

Rakefet News

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Rakefet News

Rakefet for Windows Version 4.0 is here at last!

Well, we've finally released the long-awaited Rakefet version 4. After you do your backup and install it, you'll immediately notice that the windows are larger and fonts more readable, that some windows that were fixed in size (the Database Detail window is the prime example) are now resizable, and that the menus contain entries for Scheduling and Relationships.

Your financial people will find that account numbers have 6 digits instead of 3 (we've converted the old ones by adding 3 zeros), and that the balance sheet has a new way of displaying Restricted and Unrestricted Equity, which we hope will be clearer. Also, each restricted fund now has an retained equity account associated with it, so you can transfer fund balances with a simple journal entry. The check-deposit register continues to display individual checks and deposits, but now they are sorted in order of entry within each day.

One of the features that we've been promising for some time is e-mail support: if you have e-mail addresses in the family or individual e-mail fields, you can send any Letters, Statements, or Receipts by e-



mail. More features in this area are coming soon.

You should also take a look at the Resource Scheduling function (Special / Scheduling) which allows you to keep track of the usage of resources such as rooms and even personnel. And at Setup / Relationship Manager, you will find the ability to define and apply relationships between families and individuals in the database for purposes of fund-raising, mishloach manot, etc.

These are also areas that we are planning to upgrade soon with automatic entry of recurring functions in scheduling, and special reports for mishloach manot.

Other new features are a mass area code replacement function, the ability to save and restore

setups for the Member Data report (152), including a custom Palm Pilot export; many changes to the Letter Writer including importing graphics and building tables; the ability

to backup and restore to and from hard drives, Zip Drives, and CD/R devices; new support for UK address formats; and the ability to bill for tuition by class.

Finally, there are many internal changes to improve performance and data integrity: see my article on "Inside Version 4" for technical details.

This list isn't even complete! See Help / What's New for a list of changes. Thank you for your patience, and we know you will find the new program exciting.

-Vic

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"One of the features that we've been promising for some time is e-mail support.."



Dear Lise

Dear Lise,

A congregant's father died on March 7 last year which was the 30th day of Adar I. This year your dumb program printed out his yahrzeit as occurring on February 23, which is the 30th day of Shevat. Is this a little hold-over from the Y2K bug?

Belligerent in Brooklyn

Dear Belle,

As strange as it may seem, in a year when there is no 30th day of Adar I (that is, in a non-leap year) the rabbis decided that kaddish would be recited on the 30th day of Shevat. Rakefet bases its yahrzeit system on the information in The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar by Arthur Spier, otherwise known as The Green Book (revised Third Edition).

Dear Lise,

Harry and Louise were married for many years and then Harry died. The family, which at this point was only Louise, received notification of his yahrzeit. Then Louise went on the internet and met Irv and they got married. I added Irv to the family file of Louise and changed the family title and salutation. However, Irv takes umbrage at receiving a yahrzeit notice about Harry, particularly when it refers to him as "your beloved husband." How do I handle this?

Embarrassed in El Paso

Dear Emmy,

On your yahrzeit screen you will see a field titled "Observed by" with the options being Family, Member 1, and Member 2. The default is family, and indeed if you bought Rakefet some time ago, that was the only option. However, now you can, on an individual basis, edit the yahrzeit file to have only Member 1 or only Member 2 receive the notification. Just remember to make the relationship make sense within that context and with your yahrzeit template.

Dear Lise,

I just got a notice from the bank that a congregant's dues check, which I deposited last week, bounced. I know what I'll do to him the next time I see him. The question is, how do I handle this in Rakefet?

Irate in Indianapolis

Dear Ira,

Just highlight the congregant's name and click the button off to the right that says "Refund." This is short for Refunds and Reversals which is a polite way of saying

bounced checks. Fill in today's date and the information about the check, the account, the amount, the check number. Fill in the transaction type, Payment or Donation, of the original check. This helps put his balance back where it belongs. In your situation, this is a Reversal, but if someone paid for next year's tuition and then got transferred to another city, you will be doing a Refund, and you can actually write the check from this part of the program.

Dear Lise,

I just purchased the CheckMark Payroll Software through you, and I think I filled in everything just right. The checks printed fine, but when I went to import, the import was unsuccessful. Can't it be more explicit?

Penelope Weiss

Dear Penny Wise,

From the Import Payroll screen, you can push the View File button and see the information that Rakefet was trying to import. The information is in this order: check date, check number, employee number, general ledger account number, amount, and end of pay period. If, for instance, you see two commas right next to each other where the employee number should be, the CheckMark doesn't know the number Rakefet assigned to that person in the Vendor/Employee file. If you locate and fix the problem, you will have to print the report again in CheckMark and do the import again in Rakefet. If you still can't find the problem, you can click File/Print and fax it to Transparent Software (559) 226-7957. Someone, probably me, will help you find the problem.

Dear Lise,

This doesn't exactly have anything to do with Rakefet, but last week I was talking to Melissa and I thought I heard a cat meowing. Was this her screensaver?

Nosy in Nashville

Dear Nosy,

We wish! Some time ago a dubious corporate decision was made to adopt an office cat, a deaf white animal named Lulu who was, as a matter of fact, being evicted from my daughter's apartment by her roommates. She adores Melissa and, in addition to sending faxes, putting through credit card transactions and erasing the message on the answering machine, she likes to do tech support, sometimes from on top of Melissa's head. Although Melissa is primarily a dog person she's been a remarkably good sport about this.

-Lise



Calling for an Appointment

When Transparent Software was a fledgling company with a dozen users and one phone line, whenever a customer called, the tech support department (me) would talk to the person right away until the problem was solved, whether it was a yes or no question or the philosophical underpinnings of a chart of accounts. As we grew, added additional lines and additional people to talk on them, it became necessary to set some ground rules about how long one of them could talk on a spontaneous phone call. We bought a date book and started setting appointments to talk about things that were clearly going to take a long time to handle thoroughly—initial training of new users or new personnel of established users, planning a chart of accounts, setting up some aspect of your synagogue that you haven't been handling on Rakefet up till now, like *yahrzeits* or the school. Setting an appointment has several advantages:

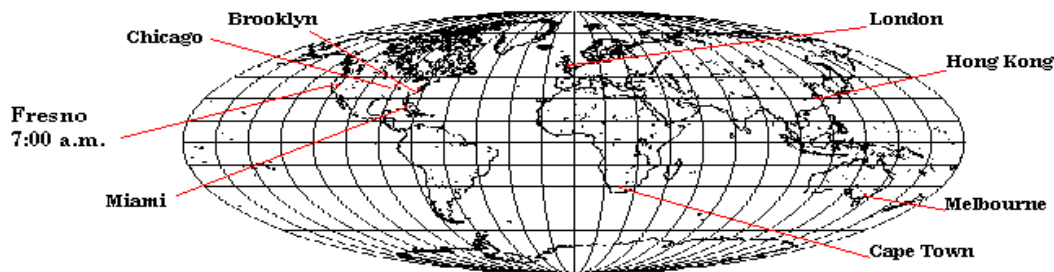
1. The person who will be doing the training can be uninterruptible. I will not make an appointment with you before Melissa comes in in the morning or for when she's at lunch, because at those times, I'm responsible for all phone lines plus the UPS man.
2. You can make arrangements so that you can be uninterruptible. Get a volunteer to come in and deal with the phone and foot traffic. It's much easier for you to concentrate.
3. We'll decide ahead of time to whom you need to talk and make sure that person is in the office. There are some things Lise handles more easily, some things Melissa is better at, and if you're doing something complicated technically, you'll be talking to Vic. Setting an appointment guarantees that the person you need to talk to is in the office and not at the dentist.

Sometimes when people have had several training sessions after purchasing Rakefet, they come away thinking that every communication with Rakefet needs to be an appointment. If you have a quick question, just call. We'll do our best to help you on the spot. Example of a quick question: What's the best report to tell me who is delinquent in his dues?

Example of an appointment topic: I have to assess my dues. I have some lists of the people who pay full dues and partial dues but that information isn't in Rakefet. Walk me through it.

Whenever you call Rakefet, here are some pointers to help us help you.

1. Have the computer turned on and Rakefet up and running before you call, so that if we need to ask you some questions you'll be able to answer them.
2. Identify yourself with the name of your synagogue and the city and state where it is located—and of course, your name. This enables us to quickly access your file and see what's going on. You might not even know that the president was in last night after a meeting, and the system crashed and he called for tech support, but we both want to be aware of that when we address your current question.
3. We open at 7 a.m. Pacific Time. See the little map on page below to determine what time that is where you live. It is not cricket to call before we open and leave us a message to call you back.
4. If this is a second or third call on a problem we've been tackling over a day or so, even if you end up with the same person you talked to before, give us a quick synopsis of what the problem was and what we have done up till now.
5. Try to call on a reliable phone and to speak into the receiver. Talking to several people on a speaker phone is like doing tech support from the other end of the Lincoln Tunnel. I can't hear what you're saying, but the rattling of papers comes through loud and clear. Sometimes several people need to be in on the conversation, but if I can't hear any of you, the advantage is lost.



6:55 a.m.
Rakefet Tech
Support Office
in Fresno CA



7:00 a.m.
Rakefet Tech
Support Office in
Fresno CA



When it is 7:00 a.m. in Fresno, California
what time is it by you?

Technical Topics

Printer problems



Version 4 has solved many printer problems. Apparently some of the newer Hewlett-Packard printer drivers (starting with the HP LaserJet 4050) could not deal with large 16-bit programs, such as Rakefet 3.x, and caused an error as soon as Rakefet tried to communicate with it. HP wasn't interested in fixing this (since 16 bit programs are 'old' technology), so we suggested workarounds like creating a new printer driver and fooling it about what kind of printer it was talking to, etc. This is no longer necessary in version 4, which is a 32-bit program.

Here are some suggestions in dealing with printing problems: first of all, go to Setup / Select Printer and verify that the printer selected is actually the one you are trying to use. Then try printing to the screen – if the report prints to the screen, then you know that Rakefet is communicating with the printer driver. If you can print to the screen but nothing comes out on the printer, try shutting down and restarting your computer; sometimes communication between Windows and the printer gets disrupted.

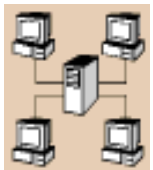
Resources, resources



Although the combination of a 32-bit operating system and a 32-bit program reduces resource problems, they still can occur. We recommend that you do not keep Rakefet open along with large programs, such as Microsoft Word, etc. It is worthwhile to go through your Startup programs and remove anything that is not necessary (Windows 98 or ME users can use MSCONFIG to do this). If you would like help doing this, call us and ask for Melissa!

A symptom of resource exhaustion problems is the occurrence of GPF errors that occur inconsistently in different parts of your programs.

Norton Antivirus problem on networks



We've had some reports of the following problem occurring on some networks where some version (I'm sorry I can't be more specific) of Norton Anti-virus is installed: The first Rakefet user to log on gets into the program immediately, but others have to wait abnormally long times for the data to appear. If you have this problem, the solution has been to replace Norton Anti-virus with another virus-protection product.

Doing backups to CD/R drives



Version 4 of Rakefet can back up to hard disks, Zip Drives, CD/R drives, etc. Some users have had trouble with CD/R drives because they don't realize that to burn a CD you first have to prepare it for writing. If you have the Adaptec CD/R software, you will find a small icon for Direct CD on your Windows task bar near the time display. Before doing the backup you can use this to prepare the CD for writing; after the backup, you use it to eject the CD.

Inside Rakefet Version 4.0 ~ for nerds only!

Many people have asked me “how come it took so long?” Like an iceberg, much of the work in upgrading Rakefet is not obvious! One of the main changes we made which is completely invisible to users was to replace the ‘data driver’. This is the program module that actually reads and writes data to your hard disk and across your networks. Data drivers are extremely complicated, and to avoid reinventing the wheel, are normally third-party products that a developer like us buys from another company. We chose the old driver because it promised quick performance, but unfortunately it suffered from a number of bugs (how many of you have received an error message from ‘SDENSX16?’), and the support from the developer went from fair to poor to nonexistent as the company was sold several times!

The old driver consisted of two DLL files that were separate from Rakefet. The new one, called ‘Halcyon’, is written in the same language as Rakefet (Delphi), and is compiled along with it. This means that I have access to the inner workings of the module, and can fix bugs myself if need be. In addition, the developer is very responsive – we’ve worked together several times to solve problems. Our top priority in selecting this data driver was to improve data integrity (what happens when your server crashes with Rakefet open, etc.) and I think we’ve done that. SDE (the old driver) is now used only when you install this version and convert old data, or when you restore a backup created by an earlier version.

Another big job was the user-interface upgrade. Previous versions of Rakefet were insufficiently flexible to handle the wide range of monitor sizes and resolutions available. Although most of the windows could be resized, the fonts, buttons, etc. on the window stayed the same size. And some important ones (e.g., the Database Detail window) were not resizable. In version 4, not only are the windows resizable, but the fonts and controls on them are resized as well. The size of the windows and the fonts in browsers, etc. are also initialized to match the resolution of your system. We think that this will make using Rakefet a lot more pleasant and efficient.

My programming philosophy has always been to construct a solid foundation first and then add features. Sometimes the marketing department is unhappy about this, but in the long run it pays off. Now that the 32-bit foundation has been laid, we are in feature development mode (are you listening, marketing?). Stay tuned.

-Vic

Word Find

Rakefet	Transparent Software	Phone Tree	Memo	Filter
Payroll	General Ledger	Statements	Fresno	Export
Account	Letter Writer	Allocate	Income	Labels
Refund	Tech Support	Vendor	Expense	FAX
Payment	Relationship	Donation	School	Email
Pager	Postal Import	Database	Member	Codes
Reports	Preferences	Invoice	Budget	Fund

F U N D A T A B A S E V A C A T I O N J U N E B E A C H G C O D E S M E S F
 I N G L A L A L A I N V O I C E F R E S N O L O S A N G E L E S S E D O N A
 R E P O R T S F L A M I N G O P I N K B Y E B Y E B U D G E T G E T S C H O
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 S I P M E N E W O R L E A N S W O R D F I N C O M E O W M A Y W O N D F I L
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 D R N M A D I G A D I G I T A L Y O S E M I T I R E L A T I O N S H I P I P
 R K S O I P A R I I G O L F M A L L O C A T E L H E N D E R S O N R E F U N
 R A E M W E S T H O L L Y W O O D S T A T E M T W W F M O N T R V I S A L I
 F I L T E F I S H R E F E R N C E R E N O N V E W U W U S A N T A M O N I C
 P R E F E R E N C E S T R A N M O S E A T T L R W W U W N V E N I C E B E A
 S T A T E M E N T S W A T E R B U R Y P H O E N I X Q U E D N O R T H R I D

Rakefet Word Find



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Rakefet for Windows Version 4.0 Now Available on CD!



See you at the Biennials!

Every two years in the late fall and winter we go into Biennial Mode, leaving Melissa to hold down the fort in Fresno while Lise and Vic live out of their suitcases and spend long days on the convention floor. In addition to wooing and wowing non-Rakefet users, we welcome the opportunity to get to meet in person the people we've been talking to on the telephone. This year we will be attending the United Synagogue Convention in Washington D.C. from February 10-14. We hope that our conservative users will stop by and say hi, talk over any issues they've been wondering about and try to talk us into incorporating their pet feature onto the wish list for version 4.5.

In December, in Boston, however, we had to make a choice between going to the Biennial itself December 5-9 or the NATA convention, December 1-5. After long consideration, we made the difficult decision to concentrate our time in meeting the people who are using Rakefet day to day. So come by and say hi at the NATA convention. If you're not going to the NATA convention but are going to the Biennial, come by the Marriot and say hi real fast Wednesday morning.

