


**IN THE NEWS**
**U.S. envoy:  
Iran sanctions likely**

Sanctions on Iran are likely after a U.N. nuclear watchdog reported that the country's nuclear program may not be peaceful, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said.

"The IAEA is still unable to confirm the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

"Now, in the language of the IAEA and the international system, that's a red flag," John Bolton said after the International Atomic Energy Agency delivered its report Thursday, the deadline for Iran to allow inspectors to check its program or face sanctions.

Bolton dismissed concerns that China or Russia, veto-wielding nations on the U.N. Security Council, would block sanctions.

**Annan holds  
talks in Syria**

Kofi Annan held talks in Syria on the latest leg of his tour of the Middle East. The U.N. secretary-general was expected to press Syrian officials Thursday to respect efforts to halt the flow of arms to Hezbollah.

Syria long has been a major supplier of arms to Hezbollah.

**Israelis rally  
for kidnapped soldiers**

Thousands of Israelis rallied in Tel Aviv to demand the release of three kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

Speakers at Thursday's rally in Rabin Square called on the Israeli government, the United Nations and the international community to work for the release of the soldiers.

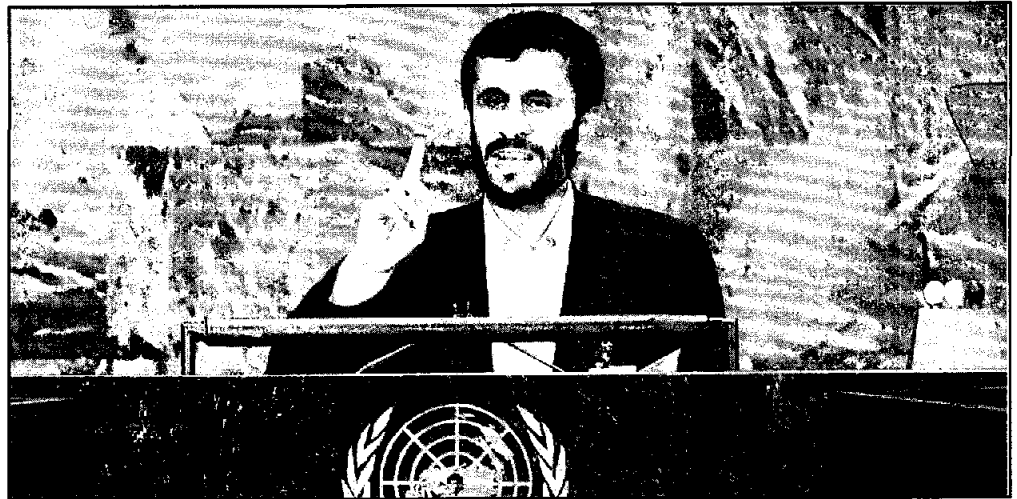
Gilad Shalit was abducted by Hamas on June 25; Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were kidnapped by Hezbollah on July 12.

**Reminder:**

The JTA World Report will not be published Monday, Sept. 4.

# WORLD REPORT

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Paulo Filgueiras/UN

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the U.N. General Assembly.

## Atomic inspectors' report on Iran lays groundwork for united action

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — The final, absolute, no-question deadline passed, Iran still won't give in and the world is finally ready to... well, wait and see.

The International Atomic Energy Agency report, delivered Thursday to the U.N. Security Council, erases any last vestige of doubt that Iran might accede to international demands to stop enriching uranium, diplomats said.

"The IAEA is still unable to confirm the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program," said John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. "Now, in the language of the IAEA and the international system, that's a red flag. That says that the Iranian program contains much that should be worried about here in New York, and

that I think underlies our concern that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons."

The report was hardly unexpected. Iran's self-set deadline to respond to the sanctions or assistance offer from the international community had been Aug. 22, and its answer, delivered that day to diplomats, was to call for more negotiations.

Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said the process was still very much under way, deadlines or no.

"This has a long way to play out," he said. "The U.S. will go to the Security Council and see what progress it can get. It will threaten the Security Council, in subtle or blunt ways: 'If you don't act, we will.'"

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad  
*Continued on page 2*

**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## Iran's response to sanction threats and offers of help was to call for more talks

*Continued from page 1*

jad, claimed as late as Thursday morning — just hours before the IAEA report was published — that enriching uranium was Iran's "right." Iranian officials later called the IAEA report "baseless."

The Aug. 22 deadline came after two other deadlines set by the United States passed in July. A host of earlier ultimatums has come and gone since 2003, when the international community first tried to corner Iran on the issue.

Iran insists its program is peaceful, but IAEA inspectors say that's doubtful, and that the nature of the uranium enrichment suggests a weapons program.

So what happens now?

Bolton made clear that he expects the next step to be sanctions; after all, that was what the five permanent, veto-wielding members of the Security Council, plus Germany, threatened earlier this year in making Iran the offer first outlined by Britain, France and Germany, known as the "E.U.-3."

Russia and China committed to seeking sanctions when the group met about two months ago, Bolton said.

Their statement was clear "that if Iran continued to reject the very generous offer that the E.U.-3 were making on behalf of the six countries and if Iran failed to suspend its uranium enrichment activities, now as called for both by the International Atomic Energy Agency and by the Security Council, then the Perm-5 plus Germany would come to the Security Council and seek sanctions," he said.

Well, maybe — Russian and Chinese diplomats were notably silent after the IAEA report was delivered. Even the European nations, which have been firmer in threatening sanctions, were hanging back until they heard more from the Iranians.

Javier Solana, the European Union foreign policy chief, was set to discuss next steps next week with Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator. Iranian diplomats were readying for a diplomatic blitz to Russia, China and European capitals next week.

Shi'ite Iran also may try to use its considerable conventional force to cow Sunni Arab neighbors into blocking international sanctions, according to a report released this month by the London-based Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

"The Sunni Arab states of Jordan, Egypt and the Gulf are wary of Iran yet feel compelled by its strength to maintain largely cordial relations while Iran embarrasses their Western-leaning governments through its stance against the U.S.," said the report on Iran's burgeoning regional influence.

The lack of international backing is unlikely to dampen determination in Washington to isolate Iran. The top agenda item for U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) for the last congressional session in Sep-

tember, before mid-term elections, is final passage of her Iran Freedom Act, which has garnered overwhelming support in the House of Representatives.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee and an array of other Jewish groups are committed to the act's passage. The legislation would considerably toughen existing U.S. sanctions against Iran, extending them to third parties that deal with Iran, a measure that would increase Iran's isolation even without formal support

**'A nuclear Iran is not a more confident, self-contained Iran. It's an Iran that is likelier to seek a regional war at the expense of the United States and at the expense of Israeli security. An Iran throwing its weight around is not going to be on the side of the angels.'**

**Jon Alterman**

Center for Strategic and International Studies

from China, Russia and the Europeans.

Ultimately, the world might have to learn to live with a nuclear Iran, said Shlomo Aronson, a political science professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. That might be tolerable for a while, as long as Iran maintains the opacity it has cultivated until now, he said.

"They will not threaten the use of a nuclear weapon that they deny exists," he said.

The problem with that scenario, Alterman said, is that even the tacit threat of a nuclear Iran poses dangers.

"A nuclear Iran is not a more confident, self-contained Iran," Alterman said. "It's an Iran that is likelier to seek a regional war at the expense of the United States and at the expense of Israeli security. An Iran throwing its weight around is not going to be on the side of the angels." ■

## Case dropped against Polish commentator

WARSAW (JTA) — Charges against a Polish commentator who complained about Jews on Poland's Radio Maryja were dropped. A state prosecutor concluded that a case brought against Stanislaw Michalkiewicz did not have merit. An anti-racism group had accused Michalkiewicz of defaming Jews in a March 29 program in which he accused them of running a

"Holocaust industry," extorting the Polish government and humiliating Poland.

He added that Jews were blowing out of proportion the murders of hundreds of Jews on Jedwabne in 1941 and making propaganda out of a postwar anti-Semitic attack in the town of Kielce. Radio Maryja, a Catholic broadcaster, has a history of airing anti-Semitic statements. ■

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# Luxembourg's Jews seek payback

By LARRY LUXNER

LUXEMBOURG (JTA) — Visitors to Luxembourg's modern city history museum might be surprised to find Torah scrolls, Havdalah spice boxes, silver Shabbat candles and other Jewish ritual objects.

After all, this wealthy little country in the heart of Europe has only 1,000 Jews — and ever since World War II, when the Nazis nearly decimated its Jewish community, Jews here have kept a low profile.

But lately the community has begun demanding answers — and unspecified compensation — for the heirs of Jews whose assets were seized by the German occupiers and their accomplices.

A recent exhibit at Luxembourg's Musee d'Histoire, titled "Le Grand Pillage," is part of a new awareness in Luxembourg that the country has never really come to terms with its past.

"In 2002, Luxembourg decided to set up a commission to look into the fate of material losses during the war," said human-rights lawyer Francois Moysse, a prominent member of Luxembourg's Jewish community.

Moysse told JTA that some 4,000 Jews were living in Luxembourg just before the outbreak of World War II. About half were refugees from neighboring Germany.

In 1940, Nazi troops invaded and ordered Luxembourg's Jews to leave. All except 700 were able to escape, but those who remained were deported to concentration camps, mainly Theresienstadt. Only a handful of the deportees survived the war.

Moysse said that in 1959, Luxembourg received 18 million Deutschmarks from Germany as compensation for its Jewish citizens.

"For sure, some Jews have never been compensated for their suffering," said the lawyer, one of four Jews on the 25-member commission. "These were foreign Jews, and only Luxembourg Jews were entitled to compensation by the Luxembourg government. The commission was supposed to make recommendations, but it has been over three years and there hasn't even been an interim report."

Luxembourg's Jewish community was established in the early 1800s. Officially the country has 600 Jews, said Moysse, who believes the real number is nearly twice that much.

About 80 percent of the Jews live in the capital city, also known as Luxembourg, with a much smaller community in the nearby town of Esch-sur-Alzette.

French and German are the predominant languages in this country of 450,000 people spread over 999 mountainous square miles. Luxembourg hosts large numbers of expatriates due to its status as a financial center and home to E.U. institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Court of Justice.

Boulangerie Phillip is Luxembourg's only kosher grocery, serving the 30 or so local families who observe kashrut. The supermarket sells matzah-ball soup mix from Israel, Chanukah candles from Belgium and frozen kosher meat from France.

The grocery is a 15-minute walk from the country's main synagogue, built in 1953 to replace the previous shul, destroyed by the Nazis. Services follow modern Orthodox rituals and are conducted in French and Hebrew by Moroccan-born Joseph Sayagh, said to be the first Sephardi rabbi in Luxembourg's history.

"The Jewish community used to be 100 percent Ashkenazi, with many families of Luxembourg origin or from neighboring regions," said Moysse, 39. "These people joined the community and after one generation they were considered locals. But now we have a lot of newcomers because the country is attracting new people, mainly from France."

Some of those newcomers are attracted to Or Chadash, a small Reform congregation established in 1998 by American expatriate Betty Preston.

"I missed my Judaism, and I missed the idea of celebrating and being with other Jews," said Preston, who has lived in Luxembourg since 1982.

With around 35 adult members and 15 children, Or Chadash holds Shabbat services once a month at the local Baha'i Center.

Or Chadash's members are all foreign expats working in Luxembourg for several years, and the congregation is a member of the Liberal Judaism Council. In fact, foreigners today constitute 40 percent of Luxembourg's population.

Because of its small size, Luxembourg is one of the few countries in Europe without an Israeli embassy. Despite the community's low profile, some Jews here have achieved prominence. One is Alain Meyer, a former vice president of the community who is now a member of Luxembourg's Council of State; another is Edmond Israel, former president of the Luxembourg Stock Exchange.

Thanks to its general prosperity, Luxembourg has few problems with immigrants — certainly not to the extent of neighboring

France and Belgium, both of which once possessed colonies in Africa.

"There is no violent anti-Semitism in Luxembourg, but like in any country, there is some xenophobia. You might hear somebody saying something, making remarks," Moysse told JTA. "There's a kind of myth here that poor Luxembourg was overrun and annexed by the Reich, and that nearly all Luxembourgers

resisted the Nazis. But some people profited from the regime. We know, for example, that antiques dealers bought a lot of items that had been owned by Jews, certainly of dubious origin."

Some of those artifacts were on display at the recent exhibit.

"I'm not saying anybody here helped kill the Jews, but in Luxembourg, only one Jew was hidden. We as the Jewish community are not only interested in payments to heirs, but also in history, because this story has never been written in Luxembourg," said Moysse, who declined to speculate on the monetary value of losses or who exactly should be held accountable.

"We are not blaming anybody because that's not what we're looking for," he added. "But people had losses and must be compensated." ■

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

'There's a kind of myth here that poor Luxembourg was overrun and annexed by the Reich, and that nearly all Luxembourgers resisted the Nazis. But some people profited from the regime.'

**Francois Moysse**  
Human-rights lawyer

# Challenge on campus for Hillel

By RACHEL POMERANCE

ATLANTA (JTA) — Ezra Billinkoff has an easy way about him, with his cropped red hair, funky glasses, wide grin and a T-shirt that boasts, "Everyone loves a Jewish Quaker."

But the 21-year-old president of Hillel: The Foundation for Campus Jewish Life at the University of Pennsylvania becomes serious when asked about his impending return to campus.

"We have a huge challenge," Billinkoff told JTA at Hillel's Charles Schusterman International Student Leaders Assembly, a five-day retreat for activists that ended Sunday at Camp Ramah Darom in Georgia.

Billinkoff is speaking about the heated and conflicted emotions some Jewish students have regarding Israel's war this summer with Hezbollah. Like the four children in the Passover story, students returning to campus will bring a range of perspectives, Billinkoff said — including that of the proverbial child who doesn't even know how to ask the relevant questions.

Billinkoff said he will work on campus to create "a forum for people to be able to express whatever they want."

As Jewish activists return to college, they anticipate widespread debate over this summer's monthlong war. But the debate also is taking place within Jewish groups, as the students determine the best course of action to support Israel.

Billinkoff urged one student activist to scale down plans for a pro-Israel event at Penn, arguing that a major, one-sided affair "could really alienate people, Jews included, who do not necessarily feel 100 percent Israel is right."

American universities have seen vigorous debate over the years surrounding Israel's conflicts with its neighbors. In 2000, the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada led to a swell of anti-Israel activism. In response, Jewish groups formed the Israel on Campus Coalition, which today comprises some 30 organizations with a campus presence, to coordinate Israel advocacy.

In recent years Jewish groups could claim they had "taken back the campus": Petitions on several campuses to divest from Israel were trumped by counterpetitions, and Jewish groups had trained armies of pro-Israel student activists.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee even has begun training non-Jewish pro-Israel activists at historically black colleges and Christian universities.

Meanwhile, Israel gained sympathy with its unilateral withdrawal in 2005 from Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

Now, a fresh group of students means re-educating the campus. This time around, the war has changed — and so have some of the activists' tactics.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

"We have been overly focused on proving that Israel is correct legally and logically, and we have not spent enough time" on the "moral and emotional aspects of the images people are seeing," said Wayne Firestone, Hillel's president-elect. "I think we've failed to make the case that Israel is a moral place."

The use by anti-Israel activists of the "David-Goliath" image takes the morality out of the issue," Firestone said. Through that lens, even Israel's vulnerability in the conflict is read as the "bully got what's coming to them."

However, Israel supporters can influence opinion by humanizing the conflict and appealing to emotions — circulating, for example, a cartoon that depicts an Israeli soldier shielding a baby carriage, opposite a Hezbollah fighter who is using a baby carriage as his own shield.

Anti-Israel activists are expected to argue that "Israel is occupying Lebanon just like it occupied Gaza," Firestone said. But the conflict with Hezbollah provides pro-Israel activists with a clear enemy.

"We may have the best opportunity to show Hezbollah as thugs, to show Iran as a global threat because these guys are unabashed about who they are," he said. "They can't put a shiny veneer on this."

The Israel on Campus Coalition has provided students with a 130-page resource guide offering programming ideas from member organizations, which run the political gamut.

The coalition also has various national programs in the works, including a national petition supporting Israel and a briefing for



Hillel

Ezra Billinkoff, 21, Hillel president at the University of Pennsylvania, attends Hillel's Charles Schusterman International Student Leaders Assembly.

the coalition by senior White House staff.

But it's up to each student to determine his or her own response.

For some of Hillel's Grinspoon interns — students who serve as paid pro-Israel programmers — the best approach is a nuanced one.

"You also have to look at Israel's faults," said Talia Komorov, 21, an Israeli who is a senior at Florida Atlantic University. "When you advocate, you don't want to seem like an extremist."

But advocating for Israel doesn't necessarily appeal to all Jewish students, even activists

on a Hillel retreat.

"I try not to expose myself around it too much just because it's not good, it's not happy news," says Jeff Diamon, 19, a University of Maryland sophomore.

"If I think about it, it's not going to make a difference," he said. "It's not going to stop the war."

His friend Josh Greenfeld, also a 19-year-old Maryland sophomore, disagrees.

Since "national and international affairs dictate what is acceptable," he said, "you have to advocate for your country." ■

"I think we've failed to make the case that Israel is a moral place."

Wayne Firestone  
President-elect, Hillel

# Non-Jews defend Israel on campus

By DAVID J. SILVERMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A cadre of students hit the pro-Israel books early this summer, studying techniques ahead of what is promising to be one of Israel's toughest seasons on campus in the wake of the Lebanon war.

The difference for these activists is that they're not Jewish.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee says there are currently about 400 non-Jewish activists trained in its programs at schools as disparate as the Ivy Leagues, state schools, Christian institutions and traditionally black colleges.

Of those, about 70 joined 300 Jewish student activists in late July in a four-day leadership training seminar that focused on dealing with the aftermath of Israel's war against the Hezbollah terrorist group.

"The face of AIPAC on campus is the face of America," said Jonathan Kessler, AIPAC's leadership development director.

Kessler said AIPAC wants to expand pro-Israel activism to untapped groups of students, seeking out campuses with small or no Jewish populations.

In January, AIPAC underwrote a mission to Israel to educate 43 non-Jewish students, including the presidents of the National College Democrats and College Republican National Committee.

In interviews, participants in the programs reveal the same anxieties and ambitions their Jewish counterparts face: They want to blunt the effects of media images

by providing context. Some hope to book pro-Israel politicians and former Israeli soldiers for campus talks.

"Yes, what people see on television will shape their opinions," said Amanda Wilkerson, a senior political science major at Florida A & M University, a historically black institution. But the conflict violence also "gives us a chance to show that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization that is hiding in homes."

Wilkerson said her AIPAC training and her on-campus experience was helping her steel for increased anti-Israel activism this year.

"Two years ago, I had people saying it couldn't be done on an historically black campus, that there was no interest in Israel," said Wilkerson, who in the past month has been peppered with dozens of phone calls from students interested in learning more about the Middle East violence. She says she sometimes spends hours explaining the conflict.

Wilkerson's interest in Israel was piqued when she was assigned the nation for a project in a comparative politics course. She was soon smitten with the Jewish state, and last November, she organized an Israel festival that drew 600 students.

Her modus operandi, she says, is connecting her fellow students to Israeli culture.

Jamal Sowell, a black U.S. Marine and graduate student in higher education at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, attended AIPAC's mission to Israel with Wilkerson last year.

He said he is ready to counteract what he expects to be a number of anti-Israel and anti-war forums and protests.

"Pro-Israel activists have to step it up another notch," he said. "You have groups such as Hezbollah that are out to wipe Israel off the map, and they are not going to stop until their agenda is pushed forth. That means that as Americans we

cannot sit back and watch; we need to be proactive because what happens over there affects the whole Middle East and our country."

Even students from traditionally Christian schools, where anti-Israel sentiment is comparatively low, are getting ready for a relatively busy season.

"We want to make sure people get the facts," said Brian Colas, a senior at Virginia's Liberty University who interned at AIPAC this summer. "We're going to focus on the nature of Hezbollah to make sure no one is confused that they are a humanitarian organization that was attacked by Israel. If we bring this to the front, right away, I have no doubt that Liberty students will understand and know the nature of this conflict."

Jewish students who have trained with non-Jewish activists at AIPAC events say they marvel at their level of commitment and enthusiasm.

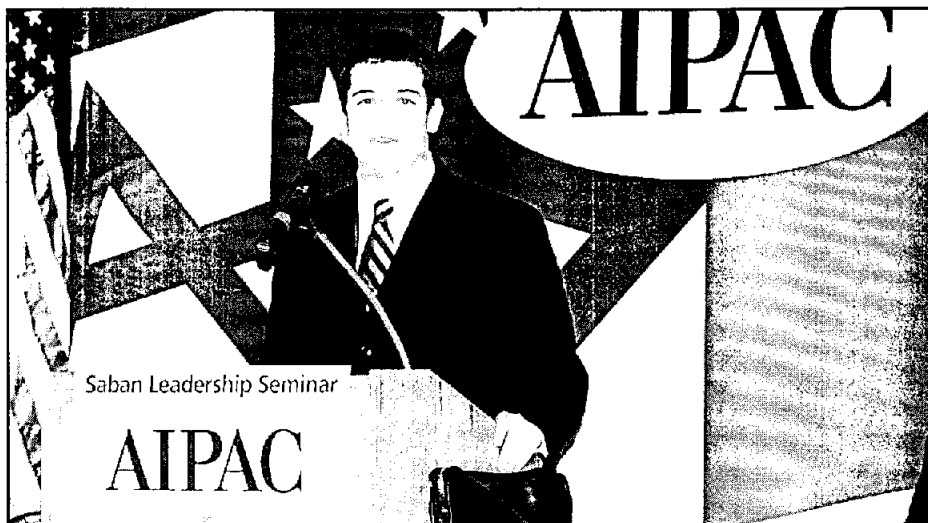
Naomi Berlin, a sophomore at Tufts University in Boston who also interned at AIPAC this summer, said the efforts of her non-Jewish counterparts affirm that what she is doing is right.

"With Jewish students it's something inherent, instilled in us from the beginning," she said. "But for most of them, it's something they've realized on their own. That's why the level of commitment is so impressive." ■

**'We're going to focus on the nature of Hezbollah to make sure no one is confused that they are a humanitarian organization that was attacked by Israel.'**

**Brian Colas**

Student activist, Liberty University



Joe Painter of Tennessee Temple University introduces Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman at AIPAC's Saban Student Leadership Seminar in July.

# Youth take havurah movement reins

By SUE FISHKOFF

RINDGE, N.H. (JTA) — When Ben Murane arrived earlier this month at the National Havurah Committee's Summer Institute, the annual gathering of the country's independent Jewish prayer communities, he was "surprised to see all the older people here," he says.

Murane, 23, thought he and his friends at Kol Zimrah, a three-year-old, lay-led minyan on Manhattan's Upper West Side, were at the forefront of a religious revolution led by young people turned off by what they say as the impersonal, hierarchical nature of institutional Judaism.

He had no idea that the white-haired, guitar-playing, anti-establishment grandparents he found himself living and studying with for a week in New Hampshire had done the same thing almost four decades earlier.

"Everyone I've met at Kol Zimrah is young," Murane explains.

But the havurah movement is 38 years old, dating back to the 1968 founding of Havurat Shalom in Somerville, Mass., a non-denominational community of Jewishly literate, religiously egalitarian and politically liberal young Jews.

Even as mainstream synagogues began co-opting the havurah model to reinvigorate large, impersonal congregations, a network of independent havurot grew, creating an all-volunteer National Havurah Committee and, in 1979, the first summer institute, where havurah members from across North America gather every year to sing, dance, pray, study and meditate.

This year the movement symbolically turned over the reins to the next generation. Ben Dreyfus, 26, and Elizabeth Richman, 32, co-chaired the summer institute, the first time it was headed by two young people.

"There's a passing of the baton," says social psychologist Sherry Israel of Brandeis University, who's been coming to the institute since 1983.

"All of us who have seen these kids grow up in this community are pleased as punch, and relieved," says Debra Cash, a member of Havurat Shalom from 1974 to 1981. "There was a question for a long

time, is this kind of transdenominational Judaism for them?"

The answer seems to be yes.

"For us, havurah Judaism is very much about doing it ourselves," says Benj Kamm, 22, who first came to a summer institute as a child.

Kamm believes havurah Judaism has much to offer his generation.

"We see our peers not knowing much about being Jewish, not knowing why they practice. They bring in clergy to be Jew-

ish for them. For many people in my generation, havurah Judaism is saying we need to own our Jewish experience," he says.

By the 1990s, the havurah movement was graying. According to institute lore, by 1999 there were just four people younger than 35.

The following year, the Edith and Henry Everett Philanthropic Fund began underwriting a fellowship program to bring 18 post-college Jewish activists to each summer institute. Everett alumni, together with children of movement founders like Kamm and members of new independent minyanim like Murane, in five years have created a vibrant new population base.

This summer, the single largest group of participants was people in their 20s.

"This is the second wave" of havurah Judaism, says Richman, a 2000 Everett fellow. She and Dreyfus, a 2002 Everett fellow, say the "tipping point" was 2001, when groups of young Jews in New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Washington began forming their own independent minyanim along traditional havurah principles.

Some of the leaders of these new minyanim, like Dreyfus and Richman, founders of Kol Zimrah in New York, were Hillel activists in college. Others are new to Jewish organizational work, but are active in groups like Jews in the Woods, an on-line community of young activist Jews, or might have studied in Israel for a year or worked with the Israeli peace movement.

A NEW  
YEAR  
DAWNS

'Havurah Judaism is  
very much about doing it  
ourselves.'

Benj Kamm, 22

The summer institute has become a touchstone for these young Jews, Dreyfus says. They form social networks and keep in touch during the year, feeding off each other's inventiveness.

"There is again a generation of young people who are served by" independent havurot, argues Rabbi Arthur Green, spiritual luminary of the Reconstructionist movement and founder of Havurat Shalom. "They see themselves as too unconventional for a mainstream congregation. They want a more informal style of worship."

Like those who founded the first havurot, these younger Jews are very committed to text study even as they oppose what they call the elitism of religious authority. Rabbis are not addressed as such, and workshops are taught by teenagers as well as renowned intellectual figures.

Sarah Brodbar-Nemzer, 22, of Toronto, has been coming to the institute since she was 8. At 13 she ran a workshop and at 15 became a member of the board.

"This has always been a place where my leadership was taken seriously," she says.

These younger Jews are bringing new sensibilities and priorities to havurah Judaism, while preserving the movement's original egalitarian and counter-cultural nature. They want greater emphasis on music, social action and traditional observance.

"There's less fear of halachic practice," notes Green, adding that the founders of the havurah movement were fighting feminist and pluralist battles that today's young Jews have moved beyond.

The young Jews taking leadership roles in havurah Judaism "believe passionately in what we do," Richman says.

That makes their parents happy.

"In the late '80s our young people were telling us, 'You need to tell us what to do,'" Cash says. "This group of the last decade, they just invent it. Even though there's a chance havurah will morph into something different with this generation, it looks as if it will carry forward. ■"



# Zionist Brando play turns 60

By RAFAEL MEDOFF

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Broadway plays don't usually produce political or social change. But Ben Hecht's controversial pro-Zionist play, "A Flag Is Born," which debuted 60 years ago, had an impact on three of the most contentious issues of its day: the fight to establish a Jewish state, the smuggling of Holocaust survivors to Palestine and the battle against racial segregation in the United States.

Hecht, an Academy Award-winning screenwriter, was active in the Bergson Group, a 1940s political action committee that lobbied for the rescue of Jews from Hitler and for the creation of a Jewish state. It made waves by using protest tactics that were unusual for that era, including full-page newspaper ads and theater productions.

Among the many celebrities whom Hecht helped bring to the Bergson group were the Adlers, the "first family" of Yiddish theater, and they were central to "A Flag Is Born."

Luther Adler directed the play. His half-sister Celia and another Yiddish star, Paul Muni, co-starred as elderly Holocaust survivors straggling through postwar Europe. Their sister Stella, the statuesque actress and acting coach, shared the role of narrator with journalist Quentin Reynolds.

Stella's most promising student, 22-year-old Marlon Brando, was cast in the

role of David, a passionate young Zionist who encounters the elderly couple in a cemetery.

"When my mother came home from the first rehearsal, she said of Brando, 'I can't remember his name, but boy, is he talented,'" recalled Celia Adler's son, Selwyn Freed, a retired professor of urology.

"Marlon was simply gorgeous, and his acting was astounding," said Stella's daughter, Ellen, who dated Brando

for several years. "At one rehearsal, his performance was so intense that my uncle Luther was moved to tears. And it wasn't just acting — Marlon really cared about the Jewish refugees, just as he later became active for black civil rights and the American Indians."

On Sept. 5, 1946, "Flag" debuted at Manhattan's Alvin Theater, known today as the Neil Simon Theater. Due to popular demand, the four-week opening run was extended to 10 weeks.

The characters' sharp criticism of British rule in Palestine irked many in England. The London Evening Standard called it "the most virulent anti-British play ever staged in the United States."

American reviewers were kinder. Walter Winchell said "Flag" was "worth seeing, worth hearing, and worth remembering... it will wring your heart and eyes dry... bring at least 11 handkerchiefs."

Brando's performance, especially his lines criticizing American Jewry's response to the Holocaust, touched a nerve.

"You Jews of America!" he shouted. "Where was your cry of rage that could have filled the world and stopped the fires?"

The accusation "sent chills through the audience," Brando later recalled. At some performances, "Jewish girls got out of their seats and screamed and cried from the aisles in sadness, and at one, when I

asked, 'Where were you when 6 million Jews were being burned to death in the ovens of Auschwitz?' a woman was so overcome with anger and guilt that she rose and shouted back at me, 'Where were YOU?'"

"Flag" was performed in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Baltimore and, reportedly, in a displaced persons camp in Europe. In some of the later performances, young Sidney Lumet — later an Academy Award-winning director — replaced Brando.

"This is the only romantic thing left in the world," Lumet told reporters before one show. "The homecoming to Palestine, the conquest of a new frontier, against all obstacles."

A planned performance at the National Theater in Washington was relocated to Baltimore's Maryland Theater because Hecht would not permit his works to be staged at theaters, such as the National, that barred blacks.

When Hecht discovered that the Maryland Theater restricted blacks to the balcony, the Bergson Group and the NAACP teamed up to protest: The

NAACP threatened to picket and a Bergson official announced he would bring two black friends to sit with him at the play.

The management gave in, allowing black patrons to sit wherever they chose. NAACP leaders hailed the "tradition-shattering victory" and used it to facilitate the desegregation of other Baltimore theaters.

"A Flag Is Born" was a triumph. It influenced American public opinion by reaching large audiences with an inspiring message about the plight of Holocaust survivors and the need for a Jewish state. It raised enough funds to purchase a ship — renamed the S.S. Ben Hecht — that tried to bring 600 survivors to Palestine, and that focused international attention on the refugees when the ship was intercepted by the British.

Rafael Medoff is director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, [www.Wymaninstitute.org](http://www.Wymaninstitute.org).

## ARTS & CULTURE

At one performance, 'when I asked, "Where were you when 6 million Jews were being burned to death in the ovens of Auschwitz?" a woman was so overcome with anger and guilt that she rose and shouted back at me, "Where were YOU?"'

Marlon Brando

## COMMUNITY

### TRANSITIONS

- The World Jewish Congress named Pinchas Shapiro its deputy general secretary.
- Joan Seidel was named national president of the American Technion Society.
- Mark Seal was named executive director of the American Society for Yad Vashem.
- The North American Alliance for Jewish Youth renamed itself the Network for Experimental Jewish Youth Education, or Jexnet.
- The American Jewish Committee's Transatlantic Institute named Emanuele Ottolenghi as its director.
- Dennis Prager was named a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.
- The American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science appointed Virginia Saifer as director of its Bay Area region.
- Jewish Family and Life named Amir Cohen its CEO.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Israel ready to bargain on prisoners?

Israel indicated a willingness to release Lebanese prisoners in exchange for two soldiers held by Hezbollah.

Jerusalem sources said Thursday that if Hezbollah hands over the two reservists snatched in a deadly July 12 border raid to the Lebanese government, Israel might free prisoners in return.

The announcement came as Lebanese media reported German officials were en route to Beirut, apparently on a mission to mediate a prisoner swap.

Hezbollah originally demanded the release of hundreds of Arabs held in Israeli jails, but it is widely expected to settle for Lebanese inmates.

Israel has three Lebanese in its prisons, an unknown number of Palestinians from refugee camps in Lebanon, as well as at least a dozen Hezbollah gunmen captured during the recent war.

#### Nablus bomb-maker killed

Israeli special forces killed a senior Palestinian terrorist in the West Bank.

The Al-Aksa Brigade leader was shot dead Thursday in Nablus.

Security sources said he was wanted for recruiting and equipping suicide bombers. In the Gaza Strip, tanks and troops withdrew from the district of Shajayia after an almost weeklong mission to uncover a tunnel dug by Palestinian terrorists intent on attacking an Israeli border position.

Twenty Palestinians, most of them gunmen, had been killed trying to repel the Israeli force.

Palestinian terrorists fired at least three rockets from Gaza into Israel, but caused no damage or casualties.

#### Israelis want independent probe of war

Most Israelis want an independent inquiry into the recent Lebanon war, a survey found. Israel Radio on Thursday published the results of an opinion poll it conducted on Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's decision to limit probes of the 34-day offensive against Hezbollah to a government-appointed panel.

Sixty-four percent of respondents were unhappy with the decision, preferring that an independent body look into the war's planning and execution, the station reported.

The findings added to pressure mounting on the Olmert government since an Aug. 14 truce ended the Lebanon war.

Israeli media reported that even Olmert's junior partner in the coalition, Labor Party chief and Defense Minister Amir Peretz, favored an independent probe.

According to the Israel Radio survey, there is waning support for Olmert within his Kadima Party, with only 15 percent saying they would vote for him today if there were an election.

Thirty-nine percent said they preferred Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to head Kadima, and 46 percent were undecided.

#### Labor chief challenged

The head of Israel's Labor Party is facing his first formal leadership challenge. Two senior Laborites announced Wednesday they would run against Amir Peretz in the party primary, currently scheduled for May 2007.

The two contenders, former security chief Ami Ayalon and veteran economist Avishai Braverman, agreed they would campaign jointly, though they have not yet determined who will be the lead candidate against Peretz.

The Labor leader, whose performance as Israel's defense minister during the recent Lebanon war has come under intense scrutiny, also

faces potential challenges from Ehud Barak, Danny Yatom and Matan Vilnai, all party members with strong military backgrounds.

#### Alliance boosts Israel school for teens

The Jewish National Fund formed an alliance with a group that runs sessions for high schoolers in Israel. The partnership between the JNF and the Alexander Muss Institute is aimed at strengthening the institute's Israel programs and building four new campuses in Israel, beginning with one in the Negev.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Bush: Hezbollah plays terrorist role

Hezbollah plays a central role in international terrorism, President Bush said.

"The enemies of liberty come from different parts of the world, and they take inspiration from different sources," Bush said Thursday in a speech to the American Legion in Salt Lake City.

"Some are radicalized followers of the Sunni tradition who swear allegiance to terrorist organizations like Al-Qaida.

"Others are radicalized followers of the Shia tradition who join groups like Hezbollah and take guidance from state sponsors like Syria and Iran."

#### 'Holocaust' writer dies at 84

Gerald Green, who received an Emmy for his screenplay of the television miniseries "Holocaust," died Tuesday in Connecticut of pneumonia at age 84.

The series was credited with breaking a taboo when it aired in West Germany in the late 1970s.

### WORLD

#### Holocaust survivors write to Ahmadinejad

An Israeli group representing Holocaust survivors offered to take Iran's president on a tour of Auschwitz.

The Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel announced Thursday it had written to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, via the Iranian Embassy in Germany, and proposed taking him to the site of a Nazi death camp in a bid to counter his assertions that the wartime genocide against the Jews did not take place.

The group, which sent a copy of the letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, also asked to be invited to a Holocaust denial conference scheduled to take place in Tehran at the end of the year. Iranian officials had no immediate comment on the overture.

#### Polish leader says country not anti-Semitic

Charges that Poland is veering toward anti-Semitism are based on a "myth" created by the European media, Poland's prime minister said.

Jaroslaw Kaczynski made his comments on his first trip to the European Union headquarters in Brussels to meet with the 25-nation bloc's commissioner, Jose Manuel Barroso.

European Union lawmakers have accused Poland of not upholding European values of tolerance.

A controversial resolution in the European Parliament earlier this summer warned of a "general rise in racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and homophobic intolerance" in Poland.

The comments infuriated many Poles, who felt the judgements were based on a few isolated incidents.

Poland's government includes the League of Polish Families whose members have been linked to anti-Semitic stances.

The party's leader, Roman Giertych, says he opposes anti-Semitism.