

Protesting 'kosher' buses

Young people in Israel are protesting the separate seating between men and women on transportation in Jerusalem. **Kobi Nahshoni** reports.

DOZENS of young people protesting the separation between men and women on public transportation in Jerusalem toured a number of cities last Tuesday night, where they hung signs in protest of the "mehadrin lines" that stipulate the separation.

The activists, who will hold a protest in the capital next week, are also calling for Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, who has allowed the gender separation to be instated, to step down.

In a night-time campaign called "A Stop in Time", the protesters hung posters that sought to demonstrate to Israeli citizens what public transportation could look like in the future if the mehadrin lines are authorised and expanded. The signs were hung in hundreds of bus stops in Jerusalem, Ra'anana, Holon, Tel Aviv, Be'er Sheva, and Tiberias.

"This bus stop is mehadrin kosher. Thus, men enter and sit down in the front; women and all the rest – to the back," the posters read. Underneath the headline is an illustration showing that "women, blacks, and minorities" belong in the back along with a "kashrut stamp" showing that the line

has been deemed kosher "with the oversight of the transportation minister and subsidised by the state".

One of the protest's organisers explained: "Gender-segregated lines exist today in many cities and between many cities, not just in Charedi centres. We are protesting against Minister Katz's statements and the blind eye Egged has turned to the despicable phenomenon of women being moved to the back of the bus, sometimes through physical and verbal violence.

"The mehadrin lines serve a mixed population that is not only Charedi. This segregation is forced on the general public," he explained.

"This bus stop is mehadrin kosher. Thus, men enter and sit down in the front; women and all the rest – to the back."

Poster protesting transportation segregation

The organiser also claimed that new lines are added weekly to what he calls "discrimination lines". According to him, the policy is strictly enforced by Charedi passengers as drivers turn a blind eye and sometimes even support their violent acts.

"The ministerial committee that was established by High Court request ruled unequivocally that the segregation must



A number of young people hung signs around Israel last week in protest of the separation between men and women on public transport in Jerusalem.

be stopped. Despite this, nothing has yet been done on the matter. On the contrary, the Transportation Minister has come out more than once in favour of the segregation lines and their necessity."

This weekend, the Forum of Organisations for a Free Jerusalem will hold a rally in front of the Prime Minister's residence in a call for Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to get involved in the issue. They will also call

for Katz's resignation.

Taking part in the event will be organisations such as the Israel Religious Action Centre, which is spearheading the legal battle against the kosher lines, Jerusalemites, Ela, Hitorerut Yerushalayim, New Spirit Students for Jerusalem, Meretz, Labour Party's Young Guard, and Hiddush for Religious Equality and Freedom.

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iPhone prayers to be sounded in Jerusalem

TZOFIA HIRSCHFELD

THE wonders of technology. The Jerusalem.com tourist website launched an iPhone application last month that enables people from around the world and of any religion to record a 45-second prayer that is then sounded on a loudspeaker opposite Jerusalem's walls at a time and day of the person's choice.

"This option is for people who want to maintain a spiritual connection with the city but are unable to visit it," explained Michael Weiss, one of the website's administrators. "The idea is to provide a meaningful experience beyond an image of the city. We allow any person in the world to be heard in the city of God.

"Israelis' accessibility to the holy sites is elementary, but is not within the reach of millions of people. Many of them will not be able to come here even once in their lives. Using this technology, one can provide people far away with something of the holy city's DNA," Weiss said.

He added that the loudspeaker was installed in the Yemin Moshe neighbourhood and operated on medium volume.

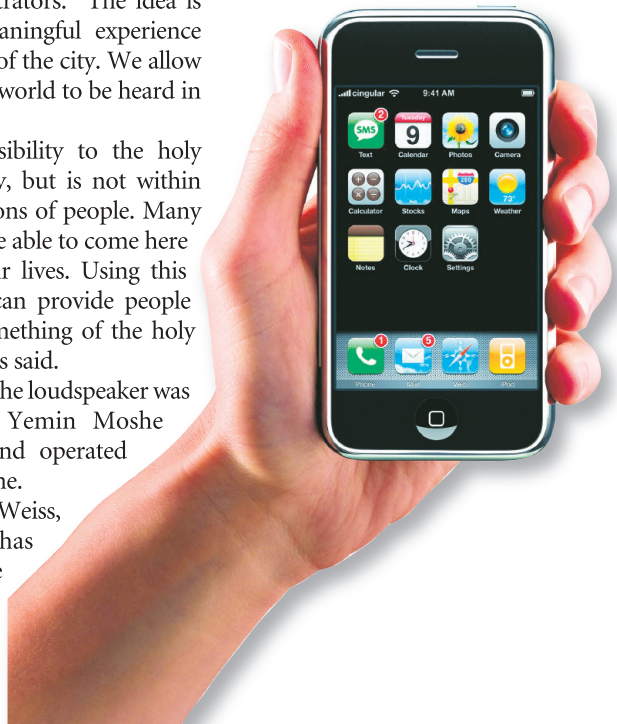
According to Weiss, after a prayer has been sounded, the person who sent the recording receives a message saying "God

heard your prayer in Jerusalem".

Thus far, prayers have been received from 72 countries and Weiss said that Jews are "the strongest audience", but that there are many prayers from Christians and Muslims.

"We see a connection between the nature of the prayers and everyday life," Weiss said. "The economic crisis has brought about many prayers pertaining to work from around the world. The number of prayers rises substantially towards the holidays. We are expecting masses of prayers ahead of Passover."

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Shabbat times

Friday, March 12
- Adar 26
Candle-lighting
7.27pm

Saturday, March
13 - Adar 27
Shabbat ends
8.22pm

IT'S KOSHER

Dalia Sable



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With 40 per cent less sugar than the average frozen snack, Smooze also has a low fat content, zero cholesterol and is free from trans fats, which can be attributed to its coconut milk base. While coconut milk was once considered unhealthy, new studies show that

it is a healthy fat easily converted into energy. Smooze is also dairy and gluten free and can be kept in the cupboard for a snack on the go, or frozen when desired.

Smooze is certified kosher by US authority OK and available in three varieties, coconut/mango, coconut/pink guava and coconut/pineapple. Sold in boxes of 10, Smooze can be found at Coles and Woolworths supermarkets, as well as at selected independent supermarkets and health-food stores.