

IN THE NEWS

U.S. blocking \$100 million to Hamas

The United States successfully blocked \$100 million from getting to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority.

"Hamas is a terrorist group and we are doing all we can to achieve a financial blockade against Hamas, and every other terrorist group," Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser, told leaders of the Orthodox Union in a meeting Thursday.

U.S. contemplated Hezbollah strike

Senior U.S. officials contemplated striking Hezbollah targets in South America after the Sept. 11 attacks. A top-secret memo uncovered by the Sept. 11 commission recommends hitting reputed Hezbollah targets in the area where Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil meet, Newsweek reported Thursday.

The memo suggested such an attack would catch the terrorists by surprise and have a "ripple effect" on other terrorist groups.

The underlying presumption was that terrorist groups were allied in a network, although no Al-Qaida-Hezbollah connection has emerged.

Hezbollah is reputed to maintain a presence in the region for drug smuggling and fund-raising purposes.

Democrats meet top Jewish officials

Top Democrats discussed a range of issues with Jewish community leaders.

Leaders of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and other groups briefed Democratic senators and members of the U.S. House of Representatives in two separate sessions Thursday.

Issues included Iran, Hamas, energy policy, poverty, the national budget and the genocide in Darfur.



WORLD REPORT

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

On eve of meeting, divestment issue still roils Jewish-Presbyterian ties



David P. Young/Presbyterian Church USA

The Rev. Victor Makari, the Presbyterian Church USA's coordinator for the Office of Middle East and Europe, speaks at the group's 2004 biennial assembly in Richmond, Va.

By RACHEL POMERANCE

ATLANTA (JTA) — As Presbyterians across America gear up for their biennial assembly next month, the legacy of the last such meeting is still roiling the Jewish community and the church's own members.

Two years ago, the Presbyterian Church USA passed a resolution calling for "phased, selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel."

Those who long have followed Jewish-Protestant relations weren't surprised.

"It was the culmination of decades — not years, but decades — of hostility toward Israel and Zionism, not by the rank-and-file members of these churches, but by some of the leader-

ship," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, senior interreligious adviser for the American Jewish Committee, where he staffed the interfaith department for 38 years.

The passion ignited by the divestment resolution at the last General Assembly is likely to erupt again at the June 15-22 meeting in Birmingham, Ala.

What happens there will have a lasting impact on the already strained relationship between Jews and the entire Protestant community. The estimated 3 million Presbyterians in the United States influence the other white mainline Protestant churches in this country, whose members number more than 20 million.

Presbyterians are considered the "conscience" and reason of the Protestant community, serving as something of a "swing vote," Rudin said.

Indeed, after the Presbyterians' 2004 resolution on divestment, several other Protestant communities took up the issue. The Methodists decided to study their options; the United Church of Christ, also known as the Congregationalists, endorsed divestment but did not create a process to enact it; the Episcopalians considered but rejected divestment; and the Lutherans rejected a divestment resolution, and instead passed a resolution to invest in cooperative ventures between Israelis and Palestinians.

What will happen in Birmingham is anyone's guess, though both Presbyterian and Jewish officials predict that no immediate action on divestment will be taken.

According to Ethan Felson, associate executive director of the Jewish Council for Public

Continued on page 4

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

Cabinet has some familiar, some new faces

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Following are thumbnail biographical sketches of the main players in Israel's new government.

• Prime Minister Ehud Olmert: A charismatic ex-mayor of Jerusalem who filled Ariel Sharon's post when the former prime minister was crippled by a stroke in January, Olmert lacks Sharon's military pedigree but is considered a shrewd statesman.

A scion of the long-dominant Likud Party, Olmert was quick to follow Sharon when the former premier left the Likud to form the more centrist Kadima Party last year.

Olmert is considered a pragmatist keen to follow up last year's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank with more far-reaching moves in the West Bank, and to set Israel's border unilaterally in the absence of peace talks with the Palestinians.

• Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni: As the second woman, after the iconic Golda Meir, to hold the Foreign Affairs portfolio, some expect Livni to similarly rise to top office one day.

A one-time Mossad operative, Livni cut her political teeth as immigration and justice minister in previous Likud-led governments.

Well before Hamas won Palestinian Authority elections in January, Livni invested months in convincing Western nations to isolate the Islamic terrorist group.

• Defense Minister Amir Peretz: Chairman of the Labor Party, senior partner to Olmert's Kadima in the coalition government, Peretz secured the key Defense Ministry — raising eyebrows given his lack of military experience.

A veteran trade union-

ist, Peretz is considered a Labor firebrand, but since toppling Shimon Peres as party head last year he has alienated colleagues who accuse him of lacking diplomatic vision.

• Finance Minister Avraham Hirschson: An Olmert confidant, Hirschson is expected to press ahead with free-market reforms championed by former Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

As tourism minister in the previous government, Hirschson helped introduce more competition in Israeli commercial aviation and pursued joint projects with his counterpart in the Palestinian Authority.

• Minister of Regional Development Shimon Peres: As Israel's elder statesman, Peres was guaranteed a senior role in the new government.

He is expected to focus his efforts on developing the Galilee and Negev, areas that have received new attention since the Gaza Strip withdrawal prompted a quest to rehouse former settlers.

Winner of the Nobel peace prize for his role as architect of the Oslo peace accords, Peres also could lend diplomatic polish to Olmert's plan to annex West Bank settlement blocs.

• Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter: A former head of the Shin Bet domestic security service who backed the assassination of top Palestinian ter-

rorists, Dichter has made the most dramatic leap from Israel's security ranks to politics.

He is expected to apply his experience to fighting a crime wave sweeping the Jewish state.

The other members of the Cabinet, with their parties and positions, are:

• Ariel Atias, Shas, Minister of Communications;

• Ronnie Bar-On, Kadima, Minister of the Interior;

• Yacov Ben Yizri, Gil, Minister of Health;

• Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Labor, Minister of National Infrastructure;

• Ze'ev Boim, Kadima, Minister of Immigrant Absorption;

• Eitan Cabel, Labor, Minister without portfolio (responsible for the Israel Broadcasting Authority);

• Yitzhak Cohen, Shas, Minister without portfolio

(with responsibility for the religious councils);

• Ya'acov Edri, Kadima, Minister without portfolio (responsible for liaison with the Knesset);

• Rafi Eitan, Gil, Minister without portfolio (with responsibility for pensioners);

• Gideon Ezra, Kadima, Minister of the Environment;

• Isaac Herzog, Labor, Minister of Tourism;

• Shaul Mofaz, Kadima, Minister of Transportation;

• Meshulam Nahari, Shas, Minister without portfolio;

• Ophir Pines-Paz, Labor, Minister of Culture and Sport;

• Haim Ramon, Kadima, Minister of Justice;

• Meir Sheetrit, Kadima, Minister of Housing and Construction;

• Shalom Simhon, Labor, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development;

• Yuli Tamir, Labor, Minister of Education;

• Eli Yishai, Shas, Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor.

BACKGROUNDER

Peretz is considered a Labor firebrand, but since toppling Shimon Peres as party head last year he has alienated colleagues who accuse him of lacking diplomatic vision.

JTA WORLD REPORT

Daniel J. Krifcher
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Noa Artzi-Weill
Marketing Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Bush aide mixes levity, gravitas

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Joel Kaplan, President Bush's new policy czar, brings to his job a disciplined adherence to the White House message.

Bush last month named Kaplan, 36, as deputy chief of staff in charge of day-to-day policy after deciding that his closest adviser, Karl Rove, needed to focus more on upcoming congressional elections. With Bush's public support plummeting in opinion polls, Republicans face the real prospect of losing one or both houses of Congress in November.

Kaplan's reputation after three years as deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget was of someone able to simultaneously handle the big picture and master details — qualities that made him a good fit for one of the most grueling jobs in the administration.

"I tell everyone that you really have to have your stuff together before you go and meet with" Kaplan, said Tevi Troy, a senior adviser to Bush who was the White House liaison to the Jewish community until 2003. "He has a reputation for brilliance and really getting to the heart of the matter."

Kaplan seemed both a natural choice for the policy job and something of a mystery. It seemed natural enough for Joshua Bolten, Bush's new chief of staff, to bring over his most trusted aide from the Office of Management and Budget, where Bolten had been director. Bolten, who also is Jewish, recited the Sheva Brachot, traditional Jewish blessings, at Kaplan's wedding earlier this year at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

On the other hand, Kaplan was an unknown quantity — unlike Bolten, who was known for his friendly relations with Congress and his onetime dalliance with Hollywood star Bo Derek.

Kaplan has made his presence felt in the new post with an easygoing manner.

"He has a lot of energy, a good sense of humor," said Jay Zeidman, the White House Jewish liaison.

That sense of humor sometimes gets a little goofy.

In a January 2004 online session of "Ask the White House" on the topic of the

budget, Kaplan showed an apt hand with statistics and projections, answering a question in heavy policy-work jargon.

Yet when someone asked Kaplan about his resemblance to Peter Frampton, he immediately posted a photo of the 1970s rock icon and said he had just bought a shirt like the silk number Frampton is wearing in the picture.

"As for my favorite Frampton song — I would go with 'Show me the Way' or 'Day in the Sun,'" he added.

Friends say the humor leavens a deeply serious side. A Boston native, Kaplan interrupted his academic trajectory between a 1991 Harvard undergraduate degree and a 1998 Harvard Law School degree to serve three years as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marines.

"The key tenets of honor and courage and commitment were attractive to him," said Nigel Jones, who has known Kaplan since ninth grade and served in the Marines with him.

Jones said Kaplan wanted to break away for a while from his middle-class upbringing in suburban Boston, where he attended Sunday school at Temple Beth Elohim in Wellesley, Mass.

"We were graduates of liberal arts schools from the Northeast, a Jewish guy and a black guy," said Jones, who now is a partner in a venture capital firm in the Washington area. "It was not your typical demographic, which is why we both did it — to get out of our comfort zone."

Old friends say Kaplan's seriousness stems in part from his Jewish commitment. Kaplan maintained his connection to his faith even while leading patrols on the U.S.-Mexico border or fighting wildfires in Washington state.

"We spoke about religion on a number of occasions," said Brian O'Leary, who trained in artillery with Kaplan in Oklahoma and now is a money manager in New Jersey. "He's very astute with respect to his own faith."

Kaplan participates avidly in White House Jewish events, seeking out the rabbi in attendance on Sukkot to fulfill the mitzvah of the lulav and etrog. Most recently, he spoke at the executive office's private Holocaust remembrance ceremony.

"He spoke eloquently and thoughtfully" Zeidman said. "He carried the message of the importance of never forgetting."

Jones said Kaplan's Judaism is an essential part of his worldview.

"His core values are very much rooted in, as he terms it, the Judeo-Christian ethos, respect for the individual, respect for truth, honesty and loyalty," he said.

Such high-mindedness doesn't mean Kaplan lacks a fiercely competitive streak.

"He's a Red Sox fan, and I'm a Yankees fan. That's good fodder for arguments and debates," O'Leary said.

Kaplan won a fitness award in the Marines that O'Leary had hoped to nab.

"It pains me to remember this, but I lost a beer in a bet over that one," he said.

Jones said Kaplan worked hard even when he didn't have to.

"Joel would come into the homeroom on the day of a history exam and ask me a few questions about the exam," as if he hadn't prepared, Jones recalled. "Then a few weeks later the teacher would hold up his exam as an example of how it should be done."

Kaplan was reported to be among a large group of Bush supporters who helped bring about a stop to the Florida recount in 2000 when they stormed a room in a local government building. In his Senate confirmation hearings in 2003, Kaplan said he was there but, as far as he recalled, was not a participant in the incident.

Whatever his role, he maintained his famous wit: It's Kaplan who is believed to have labeled the incident the "Brooks Brothers Uprising," referring to the business attire of many of the protesters. ■

JTA Washington intern David J. Silverman contributed to this report.

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

His core values are very much rooted in, as he terms it, the Judeo-Christian ethos, respect for the individual, respect for truth, honesty and loyalty.

Nigel Jones
Marines comrade

Continued from page 1

Affairs, "the prevailing wisdom" is that a recommendation proposed by the General Assembly committee to appoint a committee for continued debate on divestment, without halting the divestment process, will pass.

Soon after the resolution was passed, the group's committee charged with assessing the church's stock portfolio for potential divestment expanded the criteria of companies to include companies that support Israel's presence in the West Bank; its separation barrier; settlement building and violence to either party in the conflict.

The committee is still in its investigative stages. It has already begun initial talks with three of the five companies in question. The Presbyterian Church says it has targeted the following companies for these reasons:

- Caterpillar, because the Israeli military uses its equipment to demolish Palestinian homes and construct roads for Israeli settlers in "the occupied territories";
- Citigroup, due to charges that it has transferred funds to Palestinian terrorist groups;
- ITT Industries, for supplying communication devices to the Israeli military used in "the occupied territories";
- Motorola, because it also supplies the

Israeli military with communication devices, and takes "advantage of the Israeli government policy of delaying or prohibiting the importation of modern equipment into Palestine"; and

- United Technologies, for providing helicopters to the Israeli military that have been used in attacks against suspected Palestinian terrorists.

More than \$65 million is at stake — the combined shares of Presbyterian Church stock in the aforementioned companies. The MRTI committee has made no requests for action by the companies, said a church press officer. The meetings were about "fact finding" and "information sharing," she said.

The more immediate question is whether the church will continue to go down the divestment path or reverse course.

To some extent, the issue can be viewed as a struggle between the denomination's ministers and laity. According to an internal Presbyterian USA poll taken in November 2004, more laity — some 42 percent of members and 46 percent of elders — oppose selective phased divestment than favor it (28 percent of members, 30 percent of elders). Meanwhile, pastors favor the action by 48 percent to 43 percent and specialized clergy favor the divestment decision by a margin of 64 to 24 percent.

Furthermore, the church said that the poll showed that "despite widespread media attention," most Presbyterian laity were not even aware of the decision of the 216th General Assembly to "begin a process of phased, selective divestment" of companies profiting from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

But it would be hard to imagine that anyone heading to Birmingham could miss the subject, given the sheer number of overtures, or proposals, on divestment submitted to the church by regional presbyteries for the upcoming assembly.

Nearly one-fifth of the 137 proposals to be considered at the assembly address divestment. Some want to press forward with the divestment process, many others aim to rescind the original resolution and express serious concern about the damage the issue has done to Jewish-Presbyterian relations and the church's reputation.

The overtures come before a committee, which will condense them into a single resolution or propose an alternative to present to the assembly.

Some 3,000 clergy and lay people are expected at the assembly. Of these, 534 individuals — half clergy, half laity, are eligible to vote on the overtures.

Given the wave of overtures to reject divestment, "one would hope they would see that as the will of the people," said the Rev. John Wimberly, pastor of Western Presbyterian Church in Washington.

Wimberly is on the steering committee of Presbyterians Concerned for Jewish and Christian Relations, a group that has pushed hard to further overtures against divestment.

However, "this issue has become the 'in' issue," Wimberly said. "It's the issue of the left today in the Presbyterian Church and it gains a kind of life of its own."

Asked about the issue by JTA, Clifton Kirkpatrick, chief ecclesiastical officer of the Presbyterian Church, said it has been "very painful that in our effort to secure peace and justice for all," the church has hurt members of the Jewish community, for which the church has "deep respect." The Presbyterian Church is committed to both good interfaith relations with Jews and Muslims while pursuing "peace and justice in the Middle East."

Some devoted to Jewish-Christian relations have made overturning divestment a priority. They include the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, a network that long has worked with Jew-

Number of proposals on divestment shows issue remains at top of agenda

By RACHEL POMERANCE

ATLANTA (JTA) — Out of 137 overtures submitted for consideration at the 217th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA, to be held June 15-22 in Birmingham, Ala., 25 address divestment from Israel.

They come in the wake of two years of intensified Jewish-Presbyterian dialogue and heated discussion on the matter among Presbyterian groups, and reveal the extent to which the issue has roiled American Presbyterians.

Here is where things stand heading into the conference:

- Fourteen proposals call for rescinding the divestment resolution initiated at the last assembly.
- Three explicitly reaffirm divestment: One from San Francisco, which also presses for peaceful investment; one from Boston, which urges the church to develop

educational materials about divestment so people "might discover a cogent, faithful Christian argument"; and one from Newark, which calls for Israel to stop "settlement population growth" and for Hamas to end violence and "disavow the goal of expelling Israel from Palestine."

- Several other presbyteries are more subtle, calling for peaceful investment as the church reconsiders its stock portfolio. These overtures come from Washington; Chicago; Giddings-Lovejoy in St. Louis; New Brunswick, N.J.; and Missouri Union.

- Florida and New York City skirt the issue: the former calls for fairness, noting that the last assembly took actions biased against Israel; the latter mandates funds for peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians while healing damaged relations with Jews. A presbytery from western New York calls for education about the Middle East.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

ish and Christian supporters to promote Israel's cause.

The group is hosting a May 18 conference on divestment at the Central Presbyterian Church in New York City and coordinating a Presbyterian mission to Israel later this month.

There's "a real groundswell of opposition that's occurred within the church, and it's very widespread," said Jim Roberts, a Presbyterian from San Diego, who heads a committee of volunteers and a Web site called "End Divestment Now."

Roberts' group argues that divestment is rooted in bias and flawed theology, and considers the divestment push a breach of the church's principles of fairness and bottom-up governance.

Insiders say several sources gave rise to the 2004 divestment resolution and the pro-Palestinian feelings among many Presbyterians.

For one, Palestinian Christians have deeply influenced the church by framing the Israeli-Palestinian issue in terms of "liberation theology," portraying the Palestinians as powerless victims who must be freed from their ostensible oppressors, the Israelis.

The most influential group espousing this platform is the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, which sponsors conferences around the world and speakers at Christian gatherings, and advocates divestment from Israel.

Jewish groups, and many Christians, call Sabeel a corrupting influence.

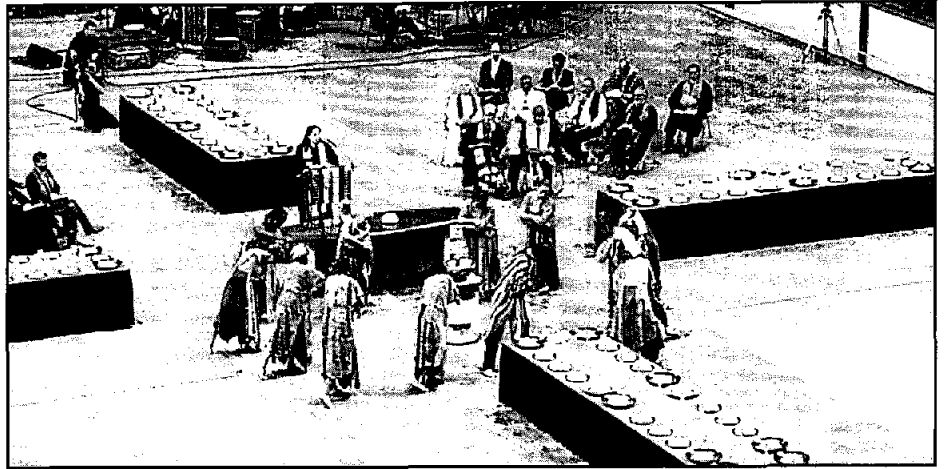
Christians for Fair Witness in the Middle East holds news conferences about Sabeel nearly every time the group holds a meeting in America, said the Rev. Roy W. Howard, an executive committee member who is pastor of Saint Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, Md.

According to Howard, Sabeel is ambiguous about Israel's very right to exist: Its devotees speak about a "Greater Palestine" in which there is no Jewish state, he said.

The Rev. Richard Toll, chairman of Friends of Sabeel North America, calls these charges a distortion.

"There has never been a call for the destruction of Israel or anything like that at all," he said. Leaders of mainstream Jewish groups are often invited, but don't respond, he said.

San Francisco, a presbytery that has presented an overture affirming divestment, was influenced less by Sabeel than by Presbyterians who visited Palestinian



Danny Bolin/Presbyterian Church USA

The Presbyterian Church USA's 2004 biennial assembly in Richmond, Va.

areas, said the Rev. Will McGarvey, pastor of the Community Presbyterian Church, who will present San Francisco's proposal at the assembly.

Divestment is a last resort in a process that encourages corporations first to act more justly, McGarvey said. Though it may seem one-sided, "there's only one side that has power right now, and that is the" Israel Defense Forces, he said.

Jewish officials in San Francisco felt insulted that the local presbytery never informed them of its overture.

"That's awful hurtful," said Jonathan Bernstein, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Central Pacific Region. "I feel like they didn't really learn a lesson" from the uproar over the 2004 resolution about the need to inform Jewish colleagues about their actions.

It also hasn't been easy for Jay Teath, vice president of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and director of its Jewish Community Relations Council.

He has limited his interaction with the local presbytery since the fall of 2004 because the group delayed addressing the divestment resolution. Instead, he turned his attention to individual churches in the area, which he said are more open to dialogue on the issue.

"Friends don't allow slanders to stand against other friends," he said.

Matters worsened when the Chicago presbytery's Middle East task force met

with leaders of the radical fundamentalist group Hezbollah in Lebanon last fall.

It was smoother in Atlanta, where Jewish officials got early word of an overture for divestment because of their strong interfaith relationships. They successfully called for its withdrawal in favor of broadened dialogue.

Some say Presbyterian leaders have sidelined Jewish voices on divestment.

It's "downright embarrassing that the Presbyterians have not made certain that

they have multiple points of views and interpretations of what's going on," said Christopher Leighton, director of the Baltimore-based Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies.

Some Jewish officials suggest the church is again stacking the deck.

The day before this year's General Assembly, for example, the church has scheduled a Middle East forum with three representatives — a Palestinian Christian, a Palestinian Muslim and a American Jew, Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Why, anti-divestment forces wonder, is there no Israeli represented?

For now, there is plenty of debate on all sides of the issue. And many are just plain confused.

Presbyterians may need to "wait for the dust to settle before we can make any real determination of the appropriate way to enhance relations between Israelis and Palestinians," Leighton said.

'Friends don't allow slanders to stand against other friends.'

Jay Teath

Vice president,

Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago

Recording Jews' oral histories

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — Growing up, Steve Hochstadt didn't think much of the Buddha trinkets strewn about his house.

"I thought that every family had little statues of Buddha in their house," said Hochstadt, a history professor at Bates College in Maine. "I did not have a sense that my family was different from other families."

Years later, those trinkets would come to fascinate Hochstadt, and lead him on a journey to his roots in Asia.

Hochstadt started by asking questions — first to his elderly grandmother, a German Jew who immigrated to Shanghai during the Nazi regime. Hochstadt soon learned that approximately 15,000 German-Austrian Jews had followed that path, lured to Shanghai by its Western business culture and relatively open borders.

"For many people, this caused them to re-emphasize their Jewishness," Hochstadt explained. "They founded several synagogues, held cultural performances, opened Viennese pastry shops. They didn't see themselves as Chinese."

By the time he was done, Hochstadt had conducted 100 interviews, mostly in German, with Shanghai Jews now living in the United States. Thus was born the Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project.

Hochstadt is one of a growing number of Jewish oral historians working to capture the diversity of the Jewish experience. Through documentary filmmaking, tape-recorded conversations and a variety of other primary source materials, these projects give voice to vanished or vanishing Jewish communities in China, Iran, Iraq, Cuba and other unlikely locales.

Riv-Ellen Prell, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Minnesota, said the projects are part of a larger trend of oral histories. She described the medium, which sprang up in 1970s, as "the product of a cultural revolution."

"Before, writing history belonged to those in power, with great education, who were predominately male," Prell said.

But with a swelling interest in the minority experience during the 1970s, all kinds of history makers and historical subjects came out of the woodwork. Pluralism became the norm.

"Suddenly an entirely invisible history became visible," she said.

Jewish subgroups were among those whose stories were brought to the fore. Prell described the process as an exercise in communal self-awareness.

"What does it take for a community to gain self-consciousness, and then go to the larger Jewish community and say, 'We have a story to tell?'" she asked.

For Homa Sarshar, a Persian Jew who grew up in Shiraz, Iran, and now lives in Los Angeles, the answer to that question came in 1995.

A prominent journalist in the Iranian American community, Sarshar hopped upon two oral history projects of Iranian Americans. While excited to discover the work, she was disappointed by what was left out.

"I saw that they hadn't even talked to one Jew, let alone other minorities," she said. "I mean, Jews had been around" in Persia "for 2,700 years — I thought somebody should talk about them."

Sarshar founded the Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, a Los Angeles-based organization that seeks to document the life and history of Iranian Jews.

The center has conducted 100 interviews with Persian Jews — mostly in Farsi — produced 20 documentaries, collected 2,000 documents and published five books.

The center's research focuses on the experiences of Jews in Iran between the start of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 and the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In two- to three-hour interviews, Sarshar and her colleagues ask subjects about life back then, touching on school, work, Jewish practice and coexistence with Muslims.

Sarshar said she adopted the methodology from the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, a Los Angeles-based organization that seeks to preserve Holocaust testimony.

"I didn't have any clue how to conduct an oral history project when I first started out," she said. "But they trained five of us. They showed us how to gather information."

Hochstadt prefers a different technique.

"At first I started with a list of questions," he said. "Then I realized what I wanted to do was to let people talk about their lives. I wanted to hear what they thought was important, what they wanted to say without me guiding them."

But the conversation doesn't always flow so easily.

When Carole Basri started taking oral histories of Iraqi Jews, she found even her own family members unwilling to talk.

"Telling these histories is a very painful process," said Basri, a lawyer by training. "People don't want to talk about being in jail, or hangings," she said, adding, "nobody wants to think of themselves as a refugee."

Over time, however, Basri was able to get Iraqi Jews to open up, using connections from her grandparents, who were prominent members of Baghdad's Jewish community.

She now has produced three documentary films and interviewed 100 Iraqi Jews in the United States, Canada, Israel, India and elsewhere.

"I wanted to understand what made people decide to leave and why they did leave," she

explained. "The oral histories were so important because I couldn't get the answers anywhere else."

Miriam Greenberg, a New York filmmaker compiling a documentary about Jews in Cuba, has run into other snags.

An assistant professor at the Pratt Institute, Greenberg says she can't find funding for her film, which chronicles the experience of 50 Jews still in Cuba. Though the film's production was supported through grants, "No todos nos fuimos" — "We didn't all go" — has been on hold for the past two years.

"They gave money to produce it, not to edit it," Greenberg explained. "We have over 60 hours of footage. It all needs translation, subtitles, graphics. It's a rough cut."

Greenberg says the delay is particularly frustrating because there's such a pressing need to catalog Cuba's Jewish history.

"A lot of people who left Cuba after the revolution were the most involved — the rabbis, the teachers, the leaders of the community," she said. "They took with them a lot of knowledge of the history of the community."

ARTS
&
CULTURE

One oral historian found even her own family members unwilling to talk.

HOLIDAY FEATURE

When killing them isn't an option: A mothers guide

By WENDY MOGEL

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — When stuck with a rebellious child, glutinous and thieving, the Torah has a tidy solution: Kill him. Or her.

For those of you excited by the opportunity to practice a new mitzvah, be mindful that the rabbis, worried about the edict, say in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 71a): "The case of the wayward and rebellious child never was and never will be." The tradition both recognizes the impulse to do violence, and then brings us to our senses and to our obligations.

Still, it's tempting sometimes, isn't it?

I talk to parents about normal child development.

When children are small, they beg you to come into their room and stay there as long as possible, especially at night. When they are teenagers, they get angry if you even look in their room, or enter without permission, especially at night.

When they were small, they embarrassed you by screaming in the supermarket, now you embarrass them by singing, ever, or being too friendly, to anyone. They act this way because they are making space to grow away from you, to form their own identity. As they should.

But until then, what to do? In my classes, I say to the parents over and over in every way I can think of: Don't take eye-rolling as an insult. Think of it this way: At least they are listening. Don't take any of this personally. Although they may be taller than you are and are certainly more quick-witted, they aren't doing this to hurt you. What they are doing is not only normal, but necessary. ■

Wendy Mogel is a clinical psychologist based in Los Angeles. She is the author of the best-selling parenting book, "The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teaching to Raise Self-reliant Children" (Penguin, 2001). She is currently writing a book for parents of adolescents, "The Blessing of a B Minus."

Looking for love in Israel

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — At a candlelit restaurant by the sea, Iriet Schulman and Josh Gartenberg lean toward each other and giggle over a private joke.

They are here on a JDate-sponsored group trip to Israel and had just checked into their rooms when they stepped into the same elevator of their Tel Aviv hotel and felt an immediate click.

"I came here mainly because of the journey and experience and if I do meet someone, all the better," said Schulman, 30, smiling at Gartenberg, 31.

"She's a great girl," said Gartenberg, a New York filmmaker who happily admits the two have been inseparable since their elevator meeting.

Surrounding them is a boisterous gang of newfound friends, clinking wine glasses and posing for photos. They have only known each other for two days, but the group says it feels like a lifetime of connection.

Among the laughing, joking crowd is Emily Ross, a 27-year-old midwife from San Francisco.

"A trip like this is a great idea because you come here with a bunch of Jewish people who feel like family," she said. "When else do you meet a group of people on vacation that you identify with about everything?"

Like Ross, many on the trip are here in Israel for the first time.

Some of the 130 participants are regular JDate members but others, including Schulman and Gartenberg, signed up after seeing ads for the trip. Gartenberg became intrigued after seeing an ad on a billboard in Times Square in Manhattan. Schulman, who lives in Hollywood, Calif., registered after she read an ad in the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles.

Participants on what is billed by JDate as "an offline 10-day journey to Israel" came from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil and England, and range in age from late 20s to mid-70s. The group

landed in Israel on May 3.

JDate has more than half a million members and is the largest Jewish singles Web site in the world. The site has sponsored group trips to places like Jamaica and Mexico, but this is the first time it has organized one to Israel.

"It's about emotions," said David Siminoff, president and chief executive officer of Spark Networks, JDate's owner and

operator.

Being in Israel heightens a sense of connection both to Israel as Jews, and possibly to one another as potential love interests and friends, he said.

The group is crisscrossing the country — touring Jerusalem's Old City, kayaking down the Jordan River, hiking to the top of Masada and having a boat party on the Sea of Galilee.

They are meeting Israeli members of JDate and the itinerary is focused on social activity as well as sightseeing, with cocktail and pool parties and nights out.

Stuart Rosenberg, a 47-year-old financial

executive from Los Angeles, was also seeing Israel for the first time. He downplayed the dating aspect of the trip and said what drew him in was an opportunity to see the Jewish state.

"People here are single, they want to see Israel and want to meet people they can connect with," he said. "If I meet someone, then terrific. If I don't, I do not care. I came here to experience Israel."

Jesse Arfa, 32, who does custom metal work on motorcycles in Clearwater, Fla., said that being in a group setting takes off some of the pressure that can accompany meeting new people.

"I came here for a mix of reasons, but it would be great to meet someone. I'm all for the adventure part of it — just to be happy and have something good to remember," he said.

Schulman, who is beaming as she continues to laugh and talk with Gartenberg and her new circle of friends, raves, "It's a fabulous trip." Her blue eyes shining she adds, "More than I expected." ■

ARTS
&
CULTURE

'I came here mainly because of the journey and experience and if I do meet someone, all the better.'

Josh Gartenberg
JDate traveler to Israel

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Ahmadinejad blasts Israel

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad predicted Israel's eventual destruction. Addressing students during a visit to Indonesia on Thursday, Ahmadinejad described Israel as "a tyrannical regime that will one day be destroyed."

He also said Iran would press ahead with its nuclear program despite the threat of U.N. Security Council sanctions. But Ahmadinejad voiced willingness to defuse the standoff through talks with any member of the international community — except Israel.

Draft exemption upheld

Israel's top court upheld a law exempting yeshiva students from military service. The High Court of Justice, by a vote of 8-1, on Thursday rejected four petitions against the Tal Law.

But the panel also criticized implementation of the law as potentially unconstitutional, suggesting that it could be overturned in the future.

Named after a retired High Court justice, the Tal Law allows for the mass deferral of military service for yeshiva students, on the understanding some would opt to join up having completed their religious studies.

But the continued relative lack of former yeshiva students in uniform has aggrieved many secular Israelis.

Hamas agents arrested

Two Hamas agents were caught en route from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank. The Shin Bet announced Thursday that it had arrested the two Palestinian terrorists, who originated in Gaza but had been dispatched by the radical Islamic group to set up a new armed cell in the West Bank and Israel.

They were intercepted after crossing from Gaza into the Egyptian Sinai, and then up into Israel's Negev Desert.

Article: Sharon's treatment was reasonable

Ariel Sharon received reasonable treatment, according to an article published in a medical journal. The article in the official journal of the American Neurological Association said his doctors' decisions made sense, given the severity of Sharon's condition.

"Sharon's physicians were subjected to a barrage of second-guessing even before all the facts of the case were in," states the article, according to Ha'aretz. Sharon has been in a coma since suffering a Jan. 4 stroke, which followed a more mild stroke.

NORTH AMERICA

Clinton: Confront Russia on Iran sales

The United States must confront Russia over its arms sales to Iran, Sen. Hillary Clinton said. The New York Democrat said current Russian arms sales are improving Iran's air defense system, removing a deterrent for Iran to pursue its suspected nuclear weapons program.

That could endanger Israel and ultimately endanger Russia, which is within missile distance of Iran, Clinton said Thursday at the Orthodox Union's annual Senate luncheon. Russians must realize "that they are planning a dangerous game for themselves," she said to applause.

U.S. official to meet top Jews

The U.S. national security adviser will meet with Jewish leaders ahead of Ehud Olmert's visit. Stephen Hadley and his deputy, Elliott Abrams, will meet with the leaders on Monday to discuss Olmert's

first visit to the United States as Israeli prime minister. Olmert, who will meet with President Bush on May 23 and will address Congress the following day, is expected to seek endorsement for his plan to unilaterally withdraw from parts of the West Bank.

Specter wants to talk with Iran

Sen. Arlen Specter called for dialogue with Iran. "I would like more attention paid to a dialogue with Iran," the Pennsylvania Republican, who is Jewish, said Thursday at the annual Senate luncheon sponsored by the Orthodox Union.

"Talking with people is never harmful." Specter did not elaborate, but the Bush administration is refusing to reply to an 18-page letter sent this week by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the first of its kind since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

In his letter, Ahmadinejad defends Iran's nuclear program and continues to reject Israel's existence.

Limbaugh: Ahmadinejad quoting Hollywood Jews

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's anti-Israel comments in a letter to President Bush are a "liberal Jewish Hollywood talking point," Rush Limbaugh said.

The conservative radio talk show host said the letter from the Iranian president this week took cues from Democrats and liberals "to push our buttons," including on the Iraq war and U.S. mistreatment of detainees.

"I've run into so many liberal Jews around the country that are pro-Palestinian," Limbaugh said. "And I've never understood it, and they've kind of given me indications, 'Well, it's just not fair; they're just a minority and the U.N. gave these people a country and they pushed these other people out.'"

Media Matters, a liberal watchdog, highlighted the Limbaugh comments.

WORLD

Amnesty: Russia should crack down on hate attacks

Russia should do more to curtail a rising trend of xenophobic attacks, Amnesty International said.

According to the report titled "Violent Racism Out of Control," 28 people were murdered and 366 were assaulted in racial attacks in Russia in 2005.

"While we recognize that some representatives of the authorities, including President Vladimir Putin, have acknowledged the problem, we believe that the authorities are failing to take adequate steps to tackle the issue," said Victoria Webb, an Amnesty researcher on Russia.

Tajiks; Roma, or Gypsies; people from the Caucasus Mountains; as well as members of the Jewish community all have been targets of racially motivated attacks in the past year.

The report also advises the Russian government to work more closely with anti-racism organizations and provide them with increased protection.

Presidents invited to mark massacre in Ukraine

Ukraine's president invited Russian and U.S. presidents to a Kiev forum in September to mark the 65th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre.

In his letters, Viktor Yushchenko wrote, "We can now together help the world and particularly the younger generation remember the lessons of history and prevent ethnic hatred."

More than 100,000 Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, gypsies, Ukrainian nationalists and others were killed in Babi Yar, a ravine in a Kiev suburb, beginning in September 1941.