

## Jewish bikers create a community of their own

By ELINOR J. BRECHER  
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**MIAMI** - From a distance, they look like any other squadron of bikers out for a Sunday ride: leathers, flashy motorcycles, piratical bandanas. But pull up next to the King David Bikers and you will see T-shirts reading "100 percent kosher all-beef biker," gold "chais" (Chai is Hebrew for `life') dangling from ears, Israeli flags whipping alongside U.S. flags and a two-tone bike with "Harley Ben David" painted on it.

Jewish bikers? Why not?

"We share a passion to ride and the bond of our faith," said club president Jeff Mustard, 45, who is in advertising and public relations for an investment firm.

Mustard said with 105 members, the King David Bikers are the biggest Jewish motorcycle club in Florida, drawing doctors, lawyers, retirees, SJFs-seeking-SJMs-with-wheels and a middle-age woman who will not give her name because her parents would plotz if they knew their Nice Jewish Daughter rode a motorcycle.

Founded last spring, the club joins the growing international universe of Jewish biker groups, including the New York Chai Riders, Hillel's Angels, Members of the Tribe, the YOWs - Yidden on Wheels - and SOBs - Semites on Bikes.

One recent Sunday, the club's spiritual leader, Rabbi Zachary Betesh, muscled a hefty leather saddle bag onto a table at JP Bistro, a kosher restaurant in Hollywood, Fla.

The day before, he had led an Orthodox Shabbat service at a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Chabad.

The club meets at the restaurant Sunday mornings to nosh, kibbitz and study scripture before settling their helmets over their yarmulkes and roaring off wherever they decide to go.

"Who wants to daven pray?" asked Betesh, 48. Five men stepped forward as others headed for the breakfast buffet and still others went to check out the Bikers With Chutzpah caps and Jews Who Cruise mugs for sale.

Inside the saddle bag: tefillin, tallesim and a downsized Torah scroll.

Tefillin are the leather boxes containing prayers attached to leather straps. Tallesim are prayer shawls. Observant Jewish men use both for morning worship.

Betesh helped one of the men wrap tefillin around his arm. The worshipers faced east, began to chant and rock back and forth.

"All prayer should come from the heart," Betesh counseled. "This is the prayer that God hears."

Sherry Pressman, 49, a Pembroke Pines, Fla., pharmacy manager, is praying she will find Mr. Right through the club.

"I loved riding with my ex-boyfriend," said Pressman, who is divorced.

Her profile on J-Date, the Internet dating site for Jewish singles, said: "Motorcycle a plus."

She vows to learn to ride next year.

"Mazel tov!" said Tova Fischtein, 46, who teaches at a Boca Raton, Fla., Jewish day school.

"I've been on the back of a bike since I was 2," she said. "My father had one in Israel. We didn't have a car."

She enjoys riding so much that "Sunday mornings, I don't need an alarm clock to get up."

Pressman said her two adult daughters "think they have a really cool mom."

But not all club members get similar support from their relatives.

"My mother hates the fact that I bought a bike," said optometrist Ricky Myers, 53, a charter King David member who has a Miami practice. "And I got one of the biggest bad boys there is: the Ultra Classic."

This day, Betesh was not riding because he had to perform a wedding. He had pulled up in a mammoth black Humvee. In addition to a 2002 Ultra Classic, he also owns a 1996 Harley Fatboy.

It was a conventional wedding, he explained, "but someday I want to perform the first Orthodox Jewish biker wedding in South Florida."

A Long Islander, he has been riding since college, which he attended on a wrestling scholarship. He joined the club last August, after someone in his Lubavitch congregation mentioned hearing a bunch of Jewish bikers were looking for a spiritual leader.

The Brooklyn-born Mustard, who rides a Yamaha Road Star Silverado, started the club because he did not feel much of a connection to other bikers.

"I'd go to various meetings, mostly at bars, and found a not very welcoming environment, like I was the new kid at the bus stop."

Said charter member Irwin Zagoria, 47, a retirement planner from Plantation: "Everybody here is like family."