



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Tensions escalated in southern Lebanon as Hezbollah fighters carried out three attacks that included a suicide bombing that killed at least one Israeli army officer. [Page 3]**

■ **Israeli security forces in the West Bank demolished the homes of Hamas terrorists and their accomplices. The first demolitions took place in the Al-Fawwar refugee camp near Hebron, where the homes of the two suicide bombers responsible for the Feb. 25 attacks in Jerusalem and Ashkelon were destroyed. [Page 3]**

■ **A new consortium to replace the American Zionist Youth Foundation is slated to be officially established in Jerusalem on Tuesday. The group, composed of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal and the Charles Bronfman Foundation, hopes to double the number of North American youths participating in Israel Experience programs.**

■ **A Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee completed a hearing to investigate how Palestinians are spending millions of dollars in U.S. development aid in Gaza and the West Bank. The panel also pledged to continue probing Hamas activities in the United States.**

■ **The Israeli media defied military censors by reporting the name of the next head of the Mossad. [Page 3]**

■ **Israeli troops arrested 35 Palestinians in the ongoing crackdown on Hamas militants. Despite the arrests, also being carried out by the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian police chief cautioned that there might be more suicide attacks by Islamic fundamentalists. [Page 3]**

■ **The Likud Party's central committee overwhelmingly approved an alliance with the Tsomet and Geshar parties. The primary opposition to the merger was voiced by Likud Knesset member Ze'ev "Benny" Begin.**

■ **Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay signed an agreement to crack down on terrorism in areas believed to be hideouts for Islamic terrorists. [Page 4]**

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Reform rabbis still wrestling with intermarriage, descent

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Some of the most controversial and central issues shaping Reform Judaism today — intermarriage, patrilineal descent and gay marriage — will be the focus of an upcoming conference of Reform rabbis.

Several hundred Reform rabbis from around the world are expected to attend the annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, slated for March 24-28 in Philadelphia.

The theme of the gathering is "Outreach and Intermarriage — Come Let Us Reason Together."

Two resolutions — one supporting civil marriage for gays and lesbians and one to establish a task force to study the ramifications of patrilineal descent — are expected to pass.

Outreach, intermarriage and patrilineal descent are being revisited by the rabbis now because of the tensions these issues have engendered within the movement during the past several years.

They also come at a time when the movement's longstanding emphasis on outreach has come into conflict with many Reform Jews' search for spiritual authenticity, which has led to greater emphasis on traditional Jewish practices.

The recent experience of many congregations suggests that there is an inherent tension in trying to be both broad and particularistic, in trying to be completely inclusive of interfaith families while ensuring that synagogue leadership and rituals are completely Jewish.

On the question of intermarriage, the Reform rabbinical organization passed a resolution in 1973 formally discouraging officiation.

But autonomy in decisionmaking is a central tenet of Reform Judaism and so the organization does not, and cannot, prohibit its rabbis from officiating.

A recent survey of CCAR members conducted by one Reform rabbi in New Jersey, Irwin Fishbein, found that 48 percent of Reform rabbis are willing to perform a marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew.

Fishbein runs an organization called the Rabbinic Center for Research and Counseling, which publishes a list of 231 Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis willing to officiate at intermarriages.

Such officiation is a matter of individual conscience, as is every other decision for Reform rabbis, said Rabbi Simeon Maslin, president of the CCAR.

Pressure to perform intermarriages

Maslin, the rabbi of Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pa., is personally opposed to officiating at intermarriages.

He took issue with Fishbein's survey findings and estimated the percentage of members who would officiate at an intermarriage to be between 33 percent and 40 percent.

Whatever the numbers, Reform rabbis are under considerable pressure from their congregations to perform intermarriages, several sources said.

According to the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, 62 percent of Reform Jews who married since 1985 married non-Jews.

And for many rabbis, it has become a litmus test for whether they will or will not get jobs.

There have been several cases in which rabbis' contracts have not been renewed by their congregations because they refused to officiate at mixed marriages, said Rabbi Elliot Stevens, executive secretary of the CCAR.

An illustration of the unprecedented congregational pressure that some are bringing to bear on the rabbis is the fact that David Belin introduced a resolution on the subject at the Feb. 5 executive meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational arm of the movement.

The proposal urges the CCAR to change its 1973 resolution opposing officiation "and instead adopt a neutral resolution neither favoring nor opposing rabbinic officiation."

The committee deferred consideration of the resolution until the

UAHC's trustees' meeting in June. "In many communities, people find it very difficult to get a Reform rabbi to do" intermarriages, said Belin, who was the founding chairman of the UAHC's Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach.

"The rabbis who don't [officiate] use the CCAR resolution as a rationale," said Belin, who is also president of the Jewish Outreach Institute, which is not affiliated with the Reform movement.

"The resolution also has an impact on how young rabbinical students feel" about officiating at intermarriages, he said.

The UAHC has never before adopted a resolution in an attempt to influence the policy of the CCAR, but Belin said he thinks that it is appropriate that the congregational arm of the movement do so now.

"The movement has constantly reinterpreted Jewish tradition in large part as a result of the concerns of lay people, and met the needs of lay people," said Belin, an attorney in Des Moines.

One of those reinterpretations, largely spurred by the realities of Reform life, was the 1983 adoption of patrilineal descent as Reform movement policy.

The policy accepted people as Jewish if either of their parents was Jewish, and if they had a Jewish education.

That acceptance contradicts the traditional definition of Jewishness as being inherited through the mother's line.

Such acceptance had been the movement's practice for many years.

But even 13 years after becoming movement policy, it remains problematic for some Reform rabbis.

Reform rabbis in Canada, with the support of those in Europe, Israel and some in America, are introducing a resolution at the CCAR convention that, if passed, would create a task force to study the impact of patrilineal descent and to clarify the policy.

Questions that have emerged from the policy include whether the "public and timely acts" of identification included in the original wording are obligatory and whether someone whose mother is Jewish but who is not educated as a Jew is to be considered Jewish, said Rabbi Elyse Goldstein of Toronto.

"There's no solid standard across the movement for what's expected. It's more like a smorgasbord to choose from," said Goldstein.

Goldstein runs an adult Reform education program, called Kolel, in Toronto.

Although Canadian, Israeli and European Reform rabbis would like to rescind the policy, such an effort would be "futile," Goldstein said.

"There is no chance of changing the reality of patrilineal descent."

'Worried about continuity'

More than 90 percent of Reform rabbis support the patrilineal descent policy, said Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive vice president of the CCAR.

But Rabbi Elliot Stevens of the CCAR acknowledged the problems inherent in the patrilineal decision.

"It's not clear who decides someone's Jewish status, and what happens when one rabbi considers someone Jewish and another does not because of their family practice or background," he said.

Goldstein also expressed concern that the policy has made it much easier for men to intermarry because it obviates the stigma connected with having non-Jewish children.

She also said that with patrilineal descent, she is "worried about continuity, about all these Jews who the rest of the world doesn't consider Jewish."

Rabbi Peter Knobel, spiritual leader of Beth Emet-The Free Synagogue in Evanston, Ill., is one who will oppose the resolution.

"I don't see the necessity for a task force," he said. "Is it a question of clarification or is it an attempt to reverse our decision?"

"I'm not in favor of disenfranchising large numbers of people who most people consider to be Jews and who are loyal to the Jewish community," he said.

On the issue of gay marriage, the Reform rabbinate is expected to adopt a resolution supporting civil marriage for gays and lesbians.

A great deal of informal discussion is also expected at the conference on the related but separate issue of religious sanctification of same-sex partnerships.

The group will likely take a position on gay religious weddings, which are often called commitment ceremonies, at next year's convention, when the organization's Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality presents its final report. □

Famous chefs regale Israelis with feast fit for King David

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Some 13 renowned chefs from around the world convened in Jerusalem to serve up a feast fit for a king — King David, that is.

The banquet, King David's Feast, was held Monday night as part of the city's Jerusalem 3000 festivities, commemorating the three millennia since David declared Jerusalem the Jewish capital.

Three hundred people enjoyed such culinary offerings as veal medallions with fresh herbs, prepared by Cajun legend Paul Prudhomme; truffled cream of white beans with smoked goose breast, by Paris chef Joel Robuchon; and gelee of acacia honey with strawberries, by Michel Trama of France.

The chefs, many of whom were already in Jerusalem for the World Association of Cooks Societies' Congress, prepared the courses in two specially built kitchens at Jerusalem's International Convention Center.

They were assisted by students from Israel's cooking schools.

Speaking to reporters between chopping and checking under pot lids, Prudhomme said the theme of the banquet had definitely influenced his offering.

"I think of huge things going by on platters, whole birds, food all over," he told Israel Television.

Prudhomme and his staff reportedly took lessons on kosher cooking before traveling to Israel.

All the chefs donated their time and culinary talents to the fund-raising event.

Proceeds from the \$600-a-plate dinner went to the Ein-Yael Living Museum and to educational projects for Jewish and Arab youths. □

Private cars allowed into Jordan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel and Jordan have agreed to allow private vehicles and buses to cross their border starting next month.

The agreement, which was reached this week by representatives of the Israeli-Jordanian Joint Transport Committee in Amman, is part of a broader pact that also covers trade issues.

As a result of the agreement, bus service is scheduled to begin soon on routes linking the Jordanian capital with Tel Aviv and Haifa.

The section of the accord dealing with trade is expected to be signed within three months. □

U.S. urges Israeli restraint as Hezbollah kills IDF soldier

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The situation in southern Lebanon continued to deteriorate after Hezbollah fighters carried out three attacks that included a suicide bombing aimed at Israeli troops operating in the region.

Tensions in northern Israel and the southern Lebanon security zone have increased since Israel broke off peace talks with Syria on March 4, after Damascus refused to condemn a recent series of suicide bombings in Israel.

Fighting in southern Lebanon is often linked to the state of the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

An Israeli army officer was killed and an Israeli civilian lightly wounded Wednesday when the suicide bomber blew himself up near a convoy in the southern Lebanon security zone. The dead soldier was identified as Capt. Salakh Kamal Zeidan, 23, of the Druse village of Beit Jann in northern Israel.

The suicide bomber belonged to the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement, which vowed days earlier that it would launch dramatic attacks against Israeli troops operating in southern Lebanon.

In a separate explosion Wednesday, a soldier with the Israel-allied South Lebanese Army was killed.

A Lebanese civilian was wounded in a third incident that day when an explosive device was detonated near a police station in the security zone town of Bint Jbail. Israeli sources said the device, which apparently went off prematurely, had been intended for Israeli troops operating in the area.

Immediately after the suicide bombing, heavy artillery exchanges were reported between Israeli and Hezbollah forces.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, visiting soldiers wounded in previous clashes in southern Lebanon, said at Haifa's Rambam Hospital that if Hezbollah did not act with restraint, neither would Israel.

"We will not depend on promises or paper," he told reporters, "but will see how things develop, and based on this, decide how to act."

He dismissed a question about whether Israel had given the United States a pledge to act with restraint in southern Lebanon. "There was no pressure," he said. "The Americans conveyed a message. We said we will consider them, taking into account" the realities on the ground in Lebanon.

A day earlier, Peres denied rumors that Israel was planning a large-scale action against Hezbollah.

In response to those rumors, Hezbollah said that if it was attacked, it would launch Katyusha rocket attacks against communities in northern Israel.

The suicide bombing took place when members of an Israeli convoy spotted a fighter approaching them.

When soldiers got off their jeep to approach him, the suicide bomber detonated the explosives.

The U.S. State Department issued a statement urging all parties to "restrain themselves in an effort to defuse the current situation." □

High Court supports decision to demolish terrorists' homes

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hoping to deter more suicide bombings, Israel has resumed the demolition of Hamas terrorists' West Bank homes.

Three homes were destroyed Wednesday after the High Court of Justice rejected seven appeals against the demolition policy.

At the Al-Fawwar refugee camp near Hebron, Israeli soldiers evacuated residents to a nearby hilltop before blowing up the home of Ibrahim Sarahneh, the suicide bomber who killed one other person in a Feb. 25 suicide attack in Ashkelon.

Angry residents, protesting what they called collective punishment, threw stones at the troops, who responded with rubber bullets. No one was injured.

Troops were also scheduled to demolish another home in Al-Fawwar that belonged to the family of Majdi Abu Wardeh, who killed 25 people as well as himself in a bus bombing in Jerusalem the same day as the Ashkelon attack.

But the demolition was delayed, after the army decided it would damage surrounding homes.

In Beit Hanina north of Jerusalem, bulldozers flattened the home of Mohiadin Sharif.

Sharif, who is still at large, is suspected by Israel of recruiting the suicide bomber and providing the explosives used in August's bombing of the No. 26 bus in Jerusalem's northern neighborhood of Ramat Eshkol.

The bomber claimed four victims in that attack and injured more than 100.

The third home destroyed belonged to Abdel-Majid Dodin in El Bruj near Hebron. He was sentenced by a Palestinian court to serve 12 years in jail for involvement in the No. 26 bus bombing.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem appealed in a letter to Prime Minister Shimon Peres "to reconsider the use of house demolitions as a punitive measure."

Last week, Israeli troops destroyed the home of Yehiya Ayash, believed to be the mastermind behind a series of suicide bombings in Israel. He was killed January in the Gaza Strip by a booby-trapped cellular phone.

A week earlier, Israeli troops blew up the home of Rayid Sharnobi in the village of Burka, located north of Nablus. Sharnobi carried out the March 3 suicide bombing of the No. 18 bus in Jerusalem, killing 19 people as well as himself.

Meanwhile, in the ongoing crackdown on Hamas militants, Israeli troops on Wednesday arrested 35 Palestinians. Palestinian police say they have arrested some 900 suspected militants since the wave of recent Hamas suicide bombings brought the peace process to a virtual halt.

On Wednesday, the Palestinian police chief in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Maj. Gen. Nasser Yusef, warned that there might be more suicide attacks by fundamentalists. □

New Mossad chief's name released

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Usually veiled in secrecy, the name of the next head of Israel's foreign intelligence agency has been publicized in the Israeli media.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz defied military censors by reporting this week that Maj. Gen. Danny Yatom would soon be appointed the next head of the Mossad.

Yatom, who has been in the army for 33 years, most recently served as chief military aide to Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres.

He will succeed a man identified only as "S," in keeping with the long-standing practice of keeping the names of Mossad leaders secret. "S" is planning to retire in June and will then become manager of Kupat Holim Maccabi, Israel's second-largest health care fund. At that time, his identity will be declassified.

The disclosure that Yotam will head Mossad comes two months after the Israeli media broke a similar tradition of secrecy by announcing that Rear Adm. Ami Ayalon was the newly appointed head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency. □

B'nai Brith audit: Incidents of anti-Semitism up in Canada

By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights has found that the number of reported incidents of anti-Semitic harassment and vandalism in 1995 stood at its highest point in 14 years.

The league's annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, released last week, showed that there were 331 incidents in 1995, compared with 290 reported the previous year.

The 1995 figure may be an underestimation of the actual number of anti-Semitic incidents, said Karen Mock, national director of the League for Human Rights. "The audit depends on the voluntary reporting of incidents," she said, adding that "people are often afraid to report, and frustrated when they fear nothing will be done."

She noted that only "one in 10 anti-Semitic incidents are ever reported, similar to incidents of child abuse or wife assault, both of which are notoriously underreported."

The increase of reported incidents in 1995 over previous years may be the result of the "quite sophisticated" high-tech system used to report the incidents, said Robert Libman, the BBC's Quebec regional director.

He added that a new hate-line installed in the group's Toronto office has made reporting the incidents easier, contributing to last year's higher total. Nearly 50 percent of the reported incidents occurred in Toronto.

Libman said the number of hate messages transmitted over the Internet has become a growing concern.

There is a debate over the best way to combat this, "either with laws to restrict it or to use the [Internet] to actually combat racism" with anti-hate cybermessages, Libman said.

By contrast, the United States witnessed a drop in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in 1995. In its annual audit released last month, the Anti-Defamation League recorded 1,843 incidents last year, a decrease of 11 percent from 1994. It was the first decline in three years. □

(JTA intern Sandra Saslovsky in New York contributed to this report.)

U.S. Jews join Argentines in remembering bombing

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentine Jews, joined by Israeli and American representatives, marked the 20 months that have elapsed since the bombing of the Jewish headquarters here.

As more than 500 people gathered Monday outside the Argentine Supreme Court to commemorate the July 18, 1994, bombing, Argentina joined with two neighboring countries to sign an agreement designed to crack down on terrorists operating in the region.

The investigation into the bombing of the Argentine Mutual Aid Association, or AMIA, has been marked by a frustrating succession of false leads. The bombing claimed 86 lives and left more than 300 wounded.

As part of Monday's commemorations, the crowd gathered at the blast site and lit 86 candles while the names of the victims were read aloud.

Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, told the gathering that Israel "will rest only when the case is solved and the terrorists brought to justice."

A 56-member delegation from the United Jewish Federation of MetroWest in New Jersey also participated.

"When Jews are killed anywhere, we feel the same pain," said Stanley Strauss, the federation's president.

Also unsolved is the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, which killed 29 people and left more than 100 injured.

The fourth anniversary of the embassy bombing came Sunday amid a warning from Israel's ambassador to Argentina, Itzhak Aviran, that the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement could launch another attack against a Jewish target here.

Israel and Argentina have accused Hezbollah of carrying out the two bombings.

Argentina's interior minister, Carlos Corach, is scheduled to visit Israel next week to meet with Prime Minister Shimon Peres to discuss cooperation in countering Islamic extremists.

Meanwhile, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay signed a pact Monday to coordinate border patrols and crack down on terrorism and drug trafficking in their common border area near Ciudad del Este, a commercial city in southeastern Paraguay.

The treaty calls for full cooperation between the security services of the three countries and for an upgrading of facilities to control the movement of people and vehicles in the busy international border region.

Intelligence sources have described Ciudad del Este as a smuggling center with a large Arab community.

Argentine police claim that Arab terrorist groups maintain cells and support bases in the city. According to the Argentine judiciary and police, those cells were involved in the AMIA and Israeli Embassy bombings. □

Czech Jews protest release of book examining 'Protocols'

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech Jewish community is incensed that a local publisher has issued a book analyzing the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

Written by Polish historian Janusz Tazbir, "Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Truth or Fraud?" was published in Poland without protest.

But local publisher Votobia has been sharply criticized by the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic for releasing a Czech version of the book last month.

"This is one of the most anti-Semitic books on the market," federation spokesman Jiri Danicek recently said. "It invokes among the Czech Jewish community feelings of bitterness and disgust."

Although Tazbir concludes in the book that the premise of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion — that there is a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world — is unfounded, the Jewish federation opposed publication of his book because it contains a complete version of the notorious anti-Semitic tract.

Readers of Tazbir's book are inclined to give as much credence to the tract itself as to the historian's assessment of it, Danicek said.

He added that he was "disappointed" that the title of the book is punctuated with a question mark.

Votobia President Petr Mikes told the Czech newspaper Mlada Fronta Dnes that he was "surprised" by the Jewish federation's reaction to the book.

The daily also reported that Vaclav Burian, who translated the book into Czech, was "taken aback" by the uproar. He was quoted as saying that the Jewish community in Poland was receptive to the book when it was published there and that it was given a positive review in the Jewish monthly Slovo Zidowskie.

Danicek said the Jewish federation was considering what, if any, action it would take against the Czech publisher. □