



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Jordan's King Hussein is slated to meet with President Clinton on Wednesday at the White House.** Hussein, who has been treated for cancer, is in the United States for a checkup at the Mayo Clinic.

■ **A U.S. lawmaker introduced legislation intended to prevent religious discrimination in the workplace by forcing employers to accommodate their employees' religious needs.** The bill, known as the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, was introduced by Rep. Bill Goodling (R-Pa.) and has strong backing from most Jewish groups. A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate.

■ **Members of the U.S. Congress are preparing to challenge President Clinton's decision to remove Syria and Lebanon from the U.S. list of drug producers and exporters.**

■ **Alabama's attorney general asked a federal judge to delay enforcing a decision that forbids several forms of religious expression in public schools.** He said the decision by Judge Ira DeMent barring such activities as vocal prayers at school sporting events and Bible readings on school grounds violates the free speech rights of students.

■ **Jewish groups joined protests against the Senate Judiciary Committee's move to block President Clinton's nominee for assistant attorney general for civil rights.** A coalition of religious and civil liberties organizations, coordinated by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, wrote to members of the committee to defend Bill Lann Lee's support for affirmative action policies.

■ **A Jewish youth was stabbed and slightly wounded by an Arab in downtown Jerusalem.** The assailant is still at large.

■ **Two Palestinian land dealers arrested on suspicion of selling land to Jews died in Palestinian jails over the weekend.** Palestinian security sources reported the cause of death as illness. Palestinian human rights groups said they were investigating the matter.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Conservative Jews different, despite an alliance with Reform

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y. (JTA) — When it comes to religious pluralism in Israel, the Reform movement has gotten most of the press.

The Conservative movement has been largely ignored by Orthodox religious and political leaders and spared the rhetorical barbs aimed at the Reform, a group thought by many Israelis to include everyone who is not Orthodox and which is publicly derided by some influential Orthodox leaders as "close to Christianity."

But now the Masorti movement, the Israeli arm of the Conservative movement, is beginning to be understood as something quite different from Reform, its leaders say.

Indeed, Reform and Conservative Judaism do differ in significant ways.

As a result, there are different opinions within the Conservative movement as to how far the alliance with the Reform should go.

Stephen Wolnek, the newly elected international president of the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism, said that although the Masorti and Reform movements are allied in their fight for official recognition in the Jewish state, "We would not allow the Reform movement to veto a solution within the Ne'eman Committee that we find acceptable."

Wolnek of Port Washington, N.Y., was referring to the committee empowered by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to find a way to reconcile the Reform and Conservative movements' demands for the legal recognition of their marriages, conversions and divorces with the Orthodox rabbinate's demand that the status quo — in which they have sole control over personal religious matters — be maintained.

Wolnek made his comments in an interview at the biennial convention of his organization, held at the Concord Hotel in the Catskill Mountains this week.

The conference brought together more than 750 Conservative Jews from the movement's some 800 synagogues around the country for an exploration of Jewish religious and public policy issues.

But others disagreed with Wolnek.

"We are not about to go our own way and abandon Reform on this issue," said Rabbi Reuven Hammer, head of Masorti's religious court, or Beit Din, which oversees conversions.

"We disagree with them heartily, may even tell them we prefer that they do things differently, but we want them to have the same privileges in Israel that we want," said Hammer, the Conservative representative on the Ne'eman Committee.

The committee has seven members: five Orthodox, and one each from the Reform and Conservative movements, along with several observers.

### Differences in style and content

Though generally lumped together in the minds of many Israelis, and similar in size in North America, Reform and Conservative Judaism are, in fact, quite different.

Those differences both in style and content were apparent at the convention of the Reform movement's congregational arm in Dallas earlier this month and at this week's meeting of the Conservative movement's congregational body.

Reform movement leaders spoke on pluralism with rhetoric emphatic and sharp.

They spoke of their impatience with the process, of overcoming their enemies and winning the war for religious rights.

The Conservative movement's leaders here have spoken in a more modulated tone, one which champions unity before victory.

"We must find a way to hold constructive dialogue and not be destructive, a way to avoid rupture," Hammer said during a plenary session devoted to pluralism.

Conservative Judaism is centered on halachah, or Jewish law, which the movement interprets in a liberal way relative to Orthodox rabbis. The

Reform movement rejects Jewish law as a basis for policy or practice.

While both liberal movements ordain women as rabbis and cantors, the Reform movement ordains openly gay and lesbian clergy, and the Conservative movement does not.

Perhaps most significant are their different approaches to intermarriage.

The Reform movement encourages the participation of interfaith families, and there are more interfaith couples in most Reform congregations than in most Conservative ones.

In a 1983 policy known as patrilineal descent, the Reform movement changed the millennia-old way Jewishness was defined.

It deemed as Jewish anyone born of a Jewish parent, of either gender, as long as the child is raised as a Jew.

The Conservative movement continues to adhere to the matrilineal definition of Jewishness, defining as Jewish anyone born to a Jewish mother, or converted according to the standards of Jewish law.

Requirements surrounding conversion also differ.

The Reform movement in North America does not require converts to immerse in a mikvah, or men to be circumcised.

Conservative rabbis — like the Orthodox — officially require both practices.

In Israel, though, the Reform movement is much more traditionally oriented than it is elsewhere, and generally requires both of those elements as part of its conversion process.

#### **'A total revolution'**

The fundamental differences between Conservative and Reform Judaism have begun to be recognized by leading Orthodox rabbis in Israel, say Masorti representatives.

On a radio program two weeks ago, Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, described the Conservative movement as one that "believes in halachah with progress," said Rabbi Ehud Bandel, president of the Masorti movement.

"Lau sounded like a spokesman for Masorti. It's a total revolution" in the way Conservative Judaism is understood by the Orthodox, Bandel said.

Conservative Jews in Israel feel torn between the movements, he said, but are also in a position to mediate between them.

"We feel in one camp with the Orthodox, who observe halachah, but in another with Reform, against religious coercion.

"We are indeed the mercaz (center) that should try to bridge between the extremes and bring everyone to the center," he said.

The Conservative movement's strategy on pluralism, as outlined by the movement's leaders here, is to expand its efforts to reach Israelis.

The movement currently has 48 congregations in Israel, with some 20,000 members, but it has not reached enough Israelis, said some.

"We want to reach the 80 percent of Israelis who are not Orthodox and show them that there is a Judaism that is modern and meaningful and moderate and that can speak to them," said Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of United Synagogue.

To do so, officials said, the Conservative/Masorti movement is expanding its downtown Jerusalem campus by 50 percent by adding a new \$18 million building.

It also plans, in mid-1998, to begin youth and adult education programs that will bring together Israeli and

North American Jews. The Center for Religious Understanding, as it will be called, will host "Jewish growth encounters, dialogues on the role of Judaism in one's life" and shared holiday experiences, said Epstein.

The endless hatred of fellow Jews, *sinat chinam* in Hebrew, "cannot be changed by legislation," Epstein said.

"We must build *binat chinam* — endless understanding." □

#### **Israeli Cabinet minister plans to meet with Pollard in prison**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein intends to visit convicted spy Jonathan Pollard when he visits the United States next week.

If the visit takes place, Edelstein would be the second — and the highest-ranking — Israeli official to meet with the former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst during the 12 years he has been imprisoned.

Pollard was previously visited by a junior consular official.

Edelstein said this week that he believed it was time to take a public stand regarding Pollard's imprisonment.

"I think my major message is that Pollard hasn't been forgotten," said Edelstein, a member of the Yisrael Ba'Aliyah Party.

"I'm not going to say he hasn't done anything wrong. It was a crime under American law, and I think 12 years [in prison] was enough. It's high time for us to debate the issue publicly," he told Israel Radio.

Edelstein said he had consulted with Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein about visiting Pollard at a federal prison in Butner, N.C.

Edelstein added that he was coordinating the visit with Israel's Foreign Ministry, which is discussing the idea with American officials.

Pollard was arrested in 1985 outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington. He pleaded guilty in 1986 to stealing secrets for the Israeli government and, in 1987, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Edelstein said the Israeli government has not done enough to press for Pollard's release.

He told Israel Radio that during the past 18 months that he served as a member of the Cabinet, he had not "seen any efforts" on Pollard's behalf — "not to mention the previous government, which was not, let's say, sacrificing themselves for this."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied last month that he had abandoned Pollard's cause, adding that he had raised the matter three times in discussions with President Clinton.

Clinton rejected a clemency plea by Pollard in July 1996, citing the gravity of his crime, his lack of remorse and the damage he caused to American security.

Pollard was granted Israeli citizenship in 1996,

He had hoped that move would bolster his chances for release.

Pollard's wife, Esther, recently petitioned the High Court of Justice to call on the Israeli government to recognize that Pollard was an agent for Israel.

The petition also asked the court to order the government to release classified documents which she said would prove that her husband's activities were overseen by senior Israeli authorities.

The court postponed a decision, ruling last month that the defense establishment should first grant her meetings with security officials.

Israeli officials have maintained that Pollard passed on intelligence documents without official sanction. □

## Holocaust survivors in Latvia to get first Swiss fund checks

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — A 75-year-old Latvian Jew who narrowly escaped death by fleeing a Nazi labor camp will be the first Holocaust survivor to receive payment from a Swiss fund created earlier this year.

Riva Sefere's receipt of a \$400 check at a ceremony scheduled for Nov. 18 in the Latvian capital of Riga will end months of speculation and questions over who would receive payments and when they would be disbursed.

The Holocaust Memorial Fund was established in February by Switzerland's three largest banks to aid needy survivors worldwide. It is led by a board comprised of Swiss, American Jewish and Israeli officials.

Some 80 Latvian Jewish survivors will be the first recipients because "virtually none of these people have received any compensation for their suffering during the Holocaust," said Gideon Taylor, assistant executive vice president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Sefere, who was interned in a Latvian labor camp during the war, sneaked away from a column of laborers being marched off to be shot and then spent the rest of the war in hiding. She became a French teacher after the war. Now she and her husband live on two monthly pensions totaling about \$160.

Other Latvian survivors who will receive checks next week include:

- Yacov Barkan, 68, who hid in a basement for three years after escaping the liquidation of the remaining Jewish residents in his hometown. He is a professor at Riga University.
- Yevgenia Barowska, 75, who spent much of the war in a concentration camp in Latvia.
- Margers Vestermanis, 72, who is director of the Jewish Museum's documentation center in Riga, spent part of the war in labor camps and, after escaping, hid in a forest until liberation.

### Other survivors soon to see benefits

They, like Sefere, never received any restitution for what they experienced during the war.

Each of the Latvian recipients will receive an additional check for \$600 at a later date. Other Holocaust survivors in Eastern and Central Europe will soon be receiving checks for up to \$1,000 from the Swiss fund.

The fund was created amid allegations that the Swiss banks were hoarding the wealth of Holocaust victims. The Swiss National Bank recently contributed to the fund, bringing its total value to about \$187 million.

After months of delays, the distribution of the first checks was made possible after the fund transferred \$11 million Monday to World Jewish Restitution Organization officials in Jerusalem.

Fund officials said in a statement that the transfer took place after the WJRO presented its plan to "set up a comprehensive system to support Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union through local communities and organizations."

The JDC, which already has an extensive network of support services for survivors in Eastern and Central Europe, was designated by the WJRO to help distribute the payments.

The WJRO, which is headed by World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman and includes the Jewish Agency for Israel and other international Jewish groups, spearheaded international efforts to get the Swiss to confront their wartime past.

The fund's executive board agreed in July to earmark the \$11 million initial distribution to Jewish Holocaust survivors.

In September, Jewish officials turned over to Swiss authorities the names of some 32,000 Holocaust survivors, 12,000 of whom were eligible for the initial round of payments.

The first group of recipients has been limited to Jews living in former Soviet bloc countries — the so-called "double victims" who suffered under both Nazism and communism and never received reparations from the German government.

The survivors' average age is 80, and many are living in dire poverty.

WJRO officials approved a blueprint last week for allocating the remaining portion of the Swiss fund — over and above the \$11 million already approved — that will be distributed to Jewish survivors.

The fund's executive board is expected to ratify those allocations in January, according to WJC Executive Director Elan Steinberg.

Not all of the fund's assets will be distributed to Jewish survivors. About 10 percent of the fund will be set aside to help non-Jewish victims of the war, such as Catholics, Gypsies and homosexuals.

Officials representing those groups have said their payments will take longer to distribute because they are not as well organized as the groups representing Jewish survivors. □

## From quotas to Jewish center: Life at Dartmouth has changed

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — At Dartmouth College, the times they have a-changed.

Four Jews — including three men wearing yarmulkas and tallitot — stood on the dais at a dedication ceremony at Dartmouth College over the weekend for a new \$4 million Roth Center for Jewish Life.

And one of them, Dartmouth's President James Freedman, confronted the anti-Semitic past of the Hanover, N.H., institution. He read from sets of correspondence between university officials and alumni that were replete with derogatory remarks toward Jews and hints of the quotas that prevailed in the Ivy League and elsewhere.

The documents read by Freedman included a June 1934 exchange of letters between an alumnus and Dartmouth's director of admissions, The New York Times reported this week.

The alumnus, Ford Whelden of Detroit, complained that "the campus seems more Jewish each time I arrive in Hanover. And unfortunately many of them (on quick judgment) seem to be of the 'kike' type."

The director of admissions at the time, Robert Strong, replied, "I am glad to have your comments on the Jewish problem, and I shall appreciate your help along this line in the future. If we go beyond the 5 percent or 6 percent in the Class of 1938, I will be grieved beyond words."

Jews make up approximately 10 percent of the roughly 4,800 students at Dartmouth today.

Freedman — who perhaps best reflects the shift in the college's attitude toward Jews — said in an interview with the Times, "No Jewish students or faculty need fear that they will be discriminated against. Jewish students have a proud place at Dartmouth today."

The Roth Center for Jewish Life will provide space for a wide range of Jewish activities on campus, ranging from religious services and artists and social events to an annual Holocaust commemoration. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Shaky at home and abroad,  
Netanyahu heads to America***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visits to England and the United States this week come at a time of profound confusion over his standing both at home and abroad.

At home, Netanyahu emerged from a stormy three-day session of a rarely convened Likud Party convention with his credibility battered.

The tumult centered around a move to abolish the system of primaries that determine the party's list of candidates for Knesset elections. While Netanyahu pleaded with the 2,000 delegates to postpone a decision to abolish the primaries, most of them appeared determined to restore the old system of patronage used to draw up the list.

The dispute indicated that the premier might be losing control over his own party's rank and file, many of whom have been increasingly questioning his government's policies. Netanyahu was likely to face just as chilly a welcome in London — and an uncertain climate in the United States.

The London Jewish Chronicle reported over the weekend that during his visit to Britain, which was slated to begin Thursday, Prime Minister Tony Blair intended to voice firm support for a more conciliatory position from Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinians. The newspaper added that a dozen prominent British Jewish leaders, protesting Netanyahu's policies, had declined invitations to a dinner in the Israeli leader's honor.

**Netanyahu to meet with Albright**

Netanyahu is coming to the United States chiefly to address the largest annual gathering of the organized Jewish community's leadership — the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, which opens Sunday in Indianapolis.

But his aides also have been trying for weeks to arrange a meeting with President Clinton — a meeting that the White House has been insisting the president's schedule cannot accommodate.

The results of a meeting slated for Friday in London between Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright could determine whether Clinton makes time for the Israeli premier. Albright, who is scheduled to meet with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat the following day, was expected to press Netanyahu on implementing a "timeout" on settlement construction and redeploying Israeli forces in the West Bank.

The two were also expected to discuss the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which took place last week near Washington.

Those talks focused on issues still unresolved from the 1995 Interim Agreement, including a Palestinian airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, a safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between Gaza and the West Bank, and the creation of an industrial park at the Karni crossing between Israel and Gaza.

As Netanyahu's evaluation of the talks flip-flopped, his credibility — or at the very least, his consistency — was stretched.

Foreign Minister David Levy, who led the Israeli delegation to Washington, maintained after he returned home that the talks had made real progress. But Netanyahu let it be known that he saw insignificant progress.

But the prime minister subsequently moved around to Levy's position.

At a briefing Monday for British journalists, Netanyahu said the talks near Washington had brought

"close to completion" the long-delayed issues of the airport and the joint industrial park.

The Palestinians have persisted in labeling the Washington talks a failure.

Washington, anxious to salvage what hope yet remains of an upcoming regional economic conference in Qatar, has been carefully avoiding taking sides.

Citing the lack of progress in the peace process, some Arab countries have decided to boycott next week's conference or send low-level representation. The United States, which views attendance as an expression of support for the peace process, has pressed Arab states to participate in what will be the fourth annual conference.

For his part, Netanyahu's policy addresses to the Likud convention raised doubts among some of his domestic political allies and among the Palestinians about where he stands. The premier, in his opening address Sunday, presented a list of demands for permanent peace that were restricted to Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley — and seemed deliberately to omit the Golan Heights.

After a day of complaints from Golan settlers and coalition hard-liners, Netanyahu took to the rostrum again Monday and virtually repeated the entire speech. But this time he beefed up his list with an assertion that the Golan is "an area vital for the security of the State of Israel." He specified the pre-1967 "borderline region — not just the line, the entire region" of the Golan as an absolute requirement in a permanent peace accord with Syria.

In both speeches, Netanyahu ruled out a Palestinian state.

The Palestinians and the wider Arab world say the premier's continuing call for accelerated permanent-status talks is suspect — unless he is prepared to implement the agreements on further Israeli pullbacks on the West Bank.

If Washington comes down hard in favor of that position, which it may well do after the Qatar summit, Israel could find itself more isolated than at any time since the Oslo accords with the Palestinians were signed four years ago. □

**Court may allow seditionists  
to perform community service***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two right-wing Israelis convicted of sedition have been sentenced to relatively light prison terms.

Shmuel Sackett and Moshe Feiglin, are the leaders of Zo Artzeinu, or This Is Our Land, a grass-roots movement that opposes the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The two, who organized mass demonstrations against the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the summer of 1995, were sentenced Tuesday by the Jerusalem Magistrates Court to jail terms of four and six months, respectively. It is believed the judge would let the two do community service instead of serving time in jail.

The final decision is expected to be announced Dec. 17.

In his ruling, the judge said the defendants had chosen to repeatedly breach the law and had organized protests that were a danger to democracy, law and public order. But in rendering his decision, the judge said that he had taken into account that the organization advocated peaceful protest, adding that he also wanted to stress the importance of upholding freedom of expression.

Some 50 supporters of Sackett and Feiglin greeted the decision with cheers and song.

Sackett said he did not regret his actions.

"We did what Judaism commanded us to do and what democracy permitted us to do. We did what we had to and we would do it again," he told Israel Radio. □