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Campus Jewish community celebrates Rosh Hashana

The 10-day Jewish holiday provides a time of reflection and spirituality for some students at the University

By **Jared Paben**
News Reporter

Abram Goodstein stepped to the Willamette River's edge clutching a handful of Fred Meyer white enriched bread. The dark lenses of his sunglasses concealed his eyes, but he had a solemn expression on his face.

Goodstein held in his thoughts one of the sins he had committed in the past year — the custom during this Jewish Tashlich ceremony, which is part of the Hebrew new year Rosh Hashana. He then mashed some of the bread into a tightly packed ball and tossed it into the current, repeating the spiritual exercise over and over again, each time thinking about another one of his past sins.

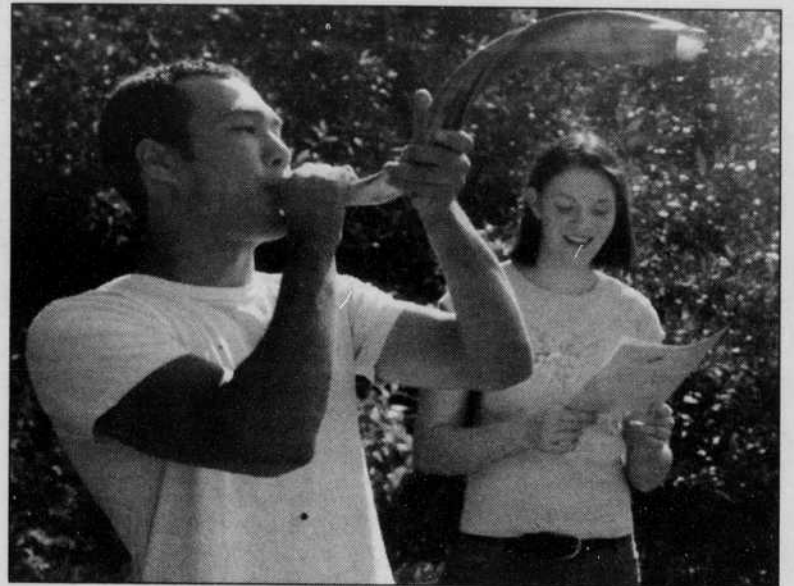
For Goodstein, a freshman anthropology major, and the other members of the Oregon Hillel who gathered at the river for Sunday's ceremony, the casting away of the bread symbolizes the casting away of their sins.

But in reality, the ceremony was just the lighter side to the first three days of Rosh Hashana, explained Hal Applebaum, executive director of Oregon Hillel. The 10-day process of introspection started on Friday evening when campus Jews opened the holiday with a service that brought together about 75 people to pray, chant and sing some of their most ancient prayers.

Hillel board member Jonathan Seidel — who works as a rabbi and teaches in the University Judaic studies program — led the service Friday night.

This time is "more serious than a football game," Seidel explained to the crowd. "It's a time of reckoning; a time of renewal. It's really that day of oneness, getting that balance with yourself."

Sharon Ungerleider, an ex-director and current board member for Oregon Hillel, also attended the service. She took part in singing the English and



Lauren Wimer Photographer

As part of the Rosh Hashana celebration, senior Daniel Gruber blows the shofar as senior Rachael Osofsky intermittently calls for the traditional sound of the shofar.

Hebrew songs, some of which are the oldest and most central to Judaism. She also participated in reciting the Sh'ma, which she described as the first prayer to declare the existence of only one god. "Hear O Israel, the Eternal is our God. The Eternal is one," an excerpt from the prayer reads.

One of the chants has a melody that is 2,000 years old, Ungerleider said.

Seidel said Rosh Hashana is the most important time of the year for Jewish people.

"It's a time for beginning anew and getting a chance to hear the inner voice," he said. "That introspective part has grown to be the most important part."

On Saturday morning, members of the campus Jewish community gathered again at the Hillel House, located at 1059 Hilyard St., for a smaller, yet equally important ceremony. They prayed, sang, and read directly from the Torah.

About 8,000 Jewish alumni have passed through the University, Ungerleider said. The school's Hillel House, which is not directly affiliated with the school, has been active for eight years. Information about the Hillel can be found at www.oregonhillel.org. There are houses just like it on campuses across the United States and in countries across the globe.

Ironically for Goodstein, who took

the Tashlich ceremony especially seriously, it was a first for him. Goodstein, an Alaska native who was born and raised Jewish, hadn't heard of the ceremony until recently.

Despite that, Rosh Hashana has not only been a time of reflection and prayer, but a time of understanding for Goodstein.

"What it used to mean to me is sitting in a service, bored out of my mind, listening to Hebrew, which I barely understood," he said. "It's more just atonement, it's understanding — that's what I feel about these holidays now."

About 40 students and community members also celebrated the first night of Rosh Hashana with Chabad of Eugene, rabbi Asi Spiegel said. Services took place at the River Ranch events center in Eugene, and traditional meals followed the celebration.

"It's a very strong beginning, the way you start the year," Spiegel said. "By trying to pray and focus and meditate, it really effects things that will come in the new year."

Chabad will also celebrate Yom Kippur starting Oct. 5 with a free prefast meal at 5:30 p.m. and services at 6:30 p.m. The event will also take place at the River Ranch events center.

Contact the people/culture/faith reporter at jaredpaben@dailyemerald.com.

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