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UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

NEW YORK

**The New York City Council Celebrates Hanukah
with the Indian Jewish Community**

December 21st, 2006

This is a very special event where City Hall is honoring the Indian Jewish Community by having us celebrate Hanukkah with them starting at 5:30 PM on December 21st 2006. We will be lighting the "Hanukkah Menorah" in the traditional Indian way as well as singing the prayers our traditional way.

Hanukkah songs would also be part of the evening's proceedings.

It would be special if the men could come dressed in formal Indian dress and the ladies either in a sari or the salwar kameez.

For more information, contact Romiel Daniel, Romiel@jewsofindia.org

New York City Council
Speaker **Christine C. Quinn**
with
Council Members
Alan J. Gerson
Michael Nelson
and The New York City Council
Cordially invite you to join them
and their colleagues in

**a Hanukkah
Celebration**

Featuring the Traditions
of the Jewish Community of India

**Thursday, December 21, 2006
5:30pm**

Council Chambers, City Hall

Be'chol Lashon (In Every Tongue)

A program of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research seeks to grow and strengthen the Jewish people through ethnic, cultural, and racial inclusiveness.

www.JewishResearch.org

2nd Annual Sephardic Music Festival**Sephardis Get Funky**

By Caroline Westbrook, Dec 12, 2006, DailyJews.com

This Chanukah, New Yorkers will get the chance to celebrate everything that makes Sephardi culture fresh and happening. The second annual Sephardic Music Festival, organised by DJ Handler, boss of Modular Moods, features a breathtaking array of diverse Sephardic-flavoured sounds.

From Israeli hip-hop to black converts to Orthodox Judaism, the nine-day event starts on December 16 and finishes on Christmas Eve. Among the events to look forward to are Y-Love, performing with Pharoah's Daughter on opening night.

Y-Love, aka Yitz Jordan, is a black MC who discovered the delights of Judaism, so much so that he can rhyme in English, Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish and even Aramaic. Pharoah's Daughter, fronted by Basya Schechter, perform mighty Middle East fusion music, influenced by a variety of cultures.

Other highlights include legendary Uzbekistan-born Ezra Malakov, who performs Bukharian music, and is a Chazan in Queens.

The ever-popular Afro-Semitic Experience also feature, on December 21, blending Jewish and African sounds into infectious grooves.

Plus throughout the Festival, DJ Handler himself and Y-Love will also appear on other nights, while a free mix tape featuring some of the best artists, by DJ Handler, will be given out at events.

With something on the bill for the glorious hip as well as the totally untrendy, this is an essential event.

For more information: www.SephardicMusicFestival.com



COMMUNITY UPDATE

Feliz Januka! Happy Hanuka!

From Aharon Franco

La Fiesta de la Januka simboliza el milagro de la supervivencia del Pueblo Judío, esta Janukia encontrada en la Sinagoga de Lorca y mostrada en la exposición inaugurada en las I Jornadas de Cultura Judeo Sefardí en marzo de 2006 da cuenta del milagro renovado.



SPECIAL CHANUKAH SUPPLEMENT

Have a Feliz Chanukah at Multicultural Holiday Fiesta

By Dan Pine, Dec. 8th, 2006, j. weekly



Dreidels won't be the only thing spinning at this year's Be'chol Lashon Chanukah celebration. The menorah-minded are advised to watch out for Chinese Lion Dancers, Brazilian capoeira experts and an Afro-Cuban drum band.

That kind of multi-cultural mélange is par for the course with Be'chol Lashon (Hebrew for "in every tongue"), a project of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research. The organization cultivates and celebrates diversity in the Jewish community, including Jews of Asian, African and Latin American descent.

"The goal is to change the stereotypes of how Jews see the Jewish community," said Diane Tobin, who with her husband, Gary Tobin, has guided Be'chol Lashon.

The free event takes place Sunday, Dec. 10 at the Mission Cultural Center, in a heavily Latino part of San Francisco. Tobin chose the setting with the neighborhood's Hispanic flavor in mind. The Family Arts Day itinerary takes place in the afternoon, while the evening's festivities include an adults-only dance party and a live theater performance.

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"We expect people will walk in off the street, look around, recognize themselves first then say this is Jewish on top of that," added Tobin. "Our hope is for them to understand that Jews are everywhere in every culture."

Oily treats will be on hand, though latkes may be hard to find. Rather, Sephardic staples like ramblas tapas, tortillas Españolas, and bunuelos (fried dough fritters fresh from La Palma Mexicatessan) will be included on the bill of fare.

In addition to the Lion Dancers and Afro-Cuban band, entertainment includes a performance by actress/hip-hop poet Vanessa Hidary of her one-woman show "Culture Bandit." The Manhattan native is of Syrian Jewish ancestry, and has long weaved New York's vaunted melting pot into her work.

"I'm fascinated with the concept of what Jewish looks like," said Hidary, who also uses the sobriquet of Hebrew Mamita. "Coming from a Sephardic background it was important for me to address that in my work. People always thought I was Italian or Spanish. There isn't much knowledge about Jews of different cultures and skin colors."

This is Chanukah after all, so menorah lighting is also part of the plan. Gail Gutierrez, a convert to Judaism, will light the candles.

But Gutierrez is not just any convert to Judaism. She's actually a re-convert, one of the Anusim, the name for those who trace their heritage back to the Spanish Marranos (hidden Jews who adopted Catholicism to avoid the auto-da-fe of the Inquisition).

"There's a growing recognition among those seeking to reclaim their Jewish heritage," Diane Tobin said. "All over Spain the government and the people are seeking to unearth their Jewish past and celebrate it. In Mexico, where there are many conversos, there's still some fear, but slowly and surely it's dissipating. People are now coming out. It's safe to reveal the family secret kept for 500 years."

With her many Puerto Rican and Dominican friends back in New York, Hidary expects to feel right at home in the Mission District, and she looks forward to sharing her thoughts about the wide, wide world of Jewry.

"San Francisco will be a great place to talk about these things," Hidary said. "I love when my audience is as diverse as the message."

Hanukah Lights in Portugal to Burn Publicly for the First Time in 500 Years

By M. Lopes de Azevedo, November 23, 2006, Ladina.BlogSpot.com

For the first time since the forced baptism of 1497 (unlike Spain, Portugal did not expel its Jews, it simply baptized them all), Hanukah lights will burn in public in the old Jewish quarter of Olival, in downtown historic Porto. Ladina, a Porto based non-profit society dedicated to rescuing Portugal's Jewish heritage, will erect a giant Hanukiah between two towering palm trees overlooking the red tiled rooftops of the Douro river, a stone's throw away from the birthplace of Uriel da Costa, a little known New Christian whose tragic death in Amsterdam in 1640 greatly influenced Portugal's most famous Jew, Bento de Espinoza, better known as Baruch Spinoza, the philosopher. Da Costa, who denied the immortality of the individual soul, is recognized as the world's first modern secular Jew

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Rabbi Eliezer Shai di Martino, recently arrived from Rome will light the candle on the ten foot high locally made candelabrum on the 3rd day of Hanukah, Sunday, December 17th. In attendance will be members of the fledging Marrano community of the Mekor Haim synagogue known as the "Cathedral of the North", built by Captain Barros Basto. The charismatic Captain, dubbed the "Apostle of the Marranos" by noted historian Cecil Roth had over 10,000 adherents in northern Portugal in the 1920s and 30s. He started building the synagogue in the year of the depression and with the help of the descendants of the Marrano Diaspora in New York, London and Amsterdam (and the Kadoorie family) finished it in 1938, the year of Kristallnacht.

There is a strange rumble going on in Portugal, a purported Catholic country. Despite the forced baptism of 1497 and 300 years of the Inquisition, the Jewish soul has survived and is even making a comeback, albeit slowly. Hardly a month goes by in Portugal without a new book on Jewish culture, whether it is a foreign translation such as Martin Gilbert's Letters to Aunt Fori or a homegrown work such as professor Jorge Martin's monumental three-volumes, Portugal e os Judeus. From a new synagogue for the Marranos of Belmonte who secretly practiced essential Jewish rituals for 300 years, to the transformation of the Ashkenazi Ohel Jacob synagogue in Lisbon for returning Marranos, the deeply embedded sibilant roots of Jewish Portugal are sprouting new shoots.

The term Marrano was once frowned upon as a pejorative term for those Jews who were forcibly baptized (New Christians). Many academics prefer the term, Anousim, Hebrew for "forced ones". However, for people like Jorge Neves Oliveira, filmmaker and poet Alexandre Teixeira Mendes, both founders of Ladina, the term Marrano signifies survival against all odds. It is a badge of honour, a source of pride. The Inquisition did not triumph. Oliveira and Mendes are intent on rescuing the nearly lost Jewish heritage that once thrived in the Iberian Peninsula, otherwise known as Sefarad (hence the term, Sephardic Jews). And the Jewish world is taking note. Rabbi di Martino is in Porto courtesy of Shavei Israel, an organization dedicated to returning lost sheep to the flock. In Lisbon, the Conservative movement has facilitated the return of Marranos to normative Judaism by providing educational guidance and support.

Portuguese Jews once helped make Portugal a great centre of culture and education. From astronomy to politics to medicine, Portuguese Jews played an important role in the creation of a modern Europe. In commerce, the so-called "Men of the Nation" were instrumental in the development of modern financial markets of Amsterdam, London and New York (see the Coffee Trader and A Conspiracy of Paper by David Liss or the Grandees by Stephen Birmingham).

Portugal is once again mired in economic woes and despite the dark period of the Inquisition, the remnants of its once proud and fiercely patriotic "Men of the nation" may have to come to the rescue, only this time they will be welcomed with open arms.

Exotic Latke Recipes for Celebrating All Eight Days of Hanukkah

By Jayne Cohen, Dec. 2006, Interfaithfamily.com

For additional recipes:

Mediterranean Chickpea Latkes

http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/recipe_views/views/106007

Sephardic Spinach Patties

http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/recipe_views/views/233358

Syrian Pumpkin Patties

http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/recipe_views/views/233359



"On the first day of Christmas..."

I always thought that lovely carol, cataloguing each of the twelve days of Christmas giving, brought Hanukkah more to mind. After all, Christmas lasts at most two days (Christmas Eve and Christmas Day itself), and possibly another, like Epiphany, for exchanging presents.

But Hanukkah spans a full eight days. And while that means there are more days to celebrate, a longer festival also elicits a different kind of family celebration for most of the holiday.

Yes, on Hanukkah there may be raucous parties with a host of friends and feasts of foods and big family get-togethers taking place on the weekend (or ends) that fall during the holiday and perhaps on a couple of the other days. There may be the thrill of opening one or two special, lavish presents, given in lieu of, or combined with, more modest gifts for the other days of the festival.

Most of Hanukkah, though, is celebrated more simply in our homes, eating cozy meals embellished by a few of the holiday foods while burning menorahs light up the wintry night. But indelible family memories are made not only of boldface moments: each night of Hanukkah becomes special when we make it an authentically shared family experience. Here are some simple ideas for family activities and foods to enhance your holiday, whether it is your first time celebrating it or your fortieth.

While there is no religious proscription against working during Hanukkah--even for the most Orthodox--as on some of the other holidays, there is a tradition of not engaging in work while the menorah candles are burning (usually thirty minutes to one hour). So forget the dishes, set

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aside the homework, and turn off the TV. This is a wonderful opportunity: use this time for a special family activity, one that invites participation by all generations present.

Many families play dreidel, spinning a four-sided top bearing Hebrew letters that stand for "A Great Miracle Happened Here." But there is nothing sacred about dreidels, and no reason not to update tradition with something your family prefers, like cards, chess, or board games. Our family usually sets up Trivial Pursuit for a team game, kids against adults. If we run out of time, the next night we just pick up where we left off. A friend's family begins a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle on the first night.

We're especially fond of storytelling of all kinds, from sharing tales rooted in our family trees to reading Hanukkah picture books that speak poignantly to all ages. You could easily do as Isaac Bashevis Singer suggested: tell a different story each night of Hanukkah. There is a rich repertoire to explore that will engage the whole family: Jewish stories of salts and tricksters, or multicultural, traditional, or contemporary tales.

Whether they are gathered around the piano or the holiday table, nothing brings the generations together like music. Devote a night or two to rousing group sings of traditional Hanukkah songs like Rock of Ages, the Beatles, classic rock, or just old family favorites.

Don't forget to highlight one night with dancing. CDs of Hava Nagilah for a hora are readily available, but any exuberant dancing the family enjoys will be great fun, an upbeat antidote to the winter blues.

It takes effort and planning for busy families to steal a little time together. But at the end of the holiday, you'll have eight days of cherished new memories.

Of course, you will need nourishment for all that activity. Potato pancakes and jelly doughnuts, fried to commemorate the tiny bottle of oil that miraculously burned in the Temple menorah for eight full days, are among the glories of the Jewish kitchen. But the truth is, no matter how fond you are of these mouth-watering treats, they no longer taste special when you've been eating them for several days.

Oil, though, is the defining culinary characteristic here, and many foods offer a taste of Hanukkah when they have been fried in oil. Experiment with recipes for dishes enjoyed throughout the Diaspora, or try fried foods inspired by other cuisines, like Greek spinach latkes or scallion pancakes, reminiscent of Chinese dim sum. Some people incorporate the fried food traditions of their non-Jewish family members or the birth parents of their adopted children: Southern fried chicken, Colombian arepas (corn pancakes).

Made from scratch, potato pancakes can take up almost all my allotted time in the kitchen on harried nights. And latkes alone do not a dinner make. So one night I dipped fish fillets into the latke batter, and served a one-pan fish-and-chips, Jewish-style.

Round out these fried foods with a salad of sliced fresh oranges and romaine or some roasted asparagus; ripe mango or pineapple, or homey fruit sauces and compotes that can be readied in advance.

The other symbolic Hanukkah food need not be fried at all: dairy, representing the courageous exploits of the Jewish heroine, Judith. According to many historical sources, the Book of Judith was written around the time of the Maccabees, and the story became associated with

Hanukkah during the Middle Ages. When Bethulia was under siege, this beautiful widow plied Holofernes, the Assyrian general, with salty cheese. He became increasingly thirsty, eventually drinking so much wine that Judith was able to overcome him and save her people from slaughter. So instead of potato latkes, serve delicate ones made of cheese, or cheese blintzes. Or accompany broiled or baked fish with a mound of couscous, drizzled with melted butter and swirls of cinnamon, dotted here and there with plumped raisins or ruby pomegranate seeds.

Or end the evening with homemade butter cookies or a slice of luscious cheesecake.

These foods, like the uncomplicated family activities I've mentioned, are simple. But invested with a sense of family tradition, they will taste richer every year.

RECIPES

1. SCALLION LATKES WITH SCALLION DIPPING BRUSHES

Kids love using these scallion brushes to brush the dipping sauce on their latkes! Reminiscent of those savory little pancakes served as dim sum, this dish makes use of ancient Chinese wisdom: the bracing, clean flavors of ginger, vinegar and soy provide a sparkling antidote to the oily richness, as well as welcome respite from the ubiquitous sour cream.

Ingredients

For scallion brushes:

10-12 thin scallions

ice water

For dipping sauce:

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons orange juice

1 tablespoon rice, Chinese black, or cider vinegar

2 teaspoons Asian toasted sesame oil

1 teaspoon peeled and grated fresh ginger

optional: chili oil to taste

For the latkes:

2-2 1/2 bunches of scallions, white and light green parts, trimmed and thinly sliced (about 2 1/2 cups)

2 tablespoons mild olive or vegetable oil, plus additional oil for frying latkes

1 teaspoon peeled and finely minced fresh ginger

1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh garlic

1 1/2 teaspoons soy sauce

about 1 1/2 lbs. Yukon Gold or russet (baking) potatoes, peeled

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1 large egg

salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

2 tablespoons matzah meal or all-purpose flour

1. Make the scallion brushes. Cut off and discard the roots and all but 3 inches of the green part of the scallions. Using a scissor or a small paring knife, cut slits about 1/2-inch deep into both sections of each scallion stalk, creating a fringe. Carefully fan out the fringed edges. Place the scallions in a bowl of ice water, and refrigerate for 2 hours or until the fringed edges curl up.

2. Prepare the dipping sauce. Stir together all ingredients and let the flavors meld for at least 30 minutes.
3. Start the latkes. In a large skillet, saute the scallions over moderately high heat in the oil until tender and just beginning to brown at the edges. Stir in the ginger, garlic and soy sauce, and cook, lifting and turning, for 2 -3 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside to cool briefly.
4. Coarsely shred the potatoes, using the grating disk in a food processor. Transfer the potatoes to a colander or strainer and use your hands or a wooden spoon to press out as much moisture as possible. (Don't bother washing out food processor--you'll be using it again here.)
5. Remove the grating disk from the processor and replace with the steel blade. Return about 1/3 of the shredded potatoes to the work bowl of food processor and roughly puree, using pulse motion. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl, add the remaining coarsely shredded potatoes from the colander, and the egg, salt, pepper, baking powder, and matzah meal or flour. (You will need salt here--the soy sauce merely flavors the scallions. Putting in enough soy sauce would make the latkes too wet. Figure about 1 teaspoon of salt.) Stir in the sautéed scallions. Mix until thoroughly combined.
6. In a heavy, 10- to 12-inch skillet (cast-iron is ideal), heat about 1/4-inch oil over high heat until it is hot but not smoking. Using a 1/4-cup measure, drop the batter into the pan; then flatten the latkes with a spatula. Cook no more than 4 or 5 latkes at a time; crowding the pan will make the latkes soggy.
7. Regulate the heat carefully as the latkes fry until golden and crisp on the bottom, about 4 minutes. To prevent the oil from splattering, use two spatulas (or a spatula and a large spoon) to turn the latkes carefully. Fry until crisp and golden on the other side. (Avoid turning the latkes more than once or they will absorb too much oil. Before turning, lift the latkes slightly with the spatula to make sure the underside is crisp and brown.)
8. Transfer the cooked latkes to paper towels or untreated brown paper bags to drain. Continue frying latkes in the same way until all the batter is used. If necessary, add more oil to the pan, but always allow the oil to get hot before frying a new batch.
9. If you must keep the latkes warm, place them in a single layer on a rack in a slow oven (200 degrees), until they are all ready to be brought to the table.
10. When ready to serve, pat the scallions brushes dry. Guests should use the brushes to coat each latke with dipping sauce, then top the latke with the brush.

Yield: 4 servings

2. WALNUT-CHERRY CHEESE LATKES WITH CHUNKY CHERRY-APPLESAUCE

Crisp potato latkes are the taste of Hanukkah for most Ashkenazi Jews. But the first latkes, according to many food historians, were probably made of cheese. Today latkes based on sweet curd cheeses--farmer, pot and cottage--remain popular.

Delicate and dairy-clean tasting, this version begs for a fresh complement of bright-tasting fruit. Instead of the traditional syrup or preserves, which would overpower the natural milky sweetness, serve the latkes with the easy-to-prepare cherry applesauce that follows.

They make a wonderful light supper, breakfast, or brunch. Or serve the latkes as a finish to a more elaborate meal.

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb. farmer cheese (a 7.5 oz. package is fine), drained
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese, room temperature
- 4 large eggs, separated
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

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1/4 teaspoon almond extract
 5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 1 tablespoon light brown granulated sugar
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 cup dried tart cherries, plumped in hot water 10 minutes, then drained
 1/3 cup finely chopped lightly toasted walnuts
 unsalted butter and mild vegetable oil, like avocado or canola, for frying

1. Combine both cheeses, egg yolks, and extracts in a food processor and process until well-blended and smooth. Add the flour, sugar, and salt, and pulse to blend. Transfer the batter to a large bowl. Mix in cherries and walnuts.
2. Whip the egg whites in a separate bowl until stiff, but not dry. Gently fold the whites into the batter.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons each of butter and oil in a heavy 10- to 12-inch skillet over medium heat until hot but not smoking. Working in batches, drop the batter by heaping tablespoonfuls into the skillet, and fry until the bottoms are golden brown, 2-3 minutes. Turn, using two spatulas, and cook other side until lightly browned, 1-3 minutes. Remove and transfer to plates or keep warm on a heated platter or in baking sheet in a 200-degree oven, while you repeat with remaining batter. Add more butter and oil if necessary, always allowing the fat to get hot before adding more batter. Serve with chunky cherry-apple or other fresh fruit sauce.
 Yield: 3-4 servings

3. CHUNKY CHERRY-APPLE SAUCE**Ingredients**

5 Gala (or other sweet, flavorful) apples (about 2 pounds), peeled, cored, cut into small pieces
 1/4 cup unsweetened apple juice
 about 3 tablespoons cherry preserves (exact amount will vary, not only according to preference, but according to sweet/tartness of preserves and apples; sour cherry preserves are delicious here)

1. Combine apple pieces and unsweetened apple juice in a heavy large saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer until apples are very tender, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in cherry preserves.
2. Using a potato masher or fork, mash the mixture to a chunky puree. Taste, add more preserves if desired, and mash again. (Sauce may be prepared up to two days ahead. Cover and refrigerate.) Serve warm or room temperature. Or refrigerate until lightly chilled. Best not icy cold.

4. GREEK HERBED SPINACH LATKES WITH FETA-YOGURT SAUCE**Ingredients**

2 lbs. fresh spinach, well-washed, tough stems discarded OR 2 10-ounce packages frozen leaf spinach, thawed
 salt
 2 tablespoons butter
 8 scallions (about 1 cup), trimmed and thinly sliced
 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
 freshly ground pepper
 1/3 cup (packed) fresh challah or other egg bread (crusts removed), torn in pieces
 1/2 cup fresh dill leaves

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1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, packed
 1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves
 4 large eggs, beaten to blend
 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
 additional butter and mild vegetable oil, like avocado or canola, for frying

Feta-Yogurt Sauce (recipe follows)

1. Cook spinach in a large saucepan with 1/4 cup lightly salted water until tender. Cool, then place in a colander and squeeze out as much liquid as possible.
2. In a medium skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add scallions and garlic and saute until scallions are softened. Stir in spinach, season to taste with salt and pepper, and sauté about 3 minutes, or until all liquid is evaporated. Cool completely.
3. Process challah in a food processor to fine crumbs. Add spinach mixture, dill, mint, and cilantro, and pulse, using on/off turns, until finely chopped. Transfer to a large bowl. Taste, adding more salt and pepper if necessary. Mix in eggs and baking powder.
4. Heat 2 tablespoons butter and 2 tablespoons oil in a 10- to 12-inch heavy skillet (preferably cast-iron) over medium heat until hot but not smoking. Working in batches, drop batter by the heaping tablespoonfuls into the skillet, using the back of a spoon to flatten latkes slightly. Fry until lightly browned, about 2 minutes per side. Avoid turning more than once. Using a slotted spatula, transfer the latkes to paper towels to drain.
5. Fry remaining latkes in the same way, adding more butter and oil to the skillet as necessary, and allowing the fat to get hot before adding more batter.
6. Serve with Feta-Yogurt Sauce.

Yield: about 30 small latkes

5. FETA-YOGURT SAUCE

This sauce is also delicious served with raw or cooked vegetables, or drizzled over a salad of mixed greens.

Ingredients

1 cup crumbled feta
 1 cup plain yogurt (preferably Greek-style)
 1/3 cup chopped fresh chives
 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 1 clove minced garlic
 2 teaspoons dried oregano
 freshly ground pepper
 salt, if necessary

Mash feta in a medium bowl using a fork. Mix in yogurt. Stir in remaining ingredients, seasoning to taste with pepper. Taste, and add salt, if needed (the feta may be quite salty). Set aside for flavors to blend at least 2 hours before serving. (Can be made 2 days ahead. Cover and refrigerate until needed.)

6. FISH IN POTATO LATKE CRUST WITH HORSERADISH CREAM

Ingredients

about 1 1/2 lbs. russet (baking) or Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed or peeled, and cut into chunks
 1 medium onion, peeled and quartered

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2 large eggs
 2 large cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
 1 teaspoon cider vinegar
 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
 1/4 teaspoon pepper, or to taste
 2 tablespoons matzah meal or all-purpose flour, plus additional flour for dredging
 olive or vegetable oil, for frying
 2 lbs. flounder, lemon sole, or similar white-fleshed fish fillets, wiped with a damp paper towel and patted dry. (If the fillets are not small, cut them into long strips, so they will be easier to batter.)
 Horseradish Cream (recipe follows); lemon wedges

1. In a food processor, using the grating disk, coarsely grate the potatoes together with the onion. Transfer the mixture to a strainer and drain it well, using your hands to squeeze out all excess moisture. (Don't wash out the processor yet.) Replace the grating disk with the steel blade. Return the grated mixture to the processor and add the eggs, garlic, dill, vinegar, salt, pepper, and matzah meal or flour. Process to a smooth batter. Put the batter in a large bowl.
 2. Heat 1/4 inch of oil in a 10- to 12-inch heavy skillet until hot but not smoking. Spread some flour on a large sheet of wax paper or a plate. Dredge a fillet in the flour, covering it completely and shaking off the excess, then dip it into the latke batter, coating well on both sides. Quickly slide it into the hot oil. Repeat, frying a few pieces at a time, and making sure you do not crowd the pan. Fry until browned on both sides and cooked through (exact time will vary, depending on thickness of fish used). Drain on paper towels or untreated brown paper bags. Serve with Horseradish Cream and lemon wedges.

Yield: 6-8 servings

7. HORESERADISH CREAM

Ingredients

1/2 cup peeled, finely diced cucumber
 salt
 1 cup yogurt (preferably Greek-style or drain the yogurt until thickened; regular yogurt will be too watery) or sour cream
 1 large garlic clove, minced and mashed to a paste with 1/4 teaspoon salt
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
 1 tablespoon drained bottled white horseradish, or to taste
 freshly ground pepper

Start the Horseradish Cream at least 1/2 hour before serving to develop the flavors. Sprinkle the cucumber with 1/4 teaspoon salt. Let stand for 10 minutes. Wrap in paper towels or a kitchen towel and squeeze out as much liquid as possible. In a small bowl, combine the cucumber with the other ingredients. Adjust the seasoning to taste. You can refrigerate the Horseradish Cream, but allow it to come to room temperature before serving.

Yield: about 1 cup

CURRENT NEWS

Intermarriage Tipping Point Long Past, but Institutions Must Now Catch Up

By Paul Golin, Nov. 22, 2006, JTA



Few Jewish communal leaders have openly declared that the battle against Jewish intermarriage is over and we should instead focus solely on outreach. But the battle is over, and has been for a generation. What's more, Jewish outreach works, and it works best when not hampered by mixed messages that tell intermarried families we want them, but they're still second-class citizens.

That's the message we still hear from segments of the community, even as many other institutions move toward a more welcoming approach to intermarried families. Recent events suggest we may finally be able to put the debate behind us.

Anyone who's read Malcolm Gladwell's groundbreaking book "The Tipping Point" forever thereafter seeks out the little things that portend big changes at exponential speeds. We've long since reached the demographic tipping point on Jewish intermarriage, but most of our institutions have yet to change direction in terms of their programming, posturing and professional training. After maintaining single-digit intermarriage rates for the first 60 years of the last century, we saw a rapid rise in intermarriage. A 13 percent intermarriage rate of those married before 1970 leapt to 47 percent in 25 years.

By 2001, there were about as many intermarried households in America as inmarried households, according to the National Jewish Population Study. More importantly, those intermarried households are younger and produce more children. Forty-five percent of college students who identified themselves as Jewish came from households with one Jewish-born parent. Yet there is still an effort in the organized Jewish community to discredit those Jews. So they hire researchers, who find that intermarried Jews are less Jewishly educated, less Jewishly involved, even though the same could be said for many other Jewish sub-groups. The resulting policy recommendations are always the same: Don't spend money on the intermarried.

Why would influential leaders in the richest, most powerful Diaspora community in history still feel the need to triage half our married population? We have a demographic and a moral imperative to reach out to intermarried families and welcome them into the Jewish community. Intermarriage is not the end of Jewish continuity; not raising Jewish children is the end of Jewish continuity. Recognizing this will lead the organized community to welcome all who would cast their lot with the Jewish people.

And when our population begins to grow, we will likely look back upon the recent release of the 2005 Boston Jewish Community Survey as a tipping point. That study showed 60 percent of intermarried families in that city are raising children Jewishly, and states that intermarriage

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“is contributing to a net increase in the number of Jews” in the Boston Jewish community. This position is made more powerful when combined with the 2005 San Francisco Jewish demographic study that also identified higher-than-average rates of intermarried households raising children Jewishly.

What do San Francisco and Boston have in common? A Jewish community that, for the most part, welcomes intermarried families to participate as they are. Also, both cities have a tightknit group of interfaith outreach specialists. There is now talk that other federations should consider similar expenditures on interfaith outreach, highest in the country. Combined Jewish Philanthropies is reportedly spending about 1.5 percent of its budget on outreach. Detractors say that “we tried outreach and it didn’t work,” but how hard have we tried if communities have to be convinced to increase their spending on outreach to even 1 percent of their budgets. In order for it to work, however, we need to not only dedicate resources but also make distinctions between Jewish and halachically Jewish.

A tipping-point moment on halachic issues came earlier this year, when Ismar Schorsch — outgoing chancellor of the Conservative Movement’s Jewish Theological Seminary — proposed that the movement’s Ramah camps allow children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers to attend their camps until age 13, when they would then be asked to convert. The fact that this had not previously been allowed is all about culture, not halachah. Jewish leaders must recognize what their constituency already understands: We do not live in an ideal Jewish world. Not all Jews observe all of the mitzvot. But we don’t kick people out of the Jewish community if they skip a few.

Institutional admonishment against intermarriage doesn’t stop intermarriage in America, it only serves to push away the intermarried. Our sole mission should focus on helping all existing Jewish households engage more deeply in Jewish activities.

Boston and San Francisco have a head start, but there are some fairly clear outreach methodologies that other communities can adopt. First, they must train and sensitize all of their professionals and lay leaders. The Jewish Outreach Institute has conducted environmental scans of more than 500 communal institutions in North American cities like Ottawa, Louisville, Atlanta, San Francisco and Phoenix, and found that those who answer the phones or sit by the doors almost universally receive no sensitivity training for intake of intermarried couples.

We also have to make the joys of being Jewish more visible to the community-at-large rather than keeping it all within the walls of our institutions. Cultural events in secular venues reach a less engaged audience. The findings of the Boston Study certainly feel like vindication for the outreach community, but we also note that 28 percent are raising their children in no religion. That’s growth potential. That’s an additional outreach target population. We know the outreach corps in Boston will keep working to draw in even more interfaith families.

Outreach is some of the most challenging work in the Jewish community. But we will be a better people for trying rather than telling ourselves that those on the periphery of our community are not worth our time or money and should therefore be let go.

Israel Teaches WHO about Circumcision

By Meital Yasur-Beit Or, Nov. 28, 2006, YNetNews.com



Circumcision against AIDS: A new program being developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) is attempting to suggest ways and principles for holding a mass circumcision in HIV-infected countries, particularly African countries. Research has found that the removal of the foreskin, an act which is carried out during the circumcision ceremony, reduces the chances of being infected or infecting people with the HIV virus.

The issue was discussed in Jerusalem at the beginning of the week, in a meeting between WHO representatives, 20 Israeli physicians and Jewish and Muslim circumcisers. "The initiative was born because Israel is one of the only countries in the world with so much experience in circumcising children, as well as adults," explained Dr. Inon Schenker, an HIV-AIDS prevention specialist from the Jerusalem AIDS Project (JAIP).

According to Dr. Schenker, the joint workshop was aimed at hearing the opinions of the Israeli experts before deciding on the clinical indications for carrying out the circumcision. Dr. Schenker presented data which show that almost all men in Israel have been circumcised, apart from a small percentage among adult new immigrants. "In a country like Israel, in which about 100 percent of men have been circumcised, there is great significance in stressing the message that circumcision reduces the risk of being infected with HIV, but does not fully guarantee that. One must not be complacent."

Dr. Yoram Mor, chair of Pediatric Urology at the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer, was one of the experts who took part in the conference and commented on the document. According to Dr. Mor, "The World Health Organization's documents mainly contains technical details which have to do with the training of circumcisers, the surgical technique, how to deal with complications, and which physical tests should be carried out. The Israeli team of experts received the draft document and commented on it."

The issue which was of natural interest to the WHO representatives dealt with circumcision of adults (new immigrants, for example). "If circumcision reduces the chances of being infected with HIV, then it is a life-saving operation," Dr. Mor said. The WHO program will only mature after the findings of additional research on the issue of circumcision are received, and in any case it will only serve as a recommendation to the authorities in African countries.

Dr. Schenker noted that two countries, Zambia and Swaziland, have already started suggesting to their residents to be circumcised as part of an experimental service aimed at examining the public's response to the issue.

Research proves: Circumcision reduces risk of AIDS

A study conducted in Africa and published more than a year ago has shown that the chances of men who have been circumcised to be infected with HIV during sexual intercourse with a woman carrying the virus are 70 percent lower than that of men who have not been circumcised. Another study held in Uganda revealed that circumcision also protects women from being infected with AIDS. According to the research findings, the chances of partners of men who have been circumcised and infected with the HIV virus to be infected are 30 percent lower than the chances of partners of men who have not been circumcised.

Conservative Panel Votes to Permit Gay Rabbis

By Rebecca Spence, Dec. 6, 2006, Forward.com

In a historic vote, leaders of Conservative Judaism on Wednesday approved a rabbinic opinion allowing ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis and sanctioning same-sex unions.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards — the 25-member lawmaking body of the Conservative movement — opted to follow the rabbinic tradition of approving separate, mutually contradictory opinions, each of which is now sanctioned as normative Conservative practice. Of the three papers approved, the most permissive, co-authored by rabbis Elliot Dorff, Daniel Nevins and Avram Reisner, opens the door for gay rabbis and same-sex unions, but retains certain biblical bans on homosexual activity. Also vetted were two opinions that uphold the ban on ordaining gay rabbis, one submitted by Rabbi Joel Roth, and another, more extreme opinion submitted by Rabbi Leonard Levy.

Four of the most conservative members resigned the committee in protest: Roth, Levy, Mayer Rabinowitz and Joseph Prouser.

While the decision of the law committee marks a major turning point, it is now up to the individual Conservative seminaries and congregations to decide how to implement the ruling.

And at the movement's two seminaries, situated on opposite coasts, the approaches are markedly different. The University of Judaism in Los Angeles has long maintained that it will immediately begin admitting gay and lesbian students as soon as the law committee passes a policy that sanctions gay ordination. But at the Jewish Theological Seminary — the movement's flagship seminary in New York — the law committee's decision will have to be weighed by the faculty, who plan to deliberate whether or not to begin accepting gay and lesbian students who want to become rabbis.

Judith Hauptman, a professor of Talmud and rabbinic culture at JTS and a prominent supporter of gay ordination, cautioned that the faculty there would not necessarily lean in favor of accepting gays and lesbians. "We can go either way on it," said Hauptman. "We're not making a decision about Jewish law, we're making a decision about the school."

Hauptman also said that many members of the faculty had not publicly disclosed their views on gay ordination, making it anyone's guess what the final outcome would be. As for her own views, Hauptman expressed unflinching support for accepting gay students. "As soon as it is

possible to ordain gay rabbis,” she said, “it becomes morally imperative on us to accept gay candidates for ordination.”

This week’s decision marks the final chapter in a divisive debate that has roiled the Conservative movement since 1992, when the law committee first took up the question of gays and lesbians becoming rabbis. That debate resulted in the adoption of an opinion that effectively banned gay ordination and unions. The committee’s current consideration of the issue began with the submission of nine papers in the spring of 2005, which were ultimately combined into four separate papers.

The wide gulf between the stances of JTS and of U.J. can be explained in part by the positions of the institutions’ faculty and leadership. The dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at U.J., Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, authored the 1992 paper advocating gay ordination and unions, which was defeated at the time. That rabbinic opinion, known as a teshuvah, took the most liberal position in that it also lifted the ban on homosexual anal sex.

Roth, a professor of Talmud and Jewish law at JTS, wrote the opinion paper opposing gay ordination that gained approval some 15 years ago. In addition, the former chancellor of JTS, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, has long argued that sanctioning gay ordination and unions would fracture the movement, with those who opposed it joining the ranks of the Modern Orthodox and those who supported it ultimately converging with Reform Judaism, America’s largest stream.

The appointment earlier this year of Arnold Eisen, a proponent of gay ordination, as the new chancellor of JTS signaled to many that the movement was now on track to open its doors to gay and lesbian clergy. Eisen, who is not a rabbi, is widely expected to turn to the pews in order to bolster support for the movement’s retooled approach to homosexuality.

At Wednesday’s vote, held at Manhattan’s Park Avenue Synagogue, five teshuvot were on the table, covering a diverse spectrum of opinion. The teshuvot in favor of upholding the ban on gay ordination and same-sex unions included an expanded version of Roth’s 1992 paper, as well as one written by Levy, making the case that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured. Levy’s paper passed with six votes - the minimum number required - while the other two garnered more widespread support, each passing handily with 13 votes.

Dorff, the rector of U.J., co-authored the paper that sanctions same-sex unions and allows for gay ordination, but falls short of deeming intercourse between men to be compatible with halacha, or Jewish law. An opinion submitted by Rabbi Gordon Tucker of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, N.Y., which advocated full equality of gays and lesbians in Conservative Judaism, with no restrictions on sexual behaviors, failed to pass after being turned into a takanah, an amendment to Jewish law rather than an interpretation.

In an interview at his Los Angeles office, Dorff framed the debate in generational terms. He contended that most Conservative Jews on the younger side of the spectrum would support the decision to allow gay and lesbian rabbis, while older people who grew up in a society far less accustomed to people openly expressing their homosexuality might be opposed to the change. Dorff also noted that of the 25 members of the law committee, only two are under the age of 40.

In recent days student groups advocating a change in policy ramped up their activism in advance of the vote. Last week, U.J.’s pro-gay ordination group, Dror Yikra (Hebrew for “call

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to freedom”), sent each member of the law committee a copy of a letter in support of gay ordination that was signed by three-quarters of the student body. “As future rabbis, we feel bound by the tenets of halakhah and moved by the ethical challenges posed by our new scientific knowledge and modern understandings of sexual orientation,” the letter stated. “We believe that there is a halakhically acceptable way for our movement to ordain gays and lesbians and for our rabbis to consecrate their love through Jewish commitment ceremonies.”

The group’s co-founder, Rachel Kobrin, a fifth-year rabbinical student, said that her decision to attend U.J. stemmed from its more liberal position on homosexuality. “I came here and not JTS because of this issue,” said Kobrin, 32. “Because I knew that Rabbi Artson was a serious advocate for change.” Indeed, according to Dorff, Artson accepted the job as dean of the rabbinic school on the condition that U.J. would begin accepting gay and lesbian students if and when the law committee ruled in favor of an inclusive policy.

While the majority of the student body at U.J. favors gay ordination, a quiet minority stands in opposition. One student who chose not to sign the letter, Ben Goldstein, a second-year rabbinical student from Rochester, N.Y., said that while he was conflicted in his views on the subject, he did not attach his name to the petition because he did not think that both sides had been given a fair hearing at U.J. Goldstein said that Dorff’s view had been fully parsed, but that Roth’s opinion upholding the ban had gotten short shrift. “There are other people who feel the same way I do, but they won’t tell you,” he said, citing an atmosphere in which it was frowned upon to oppose gay ordination.

Meanwhile, at JTS, the student organization that advocates full inclusion of gays and lesbians, Keshet, hosted seminars on homosexuality in Judaism while the law committee deliberated. Students wearing rainbow ribbons and buttons proclaiming “ordination regardless of orientation,” participated in educational sessions on such diverse topics as the history of lobbying in the process of deciding Jewish law as well as gay interpretations of the classic Yiddish play, “The Dybbuk.”

The law committee’s decision to allow gays and lesbians to be ordained as rabbis and to sanction same-sex unions comes as other mainstream religions are grappling with similar internecine debates. In recent weeks a southern California diocese of the Episcopal Church (U.S.A.) moved to distance itself from the church over its ordination of gays and women, when it voted to identify as a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion, rather than a member of the American arm. That vote could portend a complete break from the church, which recently elected its first female bishop.

IDENTITY

Deconstructing the Asian Jewish experience

By Joshua Brandt, Dec. 8, 2006, j. Weekly



A recent forum on Asian Jewish identities emphasized commonalities while shattering stereotypes. But before debunking the prevailing paradigm of the Ashkenazi Jew, the panel had to come to grips with an equally important question: What constitutes “Asian?” For example, the panel’s moderator, Dafna Wu, was born in Brazil to an Ashkenazi Jewish mother and a Shanghainese father. Panelist Lori Rosenstein was born in Korea and raised in Vermont by her adopted parents — a Vermont-born Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother from Texas.

Given the panoply of perspectives, Wu asked the audience at the Bureau of Jewish Education’s Jewish Community Library in San Francisco to determine what stereotypes were being reinforced or dismantled. The Nov. 28 event, which was co-sponsored by Be’chol Lashon (In Every Tongue) of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, produced some intriguing answers.

Larry Wong, a native San Franciscan who was born to Chinese parents, is in the process of converting to Judaism. Wong, who attends San Francisco’s Reform Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, said that he’s always felt “right at home” within Jewish culture and traditions. A recent trip to Israel solidified his connection to Judaism, although the paucity of Asians in the country probably led people to believe he was “hired help,” Wong added with a chuckle. Asked about his family’s reaction to his conversion, Wong gave an answer that elicited some titters from the audience. “Both communities are very concerned with money, education and family,” Wong said, adding that the cultural similarities have made the conversion process easier. Wong also displayed a cogent wit throughout the evening, especially when talking about Jewish food. “I love latkes, but I don’t know about adding applesauce and sour cream,” he said. “I think what latkes really need is some good shrimp sauce.”

Other panelists evidently had a more ambiguous relationship to the liminal space occupied by people claiming multiple identities. Rosenstein said when people asked about her background, she deconstructed the question. “I understand their confusion, because to them I don’t look like a ‘Rosenstein.’ What I tell them is that my race is Asian, my ethnicity is Jewish, and my nationality is American,” she said.

Panelist Descartes Li, a Chinese non-Jew raised on Long Island, N.Y., and married to Ashkenazi Jewish panelist Leah Karliner, provoked laughter when he said he was an honorary Jew because “some of my best friends are Jewish.” Li joked that being a psychiatrist bolstered his Jewish “credentials.”

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Karliner said the concept of “otherness” really hit home when she visited China with Li. Her skin color was now a distinct minority, something her husband experienced every day in the States. “That was an important lesson for me,” she said. “As a Caucasian Jew, I can ‘pass’ — and sometimes have. But Descartes wears his Asian identity every day in this country.”

Eric Wong, who grew up in San Francisco and was raised by a Chinese-American father and Jewish-American mother, said there were both benefits and detriments to being outside the Jewish “norm.” While noting that growing up he didn’t face any overt prejudice, Wong nonetheless felt a “subconscious” disconnect being a Jew of Asian descent. The questions he faced regarding his identity “chipped away” at his comfort level in the organized Jewish community. On the flip side, he enjoyed “breaking the mold” of what a Jew looks like.

Perhaps the night’s most memorable statement came from audience member Dorothy Jones-Davis, who identifies as an African-American Jew. She wondered if there would come a time when people didn’t regard non-Ashkenazi Jews as a curiosity. “I’m waiting for the time that I tell people my identity and it’s just accepted without question.”

Latino New Mexicans See Hints of Jewish Past

By Matt Crenson, Dec. 10, 2006, AP

Within weeks of assuming the job of New Mexico state historian, Stanley Hordes started receiving some odd visitors. They would enter his Santa Fe office, close the door -- and gossip about their neighbors. "So-and-so lights candles on Friday nights," they would whisper. "So-and-so doesn't eat pork," they would say.

Hordes wasn't the first scholar who had ever heard such things. But as a curious new arrival from Louisiana, the young historian was intrigued. So Hordes began visiting rural villages to interview the viejitos, Hispanic old-timers whose families had lived in the state for generations, sometimes since the original Spanish settlers came up from Mexico. He was astounded by what they told him.

Though the people Hordes spoke with were clearly Catholic, they reported following an array of Jewish customs. They talked about leaving pebbles on cemetery headstones, lighting candles on Friday nights, abstaining from pork and circumcising male infants. When Hordes asked why they did such things, some said they were simply following family tradition. Others gave a more straightforward explanation. "Somos judios," they said. "We are Jews."

What was that supposed to mean? Their villages were built around old Catholic mission chapels, not synagogues. The Hebrew scrolls of the Torah were Greek to them. They didn't really know anything about the Jewish faith, and yet, they called themselves Jews. Were they? People don't just decide they're Jewish for no reason. Cultural traditions and identities, no matter how tenuous, have to come from somewhere.

A quarter-century later, Hordes has a stirring explanation of how Judaism got to New Mexico. Like so many Jewish stories -- the Exodus, David and Goliath, the Hanukkah story -- it is an ancient and epic tale of triumph against overwhelming adversity. And like so many of those stories, it requires a certain suspension of disbelief.

In the spring of 1492, Jews in Spain were given two choices: convert to Catholicism or leave the country. Many left, scattering as far afield as Istanbul, London and Cairo. Many others

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simply abandoned their religion for Catholicism. But a few of those who converted did so only publicly, continuing to practice Judaism in secret. The Spanish Inquisition sought to identify and punish such false converts.

Modern scholars have found a few communities of so-called "crypto-Jews" that survived in both Iberia and the New World for centuries, hiding their true religious identity from their neighbors and the Catholic church. In his 2005 book "To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico," Hordes suggests that many crypto-Jews found their way to the northern frontier of the Spanish colonial empire, where evading the authority of both church and state was an easier proposition. There they continued to observe their religion behind locked doors, blending publicly into the monolithic Catholic culture and teaching their children that revealing their true identities could mean death by the Inquisition. "They were invisible," Hordes said.

But the very same secrecy that protected Judaism in the Spanish Southwest eventually doomed it. The people had no synagogue, no Torah, no connection to global Jewish culture. They were immersed in a Catholic culture with its own rich traditions. By the 20th century, Hordes concludes, all that was left were a few suggestive customs and a vague sense among a few viejitos that somehow, they were Jewish.

For Sonya Loya, there's nothing vague about it. She has always felt Jewish. Growing up Catholic in Ruidoso, N.M., Loya was intensely spiritual. But she never identified with Jesus or Christianity. "I never felt whatever I was supposed to feel when I was Catholic," Loya said. Loya began observing the Jewish sabbath, Shabbat, six years ago, about the same time that she learned about the secret Jewish past that was being uncovered by Hordes and other scholars. She was thrilled at the possibility that she might actually have Jewish heritage, that a faith her ancestors lost over centuries of struggle was inexplicably welling up inside her. "I believe that what drew me back home to who I am is my Jewish soul," Loya said.

In 2004 she went to her parents, asking them to bless her conversion to Judaism but expecting the worst. Perplexed by their daughter's rejection of Catholicism, they had often reacted badly to such pronouncements. But this time it was her turn to be perplexed. Not only did her father give his blessing, Loya said, but he revealed that he had known since childhood that he had Jewish ancestry. An uncle, returning from World War II, had seen the family name on a list of concentration camp inmates. "I'm still discovering a lot of these things from my own family," she said.

Bill Sanchez always felt Jewish, too. But not that Jewish; he's a Catholic priest. Sanchez discovered his own Jewish roots after watching a television documentary on genetics. The show inspired him to have his own genes tested by a Houston-based company called Family Tree DNA. The company determined that he has a set of genetic markers on his Y chromosome that is also found in about 30 percent of Jewish men. The tests even indicated that Sanchez has a genetic signature that has been associated with the Cohanim, the priesthood that is said to go back to Moses' brother Aaron.

Since then, Sanchez has embraced his Jewish heritage. He wears a Star of David around his neck on the same chain that holds his crucifix and keeps a menorah in his office at St. Edwin parish in Albuquerque. "We're already Jewish. We don't have to become Jews," Sanchez said. "The spark within us, the Jewish people, cannot be extinguished."

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Like Hordes, folklorist Judith Neulander was fascinated by the story of the Southwestern crypto-Jews when she first encountered it as a graduate student in the early 1990s. An American Jew who grew up in Mexico City, she felt like she was the perfect person to write the definitive book on the subject. "I really in my heart wanted to curate the crypto-Judaic exhibit at the Jewish Museum in New York," said Neulander, who is now co-director of the Jewish Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

Neulander went to New Mexico in the summer of 1992 and began doing interviews. At first she talked with people who were referred to her by Hordes or other researchers, and then with people she identified herself. Neulander heard accounts of grandfathers donning shawls before they prayed and grandmothers carefully draining every drop of blood from chickens after slaughtering them. But she grew increasingly uneasy, and then dismayed. People told her about how their parents or grandparents prayed to "Yahweh" -- Hebrew for God. But Judaism forbids saying God's name out loud.

They talked about playing as children with a four-sided top that resembled a dreidel. But dreidels first appeared among Central and Eastern European Jews well after 1492. How would the descendants of Spanish Jews who fled Europe during the Inquisition have known anything about them? "All of it just doesn't really hold up when you examine it carefully," Neulander said.

Aside from the cultural evidence, all Hordes had was a handful of prosecutions against suspected Jews in the records of the Mexican Inquisition and genealogical arguments linking individual New Mexicans back generations to pre-expulsion Spanish Jews.

Neulander wasn't buying it. But if they weren't Jewish, she still had to explain why so many people in the Southwest thought they were. In 1994, Neulander wrote a paper in the *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* that offered an explanation. During the 1940s, an anthropologist named Raphael Patai had discovered a church outside Mexico City whose members considered themselves Jewish, even though they believed in Jesus and knew very little about Judaism. He concluded that the church must have been founded by evangelical Protestant missionaries from one of several small sects who considered themselves descendants of a lost tribe of Israel.

Though rare today, such Christian groups follow many Jewish traditions while believing in Jesus, and consider themselves the world's only truly chosen people. "There were probably many more sects like this in the early part of the 20th century," Neulander said. She can't prove it. But Neulander believes Protestant evangelicals, possibly from a group that splintered off the Seventh-day Adventist church, inspired the belief in a Southwestern Jewish past less than a century ago.

Hordes dismisses her theory as outrageous. "Do you think they would have forgotten that they were Seventh-day Adventists?" he asked. The debate isn't just academic. People like Loya and Sanchez are constructing their religious lives around the assumption that their ancestors were Jewish: "All of it is a process of returning back to who I am and what was taken away from me," Loya said.

Though Judaism has always allowed for the conversion of people who have demonstrated a sufficient commitment to the faith, it has an ethnic component that other religions lack. People become Christian when they choose to put their faith in Jesus Christ. But Jews don't choose; they're chosen. They have a special relationship with God, forged by the events chronicled in

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the Old Testament and kept alive over millennia. Crypto-Jews have an uncomfortable relationship with that legacy. Though their claim to Jewishness is based on inheritance, they have no way of documenting it. "You'll never have proof," Loya said. "You have these bits of evidence ... like bread crumbs."

Sanchez hopes to make the case with DNA. He estimates that more than half of the men he knows who have been tested have DNA signatures consistent with a Semitic ancestry. In Spain, the fraction of men with a similar signature is only 10 percent.

Yet the only serious genetic study that has attempted to find Jewish ancestry among Hispanics in the Southwest reached a different conclusion. "We just couldn't wait to find all these Jews," said Alec Knight, who was working in an anthropological genetics lab at Stanford University when he saw the crypto-Jew story in an in-flight magazine.

Knight recruited a handful of colleagues for a simple study. They took DNA samples from 139 men in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, most of whom could trace their family trees in the region back to the 17th century. The results? To use a Yiddish expression, *bubkes* -- almost nothing.

As the 139 DNA profiles came back, it became clear to Knight that the population he had sampled was genetically indistinguishable from the modern population of Spain. There were a few individuals who did have typically "Jewish" profiles, but no more than you would find in Spain, due to the presence of Jews there before 1492. "Basically, it was a migration of Spaniards," said Knight, who recently left Stanford to teach science in Alpine, Texas, at the high school level.

When confronted with the genetic evidence, Hordes quickly points out that genes are not culture. Besides, he adds, he never claimed that the early European settlers of the Southwest were overwhelmingly Jewish. But if there was never more than a handful of Jews among the first Southwesterners -- if any -- and they never left any visible impact on the culture beyond a few odd customs, why are people so eager to resurrect them? Sociologist Michael P. Carroll has suggested that the crypto-Jew story has "an appeal that is independent of the evidence."

The crypto-Jewish saga is one of cultural survival against the odds, a life-affirming counterpoint to the genocidal reality that Jews have faced throughout history. Those who embrace a crypto-Jewish identity see themselves as heirs to a legacy of survival against tremendous odds. "The notion that you're somehow indomitable, that there can be such a thing as a miraculous survival, is so comfortable, so buoyant to the spirit, that it's very hard to let go," Neulander said.

And what of the scholars like Hordes? Carroll and Neulander accuse them of being seduced by the age-old fantasy of discovering a lost tribe. The remote Southwest used to have such "tribes" in abundance. They lived in pueblos, in remote mountain villages and on desert reservations, isolated from the outside world for centuries. But earlier generations of researchers have already done the job of documenting those more typical Southwestern traditions. What was once an exotic, almost foreign region of the country has witnessed an influx of retirees and second-home dwellers from the coasts that has swelled its population and diluted its sense of place.

The crypto-Jew story injects fresh mystery into this increasingly humdrum world. In fact, the crypto-Jew phenomenon probably tells us more about life in the Southwest today than it does

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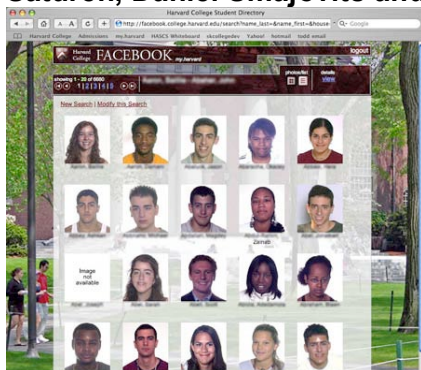
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about what happened there hundreds of years ago. Even Hordes acknowledges that if Jews fleeing the Inquisition actually did settle on the northern frontier of Spain's colonial empire, there weren't very many of them and their impact on the culture never amounted to much.

But that doesn't matter to people like Sonya Loya. Having "felt Jewish" for most of her life, the crypto-Jew story gives her the authority to embrace the heritage of her choice. And as she and others continue to spread the incredible survival story of the Southwest's Jewish colonists, it almost becomes a religion itself.

Networking Site Changing Face of Jewish Campus Life

By CampusJ.com (Reporting by Sam Guzik, Ben Greenberg, Jordan Magaziner, Valerie Saturen, Daniel Smajovits and Steven I. Weiss.), Dec. 10, 2006, JTA



Jewish life on campus has a changing face because of Facebook.com.

Students and organizations are taking advantage of the social networking site launched in 2004 that allows users to make a profile, create and join numerous groups, and post messages to other members and groups. "It's already had a direct effect on the expectations that Hillel is putting into its resources," said Hillel's Sam Amiel, who is charged with overseeing the Jewish campus organization's outreach fellows.

"Ten years ago, 15 years ago, the goal was to get students in the building," he explained, adding "that's still a nice goal for us... but it's far more of an important goal to say there are 500 students having a Jewish experience every week, inside the building or out."

Facebook's ability to create ad-hoc communities is seen as its greatest strength. When an Iranian-American student was Tasered by campus police at the University of California Los Angeles, thousands of students registered their protest within days by joining groups created to complain about the incident.

Jewish students and groups on Facebook are taking similar advantage of the site's possibilities. A Jewish group was launched recently to gather right-wing Israel advocates to protest a book-signing by former President Carter on the same day in New York City. Another group is called "American Jews Against Israel."

Along the way, Jewish students are finding new ways to associate with each other and new aspects of their identities. Janice Hussain is a junior at Brandeis University, and the daughter of Indian and Jewish parents, and until she started using Facebook, she didn't know there were many other Jews of a similar ethnicity.

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"At Brandeis, if I wanted to meet someone who was Asian and Jewish, or Indian or half-Indian, I couldn't," she said in an interview. So Hussain this semester launched a group called "Asian and Jewish," inviting a handful of people at Brandeis who were of Asian and Jewish descent. Before she knew it the group reached 90 members from various campuses.

Now that she's had success online, Hussain is considering new endeavors for Jewish life on her campus, with which she's had little involvement thus far. "I was actually thinking of maybe starting a club at Brandeis for Jews that are not fully Ashkenazi, or Jews of color, and to have an event or maybe have a lecture," she said. Hussain's experience in finding common heritage is far from unique on Facebook for Jews of mixed descent. "What seems to be coming up over and over again is a place for students that are from a mixed-parentage family," Amiel said, noting that Facebook's self-starting nature allows Jewish students to "make connections that are more organic."

On Facebook, most of the traditional categories for Judaism and religious activity in general are far less popular than alternative expressions of identity. Jews on Facebook are using nontraditional identifiers far more than any standard declaration. Several groups are titled "I don't roll on Shabbos," after a line in the cult movie "The Big Lebowski." Hundreds of students belong to these groups, and most of them belong to hundreds of other groups that express their Jewish identities.

While statistics are not available for the site, an informal survey of multiple campuses has shown consistently that most Jewish students will call themselves "Jewish" or some manifestation thereof in the "Religious Views" box only about 10 percent of the time. At Indiana University, even the Hillel president, Joanna Blotner, doesn't call herself "Jewish" on her profile. "It's because you don't want to actively make yourself part of the minority," she explained. "It's probably the same reason a lot of gays and lesbians don't identify themselves."

It's a trend that Jewish officials can't explain. "Of any place, being on Facebook is one of the most safe places to identify as Jewish," Amiel said.

At the same time, traditional Jewish institutions have employed the site as well, finding Facebook to be far more effective than e-mail in getting students to attend their events. "People, in my experience, are more likely to attend an event if they are personally invited," said Alex Freedman, president of the Jewish Student Union at Washington University. "The group and event invitation serves that function on a grand scale -- it allows the word to be spread better among a target audience quicker than any other medium."

Meanwhile, Facebook's implementation of a new feature called "News Feeds" allows students to see the groups or events their friends are joining. "All of a sudden, people no longer had to be individually invited to a group or to an event, they could see what their friends were doing," said Andy Ratto, Washington University Hillel's JCSC fellow. "This has been extremely useful because people might be rather unlikely to go to an event where they didn't know anyone who would be there, but all of a sudden people would find out about an event because their friends were going to it, and then they would want to come, too."

While those results aren't the expectation for Hillel events at a given campus, the function still makes a difference, Freedman said. It "saves us a lot of phone calls, a lot of fliers and a lot of time," he said.

COMMUNITES AROUND THE WORLD

The Zimbabwean People of the Book

By Cindy Mindell, Nov 29, 2006, Jewish Ledger

Relly Coleman grew up in Tel Aviv, met her Zimbabwean husband in London, married in Holland, and came to the U.S. 26 years ago. Her daughter was born in England, her son in the U.S. It's no wonder that Coleman pursued cross-cultural studies at UConn, and tracked down the Jewish Lemba tribe in Zimbabwe last year. But for Coleman the philanthropist, it wasn't enough to meet the mysterious "Black Jews of Southern Africa." Since last June, Coleman has succeeded in collecting and shipping 1,000 pounds of textbooks to the village schools.

The Lemba claim to descend from Jewish traders who came to Africa many generations ago and married local women. A 1999 DNA study confirmed a Jewish genetic marker, and the Lemba's Judaic-like customs set them apart from neighboring tribes: kashrut, male circumcision, a weekly holy day, belief in one G-d, and marrying within the tribe.

So Coleman's act is beyond ordinary tzedakah: The more textbooks the tribe acquires, the longer the Lemba can keep their children in the village schools, and the more likely they are to maintain their Jewish customs. Because the village schools end at 10th grade, a child must complete his secondary education at a boarding school, and then only if the family can afford the cost. While away from home, many Lemba children find it difficult or impossible to preserve their tribal culture.

Coleman discovered the Lemba through the writings of Tudor Parfitt and a NOVA documentary which aired in 2000. "My interest in anthropology, Jewish history, and people all came together with the story of the Lemba," she says. Before the family's Zimbabwe trip, Coleman tried to arrange a visit with the tribe. One hour before the Colemans left for the airport, an email invitation arrived from a Lemba contact in Harare.

With his help, the family traveled to Mapakomhere, a rural Lemba village in southern Zimbabwe. While touring an elementary school, Coleman was struck by the dedication of the students, 30 to a room and three to a desk sharing one old and worn book. The headmaster asked the Colemans to help obtain up-to-date textbooks.

Back in Westport, Coleman contacted Darien Book Aid, who immediately shipped 50 reference books to the village. Grateful letters from the headmaster and village elder announced the establishment of a teachers' reference library. A wish list requested high school-level textbooks. Coleman contacted Joyce Losen of the Westport Public School District, who asked department heads for phased-out textbooks. Two months later, teachers had filled a room at Staples High School.

It's one thing to find enthusiastic donors and to box the books. It's quite another to get the heavy packages from a garage in Westport to a remote village in Zimbabwe. While DHL and British Airways generously coordinated shipment from JFK to Harare, Coleman cannot use those carriers at present, and is seeking an alternate solution.

Books-for-Zim has grown into a fulltime, international endeavor. Used books are donated by Darien Book Aid and six Fairfield County school districts in Westport, Weston, Wilton, Norwalk, Greenwich, and Fairfield. McGraw-Hill and Scholastic provide new textbooks. Grants from the

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Westport Rotary Club help cover packing and freight costs.

But now, Coleman says, "it's like saying I want to send something to the moon." Once the books arrive in Harare, she must rely on charitable individuals to drive the packages the last 180 miles to Mapakomhere. While she awaits a letter from the village, Coleman is readying a fifth shipment to Harare and is planning phase two of Books-for-Zim: raising money for the Lemba to purchase textbooks in Zimbabwe on local studies.

The Lemba plan to expand their high school to grade 12, and to offer boarding for non-local students. Through the tribe's commitment to modern education, the Lemba children will remain connected to their Jewish heritage.

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism of Fairfield County accepts tax-deductible donations for Books-for-Zim.

Castro Can't Make It, but Jews in Cuba Mark 100 Years on Island

By Larry Luxner, Nov. 30, 2006, JTA



As the world focuses its attention on Cuba's ailing President Fidel Castro - who was too sick to attend his own 80th birthday bash in Havana - Cuba's Jews are enjoying a rare celebration of their own. For the next month, the island's tiny Jewish community will mark its 100th anniversary with religious services, music, dancing, parties and speeches.

The festivities were to begin Thursday evening with a cultural gala at Havana's National Fine Arts Museum. On Dec. 1, local historian Maritza Corrales was scheduled to present her book, "The Chosen Island: Jews in Cuba," at the biblically themed Hotel Raquel in the capital city's historic colonial quarter.

Throughout December, the Emuna dance company will perform contemporary Jewish folk dances in the central Cuban city of Santa Clara, while in Santiago de Cuba, the works of Jewish artists will be exhibited at Congregacion Hatikva. The leader of that synagogue, Eugenia Farin Levy, also will present her book, "History of Cuba's Jewish Community in Maps."

Some 1,500 Jews live in Cuba, more than 85 percent of them in Havana, according to Adela Dworin, president of Havana's largest synagogue, the Patronato. Sources in Miami, however, put the actual number of Jews in Cuba at 600 to 800. They point out that nearly 700 Cuban Jews have left for Israel in the past 10 years, with nearly half of them eventually relocating to South Florida.

Dworin assumed leadership of the Jewish community in March after its longtime president, 80-year-old Jose Miller, died of a heart attack. Miller's grandson, William Miller, 30, is the community's vice-president. "For us it's very sad not to have Dr. Miller with us because this

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celebration was his idea," Dworin told JTA in a phone interview Thursday from Havana. "The actual centenary of the community was in August, but we had to postpone it after he died."

Jews have been living in Cuba off and on for centuries, but it wasn't until 1906 that 11 American Jews living on the island established a Reform synagogue, the United Hebrew Congregation, with services in English. They also consecrated a cemetery in Guanabacoa, on the outskirts of Havana, officially marking the start of institutionalized Jewish life in Cuba. By 1959 Cuba had an estimated 15,000 Jews, for the most part wealthy merchants with shoe factories, department stores and mansions. Following Castro's sweeping confiscation of private property, most of the Jews fled to South Florida, with smaller numbers immigrating to Israel and various Latin American countries.

Havana currently has three functioning synagogues, while Camaguey and Santiago de Cuba have one each. In addition, much smaller Jewish communities hold regular Shabbat services at private homes in the provincial capitals of Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus and Guantanamo. Dworin said several prominent rabbis are in Cuba for the festivities, including Chile's Samuel Szeinhandler and Arthur Schneier, founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation. Also set to attend the opening-night commemoration was Caridad Diego, chief of religious affairs of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee.

The islandwide event marking 100 years of organized Jewish life in Cuba was supposed to include a visit to the Patronato by Fidel Castro himself. But that had to be canceled when the bearded leader was rushed to a hospital in late July for emergency surgery of an undisclosed nature. The illness forced Castro to turn power over to his brother Raul, 75, for the first time since 1959. By coincidence, the Jewish festivities overlap the Communist regime's official commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. Yet Castro didn't even make it to a military parade in his honor, telling supporters in a statement read on government-run TV, "It is with great sorrow that I bid you farewell for not being able to personally thank you and embrace every one of you."

Castro has not been seen in public since his surgery. Foreign experts and many Cubans are convinced he has terminal cancer. "I don't believe this is a moment for celebration," said Moises Asis, an anti-Castro exile living in Miami. "What's there to celebrate?"

Asis taught Hebrew and led the B'nai B'rith Havana chapter before fleeing Cuba in 1992 with his wife and daughter. He told JTA that Jews, like the rest of Cuba's 11.2 million inhabitants, enjoy no basic political or economic freedoms. "Everything is about money," he said. "Cuba may have the label of a communist country, but the reality is one of brutal capitalism. Workers are exploited more by the Castro regime today than they were in England in the 19th century."

Yet Asis acknowledged that the regime has never been anti-Semitic, despite Castro's vicious criticism of Israel and historic closeness with Palestinian terrorist groups. And private Israeli companies have invested heavily in Cuban citrus and real-estate ventures. "The discrimination in Cuba is not specifically against Jews but against all religions including Jews," Asis said. "It's true we had some privileges, but the Jewish community was so small and so weak that it would have been very easy for the government to destroy that community if it wanted. When it comes to treatment of Jews, Cuba was one of the most tolerant countries in the communist world."

The Castro regime has never stopped US or Canadian Jewish organizations from delivering wheelchairs, school supplies and kosher food to the local Jewish community. Robert Safran, medical director of the Cuba-America Jewish Mission in Berkeley, Calif., has been to the

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island 11 times. His wife, June - who is now on her 25th trip to Cuba - directs the mission, which has a specific license from the U.S. Treasury Department to provide humanitarian assistance to Cuba.

Cuba experts speculate that U.S. policy toward the island might change now that the Democrats control Congress. Regulations regarding humanitarian and possibly even leisure travel to Cuba could soon be relaxed. Safran says he isn't sure what might happen. "A lot of American groups are going to Cuba to help the Jews, but it probably doesn't make any difference politically," he said. "It isn't going to change the policy of our country, and it isn't going to change policies in Cuba. Most of the people I know who are active in these efforts stay away from politics as much as possible."

Ethiopians Celebrate Jerusalem, Giving of the Torah

By Amihai Zippor, Nov. 22, 2006, Israel Hasbara Committee



Tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews in Israel converged on the capital this week to mark Sigd, a festival which celebrates the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people by God at Mt. Sinai. Regarding the celebration of the giving of the Torah, most Jews of from Europe, North Africa, and the Far East count seven weeks in the spring from Passover to Shavuot and celebrate the historical event. However, Ethiopians mark the event by counting seven weeks from the holiday of Succot in the fall and celebrating it on Sigd, the 29th of Chadar, otherwise known as the Jewish month of Cheshvan.

The difference in tradition in the Ethiopian community may be attributed to their isolation in Africa, which is said to date back to the times of the First Temple and the Israelite King Solomon, the son of David.

Besides Sigd, Ethiopians have several other dates they mark in the month of Chadar. They include the first of the month when the biblical prophet Moses saw the face of God and the tenth when Moses greeted the Israelites on his descent from Mt Sinai with the Ten Commandments.

At this year's gathering, the community's continued difficulty being accepted into Israeli society was in the air but organizers of this pilgrimage were careful not to make the gathering political. "Today we have come to pray," the Israeli daily, Haaretz quoted former MK Adiso Masala, the chairman of the umbrella organization of Ethiopian Jewish groups as saying. "The community comes together once a year, and we must not turn a sensitive religious event into a social struggle," Masala said.

The Jews of Ethiopia began returning to Israel in 1977, after a request was made by then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the government of Ethiopia. At the time 200 Jews were

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allowed to leave on an Israeli military jet, an achievement that was seen as the precursor for Operation Moses, which began on 18 November 1984 and succeeded in bringing 8,000 more to Israel over the course of six weeks. Since then other operations have helped thousands more arrive in Israel but many remain in Ethiopia waiting in transit camps amid sectarian violence and poor conditions.

ARTS & CULTURE

UCLA Jewish Ballplayer Shoots for the NBA

By David Ostrowsky, Dec. 12, 2006, The Jewish Advocate



Talented, ambitious, conscientious and intelligent would all be fitting characteristics to describe Jordan Farmar, UCLA's star 6-foot-2-inch point guard. Yet not as fitting as one characteristic: eclectic.

Farmar's basketball skills are similar to his heritage as they both share a very diverse and hybrid nature. Starting with his familial upbringing, he associates with multiple ethnicities. Farmar's biological father is Damon Farmar, an African-American man who had a distinguished career in the minor leagues. While pursuing a professional baseball career Damon married a Jewish woman, Melinda Kolani, future mother of the UCLA star.

When Farmar was 2, the couple divorced. Melinda stayed in the Los Angeles area and Farmar spent the majority of his childhood living with her. It would not be long before Melinda would remarry, this time to an Israeli immigrant by the name of Yehuda Kolani, who raised Farmar in a Jewish home. He reached the pinnacle of his Jewish upbringing when stepfather Yehuda sponsored his bar mitzvah at Temple Judea.

His strong Jewish upbringing inspired Farmar to take academics very seriously. He is on pace to graduate in three years. UCLA Assistant Coach Scott Garson said: "He is very close with family, and I think that's a big part of his life. His family gives him a sense of how to be a teammate.

During his teenage years, Farmar was not an observant Jew, but he has visited Israel twice and is not shy about labeling himself as a Jew. This is particularly important considering how faithful of a fan base he has in the Jewish community of Los Angeles. "A lot of young Jewish

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kids look up to him. I hear all the time talking about [being] a Jewish point guard,” Garson said.

But don't expect Farmar to pigeonhole himself into playing professional basketball for a career in Israel – not with the NBA as an imminent possibility. Although it was only two years ago that Farmar was leading Taft High to its first ever Los Angeles' City title, he is already being projected as a potential NBA first round draft pick.

So why is Jordan expected to be one of the few Jewish basketball players to set foot in the NBA? He's an incredibly talented point guard, possessing that rare combination of brilliant court vision to find the open man, while also the ability to beat his man off the dribble and penetrate to the basket. He is equally adept at creating scoring opportunities for himself as well as teammates. For a relatively small point guard, Farmar is a force in the paint, compiling 185 rebounds over the course of his UCLA tenure.

Those aforementioned skills combined with precise long range shooting made Farmar an easy choice for last season's Pac-10 rookie of the year. This season, there would be no sophomore slump for Farmar, who went on to average 13.6 points per game along with 164 assists in helping UCLA to a sparkling 27-6 record. Farmar's leadership intangibles are nearly as paramount to UCLA's success as his immense on-court ability. “Jordan's got a lot of terrific leadership qualities. He's an extension of Coach Howland,” Garson explained.

Alas, the NBA will have to wait as Farmar has his hands full anchoring the backcourt of a UCLA squad beginning its quest for its first national championship since 1995. The culmination of this marvelous season came against California in the Pac-10 championship game this past Saturday. Farmar poured in a game high 19 points in leading the Bruins to a 71-52 romp over Cal en route to their first Pac-10 title since 1987. Ah, 1987. The year in which Hall-of-Famer to be Reggie Miller last donned the UCLA blue and gold. Farmar's got a long way to go to eclipse Miller's vaunted total of 25,279 career NBA points and his .395 conversion rate from international waters.

Although it is premature to compare the teenage Farmar with one of the greatest shooters in the history of the game, Farmar is on a mission to do something that Miller fell short of: Leading UCLA to a record setting 12th national championship in its school history. That journey begins this week against another Bruins team, Atlantic Sun powerhouse Belmont University. Chances are the Bruins team with Farmar on their side will advance to the ensuing round.

Mamma Mia! That's a Chanukah

By Robert David Jaffee, Dec. 1, 2006, JewishJournal.com



The Skirball Cultural Center has chosen to focus on Italian Jewry as the theme for its upcoming "Hanukkah Family Festival," a series of performances, workshops, exhibits and other activities on Sunday, Dec. 10.

Italian Jewry is a fitting theme since the Jewish community in Italy is one of the oldest in the world. Jews have been in Italy since the Romans conquered Jerusalem and forced the Jews to build the Arch of Titus in Rome.

While many Jews assimilated, others came to Italy from Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Balkans and North Africa and brought their diverse traditions with them. Primarily Sephardic Jews, these immigrants spoke Ladino, "a jargon language very close to Spanish," says David Glukh, whose five-piece ensemble will perform medieval Ladino songs as well as songs composed by Italian-Jewish Renaissance composer Salomon Rossi and Italian-Jewish Chanukah songs.

To prepare for this assignment, Glukh, a 31-year-old Juilliard graduate, sought out arcane recordings and compositions from specialty Jewish music stores, libraries and even ventured online. What he found were beautiful, old melodies but no harmonies, so "we came up with our own arrangements," he says from New York, where his ensemble is based.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect to his research was his discovery that "almost every city in Italy or even community has its own set of different songs and different liturgy." He points out that, since these songs come from the oral tradition, one community's "Maoz Tzur" will be distinct from another's, which means that melodies and meters often differ. Some songs originating in the Balkans have 7/8, 9/8 or even 12/8 time signatures, he says.

Glukh, who hails from Moscow, has not limited himself to Italian-Jewish music. Over the years, he has performed in fusion klezmer bands, bands that combine klezmer with Irish, Eastern European, Far Eastern and Israeli music.

In addition to the Glukh ensemble, the Skirball will feature an exhibition of Chanukah lamps from Italy, with an accompanying workshop, as well as a workshop in Italian silver etchings in which participants will learn to make Sephardic hamsas, ancient hand symbols, from metal.

The event is also child-friendly and will include a Chanukah puppet show performed by Jenny Nissenson and Bill Burnett, creators of Nickelodeon's "ChalkZone!"

Preaching Peace and Love, Armed with Just a Guitar

By Jo-Ann Mort, Aug 04, 2006, Forward.com



"I'm here as a soldier of love," reggae star Ziggy Marley proclaimed last Thursday, as he performed at Ra'anna's municipal park in a suburban-style city in the center of the country, far from the katushyas that are hitting in Israel's north and from the Qassam rockets falling in the south. It was the same message he had given at a pre-concert press conference: "I have no fear. I believe in what I do, good vibes, love, release of tension, negative energy... love is my religion."

It wasn't the first time that the singer, son of legendary Rastafarian icon Bob Marley, has performed in Israel, though his original schedule of two concerts — one at northern Achziv Beach, within shooting range of the Lebanese border, and the other at a Tel Aviv nightclub — was collapsed into one and moved to the relatively safe Ra'anna venue.

Israel has been trying to lure foreign talent to its theaters for some time — both Sting and Pink Floyd's Roger Waters performed here in June — but regular outbursts of violence have kept many of the boldface names away. And now, even locally based cultural performances are sparsely attended. And as Marley performed, audience members could be heard wondering about whether British alternative rock band Depeche Mode still would be coming to perform in Tel Aviv. On August 1, two days before its scheduled performance, the band pulled out. In this context, Marley's concert provided a much needed, and rare, outlet for those in attendance.

"We are here for the people, not the politics," he said. And yet, Marley (who is married to an Israeli woman) put on a concert — performed in an open-air amphitheater for 7,000 people — that was actually quite political in its tone.

The crowd was filled with high school and university kids, baby boomers and families pushing infants in strollers. Opening for Marley was the popular Israeli hip-hop singer Muki, who sang of social inequalities in Israeli society and also gave messages of peace. Then Marley came onstage, flanked by a full band, backup singers and a light show (sometimes beaming the colors of the Jamaican flag). He sang a song from his new album, "Shalom, Salaam," in which he asks: "Who will take the blame for my children dying from tanks and suicide bombers?" referring both to Israeli tanks in Gaza and Palestinian suicide bombers in Israel. "Justice will come for my sons," he continued.

Marley later introduced his father's famous song "No Woman, No Cry," by dedicating "something special to Israel and for Lebanon, too," to "all the mothers, women, sisters who lost children in this terrible war." Thousands of Israelis joined in the singing.

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Adina Kruger, a university student from Be'ersheva, enjoyed the concert despite the message, which didn't sit well with her. "I don't like people from outside making peace for Israel," she said, before adding, "I came for music, not to talk to [Marley]." Rotem, a female soldier on leave (who wouldn't give her last name), thought otherwise. "It sounds like a cliché, but it's nice to be at an event for peace," she sighed.