Jewish Current Events

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Celebrating 50 years!

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Kislev 7 5769

In Russia

Rostov gets Book of Memory

ROSTOV-ON-DON, Russia – The Ohr Avner Chabad Day School in Rostov hosted the presentation of a new project – "The Book of Memory" – which is being carried out by members of the local Jewish community. This book lists the names of Jewish residents who were victims of the Holocaust during the city's Nazi occupation.

As emphasized by Lana Glauberman, the project's initiator and leader, "the idea of the project is to take the time to prepare something for these people's descendants about the historical truth about this terrible war. Of course, it is important that they also learn about this victory and the fate of specific, real people who have overcome all this."

Participants – veterans, elders – shared their own personal stories, and those they knew during the war years. Attendees joined together for a prayer in the name of those who rescued Jews during the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

Since there was general consensus that this meeting should not remain an isolated event, participants planned to develop the idea of presenting the "Book of Memory" project in other schools, Jewish and non-Jewish, of Rostov.

In Israel

Ambassadors of Jazz

Over the years, Leonid Ptashka has brought some quality acts to Israel. A few years ago, the Russian-born pianist was in charge of the artistic program of the now-defunct Rehovot Jazz Festival, which featured such titans of the art form as saxophonist Wayne Shorter and drummer Al Foster.

However, it is safe to say that none of his eclectic efforts to date compares with the Ambassadors of Jazz project he has put together. Aside from Ptashka on piano, the six-date tour, which will cover the length of the country between December 8 and 13, features 75-year-old American trumpeter Ted Curson, 70-year-old American saxophonist Monty Waters, Finnish violinist Vitaly Imerly and compatriot bassist Jyrki Kangas, and Russian powerhouse saxophonist Alexey Kozlov. "I called the series Ambassadors of Jazz because all the musicians coming over are true leaders and pioneers in their field," he says.

Ptashka says, all the members of the Ambassadors of Jazz have something special to offer. "We'll be playing our own versions of standards, and freer stuff, and charts we wrote ourselves. We have never all played together at the same time, and we won't be rehearsing before the first gig [in Karmiel]. The beauty of what we all do is that we can easily lock onto each other, and with a lot of heart and soul. It's really going to be something special."

In the USA

Elite Jewish Gymnastics

The first Maccabi USA Junior Gymnastics Invitational will be held December 6 and 7, at the Bart Conner Gymnastics Center in Norman, OK. This is to be held in conjunction with the Maccabi USA 18th Maccabiah Gymnastics Tryouts for elite Jewish Gymnasts who will represent the USA at the 18th Maccabiah Games in Israel, July, 2009.

The weekend will begin with a banquet for all 125 athletes and their parents on Saturday evening The two competitions will follow on Sunday. The first will be the Juniors Invitational, with Gymnasts ranked at levels 4-8 from the USA and Canada participating in the event, will follow all USAG sanctions. Next, the Maccabi USA Trials for its USA Gymnastics Team will follow, with elite Jewish Gymnasts, both men and women from the USA, competing to represent their country at the 18th Maccabiah Games in July.

In the U.S.

Leading Jewish Orthodox thinker dies at 98

Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, a leading Orthodox thinker and an early champion of women's rights, has died in New York at the age of 98. Tributes praised Rackman for being an Orthodox pioneer in trying to ease the plight of *agunot* – women whose husbands denied them a religious bill of divorce (a *get*). He was also an early supporter of dialogue between different religions and one of the first rabbis to travel to the Soviet Union after the end of Stalinism to raise the plight of Jewish refuseniks.

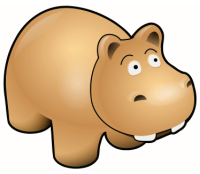
Born in 1910, he earned a law degree and a doctorate in political science at Columbia University while studying for the rabbinate at Yeshiva University. He served as a military chaplain in the US Air Force in World War II, retiring with the rank of colonel. He went on to lead New York's Fifth Avenue Synagogue and Congregation Shaarey Tefila in Queens. He was also a president of both the New York Board of Rabbis and the Rabbinical Council of America. In 1970 he became provost of Yeshiva University, and in 1977 was named the president of Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Rackman served as chancellor there until his death. "The university and the Jewish world have lost a giant of a man whose greatness was derived not only by his intellect, but his passion and sense of social justice," said Bar-Ilan's president, Moshe Kaveh. *-WJC*

jokes of the week

What do you call an insincere hippo?
A hippocrite.

How can you get a hippo to do whatever you want?
Try hipponotism.

How do hippos commute?
In a hippopotabus.



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In Europe

Prince Charles marks 70th anniversary of Kindertransport decision

In England, Prince Charles has marked the 70th anniversary of a decision to allow thousands of children from Nazi-occupied Europe into the UK. He told former refugees at a reunion in London he was proud his own grandmother had sheltered Jewish refugees when WWII broke out. About 10,000 mainly Jewish children were allowed into the UK following a 1938 parliamentary debate on refugee policy. The Association of Jewish Refugees says the UK saved them from "certain death."

In a speech, the heir to the British throne said his paternal grandmother, Princess Alice, had taken in a Jewish family when she was living in Athens. He said: "That's one reason why I wanted to be with you today because my grandmother would have approved. She was a very remarkable lady." He added he was "incredibly proud a member of my family did the right thing. That I think is something we always need to remember on these occasions. What is the right thing to do? We must never ever forget the lessons from what you had to go through."

The UK's Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, welfare minister Tony McNulty and film director Lord Attenborough also attended the commemoration. Erich Reich, chairman of the Association of Jewish Refugees' Kindertransport committee, said: "We are celebrating one of the single most important decisions ever taken by the British government."