



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ U.S. mediators complained that the Palestinian Authority did not send enough experts to the talks with Israel that convened in Washington. A Palestinian spokesman responded that Chairman Yasser Arafat would "dispatch a private plane" to send more people if there are "positive developments" in the talks, which are expected to last several days.

■ A federal judge in Alabama ruled that vocal prayers and Bible devotionals in public schools are prohibited in his state. Judge Ira DeMent also created a monitoring system to ensure compliance in DeKalb County, where Jewish students charged last spring that they were coerced into participating in religious activities.

■ President Clinton will address the Council of Jewish Federations' General Assembly on Nov. 18 by satellite, according to White House sources. Organizers had asked the president to appear at the Indianapolis conference in person.

■ The Swiss National Bank transferred 100 million Swiss francs — approximately \$71 million — to the fund recently created for needy Holocaust survivors. [Page 3]

■ Polish Roman Catholic authorities barred a priest from giving sermons for one year after he made anti-Semitic remarks. Rev. Henryk Jankowski said in a sermon last month that Jews should not be allowed to participate in the recently elected Polish government. Jankowski also made anti-Semitic remarks in a 1995 sermon.

■ The Anti-Defamation League joined U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat in calling "counterproductive" recent moves by the state of California and other states and municipalities to limit investment in Swiss banks.

■ One of the two assassins involved in the Mossad assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Jordan failed to follow orders and call the attack off, according to Israel Television. The senior of the two operatives was supposed to call off the attempt if he saw Khaled Meshaal's driver, which he did.

THE PULSE OF REFORM JEWRY

Leaders urge spiritual return, well aware of their challenges

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

DALLAS (JTA) — So many Reform Jews attended morning prayers during their biennial convention here last week that they spilled out into the hotel lobby.

With the doors of three adjacent alternative services open, the recitation of the Shema in different tunes merged into one powerful, spiritual song.

About half the men — and many women — covered their heads with kipot at Shabbat morning services.

It was the first time that organizers of the gathering of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform movement's congregational body, had made yarmulkas available.

And unlike earlier conventions, where only a sprinkling of people wore tallitot, or prayer shawls, this year there were too many to count.

In his Shabbat morning sermon, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the UAHC, demanded — in strong language that got several standing ovations — that Jews rise up from their "crippling ignorance."

This is clearly not your father's Reform Judaism.

For several years now, the movement — with 857 congregations, the largest in America — has been in transition. However, at this, the 64th biennial, which drew 4,500 Jews from across the country, the movement's top leaders officially embraced tradition in a way never before seen at a UAHC convention. From Torah-chanting lessons to the distribution of new booklets of Sabbath and holiday prayers and songs, the direction was unequivocal.

A well-known Reform rabbi, Marc Gellman of Melville, N.Y., said in a speech that Reform Jews should embrace the notions of an afterlife, known as Olam Habah, and of heaven.

While many of his listeners didn't seem to connect with Gellman's idea, the substance of what he said could easily have come from any Orthodox rabbi.

But perhaps more influential was Yoffie's Shabbat morning sermon, his first at a biennial since he became president of the UAHC in 1995.

'Single most momentous hour in the history of our movement'

The 50-year-old Yoffie warned the delegates that if they did not become serious about the Jewish part of their Reform Judaism, the movement would be so weakened that it would cease to be effective.

"Never in our history has the gap between the serious Reform Jew and the non-serious Reform Jew been so great," he said to the delegates gathered in a cavernous hotel convention space-turned-sanctuary. "Alongside those who take seriously the reality of God and God's immanence in Torah are those for whom the vision of the sacred has all but died in their soul.

"This is the single most momentous hour in the history of our movement. We have an affirming core of Reform Jews, and these Jews must now decide if our Reform heritage will be permitted to wither."

"Too many of us can name the mother of Jesus, but not the mother of Moses; we know the author of 'Das Kapital,' but not the author of the 'Guide for the Perplexed,' he said, referring to Marx's bible of communism and Maimonides' seminal treatise on Jewish philosophy. "Our challenge then is this: to lift up a whole generation of Reform Jews from the crippling ignorance that is all too often their companion, and to help them become competent and literate Jews."

Yoffie kicked off five new programs to help Reform Jews get where he wants them to go. On the regional and local level, he said the UAHC will help Reform Jews:

- Learn how to chant the Torah, an honor usually reserved for the rabbi in Reform congregations;
- Read and discuss at least four serious Jewish books each year;
- Study relevant Jewish texts as part of every temple committee meeting;
- Include Torah study in each Sabbath service; and
- Gather on the eve of Shavuot next year to learn together on a night

when Jews traditionally stay up late studying the Torah and other Jewish texts.

Yet within the movement, not all members are embracing the new turn toward tradition.

"A lot of people in this movement are doing it to feel more Orthodox, more authentic," said one woman at the convention who asked that she not be named. "And that's not what Reform is supposed to be about."

Indeed, the emphasis on tradition poses many challenges for a movement that has long rejected it.

Even as the movement's president instructed his members that they must return to Torah in a serious way, kosher food was not on the menu at the convention.

Reform is Judaism's only denomination that rejects the binding nature of Jewish law, including the requirement to keep kosher, though an increasing number of Reform rabbis observe the dietary laws.

The movement is also struggling with how particularistic it can be if it continues to open its doors to the non-Jewish spouses of so many of its members.

A reporter's informal survey of delegates at the convention revealed that it is common for 40 percent of the members of Reform congregations to be involved in interfaith marriages. As much as 25 percent of temple board members are non-Jews. In many cases, these Christian partners remain devoted members of their churches even as they demonstrate deep commitment to temple life.

Joseph Karpen is president of Congregation Beth HaTephila, a 200-member temple in Asheville, N.C., an area filled with rolling mountain roads and many Christian churches. His wife isn't Jewish. Though she regularly attends services with him, she also attends a Methodist Church each Sunday.

Karpen had what he called "a traditional Jewish wedding" a few years ago, with his uncle, a Reform rabbi, officiating. But his wife's pastor also gave a sermon as they stood under the wedding canopy.

His 20-year-old son from an earlier marriage is likely to marry a non-Jewish woman, Karpen said, adding that it doesn't bother him much because he doesn't feel that there is anything he can do about it.

While the rabbi of his congregation has recently introduced more traditional Jewish practices, such as walking the Torah through the congregation after it is read, the congregation is struggling with questions of limits to non-Jewish participation.

When it became clear that a non-Jew might be in line to become temple president, the board took up the matter and decided it would be inappropriate.

That temple leader resigned from his position on the board, Karpen said, "hurt that it had been brought up" as a potential problem at all.

Dealing with seemingly contradictory impulses

A number of Reform temples are dealing with tensions between their movement's classical ideology and neo-traditionalism by holding two very different kinds of services.

On Saturday mornings at Congregation Mickve Israel, in Savannah, Ga., for instance, the 60-minute worship begins with an English hymn. An organ accompanies the service and a soprano-soloist and the rabbi lead the sung portions of the classical Reform liturgy.

On Friday nights at the 350-family congregation, the service is what Rabbi Mark Belzer described as "warm Reform," with a part-time cantor, more congregational participation, accompaniment by a guitar and more Hebrew. Mickve Israel is one of many Reform congregations dealing with the seemingly contradictory impulses within the movement by trying to accommodate both of them.

For the time being, at least, it seems that the

movement as a whole, too, will cope with such tensions by staying on two parallel tracks as well.

"There's always a tension between the committed few — the leadership — and the rank and file," said Yoffie in an interview.

Still, he said, "never have we had such an intensive approach to Torah study and seen a clear progression" in the movement's spiritual development. □

Fervently Orthodox executive to buy manufacturer of bikinis

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Lev Levayev is not about to let a little skin get in the way of business.

The Africa-Israel Corp., which the fervently Orthodox Levayev controls, plans to purchase an 80 percent stake in Gottex, an Israeli swimsuit company known for its daring bikini designs.

The move, which will mark Africa-Israel's entry into the clothing industry, raised questions about whether Levayev would try to revamp Gottex's production line because of his religious beliefs.

Levayev recently created a controversy when he said he would not allow the operation on the Sabbath of a movie theater in a shopping mall built by Africa-Israel in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Aviv. He also wanted to make a McDonald's restaurant in the mall kosher.

This week, however, a company spokesman said that Levayev had no intention of altering the revealing Gottex designs.

"Africa-Israel is a company. It is not defined as a religious or secular company. Levayev will not change the production line. The purpose is to strengthen [Gottex] and get it back on top."

Africa-Israel negotiated the deal for Gottex with Leah Gottlieb, who held the controlling share in the financially troubled company.

Gottex has debts totaling some \$30 million to \$35 million, including about \$18 million dollars owed to suppliers.

Creditor banks gave Gottlieb three months to find a strategic investor, saying they would otherwise go to court in an effort to dissolve the company. □

Israelis' travel image under siege

NEW YORK (JTA) — Blame it on the Israeli army.

The desire among young Israelis to live it up after they complete their mandatory service appears to be the main reason why tourists from the Jewish state are considered the world's worst-behaved travelers.

For recently released members of the army, "the desire to get to know other cultures does not hold a high priority," said Yehuda Jacobson, a sociologist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Now a new campaign is being launched to improve the behavior of Israelis abroad.

Yuval Limon, the manger of LaMetayel, Israel's largest chain of travel stores, launched the campaign.

Limon is calling for classes on tourist etiquette to be introduced in schools, and he hopes to collect enough signatures to force the Knesset's Education Committee to deal with the issue.

We want to "admit our sins and move forward," he said.

Apparently, he's got a long way to go.

A recent survey of Norwegian hotel owners found Israelis to be the least liked of tourists because they "steal everything possible," according to Limon. □

Swiss government foundation to exclude assisting survivors*By Fredy Rom*

BERN (JTA) — In an apparent effort to win popular support for its plan, the Swiss government has decided that no moneys from a proposed multibillion dollar foundation will be given to individual Holocaust survivors.

Swiss President Arnold Koller proposed in April the establishment of the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity. The investment income from its \$5 billion in reserves would provide help to victims of catastrophes in Switzerland and abroad.

Koller, who made the announcement as part of an effort to deflect international criticism of Switzerland's wartime dealings with the Nazis, said at the time that some of the foundation's estimated \$230 million in annual income would help support needy Holocaust survivors.

Observers said this week that the government made the decision last Friday in order to ensure that the foundation would be approved in next year's referendum.

While individual survivors will now be excluded, the foundation may devote some of its resources to funding projects that help survivors, according to one paragraph of the regulations approved by the Swiss government.

Last Friday's decision, which came after a series of hearings about how the foundation would distribute its funds, made a sharp distinction between the foundation and a separate Holocaust Memorial Fund.

Needy Holocaust victims should expect help from that fund, not the foundation, Finance Minister Kaspar Villiger said in an interview.

The size of the fund increased substantially Monday, when the Swiss National Bank officially turned over its pledge of 100 million Swiss francs — approximately \$71 million at current exchange rates — bringing the total value of the fund to some \$187 million.

In yet another delay, the first payments from the fund may not come until December, according to Rolf Bloch, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, who also serves as the chairman of the fund.

Recently declassified documents provided evidence that the Swiss served as the Nazis' bankers, purchasing gold the Nazis looted from the central banks of the countries they overran.

According to an article Sunday in The New York Times, some of that gold found its way to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which melted down \$23 million worth of Nazi gold in the 1950s and replaced the swastika with a U.S. seal.

The U.S. treasury knew that the gold had been looted by the Nazis from Belgium and Holland, the Times reported, citing recently released memos from the Federal Reserve.

But there is no evidence that U.S. Treasury officials suspected that any of the gold had come from Holocaust victims, according to the report. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**China's pledge on Iran welcomed although many remain skeptical***By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Middle East military analysts and pro-Israel activists are welcoming China's pledge to forgo new nuclear dealings with Iran, but remain skeptical about whether Beijing will honor its commitment.

President Clinton last week concluded an agreement clearing the way for U.S. firms to sell nuclear reactors to China, provided that Beijing live up to its

commitment to stop selling technology to Iran and other nations that could be used to build nuclear weapons.

Halting Beijing's technology transfers to Iran is viewed as a crucial part of efforts to contain Iran, which has been attempting to develop biological, chemical and nuclear capabilities.

Indeed, the U.S.-Chinese agreement came as Congress launched a new legislative initiative aimed at preventing Iran from developing such weapons.

Although China's assistance to Iran's nuclear aspirations has focused on the development of a civilian nuclear power program, Washington believes that such transfers would help provide know-how that could eventually be used to make bombs.

China's halt would "choke off a major source of support for the Iranians, but the key question is 'if' because we know that China has not necessarily broken its promises, but sidestepped them before," said Dov Zakheim, a former deputy undersecretary of defense in the Reagan administration.

China has long been accused of providing countries such as Iran and Pakistan with technology that could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

Holding China's 'feet to the fire'

While Beijing has denied the allegations, the Central Intelligence Agency recently reported that in the second half of 1996, China was the "primary source of nuclear-related equipment and technology to Pakistan and a key supplier to Iran."

Following last week's U.S.-China summit meeting, the White House said China was taking a range of actions to keep weapons of mass destruction and other sophisticated weapons "out of unstable regimes and away from rogue states and terrorists."

One Middle East analyst, who asked not to be identified, said of the deal: "The key thing is to really make sure the Chinese have their feet held to the fire before anything is actually delivered in terms of U.S. nuclear technology."

Despite Beijing's new pledge, some analysts speculate that a good deal of damage has already been done. China has steadily supplied Iran in recent years with technology that has boosted Iran's weapons technology.

While the Chinese agreement would close off a major avenue for technology transfers, Iran is likely to continue drawing on other sources, such as Russia, for help in its weapons development program.

Some analysts, in fact, believe that Russian cooperation with Iran poses a more immediate concern.

Israeli military officials have warned that with continued help from Russian engineers and scientists, Tehran would have the ability to launch ballistic missiles equipped with chemical, biological and other warheads into Israel and other states in the region within the next 18 months.

"If a deal with the Russians similar to one with the Chinese can be worked out, I think we'd be in much better shape," said the Middle East analyst.

Indeed, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, along with other Jewish organizations, has made the containment of Iran a top agenda item.

AIPAC is engaging in "emergency mobilization" to win congressional support of legislation introduced last week.

The legislation, sponsored by Sens. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and in the House by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), would automatically impose sanctions on foreign companies known to have transferred missile technology to Iran. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Hebron's Jews, Arabs angry over reopening of key street***By Gil Sedan*

HEBRON, West Bank (JTA) — The partial reopening of a key street here has done little to quell anxieties in this tense and divided town.

Hebron's Jews and Arabs have different names for the street, revealing the sharp political differences that have long threatened to tear apart the City of the Patriarchs.

The Jews call it King David Street, named after the biblical king who established his first capital there.

The Palestinians call it Shuhada Street. Shuhada is the Arabic word for "martyrs," the honorary term bestowed on terrorists and others who die as part of the effort to bring about the destruction of the Jewish state.

This visitor came to Hebron only days after the street was partially reopened to Palestinian traffic — a move that has satisfied neither of the two populations living in tense proximity to each other.

The Palestinians were angry that the street's opening after nearly four years was only partial, and that few of their vehicles are allowed to traverse it.

Hebron's Jewish settlers, meanwhile, are upset that the street was opened at all — a move they view as a threat to their safety. They warn of "big trouble" if and when the street is fully opened to Palestinian traffic.

The reopening of the street came just days before Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy sat down Monday in Washington with Palestinian officials to discuss ways to advance the ailing peace process.

Protesting the talks, hundreds of Palestinian demonstrators in Hebron chanting "Death to America! Death to Israel!" staged a mock funeral for the peace process. On the street itself, a tense quiet prevailed as it remained closed to Palestinian traffic.

Israeli cars could travel the street — so long as they did not enter the area controlled by Palestinian police.

The area looked like a resort town after the tourist season had ended. Half the shops fronting the street were closed; only a few cars broke the quiet.

An elderly woman greeted carpenter Yunis Abu Minshar, who was sitting in front of his shop. She wanted a piece of wood, for which Abu Minshar charged her two shekels.

'First income for the day'

"My first income for the day," he said, "and there won't be much more of that."

An Israeli pickup truck then stopped in front of Abu Minshar's carpentry shop.

While the driver and Abu Minshar spoke, the pickup remained in the middle of the street. On what was once a major artery, there was no traffic for it to block.

Four Arab women, two of them carrying babies in their arms, walked by. Pedestrians do not face the same restrictions as vehicles.

The street, which straddles Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, was closed for security reasons after the February 1994 Hebron massacre, when Dr. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians worshipping at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Israeli security officials said at the time that they closed the street to protect three Jewish enclaves located in the immediate vicinity of the thoroughfare, which links downtown Hebron to the main marketplace.

As part of January's Hebron Agreement, in which Israeli troops pulled back from 80 percent of the town, the United States agreed to finance the refurbishing of the street, a project that carried a final price tag of \$2.5 million.

The renovation work involved putting in new water and sewage systems, beautifying the store's facades and adding decorative, antique-style street lamps.

But when construction work was completed, the settlers staged a demonstration against reopening the street, and the Israeli authorities decided to use their prerogative under the agreement and reopen the street gradually.

Israel's security procedures have created the following scenario: When a Palestinian car drives down the street from the area under Palestinian control, it is stopped by an Israeli army barrier.

Only special-permit holders, such as drivers of city trucks, taxis and emergency services vehicles, and residents of the street are allowed to pass. All other vehicles are diverted to another street that forces the driver to take a roundabout route to reach the marketplace.

Cars with Israeli license plates, however, are whisked through the Israeli checkpoint.

A large portion of the settlers' concerns about the reopening focus on Beit Hadassah, which fronts on the street. They fear that terrorists will be able to launch an attack on the house, even though it is heavily guarded by Israeli soldiers. Beit Hadassah, which now houses several Jewish families, had not had any Jewish residents since 1929, when local Arabs staged a pogrom that devastated the Jewish community.

The Jewish presence in Hebron was re-established in 1979, when a group of Jews moved from the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba into Beit Hadassah.

Settlers defend right to live in Hebron

In addition to Beit Hadassah, there are two other Jewish enclaves located near the street. The Hebron settlers, who staunchly defend their right to live in the town so rich in biblical history, number about 500.

Trying to go about their lives in a town with more than 130,000 Palestinians, many of whom are hostile to their presence, the settlers are wary of what may happen when the street is fully opened.

"The main problem is the extreme proximity of the street to the Jewish houses," said Noam Arnon, spokesman for the Jewish community of Hebron. "Can you imagine four Palestinian cars stopping by Beit Hadassah? Thirty to 40 people jump out, and they are inside the house before the soldiers know what hit them."

The Palestinians dismiss such fears.

"Nonsense," said Idris Zahde, one of the workers who helped with the street's renovation. "This [fear] has nothing to do with the reopening of the street." Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and his security forces "will not allow any attacks on the settlers because this would be a violation of the agreement."

But Arnon does not believe in the assurances from the Palestinian Authority. He remembers how Palestinian protesters, armed with stones and gasoline bombs, came extremely close to the Jewish Quarter earlier this year — and he believes that it happened with Arafat's blessing.

Arnon also charges that the Palestinian Authority has violated the Hebron Agreement by banning Israeli cars from entering the area within their control.

"I demand reciprocity," he said. "Let me drive like a free human being in all parts of Hebron. Then the Palestinians will be allowed to drive through Shuhada Street." Some local Arabs blame the Palestinian leadership for the slow progress in getting the street fully opened.

"The street will not be reopened until the Arab leaders change," said Abed Rahim, a passer-by. "Yes, also Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat." His friend Ribhi Abu Sneineh looked at him with a scornful smile. "Neither Arafat nor [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu will decide when the street opens. Only the settlers." □