys.com has found itself knee-deep in controversy since its launch six months ago.

In addition to Dead Sea cosmetics, kosher wine and chuppah decorations, the Web site contains books of Holocaust propaganda, T-shirts that say "Shalom Motherf\*\*\*er" and Jewish stars adorned with crosses, courtesy of Jews for Jesus.

Most of these items are posted by Jews — and opposed by other Jews, Alon says.

"We got reactions like, 'How can you post that?'" Alon said. "How can you let people put those T-shirts on the same Web site as books of Torah?"

The company may be small, but its travails illustrate how difficult it is to define what makes a site "Jewish" as entrepreneurs jostle for attention in the burgeoning e-commerce sector.

JewishBuys.com began when its founders met in an eBay chatroom.

"We did research and discovered that one of the top selling items on eBay is Judaica," Alon explained. "We realized there's a big market for that."

The site has grown to include 400 sellers and more than 2,000 registered users.

The way JewishBuys.com is structured, users are free to sell any item they like — which, until now, has allowed items with no Jewish content, or that some Jews might find offensive.

Some users have capitalized on this unregulated environment. One post, reads, "Who doesn't want peace?!! We sure do, but we express it in our own way with this 'Shalom Motherf\*\*\*er' shirt."

A few clicks away stand sacred Jewish texts and relics from the Holocaust.

Though such items have angered some shoppers, Alon said he doesn't like the idea of playing cop on the site.

But that stance has proved problematic. One user decided to sell a book of Nazi propaganda on JewishBuys.com to highlight the lack of an on-site filter.

For now, Alon and his partners are considering some form of oversight. He said the team plans to start removing items that evoke Jews for Jesus paraphernalia, that involve nudity, or are not connected to Judaism in some way.

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# AJCommittee marks 100 years of global diplomacy

By DINA KRAFT

TUNIS, Tunisia (JTA) — In a meeting room of gold silk curtains and tiled walls, a delegation from the American Jewish Committee takes its seats at a long, glass-topped table facing Tunisia's foreign minister and his aides.

Soon the questions begin: When will Tunisia resume official relations with Israel? What is the country's stance on Iran?

These questions are de rigeur for the AJCommittee, which is sometimes called "the State Department of the Jewish people" because of its frequent meetings with leaders of foreign countries.

AJCommittee board members and activists traveled to Tunisia last month as part of a multi-country tour marking its 100th anniversary.

The diplomatic mission included stops in five European capitals, Morocco and Israel, meeting with presidents, government ministers, NATO officials and the pope.

The group is also planning a several-day forum in Washington beginning May 1 that features political and intellectual notables from around the world.

"It's unbelievable access," said Stephanie Pulver, an AJCommittee member from New York who was among those in Tunisia. "It allows us to try to bring up issues that are important to the community and learn about the country and the problems they are having."

The AJCommittee was founded in 1906 by American Jewish elites, mainly of German Jewish background, who were alarmed by the Kishinev pogroms in czarist Russia and wanted to protect and strengthen Jewish communities around the world by promoting democracy and pluralism.

Today, it has 33 chapters in the United States and a presence in 20 countries, advocating for Israel and human rights and against anti-Semitism and terror.

The group faced a crisis during the 1940s, when its president, Joseph Proskauer, opposed Zionism.

Indeed, the AJCommittee left the American Jewish Conference, an umbrella organization, in the 1940s because it opposed Zionism, according to Brandeis University historian Jonathan Sarna.

"Many people thought the organization would not survive," said Sarna, a member of JTA's board of directors.

But after World War II, the AJCommit-

tee began to recognize the importance of the State of Israel, and it soon rebounded in importance.

In the postwar era, it worked successfully for the inclusion of a human rights provision in the U.N. Charter and in 1965 was integral in convincing the Vatican to issue the *Nostra Aetate*, which absolved Jews of the collective responsibility for Jesus' death.

Among its recent achievements are helping to persuade the U.S. government to ban the Hezbollah television station, Al-Manar, and working with the Polish government to build a memorial at the previously neglected site of the Nazi death camp Belzec, where 500,000 Jews were killed.

The AJCommittee is known for its "deep research" of issues, Sarna said, and for working behind the scenes in establishing contacts with high-level international leaders.

It came as little surprise when in 2004, the AJCommittee opened its Transatlantic Institute in Brussels, the home of the European Union.

"The ability of the committee to reinvent itself to change as American and world Jewish conditions change is quite extraordinary," Sarna said. "Not all Jewish organizations can do that."

Now, the AJCommittee's longtime executive director, David Harris, said the organization has its work cut out for itself in the future.

"The threat of nuclear weapons proliferation, radical Islam and the potential marriage of extremists and weapons of mass destruction" are among the main issues the organization will attempt to address at a time when the United States will no longer be the sole superpower, Harris said, speaking during the Tunisia trip.

In Israel, the entire delegation of some 200 people gathered for the centerpiece of the mission, where they met with senior government ministers, army officials and academics.

Harris said he envisions the AJCommittee continuing two tracks of involvement, one involving Israel-Diaspora relations, the other promoting relations between Israel and other countries.

In Germany, they heard Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier pledge not to back down on demands on Hamas; they heard Stephan Kramer, secretary-general of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, proudly describe Germany's growing Jewish population of 120,000 as the third-largest in Europe.

"This is a very hopeful place at a time when in the last five days we have not seen a lot of hope," Kara Newmark of St. Louis said at a gala dinner at Berlin's Adlon Hotel, referring to the previous visit to Israel.

Said Harris: "If you said to the AJC folks in 1946, 'Folks, put on your calendar for 2006 a gala dinner in Germany,' people would have declared me certifiably mad and retired me to the farm. But maybe the 160th anniversary of AJC will be celebrated at dinners in Tehran, Damascus."

Indeed, the AJCommittee is paying special attention to the Arab world, said Jason Isaacson, director of the group's office of government and international affairs.

"Part of the issue is Jewish concerns and communities, but it is also about there being only a billion Muslims in the world," he said. "We obviously need to be talking to them."

In Tunisia, the visiting delegation heard from officials who touted the recent visit of Silvan Shalom, Israel's foreign minister at the time of his visit.

The Tunisian-born Shalom was given a festive homecoming by Tunisian government officials in a visit that some suggested indicated warming ties between the two countries.

Still, those same government officials were reticent about when Tunisia might reassess its relationship with Israel. Tunisia broke off formal diplomatic ties after the start of the second intifada in 2000.

These discussions are normal for the AJCommittee, which often talks with foreign diplomats and officials -- especially during the U.N.'s General Assembly every September. The nations that sit with them often are seeking Jewish clout in their dealings with the U.S. government.

(JTA Foreign Editor Peter Ephross in New York and correspondent Toby Axelrod in Berlin contributed to this report.)



# Israeli entrepreneurs turn to health care

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — At a recent conference on Israeli start-up companies, a group of young investors stood in the hallway chatting animatedly about Israeli businesses and venture capital opportunities.

They were particularly surprised by the growing number of health care-related firms that had come from Israel to the conference — held at the Newark offices of telecom giant IDT — to hawk their wares.

There was FlowMedic (Israel) Ltd., a company that develops non-invasive treatments for circulatory difficulties; InspireMD, which develops coronary and carotid stents; and BrainSavers, which has developed a program to maintain and improve brain function as individuals age. And there were several others.

Had the conference, sponsored by youngStartUp Ventures, been held five years ago, it would have been dominated by Israeli high-tech firms, the investors said. Now, though, on the eve of Israel Independence Day 2006, businessmen looking to launch sustainable companies since the high-tech bubble burst are turning to health care.

The growth is "an outcome of investment over the last 20 years," said Jacob Dagan, managing partner of ProMed, a financial investment firm with a focus on Israeli biotechnology companies. "But it takes time. You see the results over the last five years."

Israel long has been on the cutting edge of medical research, from Parkinson's to diabetes. But if necessity is the mother of invention, Israel's precarious security situation has led to a significant investment in the defense industry. Much of the science behind new medical devices Israeli companies are developing originated in the defense realm, observers said.

Among these firms is Given Imaging Ltd., which developed a miniature, disposable video camera that can be fitted into a capsule and swallowed, giving doctors thousands of images of a person's intestines.

"The brain behind the product designed missiles with sophisticated imaging systems," Dagan said. "The infrastructure in Israel for devices is very developed. All of them are based on technology that came up from the defense industries."



youngStartUp Ventures

Participants mingle at a conference on Israeli start-up companies in March 2006.

That doesn't mean that strictly high-tech companies are no longer thriving in Israel; they still represent some three-quarters of Israeli start-ups.

But the biotech and health care industries are growing — quickly, noticeably and successfully. Some 70-100 new biotech companies now are created each year in Israel.

"There are far more start-ups and much more entrepreneurship on a ratio basis than there is just about anywhere else in the world," said Adam Farber, COO of IDT Ventures, the telecom company's venture capital arm.

"If you compare it to countries that are 100 times bigger than Israel," Dagan said, "they don't have this kind of growth."

Health industry firms are receiving a great deal of financial assistance from the office of Israel's chief scientist, insiders say.

"They're really making a very big effort to move the technology along," said Henry Kay, an executive in new market development and strategic planning for the Boston Scientific Corporation, a medical device company in Massachusetts.

Israeli start-ups also have been aided by government-funded incubators, where companies are provided with laboratories and offices to get their projects off the ground.

There are now some 30 incubators in

Israel, including some in peripheral areas, an effort to encourage scientists to expand beyond Israel's urban centers. These incubators increasingly are being privatized.

Kay, whose company has invested in several Israeli firms, said he has noticed a jump in the number of biotech conferences held in Israel over the past three to four years. He recently returned from one, and received an invitation to another in late May, he said.

Nevertheless, Kay said some Israeli firms still have things to learn if they hope to compete in the international market.

"The technology that I see is superb," he said. "However, there's a naivete on how to deal with American venture funds" and how to turn a good idea into a marketing strategy.

Also complicating matters for health-care companies is the fact

that other fields allow for a quicker "exit" for investors. Because regulatory barriers for standard high-tech companies are relatively low compared to medical companies, they can be built, developed and sold more quickly, giving investors a quicker return on their money.

In 2000, Dagan said, Israeli venture capitalists raised \$3.7 billion; in 2003, they brought in just \$14 million. In 2006 they're expected to raise \$600 million — a marked improvement, to be sure, but far short of the amounts raised at the turn of the century.

YOM  
HA'ATZMAUT  
FEATURE

Much of the science behind new Israeli medical devices originated in the defense sector.

# Israel shares her freedom with Muslim refugee

By BRETT KLINE

**YEMIN ORDE, Israel (JTA)** — In the days leading up to Yom Ha'atzmaut, a young African Muslim refugee recalled how the Jewish state shared its hard-won freedom and haven with him.

Chen Geffen, then called Salah, was a child shepherd, taking camels out to the dry fields near Tibesti, Chad.

Soldiers began coming to the village and enlisting local children in the army to fight against rebel forces. The soldiers blindfolded the children, and anyone who tried to escape was shot.

Geffen's older brother and father were taken to an army camp. He never saw them again. However, his mother managed to bribe an officer with a cow, and Geffen found himself in a truck heading for the Sudanese border.

Geffen stayed for three months at his grandfather's house in Darfur, Sudan, never going outside because he saw soldiers rounding up children.

"I heard about massacres, and then my grandfather told me to leave," he said. "In fact, I had walked into another civil war."

His mother had taught him that the greatest Muslim prophet was Musa, known to Jews as Moses, so he prayed to Musa as he walked and hitchhiked to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.

From there he took a bus to Shelatin, on the border with Egypt. He saw people loading camels onto trucks heading for Cairo, and instinct told him to get a job with them.

In Cairo he met other Chadians, who told him to go to the Sinai region, where there was work in tourism. After police hassled him for not having ID papers, Geffen and a companion made it to the Sharm el-Sheik resort area.

There he met a freckled, redheaded man. His friend said that the "man was a child of Moses and lived in a country called Israel," recalled Geffen, who until then had not heard of Israel. "He said that Israelis ate people and were dangerous. I was afraid of his red hair. But then I talked to him."

The Israeli, who spoke Arabic, told Geffen he could have a better life in Israel. He gave Geffen money and told him to go to Israel.

"I prayed to Musa, and that's when I made the connection between what my mother always told me about the prophet, and Moses of Israel," Geffen said.

He began walking north.

He made it to the border at Taba and found a hill where people crossed over. He tried to pass at night, but was caught by Israeli soldiers and taken to a jail cell in Ramle, in the center of the country.

His jailers were immediately won over by his perpetual, optimistic smile, but didn't know what to do with the teen. They

talked about returning him to Egypt.

"I told them I would kill myself," Geffen said.

Israeli officials talked to officials from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After several days and much paperwork, the youth became a member of the Geffen family on Kibbutz Tze'elim in the Negev.

"I have four children," Ya'acov Geffen said, "and they all took Chen in as a brother. You see, my father came to Mandate Palestine in 1932. Half of his family was killed by the Germans in WWII. They couldn't get out of Poland, and had nowhere to go anyway. Now we have given this kid a place to go."

Geffen stayed several months on Tze'elim but could not resist the lure of the big city. He went to Tel Aviv with a friend from prison and spent a year there working in a restaurant. Everyone thought he was Ethiopian.

"People treated me very well," he said, "even when I told them I was not Ethiopian and that I was Muslim. I decided then that I wanted to become Jewish. I want to be a part of the people who saved my life."

One contact led to another. Geffen went to live in the Yemin Orde Youth Village, where educator Chaim Peri has put together a school for immigrant youngsters, mostly Russians and Ethiopians.

Geffen studies English, history and math at Yemin Orde and takes classes in religion to prepare for his conversion.

The story would end there if not for Peri. Four other African boys aged 13 to 17, two from Guinea-Conakry and two from



Brett Kline/JTA

Chen Geffen, a Muslim refugee from Chad, sits on the grounds of the Yemin Orde Youth Village school in Israel where he is now a student.

Sudan, crossed the border from Egypt near Gaza just before Pesach and wound up jailed in the Negev.

Peri intervened with the courts and arranged to have the boys moved to Kibbutz Tze'elim, and for them to attend a seder at Yemin Orde. The UNHCR has granted the Guinean boys the right to live in Yemin Orde, and they are already enrolled as students there.

However, because the Sudanese boys are subjects of a country officially at war with Israel, Peri says the United Nations has denied them the right to attend school in Yemin Orde and has given them until December in Tze'elim.

Peri said he had a court order allowing the youths to live and study at Yemin Orde. A U.N. official countered that Israeli courts cannot violate Israeli law in that manner.

The four already have a person they look up to in Israel, someone who made the same journey they did — Chen Geffen. Geffen took a petition around to Yemin Orde students, asking that the four be allowed to go to school there. Peri says all 450 students signed the petition.

"I want them here," Peri said. "I believe that kids who escape genocide and make it to Israel should be allowed to live here."

**Geffen started out as a shepherd in Chad.**

**YOM  
HA'ATZMAUT  
FEATURE**

# Foundation pursues grrrl power

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's not unusual for participants in Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!, a nationwide enrichment program for teenage Jewish girls, to jump from Judaic teachings to modern-day society.

Even so, this may have been the first time the Purim tale of Queen Esther was likened to the popular TV series "America's Next Top Model."

"It's exactly the same," Natalie Oppenheimer, 11, explained to her peers one recent Sunday afternoon, sitting cross-legged on her basement floor in suburban Philadelphia.

"Half of what people see is always what you look like. It's just reality."

As a chorus of "uh-huhs" rose from the crowd, the conversation, which took place over pizza and a few cases of soda, drifted from Miss America to Ahasuerus, Megillah readings to Elle Magazine and body image to perceptions of women in the ancient world.

The Rosh Hodesh group was founded by Kolot, the Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and then spun off to the independent feminist organization Moving Traditions.

Deborah Meyer, Rosh Hodesh's national director, described the program's eclectic nature as a drawing point for participants.

"This is not Hebrew school or day school or something that you have to do," she said.

"They're practicing a Judaism that really meets their needs, that really speaks to their lives."

Rosh Hodesh is just one of several programs working to empower young Jewish women today.

Other initiatives tackle domestic violence, eating disorders, physical inactivity, self-esteem and general health, among other things.

The Hadassah Foundation, established in 1998 as a funding arm of the women's Zionist organization, has become a major source of income for such initiatives.

Love Shouldn't Hurt is a dating violence prevention program in the

San Francisco area that targets Jewish teens.

Run by Shalom Bayit, a parent outreach center, the program's youth-led workshops draw on Jewish values and perspectives.

On the East Coast, the Washington-based Jewish Women International group offers an informational toolkit called When Push Comes to Shove... It's No Longer

Love.

The package includes a short film documenting Jewish experiences with relationship abuse, as well as a discussion guide to the issue utilizing Jewish texts.

Other, more secular programs have been adapted to serve a Jewish audience as well.

Harvard Medical School colleagues Catherine Steiner-Adair and Lisa Sjosstrom are working to create a supplement with Judaic texts and values to the wellness guide they published in January. That curriculum, Full of Ourselves, aims to boost teen and pre-teen girls' self-esteem while preventing the development of eating disorders.

Other programs, like the Women's Sports Foundation's GoGirlGo! project, serve a mixed demographic through Jewish community centers around the country.

A physical activity and health outreach program, GoGirlGo! tries to get girls aged 8 to 18 involved in physical activity, using champion athletes to deliver messages on sports, fitness and nutrition.

Experts say the need for such material and programming is critical. According to Kathryn Wheeler, who serves as executive director of the Girls' Coalition of Greater Boston, only 6 percent of philanthropic dollars are allotted to programming specifically geared toward girls.

Wheeler, whose umbrella organization coordinates networking, education

and advocacy for girls in the Boston area, said coed programming is more likely to pay attention to boys.

"Girls are underserved in current programs," she said, speaking at a March 5 Hadassah Foundation luncheon called "Growing Great Girls," which brought together activists for a roundtable discussion on the feminist agenda. "We still have not achieved equity."

For Jewish girls in particular, the situation may be even graver.

Steiner-Adair argued that Jewish girls are more vulnerable than others to eating disorders due to the high stress levels and expectations for achievement placed on them.

For example, at the Renfrew Center, an eating disorder clinic in Philadelphia, 13 percent of the beds go to Jewish patients, Steiner-Adair said, far more than the percentage of the local population that is Jewish.

Hadassah Foundation director Linda Altshuler said the foundation undertook its grant campaign after a strategic planning review found "a lot of unmet needs both in Israel and the United States."

"Many girls in the American Jewish community are fortunate to come from a comfortable financial background," she said.

"That doesn't mean all their emotional and psychological needs are being met."

She also expressed hope that the campaign would spur more Jewish involvement among young Jewish women.

"A lot of women in our chapter were saying, 'We want something for our daughters, something for our nieces,'" Altshuler said.

Betsy Landis, president of the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York, seconded the call to arms.

"If we want a healthy Jewish population in 25 years, we need to be talking about girls and doing whatever it is they want to do," Landis said.

FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

They're practicing a Judaism that really meets their needs, that really speaks to their lives.

Deborah Meyer

National director  
Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Non-Jewish duo makes funny bar mitzvah film

By TOM TUGEND

**L**OS ANGELES (JTA) — “Keeping Up With The Steins” proves that you don’t have to be Jewish to make a funny Jewish film.

Case in point is the father-son team of Garry and Scott Marshall, with the younger one directing the movie and the older one just about stealing the show as a hippie Jewish grandfather, who teaches his yuppie descendants that there’s more to a bar mitzvah than throwing the most lavish party in upscale Los Angeles.

The film opens with an aerial shot of a cruise ship, whose bow displays a giant banner “Mazal Tov, Zachary.” The theme of the celebration is the last voyage of the Titanic, complete with a iceberg mockup, from which emerges a bevy of scantily clad mermaids.

Hosting the simcha is Arnie Stein (Larry Miller), and his trophy wife, whom he met at a Texas wet T-shirt contest.

Among the guests, and gnashing his teeth, is Adam Fiedler (Jeremy Piven), Stein’s business competitor, accompanied by his wife Joanne (Jami Gertz) and nerdy-looking son Benjamin (Daryl Sabara), whose own bar mitzvah is coming up in a few months.

Driving home from the Titanic bash, Adam Fiedler starts obsessing about his heir’s bar mitzvah party. It’s not enough to keep up with the Steins, he has to put on a bash that will crush and humiliate his rival.

As Adam’s fevered mind nears the breaking point, up pops his father Irwin (Garry Marshall), pony-tailed and hippie-clad, along with his spaced-out blonde girlfriend Sandy (Daryl Hannah).

“When I was in seventh grade, I went to over-the-top bar mitzvahs all the time,” Scott recalled. “At that age, it was about the only place you could meet girls and socialize.”

After shooting three separate bar mitzvah ceremonies or parties for the movie, he said, “Through this experience, I feel I have finally become a man.”

“Keeping Up With The Steins” opens May 12 in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Miami, followed by other cities in subsequent weeks.

## Immigrant students learn Holocaust

By TOBY AXELROD

LAKE WORTH, Fla. (JTA) — Luboml was a shtetl in Poland. People worked there, had families, went to synagogue, fell in love, even ate ice cream. Its inhabitants were among the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.

Now imagine that shtetl coming to life again, in the hearts and minds of teenagers at a Florida high school.

Since February, some 600 students at Lake Worth High School — mostly of Haitian and Latino background — have been reading and writing about Luboml, creating woodcuts, baking challah, building a memorial and making bracelets with a bead for each lost family.

On May 10, the students will plant a tree in memory of the Jews of this shtetl and for the 6 million who were killed in the Holocaust. It will stand near some palms in a courtyard of their sprawling campus.

It started as an idea of reading teacher Abbe Snyder, who wanted to do a new Holocaust education project this year.

Rochel and George Berman, who head the Florida Chapter of the American Society for Yad Vashem, recommended the English edition of the Luboml Yizkor Buch, or memorial book, which is filled with short stories about the life and death of the shtetl, all told by eyewitnesses.

The book, written by survivors and others who had emigrated before the war, is “absolutely poetic,” Berman said. “It was a dreamy sort of recollection of how much they loved their town.”

The book begins with stories of daily life in Luboml, in today’s Ukraine. German troops entered the town in June 1941. In October 1942, virtually all the Jews in the area were killed in a mass shooting on the outskirts of town.

The Luboml stories were put in the hands of students aged 13-20. Erin Riley’s English students wrote their own fictional stories. Gary Swigert’s shop class started working on a memorial. Sharon Crocilla’s students began working on woodcuts

based on photographs from the book. Snyder’s students used the stories to hone their reading skills.

One afternoon, Snyder split her reading class in half and had the students discuss the stories. She overheard “four Haitian girls yakking away a mile a minute in Creole, telling the story of Luboml.”

“The Nazis shouldn’t have taken them away and done that to them because they were good people,” said Jennifer Rivera, 15, who said the stories about Luboml’s marketplace reminded her of the flea market in Lake Worth.

“When I used to live in Haiti, we all used to live in a little town, we used to know each other, we knew each other’s business, we all could relate, you know,” said Mendel Surpris, 18.

But his family felt threatened by lawlessness in Haiti and wanted to leave. This helped him identify with the residents of Luboml.

“I mean, how would you like to live in a place where you are threatened? Where you don’t feel comfortable, where you can’t do what you want?” Surpris said.

The project has become a pilot program with support from Yad Vashem; Aaron Ziegelman, a New York businessman born in Luboml who financed a documentary and museum exhibition on the town; and LEAH, the League for Educational Awareness of the Holocaust.

There were some tough questions: One boy said he thought the Jews must have done something to deserve what happened.

“I asked, ‘What did the Africans do to deserve slavery?’ I keep trying with the kids to do a parallel,” Snyder said. “And I do think they get it.”

For Surpris, who graduates this year, the experience may provide inspiration.

“I write poetry about people, I like strong people, heroes,” he said. “And to me, the people who died in the Holocaust, they were kind of like heroes. They had the will to live, that was the key: the will to live. And I respect that.”

Some of the students found parallels to the Holocaust in their own experience of fleeing Haiti.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Ex Mossad chief: Hamas negotiations possible

The former director of the Mossad spy agency said Israel shouldn't rule out negotiations with Hamas.

Efraim Halevy called the terrorist group that heads the Palestinian Authority a "deadly enemy," but said that "in certain circumstances, and if they meet certain requirements," relations could change. Addressing the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Thursday in New York City, Halevy said those preconditions would include a strong Hamas-led government that honors past agreements and does not allow terrorist attacks.

He said Hamas should not be forced to recognize Israel ahead of negotiations. "We need to show them the carrot from time to time," he said.

#### Iran reports new missiles

Iran has procured North Korean missiles capable of reaching Europe, Israel's military intelligence chief said. Ha'aretz on Thursday quoted Maj.-Gen. Amos Yadlin as saying that Iran recently received a shipment of BM-25s from Pyongyang, boosting its locally made Shihab missile batteries.

The BM-25 is capable of carrying nuclear warheads and has a maximum range of 1,500 miles. In February, German media reported that Iran had ordered 18 disassembled BM-25s from North Korea.

#### New interagency task force on Arab Israelis

A coalition of American Jewish leaders initiated a task force on Israeli-Arab issues.

The seven founders hailed from the Anti-Defamation League, Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, UJA-Federation of New York, New Israel Fund, Alfred and Hanna Fromm Fund, and Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies.

Israeli Arabs make up nearly 20 percent of Israel's population, but are underrepresented in politics and land ownership. They also face educational and health care inequities within the country, and increasingly are politically radical.

#### More jail time for Rabin assassin's brother

The brother of Yitzhak Rabin's assassin got extra jail time for threatening Ariel Sharon's life. Netanyahu Magistrate's Court on Thursday sentenced Haggai Amir to one year's imprisonment for telling jailors last year that he could make a phone call and have Sharon, who at the time was Israel's prime minister, "blown away."

Half of the sentence will be served concurrently with Amir's current 16-year jail term, handed down for his complicity in his brother Yigal's shooting of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995.

#### Israeli on American arts board

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences admitted an Israeli musicologist.

The prestigious academy this week announced it was making Don Harran, a musicology professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a foreign honorary member for 2006.

Harran joins 175 new fellows and 20 new foreign honorary members, among them two former presidents of the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court chief justice, a Nobel laureate and a number of Pulitzer Prize winners.

Among the areas of Harran's research, which extends from the 15th to the early 18th century, is the Renaissance.

He has placed special emphasis on Jewish art music at the start

of the modern era, including women as poets and composers, rabbis and their speculations about music, and early composers.

#### Israelis go for hoops title

Maccabi Tel Aviv, Israel's leading basketball team, is again in the European league's Final Four. The semifinals and finals will be held Friday through Sunday in Prague's Sazka Arena.

Maccabi Tel Aviv won the European championship in 2004 and 2005 and was in the finals in 2001.

A record number of Israelis are expected in Prague for the tournament, according to Czech media reports.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Coalition calls for Sudan action

A coalition of rabbis, activists and political leaders in New York called on the international community to help end genocide in Sudan.

The group included Ruth Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service; Joseph Potasnik, executive vice president of the New York Board of Rabbis; New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver; and Nawab Agha, president of the American Muslim Congress, among others.

Just days before Sunday's Save Darfur rally in Washington, they recommended steps for the international community to take.

The gathering, held across from the United Nations, was the second such event organized by the Conference of Presidents in recent weeks.

#### Activist Jane Jacobs died at 89

Writer and urban activist Jane Jacobs died at age 89.

The urban development theorist died this week at Toronto Western Hospital. Jacobs was born to a Jewish family in Scranton, Pa., and moved to New York City during the Great Depression.

She confronted the city over development plans for her neighborhood, including a planned highway through Washington Square Park.

She settled in Toronto in the late 1960s, partly to protest the Vietnam War.

She is best known for her 1961 book, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," which changed the way people view urban spaces.

Influenced by her home, situated over a candy store in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, Jacobs suggested short, multipurpose streets, dense populations and buildings that were diverse in age and function.

This countered the belief, commonly held at the time, that governments should level poor urban neighborhoods to make room for new housing or highways. Jacobs was made an officer of the Order of Canada in 1996.

### WORLD

#### Nazi war crime convictions up

The number of ex-Nazis convicted of war crimes more than tripled in the past year, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said. In a report issued this week as Israel marked Yom Hashoah, the center said there were 16 convictions of Nazi war criminals worldwide between April 1, 2005, and March 31, 2006, a 320 percent increase over the previous year.

But the report rapped countries, including Austria, for refusing to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of Nazi war criminals on their turf.