



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel blasts U.N. resolution

Israel criticized a U.N. General Assembly decision to call for an international conference on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The U.N.'s decision harms the "integrity of the international humanitarian institutions, which are supposed to be free of any bias and prejudice," Israel's Foreign Ministry said. [Page 3]

### CJF approves merger details

The Council of Jewish Federations approved in principle documents detailing an agreement for its planned merger with the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal.

The national leadership of all three organizations is now traveling around the United States to present its plans for the merger to local federations, which need to give final approval to the agreement.

### CIA warns about weapons

Weapons of mass destruction continue to be transferred from Russia and China to such countries as Iran and Syria, the CIA warned.

In a report to Congress, the CIA said that despite restrictions imposed by the Russian and Chinese governments, quasi-governmental entities are exporting biological, chemical and nuclear weapons technology.

### Germany vows 'generous' fund

German companies are ready to establish a "generous" Holocaust compensation fund on the understanding that survivors' class-action suits against the firms be dropped, according to a top German official.

The fund would be preferable to fighting the suits, which "threaten to drag our country and our companies through the mud," Chancellery Minister Bodo Hombach told a Bonn news conference.

His comments came after he participated in talks with Jewish leaders in Washington about creating the fund.

Because of the Presidents Day holiday in the United States, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Feb. 15.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Modern Orthodox Jews engage in public search for new identity

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Modern Orthodoxy is determined to put its house in order — or at least to figure out what the house looks like.

The movement has always been open to a broad range of influences from both the traditional Jewish and secular worlds.

And the value conflicts that occasionally arise between these worlds have created challenges for its rabbinic leaders and a comfortable place for the majority of American Orthodox Jews who believe they can be observant while they enjoy the benefits of American society. But modern Orthodoxy has in recent years been buffeted by countervailing forces so powerful that rabbis and other leaders within the community say that it has lost a sense of itself as a force with a distinct religious ideology.

"To this day, the majority of Jews identifying as Orthodox are centrist, yet none can clearly assert what centrist Orthodoxy is about," said Rabbi Rafael Grossman, spiritual leader of Baron Hirsch Synagogue in Memphis, a congregation of 900 families.

About 7 percent of American Jews — or a maximum of 470,000 — are Orthodox, according to the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations.

So its leaders are now devoting themselves to examining — and re-articulating — what it means to be modern Orthodox. Perhaps the most visible illustration of the soul-searching is the upcoming conference, Orthodoxy Encounters a Changing World, sponsored by Edah, a 2-year-old organization based in New York.

Edah was founded by a handful of Orthodox rabbis and laypeople who were determined to articulate a centrist view of Orthodoxy that they felt was being subsumed as the community moved toward more stringent practices and philosophies.

They gave Edah, which means "community" in Hebrew, a tag line: "The Courage to be Modern and Orthodox."

Until now, the group, with an annual budget of about \$650,000 raised from several individual supporters, has focused its efforts on reaching rabbinical students and women rising through the ranks of Jewish educational and communal institutions to expose them to a systematic study of Jewish law and ideology. Now, however, Edah is reaching out to the grass roots. It expects about 650 people from around the country to attend the two-day conference, scheduled to begin Sunday at a Manhattan hotel.

The Edah conference follows on the heels of two conferences focusing on feminism and Orthodoxy, which also provided venues for reflecting on recent changes within Orthodoxy. The conferences, held in New York City in February 1997 and 1998, attracted some 2,000 attendees from around the world.

Further evidence of the public self-examination was found in the respected Orthodox journal Tradition, which devoted its entire Summer 1998 issue to 33 essays on "The Sea Change in American Orthodox Judaism."

Why is all of this self-examination happening now?

"We're coming of age and looking around and wondering what direction to go in" on a number of issues, said Norma Baumel Joseph, an associate professor of religion at Concordia University in Montreal and honorary co-chairwoman of the Edah conference.

"We in the modern or centrist Orthodox community find ourselves beset" by two extremes, said Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, which offers

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel's political field crowded

Fifty-five political parties are expected to take part in Israel's May 17 elections.

The total was announced when the deadline passed for registering parties to take part in the vote for the 15th Knesset.

Meanwhile, the Meretz Party re-elected Yossi Sarid to head the party's list in the elections. Current Knesset members Ran Cohen, Chaim Oron and Amnon Rubinstein took the next three slots on the leftist party's list.

### Israel frees Egyptian prisoner

Israel is freeing an Egyptian who is the longest-serving Arab prisoner in an Israeli jail. President Ezer Weizman decided to commute the sentence of Mohammed Sawarka, who served 22 years in jail for planting a mine that killed an Israeli soldier.

Weizman, who recently commuted the sentences of five Israeli Arab prisoners in honor of Israel's 50th birthday, also met with representatives of 40 other Israeli Arab prisoners seeking freedom.

### E.U. threatens aid cutoff

The European Union is threatening to freeze financial aid to the Palestinian Authority unless it receives a detailed accounting of how the self-rule government is spending the funds.

E.U. officials have long suspected financial irregularities on the part of the Palestinians, including the possibility that some of the aid has found its way into the pockets of officials close to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

### Syrians vote on Assad

Syrians voted on the re-election of President Hafez Assad to a fifth seven-year term.

Assad, who took power in a bloodless coup in 1970, is expected to be overwhelmingly approved. He faces no opposition.

Jewish undergraduate, graduate and rabbinical studies, as well as degrees in secular fields such as law and medicine.

From one side has come the powerful influence of the haredi, or fervently Orthodox, world, which emphasizes increasing stringency in Jewish observance, traditional gender roles and disengagement from the secular world whenever possible.

From the other extreme, said Rabbi Saul Berman, director of Edah, comes "a corrosive secularization present in the contact with secular society that tends to undermine spiritual passion."

"The so-called modern Orthodoxy suffers from an inferiority complex," said Rabbi Walter Wurzberger, who retired from leading an Orthodox congregation on Long Island, N.Y., and now teaches philosophy at Yeshiva University.

"In many circles, this kind of Orthodoxy is regarded as a compromise between genuine Orthodoxy and no Orthodoxy. Some people think modern Orthodoxy means you're not as emphatic in your observance of halachah," or Jewish law, he said.

Everyone interviewed agreed that the 1993 death of modern Orthodoxy's revered rabbinic leader, Joseph Soloveitchik, has created a leadership vacuum that has not yet been filled.

Leaders of modern Orthodoxy believe their movement's distinctiveness lies in its commitment to engaging with modernity, religious Zionism, expanded roles for women and relating to other Jews and non-Jews.

The most concrete changes have occurred in the areas of religious Zionism and the role of Orthodox women.

A deep commitment to the State of Israel as a political entity and as a religious phenomenon is a common thread woven through modern Orthodoxy. As a sign of that connection, graduates of Orthodox high schools often spend at least a year studying in a yeshiva in Israel.

But the political influence of religious Zionists in Israel, historically expressed through the Mizrahi Party, is virtually absent now that the major forces battling out Israel's future are the fervently Orthodox and those who would like to see religion separated from the state.

The Religious Zionists of America, a New York-based organization that was once a potent rallying force among the modern Orthodox, has long been in decline.

Now a new leadership is working to revitalize it, said Grossman of Memphis, who is the group's newly elected chairman of the board.

The organization had over 100,000 American Jewish supporters during RZA's heyday, which lasted until the mid-1960s, he said, but is now down to between 10,000 and 15,000.

Plans include establishing new chapters around the country, publishing printed materials to spark discussion and engaging in outreach, Grossman said.

The newest item on modern Orthodoxy's agenda — and one which perhaps more than any other illuminates the challenges facing the movement — is the changing role of women.

The emergence of the issue as a potent force, first widely acknowledged after the conferences on Orthodoxy and feminism — and the often-negative responses even from centrist Orthodox rabbis — has made it a watershed issue.

The backlash against the calls of women for enhanced roles in ritual and religious leadership has been "disproportionate," said Berman.

That's because "in many ways it is paradigmatic of the whole relationship between modernity and Orthodoxy," he said. "Much of the fear isn't about women's roles, or fear of what it might do to halachah in the Orthodox community.

"It's the perception that feminism is the lever which would pry open the safe haven of Orthodoxy to the general whims of modernity," Berman said.

As participants grapple with these issues, organizers hope as Berman put it, that "people will emerge with a deep sense of pride in who they are as modern Orthodox Jews."

The subtext, said Judy Adler Sheer, Edah's executive director, is that "change is hard for everybody."

"Sometimes you need more flexible, smaller organizations to light a fire" under the rest of the community. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Legislators host MIA's parents

Nine members of Congress hosted a Capitol Hill reception for the parents of Israeli MIA Zachary Baumel. Baumel's parents are in Washington to lobby for the release of State Department documents regarding their son.

Baumel was declared missing in action after a battle with Palestinian and Syrian forces during the 1982 war in Lebanon.

There have been no breaks in the case since 1993, when Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat gave half of Baumel's dog tag to then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

### French to return looted painting

A Cubist oil painting that was looted by the Nazis from a Jewish art dealer will be returned to his heirs, French museum officials said.

Fernand Leger's "Woman in Red and Green" is currently on loan from the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris to the city's recently opened Jewish Museum of Art and Culture.

### Former camp guard plans suit

A former guard at a Croatian concentration camp is suing the Croatian government for damages after the government dropped charges that she took part in wartime atrocities.

The lawyer for Nadia Sakic, who was extradited from Argentina last November, said his client is seeking an out-of-court settlement with the country's Justice Ministry.

### Russian police arrest neo-Nazi

Police in Russia recently arrested a neo-Nazi who made an anti-Semitic speech last year in a videotape near what appeared to be a burning synagogue.

Pavel Drozdov was charged with inciting hatred for making the tape.

But Drozdov didn't have anything to do with attacks on two Moscow synagogues last May, prosecutors said.

### Rabbi lobbies for environment

A coalition of Jewish and Christian groups is lobbying Congress on several environmental issues. The director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism called on members of Congress to allow the Department of Transportation to review emission standards for cars and light trucks.

Speaking also on behalf of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life and the National Council of Churches, Rabbi David Saperstein asked a House subcommittee to allow a study of emissions that he hopes will result in a reduction of dependency on foreign oil and reduce global warming.

## Israel vowing to boycott Geneva Convention meeting

By Julia Goldman

UNITED NATIONS (JTA) — Israel has criticized a United Nations decision to call for an international conference on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The U.N. General Assembly's decision Tuesday evening "was passed out of narrow political motives and not because of humanitarian considerations," Israel's Foreign Ministry said. Israel said it would boycott any such meeting, the terms of which have yet to be decided.

The General Assembly called for the conference to be held in Geneva on July 15.

The request for an unprecedented meeting of the signatories to the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs treatment of civilians during wartime, passed by a vote of 115-2, with five abstentions and 36 member-nations absent.

Only the United States joined Israel in opposing the non-binding resolution.

The vote came during an emergency special session of the 185-member General Assembly. The vote followed two days of heated debate on the issue, which was originally put on the agenda in 1997 at the request of Arab states.

The Arab request came in the wake of Israel's decision to start constructing a Jewish neighborhood in southeastern Jerusalem.

Groundbreaking at Har Homa, which the Palestinians call Jabal Abu Ghneim, sparked Palestinian riots and a terror attack on Israel — which was followed by a 19-month impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. No further construction has taken place. In addition to calling for the Geneva conference, Tuesday's resolution reiterates previous U.N. resolutions demanding the end of Israeli settlement activity in "the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem."

The General Assembly also blamed Israel for suspending the implementation of the Wye agreement. The October 1998 agreement, touted as an important step forward in the peace process, called for further Israeli redeployments in the West Bank in exchange for concrete Palestinian steps on security issues.

Israel criticized the U.N. resolution as politically motivated.

Citing historical examples of international conflict, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dore Gold, said the resolution "seeks to apply the Fourth Geneva Convention selectively in only one case: Israel." As a result, Gold told the General Assembly during debate on the issue this week, "international humanitarian institutions, which have remained neutral since 1949, will be inevitably compromised. Many U.N. member-states will find themselves to be targets of these sorts of initiatives."

Switzerland's observer to the United Nations said his country "cannot consider taking an active role in convening and preparing this conference" until the signatories to the convention define general principles for calling such a meeting that are not specifically tailored to this particular case. Long-time U.N. observers are viewing the resolution's passage as a blow to the world body's credibility.

Harris Schoenberg, the director of U.N. Affairs for B'nai B'rith International, said, "Considering they have never had a meeting to discuss the most grievous crimes" — some cite Cambodia, Rwanda and Kosovo as examples — "it's morally inane." □

## War crimes trial opens in Britain

LONDON (JTA) — Britain's first Nazi war crimes trial has opened with charges against a man who in 1942 allegedly murdered four Jews in a German-occupied town in Belarus.

Silver-haired Anthony Sawoniuk, 77, limped into Court One at the Old Bailey courthouse and was allowed to sit in the well of the court rather than in the dock, where the accused normally sits.

The jury will fly to Warsaw on Sunday and then travel by bus to Belarus to visit sites in Domachevo relating to the allegations.

In 1991, Britain enacted legislation permitting the prosecution of Nazi war crimes suspects who settled in Britain after World War II. □

**THE LEGACY OF KING HUSSEIN****New generation of Arab leaders takes hold with Abdullah's ascent***By Douglas Davis*

LONDON (JTA) — Just as the late King Hussein transformed Jordan from a desert kingdom to a modern nation-state, his heir, the Western-educated, U.S.-oriented King Abdullah, could provide the template for future Arab leaders.

In a region where Arab leaders, from Egypt and Syria to the oil-rich Gulf states, are mostly in their 70s, positions at the apex of the power pyramid are set for major change.

The fate of many of these states, often personified by leaders who have been in power for 20 years or more, will depend on the quality of succession. In this respect, mineral-poor Jordan appears exceptionally richly blessed.

Abdullah, 37, was educated exclusively in Britain and the United States. He attended school in both countries, and after graduating from Britain's elite Sandhurst Military Academy, he completed a diploma in international relations at Oxford University before studying at Georgetown University.

Having spent more than half his life in the West, it is not surprising that he is more comfortable in English than in Arabic, and that his Arabic is overlaid with a heavy English accent.

Returning to Jordan in 1984, and with no thought of succeeding his father to the throne, he became a career soldier, rising to the rank of major-general in command of the elite Special Forces.

Nor is Abdullah a cardboard cutout army general. Easygoing, athletic, with a taste for fast cars and high living is how he is described by those who knew him in his younger days.

Those who know him now say he has many of the qualities of his late father: He is, they say, a straightforward, energetic and hard-working man with a strong, muscular handshake who looks his interlocutors directly in the eye.

Nor has he lost his taste for cars, and, like his father, he holds a pilot's license.

His pastimes include parachuting and water sports, particularly scuba diving.

Abdullah is also an enthusiastic "Trekkie" — a fan of "Star Trek" — and his passion was rewarded with a walk-on part in a recent episode of the television series.

He assumed power on Sunday with minimal political training, but there are already early indications that he comes to the job equipped with political instincts that would have pleased his highly experienced and pragmatic father.

His private conversations were enough to convince President Clinton to accelerate a \$300 million aid package for the cash-starved kingdom and to win the confidence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that peace with Jordan is secure in his hands.

He made comments to that effect in an interview with Western reporters. More important, though, were his words in Arabic to an Arab audience via an interview with the London-based, Saudi-owned daily al-Hayat on Saturday.

Abdullah's fundamental message was that his rule would represent continuity: He supported peace with Israel, expressed a close affinity with the United States, spoke of his concern about the threat from Iran and, like his father, adopted a carefully nuanced pro-American position on Iraq.

He stressed that, as a major-general in the Jordanian army, he had formed deep friendships with many Israelis in both political and military circles, and he expected to construct "a permanent peace built on confidence and trust."

Iran "still causes a problem," he said, noting that "the Shi'ite elements remain a concern."

He doubted that Iran's relatively moderate President Mohammad Khatami had secured control from the hard-line mullahs and noted: "Until that happens, you can't conceive Iran to have changed that much."

While expressing concern for the "humanitarian disaster of the Iraqi people," Abdullah was adamant that "a rehabilitation of the Iraqi regime" was premature. "Our stand is behind the people of Iraq," he said, emphasizing the need for "democracy and pluralism."

The Iraqi people, he said, are currently too concerned about "trying to get by day to day" to oppose their government effectively: "If their situation is improved, maybe they will take stock and realize they have gone from one war to another war to another. If there is going to be change, there has to be change from within," he said.

Abdullah clearly believes that the emergence of a new generation of leaders could portend positive changes in the region.

He pledged to continue the trend initiated by his father — "more support for the process of democratic transformation, political pluralism and freedom of expression, and more support for the institutions of civilian life" — even though such reforms would ultimately involve a dilution of royal power.

"Democracy," he said, "is a learning experience. Down the line, you will see a shift of responsibility as institutions mature."

Like his late father, Abdullah's overriding preoccupation will be to ensure the continuation of the Hashemite dynasty in a country where Palestinians constitute some 60 percent of the population.

"The Hashemites are the unifying factor of Jordan," he said. "That is what binds us together, Palestinians and Bedouins and everyone else."

Indeed, beyond the Bedouin-Palestinian fault lines inside Jordan and the potential threats from Syria, Iran and Iraq outside, Abdullah's overarching task will be to heal the rifts that emerged over the succession within his own royal Hashemite family and restore both the appearance and substance of unity.

That will be the essential prerequisite to consolidating his authority and the legitimacy of his rule. □

**Report: Nazi living in Australia**

SYDNEY (JTA) — A commander of a police battalion involved in Nazi murders in Lithuania is living undisturbed in Australia, according to an Australian newspaper.

The newspaper article quoted Efraim Zuroff, the head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office, as saying Lithuanian documents showed that the Australian government had failed to act on the information.

The report prompted the leader of Australian Jewry's umbrella organization to charge that Australian officials are unwilling to prosecute alleged Nazi war criminals living in their midst.

"Alleged war criminals continue to reside here, untroubled and unaccountable for crimes against humanity," said Nina Bassat, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. □