



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 40

Thursday, February 28, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinian kills Israeli boss

A Palestinian murdered his Israeli employer Wednesday at a factory north of Jerusalem. The Palestinian, who had worked at the factory for three years, walked into his employer's office, shot him twice in the head and fled the scene.

Suicide bomber wounds 2

Two Israeli police officers were wounded Wednesday when a female Palestinian suicide bomber blew up her car.

The incident took place when police stopped the car at a West Bank checkpoint near the border with Israel. Police said two other people in the car with the bomber were critically wounded.

Claims Conference nominees

Rabbi Israel Singer was nominated to be the new president of the Claims Conference. Singer, the former secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, would replace Rabbi Israel Miller, who recently announced his intention to step down for health reasons.

The other nominees for leadership positions at the Claims Conference include Julius Berman as chairman, Moshe Sanbar as chair of the executive and Roman Kent as treasurer. The Jewish Agency for Israel objected to the fact that none of the nominees is Israeli and that the Jewish Agency was not involved in the nomination process.

The Claims Conference's board is scheduled to vote on the nominations April 11.

Israel, U.S. blamed for 9/11

An overwhelming majority of Muslims do not believe Arabs carried out the Sept. 11 attacks. Only 18 percent of those polled in six countries said they believed that Arabs were responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, USA Today reported Wednesday, citing a recent Gallup poll.

Many of the respondents blamed Israel or the United States, the paper reported. Just nine percent said U.S. military action in Afghanistan was morally justified, while 77 percent said it was morally unjustified.

The poll, conducted in December and January, involved 9,924 interviews conducted in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan and Morocco.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Study: Shul affiliation is rising, but Jewish population declining

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The number of American Jewish households affiliating with a synagogue has increased by 15 percent in the past decade, even as the "core" Jewish population is shrinking and the number of intermarried families has grown.

It appears that the rising affiliation rates largely are benefitting the Reform movement, which now claims 41 percent of all affiliated households, up from 35 percent in 1990. Those are among the major findings of the American Jewish Identity Survey 2001, a demographic snapshot that was recently released in full after publishing selected highlights this fall. The study is based on a sampling of 1,668 U.S. Jews.

Conducted under the auspices of the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, the American Jewish Identity Survey is similar to the National Jewish Population Survey 2001-2002, which is sponsored by the North American Jewish federation system and is expected to be released in full this fall.

Egon Mayer, one of the released study's authors, said it shows that American Jewry is facing "multiple trends" — increased involvement by some Jews at the same time as others are growing more distant from their Judaism.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said he had not yet read the full study, but said the highlights confirm his movement's experiences in the past decade.

Approximately 320,000 North American households are affiliated with a Reform synagogue, according to the UAHC, compared to 288,000 in 1990.

Yoffie credits the movement's growth to its "amalgamation of tradition and modernity," gender equality, focus on social justice and its willingness to include a wide variety of Jews, including those who are intermarried.

"Intermarriage, depending on how we respond to it, is potentially a danger, but it need not mean the death knell for American Judaism," Yoffie said.

While welcoming the finding that affiliation rates have increased, Yoffie said Reform — along with the other movements — needs to do a better job of reaching the many American Jews who do not belong to a synagogue.

The Reform movement has reached out more aggressively to intermarried families than the other major Jewish movements. It also recognizes patrilineal descent, meaning that the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers can be considered Jewish.

However, some observers are skeptical that the findings signify a real growth for Reform. Steven Cohen, a sociologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who has been a consultant for the upcoming National Jewish Population Survey, said counting households rather than individual Jews is "artificially boosting the Reform movement by adding non-Jews to their memberships."

He explained: "If the Reform movement is drawing a lot of intermarried households, they're picking up one Jew per household or maybe one and some kids, so that household will have fewer Jews" than one affiliated with a Conservative or Orthodox congregation.

Cohen recently gave a plenary address at the Conservative movement's convention, speaking about the communal challenges posed by intermarriage and urging Conservative synagogues to consider raising their religious expectations of members.

Despite the findings of increased synagogue affiliation, the American Jewish Identity Survey also reports that the "core" Jewish population — those who say Judaism is their religion, who say they are of Jewish parentage or upbringing but have no

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel kills infiltrators

Israeli soldiers killed three suspected terrorists who tried to infiltrate southern Israel on Wednesday from Egypt. Israeli security sources said the three were Palestinians. Two Israeli soldiers were slightly wounded in the exchange of gunfire after members of an Israeli patrol in the Negev Desert chased the gunmen.

Arab lawmaker's trial opens

An Israeli Arab lawmaker went on trial for alleged support of a terrorist organization. The charges against Knesset member Azmi Beshara relate to two speeches he made last year, one of them in Syria, allegedly praising Hezbollah's guerrilla warfare against Israel and encouraging Palestinians to adopt similar tactics.

At the start of the trial Wednesday, Beshara denied any wrongdoing, saying he was being prosecuted for his political views. Before the trial's opening, Beshara supporters demonstrated outside the Nazareth courthouse.

No progress in security talks

Israeli and Palestinian security officials failed to make progress in talks held Tuesday night near Tel Aviv. Tensions between the two sides grew after the meeting. Palestinian officials said another round of talks are slated for later this week.

Israel denies Pearl report

Israel denied reports that it planned to hunt down the murderers of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. Ra'anan Gissin, an aide to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, dismissed reports that Sharon had instructed the Mossad to hunt down Pearl's assassins and kill them. Pearl, who was abducted and murdered in Pakistan, was Jewish and had Israeli citizenship through his parents.



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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religion, or who consider themselves Jewish — has declined. In addition, the number of people who are of Jewish origin but identify with another religion has increased.

The rate of new intermarriages has not risen — 51 percent of Jews who wed in the past 10 years married non-Jews, compared with 52 percent in the five years preceding the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey — but the effects of years of intermarriage are being felt. Thirty-three percent of core Jews are married to non-Jews, compared with 28 percent in 1990.

In addition, almost one-third of core Jews do not have a Jewish mother. That means that with the exception of those who are converts, they would not be recognized as Jewish by Conservative or Orthodox leaders.

Smaller in scope and sample size than the forthcoming federation-sponsored study, the American Jewish Identity Survey replicates most of the methodology and many of the questions of National Jewish Population Survey 1990.

Among some of the other new findings:

- The core American Jewish population has declined from about 5.5 million in 1990 to about 5.3 million. However, the number of persons who are of Jewish origin has increased from 6.8 million in 1990 to nearly 7.7 million.

- Approximately 1 million American households — 15 percent more than in 1990 — report affiliation with a Jewish congregation. Forty-one percent of them belong to a Reform temple, 41 percent to a Conservative synagogue and 18 percent to Orthodox. In 1990, 35 percent of affiliated households belonged to Reform, 43 percent to Conservative and 16 percent to Orthodox.

- More core Jews — 30 percent — identify with Reform than with any other movement. Some 24 percent identify with Conservative, 8 percent with Orthodox, 1 percent with Reconstructionist and 1 percent with Humanistic Judaism.

However, those who identify with Conservative Judaism and Orthodoxy are far more likely to be synagogue members than those who identify with Reform.

- Among unmarried Jews living with a partner, 81 percent are living with a partner who is not of Jewish origin.

- Those who say they are Jewish by religion are older, more affluent, more likely to be Democrats and more clustered in the Northeast than those who are of Jewish parentage but have no religion or who identify with a religion other than Judaism.

The average Jew who says Judaism is his or her religion is age 51 with a household income of \$72,000, while the average Jew with no religion is age 44 with a household income of \$58,000. Non-core Jews, or those with Jewish origins but who identify with other religions, tend to be younger, have lower incomes and vote Republican.

- The Northeast still is home to more Jews than any other region of the country, but the percentage living there — 38 percent — is decreasing. Meanwhile, the percentage in the South is growing, and the percentage in the West and Midwest has remained fairly stable in the past decade.

In addition to Mayer, the study was conducted by Ariela Keysar, also of CUNY's Center for Jewish Studies, and Barry Kosmin, who oversaw the 1990 study and currently is director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in London. □

The full text of the report is available on the Internet at www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/studies_index.htm.

Israeli hopes to keep rabbi free

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Israeli activist is attempting to help a rabbi accused of pedophilia avoid a trial in the United States.

Herut Lapid, who has worked to rehabilitate hundreds of Israeli convicts, is hoping to cut a deal with prosecutors in New Jersey under which Rabbi Baruch Lanner would admit guilt, bypass a trial that could lead to U.S. jail time and instead undergo treatment in Jerusalem, according to the New York Jewish Week.

Lanner, a former professional with the Orthodox Union, has been indicted on charges of abusing two girls at a New Jersey day school.

He has also been accused of molesting scores of teen-agers involved in the youth group. Lapid told the Jerusalem Post he does not normally help sex offenders, but is afraid that Lanner would be abused in prison. Lapid's efforts have been denounced by several alleged victims and their advocates. □

JEWISH WORLD

E.U. diplomat, Saudi meet

The top E.U. diplomat met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah to discuss the prince's Middle East peace proposal.

Javier Solana cut short his meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials to fly Wednesday to Saudi Arabia.

Abdullah said he plans to propose the initiative during the March summit of the Arab League, which he expects to support it, Solana said after the meeting.

While the land-for-peace formula is not new, the latest proposal is considered significant because it comes from the conservative Saudi state, guardian of the holy sites of Islam.

Rabbi charged with sex crimes

An Oklahoma rabbi has been charged with sex crimes.

Oklahoma City prosecutors filed 11 criminal charges against Rabbi Richard Marcovitz, 64, for alleged lewd acts with two girls and sexual battery of two women at a Jewish day school, according to the ABC-TV affiliate in Oklahoma City.

Marcovitz, who was arrested last week and freed on \$80,000 bond, has been placed on administrative leave from Emanuel Synagogue, which houses the Oklahoma City Jewish Day School.

The rabbi, who says he is innocent, could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Scandal surrounds philanthropist

A tax consultant at the center of a New York bribery scandal was a major supporter of many Jewish charities.

Albert Schussler, 85, is a past president of the American Friends of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, a board member of the UJA-Federation of New York and longtime supporter of the New Israel Fund, among other groups, according to *The New York Times*.

Schussler, who is a tax consultant and building owner, was indicted this week on charges of offering tax assessors bribes in exchange for positive assessments on buildings owned by him and people he represented.

New Russian extremist party

A new extremist group was founded in Moscow. Liberalism "controlled by the Masons and the Zionists" is the most destructive force in Russia, said Gen. Igor Rodionov, one of the leaders of the new People's Patriotic Party.

Other speakers at last weekend's conference called on Jews to return the riches they have plundered from Russia.

More than 185 delegates from across Russia met to establish the new group.

Visiting American Jewish leaders express unified support for Israel

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations represents the range of American Jewish opinion — but this year's solidarity mission to Israel, which took place as the Palestinian intifada intensified, found the group unusually unified.

The five-day annual mission, which wrapped up on Sunday, examined U.S.-Israel relations, the war against terrorism and other pressing security concerns. More than 100 Jewish leaders from 51 organizations participated. The packed schedule included meetings with European counterparts in London beforehand.

Despite the ideological differences that have flared in the past within the Conference of Presidents, participants this year agreed wholeheartedly on one issue — their support for the state of Israel.

Global Jewish support for Israel is "the highest it's been since the '67 war," said Mortimer Zuckerman, the Conference's president. "We recognize that we are not alone in the foxhole."

Even representatives from Americans for Peace Now, which in the past has clashed with the more right-wing elements of the Conference, felt they were speaking the same language as the other participants, said Mark Rosenblum, APN's founder and policy director.

Participants heard briefings from politicians, military officials and policy pundits, giving them a detailed picture of the past year in Israel.

"Our goal is to give the leaders information and insights to assess and address the issues confronting Israel in the year ahead," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents. "They go home with all this information and then translate it into action."

Within their first 24 hours in the country, Conference members heard from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Both in his speech to the Conference and in a nationally televised address the following day, Sharon spoke of the need to rally Israelis for a prolonged struggle with the Palestinians. In his address to the nation, he also called for buffer zones to defend Israelis from Palestinian terrorists.

Members of the Conference would not comment on the buffer zone suggestion, but did say they were disappointed with Sharon's speech to them.

He "had nothing new to say," one Conference member said. "If that makes me feel insecure, how does it feel for someone who lives here and has to deal with the security situation day in and day out?"

During their single day outside their Jerusalem hotel headquarters, Conference members watched a demonstration of a police anti-terrorism unit, heard from the naval officer who orchestrated the interception of the *Karine A* weapons boat and ate lunch with U.S. ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer.

The Tom Clancy-like operations of the undercover police unit and the *Karine A* operation renewed the members' belief in the prowess of the Israel Defense Force. But discussions of Palestinian strategy and tactics made them wonder how Israel could sustain the daily barrage of terrorist acts and incidents.

"I'm surprisingly much more optimistic about the Israeli commitment to this state of affairs," said Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. "The intifada was so new last year and people were depressed. But the Israeli will to withstand gives me a reason for optimism."

After each session, the participants asked questions.

They wanted to understand Israel's portrayal in the foreign media. They asked about anti-Semitism in Egypt and the probability of the Temple Mount being opened again for Jewish visitors. They wondered about the chances of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's political survival.

"What is clear is that a year and a half ago there was a partner for peace," said Philip Meltzer, president of ARZA/World Union, the lay organization of the Reform movement in North America. "Now we find that the Palestinian Authority isn't a patron of peace." □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Hebron's Jews take solace in tale of Persian Jews' defeat of Haman

By Simon Carroll

HEBRON (JTA) — Regaled by a singing duo on a slow tractor, most of the 700-strong Jewish community here danced and sang and waved flags past barricaded Arab storefronts in a colorful and noisy Purim parade with a distinctly political message.

Only as dusk fell and Jews returned from the communal meal celebrating the ancient Jewish victory over Haman did Hebron return to "normality": Shots rang out from the hills overlooking the tiny Jewish enclave, and Israeli soldiers returned fire.

Tuesday's shots came a day after a local Jewish teen-ager was shot through the chest and injured. Two other Israelis were shot dead, and a pregnant woman was injured, while driving near a settlement between Hebron and Jerusalem. Immediately after Tuesday's shooting, Hebron's Jewish leadership called on the government to take stern security measures.

"Start acting like Mordechai the Jew," the community statement urged Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "Face your enemies and strike them down. Before more Jews are hurt!"

The statement complained that Israeli troops are not being sent to take up positions in the hills overlooking the city's Jewish enclave, despite promises after past attacks that the army would reoccupy the hills if the Palestinians didn't honor a local cease-fire.

Still, the security situation didn't stop members of this embattled community — endangered by Palestinian attacks, and reviled by many left-wing Israelis as provocateurs and fanatics — from celebrating the holiday.

Masks and spoof announcements in the parade drove home a Purim message to the government from the small Jewish community. Jews began to return to the city in 1971 after the community that had existed here for centuries was massacred and the remnant driven out in an Arab pogrom in 1929.

While many religious Zionists read great significance into the Jewish return to Hebron — site of King David's first capital — much of the Israeli left considers the settlers in Hebron and neighboring Kiryat Arba extremists who don't deserve the sizable army contingent needed to protect them.

Only in a Purimspiel, perhaps, would dovish Foreign Minister Shimon Peres announce that he was coming to live in Hebron.

In another skit, a masked Peres with a rope around his neck is led by a Hamas terrorist, his face concealed by a balaclava, who holds a pistol to Peres' head. "For what he has done to us, he should be hanged," the man in the Peres mask told JTA.

Settlers here feel the community is being denied sufficient political backing — despite Sharon's guest "appearance" and speech in the Purim parade.

While the Jews paraded, Arabs who live near the Jewish enclave were obliged to stay inside their homes and not open their shops. That was a temporary confinement because of shooting incidents earlier in the week, but the city's Jewish community would like to see more permanent security measures.

The community statement pointed out that for the nearly 18 months of the Palestinian intifada, Jews here have lived under threat of attack from snipers in the surrounding hills. After some shooting last September, the Israeli army retook the hills for 12 days, only to withdraw again. The Purim story clearly heartens the settlers here, since they feel a kinship with the ancient Persian Jews

threatened by Haman's "terrorist" forces. Then, God "nullified" the anti-Semites' "counsel, frustrated their intention and caused their design to turn upon their own heads," in the words of the Purim prayer that is said three times during the holiday.

Earlier, on Monday evening, around 100 people celebrated Purim by dancing and singing outside a cafe in Kiryat Arba, a modern Jewish suburb of Hebron.

Close by the revelers was the gravestone and monument of Baruch Goldstein, the American-born doctor who, on Purim morning 1994, shot and killed 29 Arabs as they prayed inside Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs. Goldstein was then overpowered and killed. A handful of Jews on the Purim march defended Goldstein's actions.

David, an 18-year-old in a cast-off army helmet inscribed with the words "Born to Kill," defended Goldstein's rampage.

"We had to show support for a good Jew who was willing to be tough and teach the Arabs a lesson," he said. "We hopefully will have the same sort of salvation as happened on the first Purim."

David moved with his family from the United States to Hebron six years ago, growing up in increasingly dangerous surroundings.

Last year, Palestinian snipers shot dead Shalhevet Pass, a 10-month-old girl, in the pathway where Jewish youth regularly play. Shalhevet's picture and details of her death are inscribed on the wall where she fell, as well as in the playground, the community center and the stone-faced apartment blocks near the Avraham Avinu Synagogue.

The bullet that killed Shalhevet grazed a 12-year-old girl, who has begun writing a violence-filled novel drawing on the community's experiences. The girl lingers on Hebron street corners with friends, looking for opportunities to pelt passing Arabs with stones. That's entertainment for Sabbath afternoons while their parents are eating, learning or sleeping. Sometimes they tip over sacks of grain in front of Arab shops.

The soldiers try to stop them, but have orders not to treat the children too roughly. Israeli police are much firmer, an attitude that has brought them into confrontation with the Jewish community.

Last Friday, for instance they beat up a boy they claimed was among a group of troublemakers.

Community leaders claim police are under orders to frustrate Hebron's Jews and favor the Arabs, community spokesman David Wilder said. It's part of a longstanding left-wing effort, he says, to get the settlers to leave the West Bank.

Wilder believes Hebron's Jews have been misunderstood and maligned, but that Purim puts it all into perspective.

"We can celebrate and try to be optimistic today, knowing we are doing the right thing," he said.

He denied that extreme actions like Goldstein's had any substantial support. "If people believed that was the way, you would not have had one Baruch Goldstein, you would have had tens of them," Wilder said. "He represented nobody but himself, and was condemned by all leaders here."

Wilder said the Jewish presence in Hebron is not shrinking, as more people moved in during the past year, despite the violence. New building finally has been permitted to replace and expand what are now a series of mobile homes on the hillside where King David's first fortress stood.

"We have no intention of leaving here," Wilder said. "Just as I do not expect Jews to flee from Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Hadera, I don't expect anyone to flee from Hebron. Jews in Hebron should be protected by the security forces here, just as anywhere else in Israel." □