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**GORBACHEV CONDEMNS ANTI-SEMITISM  
AND RAISES MONEY AT Y.U. DINNER**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, May 14 (JTA) -- In his long-awaited first address before a Jewish group, former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev condemned anti-Semitism as "one of the worst manifestations of national chauvinism."

Speaking Wednesday night at a dinner for Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Gorbachev warned that nationalist tendencies "that are not blatant very often become explosive and lead to disaster." He added that democracies "must always be nurtured and protected."

Introduced as "a prophet and a sage" by Dr. Norman Lamm, Yeshiva's president, Gorbachev received the first Benjamin N. Cardozo Democracy Award and a rousing ovation from the 700 people who had paid \$1500 to attend the black-tie dinner.

The guest of honor wore a grey suit and red tie, rather than a tuxedo. But showing a clear understanding of capitalist realities, he agreed to speak at the dinner after friends of Yeshiva donated \$100,000 to the foundation he has set up.

The university meanwhile scored a public-relations coup by hosting one of the hottest tickets in town, and netted more than \$2 million for the law school.

For an extra several thousand dollars apiece, donors were able to meet the former Soviet president in a small reception before the event.

**Honoring Gorbachev Draws Criticism**

The choice of Gorbachev for an honoree, whom Lamm praised as "an adversary who became a hero," drew criticism from some veteran Soviet Jewry activists who charged that Gorbachev was, until very recently, a staunch supporter of the Soviet communist regime.

"It is inaccurate to credit Gorbachev with the eventual large emigration (of Soviet Jews) of the 1980's," said Rabbi Avi Weiss, national chairman of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, and Pamela Cohen, national president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, in a statement. "The credit for that belongs to those who forced Gorbachev's hand."

Gorbachev, they said, is viewed by democrats in the former Soviet Union "as the Communist head of the Kremlin's totalitarian structure."

The characterization was disputed by Martin Wenick, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Acknowledging that Gorbachev does not have great popularity among the Russian population, Wenick said "the symbol of the old regime are the people who led the (abortive August) coup. One can legitimately question to what degree he's a reformer or democratic, but that's something else."

Wenick was among 12 top Jewish organization leaders who met with Gorbachev on Tuesday for 45 minutes.

At that meeting, as in the shorter and more general speech, Gorbachev warned of the rise in nationalism. He asked for assistance from the West to enable democratic reforms to continue.

"If the reforms fail, the entire world will be pulled into a black hole," he was quoted as saying by Shoshana Cardin, who chaired the meeting. Cardin chairs the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

"He made the statement that we had found each other too late, that he had engaged in dialogue with the Jewish community too late," said Wenick.

At a press conference Wednesday evening prior to his address, Gorbachev denied that anti-Semitism is endemic in Russia.

"Historically, we indeed had periods in our history where we had outbursts of anti-Semitism," he admitted.

"I remember when I was a student in 1952, where there was an ugly period where the people were accused, unfairly."

"I am also witness that during the situation of glasnost and democracy, this problem was debated and very often there was bias in the debate of that problem."

"But I have every reason to say that even before 1985 (when Gorbachev came to power), and even after '85, our society did not have this disease of anti-Semitism," Gorbachev said.

**HEARINGS OPEN ON BILLS TO RESTORE  
RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AFTER PEYOTE CASE**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 14 (JTA) -- It was the Jews, Mormons and Evangelical Christians versus the Catholics at congressional hearings this week on two bills that would make it more difficult for federal laws to impinge on religious liberties.

The bills, one of which has received wide support, are designed to circumvent a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in what is popularly known as the "Peyote case."

The court ruled 6-3 that two members of an American Indian church could not be exempted from an Oregon law that makes it a crime to possess or use peyote, even though they used it only for sacramental purposes.

It held that so long as a law is neutral on its face, the government may uniformly apply it to all persons, regardless of any burden or prohibition it may place on particular religious practices.

Jewish groups from secular to Orthodox want to thwart the possibility of the courts upholding laws that could potentially limit practices central to religious life.

These include conscientious objection from military service, Jewish circumcision rituals and kosher slaughter, the Anti-Defamation League said in written testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional rights.

Jewish groups have been at the forefront of the effort to create legislation to get around the Supreme Court ruling.

"Without a federal law to restore the liberties denied by the peyote ruling, any religious practice that ever conflicts with governmental regulation in this country would be vulnerable to attack," said Abba Cohen, director of the Washington office of the Agudath Israel of America.

Since the 1990 ruling, claims made under the First Amendment's free exercise of religion clause

have been "markedly unsuccessful," the Congressional Research Service said last month in its study of the issue.

Between 1963 and 1990, following a precedent crafted by now-retired Justice William Brennan, the Supreme Court applied various modifications of a "strict scrutiny test" that required the government to prove a compelling state interest on any law that affects a particular religious freedom.

In 1990, Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) introduced a bill, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, to revive the most stringent version of that test.

His latest version of the bill has 187 co-sponsors and appears to have enough votes to gain House approval.

Though representatives of Jewish groups were present at this week's hearings, none testified. But the subcommittee did hear from Solarz, who is Jewish and who represents a heavily Jewish district in Brooklyn. He provided the hearings with a list of Jewish religious practices that could be endangered without his proposed legislation.

It is too early to predict the bill's fate in the Senate. President Bush has yet to indicate his views on the issue.

The bill has run into opposition from the powerful U.S. Catholic Conference, which does not want a stringent test applied in cases where a woman claims a religious right to have an abortion, or where a taxpayer claims that government aid to religion violates his or her religious conscience.

The Catholics instead support a bill, the Religious Freedom Act, that would revive the strict scrutiny test but with some exceptions, as introduced by Rep. Christopher Smith (R-N.J.) with 29 co-sponsors.

#### Agudah Opposes Alternate Legislation

The Agudah said it opposes the Smith bill because religious rights legislation that could not be used to protect the right to an abortion would "strike directly at the Jewish woman who is required by her faith -- under the extraordinary circumstance of a pregnancy putting her at mortal risk -- to undergo an abortion."

There is no Senate version of either the Solarz or Smith bills.

But Jewish groups expect one to be re-introduced from 1990 by Sens. Joseph Biden (D-Del.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah).

Despite their anti-abortion position, the Evangelical Christians and Mormons argued that restoration of the Brennan test would do more good than harm.

Dallin Oaks, an apostle in the Mormon church and a former chief justice of the Utah Supreme Court, said his group was "looking at the larger good."

Oaks dismissed Catholic concerns that the courts may find a religious right to have an abortion or block government help for religion as too "theoretical" at this point.

Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.), the subcommittee chairman, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency after the hearings that "we can't compromise" the Solarz bill by adding Smith's alteration because with the change it has little chance of gaining congressional approval.

Edwards added he expects the subcommittee to vote on the Solarz and Smith bills by early June.

#### **WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY CONDEMNS ISRAEL ON TERRITORIES, SNUBS ISRAELI DELEGATE** By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, May 12 (JTA) -- The World Health Organization's annual World Health Assembly got off to a sour start for Israel last week.

Hostility toward the Jewish state is a familiar aspect of the U.N.-sponsored conclave. It was manifest this year, as it has been in the past, by a highly critical report on Israel's health practices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It was further demonstrated at the opening session when Health Minister Ahmad Ben Saeed al-Badi of the United Arab Emirates, having just been elected president of the Assembly, refused to acknowledge his Israeli counterpart from the podium.

Notwithstanding that his country is participating in the multilateral talks with Israel as part of the Middle East peace process, when Israeli Health Minister Ehud Olmert rose to speak, al-Badi ostentatiously left the chair.

The Israeli minister alluded to the snub, saying that had al-Badi remained, he could have brought back to his country a message of peace from Israel.

"His absence is a political gesture," Olmert said.

He was much more critical of Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, director general of the WHO, whom he accused of outright anti-Israel bias.

Last year's director general's report criticized health care in the Israeli administered territories. When Olmert complained it was a political issue which should not have been included in the report, the director general conceded it was a mistake made without his knowledge.

#### This Time It's No Mistake

But this year's report levelled the same criticism of Israel. "It was no mistake," said Olmert, who did not meet with Nakajima or congratulate him on his speech to the Health Assembly, as protocol required.

Asked by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency why the report included criticism of Israel, Nakajima replied that "Israel refuses to have the United Nations play a role in the Middle East peace talks while the Arabs are all for it."

In his report, Nakajima said "It is the role of the international community in its contribution to the peace process, to assist the Palestinian people in their efforts to enjoy this basic human right and the privilege of being responsible for their own health services."

"It is beyond doubt," he said, "that the attainment of a level of health by the people of the occupied territories that would permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life is one of the basic tenets for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question."

In his opening address, Olmert commended the selection of "women's health issues and development" as the subject of this year's technical discussions. In Israel, women have always worked alongside men in all fields of national development, he said.

Referring to the recent immigrants to his country from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, Olmert said that "special health-promotion activities were initiated for the various new populations in such fields as proper dietary behavior (and) communicable disease prevention."

## UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT PROMISES FULL TIES WITH ISRAEL SOON

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, May 14 (JTA) -- An exchange of ambassadors between Ukraine and Israel is likely within two months, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk said this week.

Speaking before a gathering of Jewish businessmen and communal leaders at the end of a week of meetings in the United States, Kravchuk reiterated previous statements that ties with Israel are "Priority 1," and will be put into place as soon as a suitable ambassador can be found.

Kravchuk also reiterated his government's opposition to anti-Semitism, spelled out last October at Babi Yar shortly after his country declared independence, and his desire for good relations between Ukrainians and Jews, two peoples whose cultures he said are "intertwined."

The reception on Monday was hosted by M&M Ferrous America, a company that is opening an office in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. Several economic representatives of Ukraine attended.

"We would like you to assist in moving capital to Ukraine," Kravchuk said.

Prominent at the reception were representatives of several Orthodox groups, who had nothing but praise for Ukraine's support for their educational efforts in what was, until last August, a republic of the Soviet Union.

Rabbi Moshe Binenstock, of the World Council of Hasidei Breslov, presented a silver menorah to the Ukrainian leader, whom he thanked for granting "the biggest present he could give us": open access to the gravesite of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the founder of the Hasidic group.

### Grave Has Great Significance For Breslov

Breslov Hasidim attach great spiritual value to the pilgrimage to Rabbi Nachman's grave, located in Uman, Ukraine. For decades, Breslov Hasidim traveled to Uman, sometimes clandestinely, sometimes after having been extorted for large bribes.

But under the Kravchuk regime, travel is free, and the Hasidim have been given wide access to the site.

"We're going to build a whole project to fix the cemetery, to build a whole building over the grave," said Binenstock, who flew in from Israel for the occasion.

Albert Reichmann, the Canadian billionaire whose troubled Olympia & York real estate company has been a leading story in the financial press of late, said he is indirectly involved in oil exploration elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.

What brought him to the reception, though, was his involvement with a Jewish school in Kiev, which he said now has more than 500 students.

Leibel Surkis, whose name-tag identified him as the general director of Dynamo Atlantic, said his visits to Ukraine were occasioned by his efforts to establish a yeshiva in Berdichev. The town, home in the 18th century to the famed Rabbi Levy Yitzhak, now is home to 3,000 Jews. Surkis is a member of the Skverer Hasidic group, now based in upstate New York but originally from the Ukraine.

"We would like to see the renaissance of Jewish spirit and Jewish culture in Ukraine," Kravchuk said. "We will do anything in our power, with respect to schools, newspapers, synagogues, cemeteries, shrines.

"Besides the golden gate of Kiev, we also

had the gate of Jewry. Jewish craftsmen taught Ukrainians their art, their business. Taking a look at the history of Ukraine, you see much in common. The long-suffering Jewish people comparatively recently acquired their own state, the State of Israel, and the Ukrainian people have not had their own state for a long time."

Kravchuk dealt circumspectly with the anti-Semitism that was banned by his government but remains prominent in Jewish historical memory.

"One detail I want to say about (our common) history -- some was written by us, other was inspired by other people outside Ukraine. It's very convenient for the empire to tilt one nation against the other," he said.

Despite the consensus of those working on Jewish projects in Ukraine that the official policy is philo-Semitic, visitors to Ukraine report anti-Semitic reactions and catcalls from the Ukrainian population.

According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, university applicants are still required to indicate their ethnic identity from a list of "Ukrainian," "Russian," "Jewish," or "other."

In a meeting with the group on May 6, Kravchuk "promised to look into it," according to Micah Naftalin, national director of the Union of Councils.

## JDC BEGINS MASSIVE FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN MOSCOW SPONSORED BY U.S. GOVERNMENT

MOSCOW, May 14 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee began a new massive food distribution effort in Moscow.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture donated the food -- more than 6,000 tons of rice, beans, vegetable oil, flour and evaporated milk.

The JDC said it was chosen by the government to distribute the program because of the 78-year-old organization's long history in the field of international humanitarian aid.

The first package was presented Thursday to the mayor of Moscow, Gavriel Popov, by Ralph Goldman, the honorary executive vice president of the JDC.

"We deliver the food to local charities who will give them to the elderly, war veterans, single mothers, invalids and bed-ridden people," said Goldman.

He explained that the food is sent to the charities in sealed trucks, and an elaborate monitoring system verifies the identity of the recipients, to ensure that the food reaches the needy individuals.

About 500,000 packages are to be distributed in Moscow over the next few weeks.

Mayor Popov thanked the American government and the JDC. While opening a food package to examine its contents, Popov commented, "Whatever the content is -- I can tell you it is needed."

Victor Gulyashko, deputy chairman of the Commission on International Humanitarian Aid of the Russian Federation, thanked the JDC on behalf of the Russian Government.

In a meeting with Goldman, Gulyashko praised the approach that favored working with local organizations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, as well as in the regions, "making it possible for the Russian organizations themselves to determine the priorities of the individuals in need."

U.S. Ambassador Robert Strauss received a report on this new endeavor from representatives of the JDC and the Agriculture Department.

## ISRAEL AND JORDAN HAVE COOPERATED SECRETLY ON WATER ISSUES FOR YEARS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 14 (JTA) -- The multilateral meeting on Middle East water resources that opened in Vienna Wednesday is by no means the first time that Israel and an Arab neighbor have gotten together on the subject.

Israeli and Jordanian experts have been meeting regularly since 1984 to measure the division of water from the Yarmuk River, a Jordan tributary, which is essential to both countries.

The secret meetings of what became known as the "Yarmuk Forum" were disclosed by correspondent Dan Bechor in the daily Ha'aretz, who quoted a water expert close to Israel as his informant.

The meetings involve high levels of government. Yossi Ben-Aharon, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, leads the Israeli team, while a senior Jordanian official is in charge of the Jordanian experts. The water commissioners of both countries also participate.

The two countries have also been cooperating on mosquito-control, it was disclosed recently. Jordanian experts have secretly visited Eilat and Israeli officials have visited Aqaba in order to monitor the situation.

The cooperation on water resources originated eight years ago after the Jordanians discovered a sand bank was blocking the flow of the Yarmuk River waters into the Jordan Valley canal.

It was impossible to remove the sandbank without Israel's cooperation. Jordan appealed to the United States for help and a cooperative effort between Israel and Jordan was arranged.

Israel conditioned removal of the sand bank on the establishment of regular meetings with Jordanian experts to discuss the distribution of the water that flows into both countries.

The so-called "Yarmuk Forum" resulted and has been meeting regularly since then in a tent on the banks of the Yarmuk.

After lengthy arguments over where it should be placed, a bridge was built over the river, from which technicians on both sides could measure the water flow.

The measurements make sure that each country is getting its share of the water, which was determined in the 1950s by the American-mediated Yarmuk Agreement.

Israel gets 25 million cubic meters a year, as compared to 130 million cubic meters for Jordan.

A complication arose in 1987 when Jordan and Syria signed an agreement to build the Makarin "Friendship Dam."

But the dam project died for lack of funds.

It was hoped that the Vienna meeting would harness Jordan, Syria and Israel in a joint project to resolve the region's water issues. But Syria is boycotting all of the regional talks.

## ISRAEL'S ISLAMIC MOVEMENT, IN SHIFT, URGES ARABS TO VOTE IN ELECTIONS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 14 (JTA) -- Israel's influential Islamic movement, in a sharp break with past dogma, is urging the country's Arab citizens to go to the polls and vote in the June 23 Knesset elections.

That was the word sent out Tuesday by Sheik Abdullah Nimer Darwish, the Islamic spirit-

ual leader from Kufer Kassem village near Petach Tikva. It may mark the start of a process that one day could profoundly alter Israel's political scene.

Darwish told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency "It is a historic hour."

"When the majority of Israelis take part in the election, I don't want to sit at home. I want to take part in the action," he said.

In past years, the Islamic movement has boycotted Israeli elections to demonstrate its refusal to acknowledge the Zionist state. The change of position indicated that the movement now feels strong enough to participate in the political process and exert some influence on its outcome.

Darwish in fact intimated that the movement might run as an independent party in the next Knesset elections four years hence, or as part of a larger coalition of Arab political groups.

For the time being, Islamic leaders are deeply disappointed by the failure of the two Arab splinter parties to agree on a common list for next month's elections.

Together, they could have proven a formidable force. The 309,000 Israeli Arabs expected to vote in the coming election account for about 12 percent of the electorate, the equivalent of 13 Knesset seats.

Had the Arabs been united behind one party, political observers say, that party could have become the third major political power in the country.

After prolonged negotiations, the Arab Democratic Party headed by Abd-el Wahab Darousha, and the Progressive List for Peace, led by Mohammed Miari, decided this week to go their separate ways.

## THE BIBLE LANDS MUSEUM OPENS: A WALK THROUGH 6,000 YEARS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 14 (JTA) -- The Bible Lands Museum, designed for visitors to "walk through" 6,000 years of civilization in the Middle East, was opened to the public on Monday.

The ceremonies were attended by President Chaim Herzog of Israel and Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, who is honorary chairman of the museum board.

Located between the Knesset building and the Shrine of the Book, the museum houses one of the world's most extensive collections of art and artifacts common to the cultures and civilizations of the ancient lands of the Bible.

They date from 6000 B.C.E to 600 C.E. and come from as far east as Afghanistan, from the western Mediterranean, the Caucasus Mountains and Nubia in Africa.

"The future of the nation is rooted in its past," Herzog told the large invited audience at the opening. "This museum is testimony to intensive life in this region, where monotheism was born and the three major religions have developed," he said.

It "is designed for the visitor to walk through civilizations according to their historical order," said Benjamin Abileah, the museum's director.

The \$12 million museum was endowed mainly by Dr. Eli and Batya Borowsky of Toronto, who now live in Jerusalem. Borowsky, who made his fortune as an art dealer, donated the couple's priceless collection of artifacts to the museum.