

# JCRC to hold two important events next week

A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE

## Orthodox rabbi, Brad Hirschfield, to speak at interfaith event Jan. 23

By Harriet P. Gross

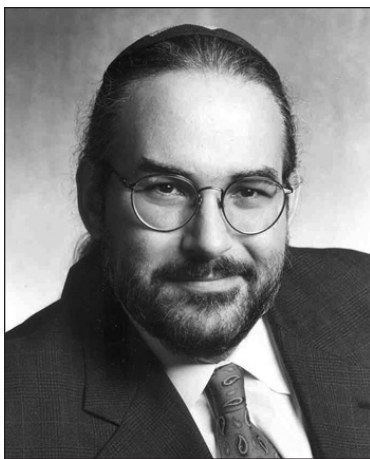
A lot of Jews might consider Brad Hirschfield a study in contrasts. His boyhood home was non-traditional, but he found and adopted Orthodoxy himself as a young teen. He became a rabbi, but one who has little patience with rabbis who want others to become more like them; his desire is for people to become more of themselves, whatever that might be.

Rabbi Hirschfield's beliefs were fueled early on by his parents and grandparents, and are aptly expressed in the title of his new book, "You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith Without Fanaticism." In it, he ap-

plies those beliefs to our current, troubling global situations. He'll be speaking and answering questions about his provocative message next Wednesday evening on the campus of Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

Now president of CLAL, the New York-based National Jewish Center for Learning and leadership, Hirschfield is a major force in American interfaith efforts, such as his 18-part broadcast series, "Building Bridges: Abrahamic Perspectives on the World Today."

With a light touch, his new book scores universal points through easy-reading, illustrative personal stories. Hirschfield calls the non-



Rabbi Brad Hirschfield

belief of his immigrant grandma an expression of Judaism: "Her faith in herself and her husband and the future they would have together in a distant land was part of the deepest rhythms of their tradition — to go and find a better life for themselves and their family."

And "My mother did not know any Orthodox Jews," he says, "until her 12-year-old son wanted to keep kosher." When he asked for his own pots and pans and dishes, "She could easily have run screaming from the house...." But instead, she kashered the kitchen so that the family could continue eating the same foods together. This acceptance enabled Hirschfield to continue going out to restaurants with the family, watching them eat and enjoy traif foods without anger or censure.

Simple analogies illustrate his views. "My home has many rooms," he says. "I'm far more comfortable in my bedroom or the kitchen than in the basement or my 13-year-old daughter's room. But I know that without them all, it wouldn't be my home. And so it is with our world. We need everyone. All our faiths. All our differences." He maintains that world unity will come from diversity rather than uniformity.

Throughout the book, Hirschfield broadens those family lessons, extending the personal toward the universal. His father taught him that "you love people not only because of certain things, but despite certain things," he says. "Real people have real disagreements.... We don't love each other less because of them. The Bible teaches us that this is the way it has always been between men and women, and between human beings generally."

see HIRSCHFELD, p28

## Shearith to remember MLK with interfaith breakfast Jan. 21

By Deb Silverthorn

Community. It's what Martin Luther King, Jr. fought and died for, and community will come together on Monday, Jan. 21, to celebrate him with an interfaith breakfast program at Congregation Shearith Israel beginning at 7:45 a.m. The program, co-hosted by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Dallas, Congregation Shearith Israel and Highland Hills United Methodist Church, is free and open to the community.

"We, as Jews, who believe in *tzelem Elokim*, the image of G-d, share the message of Martin Luther King and his vision of freedom. He was a most positive force and we must celebrate that," said Shearith Israel's Rabbi William Gershon who, with Rev. Dr. Sheron C. Patterson, senior pastor, Highland Hills United Methodist Church, will participate in a discussion entitled "Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Darfur: How Do We Make 'Never Again' A Reality?"

"Martin Luther King espoused the ideals, morals and ethics we adhere to," said Marlene Gorin, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Dallas, who hopes the program will become an annual event. "Many Jewish community leaders including Rabbi Heschel helped Reverend King during the civil rights movement. His values are our values."

Just four days (and 22 years) separate the anniversaries of the birthdays of Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, once called "two prophets, one soul" by Los Angeles-based Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis. "Two men from different geographies, color, creed, theological background were joined in a spiritual kinship whose legacy addresses our own times," Rabbi Schulweis said. "The calendrical coincidence of their birth anniversaries calls upon us to resurrect the moral passion and wisdom that infused their lives."

"I'm so excited to bring our



Rev. Dr. Sheron C. Patterson



Rabbi William Gershon

communities together and to be part of this occasion, to discuss the devastation that is happening in Darfur and what we can do to end it," Dr. Patterson said. "We as African Americans and Jews know about suffering and pain. This is a union of our communities, joining so that the world hears us."

"We said 'Never Again' after the Shoah (Holocaust); we said 'Never Again' after the fights of those who marched and fought with Martin Luther King," Gorin said. "The desolation in Darfur is happening now and today. When will we stop the suffering? When will we stop saying 'Never Again'?"

"When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying," said Rabbi Heschel, called "one of the great men of our time" by Coretta Scott King. "Equality is a good thing ... what is lacking is a sense of the monstrosity of inequality."

For more information, contact Tracey Bruce, JCRC associate, at 214-615-5261 or tbruce@jfgd.org.

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## HIRSCHFIELD continued from p2

A literal translation of the Hebrew purpose for which God created Eve, he says, is not to give Adam a companion, but rather to provide “a helper who is against him.”

“President George W. Bush was fond of saying ‘People are either with us or against us,’” Hirschfeld continues. “But I think Genesis is telling us that perhaps it is possible to be both at once. The fact is, it may be that our most painful disagreements arise because we share the same values.

“A helper against him’ guarantees that there will be strife. Adam and Eve’s relationship — like all enduring, lasting unions — had its struggles and conflicts. But what if we could hold inside ourselves that the ‘helper who is against us’ may also be our greatest ally? I think that would change the nature of our struggles...”

“Adam and Eve are the models for our larger web of human connections. They were not Jews, Christians, Muslims, or Hindus. They were not from any particular nation or tribe. They are the common ancestors we all share. That is why their story belongs to all of us...”

“The message is clear. To be Jewish is just one subset of what it is to be human, as is the case with every other race and ethnicity. Adam and Eve’s story is filled with bumps and bruises and pain, but it reminds us that we all share the same ancestors, and we are all on this journey together.”

The recognition that absence of conflict is not essential to a good work-

ing relationship, that conflict is indeed a necessary part of such a relationship, brings Hirschfeld to the conclusion that the dignity of a person — or a nation, a faith or a culture — trumps some of our old assumptions. About such important matters as Middle Eastern politics, he says: “We need to enter into difficult and painful conversations, knowing that we will be challenged and stretched. But it has to be safe to enter into such conversations.... We need a way to talk to one another that guarantees that we put the dignity of the person in front of us before the correctness of our own ideas.”

Hirschfeld’s ideas will be questioned Wednesday evening when he is interviewed on the stage of SMU’s Hughes-Trigg Student Center Theater, 3140 Dyer Street, Dallas, by Robert A. Hunt, director of global theological education at the university’s Perkins School of Theology. This interfaith meeting, “Finding Faith Without Fanaticism,” is scheduled for 7:30 to 9 p.m. and is open to all at no charge.

Before this event, Rabbi Hirschfeld will meet again with graduates of the Dallas Federation’s Young Leadership program, with whom he has previously shared his beliefs and ideas. “Jewish wisdom has something to offer to all,” he says. “I’m always interested in working with others on how to use the tradition I most love in ways that can be useful to all people.”

Co-hosting with SMU is the Dallas Jewish Community Relations Council, which can be contacted for further information about Wednesday’s event by phone at 214-615-5254, or by e-mail: jcrddallas@jfgd.org.

# Ms. magazine’s rejection of pro-Israel ad elicits strong Jewish response

By Sue Fishkoff

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — The American Jewish Congress is ramping up its protest against *Ms.* magazine’s rejection of its pro-Israel advertisement.

In a campaign launched Sunday, AJCongress urged people to write, call or e-mail the prominent feminist publication to “register your complaint at their anti-Israel bias.”

It also has enlisted the support of high-powered Jewish feminist speakers, several of whom were to appear at a news conference Tuesday.

The ad in question features photos of three prominent Israeli women leaders and the phrase “This is Israel.”

AJCongress leaders claim *Ms.* rejected the ad because of its bias against Israel — a charge the magazine’s executive editor hotly denied.

“We only take mission-driven advertisements,” Katherine Spillar told JTA last Friday.

“Because two of the women were from the same political party, we understood it as political endorsement,” she said. *Ms.* “does not get involved in the domestic politics” of other countries.

AJCongress President Richard Gordon called that argument “specious,” noting that in any parliamentary democracy, the foreign minister and parliament leader are going to

be from the same party.

Gordon also noted that none of the women are running for office, and the ad does not suggest support for either of their parties.

He pointed out that

*Ms.* ran a cover story about Jordan’s Queen Noor in 2003, and a story in its most recent issue about Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, under the headline “This is What a Speaker Looks Like.”

Gordon said the only difference he sees between Pelosi and the three women featured in the AJCongress ad is that Pelosi is not Israeli.

“*Ms.* magazine obviously is trying to create a legal fiction after the fact to cover their bias at the time of the incident,” he said.

Spillar said Tuesday that it is “unfair and untrue” to allege that *Ms.* magazine is anti-Israel. She said the magazine is running a two-page profile of Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni, one of the three leaders pictured in the AJCongress ad, in its Winter 2008 issue, which hits newsstands Jan. 29.

In a faxed statement, Spillar wrote that the magazine has covered the Israeli feminist movement and the country’s women leaders in 11 articles in its past 16 issues.

But the AJCongress ad was “inconsistent” with the *Ms.* policy of not being politically partisan, and the slogan “This is Israel” in the ad “implied that women in Israel hold equal positions of power with men,” whereas “Israel, like every other country, has far to go to reach equality for women.”

Speaking later to JTA by phone, Spillar said she “puts the U.S. in the same category as Israel” in terms of having far to go to achieve full gender equality. But the AJCongress ad “was almost a country ad, and we don’t take country ads.”

Harriet Kurlander, the director of AJCongress’ Commission for Women’s Empowerment, said that when she originally tried to place the ad, a magazine representative told her that the magazine “would love to have an ad from you on women’s empowerment, or reproductive freedom, but not on this.”

In other conversations with maga-



Photo courtesy of JTA

zine staff members, Kurlander said she was told that publishing the ad would “set off a firestorm.”

Kurlander said the magazine should admit its “cover-up” and “simply print the ad.”

Among the Jewish feminists speaking out on the issue is Blu Greenberg, the founding president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance. Greenberg said that by not accepting the ad, *Ms.* is “aligning itself with the political far left that wants to delegitimize Israel altogether on the stage of world opinion.”

“I wish I could believe that we’re overblowing it, but I’ve been in numerous situations where I’ve seen the same thing — this total excoriation of Israel,” she said. “That’s what we’re all feeling right now.”

Susan Weidman Schneider of *Lilith* magazine said she was “very surprised” by the refusal of *Ms.* to run the ad. But Schneider said that after speaking to the magazine’s publisher Monday, she believes the ad was likely rejected “out of a place of ignorance” and was not intended as “a willful slap in the face to Israel.”

Weidman Schneider said she considers Spillar’s argument “possibly an ex post facto explanation.”

She said she told publisher Eleanor Smeal that in retrospect, *Ms.* would have done better to suggest to the AJCongress that the group shape an ad reflecting a broader range of women’s advancement in Israel if any perceived partisanship in the original ad was the impediment.

But beyond the fracas surrounding the actual ad, Weidman Schneider said she is disturbed by the “vitriol” she has seen on Jewish and feminist blogs over the past few days relating to the incident.

“I didn’t expect the depth of anti-feminist sentiment that this incident has stirred up,” she told JTA, noting that she has read comments referring to “femiNazis” and others suggesting the feminist movement is inherently anti-Israel. “I felt quite chilled.”

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### 2008 Men's Event

Former Dallas Cowboys Head Coach

## Barry Switzer

Monday, January 21, 2008  
Westin Park Central Hotel  
6:00 p.m. – Registration & Cash Bar  
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. – Program  
Registration available online at [www.jewishdallas.org](http://www.jewishdallas.org)  
or by calling Lesley Kahn at (214) 615-5217.



### 2008 Women's Event

New York Times Best-Selling Author

## Iris Krasnow

Tuesday, January 22, 2008  
Hilton Anatole  
11:00 a.m. – Registration  
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Program  
Registration available online at [www.jewishdallas.org](http://www.jewishdallas.org)  
or by calling Samantha Kennealy at (214) 615-5239.

