



The OU Biennial National Convention 2004, held in Jerusalem over Thanksgiving weekend, was an extraordinary experience for the many who took part.

The Convention was sold out, with an attendance of 800 from twenty-five US states and Canada. The gathering swelled to 1,100 for Shabbat when residents of Israel joined the others. Surely, the idea of a convention in Israel struck a chord with OU members across North America.

The Convention marked the beginning of the administration of the OU's new president, Stephen J. Savitsky, who succeeded Harvey Blitz, following the completion of Mr. Blitz' successful four years in office. In his inaugural address, Mr. Savitsky outlined a highly ambitious program for the next two years, which includes expanding OU programs and increasing both our shul and individual membership.

"If the great attendance and enthusiasm at this convention is any indicator of the future—and I believe it is—in the years ahead, the Orthodox Union will be an ever-more powerful force benefiting the Jewish people worldwide," said Mr. Savitsky in his keynote address.

The sessions and the festivities left indelible memories. A selection of some of the most memorable moments can be seen in these pages.

1. Convention Coordinator and OU Director of Special Projects Frank Buchweitz calls the gathering to order on Wednesday night.

2. OU Executive Director, Programming Rabbi Moshe D. Krupka (left) and outgoing OU president, Harvey Blitz, (right) welcome United States Ambassador to Israel Daniel C. Kurtzer. During his address, the ambassador affirmed President Bush's position that Palestinian terrorism must cease for there to be any progress in the peace process.

3. Convention Co-Chair Yitzchak Fund (left) of Jerusalem converses with Israel's chief rabbis: HaRav Yonah Metzger and HaRav Shlomo Amar.



4. Convention Co-Chair Stanley Weinstein of Miami Beach, Florida, welcomes guests at the opening session.

5. Israel's president, Moshe Katsav, in his opening night address, praises the OU's efforts to fight assimilation.

6. Jerusalem's mayor, Uri Lupolianski, welcomes convention participants.

7. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Choir provides entertainment at the convention.

8. OU Executive Vice President Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb delivers a keynote address on the state of the American Orthodox synagogue and community.

9. There were plenty of opportunities for shopping at the convention exhibit hall.

10. Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discusses Israel's improving economy as well as prospects for peace.



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11. Chairman of the OU Board of Governors Martin Nachimson of Valley Village, California, chairs the meeting where a new slate of officers was elected.

12. Rabbi Leonard Matanky of Chicago, Illinois, speaks about the generational divide and adolescents at-risk.



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17. Convention Co-Chair Dr. Benzion Krupka of Far Rockaway, New York, opens the Thanksgiving dinner program.

18. The OU paid tribute to, and demonstrated solidarity with, victims of terror and the people of Israel at the Saturday night *melaveh malkah*. The event was co-sponsored by OneFamily Fund. Pictured above, a young terror victim is serenaded.

19. Convention participants *daven* at Kever Rachel before Shabbat.

20. Rabbi Weinreb welcomes IDF Liaison to the United States Rabbi Major Yedidya Atlas (center) and his fellow IDF chaplains to a new mobile *beit kneset* (synagogue), which the OU presented as a gift to the IDF.

21. Rabbi Dovid Cohen (center), director general, OU Israel, gives a tour of the OU Israel Center in Jerusalem. 

13. Chief Rabbi of the IDF Rav Yisrael Weiss (left) participates in a ceremony honoring Mrs. Terri Barnett of Columbus, Ohio, who purchased the 70,000th OU prayer card on behalf of the members of the IDF. Proceeds from the sale of the cards, at one dollar apiece, provide assistance to IDF members in financial need. Senior Vice President Harvey Wolinetz of Monsey, New York, looks on.

14. Mrs. Bonny Silver being honored at the dedication of the Avrom Silver Jerusalem College for Adults, named after her late husband. The college is the adult educational component of the Seymour J. Abrams OU Jerusalem World Center (the OU Israel Center).

15. Newly elected president, Stephen J. Savitsky, of Hewlett, New York, articulates his vision for the future of the OU in his inaugural address.

16. Outgoing OU president, Harvey Blitz, of Kew Garden Hills, New York, delivers his farewell address.



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Photos: Joel Fishman