

IN THE NEWS
Olmert, Katsav offer New Year's greetings

Israel's prime minister and president both called for Jewish unity in their New Year's greetings to Jews worldwide.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert wrote, "Your participation in strengthening the Jewish homeland is invaluable, and your unwavering encouragement reinforces our determination to live our lives here in Israel and to uphold our Jewish, democratic values." Katsav wrote, "On the eve of the New Year 5767, we are once more facing new and difficult challenges that force us to find effective ways of coping with them."

Ahmadinejad speaks his mind to think tank

In a meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad questioned the Holocaust and defended Iran's nuclear program.

Under tough questioning Wednesday at the council in New York, Iran's president told one man who saw the Dachau concentration camp shortly after its liberation that the world "should allow more impartial studies" on the Holocaust.

He also insisted Iran is fully cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Bush: Clock ticking on Iranian nukes

Time is of the essence in stopping Iran's presumed nuclear weapons program, President Bush said.

Bush was asked Wednesday on CNN whether he agreed with projections by Tzipi Livni, the Israeli foreign minister, that Iran could have the knowledge necessary to build a nuclear bomb within months.

Reminder:
The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Sept. 25.

WORLD REPORT

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Some rabbis using services to honor non-Jewish congregants

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — During Yom Kippur services this year, Rabbi Larry Raphael of San Francisco's Congregation Sherith Israel will invite his non-Jewish congregants up to the pulpit and thank them for casting their lot with the Jewish people.

Using a blessing ceremony written two years ago by Rabbi Janet Marder of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif., he'll tell them, "You are the moms and dads who drive the children to Hebrew school. You take classes and read Jewish books to deepen your own understanding, so you can help to make a Jewish home."

Offering his "deepest gratitude" for those who are raising their children as Jews — 26 percent of the parents of his religious school students — he will ask the rest of the congregation to rise and say the blessing that begins, "May God bless you and keep you."

Last Yom Kippur, the first time Raphael did this, 50 people came forward. The congregation was "in tears," says its executive director, Nancy Drapin.

As intermarriage rates continue to rise and more intermarried families join congregations, increasing numbers of non-Orthodox rabbis are looking for ways to acknowledge the non-Jews in their midst.

While Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis tend to be more low-key about it, Reform rabbis like Marder and Raphael have come up with a wide variety of ways to express gratitude ranging from festive meals to public ceremonies.

Many choose to do their honoring during



Rabbi Larry Raphael of Congregation Sherith Israel in San Francisco.

Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur services, both because of the prestige conveyed by those special days, and because that's when most of their congregation shows up. Marder did her first public blessing on Yom Kippur morning in 2004.

"I'd encountered so many families through the bar and bat mitzvah process where the non-Jewish partner had been so dedicated," she says. "I thought it was important to make a public acknowledgment."

She was concerned that some people would not want to be singled out. But the ceremony, which took place in front of thousands of people, turned out to be "a far more moving and powerful experience" than she'd expected.

In November 2005, at the Reform movement's biennial conference the president

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *Non-Orthodox rabbis are increasingly honoring their non-Jewish congregants*

Continued from page 1



Rabbi Janet Marder, of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

of the Union for Reform Judaism, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, urged Reform congregations to honor their non-Jewish members publicly, especially non-Jewish parents raising Jewish children, even as he also urged greater emphasis on conversion.

Since then, says Reform's outreach director, Kathy Kahn, public thanking of non-Jews in Reform congregations "has become more prevalent."

Rabbi David Thomas of Congregation Beth El in Sudbury River Valley, Mass., thanks his non-Jewish parents on Rosh Hashanah morning, and again on Yom Kippur. But he tries to express the same gratitude throughout the year.

Beth El member Jennifer Sarni says her non-Jewish husband, Jonathan, who

is helping her raise their two children as Jews, was "really touched" when Thomas singled out the non-Jewish parents and their extended families for a special thank you at a kindergarten event.

"My husband was there, and my in-laws, and it was a really nice part of the ceremony, totally unexpected," she says. "My husband didn't convert, but he's been completely supportive."

Rabbi Barry Block of Temple Beth El in San Antonio held a brunch in April to honor his non-Jewish members. The food was prepared and served by their Jewish spouses.

Block considered doing a public thank you from the pulpit during High Holidays, but he got the thumbs-down from the non-Jews he asked. "They said they'd be embarrassed," he says. "Different places have different cultures."

That's why the practice is not common in Reconstructionist congregations, says Rabbi Joshua Waxman, spiritual leader of Congregation Or Hadash in Fort Washington, Pa., and a faculty member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Describing Yoffie's biennial call as a "double-edged sword," Waxman worries that "singling out someone and saying, 'look at them, they're special,' sets up a 'them' and an 'us.'"

That runs counter to Reconstructionism's view of Judaism as a civilization in which non-Jews can participate fully.

Some Jewish leaders oppose the idea of publicly honoring non-Jewish spouses, saying it conveys the mistaken impression that the Jewish community approves of intermarriage.

"The fact that they're willing to raise their children as Jews is great, but that's only half the story," says Martin Schneer, president of the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Philadelphia.

Emphasizing that he's speaking as an individual, Schneer says congregations

should extend a warm welcome to the non-Jews in their midst, but honoring them from the dais is inappropriate.

Schneer's opinion is echoed by Conservative leaders. Rabbi Moshe Edelman, leadership development director for the United Synagogue of Conservative Juda-

ism, says he hasn't heard of Conservative rabbis publicly thanking the non-Jews in their congregations.

Conservative outreach has deepened in other ways this year, he notes. Camp Ramah, the movement's summer camp, has begun admitting pre-bar and bat mitzvah-age children of non-Jewish mothers, and the executive vice president of

the United Synagogue, Rabbi Jerome Epstein, urged the same policy this year at Conservative religious schools.

But these changes are aimed at bringing intermarried families closer to the community in order to encourage conversion. That's quite different than honoring non-Jewish parents who don't convert.

Rabbi Steven Glazer of Congregation Beth Emeth, a Conservative synagogue in Herndon, Va., is in the minority in his movement. For almost 10 years, he's chosen four non-Jewish spouses every year to stand on the bimah, or dais, during the Yom Kippur service and read the story of a Righteous Gentile, a non-Jew who saved Jews during the Holocaust.

"These are our Righteous Gentiles," he states. "Many are more motivated than the Jewish parent, schlepping the kids back and forth all the time."

Craig Dubois, a non-Jew and father of two, read one of those stories in 2002. "I felt very honored," he says. "Anything that's given out during the holidays, I'm proud to get."

Glazer notes that "a fair number" of the non-Jews he honors in this way go on to convert, although he emphasizes that wasn't his intention.

Dubois converted in 2003. ■

'I'd encountered so many families through the bar and bat mitzvah process where the non-Jewish partner had been so dedicated. I thought it was important to make a public acknowledgment.'

Rabbi Janet Marder
Congregation Beth Am



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Israel supporters rally outside U.N.

By JACOB BERKMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The 61st convening of the United Nations General Assembly has been marked outside the U.N. building by pro-Israel rallies, and inside by a growing ideological rift between the United States and its opponents, with Israel caught in the middle.

President Bush used his speech Tuesday to the General Assembly to appeal to the people of Iran, telling them that their president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was wasting their resources to build nuclear weapons and support terrorism.

In response, Ahmadinejad sought to paint the United States as an imperialist aggressor that uses Israel as its proxy.

Jewish groups and others came out en masse Wednesday to protest against Ahmadinejad in a rally organized by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, United Jewish Communities and UJA-Federation of New York.

Some 35,000 people rallied across from the United Nations to protest Ahmadinejad's presence at the world body. The crowd also wanted to show solidarity for Israel and implore the United Nations to enforce Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended Israel's war this summer with Hezbollah and calls for the release of three Israeli soldiers taken hostage by Hamas and Hezbollah.

During the rally, Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, referred to Ahmadinejad's Tuesday night speech to the General Assembly, in which he portrayed the creation of Israel as aggression against the Muslim world.

"He's constantly lied and misrepresented the truth," Hoenlein said, "and he comes and lectures the rest of the world?"

The rally drew dozens of speakers, including Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, New York Gov. George Pataki and Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz.

"Shame on you for being the biggest Holocaust denier in the world," Wiesel said of Ahmadinejad. "You bring shame to your culture and your nation."

The United Nations, he added, also should be ashamed for giving Ahmadinejad a forum.

Dershowitz brought to the podium a copy of an indictment he said he was set to file against Ahmadinejad for trying to incite genocide against the Jewish community.

The rally also featured a healthy number of non-Jewish speakers and protesters. Kimberly Nucco and Sonya Davie, members of Christians United for Israel, came to the rally from Brooklyn. Both had been told in their church that it was impera-

tive to support Israel.

It seemed clear, though, that the Jewish state was at the center of a power struggle, as opponents of the United States paint Israel as an the pawn of U.S. imperialism.

Though he didn't mention Israel by name in a speech laced with improbable appeals for more love and human rights, the Iranian president devoted much of his speech to criticizing the Jewish state.

He also called for the U.N. Security Council to be reformed so the United States would no longer be a permanent member with veto power. The United States abuses its veto power to achieve its imperialist goals and stifle the voice of the oppressed, Ahmadinejad argued.

"This is blatantly manifested in the

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

'He's constantly lied and misrepresented the truth, and he comes and lectures the rest of the world?'

Malcolm Hoenlein
Conference of Presidents

way the elected government of Palestine is treated, as well as in the support extended to the Zionist regime," Ahmadinejad said. "It does not matter if people are murdered in Palestine, turned into refugees, captured, imprisoned or besieged."

Ahmadinejad did not deny the Holocaust, as he has done in the past, but made clear that he feels the creation of Israel was an act of aggression.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez picked up Ahmadinejad's rhetoric Wednesday. Calling Bush the devil, he castigated the Security Council for, in his view, allowing Israel to destroy Lebanon and intentionally kill hundreds of civilians.

"The bombs in Beirut had micro-millimetric accuracy, and they are caught in the crossfire?" Chavez said. "It is genocidal."

The real question, said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, is whether the voices of those gathered at the rally across from the United Nations will be heard by member nations, especially as Ahmadinejad tries to position himself as a champion of the oppressed.

The danger is that people in the developing world will start to look at Ahmadinejad as their spokesman, Harris said.

"The message from the rally could not be clearer," he told JTA. "Whether it will be heard and heeded is another matter. The gap between the U.N. and the rally is much wider than First Avenue."

Chabad offers shelter during Thai coup

BANGKOK (JTA) — As more than a dozen tanks were encircling Thailand's Parliament building in a military coup d'etat, hundreds of Israeli backpackers were seeking shelter in the local Chabad House a mile or so away.

The four-story establishment on Khao San Road, Bangkok's famous backpacker district popular with young Israelis, generally pulls down its shutters after 10 p.m. On Tuesday, though, it stayed open well into the night. Hearing rumors of an impending coup in the late afternoon, Rabbi Nehemya Wilhelm began warning Jews and Israelis to stay off the streets.

Although Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai, or Thais Love Thais, party won by a landslide in elections last year, persistent allegations of corruption have severely dented his populist appeal, especially in the capital. Earlier this year, mass protests calling for his resignation rocked the capital for weeks on end.

No sooner did CNN and BBC start broadcasting pictures of the unfolding military takeover in Bangkok than frantic parents in Israel began calling Chabad House on Khao San Road. "Interestingly, they seemed to know more about the situation back in Israel than we did in Bangkok," Wilhelm said.

U.S. Jewry: Year of the Youth

By CHANAN TIGAY

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — During Bill Clinton's successful run for the White House in 1992, campaign strategist James Carville famously impressed on campaign staffers that, when it comes to reaching American voters, "It's the economy, stupid."

Even in a year when a Muslim man angry at Israel went on a shooting rampage at the Seattle Jewish federation, killing one person and injuring five, 5766 may well be remembered as the year when American Jews looked into the crystal ball and discovered that, "It's the youth, stupid."

With leaders of U.S. Jewry increasingly concerned about continuity and watching fretfully as many younger Jews opt out of traditional forms of affiliation, each month seemed to bring with it a new study of 18-25 year-old Jews — offering insights into their likes and dislikes; where they're doing their Judaism and spots from which they're shying away; and what turns them on, as well as what turns them off.

There was Brandeis University's study of Jewish college students, which found that, while proud of their heritage, these young Jews were basically unaffiliated, had relatively weak ties to Israel and Jewish federations and were attracted more to Jewish culture than religion.

And there was the study by Reboot, a nonprofit that promotes creative Jewish initiatives, that found college-age Jews, also proud of their heritage, were avoiding institutional affiliations and were particularly interested in Jewish culture.

Then there were studies by sociologist Steven Cohen and by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, that found, well, pretty much the same thing as the others. As study after study emerged, observers started to see a pattern.

That many younger Jews in America are engaging differently than their forebears, and expressing their Jewish identities in different ways, should come as no surprise. Indeed, extrapolating from a Feb. 27 piece by Jane Kramer in *The New Yorker*, this may simply reflect the nature of democracies.

"Democracies preclude contending absolutisms and the dicta of fixed identities," Kramer writes. "They have to do with identity in flux, with culture, and cultures,



Brian Hendler

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

constantly transforming, molting into something new — something surprising and different and open-ended and free."

Still, with intermarriage rampant, synagogue membership among young Jews on the decline and a general sense that younger Jews are less connected to Judaism, Jewish communal leaders are on the lookout for ways to get the younger generation to connect and to engage in a conversation about Jewish identity, community and meaning.

But given what the recent slew of studies tells us about younger Jews, how should this be accomplished? Over the past year, Jewish professionals and lay people increasingly have been asking this question and debating possible answers.

Should these groups try to meet the next generation where it's at, promoting initiatives that cater specifically to a younger audience? Or should traditional Jewish organizations, from synagogues to federations, work to convince the youth that these institutions still have something to offer? Maybe some combination of the two? Or something else entirely?

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

To be sure, recent developments have

given young Jews plenty of outlets for the Jewish cultural impulse, and seem to demonstrate that there's a large market for these cultural efforts. Matisyahu, a Chasidic reggae singer, has sold more than 500,000 albums. *Heeb*, a Jewish magazine aimed at hip young Jews, has been the subject of much chatter and numerous articles in the mainstream media. And *Guilt & Pleasure* — "A magazine for Jews and the people who love them" — has been selling out at newsstands and bookstores across the country.

Times, in other words, are flush if you're a young, culturally minded Jew. But the explosion in material led some observers this year to ask whether the arts should be viewed as a gateway to further Jewish

involvement or are valuable as a destination in and of themselves.

The distinction probably doesn't matter to many of those surveyed in the studies. However, the answer has practical implications when it comes

to deciding which initiatives Jewish organizations and philanthropists should fund.

Another study of younger Jews, this one by the American Jewish Committee, suggested that Orthodoxy will become a larger and more influential force in coming decades. The survey, which looked at the 1.5 million U.S. Jews between the ages of 18-39, found that Orthodox Jews comprise some 11 percent of all U.S. Jews and 16 percent of 18-29 year-olds.

Among even younger Jews, the percentage of Orthodox is even higher, those

A NEW YEAR
DAWNS

One study of younger Jews suggested that Orthodoxy will become a larger and more influential force in coming decades.

behind the report speculated. Further, the survey found, Orthodox Jews marry at a younger age, have more children and are more Jewishly engaged than their non-Orthodox counterparts.

The same study found that the Holocaust is proving more important than Israel in positively affecting Jewish identity among many young Jews.

Still, as tensions flared along the Gaza-Israel border and Israel's northern border erupted into war over the summer, American Jews mobilized quickly and decisively to aid the Jewish state. Jewish leaders met publicly and privately with world leaders and diplomats, urging them to condemn Hezbollah attacks and stressing the complicity of both Iran and Syria in the northern war.

Jewish groups, meanwhile, raised large sums of money to help Israeli causes, from shoring up dwindling blood supplies to helping children living in the line of fire escape to safer ground.

Middle Eastern politics intruded squarely onto the American Jewish scene in Seattle, where a Muslim man ostensibly angered by the Israel-Hezbollah war killed one woman and injured five others in a shooting rampage at the city's Jewish federation.

Even before the war with Hezbollah, however, Israel was at the center of American Jewry's agenda. An effort in Congress to cut off assistance to the Palestinian Authority after Hamas' landslide electoral victory in January met unexpected resistance from a coalition of dovish Jewish groups.

AIPAC strongly favored the bill, but Americans for Peace Now, the Israel Policy Forum and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom objected particularly to the U.S. House of Representatives version because it would cut off

the Palestinian Authority regardless of whether it is led by Hamas.

The groups said the measure would suffocate any attempts by Palestinian moderates to push back at Hamas. Democratic lawmakers said Jewish calls opposing the legislation outnumbered those in support by 3-1.

In the end, both bills passed overwhelmingly, though the House version recorded 37 votes against — far more than the usual dozen diehard Israel critics. The Senate and the House have yet to reconcile substantial differences between their versions of the bill.

Meanwhile, the Arab-Israeli conflict also was being played out on movie screens across the country as two films — Steven Spielberg's "Munich" and Hany Abu-Assad's "Paradise Now" — took on the hot-button issues of terrorism and counterterrorism.

Elsewhere, the Jewish community, all-too-cognizant of where silence in the face of genocide can lead, took a leading role in efforts to end ongoing atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan.

As surveys focused on the new ways youth are engaging, some Jewish organizations, too, were thinking outside the box. In April, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Conservative Judaism's flagship institution, selected Arnold Eisen as its next chancellor.

The choice of Eisen, a Jewish studies professor and chairman of Stanford University's Religious Studies department,

surprised some watchers because he is not a rabbi and has spent his professional career in academia. Eisen will be just the second non-rabbi of the seven people to have held JTS' top post.

In addition, Hillel selected Wayne Firestone as its new president. An attorney by training, Firestone, 42, worked in high-tech in Israel following a stint as an administrator and lecturer at Haifa's Technion — Israel Institute of Technology. He also headed the Anti-Defamation League's Israel office for a year before joining Hillel in 2002, where he most recently was executive vice president.

And while these institutions gained new leaders, the American Jewish community lost several prominent members this year. Jewish philanthropic giant Andrea Bronfman, 60, was killed in January when she was struck by a car as she walked

her dog in Manhattan.

In April, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a prominent congregational rabbi, historian, organizational leader and thinker, died at age 84.

Later that month, the Satmar Grand Rebbe, Moshe Teitelbaum — who led a community of an estimated 50,000 Chasidim — died in New York after suffering from spinal cancer and other ailments. He was 91.

In late March, 12 American tourists on a B'nai B'rith trip to South America were killed when their bus fell 300 feet down a mountainside in Chile.

As we welcome in 5767, young Jews still are less affiliated than their elders, and Israel still lives in a tragically dangerous neighborhood.

But there is a bit of good news. With the High Holidays upon us, one fear that shook up the community last year appears no longer to be in play: As of this writing, the lulav shortage that loomed as Sukkot 5766 approached appears to be a thing of the past, baruch hashem.

Jewish tradition holds that the four elements comprising the lulav represent the human spine, heart, eyes and mouth. And so, with plenty of lulavs to go around, here's to a year of strength, happiness, the ability to see things clearly and only good tastes in the mouths of the Jewish people. And to a year as sweet as the etrog's aroma.

(JTA Bureau Chief Ron Kampeas in Washington and Correspondent Sue Fishkoff in California contributed to this report.)

The Arab-Israeli conflict also was being played out on movie screens as two films took on terrorism and counterterrorism.



Joel Magalnick

Flowers adorn the outside of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, where on July 28, 2006, a lone gunman shot dead one employee and wounded five others.

Reform movement seeks stronger FSU presence

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Reform movement has been working in the former Soviet Union for 16 years, but it still lacks a central facility for its operations in the region and suffers from a shortage of rabbis, cantors and community workers.

That may change, movement leaders say, with the introduction of a new, extended curriculum at the movement's Russian training college and the group's renewed commitment to purchasing a building in Moscow.

The plans were announced during a recent seminar of Reform congregation and youth group leaders and educators from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, who spent four days last week near Moscow at the movement's annual seminar.

The changes in the movement are long overdue, members said, expressing frustration over insufficient funding and management problems.

"I'm 10 years with the Reform movement, and there's very little development going on," said Dmitry Karpenko, 37, a cantor with the Moscow Reform congregation and one of the young, charismatic Reform leaders in Russia.

Previously focused on growing the number of its congregations in the former Soviet Union, the movement now is beginning to cut funding to some member communities to focus on quality instead of quantity, said Alex Kagan, the region's director with the World Union for Progressive Judaism's Israel office.

Quality also means more committed leadership and improved management. To this end, changes were recently introduced at Machon, a Moscow-based program that trains para-rabbis to work with progressive groups throughout the post-Soviet states.

The incoming class of 10 students who started their school year in early September will be the first in Machon's 11-year history to study for three years instead of two. The additional year was added to allow students to spend more time working in the communities that after graduation will employ them as para-rabbis, cantors and educators.

"We want to stimulate people to stay with us and continue working in our communities," said Rabbi Alexander Lyskovoy,

a Moscow Reform leader and Machon's director.

Dan Shvets, 23, originally from Kirovograd, Ukraine, just started his second year at Machon, where he studies cantorial art. He expects to have no trouble finding a local community to work in when he graduates.

"There's a need for people like us. I won't be sitting around without a job," he said.

"I have a list of 40 empty cities," Lyskovoy said, referring to communities in the former Soviet Union with established Reform congregations but no rabbis or professional community workers.

"There's enough room for our graduates in the communities. They can work as rabbis in everything except for issues of halachah," or Jewish religious law, Lyskovoy said.

In addition to another year of classes added to the curriculum and a semester of study and practicum in Israel, beginning this year Machon will hold some of its classes at the Russian State University for the Humanities, allowing students to earn credits from the prestigious Moscow university.

The changes aim to make the Machon curriculum closer to that of Hebrew Union College, the Reform movement's main school, which has campuses in the United States and Israel.

Reform leaders in the region say the changes are a first step in eventually making Machon a seminary — which the movement long has been considering — to train Russian-speaking rabbis, cantors and community workers.

"Machon can become a rabbinical college, but no sooner than in three to five years," Lyskovoy said. "The idea of a rabbinical college is floating in the air, but it's being put off because of financial and organizational difficulties."

The financial matters Lyskovoy was referring to affect not only Machon: Some students believe it will be extremely challenging to live off the \$300 monthly salary the movement pays graduates who go on to lead local congregations.

The Reform movement in the region is funded almost exclusively by donations from North American Jews, channeled through the World Union's Jerusalem office.

The movement's current budget in the FSU is about \$1 million — a paltry sum compared to the \$60 million budget of the Chabad-led Federation of Jewish Communities, the leading Jewish religious group in the post-Soviet countries.

Donations that Reform Jews raise locally account for no more than 5 percent of the budget, Kagan said. Last month, the central organization of Reform Jews in Russia, known as OROSIR, lost its lease for a space it has rented since 2002 and had to move from downtown Moscow to a Jewish community center in a remote district.

The development prompted the group

to renew efforts to purchase a building in Moscow that will house a synagogue, community center, Machon and OROSIR offices.

"Without a base, we cannot talk about anything," Lyskovoy said. "This is like hanging in the air. When you

have a space you can find money to renovate it; when you don't have a space you won't find money to do anything."

Kagan agreed, saying the World Union will focus its efforts on the property issue and hopes to resolve it within a year.

The group has a commitment for a \$3 million donation but will need to raise at least \$2 million more to afford a property in central Moscow. The World Union currently is negotiating with potential donors, including a leading American Jewish businessman based in Moscow.

Meanwhile, the World Union has adopted a strategy focusing on property purchases in areas outside Moscow. With the exception of a few Ukrainian towns where Reform Jews received synagogue buildings that had been confiscated decades earlier by Soviet authorities, most of the 60 or so Reform congregations in post-Soviet countries have to lease space. Last month, the movement completed the purchase of a 5,000-square-foot building to house its St. Petersburg congregations, and it is trying to finalize the purchase of a building in the Belarussian capital of Minsk. ■

ACROSS
THE FORMER
SOVIET
UNION

The Reform movement
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A NEW YEAR DAWNS

Rosh Hashanah: The beginning of change

By RABBI JILL HAMMER

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish time does not begin in the spring, with the leaf and flower. It begins in the autumn, with the seed. From the harvest, we gather not only food for our tables, but grains and kernels to plant in the coming year.

Rosh Hashanah is the new year of the Jewish people not only because we renew our hearts at this season, but because, as fruit turns into seed, we renew the cycle of life.

It's no wonder the sages say God created the world in the autumn. Rosh Hashanah isn't only the day of the shofar blast, the day of repentance. It is also the festival of beginning. Nature begins her work of growth and change, mulch and frost, preparing for the spring. So too, we begin our work of growth and change, preparing for an inner rebirth.

We may not think of Rosh Hashanah as a festival connected to the earth. Yet consider the Torah portion we read on the first day of the new year: Sarah, the elderly wife of Abraham, conceives and gives birth to Isaac. Even though Sarah is barren, her womb receives new life. The greatest gift I've received from the Jewish calendar is its awareness of change. The mood of each season, month, week and day is different. In fact, the Hebrew word for year, "shanah", is similar to the word "shoneh", or "changing."

It's even occurred to me that Rosh Hashanah, the "head of the year," could be retranslated as "the beginning of change." As we start out on the path of Jewish time once more, we know we won't be the same when the new year returns again. The story of Isaac's unexpected birth teaches us that, just as astonishing changes happen outdoors at every season, change is possible — and even inevitable — within us as well. ■

Rabbi Jill Hammer is the author of the new "The Jewish Book of Days: A Companion for All Seasons" (Jewish Publication Society, 2006) and "Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women" (Jewish Publication Society, 2001).

Op-Ed: God is in the details

By WENDY MOGEL

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Preparation for the High Holidays means engaging in cheshbon hanefesh, accounting of the soul. This includes taking a personal inventory of your own behavior and the lessons you may unwittingly be teaching your children. In Judaism, God is in the details, and one of the most important details is everyday courtesy.

The rabbis teach that respectfulness and courtesy are redeeming virtues even when the Jewish people do not fulfill the other precepts of the Torah. They call these practices *derech erez*, and say: "A Torah scholar who does not have *derech erez* is worse than a dead animal."

Whoa, Nelly. In our competitive, over-scheduled world, we so often get in the habit of looking for shortcuts and finding creative justifications for breaking rules and putting our own needs ahead of those of the community that it's easy to forget that our children are watching.

You need look no further than the carpool drop-off lane at your child's school to know exactly what I'm talking about. Rudeness is so rampant that administrators nationwide are forced to write parents letters begging them to be polite and follow the rules.

All of us do things we don't want our children to emulate, more often than we realize and often in undramatic, everyday ways. The High Holidays are a good time to switch gears and to find ways to practice *derech erez*, beginning with the details of daily living. Here are some of my personal favorites. Many of these laws come from "Guide to *Derech Eretz*," an introduction to the subject by Rabbi Shaul Wagschal.

- To protect a rabbi from possible embarrassment, you shouldn't ask a question if you suspect he may not know the answer.

- Invite guests to Shabbat dinner by Wednesday so they won't think the invitation is an afterthought.

- Laws of *lashon hara* prohibit gossip, even in its most subtle, peripheral form, called *avak lashon hara*, the dust of gossip. For example, the rabbis warn us never to praise anyone too highly because too much praise can invite the other person to

compare the image you're presenting to his own.

To these venerable laws I would like to add three suggestions of my own that will give parents frequent opportunities to teach by example.

1. A parent must lay down his or her phone when greeting his child. The laws of *derech erez* state that when in public, you should try to greet others as soon as you spot them so they won't think you're ignoring them or trying to avoid them.

Your child deserves as much consideration. Get off the cell phone before they get in the car. If the phone rings during the first few minutes of your greeting, don't answer it. If you don't answer the phone immediately, your child gets a message — that greeting someone in person takes precedence over any other activity.

2. It is forbidden to cut ahead in the carpool line. Why? Because it is a theft of time. What is your compensation for waiting your turn in the carpool lane? The knowledge that you are teaching your child patience and courtesy.

3. A mother or father shall not fib on a child's behalf, not even to maintain the purity of the college transcript. The rabbis say that one should not break a promise to a child, because doing so will teach the child to lie. If you tweak the rules for your children, you are breaking the agreement you made with them when they were young. Back then, you taught them to tell the truth. When they see your hypocrisy they will lose respect for you, imitate your behavior, or both.

The commandment to honor one's parents helps elevate the laws of *derech erez* to prominence in our High Holiday inventory. We can ask, "Do I deserve the reverence of my child? Am I the kind of parent my child can learn from and be proud of?"

This is the time to think about not only crimes but misdemeanors and, if we are right by the rabbis, even dust. ■

Wendy Mogel is a clinical psychologist. She is the author of "The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teaching to Raise Self-reliant Children." She is currently writing a book for parents of teenagers, "The Blessing of a B Minus."

Your child deserves consideration. Get off the cell phone before they get in the car.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Five Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip

Israeli forces killed five Palestinians during operations in the Gaza Strip.

Troops raided the southern Gaza town of Rafah early Thursday and demolished the home of a suspected Hamas terrorist.

During ensuing clashes with local gunmen, a Palestinian woman and a member of the Al-Aksa Brigade were killed.

In the northern Gaza Strip, Israeli shelling at an area used by terrorists to fire rockets across the border killed three Palestinians.

Assad warns of war

Syria's president warned of possible war against Israel.

The Lebanese newspaper A-Safir on Thursday quoted Bashar Assad as telling a visiting delegation from Beirut that Israel could attack Syria as part of an effort to shore up domestic self-confidence after the war on Hezbollah.

There is no known basis for his comments.

"If Syria is attacked, we will fight back, stand firm and not yield," Assad was quoted as saying.

Israel has lambasted Damascus for supporting the Lebanese militia but has been at pains to make clear it does not seek to open a second front with Syria.

Closure for Rosh Hashanah

Israel's defense minister ordered the West Bank sealed off over Rosh Hashanah.

The closure ordered by Amir Peretz came amid intelligence warnings of potential terrorist attacks over the weekend.

The measure is expected to be reimposed during the rest of the High Holidays.

New settlement homes planned

Israel plans to build 164 new homes in three West Bank settlements.

The Israel Lands Administration issued construction offers Thursday for 88 additional housing units in Ariel, 56 for Alfei Menashe and 20 for Karnei Shomron. The move could upset the United States and European Union given Israel's obligation under the "road map" peace plan to freeze settlement expansion.

The three settlements cited are located in blocs that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has said would be annexed to Israel under any future peace deal with the Palestinians.

Olmert's popularity plunges

Ehud Olmert came fifth in an Israeli opinion poll on who should be prime minister. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came first in the Yediot Achronot survey published Thursday, with 27 percent of respondents supporting him.

He was followed by Avigdor Lieberman, head of the hawkish Yisrael Beiteinu Party, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Vice Premier Shimon Peres.

Olmert's low ranking, with 7 percent support, reflected dwindling public faith in his government since the Lebanon war.

Israeli Arab lawmakers questioned

Israeli police questioned three Arab lawmakers who made unauthorized trips to Syria and Lebanon.

Azmi Bishara, leader of the Knesset's Balad faction, answered a summons by the police international investigations unit Thursday along with a party colleague.

A third Balad member who visited Damascus and Beirut this

month, Jamal Zahalka, was questioned Wednesday.

The three lawmakers denied wrongdoing despite flouting Israeli laws requiring that trips to enemy nations receive special permission from the Interior Ministry.

They argued that their visits were a matter of Arab solidarity and a bid to foster peace talks with Syria and Lebanon.

Interior Minister Roni Bar-On has called for the lawmakers to face legal sanctions, hinting that he could ban them from traveling abroad in the future.

Israeli Arab population grows

Israel's Arab sector is growing at a faster pace than its Jewish counterpart, government figures show.

According to Central Bureau of Statistics data released Tuesday ahead of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish population's growth rate remained at roughly 1.5 percent; the Muslim population dropped to 3 percent, mainly due to a lower birth rate.

The report also stated that Jews constitute 76 percent of Israel's population, while Arabs constitute 20 percent.

The total Israeli population now stands at around 6,990,700.

WORLD

Russian youths charged with hate crime

Five youths in Russia were charged with a hate crime for allegedly beating a Jewish man to death with a metal cross.

The killing of Andrey Dzyuba, 21, in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg took place Oct. 1, 2005, but was not reported to the media until early this week.

Fifteen youths reportedly attacked Dzyuba in a local cemetery, beat him to the ground and killed him with a metal cross they ripped from a tombstone.

In addition to the charges against the four youths, a young woman in the group is charged with aiding and abetting the crime.

Ten others have been released from custody during the investigation.

NORTH AMERICA

Bush offers Rosh Hashanah greetings

President Bush issued Rosh Hashanah greetings.

"On this sacred holiday, I appreciate the Jewish people for your efforts to ensure that your values and traditions are passed on to future generations," Bush said in a message issued Thursday.

"As you begin the Days of Awe, your faith in the Almighty reminds us of the gift of religious freedom in our country and helps make the world a more hopeful place." The message earlier this week from Howard Dean, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, emphasized the season's theme of atonement. "During this time it is customary to use the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, to re-examine shortcomings and seek the means to a more rewarding future," said Dean, who married a Jewish woman and is raising his children Jewish.

Democrats: Don't rule out force with Iran

Two Ohio Democrats running for Congress say force must be an option in dealing with Iran's nuclear threat.

The responses offered by U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown, running for a U.S. Senate seat, and Zack Space, running for an open U.S. House of Representatives seat, to questions in a conference call Thursday with Jewish media suggest that national Democrats will not differ from the Bush administration on this issue in the midterm campaign season.