



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 41

Wednesday, March 3, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Premier pledges troop withdrawal

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his primary challenger pledged to withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon within a year after the May 17 elections.

The pledges by Netanyahu and Ehud Barak followed two weeks of increased hostilities in southern Lebanon that have claimed the lives of seven Israelis, including a brigadier general.

Meanwhile, Israeli government officials and the head of the South Lebanon Army were among the thousands who attended the funeral of Brig. Gen. Erez Gerstein killed in a roadside blast Sunday.

### Subway bomb-plotter gets life

A Palestinian immigrant who plotted to bomb the New York City subway system was sentenced to life in prison.

Before Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar was sentenced, he recited a list of grievances against the Jewish people, maintaining that it was "a lie" that the Nazis killed 6 million Jews. He also said Israel had confiscated his family's home. Abu Maizar was arrested in July 1997 in Brooklyn.

### Pole charged with hate crime

Polish prosecutors charged a Polish activist with inciting hatred against Jews for leaflets he distributed as part of his campaign to erect crosses near the site of the former Auschwitz death camp.

One of the leaflets distributed by Kazimerz Switon reportedly said, "The time has come for us, Poles, to wage merciless war on Jewish-communist masonry, the biggest enemies of the Polish state."

### Doctors: Circumcision not needed

A finding that circumcisions are not medically necessary will not significantly affect Jewish practice of the ritual of brit milah, according to a leader of the Conservative movement.

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, head of the Jewish Theological Seminary, made his comment in response to a policy statement issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which also said that pain relief should be administered during the procedure. Schorsch added that circumcision is a "sign of Jewish identity, and it will continue to remain a rite of passage for Jews as long as there is an organized Jewish community."

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Sephardi and Orthodox support turn Labor Party into 'One Israel'

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Perhaps it isn't the broad rainbow coalition that Ehud Barak had hoped for.

But "One Israel," the Labor Party leader's long-anticipated, meticulously constructed, larger-than-Labor election ticket came into being this week, boasting both authentic Sephardi and Orthodox components.

The week's sad events in Lebanon caused a postponement in the formal ceremonies that were to dot the I's and cross the T's. But by week's end, David Levy, the longtime Likud minister and popular Moroccan-born, blue-collar leader, was to have signed an agreement merging his Geshar Party into the new One Israel.

And early next week, the leadership of Meimad, the moderate Orthodox group, is expected to approve a deal with Barak as well.

Labor, then, will appear in the May 17 election not as Labor, but as One Israel.

The No. 3 slot on the party list, after Barak and Shimon Peres, will feature Levy. There will be one member of Meimad and two more representatives of Geshar among the first 30 names.

Levy and Meimad's Aviezer Ravitzky, who heads the Jewish philosophy department at Hebrew University, will serve as ministers if and when Barak wins the election for prime minister and forms the next government.

Levy has been promised a senior portfolio. The presumption is that he would return to the Foreign Ministry.

Levy resigned as Benjamin Netanyahu's foreign minister last year over differences related to peace policy and particularly over social policy.

An attempt by the premier to bring him back as minister of finance failed when the two could not agree on the state budget.

Now Levy says Barak is the only prime ministerial candidate who is offering new hope and new thinking for the less-affluent sectors of Israeli society.

Ravitzky reportedly wants to be minister of education, but that has not yet been decided.

A lesser-known political activist, Shlomo Lahiani of Bat Yam, near Tel Aviv, is also expected to be brought in, with the home-grown movement he has formed in his city.

Political observers concur that Levy, for years a stirring rhetorician second in Likud only to Menachem Begin himself, is past his political prime in terms of popular support.

Nevertheless, most observers say Levy is still "worth" — in terms of the votes he can attract — the two or three seats that Laborites have been required to give up for him.

Levy regards himself and his Geshar Party as the mouthpiece for a large proportion of the 200,000 unemployed Sephardim in the country. He charges the Netanyahu government with "Thatcherite" policies that have heartlessly impoverished whole communities.

Levy's commitment to One Israel is a meaningful coup for Barak, who in 1997 publicly asked the Sephardi community's "forgiveness" for wrongs that the Labor movement, out of insensitivity and hubris, had done to Sephardi immigrants in the early years of the state.

It signals, at least symbolically, that the gesture has resonated at least with some of

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Theft of documents investigated

Israeli military police are investigating the theft of classified documents from the office of Israel's top military commander in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. The commander, Maj. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, said there was no connection between the theft of the documents, which reportedly occurred three weeks ago, and the ambush of Brig. Gen. Erez Gerstein last week.

### Court sentences Orthodox teen

An Israeli court sentenced a fervently Orthodox teen-ager to six months in jail for his role in vandalizing two apartments inhabited by Christians in a religious neighborhood of Jerusalem. The 17-year-old was part of a group of haredim who lit fires that destroyed the apartments three months ago.

### Bureaucracy holds up funds

Holocaust survivors living in Israel have not received payments from a Swiss humanitarian fund for survivors established in 1997. A spokesman for Israel's Finance Ministry said the money was being held up in a parliamentary committee, and added he did not know when the money would be distributed.

### Soldiers wound Palestinian

Israeli soldiers shot and seriously wounded a Palestinian traveling in a car they said tried to bypass an army roadblock. The incident occurred amid a heightened security alert and full closure imposed by the army on the territories to prevent possible terrorist attacks during the Purim holiday.

### Israel frees prisoners

Israel freed a Lebanese and a Palestinian prisoner who had been imprisoned since the early 1990s. The two men had been arrested for their involvement in the Hezbollah movement, which is trying to force Israel to withdraw from Lebanon.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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the North African immigrants to whom it was chiefly directed.

Levy himself arrived in Israel as a youngster from Morocco, and worked as a bricklayer in the poor development town of Beit Shean before embarking, through the unions, on his meteoric political career.

Meimad's accession is another feather in the Labor leader's cap. Barak's hard line against draft avoidance by the fervently Orthodox and on yeshiva budgets has drawn dire threats of ballot-box retribution from the fervently Orthodox.

And for much of the modern Orthodox community, Labor is too left-wing.

But there is a significant segment of moderate — politically and religiously — opinion in the Orthodox camp, and this segment may now be able to see One Israel as its ticket.

The deals did not come easily — on either side. And there have been recriminations that still resonated this week. Some Geshet activists vowed to sever their links with Levy and return to Likud. They accused Levy of "looking after himself and his brother" but betraying the movement as a whole.

The reference is to Maxim Levy, a Knesset member, longtime mayor of Lod and close political ally of the former foreign minister, who is expected to be the No. 2 man of Geshet's three slot-holders in One Israel. These comments reflect a deep-seated antipathy still present among many Moroccan Israelis toward Labor.

In Meimad, too, not everyone is happy with the link to Labor.

Part of the movement is negotiating with the still-evolving centrist party under the leadership of Yitzhak Mordechai.

That party, too, may offer a safe slot to a modern Orthodox figure to broaden its appeal. Among the names mentioned are Knesset Member Alex Lubotsky, who has seceded from the Third Way Party to join Meimad, and Dr. Yehuda Ben-Meir, a one-time deputy foreign minister who walked away from the National Religious Party several years ago.

In the Labor Party itself, One Israel has been met with a marked dearth of enthusiasm among would-be Knesset members who, after hard-fought primary races, find themselves in slots on the party list that might not make the final cut, depending on how well the party does in the elections.

Having negotiated the deals, Barak is now working overtime to smooth ruffled feathers among his party's own loyalists. □

## 'One Israel' coalition supports civil marriage, Shabbat transport

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If the Labor Party wins Israel's elections, the Jewish state may, for the first time, have civil marriages and public transportation on Shabbat.

"One Israel," the umbrella list that Labor leader Ehud Barak is forming with David Levy's Geshet movement and the politically moderate religious movement Meimad is expected to advocate a cancelation of the religious status quo, an Israeli daily reported.

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, these changes are included in the understanding drawn up between Labor and Meimad and would serve as the basis for a coalition agreement.

The understanding draws from the "new covenant" on religion and state initiated last year by Labor Knesset member Yossi Beilin, Third Way Knesset member Alex Lubotsky and representatives of Meimad.

The paper said the agreement would allow public transportation on the Sabbath, as determined by the local authorities, based on the needs and character of the population. In contrast, all business and commercial transactions would be barred, with the exception of cultural, sport and leisure activities.

The agreement would also call for the establishment of a framework for civil marriages in Israel, something which does not currently exist.

Recent surveys have shown that a high percentage of Israelis would like the option of civil marriages, rather than the current requirement that all marriages be authorized through the Orthodox rabbinate. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Museums to investigate paintings

The British government ordered all public galleries and museums in the country to investigate the origin of all paintings they have acquired since the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933.

The move was welcomed by Lord Janner, the head of the London-based Holocaust Educational Trust, who said it would serve as an "example to museums around the world."

### Argentine lawyer may file suit

A lawyer for relatives of victims of the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina said he is preparing to file a complaint with an international human rights group.

Alberto Zuppi said he is preparing to file with the Washington-based Inter-American Commission of Human Rights because of what he calls the Argentine government's "reckless disregard" in investigating the bombing at the AMIA center, which killed 86 people.

### Swiss legislator off the hook

A member of the Swiss Parliament who had been accused of anti-Swiss behavior will not be prosecuted, according to government officials. A group of right-wing citizens had leveled the charges against Jean Ziegler after publication of his book, "Switzerland, Gold and the Dead," and in the wake of his testimony in the U.S. Senate about issues related to Swiss dealings with the Nazis during World War II.

Representatives of the Swiss Jewish community welcomed the government's decision, saying it was long overdue.

### Half of Russian emigres own PCs

Some 60 percent of Russian immigrants living in the United States expressed satisfaction with their lives in a new survey.

The study of 500 mostly Jewish immigrants conducted by the Research Institute for New Americans, one of the first to draw a composite portrait of the population of Russian immigrants who arrived in the United States since the 1970s, also found that almost half of those interviewed own a computer.

### Lightning hits Chicago seminary

An Orthodox rabbinical seminary near Chicago has declared a state of emergency after being hit by lightning early Saturday morning. Officials of the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie closed the facility and are assessing the significant damage to the building caused by the lightning bolt.

No one was hurt. The 120 yeshiva students who were in the building at the time have either gone home or have been relocated to local homes and hotels.

## British publishers compete over Anne Frank biographies

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Three of Britain's most prestigious publishing houses are engaged in a big-money tussle over what each claims to be the "definitive" biography of Anne Frank.

The rival biographies will be published later this month to mark the 70th anniversary of the birth of Frank, one of the most enduring and powerful symbols of the Holocaust.

Each claims to have received the personal endorsement of the Frank family and to have had privileged access to previously unpublished documents.

Friends, family and Holocaust scholars are divided over the relative merits of the three biographies — Viking's "Roses from the Earth," by Carol Ann Lee; Bloomsbury's "Anne Frank: The Biography," by Melissa Muller; and Macmillan's "The Story of Anne Frank," by Mirjam Pressler.

Lee and Muller each claim to reveal fresh information about the identity of the person who betrayed the Frank family.

But some who have read the books say neither author has, in fact, produced any new evidence.

Others believe that by turning Frank's story into a murder mystery is to miss the point.

Frank was 13 when she went into hiding in her native Amsterdam. She was not yet 16 when she and her family, along with another family who shared their hiding place, were arrested by the Nazis.

Frank was put on the last train from Amsterdam to Auschwitz.

She died of typhus, among the final victims of the Holocaust, after being moved to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Her diary, written while in hiding in Amsterdam between 1942 and 1944, was not found by the Nazis who arrested her.

The book is now considered to be the most widely read document about the Holocaust.

The three publishers are sparing no expense in marketing their biographies.

But it is Viking that is making the most extravagant claims. Writer Carol Ann Lee was born in Britain in 1969.

A fan and avid collector of Anne Frank memorabilia, she is touted as a "world authority on Anne Frank."

Her book will be launched during Jewish Book Week, March 7 to 14, as "the only biography fully supported by the Frank family."

Publicity material for the book claims that Lee has "discovered a letter which points towards the identity of the Frank family's betrayer."

Bloomsbury's book is billed as "the biography for all those who seek a richer understanding of Anne Frank and the brutal times in which she lived and died." It is, according to the pre-publication hype, "full of revelations" and "examines the enduring mystery: who betrayed the families."

Mirjam Pressler, the author of the Macmillan biography, has, according to the publisher, "impeccable credentials."

"There could hardly be anyone better placed to write a biography of Anne Frank than Mirjam Pressler: as a Jewish woman living in contemporary Germany; as the translator of 'The Diary of Anne Frank' from Dutch into German; as the editor who, with Otto Frank, compiled the new expanded 'Definitive Edition of the Diary.'"

Unlike the other two works, Pressler does not address the question of the Frank family's betrayer, an omission of which Macmillan is proud.

"That is not something we would countenance," said a spokesperson. "It seems to be almost a diversion."

Whatever the merits of the books, the publishing fest marks a recognition by the literary industry of the lasting appeal of Anne Frank's tragic life story — and of its commercial potential. □

## Committee makes little progress in effort to curb terror incitement

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — After seven meetings, Israel sees little progress in working together with the Palestinians to end incitement to violence and terror.

Israel is "very disappointed with the amount of progress made" in the committee that was created by the Wye peace accord in October, said Daniel Taub, one of five Israeli members of the committee. Still, Taub said in an interview here Monday, "as long as there is any hope of any benefit coming out" of the trilateral anti-incitement committee, "we will continue."

Representatives of Israel, the United States and the Palestinians sit on the committee.

Taub, a representative of Israel's Foreign Ministry, said the sides have yet to agree on even which cases should be monitored.

In "not one single case" has the Palestinian side "even agreed that an example we brought forward constituted incitement," said Taub.

Considering the "vitriol" that exists, Taub said, "Israel attaches great importance to the anti-incitement committee" as a means to "create an atmosphere in which we are able to deal with emotive issues in a reasonable manner." He said a better environment would be particularly important as a run-up to final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Taub's remarks stand in contrast to the optimistic report by the State Department following a meeting of the committee last week.

After two days of talks in Washington, Israel and the Palestinian Authority agreed to "work in a cooperative spirit," the State Department said in a statement released on behalf of the Israeli and Palestinian members of the committee.

"The parties believe it is essential to break down the barriers of mistrust and change the images they hold of each other."

The committee is made up of current or former elected officials, as well as representatives from the fields of education, media and law. During the Washington meeting, Israeli and Palestinian representatives agreed to an exchange of columns in each other's newspapers and to hold joint briefings for journalists.

The delegates also discussed an Israeli proposal to review both Israeli and Palestinian textbooks for possible abuses. An Israeli member of the delegation said Palestinian textbooks regularly do not recognize Israel and contain anti-Semitic portrayals of Jews.

In fact, the General Accounting Office, Congress' investigative arm, reported similar findings earlier this year in textbooks paid for by the United Nations commission responsible for Palestinian refugees. The group agreed to consider the proposal and scheduled another meeting for April 14.

New York Post columnist Uri Dan headed the Israeli delegation, Palestinian spokesman Marwan Kanafani led the Palestinian delegation and former congressman Mel Levine chaired the American delegation.

On the eve of the anti-incitement committee's meeting, three right-wing groups opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords held a Capitol Hill news conference to put the spotlight on Palestinian calls for violence against Israelis.

Several members of Congress who attended the news conference said the Palestinian Authority should rein in incitement before

the United States sends more aid. Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.), who has authored a resolution opposing a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood that now has 170 co-sponsors, promised to oppose U.S. aid to the Palestinians unless incitement ends.

"If they want a jihad, I will lead a jihad here against funding until they cleanup their act," he said in a brief interview, referring to Palestinian calls for a holy war for Jerusalem and statehood.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has scheduled a meeting later this month with President Clinton to discuss statehood, Palestinian officials said. As part of the Wye peace accord, the Clinton administration has asked Congress for an additional \$100 million a year for three years for the Palestinians. The money is in addition to the \$100 million a year the Palestinians have received since signing the 1993 Oslo accords.

The anti-incitement committee meeting broke up as the State Department released its annual report on human rights violations.

According to the report, Israel and the Palestinian Authority are responsible for "serious human rights abuses."

Israel generally respects human rights, but abuses occur because of "policies and practices in the occupied territories and from its fight against terrorism," the department reported.

The report noted "some improvements in the human rights situations" in both the Israeli- and Palestinian-controlled parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As in years past, the report contained an unflattering account of Israeli security forces who "abused, and in some cases torture Palestinians suspected of security offenses."

Israeli forces, who killed nine Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, at times "shot at demonstrators indiscriminately" using live ammunition, the report said.

The report accused Israeli citizens, including settlers, of continuing to "harass, abuse, and attack Palestinians."

Palestinians also continue to "harass, abuse and attack Israelis, especially settlers," the report said. For their part, Palestinian forces killed two prisoners in custody and also "committed a number of serious human rights abuses."

Israeli officials said the Foreign Ministry was studying the report and did not yet have any comment. □

(JTA Washington Bureau Chief Matthew Dorf contributed to this report.)

## ADL satisfied with conviction

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Florida jury has convicted the president of the National Baptist Convention USA of racketeering and grand theft, in part for stealing close to \$250,000 donated by the Anti-Defamation League.

The Rev. Henry Lyons was found guilty on Saturday of stealing a \$244,500 donation from the ADL to rebuild black churches that had been destroyed in a wave of arson attacks.

After newspaper reports unveiled the theft, the ADL requested that Lyons account for the money. When he could not, Lyons returned the money to the ADL, which then redistributed the funds through another avenue.

"From everything that I know, it's an appropriate verdict," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

Under state sentencing guidelines, Lyons faces three to seven years in prison. □