



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 159

Wednesday, August 23, 2000

83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Report: Bin Laden may attack

Supporters of Osama bin Laden may be planning attacks in Israel to try to thwart the Middle East peace process, a U.S. congressional report warned Monday.

The report said some members of Hamas may be gravitating toward bin Laden.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces are on heightened alert for terrorist attacks after the arrest of 23 members of a terrorist cell, allegedly linked to bin Laden, who were reportedly planning attacks against the Jewish state. [Page 2]

### Neo-Nazi trial begins

A trial of three alleged neo-Nazis charged with kicking and beating to death an immigrant from Mozambique began Tuesday in Germany.

The June 11 attack was the worst case in a reported upsurge in German neo-Nazi violence.

The court translated the indictment into English, an unusual move that is seen as recognition by Germany that the recent rise in violence has the world's attention.

### Abdullah: Israel needs partners

Jordan's King Abdullah said Israelis "have the right to know that they have solid partners they can live and interact with."

Abdullah made the comments after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in Israel on Tuesday.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav refused to meet with Abdullah because the Hashemite king did not come to Jerusalem.

Abdullah also met with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

### U.S. army officer leaves Israel

An American military officer found in Israel after going absent without leave from his Texas base for two weeks is voluntarily returning to the United States.

Lt. Col. Jeremiah Mattysse said he did not pass on any military information to the Jewish state.

"First of all, I'm on vacation here," Mattysse said. "I'm not a spy. I've given no classified information to anybody."

Israeli authorities confirmed that Mattysse has applied to immigrate to the Jewish state.

## Dialing for answers: NJPS launches Jewish data quest

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The phones are ringing. But will anyone answer?

A long-awaited comprehensive survey of American Jews began dialing up households around the country Sunday to find out such things as what percentage of Jews marry non-Jews, what childhood experiences foster Jewish identity and how Jews differ from other Americans.

The National Jewish Population Survey, sponsored by the national federation umbrella organization, the United Jewish Communities, is expected to influence funding and policy decisions of Jewish organizations for the next decade.

Its results, particularly concerning intermarriage, will be closely compared to the 1990 version of the study, which created much communal soul-searching when it reported that 52 percent of Jews who wed between 1985 and 1990 married non-Jews.

That finding, which has been disputed by many sociologists who assert the true rate is lower, prompted various "continuity" initiatives aimed at strengthening Jewish identity. After years of planning — and an eight-month delay as the sponsoring agency's new leadership added input and questions were field-tested — the 35-minute questionnaire is finalized. Researchers plan to interview some 4,500 Jews, almost double the number interviewed in 1990.

In addition, 500 non-Jews "associated" with Jews — people married to Jews or who have Jews in their families — will also be interviewed. Four thousand non-Jews will receive a shorter version of the survey, so that researchers can compare Jewish attitudes to those of the general public.

The survey's questions are being kept out of public view so potential participants are not influenced beforehand, according to UJC officials. The question among organizers now is whether enough people will participate to get the data the researchers are seeking. Besieged by telemarketers and increasingly pressed for time, fewer Americans are responding to phone interviews, say researchers. This year's U.S. Census, a written survey distributed to every household in the country, yielded lower response rates than in previous decades.

"People are bombarded particularly by phone with requests for surveys and so on, and many of them are not legitimate surveys but disguised advertising or promotional activities," said Leonard Saxe, a sociologist and director of Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

In a recent study in Massachusetts, the Cohen Center offered Jewish teens \$10 to complete a survey. Close to 85 percent of potential participants responded, far higher than the 60 to 70 percent rate most studies consider to be successful, said Saxe.

For the first time, the NJPS is also offering an incentive, although more modest than the teen survey. Each respondent will designate \$2 in UJC funds as a contribution to the American Cancer Society, the March of Dimes or the American Heart Association. As a nonprofit organization, the UJC feared it would appear unseemly to offer larger or noncharitable incentives to respondents, say officials.

However, some involved with the process say offering larger incentives would probably save the organization money in the long run, given the difficulty of locating Jewish households at random.

"If a person hangs up and refuses to participate, it might take another \$10 to 15 to find another cooperative Jew," said Ira Sheskin, a professor of geography at the University of Miami and a member of the population study's National Technical

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### JNF park inaugurated

The Jewish National Fund-Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael established a park in the Israeli development town of Ofakim.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and JNF President Ronald Lauder attended the inauguration of the park, part of a JNF program to improve the quality of life in Israel's desert.

### Clash erupts in Jerusalem

Israeli police clashed with Palestinian activists in Jerusalem.

Two policemen and two demonstrators were slightly hurt in Tuesday's scuffle, which occurred after approximately 200 activists marched from Palestinian headquarters in Jerusalem toward the Damascus Gate in the Old City.

### Albright talks with Egypt, Syria

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has discussed the peace process in recent days with the foreign ministers of Syria, Egypt and France.

The reports of Albright's discussions come as U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross said he would hold another round of meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to see if another peace summit is possible.

### Israeli envoy to S. Africa named

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed Tova Herzal as the country's ambassador to South Africa. Herzal, whose appointment must still be confirmed by the Knesset, is currently head of congressional affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

### Old City top spot for lovers

Jerusalem's Old City walls are the most romantic spot in Israel, according to a survey published by the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

The archeological excavation at Caesarea came in second, and the Judean desert third.

Advisory Committee. But "the P.R. of having to pay people didn't go over well with a lot of people," Sheskin said, explaining the UJC's ultimate decision.

Budgeted at \$5 million, the survey is expected to be completed by the end of December, with preliminary results available in the spring of 2001.

A full report of the study's findings will be published in approximately a year, say UJC officials, along with shorter "highlight reports" analyzing how the findings might be used to shape policy for specific groups, such as synagogues, federations and Jewish community centers. □

## Israel, Palestinians thwart plans for major terror attack

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian security forces say they have uncovered a terrorist group linked to terror mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Israel has arrested some 23 individuals over the last few months who allegedly planned a range of attacks in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The uncovering of the cell prompted words of caution from the U.S. State Department to Americans living and traveling in Israel.

The U.S. government issued a public announcement last week that there is "an increased possibility for terrorist attacks in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza," and urged Americans to "increase their vigilance with respect to their personal security."

In addition, a U.S. congressional report released Monday said bin Laden supporters may be planning attacks in Israel to try to thwart the Middle East peace process.

According to Israeli security sources, the group planned a variety of attacks using missiles, remote controlled bombs and suicide bombers — all designed to inflict massive casualties similar to the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, which have been blamed on bin Laden.

The arrests prevented plans to detonate a roadside bomb on an Israeli army patrol near Netzarim in the Gaza Strip, the firing of a missile at a settlement and the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, authorities said.

The man in charge of the ring is said to be Nabil Okal, 27, from the Jebaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. Okal was arrested in June.

According to security sources, Okal received help from Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin. It is not clear whether Yassin knew of Okal's links to bin Laden.

Okal reportedly recruited the terrorists, among them a number of Israeli Arabs. Security services arrested at least three of them while they were trying to move weapons from a hiding place near the Egyptian border in the Negev Desert to the West Bank.

Okal is said to have spent time in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He reportedly received extensive training in the manufacturing of bombs and the use of remote-controlled devices from bin Laden's organization.

Palestinian security services arrested 12 Palestinian suspects.

Senior Israeli security sources said the terror ring reveals a dangerous network of a new nature, which involves different groupings and cuts across borders. The network included links with terrorist headquarters in Damascus, as well as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, but so far was unable to act inside Israel proper.

Despite news of the thwarted attacks, Israeli officials were upset with the U.S. travel advisory.

"There aren't any warnings that require such an announcement as I heard put out by the U.S. State Department," said Danny Yatom, a top security adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Traveling in Israel is safe, and the authorities make every effort to ensure the safety of tourists, said Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. There is an ongoing terrorist threat to Israel as there is to other countries, Regev added.

The announcement is "simply a way of reminding people of those threats and that they need to take appropriate steps to watch out for their security," said State Department spokesman Philip Reeker. □

(JTA correspondent Sharon Samber in Washington contributed to this report.)



## Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, President

Mark J. Joffe, Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein, Editor

Howard Levy, Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein, Business Manager

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).  
© JTA      Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

## JEWISH WORLD

### Truman backed reparations

President Truman wrote two letters in July 1945 backing German reparations for Holocaust survivors, including Jews.

But the letters were never sent to the State Department, according to Reuters, perhaps because U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes did not want to help Jews who wanted to go to Palestine.

At the time, Britain was severely limiting Jewish immigration into Palestine.

### Polish candidate praises Hitler

Polish politicians are protesting a candidate in the country's presidential campaign for praising Hitler's housing policy.

The comments by Gen. Tadeusz Wilecki, a minor candidate on a nationalist ticket, "should end his career before it even begins," said a spokesman for Poland's ruling Solidarity bloc.

Wilecki is projected to receive 1 percent of the electorate in the October vote.

### Program links schools, Internet

Twenty-five Jewish day schools in the northeastern United States will participate in a new program that uses technology like the Internet and teleconferencing to hone classroom teaching skills.

The new effort comes as many Jewish educators are talking about using distance-learning technology to train Jewish teachers living in remote areas.

### Kindertransport film opens

A documentary about children transported out of Germany, Austria and Poland on the eve of World War II is slated to be released next month.

"Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport" is scheduled to premiere at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on Sept. 11.

### Robert Redford to film in Israel

Actors Robert Redford and Brad Pitt are slated to begin filming "The Spy Game" in Israel in October.

Few details about the film are available at this time, but the thriller will be directed by Tony Scott, who also directed "Top Gun," "Crimson Tide" and "Enemy of the State."

### S. African philanthropist dies

South African mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer, who led the world's largest diamond and gold mining companies for a quarter-century, died Saturday at the age of 91.

Oppenheimer, a leading philanthropist and former legislator, was born Jewish and celebrated a Bar Mitzvah, but later renounced Judaism and became an Anglican.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Arab leaders join efforts to salvage a peace deal

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Belatedly, indeed perhaps too late, Arab leaders this week joined the United States and others in efforts to salvage an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

Jordan's King Abdullah visited the Palestinian Authority and Israel on Tuesday. Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak met with the leader of Israel's Meretz Party, Yossi Sarid, on Monday, and was to receive Israel's acting foreign minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami, later in the week.

Jordan, and even more so Egypt, were markedly slow to respond earlier in the summer, when President Clinton sought their active involvement, together with that of Saudi Arabia, in his effort at Camp David to coax Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat toward greater flexibility. Mubarak's cold-shoulder approach toward the U.S. president led to a period of tense relations between Washington and Cairo.

After Camp David ended in failure in July, Egyptian leaders declared repeatedly that they would not twist Arafat's arm at Washington's behest.

They praised the Palestinian leader's resilience in withstanding American pressures. In Mubarak's frequent meetings with Arafat, there was no indication — at least publicly — that Egypt was seeking to impress upon Arafat the need for new flexibility, particularly over Jerusalem, to prevent the final collapse of the peace effort and the inevitable defeat of the Barak government in Israel.

It was all the more significant, therefore, to hear the usually hard-line Egyptian foreign minister, Amre Moussa, tell reporters this week that he and other diplomats were looking at new ideas concerning Jerusalem.

Analysts note the link between these new Arab initiatives and Arafat's failure to gain international support for a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. During intense globe-trotting in recent weeks, Arafat heard repeatedly from world leaders — including the usually Palestinian-friendly leaders in France and China — to go back and work out a deal with Israel. The new ideas, say knowledgeable sources in Israel, may now be coming from Jordan's Abdullah.

While obviously far less influential than Egypt in inter-Arab politics, the Jordanian monarch has long-standing ties to the disputed Holy City.

These were given formal recognition in the 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.

Abdullah, moreover, does not hide his eagerness to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict finally resolved — and his own country awarded generous compensation from the international community for its part in the absorption of large numbers of Palestinian refugees.

He is anxious, too, to ensure that the security arrangements Israel implements in the Jordan Valley, in the context of a peace settlement with the Palestinians, protect his country from any hostile Palestinian expansionism eastward.

Israeli sources say Abdullah is proposing to Arafat and Barak that they set aside part of the Jerusalem problem while agreeing on all the other aspects of the conflict. The remaining areas of disagreement would embrace the Temple Mount and parts of the walled Old City.

The idea to exclude Jerusalem from a final deal has not gone anywhere before.

The diplomatic wires are currently full of formulas — from politicians, academics, historians and assorted dreamers — regarding how sovereignty can be vested in the three faiths, in God, in the two neighboring states, in other nebulous bodies, and how it can be shared, layered, parsed and otherwise inventively sidestepped.

If the king of Jordan can line up a significant body of Arab and Muslim opinion behind a solution for Jerusalem that's acceptable though less-than-perfect, that may prove a crucial contribution at the last minute that can snatch success from the jaws of failure. Barak made it clear that he sees no evidence upon which to base such confidence. □

## Synagogue is poster shul, but can renewal be replicated?

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's a Friday evening in the middle of summer and casually attired worshipers — many of them young singles — are lining up on Manhattan's West 88th Street to enter the large Gothic-inspired edifice that is B'nai Jeshurun.

Virtually every seat in this large, recently restored Moorish sanctuary is full even before the rabbi approaches the bimah, or dais, leaving those who arrive as the service begins to settle for tattered siddurim and the balcony.

Soon the brightly painted sanctuary is pulsating with singing, the organ, clapping.

### Redefining the Synagogue Part 4 of a Series

In the middle of the song "L'cha Dodi," the atmosphere is akin to a wedding reception, with the rabbi and cantor swaying and singing joyously and strangers linking arms to snake dance

through the aisles and onto the bimah.

When services are over, it takes a good 15 minutes to leave the balcony, as hundreds of people clog the stairs and entryway and hundreds more spill out onto the street to chat.

This is B'nai Jeshurun in the slow season, when one of the rabbis is on leave and Manhattan is relatively quiet.

When it's not summer, the congregation has twice as many people every Shabbat, forcing it to rent space at a nearby church and offer two separate Friday night services.

"B.J.," as it is known to insiders, was the site for the recent Ben Stiller film "Keeping the Faith," about a hip young rabbi who livens up services and draws in new blood with music.

It was fitting to shoot the movie at this synagogue that is now world-renowned for its lively worship, but just 15 years ago was an aging, demoralized synagogue that could barely pull together a minyan on Shabbat.

Most credit the shul's transformation to the leadership of its late rabbi, Marshall Meyer, who died in 1993.

Synagogue lay leaders brought Meyer — an American who was instrumental in founding the Jewish Theological Seminary's Latin American campus and active in organizing Jewish resistance to repressive political regimes in that region — to B.J. in 1985 in hopes he would revitalize it.

A charismatic leader, Meyer attracted congregants with his passion for social justice, his openness to innovation and the vision he articulated, which is still displayed prominently on the congregation's Web site: "A community synagogue which responds to the authentic questions of life, death, love, anxiety, longing and the search for meaning can, once again, attract Jews — families and individuals — if it is willing to grapple with the great issues of life."

B.J., which was originally Conservative but is now unaffiliated, has become a regular destination for many Jewish visitors to New York.

It is arguably the most-talked-about shul in the United States. Congregations around the country talk about wanting to replicate at least some of B.J.'s rags-to-riches success.

But is B.J. a recipe for reinventing American congregations or

simply a fluke, a lucky combination of circumstances?

The leading synagogue renewal engine, Synagogue 2000, is banking on the fact that the shul has something to teach.

That organization, which works with congregations seeking to change, recently launched a \$160,000 ethnographic study of the synagogue.

"We hope to find out what makes B.J. the place that it is, and then to invite other congregations to employ the principles in their own case — not to become a B.J., but to become their own kind of spiritual success story," says Rabbi Larry Hoffman, one of the co-founders of Synagogue 2000.

But Rabbi Daniel Frelander, who is overseeing the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations' partnership with Synagogue 2000, said the B.J. story is only "minimally" applicable to most congregations.

"If you have a congregation with 30 families left and it's bankrupt and has to choose between going out of business or allowing someone to change things 100 percent, then you can do B.J.," he says.

"We have 900 congregations and can't ask them to start from scratch.

"They have to go through incremental, slow change," adds Frelander.

Through a recently discontinued project called Friday Night Alive, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia actually imported the all-Hebrew B.J. service to several area congregations in hopes that it would attract unaffiliated Jews.

While hundreds of people attended the services — held once a month at rotating Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist congregations — and many praised the project, it did not work well in Reform congregations where congregants were less accustomed to Hebrew or unfamiliar with the melodies.

"We felt like a one-size-fits-all isn't the way to go," says Ellen Bernstein, who coordinated the project.

She notes that while Friday Night Alive energized the participants, it was less successful at engaging the unaffiliated in any ongoing way.

B.J. Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein says other congregations can learn from B.J.'s success if they understand it is not simply about a type of service or "technique."

Instead, Bronstein says, they should focus on the shul's commitment to ongoing experimentation, inclusivity, and governing style — in which rabbis and lay leaders work as partners, and rabbis play a larger role in decision making than at most synagogues.

Synagogues that can glean even a fragment of the enthusiasm surrounding B.J. may well consider themselves lucky.

One member, who says B.J. is the first synagogue she ever joined, says the shul was the biggest reason she recently decided against moving back to her native Australia.

Ilana Eberson, a 39-year-old natural medicine student, says she found B.J. after years of trying out other Upper West Side synagogues and was so happy her first time at services — where a stranger welcomed her right away and she instantly fell in love with the music — that she burst into tears.

"Where else are you going to find 1,200 Jews on a Friday night happy to go to shul?" she asks.

"If there were more B.J.'s, there would probably be more affiliated Jews." □