

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ The Council of Jewish Federations opened its annual general assembly in a slightly subdued mood in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Several tributes and memorial services were planned during the three-day affair, which brought together in Boston nearly 4,000 delegates from across the country.

■ Israeli President Ezer Weizman asked Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres to form a new government. Peres, it is widely believed, will present his government to the Knesset next week.

■ Israeli police arrested two Orthodox yeshiva students for desecrating Yitzhak Rabin's grave. They were taken into custody after it was alleged that one spat on the grave and the other attempted to urinate on it. [Page 4]

■ The head of the Shin Bet said Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin's confessed killer, had planned the assassination over the course of two years. The head of Israel's domestic security agency said the agency took full responsibility for the failure to prevent the killing.

■ Israeli police arrested a 20-year-old woman from the West Bank settlement of Beit El in connection with the alleged plot to kill Yitzhak Rabin. The woman goes to Bar-Ilan University, the same school attended by Amir. [Page 3]

■ Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun of the West Bank settlement of Ofra issued a public apology to any colleagues he may have hurt when he vowed to reveal the names of rabbis who gave halachic justification for killing Yitzhak Rabin. Bin-Nun told a news conference that he made the vow when hearing, a day after the assassination, that another person had planned to kill Rabin three months ago, after receiving justification for the act from rabbis.

■ Palestinian police reportedly arrested five Arabs on suspicion of plotting the assassination of Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat. The five were said to be followers of terrorist Abu Nidal.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES [Part 1]****Secular Humanistic Jews seek to attract unaffiliated**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. (JTA) — How to reach the unaffiliated Jew? It's the organized Jewish community's million dollar question.

The small movement of Secular Humanistic Jews believes that it has an answer in its practice of nontraditional, nontheistic Judaism.

"I was an unaffiliated Jew, and it is through my connection with this movement that I found that connection again," said Martin Kotch, a law professor who was trained as a leader of Secular Humanist Judaism.

Founded more than 30 years ago, Secular Humanistic Judaism is an organized effort to codify into a movement the reality of Jewish life for a substantial number — perhaps the majority — of American Jews.

Most American Jews — 55 percent — are not affiliated with any Jewish organization at all, according to the 1990 National Jewish Population Study.

And most of the unaffiliated — 83 percent — describe themselves as having a secular, or "just Jewish" background, rather than one rooted in the Orthodox, Conservative or Reform movements.

More than 1.1 million American Jews — some 20 percent of the population — describe themselves as having a Jewish identity, but not as part of the Jewish religion.

They are, in short, the secular Jews who might feel at home within a framework that focuses on the cultural and historical doorways into Jewish connection, but at the same time disavow the religious.

"The problem is that the [Jewish] institutions are not relevant to the people out there," said Rabbi Sherwin Wine, leader of the effort in North America and co-chairman of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews.

But the movement Wine founded has yet to attract these people in large numbers.

As many as 10,000 North Americans are affiliated with Secular Humanism through congregations or other types of secular Jewish institutions, said Wine.

There are another 20,000 affiliated Secular Humanistic Jews in Israel, Europe and South America, he said.

In North America, 26 congregations are connected with the movement through its umbrella, the North American Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, said Wine.

The congregations range in size from a handful of people who meet once or twice a month, or just on the High Holidays, to Wine's Birmingham Temple here, the flagship of the movement, which has about 500 member families.

**'A great shock'**

"Secular Humanist Judaism offers people a group within which we can hash out ideas and learn about the humanistic interpretation of such things as the Bible," said Esther Friedman, co-president of a 20-member congregation in Stanton, Calif.

The congregation has no regular Sabbath service but meets occasionally in someone's home or in a private room in a restaurant.

"There was something missing in my life" before becoming a follower of Secular Humanist Judaism in 1977, she said. "Reform Judaism just didn't fit.

"I was very uncomfortable with bowing down and blessing the Lord. It didn't ring true for me."

When Wine, an ordained Reform rabbi, broke from the Reform movement to start a humanistic congregation in the 1960s, the move sparked controversy.

"Humanism caused a great shock," recalled A. James Rudin, a Reform rabbi who is the American Jewish Committee's director of interreligious affairs.

"No one knew what to do with it.

"It was going to be a juggernaut that destroyed Judaism in America,

and the Reform movement wanted to throw him out," Rudin said.

"In the '60s, there was an opportunity to make it into a movement. Either he didn't or couldn't. The test of any tradition is whether it can reproduce its own," said Rudin.

How to reach the unaffiliated Jew — and perhaps broaden the reach of Secular Humanistic Judaism — was the theme of the movement's first colloquium, held at the Birmingham Temple in October.

An eclectic collection of Jewish academics, historians, cultural critics, sociologists, writers and visual artists came together to address the issues surrounding "The Unaffiliated Jew."

Speakers included authors Andre Aciman, Charles Silberman and Anne Roiphe, Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai and filmmaker Joan Micklin Silver.

The historical and communal views of Jewish life were also emphasized.

Speakers also included Yehuda Bauer, the Israeli Holocaust scholar who is also a founder of Jewish Secular Humanism, Jewish communal leader Shoshana Cardin and sociologist Egon Mayer.

Most of the speakers said they do not consider themselves Secular Humanist Jews, and many are active in religious Jewish life through the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox movements.

They were there, they said, because they found the colloquium's topic compelling. Cardin said many people asked her why she was speaking to a gathering of Secular Humanistic Jews.

"I am a passionate Jew who believes that being Jewish requires retaining that particularist, distinctive facet of our people to share with others," she said.

But "any individual who is willing to assume the privileges and responsibilities of being Jewish should be accepted as a Jew."

All but about a tenth of the 200 people attending the conference were either speakers or Wine's congregants. Few people younger than 50 could be found in the audience or on the dais.

Every one of the dozen congregants of Wine's temple interviewed during the colloquium was a longtime member and is the parent of grown children.

Most said that they celebrated little Jewish life at home.

### 'No easy answers'

In each case, one or more of each of their children had married a non-Jew and most of their children were disconnected from Jewish identity, they said.

"Of course it's painful that our children aren't involved" Jewishly, said Birmingham Temple member Skip Rosenthal. "There are no easy answers."

Still, the congregants observe all of the Jewish holidays here, said temple member Maynard Gordon.

Friday night and other holiday services are held in an auditorium where there is a sculpture of the Hebrew word "Adam," or "man," on the wall behind the dais.

The congregation's Torah is kept in the library and taken out only during the recently instituted hourlong Bible study on Saturday mornings attended by about 25 of the temple's members.

Jewish ritual, in addition to being nontheistic, is largely divorced from traditional Jewish observance.

Services at Birmingham Temple and at some, but not all, of the other Secular Humanist congregations, are often built around liturgy written by Wine.

A prolific writer and speaker, Wine is venerated by many of his congregants, who describe him as "brilliant," "a genius," "encyclopedic."

On Friday night, to celebrate Sabbath and Sukkot, the festival that took place during the gathering, participants recited this benediction, written by Wine: "Where is my light? My light is in me. Where is my hope? My hope is in me. Where is my strength? My strength is in me. And in you."

The Sukkot service started with a Yehuda Amichai poem and interspersed Jewish folk songs among benedictions penned by Wine.

The service centered around a series of affirmations recited by the audience, including: "We affirm our commitment to the Jewish people. We affirm our commitment to the life of reason. We affirm our commitment to discovering our own power and strength."

One of the colloquium's speakers described the congregation's liturgy and practices as "ersatz Judaism."

Poet Amichai — who describes himself as a secular Jew but is not affiliated with this movement — said the liturgy was "like an artificial flower, which looks nice but has no scent, no soul."

Leaders of the movement attribute its inability to attract larger numbers to a lack of leadership.

"If we had 100 rabbis and 200 madrichim we would be a powerful force," Wine said in an interview during the colloquium.

Responding to the void, the North American Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews began a leadership training program three years ago.

Eight people are currently studying with Wine in a five-year program to become rabbis, and 49 are training to be "madrichim," or leaders.

Eight graduated as madrichim during last month's colloquium. They will work primarily as officiants of life cycle events, such as weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, in humanistic communities.

A few received interim permission to officiate at weddings before they completed their training. Ruth Feldman has, to date, overseen 18 weddings, she said during her graduation speech.

"Most of them have been intercultural," she said, using Secular Humanists' preferred term for intermarriages.

### 'The challenge is to define what we are'

Wine performs most of the intermarriages in the Detroit area, said several of his congregants.

British businessman Felix Posen, a philanthropist who underwrote a substantial part of the colloquium's cost, said in his remarks at the colloquium, "Secular Jews are intellectually undeveloped. They will be hard to find and difficult to attract.

"The challenge is to define what we are and sell the positive qualities to those unknown to us now."

Yet, on the day speakers were scheduled to address the topic "Why be Jewish," nearly all of them devoted their time to enumerating reasons why not to be Jewish.

They talked about Judaism in terms of pain and guilt. And when they spoke of mainstream Judaism, it was in connection to views of traditional Jewish culture as authoritarian, one-dimensional and suffocating.

No mention was made of the diverse conceptions of God and expressions of Judaism.

Historian Norman Cantor said the central theme of his Jewish identity is suffering.

"Being a Jew explains the meaning of suffering. It is part of my Jewish nature or destiny," he said. "To realize one is a Jew is to realize that you have to endure an unfair life."

Edna Coffin, a professor of Hebrew literature and language, said, "The only way I could escape from the 'oy vey' way of life, to stop waiting for the pogrom around the corner, was to become a humanist." □

## Leah Rabin expresses regret for appearance on 'Nightline'

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The widow of slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin expressed regrets over having taking part in a special telecast of the ABC-TV news program "Nightline," which was broadcast live from the Jerusalem Theater early Wednesday morning.

Leah Rabin, who participated in the show via a linkup from her Tel Aviv home, later told Israel Radio that the program had only served to escalate the tensions that have surfaced in Israeli society in the wake of her husband's Nov. 4 assassination.

The show "exists precisely to fan the flames," she said, adding, "this is not the time yet for such debates and definitely not on our TV screens."

The show, simulcast on Israel Television as it was beamed to U.S. audiences late Tuesday night, was moderated by journalist Ted Koppel, who interviewed panel members from both sides of the political spectrum and sought comments from audience members in the theater.

Focusing on Israel's political and social climate in the aftermath of the assassination, the special "Town Meeting" program drew millions of viewers, according to the show's producers.

During the show, Rabin explained why she shook hands with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat when he came on a condolence call to her Ramat Aviv home last week, but has expressed reservations about shaking hands with Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

"The handshake [of Yitzhak Rabin] two years ago with Yasser Arafat symbolized hope and the beginning of a new road" toward peace, she said. "The handshake with Mr. Netanyahu did not."

In recent interviews, Rabin has been sharply critical of Netanyahu and other right-wing leaders for permitting hot political rhetoric to escalate against her husband in the weeks prior to the assassination.

Like Rabin, Netanyahu and Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres took part in the show via linkups from other locations in the country.

Peres, looking drawn and tired, repeated the call for reconciliation. "We have to stop by all means the acts of violence, the support for terror, whether verbal or physical, and go on," he said.

### Razor-thin approval

He also defended his government's right to proceed with a recently signed agreement with the Palestinians, despite the razor-thin approval the pact recently received in the Knesset.

Netanyahu lashed out against the recent government crackdown on extreme right-wing groups, calling it a "sheer witchhunt" that smacked of "McCarthyism at its purest."

He also said Israel's left wing was guilty of name-calling and of blaming the right wing for physical violence, when it had its own history of acerbic verbal attacks against the right.

The studio panel included Likud Knesset member Eliahu Ben-Elissar, former Knesset member Elyakim Ha'etzni, who resides in Kiryat Arba near Hebron, and Efrat leader Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, all of whom represent various shades of right-wing opinion.

Ben-Elissar questioned whether it was proper for the government to make "revolutionary decisions" regarding trading land for peace with the Palestinians when the recent agreement was approved in the Knesset by only one vote.

Representing the left on the panel were Health

Minister Ephraim Sneh, Histadrut Secretary-General Haim Ramon and Peace Now activist Janet Aviad.

The panelists were often critical of one another, reflecting the divisions among Israelis, despite calls for reconciliation period in the wake of the assassination.

Among the audience members participating in the discussion was Esther Waxman, whose son Nachshon Waxman was killed in October 1994 when Israeli commandos attempted to rescue him from three Hamas abductors.

Waxman called on the government to attempt to heal the divisions among Israelis before continuing with the peace process with the Palestinians.

"Peace with our enemies is a mockery when there is no peace with our brothers," she said. □

## Assassination plot investigation leads to arrest of female settler

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police arrested the first female suspect in connection with the Nov. 4 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Described by police as one of the "dominant members of an organization that wants to kill Rabin," Margalit Harshefi, 20, from the West Bank settlement of Beit El, was brought in handcuffs before a court in Petach Tikva on Wednesday.

Police said Harshefi was not suspected of active participation in the assassination, but that she knew of the plot in advance and failed to alert security officials.

She was charged with conspiracy to commit a crime and failure to prevent a felony. Harshefi pleaded not guilty. She was the eighth person to be arrested in connection with the assassination. All the suspects are religious Jews in their 20s.

The judge ordered her placed in custody and said she could not see a lawyer until Sunday.

Both Harshefi's father and lawyer said she knew confessed assassin Yigal Amir, but had no criminal connection with him. Harshefi is a student at Bar-Ilan University, the same school attended by Amir.

Meanwhile, another suspect already arrested in connection with the alleged plot to kill Rabin was brought before a Tel Aviv court for a third custody hearing.

Ohad Skornik, 23, is suspected of having prior knowledge of the plot, and of being a member of an extremist group that planned attacks against Arabs. He was ordered held in custody for another five days.

Another suspect in the case, Avishai Raviv, leader of the Jewish militant Eyal group, was released on bail Wednesday and placed under house arrest at his parents' home for seven days.

On Tuesday, a Tel Aviv court extended the detention of Michael Epstein, 23, of Ramat Gan, who was originally arrested Nov. 8 on suspicion of being involved in the conspiracy. Police officials reportedly told the court that they no longer believed that Epstein knew in advance of the assassination.

But they sought his continued detention, saying that they were investigating his possible involvement in an organization that was planning attacks on Palestinians as a means for disrupting the peace process.

Reports surfaced during the week that extremist right-wing groups may strike again, but this time at Palestinians, not the Israeli leadership.

In addition to arresting those believed to have conspired in the Rabin assassination, police have also launched a broader crackdown on Israeli extremists, serving indictments this week against more than 50 settlers accused of disturbing the public order or attacking Palestinians or their property. □

**NEWS ANALYSIS****Forging ahead minus a partner, Peres looks to next generation***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "Before, there were two horses pulling the cart," a sad and pensive Shimon Peres remarked to friends over the weekend. "Now, there is one horse and an empty harness."

The image reflected the distance the two once-bitter rivals, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, had traversed the past three years.

Bitter at losing the Labor Party leadership to Rabin in 1992, Peres entered the new government that year full of resentment and suspicion.

But as the peace process unfolded, he set aside his still-intense dislike of Rabin and dedicated himself to one goal: peace.

Rabin, whose antipathy toward Peres was at least as profound as that of the foreign minister toward him, responded positively to Peres' new selflessness in the pursuit of a regional peace.

Indeed, working together in intimate proximity, the unexpected happened to the two old war horses: They grew to respect each other, to feel comfortable with each other — and even to begin to like each other.

Their close alliance formed the bedrock of Israel's peace policies. But it posed a looming problem for their party.

Elections were approaching, and the Rabin-Peres ticket meant that the Labor Party was offering the electorate two septuagenarians: Rabin would have been 74 and Peres 73 by November 1996, when the national elections are scheduled to be held.

The problem was exacerbated by the contrast between Labor's slate and that of the Likud, led by the young, telegenic and charismatic Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, 47.

The Likud, long led by the elderly though spry Yitzhak Shamir, had managed to jump a generation and to present the public with a fresh and youthful image.

**Make way for the 'Bibi-boomers'**

Three longtime leadership contenders had all been shunted aside to make way for the "Bibi-boomers":

Moshe Arens, who served as Shamir's defense minister but retired from politics after the Likud's defeat in 1992; Ariel Sharon, the hardline and controversial defense minister of the Lebanon War who lost the party's mainstream support as he edged steadily rightward; and David Levy, Shamir's foreign minister who broke from Likud earlier this year to found his own party.

Netanyahu, not universally respected among his party colleagues, has carefully surrounded himself with an impressive and attractive phalanx of bright young stars:

Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, son of the late, revered Menachem Begin; Dan Meridor, formerly the minister of justice and closest aide to both Menachem Begin and Shamir; Limor Livnat, a cogent and outspoken young female Knesset member; and Tzachi Hanegbi, firebrand former student leader and rising Knesset star.

Waiting in the wings and available for national office are the mayors of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Ehud Olmert and Ronnie Milo.

Now, with Rabin's tragic death, Peres and Labor have the opportunity to match the Likud challenge with a winning mix of their own youthful stars.

The pattern that is clearly before Peres' eyes is that of his own revered mentor, Israel's founding father and first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

During his 15 years at the helm of the state, from

1948-1963, Ben-Gurion surrounded himself with bright and loyal younger men, purposefully grooming them for future national leadership roles.

Prominent among these young men was Peres himself, who was appointed director general of the Defense Ministry at the age of 29.

As Peres pursues the Ben-Gurion model, the young men who may fill roles in his evolving government are not all of his choosing. But coming into the premiership in a dramatic and unexpected way, Peres could hardly have prepared his own preferred team.

The rising stars include:

- Ehud Barak, 53, an intellectually brilliant and much-decorated military man who retired as army chief of staff at the beginning of this year and recently entered Rabin's Cabinet as interior minister.

Many regarded Barak as Rabin's chosen heir. Peres is likely to appoint him defense minister or foreign minister — depending on which, if either, of these posts Peres decides to keep for himself.

- Haim Ramon, 47, a popular young politician who served under Rabin as minister of health. He broke from Labor when it refused to back his health reform proposals. He then set up his own party to fight and win control of the Histadrut trade union federation, a longtime Labor power base.

After the assassination of Rabin, Ramon set aside all preconditions for his re-entry into Labor. On Tuesday, he made the decision official, announcing that he and two other breakaway colleagues, Amir Peretz and Samuel Avital, were returning to the Labor fold.

Peres, for his part, is expected to give Ramon the Interior Ministry portfolio in his new government.

But the young minister who, whatever his portfolio, will be the closest to Peres will be Yossi Beilin, now minister of economic planning.

Beilin, 47, a former journalist, threw in his lot with Peres in his mentor's darkest days — straight after Labor's searing defeat at the hands of Menachem Begin in 1977.

Since then, the two have been inseparable and have developed a father-son relationship that has withstood all the vicissitudes of public life. It was Beilin who, through two academic friends, set the secret peace talks with the Palestinians in motion in Oslo — discussions that paved the way for the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn.

As Peres goes about the task of establishing a new government, he has received as gracious a gesture of support as he could have wished from the slain prime minister's widow, Leah Rabin.

"You started off as two," she told Peres during Sunday's massive rally in Tel Aviv to honor her slain husband. "Now you are left alone."

She then wished him well in his effort to lead Israel toward the peace that was her husband's legacy. □

**Two arrested at Rabin's grave***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police arrested two yeshiva students on charges of desecrating Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's grave.

Yehudah Kiegel, 19, of Jerusalem, and Avraham Birenbaum, 18, of Ashdod, were placed in custody for six days. The two attended the Be'er Torah seminary in Jerusalem, according to Israel Radio.

They were arrested early Wednesday morning at the Mount Herzl Cemetery in Jerusalem.

Police said they were taken into custody after one of the students spat on the grave and the other attempted to urinate on it. □