

the Jewish Observer

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From left to right, American Jews are criticizing Israeli anti-boycott law

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Backers of a new Israeli law penalizing anyone who targets Israel or West Bank settlements for boycotts tout it as a tool to fight back against anti-Israel campaigns, but American Jewish organizations seem remarkably united in deeming the measure an affront to freedom of expression.

"We're disappointed that they passed the law," said Rabbi Steve Gutow, the director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the umbrella body for the Jewish public policy groups. "We don't support boycotts," he said, adding that "The law does challenge democracy in a way, and hopefully the Supreme Court will respond."

"Not since 'Who is a Jew?' has there been a controversy that could seriously strain relations between Israel and American Jews, said one pro-Israel heavyweight, referring to the early 1980s battle. "Oy! Who needs it?"

The Knesset enacted the law late on July 11 by a vote of 47 to 38 after hours of fierce debate. The legislation, initiated by Likud Knesset member Ze'ev Elkin, allows advocates of boycotts against Israel or areas under its control to be sued for monetary damages by those who are hurt by the boycotts. It also prohibits the Israeli government from doing business with companies that comply with such boycotts.



Two among dozens of demonstrators in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv protesting the new anti-boycott law enacted by Israel's Knesset, July 11, 2011.

A number of liberal Israeli non-governmental organizations and civil rights groups are mounting legal challenges to the law.

In America, negative feeling toward the measure seems to span the ideological spectrum, from J Street on the left to the Zionist Organization of America on the right.

Morton Klein, the ZOA's president, said he was still examining the law, but that in principle the ZOA opposed anti-boycott laws. "Nobody was more appalled by the boycott of Ariel theater than me, but to make it illegal? I don't think so," Klein told JTA, referring to calls by some Israeli

artists to boycott a performing arts center in the West Bank settlement of Ariel.

Supporters of the law in Israel say it is a necessary counter measure to boycott efforts. "It's a principle of democracy that you don't shun a public you disagree with by harming their livelihood," Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz said during the debate on the bill, according to Ynet. "A boycott on a certain sector is not the proper manifestation of freedom of expression."

The Anti-Defamation League, however, suggested in a public statement that the legislation is not the *Continued on page 4*

Interfaith event brings people together to find common ground, joint projects

By Kathy Carlson

The best response to those who try to divide Nashville along religious lines is for faith communities to work together on shared goals, Reform Jewish leader Mark Pelavin told about 400 people at a July 13 interfaith event.

"We live in a time when people are taking our sacred texts and using them as weapons," said Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and guest speaker at the event, titled "Family of Abraham: Towards a Common Vision." "Far too many ... distort sacred teachings to advance their own agenda," he said. "That's true in every faith community." Christians, for

example, have cited religious reasons for killing doctors who perform legal abortions and an Israeli Jew assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he noted.

"It seems to me the best response is to regroup and focus on what we can do together," Pelavin said. "There's real power in the combined efforts of religious communities and there is so much more that unites us than divides us."

The event also included a panel with Imam Ossama Bahloul of the Islamic Community Center in Murfreesboro; Rev. Sonnye Dixon Jr. of Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville; and Father Joseph Breen of St. Edward Catholic Church in Nashville. They spoke and answered questions after Pelavin spoke.

A host committee of 51 Jewish,

Christian and Muslim men and women organized the event, held at University School of Nashville. They included priests, ministers, imams and rabbis, business leaders, professors, politicians, retirees, and social service providers and other professionals. Many organizers and attendees had participated in this year's Social Justice Seder at the Gordon Jewish Community Center and organized by the Jewish Federation of Nashville's Community Relations Committee.

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean spoke at the start of the event, saying the faith community deserves much of the credit for the city's reputation as friendly and welcoming. "We may get to where we're going in different ways," he said. "...For the most part we're headed in the same direction."

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No quick reconciliation for Turkey-Israel ties, but Turkey rethinking rift

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Turkey-Israel relationship is not out of the woods just yet.

After some positive signs in recent weeks that the once close allies were moving to repair the rift that ripped wide open last year after nine Turks were killed by Israeli forces in a confrontation on a Gaza-bound flotilla of ships, Turkey's prime minister renewed his hard line on Israel.

"Normalization of relations between the two countries is unthinkable," Recep Tayyip Erdogan said July 8 in a speech to the Turkish Parliament, "unless Israel apologizes for this illegal act, which is against international law and values, pays compensation to the relatives of those who lost their lives in this atrocious event and lifts the embargo on Gaza."

Israel says it will not apologize for the incident, which took place aboard the Turkish-flagged ship Mavi Marmara on May 31, 2010, but says it is willing to express regret for the loss of life. It is also willing to compensate the families, but on the condition that the payments preclude future civil claims against the individual soldiers involved.

For most of the past decade, Israel and Turkey, two major non-Arab regional players, enjoyed a very close relationship that was often described as "strategic." Israeli fighter planes trained over Turkish airspace, the two countries held joint naval rescue exercises and Israel provided Turkey with anti-terrorist equipment and know-how. In 2007 and 2008, Erdogan even mediated indirect Israeli-Syrian peace overtures.

But the Islamist prime minister, who came to power in 2003, has been consistently critical of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, often using harsh language to vent his feelings.

Things came to a head with the 2009 Gaza War, and relations between the two countries since then have cooled. The Mavi Marmara affair exacerbated the already existing rift, with Erdogan demanding an apology from Israel and Israel accusing the Turkish government of encouraging the Turkish radicals behind the maritime challenge to its naval blockade of the Gaza Strip.

At the time, Israeli analysts saw in Turkey's abandonment of Israel part of a wider regional foreign policy shift. Devised by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and dubbed "zero problems," it entailed a move toward closer ties with the Iran-Syria axis at Israel's expense.

Ironically, the U.N. commission investigating the Mavi Marmara affair provided the platform for a possible Israel-Turkey reconciliation. Headed by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and co-chaired by former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, it included representatives from Israel and Turkey.

According to unofficial reports, the Palmer Commission found that Israel's blockade of Gaza and its interception of the Turkish vessel on the high seas both were legal, but that the commandos used excessive force in taking over the Mavi Marmara. The report also allegedly censured Turkey for encouraging the activists.

Unhappy with the text, the Turks allegedly asked that the official publica-

tion of the findings be deferred to enable the Israeli and Turkish representatives on the commission — former senior Foreign Ministry officials Yosef Ciechanover for Israel and Ozdem Sanberk for Turkey — to hammer out a compromise.

But Ciechanover and Sanberk have been working for the past several months on something much wider: a compromise that will allow the full normalization of Israel-Turkey relations. With the deferment, they now have until July 27 to get the job done. Apparently they are looking for a formulation that in Turkish will sound like an Israeli apology and in Hebrew like an Israeli expression of regret for loss of life.

Insiders say this is why the U.N. report on the incident has been delayed.

Short of an apology, official Israel has made every effort to effect a reconciliation. After Erdogan's re-election on June 12, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent a conciliatory message.

"My government will be happy to work with the new Turkish government on finding a solution to all outstanding issues between our countries in the hope of re-establishing our cooperation and

renewing the spirit of friendship which has characterized the relations between our peoples for many generations," Netanyahu wrote.

There were even rumors that Israel had entrusted Erdogan with a mediation mission for the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier believed to be held captive in Gaza since June 2006.

The Turks also made conciliatory gestures. A few weeks before this year's planned flotilla to challenge the Gaza blockade, they canceled the participation of the Mavi Marmara. Their readiness to work for a compromise within the context of the Palmer Commission was another sign of willingness to cut a deal.

But both sides had their hard-liners — Erdogan on the Turkish side and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman on the Israeli.

"Turkey wants to give the impression that it can dictate terms and that we'll accept them as if it were a superpower," Lieberman grumbled at an early July meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. "As far as we are concerned, there is no reason to apologize."

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Needed: A dozen participants for Israel dialogue program

We are looking for about a dozen members of our community to take part in a pilot program of dialogues about Israel advocacy-related topics," said Irwin Venick, Federation Community Relations Committee (CRC) chair. "These dialogues are part of the CRC's Israel Education and Advocacy Grant from the Jewish Federation's New Initiatives Fund." The grant has allowed the CRC to bring in speakers about Israel including Jonathan Schanzer in June and Nathan Klein from the Israel Project coming Aug. 30 [See related article in this issue.] and others in the future.

The dialogue participants would attend the Aug. 30 event, "Israel: Why Should I Care?," and then gather several days later for a professionally facilitated discussion about the speaker's presentation. "It will be a time for open and honest conversation with all viewpoints heard," said Judy Saks, CRC director. "The emphasis will be on listening to each other and being able to appreciate each other's opinions."

Based on the results of this first, pilot program, additional dialogues will be held following each of the Israel Education and Advocacy speaker presentations throughout the year.

Anyone interested in participating should contact Judy Saks by Aug. 15 at judy@jewishnashville.org or 354-1637. □

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Interfaith event

Continued from page 1

Nashville attorney Irwin Venick chaired the Family of Abraham event. The past year had been challenging for Nashville and Tennessee, he said. State lawmakers considered an anti-Sharia law; proposals to build or expand mosques in Rutherford and Williamson counties faced opposition and in some cases violence; a video surfaced criticizing Nashville rabbis for interfaith efforts with Muslims. The Family of Abraham event aimed to bring people together to learn about their faith and those of others.

Bahloul, who came to the United States from Egypt, said he's optimistic about America's future and the future of Muslim Americans, despite current anti-Islamic sentiments. "We have to allow each other to know one another," he said. Most people are good, he said, adding there are crazy or bad people in any group. And Sharia law, he noted, is "for Muslims only, not for non-Muslims." ... The Koran teaches, "you have your way, they have their way," he continued.

The only conflict he could see between Sharia law and U.S. law was that Sharia law sometimes permits polygamy, which isn't legal here. If someone asked Bahloul about practicing polygamy here, he'd say it wasn't allowed here and advise the person to "respect the law of the land." Even in a Muslim country, Islam as he understands it does not require someone of another religion to follow Islam, he said.

Dixon urged his audience to do the hard work of reconciliation by examining how they themselves divide people and committing the time it takes to truly build relationships and get to know others. Many young people, he said, "have no faith at all (and) simply do not give a damn. Their loss of faith comes from watching those in the faith community... not getting along."

Dixon also urged the group to take a wider view of the family of Abraham, looking beyond Abraham and including his two wives, Sara and Hagar. "We have to embrace the God who was God to both Sara and Hagar and gave promises to both of them."

Breen recalled the lessons his parents taught him as a child. "I had a mother and father who somehow never saw differences in people," he said. They and his teachers at Nashville's Christ the King School and Father Ryan High School taught him that God made everyone in his image and likeness, and that Jesus Christ redeemed us all. And with people the world over, "If you treated them nicely, they responded nicely. ... Treat people well and they treat you well."

In response to a question asking where are the moderate Muslim voices and why don't they speak out against radical Islam, Bahloul responded that he had done so. Islam isn't structured like the Catholic Church, with a pope as a recognized leader who speaks for the whole group, so it's harder to find a unified Muslim response to issues, he and others said.

Dixon suggested that when a Muslim cleric opposes extremism, others need to say, "Yes, they're speaking (out) and we are standing with them."

Interfaith work is not only powerful, it's deeply personal, Pelavin said. "I've come to understand my own Judaism so much better when I view it in the context of other religions." □

Nathan Klein to address "Israel: Why Should I Care?"

Nathan Klein, director of research and messaging for The Israel Project (TIP), will be the second speaker in the Jewish Federation's Community Relations Committee's series, Increase Your Israel IQ: From Argument to Advocacy. On Tues., Aug. 30, Klein will speak on "Israel: Why Should I Care?" at 7:15 p.m. at the Gordon Jewish Community Center.

Klein is responsible for overseeing and managing TIP's public opinion research worldwide. He works with TIP's longtime and renowned pollsters Neil Newhouse, Stanley Greenberg and Frank Luntz.

He gathers data on opinions

toward Israel and the Middle East and develops data-driven messages to inform TIP's ongoing mission of educating journalists and leaders around the world. The Israel Project is a nonprofit educational organization that provides factual information about Israel and the Middle East to the press, policy makers and the public.

Before joining The Israel Project, Klein worked as a project director for a leading political and public affairs research firm, Public Opinion Strategies. He also spent four years living in Israel and served with the

Israel Defense Force's Golani Infantry Brigade.

The speaker series is funded by a grant from the Jewish Federation's New Initiatives Fund.

The event is free and open to the Jewish community. The previous speaker, Jonathan Schanzer, drew 175 people for an informative talk on "Palestinian Politics, Arab Protests and Israeli Security."

For additional information, contact Judy Saks, community relations director, at judy@jewishnashville.org or 354-1637. □



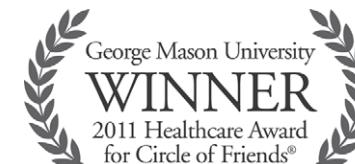
Nathan Klein

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From left to right, American Jews are criticizing Israeli anti-boycott law

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appropriate way to combat boycotts. "To legally stifle calls to action — however abhorrent and detrimental they might be — is a disservice to Israeli society," said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director. "We hope Israel's Supreme Court will quickly take up a review of this law and resolve the concerns it raises."

In an interview, Foxman expressed concern that in any case, a degree of damage was done to Israel by the law, even if the courts eventually quash it. "The people who wanted it will say, 'We introduced it, we argued for it, we got it passed,' and the people who think it's contrary to democracy will have their victory in the court," he said. "People are playing politics with an issue that does Israel damage."

Centrist American Jewish groups in the past year have pressed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government twice to contain what they perceived as damaging hearings in the Knesset, one targeting human rights groups and the other J Street.

Joining the ADL in issuing statements condemning the law were an array of dovish Jewish groups that included the New Israel Fund, J Street and Americans for Peace Now.

"When you start to persecute unpopular opinions, there really is no end point," said Naomi Paiss, a spokeswoman for the New Israel Fund.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington, fielding what it said was "not a small amount" of calls seeking clarification on the matter, reflected what appeared to be ambivalence on the law by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was absent for the Knesset vote. The embassy was telling those with queries, "This is a matter of controversy in Israel, and it would appear that it will have to be heard by the High Court of Justice, as in any democracy."

The Obama administration was measured as well in responding to the law. An administration official told JTA that the law was an internal matter, but also pointed to democratic values shared by Israel and the United States, including free speech.

The bill defines "boycott" as "deliberately avoiding economic, cultural or academic ties with another person or another factor only because of his ties with the State of Israel, one of its institutions or an area under its control, in such a way that may cause economic, cultural or academic damage," according to a translation of the legislation provided by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

The legislation applies not only to boycotts targeting all of Israel, but also those aimed at "an area under its control" — meaning that Israelis who support boycotting West Bank settlements would be vulnerable under the law. □

letter

To the Editor/Board/Community:

At its recent special meeting, the Board of Directors of the Federation adopted a statement reflecting a communal desire for civility toward individuals in the face of heated and often tendentious debate.

The idea is that despite our individual disagreements, we are a community of Jews, and in a city like Nashville we are an especially close one. We are therefore expected to act as such, with the weight of our history and our tradition never far from our minds.

Additionally, I believe that in keeping with the Federation's role as the central Jewish communal agency, the Federation board took seriously its responsibility to act in a leadership role. By staking out this position, many in the room felt that this measure clearly stated that we will both elevate the tenor of our discussions and prepare to focus on issues of substance.

The vote, while strongly in favor, was not unanimous. My own thought was that the statement, while necessary and even-handed, appeared to stop with the singular value of civility. It properly enumerated one thing that we are for, but did not acknowledge that even as broad-based an organization as we are, there are boundaries to what is acceptable to the community.

According to our mission statement, "the Federation works to promote the general welfare, viability and cohesiveness of the Jewish community of Nashville and Middle Tennessee and to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people locally, in Israel and around the world."

That sentence encapsulates our core institutional values, and over the years

we have proudly funded projects aimed at rescue, relief and revitalization of Jews all over the globe.

I would also note that the word "cohesiveness" appears prominently in that sentence, and the need for that principle derives not so much from contemporary debate as it does from some of the saddest and most destructive periods in Jewish history.

However, in addition to expressing our positive values, that sentence directly implies that there are positions we do not tolerate. We can discuss exactly where the lines should be drawn, but some things are beyond the pale.

We will judge people by their intents and their actions, not by their origin. If someone's position is worthy of attack, we might attack that position but not the person. We will heatedly debate inside our community, but we will not lose sight of the fact that we have real enemies in this world. And we will vigorously respond to the ongoing delegitimization of Israel (and the Jewish people), whether it comes under the guise of overt anti-Semitism or covert universalism.

Over the years the Jewish Federation of Nashville — and our national and international agencies — has taken concrete action in all of the areas I mentioned above. By our public statements and funding decisions we have established that we do have ground rules and red lines. Our mission statement is a general guide; our Jewish memory, both ancient and recent, is a specific one.

May we always remember that *kol Yisrael arevim ze l'zeh*, all Israel is responsible, one for another, and conduct ourselves accordingly.

Fred Zimmerman

Fred Zimmerman is a past president of the Jewish Federation of Nashville, a past board member of the Jewish Federations of North America/United Jewish Communities, and a member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

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New shlicha to help Israel bloom in Middle Tennessee

By Kathy Carlson

At age 23, Inbar Shaked has served in the Israeli military, traveled around the world and studied journalism. She's set to arrive in Nashville next month to serve as shlicha to the Jewish community, building bridges between Music City and Israel.

Inbar's presence in Nashville grows from the Local Global Initiative of the Jewish Federation of Nashville's Best Jewish Nashville project, which helped the community determine its priorities and make them a reality. The project identified a need to foster connections between Nashville and Israel, and bringing a shlicha to Nashville was a tangible way to do just that.

Nashville turned to the Jewish Agency for Israel for candidates for the new position, and the Local Global Committee, headed by Ellen Levitt, reviewed resumes and interviewed prospects before extending a job offer to Inbar.

"She is dynamic young lady," Levitt said. "She's from a family of five – it sounded like a very dynamic family – and she's used to having to navigate a lot of different things."

"We're really excited about her being here," committee member James Fishel said.

Three committee members – Levitt, Rachel Koch and Carol Hyatt – interviewed Inbar over Internet video-phone service Skype, and found her "very open



Inbar Shaked will become Nashville's first shlicha.

and easy to talk to," Levitt said. "We expect her to interact with all age groups. She seemed very comfortable with that."

Inbar was the youngest applicant, but her application stood out to Koch because of her work and volunteer experience. While in high school, Inbar joined student delegations to Poland and Germany. Later, she worked as a guide for an Israeli teen group participating in a program in England, in Kansas City as a shlicha with its Jewish Community Center summer camp and in Israel to help train other shlichim to work at

American JCC summer programs. "This is a connection she makes quite naturally with youth," Koch said. "... She is very comfortable interacting and teaching about Judaism (and) Israel – the country, culture, history."

Inbar also said she was "specifically interested in Nashville because it's our first year (with a shlicha program). She felt very excited about creating the program with us," said Koch. "We could really tell that she grasped our medium-sized Jewish community, how we function," Levitt said.

The Best Jewish Nashville project

identified a strong need for programming and services for the older teen-young adult age group, those from ages 18-25, Levitt said.

"I think she's going to be incredible with our youth here – the stronger the connection to Israel the better," Koch added. Inbar will work with the Get Connected program next year to help educate teens on what to expect when they visit Israel, Koch said.

Broader goals for the shlicha position include deepening the community's relationship with Israel, exposing as many people as possible – both Jewish and non-Jewish – to Israeli culture, educating young Jewish adults about Israel and helping develop long-term leadership and engagement with the Jewish community and Israel. The shlicha will work with all age groups and with many community initiatives and programs.

As of mid-July, Inbar was attending a JAFI orientation in Jerusalem for shlichim. In Nashville, people were lining up an apartment for her, scouting for furniture and household goods, and searching for someone willing to donate a car so she could easily get around in Nashville. Community members who would like to donate items for Inbar can contact Federation Planning Director Harriet Schiftan, harriet@jewish-nashville.org.

There's a lot of potential for both Nashville and the shlicha to benefit in the months ahead, Levitt said, adding that "a lot of it is what this shaliach makes of it. ... We'll be guiding her along." □

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State Dept. envoy on anti-Semitism facing resistance on Arab textbooks

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Hannah Rosenthal, the State Department's envoy for combating anti-Semitism, was heartened if skeptical when some Arab officials pledged to her that they would remove anti-Semitic tropes from their school curricula.

She was frustrated when they hemmed and hawed. And she was outraged when they outright refused to do so.

Rosenthal visited Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia last month on a mission to persuade officials in those nations to remove from their textbooks intolerance aimed at non-Muslims and to introduce positive references to Judaism.

The most common response, she said, was avoidance and of a hoary variety: Talk about Jews almost inevitably led to grievances about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

"As soon as a conversation about

religious tolerance becomes tense, they shut it down or they go to Israel-Palestine," she told JTA in an exclusive interview after the trip.

Rosenthal, who is Jewish, met with Education Ministry and other government officials in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In Lebanon, she met only with civil society groups promoting interfaith dialogue, in part because she was limited to a few hours in the country for security reasons. Meeting with Lebanese government officials has become sensitive for U.S. officials now that Lebanon's Cabinet includes members of Hezbollah, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

Rosenthal's signature achievement on the trip was extracting from Saudi officials a pledge to remove anti-Semitic references from curricula, including some apparently rooted in the notorious forgery positing Jewish world domination, the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

"I got commitments from the ministries of education and culture that they were ready to work with us," she said. "I am taking all of this at face value."

A Saudi Embassy spokesman in Washington did not return a request for comment.

Rosenthal said a typical initial response in Saudi Arabia was for officials to challenge her to produce evidence of intolerance. When she did — for instance, a passage describing Jews as the spawn of "monkeys and pigs" — she was told the book was outdated and no longer in use.

Rosenthal told Saudi officials the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor was planning a study of Saudi texts and would assess which countries have schools using the textbooks, as well as whether the texts promote intolerance. Saudi textbooks with offensive passages relating to Jews, Christians and women

have been found in use as far afield as Argentina and Pakistan.

Rosenthal said the grantees that would carry out the study had yet to be selected.

"It was positive in the sense that they all said the right thing," she said of the Saudis. "They're claiming all the bad stuff has been taken out. We're going to do an honest academic review and see what's there."

More disappointing, Rosenthal said, were her encounters in Jordan, particularly with a high-level Education Ministry official who resisted any suggestion that Holocaust studies be introduced into the curriculum.

"This is how it ended: We're having this semi-tense conversation about this dismissal of the Holocaust, and he says, 'We are not teaching that this didn't happen,'" she said.

A Jordanian Embassy spokesman in Washington declined comment. Jordan has a peace treaty with Israel.

Rosenthal also confronted officials of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the body that cares for millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, about their failure to teach U.N.-created Holocaust materials.

A high-ranking official with UNRWA told JTA that the agency is bound by agreements with host countries to use local textbooks. Additionally, in some areas — notably the Gaza Strip — UNRWA officials have faced threats from Islamist groups for reports of plans to introduce Holocaust and tolerance teaching into the curriculum.

In Lebanon, Rosenthal sought out organizations that seek to promote tolerance among the "Abrahamic faiths" only to find that Judaism was not included. "It turned out 'Abrahamic' meant Islam and Christianity," she said.

Rosenthal offered to assist the groups in bringing lecturers who could teach about Judaism.

She subsequently learned that one of the groups she addressed — Adyan Village, which is partnered with Notre Dame University — brought in an Eastern Orthodox nun who had some knowledge of Judaism.

Rosenthal told JTA that her most moving visit in Lebanon was to the site of a synagogue in Beirut that the country's tiny Jewish community is endeavoring to restore.

"They were nervous about showing it to me, and they feel extremely vulnerable — my guide told me that his business clients don't even know he is Jewish," she said. "Their hope is that it will be ready by Rosh Hashanah, but builders and contractors find out they're working on a synagogue and don't come back." □

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As men fade from Jewish communal life, men's clubs push for revival

By Sue Fishkoff

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — When Mitchell Ross was a boy, he remembers his grandfather hanging out with the men's club at his Conservative synagogue. "I always felt it was something older Jewish men were involved in, the over-60s club," said Ross, a 39-year-old cardiologist in Phoenix, Ariz.

Today, Ross is active in his own men's club at Har Zion Congregation, a Conservative shul in Scottsdale, and he is working hard to attract men his age and younger to a Jewish world that many of them have dismissed.

"I'm into fitness, into biking, and the men's club has a wellness initiative, so we do a lot of hikes as well as community service activities," Ross told JTA. "It offers a way for younger men to get involved."

Good luck with that.

For more than a decade, Jewish leaders and academics have been lamenting

the disappearance of boys and men from non-Orthodox Jewish life. Men's clubs, operating at more than 250 North American Conservative synagogues, are just one of many groups trying to stop the hemorrhaging.

"The challenge facing the American Jewish community is not that women are more active — surely a positive development — but that men and boys have retreated from much of American Jewish life," wrote Sylvia Barack Fishman and Daniel Parmer in the Fall 2008 issue of Jewish Political Studies Review in a piece titled "The Policy Implications of the Gender Imbalance Among America's Jews."

Some, including Fishman, call it the "feminization" of liberal Judaism, a term that raises hackles among those who don't wish to see women's ritual gains reversed or blamed for the retreat of men. But the phenomenon is readily apparent and has elicited scores of programming initiatives.

Many parallel women's initiatives. The Man Seder, an all-male Passover seder held at American Jewish University in Los Angeles since 2006, is patterned after the women's seders that emerged in the 1980s. The teenage boys' programs developed this year by the organization Moving Traditions were an outgrowth of its popular program for teenage girls, Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing.

A number of Reform and Conservative synagogues run a program usually called 100 Jewish Men — a series of dinners with speakers who talk about their relationship to Judaism, their families and their careers.

"At so many synagogues, especially in the non-Orthodox world, the men are not there and the men's clubs skew older," said Rabbi David Woznicka of the Stephen S. Wise Temple, a large Reform congregation in Los Angeles that launched such a series four years ago for its members between 30 and 55. Nearly

100 men signed up in the first year, and the project is still steaming along.

The most aggressive pursuer of the great disappearing American Jewish male is probably the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, the umbrella group for men's clubs in the U.S.

These clubs are trying to cast off the backroom, cigar-chomping image of yesterday and pull in younger men, getting them to talk to each other and their sons. Ultimately the goal is to get them into the synagogue — maybe not to pray, but at least to find Jewish community and pass it on to their children.

"We're trying to make men realize the tremendous impact they have on their children," said Rabbi Charles Simon, the executive director of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, who writes and speaks extensively on the importance of men volunteering and taking charge of their personal lives.

Continued on page 12

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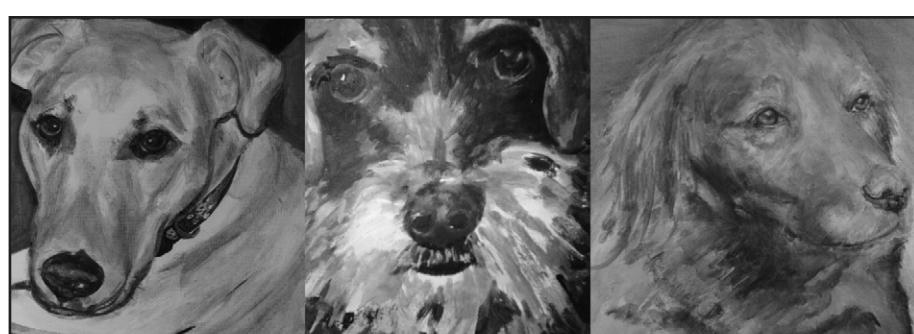
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Sherith Israel elects Lutz president

At its June 28 annual meeting, Congregation Sherith Israel elected new officers and board members including Sheldon Lutz, president; Greg Goldberg, vice president administration; Evelyn Koch, vice president membership; Bobbie Limor, vice president programs; Marty Satinsky, treasurer; Ben Walter, financial secretary; Marty Kooperman, recording secretary; and Coby Hanai, past president.



Sheldon Lutz

New Directors include Maria Garber, Mosh Koch, Miriam Leibowitz, Phil Shmerling, Jordana White and Roberta Goodman. Marilyn Foyer, Jay Geller, Pam Kelner, Lenn Goodman, Ramin Hanai and Carol Rubin are continuing directors. Gabboim are Richard Chalal, Louis Lipschutz and David Naft.

A framed photo on canvas titled "Hands-on Religion" was presented by Mosh and Evelyn Koch to the synagogue in honor of retiring president Coby Hanai's "hands-on presidency" of the Shul from 2007-2011. □

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Urban Green Lab co-founder to speak at The Temple

Dan Heller, the president and co-founder of Urban Green Lab, will be the guest speaker at The Temple's Green Team meeting on Tues., Aug. 9, at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Heller will discuss his team's vision to catalyze a culture of sustainability by building Urban Green Lab, Nashville's first-ever community center dedicated to sustainable living. Projected to open in 2012 in the Inglewood neighborhood of East Nashville, Urban Green Lab will be building a state-of-the-art green building at the intersection of Maxey Lane and McGavock Pike, a \$1.5 million project that is still in its fundraising stage. It is envisioned to be a meeting place for students and adults to learn about everything from energy efficiency to urban agriculture. The lab is an official 501 (c) (3) project of Trust for the Future.

Heller has over 25 years of business, marketing and real estate experience to apply to the launch of Urban Green Lab. He is known as a strong advocate for small business and neighborhood beautification in Nashville, and is credited for making visible improvements to the dingy commercial buildings at Riverside and McGavock in 2005 which blossomed into Riverside Village. Through Heller's efforts in garnering community support, the area has become a popular destination of 100 percent locally-owned restaurants and shops. Heller was awarded East Nashvillian of the Year by the Historic East Nashville Merchants' Association in 2009 for his work.

The Temple's Green Team committee promotes environmental awareness and earth-friendly initiatives within the building and the community.

For reservations, call (615) 352-7620. □



From left: Lee Cohen, Lisa Cohen, State Sen. Doug Henry, Mark Cohen, State Rep. Gary Odom, Jay Cohen.

I-40 ramp named in honor of late Councilman Cohen

A flyover ramp connecting Interstate 40 to Briley Parkway in West Nashville has been named in honor of the late Metro Councilman Ralph M. Cohen.

His four children, other family members along with State Sen. Douglas Henry and State Rep. Gary Odom were on hand on July 14 to celebrate the naming with a reception at the Cohen law offices at 4908 Charlotte Pike. The storefront offices had been the site for Ralph Cohen's longtime business, Cohen Do-It-Yourself Plumbing & Electric. Mr. Cohen died at age 76 in January of 2005.

Mr. Cohen's oldest son, Mark,

had asked Odom at the end of last year whether it would be possible to name one of the flyover ramps for his father, who had worked to improve roads serving West Nashville. Odom and Henry sponsored the legislation to name the ramp for Cohen, and all four Cohen children pitched in to pay for the bright green and white-lettered signage.

Ralph Cohen served on Metro Council from 1980 to 1987, representing West Nashville. The flyover was named after him "to honor Mr. Cohen's memory and his bountiful life of purpose and commitment to the greater good," the legislation stated. "No Tennessean is more deserving of this honor than the late Ralph M. Cohen." □

GJCC welcomes new CFO and facilities director to staff

The Gordon Jewish Community Center welcomes new Chief Financial Officer Jared L. Book, and Facilities Director Daniel Shuemaker.

Book earned his Master's degree in business management specializing in finance from the University of Redlands and has spent over 25 years in senior management including administration, financial operations, accounting and treasury operations. Book's most recent position was chief financial officer of LawFinance Group Holdings, the parent company of multiple finance company subsidiaries headquartered in California and Nevada. He joined LawFinance Group in 2004.

Book has played an active role in many charitable and other not-for-profit organizations at the national level. He currently serves as chair of the Board of Trustees of the United States Diving Foundation. He and his wife, Judy, reside



Jared L. Book



Daniel Shuemaker

in Bellevue and are active members of the Jewish community.

Shuemaker hails from Knoxville. He and his wife, Kristi, have been in Nashville for more than five years. Together, they have two daughters, Asher, 6, and Karis, 2; and a son, Gabe, 8.

For the last five years, Shuemaker has been with the CMT/MTV Networks CORE Services department working in facilities management and planning and design as well as pursuing studies in interior architecture and design at The Academy of Art University. □

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lifecycles

Bat Mitzvah

Morgan Ausbrooks will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah at The Temple on Sat., Aug. 13, at 11 a.m. She was born on Dec. 2, 1997, in Nashville. Her parents are Ryan and Jonathan Kroser. Her grandfather is Albert Kroser of Philadelphia.



Morgan Ausbrooks

As her mitzvah project, Morgan has been collecting and crushing aluminum cans for the past year. She will donate them to OPAH, a foundation that uses these donations to rescue mistreated animals.

An eighth grader at White House Heritage, Morgan's special interests include reading, soccer, swimming, helping animals, Girl Scouts and being environmentally conscious.

Professional notes

Dr. Michael H. Gold, founder of Gold Skincare Center, announces the launch of The Dermatologic &

Aesthetic Surgery International League (DASIL). Founded in conjunction with Dr. Marc B. Roscher of South Africa, the organization's mission is to create a global community for the open exchange of knowledge and innovation by physicians specializing in dermatologic and aesthetic surgery.

James Mackler has joined the law firm of Bone McAllester Norton PLLC as a litigation attorney with a specialty in legal assistance for military veterans.



James Mackler

Along with litigation, Mackler will provide legal assistance to members of the military transitioning into the civilian sector, including entrepreneur start-ups, fundamental business issues and the day to day legal issues that veterans encounter with a new business. He is on the board of Jewish Family Service and is married to Rabbi Shana Mackler.

Sympathy

. . . to the family of Elizabeth Sternberger Weinstein, 92, who died July 2 at National Health Care, Bristol, Tenn. Condolences and memories may be shared with the family and viewed by visiting www.oakley-cook.com.

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New schedule set for GJCC/TGIT programs and lunch for seniors

The GJCC Adult Program has released the July-August schedule of programming for TGIT (Thank Goodness It's Thursday).

July 21: Chopped (and diced): a take-off on the Food Network Series, "Chopped." Watch the contest between two great chefs as they prepare dishes from a basket of odd ingredients.

July 28: Even more brain games: come exercise your brain. Learn secrets to help keep your brain young.

August 4: Musical performance with Carrie and Garrett Mills, an encore appearance.

August 11: Musical performance with Frank Sinatra singer/impersonator Tony Santaguidi

Buy Israel!

Throughout the United States and in many parts of the world, there is a concerted effort to delegitimize the State of Israel. One of the tactics being used is a boycott of Israeli products. This action has been seen in several locations in our country.

In an effort to counter that boycott and support Israel, many Jewish communities and organizations have urged Americans to buy Israeli products. The Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and The Observer want to make it easier for Nashvillians to find Israeli-made goods by publishing a list of the products and where to find them, locally.

We need your help. If you know of available products and the stores that carry them, email that information to judy@jewishnashville.org. Food, clothing, jewelry, wine, etc., whatever you have found, please share it with our community.

See the updated list, below and send your additions to judy@jewishnashville.org or call 354-1637.

Israeli silver jewelry - area TJMaxx stores
Geffen Pickles - Belle Meade
Kroger

August 18: Israel...what's new?
August 25: Volunteer Appreciation Day. We appreciate our volunteers, come see why. They really are the best.

The GJCC Adult Program thanks the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee for its generous support of the popular TGIT Program.

TGIT brings thoughtful programming and lunch to Jewish community seniors every Thursday in the Senior Lounge of the GJCC. The day includes a blood pressure check with Lauren Cooper, RN; exercise appropriate for all levels; lunch catered by Sova Catering for a small fee; and the program.

For questions or more information, contact Meryl Kraft at 356.7170 or meryl@nashvillejcc.org. □



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Dorot frozen garlic and herbs –
Trader Joe's
Telma products – Publix
Moroccan Hair Oil treatment –
Cosmetics Market
Sweet Clementines (oranges) –
Costco
Cedars Halva – Whole Foods
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around the town

Taste of Judaism

Rabbi Rami Shapiro will serve as guest lecturer for The Temple's Taste of Judaism lecture series on Wednesdays July 20 and 27 from 7-9 p.m. The series is open to anyone who wants to learn or relearn about the Jewish religion, its practices, customs and beliefs. Shapiro is adjunct professor of religion and director of The Writers' Loft at Middle Tennessee State University and the director of Wisdom House, a center for interfaith study, dialogue and contemplative practice at the Scarritt-Bennett Center. For information on the series, call 352-7620.

included. This is a special opportunity to learn great dances, meet people, exercise aerobically and participate in an enjoyable, stress-reducing activity. It will be held at the Schulman Center for Jewish Life, 2421 Vanderbilt Pl., at Vanderbilt University. For directions, parking, and other information, contact Carol Rubin at carol.rubin@vanderbilt.edu or 615/352-9447 or 615/767-1176. Have dinner at Grins Vegetarian Cafe in the Schulman Center before the dancing begins. For more information, go to www.vanderbilt.edu/israelidance.

BBG to host brunch

Last year BBG, the girls division of BBYO, began a tradition of having a brunch for the whole community in honor of BBG alums. This year's brunch will be on Sept. 25 from 1-3 p.m. at the GJCC. There will be single and family tickets as well as the opportunity to purchase a table for friends and family. For information, contact Jessica Leving at Jessica@nashvillejcc.org or 356-7170.

community calendar

Monday, July 18

Jewish Federation Community Relations Committee Meeting – 7-9 p.m.

Tuesday, July 19

Temple Board Meeting – 7-9 p.m.
West End Synagogue Board Meeting – 7-8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 20

GJCC Board Meeting – 7:30-9 p.m.

Thursday, July 21

GJCC Car Lexus Drawing Party – 6-9 p.m.

Friday, July 22

Jewish Federation Welcome Breakfast for Hadera Teens – 8-9 a.m.

Tuesday, July 26

Federation Board Meeting – 7:15-9 p.m.

Wednesday, July 27

Congregation Micah Board Meeting – 7-9 p.m.

Thursday, July 28

Jewish Family Service Board Meeting – 7:30-9 p.m.

Sunday, July 31

Get Connected Reunion at West End Synagogue – 6-8 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 4

Akiva Board Orientation – 6-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 9

GJCC Board Meeting – 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 11

Federation Campaign Kickoff – 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Friday, August 12

Music City BBG Car Wash - GJCC - 3:30-4 p.m.

Sunday, August 14

GJCC Preschool Get Acquainted Day – 9-11 a.m.
Akiva Day School Family Picnic – 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Shalom Akiva /Akiva Day School Kindergarten Orientation – 1-2 p.m.
West End Synagogue Outdoor Pool Party – 4-8 p.m.

Monday, August 15

First Day of GJCC ECLE School Day – 7 a.m.-6 p.m.
Akiva Day School First day of School, 1st-6th grade – 7:55 a.m.-8:25 a.m.
Jewish Federation Campaign Cabinet Meeting – 7-9 p.m.
Federation Community Relations Committee Meeting – 7:15-9 p.m.

Tuesday, August 16

West End Synagogue Board Meeting – 7-10 p.m.
Temple Congregation Ohabei Shalom Board Meeting – 7-8:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 18

Vanderbilt Hillel Graduate Student Orientation – 2-3 p.m.
JMingle Bar Night – 7-10 p.m.

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NEW & RENEWING ADS ARE SHADED

As men fade from Jewish communal life, men's clubs push for revival

Continued from page 7

Simon says his organization has been involved with men's issues since 1999 but is now making a concerted push to attract younger men. At the group's national convention this week in Costa Mesa, Calif., a curriculum to engage men at different ages was slated to be unveiled, and it is to be piloted at several Conservative congregations next year.

Eighteen months ago, the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs launched HaDor Habah, Hebrew for "the next generation," a project that brings men younger than 45 to training seminars so they can learn how to lead men's activities for their peers. Nearly 70 men attended the second annual seminar in January.

Mark Kluger, 43, says the retreat

was eye opening. Back home at Temple Israel in Longwood, Fla., he started a program called Hearing Men's Voices, a men's club tool. He gathered the men in a circle, warned them they were going to think it was corny and asked each to answer one question: Who am I?

"For 2½ hours, people told their stories," Kluger said. "We had people crying. It was such an unbelievable outpouring, a shedding of the veil. It really hit me that men, Jewish men, we don't have a lot of outlets. We don't talk like our wives and girlfriends do."

In addition to these talking circles, which don't appeal to everyone, Conservative men's clubs around the country have been organizing all kinds of activities to attract a younger demo-

graphic. Ski trips. Pizza and beer evenings. Trivia nights at local bars.

Community service is also a big draw. A men's club in Chicago sponsored a sub-club for guys in their 20s, which is holding a fundraiser July 15 for ALS research. Rather than a \$1,000-a-plate gala dinner, they're holding it in a bar and charging \$16.

Justin Ross, 26, is helping to organize the evening. He says the club is a great idea but is hard to maintain. "We're trying to drum up more interest," he said, adding that this fundraiser may be the final attempt.

With all the financial pressures on men his age, as well as the fact that most are single, the idea of showing up to chew the fat with a bunch of other guys on a regular basis is not that appealing.

What do they need? Women, he says.

"The next logical step is to create a coed club," he said.

That's the central question for men's club leaders: In an egalitarian world, is a single-sex organization still relevant?

Yes and no, says 42-year-old Louis Piels, a trustee of the men's club at Temple Beth Shalom in Livingston, N.J.

Last year, Peils' club sponsored a steak dinner at a kosher Japanese restaurant for 15 young fathers of kids in their religious school as a first step to raising their involvement.

A "guys' night out" followed, but then the members decided that they wanted wives and children along. Since then, the group has held apple-picking days, a bike ride, ice skating, a mountain hike and scavenger hunt, all of them family friendly.

"The whole concept of a men's club may be dated," Piels acknowledges. "Why would we want to be just among men all the time?"

Piels now sees his club's purpose as spearheading events and community service initiatives that are open to the entire community. At the same time, he doesn't want to alienate older men, who are used to a male-only club. "That old 'clubhouse' view also has a place," he said.

For some of the younger men, who were drawn to their men's club in search of camaraderie or as a way to do community service, club involvement has indeed led them back to shul. □



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No quick reconciliation

Continued from page 2

Lieberman was backed up by Tel Aviv University's Ehud Toledano, an expert on Turkey, who argued that there was no need to sweet talk the Turks because Israel had little to gain from a restoration of ties. Writing in Haaretz, Toledano claimed that Erdogan had eroded the Turkish army's independence and taken control of MIT, the Turkish intelligence service, and thus the damage to Israel's strategic ties with Turkey was irreversible.

In other words, reconciliation would not change much.

During the estrangement from Turkey, Israel has drawn closer to Greece, Turkey's traditional rival.

The relationship paid off in early July when Greek authorities delayed this year's planned Gaza flotilla. When U.S. and Canadian vessels slipped away from Greek shores, Greek frogmen forced them back.

Israel's newfound closeness with Greece also is a message to Turkey that Israel has other options in the eastern Mediterranean. Israeli tourists, too, have been boycotting Turkey and instead going to the Greek islands in droves. This week, Greece's president visited Israel.

Yet while the annual volume of trade between Israel and Greece has increased dramatically to about \$140 million, it is nowhere that of Israel and Turkey, which at approximately \$3.5 billion remains largely unaffected, except for the military aspect.

For Israel, there is no way Greece can fully replace Turkey.

Still, the Greek connection is one reason that Turkey is clearly rethinking its damaged relationship with Israel — Erdogan's latest outburst notwithstanding. □