

IN SUNRISE RITE, JEWS RECALL CREATION

By CHARLES AUSTIN

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At dawn yesterday Rabbi Zalman Schachter stood on the observation deck of the Empire State Building and watched the sun's rays flash across Long Island Sound and glint off the windows of Brooklyn. As the sunlight brightened the East River and streamed into Manhattan, he sounded the shofar - a ram's horn trumpet - and led several hundred worshipers in the Birkat ha-Hamah, the Jewish blessing of the sun, which takes place only once every 28 years.

The rite marks what the Jewish calendar determines to be the fourth day of Creation, the day on which the sun was made and set "to rule the day," according to the story of the Creation in the Book of Genesis. It is observed at 28-year intervals because a rabbinic tradition holds that on those occasions the sun is in the same position in the sky that it was on the day of Creation.

About 300 people, most of them young adults, crowded the northeast corner of the observation deck and raised their hands in prayer with Rabbi Schachter, professor of religion and Jewish mysticism at Temple University in Philadelphia. Participants joined in a hymn of creation mentioning the sun, the moon and the stars and declaring, "Joyous in their rising and exultant in their setting; they perform with awe the will of their Master." Many Wear Prayer Shawls

Many of the worshipers wore the prayer shawls and tefillin - small boxes containing verses of Scripture - common in Orthodox Judaism. During the two-and-one-half-hour service, conducted in Hebrew and English, the Philadelphia rabbi led a series of prayers asking "healing for ourselves and for our planet, good crops and solutions to our economic problems."

At the end of the service, 70 balloons representing the nations of the earth in biblical times were released and floated to the northeast, accompanied by applause and shouts from the worshipers. Some of the young people remained on the 86th-floor observation deck after the ceremony ended, singing a Hebrew version of "Let the Sun Shine In" from the rock opera "Hair."

Rabbi Schachter, an expert on Jewish worship and mysticism, said the rite "helps us renew our relationship with the solar system and increase our awareness of the sun as a source of energy."

Other ceremonies were held on the roof of the World Trade Center, atop the Y.M.H.A. building at 185th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, and at Yeshiva University's Danziger campus overlooking the Harlem River. In local synagogues special prayers were inserted into the regular morning prayers, according to a spokesman for the American Jewish Congress, organizer of the Empire State Building observance.

Birkat ha-Hamah services were also held at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and on beaches at Cape Cod, Mass.