

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

- The 1,000-member Labor Party Central Committee formally endorsed Shimon Peres as its leader. With the end of the seven-day period of mourning for slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, President Ezer Weizman is expected to appoint Peres to form a new government.
- Two Anti-Defamation League offices were the target of a plot to blow up various sites with fertilizer bombs. The FBI arrested three individuals in Oklahoma who reportedly were involved in the plot.
- American law enforcement officials stepped up their campaign to trace funds from U.S. soil to Jewish extremists in the West Bank in the wake of the Yitzhak Rabin assassination. [Page 4]
- Israeli officials debated whether the Law of Return should be changed to prevent activists belonging to right-wing Jewish extremist groups from entering Israel. The debate came as Interior Minister Ehud Barak barred the entry of a Kach activist from New York. [Page 4]
- Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres and other leading Israeli officials are reportedly going to wear bulletproof vests when they appear in public from now on. Hundreds of vests were airlifted to Israel from the United States soon after the assassination.
- Histadrut Secretary-General Haim Ramon announced his return to the Labor Party along with colleagues Amir Peretz and Samuel Avital. Ramon was ousted from Labor when he formed his own faction, which defeated Labor in the Histadrut labor federation elections.
- The building of Israel's chief rabbinate in Jerusalem was defaced in the wake of charges that radical rabbis had called for Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. "Rabbis Murder and the Rabbinate is Silent" was spray-painted in large letters on the building.
- Perth, Australia, became the first Australian municipality to establish a civic memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Calls for unity after Rabin killing aim to heal deep communal rifts**

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The assassination of the Israeli prime minister by a religious Jew bent on "saving" Israel from the peace process prompted fervent calls for unity and healing among a shocked and grief-stricken Jewish people.

Leaders across the political and religious spectrum warned that internecine hatred brought down the second Jewish Commonwealth and that intracommunal strife could again wreak disaster.

But barely a week after Yitzhak Rabin was laid to rest, it appears that the rifts over the peace process between right and left and Orthodox and non-Orthodox are not being narrowed by shared sorrow, but are yawning wider than ever. "I'm afraid what's going to occur is a hardening of both sides," said Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, chairman of Shvil Hazahav, an Orthodox group that supports the peace process.

"The government and pro-peace process [camp] may unfortunately try to seize on this and paint the whole Orthodox community as extremist," he said. "I fear segments of the Orthodox community in reaction will begin to harden their positions, thereby driving further wedges [in] the community at a time when unity is sorely needed."

Two Jewish umbrella organizations are in the process of planning national solidarity events in support of the peace process. At the same time, however, they say there must be opportunities to express opposition to the process when the expression is responsible.

Meanwhile, Orthodox leaders are growing alarmed that the daily reports from Israel about confessed killer Yigal Amir are unleashing a backlash against them. The reports indicate that Amir was part of an elaborate underground of religious zealots led by rabbis who appeared to sanction violent acts against Israeli leaders for pursuing a peace process whose territorial concessions defied the will of God.

There are also media reports linking American Orthodox fund raising for settlers in the territories with armaments for a political-religious underground and of local support for the legal defense fund of Amir.

**Fears of 'Orthodox-bashing'**

Inflaming the atmosphere here are charges by some that Amir's ideology and action were only a natural outgrowth of his Orthodoxy.

"The intense religiously defined nationalism that fueled the fury of Yigal Amir, the confessed assassin, is normative in today's Orthodox community," Henry Siegman, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and former executive director of the American Jewish Congress, wrote in an opinion piece.

For most Orthodox Jews, he wrote, "the Jewish claim to the Land of Israel is seen as biblical and absolute, and not subject to the normal give and take of the secular political process."

Orthodox leaders are concerned that the rhetoric in the wake of the assassination is amounting to "Orthodox-bashing."

"The Orthodox community is being tarred and feathered," said Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, which represents fervently Orthodox Jews. "If the community continues to be smeared with one brush for the activity of one person, I'm afraid of a situation where we will no longer talk rationally."

"Yigal Amir is no more representative of Orthodox Jews than David Duke is of the Republican Party," he said.

"Leaders of Orthodox Jewry were outraged by the murder and condemned it in the strongest terms," Sherer said. "We also emphatically condemned the sentiments of a few individuals — of the minuscule fringe — who exulted in the assassination."

Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union, which represents 1,000 congregations nationwide, expressed similar sentiments. "We are part of the mainstream with a lot to contribute and to be ostracized and delegitimized is very distasteful."

Ganchrow stressed that his organization is not an opponent of the

peace process, but repeatedly has issued a call in a political framework "to slow things down, to bring people together." Such a call was made, he said, in a meeting last July with Rabin and now Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and in a carefully worded letter to Rabin published as a full-page Jewish newspaper ad last August.

"We feel very strongly about the sanctity of the land" and the peace process has given rise to "serious concerns we have about security," said Ganchrow. "People are scared for their lives [in Israel] and the future of their children and of the Jewish people."

"I make no apologies for what we did," Ganchrow continued. "But could we have done more" to curb extremism? "Everyone could have done more."

Leaders of non-Orthodox groups caution against scapegoating of any sort in the emotional wake of the Rabin killing. At the same time, some contend that it is logical to turn the spotlight on the political-religious community from which such a deed sprang and on the role and responsibility of its leaders.

"It is very important to avoid stereotyping and generalizations, like blaming the whole political right, or Orthodox Jews or American Jews who make aliyah," said Kenneth Jacobson, director of international affairs for the Anti-Defamation League.

"When there is extremism, everybody has the obligation to speak out and to make sure it doesn't spread and infect a broader part of the population," he said.

But, he added, in the religious community "the rabbis have a special obligation" to wield their influence.

Communitywide condemnation of extremism is needed, agreed Gary Rubin, executive director of Americans for Peace Now.

"But, the hard truth is that the responsibility lies especially with those in whose name the extremists claim to speak" and whose authority they draw on to commit acts of violence against Israeli leadership, Rubin said.

#### 'No room for shutting out debate'

"This is not a matter of scapegoating," said Rubin. "This is a matter of marshaling the only forces in the community that can be effective in combating the extremism."

What is needed from "the only leaders who can speak credibly to the extreme right," said Rubin, is a "clear statement that halachah unambiguously rejects acts of extremism and violence."

"There is no room for shutting out debate and the inevitable delegitimization of views that comes with shutting out debate," he said.

Meanwhile, Goldin of Shvil Hazahav maintained that "all sides of the debate share a degree of culpability through irresponsible rhetoric."

But, Goldin continued: "I have to be particularly pained by the role of my own Orthodox community."

Responsibility, he said, clearly lies with the small fringe group of extremists, but it also rests with a much larger group who "called the prime minister a traitor and made other accusations," and with the "whole community for not responding to the rhetoric loudly enough and quickly enough."

Since the assassination, countless condemnations of the killing and the violent rhetoric were issued by religious as well as other Jewish groups. The New York Board of Rabbis on Monday made a strong statement at a news conference at the Israeli Consulate.

"We pledge we will not tolerate the vituperative, vilifying and inciteful language uttered by some in Israel and America, including several rabbis, who advocate murdering Israeli leaders or justify assassination," said the board, which represents 800 rabbis of all Jewish streams.

"Rabbis and lay persons who articulate such heinous views are beyond the pale of civilized society. We will shun, scorn and quarantine them for they are moral lepers," the rabbis said.

"We will redouble our efforts to heal the wounds of our people, using our pulpits and pens to bring greater unity rather than partisanship and factionalism, reason rather than fanaticism, love instead of hate."

For Goldin, simply toning down the rhetoric is not enough. "It addresses the symptoms and not the disease," which is the conviction by people in all camps that "they know the answer," he said.

"If you think you know something you can't entertain disputes and everyone who disagrees with you automatically becomes your enemy," said Goldin.

"Until we can distance ourselves from this approach," he added, "addressing rhetoric is pointless."

Sherer said the polarization would be eased by broadening Israel's governing coalition to include more representation of the religious parties and by educating the non-Orthodox about "what the Orthodox are and what they stand for — the acts of goodness and kindness. Ours is a world where violence is totally foreign to us."

"I would like to think we teach tolerance as a way of life, but I think we have not," said Ganchrow. "We and everyone else have failed. We all have to accept our blame."

#### Emergency strategy session

Ganchrow said Orthodox Union leadership met this week in an emergency session to discuss strategies for responding to heightened tensions within the Jewish community.

The Orthodox Union will be working to develop programs to teach tolerance to the 40,000 students in its National Synagogue Conference, he said. The emphasis will be on "how you deal with people who are not religious or who don't agree with you politically, and what are the allowable limits of political discourse in Jewish law."

The Orthodox Union is also working on ways to "deflate" what Ganchrow called the radical right-wing Jewish media. "This is a great problem for the whole community," he said.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was also scheduled to meet this week to plan a "national unity event" and forge an overall strategy in the wake of the Rabin killing that would deflect the divisiveness that looms over the community.

The umbrella group plans to "reaffirm our traditional support for Israeli government policy" at the same time that the conference "continues to support the right of people to express their differences when their differences are expressed appropriately," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the conference.

For Martin Raffel, associate executive vice chairman of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, "The challenge is to create a culture of debate in the community that will sustain us in the long run."

He said the NJCRAC was planning a peace process advocacy day in Washington sometime next month for Jewish leadership from across the nation. At the same time, he said, the NJCRAC is working with community relations councils to find ways to allow for civil debate and dialogue that include all views on the peace process.

Meanwhile, the community's intense "degree of denial" of Jewish extremism cannot continue, said Peace Now's Rubin. The community knows that Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has to be repudiated and isolated, he said, adding, "We have to begin dealing with our own extremists with the same intensity and sense of threat as with anti-Semites." □

## Conservative 'continuity' effort places emphasis on Jewish living

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Viewing the communal effort to promote Jewish continuity as flawed, the Conservative movement has launched its own campaign to strengthen Jewish identity.

"Anything that focuses on the future without building in the present can't work," said Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and author of its "Jewish Living Now" campaign. The campaign was introduced at the movement's recent biennial convention here.

Although the Conservative movement has been promoting "Jewish continuity," the movement's leaders now view that approach as flawed because, they say, it placed too much of its emphasis on the future, and not enough on Jewish living in the present.

"Jewish continuity depends not on some commission, not on some institution, but on each and every one of us, and it depends on what we do now — not some day, not later, but what we do now," said Ron Wolfson, director of the University of Judaism's Whizin Institute.

"It's our turn to step up, it's our turn to make the commitment to our own personal Jewish journeys."

Central to the "Jewish Living Now" campaign is the idea that investing resources and energy into Jewish life today will create a strong base for Jewish life tomorrow.

"When we choose to live Jewishly, not only do we enrich our own lives, but we help to create meaningful Jewish memories for our children and grandchildren," said Alan Ades, international president of the United Synagogue. "And by creating those memories, hopefully we're guaranteeing that there will be future Jewish generations."

### Climbing rungs of a ladder

The United Synagogue likens the new approach to climbing a ladder — one rung at a time, if necessary. The rungs, as defined in the "Jewish Living Now" campaign, consist of six areas of Jewish living: Shabbat, kashrut, the synagogue, study, tzedakah and outreach.

Rather than presenting Jewish commitment as an all-or-nothing proposition, the movement's leadership is encouraging Jews to pick one area of Jewish living in order to climb onto the ladder. They hope that as Jews learn and feel more comfortable with Jewish observance, they can slowly ascend the ladder of commitment.

Conservative Jews attending the conference expressed enthusiasm for adopting new approaches that may make Judaism more accessible.

Madeline Dunn, president of B'nai Israel in Albuquerque, N.M., said creating a sense of comfort and bringing a "feeling of joy in the celebration of Judaism" to her community remains her overarching goal.

She said she intends to ask her synagogue's congregants to try the one-rung-at-a-time approach.

"I'm going to ask them to do one Shabbat thing — to light candles if they don't already, bless their children, buy a challah, have Shabbat dinner with family, invite someone to Shabbat dinner," Dunn said.

Bette Novick of Portland, Maine, sees assimilation as the most pressing issue facing the Conservative movement today. For that reason, she agrees that making Jews "feel comfortable coming to synagogue and sharing family and social times with Jewish friends" is critical to maintaining a lasting sense of Jewish identity.

Although Conservative practice varies widely from community to community — often to a greater extent than the other Jewish denominations — many of those attending the United Synagogue conference said they were struck

more by the similarities in their experiences than by differences.

"I've been talking to people who discuss similar problems like getting a minyan together when they have a congregation of thousands and I have a congregation of 35 families," said Alan Turner, a lay leader who, in the absence of a rabbi, leads his congregation in Putnam, Conn.

Kitty Calhoon of Nashville, who converted from Christianity to Conservative Judaism 13 years ago, said she is encouraged by what she sees as the movement's increasing willingness to grapple with "modern-day issues," such as the role of women and fundamental questions about "who we are."

"Before," she said, "the movement as a whole was kind of afraid to deal with that, perhaps for fear of creating a schism or alienating people within." □

## HUD decision to cancel contract with Nation of Islam wins praise

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — After more than a year of pressuring the federal government to examine contracts with Nation of Islam-affiliated businesses, critics of the relationship appear to be making headway.

Several Jewish groups welcomed last week's action by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros, who ordered the Baltimore Housing Authority to cancel its contract with a security company affiliated with a private company run by members of the Nation of Islam.

"I'm hopeful that the investigation and determination in Baltimore will mark the turning of the corner by HUD and by other branches of government in terms of taking these complaints seriously," said Mark Pelavin, director of the governmental and public affairs office of the American Jewish Congress.

Pelavin said HUD should hold "the Nation of Islam-affiliated companies to the same standards as others who seek to do business with the federal government."

The Nation of Islam Security Agency plans to seek an injunction to stop HUD from terminating its \$4.6 million contract with the Baltimore Housing Authority.

"HUD has been forced into a situation," said Abdul Arif Muhammad, agency spokesman and general counsel. "They have capitulated to the pressure of the American Jewish League and the American Jewish Congress."

HUD has been under fire since 1994 from Jewish activists and members of Congress to investigate Nation of Islam-affiliated business that receive federal funding through contracts.

They charge that the organization — headed by Louis Farrakhan — is not an equal opportunity employer and stands in violation of federal anti-discrimination laws.

Critics further object to the racist and anti-Semitic views espoused by Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, saying that taxpayer's funds should not be used to subsidize bigotry.

Since March, when HUD began a compliance review of 15 contracts with Nation of Islam affiliates, contracts have expired or been terminated by local governments in six cities.

Although HUD said it canceled the Baltimore contract because the company violated federal procurement regulations — not employment practices — Jewish groups portrayed the action as an encouraging breakthrough.

Several Jewish organizations sent letters to Cisneros commending him for his decision to cancel the Baltimore contract. □

## Rabin's assassination renews probe of U.S. funds to terrorists

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The first bank account uncovered after President Clinton froze the assets of 12 Middle Eastern terrorist organizations in January contained a couple hundred dollars belonging to the Jewish extremist group Kahane Chai.

Since then, federal investigators have had little, if any, success unearthing the assets of Kahane Chai, Kach or any of the Arab terrorist organizations banned from collecting charitable contributions in the United States under Clinton's executive order.

The issue of funds being raised in the United States and channeled to terrorist groups abroad has resurfaced in the wake of the Nov. 4 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Since Rabin's assassination, American law enforcement officials have stepped up their campaign to trace funds from U.S. soil to Jewish extremists in the West Bank, according to U.S. officials.

The Anti-Defamation League has asked the Treasury Department to add Eyal, the Kach splinter group to which Yigal Amir, Rabin's confessed assassin, belonged, to the list of terrorist organizations banned from raising funds in the United States.

At the same time, an effort to raise funds for Amir's defense has sprung up in New York. Although such activity is not illegal, it has revived questions over the use of American-raised funds being used to support Middle East terrorism.

Although few investigators believe that Amir, and his emerging circle of alleged collaborators benefited from funds raised in the United States, they do believe that U.S. money flows to Jewish extremists in the West Bank.

There are several organizations that have launched fund-raising campaigns for Jewish settlers in the territories. Although most of those funds are believed to go to legal projects, it is difficult to determine whether the funds are diverted for terrorist purposes.

And even though the search for illegal funds has intensified, at least one high-level official is not optimistic that investigators will seize any substantial assets.

### 'Only difference is honesty'

"First of all we are not dealing with a lot of money. It's probably in the tens of thousands of dollars range," a Clinton administration official said on the condition of anonymity.

Law enforcement officials and financial institutions continue to search for assets and bank accounts of Kach or Kahane Chai, but they are unlikely to be successful unless the organizations use their own names.

"Anybody stupid enough to have money in their own bank accounts is going to get hammered," said Steven Emerson, a terrorism expert. "But the notion that the government can go and take these people's money is simply not true."

Kach and Kahane Chai, both of which are outlawed in Israel, "operate with the same M.O. as Islamic militants," Emerson said, adding, "The only difference is honesty. Jewish extremists admit their motives."

Emerson believes that the difficulty in enforcing the executive order, which was also targeted against Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, shows that it was "not made to be implemented but made to be a political statement."

Meanwhile, supporters of Rabin's assassin have started a campaign to raise money for his legal defense, declaring it a "a great mitzvah" to help him.

"Yigal Amir is a young religious Jewish hero who

assassinated the evil Rabin," declares a New York hot line seeking donations. "Rabin was an extreme radical racist who hated religious Jews of any persuasion."

The message is played on the voice mail of a cellular phone, which is not traceable. Occasionally, calls are forwarded and operators reportedly solicit donations and give the Amir family's address to those wishing to send donations.

Giving money to a terrorist's legal defense fund or to support relatives is not a violation of U.S. law. And Amir's supporters are not the first to raise money for the defense of terrorists. Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the convicted spiritual mastermind behind the World Trade Center bombing, received tens of thousands of dollars raised by his U.S. supporters for his legal defense fund.

Similarly, supporters of Moussa Abu Marzook, the Hamas "foreign minister" being detained in New York and awaiting possible extradition to Israel, recently sent an Internet message soliciting donations to his family and legal defense fund. Federal investigators seized about \$750,000 from Marzook's bank accounts after he was detained last July. Investigators believe that the money was intended for Hamas. □

## Law of Return debate resurfaces amid concern about extremists

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israeli security and government officials look for ways to combat illegal activities of right-wing Jewish extremist groups, debate has resurfaced over whether the Law of Return should be changed to prevent such activists from entering Israel.

Argument has focused on whether it is necessary to amend the Law of Return, or whether the legislation in its existing state is capable of dealing with the issue.

The debate became more than theoretical this week, when Interior Minister Ehud Barak barred a Kach activist from New York from entering Israel. Israeli media reported that the individual, who was not identified, has a criminal record in New York and is known to the FBI.

At Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said the Law of Return, which grants Israeli citizenship to any Jew who wishes to immigrate, should be changed so that members of militantly anti-Arab groups such as Kach and Kahane Chai, which have been declared illegal here, cannot enter Israel under its terms.

"It is unacceptable that the Law of Return should apply to such persons," Sarid said. "There is no country in the world that would grant entry to members of a terrorist organization. It is inconceivable that we should."

But Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban expressed opposition to any changes, saying that the Law of Return already gives the Interior Ministry authority to bar entry to any individual who poses a danger to public safety.

"In every instance, since the establishment of the state and until today, when the interior minister decided to prevent the entrance of an immigrant to Israel using this clause, he received the full backing of the High Court," Tsaban said.

Barak made use of this clause this week when he refused entry to the Kach activist.

According to a statement from the Interior Ministry, Barak exercised his authority in accordance with the Law of Return and the Law of Entry into Israel "to prevent extremists liable to breach the public peace and threaten the country's security" from entering Israel.

The clause was also reportedly employed in the 1970s, when Israeli officials denied reputed gangster Meyer Lansky citizenship, who was facing prosecution in the United States and sought to immigrate to Israel. □