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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

3 Israelis killed on West Bank

Three Israeli soldiers were killed and another wounded in a fire fight with Hamas militants north of the West Bank town of Nablus on Sunday.

Israeli chief of staff Shaul Mofaz said the soldiers may have been killed by "friendly fire" during a "serious operational mishap."

The troops were on a mission to capture Mahmud Abu Nahoud, an alleged Hamas terrorist who officials say was responsible for suicide bombings in Jerusalem three years ago.

Abu Nahoud was lightly hurt in the clash and turned himself in to Palestinian police.

Clinton, Mubarak to talk peace

President Clinton is expected to discuss the peace process with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during a stopover in Egypt on Tuesday at the end of a trip to Africa.

Mubarak has raised a number of proposals aimed at bridging gaps between Israel and the Palestinians, including the issue of Jerusalem. [Page 3]

Polish Catholics ask forgiveness

Poland's Catholic leaders are asking forgiveness for its toleration of anti-Semitism in a letter read during Sunday Masses.

"We ask forgiveness for those among us who show disdain for people of other denominations or tolerate anti-Semitism," the letter said.

"Anti-Semitism, just like anti-Christianism, is a sin."

Suspect out to 'purify' Tel Aviv

A 34-year-old Orthodox man was arrested Saturday in connection with a series of fires in Tel Aviv sex establishments that killed four women, Israeli police said.

Yariv Baruchim admitted to police that he had torched nine brothels and sex shops to "purify" Tel Aviv, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

PLO body may delay declaration

Most members of the Palestine Central Council, the PLO's mini-Parliament, lean toward delaying a declaration of Palestinian statehood, a PLO official said Saturday. The mini-Parliament is expected to meet Sept. 9 on whether to declare a state this year.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Journalist puts human face on war for U.S. Jewry's future

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Just as American Jews spent the last decade worrying about "continuity," they will likely spend this one worrying about lack of consensus as to just what kind of Judaism should be continued.

That's the message of a provocatively titled new book, "Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry," by award-winning journalist Samuel Freedman.

That there are tensions among the different streams of Judaism — particularly between Orthodox and liberal Jews — is nothing new. Indeed, in every large Jewish community throughout the United States, the loud pleas for "tolerance" and "unity" have become something of a cliché.

Umbrella organizations like federations and Jewish community centers have struggled with dueling demands such as whether to close for Shabbat or remain open, to allocate overseas funds to the liberal streams of Judaism or to Orthodox yeshivot and social organizations, to support the Israeli prime minister's willingness to exchange land for peace or to condemn it.

What makes his book unique, says Freedman, is that it is not "from one polemical point of view or another."

Instead, the book puts faces on the Jewish disunity, thoroughly chronicling the stories of a handful of people caught up in such disputes.

The disputes in modern American Judaism, contends Freedman, go beyond simply Orthodox vs. secular.

But the central conflicts of the book are the ones that pit Orthodox against liberal Jews.

Freedman examines:

- The simultaneous demise of a secular Zionist summer camp and exponential growth of a neighboring Chasidic community in New Jersey;
- A failed joint Orthodox-Reform-Conservative conversion program in Denver;
- Reform Jews who left their Long Island suburb because they felt their Orthodox neighbors were judging them;
- A protracted dispute in suburban Cleveland pitting liberal Jews against Orthodox Jews seeking to build a synagogue, mikvah and school.

However, not all conflicts are Orthodox-secular. He also writes of:

- Tensions that emerge in a traditional Conservative congregation in Los Angeles when one of the members seeks to include the matriarchs in the liturgy;
- A terrorist act in Jacksonville, Fla., inspired by sharply different visions of the Israeli peace process;
- The intra-Orthodox tensions ignited when five fervently Orthodox students declared the Yale University dorms improper settings for observant Jews, even though hundreds of modern Orthodox Jews had happily lived in them for years.

Even buzzwords like "unity" and "pluralism," have partisan undertones, writes Freedman. Unity — generally used by more traditional Jews — asks all Jews to adhere to the same beliefs, while pluralism, writes Freedman, often implies that anything goes and there are no common rules at all.

Freedman, a Columbia University journalism professor raised in an "intensely secular" household, brings somewhat of an outsider's perspective to the debate.

This is his first book on a Jewish topic, and he is reluctant to take sides or prescribe

MIDEAST FOCUS

Law would block peace deal

A right-wing Israeli legislator has gathered the signatures of 62 Knesset members to back legislation that would prevent the prime minister from signing any international treaties with a minority government.

The initiative, sponsored by Knesset member Benny Eilon, is intended to prevent Prime Minister Ehud Barak from signing any peace agreement with the Palestinians as long as he lacks a parliamentary majority.

Barak: No digs under holy sites

Israel will not excavate under Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Friday, but he reiterated that no Israeli leader could ever accept Palestinian demands for sovereignty over the Temple Mount.

An adviser to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat said that without full Palestinian sovereignty over all religious sites, there would not be peace.

Charity may have links to Hamas

The United States suspects a Muslim charity is providing support to families of suicide bombers and others with links to Hamas, The New York Times reported.

The Holy Land Foundation should be removed from the roster of charities and relief groups supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the State Department says.

Magen David Adom logo proposed

A new compromise plan may allow for Israel's humanitarian aid society to become a member of the International Red Cross.

The new emblem for Israel's Magen David Adom organization would be a Jewish star framed in a border. The international group will consider the plan next month.



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solutions, preferring instead to "create a dissonance in the reader's brain," by showing the humanity of those with whom they might passionately disagree.

Interested in Judaism as a child, Freedman chose against his parent's wishes to have a Bar Mitzvah but his Jewish interest "ended abruptly" when the rabbi refused at the last minute to lead the service due to a dispute over whether the reception would be sufficiently kosher.

"We had to find another rabbi and another synagogue, so everything I'd heard from my parents about how sectarian and petty Judaism was seemed to have been confirmed," said Freedman.

He returned to religion years later, in an unlikely spot: as a reporter writing a book on an African-American church in Brooklyn.

There, people frequently asked him about Judaism and "the fact that I knew so little made me feel such a profound sense of shame."

Now, Freedman identifies as a Conservative Jew and belongs with his wife and children to B'nai Jeshurun, a large Manhattan synagogue known for its lively prayer services and extensive array of social action projects.

Although he and his wife considered enrolling their children in a pluralistic Jewish day school, they ultimately opted for public school, mainly because they wanted them to be exposed to children from other backgrounds.

Freedman suggests that in the future American Jews will be aligned into four main constituencies: Haredi or fervently Orthodox; what he calls "Conservadox" — a partnership of modern Orthodox and traditional Conservative Jews who favor gender equality but find Jewish law binding; and "Reformative," liberal Jews who incorporate tradition but accept such things as gay marriage and patrilineal descent.

As for the fourth group, what Freedman terms "just Jews," he sees little future. Ethnic/secular Judaism, he writes, has been buffeted by intermarriage and upward mobility and is becoming indistinguishable from broader American culture.

However, he is not writing off Secular Humanistic Judaism, a relatively young Michigan-based movement founded by a former Reform rabbi, Sherwin Wine.

The movement has secular congregations throughout the country that host discussion groups, services that do not mention God and even train children for secular Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

"Those sorts of organizational entities are what's been missing from secular Judaism, so if it can perpetuate, that's all to the good," he said, but noted that "I can't help being struck by the fact that their leader is a rabbi.

"It's sort of paradoxical."

Chabad-Lubavitch, a fervently Orthodox Chasidic stream with extensive interaction with other Jews, may also break from the general mold of fervently Orthodox and other Jews having little to do with each other.

"You get in, get loved so much and get a sense of community, then decide willingly to be haredi," observes Freedman.

"They're onto something. You don't win by browbeating."

The fact that Jews are segmenting and fighting in no way eliminates concerns about Jewish continuity, however, writes Freedman.

"It is tragic, yes, that American Jews have battled so bitterly, so viciously over the very meaning of being Jewish," are the last words of his book.

"It is more tragic, perhaps, that the only ones fighting are the only ones left who care." □

Canadians caught up in Israeli drug case

NEW YORK (JTA) — Several Canadians were ensnared in a drug case on an exchange program that brings Canadian Jewish teens together with their Israeli counterparts, according to the Canadian Jewish News.

A group of 17-year-olds on Canadian Young Judaea's Biluim Israel program were not arrested, but were called as witnesses in an Israeli case this month after allegedly buying drugs in Tel Aviv.

The program's director, David Altshuler, said the teens are now back with their parents in Canada. He said the youths were not kicked off the six-week program.

JEWISH WORLD

B'nai B'rith to choose president

A sitting president of B'nai B'rith International is facing a serious challenger for what is believed to be the first time in the organization's history.

On Monday, the 157-year-old organization is expected to choose between the incumbent, Richard Heidemann — who has overseen sizeable budget cuts — and Daniel Frank, a senior vice president who says the organization needs to pay more attention to its grass-roots membership.

Gore-Lieberman office vandalized

The local Gore-Lieberman office in Chico, Calif., north of Sacramento, was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti.

Bob Ray, president of the Democratic Action Club, told the Associated Press that he arrived at the office Thursday and found "No Jew in the White House" written across two large erasable boards and a planning calendar.

Lieberman tries to mend family

Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman, acting as executor of an uncle's \$48 million estate, is taking steps to reinstate two children who had been cut out of the will because they married non-Jews.

Lieberman is handling the estate of Bernard Manger, who died after a fall in 1995.

Lieberman's role, a spokeswoman said, is "to try to help bring the family back together."

Lawyer seeks to bankrupt racists

A lawsuit against the Aryan Nations, a white supremacist group that says Jews are the offspring of Satan, goes to trial Monday.

Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center, who is representing a mother and son who were attacked by the group, says he tries to bankrupt hate groups through litigation.

Reconstructionists construct

Twenty-five percent of the Reconstructionist movement's congregations have just completed, are in the middle of or are now launching capital campaigns for buildings.

The movement is Judaism's smallest and newest stream, and most of its 100 congregations do not have their own buildings.

Jewish quarter a heritage site

The Czech Ministry of Culture has nominated the former Jewish quarter in the town of Trebic for inclusion in UNESCO's list of world culture and heritage.

The state, the town hall and property owners have invested \$2.5 million in restoring the quarter.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Few hold out hope that Clinton's trip to Egypt will produce a breakthrough

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In a sign of how deeply mired the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is, even news of a planned visit to the region this week by President Clinton did little to counter dimming prospects for progress.

Clinton is due to stop in Egypt on Tuesday at the end of his trip to Africa. He will meet with Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak, who has met over the past week with Israeli and Palestinian officials to discuss proposals to try to break the deadlock between the sides. The proposals address some of the key disputed issues, including sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Though Israel's acting foreign minister, Shlomo Ben Ami, described his conversation last week with Mubarak as "very, very interesting," Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Friday rejected one of the Egyptian leader's reported proposals to allow for Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount.

Barak was quoted as saying in a meeting with the visiting Norwegian foreign minister that "no Israeli prime minister" would ever accept such an arrangement.

In the meantime, the Israeli leader continued to blame the impasse in the process on Palestinian inflexibility.

On Sunday, Barak told the Cabinet that the "ball is in Yasser Arafat's court."

The leaders face a fast-approaching Sept. 13 deadline, when the Palestinians have said they will declare a state, with or without an agreement.

Each side is aware of the possible negative consequences such a move would elicit, and despite the tough rhetoric being heard, both sides are reluctant to formalize failure of the process.

Following a globe-trotting trip that failed to drum up desired support for a unilateral declaration, Arafat signaled the Palestinian leadership may consider a "postponement" of such a declaration.

Barak, meanwhile, is at the forefront of a diplomatic flurry. Regional Development Minister Shimon Peres traveled to India last week to raise support for the peace process, while Ben Ami was in Alexandria for talks with the Egyptian leadership.

At the same time, Barak faces increasingly formidable domestic opposition. As Barak struggles through a Knesset recess to rebuild a coalition with calls for a "secular revolution," a right-wing legislator said Sunday he had gathered the signatures of 62 Knesset member who would back legislation to prevent the prime minister of a minority government from signing any international treaties.

Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian security forces have been continuing to cooperate in thwarting possible terrorist activity by militants from fundamentalist Muslim groups opposed to the peace process.

In a serious setback, three Israeli soldiers were killed and another moderately wounded during an operation in a village north of the West Bank town of Nablus on Sunday to capture a wanted Hamas fugitive.

Both Barak and the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, indicated that the Israeli casualties could have been the result of "friendly fire." In the operation, which took place in an area under Israeli security control, the militant, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, was lightly wounded in the hand. He fled to the Palestinian autonomous area, where he was apprehended by Palestinian security forces.

Barak said Israel may consider filing an extradition request for Abu Hanoud, who was responsible for two suicide bombings in Jerusalem three years ago. Barak said the operation saved the lives of dozens of Israelis who could have been endangered by terrorist activity. At the same time, he called the Duvdvan undercover unit one of the defense force's "most outstanding," and expressed deep regret over the mishap.

The Israeli army chief said a thorough investigation would be undertaken. He told a news conference it was possible that the casualties were linked to a secondary force in the field, and could have been caused by improper positioning, improper identification or inaccurate fire. □

Report warns terror mastermind training Hamas for more attacks

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The week that Israeli and Palestinian security forces arrested members of a terrorist group linked to millionaire terror mastermind Osama bin Laden, a U.S. report suggested the likelihood of such groups planning attacks against Israel and trying to thwart the peace process.

According to a Congressional Research Service report issued last week, there have been growing signs over the last year that bin Laden might be planning terrorist actions and trying to disrupt the peace process.

Cells operated by bin Laden in Jordan and Lebanon were discovered recently, although no attacks linked to bin Laden were carried out in either country.

The report suggests that guerillas with the militant Islamic group Hamas are gravitating to bin Laden's network because they fear Hamas might not oppose a Palestinian peace deal with Israel.

Israeli security officials maintain that the 23 activists arrested Monday belong to militant Islamic groups. A Gaza resident was a cell leader and officials say Hamas sent him to Pakistan three years ago to study terror techniques with bin Laden's organization.

If there is indeed a shifting allegiance of Hamas radicals to join bin Laden's group, then the threat to Israel and the peace process is significant, said the report's author.

"This could lead to a very sharp, very sudden upturn in violence," said Kenneth Katzman, a specialist in Middle Eastern affairs.

Hamas radicals are disillusioned and could be turning to bin Laden because he represents the last bastion of radical ideology and because he has the money to take on anyone, Katzman said.

Bin Laden is estimated to have about \$300 million in financial assets with which he funds a network of as many as 3,000 militants, according to the report.

But Hamas so far denies the association with bin Laden, who is accused of masterminding the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

"Hamas and I have no connection with bin Laden," Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin said last week in Gaza.

Yassin accused Israel of spreading false stories to increase pressure on the Palestinian Authority to act against Hamas.

The report, titled "Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors," credits the Palestinian Authority with greater antiterrorism vigilance and taking more pre-emptive actions against terrorists.

The Palestinian Authority seems to be acting on its own without any prompting from Israel, Katzman noted.

The report draws from the State Department's annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report, which was released in April.

Often reports by the Congressional Research Service are prepared at the request of committees or members of Congress. But Katzman said he undertakes the project annually because there is always a lot of interest and the report is widely requested.

Though the report is intended mainly to give background information to lawmakers, if a member of Congress believes findings in the report merit further consideration, he could call for hearings on the subject.

Among the other findings of the report are:

- Syria has not stopped anti-Israel attacks by Hezbollah and Palestinian groups in southern Lebanon and continues to give these groups safe haven. Syria also opposed suggestions that Hezbollah be disarmed by U.N. peacekeepers after the militia seized positions in southern Lebanon following the Israeli pullout in May.

- Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorism has declined because of increased cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces. □

Argentine Jews protest 'messianic Jewish' event

By Nicolas Penchaszadeh

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The three-day celebration in one of Buenos Aires' most popular parks last weekend was touted as an international festival of Jewish music and dance.

But, as Argentine Jewish leaders made perfectly clear, the event, attended by 30,000 people, was actually sponsored by "messianic Jews" who want to persuade Jews to accept Jesus.

Argentine Jewish leaders protested the event, which marked a rare appearance by "messianic Jews" in Argentina, where they are less visible than elsewhere in the world such as the United States and Eastern Europe.

"These so-called messianic Jews who use Jewish symbols are actually a group of Christian missionaries, who are very active in the United States, whose aim is to attract misinformed Jews to convert them," stated a news release issued by the AMIA Jewish Community Center.

"We respect religious freedom, but we want to state that these self-proclaimed 'Messianic Jews' are not part of the Jewish community and their event does not receive the backing of any Jewish institution in the country."

The Argentine Jewish community protested the event, asking a judge to block the festival, but he refused to do so.

The judge did, however, order event organizers to take down neon menorahs and a Star of David, but left the sign advertising the event.

Jewish leaders sent out e-mails and took out newspaper advertisements. Outside the stadium, fliers were posted and a truck with speakers informed possible attendees about the true nature of the event.

"Beware!!! Don't let yourself be fooled by these people who are financed by powerful groups in order to convert you to Christianity. In 2,000 years, they haven't been able to do it by force, and now they try like this," read one of the fliers.

Nearby a man in a bullhorn invited passersby to disregard the leaflets and attend the free event.

"Our mothers are Jewish, and that makes us Jews," Scott Sekulow told local reporters. "We have a right to carry out this festival."

Inside the Luna Park, beneath a sign that read "Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah," "messianic Rabbi" Jonathan Bernis entertained the throngs with tales from Exodus — with the help of a translator and strobe lights.

With music playing and dancers performing on stage, an announcer invited the crowds to a dance floor, which was promptly filled. But it is not clear how many Jews attended the event. □