



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Two Americans were among the 26 people killed by two suicide bombers in Jerusalem and Ashkelon.** The Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas took responsibility for the attacks, saying they were carried out to avenge last month's killing of Hamas bombmaker Yehiya Ayash. [Page 1]

■ **Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat pledged to take immediate measures to crack down on fundamentalist militants operating in the Palestinian autonomous areas.** Peres, who immediately suspended talks with the Palestinians, also said the Palestinian government had already thwarted a number of attacks. [Page 3]

■ **Famed Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld was expelled from the Bosnian Serbs' self-proclaimed capital of Pale after he tried to persuade their leaders to surrender to an international war crimes tribunal.** The U.N.-appointed war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia already indicted Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic.

■ **Israel rejected an offer from members of the fundamentalist Islamic group Hezbollah to swap the bodies of two missing Israeli soldiers for detained Muslim fighters.** The proposed exchange marked the first time that the Iran-backed group admitted to having the bodies.

■ **The National Jewish Coalition continued its quest to distance the Republican Party from GOP presidential candidate Pat Buchanan.** The pre-eminent Jewish Republican organization launched a media blitz that included a five-page outline of Buchanan's quotations and reasons why the candidate is outside the Republican mainstream.

■ **The Jerusalem municipality, ignoring a ruling by Israel's High Court of Justice, voted against appointing Reform and Conservative rabbis to its local religious council.** The court ruling stipulates that local religious councils cannot bar candidates from non-Orthodox denominations solely on the basis of their religious affiliation. [Page 2]

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Israelis ponder price of peace after dual bombings by Hamas

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "Oh, God. When will this all end?"

These words echoed the sentiments of many Israelis in the aftermath of this week's dual suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon, which claimed the lives of 26 people and wounded at least 79 others.

David Oberman, one of the first people on the scene of the Jerusalem bombing, appeared dazed four hours after the attack.

The owner of a nearby bagel shop, Oberman recalled hearing "a loud, loud crash.

"I ran outside and saw that a bus had exploded. My first thought was that we had to get people out of the bus."

"My second thought was that a second bomb might go off at any minute," he added.

In previous suicide attacks, there was a second bomb blast timed to go off just as rescue workers were rushing to help the victims of the first blast.

"Some people decided to hold back, while others went directly to the victims — and both had good reasons to do what they did," Oberman said. "But it was very confused, total chaos."

Sunday's blasts, which occurred at two of the country's busiest intersections at the height of rush hour, saddened and shocked a nation just recovering from the November assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Evidently designed to cause the maximum amount of carnage, the attacks came at the start of the busy work week, when buses typically overflow with soldiers on their way to their bases, with children on their way to school and with adults on their way to work.

The Jerusalem blast occurred at 6:48 a.m. on a local bus that was stopped at a red light just a block away from the central bus station. The suicide bomber killed 24 people and wounded 50 others, 10 of them seriously.

Two Americans, Matthew Eisenfeld, 25, a Jewish Theological Seminary rabbinical student from West Hartford, Conn., and his girlfriend, Sarah Duker, 23, of Teaneck, N.J., were among the dead.

The second attack took place some 50 minutes later at a hitchhiking stop for soldiers near Ashkelon.

That suicide bomber killed two people and wounded 29, including six who were in serious condition.

In much of central Jerusalem, life came to a virtual standstill as dozens of ambulances rushed to the scene almost as soon as the first blast occurred.

All main roads leading to the central bus station were sealed as rescue crews evacuated the injured and the dead.

On the scene in less than five minutes, rescue workers searched for victims in the twisted wreckage of the bus, while members of Chevra Kadisha, the fervently Orthodox burial society, combed the bus, the street, even tree branches for body parts.

According to Jewish law, all bodies, including dismembered parts, must be buried within 24 hours.

### 'Sick to my stomach'

The first casualty Oberman encountered was a 16-year-old boy.

"I found the boy lying on the pavement and I pulled him away from the bus, which was smoking. I carried him to an ambulance, and his wounds appeared superficial. He was in shock and couldn't open his eyes, but he was coherent.

"It was only later, after the doctors took X-rays, that we learned that he had shrapnel in his brain.

"His mother, who was sitting beside him, was sent to another hospital. I don't know her condition."

Oberman added that before he accompanied the teen-ager to the hospital, "two other people were placed inside the ambulance. One, a woman

soldier, was burned and hysterical. The second, a young man, seemed to have third-degree burns over much of his body.

"I think the soldier probably made it. The man with the burns seemed much worse off. I feel sick to my stomach, both physically and otherwise."

Even after the destroyed bus and other damaged cars and buses were removed from the scene three hours later, hundreds of people still milled about the Jerusalem bomb site.

Some set up makeshift shrines with pieces of twisted wreckage and lit memorial candles.

Many others shouted anti-government slogans and called for an end to peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

About 100 police prevented angry onlookers from spilling into the street.

When Prime Minister Shimon Peres visited the site of the explosion, he was jeered — and his life was reportedly threatened by some members of the crowd.

"There's got to be a better way," said Eliahu Sharabani, a yeshiva student.

"This government has to be changed because they don't do enough to ensure security."

Asked whether a Likud-led government would be able to prevent such attacks, he replied, "I'm not sure of anything, but we won't know until we try."

Yohanan Ramati, who arrived at the scene about 11 a.m., said he empathized with the victims and their families.

"I'm one of the people who lost a child to terror," Ramati said. "My daughter Eliora was killed in the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires on March 17, 1992."

Argentine authorities have yet to find those responsible for the embassy car bombing, which killed 29 people and left more than 100 injured.

Although he neither carried a banner nor shouted slogans, Ramati was nonetheless critical of the government.

"I do not believe that the government's talk about separating Jews from Arabs is serious. It can't be done. The only way to do this — and I'm not suggesting it — is to get all Arabs out of the country.

"Many Israeli Arabs are no different from Arabs living across the Green Line in that they, too, support Hamas.

"As long as Jews live by the principle that Arabs can live in Israel but that Jews cannot live in areas under Arab rule, peace cannot be achieved," Ramati said.

### 'In the world to come'

Others, such as 20-year-old Tali Eliahu, said they needed time to think about the attack and its implications for the future.

"Right now, I'm still in shock. This morning we called all our relatives to see if they were all right, and my brother called from Hong Kong to check on us," she said.

"I feel sad — angry, too — but mostly sad. It hurts so much.

"Believe it or not, on Shabbat I was thinking that because there haven't been any attacks lately, peace was really coming.

"I was against the peace process in the beginning, but after Rabin's assassination I began to think that Rabin's way was the right way.

"Now, I don't know what to believe," she said.

As casualty reports continued to come in throughout the day, Jerusalem buses appeared as full as ever.

But something seemed to have changed.

Instead of engaging in noisy conversations, passengers on bus No. 18 — the same line that was attacked that

morning — listened carefully to the radio broadcasts of the latest death toll.

"Oh, God. When will this end?" cried an elderly woman, wiping away tears with a handkerchief.

"B'olam habah," replied an old man weighed down with groceries. "In the world to come." □

## Municipality snubs High Court by rejecting council nominees

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Ignoring a ruling by Israel's High Court of Justice, the Jerusalem municipality has again voted against appointing Reform and Conservative rabbis to its local religious council.

In a vote taken last week, the council voted 17-8 against the appointments.

The secularist Meretz Party and officials from the Reform movement said they planned to petition the High Court this week against the municipality's vote.

In January, the High Court reaffirmed an earlier ruling that local religious councils could not bar candidates from non-Orthodox denominations solely on the basis of religious affiliation.

In its ruling at the time, the court rejected the Jerusalem municipality's decision not to appoint Reform and Conservative rabbis to its council.

The rabbis were to serve as representatives for the left-wing Meretz faction in the municipality.

The court gave the municipality 60 days to hold another vote.

The council was asked to choose two Meretz representatives from four candidates — two of them Reform rabbis, two Conservative.

The local religious councils, supervised by the Religious Affairs Ministry, have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage, kashrut, burial and other religious matters for all Jews living in Israel.

The services provided by the councils are rendered according to Orthodox practice regardless of the affiliation or religious customs of the individual receiving the service.

Forty-five percent of each religious council is appointed by the local municipal council, with another 45 percent appointed by the religious affairs minister and 10 percent by the local rabbinate. □

## Knesset delays conversion legislation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's religious parties have agreed to a request by Justice Minister David Liba'i to put off Knesset debate on a bill that would prevent the recognition of Reform conversions performed in the Jewish state.

Liba'i asked last week that the parties delay the debate, saying that a ministerial committee had been appointed to investigate the matter.

The parties agreed Feb. 22 to postpone discussion of the legislation, which the government had threatened to vote against if the bill came to the Knesset floor.

In a landmark ruling last November, Israel's Supreme Court opened the door for recognition of Reform and Conservative conversions performed in Israel.

In a 6-1 decision, the court ruled at the time that a person who asks the Interior Ministry to be listed in a civil population registry as a Jew does not require approval from the chief rabbinate, which only recognizes Orthodox conversions in Israel.

But the court did not explicitly recognize Reform conversions, saying that it would be up to the Knesset to pass the appropriate legislation. □

## Hamas suicide terrorists hit Israel with twin attacks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The ability of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to prevent attacks by Islamic extremists has been thrown into question by this week's twin suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon.

The bombings — the bloodiest since Israel and the Palestinians signed the historic Declaration of Principles in September 1993 — left questions about how both sides handle security, the peace process' *raison d'être* for many Israelis.

Sunday's attacks came only days after Israel lifted the closure it imposed Feb. 12 on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the wake of reports that Hamas was planning to avenge the Jan. 5 Gaza Strip killing of master bombmaker Yehiya Ayash, also known as "The Engineer."

Israeli officials, who neither confirmed nor denied Hamas allegations that the Jewish state was behind Ayash's death, began easing the closure Feb. 15 to allow Palestinians older than 30 to return to their jobs in Israel. The closure was lifted entirely last Friday.

The deadly bombings — which struck a bus in the heart of Jerusalem and a soldiers' hitchhiking station near Ashkelon, killing 26 people and wounding at least 79 — came after security sources had warned not only about the possibility that militants would avenge Ayash's death, but that they also would mark the second anniversary of the slaying of 29 Palestinian worshipers at a Hebron mosque by Jewish settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein.

But in the aftermath of the bombings, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, dismissed suggestions that Israeli security forces should have been more alert in the wake of the lifting of the closure. "If it wasn't the 50th day [since Ayash's death] it would have been the 60th," he told reporters. "The Hamas does not need excuses. It has declared that it will act against us."

Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz likewise said security and political measures were being taken to combat terrorism, adding that the lifting of the closure and Sunday's attacks were not necessarily linked.

"Just because there was an attack immediately after the lifting of the closure does not mean it was because it was lifted," he told Israel Radio.

### Bomb filled with nails

In the Jerusalem attack on a No. 18 bus, a suicide bomber with a 22-pound bomb filled with nails and ball bearings killed 24 people and wounded 50 others, 10 of them seriously.

Two Americans were among those killed.

Matthew Eisenfeld of West Hartford, Conn., a second-year rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, died in the attack. Eisenfeld, 25, was studying for the year at the JTS campus in Jerusalem.

Eisenfeld's girlfriend, Sarah Duker, 23, of Teaneck, N.J., who was spending the year in Israel, also died in the attack.

The attack came at 6:48 a.m., during Israel's rush hour, as the bus waited at a traffic light at Jaffa and Sarei Yisrael streets, some 900 feet from the central bus station. The blast destroyed the bus, leaving only a blackened, twisted frame. It damaged another local bus, No. 36, which was waiting behind it, as well as seven cars near the blast.

The second attack occurred in Ashkelon, less than an hour later, at a hitchhiking stop for soldiers.

The suicide bomber in that attack killed two people and wounded 29, including six who were in serious condition.

The attack was reportedly carried out by a terrorist dressed in an Israeli army uniform who mingled with soldiers waiting for rides.

Hamas claimed responsibility for the attacks in a leaflet distributed and signed by the "cell of the new students of Yehiya Ayash."

The attacks came after a six-month halt by Hamas, which last attacked an Israeli target Aug. 21, when a suicide bomber detonated an explosion on the No. 26 bus in Jerusalem's northern neighborhood of Ramat Eshkol, killing four people, including American Joan Davenny, 47, of Woodbridge, Conn.

Sunday's bombings generated questions about the Palestinian Authority's ability to control Hamas terrorists.

Days before the latest attacks, Palestinian officials had reportedly reached an agreement with Hamas militants, according to which the fundamentalists would halt attacks on Israel in return for the Palestinian Authority's protection from Israeli retaliation.

Israeli intelligence officials briefing the Cabinet on Sunday repeated their assessment that the Palestinian Authority was not doing enough to get at the infrastructure of Hamas and the other fundamentalist groups.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, briefing reporters after Sunday's attacks, said he had telephoned Palestinian Council President Yasser Arafat and demanded that the Palestinian Authority stop the militants from carrying out their deadly missions.

"There is no doubt that the Palestinian Authority has thwarted a number of attempts to hurt Israel," Peres said, confirming Palestinian officials' recent claims that they had arrested a number of extremists, foiling attacks within Israel. "At the same time, we demanded that the activities against the [infrastructure] of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad be stepped up, immediately and without hesitation," Peres added.

Peres said Arafat had pledged to do so and that arrests of activists were already being carried out.

Peres, who has enjoyed a wide lead in the polls against Likud rival Benjamin Netanyahu, was jeered when he visited the site of the Jerusalem blast.

Some Israelis reportedly chanted, "With blood and fire, we will throw out Peres," a reference to Israel's national elections on May 29.

Other Israelis gathered at the bomb site reportedly made death threats against the prime minister.

In his comments to reporters, Peres vowed to continue the peace process.

### Pope condemns attacks

"We have no intention of surrendering to the Hamas and Islamic Jihad," Peres said. "We must continue to fight terror on the one hand, and continue peace discussions on the other." Peres said negotiations with the Palestinians would be suspended until after the mourning period, "as has become the practice."

Peres, noting that Israeli security officials had information of possible future attacks, announced that Israel was reimposing the closure on the territories and was stepping up security checks at crossings between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.

In the wake of the bombings, Israeli opposition parties refrained from openly attacking the government — but they called for a rethinking of the peace process.

The attacks elicited condemnations from world leaders, including U.S. President Bill Clinton, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Hussein and British Prime Minister John Major.

Pope John Paul II condemned the bombings in his Sunday address and extended his condolences to the victims' families. □

## Nearly gone, but not forgotten: Jerusalem cafe sells out to pizza

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Perhaps it was inevitable.

With McDonald's, Ben & Jerry's and Blockbuster Video all ensconced in downtown Jerusalem, some consider it just a matter of time until the city's venerable outdoor cafes become obsolete.

Even so, Pizza Hut's recent announcement that it was leasing the space now occupied by the nearly mythical Cafe Atara on Ben Yehuda Street sent shock waves through the Israeli capital.

Far from fancy, and certainly not chic, Atara's appeal has always been more historical than gastronomic.

Founded in 1938 by Heinz Greenspan, a German refugee, the restaurant's narrow, tilting tables — the sidewalk is uneven — continue to draw Israeli intellectuals, foreign journalists and myriad tourists.

Immortalized in Amos Oz's best-selling novel "My Michael," Atara is to Jerusalem what Horn & Hardart was to New York.

The restaurant, the best place in town to eat onion soup, is also the place where military battles were strategized and political campaigns formulated.

In a country barely 50 years old, the 58-year-old restaurant is a cultural icon.

Still, icon or not, the Greenspan family has decided to sell its rights as tenants for a reported \$500,000.

If the Greenspan family is able to find an alternate site for the resident, the cafe may ultimately reopen elsewhere.

"It's complicated," says Uri Greenspan, the founder's grandson.

"It's not just that we got a good offer. There's an old tenancy law from the Mandate period that might change next year, and that will cost us a great deal of money.

"We didn't want to take any chances. We tried to buy the building, and we didn't put any limit on the offer, but the owner didn't accept. So now we have to be practical."

Overhearing the conversation, a passerby in her 60s tells Atara's owner: "We're so sorry you're leaving. My husband and I have been coming here, as tourists, for 40 years."

Shaking his head, Greenspan continues, "It's been unbelievable. I've gotten letters from customers living abroad, and from people living here. They ask me to reconsider our decision."

Practically raised in the cafe, Greenspan waxes nostalgic when asked to recall Atara's past.

"I wasn't here in 1948, but in 1958 we had a party to celebrate 10 years of independence, and it lasted until dawn.

"All of our customers who were here in 1948 came back to join us."

Noting that the cafe never closed a single day due to war, Greenspan says that the 1967 Six-Day War was something special.

### 'Seen a lot of history'

"We stayed open the entire week, and I still remember the celebration when Jerusalem was reunited. I had to join the army, of course, but my parents came and ran the business."

During the Gulf War in 1991, he continues, "A lot of our customers from Tel Aviv came to Jerusalem and spent the days with us. This restaurant has seen a lot of history."

Although many of Atara's customers are relative

newcomers, even they seem to cherish its link with the past.

"It's truly sad to see a landmark like this turned into a Pizza Hut," says Chava Weiss, an editor who emigrated from the United States three years ago.

"A hundred years from now, I can't see people putting up a fuss when someone decides to knock down a pizza restaurant."

"I've been in Jerusalem only three months, but friends suggested I check it out," says Ariel Hayat, a Hebrew University student.

"I'd heard it had a lot of tradition, that it's one of the oldest cafes in Jerusalem."

Upset by what he perceives to be the Americanization of Israel, Hayat says, "It's sad. When you walk down the street you see a big McDonald's sign. It looks so out of place.

"I'm from Tel Aviv and am used to the Americanization there, but here in Jerusalem you expect something better, something more quiet, more peaceful." □

## Primary candidates' list causes row in Likud Party

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Likud officials charged the Israeli media last week with exaggerating a reported rift in the party between leader Benjamin Netanyahu and Knesset member Dan Meridor.

Reports of the rift came in the wake of the publication this week of a list of recommended Likud candidates in the primaries, which did not include Meridor or Knesset member Ehud Olmert, the mayor of Jerusalem.

Meridor is known to be strongly opposed to the recently formed joint list of the Likud and Tsomet parties in the upcoming national elections.

Likud Knesset faction leader Moshe Katsav denied any connection between the list of recommended candidates and Netanyahu, saying that it was distributed by a "marginal element" in the opposition party and had no significance.

"We are at the start of a very tough campaign for the primary system," he said.

"I believe that some marginal groups in the party used this negative method to try to receive popularity, or something else."

Katsav said Meridor and Netanyahu had met and diffused the tensions between them.

Meanwhile, Meridor said that while he still believed that the Likud should re-examine its agreement with Tsomet to see whether it would really draw more votes, he would not oppose it.

His spokesman, Shlomo Gravit, said Meridor had no plans to try to overthrow Netanyahu for the party leadership in the Likud primaries, which are scheduled for March 18.

"All of us are working toward the real goal of the Likud, which is to win the coming elections," he said. □

## Israel sets satellite launch date

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel reportedly will launch its Amos-I communications satellite in May.

The \$350 million satellite, developed by Israel Aircraft Industries, will be launched May 7 on a French rocket.

The satellite will be in orbit for 11 years and be located next to Arab communications satellites.

The launch comes after Israel sent out a satellite last year that crosses over Syria, Iran and Iraq. □