



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 149

Monday, August 13, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Suicide bomber wounds 20

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing Sunday that wounded at least 20 people in the town of Kiryat Motzkin, a suburb of Haifa.

According to Magen David Adom officials, most of the victims suffered light to moderate wounds.

In another development Sunday, Israeli police scuffled with Arab protesters for a third straight day outside Orient House, the Palestinians' de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem. [Page 3]

U.S. renews travel warning

The U.S. State Department renewed its warning to U.S. citizens to defer travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, citing the ongoing violence.

Judith Shoshana Greenbaum, a 31-year-old pregnant teacher from Passaic, N.J., was among the 15 people killed by a suicide bomber last week at a Jerusalem pizzeria. She was buried last Friday in Jerusalem.

5 Jews killed in helicopter crash

Five Orthodox Jews from Brooklyn were killed in a helicopter crash near the Grand Canyon.

The five tourists killed last Friday were part of a group of about 20 friends and family on a four-day vacation at the Bellagio hotel-casino in Las Vegas, according to Steven Golomb, a friend of the victims. "Two wives are left without husbands because they were on the other helicopter," Golomb told The Associated Press.

"They are all active in the communities, they're all friends," New York City Councilman Noach Dear said of the victims. "They were a lot of fun to be with."

The sole survivor, Shawna Daskai, suffered burns over 80 percent of her body.

Jews mixed on stem cell plan

Jewish groups offered mixed reactions to President Bush's decision to allow limited federal funding for research on existing embryonic stem cells.

Groups praised the government's first step but expressed hope that the scope of funding could be expanded in the future.

The National Council of Jewish Women, however, said it is "deeply disappointed" by the president's Aug. 9 announcement, calling it too narrow and restricting. [Page 4]

FOCUS ON ISSUES

After long denial, Orthodox world begins to grapple with sexual abuse

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Borough Park section of Brooklyn is one of America's most visibly Jewish neighborhoods.

On several residential blocks of one- and two-family brick homes, almost every front door has a mezuzah. Modestly dressed women push strollers, while girls in dresses and boys in tzitzit and yarmulkes play on the sidewalks.

Sixteenth Avenue, one of the main drags, is lined with religious study centers and yeshivot, a Jewish high school for girls, small synagogues and Judaica stores.

And in the middle of it all is an agency that runs a treatment program for Orthodox Jewish pedophiles.

Orthodox pedophiles?

For years, most people in the Orthodox world assumed their religious way of life and tight-knit communities insulated them from problems rocking the larger world, like sexual abuse. There is still a great deal of resistance to discussing the issue, and a lingering feeling among many victims and advocates that Orthodox institutions are more concerned with protecting the reputations of men accused of sexual abuse than with believing or helping victims.

But fueled by a combination of factors — recent scandals, a growing cadre of Orthodox psychotherapists in whom Orthodox Jews feel comfortable confiding, and American society's growing openness about sensitive social problems — that sense of insularity is eroding among both the fervently and centrist Orthodox communities.

Just as it has begun to acknowledge that there are Orthodox child abusers and Orthodox drug addicts, the community is gradually coming to grips with the fact that it, too, has sexual abusers in its midst.

Through Jewish agencies like Borough Park's Ohel Children's Home and Family Services — whose sex offender program is believed to be the only Orthodox program of its kind — it is starting to confront the problem. Among the indicators of change:

- In the wake of public allegations last year that a high-ranking professional in the Orthodox Union's National Conference of Synagogue Youth had sexually abused more than 20 teen-age girls, sexual abuse has become a household word among centrist Orthodox Jews. The O.U., which had been accused of protecting Rabbi Baruch Lanner, the alleged abuser, underwent an investigation by an independent commission, made some key staff changes and has vowed to implement policies to prevent future abuse.

- Four years ago, at the request of the Brooklyn District Attorney, Ohel — which already treated Jewish survivors of sexual abuse — created the first-ever treatment program for Orthodox sex offenders. More than 30 people, half referred through the criminal justice system and half through rabbis and Jewish communal leaders, have received evaluation or treatment through the program; more are on a waiting list.

- At its convention this year, the Rabbinical Council of America, which represents 1,100 mainstream Orthodox rabbis, held an open and detailed discussion about sexual abuse led by Dr. Susan Shulman, a pediatrician who served on the O.U.'s commission investigating the Lanner scandal and lectures frequently about sexual abuse.

- According to the RCA's immediate past president, Rabbi Kenneth Hain, the rabbinic group is in the "embryonic stages" of creating a system for dealing with members accused of sexual misconduct.

- In the aftermath of two publicized cases of pedophilia — one concerning a rabbi teaching at a day school and another concerning a kosher butcher — the Chicago

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.S. envoy visits Mideast

The U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs is visiting the Middle East this week for talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials.

The visit by David Satterfield comes amid an international drive to pressure the two sides to prevent the violence from spinning out of control.

P.A. arrests four Hamas members

Hamas said Sunday the Palestinian Authority had arrested four of its members.

One of the four had dispatched the suicide bomber who carried out last week's attack in a crowded Jerusalem pizzeria, according to Hamas. Israeli officials said the arrests did not go far enough and insisted that the Palestinians do more to stop terror.

Bush: Arafat should do more

President Bush said he believes Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat should do more to halt the violence.

"Mr. Arafat can do a better job," Bush told ABC News last Friday in an interview from his Texas ranch. "I am deeply concerned that some of the more radical groups are beginning to affect his ability and obviously are provocative as heck toward the Israelis," he said.

Hezbollah offers to join intifada

Hezbollah's leader in Lebanon said his followers are prepared to join in the Palestinian uprising against Israel. "When we realize that the intifada needs us at its side with all our strength, we will not hesitate to do that," Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said.

Envoy to France blasts U.S.

U.S. officials criticized Israel's ambassador to France, who accused President Bush of mishandling the U.S. role in the Middle East. Elie Barnavi said he is disappointed by the way U.S. officials have handled the Mideast conflict since Bush became president.



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.

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Rabbinical Council recently created a special Beit Din, or rabbinical court, to address sexual abuse. The court, which has four rabbis from different sectors of the local Orthodox community, consults with a team of psychologists, social workers and lawyers. It is believed to be the only permanent North American Beit Din focusing on this issue.

• According to David Mandel, chief executive officer of Ohel, Orthodox schools and other institutions increasingly are hosting workshops educating parents and teachers on how to prevent abuse against children and identify the symptoms indicating that a child may have been abused. In the past year, Ohel participated in more than 12 seminars or conference sessions on the topic, about twice as many as in previous years.

Sexual abuse is hardly unique to the Orthodox community, and many who work in the field say there appear to be far fewer incidents in the Jewish community than in American society as a whole.

Problems like victims' reluctance to come forward, difficulty proving cases, and a tendency of people not to want to believe accusations are vexing issues in any community. Even when caught, sexual abusers are difficult to treat, and many experts say they must be watched vigilantly because they never fully recover.

But there are certain aspects of Orthodox life that make such problems uniquely challenging. Perhaps the biggest obstacle is the wall of silence and denial.

"We're a community that would like to believe that our religious lives prevent these problems," said Rabbi Yosef Blau, a spiritual guidance counselor at Yeshiva University's rabbinic seminary who is known as an advocate for victims of sexual abuse.

In addition, there is a historic Jewish tendency, particularly acute in the Orthodox world, to keep quiet about sensitive issues for fear of publicly scandalizing the community. Many Orthodox Jews also fear that embarrassing information could jeopardize future wedding matches for individuals and their families.

Another obstacle is that the many demands of an Orthodox lifestyle — and the fact that Orthodox Jews must live within walking distance of synagogue — make Orthodox communities tight-knit. That can make it hard for a victim to come forward, particularly if the abuser is prominent or well-liked.

When the perpetrator is a rabbi or other respected member of the community, victims have an even greater difficulty, given Orthodox Judaism's reverence for rabbinical authority figures. "If a kid goes to a parent and says, My rebbe did something to me, the parents tend to believe the rabbi, not the child," Blau said.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is that most Orthodox institutions lack a formal system for preventing or reporting abuse.

Exacerbating the situation is the fact that Orthodox Jews generally are more reluctant than liberal Jews to go to the police for crimes committed within the community. Instead, Orthodox Jews tend to rely on rabbinical courts. But most such courts are ill-equipped to handle sexual abuse cases, and many — according to victims' advocates and Shulman — refuse to hear such cases.

Chicago's Beit Din is one of the few actively dealing with sexual abuse. So far, it has found three people guilty of abuse, alerting community leaders so they can keep an eye on the offenders and not hire them for jobs where they will be alone with children.

Rabbi Gedalia Schwartz, chief presiding rabbi of the Chicago Rabbinical Council and the Beit Din of America, a national rabbinical court under RCA auspices, urges victims to go to the police as well.

Despite the remaining challenges, some in the Orthodox world find solace in the fact that the topic is now on the table and that some treatment programs are out there.

Because of the Laner case, "people who in the past would've said, 'I'm sure he couldn't have done that and just let it go' are now saying, I heard about this and we can't let this happen again," Blau said.

According to Mandel and others, the changes are deeper than a mere reaction to Laner. In fact, sex abuse is being discussed and addressed not just in centrist Orthodox circles but in fervently Orthodox communities where many people — who do not read secular or even mainstream Jewish newspapers — have not heard of the Laner scandal.

David Pelcovitz, director of psychology at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, N.Y., and a clinical professor of psychology at the New York University School of Medicine, said he increasingly hears rabbis frame the issue by talking about the concept of ha'alah, the biblical injunction not to look the other way. □

JEWISH WORLD

Disputes remain on racism forum

Talks last Friday failed to settle disputes over how an upcoming U.N. Conference on Racism will deal with Israeli policies toward the Palestinians.

Ya'akov Levy, Israel's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, said his delegation may not attend the conference starting later this month in Durban, South Africa.

"The Middle East conflict is political, not racial," he said. The United States has said it will not attend the conference unless Arab states drop demands that conference texts single out Israel as a "racist" occupying power.

Suspected arsonist caught in act

An Orthodox Jewish family in London surprised a suspected serial arsonist who was trying to set fire to the family home, but family members did not call the police because the incident happened on Shabbat.

Orthodox authorities later said the family should have phoned the police, because doing so could constitute saving a life, which takes precedence over Sabbath observance. It was at least the seventh time since June that arsonists struck London's fervently Jewish neighborhood of Stamford Hill.

Judge rules against eruv

A New Jersey town can remove a wire boundary that allows observant Jews to carry objects on the Sabbath because parts of it were built on public property, a U.S. judge ruled. A lawyer for the Tenafly Eruv Association said his group would appeal the Aug. 9 decision against the local eruv.

British group warns of attacks

A group that monitors anti-Semitic incidents in Britain is warning that Palestinian terrorists may expand their activities to target Jews around the world.

The Community Security Trust points out that Hamas' Web site asks rhetorically, "Aren't all Jews and Zionists fighting your own brethren and targeting you all?"

A Hezbollah-controlled television station, meanwhile, reported that a group allied with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement issued a threat to attack "Zionists and their U.S. allies anywhere, inside and outside occupied Palestine."

Two N.Y. rabbis sentenced

Two New York City rabbis were sentenced to nearly three years in prison for embezzling \$2.5 million meant for training counselors for elderly Holocaust survivors. Efraim Stein and Jacob Bronner pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy charges.

Prosecutors said Stein slipped funds to his synagogue and to subcontractors in exchange for kickbacks and falsely put his relatives on the payroll as trainers.

Israel faces international pressure after it takes control of Orient House

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's closure of Orient House in eastern Jerusalem appears to have dealt a new blow to hopes that more than 10 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence will end any time soon.

Israeli analysts likened the Israeli action against the Palestinians' de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem to going for the Palestinians' political jugular.

Israel closed down Orient House early last Friday in retaliation for an Aug. 9 suicide bombing at a Jerusalem pizza shop that killed 15 people and wounded more than 130 others. Israel accused the Palestinian Authority of using its offices in the Jerusalem area to support Arab terrorists.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told his Cabinet that he is authorizing the creation of a new Israeli police station in eastern Jerusalem to deal with the eruption of tensions there.

His announcement came after Israeli security forces closed down a Palestinian communications office in Abu Dis — a further step aimed at halting activity by the Palestinian Authority in the area.

Along with taking over Orient House, Israeli security forces last Friday raided Palestinian Authority buildings in Abu Dis, located on Jerusalem's outskirts. In addition, Israeli F-16 fighters fired two missiles at a Palestinian police station in Ramallah to retaliate for the deadly suicide bombing.

Three days after the attack at the pizzeria, another suicide bomber struck in northern Israel.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for Sunday's bombing, which wounded at least 20 people in a suburb of Haifa.

In a statement faxed to Reuters in Beirut, the terrorist group said one of its members had blown himself up in the Wall Street Cafe in the town of Kiryat Motzkin. According to Magen David Adom officials, most of the victims suffered light to moderate wounds.

Last Friday's move against Orient House quickly inflamed Palestinian passions because the former hotel has long been a symbol of Palestinian aspirations to take control of eastern Jerusalem.

On Sunday, Israeli police scuffled with Arab protesters for a third straight day outside the former headquarters.

Ahmed Karia, a Palestinian negotiator who also is speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, said Sunday he supports armed resistance to retaliate for Israel's takeover of Palestinian institutions in eastern Jerusalem.

"Resistance of this Israeli policy, using all means, has now become legitimate as well as a national and religious duty," said Karia, also known as Abu Alaa.

He also called on the international community to condemn Israel and on Arabs to observe a "day of rage." Within hours after Israel made the move, international pressure — including criticism from the United States — began mounting on Israel to withdraw from Orient House.

Israel defended the move as a "measured response" to last week's terror pizzeria bombing. Both Israel's justice minister and attorney general said the Palestinians had long engaged in political activities at Orient House, in contravention of previously signed agreements.

Some are questioning the wisdom of the Israeli move.

Palestinian sources quoted by the Jerusalem Post said Sharon did the Palestinian Authority a favor by taking over the headquarters — because the move turned world attention away from last week's terror attack in Jerusalem.

The move has also created strains within Sharon's unity government.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres opposed the Cabinet decision to close down Orient House. On Sunday, he threatened to resign from the government over Sharon's policies.

Also on Sunday, Peres told members of his Labor Party that Israel should hold cease-fire talks with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat despite Sharon's repeated refusal to hold talks while the violence continues.

Later that day, Sharon gave the go-ahead for Peres to discuss a cease-fire with Arafat, Israel Radio reported. □

Jews mixed on stem cell choice; most hope Bush will go still further

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish groups are offering muted praise to President Bush's decision to allow some federal funding for stem cell research, hoping that it is only the first step to more expansive government support.

Many groups praised Bush's decision, announced Aug. 9, but — since it will allow funding for research only on about 60 existing stem cell lines — expressed hope that the scope of funding would be expanded in the future.

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, said it is "cautiously optimistic" about the decision.

The Orthodox Union, which recently came out in favor of stem cell research, said it is comfortable with Bush's stance.

"Our limits would have been more expansive," said Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs. "But there's nothing wrong with proceeding with caution."

But the National Council of Jewish Women said it is "deeply disappointed" by the president's decision, calling it too narrow and restricting.

Some scientists worry that going too slowly will hinder medical progress.

In his first prime-time speech to Americans, Bush laid out the arguments for both sides of the issue.

One side essentially says stem cell research could bring cures to many diseases and notes that many embryos will be destroyed anyway. The other side views embryos as human beings and their destruction as immoral.

Bush's compromise plan allowed him to sidestep the difficult ethical questions that would have come with a decision either to fully support or to ban such research.

"I have concluded that we should allow federal funds to be used for research on these existing stem cell lines, where the life-and-death decision has already been made," Bush said.

During the campaign — and as recently as May — Bush said he would oppose federally funded research or experimentation on embryonic stem cells that requires living human embryos to be destroyed.

Most Jewish ethicists agree that tradition allows embryos to be destroyed if the research has the potential to benefit society. Polls show a majority of Americans support federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.

A stem cell is a special kind of cell that has a unique capacity to renew itself and to develop into specialized cell types. Researchers use stem cells to replace cells that are damaged or diseased.

Many believe stem cell research may yield cures for Parkinson's Disease, Alzheimer's, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, heart disease and more.

A recently released report from the National Institutes of Health found that both embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells "present immense research opportunities for potential therapy."

But while embryonic stem cells can proliferate indefinitely, adult stem cells cannot.

Rabbi Richard Address, director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Department of Jewish Family Concerns, said Bush had opted for a "safe decision."

"I wish it went further," he said, but acknowledged the

political reality Bush faced. Address said he hopes this step will allow people to reflect on the linkages between tradition and medical technology, and make these matters part of the public discourse.

The lead editorial in *The New York Times* last Friday, after the speech, criticized Bush for waffling.

"Last night George W. Bush had one of those rare opportunities a president gets to take a bold step that might define his administration," the *Times* wrote. "Instead, he ducked."

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, who favors stem cell research, called Bush's decision a "compassionate solution" that "balances respect for life with high hopes for research."

Thompson said the government wants to create a registry of the stem cell lines, but that patent issues must still be resolved with research centers that own the existing stem cell lines.

Bush also will establish a council on bioethics to look at issues such as stem cell research, cloning, assisted reproduction, gene therapy, drugs and brain implants. □

Controversial saint invoked in papal call for Mideast peace

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — In his latest call for peace in the Middle East, Pope John Paul II has invoked the name of Edith Stein — a Jewish convert to Catholicism who became a nun, was killed during the Holocaust and was later made a saint.

Stein, canonized in 1998 as Saint Teresa Benedetta della Croce, "died, along with her sister Rosa and many others of her people, in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau on August 9, 1942," the pope told the faithful gathered at his summer residence outside Rome.

"We are seeing the life and dignity of human beings trodden upon in a violent manner right in the Holy Land, to which Saint Teresa Benedetta had a deep spiritual link," the pope added Sunday.

The pope prayed for the intercession of Saint Teresa Benedetta so that "the political and military authorities in the conflicting sides will not lack good will, that they will bear in mind before God and history the urgency of silencing their arms, and that they reflect on the future of their peoples — a future that cannot be of hate, but of brotherhood; not of confrontation but of collaboration."

Bemoaning the outbreak of "unheard-of brutality," he also admitted that his earlier pleas for peace have gone unheeded.

In declaring Stein a saint in 1998, John Paul attempted to use her figure as a means of paying homage to Holocaust victims and promoting Christian-Jewish dialogue.

At the time, he called Stein both "an eminent daughter of Israel and a faithful daughter of the Church" and used the canonization to appeal for tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation.

He said Stein's saint's day each year — Aug. 9, the anniversary of her death — would be celebrated as a Holocaust memorial, to remind the world "of that bestial plan to eliminate a people, which cost millions of Jewish brothers and sisters their lives."

Honoring Stein in this way, however, affronted some Jewish sensibilities. Many Jews said that by making a Jewish convert to Catholicism a saint, the pope had offended the memory of Hitler's Jewish victims. □