



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ An Israeli army reserve officer admitted to killing a British tourist and wounding another. Maj. Daniel Okev said he could offer no motive for the shooting. [Page 3]

■ The southern Lebanon security zone was quiet following heavy weekend clashes that included an unsuccessful attempt by Hezbollah to overtake an Israel Defense Force position. [Page 3]

■ Israeli soldiers fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse Palestinian demonstrators during a second day of protests near Rachel's Tomb, on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Bethlehem remains the only Palestinian city under an internal closure imposed by Israel after last month's twin suicide bombing attack in Jerusalem.

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke by telephone Saturday night with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to voice Israel's dissatisfaction with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's actions. The Palestinian leader has rejected an Israeli demand for a crackdown on Islamic militants.

■ Israel's new religious affairs minister, National Religious Party leader Zevulun Hammer, declared that he would oppose a High Court ruling to seat a Reform representative on Netanyahu's religious council. Eli Suissa of the Shas Party stepped down from the position rather than carry out the court order.

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said China had agreed not to help Iran build a nuclear reactor. Netanyahu was speaking to reporters during a stopover in Beijing on the first leg of a Far East trip designed to strengthen trade between Asian countries and Israel.

■ An Israeli military court committed Noam Friedman, an Israeli soldier who wounded seven Palestinian shoppers earlier this year in Hebron, to a psychiatric hospital. Friedman, who was charged with attempted murder and encouraging others to commit violence against Arabs, expressed regret for his actions.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Redefining Zionism in America: It's not about aliyah anymore

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — For Louis Kestenbaum and his wife, Trudy, it felt only natural to make plans to fly from their Los Angeles-area home to Basel, Switzerland, to celebrate modern Zionism's 100th birthday.

Like most of the other members of the North American delegation attending the Swiss festivities this weekend, the Kestenbaums are Holocaust survivors.

And that makes their attachment to Zionism obvious.

To leave Europe "was difficult enough," said Kestenbaum, who grew up in Czechoslovakia and was in a concentration camp in Austria during World War II.

But once able to leave, he said, "Where do you go? Nobody wanted to accept us as immigrants.

"Zionism was responsible for creating a homeland" for the Jews so they would never again face that dilemma, said Kestenbaum, a regional chairman of the Jewish National Fund.

Indeed, the need to provide a safe haven for Jews persecuted throughout Europe between the wars — and then during the Holocaust — gave what had been a fledgling Zionist movement in the United States its biggest boost.

But now Israel is a secure and thriving nation, Holocaust witnesses — with their searing memory of an international community criminally callous to Jewish suffering — are dwindling in number and virtually all Jews in danger have been rescued and resettled.

So 100 years after the journalist Theodor Herzl led the first meeting of the World Zionist Organization in Basel, Zionism's classical rallying cry is far fainter.

Elections now taking place in the United States for delegates to the 33rd World Zionist Congress, slated for December in Jerusalem, have captured the interest of many rank-and-file Jews.

The Reform and Conservative movements' Zionist branches have managed to capitalize on the crisis over religious pluralism by casting the elections as a referendum on the status of non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel.

But this passion is an anomaly.

Even its biggest champions concede that the American Zionist Movement, the U.S. sponsor of the elections, is moribund.

The majority of American Jews "recoil from the term Zionism," said Seymour Reich, immediate past president of AZM.

This is a result "of the failure of the movement to make itself understood," he said, adding that there is still the misguided notion that Zionism "requires a total commitment, and that total commitment means aliyah."

"Aliyah is a stumbling block," said Reich.

He noted that from his first day as president of AZM, "I have urged a redefinition" of Zionism.

If the term is redefined to mean "more of an association with Israel," including visits to Israel, he said, "it makes it easier for people to identify."

### Zionist movement built on 'old model'?

Veteran Zionist activist Charlotte Jacobson, a longtime leader in Hadassah and JNF, also believes the "whole Zionist movement needs restructuring" because it is built on an "old model" and is not successfully transmitting its message.

"I don't think most Jews in America today understand Zionism as a philosophy," she said.

For her, Zionism means "recognizing Israel as central." It furnishes "a unity of purpose among all of us in a way no other world philosophy does."

Classical Zionism held that Jews living outside their own state would be doomed to assimilation — or anti-Semitism if they insisted on living Jewish lives.

The only solution was to create and move to their own state, where

they could be a "normal" people while at the same time being a "light unto the nations," a model of ethical and moral behavior.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, scholar and author of the recently republished classic, "The Zionist Idea," points out that from the early days, Jews living in the United States resisted some of Zionism's core principles, particularly aliyah.

The "overwhelming majority of American Jews have always believed and continue to believe that America is their permanent home," Hertzberg wrote in a recent article based on the book's new preface.

"Palestine was the place for Jews who were fleeing persecution."

Some American Zionists repeated the phrase "the centrality of Israel" like a "mantra," Hertzberg continued. But efforts on behalf of Israel aimed primarily at "increasing the morale and giving content to the American Jewish community."

Few bothered to learn Hebrew, he said. And in the end, work in support of Israel became "a substitute religion" for many Jews.

But the debate over aliyah aside, there are many activists and thinkers who argue that the Zionist movement has triumphed.

This school of thought says the Jewish mainstream has embraced Israel as a key component of its religious and cultural identity, amounting to what one person termed the "Zionization" of American Jewry.

And this identity transcends the deep divisions spurred by Israeli realpolitik - whether it be the peace process or religious pluralism.

It is impossible to ignore the increasingly heated debates in local communities across the nation over how much priority should be attached to Israel.

The relatively small number of American Jews who have visited Israel — fewer than 25 percent — is well-known.

Aliyah, never impressive in sheer numbers, remains but a trickle, roughly 3,000 a year from all of North America.

#### **Indisputable hold on the communal imagination**

And the Zionist youth organizations, so vibrant decades ago, have been supplanted in large measure by synagogue-based youth groups.

Nonetheless, Israel's hold on the communal imagination is indisputable.

Unprecedented resources and rhetoric are being poured into "Israel Experience" programs for youth as a recipe for Jewish continuity, for instance.

Estimates of philanthropy flowing to Israeli entities run as high as \$1 billion a year.

In a recent survey, even Jewish baby boomers, known for their alienation from the Jewish establishment, overwhelmingly registered some attachment to the Jewish state.

For some, it is the very achievement of nearly universal identification with the Jewish state that makes the Zionist movement irrelevant.

It also renders anachronistic the old distinctions between Zionists, pro-Israel activists and "friends of Israel."

"We speak today only about degrees of intensity" in involvement and identification with Israel, said Gad Ben-Ari, chairman of the North American delegation of the World Zionist Organization.

"The question should not be, 'What is Zionism today?' " he said.

Rather it should be: What is the relationship between Jews outside of Israel and Jews in Israel?

"Zionism has always been about that relationship," he said.

The exception to the paltry flow of olim, or immigrants, from North America has been among modern Orthodox Jews.

For them, "the concept of Zionism and of the settlement of Israel is central," said Jonathan Halpert, an Orthodox psychologist.

"The ideal goal of Zionism is physical return to Israel," Halpert said, "and if you're intellectually honest, you live with the conflict all the time."

"In my age group," added the 53-year-old New Yorker, "everyone of us has at least one child who made aliyah."

Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War "had a profound impact" on the lives of the Orthodox in America, recalled Halpert, a varsity basketball coach at Yeshiva University for 26 years.

Before that, he said, "Orthodox kids did not walk in the streets in yarmulkes. We wore baseball hats."

After the war, he said, "There was tremendous pride in the fact that we were Jews."

"We felt much greater security because Israel had demonstrated itself as a powerful nation."

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of how Zionism in America has won hearts and minds are the latest proclamations from a much different place on the religious spectrum.

The Pittsburgh Platform adopted in 1885 by the Reform movement was infamous for its rejection of Zionism. Jews were co-religionists, it declared, not a people or a nation.

To mark Zionism's centennial this year, the Central Conference of American Rabbis issued a platform at its recent Miami convention that was dedicated solely to the link between Reform Judaism and Israel. It not only encouraged aliyah, but also stressed the importance of Hebrew in school curricula.

Atlanta-based Rabbi Stanley Davids, who is active with the Association of Reform Zionists of America, spearheaded the initiative to draft the CCAR platform.

Davids said he was driven by the feeling that "we were doing a superb job of caring for the needs of the state," but had failed to work through "how we are bound through mitzvah, faith, and religious identity to what is happening in Israel."

#### **Youth movement broadens its scope**

He said he wants the CCAR document to be used to prompt youth in particular to explore how their Jewish identity can be enriched by a connection to Israel.

"The fullest possible Jewish life is life lived where the setting as well as the calendar are reflective of Jewish values and concerns," Davids said.

Israel is a "living laboratory" that provides an opportunity to "test out our faith in the real world" by applying Jewish paradigms to social problems.

Jessi Baden agrees.

A recent graduate of McGill University in Canada, she is now the treasurer of Habonim-Dror North America, a Zionist youth movement affiliated with Israel's Labor Party.

Encouraging aliyah remains important in Habonim's value system, she said.

But there has been a shift over the decades that recognizes "there are other ways to do good for Israel" and for Jews.

She said the movement teaches a "positive Judaism" that can be experienced in a unique way through various programs in Israel and can lead to "building community back home."

## Israeli reserve army officer admits to murdering tourist

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis have reacted with shock to the news that an Israeli soldier, not a terrorist, was behind the recent murder of a British tourist.

Israeli police arrested Maj. Daniel Okev, a reserve army officer who admitted to the Aug. 13 murder of Jeffrey Hunter, 22, and the wounding of his girlfriend, Charlotte Gibb.

Although he admitted to picking up the tourists near Eilat and later shooting them, Okev could not offer a motive.

"Maybe I need a doctor," Okev said during a detention hearing last Friday. "Maybe I have a split personality."

A breakthrough in the investigation came when a policeman at a roadblock set up after the murder recalled seeing Okev in a car similar to the one witnesses said they had seen parked in a deserted area that turned out to be the murder scene.

The policeman said that Okev had identified himself as a reserve army officer when he was stopped at the roadblock.

With permission from the district attorney, investigators secretly took Okev's car for examinations that turned up Hunter's fingerprints.

When police came to arrest Okev last Friday at his home in Even Yehuda, near Netanya, he surrendered, handing over his gun.

"I know why you're here," Okev said at the time of his arrest.

Okev, 45, is a father of two.

He left the army several years ago and had been working for a trucking company.

During a re-enactment of the shooting, Okev told police how he had picked up the two tourists near Eilat, and began driving north.

He said that after driving along with the two hitchhikers for a while, he pulled the car over and they got out to smoke and drink some water.

Okev said the conversation was pleasant and that there had been no argument.

He said that when they returned to the car, he got in first, pulling his pistol out from under the seat where he kept it.

"All I remember after that is that they were then lying on the ground," Okev said.

"I don't know how many times I fired."

### Victim's family criticizes officials

Okev left the scene and drove back to Eilat, where he was stopped at the roadblock and allowed to go on.

Hunter and Gibb were subsequently found by a passing car.

Okev's attorney, David Yiftah, argued that his client was temporarily insane at the time of the shooting and should not be held responsible.

"I don't think we are dealing with a conventional crime carried out by a hardened criminal," he said.

"We are dealing here with an army officer, a decent citizen, a loyal family man.

"As we know, Daniel Okev had no motive for committing murder and does not recall shooting the victims," Yiftah told Israel Radio.

Police rejected the argument, and Okev was placed in custody for 15 days.

The family of the murder victim has been sharply critical of the treatment they received from both Israeli and British authorities.

Norman Hunter, Jeffrey's father, told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that the authorities in Israel and Britain had offered no help — logistical, financial or otherwise — in transferring the body back home.

He said he learned of the arrest of a suspect by chance, when he went to visit his slain son's wounded girlfriend in a hospital in Cambridge, England. □

## Tensions high in Lebanon after weekend of fighting

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The steadily deteriorating situation in southern Lebanon was marked by fierce fighting over the weekend between Israeli forces and Hezbollah gunmen.

The Israel Defense Force said at least two Hezbollah fighters were killed Saturday when Israeli forces repelled an unsuccessful attempt to attack an Israeli army outpost close to the northern border.

According to reports, the Israeli forces spotted the fighters as they tried to approach the outpost.

The IDF troops gave chase and opened fire, killing the Hezbollah gunmen. There were no Israeli casualties.

During the pursuit, Hezbollah directed mortar fire at the Israeli troops in an effort to give the retreating Hezbollah unit cover.

Saturday's fighting, the latest during a week of tit-for-tat escalations, reportedly took place after a Hezbollah rocket attack on an Israeli position in the southern Lebanon security zone.

Although there was no fighting reported Sunday, Israeli military officials issued warnings that Hezbollah might try to retaliate for the losses of the previous day with long-range fire at Israeli positions in the security zone.

The officials also warned of possible rocket attacks on northern Israel.

Last week, Hezbollah launched its heaviest Katyusha rocket attack on northern Israel since April 1996, when a U.S.-brokered cease-fire brought an end to more than two weeks of cross-border fighting.

No Israelis were killed in the Aug. 19 attack, which Hezbollah launched to avenge the shelling a day earlier of the Lebanese port city of Sidon by Israel's ally, the South Lebanon Army.

At least six people were reported killed in that attack.

Meanwhile, the five-nation committee monitoring the cease-fire issued a statement regarding the SLA's shelling of Sidon and the Hezbollah Katyusha attacks on northern Israel.

The committee called on both Israel and Lebanon to work to prevent attacks on civilians.

For the first time, the committee said it was essential for the Lebanese government to keep groups from carrying out attacks on Israel.

The committee did not accept Lebanon's request to blame Israel for the SLA shelling of Sidon.

But it said the IDF must prevent the SLA from carrying out such attacks.

In another development, Lebanon and the pro-Syrian Amal movement blamed Israel for a car bomb explosion Saturday in Beirut that killed an Amal official and a driver for a Lebanese government minister.

Israeli security officials refused to comment on the explosion.

They said only that it appeared to be connected to internal political disputes.

The United States sent messages to Syria, Israel and Lebanon over the weekend requesting that the sides work to calm tensions in the region. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**Russian Jews trace family roots long forgotten under communism**

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When Vladimir Paley began researching his family history two decades ago, some of his relatives were strongly opposed.

"When I was 10, I started asking older relatives about our family past," he says.

"Not everyone was ready to help — my mother would ask what I needed it for," says the 30-year-old Muscovite.

Paley's family was not alone.

During the oppressive days of the Soviet Union, most Russians avoided learning about their family roots.

Under the brutal dictatorship of Joseph Stalin, Russians learned that knowledge of one's own family history could bring nothing but trouble.

Having a grandparent who was a noble, a rabbi or even a shopkeeper could land one in the Gulag.

This was particularly true for Jews, many of whom came from merchant families.

Even after the mass arrests slowed after Stalin's death in 1953, a "petty bourgeois" or Jewish ancestor could still harm one's career or, sometimes, land one in jail.

Since the fall of communism in 1991, however, the situation has changed.

An increasing number of Russian Jews are now interested in learning more about their neglected family history.

Some of them want genealogical proof of their Jewish background before they emigrate to Israel.

Others are Jews who returned to Judaism and want to know if there are any scholars among their ancestors.

In some cases, clients are non-Jews who discovered that they have some Jewish ancestors and want to fill in this part of the family tree.

There are also better-off Jews for whom the family tree is a matter of prestige.

"These are business people who have seen trees of their Western colleagues, not necessarily Jewish. Now they want to have similar trees for themselves," says Paley.

The fruit of Paley's inquiry into his own family is a scroll 9 feet long.

The scroll is the culmination of five years of research in the archives of the Belarussian capital of Minsk and the Ukrainian city of Chernigov.

**'Pay attention to the first names'**

Paley has documented his family history seven generations back — to Ukraine in the 1720s.

But his tree could not have been completed were it not for a remarkable coincidence.

Two years ago, he attended an international annual meeting of Jewish genealogists in Washington, D.C., where he gave a lecture on genealogical research in the former Soviet Union.

After the presentation, an American approached him.

"He handed me a piece of napkin with a part of his genealogical tree drawn on it," Paley says.

The man, Herbert Lazerow, a law professor at the University of San Diego, turned out to be Paley's fourth cousin. Lazerow's great-grandfather left Ukraine around the turn of this century.

"If your own surname and the geographical names on your family tree coincide with those on someone else's tree, pay attention to the first names," says Paley. "Within one family, there was always a relatively limited set of

given names used over the generations. It is true even after the family was separated by emigration."

While the first Jewish genealogical groups started in Germany in the 1920s, widespread interest in genealogy among Jews in the United States began about two decades ago after the 1977 television movie "Roots," which was based on a book about an African American's search for his family origins.

Today, there are 60 Jewish genealogical societies worldwide, 45 in the United States and Canada.

Paley, meanwhile, has turned his hobby into a full-time job.

Since 1994, he has chaired the Jewish Genealogical Society in Moscow. Founded in 1992, the society is the only such group in the former Soviet Union.

The society gives free consultations to those interested in researching family heritage, describes Jewish holdings in the archives of the former Soviet Union and helps locate long-lost relatives in Russia and abroad.

About half of its clients are Russian Jews; the other half are Jews from other countries, mostly from the United States.

Paley says that his American clients often do not know where their families lived in Russia before emigrating, making research impossible.

"My father was born in 'guberniya' is a typical description of one's family origins we often come across," Paley says. Dozens of guberniyas, or provinces, existed in the Russian Empire.

"The name of the place was erased from this family's memory and people think 'guberniya' is the name of a shtetl."

A search can be conducted only when the last name of the person or family and the place of residence are known.

There are two different types of research. The elementary one is based on vital records found in the archives and results in the list of names, dates and, sometimes, old addresses.

The more detailed and more expensive research recreates parts of family history. Based on different types of documents and non-archival materials, including cemeteries, it draws a broader picture of the family's daily life.

An average search of a family name in Russian, Ukrainian or Belarussian archives by one of the society's six full-time researchers costs about \$500. □

**Israel searching for missing soldier**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israel Defense Force has been conducting searches in the Golan Heights for an Israeli soldier reported missing last week.

Police said the soldier, Guy Hever, 20, left his base in the north in his uniform and carrying his army-issued rifle.

His family said Hever was unhappy at the base and had left suddenly.

Police said they were investigating all possible explanations, including a terrorist kidnapping, murder or suicide.

Another Israeli soldier, Sharon Edri, disappeared in central Israel last year after leaving a base on his way home.

In April, Israeli security forces, acting on information obtained in part from Palestinian police, found Edri's body buried in the West Bank village of Tsurif, near Hebron. IDF officials said at the time that Edri was killed by members of a cell of the Hamas military wing that had been responsible for murdering 10 other Israelis and wounding 49 in attacks since the beginning of 1996. □