



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel celebrates 53rd birthday

Israel beefed up security at its cities and vacation spots, fearing Palestinian attacks as Israel celebrated Independence Day. Security officials urged Israelis to celebrate as usual on Thursday, but to be on the lookout for suspicious objects and people.

### U.S. report sends Arafat warning

The U.S. State Department's annual report on terrorism will include Israeli accusations that two groups affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization have taken part in terrorist activities against Israel during the current Palestinian uprising, according to USA Today.

U.S. officials told the newspaper that the report stops short of labeling Fatah and the Tanzim militias terrorist organizations, a designation that would require the U.S. to end relations with the PLO.

The report, due to be released next week, will not directly address the question of whether Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat or other Palestinian officials personally ordered attacks against Israelis.

Still, the mention in the report represents a clear warning to Arafat to reign in the groups' activities, Israel's Army Radio quoted senior White House officials as saying.

### Ellis Island site: entry denied

A Web-based database of immigrant arrivals at New York's Ellis Island from 1892 to 1924 is turning away more than 85 percent of potential users, according to The New York Times.

Officials with the Statue of Liberty — Ellis Island Foundation, which created the database for [ellislandrecords.com](http://ellislandrecords.com), admit they underestimated the numbers who would wish to access the site. They are adding computer hardware to improve the site's accessibility, the officials said.

### Florida federation exec resigns

The top professional at the Jewish Federation of Broward County, Fla., resigned to pursue other professional interests.

Gary Rubin's departure from Broward, which serves 270,000 Jews, follows the departure of several top executives from other large federations. In the past year, federation executives from Washington and San Francisco have left to work in the for-profit sector.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Federations mobilize for Israel, but leave funding to communities

By Julie Wiener

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Eager to show they stand alongside Israel during the ongoing violence with the Palestinians, North America's Jewish federations are mobilizing for two national solidarity rallies in June.

Simultaneous rallies — tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 3 in New York and Los Angeles — will feature Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (live in New York and videoconferenced into L.A.) and a range of top Israeli officials.

Together, the events, which are expected to cost approximately \$2 million, are intended to send a message to Israel — and the Arab world — that the Jewish state has strong backing overseas.

Officials are not predicting how large a turnout they hope to get.

The rallies were announced here this week during meetings of the United Jewish Communities, as the federation system's umbrella group is known. They come at a time when the organized Jewish community is eager to help Israel but is not entirely certain just how to do it.

The federations decided this week not to launch a "second-line" funding campaign for Israel, choosing instead to leave it up to local communities as to whether they want to increase funding for the Jewish state in light of the recent violence.

Underlying the struggle to react on behalf of Israel is a growing concern that large numbers of American Jews — including some in leadership positions — lack significant knowledge of and emotional ties to the Jewish state.

Indeed, recent surveys have found not only that fewer than one-third of American Jews see Israel as a "very meaningful" aspect of their Jewish identity, but that many are unaware of key information about Israel, such as territorial concessions made in the now-moribund peace process with the Palestinians.

The June rallies are intended to be the first piece of a larger national effort called the Israel Solidarity Initiative.

But that effort is still in the early planning stages — and the UJC, which acts only after lengthy discussions and meetings with its member federations — is by nature slow-moving.

"The rally stood out as what we could do now," said Karen Shapira, chair of the UJC's Israel and Overseas Pillar, or committee, emphasizing the word "now."

The Israel Solidarity Initiative, which Shapira described as a "call to action," is expected to include programs for educating North American Jews of all ages about Israel, as well as fund-raising campaigns and public relations for Israel.

At a meeting on responding to the Israel situation, conversation turned quickly from perceived anti-Israel biases in the media to concern that young Jews — and even some Jewish lay leaders — lack the knowledge to be effective pro-Israel advocates.

"We need to reach out to our own young people and help them understand the complexities so we have advocates in the future," said Martin Raffel, associate executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Stephen Serbin, chair of the UJC's group for small federations, told JTA it is not uncommon for lay leaders in small communities to be uninformed about Israel and international Jewish needs.

"We've had federation presidents who have never been to Israel," said Serbin, the immediate past president of the Columbia, S.C., federation.

One person at the meeting on Israel requested briefing papers on Israeli history and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Powell: U.S. boosts peace role

The Bush administration is stepping up its diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, according to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. "We're doing it quietly, without a billboard announcement, every day," he told Congress on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, President Bush telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to "discuss ways of securing peace" in the Middle East, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. The White House announced Thursday that Israeli President Moshe Katsav will visit Washington on May 30 for talks with Bush.

### Arabs fire on Gilo neighborhood

Firing from the nearby Arab village of Beit Jallo mingled with the sound of fireworks as residents of Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood marked the start of Independence Day on Wednesday night. Eight homes in Gilo were damaged, but no one was hurt. Israel responded with tank and machine-gun fire.

### Gaza bomb kills 4 Palestinians

A bomb exploded Wednesday night in the southern Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians. Israel denied any connection to the incident, which took place near the border with Egypt.

### Peres to visit Egypt, Jordan

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres plans to go to Cairo and Amman on Sunday to deliver Israel's reply to a joint Egyptian-Jordanian initiative to end violence and resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Peres plans to fly to Washington on Sunday for meetings with U.S. officials and congressional leaders.

### Israeli Arabs stone bus

Israeli Arabs in the Galilee marked Israel's Independence Day by stoning an Israeli bus that was making its way Wednesday evening from Haifa to Tiberias, according to Army Radio. No one was hurt.

Israeli concessions that she could share with lay leaders in her federation. Judy Wortman, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Delaware, said in the meeting that federations need information about Israel that is targeted toward the Jewish community's leadership.

While fund raising is also a piece of the planned initiative, its focus remains undecided: Initial proposals to launch a "second-line" campaign for Israel were dismissed by federations, in part because there was no single need that could be attributed to the recent outbreak of violence.

There wasn't a "wall-to-wall mandate" on funding for Israel, said Victoria Agron, the UJC's vice president of campaign and financial resource development.

Instead, she said, it may be more critical to focus domestically on "serious education about the realities of Israel today."

Federations that want to step up funding for Israel as a result of the current situation will decide for themselves how to do that, Agron said.

Some federations are talking about stepping up their support for Partnership 2000, a program that matches North American Jewish communities with Israeli ones for people-to-people exchanges and economic projects in Israel.

Others are interested in focusing increased funding on projects for Israel's Ethiopian immigrants, who risk becoming a permanent underclass.

The discussions came in the Washington gathering, the first large meeting where leaders of the newly formed UJC focused on long-term programs and goals rather than simply governance or bread-and-butter matters.

The UJC was created in 1999 out of the merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal.

While Israel dominated the discussions, leaders also discussed plans to identify three or four major issues that the UJC will focus on in the coming years.

Among the issues raised at the meeting were adult Jewish education, outreach to Jews in their 20s and 30s, recruiting and training Jewish leaders, as well as advocacy for elderly Jews.

Under the new system, the UJC's 189 member federations are "owners" and their buy-in is sought for all major decisions.

But the novelty of this structure is still apparent in the way leaders repeatedly remind the federations that they have the responsibility to participate and work together, rather than just grumble about decisions handed down from on high.

At the gathering's open plenary, Carole Solomon, chair of the Campaign and Financial Resource Development pillar, told federation leaders, "The pillars are us. The pillars are the UJC. The pillars are indeed the federations."

And at a plenary the next day Joel Tauber, the chair of the UJC's executive committee said, "We are you. It's us, all of us."

Despite the overall focus on Israel and setting program priorities, the meeting also launched discussions of a long-unresolved issue in the merger: how to determine "fair share," or an appropriate dues system for the federations.

Currently, the UJC is funded through a combination of methods employed by its predecessors: a small percentage of the revenues comes from dues, determined by the size of the federation, and a larger portion comes off the top from overseas allocations the federations make.

That system is viewed as unfair because federations that give more money overseas contribute far more for the national system's operating costs than do federations that keep more money for local needs.

While nothing was decided, preliminary discussions indicated that most of the federations would like to move to a dues system based on a fixed percentage of the dollars each member federation raises each year.

The federations collectively raised \$826 million in 2000, and the UJC's annual budget is \$41.7 million.

Ironically, amid all the uncertainty at the meetings about whether American Jews will rally on Israel's behalf, one beacon of hope was just a few blocks away.

While the largely middle-aged federation machers debated inside a downtown Washington, air-conditioned hotel Sunday afternoon, hundreds of T-shirt-clad Jewish teen-agers and college students — mostly from the Young Judaea youth movement — were holding a pro-Israel rally in 80-something-degree weather at a park across from the White House. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### After months keeping its distance, Bush team ups Mideast involvement

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration intensified its involvement in the Middle East conflict this week, making plans to meet with Middle Eastern leaders and facilitating meetings in the region between Israel and the Palestinians.

President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell spent part of their week discussing the troubled region. Administration officials spoke frequently with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and made plans to welcome two other Israeli leaders — Foreign Minister Shimon Peres early next week and President Moshe Katsav at the end of May.

"You don't have to look far to see that this administration is engaged," Powell said Wednesday after meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. "It takes a great deal of President Bush's time."

In a telephone conversation with Sharon on Thursday, Bush discussed "ways of securing peace in the region," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

In a hearing Thursday before a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Powell said he and Bush are "fully engaged."

"We're doing it quietly, not with a billboard announcement every day," Powell said. "But believe me, there's no lack of engagement on the part of this administration."

Powell said he had seen a bit of progress in the past week, "but it is as tough as I have ever seen it before in the region."

In earlier interviews, he said the United States was operating on two tracks — holding conversations with Mideast leaders and supporting direct communication between Israeli and Palestinian officials.

American officials in the region have been participating in security talks between the two sides. State Department officials have defined their task as to "facilitate, monitor, and report back."

The CIA is again involved in Israeli-Palestinian security talks. The CIA played a key role during the Clinton administration but was publicly removed from its mediating duties in the weeks after Bush took office.

The renewed U.S. participation contrasts with the rhetoric in the early days of the Bush administration, when officials called on Israel and the Palestinians to lead the peace process themselves.

In recent weeks, however, the White House has been inundated with requests from Arab leaders to play a more active role. In addition, the intensification of violence in recent weeks — including a brief Israeli incursion into the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip to stop mortar fire and an Israeli attack on Syrian radar in Lebanon after Hezbollah killed an Israeli soldier — showed Washington how quickly the situation can escalate if left unattended.

Visiting Washington this week, Lebanon's Hariri pressed the White House to play "a more effective role to push forward the peace process in the region."

"I believe that peace in the region is the responsibility of the United States, because it is the leader of the world," he said.

Hariri said he was encouraged by his conversations with Bush. While pushing for an increased U.S. role, he did not encourage the United States to take any specific steps, Hariri said.

Asked on CNN whether the United States should designate a special envoy for the Middle East, Hariri said the Bush administration should "try to achieve the peace in the ways and means they see it necessary."

Even if Bush is carving out a role for his administration in Mideast affairs, it is not nearly as hands-on as the Clinton administration's tactics.

"This administration is very cognizant of the kinds of things the United States has been able to do successfully in the past and the kinds of things it has not been able to do successfully," said Jon Alterman of the U.S. Institute for Peace.

The Bush administration is seeking a "much more modest kind of role," Alterman said. He noted that the diplomatic proposal currently being considered to break the Israeli-Palestinian logjam is called the Jordanian-Egyptian plan — indicating that other regional players are mediators, not just the United States. □

#### Rabbi: Don't knock Knick

The New York Knicks basketball player who told The New York Times Magazine that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus is "100 percent" remorseful, said a rabbi who is planning to conduct a dialogue with him.

Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, said that in a 15-minute phone conversation Wednesday Charlie Ward displayed an "open heart, a spirit of repentance and a desire to learn how" to "extend his hand to the Jewish people in a sensitive way and learn more about Jews and Judaism."

Eckstein also said Ward would visit Israel with him when the NBA season is over.

Eckstein, a longtime interfaith activist, added that he disagrees with the American Jewish Congress' call for Ward to be dismissed from his position as a spokesman for a Florida literacy program.

#### Study: Muslims outnumber Jews

There may now be more Muslims than Jews in the United States, according to a new study by a professor at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C. The study by Professor Ihsan Bagby estimates there are 6-7 million Muslims, compared to an estimated 6 million Jews.

#### Poles sue about massacre news

A Polish extremist group is appealing a Polish prosecutor's refusal to investigate claims that a recent book implicating Poles in a 1941 massacre of Jews slanders the Polish nation.

The appeal by the Association Against Anti-Polonism will now go to the regional prosecutor's office.

#### Teens return from Cuba mission

Twenty teen-agers from Long Island, N.Y.; Miami; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, recently returned from a Jewish teen mission to Cuba.

In a five-day trip sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the group brought books, medication and clothing.

The teens also met with their Cuban Jewish peers and visited Latin America's oldest Holocaust memorial, which was built in 1946.

#### Court: Rabbi, keep off the grass

A New York rabbi was sentenced to five years' probation and a \$5,000 fine Monday for selling marijuana he claims was for medical purposes.

"I saw people who were dying of multiple sclerosis, AIDS, cancer," Rabbi Yitzchak Fried previously told the Village Voice. "Being a rabbi, I had to deal with it, not put my head under a rug and ignore it."

## L.A. rabbi blasted for fifth question: Was there really a biblical Exodus?

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Passover has passed, but Los Angeles Jews are still heatedly discussing whether the Exodus actually happened.

The controversy, labeled a "hurricane" by the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, was triggered by Rabbi David Wolpe, the spiritual leader of Conservative congregation Sinai Temple and the author of numerous popular books on Judaism.

In three sermons during Passover, Wolpe examined current research in biblical archaeology and concluded that "virtually every modern archaeologist who has investigated the story of the Exodus, with very few exceptions, agrees that the way the Bible describes the Exodus is not the way it happened, if it happened at all."

Some of Wolpe's congregants were shocked, but normally the sermon would have caused only a few ripples within the temple. However, during the latter part of Passover, The Los Angeles Times ran a prominent front-page article on biblical archaeology, leading with the Wolpe sermons under the headline, "Doubting the Story of the Exodus." The reaction was strong.

"Everybody was in shock," said Orthodox Rabbi Elazar Muskin of Young Israel of Century City, Calif.

Even at liberal congregations, many worshippers asked, "Did he have to say it during Passover?"

Wolpe forcefully defended his position.

"It's a well-known fact that millions of Jews have doubts about the literal veracity of Bible stories. My sermons emphasized that faith is independent of doubt. I wanted the millions of doubting Jews to know that they can still be faithful Jews," Wolpe said in a statement.

"If scholarly books are written that question the literal veracity of Bible stories, it does not help our credibility to pretend that they don't exist. By discussing these books, we maintain the Jewish tradition of sustaining faith by seeking truth," he continued. "Ignoring the books, on the other hand, conveys a message of fear: We are afraid that science will shake our faith. I don't believe it should, and that is why I spoke out."

The controversy continues unabated, however. In the current issue of the Jewish Journal, the entire letters to the editor section is taken up by 17 pro-and-con arguments.

Actor Kirk Douglas, who at 83 celebrated his second Bar Mitzvah under Wolpe's auspices last year, wrote that "Rabbi Wolpe had tremendous courage to stand up and speak about what is essentially a search for truth. That is the highest form of Jewish learning."

By contrast, Orthodox Rabbi Ari Hier — the son of Simon Wiesenthal Center founder Rabbi Marvin Hier — wrote, "Rabbi Wolpe has chosen Aristotle over Maimonides, theories and scientific method over facts."

Earlier, author and national talk show host Dennis Prager sharply attacked Wolpe's thesis in a lengthy article.

"If the Exodus did not occur, there is no Judaism. Judaism stands on two pillars — Creation and Exodus," Prager wrote. "Judaism no more survives the denial of the Exodus than it does the denial of the Creator."

In an opposing view, Reform Rabbi Steven Leder of Wilshire Boulevard Temple argued that "defending a rabbi in the 21st century for saying the Exodus story isn't factual is like defending

him for saying the earth isn't flat."

Wolpe himself re-emphasized his position in a sermon last week, addressing a jammed sanctuary of 1,300 congregants.

"The Torah is about the spiritual truth of the Jewish people, not about particulars," he said. "Let us be brave together." □

## Newly opened Soviet archives shed light on Holocaust history

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The emotional events of Holocaust Remembrance Day still draw a mixed reaction in Russia, but educational advances from projects relating to Holocaust material in Russian archives are moving forward.

In a sign seen by some as positive, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matvienko conveyed official greetings last week to a Jewish gathering outside Moscow, and the day was mentioned in some media outlets. But when a liberal member of the Russian Parliament called on his fellow deputies to stand for a minute of silence to commemorate Jewish victims of Nazism, ultranationalist deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskiy protested.

"Who will stand in memory of the 30 million Russians who were killed?" he asked.

Many deputies remained in their seats.

But the fact that many others stood reflects a profound shift in the way Jewish issues were handled in czarist and Soviet times.

Just the same, there are some observers for whom the glass remains half empty.

"The commemoration of the Holocaust in Russia remains a Jewish business and has not yet become institutionalized in the society," said Roman Spector, a Moscow Jewish leader.

After decades of Soviet rule, when information was closely restricted, many Russian archives have opened up in recent years. And institutions are cooperating with Jewish groups and activists reconstructing the history of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.

Documents recently discovered in the city of Kaluga's archive reveal that the Nazis failed to liquidate the Jewish ghetto in this city 150 miles south of Moscow.

In October 1941, the Germans were unable to carry out their plans to kill Kaluga's 154 remaining Jews because they had to flee the advancing Red Army.

A group of researchers, headed by U.S.-based historian David Fishman and financed by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, is studying Jewish documents in what is called the Osoby, or Special, Archive, made up of papers looted by the Nazis and seized by the Soviets in 1945.

The slew of documents, which had been kept in KGB archives, chronicles the activities of European Jewish communities and Jewish organizations between the two world wars.

The collection also contains personal archives of a number of outstanding Jewish personalities.

Some documents also contain information on Jewish property that later was destroyed or looted.

Some of the documents could provide material for suspense stories. Last year, an Internet ad offered to sell diaries of Hitler deputy Martin Bormann that had been stolen from the archive.

The Federal Security Bureau, the successor to the KGB, traced the documents, recaptured them and placed them inside the FSB.

Another part of the collection features Hebrew speeches of the Lubavitch rebbe, Joseph Isaac Schneerson, from Riga in 1931. □