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# Madonna and hubby Guy Ritchie celebrate religious holiday in Holy Land

OFFBEAT WITH PHILIP POTEempa

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FRIENDS OF FAITH - - Singer Madonna (left) and her director husband Guy Ritchie (right) welcomed the arrival of the Jewish holiday Rosh Hashanah in Isreal at the home of the country's president Shimon Peres (middle). (Image courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)

### Holiday travel

**Madonna** and her film director husband **Guy Ritchie** joined thousands of followers of Kabbalah in Tel Aviv last week to celebrate Rosh Hashana for the Jewish New Year.

Madonna decided to "ring in the holiday" with a visit to the Jerusalem home of Israeli President **Shimon Peres**.

Other luminaries who also attended included actress **Demi Moore** and her husband actor **Ashton Kutcher**, fashion designer **Donna Karan** and former talk-show host **Rosie O'Donnell**, all of them accompanying Madonna to Israel to attend the special conference for Kabbalah, which is described as a medieval form of Jewish mysticism.

How do I know all about Madonna's comings and goings last week?

I was contacted with the scoop by **Marcus Sheff**, a publicist for The Israel Project, an international nonprofit organization "devoted to educating the press and the public about Israel while promoting security, freedom and peace."

Marcus said the group was created "to provide journalists, leaders and opinion-makers accurate information about Israel."

The Israel Project is not related to any government or government agency.

According to presidential spokeswoman, **Ayelet Frish**, the two discussed how to advance the peace process, as well as issues of conciliation and tolerance throughout the world. Madonna promised to do her best to promote these values in her songs and books.

Although most of Madonna's recent headlines have been about her overseas adoptions, she has also become increasingly involved in humanitarian issues around the world in recent years.

Her last trip to Israel was three years ago, also on a Kabbalah-centered trip.

She first visited the Jewish state in 1993, when she performed in a concert unrelated to Kabbalah in Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park. Madonna said she will return to Israel next weekend for Yom Kippur.

### Book it

While at this year's 26th Annual Wizard of Oz Festival, one of the visiting guests I met was a young author from New Hampshire named **Joshua Dudley**, who is continuing the story traditions started by **Frank L. Baum** when he originally penned the first of 40 books about the land of Oz way back in 1900.

Dudley, 21, can be proud of his new book, which is also his first book, "Lost in Oz" (May 2007 [www.Lulu.com](http://www.Lulu.com) \$10.95).

It's not only selling well, it also has a great story, including the author's own experiences and voice as one of the characters.

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The opinions expressed are solely those of the writer. He can be reached at [ppotempa@nwtimes.com](mailto:ppotempa@nwtimes.com) or 219.852.4327.

## celebBirthdays

Cartoon voice legend **June Foray** (Rocky the Squirrel, Tweety Bird's Granny) is 90. Singer **Jimmie Rodgers** and actor **Robert Blake** are 74. Actor **Fred Willard** is 68. Singer-actor **Frankie Avalon** is 67. Guitarist **Kerry Livgren** (Kansas) is 58. Actor **James Gandolfini** ("The Sopranos") is 46. Singer **Joanne Catherall** of the Human League is 45. Actress **Holly Robinson Peete** ("Hangin' With Mr. Cooper") is 43. Singer **Ricky Bell** (Bell Biv DeVoe, New Edition) is 40. Actress **Jada Pinkett Smith** is 36. Actor **James Marsden** ("The Notebook," "Ally McBeal") is 34. Rapper **Xzibit** is 33. Actors **Taylor** and **Brandon Porter** ("Party of Five") and **Patrick Schwarznegger** (son of Gov. Arnold and Maria Shriver) are 14.

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