



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom

Issue Number 20  
December 2008

## Israeli Leaders Congratulate Obama On Victory

### Obama Sends Strong Signal To Israel By Appointing Emanuel Chief of Staff

Barack Obama reached out to a prominent Jewish congressman, Illinois Rep. Rahm Emanuel, to be his Chief of Staff, earning renewed support from the Jewish community here and abroad.

Obama's offer could be an early signal to the Middle East that the new president intends to follow through on his promises to uphold the US-Israeli alliance in his administration.

Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council said Obama's selection of Emanuel helps build confidence that the United States will be vigilant in responding to any threats to Israel posed by Iran. "Rahm has certainly never been accused of being too naive or not decisive in his analysis of these types of issues," Forman said.

Emanuel is the son of a Jerusalem-born doctor who worked for the Israeli underground before the nation's creation following World War II. He belongs to an orthodox congregation in Chicago and worked as a volunteer in Israel during the first Gulf War. Though Obama was accused of being conciliatory toward Iran and toward Palestinians during the presidential race, an Emanuel appointment could combat those perceptions.

Emanuel has indicated consistent support for Israel's rights. While he has expressed empathy for Palestinians, Emanuel has explicitly condemned their leaders.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni congratulated US president-elect Barack Obama on his victory, saying that Israelis were "impressed by his commitment to the peace and security of Israel" during his recent visit.

In a statement released after the election, Livni also thanked Sen. John McCain for his "long-standing friendship" with Israel, and congratulated him on an honorable campaign.

Opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu sent Obama a telegram also congratulating him on his election. "You and the American people have brought about a historic change," Netanyahu wrote. "You've reminded the world what the US symbolizes - the hope and promise of a better future." "I am convinced that we will work together for peace, security and prosperity in our region and a better future for us all," he added.

Also reacting to the election, Shimon Peres said what he had hoped for Obama when he visited Israel, that he could do for "to be a great of the United America." Peres sent Obama a personal letter, which read "The needs a great is in your making in our prayers. you."

Prime Minister Olmert also congratulated Obama on his and impressive

"America proved once again that it is indeed the greatest democracy, which sets an example to all the democracies in the world," Olmert said.

Olmert added that Israel and the US have a special relationship based on shared values and interests. "Israel and America have a joint will to continue and strengthen that relationship and advance peace and the stability in the Middle East. I have no doubt that this special relationship between the two countries will continue and strengthen during the Obama administration."

### Livni To Obama: Don't Talk To Iran

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni warned President-elect Obama that talking to Iran could project "weakness." Her comments marked a first sign of disagreement with the incoming American administration. Obama has stated a willingness to talk to Iran about its nuclear program without condition. His policy marks a departure from that of the Bush administration, which refused to engage Iranian leaders.

Livni said in an interview with Israel Radio shortly after the US election that "dialogue at this time is liable to broadcast weakness." She added, "early dialogue at a time when it appears to Iran that the world has given up on sanctions could be problematic." Obama says direct diplomacy with Iranian leaders would give the US more credibility to press for tougher international sanctions.

to the US President reiterated said to he was in best thing Israel was president States of Peres also short per- which world leader. It ing. It is God bless

Ehud Olmert congratulated "historic victory."

## Dead Sea Science

Two Israeli institutions, the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot and Hebrew University in Jerusalem, placed first and second, respectively, among scientific institutions outside of the US according to a ranking published by The Scientist magazine in the November, 2008 issue.

"What's unique to us," says Haim Garty, a biochemist and Vice President of the top-ranked Weizmann Institute, "is that the red tape is minimal." The institute's role is to provide the resources and stay out of the way, he says. For example, Weizmann has no undergraduate students, so scientists are less distracted by teaching duties. The Institute also offers its scientists a network of affordable core facilities, from bioinformatics to a proteomics center which provides everything from cloning to 3-D structure analysis, says Garty.

Second place winner, Hebrew University, stresses mentoring of young faculty and actively avoids overburdening them with non-research tasks says Hermona Soreq, a molecular biologist and former dean of the science faculty. "If a new faculty member is asked to spend most of their time on teaching or administration, they are endangering their whole career."

Unlike Weizmann, Hebrew University has about 2000 undergraduate students, but the teaching load is shared with graduate students, she says. Each new faculty hire is assigned a senior faculty member. In Israel, family-friendly policies are the norm, says Soreq, noting her institution's on-campus day care facilities and breast-feeding rooms. A handful of national grants, including a fund for "convergent technologies," focus specifically on interdisciplinary research.

Top 10 International Academic Institutions

Rank in 2008	Institution	No. of Full-Time Life Science Researchers	Federal Funding* (in millions USD)**	Papers Published <sup>2,3</sup> in the Life Sciences	Citations per <sup>2,3</sup> Paper
1	Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel	236	304.2 NIS (\$88.0 USD)	4,505	27.91
2	Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel	513	884.7 NIS (\$256.1 USD)	10,346	15.14
3	University of Liverpool, United Kingdom	594	£23.3 (\$41.3 USD)	7,936	13.42
4	Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Parkville, Australia	820	12.1 AUD (\$9.4 USD)	354	7.83
5	Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium	1,340	€43 (\$59.3 USD)	9,204	17.13
6	University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada	2,700	\$225.8 CAD (\$209.0 USD)	18,789	16.10
7	Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada	505	\$71.5 CAD (\$66.2 USD)	5,276	13.41
8	University of Antwerp, Belgium	595	€72.5 (\$100.1 USD)	4,217	12.77
9	Ghent University, Belgium	967	€315.5 (\$435.5 USD)	1,667	3.49
10	Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research, Mellebeke, Belgium	250	€30.0 (\$41.4 USD)	-	-

<sup>1</sup> Most recent fiscal year data available for funding of life science research.

<sup>2</sup> From ISI Web of Knowledge Essential Science Indicators, which covers the period Jan 1, 1998 to June 30, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Includes papers in Agricultural Sciences, Biology/Biochemistry, Clinical Medicine, Environment/Ecology, Immunology, Microbiology, Molecular Biology/Genetics, Neuroscience/Behavior,

Pharmacology/Toxicology, and Plant & Animal Science.

\* Only researchers who received federal funding for life science research were counted.

\*\* Conversion current as of October 3th, 2008

November 2008 THE SCIENTIST 51

## Scientists Grow Eggs From Five-Year-Old Girls With Cancer

Scientists from Hadassah Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem have successfully grown eggs from tissue taken from five-year-old girls suffering from cancer.

The breakthrough offers a ray of hope to childhood cancer sufferers who are often left infertile by the treatment, and are compelled to rely on donated eggs and sperm or adopting to have their own family. The problem is especially difficult for children who develop cancer before they reach puberty because they cannot freeze their own eggs and sperm.

The scientists have managed to grow eggs in the laboratory from samples of ovarian tissue taken from girls as young as five. Immature eggs can be removed from the tissue and grown to maturity in special culture.

The researchers further plan to conduct studies if they can be fertilized to create viable embryos. These could then be frozen and stored for future use or the unfertilized eggs could be frozen using the latest techniques, which have proven more effective."

As our ability to treat childhood cancers improves, it becomes more important that those survivors are able to live rich, full lives, including the ability have children," said Dr. David Adamson, the President of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. "This research helps move us to the goal of allowing pediatric cancer survivors to become parents," he added.

## Moscow To Build \$100 Million Hotel for Russian Tourists at Dead Sea

The Moscow municipality plans to build a \$100 million hotel for Russians at the Dead Sea, the Israeli Tourism Ministry said.

The Tourism Ministry forecasted an influx of 400,000 Russian tourists to the country in 2009.

The 172,000 square-foot, 240-room hotel, with a helipad, will be built by Sun Dream, a company owned by the Moscow municipality and the Intercons Corp, the ministry said in a statement.

Construction is expected to begin within a few months.