The Bush administration began the year buoyed by the results of the November 2004 elections: the president’s decisive reelection and a strong Republican showing in the congressional races in which the party, already in control of both houses, gained four seats in the Senate and three in the House. The president promised to spend the “political capital” he had earned on an agenda that included Social Security reform, tax cuts, and the continuation of an aggressive global war on terror.

The organized Jewish community, meanwhile, geared up for another four years of an administration strongly allied with most Jews on Israel’s defense needs, defiantly committed to an increasingly complicated and controversial war in Iraq, and diverging sharply from the majority of American Jews on many domestic issues.

THE POLITICAL ARENA

A Reelected President

President Bush won immediate praise from Jewish leaders for his appointment of Judge Michael Chertoff, the son of a rabbi, as secretary of homeland security. Chertoff had been a widely respected prosecutor and then chief of the Justice Department’s criminal division before becoming a judge on the Third Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. He was nominated for his new post on January 11 and confirmed by the Senate on February 15. Another appointment of a prominent Jew was that of Elliott Abrams, who had held a variety of government positions, to be deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor.

Two other presidential appointments were generally applauded by the Jewish community. Condoleezza Rice, seen as a friend of Israel, moved from national security advisor to secretary of state. She won swift Senate approval, but John Bolton, chosen by Bush to serve as U.S. ambassador to the UN, did not. On August 1, the president used his power of recess appointment to place Bolton in that role on a temporary basis, until
January 2007. Bolton’s harsh criticism of the way the UN operated included what he viewed as its unfair treatment of Israel.

The president’s honeymoon did not last long, and his public standing steadily declined during the year. Many reacted negatively to a federal attempt to intervene in the treatment of a comatose Florida woman, Terri Schiavo, when her doctors took her off life support. Repeated presidential visits to the flood-ravaged Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina could not undo the damage done by his words of support for Michael Brown, the feckless director of the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). Americans watched in confusion as a New York Times journalist, Judith Miller, chose jail time rather than reveal her source in the leak of a CIA agent’s name, a leak allegedly made by someone in the administration to mitigate the damage done by the spy’s husband, a former ambassador, when he criticized the administration’s use of intelligence in the lead-up to the Iraq war.

Despite a robust economy, the president saw his approval ratings slip by more than 20 points in the course of the year. In Congress, meanwhile, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R., Tex.), a staunch and powerful friend of Israel, faced prosecution in his home state. And the activities of a leading lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, an observant Jew, tinged several congressional leaders with scandal.

Off-Year Politics

There were only two major elections during this political off year, and when they were over Democrats celebrated holding onto the governor’s mansions in both New Jersey and Virginia. The winner in New Jersey was U.S. Senator Jon Corzine, who spent more than $60 million of his own money to defeat Douglas Forrester in a race marked by vituperative ads on both sides. U.S. Representative Bob Menendez was a beneficiary when Corzine appointed the Latino congressman to complete his Senate term. It was believed that in 2006 Menendez would have to fight to keep the seat away from Tom Kean, Jr., the son and namesake of the popular former Garden State governor.

The more closely watched election was in Virginia. The Democratic lieutenant governor, Tim Kaine, was the victor, despite a last minute appearance by President Bush at a rally for Kaine’s Republican opponent, Jerry Kilgore. The victory was particularly sweet for the outgoing Democratic governor, Mark Warner, who vacated the post due to term lim-
its. Pundits credited Warner, a presidential hopeful, with providing some of the coattails on which Kaine rode to victory, an accomplishment that enhanced Warner’s credentials for a 2008 White House run.

Looking ahead to 2006, two gubernatorial contests drew considerable interest. The chances of Arnold Schwarzenegger returning to the California statehouse diminished in 2005 as the state’s voters defeated referenda he sponsored to redraw legislative districts, restrict the political use of union dues, increase the waiting time for teachers to attain tenure, and slow the growth of state spending. In Maryland, Gov. Robert Ehrlich, who faced a tough reelection challenge, won praise from some Jewish community organizations—and muted criticism from others—for the $1.5 million in federal homeland-security funds he directed to nonprofit groups, including $250,000 in grants to Jewish institutions. He had the Baltimore Jewish Council designated as a funding intermediary, charged with working with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency to identify security needs at local institutions. That move came on the heels of a protracted legislative debate in Washington about the conditions under which federal funds could be given to high-risk nonprofit institutions, including those whose sectarian nature precluded them from eligibility for other types of government funding.

The nation’s two Jewish governors both announced that they would seek reelection in 2006. Hawaii’s first Jewish governor, Republican Linda Lingle, was considered the odds-on favorite in her state. The other, Ed Rendell, governor of Pennsylvania, a Democrat, was also being mentioned as a possible presidential or vice presidential candidate in 2008. In New York State, Attorney General Elliot Spitzer set up a well-financed campaign in a quest to become the second Jewish governor in the state’s history (the first had been Herbert Lehman, who served from 1932 to 1942).

Well positioned for reelection in 2006 were two veteran Jewish senators, Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.) and Herb Kohl (D., Wis.). They represented the two states that could boast of having all-Jewish Senate delegations. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D., Conn.) announced his intention to seek a fourth term in 2006, apparently abandoning his presidential ambitions. If reelected he would become the longest-serving Jewish senator from the Nutmeg State, a record currently held by his mentor, the late Abraham Ribicoff. However, opponents of the war in Iraq, which Lieberman unwaveringly supported, were expected to challenge him in the Democratic primary.
Sen. Hillary Clinton (D., N.Y.), pilloried in her successful 2000 Senate campaign for embracing Palestinian First Lady-in-Waiting Suha Arafat (see AJYB 2001, p. 158), seemed to make all the right moves with New York's Jewish community, adding 20 points to her approval rating in that coveted constituency. Jews constituted 15 percent of eligible voters in the state but were twice as likely to vote as others, and provided two-thirds of the state party's funding, according to a report in the Village Voice.

Republicans took some comfort in the knowledge that incumbent Democratic senators would be retiring in Maryland (Paul Sarbanes) and Minnesota (Mark Dayton), as would Jim Jeffords, the independent senator from Vermont who usually sided with the Democrats. Other senators facing reelection challenges in 2006 included Conrad Burns (R., Mont.), Marie Cantwell (D-Wash.), Lincoln Chafee (R., R.I.), Rick Santorum (R., Pa.), and Debbie Stabenow (D., Mich.). Election wildcards might come from backlash to the Iraq war, or surprise retirements by octogenarian senators from Hawaii, West Virginia, and New Jersey, or any of a dozen of their septuagenarian colleagues. Jewish pundits, generally not fans of former president Jimmy Carter, were curious to see if the baggage of Jack Carter's presidential father would help or hurt when he would take on Sen. John Ensign (R., Nev.) in 2006.

Among the prominent House members who indicated interest in running for the Senate were two Jews. Ben Cardin, a Democrat from a family virtually synonymous with the Baltimore Jewish community, was considered a strong contender for the Maryland seat being vacated by the retiring Sarbanes, and Rep. Bernie Sanders (I., Vt.), who described himself as an independent socialist, planned to seek the seat of Sen. Jeffords.

Judicial Nominations

The federal judiciary was a major battleground between Republicans and Democrats, as President Bush's nomination of political conservatives, some of them considered extreme in their views, for lifetime positions on the bench raised the fears of many Democrats. A bipartisan group of 14 U.S. senators, seven from each party, averted a historic showdown over judicial nominations in May. At a time when the Republican majority in the Senate was threatening to push through nominees via the "nuclear option"—eliminating by majority vote the use of the filibuster, the tool enabling a minority of at least two-fifths to block Senate action—these senators met in the office of Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.), and crafted a compromise. They agreed that the seven Republicans would oppose any
change in the filibuster rules if the seven Democrats would pledge to use the filibuster only in "extraordinary circumstances." The Republicans agreed not to protect the two most controversial of President Bush's nominees to courts of appeal, and the Democrats, in turn, acquiesced to the confirmation of three others.

The longest period between Supreme Court vacancies drew to a close just two months later with the much anticipated retirement announcement of Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who had carved out a reputation as a judicial moderate. Several American Jewish groups were prepared to engage in a spirited national debate to block a nomination of an extreme ideologue whom they would consider "out of touch" with mainstream American values. To everyone's surprise, the president nominated Harriet Miers, the White House staff secretary, triggering blistering criticism from the president's own conservative base, which considered her too risky due to her sparse record on abortion and other hot-button issues.

Under pressure, the president withdrew the nomination. He replaced her with Judge John Roberts of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Although a thorough conservative, Roberts brought to the table impeccable credentials and solid intellectual standing. The death of Chief Justice Rehnquist in early September provided an opportunity for the president to nominate Roberts for the seat of the man for whom he had once clerked, rather than for O'Connor's associate-justice slot.

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the Reform movement opposed the Roberts nomination. The American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and other Jewish groups did not take a position on the nomination, but urged that the confirmation process be conducted with openness and bipartisan consultation. The Orthodox Union, while reiterating its determination not to take positions on nominations, offered praise for the nominee and called on senators not to apply a religious litmus test to the confirmation process. The Senate Judiciary Committee approved the nomination on September 22 by 13-5, three Democrats crossing party lines to vote for Roberts. The full Senate confirmed the nomination a week later by 78-22 with the Democrats splitting evenly, half, including the independent Jeffords, favoring the nomination, and half opposed.

President Bush nominated Judge Samuel Alito, then serving on the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, to fill the O'Connor seat. An interfaith group that included the Reform and Conservative movements, the
Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), and NCJW sent a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee posing a range of Establishment Clause concerns. Senate hearings were scheduled for early 2006.

THE POLICY ARENA

Israel and the Middle East

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICS

On January 9, the Palestinian Authority (PA) held presidential elections. American Jewish organizations welcomed the victory of Mahmoud Abbas, who had called for an end to terrorist attacks against Israelis and advocated fundamental democratic reforms within the PA. Israel signaled that Abbas was someone it could work with, a welcome change after four decades of Yasir Arafat's authoritarian, devious, and increasingly corrupt leadership.

The American government viewed the election as a step toward implementation of the “road map” toward peace first put forward in 2003 by the “Quartet” of the U.S., the UN, the European Union, and Russia, and approved, with reservations, by the Israeli cabinet (see AJYB 2004, pp. 159–66). Both houses of Congress passed resolutions commending the conduct of the Palestinian election.

American Jewish organizations reacted positively to the Sharm al-Sheik summit hosted by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in early February and attended by Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, Palestinian president Abbas, and King Abdullah of Jordan (see below, pp. 233–35). While those involved kept expectations low, hopes for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were reinforced. Sharon refrained from responding to a spate of anti-Israel terrorist incidents before the summit in order to give Abbas time to restructure security operations. And the summit itself suggested a degree of cooperation between the parties that could lead to “coordinated unilateralism,” Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank with at least tacit cooperation from Jordan and the PA.

More than 25 national Jewish agencies signed an ad in the Sunday, May 22, New York Times welcoming Prime Minister Sharon to the U.S. for meetings with President Bush and other administration officials and ex-
pressing support for his disengagement initiative (see below, p. 95). The next week, PA president Abbas arrived to meet with Bush, an honor that had eluded Arafat, his predecessor.

As Israel prepared to implement disengagement, American Jewish organizations braced for the worst, anticipating possible chaos and even loss of life when Israeli troops moved settlers out of the homes and off the land that they and their families had held for decades. These fears were not realized, however, as most of the settlers left ahead of schedule. In late August and early September, the Israeli settlements were disassembled amid protest and some physical violence, but with no bloodshed (see below, pp. 213–19).

When the operation was completed, mainstream American Jewish organizations issued statements expressing pride both in Israel’s willingness to sacrifice settlements in exchange for the possibility of peace and in the sense of Israeli solidarity that prevented the situation from spiraling into insurrection and civil war. Polls revealed that American support for Israel, already high, surged even higher after the successful disengagement. Subsequently, many in the American Jewish community contributed to help the displaced settlers find new homes and jobs. The more hawkish and Orthodox elements of American Jewry tended to oppose the disengagement, and it was not easy for them to balance their attachment to the land, on the one hand, with deference to the decision of the democratic and sovereign nation of Israel to give it up, on the other (see below, pp. 95–97).

In October, a bipartisan group of more than three dozen members of Congress signed on to a letter sponsored by Reps. Deborah Pryce (R., Ohio) and Bob Menendez (D., N.J.) and addressed to PA president Abbas expressing concern about the postdisengagement chaos they saw taking hold in Gaza. The letter also urged him to exclude from the Palestinian parliamentary election of January 2006 all unreformed terrorist groups, such as Hamas. In the end, that suggestion was not followed.

Foreign Aid

As part of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, the U.S. Congress designated $2.56 billion in aid for Israel for the period October 31, 2005 through October 31, 2006. The legislation passed the House by 350-35 on November 5 and the Senate by 91-0 on November 10; the president added his signature on November 14. The appropriations for Israel, whose easy passage attested to the continuing influence of the American
Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), designated $2.28 billion for military assistance and $240 million for economic aid. The package provided a $60-million increase for foreign military financing to help Israeli security and counterterrorism efforts. The bill also provided an additional $40 million for the resettlement of Russian, Eastern European, Ethiopian, and other Jewish refugees in the State of Israel.

Aid for the Palestinians was approved as well. In the State of the Union Address delivered on February 5, President Bush announced his intention to secure $350 million for the Palestinians to support political, economic, and security reforms. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), which held its annual plenum soon after, passed a resolution supporting such aid, and other Jewish organizations followed. In May, Congress provided $200 million in funding for the Palestinians, doubling the previous level of U.S. support. This aid was targeted for home construction in Gaza, education, economic development, political and security reform, social services, and Israeli-Palestinian commerce. A portion of the funds would positively impact Israel, including $50 million for Israel to construct high-tech border crossings and $2 million for Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, for Palestinian health-care services.

The package, however, disappointed those who sought to have funds flow directly to the PA as a means to bolster the standing of President Abbas. Congress, mindful of past aid misallocations, continued to preclude "direct financial support for the Palestinian Authority." It provided funding for projects approved by the U.S. Agency for International Development and not for direct budgetary assistance, although a waiver was later enacted that would give the president the discretion to remove that restriction for national security purposes. Congress also set aside $5 million to audit how the funds were spent. The aid package was part of the $82-billion Emergency Supplemental Spending Bill that dealt mainly with financing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The administration also sought to reprogram over $40 million in previously authorized aid to the Palestinians. While the appropriation had been originally intended to finance long-term projects such as a facility for the desalinization of Gaza seawater, it would now be disbursed by nongovernmental organizations for projects that would have immediate and measurable impact on the lives of Palestinians.

Combating Anti-Israel Manifestations

A lack of communication and cooperation between Jewish agencies was glaringly evident in November, when most of them were surprised
to learn that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights would hold hearings about anti-Semitism on college campuses at which only the American Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organization of America would testify. These groups painted a dire, broad-brush portrait of anti-Israel forces creating a hostile climate for Jewish college students. An alternate view was presented by the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC), made up of a number of Jewish groups, which sent a letter to the commission that highlighted the flourishing of Jewish life on campus while at the same time acknowledging specific areas of concern.

The American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress placed high priority on proposed legislation to monitor university Middle East studies centers that were funded under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, so as to ensure that they were not tinged with anti-Israel bias. Since the purpose of Title VI was to educate the public and train experts for government service, they argued, teaching a skewed perspective on the Middle East ran contrary to the national interest and the intent of the program. Others, however, including prominent figures in the Jewish community, warned that such monitoring threatened academic freedom.

When the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) voted in April to boycott two Israeli universities, Haifa and Bar-Ilan (see below, p. 320), the U.S. Congress and American Jewish groups sprang into action. In the House, Reps. Brian Higgins (D., N.Y.) and Mike Pence (R., Ind.) introduced a resolution condemning the boycott. In the Senate, a letter from Ron Wyden (D., Oreg.) and Sam Brownback (R., Kans.) and supported by several others called for the AUT to "correct this situation immediately." Reps. Jim Saxton (R., N.J.) and Robert Andrews (D., N.J.) initiated a similar letter in the House that garnered more than two dozen signatures. The major Jewish defense organizations played a key role in mobilizing Congress to act. The American Jewish Committee called for American universities to defy the boycott by intensifying their ties to Israeli universities, increasing joint programming, and inviting visiting Israeli scholars to their campuses, and set up a fund to pay the cost of lawsuits against the AUT on the part of Israeli academicians harmed by the boycott.

Calls for divestment that were heard in the American labor movement were countered by the Jewish Labor Committee. That organization was instrumental in defeating a divestment resolution brought up in a California labor union, and worked to secure passage of an anti-divestment policy statement at the national AFL-CIO convention.

Numerous American Jews claimed to be the victims of discrimination
by the insurance industry when life insurance companies denied their policy applications due to past or anticipated travel to Israel. The companies, however, justified their actions by pointing to Israel’s place on the U.S. State Department’s security watch list, and argued that the risks associated with travel to Israel constituted valid grounds for rejecting applications for policies or offering them at different terms than they did for non-travelers.

Legislation was introduced in the House to deal with the problem. Reps. Deborah Wasserman Schultz (D., Fla.) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R., Fla.) proposed the Life Insurance for Travelers Act, which would prohibit insurers from denying coverage based on the intent to travel, or charging rates that were excessively disproportionate to the actual risk of foreign travel. But free-markets forces appeared to fix much of the problem without the need for legislation, as some insurers seized the opportunity to increase market share by willingly underwriting policies without regard to travel to Israel.

IRAQ, IRAN, AND THE WAR ON TERROR

For more than two years, American Jewish organizations had maintained a low profile about the war in Iraq, fearing, on the one hand, that explicit support for the war would lend credence to the accusation that the conflict was being carried out for Israel’s benefit, and, on the other, that outright opposition would antagonize a pro-Israel administration. The American Jewish Committee’s annual survey of American Jewish opinion, conducted in November, found that 70 percent of Jews opposed the Iraq war, a much higher percentage than the bare majority that opposed it in the general American population.

The period of Jewish organizational silence ended on November 18, when the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), representing the largest branch of American Judaism, passed a resolution at its convention opposing the war and urging the administration to come up with an “exit strategy” and “specific goals for troop withdrawal.” The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) fired back with a full-page ad in the New York Times, which was followed by a public exchange of letters and e-mails. RJC leader Matt Brooks was especially outraged at what he interpreted as the sweeping implication by URJ’s president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, that American Jews opposed the war. According to a report by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism, acknowledged that not even every
member of the Reform movement would agree with the resolution, but that the URJ delegates that passed it did “speak for the vast majority of Reform Jews.” Saperstein, in turn, said he was offended by language in the RJC ad suggesting that the Reform movement did not feel that “freedom is worth fighting for” and that it “does not support the troops.”

Concern grew over the course of the year about Iran’s destabilizing influence in the Middle East and beyond. That country’s president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made numerous comments denying the Holocaust and calling for Israel to be “wiped off the map,” statements that were roundly condemned in a congressional resolution that passed overwhelmingly. But the Iranian danger was not only verbal: the UN seals were broken at Iranian nuclear sites, and the country resumed its program of uranium enrichment. The head of the UN Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said late in the year that Iran could be only “months” away from having a nuclear weapon.

International momentum gathered for a referral of Iran to the UN Security Council, although the U.S. administration agreed to a short delay to allow time for diplomatic efforts by Russia and the so-called EU-3, England, France, and Germany. American Jewish agencies, led by AIPAC, advocated UN sanctions such as bans on arms sales to Iran, curtailment of diplomatic and certain other travel there, and a cessation of trade in refined gasoline.

Members of Congress demonstrated their desire to confront Iran as well as other Middle Eastern countries possibly implicated in terror. The Iran Freedom Support Act (IFSA), introduced by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R., Fla.) and Tom Lantos (D., Calif.), would strengthen existing sanctions related to the Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons. The bill also urged support for democratic forces in Iran and called for American divestment from foreign companies investing in Iran’s petroleum sector. A Senate version of the bill, sponsored by Rick Santorum (R., Pa.) and Evan Bayh (D., Ind.) elicited the support of 49 cosponsors.

In November, Congress reauthorized the 2000 Iran Nonproliferation Act and added Syria to its mandate. The renamed Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act directed the president to impose sanctions on individuals and nations aiding Iran or Syria by transferring to them missiles, weapons of mass destruction, or advanced conventional-weapon technologies. The new law made nations directly liable, amending a prior provision that only reached countries that were “operating as a business enterprise.” Rep. Anthony Weiner (D., N.Y.) introduced a bill to prohibit U.S. assistance to Saudi Arabia.
AIPAC Probe

An FBI investigation of two AIPAC officials, which first came to light in late August 2004, picked up steam in 2005. In May, the U.S. Justice Department announced that a Department of Defense employee, Larry Franklin, had been arrested and charged with leaking classified information about Iranian intelligence and potential attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq. The criminal complaint against Franklin described a lunch meeting that he had with the two senior AIPAC staffers, Steven Rosen, the organization's foreign policy director, and Keith Weissman, a specialist on Iran. In August, federal prosecutors indicted the two for conspiring to gather and disclose classified security information to Israel. A trial date was set for early 2006. American Jewish leaders, most prominently Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, and Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, criticized both the investigation and the indictments (see below, p. 74).

Other International Concerns

Global Anti-Semitism

During the first week of the year, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor released a report on anti-Semitic activity around the world, documenting the growth of anti-Semitism in numerous countries and highlighting the response or lack of response by foreign governments. The report noted a “surge” in anti-Jewish violence as well as widespread verbal attacks and intimidation in Europe. Media vilification of Jews was described as especially prevalent in Arab and Middle Eastern countries. The State Department had been mandated to provide the report by the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act of 2004, spearheaded by Sen. George Voinovich (D., Ohio) and Reps. Benjamin Cardin (D., Md.), Tom Lantos (D., Calif.), and Chris Smith (R., N.J.).

Governor George Pataki of New York led a high-level U.S. delegation to the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) Conference on Anti-Semitism, held in June in Cordoba, Spain. The group included two U.S. ambassadors, the archbishop of Denver, and representatives from AIPAC, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Free Muslim...
Coalition Against Terrorism, and Agudath Israel. Accompanying these official delegates were a complement of participants from numerous national Jewish agencies.

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The 60th anniversary of the formation of the UN provided the backdrop for an earnest debate over the merits, for Jews, of that international body. In April, the House of Representatives passed a resolution deploiring manifestations of anti-Semitism at the UN and urging action to prevent their recurrence. While acknowledging steps the UN had already taken to address the problem, the resolution condemned the annual passage of anti-Israel resolutions and called on UN officials to repudiate anti-Semitic statements made at its meetings and conferences.

American Jewish groups followed a similar pattern, crediting the international body with enhancing hopes for world peace but noting UN inaction in the face of much injustice, including the vilification of Israel. A wide spectrum of Jewish agencies called for changes that would allow the inclusion of Israel on UN committees through normalization of Israel’s status within a regional group. The American Jewish Committee adopted a comprehensive statement on UN reform that called for restructuring the Security Council, streamlining the General Assembly’s agenda, reorganizing the Economic and Social Council, and replacing the Commission on Human Rights with a substitute body whose membership would be limited to members possessing “a solid record on human rights issues.”

Veteran lawmaker Rep. Henry Hyde (R., Ill.) introduced legislation to withhold U.S. dues unless the UN met certain standards in budget, oversight, peacekeeping, and protection of human rights. An amendment to the bill, offered by Rep. Tom Lantos (D., Calif.) and narrowly defeated in the House, would have given the secretary of state the power to decide on American funding of the UN. As pressure for reform mounted, Secretary General Kofi Annan spent much of the year ensnared in a controversy over corruption in the UN’s Oil-for-Food program that financed the final years of Saddam Hussein’s regime, and that allegedly involved the secretary general’s son. Annan joined a chorus of Jewish groups in criticizing comments by Jean Ziegler, the UN’s special rapporteur on the right to food, comparing Gaza to a concentration camp and likening Israelis to camp guards.

The UN General Assembly held a special session on January 24 to com-
memorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps. Secretary General Annan declared that while “the tragedy of the Jewish people was unique,” the purpose of the UN event was not merely to remember past victims “but also the potential victims of present and future.” American Jewish leaders believed that this first top-level UN memorializing of the Holocaust indicated a desire to counteract the impression, widespread in the Jewish community, that the UN was biased against Israel and Jews. Another such indication came in November, when the General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution calling for an International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, set for January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The historic resolution also rejected all forms of Holocaust denial and called for education about the lessons of the Holocaust and action to prevent violence based on religion or ethnicity.

A piece of long-awaited good news on the international horizon came when the International Red Cross reached a compromise formula that would allow membership to Israel’s Magen David Adom. The Israeli organization had long sought recognition under its own symbol, the Star of David, but the international body recognized only the cross and the (Islamic) crescent. The U.S. government and the American Red Cross supported Israel’s position, the latter displaying its solidarity by withholding its $5 million in annual service dues for nonhumanitarian programs. Under the new arrangement, a new insignia, a red crystal, would stand alongside the cross and the crescent as markers of the emergency-service agency, and Magen David Adom could place its Star of David within the crystal. Final approval of the compromise was scheduled for 2006.

**Darfur**

As the death toll passed a quarter million in Darfur, Sudan, in the midst of a bloody civil war there, the American Jewish community played a critical role in alerting the public to what it saw as genocide and arranging for food and supplies to be sent in. Virtually all the Jewish agencies joined with Christian and Muslim groups in a “Save Darfur” coalition, with American Jewish World Service and its director, Ruth Messinger, providing both leadership and support on the ground. In October, the coalition supported a national call-in day to promote U.S. government action. Despite what many Jewish leaders privately considered an inadequate re-
response from the administration, the American Jewish community refrained from publicly challenging its record on the Sudanese situation.

Many Jewish and human rights groups applauded a resolution by the UN Security Council in April to refer those suspected of war crimes in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the first time the Council had ever referred a case to the court. The U.S. was one of four nations to abstain in the 11-0 Security Council vote. Even though the U.S. government—as well as many American Jewish organizations—did not support the ICC, the U.S. did not cast a veto since the resolution explicitly exempted individuals from nations that did not participate in the ICC from being handed over to it or to the courts of any nation for their actions in Sudan.

In Congress, Senators Jon Corzine (D., N.J.) and Sam Brownback (R., Kans.) introduced the Darfur Accountability Act to impose sanctions and extend an arms embargo against the Sudanese government. The bill was cosponsored by Senators Tom Coburn (R., Okla.), Mike DeWine (R., Ohio), Christopher Dodd (D., Conn.), Richard Durbin (D., Ill.), Russ Feingold (D., Wis.), Joseph Lieberman (D., Conn.), and Jim Talent (R., Mo.). A House bill, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, was introduced by Reps. Henry Hyde (R., Ill.), Michael Capuano (D., Mass.), Tom Lantos (D., Calif.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D., Tex.), Donald Payne (R., N.J.), Chris Smith (R., N.J.), Ed Royce (R., Calif.), Tom Tancredo (R., Col.), and Frank Wolf (R., Va.). The House proposal would increase sanctions and travel restrictions, bolster the African Union mission in Sudan, aid investigations by the ICC, and direct the president to appoint a special envoy to Sudan.

**Immigration**

Concerns mounted over the status of undocumented aliens in the U.S., whose numbers were estimated at between eight and twelve million. According to the U.S. Census Department, an estimated 3.7 million people had entered the country illegally in the past five years. A robust national conversation explored many facets of the U.S. stance toward those who wanted to enter the country, especially the people pouring across the nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico. An estimated half-million Mexicans and more than 100,000 Central Americans crossed into the U.S. from the southwest illegally in each of the past few years, with as many as 450 dying in the attempt. There was considerable pressure to extend the fences that had already been erected in populated areas near the Mexican bor-
order to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. There were those who disagreed, pointing out that the fences merely redirected these people to cross through desert areas.

On the political left, attention focused on the civil rights of undocumented aliens; U.S. economic policies such as the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA), which, it was alleged, impoverished Mexican farm workers by flooding their markets with lower-priced American agricultural products and thus induced them to cross the border in search of work; and the sheer physical dangers that migrants faced in crossing the desert. Groups such as No More Deaths organized to provide water and medical care for them. On the political right, border security was the clarion call. Fear of terrorists entering the country mixed with angst about illegal immigrants competing for jobs and draining social services. The vigilante Minutemen Civil Defense Corps set up “watches” to catch those crossing the border illegally and turn them over to law enforcement.

More than a dozen national Jewish groups and three dozen local Jewish federations and their community relations councils joined in endorsing a statement circulated by HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) titled “Jewish Vision for the Future of American Immigration and Refugee Policy.” It called on the U.S. to continue its tradition of providing a haven for refugees fleeing persecution and not to establish immigration restrictions based on “exaggerated fears that today’s immigrants will not become productive and patriotic Americans.” Calling for a comprehensive approach to immigration reform, the statement stressed the need to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented migrants and “improve border security while protecting privacy, due process, and other civil liberties that have been eroded and stand the chance of being washed away by immigration reform.”

HIAS and other Jewish groups supported the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act introduced by Senators John McCain (R., Ariz.) and Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.), while opposing other approaches that stressed border enforcement without addressing the needs of present or future immigrants. The Jewish agencies also opposed passage of the REAL ID Act, advanced by the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R., Wis.). HIAS claimed that the bill, offered as a tool against terrorism, was not only largely unnecessary, but would place onerous burdens on those seeking asylum from persecution.

The act did pass, however, in the form of a rider to a military spending bill, and was signed by the president on May 11. It broadened the definition of “terrorist organization,” facilitated fence construction and
the use of other technologies at border crossings, and eased the deportation of individuals linked to terrorism. In addition, the law barred states from issuing identification cards or driver’s licenses to people who could not prove their citizenship or legal-immigrant status, and required that any such identification document expire on the date that a non-citizen’s visa expired.

In late August, a delegation of Jewish leaders from HIAS, the American Jewish Committee, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)—led by David Elcott, AJC’s national director of interreligious relations, and Gideon Aranoff, vice president for community relations and public policy of HIAS—joined with counterparts from the Catholic and Protestant communities to visit the U.S.-Mexican border south of Tucson, Arizona. The hopes that these religious leaders had for headlines were dashed by Hurricane Katrina, which reached New Orleans the same day they arrived at the border. Still, the interfaith partnership stood in marked contrast to other tensions between the groups, most notably on divestment from Israel (see below, p. 54–57).

In November, Sen. Arlen Specter (R., Pa.) succeeded in having Congress extend a provision named for him and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D., N.J.) that facilitated requests for refugee status by religious minorities from the former Soviet Union and Iran, as well as certain Indochinese refugees.

The House passed a bill in December that dealt only with border security, not with the status of those illegal aliens already in the U.S.; it was supported by 92 percent of the Republican members and opposed by 82 percent of the Democrats. The Senate took no action in 2005.

Homeland Security

Congress conducted a series of hearings in late spring examining the USA PATRIOT Act, enacted in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (see AJYB 2002, pp. 162–63). The legislation had greatly expanded the arsenal of tools available to law enforcement in the fight against terrorism, and these provisions took center stage as more than a dozen of them were slated to expire at the end of 2005. Civil rights advocates called them unnecessarily broad and charged that there had been insufficient judicial oversight provided for their application. The Jewish community had, for the most part, supported the original legislation while calling for modifications in areas such as “roving wiretaps” and “sneak and peak” warrants, as well as the permission given govern-
ment to access business records, particularly the issuance of national security letters requiring businesses to turn over specific documents.

An extension of the act without additional safeguards passed the House overwhelmingly, but Democrats held up Senate enactment of a companion bill. Unwilling to accept the Democrats’ proposed changes, Senate Republicans threatened to let the act expire and then paint the Democrats as soft on national security. Congress twice extended the original provisions, thus postponing the debate into 2006.

In October, the Senate agreed, in a 90-9 vote, to attach a torture-prevention amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act for 2006. The amendment barred cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of anyone held in custody anywhere in the world by an agency of the U.S. government, and required army interrogators to abide by the detainee treatment standards set forth in the Army Field Manual. The organized Jewish community applauded this step, the most vocal approbation coming from the Union for Reform Judaism, which had made banning of all torture a top priority.

Hate Crimes and Civil Rights

In May, Senator Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) introduced once again legislation he had long championed to broaden federal hate-crime laws. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (LLEEA) and its companion bill in the House, offered by Rep. John Conyers (D., Mich.), would strengthen the ability of federal, state, and local governments to investigate and prosecute crimes motivated by bias against a victim’s real or perceived color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Jewish organizations advocated passage of LLEEA, and expressed gratification when the House passed the act on September 14 by 223-199. Although a similar measure had passed the Senate by a wide margin during the previous session, the year ended without Senate action.

Passage by Kansas and Texas brought to 19 the number of states that had constitutional provisions limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples. Seven more states took steps looking toward similarly amending their constitutions in 2006. A total of 43 states had statutory definitions that precluded same-sex couples from marrying, three of them predating the 1996 passage of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Legal challenges to such restrictions worked their way through the courts in several states. During 2005, a court in Louisiana upheld that state’s provision, while a court in Nebraska overturned one there.
Stung by defeats at the polls in 2004, activists for gay and lesbian rights focused their attention on a handful of states where courts or state legislatures were perceived to be amenable to expanding the rights of same-sex couples. Connecticut became the first state to enact the right to civil unions without being driven by a court decision. California, Hawaii, Maine, and New Jersey had laws that provided some spousal rights to unmarried couples. Massachusetts remained the only state to issue marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Washington, D.C., passed a resolution calling for equal treatment of same-sex couples, joining their JCRC counterparts in other cities, notably Boston and Madison, Wisconsin. Hadassah decided to join the ADL, American Jewish Committee, NCJW, and URJ in supporting rights for same-sex couples and opposing the proposed federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

Opposition to a planned international gay-pride festival in Jerusalem (see below, p. 276) brought together an unusual alliance of Israeli Christian, Muslim, and Jewish clerics, including Israel’s two chief rabbis. A front-page picture in the New York Times showed the religious leaders, and an accompanying article quoted Rabbi Yehuda Levin, a spokesman for the Rabbinical Alliance of America, an Orthodox group, saying the rally would amount to the “spiritual rape of Jerusalem.” Many non-Orthodox rabbis and Jewish organizations issued statements in support of the gathering.

Response to Natural Disasters

In the final days of 2004, a massive undersea earthquake set off a tsunami, or tidal wave, that spread throughout the Indian Ocean. Initial reports of casualties in the tens of thousands gave way to totals surpassing 250,000. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee’s Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief established a Jewish Coalition for Asia Tsunami Relief, with a mailbox for donations. Other organizations, including the American Jewish World Service, were soon on the ground providing food, medicine, and other supplies. The American Jewish Committee sponsored an Israeli team of social workers that helped children orphaned by the tsunami.

The capacity of public and private agencies to respond to disasters was tested by Hurricane Katrina. First appearing off the coast of Bermuda on August 23, it reached Category 5 status on August 28, and the next
day, weakened somewhat to Category 3, ripped through the Gulf Coast, devastating parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Estimates of the dead topped 1,600 and property damage exceeded $115 billion.

Katrina hit the cities of Mobile, Biloxi, and especially New Orleans, where a series of levee breaches produced massive flooding. Much of New Orleans remained under water as high as ten feet for days and even weeks. Floodwaters spared little other than outlying areas and parts of the historic French Quarter, which rested on higher ground that the rest of the city. The world watched as stranded residents waited for rescuers to save them from rooftops, bridges, and evacuation centers that were ill prepared for the deluge. Relief came slowly. Federal, state, and local authorities faced blistering criticism from residents, the media, and those with a political ax to grind.

Many of the institutions of the New Orleans Jewish community, located in the Metairie area, experienced flooding and some structural damage, but were spared the worst that Katrina had to offer, and rescuers pulled undamaged Torah scrolls from the synagogues. An exception was one Orthodox congregation in the Lakeview area, which suffered extensive damage that included ruined Torah scrolls. Jewish leaders such as Eric Stillman, director of the Jewish federation, and Adam Bronstone, director of the Jewish community relations council, managed relief efforts from the offices of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

A well-coordinated team of Jewish organizations, including the Association of Jewish Family and Children’s Agencies, the International Association of Jewish Vocational Services, JCPA, Jewish Education Service of North America, and United Jewish Communities, sent daily e-mails to inform Jewish communities throughout the country what was needed for the evacuees and how they could donate cash and goods, offer housing, send volunteers, provide supplies, or assist in other ways large and small. The religious streams, the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish World Service, B’nai B’rith, Mazon, and others established funds to help those impacted by the flooding.

The floods created a New Orleans Jewish “diaspora,” and communities throughout the region and the nation took in displaced residents. Jewish leaders estimated that as much as half of the city’s Jewish population might not return. Many students were taken in by Jewish schools across the nation. At least 50 college students from New Orleans, Jewish and non-Jewish, expressed an interest in studying in Israel, and many were accepted by Israeli institutions.

As the floodwaters subsided, the Bush administration sought to con-
Katrina’s political damage by bringing to an end Michael Brown’s career as director of the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). Another political firestorm soon erupted as relief efforts got entangled in the net of politics. Jewish agencies reached different conclusions as to whether the exigent circumstances of the flood justified allowing public funds to flow to religious groups exempt from civil rights laws and to parochial schools taking in displaced students.

The clean-up of Katrina’s devastation was still in full swing when a massive earthquake in South Asia killed thousands. Combating compassion fatigue, several member organizations of the Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief collected donations for the victims.

Social Services and Public Health

The president’s budget for 2006 sounded the alarm for Jewish agencies working in the social-service arena. Medicaid, the federal health insurance program for low-income Americans, faced not only a cut of $45 billion, but also the threat of being shifted to a block-grant program, a move that the Jewish service providers felt would rob states of the flexibility to address changing needs. The Senate budget bill, however, included an amendment by Sen. Gordon Smith (R., Oreg.) that took the Medicaid cuts off the table and instead created a commission to study the program.

Proposed tax cuts were decried by many social-service agencies, but most of the major Jewish communal organizations, including United Jewish Communities, the umbrella body of the federation network, remained silent. Exceptions to the rule were the more liberal groups, such as the URJ and NCJW, which denounced the tax cuts as aiding the wealthy at the expense of the poor, a violation of Jewish ethics in their view, and charged that the mainstream Jewish groups lacked the courage to confront the administration on this issue.

Faith and politics collided in the public-health arena as Christian conservatives maintained their objections to medical research involving the use of stem cells from human embryos. A broad swath of American Jewry, including both the Union for Reform Judaism and the Orthodox Union, supported expanded funding for stem-cell research. Hadassah, JCPA, NCJW, and others lobbied Congress to pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which would remove restrictions that President Bush placed on federal funding for human embryos available after August 9, 2001. The legislation was introduced in the House by Reps. Mike Castle (R., Del.) and Diana DeGette (D., Col.) and passed in May by a
vote of 238-194. In the Senate, the legislation was sponsored by Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.), Tom Harkin (D., Iowa), Orrin Hatch (R., Utah), Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.), Gordon Smith (R., Oreg.), and Arlen Specter (R., Pa.). But despite the support of Majority Leader Bill Frist (R., Tenn.), the bill languished under the threat of a presidential veto.

In March, a bipartisan group of legislators introduced a bill to prohibit the misuse of genetic information by employers and insurers. Hadassah, NCJW, and JCPA deemed this a high-priority issue since discrimination on the basis of genetic information could not only profoundly harm many Americans, but Jewish women were particularly at risk, as they had a greater predisposition than others to genetic markers linked with breast cancer. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2005, sponsored by Sen. Olympia Snowe (R., Maine), passed 98-0. But the influential insurance industry, which opposed the legislation, managed to stall passage in the House.

Nonprofit Organizations

Congressional efforts to restructure the laws governing 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations—such as charitable, religious, scientific, and educational institutions—caught the attention of American Jewish groups, many of which feared they could be adversely affected by certain aspects of the reform. The initiative, led by Sen. Charles Grassley (R., Iowa), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, would broadly change the rules of governance and oversight, and specifically revise the rules pertaining to donor-advised funds, a major component of endowments in the Jewish and general communities, requiring changes in investment and distribution of funds. The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of the local Jewish federations, played a critical role in the national conversation on the proposal.

More than 150 members of the House joined sponsor Walter Jones (R., N.C.) in supporting the Houses of Worship Freedom of Speech Restoration Act. The bill would exempt churches, synagogues, and mosques from rules that placed a nonprofit group’s tax status in jeopardy for actions supporting or opposing a candidate for public office. The issue had been a flashpoint in the 2004 elections, as the presidential campaigns of both major parties welcomed endorsements from pulpits across the country, exposing those institutions to IRS investigations after Election Day. The Jones bill, as it became known, would allow religious bodies to have political content in their services and gatherings without the
threat of losing tax-exempt status. Most Jewish organizations opposed the bill, fearing that it would put clergy in the position of being pressured to engage in political activity.

INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

A rare, almost wall-to-wall array of American religious groups united in welcoming a U.S. Supreme Court decision that ruled unconstitutional the execution of minors. In its 5-4 ruling in *Roper v. Simmons*, the majority opinion, written by Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, declared that the death penalty could be carried out only against someone who was at least 18 years old at the time of the crime. The brief submitted by the religious groups when the case was under consideration was drafted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and joined by Buddhists, Muslims, and a spectrum of Christians that included Baptists, Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Evangelical Lutherans, Greek Orthodox, Methodists, and Presbyterians, as well as such Jewish groups as the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, JCPA, URJ, and the National Synagogue Council, which included the Reform and Conservative movements.

Catholics and Jews

Two events during the year symbolized the close and warm relations that had developed between American Catholics and Jews: the passing of Pope John Paul II and the 40th anniversary of Nostre Aetate, the Vatican declaration calling for improved interfaith relations and stating that Jews were not collectively responsible for the death of Jesus.

The voice of American Jewry was prominent among those expressing sympathy on the passing of the pope and gratitude for his lifework. In their tributes, many Jewish leaders highlighted John Paul's struggles against Nazism and communism, the Vatican's diplomatic recognition of Israel during his tenure, the pope's historic visits to a Rome synagogue and to Israel, and strides in Catholic-Jewish reconciliation. An event often mentioned was John Paul's refusal, as a young priest, to convert a Jewish child whose parents perished at Auschwitz.

Jewish groups expressed concern that the next pope might not have similar sensitivity to Jewish concerns. A collective sigh of relief came from many quarters of the Jewish establishment when the white clouds of
smoke signaled the election of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger as the next pope. While a theological hardliner, the man who would become known as Benedict XVI had had extensive dealings with Jews, especially while serving as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He had been instrumental in the publication of "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible," which included the near-revolutionary statement that "the Jewish messianic wait is not in vain." He also worked on "Memory and Reconciliation: the Church and the Faults of the Past," which outlined the historical errors committed by the Church in its treatment of Jews.

In June, Pope Benedict met with two dozen prominent Jewish leaders representing the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), the Jewish community's umbrella organization for relations with the Church. Chairing the group was Rabbi Israel Singer, and it included Conservative leaders Rabbi Joel H. Meyers and Rabbi Jerome Epstein; Reform leaders Mark Pelavin and Rabbi Shira Lander; Rabbi Leon Feldman, who was Orthodox; ADL leaders Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Rabbi Leon Klenicki, and Alessandro Ruben; B'nai B'rith's Joel Kaplan; and AJCommittee leaders Lisa Palmieri Billig and Rabbi David Rosen (who was selected to serve as the next chair of IJCIC). Also attending were leaders of the World Jewish Congress, European Jewish Congress, and Latin American Jewish Congress. The pope praised the work of his predecessors, Paul VI and John Paul II, in strengthening ties with Jews. "It is my intention to continue on this path," he said, adding, "at the very beginning of my Pontificate, I wish to assure you that the Church remains firmly committed, in her catechesis and in every aspect of her life, to implementing this decisive teaching."

An exception to the overwhelmingly positive relationship between Jews and the Church occurred in July, when the Israeli government and some American Jewish leaders criticized a Vatican statement condemning the terrorist attacks in London. The statement listed other places in the world that had suffered such attacks, but left out Israel, where a bombing had taken place two weeks earlier (see below, p. 390).

Mainline Protestants and Jews

Ironically, a major unifying force in the American Jewish community during 2005 was a common opposition to the criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians by mainline Protestant churches and their con-
sideration of economic sanctions against the Jewish state.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continued to attract harsh criticism from all segments of the organized Jewish community for a resolution it adopted in 2004 initiating a process that could lead to the church divesting from some companies operating in Israel (see AJYB 2005, pp. 149–51). Divestment was part of a larger Presbyterian offensive against Israel, the resolution having passed alongside others condemning Israel's security barrier, rejecting Christian theological support for Zionism, and continuing funding of deceptive conversionary policies pending an internal evaluation of such efforts. Adding fuel to the fire were Presbyterian meetings with the terrorist group Hezbollah, first by a national delegation, then a seminary delegation, and finally a Chicago Presbytery task force.

Such pronouncements did not reflect the views of rank-and-file Presbyterians. A poll released by the Presbyterian Church itself demonstrated that most of the laity was unaware of the divestment resolution, and a majority of those who knew of it opposed the idea. Even so, the Presbyterians’ Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment soldiered forward and singled out four American companies—Caterpillar, ITT, Motorola, and United Technologies—for their military sales to Israel. In an attempt to show evenhandedness, it also identified Citigroup for allegedly handling financial transfers with the terrorism-tainted Arab Bank.

In April, seven national Jewish groups, including the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, ADL, and JCPA, as well as the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements, sent a joint letter to the mainline churches urging opposition to divestment. Later in the year, the same groups jointly criticized a Disciples of Christ resolution calling for Israel to “tear down” its security fence, saying, “We are gravely troubled that the Disciples of Christ chose to value property over human life, and violence over security, for all the peoples of the Holy Land.”

The news coming from other Christian denominations was mixed. The United Methodist Church (UMC), the largest of the mainline bodies, decided to continue studying the issue, despite the fact that two of its regions had adopted resolutions calling for divestment. The international World Council of Churches endorsed divestment, leading to scathing attacks from American Jewish groups. The Episcopal Church U.S.A., which had adopted a process in 2004 that did not rule out divestment, removed it from consideration in 2005, having found it an ineffective strategy to
promote peace. Jewish leaders praised the Episcopalians’ careful process of deliberation and their ongoing consultation with a diverse group of Jewish community leaders. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) made history by inviting the URJ's president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, to become the first Jew to address the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. While the occasion was the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of Jews in America, Yoffie took the opportunity to discourse on Israel’s legitimate security needs. The ELCA adopted a resolution criticizing the placement of sections of Israel’s security barrier beyond the Green Line, but rejected divestment in favor of “positive investment”—the investment of “advocacy, volunteer work, and financial resources in those who share in the quest for peace with justice.”

Hopes were high when the United Church of Christ (UCC) seemed prepared to reject a virulently anti-Israel, pro-divestment resolution in favor of a similar “invest in peace” approach. David Elcott, the American Jewish Committee’s national director of interreligious affairs, was warmly welcomed at the UCC General Synod in July, and addressed the committee studying the issue. Although a “positive investment” statement was approved by the committee, the full synod adopted an eleventh-hour “compromise” that included both “positive investment” and an endorsement of divestment. The resolution did not actually initiate any divestment process, however, and UCC leaders publicly stated that they planned none. Jewish observers noted that the UCC statement explicitly recognized Israel’s right to exist, condemned terror, and said that economic leverage should be exerted on all parties in the conflict.

In September, the JCPA brought more than a dozen mainline Protestant clergy from across the country to a weeklong institute in Israel. Immediately afterwards, another group, consisting of 18 professionals who staffed national Jewish and mainline Protestant organizations, toured Israel and the Palestinian towns of Bethlehem and Ramallah on the West Bank. The participants represented the Alliance of Baptists, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, ADL, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal Church, ELCA, JCPA, National Council of Churches of Christ, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), UCC, UMC, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

The group was initially brought together by David Elcott of the American Jewish Committee and Shanta Premawardhana of the National Council of Churches, and had been conducting a dialogue for more than a year. At the conclusion of the trip, the group issued a statement call-
ing the situation “unholy in a land most holy,” and declared the need for a “secure, viable and independent Palestinian state alongside an equally secure State of Israel.” One flashpoint was a meeting with the Sabeel Center, a pro-Palestinian Christian group that had been the target of Jewish criticism for its strident attacks on Israel, stated preference for a one-state solution, and use of deicide imagery in describing allegedly defenseless Palestinians suffering under an illegitimate colonial Israeli occupation. Sabeel leader Rev. Naim Ateek told the delegation that “if an Israel should have been created at all, it should have been in Munich,” eliciting sharp rejoinders from the Jewish leaders.

**Evangelicals and Jews**

“Friend or Foe?” was the question on the minds of American Jews engaged in the complicated relationship with evangelical Christians. Evangelicals were at the height of their influence in American politics—the president and several leading figures in Congress were among their adherents—and strongly pro-Israel. The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, which mobilized evangelical energy and funds to help the Jewish state, had moved from the fringe of pro-Israeli activity to the center. A parade of American leaders, including House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D., Conn.), and former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, addressed the inaugural conference of Stand for Israel, an offshoot of the fellowship.

Nevertheless, evangelical-Jewish dialogue was hampered by two factors. The first was the conservative evangelical agenda on most domestic issues, such as abortion rights, homosexuality, and stem-cell research, which clashed with the predominantly liberal attitudes of the organized Jewish community. Second, despite survey data suggesting otherwise, many Jews suspected that the evangelicals’ backing for Israel was motivated by an effectively anti-Semitic end-of-days theology that looked toward the destruction of those Jews who refused to convert to Christianity.

In November, both ADL national director Abraham Foxman and URJ president Rabbi Eric Yoffie delivered widely publicized speeches denouncing the agenda of some evangelical groups, deeming it a threat to religious pluralism and to the constitutional guarantee of church-state separation. Foxman went so far as to accuse the Christian Right of inventing a fictitious “campaign” by secularists against Christianity—including, for example, forcing the use of generic “Holiday Greetings” in
place of traditional Christmas salutations (see below, p. 59). While both Foxman and Yoffie directed their criticism at the more extreme manifestations of evangelical zeal, their remarks set off a strong counterattack from many moderate evangelicals who felt maligned. The controversy was a major topic of discussion at a two-day scholarly conference on Jewish-evangelical relations held soon afterward at the Jewish Theological Seminary, but the collegial atmosphere at the conference indicated that the two communities were hardly on the verge of open warfare.

**Muslims and Jews**

Given the searing memory of 9/11 and the ongoing anti-American rhetoric flowing from Islamists around the world, it was hardly surprising that polls indicated great mistrust of Muslims and their religion in the U.S. Muslim leaders in America found it difficult to address these prevalent feelings. Well-established organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) continued to face accusations of being soft on terrorism and of seeking the destruction of the State of Israel. The Islamic Society of North America was investigated by law enforcement agencies for terrorist links, but the Senate Finance Committee, which examined the group's money transfers, cleared it of wrongdoing in November. Other veteran groups, such as the American Muslim Council, faded into relative obscurity. Several new Muslim American organizations that seemed to eschew inflammatory rhetoric began operating during the year.

A provocative study completed in late 2004 by Raquel Ukeles, a Harvard doctoral student, attracted considerable interest throughout 2005. Conducted for the Mosica Research Center for Religion, Society and State, it addressed the question of when Jewish agencies should dialogue with Muslim groups and when they should not. Ukeles suggested that the American Jewish community had taken too restrictive an approach. She agreed that it made sense not to talk to organizations that espoused terror, but felt that others were appropriate dialogue partners even if they included some members associated with extremist groups or who had used pro-terrorist rhetoric. Some Jewish community-relations agencies agreed, having found that a boycott of virtually all Muslim organizations prevented them from entering religious and ethnic coalitions they would otherwise have benefited from joining. Others, however, warned that Jewish association with groups that had problematic connections lent them an unwarranted credibility.
Religion and the Public Square

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a split decision in two cases involving displays of the Ten Commandments in public settings, resulting in a standard that seemed to allow them only as part of larger displays. In McCreary v. A.C.L.U. the court found that a stand-alone display of the Ten Commandments in courtrooms in two Kentucky counties violated the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause. In the second case, Van Orden v. Perry, the court found a Texas display permissible because of its placement among other historical documents.

In the lead-up to the hearings, the bulk of the Jewish communal organizations opposed both types of displays. The American Jewish Congress drafted an amicus brief to this effect, joined by the American Jewish Committee, Hadassah, and the JCPA. The ADL focused on the religious elements of the Ten Commandments in a brief written in cooperation with Boston College’s Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. The NCJW filed a brief together with Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the People for the American Way Foundation. Expressing support for the posting of the Ten Commandments was a coalition of Orthodox Jewish groups under the aegis of the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs.

The place of religion in the public square took a humorous turn toward the end of the year as a small band of conservatives decried the alleged expulsion of Christmas from stores, schools, and other secular settings. Fox News anchor Bill O’Reilly called on Americans not to give “holiday” greetings, but rather to issue greetings that explicitly recognized Christmas. American Jews stood by in a mixture of amazement and ire as the pugnacious O’Reilly painted a nightly picture of a well-orchestrated campaign to denigrate the values of Christians.

Government Funding and the Establishment Clause

Voting along party lines, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives renewed the Workplace Investment Act, a $6.6-billion employment-training program that allowed federally funded training programs to discriminate in hiring on religious grounds. Proponents of the bill argued that they were merely restoring an exemption that religious groups enjoyed through the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which did not include
religion among the criteria protected from discrimination in federal programs. The extension of such protections under other federal and state civil rights laws, they suggested, had led to discrimination against the religious groups themselves, since they could not exercise their ostensible right to make hiring decisions informed by their religious convictions. Critics, however, objected that the law sanctioned discrimination on the basis of religion in a federally funded program. A Senate version of the bill removed the employment provision, a step welcomed by most Jewish organizations.

The debate over charitable choice came to focus on the issue of Head Start. When the program was created in 1981, it included civil rights protections in hiring. These were now jeopardized by an amendment that would allow discrimination on the basis of religion by religiously affiliated groups receiving the federal funding. In an unusual move, a coalition of agencies that would ordinarily support funding for Head Start—the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, NCJW, the Reform movement, the ACLU, and People for the American Way—announced not only their opposition to the amendment, but, if the amendment passed, also to final passage of the authorizing bill. The amendment passed 220-196 after a lively debate, and the final bill passed the House by a slightly larger margin. It awaited Senate action as the year ended.

Free Exercise and Religious Accommodation

The defeat of Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D., Mass.) in 2004 set back hopes that legislation might soon protect workers who suffered employment discrimination due to their religion, a cause that the senator had championed. In the new Congress, Kerry, together with Sen. Rick Santorum (R., Pa.), once again introduced the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA), and a companion bill was put forward in the House by Reps. Mark Souder (R., Ind.) and Carolyn McCarthy (D., N.Y.). WRFA would require employers to make reasonable accommodation of an employee's religious needs unless that accommodation constituted an "undue hardship" to the employer. Previously, the Supreme Court had struck down a provision from a 1972 amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that defined as "undue" even the slightest burden to the employer.

Most American Jewish organizations supported WRFA even in the face of criticism from the NCJW and others that it would open the door for
employees to assert, for example, an accommodation right and refuse, on religious grounds, to dispense contraceptives in a pharmacy or to counsel gay and lesbian teens in a high school setting. Supporters of WRFA argued that the definition of "undue hardship" in the legislation was carefully crafted to balance a respect for religion and the needs of employers to have reliable workers and productive workplaces, a test they said would ensure that religious employees would not be able to trample on the rights of others.

Repercussions were still being felt 15 years after the Supreme Court, in Oregon v. Smith, had discarded the longstanding requirement that only a "compelling" state interest could justify a law infringing on the free exercise of religion. While opening the door for the government to act in ways that restricted religious freedom, the court left room for the political process to grant protection. Congress did just that in 1993 by enacting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), restoring the "compelling interest" test. When part of that law was ruled unconstitutional, the Religious Land Use and Incarcerated Persons Act (RLUIPA) was enacted that required a "compelling interest" for the state to restrict religious activities in zoning laws and in prisons. In May 2005, a unanimous Supreme Court, in Cutter v. Wilkinson, upheld the RLUIPA, ruling that Congress had the authority to impose such a test on states and localities. In November, the Supreme Court heard arguments in another case, Gonzales v. O Centro, which raised the question of whether the federal government was bound by the RFRA. In these two cases, a broad spectrum of Jewish agencies filed briefs in support of both RFRA and RLUIPA.

Air Force Academy

In 2004, charges surfaced in the media that non-Christian, particularly Jewish, students at the U.S. Air Force Academy, a tax-supported institution, were subject to discrimination, verbal abuse, and humiliation on the largely Christian campus in Colorado Springs, a hotbed of evangelical fervor (there were 2,600 Protestants in the student body, 1,300 Catholics, 120 Mormons, 44 Jews, and 19 Buddhists). The academy commandant, Brig. Gen Johnny Weida, was a self-declared "born again" Christian who had told students "to discuss their Christian faith" with their classmates. Mikey Weinstein, a Jewish alumnus and father of a current student, began a campaign against what he called "a lusty and thriving religious intolerance" that, he said, "is obliterating the First Amendment of the
Constitution.” It soon came to light that 55 allegations of religious intolerance at the academy had been made over the previous four years.

In February 2005, Lt. Gen. John Rosa, the head of the academy, acknowledged to the institution’s oversight committee that the problem was real and promised to institute a mandatory class on respect for different religions. On April 28, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State issued a report cataloging a long list of mandatory religious observances, incidents of proselytizing by faculty, and allegations of preferential treatment for evangelicals. On May 4, a Lutheran chaplain who had publicly agreed with the charges made against the school was removed as executive officer of the academy’s chaplain unit. The academy called this a routine personnel transfer, but the chaplain claimed it to be an act of retribution, and several weeks later resigned her commission.

Jewish organizations entered the fray. On June 2, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform movement’s Religious Action Center (RAC), wrote to the acting secretary of the Air Force urging him to conduct an internal investigation and to report on what concrete steps had been taken to rectify the situation. The next day, the ADL executive committee met with Gen. Rosa, who told them, “I have problems in my cadet wing,” and that it might take as long as six years “to fix it.” Abraham Foxman, the ADL national director, said afterward that Rosa “is committed to solving the problem. The question is whether the system will let him.” The Air Force subsequently announced the launching of an investigation.

In Congress, meanwhile, Rep. Steve Israel (D., N.Y.) proposed amending the National Defense Appropriations Act to require the Air Force to submit a plan for ensuring religious tolerance at the academy. But several Republican members called the complaints an attack on the right of Christians to freely advocate their religion, and the Republican majority defeated the amendment on May 23. The next month a similar amendment was suggested by Rep. David Obey (D., Wis.) requiring the school to develop a plan to ensure “a climate free from coercive religious intimidation and inappropriate proselytizing.” The Republican majority voted this down as well.

The Air Force released its report on June 22. It noted that many of the allegations against the academy were substantiated, but rather than calling them acts of discrimination, the report classified them as instances of “insensitivity.” In releasing the report, the Air Force deputy chief of staff for personnel said, “There is a lack of awareness on the part of some faculty and staff, and perhaps some senior cadets, as to what constitutes
appropriate expressions of faith.” The report elicited mixed reactions. The ADL praised it, Rep. Israel charged that it sought to “explain away” rather than address the problem, and Mikey Weinstein called it a “whitewash.” Evangelical leaders continued to claim that any restrictions on proselytizing threatened the free-speech rights of Christians. A few days after the report was issued, the Air Force appointed Rabbi Arnold Resnicoff, a retired Navy chaplain, as special assistant and chief of staff for values and vision, with a mandate to deal with the religious climate at the academy.

On Resnicoff’s initiative, the Air Force promulgated guidelines for the free exercise of religion on August 29. They stressed the right to practice one’s faith tradition and not be forced to practice another, and pointed out the inappropriateness of endorsements of religion, explicit or implicit, by those in positions of authority. Rabbi David Saperstein, director of RAC, praised the guidelines and suggested their adoption by the other branches of the armed services as well, but noted that “their true value will not be realized until they are fully implemented.”

Mikey Weinstein, who had originally brought the charges to light, was not satisfied, and in early October sued the academy for violating the First Amendment by imposing Christianity on non-Christians. He told the Associated Press that he did not believe that evangelical chaplains had any intention of following the new guidelines. “It’s a shocking disgrace that I had to file this thing,” he said.

Ethan Felson
By all standard evaluative criteria, anti-Semitism, while certainly a factor in American society, remained marginal in 2005 and did not compromise the ability of American Jews to participate fully in all aspects of life. Nevertheless, a troubling question pervaded discussions of the topic: at what point does anti-Israel rhetoric—criticism of the policies of the government of Israel—cross the line and become anti-Semitism? A good deal of anti-Semitic expression in 2005 was related to Israel, and therefore extremist-group activity, the situation for Jews on college campuses, virtually all interreligious relationships, and international protocols on racism and anti-Semitism were all implicated in this question.

Assessing Anti-Semitism

Among the criteria for measuring and assessing anti-Semitism, one is the counting and categorizing of incidents. The best known such exercise is the annual Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, which reports cases of physical and verbal assault, harassment, property defacement, vandalism, and other expressions of anti-Semitic sentiment. While the tally of such incidents is only one indicator that says little about the overall security of Jews, and inconsistencies in reporting reduce the accuracy of the Audit, its data, when tracked over time, identify useful patterns.

The 2005 Audit reported 1,757 incidents, reflecting a modest decline from the 2004 total of 1,821, which was a nine-year high. Vandalism constituted the largest single category, 65 percent. The audit reported 617 incidents of vandalism, a decline of 4 percent from 2004, and 1,140 of harassment, a decline of 3 percent from 2004. Analysts attributed the drop in vandalism to enhanced security measures put in place to protect Jewish communal institutions.

Incidents on campuses across the country rose by nearly one-third, from 74 in 2004 to 98 in 2005. The peak year for campus incidents was 2002, when 106 were reported. High schools and middle schools also witnessed many cases of anti-Semitic harassment and vandalism: in the eight states with the highest overall totals of anti-Semitic acts in 2005, 13 percent of all incidents occurred at such schools, the same level re-
ported in 2004. These generally took the form of swastikas painted or written on desks, walls and other school property, as well as name-calling, slurs, mockery, and bullying.

Commenting on the Audit's findings, ADL national director Abraham H. Foxman said, "While any decline is encouraging, we remain concerned because too many people continue to act out their anti-Jewish hatred." Foxman stressed America's historical uniqueness, noting that "the Jewish communities here are fortunate to be largely immune from the kind of anti-Semitic violence experienced by some European Jewish communities."

FBI statistics for 2004, gathered under the provisions of the federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act (see below, p. 91), also shed light on anti-Semitic expression. In 2004 there were 7,649 bias-motivated criminal incidents, slightly higher than the 7,489 recorded in 2003. Of the 2004 total, 4,042 were motivated by racial bias; 1,374 by religious bias; 1,197 by sexual-orientation bias; 972 by ethnicity/national-origin bias; and 57 were against disabled individuals. Of the incidents motivated by religious bias, 954 (69.4 percent) were directed against Jews and Jewish institutions, accounting for 12.5 percent of the total number of reported hate crimes in 2004. In 2003 there had been 927 incidents directed against Jews (69 percent), accounting for 12.37 percent of the total number of hate crimes.

In March, the ADL released American Attitudes Towards Jews in America, the latest in a series conducted for the ADL since 1992 by the Marttila Communications Group, Inc. (formerly Marttila and Kiley). Using, as in previous years, an 11-item "Anti-Semitic Index" measuring a range of attitudes toward Jews, the 2005 survey showed a slight decline—from 17 percent in 2002 to 14 percent—in the number of Americans holding anti-Semitic attitudes. The percentage of Hispanics holding such attitudes dropped from 44 to 35 percent, an apparently significant trend given the rapid growth of the Hispanic population. The poll found 36 percent of blacks with anti-Semitic attitudes, a figure that had remained stable since 1992. The survey reconfirmed a number of principles familiar to scholars: anti-Semitic sentiments tended to correlate with intolerance generally; older people tended to have more anti-Semitic attitudes than the young, and well-educated people fewer then the less educated; and — of great significance — religion, economic distress, and party ideology and affiliation did not seem to have any correlation with levels of anti-Semitism.

Analysts continued to raise questions, however, about the survey's "Anti-Semitism Index." The items on it had been devised in the 1960s and never subsequently updated. While the annual use of the same items fa-
cilitated comparison over time, the nature of anti-Semitism had evolved in the interim, and the original questions might not fairly or reasonably measure anti-Semitism in the 2000s.

In May, the ADL released *Attitudes Toward Jews in Twelve European Countries*, a survey conducted for it by First International Resources, LLC. It found that 43 percent of Europeans believed that Jews were more loyal to Israel than to their own country; 30 percent that “Jews have too much power in the business world”; 42 percent that Jews talked too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust; 20 percent blamed Jews for the death of Jesus; 29 percent said their opinion of Jews was influenced by the actions taken by the State of Israel; and 53 percent said their opinion of Jews was worse as a result of Israel’s actions. (See articles on individual European countries in this volume for detailed reports on anti-Semitism.)

Also on the international front, a study released in May by Tel Aviv University’s Stephen Roth Institute reported 482 incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism across Europe in 2004, including 19 “major attacks”—defined as having the intent to kill. This compared with 330 incidents and 30 major attacks in 2003, and reflected a six-fold increase since 1989, when the institute began collecting statistics.

The obverse side of the coin was also documented, at least for the U.S. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reported in 2005 that more Americans admired Jews than admired Catholics, evangelicals, or atheists. Jews received a favorable rating of 77 percent in the forum’s poll, with Catholics scoring 73 percent, Protestant evangelicals 57 percent, and atheists 35 percent.

Another facet of assessing anti-Semitism is how Jews themselves perceive the phenomenon. Seven questions were devoted to this in the *2005 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion*, conducted for the American Jewish Committee (AJC) by Market Facts, Inc. The survey found that 27 percent of American Jews said anti-Semitism was a “very serious problem” and 65 percent that it was “somewhat of a problem,” numbers that were virtually identical to those in the AJC’s 2004 survey. Also very similar to the 2004 findings were the 7 percent who felt that anti-Semitism would “increase greatly” over the next several years, the 33 percent who said it would “increase somewhat,” and the 48 percent who believed it would “remain the same.” American Jews continued to display anxiety over anti-Semitism elsewhere in the world, 16 percent asserting that it would “increase greatly” and 38 percent saying it would “increase somewhat.”
Intergroup Relations and Anti-Semitism

Mainline Protestants and Divestment

The controversy over withdrawing funds invested in Israel, Israeli companies, and firms doing business with Israel continued in 2005, escalating tensions, which were already high, between Jewish groups and mainline Protestant denominations. This issue highlighted a key theme resonating throughout the year: the vague and permeable boundary between legitimate criticism of the policies of the government of Israel, and anti-Semitism.

As the year began—six months after the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shocked and angered Jewish groups with its decision to divest—the church faced a backlash from many of its pastors and parishioners as a grassroots antidivestment campaign picked up steam. National Jewish leaders were careful not to meddle in the internal Presbyterian struggle, but Jewish community relations councils around the country ratcheted up their meetings with local church groups, with whom they had made common cause on a variety of issues over the years.

The divestment question was played out in other church bodies as well. At the end of April, the United Methodist Church voted to conduct a yearlong study to consider the matter. The same week, the United Church of Christ (UCC)—a group with a long record of statements harshly critical of Israel—announced it would consider two divestment resolutions at its biennial synod, and on July 5, the synod passed one of those resolutions urging “divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practices of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation.” This drew sharp reactions from Jewish groups, and at least one, the Wiesenthal Center, called it “functionally anti-Semitic.”

In contrast, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, traditionally friendly to Jewish concerns, voted in April for “constructive investment” in both Israeli and Palestinian organizations that promoted peace. And in a crucial development, the executive board of the Episcopal Church of America—itself the source, over the years, of harsh statements on Israel—voted unanimously in October to reject any campaign to divest from Israel. While some Jewish groups suggested that the Episcopal move may have marked a turning point in the fight against divestment, skeptics cautioned that outside the U.S. the divestment campaign was alive and well. The influential World Council of Churches, for example, voted in February to “commend” the Presbyterian divestment campaign,
and urged member churches to “give serious consideration to” divestment measures.

**Evangelicals and Jews**

Evangelical Protestant groups were generally pro-Israel and sided with the Jewish community in opposition to divestment. Tensions between evangelicals and Jews were domestic in nature, centering on the appropriate role of religion in American public life.

On April 28, Americans United for Separation of Church and State issued a report charging that the U.S. Air Force Academy had created a climate that was unwelcoming to Jews and other religious minorities. The report detailed a series of alleged incidents at the academy, such as an Air Force chaplain directing cadets attending Protestant services to proselytize those not in attendance; a Christian-themed program based on Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ* that was billed as an “officially sponsored” academy event; Jews being denied special passes to leave academy grounds for Sabbath observances while Christian cadets were routinely given such permission on Sundays; and a Jewish cadet being told that the Holocaust was revenge for the death of Jesus.

In early June, Jewish groups received assurances from the academy superintendent that he would take steps against religious intolerance. On June 22, the Air Force released a report by Lt Gen. Robert Brady, deputy chief of staff for personnel, which acknowledged the perception of intolerance but suggested that it was not the result of intentional discrimination or anti-Semitism. The report laid out nine recommendations for change, including training for faculty and staff, and increased access to kosher meals. The report, which Jewish groups viewed as a step forward, was accepted by the acting secretary of the Air Force.

Almost immediately, however, the situation escalated into a political donnybrook. During a House of Representatives debate on a budget measure in mid-June, Rep. David Obey (D., Wis.) offered an amendment calling for an Air Force investigation into “coercive and abusive proselytizing” at the academy. In the heated debate that ensued, Rep. John Hostettler (R., Ind.) said, “The long war on Christianity in America continues . . . . It continues with aid and comfort to those who would eradicate any vestige of our Christian heritage being supplied by the usual suspects, the Democrats . . . . Democrats can’t help themselves when it
comes to denigrating and demonizing Christians." Hostettler retracted his remarks, but not before several other Republicans echoed them on the House floor. And on August 29, when the Air Force officially issued new guidelines for religious tolerance, Rep. Walter Jones (R., N.C.) characterized them as another "assault on... the Judeo-Christian values of America" (see above, pp. 61–63).

AFTERMATH OF THE PASSION

When Mel Gibson's film The Passion of the Christ opened in 2004, most mainstream Jewish groups and many scholars branded it as anti-Semitic (see AJYB 2005, pp. 160–63). But in the year and more that followed there was little if any anti-Semitic fallout, either behaviorally or, judging by the reactions from focus groups, attitudinally. A less violent version of The Passion was released in March 2005 with six minutes of the goriest footage edited out, but Jewish groups noted that the basic portrayals and the fundamental message of the film remained the same as before. A useful collection of essays on the controversy, After "The Passion" is Gone: American Religious Consequences, edited by Shawn Landres and Michael Berenbaum, appeared in 2005. It included thoughtful treatments by Christian and Jewish scholars from the perspectives of history, theology, and culture.

A footnote to the controversy came on January 11, when the National Board of Review gave its Freedom of Expression Award to The Passion. Many were surprised that the award was presented to Gibson by Annette Insdorf of Columbia University, author of Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust, the standard work on the representation of the Holocaust on film. Insdorf maintained that the award supported filmmakers' "right to express their point of view," but others wondered in what way Gibson's phenomenally successful moneymaker represented a victory for freedom of expression.

Gibson announced in December that he would produce a four-hour miniseries for ABC-TV on Christian rescuers during the Holocaust.

FORTY YEARS AFTER NOstra AETate

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the watershed document of the Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate, which redefined Catholic relationships with non-Catholic faiths and, among other things, specifically
repudiated the charge of deicide against the Jewish people as well as the Christological anti-Semitism founded on it.

Among the numerous international conferences commemorating the anniversary, two focused specifically on the issue of anti-Semitism. The first, held in July, was titled "Healing the World—Working Together: Religion in a Global Society," and took place in Chicago under the auspices of the International Council of Christians and Jews. The second was in November in Jerusalem: "Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations," was sponsored by the Hebrew University's Center for the Study of Christianity and the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies (Bologna). Participants included not only scholars and interreligious professionals, but also people who had been involved in the planning and drafting of the 1965 document.

On another front of Catholic-Jewish relations, Eugenio Pacelli—Pope Pius XII—had not yet been beatified as the year ended. Beatification was the second step of three on the road to canonization as a saint, and sainthood for Pius had been seriously questioned by Jewish groups critical of his record during the Holocaust (see AJYB 2005, p. 397). Adding to their concerns was the discovery of a letter suggesting that Pius directed Church officials in France not to return some Jewish children to their parents after World War II. The Vatican letter, found in the archives of Archbishop Angelo Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII), appeared to be the first hard evidence of the direct involvement of Pius XII in the practice of holding these children, but the defenders of his reputation charged that the document was being misinterpreted and its meaning distorted.

The Pius XII controversy stood in stark contrast to the virtually universal praise for Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II, who died on April 4. His papacy was characterized by forthright opposition to anti-Semitism through formal documents, verbal declarations, and personal acts. The new pope, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, visited a synagogue in Cologne, Germany, his native country, soon after his accession, and denounced anti-Semitism (see below, pp. 445–46).

BLACKS AND JEWS

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, a New York-based body dedicated to improving relations between Jews and other ethnic groups, launched an advertising campaign in 2005 using celebrities such as Denzel Washington, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Beyoncé to advocate intergroup harmony. However, one of the prominent blacks involved, Russell
Simmons, was identified by the ADL as having close ties to Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam (NOI). ADL national director Abraham Foxman suggested that it was “hypocritical for Simmons to lead a charge against anti-Semitism while failing to denounce anti-Semitism within his own community.” Rabbi Marc Schneier, president of the foundation, said: “I’m not going to dignify that with a response.”

Farrakhan and the NOI had long been the source of anti-Semitic and anti-white rhetoric, notwithstanding a perception in recent years that he had moderated his views. In October, Farrakhan organized the Millions More Movement in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Million Man March (see AJYB 1997, pp. 159–60). At one Millions More Movement rally Farrakhan spoke about the Jewish community, saying, “I do not hate the Jewish people; put that down! What I hate is the degree of control that they exercise over black intellectual, cultural expression. I do not think that no human being should determine how high we can go, that can only be determined by God and by us; not by no white man, no black man, no human being.” The Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton, two black leaders who had had their run-ins with the Jewish community, endorsed the Million More March.

NOI member Ashahed M. Muhammad, who ran the anti-Semitic Web site Truth Establishment Institute, published The Synagogue of Satan in 2005. Advocating Jewish conspiracy theories and Holocaust revisionism, the book charged that truth was being obscured by “Satanic” powers—Jewish organizations motivated by Jewish theology. The work was heavily promoted by the NOI leadership and advertised in the movement’s newspaper, The Final Call, and on its Web site.

In his forward to the book, Malik Zulu Shabazz, national chairman of the New Black Panther Party, a black nationalist group, defended anti-Semitism and called Israel a state that was “using the name of Yahweh and Jehovah to further a political and colonial agenda that is in fact manifestly Satanic.” Shabazz, in fact, was a close ally of Farrakhan, serving as a national co-convener of the Millions More Movement and keynoting numerous local rallies for it across the country. In February 2005, speaking to students at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Shabazz said, “Zionism is racism,” “Zionism is terrorism,” and “You cannot be a real Jew and a Zionist at the same time” (see below, p. 77).

Shabazz and other New Black Panther Party leaders also appeared occasionally on cable news programs. The party’s chief of staff, Hashim Nzinga, said, during an appearance on FOX’s Hannity & Colmes pro-
gram on September 19, that Jews knew in advance of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Asked twice more by an incredulous Sean Hannity whether he seriously thought that to be true, Nzinga responded, "I absolutely believe it, sir."

Hispanics and Jews

Hispanic Americans—a heterogeneous group including people with origins in Mexico, Central America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, other areas of the Caribbean, and various parts of South America—constituted one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the U.S., and their relations with American Jews were of great interest to Jewish organizations (see above, p. 000).

There were no serious areas of friction between Jews and Hispanics in 2005. On the extremist front, however, the Nation of Aztlan, a small California-based group, continued to distribute—as its only known activity—virulently anti-Semitic material. Hector Carreon and Ernesto Cienfuegos, editors of the group’s publication La Voz de Aztlan, blamed Jews and Israel for every problem affecting the Mexican community in the U.S., and ran articles justifying the Iranian president’s proposal to eradicate Israel. The group’s Web site, www.aztlan.net, posted the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and referred to it in numerous articles.

Anti-Semitism and Politics

Surveys consistently showed a higher percentage of American Jews opposed to the war in Iraq than in the general population. But Jews opposed to the Bush administration’s conduct of the war were increasingly troubled during 2005 by the anti-Israel—and in some cases anti-Semitic—stance of some antiwar protest groups, particularly International ANSWER, the best-organized of these groups, which sponsored numerous antiwar events during the year.

As popular support for the Iraq war plummeted during 2005, a number of persistent critics of Israeli policy revived the charge that Israel was responsible for the conflict. In June, at an unofficial meeting called by a number of House Democrats, Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst and a leading war critic, repeated the allegation that the war was waged for Israel’s benefit, saying, “It has been consistent that U.S. policy toward Mideast governments has been determined by two factors: securing energy sources and supporting Israel.”
Anti-Semitism was a minor theme in the quadrennial mayoral campaign in New York City, home to the largest Jewish community in the world. In April, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a candidate for reelection, sought to distance himself from Independence Party leader Lenora Fulani, an erstwhile Marxist characterized by many Jewish groups as anti-Semitic, from whom he had sought support in the past. In 2001, her party delivered over 59,000 votes for Bloomberg, which was more than his margin of victory.

Fulani inadvertently helped Bloomberg free himself from her political embrace in 2005. On an April 15 cable TV interview, Fulani reaffirmed a remark she had made in 1989 that “Jews had to sell their souls to acquire Israel and do the dirtiest work of capitalism—to function as mass murderers of people of color—in order to keep it.” On September 18, her own Independence Party, viewing her refusal to recant the 1989 defamation as a liability for the party, ousted the increasingly unpopular Fulani from the party’s executive committee. Meanwhile, Bloomberg’s Fulani connection was political fodder for his Democrat opponent, Fernando Ferrer, who himself was bedeviled by his relationship with the Rev. Al Sharpton, whom most Jewish leaders had shunned over the years because of his role in exacerbating black-Jewish tensions in the 1990s.

According to press reports in April, embattled Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff—prominently identified as an Orthodox Jew—had done lobbying work for the government of Malaysia when its prime minister was Mahathir Mohamad, who, in 1997, had made a number of anti-Semitic comments. American Jewish Congress official David Twersky reflected the sentiments of many in the Jewish community, saying, “It’s entirely inappropriate for any American, especially a Jewish American, to represent someone who makes wild and irresponsible allegations of worldwide Jewish conspiracies.” Abramoff’s shady lobbying activities in the U.S., which appeared likely to bring him a long prison term, did not generate any perceptible anti-Semitic fallout.

Jewish groups were extremely sensitive to the use of the Holocaust as a political metaphor. The chief congressional offender in 2005 was Sen. Robert Byrd (D., W.Va.), the Democratic dean of the Senate, who, in March, likened proposed changes in Senate rules that would bar filibusters on judicial nominations to Hitler’s manipulation of the law to achieve “cruel and unjust ends.” Condemnation from both sides of the aisle was swift. In a similar vein, during the heated public debate in August on stem-cell research, James Dobson, chairman of the advocacy group Focus on the Family, criticized such research, saying that its im-
morality was reminiscent of Nazi experiments on death-camp inmates. “We are concerned because it trivializes history,” commented the ADL’s Abraham Foxman, whose agency had previously documented numerous instances of anti-abortion activists invoking the Holocaust. Scholar Michael Berenbaum offered an explanation for these repeated Holocaust references: “When people want to reach for something in a debate that everybody agrees is absolutely evil, they reach for a Holocaust allusion.”

Political caricature took a negative turn before the confirmation hearings on John Roberts to be chief justice of the Supreme Court. The National Review, a leading conservative journal, featured a cover illustration on its August 8 issue depicting Sen. Charles Schumer (D., N.Y.)—who is a Jew—as a long-nosed Torquemada-style inquisitor dressed in fifteenth-century Catholic vestments, above a headline, “The Inquisitor.” Schumer was a leading opponent of the Roberts appointment. Some Jewish groups complained that this was an anti-Semitic stereotype, but others disagreed. The New Republic’s Leon Wieseltier commented: “Schumer is not an inquisitor; he is a nudnik.”

The problems faced by AIPAC also raised questions about anti-Semitism. In 2004, reports surfaced that the FBI was investigating the pro-Israel lobby widely recognized for its clout on Capitol Hill and with the administration. During 2005, AIPAC fired the two targets of the FBI investigation, Policy Director Steven Rosen, considered to be one of the top Jewish operatives in Washington, and Keith Weissman, a senior Iran analyst. On May 4, a Pentagon analyst, Lawrence Franklin was arrested by the FBI and charged with disclosing classified information to the two AIPAC officials in 2003. Franklin was indicted on June 13, and on August 4 so were Rosen and Weissman, who were charged with “conspiracy to communicate national defense information to persons not entitled to receive it.” They had allegedly relayed classified information to an Israeli embassy official. Franklin pled guilty in October as part of a plea-bargain deal to cooperate with the government in its case against Rosen and Weissman.

Jewish groups worried about two possible anti-Semitic angles. Obviously, the specter of “dual loyalty” hovered over the case. In addition, questions were raised as to whether the FBI might have had anti-Jewish motives in targeting the powerful pro-Israel lobby for conducting the normal and widely accepted Washington practice of trading sensitive information. The investigation and indictments triggered anxiety among other Jewish public-affairs professionals about a possible “chilling effect” on information-gathering in the future.
"No evidence of any statements made by the faculty could reasonably be construed as anti-Semitic." So concluded the report of an ad-hoc committee, released March 31, that had investigated complaints that pro-Israel and other Jewish students were harassed by pro-Palestinian professors at Columbia University.

Beginning in 2002, some Columbia students had complained about anti-Israel comments and harassment of Jewish students in a number of courses offered by the Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Culture (MEALAC). The situation came to a head in 2004 with the release of a film, Columbia Unbecoming, purporting to document specific instances of harassment, intimidation, and discrimination from MEALAC professors. Toward the end of that year, the Columbia administration, stung by the barrage of criticism and sensitive to its public image and the feelings of alumni and donors, announced the creation of the investigative committee (see AJYB 2004, pp. 83–84; 2005, pp. 167–68).

A number of events in early 2005, prior to the release of the report, heightened tensions. Even before it could get down to business, the panel was charged with having a biased membership, and Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz asserted that as the university apparently could not police itself, a committee of unbiased "outsiders" should be called in to do the job. On January 24, conductor-pianist Daniel Barenboim, long a critic of Israel's West-Bank policies, delivered a lecture on campus that was harshly anti-Israel. Israeli ambassador Daniel Ayalon withdrew from a Columbia conference on the Middle East scheduled for January 27 because of the student allegations of anti-Israel harassment. Before a public screening of Columbia Unbecoming in New York on February 3, Israel's minister of Diaspora affairs, Natan Sharansky, who was visiting, publicly called campuses "islands of anti-Semitism," but the students who made the film subsequently objected, saying that all they wanted was open discussion of Middle East issues and that they had never charged anti-Semitism.

On March 3, Columbia trustee Mark Kingdon announced that the university would create a $5-million chair in Israel studies; the university immediately denied a connection between the new chair and the controversy.
Three days later, Columbians for Academic Freedom and Scholars for Peace, both pro-Israel groups, held a joint full-day symposium at the university, generating criticism from others for alleged anti-Arab racism and intolerance for pro-Palestinian views. And on March 23, Columbia president Lee Bollinger, delivering the annual New York State Bar Association Cardozo Lecture, asserted that “outside voices” had no place in the Columbia conflict and that there was a difference between free speech and academic speech, as the classroom was not the place for political advocacy.

The 24-page report of the ad-hoc committee, the product of more than two months of deliberation, fueled a new round of controversy. It identified one instance in which a faculty member, Assistant Professor Joseph Massad, “exceeded commonly accepted bounds” by angrily saying to a student, “If you’re going to deny the atrocities being committed against Palestinians, then get out of my classroom!” The report also noted that “numerous students” felt unable to defend their views in class for fear of attacks from other students. Nonetheless, the panel concluded that anti-Jewish bias was not a factor in these incidents.

The panel made five recommendations to deal with perceived instances of intimidation: grievance procedures must be made accessible and transparent; deans should evaluate their schools’ advisement systems to ensure regular student-faculty contact; faculty must become familiar with their responsibilities for handling grievances; the role of the university chaplain in these matters must be reviewed; and a university-wide office should be created to hear complaints and take appropriate action. Within days President Bollinger vowed to conduct a “complete overhaul” of the university’s grievance procedures. By mid-April a detailed set of guidelines were produced, and Jewish “defense” agencies expressed their approval.

The Jewish students, as well as many observers, felt that the panel had erred in focusing narrowly on specific cases and not addressing the broader question of alleged pervasive anti-Israel bias at MEALAC. Muslim groups, for their part, averred that the report could curtail the freedom of faculty and students to criticize Israeli policies, and blamed the prominence of Jews on the Columbia board for the outcome.

Other Campus Issues

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights heard testimony in 2005 from the American Jewish Congress, the Zionist Organization of America, and the Institute for Jewish and Community Research (an independent
California-based group) on allegations that the atmosphere on many campuses had become oppressive—in some cases threatening—to Jewish students, and that federal funding of university Middle East programs gave the government authority to ensure that the money was not being used for such purposes. The ZOA, which had set itself up as a campus "watchdog," initiated the process in March when it filed a complaint with the Justice Department's Office of Civil Rights alleging that officials at the University of California at Irvine turned a blind eye to intimidation of Jewish students. But Joyce Greenspan, director of the ADL office in Orange County, where the university was located, suggested that the situation would be best assessed by those who are in daily contact with students. "It is disconcerting when an outside group comes in with all guns blazing," said Greenspan.

On November 18, after hearing the evidence, members of the commission expressed a willingness to look into the matter, but were skeptical about intervening in the administration of university affairs. The Deficit Reduction Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 2005, a massive budget bill, included language from the Senate version stating that the U.S. Department of Education must not "mandate, direct, or control and institution of higher education's specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction." AJCongress official Sarah Stern complained that the Senate provision came "completely under the radar" and denounced the legislation, but Richard Foltin, legislative director of the American Jewish Committee, suggested that even the law as written might give the secretary of education some limited powers of review that would not interfere with academic freedom.

Among the more noteworthy campuses incidents during the year was one that occurred at a rally on February 17 at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Malik Shabazz, leader of the New Black Panther Party (see above, p. 71) and guest speaker at the event, asked the Jews present to identify themselves, and then excoriated them, saying, "Zionism is racism," "Zionism is terrorism," and "You cannot be a real Jew and a Zionist at the same time."

Two other well-publicized campus controversies touched on the issue of anti-Semitism. Harvard University president Lawrence H. Summers had come under criticism for a number of statements and actions during his tenure, and there were calls for his removal. In 2005, some of his supporters raised the possibility that his consistent and vocal opposition to anti-Semitism, including his public disapproval of "singling out Israel for opprobrium," might have played a part in fueling the opposition. And at
the University of Colorado, Professor Ward Churchill, a constant critic of Israel and the U.S., sought to defend himself against those appalled by his characterization of the victims of the September 11 attacks as “little Eichmanns.” Calls for his dismissal picked up steam when doubts were raised about the veracity of claims Churchill had made about his own background.

On the international front, the Association of University Teachers, a union representing British faculty members, announced a boycott of two Israeli universities, Bar-Ilan and Haifa, on April 23 (see below, p. 320). The American Jewish Congress noted, “Not since the Nazi university boycotts of Jews has there been so far-reaching an encroachment on academic freedom.” The American Jewish Committee also denounced the step and set up a fund to help defray the legal expenses of Israeli professors who wished to challenge the boycott in court. The ADL called for a “counter boycott” of British universities.

The “New” Anti-Semitism: The Debate Continues

In a Forward op-ed on January 21, Israel’s minister for Diaspora affairs, Natan Sharansky, distinguished between classical, Christian-based anti-Semitism, directed against the Jewish people, and the “new” anti-Semitism, directed against the Jewish state and informed by a “double standard” that blamed Israel for policies that were not criticized when carried out by other governments Sharansky suggested that the “new” version was especially difficult to combat because it did not carry the social unacceptability of the “old,” and that an unusual level of “moral clarity” was therefore required for prevention and counteraction.

A good example had appeared little more than two weeks before, in the January 3 issue of The Nation. Its author was NYU historian Tony Judt, who had already aroused a furor with his article, “Israel: An Alternative,” published in the New York Review of Books in 2003, that argued for the replacement of Israel with a binational state (see AJYB 2004, pp. 77—78). Judt’s Nation piece, titled “Goodbye to All That?,” argued for a distinction between anti-Israel expression and anti-Semitism, and asserted that “anti-Semitism is an illusory problem.” In a wide-ranging diatribe—including charges of cynical use of the Holocaust by Jewish groups and suggestions that the Holocaust and the Allied bombing of German cities were morally equivalent—Judt excoriated “ADL and many American commentators” for concluding “that there is no longer any difference between being ‘against’ Israel and ‘against’ Jews: i.e., that in Europe anti-
Zionism and anti-Semitism have become synonymous.” Judt insisted that “some of the most widespread pro-Palestinian and even anti-Zionist views are to be found in countries that have long been — and still are — decidedly philo-Semitic.”

An even sharper critic of Jewish organizations than Judt was Norman Finkelstein, whose 2000 book, The Holocaust Industry, accused Jewish leaders of exploiting the destruction of European Jewry for the benefit of Israel and themselves. In a new book, Beyond Chutzpah, Finkelstein took on Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz, whose 2003 bestseller, The Case for Israel, expressed string support for the policies of the Jewish state. Finkelstein accused Dershowitz of, among other things, plagiarism, only to have Dershowitz respond that Finkelstein’s work “is a fraud.”

Several publications appeared during the year that analyzed the “new” anti-Semitism. A follow-up to the landmark 2003 YIVO conference on anti-Semitism, “Old Demons, New Debates” (see AJYB 2004, pp. 78—79), was the publication in 2005 of the conference proceedings, edited by David I. Kertzer. A review-essay by historian Edward S. Shapiro, “Will Democracy and Modernization Combat the ‘New’ Anti-Semitism?” appeared in Congress Monthly (May/June). Also weighing in was journalist and historian Paul Johnson, whose Commentary article, “The Anti-Semitic Disease” (June), offered a historical analysis of anti-Semitism and concluded that since the phenomenon was fundamentally irrational, so-called “new” manifestations of the “disease” were not new at all.

Two important studies that expanded the understanding of anti-Semitism were published by the American Jewish Committee. European Anti-Semitism Reinvents Itself, by historian Robert S. Wistrich, summarized and analyzed changes in the European scene over the past decade. Demographer Tom W. Smith’s Jewish Distinctiveness in America: A Statistical Portrait, the most comprehensive conspectus of information on American Jewry to date, contained valuable data on attitudes toward Jews and Jewish attitudes toward intergroup relations.

Several books published during the year examined aspects of anti-Semitism. Gavriel Rosenfeld’s The World Hitler Never Made explored a number of “what if?” scenarios for the Holocaust and post-Holocaust eras. A serious treatment of how the press covered—or did not adequately cover—the Holocaust was Laurel Leff’s Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America’s Most Important Newspaper. The Sky’s the Limit: Passion and Property in Manhattan, by Steven Gaines, focused on dis-
There was considerable interest during the year in an anti-Semitic classic, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Graphic artist Will Eisner’s last book, The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, completed in the last month of Eisner’s life and published posthumously (see below, p. 713), was a cartoon-format history and analysis of the fabrication of the Protocols by the Czarist secret police and its subsequent use by anti-Semites of all stripes. Another treatment of the Protocols was a documentary film, Protocols of Zion, written and directed by Marc Levin, first screened January 21 and commercially released in October. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum launched a major exhibition in June on “Anti-Semitism: Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which traced the publication history of the Protocols and noted its continuing influence in many parts of the world.

“Moral equivalency,” Israel, and anti-Semitism were natural themes for debate in the heated reception afforded Steven Spielberg’s film Munich, released in December, which was about Israel’s attempt to hunt down and assassinate the perpetrators of the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Leon Wieseltier of The New Republic wrote that “Munich is soaked in the sweat of its idea of evenhandedness . . . . There are two kinds of Israelis in Munich: cruel Israelis with remorse and cruel Israelis without remorse.” Moreover, the author of the screenplay, the noted playwright Tony Kushner, was quoted as having asserted that Israel was a “mistake” and that a one-state solution in Palestine was the answer—a sentiment bordering on anti-Semitism. Other observers, however, including representatives of Jewish defense agencies, did not view the film as equating agents of the Israeli Mossad with Palestinian terrorists. Speaking before a forum on the film held at the 92nd Street Y/Makor in New York, community analyst Jerome Chanes noted that “the Israelis come off very well indeed, with the protagonist constantly examining his moral dilemma . . . . It is the humanity of the Israeli protagonist, however compromised, that gives Munich the weight of a moral argument.”

The question of anti-Semitism inevitably entered the debate over a study, “Natural History of Ashkenazi Intelligence,” published during the summer in the Journal of Biosocial Science. It theorized that the high intelligence of Ashkenazi Jews is genetic, and that over the centuries in Northern Europe, natural selection favored more intelligent Jews, since the Jews were genetically isolated and intellect gave its possessors a bet-
ter chance to survive. Aside from the “nature-versus-nurture” aspects of the issue, the report’s apparent genetic determinism made many Jewish scholars and leaders uncomfortable because of the racist implications that recalled Nazi race theory, even as they assigned Jews, in this case, a “superior” position. Robert Pollack, director of Columbia University’s Center for the Study of Science and Religion, called into question some of the scientific protocols used by the researchers, and concluded that, in any case, “Judaism is not inherited through DNA. The central ideas and actions of a Jew have always been taught and learned; they have never been inherited” (Forward, June 10).

Extremist Groups and Activities

In keeping with the emergence of the “new” anti-Semitism, extremist group activity was increasingly focused on criticism of Israel. Such a strategy served two major functions. First, it “sanitized” the extremists by associating them with a cause that was in the American mainstream (another such issue seized upon out of a similar motivation was opposition to immigration). Second, anti-Zionism was a way for the far right to make common cause with the extremist left, and even with radical Jews.

According to the ADL, three of the largest white supremacist groups in the country were in the process of disintegrating in 2005—Aryan Nations, the National Alliance, and the World Church of the Creator.

Aryan Nations, a paramilitary neo-Nazi group formed in the mid-1970s and based in Hayden Lake, Idaho, had been forced to declare bankruptcy in 2000, and its founder, Richard Butler, died in September 2004. Membership dwindled and the group split initially into four factions, with subsequent additional breakups and consolidations. Morris Gulett, who led one of the splinter groups, the Church of the Sons of YHVH, in Louisiana, was in prison awaiting trial after being indicted in April 2005, together with comrade Charles Scott Thornton, on charges of conspiracy to commit bank robbery. The Louisiana group was left leaderless. Two other Aryan Nation factions still carried on while continuing to vie with each other for authority after Butler’s death. A weekend gathering hosted by Aryan Nations in Scottsboro, Alabama, on September 15–16 drew only 30 participants. Individuals associated with Aryan Nations continued to be involved in serious crimes. One, Sean Gillespie, was sentenced to 40 years in prison for attempting to firebomb a synagogue in Oklahoma City and another, Steve Holten, who had just finished serving a prison sentence for making death threats to state offi-
cials in Reno and San Francisco, was arrested and pled guilty to soliciting sex from an undercover police officer without disclosing his AIDS affliction.

The National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group based in Hillsboro, West Virginia, was led by Erich Gliebe, who assumed control upon the death of founder William Pierce in 2002. In early 2005, the Alliance carried out a number of activities to gain media attention, including distributing flyers, renting billboards, advertising on the St. Louis MetroLink system (until the local authorities realized who the sponsor was), and even flying a banner with the slogan “Love Your Race” and the name of the organization’s Web site over the NASCAR Daytona 500 stock-car race in Florida. However the group’s rank and file expressed continuing dissatisfaction with the leadership, and this came to a head in April 2005, after a number of prominent activists were expelled. Those who were ousted created a rival organization, National Vanguard, which, by year’s end, had absorbed most of the chapters and membership of the parent body, making the Vanguard one of the larger neo-Nazi groups in the country, while the Alliance continued to decline.

The World Church of the Creator was a white supremacist organization that rejected Christianity in favor of a whites-only religion called “Creativity.” It had been losing members since the imprisonment of its leader, Matt Hale, in 2003. In April 2005 Hale was sentenced to 40 years in jail for soliciting an FBI informant to murder Judge Joan H. Lefkow, and the future of the organization looked dim.

With the breakup of the three large extremist bodies, some former members moved into smaller groups, while others decided to act individually as “lone wolves.” Meanwhile, another organization, the National Socialist Movement, sought to fill the vacuum and position itself as the leading neo-Nazi group in the country. The NSM was a Minneapolis-based group descended from the 1960s-era American Nazi Party. Its members, who wore Nazi uniforms and openly sported swastikas, called for a “Greater America” that would deny citizenship to Jews, nonwhites, and homosexuals. In 2005 the NSM created new chapters, conducted rallies, and distributed literature, while also utilizing new technology, such as racist computer games, to reach potential recruits. And the group vowed to run a National Socialist candidate in the 2008 presidential election.

In January, in an effort to gain publicity, the NSM participated in an adopt-a-road program in Oregon, which let local groups clean up stretches of highway in exchange for recognition through a sign adver-
tising the group's name. Their sign, which said "American Nazi Party" and "NSM," caused a local outcry. In the spring, NSM members cleaned up a local park in Cadillac, Michigan, while taking group pictures wearing swastika armbands and other Nazi regalia. They eventually received a certificate of appreciation from the mayor of the town. In early summer, Bill White, owner of the anti-Semitic Overthrow.com Web site, became a spokesman for national NSM. He organized an NSM demonstration in Toledo, Ohio, in October, which triggered riots by hundreds of counter-protestors. To garner additional media attention and exploit racial tensions, NSM held another Toledo rally on December 10, which led to about 100 arrests and the declaration of a state of emergency by city officials.

The resurgence of skinhead groups, first noted in 2002, continued. Both the number of skinheads and their criminal activity were on the upswing—including hate crimes against blacks, Hispanics, multiracial couples and families, Asians, gays and lesbians, Jews, and the homeless. Their activities could even descend to attempted terrorism: in May 2005, two racist skinheads from New Jersey were charged with giving 60 pounds of fertilizer to an undercover informant and asking him to build them a bomb. Prominent skinhead groups included the Hammerskin Nation, the American Front, Volksfront, the Keystone State Skinheads, the PEN1 (Public Enemy Number One) Skins, and the Vinlander Social Club. Skinheads were also increasingly joining other white supremacist groups.

The Christian Identity movement promoted its racist and anti-Semitic agenda by promulgating as religious teaching the doctrine that people of white European ancestry descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel, making them the "chosen people" of the Bible. Identity's "two seed-line" theory asserted that Jews did not descend from Adam and Eve, but rather from a sexual union between Eve and Satan. Among notable Identity groups were America's Promise Ministries of Sandpoint, Idaho; Dan Gayman's Schell City, Missouri, Church of Israel; Pete Peters's Scriptures for America Worldwide based in Laporte, Colorado; and Kingdom Identity Ministries in Harrison, Arkansas.

Liberty Lobby, founded in 1955 by Willis Carto, was for years the most influential anti-Semitic propaganda organization in the U.S. American Free Press, which succeeded Liberty Lobby's original publication, Spotlight, continued to focus on anti-Semitic theories, including alleged Israeli involvement in the 9/11 attacks, in financing Islamic terror, attacking the USS Liberty in 1967, and involvement in the JFK assassination. Articles supporting Mordechai Vanunu, "famed Israeli nuclear whistleblower,"
were a frequent feature. *American Free Press* regularly advertised Holocaust-denial literature.

Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke served a prison sentence in 2003–04 for mail fraud, bilking his supporters of money, and filing a false tax return. After his release from prison in May 2004, he continued promoting anti-Semitism and white supremacy, and was featured on a weekly live Internet question-and-answer program. He flew to Sweden twice in 2005, in January to give speeches and meet with like-minded Scandinavian racists, and in August to address a “Nordic Alliance Festival.” Duke convened the annual European American Conference in New Orleans on May 20–22, at which some 300 racists discussed how to coordinate their efforts against Jews. Duke attended an anti-Semitic conference in Ukraine in June, titled “Zionism as the Biggest Threat to Modern Civilization,” sponsored by MAUP, the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, a major private university whose leaders supported anti-Semitism and extremism. MAUP awarded Duke a doctorate in history; his dissertation topic was “Zionism as a Form of Ethnic Supremacism” (see below, p. 522).

In late August, Hurricane Katrina damaged Duke’s office and home in Mandeville, Louisiana. He used this as an opportunity to solicit financial contributions and to make racist statements on his Web site against minority looters in the area. In late November, Duke traveled to Syria to express solidarity with the Syrian people and the Assad regime. In a November 21 speech in Damascus that was aired on Syrian national television, Duke attacked pro-Israel groups in the U.S. and denounced Israel for possessing weapons of mass destruction. He also participated in a November 24 mass solidarity protest there, leading the crowd in chanting, “No war for Israel,” referring to the war in Iraq.

Hal Turner, a New Jersey-based white supremacist Internet radio-show host and a former member of the National Alliance, claimed no formal affiliation with any white supremacist group. But his “Hal Turner Radio Network” provided air time to other white supremacists, and at times explicitly encouraged violence against Jews, other minorities, and government officials. In January, Turner posted the U.S. presidential inauguration route on his Web site and suggested the possibility of a mortar attack. He advocated torturing and killing Jews and attacking yeshivas, and in July one of his supporters provided the addresses of yeshivas in New Jersey on the Web site, allegedly in case Al Qaeda needed a Jewish target to attack. In November, Turner organized a white supremacist rally in Kingston, New York, to protest alleged assaults against
white students at the local high school. The rally attracted 50 supporters and 100 counter-protestors.

Although the Ku Klux Klan was collectively much smaller than it been in decades, it remained the most prevalent type of hate group in the U.S. There were about 50 Klan organizations in the country, ranging from small single-chapter groups to larger ones with chapters in many states. Most were located in the South and the Midwest, and their ideology was designed to appeal to white people at the low end of the socioeconomic ladder. The Klan remained associated with criminal activity: in November, for example, a Tennessee Klansman received a 14-year prison sentence for making pipe bombs that he thought would be used to attack Mexicans and Haitians living in the U.S. J.B. Stoner, a Klan leader convicted in 1983 for bombing an Alabama church in 1958, died in April.

So-called Militia groups continued to conduct paramilitary training in relative secrecy. A revived Internet militia discussion board, “A Well Regulated Militia Signal Corps,” sought to stimulate recruitment. Immigration was a matter of major concern, focusing on the border between the U.S. and Mexico, although the Minuteman Project, which continued to be supported by individual militia members, did not feature the kind of organized state militia support that was evident in 2004. On May 10, Missouri Militia member Martin Lindstedt was arrested and charged with child molestation. Prior to his arrest, Lindstedt, a Christian Identity adherent, was listed as the Missouri contact for the Sons of the Church of Yahweh organization, based in Louisiana.

The Internet—Web sites, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and e-mail—continued to play a major role in the dissemination of anti-Semitism. (The ADL Audit counted as incidents of hate only those Internet messages containing specific threats aimed at Jews, synagogues, and other Jewish institutions). Extremists developed and expanded their Internet presence through 2005. There were hundreds of anti-Semitic Web sites of varying technical expertise, some of them incorporating the latest technology, such as streaming audio, video, and e-commerce sections, as well as sophisticated flash videos and background music, original artwork, and cartoons. Many of the European extremist groups used servers located within the U.S. so as to circumvent local laws prohibiting racist and anti-Semitic content. Increasingly, however, international terrorist groups with an anti-Semitic agenda—including organizations affiliated with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Al Qaeda—had difficulty finding U.S. providers to host their sites.
HOLOCAUST DENIAL

The year was not a good one for Holocaust deniers, as the ideology was increasingly associated in the public mind with neo-Nazism, and the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), which purported to present scholarly arguments against the accepted version of Holocaust history, became increasingly irrelevant.

British Holocaust denier David Irving came to the U.S. for a lecture tour in early 2005 and spoke at several meetings of the National Alliance. (In November, he was arrested in Austria on Holocaust-denial charges there dating back to 1989.) Ingrid Rimland, wife and Webmaster of Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel and a denier in her own right, was brought to the University of Colorado at Boulder by a student named Joshua McNair, a member of the National Alliance, and Rimland also addressed a National Alliance meeting in June. Friedrich Berg, a former associate of the Institute for Historical Review, promoted Holocaust denial in an address to the October “Eurofest” in Phoenix, Arizona, convened by the National Vanguard. In July, IHR director Mark Weber was a guest on the National Alliance radio show, “American Dissident Voices.” Weber was also featured at a July 16 IHR meeting in New York; his topic was “The Jewish-Zionist Role in Fomenting War in the Middle East.” Germar Rudolf, a denier who was convicted of inciting racial hatred in his native Germany in 1995 and now sought to position himself as a leader of American right-wing extremism, was deported back to Germany in November (see below, p. 433).

In one of the more interesting developments on the U.S. Holocaust-denial scene, the Sacramento-based Walter Mueller stopped publishing his monthly tabloid Community News as well as his daily electronic Patriot Letter, both of which glorified Hitler and promoted Holocaust denial. In a scathing final essay in December, Mueller denounced U.S. Holocaust deniers as being “closely linked to the white supremacists,” and “as bigoted and racist as they are.” He added that “many of the revisionists are simply rip-offs who lie to get money out of their supporters.”

In a flap that involved the Internet, Amazon.com, a leading Web-based bookseller, removed Holocaust denier Michael Santomauro, who had been selling Theodor Fritsch’s 1887 The Riddle of the Jew’s Success—one of Hitler’s favorite books—from its marketplace in October. Santomauro ran an e-mail list called ReportersNotebook that was dedicated to anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.
Responses to Anti-Semitism

A number of UN programs and events during 2005 suggested a new openness to Israel and other Jewish concerns. On January 24, the UN General Assembly held a special session to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the death camps. The program was endorsed by 111 member states. “We must be on the watch for any revival of anti-Semitism,” cautioned UN secretary general Kofi Annan. Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was prominent among the conference speakers. Jewish groups applauded the UN’s decision to hold the conference, noting that the specter of anti-Semitism still haunted Arab lands and parts of Europe.

In November, forming a “bookend” to the January conference, the General Assembly passed a resolution establishing January 27—the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—as Holocaust Remembrance Day at the UN, and calling upon member states to include the Holocaust in their curricula and to create “The UN and the Holocaust” programs. This was the first Israeli-initiated resolution ever passed by the General Assembly.

On June 21, secretary general Annan delivered a speech on anti-Semitism at a UN conference on confronting intolerance, asserting that “the rise of anti-Semitism anywhere is a threat to people everywhere.” Nonetheless, the protocol that emerged from the conference did not indicate if or when the steps recommended by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) monitoring anti-Semitism—such as the appointment of a special representative to deal with the problem—would be taken.

Representatives of 55 countries as well as delegations from a number of Jewish groups met in Cordoba, Spain, in June, under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as a follow-up to earlier sessions in Berlin and Vienna (see AJYB 2005, p. 182). The conference produced a statement, the Cordoba Declaration, which called upon participating countries to “Recall the commitment to develop effective methods of collecting and maintaining reliable information and statistics about anti-Semitic and all other hate motivated crimes and following closely incidents motivated by intolerance in order to develop appropriate strategies for tackling them; recall that legislation and law enforcement are essential tools in tackling intolerance and discrimination and that the authorities of participating States have a key role to play in ensuring the adoption and implementation of such legislation and the establishment of effective monitoring and enforcement measures; recall
the importance of education, including education on the Holocaust and on anti-Semitism, as a means for preventing and responding to all forms of intolerance and discrimination, as well as for promoting integration and respecting diversity.” The document also called upon national par-
tliaments to enact “necessary legislation” to combat racism and anti-

While the OSCE process was considered significant, Jewish groups ex-
pressed their reservations about the outcome of the meeting. ADL Wash-
ington official Stacy Burdett said, “No meeting or statement can be a
substitute for national governments, one by one, taking action that can
improve the safety and security of Jews and other minorities seeking to
live in security and dignity.” In fact, said Burdett, “Cordoba highlighted
the lack of compliance by governments in their commitment to combat-
ing intolerance.”

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, an OSCE
body that was supposed to assist states with the implementation of
human rights commitments spelled out at the meeting, released two re-
ports during the year. One looked at how to combat hate crimes in the
OSCE region, and the other surveyed education about the Holocaust and
anti-Semitism.

Initial reaction to the State Department’s first “Report on Global Anti-
Semitisrn,” mandated under the Global Anti-Semitism Awareness/Re-
view Act of 2004 and issued at the end of that year (see AJYB 2004, p.
182), was generally positive. Jewish groups applauded the fact that the
document clearly identified the threat of “strong anti-Israel sentiment
that crosses the line between objective criticism of Israeli policies and
anti-Semitism.” But critics suggested that the report, which examined in-
cidents and incitements in 61 countries, went easy on friendly Arab gov-
ernments while focusing on Europe and the former Soviet Union. The
David S. Wyman Institute pointed out, for example, that Iceland merited
387 words in the report, while Saudi Arabia—a major contributor to
anti-Semitic incitement—was given only 182.

Another U.S. government report, issued in May by the U.S. Commis-
sion on Religious Freedom, singled out the government of Egypt for al-
lowing the deterioration of rights of religious minorities, including Jews.
And it took the government of President Hosni Mubarak to task for fail-
ing to “take steps to combat widespread and virulent anti-Semitism in the
media.”

In July, following an international outcry, state prosecutors in Mos-
cow abandoned an investigation into the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations in Russia for the umbrella group’s role in publishing and distributing a Russian translation of the classic *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, a traditional code of Jewish law. Prosecutors had alleged that the code contained anti-Gentile statements, and the controversy came amid reports of growing anti-Semitism in Russia and charges that government authorities were not doing enough about it (see below, p. 520).

In November, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in a speech entitled “A World Without Zionism,” asserted that the Holocaust was a myth and expressed the need to “wipe Israel off the map.” The speech, delivered at an anti-Zionist conference, was immediately condemned by American and European leaders, as well as by Israel and Jewish organizations. Some likened Ahmadinejad’s comments, which seemed bizarre at first glance, to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, which many did not take seriously when written but turned out to be all too serious. Ahmadinejad’s presidential predecessor for the previous eight years, Mohamed Khatemi, had conspicuously avoided such inflammatory rhetoric. Analysts noted that the Iranian leader’s remarks came at an unusually sensitive political juncture, amid controversies over Iran’s nuclear capabilities and intentions.

Internal Jewish disagreement over how to assess and respond to anti-Semitism came to a head at a gathering of Jewish philanthropists in Baltimore in early April. At the annual conference of the Jewish Funders Network, the umbrella body for Jewish family foundations, Antony Lerman, chief executive of the Hanadiv Charitable Trust, one of Britain’s largest Jewish philanthropies, averred that American Jewish groups combating anti-Semitism in Europe frequently ignored the views of European Jews. Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, immediately rebutted him, saying, “Europeans are not willing to discuss these realities and face up to them.” But Lerman responded that the overcharged American characterizations of anti-Semitism in Europe were a “travesty of the truth.” The controversy came in the context of increased activity on the part of American Jewish “defense” agencies in addressing European anti-Semitism, which often led to friction with European Jewish groups. “There are Jewish organizations that come into Europe and say what they like, and don’t consult before they say what they say,” said Aba Dunner, secretary general of the Conference of European Rabbis.
Legislation and Law Enforcement

In a major 2005 terrorism case, the U.S. failed to convince a federal jury in Florida that Sami al-Arian, a former University of South Florida professor and a U.S. resident, had acted to send funds to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad organization for the purpose of committing terrorist acts. Following two weeks of deliberation, the jury acquitted al-Arian on December 6 of eight of the 17 charges against him, including conspiracy to murder or maim people abroad, and deadlocked on the remaining charges. Two of al-Arian’s codefendants were acquitted of all charges, and a third was acquitted of most, with the jury deadlocking on the remainder. At year’s end the government was undecided about whether to retry al-Arian and the one remaining codefendant on the unresolved charges against them.

The saga of José Padilla, the so-called “dirty bomber” suspected of trying to use a radioactive bomb to blow up hotels and apartment buildings in the U.S., continued. In late November, Padilla, who had been held in U.S. Department of Defense custody for more than three years as an “enemy combatant,” was transferred to civilian custody. A federal grand jury in Miami added Padilla to an existing criminal case against four other defendants, charging them with conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals and of providing “material support to terrorists” in North America. Padilla’s challenge to his designation as an “enemy combatant” was pending before the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court also agreed to consider the case of Salim Ahmed Hamdan, who was allegedly Osama bin Laden’s driver and personal bodyguard in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. Hamdan—charged with conspiracy to commit attacks on civilians, murder, destruction of property, and terrorism—was being detained in Guantánamo Bay. Hamdan challenged the validity of the special military commission established by the Bush administration in 2001 to prosecute terrorism suspects outside of the civilian and military court systems for suspected war crimes.

In June, Illinois expanded its Hate Crime Statute to include harassment and threats made via electronic communication. As of December 2005, 46 states and the District of Columbia—the same number as in 2004—had penalty-enhanced hate-crime laws.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005/Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (LLEEA), S. 1145 and H.R. 2662, enjoyed strong bipartisan support in 2005, but still awaited passage at year’s end. The leg-
islation would strengthen existing federal hate crime laws in two ways. First, it would remove the current requirement that federal involvement could only be triggered if the government could prove that the crime occurred because of a person’s membership in a designated group and because (not simply while) the victim was engaged in a specified federally protected activity, such as serving on a jury or attending public school. Second, the LLEEA would, in certain limited circumstances, authorize the Department of Justice to assist local prosecutions, and, where appropriate, investigate and prosecute cases in which the violence is motivated by the victim’s actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability. Current law did not authorize federal involvement in these categories of cases.

The Federal Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) continued to require the Justice Department to gather data from law-enforcement agencies on crimes that manifested prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or ethnicity, and to publish annual summaries of its findings (see above, p. 65).

JEROME A. CHANES
American Jews Confront Disengagement

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Ariel Sharon’s announced policy of disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank continued to agitate the organized American Jewish community. In 2004, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the umbrella body encompassing 52 national Jewish organizations that formulated consensus positions on Middle East matters, came under criticism from backers of disengagement for its apparent lack of enthusiasm for the policy, although it did, in October, issue a statement that could be interpreted as one of support (see AJYB 2005, p. 187–94).

In January 2005, antidisengagement forces were bolstered by a new study that attacked the demographic assumptions of the policy. While the Israeli government argued that holding on to the territories would make Jews a minority between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River within two decades, the new study, prepared by a group of Israelis and Americans, charged that the size of the Arab population in the territories had been grossly exaggerated and that a Jewish majority was secure for the foreseeable future. But leading demographers dismissed the new claims, Sergio DellaPergola of the Hebrew University, for example, calling it “groundless” (see below, p. 594). The Conference of Presidents nevertheless invited its authors to present their findings, leading some of the Conference’s prodisengagement member organizations to see yet another indication of right-wing bias in the umbrella body.

The most active antidisengagement group was the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), which lobbied Congress and maintained a public-relations campaign against withdrawal from the territories and against U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA), another policy favored by the Israeli government. But even the national ZOA disavowed a newspaper ad placed by its Washington, D.C., branch that compared Israel’s policy to that of the Nazis: “Now, incredibly, it is Jews who would deport their own, imprison them in concentration camps and abandon the land to those who would destroy us,” the ad said (Forward, Jan. 21).

At the same time, prodisengagement groups were not silent. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), published a
blistering attack on the “extremism” of Israeli settlers in the territories, the unwillingness of many of their American supporters to denounce calls on Israeli soldiers to disobey disengagement orders, and what he considered a continuing coolness toward Israeli government policy on the part of the Conference of Presidents (Forward, Feb. 11). Americans for Peace Now, outspokenly to the left of the Jewish political consensus, urged the American administration not to help fund a technical upgrade for Israel’s separation barrier on the West Bank, since such funding would signal American support for “the perpetuation of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank.”

These disputes over Middle East policy were muted at the annual plenum of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), held in late February. The JCPA, which included 13 national Jewish organizations and 127 local Jewish community councils, called on the American administration “to play an active role” in helping Israel and its neighbors toward “productive negotiations”; expressed sympathy—at the insistence of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations—for the settlers about to be uprooted from their homes and urged against “denigrating those who disagree with government policies and avoiding challenging their right to legal protest”; and endorsed U.S. aid to the PA.

In March, American Jews opposed to disengagement ramped up their efforts. The ZOA continued to campaign against both ceding land and aiding the PA, enlisting support from Christian evangelicals. Elements of the Orthodox community, including a number of rabbis, organized solidarity missions to the Gaza settlements all through the spring, raising concern in Israel that these visitors might join settlers in active resistance against the government. The leader of one mission, Dr. Joseph Frager, said, “It’s not over until it’s over. The government can fall at any point along the way. There are no guarantees in anything” (New York Jewish Week, Apr. 1). A fund established to support the public campaign against disengagement and to provide social services for the settlers, American Friends of Gush Katif, had raised $3 million by the beginning of June.

In an effort to sway American Jewish public opinion the other way, the Israeli government launched a concerted program to mobilize the support of left-leaning groups. This led to unfamiliar sight of spokesmen for a Likud-led coalition being featured speakers at the gatherings of very dovish organizations: Danny Ayalon, Israel’s ambassador to the U.S., highlighted a Capital Hill forum of American for Peace Now, and Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert keynoted the annual dinner of the Israel Policy Forum.
Those backing Israeli government policy cited poll data as proof that they were winning the public-opinion battle. The left-leaning Ameinu (formerly known as the Labor Zionist Alliance) issued the results of a survey showing that 64 percent of American Jews supported disengagement, although only 28 percent of the Orthodox sample did. Another poll, sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), indicated that two-thirds of all Americans backed disengagement. In early July, the ZOA presented results from its own poll, which, seeming to fly in the face of the others, showed that 63 percent of Americans opposed “Israel’s unilateral withdrawal” and “forcing 10,000 Israeli Jews from their homes and businesses.” Some suggested that the wording of the question had much to do with the result.

Three other surveys gave both supporters and opponents of disengagement grounds for concern. One, conducted by noted pollster Stanley Greenberg, found that nearly six in ten Americans were ignorant of the disengagement policy, a finding that raised fears that the American public would not give Israel the credit its government felt it deserved for ceding territory. Another survey, directed by Prof. Steven M. Cohen, found a decline in American Jewish attachment to Israel over the past two years, as well as a great deal of uncertainty among American Jews about Israel’s policies toward the Palestinians. And a poll conducted by Frank Luntz for the Israel Project, “How the Next Generation Views Israel,” indicated that graduate students at the top American universities—people likely to become future leaders of the nation—were becoming increasingly sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.

Prime Minister Sharon was scheduled to visit the U.S. in late May to advocate disengagement before the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the primary pro-Israel lobby. A number of organizations wanted the Conference of Presidents to sponsor full-page ads in the major newspapers strongly advocating disengagement. Malcom Hoenlein, executive vice president of the Conference, called this a waste of money, and some proponents of the ad accused him of seeking to mute American Jewish support for Sharon’s program. Groups in favor of disengagement also wanted a public rally in support of both the prime minister and his policy, but Hoenlein and others feared that this would alienate the antidisengagement member organizations and break down the principle of consensus on which the umbrella body operated. The more extreme opponents of disengagement, meanwhile, planned massive demonstrations against Sharon.

On May 22, when Sharon arrived in New York, the prodisengagement
groups—the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, ADL, Hadassah, Israel Policy Forum, URJ, and 21 others—ran a full-page ad on page 10 of the New York Times welcoming the prime minister and claiming that two-thirds of American Jews supported his policy. On page 15 appeared another full-page ad, sponsored by the Conference of Presidents, United Jewish Communities, and UJA-Federation of New York, also welcoming Sharon, and simply announcing, “We continue to stand with Israel,” with no mention of disengagement.

Those same three groups staged a “leadership rally” for the prime minister at Baruch College that day, which drew hundreds of people who were invited as Jewish community “leaders.” In his remarks, Sharon defended his controversial policy as a way to preserve Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. The crowd was overwhelmingly friendly, but there were some antidisengagement hecklers. Outside, two demonstrations were held, one opposing any territorial withdrawal, and the other, from the opposite political extreme, condemning the disengagement plan as a cynical ploy to maintain Israeli control over the West Bank.

Prime Minister Sharon addressed the AIPAC conference in Washington the next day. He received explicit endorsement for disengagement from the lobbying group, which overwhelmingly rejected a call by the ZOA to spell out “the costs” of the “expulsion of Jews” from Gaza. There were, to be sure, some delegates wearing the telltale orange insignias denoting solidarity with the settlers, and some hecklers had to be ejected from the hall. The AIPAC conference also heard from a number of other high-profile figures, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and paid some 450 visits to members of Congress, urging support for disengagement and action against Iran’s nuclear program. Undoubtedly reflecting sensitivity to the ongoing investigation of two former AIPAC staffers for allegedly transferring classified information to Israel (see below, pp. 109–10), the conference theme was “Israel is an American value,” and, for the first time ever, “Hatikvah,” the Israeli national anthem, was not sung.

The antidisengagement forces looked to June 5, the date of the annual Salute to Israel Parade in New York City, as an opportunity to demonstrate their clout, but the result was disappointing. As had become customary in recent years, supporters of the settlers sponsored a post-parade concert in Central Park. They expected about 35,000 people this year, but only some 10,000 showed up. Morton Klein, president of ZOA, complained that “Americans don’t understand the Gaza plan.” Two more antidisengagement rallies soon followed in New York, on June 23 and July
With implementation of disengagement scheduled to begin in August, the Israeli government grew increasingly anxious about the persistence of American Jewish support for the policy’s Israeli foes. In a July conference call with American Jewish leaders, the Israeli minister of construction, Yitzhak Herzog, urged the Americans to give “unequivocal support” to the government and not to fund its opponents. He suggested that Israeli pro-settler demonstrators relied on backing from “right-wing Americans,” and said, “I wish the American Jewish community would take a stand on that” (Forward, July 15).

Israeli diplomats believed that the stance of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (OU)—the largest Orthodox synagogue group, with over 1,000 congregations—would determine whether opposition to disengagement would split the American Jewish community and thus embolden die-hard settlers, or turn out to be nothing more than a fringe right-wing phenomenon. On July 8, under intense pressure from the Israeli government, the OU declared it would neither oppose nor approve disengagement. But three weeks later, reflecting the strong feelings of many members, it sent a letter of protest to the Israeli ambassador in Washington about alleged mistreatment of Orthodox protesters in Israel, which, an Israeli official told a reporter for the Forward (Sept. 9), drew “outraged reactions” from Jerusalem.

In mid-August, as Israeli troops prepared to enter Gaza to remove settlers, several small-scale antidisengagement rallies were held in New York and other cities. None drew more than 200 people—as compared to the 70,000 who turned out for a similar protest at the Western Wall in Jerusalem on August 10—almost all of them Orthodox or Russian Jews. They expressed considerable bitterness toward the mainstream Jewish organizations—especially the OU and other Orthodox bodies, which, they felt, should have known better—for giving up the battle against the disengagement policy.

On August 16, the Conference of Presidents issued a statement declaring that “the American Jewish community stands in solidarity and compassion with all the people of Israel. We pray for their safety and welfare—for the soldiers and police entrusted with carrying out this sensitive and difficult mission as well as for those forced to leave their homes, communities, and often their livelihoods.” The Conference also warned against “internal strife,” insisting, “We have to refocus on the over-
whelming preponderance of areas of agreement, while respectfully rec-
ognizing differences.”

With disengagement now fait accompli, those organizations that had been coolest to it turned their attention to advocating for the displaced settlers. The two major Orthodox congregational bodies—the OU and the National Council of Young Israel—initiated campaigns to raise money for them, and, together with the ZOA, urged the Conference of Presidents to investigate allegations that Israel was not following through on promises to find them new housing and jobs. The United Jewish Community of MetroWest New Jersey became the first Jewish federation to help, contributing $15,000 toward the absorption of former Gaza residents in the new community of Nitzan.

On August 31, the OU fired one last salvo against the Israeli government’s handling of disengagement, sending a letter to the Israeli Supreme Court protesting the government’s plan to destroy the synagogue buildings in the evacuated settlements, on the grounds that such action violated Jewish law and could set a precedent for similar treatment of synagogues elsewhere in the world. In the end, the synagogues were left standing, only to be destroyed by Gaza Arabs (see below, p. 218).

A far more extreme sign of Orthodox anger at disengagement came in the September issue of the Jewish Voice and Opinion, published in Englewood, New Jersey. A long article titled “Leaving Israel Because I’m Disengaged,” by S.A. Halevy, castigated the Orthodox rabbis of Israel and the U.S., as well as the OU, for their “spineless and ineffective” posture in regard to disengagement, and announced that Israel “no longer is worthy of my political or financial support.” The monthly identified S.A. Halevy as the pseudonym of “a powerful, important rabbi in the tri-state [New York-New Jersey-Connecticut] area.” How many others in the Orthodox community shared his opinion was anybody’s guess.

**Jewish Identity, the Ongoing Debate**

The sense that American Jewry was in decline had pervaded the community for years, as had the debate over what could be done about it. Over Memorial Day weekend, some 20 eminent Jewish intellectuals gathered behind closed doors at the Wye Plantation conference center to mull over the future of the Jewish people. The meeting, sponsored by the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, a Jewish Agency think tank, spent much time on the apparent erosion of the American Jewish community. The
statement issued after the discussions asserted that “the Jewish people must remove the obstacles preventing many from joining its ranks,” complained about the lack of Jewish “spiritual leadership,” and bemoaned the high costs associated with Jewish living.

Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, opened a new front in the battle over the Jewish future with an article, “Jews and the Jewish Birthrate,” that appeared in the October issue of Commentary. “Faced with irrefutable evidence of demographic decline” through intermarriage and low birthrates, Wertheimer charged, “communal leaders have worked to ‘reframe’ the discussion” by advocating “inclusiveness, pluralism, and a welcoming atmosphere.” But Wertheimer, using the apparently thriving Orthodox community as evidence, claimed that a precisely opposite strategy was needed: “standing apart” from current social trends and unapologetically advocating the centrality of Jewish marriage and childbearing. Critics attacked Wertheimer for “blaming” women, for suggesting that ideology could influence behavior, for neglecting the social-support systems that might encourage larger families, and for ignoring the need to inject more “passion” into Judaism.

Wertheimer, together with Steven Bayme of the American Jewish Committee, addressed the intermarriage issue in the Forward (Sept. 9), urging the non-Orthodox movements to encourage Jewish in-marriage and, in cases of intermarriage, to focus on the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse. This aroused the ire of advocates of “outreach” to the intermarried. One of them, Kerry Olitzky, executive director of the Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI), cited an American Jewish Committee survey to the effect that 80 percent of American Jews considered intermarriage “inevitable in an open society,” and this led Olitzky to conclude that acceptance of these families was the only alternative. The “outreach” strategy welcomed intermarried families into the Jewish community without making any demands; conversational pressure, argued Olitzky and others, only alienated them.

JOI released a survey in July that, it claimed, supported the benefits of “outreach.” Entitled A Flame Still Burns: The Dimensions and Determinants of Jewish Identity among Young Adult Children of the Intermarried, the survey found that while the offspring of intermarried families had low levels of religious identification, many felt culturally Jewish, for example giving high priority to fighting anti-Semitism and keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.

The controversy over communal policy toward the intermarried could carry serious practical implications. In an article titled “Is My Prom Date
Kosher?” the New York Jewish Week (June 17) described the dilemmas faced by the Conservative movement’s Solomon Schechter high schools over whether to bar non-Jewish guests of students from school-sponsored social events. Some parents called any such restrictions ghettoizing and racist.

Beside concerns over the intermarried, another aspect of the Jewish identity debate was the search for ways to bring previously uninvolved groups into Jewish life. Much was written about how to address the interests of younger Jews—born to baby-boomer parents since 1980 and known as “Generation Y” or “Millennials”—for whom relatively new organizations like Jewish Family and Life! and Reboot, financed by federations and private Jewish foundations, produced “cool” magazines like JVibe, Guilt and Pleasure, New Jew Review; and Heeb; supported JDub Records, dedicated to innovative Jewish music; and maintained Web sites like Jewishfamily.com and MyJewishLearning.com.

Hillel, the Jewish campus organization, announced the results of a study indicating that Jewish college students were increasingly likely to come from intermarried families and have mostly non-Jewish friends, suggesting the need to address their needs through programs of a universalistic rather than a narrowly Jewish nature. Similar results emerged from a survey of Jews and non-Jews in their twenties sponsored by Reboot. The Jewish “members of Generation Y,” it noted, “have individualized world views, an apparent lack of interest in traditional Jewish institutions, and emphasize diversity.” Thus Kol Dor, an international Generation Y Jewish group, chose as its initial project the universalistic gesture of declaring the Hebrew month coinciding with November as Jewish Social Action Month.

It came as a shock to many activists when a major source of funding for programs targeted to Generation Y Jews, the San Francisco-based Joshua Venture, announced that it would close down in March, after five years of activity, because even the support it derived from several major Jewish foundations could not keep pace with the funding needs.

One category of Jews previously on the margins that was fast becoming a candidate for outreach consisted of the non-white. According to a study done by demographer Gary Tobin, In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People, there were 400,000 Jews of color in the U.S., perhaps 7 percent of the American Jewish community, and far more, as many as 20 percent of American Jews, were of non-Ashkenazi ancestry. Tobin suggested that the non-white Jewish population was likely to grow due to the increasing popularity of cross-cultural adoption. The
organization Tobin headed, the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, sponsored a five-day conference for non-white Jews in February that drew some 400 people.

**Denominational Developments**

To judge by the atmosphere at a joint forum held February 15 in New York, featuring the heads of the leading Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform educational institutions, not only were relations between the movements smooth and cordial, but there was also a vague but reassuring consensus on what needed to be done to strengthen Judaism in America. The event, sponsored by the New York *Jewish Week* and moderated by its editor, Gary Rosenblatt, showcased President Richard Joel of Yeshiva University, Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and President David Ellenson of Hebrew Union College. While expressing different perspectives on the importance of Halakhah—traditional Jewish law—all affirmed that the key challenge facing the religious movements was involving the growing population of unaffiliated Jews in Jewish life. Reflecting on the forum afterwards, Rosenblatt wrote that there was more “to link than separate the various religious streams in our community” (*New York Jewish Week*, Feb. 25).

That same sense of interdenominational amity was evident elsewhere. A week later, the Modern Orthodox organization Edah held its biennial conference. Not only was the event held at Temple Emanu-El, a Reform congregation in New York, but many of the sessions were not geared to narrowly Orthodox concerns and had clear postdenominational implications. Another straw in the wind, perhaps, was the phenomenon of postdenominational Jewish schools, the subject of a long feature article in the *Jerusalem Post* (Feb. 11). In the Boston area alone there was the New Jewish High School, which featured four separate morning prayer sessions to accommodate children from different denominational backgrounds, and where those unwilling to pray might attend one of a number of discussion groups; the rabbinical school at Hebrew College that called itself transdenominational; Minyan Tehilla in Cambridge, which was Orthodox but allowed women to conduct some of the service; and Temple Beth Zion in Brookline, whose rabbi described it as “egalitarian Hasidic.”

But not everyone shared in the warm and fuzzy mood. In April, the American Jewish Committee released a study by Jack Wertheimer, arguing that serious issues continued to divide the movements, but they were
being papered over out of politeness and fear of controversy. In *All Quiet on the Religious Front? Jewish Unity, Denominationalism, and Postdenominationalism in the United States*, Wertheimer cited conversion, intermarriage, and the religious status of gays and lesbians as potentially explosive points of contention that would only fester and grow more serious if ignored.

**REFORM JUDAISM**

At the beginning of the year, the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Reform congregational body, released a revised version of *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, the classic 1981 work edited by Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut and others, that had been the first English-language Torah commentary from a Reform perspective. Reflecting the move toward greater traditionalism in the movement, the new edition divided the biblical text according to the Torah portions as read in the synagogue rather than by literary themes, and instead of having the Hebrew text and the English translation separate, the former opening from the right and the latter from the left, the new version had them both running on the same page, opening from the right, the Hebrew side.

As Reform rabbis gathered in Houston in March for the annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), much of the talk in the corridors concerned a $1-million shortfall that had recently been discovered at the 1,500-member rabbinical body’s headquarters in New York. Outside auditors had found the problem after the resignation of the organization’s comptroller. No fraud had taken place, the auditors determined, only the misappropriation of money designated for restricted purposes to pay other bills. To help make up for the shortfall, Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the CCAR executive vice president, announced stringent budget cuts and borrowing, moved up the date of his announced retirement, and postponed the search for his successor.

A matter of considerable contention at the convention was determining the respective roles of rabbi and cantor. Reform cantors now received a thorough education, almost on a rabbinical level, in the history and theology of the prayer service, and some cantors had started to refer to themselves as "co-clergy." Many rabbis, at the same time, were increasingly involved in the musical side of the liturgy. The cantors, meeting a few weeks before the rabbis, approved a resolution calling for greater cooperation, including joint study "on an equal basis" at retreats; the rabbis passed the resolution as well, overwhelmingly, but only after deleting
the words “on an equal basis.” Later in the year, the Reform movement announced that its cantors would be eligible to serve as military chaplains, a decision that was not popular with the more traditional branches of Judaism, where the role of cantors was more restricted.

The biennial conference of the URJ, held in November, also in Houston, generated shockwaves. For one thing, the Reform movement—the largest Jewish religious denomination in America—became the first significant Jewish organization to repudiate the Iraq war. The URJ delegates passed a resolution—by voice vote and apparently with negligible opposition—calling on the administration “immediately” to “provide more transparency regarding all aspects of the war and a clear exit strategy . . . with specific goals for troop withdrawal,” such withdrawal to begin by December. The resolution added a criticism of those who used opposition to the war as grounds for vilifying Israel.

The antiwar thrust was part of a broader liberal political and social agenda evident at the biennial. Resolutions were also passed opposing the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court, supporting the rights of homosexuals, and urging an end to alleged government interference in “the integrity of the scientific process,” specifically mentioning the attempt in Kansas to have the public schools offer alternatives to the theory of evolution.

The URJ president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, reiterated these points and raised some others in his forceful biennial sermon. Yoffie denounced the Religious Right, going so far as to compare the opponents of gay rights to Hitler, who banned gay organizations as soon as he came to power in Germany, and asserted that true religious commitment must include the willingness to fight for social justice. And Yoffie called on Reform Jews to do more to encourage the conversion of the non-Jewish partners in mixed marriages and to “enthusiastically embrace” such converts and their families. This call did not sit well with those in the movement who preferred the Jewish integration of the non-Jewish spouses without a conversionary agenda (see above, p. 98).

**Conservative Judaism**

The ongoing debate over the movement’s policies on gays and lesbians—specifically, whether to ordain them as rabbis and whether to perform their commitment ceremonies—still dogged Conservative Judaism in 2005. While Orthodoxy maintained the biblical ban and Reform had dropped it years earlier, Conservatism, the movement of the moder-
ate center, remained caught in the middle, officially opposed to rabbinic recognition of same-sex relationships and leadership positions for those involved in them, but with a constituency increasingly tolerant of both. And while the status of homosexuals was the most visible challenge to the movement, it was far from the only one.

The year began with Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, assistant rabbi at New York’s Congregation Bet Simchat Torah, a gay and lesbian congregation, facing expulsion from the movement’s Rabbinical Assembly (RA). According to the RA, the problem was her repeated violation of job-placement procedures, but Cohen ascribed it to her advocacy of gay rights. In the end, the RA issued Cohen a “rebuke” but did not expel her.

The issue was on the minds of many at the RA convention in March, since whatever path Conservative Judaism might take on the role of gays and lesbians would have implications for the direction of the movement as a whole. The convention theme was “Reinventing Conservative Judaism: Defining Our Mission for the 21st Century.” With a membership that had dropped by 10 percent over the previous decade, Conservative Judaism was divided between those who sought religious liberalization as the way to attract more adherents, and those seeking to maintain a commitment to Jewish law, however interpreted.

Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the movement’s major academic center, urged the assembled rabbis to hew to tradition. He noted that many of the most religiously serious young Conservative Jews did not feel comfortable in Conservative synagogues, and were therefore “often off at Orthodox shuls.” Schorsch urged a renewed Conservative commitment to the strictures of Jewish law as the way to retain their allegiance.

The specific Jewish law he had in mind, as everyone in the audience knew, was that classifying homosexuality as a sin, which was due for reconsideration, once again, by the movement’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards just a few weeks later, in early April. But two full days of closed-door meetings by the committee did nothing to clarify the Conservative position, as a total of nine different position papers were reportedly presented. Lack of movement on the issue triggered the organization of Keshet (Rainbow) Rabbis, made up of RA members who favored ending the restrictions on gays and lesbians. By the beginning of July, 137 rabbis had signed up, almost 10 percent of the RA membership.

The issue also came up indirectly in connection with the commemoration of one of the movement’s proudest accomplishments, the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women. About 11 percent of all RA
members were now women. One of them, Francine Roston, was appointed to the pulpit of Congregation Beth El in South Orange, New Jersey, in 2005, the first woman to be named a senior rabbi at a “large”—more than 500-family—Conservative synagogue. At a JTS conference marking the two decades since women’s ordination began, the question of ordaining gays and lesbians was avoided, much to the chagrin of Keshet members. But a fake JTS press release, forged and distributed by a shadowy group calling itself Jewish Women Watching, announced that the seminary planned to institute complete gender and sexual equality in Conservative Judaism by 2010. The hoax caused the school considerable embarrassment.

A clear indication of the next divisive issue waiting in the wings for Conservative Judaism came from its Federation of Jewish Men’s Clubs, which issued a pamphlet in June written by its executive director, Rabbi Charles Simon, urging greater acceptance for intermarried families and opportunities for synagogue participation by non-Jewish spouses in the life-cycle celebrations of their children and grandchildren.

The Conservative movement confronted a variety of other problems during 2005. In February, the newly hired chief financial officer of JTS left after three months on the job. His predecessor had resigned in November 2004, soon before the school announced it had to borrow $36 million from “internal sources” to pay its bills. The seminary declined to make public any details about its financial situation. Meanwhile, the Israeli branch of the movement, known as Masorti, reportedly strapped for funds, let go its longtime president, Ehud Bandel, and the Conservative rabbinical school in Israel, the Schechter Institute, underwent a nasty internal power struggle that led to the resignation of several administrators and board members. In August, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) announced that Judge John Roberts, nominated by the president to be chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was “qualified” for the position, enraging many political liberals in the Conservative movement.

Chancellor Schorsch announced in June that he planned to retire a year later, in June 2006, after completing 20 years in the position, and a search committee was named to find a successor. Since Schorsch was seen as the major force for religious traditionalism in the movement, the identity of the next chancellor aroused intense speculation. Not only might a fresh vision for the movement help morale, but liberals also saw the choice of a new chancellor as a golden opportunity to modernize Conservative policy on issues like the ordination of homosexuals and acceptance of
mixed-religion families. They therefore reacted with dismay in July, when
the JTS board, viewed as allied to the current chancellor, doubled its own
representation on the search committee, making it more likely that an-
other traditionalist would succeed Schorsch.

In early December, USCS delegates gathered in Boston for the group’s
biennial convention amid rumors about “front-runners” and “dark
horses” for the JTS chancellorship. Echoing Rabbi Yoffie’s remarks to the
URJ just two weeks earlier, Rabbi Jerome Epstein, the group’s executive
vice president, called for encouraging non-Jewish spouses of members to
convert. The Committee on Synagogue Standards issued guidelines that
maintained the existing policy of barring non-Jews from participating in
religious rituals, becoming synagogue members, or being buried in Jew-
ish ceremonies, while calling for outreach “to help overcome resistance
to conversion.”

But more radical views were also expressed. JTS professor Neil Gill-
man urged the movement to drop what he considered its intellectually dis-
honest insistence that it was a movement based on Halakhah (Jewish law),
“and try to project a religious vision, a theological vision.” Others used
his arguments to advocate barring from the movement all manifestations
of gender or sexual inequality on the grounds that they were “immoral”
and “misogynistic,” a move that, among other consequences, would mean
ousting from the USCJ the few remaining Conservative congregations
that did not treat women the same as men. Rabbi Epstein objected that
“Halakhah is the mainstay of our movement” and that requiring, rather
than just allowing, gender egalitarianism and absolute equality for same-
sex couples would violate the movement’s commitment to pluralism and
drive away people rather than bring them closer.

Orthodox Judaism

In February, data was released that challenged the prevalent impres-
sion that haredi (right-wing) Orthodoxy was eclipsing Modern Ortho-
dox. Demographer Jacob Ukeles, analyzing information that his research
firm collected for the 2002 survey of the New York Jewish community,
found that 74 percent of the approximately 100,000 Orthodox households
in the New York City area were “modern,” using as his criterion for
“modernity” agreement with the statement that a college education was
“very important.”

This finding was greeted positively by the audience to whom it was pre-
sented, the biennial conference of Edah, a Modern Orthodox group, but
it evoked skepticism from others, who suggested that such surveys tended to undercount haredim, and that attitudes toward college no longer constituted a fault line within Orthodoxy since it was now possible to graduate college in a religiously “safe” environment, either at an Orthodox institution or at a secular one that did not require courses in liberal-arts subjects deemed dangerous to faith.

The educational flagship of Modern Orthodoxy, Yeshiva University, was under intense scrutiny for any signs that its new president, Richard Joel, appointed in 2003, had any plans for moving the institution in a more liberal direction. So far, Joel seemed intent on maintaining the existing balance of power between the secular departments and the rightward-leaning Talmud faculty. Joel announced the creation of a Center for the Jewish Future, billed as a “think tank for Jewish public policy, leadership and partnership strategies, community strengthening in Israel and throughout the Diaspora, and life-long Jewish learning.” The New York Jewish Week, reporting the news (Dec. 16), used the words “ambitious but fuzzy” in its headline. Many alumni were deeply offended when the university’s new logo replaced the school’s traditional motto, “Torah u-Maddah” (Torah and knowledge), which encapsulated the Jewish uniqueness of the institution, with the generic “Bring wisdom to life.”

A potent demonstration of the strength of Orthodoxy and a sign of its commitment to traditional Jewish scholarship came on March 1, when thousands of Jews all over the world celebrated the siyyum (completion) of the 11th cycle of Daf Yomi, the page-a-day study of the Babylonian Talmud that takes about seven-and-a-half years, sponsored by Agudath Israel. A packed Madison Square Garden in New York City served as the main center for the event, with other participants gathered at the Nassau Coliseum, the Jacob Javits Convention Center, and additional sites in the U.S. and around the world.

Closely tied to the siyyum was another landmark in the development of Orthodox learning in America, the publication of the final volume of the ArtScroll edition of the Talmud. Begun 15 years earlier, ArtScroll had the original Aramaic text and an easy-to-follow English translation, with explanatory footnotes, on facing pages. Greatly facilitating Talmud study even for those with little background, this edition, aided by a skillful marketing plan, had become the best-selling Talmud in history. In February, a set of the entire 73-volume work was officially deposited in the Library of Congress at a ceremony attended by, among many others, some 50 members of Congress, and addressed by Senators Sam Brownback (R., Kans.) and Joseph I. Lieberman (D., Conn.).
Orthodoxy's commitment to study, however, did not necessarily extend to texts outside the limited Talmudic orbit. In January, just as preparations for the siyyum neared completion, leading right-wing Orthodox rabbis in Israel and the U.S. banned the writings of Rabbi Nosson Slifkin, known as the "zoo rabbi," who, in a number of publications and on his Web site, had suggested ways of reconciling the findings of modern geology and zoology with Orthodox Jewish teachings about the creation of the world and the age of the universe. Slifkin fought back, citing earlier authorities who interpreted Jewish sources figuratively, and declared, "If I am a heretic, Heaven forbid, then I take my place among the thousands of other such 'heretics' in the Torah community." The banned books, meanwhile, dropped by their original publisher, became collectors' items, selling for many times their cover price on eBay.

In February, the New York City Health Department set off a firestorm with an announcement that three baby boys circumcised in late 2004 by the same mohel had contracted herpes, and that one had died. This mohel performed metzitzah b'peh, oral suction of the wound after the operation, a procedure called for by the Talmud to draw blood away from the place of the incision. While virtually all non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox circumcisions, as well as a good number of those in the more sectarian Orthodox community, used other means to draw the blood, there were many families, especially among the Hasidim, that had the mohel use the old practice of oral suction.

Immediately after the death of the herpes-infected baby, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), the organization of Modern Orthodox rabbis, issued a statement urging the universal replacement of metzitzah b'peh with suction through a glass tube. From the RCA's perspective, this was not just a matter of saving lives, but also a way of assuaging the fears of parents who, hearing about the cases of herpes, might be reluctant to have children ritually circumcised. But some right-wing Orthodox spokesman denied that the herpes was caused by the mohel, insisted that oral suction was an integral element of Jewish circumcision, and, framing the dispute as a question of religious freedom, announced they would continue the practice even in defiance of the law.

The Health Department, meanwhile, got a restraining order preventing that particular mohel from performing oral suction, but could not convince him to undergo a blood test. In a meeting with representatives of the Satmar Hasidic sect in August, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who was running for reelection, said that he was not considering an outright ban on the practice. In September, much to the chagrin of several public-
health experts, the city agreed to drop all charges against the mohel and leave the matter in the hands of a Hasidic rabbinical court. The year ended without that court taking any action. In December, after Mayor Bloomberg's reelection, the city's health commissioner issued "An Open Letter to the Jewish Community" noting that "metzitzah b'peh can and has caused neonatal herpes infection" and recommending that it not be practiced.

Addressing the fact that their family-oriented religious practices hardly exempted Orthodox families from problematic aspects of American culture, the OU sponsored a Positive Parenting Conference in March that dealt with such issues as substance abuse, eating disorders, and low self-esteem; it drew over 700 people and lasted for over five hours. The OU went further, issuing an advisory to member synagogues to crack down on "Kiddush clubs," small groups of men who left in the middle of Sabbath services to drink, and often returned inebriated, providing, according to the OU, a bad example for young people. And the week before Purim, a holiday often associated with drinking, the OU ran advertisements in Jewish publications warning of substance abuse.

In March, the RCA, the rabbinical group closely allied with the OU, expelled a member for "conduct inappropriate for an Orthodox rabbi," after a 15-month investigation of charges made by a number of women in his congregation near Monsey, New York. This was the first time that the organization had taken such a public step. The rabbi, however, refused to resign his pulpit, and sought backing from Israeli rabbinic authorities.

The ubiquity of the Internet did much to uncover some realities of Orthodox life to the uninitiated. Protected by the anonymity of their screen names, Orthodox e-mailers and bloggers opened up about pressures they faced to conform to group norms, the temptations of the outside world, and family problems and sexual frustrations stemming from their restricted way of life. The Forward (Aug. 26) reported that one-quarter of the almost 200 Jewish blogs were Orthodox. The New York Times (Nov. 23) ran a lengthy story on the phenomenon. A number of Hasidic communities had already banned the Internet unless needed for business purposes, and in September, leaders of the Orthodox institutions of Lakewood, New Jersey, the site of the largest yeshiva outside of Israel, issued a ban on Internet use by students and insisted that adults requiring it for their livelihood get authorization from a rabbi. In June, students at Touro College, an Orthodox institution, complained that the administration, by blocking their Internet access to keep them away from "inappropriate" sites, made it difficult for them to do required research.
Widely acknowledged as the most successful form of American Judaism in recent years, Orthodoxy came in for criticism from a leading philanthropist precisely for the satisfaction it took from that success. Addressing a group of young alumni of Yeshiva University in December, Michael Steinhardt, a major donor to many Jewish causes, complained that the Orthodox had written off other Jews as highly likely to assimilate, an attitude he considered "myopic." Steinhardt wanted Orthodox Jews to give more to non-Orthodox causes and to relate respectfully to other Jews on their own terms, not just as potential new recruits to Orthodoxy.

Eleven years after death of its leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Chabad-Lubavitch continued its impressive growth. Almost 100 couples were sent out during the year to spread the word to Jews, bringing the total number of shluchim (emissaries) to almost 4,000 in 70 countries (Laos was the latest). Nearly 30 new "Chabad houses" had opened on American campuses since 2001, bringing to more than 80 the number of campuses with a Chabad presence. The Jewish federation world, increasingly interested in fostering Jewish continuity, was establishing cooperative relationships with Chabad in many communities. Even the academic world took notice: in early November, New York University hosted a three-day scholarly conference on "Reaching for the Infinite: The Lubavitcher Rebbe—Life, Teachings, and Impact."

But the existence of an element—of unknown size—within Chabad that still denied that Rabbi Schneerson had died, or insisted he would soon be resurrected and declare himself the messiah, dogged the movement. In November 2004, Chabad officials went to court to bar "messianists" from Chabad headquarters in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and in June 2005, unknown parties tore out a plaque at the entrance to the building that had the words "of blessed memory" after the late rebbe's name.

The Organizational World

AIPAC

The FBI probe of Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman—two staff members of AIPAC, the preeminent pro-Israel lobby—on the charge of unauthorized transfer of classified government information picked up steam in 2005. In December 2004, when the investigation first came to light,
AIPAC denied that it or any of its employees had broken the law. In March 2005, however, the organization placed Rosen and Weissman on paid leave and fired them the next month, saying that the two had engaged in activities not condoned by AIPAC. Especially the dismissal of Rosen, who had been a major factor, over the course of his 23 years with AIPAC, in making the organization into a political powerhouse, was widely viewed as a sign of how anxious the organization was to cut its losses and distance itself from the affair.

On May 3, Larry Franklin, the Pentagon analyst alleged to have provided classified information to the AIPAC pair, was arrested. Five days later, AIPAC executive director Howard Kohr participated in a conference call with leaders of Jewish community-relations councils across the country. He reassured them that AIPAC itself was not under investigation, that the case against the two former staffers dealt only with “leaking” and not espionage, and that the work of the organization would go on as before. There was no mention of the matter at the AIPAC policy conference that began on May 24 with an address by Israeli prime minister Sharon (see above, p. 95), and the impressive turnout of Washington VIPs gave the sense that AIPAC had not suffered any damage.

Rosen, Weissman, and Franklin all pleaded not guilty to federal charges of disclosing classified information. As other Jewish organizations began to reassess their own work on behalf of Israel to make sure that they had not crossed the increasingly murky line between innocuous and illegal sharing of information, rumors circulated that certain wealthy donors to AIPAC had sought to find work for Rosen at another Jewish group, offering to pay his salary. This led, in turn, to speculation that AIPAC wanted to mollify Rosen so that he would not implicate the organization.

Franklin agreed to a plea bargain in early October, agreeing to testify against Rosen and Weissman. In December, the two former staffers were reported to be considering suing AIPAC for stopping payment of their legal fees, and their lawyers were rumored to be planning to argue in court that the actions of the two men, far from being unauthorized, was standard operating procedure at AIPAC.

**World Jewish Congress**

At the plenary assembly of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in Brussels in January, delegates gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to their leaders, President Edgar Bronfman and Chairman Israel Singer,
who had been charged with tolerating financial mismanagement in the organization (see AJYB 2005, p. 205). But those charges resurfaced, for all the world to see—"accusations of mismanagement, bizarre bank transactions, stolen e-mails and computer files, intimidation, and cover-ups"—in "Machers in Meltdown," an article that appeared in the February 2 issue of New York magazine. In researching the story, author Craig Horowitz found that leaders of other Jewish organizations "were not at all surprised by the difficulties the World Jewish Congress has been facing," although none would speak on the record.

In December 2004, New York State attorney general Eliot Spitzer began an "informal" investigation of the allegations against the WJC. Since Spitzer, who was Jewish, planned to run for governor of New York in 2006, there was some doubt about how seriously he would pursue charges against a major Jewish organization. But in an early June interview with editor Gary Rosenblatt, reported in the New York Jewish Week (June 10), a spokesman for Spitzer spelled out details about many of the allegations, giving every indication that Spitzer's report, due in early 2006, would not pull any punches.

UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Created in 1999 through a merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, United Jewish Appeal, and United Israel Appeal, United Jewish Communities (UJC), which coordinated the Jewish community's fund-raising and allocation process, had drawn criticism since its inception. The case against UJC was summed up in From Predictability to Chaos, a study of the organization by two respected communal leaders, Gerald Bubis and Steven Windmueller, based on interviews with many of the people intimately involved in UJC activities. The report, released February 4, alleged "unclear expectations, unshared visions, mixed motivations, and multi-layered power games." Bubis and Windmueller were particularly critical of the UJC's reluctance to seek counsel from those outside the organization's top leadership. Howard Rieger, who became the UJC's president and CEO in 2004, sent out an e-mail to UJC leaders dismissing the "so-called findings."

In March, the UJC fired a number of top-level professionals—the directors of Jewish renaissance and renewal, research and development, religious and educational activities, and Israel and overseas activities, as well as the senior planner responsible for the controversial National Jewish Population Survey 2000–01. The head of the organization's Wash-
In 2005, the UJC's annual General Assembly (GA) took place in November in Toronto. Major issues that emerged at the sessions were how to balance local needs with those of Israel and other Jewish communities abroad, the growing tendency of major givers to channel their contributions through private foundations rather than federations, and the need to find ways of attracting younger Jews toward involvement in organized Jewish life.

**Conference of Presidents**

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the umbrella body for 52 national Jewish groups, had to choose a new chairman in 2005, as the two-year term of James Tisch drew to an end. In April, deadlocked between supporters of four announced aspirants for the position, the search committee unanimously nominated a surprise candidate, Harold Tanner, an investment banker who had been president of the American Jewish Committee from 2001 to 2004. The entire Conference approved Tanner's designation in early May.

**Cultural Controversies and Achievements**

A piece that appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* (Jan. 30) by Wendy Shalit, a self-described newly Orthodox Jewish writer, raised considerable interest in Jewish circles. Shalit harshly criticized the portrayal of Orthodox characters in recent American Jewish fiction, charging that pervasively negative stereotypes suggested the presence of unacknowledged anti-Orthodox bias. She was especially disturbed when the perpetrators claimed to be Orthodox themselves, since that gave the impression that they brought an "insider" perspective to their works. Shalit, in turn, was attacked by several of the authors she criticized; they charged that she held an unrealistically idealistic image of Orthodoxy. But a number of Orthodox spokesmen supported Shalit's stand and seconded her contention that the negative fictional portrayals were part of a broader pattern of anti-Orthodox prejudice.

Another acrimonious debate broke out in December, with the release of Steven Spielberg's film *Munich*. Purporting to tell the story of Israel's
tracking down and punishing the Arab perpetrators of the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, the movie, according to some Jewish critics, portrayed the Israeli agents in a less than positive light. Jewish leaders suspected that Spielberg wanted to suggest a moral equivalence between Israel and its enemies that would apply to the current Middle East crisis as well. Another problem for the film was the allegation that the book upon which it was based relied on the alleged recollections of a man who falsely claimed to be an agent of the Israeli Mossad.

In March, the Koret Jewish Book Awards, sponsored by the Koret Foundation of San Francisco and conducted annually since 1998, underwent a major overhaul. Whereas the awards had previously been administered by a panel of scholars led by Prof. Steven Zipperstein of Stanford University, they would now take on a more popular form under the direction of Jewish Family and Life!, whose head, Yossi Abramowitz, said he would try to make them “the next best thing to a Jewish Oprah.”

A major new exhibit opened in March at the Jewish Museum in New York City, running through July, on “The Power of Conversation: Jewish Women and their Salons.” It dealt with the lives of the German Jewish women who, beginning at the dawn of Jewish emancipation in the eighteenth century, conducted salons in their homes where famous writers, musicians, and other cultural figures — Jews and non-Jews — gathered to socialize. The careers of these women marked an important step in the modernization of German Jewry.

Among the important books of Jewish interest that appeared in 2005 were: Laurel Leff’s Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America’s Most Important Newspaper, which used archival material to demonstrate why The New York Times was reluctant to inform its readers about the full horrors of the Holocaust during World War II; Deborah Lipstadt’s History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving, an account of the historian’s successful 2000 defense of a libel suit against her by Holocaust revisionist David Irving; Deborah Dash Moore’s GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation, on the wartime experience as a watershed in American Jewish life; and Yuri Slezkine’s The Jewish Century, which argued the thesis that the landlessness and mobility of Jews provided them the tools for success and even predominance during the twentieth century in the U.S., the Soviet Union, and elsewhere.

The prestigious Library of America, which published definitive editions of the works of major American writers, launched the publication of Philip Roth’s oeuvre in 2005 with two volumes of novels and short sto-
ries; six more volumes were planned. Roth was only the third author designated by the Library of America while still alive.

Two very large gifts were made during 2005 to institutions of higher learning for the furtherance of Jewish culture. With UJC having relinquished its traditional central role in sponsoring demographic research about American Jewry, philanthropist Michael Steinhardt donated $12 million to Brandeis University for the creation of a new center for the study of the Jewish community. The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan received $20 million from the Samuel and Jean Frankel Jewish Heritage Foundation, the largest single amount ever donated to any university Jewish studies program. In addition, municipal authorities in Chicago approved the construction of a new $55-million building to house the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. Upon its scheduled completion in 2007, the edifice would become the first Jewish cultural structure built since the events of September 11, 2001.
Celebrating the 350th

The American Jewish community marked its 350th anniversary with a yearlong celebration that ran from September 14, 2004 through September 14, 2005.* Like previous anniversaries of Jewish settlement in America—the 250th in 1905 and the 300th in 1954—the occasion presented an opportunity both to tell the American Jewish story and to demonstrate the community's sense of what it meant to be "at home in America."

The Commission and Celebrate 350

Gary P. Zola, executive director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and associate professor at Hebrew Union College's Cincinnati campus, took the first step in planning the 350th by inviting the U.S. Library of Congress (LOC) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to join AJA and the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) to join in what would become known as the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History. Its aim was the preparation of a major public exhibition of records documenting the history of the American Jewish community. This was the first time that high-level government bodies had ever joined forces with Jewish research institutions to mark an important American Jewish milestone. Michael Feldberg and David Solomon, who served, sequentially, as executive directors of AJHS, Michael Grunberger, head of the Hebraic Section of the LOC, and Greg Bradsher, senior archivist at NARA, were key participants in this venture, along with professors Pamela S. Nadell of American University and Jonathan D. Sarna of Brandeis University.

Zola, the commission chair, spearheaded the effort to obtain recognition for the project from Congress. On October 15, 2003, the House of Representatives adopted Resolution 106 encouraging "all Americans to

*We thank Dr. Lawrence Rubin, past director of Celebrate 350, and Rachael Dorr, Celebrate 350 operations director, for their assistance with the preparation of this article, and Dr. Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University and Dr. Gary P. Zola of Hebrew Union College for reading earlier drafts and contributing useful suggestions. Any errors of commission or omission, however, are our responsibility.
share in this commemoration so as to have a greater appreciation of the role the American Jewish community has had in helping to defend and further the liberties and freedoms of all Americans.” The Senate adopted a concurrent resolution on November 21. Subsequently Zola, an ordained rabbi, was invited to serve as guest chaplain and to deliver opening prayers in both houses of Congress in honor of the 350th anniversary.

In June 2004, the member organizations of the commission joined with American University in sponsoring the 2004 Biennial Scholars’ Conference on American Jewish History, which took place both on the American University campus in Washington, D.C., and at the Library of Congress. This international gathering, with over 100 scholars participating, was probably the largest conference ever held on the subject of American Jewish history.

The exhibition that the commission produced, entitled “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” was perhaps the most ambitious and conspicuous project of the 350th observance. Headed by Michael Grunberger, it drew upon the extensive collections of historic materials held by the commission’s member organizations, including some that had never been previously exhibited. Librarian of Congress James H. Billington first unveiled the exhibition in the main gallery of the Library of Congress in September 2004, and it quickly became one of the most popular exhibits in the library’s history. A modified version of “From Haven to Home” later traveled to the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Center for Jewish History in New York (where it was called “Greetings from Home”), and the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, so that, in all, tens of thousands of visitors learned from the items on display the story of how the contemporary American Jewish community evolved.

The impact of the exhibition reached even further. A beautiful volume edited by Grunberger and bearing the same name as the exhibit was widely distributed. Reproductions from the exhibit were also displayed in the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse in Boston. Providing broad access through the Internet, both the LOC and the AJA continued to maintain Web-site exhibitions long after the physical panels of “From Haven to Home” were dismantled.

At a very early stage, the commission recognized the need to move beyond the world of research institutions. Communal organizations and leaders needed to be brought into the commemoration, and a Jewish organizational home had to be created. Zola and Jonathan Sarna approached Robert S. Rifkind, former president of the American Jewish Committee, who agreed to work with them. The choice created a natural
link to the 300th celebration, as Rifkind’s father, Judge Simon Rifkind, had been part of the planning committee in 1954.

An institutional home proved more difficult to find, as individual organizations had competing priorities and were reluctant to take ownership of the project. Some communal leaders considered the celebration untimely; others asked whether a 350th anniversary warranted the expenditure of resources that would be required. At Rifkind’s request, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture (NFJC) and its executive director at the time, Richard Siegel, agreed to facilitate the creation of an independent organization to promote the anniversary. Established in April 2003, it was named Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America, 1654–2004.

Unlike the commemorations of 1905 and 1954, the 350th was not a centralized operation and would not duplicate functions being performed elsewhere. Rather, Celebrate 350 saw itself as a catalyst, calling upon religious, communal, and academic institutions to create their own distinctive programming and offering them assistance in doing so. Celebrate 350 was intended from its inception to be a temporary entity that would go out of business once its single project was done. Only two staff positions were established, executive director and operations manager. Public relations and fund-raising were handled through outside consulting contracts.

Siegel designed a structure for Celebrate 350 and, along with Rifkind, recruited a governing board of top philanthropic, religious, and academic leaders, which Rifkind agreed to chair. Lawrence Rubin, former head of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), was named executive director, and he built a steering committee of communal professionals representing a wide range of Jewish communal, religious, and educational organizations. Rubin directed the process through its entire planning stage, and as the celebration year began in September 2004, Alice Herman—who had held senior positions in both the public and not-for-profit sectors—took over as executive director and saw the project through to its conclusion.

Celebrate 350 worked to involve professionals throughout the American Jewish community. Research and archival organizations were represented on the steering committee. A professional advisory committee was created to secure the input of executives engaged in the fields of education, communal work, and culture. An academic advisory council ensured that high scholarly standards were maintained. The involvement of the American Jewish Historical Society and the American Jewish Archives facilitated close coordination with the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History.
The Planning Conference

A year before the scheduled opening of the celebration, the countdown began: Celebrate 350 invited a broad spectrum of organizations to participate in a national planning conference, which convened on September 9, 2003, at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. Representatives of more than 50 organizations and 30 academic institutions attended. For many of them, this meeting was their introduction to the anniversary.

Celebrate 350 chair Robert S. Rifkind presented a draft document entitled “An Invitation,” which identified core themes that could serve as a common basis upon which to build. Urging all present to sign on, he read aloud the concluding section that captured what the commemoration would seek to achieve:

In extending this call to Celebrate 350, we recognize: our need to reaffirm the reverence for justice, freedom, equality and respect for diversity that has made America the haven it has been for us and for all Americans; our commitment to sustaining America’s role as the champion of freedom and democracy throughout the world; our obligation to assess what American Jewry has achieved over the past 350 years, to transmit the lessons of the past to those who will carry on after us, and to shape a vision for the future worthy of our heritage and of the opportunity we enjoy; and our duty to give thanks for having been sustained and enabled to reach this anniversary.

Now, therefore, we call upon Jewish communities and institutions throughout the country, as well as our fellow Americans and our fellow Jews in other lands, to join with us in observing this 350th anniversary year, beginning in September 2004 [Elul 5764], as a time in which to commemorate the history of the Jewish community in America, to celebrate its achievements, take account of its challenges and shortcomings, recall its contributions, and reflect on the meaning of America for Judaism and Jewish life.

Rifkind reminded those present of the role that Celebrate 350 was designed to play:

Its entire purpose is to stimulate, to convene, to promote, and to facilitate the appropriate observance of the 350th anniversary . . . . We will have achieved our principal purpose if we succeed in quickening American Jewry’s esprit de corps, its pride in its proven capacities, its vigor in taking hold of its future, and its consciousness of itself as a distinctive and consequential link in the long chain of Jewish communities that comprise our collective history.

By the end of the celebration year, over 300 national and local organizations had signed the invitation, endorsing its statement of purpose.
Celebrating the 350th

Eli Evans, president emeritus of the Charles H. Revson Foundation and an authority on Jewish life in the South, called upon those at the planning conference to use this “once-in-a-generation opportunity to commemorate and reinvigorate the American Jewish narrative through the lens of all that has happened in our nation—and make of it a time of renewal, a period of reflection and self-examination, and a new resolve for the future of the most free and successful Jewish community in history.”

In the conference keynote address, Jonathan Sarna, chief historian of Celebrate 350, provided further guidance:

If there is a central theme to American Jewish history, it is the story of how Judaism and Jewish life have been transformed by freedom. Freedom, of course, is not an unmixed blessing. It carries with it significant challenges, even perils. Some minority groups in America have literally been loved to death in this country, intermarrying out of existence, disappearing into the mainstream. That danger threatens Jews too. But even with this concern, American Jewish history necessarily challenges the standard Jewish narrative of persecutions and expulsions, and it encourages us to explore instead an entirely different set of questions, which emerge, unsurprisingly, from the central themes of American life: freedom, diversity, and church-state separation.

Rabbi Marc D. Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, inspired by his synagogue’s historic role as the oldest congregation in North America, urged outreach to “Jews who are not very connected Jewishly, Jews who are far away from major centers of Jewish life, and the vast non-Jewish public.”

During the daylong session, working groups addressed the specific interests of educators, communal organizations, cultural institutions, research organizations and academic advisors. All in all, the planning conference laid the groundwork for what would become a broad public celebration.

Outreach, Popular and Scholarly

To engage the nationwide community, Celebrate 350 provided resources to support programming, created a unifying logo and a commemorative medal, and worked with partner organizations to spread word of the observance of the 350th.

Communications were facilitated by technologies not available for the tercentenary in 1954. A Web site and e-newsletter, developed and run by
operations manager Rachael Dorr, made available information, promotional materials, links to numerous other educational and archival Web sites, and news of programs and publications that celebrated American Jewish life. A Web-based events calendar covering the commemorative year served as a community bulletin board by documenting more than a thousand programs across the country and several outside the U.S. Visitors to the Celebrate 350 Web site were able to download and use a high-definition copy of the logo—a stylized white menorah against a background of a half-red and half-blue square, and the words “Celebrate 350/Jewish Life in America.” They could also download sample press releases, sample proclamations, and an extensive photo gallery. After the completion of the year of celebration, the site was preserved at the Internet archive Wayback Machine. It can be accessed at http://www.archive.org/web/web.php, with a search for www.celebrate350.org.

In the tradition of the 250th and 300th anniversaries, a 350th commemorative medal was minted by Mel Wacks, using a design created by the young Israeli artist Dana Krinsky. On one side the medal featured an image of a big-city skyline, the Celebrate 350 menorah logo, and an often-quoted excerpt from President George Washington’s 1790 letter to Newport’s Hebrew Congregation:

> For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens. May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants.

The other side of the medal portrayed “a crowd of men, women, and children on a journey of liberation,” horizontal lines and stars symbolizing the American flag, and the Hebrew and English texts of the biblical phrase from Leviticus that adorns the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, “Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land.”

In the course of the year medals were presented to prominent individuals and institutions, including President George W. Bush, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the U.S. Supreme Court, the librarian of Congress, the national archivist, and the Israeli Knesset. Medals were also presented to the six oldest congregations in the country: Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston, South Carolina; Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island; Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City; Congregation Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia; Congregation Beth Ahabah, Richmond, Virginia; and Temple Mickve Israel, Savannah, Georgia.
Official proclamations called upon Americans to learn about the history of the American Jewish community and to celebrate those American values that allow members of all minority groups to live freely and participate fully. In addition to the proclamations by both houses of Congress recognizing the work of the commission, governors and mayors issued proclamations, encouraged by local chapters of the American Jewish Committee.

A rabbinic proclamation, issued under the aegis of Celebrate 350, was signed by the presidents of the four major American Jewish rabbinical associations—Rabbi Harry Danziger, Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform); Rabbi Dale Polakoff, Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox); Rabbi Perry Raphael Rank, Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative); and Rabbi Brant Rosen, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. The rabbis called for observance of the 350th anniversary of Jewish communal life in America as a time “of special thanksgiving, prayer, study, reflection, and celebration.”

Although this proclamation resembled one issued by American rabbis in 1954, it differed in several respects. For one thing, the 2005 document included involvement of the Reconstructionist movement, which did not have a seminary or a rabbinical association in 1954. Also, the text differed with respect to a call for prayer. In 1954, the rabbis called “on all our brethren . . . to pray for the continued peace and prosperity of our country . . . .” The more recent proclamation, while referring to “prayer” in the preamble, together with “study, reflection, and celebration,” did not summon Jews “to pray,” saying instead, “Let us express our collective hope that peace, security and prosperity will reign in our nation for all.” And while the 1954 version was issued in Hebrew as well as English, the 2005 proclamation appeared only in English, avoiding Hebrew, the language of prayer. These two differences reflected a change that had occurred in Jewish interdenominational relations. In 1954, the Orthodox leadership had been willing to sign on to a call for prayer written in both Hebrew and English, but in 2005 it could agree only to an expression of “collective hope,” and only in English, since it sought to avoid any hint of joint prayer with members of the other branches.

Print media, radio, and television covered the anniversary. The New York Jewish Week published a special supplement, the Forward published monthly columns, and a feature article produced by the Jewish Telegraphic Association was widely distributed to Jewish newspapers. The Associated Press wire service circulated an article on the 350th that was picked up by newspapers around the country. National Public Radio af-


Scholars, both American and foreign, intensified their examination of American Jewish life on the occasion of the milestone anniversary. At a joint conference in San Antonio, the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature held sessions on “American Jewish Scholars and Their Scholarship” and “New Directions in the Study of American Judaism.” Symposia on the Southern Jewish experience were held in Charleston and Atlanta. In Tutzing, Germany, the Akademie für Politische Bildung near Munich cooperated with Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich and the University of Erfurt in hosting an international symposium that posed the question, “350 Years of American Jewry, 1654–2004: Transcending the European Experience?”

Brandeis University and the American Jewish Committee cosponsored “The Meaning of the American Jewish Experience,” a daylong conference held on the Brandeis campus in October 2004. In the words of Brandeis professor Jonathan Sarna, this meeting “aimed to explore with some of America’s foremost scholars the role played by Jews in diverse aspects of
American life and to ask how the American Jewish experience affected both American history and Jewish history.” Full proceedings were published by the AJC under the title *The Meaning of the American Jewish Experience*. Not far from Brandeis, at Boston University, that school’s Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies hosted a conference entitled “Why is America Different?” in honor of the 350th anniversary, where Nobel laureate Wiesel spoke of American Jewish history in the context of the broad sweep of world Jewish history.

The 350th anniversary also prompted publication of numerous books on the American Jewish experience. The authors took a number of different approaches, exploring religious trends, sociological groupings, integration within the larger American society, and other topics. In 2004, the Jewish Book Council (JBC) selected as its “book of the year” Jonathan Sarna’s *American Judaism: A History*. According to JBC executive director Carolyn Hessel, *American Judaism* “put the category of American Jewish studies on the map,” serving to attract other scholars and writers to this discipline. Jewish book fairs from San Diego to Cleveland to Miami invited Sarna to speak, thereby promoting even more extensively the theme of the 350th anniversary.

**Role of Women**

One of the most notable changes in the American Jewish community since the tercentenary celebration in 1954 had been the evolving role of women. Hebrew Union College ordained its first female rabbi, Sally Preisand, in 1971. In 1985 the Conservative movement ordained its first female rabbi, Amy Eilberg. Since these landmark events, many women had joined them in the rabbinate. Also, women were increasingly represented in the top echelons of American Jewish organizations, both as volunteer leaders and professionals. Even so, many pointed to the continuing dearth of women executives at the top of major Jewish organizations, a phenomenon that was noted within the leadership of Celebrate 350 itself.

The Jewish Women’s Archive (JWA) participated actively in the observance of the 350th. The JWA produced programs, curricula, Web site resources, and expert speakers—primarily executive director Gail Reimer and historian Karla Goldman—who lectured extensively on the role of women in the American Jewish story. National women’s organizations, including Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women, also contributed much to this aspect of the celebration.

Over 1,000 of the top women philanthropists associated with United
Jewish Communities (UJC), the major national Jewish fund-raising organization, met in Washington, D.C., in October 2004 for the International Lion of Judah Conference, where they explored American Jewish history through a special program designed for them by the Jewish Women’s Archive. The event included a tribute to a select group of prominent women “for their extraordinary contributions to the cultural and political life of America and American Jewry.”

Nationwide Observance

More than a milestone birthday celebration, this historic occasion served as a special teachable moment. For today’s American Jews, living in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish society, it was an opportunity to learn about their heritage. For non-Jewish Americans, the observance was a reminder of core American principles that promise freedom and justice for all citizens.

To encourage participation—especially by small communities and organizations—Celebrate 350 produced a “ready-to-go” exhibit. At the urging of Arnold Kaplan of Allentown, Pennsylvania, who provided inspiration and support, a poster series, “Jewish Life in America,” was created by Professor Sarna, designer Scott-Martin Kosofsky, and artist Lance Hidy. Each poster portrayed a critical theme in American Jewish history, such as liberty, social justice, refuge, education, Zionism, and tzedakah (charity). Over 1,000 sets were distributed to schools, community centers, synagogues, libraries, and other institutions.

In a special effort to engage the next generation of American Jewish leaders, Celebrate 350 worked with Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. At Hillel’s annual leadership conference in December 2004, student leaders learned about the observance of the 350th and were encouraged to develop programs for their own universities. These activities reached even beyond the particular campuses to include surrounding communities that would not otherwise have been involved. To cite one startling example, Shaloha-Hillel at the University of Hawaii sponsored a lecture on American Jewry, the only program listed on the 350th events calendar for that state.

With a growing academic field of American Jewish studies, expert speakers and scholars-in-residence were available and in demand throughout the year. Hundreds of lectures were given, some reaching wide audiences via radio and television. Topics ranged from broad themes like “350 Years of American Jewish History” and “New Directions in Ju-
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daism,” to specialized topics, such as American Jews in sports, the arts, the military, and small-town communities, to name a few. As noted above, the role of women in American Jewish history was an especially popular lecture subject.

The American Jewish Icons series, sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, consisted of 30 public lectures by scholars and authors who examined “icons” of American Jewish culture. A sampling of topics included Mordechai Kaplan’s *Judaism as a Civilization* (Arnold Eisen); Abrahan Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (Todd Endelman); Religious Tolerance and the Jews of the South (Eli Evans); Philip Roth’s *Nathan Zuckerman* (Sylvia Fishman); and *Commentary* magazine’s 1966 and 1996 symposia on “The Condition of Jewish Belief” (Steven Bayme).

Some of the country’s largest Jewish communities launched ambitious celebratory events. In New York City, a Jewish Music and Heritage Festival was said to be “the world’s largest celebration of Jewish culture,” featuring over 50 musical groups performing in 15 venues over a period of two weeks. The June 2005 Salute to Israel Parade in New York City paid tribute to the American Jewish community with its theme, “Two Golden Lands—The Promised Land . . . The Land of Promise.” Atlanta organized a communitywide Celebrate 350 kick-off event in January 2004. The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony performed for a large audience at the John Anson Ford Amphitheater in Hollywood Hills during the summer of 2005. In an unprecedented collaboration, cantors and choir members from more than 20 congregations in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area performed together in March 2005 before a large audience at the Strathmore Hall music center in North Bethesda, Maryland.

Communities with small Jewish populations also enthusiastically joined in the observances. For many local Jews, it was a welcome occasion to celebrate their heritage and affirm their identity. In Alaska, Millie & the Mentshn went on the road with performances of *Homeland to Heartland*. The American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming sponsored Celebrate 350 Week in September 2005. The Museum of New Mexico created a traveling exhibition, “Stories Untold: Jewish Pioneer Women 1850–1910,” featuring nine large works by Santa Fe artist Andrea Kalinowski. The Mt. Zion Congregation in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, hosted a Celebrate 350 potluck dinner and movie. Cognizant of its unique place in the history of American Jewry, Cincinnati’s Jewish community organized a massive communal gala that attracted nearly a thousand participants. They watched the premiere performance of *Foot-
steps, an original musical journey through American Jewish history written by Scott Sedar of Washington, D.C., and adapted by local playwright Whitney Stafford McKay.

Institutions outside the Jewish community participated as well. The Washington State Museum, the University of Washington, and the King County Library System/Seattle Public Library offered much of the 350th programming in that state. The Museum of Utah Art and History sponsored an exhibition, “A Homeland in the West: Utah Jews Remember,” while the Tennessee State Library and Archives presented “History of Jews in Tennessee.” Visitors who went to the New York Public Library to view the exhibit “Jews in America: Conquistadors, Knickerbockers, Pilgrims, and the Hope of Israel,” did not have to travel far to get to the Museum of the City of New York, where they could see “Forging Their Identity: Jews in Early New York.” The Center for the Study of Community, a partnership of the Strawbery Banke Museum and the University of New Hampshire in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, sponsored a series of programs in 2004 honoring Jewish life in America.

Audiences in many states were treated to “Klezmerbluegrass,” a new dance commissioned by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and created by Paul Taylor. The work was made part of the Paul Taylor Dance Company repertory during its 2004—05 national tour. In Taylor’s words, “The Jewish experience in America reflects the best values and traditions of our country—religious freedom, cultural pluralism, individual initiative, and intellectual discourse.”

Baseball, the all-American sport, proved an irresistible symbol, as the New York Mets and the Cincinnati Reds both celebrated Jewish heritage days. In August 2004, Jewish Major Leaguers Inc. and the American Jewish Historical Society jointly sponsored a tribute to Jewish professional baseball players at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

Varieties of Programming

Jewish historical societies, museums, and federations offered an array of programs, many focusing on local history. A sampling of titles provides something of a travelogue: “150 Years of Commerce & Industry in Oregon”; “Driven into Paradise: LA’s European Jewish Émigrés”; “Jewish Life in the Great East Texas Oil Boom”; “A Photographic Exhibition of Ozarks Jews”; “Milwaukee Jewish Oral Histories”; “Florida’s Pioneer Jewish Families”; “Weaving Women’s Words: Baltimore Stories”; and

Jewish community centers created extensive programming for the 350th. New York City's 92nd Street Y presented a stimulating series of lectures and cultural events during the fall of 2004, with topics ranging from Jewish Broadway to Jewish literature to new choreography created in honor of the anniversary. Over the course of the commemorative year, the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven explored Jewish contributions to American life, including, for example, a discussion of the book GI Jews, dealing with the impact of participation by American Jews in World War II, and a dramatic presentation at the Long Wharf Theatre.

Many rabbis, in addition to those who signed the rabbinic proclamation, encouraged participation. The heads of three major seminaries served in leadership roles: David Ellenson, president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; Norman Lamm, chancellor of Yeshiva University; and Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Over 5,000 rabbis received monthly e-mails from UJC relating the American Jewish experience to events on the religious and secular calendars. Many High Holy Day sermons addressed this theme, as did special services throughout the year. In many communities, American Jewish history and its implications for the present and future were integrated into the curricula of adult education classes, children's synagogues, and Hebrew day schools.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Yeshiva University all hosted special commemorative events. In addition to the national role that its own American Jewish Archives played in the commemoration, Hebrew Union College sponsored programs at its New York City campus, including two art exhibits in the fall of 2004, "Being Jewish and American: Expressions of Identity in Contemporary Art," and "Archie Rand: The 19 Diaspora Paintings." The Jewish Theological Seminary, together with the Milken Archive, sponsored "Only in America: Jewish Music in a Land of Freedom" in November 2003, exploring American Jewish music from colonial times to the present. JTS also held a three-day symposium in March
2004 on “Imagining the American Jewish Community,” and from May through September of that year hosted an exhibit, “People of Faith, Land of Promise: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America.” A traveling “Treasures of Americana” exhibit provided many communities the opportunity to view prints from the JTS library’s Americana collection, illustrating the history of American Jewry through art. The Yeshiva University Museum sponsored “New World—Old Books” in March 2004, and “Bundles, Hopes and Dreams: Jewish Immigrant Stories” the next month. In November 2005 it presented an exhibit called “A Perfect Fit: The Garment Industry and American Jewry.”

Many programs celebrated Sephardi Jews, the original Jewish settlers of the Americas. On September 12, 2004, the official start of the 350th national celebration was marked by a “Service of Commemoration, Celebration and Thanksgiving” at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, which had just commemorated its own 350th anniversary. From September through December 2004, an exhibition entitled “Pernambuco, Brazil—Gateway to New York” was sponsored by the American Sephardi Federation, in cooperation with Sephardic House, Yeshiva University Museum, and the Jewish Historical Archive of Pernambuco, Brazil. Earlier, in May of that year, the American Jewish Archives sponsored a mission to Curacao to retrace the footsteps of that historic Sephardi community, immediately followed by a Jewish Heritage cruise, sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, which sailed from Curacao to other historic Jewish communities in the Caribbean and ended in Charleston, South Carolina.

Diversity within the American Jewish community was acknowledged at a program in December 2005 called “Jewish Soul Celebration—Celebrating the Experience of Jews of Color in Israel, Africa and the United States.” It was sponsored by Ayecha, a New York-based group founded by an African American Orthodox Jewish woman, that provided education, advocacy, and support for Jewish diversity in the United States.

Boards of Jewish education, schools, youth organizations, camps, and scouting programs brought the celebration to children and teenagers. “Celebrate 350” scouting badges were created by the Western Los Angeles County Council of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for its 2004 Kinnus and also by the BSA’s Jewish Committee on Scouting for the 2005 Scout Shabbat. Babaganewz, a classroom magazine designed to teach Jewish values to schoolchildren, produced four special history supplements to commemorate 350 years of Jewish life in America.
National Dinner and a “Legacy”

Perhaps the most impressive and moving component of the yearlong celebration was its concluding dinner, held at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., on September 14, 2005. This gala event was a collaborative effort between Celebrate 350 and the Commission for Commemorating the 350th. The American Jewish Historical Society and the American Jewish Archives, groups active in both organizations, were centrally involved. Hosts for the evening, which attracted almost 1,000 guests who were prominent in the Jewish community and in American public life, were Robert S. Rifkind, Celebrate 350 chair; Kenneth J. Bialkin, AJHS chair; and Commission chair Gary P. Zola.

President George W. Bush, who accepted a gold medal commemorating the anniversary, delivered the keynote address. Taking as his starting point President Washington’s sentiments expressed to the Jews of Newport, he told the gathering: “The stock of Abraham has thrived here like nowhere else. We’re a better and stronger and freer nation because so many Jews from countries all over the world have chosen to become American citizens . . . .”

Two weeks prior to the dinner, Hurricane Katrina had devastated New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast. Many lives were lost and communities torn apart, including Jewish communities. Jody Portnoff of Tulane University Hillel in New Orleans spoke movingly at the dinner about the challenge of rebuilding. Recognizing the crisis, Celebrate 350, the American Jewish Historical Society, and the American Jewish Archives jointly pledged to contribute $50,000 toward relief projects.

Other participants in the dinner program were AJHS president Sidney Lapidus, who presented that organization’s Emma Lazarus Award to Edward I. Koch, former mayor of New York City; philanthropist Lynn Schusterman, who addressed tomorrow’s generation of Jewish leaders; Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington; Daniel Ayalon, ambassador of Israel to the United States, who read greetings from Israeli president Moshe Katzav; David Butler, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington; and Rabbi Avis Miller of Washington’s Congregation Adas Israel. The U.S. Naval Academy Women’s Glee Club opened the program with “The Star-Spangled Banner” and closed with “God Bless America.” Entertainment for the evening was provided by the accomplished com-
poser and performer Marvin Hamlisch, who played music by American Jewish composers.

A book, Three Hundred Fifty Years: An Album of American Jewish Memory, was produced to mark the occasion of the national dinner. A team of scholars worked with designer Scott-Martin Kosofsky to identify 100 noteworthy images of Jewish life in America, beginning with an early-eighteenth-century portrait of Abigail Levy Franks and culminating with Jewish campaign buttons from the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns. Participating with Kosofsky in the creation of this beautiful book were Michael Feldberg, Karla Goldman, Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, Gary P. Zola, and David Solomon.

The next morning, September 15, the National Archives and Records Administration and Dr. Allen Weinstein, the U.S. archivist, sponsored a breakfast to honor the 350th anniversary that included a tour of some treasures of the National Archives collection.

A key objective of the anniversary observance was to promote the ongoing study of American Jewish life and history so that the new school curricula, the scholarly speaking tours, and the creative projects and publications would continue into the future. Thus Celebrate 350 concluded its work with the creation of “legacy grants” designed to leave an imprint upon American Jewish historical memory and communal consciousness. A grant to the Jewish Book Council endowed an annual book prize for the author of “an outstanding published work in the field of American Jewish studies.” A grant to the New York Public Library endowed a periodic lecture series, open to the public at no charge, that would “increase awareness and study of the Jewish people’s history in America.” Another grant went to Yale University Press to assist in the publication of an atlas of American Jewish history.

Marking a New Era for American Jews

The clearest distinction between the 350th and earlier landmark commemorations of American Jewry was the absence of apologetics. In 1954, Jewish intellectuals such as Horace Kallen and Mordechai Kaplan criticized the 300th anniversary celebrations for their defensiveness about Jewish contributions to America and dearth of distinctive Jewish content. By contrast, the organizers of the 350th, in the words of Robert Rifkind, understood that “American Jewry no longer felt obliged to proclaim its patriotism or its fidelity to America’s highest values. These were unquestioned except by extremist cranks. Nor did American Jewry feel the
need to declaim on contributions that Jews had made to America. They were too conspicuous to require comment."

Rather, the focus shifted to the meaning of the American Jewish experience, its distinctive ethos, and the challenges Jews were likely to face in the foreseeable future. The anniversary provided an opportunity for internal self-assessment in regard to two crucial questions: Wherein lay the uniqueness of the American Jewish experience? How can a distinctive Judaic culture be preserved in an open and hospitable American society? In addressing these challenges, the programs of the 350th anniversary year bespoke pride and self-confidence. Since the tercentenary in 1954, anti-Semitism had been marginalized in America, and Jewish scholarship, culture, and education had flourished in a pluralistic society. The primary challenge confronting Jewish life in America was not any external threat, but rather how to preserve Jewish identity, how to give Jews the motivation for leading a Jewish life.

The grassroots nature of the celebration further underscored this point. Many national Jewish leaders were preoccupied with global threats to Jewish survival. For them, the apparent failure of the Oslo accords, the reemergence of anti-Semitism in Europe, and the spread of international terrorism constituted the backdrop for all discussions of Jewish communal affairs. But on this anniversary, Jewish leaders in communities across the country utilized the opportunity to project a far more positive image of contemporary Jewish life. The 350th resonated among Jews for whom the celebration mirrored their own American experience of unlimited opportunity, accompanied by the challenge of sustaining Jewish identity and a collective sense of peoplehood. The anniversary and all that went with it provided a much needed counter-message to a Jewish community preoccupied by grave international concerns.

The closing dinner in Washington that concluded the 350th anniversary celebration said much both about the place of American Jews in society and about the perception Jews now had of themselves as occupying a particular niche within American culture. By dint of demographics alone—Jews made up little more than 2 percent of the population, a percentage that was declining—such a gala celebration was hardly warranted. Yet even a cursory consideration of the role Jews played in American intellectual, political, and cultural life spotlighted the exceptional nature of the American Jewish experience. Never before in Diaspora Jewish history had there been a society so welcoming of Jewish participation; and therefore, never before had a Diaspora Jewish community felt so at home in its country of residence. The challenge posed
was whether American Jews would utilize the conditions of freedom to create an intensive and creative Jewish way of life strong enough to sustain the community.

In a “Letter to 2054,” included in Three Hundred Fifty Years: An Album of American Jewish Memory, Rifkind addressed this challenge:

At 350, then, American Jewry was coming to recognize that it was bound to take its place in the long procession of great and distinctive Jewish communities of which our collective history is comprised. The question to be pondered was what would American Jewry make of the extraordinary freedom and opportunity with which it had been blessed? If, in 2054, our descendants gather to celebrate in joy the 400th anniversary of Jewish life in America, we will have in good measure succeeded.

Alice Herman
Steven Bayme