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ed many heads of state and  
British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

**Judaism.** The year 1999 was characterized in world Jewish life by a return to centrism on many fronts. Renewed efforts to establish peace in the Middle East, a resurgence of anti-Semitism, and developments within Judaism's religious movements all pointed away from polarization and toward an emphasis on cooperation.

**Israel.** Israel's government, formed by the new prime minister, Ehud Barak, in July, included political parties with varying religious outlooks, including the secular Meretz party and the fervently religious Shas party. Religious divisions threatened the coalition from the start, but compromises were made. As the year ended, a compromise was being sought on a proposal to change the "Law of Return," a provision of the Israeli Constitution guaranteeing that most Jews may immigrate to Israel if they choose. Orthodox Jews expressed concern that many of those claiming Israeli citizenship under the law were actually non-Jews of Jewish descent who actively practiced Christianity.

**World.** The war in Yugoslavia and continued unrest in Ethiopia affected the fate of Jews in 1999. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a relief organization, created a refuge in Hungary, for Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia. Some of the refugees went on to Israel. More than 1,800 Jews from embattled regions of Ethiopia also arrived in Israel between July and November.

The deportations and mass-murders perpetrated against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo rekindled in many Jews in 1999 memories of the Nazi Holocaust that killed 6 million Jews during World War II (1939-1945). Jews responded generously to appeals for aid to Kosovo, quickly raising more than \$4 million. A coalition of 42 different Jewish organizations helped to provide humanitarian relief.

**United States.** The American Jewish community was particularly shaken by the wave of hate crimes that occurred in the United States in 1999. On June 18, three synagogues in Sacramento, California, were damaged in arson attacks. In July, a member of a white supremacy group went on a shooting spree targeting minority groups in Illinois and Indiana, including Jews in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Chicago. In August, a gunman opened fire in a Los Angeles Jewish preschool, injuring five people. A shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in April, coincided with the birthday of Adolf Hitler. Many Jews considered these attacks a wake-up call that highlighted the persistence of anti-Semitism.

The U.S. Jewish community moved to effect greater unity during 1999. Three major Jewish philanthropic organizations—the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal, and the United Israel Appeal—merged in April to create the United Jewish Communities.

Reform Judaism, the liberal movement embracing more than 40 percent of religiously identifying American Jews, adopted in May a new, more traditional "Statement of Principles." Among other provisions, the statement called for increased study of *Torah* (the teachings of Judaism) and observance of commandments. While the statement was nonbinding, it indicated an effort by Reform leaders to reinvigorate abandoned traditions.

Edah, a two-year-old organization representing Orthodox Judaism's more liberal wing, held a large national conference in New York City in February aimed at strengthening what many of its members called "Modern Orthodoxy." It sought to counter a perceived rightward turn in Orthodoxy, away from modernity.

The Jewish community, however, displayed growing political diversity on such issues as public school vouchers, abortion, and Middle East peace. Leaders of the New York and Chicago Jewish communal federations, in letters sent in June and August, urged that secular matters such as these should be removed from the communal agenda, in order to focus on core issues relating to survival of the Jewish people and faith.

□ Jonathan D. Sarna and Jonathan J. Golden

See also **Israel; Middle East.**

**Kampuchea.** See **Cambodia.**  
**Kansas.** See **State government.**

