

NEWS AT A GLANCE

- **The terrorist attack at a federal office building in downtown Oklahoma City prompted renewed calls for Congress to enact anti-terrorism legislation.** Within hours of the worst terrorist incident in U.S. history, Israeli officials offered to fly a special terrorist response team to assist in the rescue and investigation. "Unfortunately we have experience with these types of attacks," said an Israeli official. [Page 1]
- **Rumors about the fate of the legendary Sarajevo Haggadah were laid to rest** when the manuscript made an appearance at a community seder in the war-torn city. But the decision to let the precious text appear in public prompted controversy among Bosnian officials. [Page 2]
- **Officials at the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization decided to slash their budgets by more than \$30 million.** Sources close to the process said the cuts are part of an overall strategy aimed at combining the WZO and the Jewish Agency into one organization. [Page 4]
- **Debate over the presence of an evangelical group at an upcoming National Unity Conference for Israel has illuminated a split in the Jewish community.** Jews are sharply divided over whether they should forge ties with the segment of the Christian community most outspoken in its support for Israel — and yet devoted to converting Jews to belief in Jesus. [Page 3]
- **German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel defended his country's controversial relationship with Iran and pledged to preserve what he called a "critical dialogue" between the two nations.** "Isolating important countries in the region does not promote the peace process," Kinkel said as he received an award from the Anti-Defamation League in New York.
- **An Israeli rabbi issued a precedent-setting ruling granting Orthodox Jews the right to donate their organs — but on the condition that they go to other Jews.** The ruling came after a decision to donate the organs of Alisa Flatow, the U.S. student killed in a terrorist attack.

Oklahoma attack prompts renewed calls for terror bill*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON, April 19 (JTA) — Two weeks after the House of Representatives began to consider anti-terrorism legislation, terrorists bombed a federal office building in downtown Oklahoma City.

Hundreds were injured and the death toll is expected to reach at least 80 as a result of Wednesday's attack, believed to be the worst act of terror committed in U.S. history.

The victims included at least six dead children who were in a day-care center on the second floor of the 9-story Alfred Murrah Building, officials said.

"Today's terrorist attack underscores the urgent need for Congress to pass strong anti-terrorism legislation," said Kenneth Bandler, director of public information for the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations echoed the need for swift legislation. The umbrella group called on Congress to call a special session to deliberate the legislation "to provide law enforcement officials with the tools necessary to combat this worldwide scourge."

The anti-terrorism bill currently before Congress would give law enforcement officials additional tools to fight terrorism. The legislation is the second phase of a two-stage battle against terrorism launched by the Clinton administration.

In Wednesday's incident, a car bomb exploded in front of the federal office building shortly after 9 a.m. local time. About 500 people work in the 9-story facility.

Officials from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, one of the government agencies housed in the building, said the bomb was about the same size as the one detonated at the World Trade Center two years ago. That blast killed six people and injured 1,000 others.

'Justice will be swift, certain and severe'

President Clinton described the Oklahoma City attack as an "act of cowardice and it was evil."

"The U.S. will not tolerate it and I will not allow the people of this country to be intimidated by evil cowards," the president said Wednesday afternoon. In a news conference, he and Attorney General Janet Reno detailed the steps being taken to investigate the incident.

"Let there be no room for doubt, we will find the people," the president said. "Justice will be swift, certain and severe. These people are killers and must be treated like killers."

As law enforcement officials continued to try to patch together evidence, Oklahoma City police launched an all-out search for three male suspects, two believed to be of Middle Eastern origin, wearing blue jogging suits who were seen driving away from the building in a brown pickup truck with tinted windows.

Officials were quick to say that it is too early to pin blame on any group for the attack.

Israel's ambassador to the United States, Itamar Rabinovitch, immediately offered to fly a special terrorist response team to Oklahoma to assist in the rescue and investigation.

Responding to a question about the Israeli offer, Reno did not reply directly, but said, "We will rely on any additional resource that can help bring these people to justice."

"Unfortunately we have experience with these types of attacks," said an Israeli official.

In addition to Rabinovitch's contacts here, Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sent letters to President Clinton expressing their sorrow and remorse at the terrorist attack, according to Israeli officials. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres sent a similar letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

As the investigation continued, other speculation about the attack centered around the fact that the bombing comes two years to the day after

the failed raid on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.

"Although it is too early to tell, this bombing may be connected to the growing militia movement around the country," said Kenneth Stern, an American Jewish Committee program specialist who recently wrote a report on the militia movement.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Stern said that coming on the anniversary of the Waco incident, April 19 "is a day of extreme importance to the militia movement."

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Early reports that the Nation of Islam took credit were vehemently denied by the black Muslim group.

"We emphatically deny any connection with the attack," the Chicago-based organization said in a statement. A local Oklahoma television station had reported that a caller from the Nation of Islam claimed credit for the attack.

The American Jewish Congress was one of several Jewish organizations that joined in calling on Congress to pass the terrorism bill. "The need for stringent measures to increase our protection against the horror of political terrorism is imperative" said AJCongress President Phil Baum.

Meanwhile, B'nai B'rith International has established a fund to provide relief to bombing victims.

Donations can be sent to the B'nai B'rith disaster relief fund at 1640 Rhode Island Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. □

From the ravages of war, Sarajevo Haggadah appears

By Edward Serotta

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (JTA) — The legendary Sarajevo Haggadah made its third appearance in 50 years on Saturday at a noontime seder in this city's only synagogue.

The ceremonial seder was held during daylight hours because of spotty electricity and increasingly aggressive sniper fire as the 3-year-old war raged on.

Along with some 70 of the remaining Jews of the city and kosher wine and matzah provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the seder was attended by several high-level Bosnian officials, including President Alija Izetbegovic, Prime Minister Harris Siladzic and Cultural Minister Enis Karic.

But the special guest at the seder was the more than 600-year-old Sarajevo Haggadah.

Its greatness only came to light in Sarajevo after a poor Sephardi Jew named Kohen sold it in 1894 to the city's National Museum. Curators in Vienna recently assessed its worth as a great medieval manuscript at \$7 million.

The Haggadah has never actually belonged to the Jewish community in Sarajevo. Its history dates back to the 14th century in northern Spain, probably Barcelona, and most likely left with a Jewish family when Jews were expelled in 1492.

The next recorded date is 1609, when, as recorded in the margins of the illuminated manuscript, it was sold in Italy.

The precious legacy first came to public view in 1894 in Sarajevo, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The book narrowly escaped the clutches of a high-ranking Nazi book collector in 1941, who demanded that the museum director turn it over to him.

But the director of the museum, Joze Petrovic, told the Nazi that another German official had taken it only moments before. In fact, a Muslim scholar, in an effort to

save the manuscript, had taken the book to hide it with a family until the end of the war.

In an indication of the relations that were once possible in Sarajevo, it was a Serb who lied to the Nazi about the Haggadah while a Muslim hid it, according to the president of the Jewish community, Ivan Ceresnjcs.

The Jews, he said, remain politically neutral and continue to have good relations with Muslims and Serbs, he said.

Since World War II, the Haggadah was seen only briefly on two special occasions — once in 1966 at the 400th anniversary celebration of the Jewish community of Sarajevo and then in 1988, as part of an exhibit of Jews in Yugoslavia.

The Haggadah surfaced for only one reason this week, according to officials: to dispel rumors flying around about the Haggadah. Among the rumors were that the Bosnian government had sold it off for arms, or that it had been ruined or water-logged during the war or that it had been stolen. All these rumors were laid to rest on Saturday, as Resad Gogalija, an employee of the Ministry of Culture stood before the assembled crowd, displaying page after magnificent page.

The book appeared in remarkably good shape. Although measuring only 6.5 by 8 inches, the pages, in brilliant blues and golds, were more lively than any reproduction.

Bringing the book out of hiding was no easy task and, in fact, sparked major governmental debates.

The director of the National Museum, Envir Imamovic, who had rescued the book from the museum's leaky basement toward the beginning of the war, was adamant about never letting his prize possession out as long as the fighting continued in Sarajevo.

Once it became clear that the Bosnian president was determined to have it displayed, Imamovic resigned as the museum's director.

As an indication of the continuing debate over the Haggadah, two leaders of the Jewish community, Jacob Finci and Ivan Ceresnjcs, were asked to attend a meeting at the Ministry of Culture on Monday, where they were informed that the government has reconsidered its original idea of sending the book out of Sarajevo for restoration and exhibition. Thus the ancient treasure of Bosnia, rarely seen over the centuries, has gone back into hiding once again. □

Dutch camp survivors remember WWII experiences

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, April 19 (JTA) — A ceremony of remembrance took place last week at the former concentration camp of Westerbork, in the northeastern Netherlands.

Dutch officials, some 500 survivors, many from abroad, and pupils from local Dutch schools were among the 2,000 participants at the April 12 commemoration, which marked the 50th anniversary of its liberation.

Speaking at the ceremony, Robert Leviussen, who escaped from Westerbork in 1943, said Dutch authorities should consult Jews, who have experience in being refugees and absorbing refugees, in connection with the large number of foreigners seeking asylum in Holland.

Although the camp originally was set up by the Dutch in 1939 to shelter Jewish refugees from Germany, Westerbork served as the main transit camp for Dutch Jews during the Nazi occupation of Holland.

Beginning July 1, 1942, more than 100,000 Jews arrested throughout Holland were held in Westerbork before deportation to other camps. At the end of the war, 900 Jews were liberated from the camp. □

Jews split over ties with missionizing Christians

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, April 19 (JTA) — The fund-raising letter from an evangelical group targeting Jews is unequivocal: Christians should heighten their missionizing of Jews during the period from Passover till Holocaust Memorial Day.

And it is from a group — the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry — whose director, Elwood McQuaid, is a featured speaker at an upcoming conference of Jewish and Christian groups that support Israel.

Also speaking are representatives of the Israeli government, State of Israel Bonds and prominent conservative political figures.

The presence of the evangelical group at the National Unity Conference for Israel has illuminated a sharp split in the Jewish community.

Jews are divided over whether they should forge ties with the segment of the Christian community most outspoken in its support for Israel — and yet devoted to converting Jews to belief in Jesus.

This segment includes groups such as Jews for Jesus, the Messianic Jewish Movement International and the Chosen People Ministries, as well as the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, according to Jewish experts on missionaries.

There are more than 600 groups in North America spending more than \$150 million a year trying to convert Jews, said Mark Powers, national director of Jews for Judaism.

Jews for Jesus, for example, spent nearly \$7 million missionizing Jews in 1993, according to the membership directory of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, an evangelical information clearinghouse.

Most of the missionaries' money is collected from members of mainstream evangelical churches, said Philip Abramowitz, director of the Task Force on Missionaries and Cults of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council.

Influential mainstream evangelicals

Many of the country's most influential mainstream evangelicals, including Billy Graham and Pat Robertson, and groups, including the Southern Baptist Convention, help support the missionaries, even if they themselves do not target Jews, according to experts.

Some in the Jewish community are raising concerns that the new relationship being forged between Jewish political conservatives and the religious right on issues of mutual interest, including Israel, lends credibility to groups that try to missionize Jews.

Others, including Esther Levens, co-president of Voices United for Israel, say that love of Israel is the major factor to consider in the relationship and outweighs even the proselytizing.

The National Unity Conference is scheduled to take place on May 4-6 in Washington. The National Jewish Coalition, the major group representing Jewish Republicans, and the Israeli Embassy recently pulled out of the conference.

The Republican group cited as its reason for withdrawal the presence of Christian groups whose purpose is to convert Jews.

The Israeli Embassy's reasons were more political in nature. Avi Granot, the embassy's counselor for interreligious affairs, has hosted McQuaid at meetings several times, along with other evangelical Christians.

Granot said the embassy withdrew because of

concerns that the conference would end up lambasting the Middle East peace process.

Levens, the conference organizer, took issue with that, saying the embassy "wanted control over the conference, which we wouldn't give them." She termed McQuaid's fund-raising letter urging the missionizing of Jews "a distraction."

"We can reach out to the thousands of Jewish people who are searching desperately for peace of heart in the face of horrible memories. By God's grace, we will bring them God's message of true comfort and hope: the wonderful news of a living Messiah!" McQuaid wrote in the March 22 letter. His ministry spent more than \$5 million on programs aimed at Jews in 1993, according to the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

"I trust you will send a generous gift to help the Friends of Israel share the Messiah with the Jewish people," the letter continued.

"For the Jewish people who can only assemble to remember tragedy, a future without Him promises only despair and hopelessness. The Messiah Jesus alone can bridge the gulf between joy and despair, hope and hopelessness. We must be faithful to His commission to love them to life," wrote McQuaid.

Levens, who described McQuaid as "a true friend of Israel," said accusing groups such as his of trying to harm the Jewish people was "hurting our support among these people and creating anti-Semitism."

Herbert Zweibon, chairman of Americans for a Safe Israel, agreed with Levens. He issued a statement April 12 condemning the pullout from the Unity Conference of the Republican group and the Israeli Embassy, saying it "undermines the vital alliance of Jewish and Christian friends of Israel."

'Burying your head in the sand'

Others, including Jews for Judaism's Powers, say that to forge relationships with groups who are dedicated to converting Jews "is like cooperating with the Nazis. Both have the same goal — the end of the Jewish people.

"To fawn at people who say they love Israel without looking at their real objectives is burying your head in the sand," said Powers. "Sure these Christians love us. They love us to death."

One group, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, tries to straddle the line. Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, its president, said he has raised more than \$1 million from evangelical Christians for the United Jewish Appeal. He said he is not participating in the National Unity Conference because it takes place on the Sabbath.

But he also said he would not deal with groups whose sole purpose is to missionize Jews.

Complicating the purely ideological disagreement over the role of the Christian right is the fact that Israel actively courts evangelical, Pentecostal and other "Bible-believing" Christians with intensive promotions.

At this year's National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Israel Minister of Tourism Uzi Baram announced a \$500,000 pilot program targeting Bible Belt Christians in 13 states.

For Israel, concern over missionizing takes a back seat to the economics of the issue. About 180,000 of the 450,000 North Americans who visited Israel in 1994 were Christians visiting for religious reasons, according to the New York office of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism.

And they spent about \$234 million while visiting the country. "There are many more evangelical Christians than Jews [in North America], and this is where Israel can benefit its economy," said Barbara Bahny, a spokeswoman for the ministry. "We're all working to get Israel economically independent and travel is one way to do it." □

Jewish Agency, WZO slash budgets by over \$30 million*By Uriel Masad*

TEL AVIV, April 19 (JTA) — Officials at the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization have decided to slash their budgets by more than \$30 million.

"Today I say no to past accounts, no to past errors and no to past commitments," Avraham Burg, the newly elected chairman of the two bodies, said after the decision was made last week.

"I received a difficult, inexact and irresponsible budget in deficit. From here on, my job will be that of a cruel surgeon who amputates limbs in order to save the patient," said Burg.

Sources close to the process confirmed that the cuts are part of an overall strategy aimed at combining the WZO and the Jewish Agency into one organization before 1997, the centennial of the official creation of the Zionist movement. The first Zionist Congress took place in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland.

Burg addressed the idea of consolidating the two bodies when he held his first news conference for foreign journalists last week. At that time, he complained about the duplications and overpoliticization of the two organizations, adding that he envisioned one body replacing both.

To make his point, he coined the phrase: "One people — one body."

Burg said he would present a comprehensive and detailed plan for the future of the two bodies at the June meeting of the Jewish Agency Assembly in Jerusalem.

Burg, a Labor member of Knesset, was recently elected acting chairman of the WZO and the Jewish Agency. He will officially be named chairman in June.

The Jewish Agency is the primary recipient of funds raised for Israel by the United Jewish Appeal in the United States. The WZO undertakes Jewish educational efforts in the Diaspora and provides the mechanism for Diaspora Zionist organizations to participate in Jewish Agency decisions.

New budget cuts will cover deficit

The decision to cut the Jewish Agency's budget by some \$30 million for the current fiscal year came during a meeting last week of the Agency's Executive, which includes both Israeli and Diaspora representatives.

The Agency's 1995 budget of \$486 million suffered a deficit of some \$26 million, which the new budget cuts will cover.

"This is an essential budget cut, a pruning to allow for growth, giving the Jewish Agency hope of a future life. Today we began a process of reform," Burg said at the end of the Agency Executive meeting.

Agency Treasurer Hannan Ben Yehuda said that without the budget cuts it would be difficult for the Agency to continue its operations. He said the exchange rates and the weakening of the U.S. dollar were partly to blame for the budget deficit.

The budget ax will hit the various departments of the Agency in a manner proportionate to the current operating budget of the departments, the Executive decided at its meeting. Each department will have to decide by the end of the month which of their programs to cut.

At a separate session of the WZO Executive, Burg and Ben Yehuda announced that the WZO's \$30.8 million 1995 budget would have to be cut by \$1.7 million.

The planned cuts will include reductions in the budgets for Zionist federations abroad and the cancellation of the "Fulfillment" program, which was meant to bring young people from the Diaspora to Israel.

The cancellation of the Fulfillment program brought strong criticism from several Executive members, including Yehiel Leket, Youth Aliyah department head. Leket served as acting chairman of the WZO when the decision to establish the program was made.

"This is a black day for the WZO," Leket said at the meeting. "Once again, we have cut back on the future, and the money is being distributed to political party representatives." □

Under watchful eye of IDF, Jews pray at tomb in Hebron*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, April 19 — Under Israel Defense Force security, several hundred Jewish pilgrims this week visited the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The Hebron shrine was open Monday and Tuesday to Jewish worshipers as part of special security arrangements. Throughout the year, Jews and Muslims have a separate schedule for access to the tomb.

The arrangements are in place as a result of a massacre last year at the site. In February 1994, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, a West Bank settler and follower of the late extremist Meir Kahane, killed 29 Muslim worshipers at the tomb.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, police arrested 18 members of the Chai v'Kayam extremist group, who tried to pray on the Temple Mount in the Old City. It was the second time in less than a month that the group had tried to push past police to pray on the mount.

The Temple Mount is the location of the First and Second temples, the holiest Jewish site, as well as Islam's third holiest shrine. The site is open to the public, but police have blocked the entrance to Jewish prayer groups out of concern that disturbances could start there.

Among those detained in the recent incident was the group's leader, Yehuda Etzion. He and others were convicted and given jail sentences that were later reduced. Etzion vowed to continue his attempts to pray on the Temple Mount.

Relatedly, Gershon Salomon, head of the ultra-nationalist Temple Mount Faithful group, has petitioned the High Court of Justice for permission to enter the area. Salomon has claimed that police have denied him access since riots occurred at the site four years ago. □

Experts predict Israel to be Britain's No. 2 Mideast market*By Bernard Josephs**London Jewish Chronicle*

LONDON, April 19 (JTA) — Trade between Britain and Israel will reach \$3 billion this year as the Jewish state overtakes the oil-rich United Arab Emirates to become Britain's second biggest Middle East market, officials in London have predicted.

Figures compiled by the Department of Trade and Industry show a "phenomenal" growth in business with Jerusalem. In February alone, British firms sold Israel goods worth \$160 million, 20 percent more than last year's figure.

The amount of manufactured goods sold to Britain has jumped by 25 percent, narrowing the trade gap between the two countries.

The rapid expansion of trade — up from \$2.4 billion last year — has threatened even Saudi Arabia's standing as Britain's No. 1 market in the region, an official said in an interview. "Take away the huge amount of arms we sell them, and Israel is already miles ahead," he said, referring to arms sales to Saudi Arabia. □