



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **At least two Israelis were killed and five wounded when terrorists ambushed a bus near the West Bank town of Hebron.** Israel Radio reported that the gunmen were traveling in a car that overtook an Egged bus as it approached an intersection at the entrance to Hebron. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. [Page 3]

■ **Israel and Syria's ambassadors to Washington are to resume talks Monday, three months after the talks were suspended by Syrian President Hafez Assad.** Assad agreed to the resumption during U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's latest round of regional shuttle diplomacy.

■ **Six members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee visited Cairo for talks aimed at improving relations between Egypt and Israel.** The group met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amre Mousa. They discussed the peace process and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

■ **The extreme right-wing Centrist Democrats party received only 1 percent of the votes in Holland's quadrennial elections for 12 provincial councils.** Two other extreme right-wing parties, Centrist Party '86 and the Netherlands Block, received fewer votes than the CD.

■ **A ministerial-level committee decided to allocate grounds for alternative burials near an existing cemetery in Beersheba, a step aimed at providing Israelis with burials outside the authority of the Orthodox establishment.** The committee also agreed to allocate additional alternative burial sites in Haifa, Jerusalem and in the center of Israel. [Page 3]

■ **Advances in the Middle East peace process were reflected at the 17th International Book Fair, which for the first time included books from Egypt, Morocco and Jordan.** Other countries represented at the fair for the first time included Vietnam, Taiwan, the Baltic States and Finland. The Vatican, another first-time participant, sent from its library a collection of ancient Hebrew manuscripts for a special exhibition at the fair. [Page 3]

Settlers group seeks funds from local Jewish federations

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, March 19 (JTA) — Supporters of Jewish settlers in the West Bank are pushing federations to break their long-standing tradition of not donating to independent causes overseas.

This effort on behalf of the settlers has so far not made significant inroads. But last year, the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County gave it its first major victory, allocating \$22,000 to the American Friends of the Israel Community Development Foundation.

The foundation provides medical, educational, religious and social services to Jewish communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This money came from the \$2.75 million the Middlesex federation raised in the 12 months ending in June 1994.

Now, the United Jewish Community of Bergen County, N.J., is establishing a committee to study the matter.

Similar efforts by the settlers group to solicit funds were rebuffed by the United Jewish Federation of MetroWest, the largest in New Jersey, and by the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

Those two federations reiterated long-standing positions that the United Jewish Appeal-federation system does not fund projects over the "Green Line," as Israel's pre-1967 borders are known.

But as settlers and their supporters see it, this refusal by the central Jewish philanthropies to fund projects in the territories constitutes discrimination.

"We're making it a priority to approach as many federations as we can, because we don't see why any federation shouldn't give a portion of its funds to legitimate humanitarian causes in the territories," said Barry Liben, president of the American Friends group.

"When you give a few thousand to the settlements, which are so isolated today, it makes a big difference, both psychologically and materially," he said.

Michael Shapiro, executive vice president of the Middlesex federation, agrees.

The Orthodox a main source of support

"We found it absurd that one of the places we could not help Jews in need was in Israel," Shapiro said.

In Middlesex as well as in Bergen County, a main consideration in the debate over funding the settlers is the strong support the settlers have in the Orthodox community. It is a support based on family ties as well as on ideology.

Some of the settlers' supporters call for aid to the settlements to be combined with boycotting the federation.

Liben said his group opposes the boycott idea.

"We believe that the work federation does is fabulous. Jews should continue to support them. But the Jews that support them should not ignore a substantial part of the Israeli population that is not being served by federations," he said.

Ronald Meier, the recently appointed executive director of the Bergen federation, said the question of aid to settlers has been raised on "a number of occasions" since he assumed the post late last year.

"Particularly, the more traditional part of the community raises it as a concern," he said.

"The impression I have so far is that the long-term supporters of the UJA campaign have not been affected, have not stepped away from the campaign because of those concerns," he said.

But not funding the settlers "is certainly a stumbling block" as the federation tries to draw newcomers into the campaign from "some quarters of the community," he said.

Under an agreement reached between the settlers fund and the Middlesex federation, the settlers group will not raise funds during the federation's four-month campaign period.

And in an unusual demonstration of the close ties the Middlesex federation wants to have with the settlers group, when the group does solicit

in Middlesex County, donors will be asked to make out their checks to the federation, which will forward them to the foundation's offices in New York.

These moneys will be above and beyond the \$22,000 that the federation is allocating directly.

Shapiro of the Middlesex federation said he set up this arrangement "to make a statement" to his community and to the broader federation system.

His federation is saying "as a representative federation that it is OK to do this," he said.

Besides the settler grant, his federation, like most, makes no grants to overseas causes other than UJA.

Gerald Nagel, director of public relations at UJA, denies that his organization is committing discrimination by not funding projects over the Green Line.

"This is not an ideological position, and we're sorry that some people think we are discriminating unfairly. We are not," he said.

Nagel said the Jewish Agency for Israel, the principal recipient of UJA funds in Israel, "provides services within the Green Line to Jews from the territories, such as when a youngster from a territory settlement enrolls in a Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah school."

The UJA policy on this, he said, is based on the policy of the United Israel Appeal, which serves as the conduit between UJA and the Jewish Agency.

Fears of more risks than gains

In part, said Nagel, UJA has not modified its policy against funding projects in the territories because of "concerns that such a change in policy would lower overall donations."

Additionally, "the economic and social needs of Jews in Israel's Galilee, central corridor and Negev continue to be significant and are worthy of even more help than we can provide.

"We'd also like to note that no Israeli prime minister has ever asked us to change this policy," he said.

He had no comment on the actions by the Bergen County or Middlesex federations.

But Shapiro's critics within the central fund-raising structures warn that by directly allocating money to an overseas charity other than UJA, the federation is in the long run "committing suicide," in the words of one philanthropic official.

"What about the guy who said, 'I'm giving the federation \$5,000, but I want \$1,000 to go to my sister on Kibbutz Na'am'?" The federation now has no logical reason to say no. Once you break discipline, you break discipline," said this official.

The UJA policy against funding over the Green Line is rooted in the stance of the American government, which does not encourage Israeli settlements in the territories.

It also reflects UJA's fears, shared by the Israeli government, that pushing for the right to operate over the Green Line would bring far more risks than gains.

In the immediate wake of the Six-Day War, the U.S. government made it clear that it did not want the central American Jewish philanthropies to operate in the territories that had newly come under Israeli control.

The government did not say that operations in the territories could not, per se, receive tax-exempt status. The American Friends of the Israel Community Development Foundation is only one of many organizations whose religious, charitable or educational work in the territories qualifies it for tax exemption from the Internal Revenue Service.

Instead, the government seized on the terms by which the UJA's tax-exempt status had been clarified in 1964.

According to the terms agreed upon by UJA and the IRS, the UJA's mandate was to conduct philanthropic activities in "the State of Israel."

At the time, three years before the Six-Day War, there was no question of disputed territories.

But in 1967, "the State Department went out of its way to tell my predecessor that they recognize the State of Israel as having the boundaries it had on June 5, 1967," said Irving Kessler, executive vice president emeritus of UJA.

UJA was told that it could apply for a modified letter, allowing it to operate in the territories.

But it was also clear, said Kessler, that "we could be held up for any number of reasons" in getting a modified letter approved, meanwhile jeopardizing the status of hundreds of millions of dollars in donations.

American concern over possible UJA operations over the Green Line continued over the years, coming up in every conversation Kessler had with the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

The Israeli government did not ask the American philanthropists to fight the State Department over this.

"If we didn't have the assurances by the Israeli government that all settlement across the Green Line was being handled equitably, we might have had disputes on our board. But there never was any disadvantage in any of those areas. The government always took care of people across the Green Line better than within the Green Line," said Kessler.

'Phony' charges against the UJA and UJA

"Any charges that the UJA or UJA discriminates against [the settlers in the territories] are phony, because they get the exact same thing from government funds" as they would have gotten had they settled within the Green Line, said Kessler.

Most of the projects funded by the settlers foundation, such as mobile medical units, synagogues, security services and schools, are not generally among the Jewish Agency's priorities, even within the Green Line.

Further clouding the claims that settlers are deprived by the UJA is the fact that while the Jewish Agency scrupulously avoids sending dollars over the Green Line, the World Zionist Organization steps in to fill the breach.

The relationship between the WZO and the Jewish Agency is so close that the organizations share senior executive officers as well as offices.

The WZO is funded by the Keren Hayesod, which collects money raised by Jews outside the United States and parallels UJA.

There is a line item in the WZO's Aliyah Department to cover absorption centers and ulpan centers over the Green Line.

This funding directly parallels the funding the Jewish Agency gives to the more numerous absorption centers and ulpan centers within the Green Line.

Much of the Israeli government's activities in the territories are contracted out to WZO.

In 1993, the WZO Settlement Department employed 125 people, with a budget of more than \$36 million.

All the funding for this department came from a direct Israeli government allocation.

One American Jewish philanthropic official dismissed the entire settler claim for federation funding as a political stunt.

"They claim they want humanitarian needs. What they really want is a imprimatur for their political aims, and we're not in the business of giving imprimatur for political aims," said the official. □

**Terrorists ambush bus;
at least two Israelis killed***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 19 (JTA) — At least two Israelis were killed and five wounded Sunday night, when terrorists ambushed a bus traveling between the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba and Jerusalem.

Israel Radio reported that the gunmen were traveling in a car that overtook an Egged bus as it approached an intersection at the entrance to Hebron, close to Kiryat Arba.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place about 8 p.m. local time, but officials reportedly believe that Palestinians opposed to the peace process were involved.

The attack came after several weeks of quiet and after Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had recently reported progress in their efforts to expand Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank.

Hebron was the site a year ago of an attack by an Israeli settler at a local mosque. Twenty-nine Muslim worshippers were killed in that attack.

Israeli settlers reportedly ransacked several Palestinian shops in Hebron before the Israeli army imposed a curfew and began searching for those who carried out the attack, witnesses said.

After preliminary medical treatment at the site, the wounded were flown by helicopter to nearby hospitals.

The Israeli government had imposed a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the wake of a double suicide bombing near Netanya in January.

The government had been gradually easing the closure and on Sunday, prior to the latest attack, officials announced that 3,000 more Palestinians would be issued entry permits to work in Israel. This brings the total number of workers allowed in from the territories to 25,000.

Also Sunday, Israeli police reportedly found the bodies of two Arabs who were killed by an explosion near the West Bank town of Jenin. The authorities said the two had apparently been building a bomb that went off prematurely. □

**Burial grounds designated
outside purview of Orthodox***By Uriel Masad*

TEL AVIV, March 19 (JTA) — A ministerial-level committee has adopted a series of measures aimed at providing Israelis with burials outside the purview of the Orthodox establishment.

In one such step, the Ministerial Committee for Alternate Burial, which is headed by Justice Minister David Libai, decided last week to allocate grounds for alternative burials near an existing cemetery in Beersheba.

The committee, which includes Immigrant Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban and Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, also agreed to take steps to allocate additional alternative burial sites in Haifa, Jerusalem and in the center of Israel.

The committee members said they were acting in response to what they perceived as the real need and distress of non-Jews who cannot find burial grounds in Israel. Many of those involved in such cases are new immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not Jewish. The measures will also benefit Israeli Jews who prefer a non-Orthodox burial.

Libai said if the committee confronts any obstacles, they will be dealt with through proper and swift legislation, a move he said would serve notice to the Orthodox

establishment, which now has a monopoly on Jewish burials.

A spokesman from the Ministry of Absorption called the decision "a significant step toward the implementation of the government's decision of December 1993 to establish" alternative burial grounds.

That decision came after the High Court's 1992 favorable ruling in a case brought by Menuha Nehona, the burial society that offers non-Orthodox and non-religious burials. Menuha Nehona is affiliated with the Center for Jewish Pluralism, the activist arm of Israel's Reform movement.

According to the spokesman, the Beersheba site will alleviate the shortage of burial grounds in the Negev for those who are not recognized as Jews.

Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau expressed his regret over the committee's decision. The burial of any Jew not in accordance with halachah, or traditional Jewish law, "is distressing to us," Lau said. "The loss of one of our people's common denominators, a Jewish burial, and the fact that we are no more united by burial is doubly distressing."

However, Amiram Shacham, a spokesman for Menuha Nehona, applauded the decision, saying it could provide a solution not only for non-Jews, "but also for those Israelis who wish to bury their loved ones in a liberal Jewish or a secular ceremony, rather than submit themselves to the Orthodox establishment."

Meanwhile, the ministerial committee also instructed the ministers of absorption and religious affairs to meet with the finance minister in order to find a solution to the shortage of Christian burial grounds in Israel.

The committee said this, too, has become a matter of urgency, as churches in Israel have refused to accept non-Jewish immigrants for burial due to a severe shortage of Christian burial space. □

**A sign of peace: Arab books
represented at biennial fair***By Uriel Masad*

JERUSALEM, March 19 (JTA) — Advances in the Middle East peace process were evident last week at the 17th International Book Fair, which for the first time included books from the Arab world.

Publishing houses from Egypt and Morocco were represented at the biennial fair. Books from Jordan were also sent, though without a representative. Together these books were displayed under the banner, "Books From the Arab World."

The changes in the region's political climate brought other new participants to the fair as well: Vietnam, Taiwan, Turkey, Korea, Singapore, Nepal, the Baltic States and Finland. The Vatican, another first-time participant, sent from its library a collection of ancient Hebrew manuscripts for a special exhibition at the fair.

Among the 10 original Hebrew manuscripts sent by the Vatican were a collection of exegetic texts on the Bible, including the Sifra, a manuscript from eighth century Babylonia; Bereshit Rabba, a well-known manuscript from the 11th century; and a Rashi commentary on the Bible from the 13th century.

The one-week fair, which ended last Friday, had on display more than 100,000 books and CD-ROMs, representing 1,400 publishers from more than 50 countries.

The special displays included a German exhibition depicting the 30 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany. A Spanish display included 150 books about Jewish history and culture. The prestigious Jerusalem Prize was awarded to Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa for his contribution to individual freedom in society. □

Cease-fire makes little impact on Sarajevo's Jews and non-Jews*By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK, March 19 (JTA) — The fragile cease-fire in Bosnia has not made life in war-torn Sarajevo any easier, according to the leader of that city's Jewish community.

In addition to heading aid efforts, Ivan Ceresnjes, who also serves as the president of the Jewish community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focuses on ensuring Jewish continuity in Sarajevo, he said in a recent interview.

"The cease-fire didn't change much in Sarajevo" and other parts of Bosnia, he said, noting that people still are killed or wounded on a daily basis.

The cease-fire, which took effect Jan. 1, is scheduled to end April 30. It has been consistently violated. Over the weekend, Sarajevo came under heavy shelling from Serb forces, and last weekend six people died and seven were wounded by mortar and gunfire.

In an effort to make the situation more vivid to people in the United States, Ceresnjes is on a monthlong speaking tour across the country. The United Jewish Appeal is funding the tour, which stretches from Pennsylvania to California. One of UJA's main beneficiaries, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, has contributed significant aid to the community.

"I wanted to make a clear picture to American Jewry to tell them what is really going on there," Ceresnjes said, adding that the U.S. media does not fully depict the situation on the ground.

'Our obligation is to help everybody'

Since the war began, Ceresnjes and La Benevolencija, Sarajevo's revitalized Jewish humanitarian aid society, were instrumental in organizing 11 convoys that carried both Jews and non-Jews to safer areas. Of the 2,300 Sarajevans rescued by these convoys, 1,100 were Jews, he said. Many of the rescued Jews went to Israel.

Through the aid society, also known as JDC-La Benevolencija because of its support from JDC, Ceresnjes continues to play a critical role in bringing food, medicine and shelter, among other supplies, to the Jews and non-Jews who remain in the city.

"Our obligation is to help everybody," Ceresnjes said.

Additional convoys are not being planned at this time, he said. Getting people out of the besieged area is now being handled on a "case-by-case basis."

Ceresnjes said he and others like him are able to carry out their humanitarian missions because the Jews, as a group, have not taken sides in the war. As a result, they have been able to gain the trust of the three warring factions: the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims.

Ceresnjes said the 600 Jews who still reside in Sarajevo are the backbone of a community that dates back to the 16th century.

"We believe in continuity," he said, adding that it would be tragic if the current war in Bosnia were responsible for ending the area's Jewish presence. Outside of Sarajevo, 300 Jews live in areas controlled by different warring factions, he said.

Despite the obstacles, Ceresnjes said, the Jewish community in Sarajevo is "alive and kicking."

As efforts to preserve Jewish life continue, he said, children attend religious school, books are published, plays are staged and holidays are celebrated.

"Nothing is hopeless to us," he said of the fate of Sarajevo's Jewish community. He has said that after the war is over, he wants Jews who have left Sarajevo to be able to come home. □

Vatican, Jerusalem link up for show addressing year 2000*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME, March 19 (JTA) — Rome, the Vatican and Jerusalem were linked up last week for a special television "talk show" transmission that looked to the year 2000.

Titled "The Threshold of Hope: Five Years From 2000," the two-hour program was arranged and broadcast by a Catholic television station, Telepace, and the Italian commercial TV network, Telemontecarlo.

The live March 15 hookup linked Rome's historic city hall, the Campidoglio, with the Vatican across town and with Jerusalem.

Participants included Christian and Jewish religious figures and Italian and Israeli political leaders. They discussed issues concerning religion, tolerance, the Middle East peace process and the symbolic importance of the year 2000, which will be celebrated as a holy year by the Roman Catholic Church.

During the broadcast, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Valls reiterated that Pope John Paul II hopes to make a pilgrimage to biblical sites in Israel and in the Middle East, including Iraq, before the year 2000.

"The pontiff hopes to be able to follow the routes of Abraham, Moses and St. Paul," the spokesman said, "visiting Mesopotamia (now a part of Iraq), the Holy Land, Sinai and Jerusalem."

"The trip will have a strictly religious content and no political color," Valls said. "The pope intends to meet the representatives of the three religious faiths: Jewish, Christian and Muslim."

But the spokesman said the Vatican's policy on Jerusalem had not changed.

The Vatican does not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and would like to see the city under international jurisdiction.

Speaking from Jerusalem, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres praised the pope's efforts at dialogue with Jews and Muslims and criticized religious extremism.

"I would like to see religions without knives, but religions with wings, that fly and do not kill," Peres said. "I recognize in the pope the great merit of tolerance." □

UNESCO head upset with union that ousted Syrian poet Adonis*By Michel Di Paz*

PARIS, March 19 (JTA) — The director-general of UNESCO has protested a recent decision taken by the Arab Writers Union to expel Syrian poet Ali Ahmed Saeed from its membership.

Saeed, 65, whose pen name is Adonis, reportedly was kicked out of the union for attending a U.N.-sponsored meeting in 1993 on peace in the Middle East.

Apparently, Saeed called at the meeting for a better understanding between Arabs and Israelis, which was not to the union's liking. The writers union is based in Syria.

Federico Mayor, director-general of the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, did not give a reason for Saeed's expulsion in the communique, in which he spoke out against the union's actions.

Federico Mayor wrote in the communique that he wanted to express his sadness upon learning of the decision "to expel Adonis, one of the brilliant poets of the Arab world."

"This renowned writer, on the contrary, deserves praise for his daring fight for open-mindedness, essential for the culture of peace and international understanding," said Mayor. □