



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israel began releasing 31 Palestinian female prisoners from jail, including some who had killed Israelis. [Page 4]

■ Leaders from the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Jewish Appeal reached consensus on a partnership plan for the two organizations. The recommendations call for UJA and CJF to share facilities, integrate financial resource development, consolidate regional offices and coordinate services to communities. [Page 1]

■ Ronald Lauder, cosmetics heir and former U.S. ambassador to Austria, was elected president, effective immediately, of the Jewish National Fund of America. [Page 2]

■ Congressional supporters of a constitutional amendment on religious equality do not have the necessary votes to pass any such initiative in the House or Senate, U.S. Rep. Charles Canady (R-Fla.) told an American Jewish Committee meeting in Washington. Canady serves as chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, where such an amendment would originate.

■ A friend of convicted assassin Yigal Amir was indicted for complicity in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Margalit Har-Shefi, 22, faces charges that she knew of the murder plot and failed to prevent it, and that she aided Amir in procuring weapons.

■ Israeli air force jets strafed targets in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and on the outskirts of Beirut.

■ Seventy-nine percent of Israelis are opposed to a unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon, according to a poll conducted by Ma'ariv. The poll comes as Israeli political leaders renewed debate over the continued presence of Israeli troops in the security zone.

Because of the Presidents Day holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Feb. 17.

Modified partnership plan sails through critical phase

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Leaders of the two major institutions of American Jewish philanthropy have agreed on a partnership plan to consolidate operations and raise more money.

The blueprint, which stops short of earlier proposals for a formal merger, was crafted by leaders of the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Jewish Appeal during marathon meetings on Sunday and Monday.

It still must be approved by the boards of CJF and UJA. The plan's authors hope that approval will come by May, enabling implementation by early next year if not sooner.

The initiative comes in response to widespread recognition that the centralized system charged with raising money for local and overseas Jewish needs must be consolidated so it can be more efficient and be able to increase revenues.

UJA and local federations, for which CJF is the national umbrella body, run a joint annual philanthropic campaign of about \$720 million.

The earlier effort to merge the two entities failed largely because it was too radical and did not involve enough consultation with federations across the country.

This time around, the blueprint for partnership is more limited in scope and more gradual in implementation, say some of its key architects.

It does not even touch, for instance, the loaded and legally complicated issue of melding two separate governing bodies.

Instead, the plan provides for a joint operational committee of lay leaders to oversee joint activities.

But otherwise, the two organizations' governance structures are left intact for now.

It also does not address any formula for allocating money overseas, an issue that stymied progress in the last round.

What it does call for is:

- shared facilities;
- an integrated approach to fund raising and other resource development, which UJA will manage on behalf of the partnership;
- consolidation of regional offices and cooperative service delivery to communities, which CJF will manage on behalf of the partnership.

These recommendations were made unanimously by a committee of 23 representatives of CJF and UJA, after meeting for 30 hours.

The group had met only one other time, but based their blueprint on months of work by teams of CJF and UJA professionals, which all parties say was key in helping break down psychological barriers.

"The result of their deliberations was our starting point," said Dr. Conrad Giles, the president of CJF.

"They discovered the bridge required to bring together the two cultures" was not that vast.

'We bit off too much'

He and others said the committee profited from lessons learned from the collapse of the previous effort.

"We had lived through the elongated process and come out with very little to show," Giles said.

"There was a sense the federations would believe we were less relevant" if no action was taken, he added.

Richard Wexler, national chairman of UJA, said the earlier initiative helped drive home the point that "we needed to take this process one step at a time.

"We bit off too much last time."

Another big change, said Wexler, was "no one going in demanding a floor or a guarantee" from federations for their overseas allocations.

Instead, there is a commitment of the system "to focus on equitable sharing of resources for Jewish needs at home as well as overseas, as a single national polity."

Local federations autonomously decide how much of their campaign money to keep at home and how much to allocate to UJA for distribution

overseas. The UJA portion has steadily been declining, worrying advocates of overseas needs.

One of these advocates, Shoshana Cardin, chair of the United Israel Appeal, which is a co-owner of UJA and distributes the campaign money to Israel, expressed confidence in the new plan.

She agreed that the incremental approach of the new process was key to its success because it helped to build trust. "The trust level has to be secure," said Cardin, who had registered concern over how the previous plan could ensure a fair distribution of resources.

For his part, Giles conceded that "there will continue to be a tension within the system" over the way allocations are balanced between local and overseas needs.

"There never will be enough to take care of" all the needs, he said.

But he and other proponents of the plan say the consolidated system will be able to raise more money overall and that that invariably will translate into more money for overseas needs.

"We don't have all the answers," Wexler said. "But common ownership of the enterprise has the potential for us to develop a vision for the 21st century, to raise more money and to save more money."

Details of the plan will be circulated to federations and others in the fund-raising system.

For his part, Stephen Solender, executive vice president of the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, said he was "very upbeat" about the latest developments and that they augured well for the future.

"What I've heard from the New York leadership and my colleagues around the country suggests to me the potential for widespread support," he said. "There will be a sense that an important first step has been taken." □

Lauder assumes presidency of the Jewish National Fund

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Ronald Lauder, cosmetics heir and former U.S. ambassador to Austria, has taken over the helm of the Jewish National Fund of America.

The board unanimously elected Lauder on Monday, making his presidency effective immediately.

Lauder succeeds Milton Shapiro, whose term was slated to end at the end of this year. But he resigned in deference to the reform effort afoot at the organization.

The reforms, including the search for a new executive vice president, were undertaken in November following disclosures of fiscal and management problems.

Lauder's high profile in the business and philanthropic world is clearly seen as a boost for the shaken organization.

As for Lauder, he is expected to seek the chairmanship of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. In order to be a candidate for that office, he must hold the presidency of a member-organization.

No reporters were allowed into the board meeting late Monday afternoon when the vote on Lauder's nomination took place. Just prior to the meeting, Lauder was asked what he would bring to the leadership of JNF.

"JNF is one of the most critical organizations to the future of Israel," he responded.

He said he hoped to help "supply the necessary resources" to JNF to solve problems, including those dealing with water, which he termed one of the biggest challenges in the Middle East.

As far as his broader political aspirations in the Jewish organizational world, he said he had no comment.

Inside the meeting, he was reported also to have

said, "With its continuing commitment to Zionist programs in America, JNF is also cultivating the next generation of JNF and community leaders."

There had been some concern over recent disclosures that large sums of JNF money stay in the United States for educational programs compared to the amount of money being sent to Israel for land reclamation.

Lauder, the son of Estee Lauder, is known among other things, for his efforts to revive Jewish life in Eastern Europe. In 1989, Lauder spent \$14 million on an unsuccessful run in the Republican primary for the mayoralty of New York. □

2 parties threaten to leave coalition over construction

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Facing growing pressure from within his governing coalition, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is promising to approve construction of Jewish neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem.

But, in an important qualification of the promise, the prime minister added that the construction, hotly opposed by the Palestinians, would have to begin at the appropriate time.

On Tuesday, prior to leaving for meetings with President Clinton and other top American officials in Washington, Netanyahu met with coalition leaders who have been demanding in a growing chorus that he clarify his position on the construction.

Members of the Third Way Party and National Religious Party said this week that they would consider leaving the coalition if planned construction projects did not begin in the Jewish neighborhoods of Har Homa and Ras el-Amud.

Third Way Knesset member Emanuel Zismann said his party was giving Netanyahu two to three weeks to take action after he returns from Washington.

Netanyahu's Cabinet decided last year to lift the previous Labor government's freeze on building in the territories. But some coalition members have complained that nothing was happening on the ground.

"We wanted the prime minister to clarify his position before he went to the United States, so that he won't come back after and say, 'Hey, we didn't approve that,'" said Avraham Stern of the National Religious Party. "We've been down that road before."

Participants at Tuesday's meeting were less than pleased with Netanyahu's statement that the construction would have to wait for the appropriate timing.

"If we had expected to get an exact date from the prime minister before he left, then no, we did not get that," said Deputy Education Minister Moshe Peled, of the Tsomet Party.

Palestinian officials have strongly opposed the construction, saying it would change the status quo in Jerusalem, whose future is to be decided in the final-status negotiations. □

Discovery may halt AIDS onset

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science have isolated an enzyme that could help in developing drugs that slow down the onset of AIDS in people who have HIV, the virus that causes the disease.

The team, led by David Wallach, discovered the enzyme NIK, which plays a central role in the activation of the immune system. The findings are being published this week in the British journal *Nature*. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES
Brooklyn neighborhood seeks peace in wake of guilty verdict

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Feb. 11 (JTA) — One day after two black men were convicted for Yankel Rosenbaum's murder, a tall flag stands waving under the weak winter sun at the spot where it all began.

On its stripes, someone has written in large block letters: "We demand equal justice under law," and signed it the "Conquering Lion of Judah, Rastafari Silassi the almighty G-d."

According to Donna Marshall, the flag of the nationalist-religious Rastafarian group has been flying since Aug. 19, 1991, here at the spot where a Lubavitch-driven car went out of control and hit 7-year-old Gavin Cato, killing him instantly.

Marshall, 31, who has tucked her dreadlocks under a large knit hat, lives in the building next door to the large apartment house on the corner of Utica Avenue and President Street where Cato was playing with his bike.

That accident sparked three days and nights of mostly black-against-Jewish violence in August 1991, a time that many Jewish residents of the neighborhood refer to as "the pogrom." Three hours later, as black teens and adults rampaged in the streets, throwing rocks, screaming anti-Semitic and anti-white epithets, a group of 10 to 15 people surrounded Rosenbaum several blocks down President Street, and at least one stabbed him.

Rosenbaum was visiting from Australia, spending time researching and visiting in the Lubavitch community. He later died of the wounds.

Many others in the neighborhood were hit by flying rocks and debris, and some had their windows shattered. Cars were overturned and some were set aflame.

For the first night and day of riots, Crown Heights' Jewish residents felt deserted by the police and other emergency services, who failed to respond to calls for help.

An official New York State investigation into the incident, issued in July 1993, criticized police for their "uncoordinated and ineffective" response. It also said that then-Mayor David Dinkins and his aides failed to respond appropriately.

Comparisons to O.J. Simpson case

The conviction this week of Lemrick Nelson, 21, for the stabbing and of Charles Price, 43, for inciting the riots, brought comparisons from some black residents of the neighborhood to the O.J. Simpson case.

Simpson, like Nelson, was acquitted in a state criminal trial, and later, in a second trial, was found responsible for the murder. However, in the Simpson case, the second trial was a private civil lawsuit in which the plaintiffs sued for damages.

In the Crown Heights trial, federal prosecutors brought the charges, after pressure from politicians and Jews persuaded the Justice Department to pursue the case.

Many were outraged after Nelson was acquitted in 1992 by a mostly black jury. After the acquittal, he and jurors who cleared him celebrated together at a restaurant.

Some Jewish residents compared his re-trial, on federal charges of violating Rosenbaum's civil rights because the attack was based on the Jewish man's religion and ethnicity, to another Los Angeles case, the one involving Rodney King.

White police officers were at first acquitted of beating King, and then in a second federal trial, they were found guilty of violating his civil rights.

A panoply of New York politicians and Jewish groups, from the Anti-Defamation League to the Jewish

Defense Group of Forest Hills, N.Y., welcomed Monday's verdict.

Norman Rosenbaum, who has made more than 50 trips here from his home in Melbourne, Australia, in pursuit of justice in his brother's name, said Tuesday: "My family and I are very grateful."

In addition, he said, "we'll be working toward more prosecutions," trying to bring other members of the gang involved in his brother's murder to trial.

Though U.S. Attorney Zachary Carter reportedly said the investigation has now exhausted its leads, Rosenbaum said that "leads have been cold before."

"I was told over and over again that I we wouldn't get one prosecution and look, we got two convictions."

Several Jews interviewed in Crown Heights this week said they hope that the convictions will bring closure for the neighborhood. "Maybe now the neighborhood can get out of the news for all the wrong reasons," said Fagy Rubinfeld, a longtime resident and member of the Lubavitch community.

"The people are really not fighting all the time. We do live harmoniously," she said, citing as an example the fact that she and other Jews are working together with black neighbors to pave the alley behind their houses.

Many local black residents joined their Jewish neighbors in welcoming the verdict. One middle-aged woman, who declined to give her name, said, "If you do wrong, you've got to pay the price."

At the same time, Neville Barker, a medical technician originally from Barbados who lives a block away from the site of the original accident, said he does not understand why Nelson was tried twice. "It doesn't seem right," he said. "It doesn't seem fair."

Crime tops list of concerns

Residents both black and Jewish said they are much more concerned about crime than about any issues that divide them.

Still, for some, the convictions add to the black community's feeling that they have been treated unjustly, Marshall said as she stood next to the Rastafarian flag.

"They were drunk," she said of the Lubavitchers who hit Cato on that fateful summer day. "You just had to smell their breath."

Marshall said the reason the "real murderer" was cleared by a grand jury of any wrongdoing is that "black people have no power and Jew people do."

At the end of the day, the two communities go about their business, the overwhelming majority of people just interested in getting to and from work and buying the day's groceries.

At the same time, there is no real engagement between the communities. Their children do not go to the same schools or play together and the adults do not mix socially.

For the past two years, the local police precinct and community board have run a picnic in a neighborhood park. Last June a thousand kids, both blacks and Jews, came, downing thousands of kosher hot dogs, said Jacob Goldstein, chairman of Community Board 9, a local governing structure.

They tried to keep the girls and boys separated, as fervently Orthodox tradition requires, and everyone had a good time, he said.

But a picnic is easy, he said. "We're not going to socials and dances and all that stuff that the melting pot theory" seems to require.

"I don't need anyone to kiss me, shake my hand or anything else," Goldstein said. "I just ask that they respect what I do and believe in, and I'll do the same for them. And then we'll all go on." □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Release of female terrorists stuns Israeli victims' families**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Israel's Supreme Court decided to allow the release of Palestinian female prisoners this week, many here found the ruling impossible to accept.

"The thought is unbearable," said Ora Klein, whose husband, Zvi, was murdered in Ramallah six years ago. "They are releasing terrorists with blood on their hands."

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was determined to proceed with the releases. He was just as resolute on this issue as he was in winning Cabinet and Knesset approval for last month's Hebron accord.

On Monday, the high court rejected a last-minute appeal from a group of families of Israelis killed in terror attacks, thereby removing the last roadblock to the releases, which began Tuesday.

The releases were on the agenda of Sunday's summit between Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat. They met at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip to discuss the implementation of unfulfilled portions of previous Israeli-Palestinian accords, including last month's deal on Hebron.

Next week, eight Israeli-Palestinian teams are slated to begin negotiating further implementation of the agreements. Those talks will set the stage for the resumption of the final-status negotiations, scheduled for March.

A total of 31 female prisoners, the last of the Palestinian women being detained, were released this week.

What made the releases of the women particularly controversial — and hindered their originally planned release in late 1995 — is the fact that some of them had been convicted of killing Israelis.

Abir al-Wahidi, 27, one of those released, shot Ora Klein's husband as he drove on a main street in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Wahidi, who was at the time a student at Bir Zeit University, was sentenced to 17 years in jail, but this week she was on her way home, after having served less than half her prison term.

Another murderess released was Lamia Ma'aruf, 32, a member of a terrorist group that kidnapped and killed soldier David Manos in 1985. She was detained a year later and sentenced to life. She was deported Tuesday to Brazil.

Israeli President dropped opposition to release

Twenty-three of the female prisoners were to have been freed soon after the previous Labor government joined the Palestinians at the signing of the 1995 Interim Agreement. But President Ezer Weizman refused at the time to pardon five of the prisoners because they had been convicted of killing Israelis. The remaining prisoners refused pardons until all of them, including the five, won their release. Weizman has since dropped his opposition.

Netanyahu's willingness to release the prisoners represented another hurdle overcome as Israel and the Palestinian Authority tread the long and difficult road toward settling their historic conflict. He said the Palestinians had taken sufficient steps since the signing of the Hebron accord to warrant the prisoner releases at this time.

But word that the releases were to finally take place prompted bitter opposition from Jewish families of victims of Arab terror, as well as from politicians from both ends of the Israeli political spectrum, including from Netanyahu's governing coalition.

Knesset Member Shaul Yahalom, chairman of the Knesset Law Committee and a member of the National Religious Party, which is part of Netanyahu's coalition,

said the release of the prisoners represented "the collapse of morality and justice."

Knesset Member Reuven Rivlin, a member of Netanyahu's own Likud Party, complained that "Arafat once again proves that he gets whatever he wants."

Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi also objected, citing the failure of the Palestinian Authority to turn over terrorists who had murdered Israelis, subsequently escaped to the self-rule areas and who were now being held by the Palestinian authorities.

Israeli officials claim that the Palestinians are holding at least 30 suspects, despite repeated requests by Israel to extradite them.

At last week's Cabinet session, Netanyahu argued that there were currently more important issues to be discussed with the Palestinians. That prompted National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon to describe the pardons of the female prisoners as a "very severe act."

"I don't know of any other country which does something like this and does not insist on reciprocity. The Palestinian Authority does not extradite prisoners," he added.

When Netanyahu described the releases as a goodwill gesture toward the Palestinians, Sharon said: "And when will they make a gesture toward us?"

In the end, Netanyahu tried to sweeten the pill by telling the Cabinet that Israel would consider pardoning 15 Israelis who had been convicted of committing crimes against Arabs. These include Ami Popper, who gunned down seven Arab laborers on their way to work in Rishon Lezion in 1990, and Yoram Skolnik, who murdered a captured Arab terrorist in 1993. □

Israelis jarred by mention of crash scene in Scripture

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Was last week's tragic helicopter crash that killed 73 Israeli servicemen foretold in Scripture?

That is the question on the minds of many Israelis, who were more than a bit unnerved to find a reference to the name Sha'ar Yishuv — the northern farming settlement over which the Feb. 4 crash took place — in the preceding week's Haftorah, the reading from Scripture that accompanies the weekly Torah portion.

The passage, in Isaiah 7:3-4, reads: "Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Sha'ar Yishuv thy son . . . and say to him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted on account of the two tails of these smoking firebrands."

Many believe that the "tails of these smoking firebrands" is a direct reference to the two helicopters that collided in mid-air and then caught fire.

Although some religious figures said the passage foretells the crash, others were quick to downplay what they admitted was more than a passing coincidence.

Gary Shapiro, faculty chairman of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, expressed the opinion of many Israelis. "I don't reflexively reject anything," he said. "However, I think we have to be very cautious about drawing a one-to-one correspondence between Biblical verses and real-life events.

"This caution comes from both a humility about what the Torah is referring to, and a deep concern for how an interpretation will be used."

In one interpretation of the perceived correlation between event and Scripture, Shapiro said, "It could be construed that God was behind the crash. A lot of people, especially families who lost loved ones, could find this upsetting and offensive." □