



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israel and the Palestinians appeared to have finalized a long-delayed agreement on the Israeli redeployment from most of the West Bank town of Hebron. But a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to sign the accord was delayed due to a budget debate in Israel. [Page 4]

■ Israeli police arrested and subsequently released 15 Jewish settlers who tried to take over a vacant building in Hebron's market. Police planned to file charges against five of the settlers. [Page 4]

■ The outgoing Swiss president dismissed as "blackmail" calls for his nation to set up a compensation fund for Holocaust survivors and their heirs who might be entitled to money deposited in Swiss banks in the World War II era. The World Jewish Congress called the remarks "insensitive." [Page 3]

■ The Nazi-hunting arm of the U.S. Justice Department moved to revoke the citizenship of Michael Kolhofer, 79, a Kansas City, Kan., man accused of taking part in the persecution of Jews and other civilians while serving as a SS guard at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp during World War II.

■ Most of the Israelis who work in the public sector returned to their jobs, after the Histadrut labor union federation ended a strike that crippled much of the economy.

■ Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations issued a joint report accusing the Jewish state and the Palestinian Authority of widespread rights violations. [Page 4]

■ Three Japanese officials during World War II stepped forward to help save the lives of as many as 20,000 Jewish people, according to documents and recent testimony. The trio acted against the interests of Germany after the refugees became stranded in a Russian border town that was close to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in north-eastern China.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Raising Jewish children: A search for spiritual help

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Becoming a parent is about a lot more than coping with colic and 4 a.m. feedings.

It is an enormously transformative experience. After all, a baby makes clear like nothing else just how powerful — and powerless — you are.

And suddenly, as you watch your infant sleep his innocent slumber, or look into her eyes as she nurses, you realize that you are responsible for giving your children everything you want them to know.

You are responsible for creating the person you hope your child will grow up to be.

Oy! Graduate school and late nights at the office didn't prepare you for this. So where do you turn for help?

The question inspires some people to turn back to the Judaism they knew as a child — or may never have known, but want their child to own.

For others, becoming a parent vastly deepens an already existing connection they feel with their religious community and with God.

It also leaves many people searching for ways that they can make the connection between parenting and Judaism when they've lost the tools — the rituals, prayers and customs — that were part of their grandparents' lives.

Now, a new generation of mothers and fathers are trying to reclaim some of the practices that connect their appreciation of life's miracles with their parenting.

And a passel of new publications, services and products are becoming available to meet their needs.

At least two new periodicals are dedicated to exploring the challenges of integrating the Jewish spiritual quest and parenting: the quarterly *Natural Jewish Parenting*, which is written by and for a primarily Orthodox and holistically oriented audience, and the newsletter and Website, *Jewish Family & Life!*

Recent articles on the Website (<http://www.jewishfamily.com>) included "Myths About Raising a Mensch" and "In the Inner Sanctum of Inspiration."

In another medium, *Bagelhead*, a cartoon character, has been developed by Michael Farber and his wife, Anne Klein Farber, to provide their kids with an alternative to Barney, the popular purple dinosaur.

"We felt there was a need for a focal character for Jewish kids, because we wanted them to have a fun character that would convey important values and reinforce their sense of Jewish identity," Michael Farber said.

'Stop and take note of the wonder'

They created a book and a sing-along cassette tape titled "Bagelhead to the Rescue!" and have sold close to their entire first printing of 5,000 copies. *Bagelhead* can be visited and ordered at his Website: <http://www.gisd.com/Bagelhead>.

The reason for the spate of interest and publications now is that liberal Jews "lost sight of the spiritual" in the last several decades, which were focused more on the "civil religion" of Israel and the Holocaust, said Rabbi Nancy Fuchs.

Fuchs, a rabbi and director of religious studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College outside Philadelphia, wrote "Our Share of Night, Our Share of Morning: Parenting as a Spiritual Journey (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996)."

"The loss in recent times of a firm sense of extended family and community to support the parenting process, and the loss of an integral tradition of folkways and customs has left people more consciously searching for a way to capture that spirituality," she said.

Taking "pieces of their past and their future," parents are "making up rituals and traditions because they realize what people always intuitively knew: that raising children goes better if there are ways to stop and take note of the wonder."

Because a generation of American Jews has grown up largely unfamiliar with their religion's powerful customs and traditions, they

sometimes feel inadequate when they feel ready to explore Judaism as parents.

Writer Gila Gevirtz created the book "Partners With God" (Behrman House, 1995) to help 8- and 9-year-old children understand that they can have a personal relationship with God.

She is finding that many adults use it as help for themselves.

"These are adults who, instead of feeling comforted by religious experience, have felt inadequate," Gevirtz said.

"The one thing these people are sure of is that they're not Jewishly authentic, that they are phonies," she said.

"It's a very distorted view of Eden, and because of this distortion people are intimidated to put their toe in the water so they never get this knowledge," she said.

Some Jewish organizations have picked up on the apprehension and illiteracy, and are creating materials to try to counter it.

The Community Hebrew Schools of Greater Philadelphia, in connection with area synagogues and Jewish social service agencies, for example, received a continuity grant from the local federation to start "Making Connections," a project that publishes a newsletter and kit of activities and information about four times a year.

Each of the graphically contemporary and appealing newsletters is linked to a Jewish holiday or celebration, and has articles in it about "doing Jewish." A newsletter whose opening article was "Starting Your New Year Jewishly" contained articles on creating an ethical will and celebrating Sukkot.

Tucked inside was a sheet with New Year's postcards kids could color in and mail and another with a list of synagogues offering free High Holiday tickets.

Coupons good for a free day at the local Jewish community center and discounts on adult education classes have been inserted into other issues.

About 1,200 families get the kits, said Rabbi Philip Warmflash, who heads the Community Hebrew Schools.

"People are looking for ways to use the time they have to give their children and themselves something they find valuable.

"Judaism has that to offer if we can communicate it in ways people can hear it and see it," he said.

'Never felt it's hokey'

Some Jewish rituals seem particularly comfortable when integrated into family life, no matter what a parent's level of observance.

Samuel Barth, a Conservative rabbi and father of a 1-year-old son, has found the traditional blessing over children on Friday nights to be particularly meaningful.

Parents customarily place their hands on their child's head and ask God to give their son the blessings of the biblical Ephraim and Manasseh, or their daughter the blessings of the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

Then the prayer asks that God "bless you and guard you, turn his face to you with favor and grace, be over you with kindness and peace."

"I've spoken to teen-agers who have had that blessing their whole lives" and never felt that it's hokey, said Barth, who serves as the dean of The Academy for Jewish Religion, a non-denominational rabbinical and cantorial seminary in Manhattan.

"It gives children access to what it really is to be blessed. It's easy to read in Torah that God blessed Abraham, but when someone puts their hands on you, it's incredibly powerful," he said.

Shabbat evening dinners are another point of

comfortable access for many, especially for those who have not been at all observant.

The night can be distinguished from the week's others in many ways: by sitting down together at the same time, by lighting the Sabbath candles, by blessing wine and challah, by wearing special clothes or setting a special table.

Gevirtz, who began doing Friday night Shabbat dinners with her husband and two adolescent stepsons, calls it "one of my most powerful parenting tools."

"We always say a 'misheberach,' or request for God's healing, for people we know and all people who are ailing physically or spiritually. Sometimes we say poetry, and we always sing 'Shalom Alecheim,'" Gevirtz said.

"Once it's Shabbat, we let go of all things that didn't work in the past week and try to bring forward our best selves," she said.

In the view of Blu Greenberg, an Orthodox writer, mother of five and grandmother of 11, observance of God's commandments is a mysterious and magical thing for families. "The rabbis gave us a great gift, the way they expanded the idea of holiness and integrated it with family life, and a perfect jewel came out," said Greenberg, referring to Shabbat.

"In this age of dual career families, there's probably more of a need for the jewel than at any other point in Jewish life because it connects and anchors family members to each other and gives them a strong sense of identity and parameters," said Greenberg, the author of "How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household (Simon and Schuster, 1983)."

"If the joy and the pride is there in the celebration within the family, it imparts a very powerful sense of self that kids carry through their whole life," she said. "Ritual is connection to self, to family, to community and to God. It affects the psyche in so many ways." □

First lady tells media to leave her family alone

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Sara Netanyahu has accused Israeli media of "crossing a red line" by portraying her 5-year-old son Yair in satirical sketches on television shows.

Israel Television's weekly satire show "The Cameri Quintet" recently featured a skit in which Yair pleads with his bodyguard to beat up a kindergarten classmate who had bothered him.

"Satire is legitimate and should be part of a democracy," Netanyahu said. "People have a right to express their views about the prime minister, but there is a red line regarding the portrayal of an innocent child which must not be crossed."

The wife of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu broke her traditional silence about the media this week in a televised interview aired on Channel 2.

When asked whether the Netanyahus had not set the stage for the satire by allowing the media to document family outings, Netanyahu said, "We never invited the photographers. They just took the pictures."

The high profile coverage of Israel's "first family" is a new development that comes after years in which the spouses and children of Israeli leaders were virtually unknown to the general public. Sonia Peres, wife of opposition leader and ex-Prime Minister Shimon Peres, was said to have taken public transportation and waited on line at the bank, unrecognized.

Since Netanyahu's election, Israeli newspapers have featured photos of the family at play, as well as banner headlines on the family's nanny troubles. □

Swiss president lashes out, provoking a harsh response*By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The World Jewish Congress is accusing the president of Switzerland of showing “shocking insensitivity” to the concerns of the Jewish people.

The charge came after President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz leveled a stinging New Year’s Eve attack at his nation’s foreign critics.

Delamuraz, whose term was to end this week, dismissed as “blackmail” calls for his nation to set up a \$250 million fund to begin compensating Holocaust victims and their heirs who might be entitled to money deposited in Swiss banks in the World War II era.

“If we agreed now to a compensation fund, this would be taken as an admission of guilt,” Delamuraz told the Tribune de Geneve newspaper.

“This is nothing less than extortion and blackmail,” he added.

“This fund would make it much more difficult to establish the truth.”

Instead, the Swiss government will wait until its newly appointed historical commission determines whether Switzerland misappropriated Jewish assets, the president said.

Switzerland has been at the center of an international furor over its wartime dealings with Nazi Germany and the fate of Jewish assets.

The WJC has suggested that Switzerland set up a preliminary fund as “a good faith financial gesture.”

Senate Banking Committee Chairman Alfonse D’Amato (R-N.Y.) echoed the call at a congressional hearing in December.

‘Assault and challenge’

Jewish and Swiss officials have been discussing creation of such a fund during the past month.

Negotiations have centered around a \$250 million figure, according to a source who is familiar with the discussions.

At this point, there is “an understanding” between Swiss and Jewish officials surrounding a compensation fund, the source said.

The next few weeks will show “whether the Swiss are serious about it or not,” the source added.

The WJC, for its part, said it would attempt to look beyond the Swiss president’s remarks and continue its struggle to win restitution.

“President Delamuraz’s reported comments represent an assault and challenge to the very soul of Switzerland,” said Kalman Sultanic, vice president of the WJC.

“I do not believe the Swiss people will allow this blackening of the reputation of their country,” Sultanic said.

“He has shown shocking insensitivity to the moral concerns of the Jewish people as well as others who feel deeply the tragedy of the Holocaust and those terrible years.”

Delamuraz, who has occupied the largely ceremonial post of president for the past year under the Swiss rotating system, was due to step down Jan. 1.

In some of the harshest language yet used by Swiss officials, the president of Switzerland also accused foreign critics of trying to undermine the nation’s role as a world financial center.

“Economic competition is fierce and this affair proves it,” he said of the ongoing investigations into Switzerland’s wartime dealings with Nazi Germany. □

Pact with Poland concludes long journey for rare Haggadah*By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A rare medieval Haggadah will soon head for its new home at the National Library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The 14th-century illuminated Wolf Haggadah will be in its new home in mid-January as a result of a joint effort by the World Jewish Congress and the Polish government, Elan Steinberg, executive director of the WJC, said in an interview late last week.

In addition, a 23-foot cross on display at Auschwitz and religious symbols on the former Carmelite convent at the camp will come down “within days.”

The moves come after Polish officials and WJC representatives recently met in New York.

The fate of the Haggadah, worth more than \$1 million, has been in question for years.

Albert Wolf, a German Jew who died in 1907, had left the Haggadah to the Berlin Jewish community.

The Nazis stole it in 1938, and it was discovered in 1944 by Russian troops in Poland. The Russians turned it over to the Historical Institute in Poland.

Then, a Montreal Jewish man, Nathan Hecht, claimed to have bought the manuscript and in 1989 wanted a Swiss auction house to sell it.

The WJC, acting on behalf of the East and West Berlin Jewish communities, succeeded in 1990 in having the Geneva courts seize the Haggadah to prevent its auction.

Later in 1990, the Polish government and the WJC reached an agreement saying that they would jointly fight court appeals and that if their efforts were fruitful, the Haggadah would be officially returned to Israel. Steinberg called that agreement a “good-faith gesture.”

On Oct. 18, 1996, after a lengthy series of appeals, a Geneva court ruled in their favor, and the decision has since taken effect.

The Haggadah, when released from the custody of the court, will first be taken to the Polish Embassy in Bern. It will then be transported to Israel by Tadeusz Polak, Polish undersecretary of state at the Culture and Art Ministry, who took part in the New York meeting; the Israeli ambassador; and WJC representatives.

Once in the Jewish state, the Haggadah will be officially handed over to the National Library at a mid-January ceremony to be attended by top officials of the Polish government, Steinberg said.

Meanwhile, the cross at Auschwitz, erected in 1987, “casts a long shadow” on the camp, Steinberg said.

‘Let no one be fooled’

Steinberg said the religious symbols displayed on the building that had served as a convent until 1993 would also come down.

The nuns now live across the road in an interfaith complex.

At least one Jewish group expressed skepticism about the agreement for the removal of the cross.

“If it will happen, it is a good thing,” Rabbi Avi Weiss, who for years led the effort against the presence of a convent at Auschwitz, said in an interview Monday.

But he added, “Let no one be fooled. The attempt to Christianize Auschwitz continues.”

Weiss, head of the Coalition for Jewish Concerns-AMCHA, said, “Auschwitz still has crosses at the Field of Ashes and a Catholic parish church occupies a former SS headquarters building at Birkenau.”

Weiss said he has respect for the existence of churches, “but not at Auschwitz.” □

Netanyahu, Arafat to meet to conclude Hebron accord*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel and the Palestinian Authority appeared Tuesday to have finalized a long-delayed Hebron agreement, meeting a New Year's deadline set by both sides.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross met with leaders from both sides to press for a summit meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to initial the accord.

But Israeli officials said a meeting between the two leaders might be delayed until Wednesday because of the Knesset's scheduled vote on the controversial 1997 state budget.

Ahead of the vote Tuesday evening, Netanyahu worked to rein in coalition members who were threatening to oppose the budget over social spending cuts.

Netanyahu was also reportedly working to gain greater backing for the Hebron deal from his 18-member Cabinet.

About one-third of the ministers have threatened to oppose the plan, citing insufficient security arrangements for Hebron's 450 Jewish settlers.

But a senior adviser to Netanyahu was confident that the prime minister would muster the necessary support.

"I have no doubt that he will have widespread support," David Bar-Illan told Israel Radio.

In Hebron, home to 130,000 Palestinians, tensions remained high as security forces discovered a bomb and explosive gas balloon near the city's Jewish quarter.

Earlier, Israeli police arrested and subsequently released 15 Jewish settlers who tried to occupy a vacant building in Hebron's market, adjacent to the Jewish quarter.

The settlers claimed that the building was Jewish property and should not be handed over to the Palestinians as part of Israel's redeployment from most of the West Bank town.

Stronger security guarantees

Hebron's Jewish community has promised to expand the half dozen Jewish enclaves in the city, saying that it will ensure their safety.

Palestinians have renovated dozens of crumbling and abandoned stone buildings in the heart of Hebron.

Under the 1995 Interim Agreement signed by the previous Labor government and the Palestinians, Israeli troops were to have redeployed in March from 80 percent of the volatile West Bank town.

The transfer of most of Hebron to Palestinian self-rule was initially postponed by the Peres government after a series of suicide bombings in Israel.

It was further delayed when Netanyahu took office in June, demanding more stringent security arrangements for the deal.

The Palestinians countered with other demands.

The Israeli premier said this week that the emerging Hebron deal had stronger security guarantees than the previous one.

Hebron is the last of seven major West Bank cities Israel agreed to hand over to Palestinian rule.

In their current negotiations, the sides have been haggling over the three further Israeli redeployments in rural West Bank areas.

The redeployments were called for under the Interim Agreement.

Science Minister Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, a staunch opponent of the existing Israeli-Palestinian accords, called

on Netanyahu to oppose any further redeployments at this stage.

Earlier this week, Netanyahu faced an oppositional coalition, when members stayed away from a no-confidence motion on Hebron.

The Knesset defeated a no-confidence motion Monday submitted by the right-wing Moledet Party in response to the emerging Hebron accord.

Key coalition members from the Likud and the National Religious Party stayed away from the plenum rather than vote against the government. □

Palestinian infiltrator shot dead*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jewish settler shot dead a Palestinian on Monday in Gaza who was believed to be trying to abduct residents of the settlement Kfar Darom.

A police investigation of the body of the Palestinian found no signs of any weapons or intention to carry out a terrorist attack.

Police said he was caught sneaking into the settlement by a resident who was following Israeli army regulations for shooting someone suspected of infiltration.

Jordan: Jerusalem as interfaith capital*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel denied this week that it had agreed to a Jordanian proposal to make Jerusalem a capital for the three great monotheistic religions.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said Sunday that King Hussein had not mentioned Jerusalem as a capital "of the three religions," Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in any recent discussions with Israeli officials.

Nor had the king sent a specific letter on the matter, Levy said.

Levy said the king had suggested opening an interfaith dialogue on the future of Jerusalem as a religious center.

King Hussein's idea "is that religious leaders should meet and have a measure of dialogue about the status of Jerusalem and the holy places," Levy told Israel Radio.

"This is not a political statement," he added. □

Human rights violations cited*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations issued a joint report accusing Israel and the Palestinian self-rule authority of widespread violations.

Israel is accused of violations in the areas of torture, denying freedom of movement and failing to prosecute settlers suspected of violence against Palestinians.

The Palestinian Authority came under criticism for widespread arbitrary arrests, torture and ill treatment of detainees as well as for violating freedom of expression.

The report was released by the Israeli group B'Tselem and the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group. □

Triplets' birth sets record

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A 52-year-old woman from southern Israel signed off 1996 in a remarkable way — giving birth to triplets.

In addition to being a new parent, Tova Gamliel is now the oldest woman in the Jewish state to give birth to a trio. □