

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Reservists' petition rejected

Israel's High Court of Justice rejected a petition filed by a group of army reservists who refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In its ruling Monday, the court warned that the selective use of conscientious objection threatens the underpinnings of the state.

The court also said it could lead to a situation in which each army unit operates according to its own moral code.

### Israel changes U.N. reps

Israel's top two U.N. diplomats will end their terms Tuesday.

Yehuda Lancry, Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, will be replaced Wednesday by Dan Gillerman, head of Israel's Chambers of Commerce. Lancry's deputy, Aaron Jacob, will be succeeded by Aryeh Mekel, who previously has worked for Israel's Foreign Ministry.

### Tibi barred from election

Israel's Central Election Committee barred Israeli Arab legislator Ahmed Tibi from running for the Knesset. Tibi said he planned to appeal Monday's decision to the Supreme Court.

Earlier Monday, the election panel rejected a petition from the right-wing Herut Party to ban the Hadash-National Arab Union bloc, in which Tibi held the No. 3 spot, from participating in next month's elections.

### Israeli soldiers thwart infiltration

An armed Palestinian who crossed into Israel from the Gaza Strip was killed Monday in an exchange of gunfire with Israeli troops.

The man was armed with two assault rifles and grenades and was wearing an Israeli army uniform. Two other terrorists involved in the attempt to cross the security fence near Kibbutz Be'eri in the Negev escaped into Gaza.

In the West Bank, Israeli soldiers demolished the houses of the two terrorists who carried out last Friday's attack at a West Bank yeshiva in which four students were killed.

Israeli forces also arrested four Islamic Jihad members suspected of links to the terrorist cell responsible for the attack.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Senate leader Frist strong on Israel, but domestic stance is still unclear

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Like the man he replaced, new Senate majority leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) backs Israel but has few ties to American Jews on domestic issues, Jewish leaders say.

Until he was chosen last week to replace Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) as majority leader when the new Congress convenes in January, Frist was not seen as a key contact for Jewish organizations. A heart surgeon before he entered politics, Frist focused much of his domestic attention on health-care issues, and did not play a leading role on any of the domestic issues that are priorities for the American Jewish community.

Now that he will be setting the Senate's agenda, however, Frist's viewpoints will grow in importance. While he often has tried to stay out of policy debates in the past, Frist's new role will require him to take a stand on the issues of the day.

Overall, Jewish leaders say they are heartened by what they see as Frist's willingness to build consensus among his colleagues and reach across the aisle to Democrats.

"He's always been someone interested in hearing a lot of voices and trying to foster consensus," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"He's not someone I see as an ideologue, but as a practical politician."

However, Frist is a strong supporter of the Bush administration — some say the White House picked him for the post — and Jewish leaders say the White House has not been very willing to negotiate on controversial domestic issues like charitable choice. They hope Frist does not follow suit.

Sharon Bell, a prominent member of Nashville's Jewish community, said anyone who believes Frist will blindly follow the White House is underestimating the doctor.

"Bush and Frist have a very good working relationship, but Frist will be his own person," said Bell, co-chair of the United Jewish Communities' federation campaign in Nashville. "Frist will bring his own sense of how to do things."

On Israel, Frist is among a number of conservative leaders in Congress who have strong ties to the Jewish state and its lobbyists in Washington.

Frist told participants at the 2001 national conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that he gained a new-found respect for Israel after he toured the country, even putting on scrubs and observing surgeries in an Israeli hospital.

"If every American could only go to Israel and have these experiences, the very few challenges to U.S. commitments that we have today, I think they would go away based on that experience," Frist told AIPAC.

A member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Near Eastern panel, Frist supported a letter asking President Bush to reassess the U.S. relationship with the Palestinian Authority in 2001.

He also has been a proponent of foreign aid for Israel.

Bell first met Frist when he was a candidate for the Republican Senate nomination in 1994.

Frist's votes on domestic issues are unlikely to match what she calls the "liberal Washington action office" of Jewish organizations.

In the last Congress, Frist received a score of zero percent from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, to which several Jewish groups belong. The score is based

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon sends sympathies to Putin

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon conveyed his condolences to the Russian people during a New Year's call to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Referring to a deadly suicide bombing in Chechnya over the weekend, Sharon said attacks like this one are well-known in Israel, as is the pain of bereaved families.

During Monday's call, Sharon expressed the hope that bilateral relations will continue to strengthen.

Sharon also invited Putin to visit Israel in the coming year.

### Suicide bombing prevented

An Israeli soldier prevented a Palestinian from carrying out a suicide bombing Monday at a West Bank settlement.

After arousing the soldier's suspicion, the bomber was shot at the gates of the Kadim settlement, according to the Jerusalem Post.

### Taxi driver sentenced

An Israeli Arab taxi driver was sentenced to 15 years in prison for driving two suicide bombers to Tel Aviv.

Five people were killed and dozens of others wounded in the July 17 attack near Tel Aviv's old Central Bus Station.

Khaled Ashour had admitted to driving the terrorists from northern Israel to Tel Aviv.

### Bank of Israel governor scolded

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reprimanded the governor of the Bank of Israel for making pessimistic comments.

Monday's meeting took place after David Klein was quoted over the weekend as saying that in the present economic climate it would not be surprising if an Israeli bank collapsed.



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on a legislator's votes on key issues, and Jewish leaders said Frist voted against their wishes on hate crimes, charitable choice and workplace religious freedom.

Bush has said charitable choice issues will be a priority in the next Congress. Most Jewish groups have been wary of giving faith-based organizations an increased role in social service programming, fearing that the Bush administration's effort to increase partnerships between the federal government and religious institutions could erode the separation between church and state.

Frist has not spoken out much on the issue, but is expected to fall in line with the administration.

Jewish leaders also note that he has voted in favor of school vouchers, which provide government funds for students to attend parochial or private schools.

Yet on Frist's pet project, health care, there may be room to work with Jewish groups.

"It's clearly something that is not just his background, but his passion as well," Pelavin said.

Frist has shown an interest in allocating the necessary funds to fix the U.S. health-care system, Pelavin said, but tackling domestic issues with heavy price tags may be difficult as the government gears up for what could be a costly war against Iraq.

The circumstances behind Frist's ascension may aid the Jewish community's domestic agenda.

Frist was unanimously elected majority leader after Lott resigned under fire earlier this month for comments he made at a 100th birthday party for retiring Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

Lott praised Thurmond's 1948 run for president on a segregationist platform, saying that if Thurmond had won, "we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years."

Lott's comments outraged many, particularly in the African American community. Jewish leaders say Republicans now may be interested in moving ahead on civil rights bills in the interest of damage control.

"If members of the Senate feel compelled to do something under the rubric of civil rights, that may help us," said Nathan Diamant, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

The Orthodox Union is pushing for both houses of Congress to pass a bill that would guarantee an employee's freedom to wear religious clothes or participate in religious observances.

Any Republican effort to show that the party is open to minorities might also help hate crimes legislation, which Jewish groups have been lobbying for. □

## Ginossar investigation launched

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's attorney general has launched an investigation of businessman Yossi Ginossar.

Ginossar, who was employed by several Labor Party prime ministers as a personal envoy to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, is accused of helping Arafat divert P.A. money to secret Swiss bank accounts and of receiving millions of dollars in commissions.

Ginossar is also accused of lying about conflicts of interest in his role. Police officials reportedly are against the investigation because they believe most of the accusations will not lead to criminal charges, except possibly for a false statement Ginossar allegedly made to Israel's Supreme Court. □

## Israeli scouts skip jamboree

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel backed out of the World Scout Jamboree in Thailand due to security concerns.

The Thai government was unable to provide security guarantees to the Israeli contingent, said Lior Carmel, the general secretary of the Israeli scouting group.

Some 20,000 boy and girl scouts from around the world are coming to Thailand for the jamboree, which began last Friday. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Yad Vashem presses Vatican

The chairman of Yad Vashem called on the Vatican to open all its Holocaust-related archives. Avner Shalev issued the call during a conference on the Holocaust that opened Monday in Jerusalem.

Days earlier, the Vatican announced that it would open previously secret files — but that pledge “only relates to documents until the year 1939,” Shalev said. Vatican documents “pertaining to the most critical years for the Jewish people and all humanity” — that is, from the war years — should also be made available to researchers, he said.

### O.U. urges Palestinian reform

The Orthodox Union is urging the U.S. government to link support for a Palestinian state to political reform and an end to terrorism.

The O.U., which represents some 1,000 modern Orthodox congregations in North America, issued a resolution last Friday backing legislation that would tie U.S. support for Palestinian statehood to a “visible and tangible commitment to peace” by the Palestinians. The resolution was issued during the O.U.’s annual convention, held Dec. 26-29 in Rye, N.Y.

### Egyptians warned against racism

The Egyptian president’s political adviser criticized the Arab media for its anti-Israel and anti-Semitic diatribes.

In a series of articles published last week in Egypt’s *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Osama Baz also urged Egyptians not to be blinded by racist views, *The Associated Press* reported Monday.

“Our prejudices have turned us blind, so we are not able to differentiate between good Israelis and bad Israelis,” he wrote.

### Czech Jews want new Torah

The Czech Rabbinate launched a fund-raising campaign for a new Torah. Officials said the \$30,000 appeal is necessary because their current scrolls, which are about 100 years old, are wearing out.

A Prague-based scribe who was trained in Israel will write the new scroll.

### Birthright participants to wed

Two Birthright Israel participants are being married during their trip to Israel. Rabbi Michael Melchior, a legislator and former deputy foreign minister, will conduct the marriage ceremony for Megan Seltz and Ian Brandt on Tuesday. The two live in the New York borough of Queens.

Brandt is studying law at Brooklyn Law School, and Seltz is a doctoral candidate in psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University, according to the Jerusalem Post.

## Vatican opens up some archives, but wartime reckoning will take time

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The Vatican is about to open up secret archives that document its relations with Nazi Germany before World War II.

But it may be years before a full picture of the Vatican’s role in the Holocaust is known.

Responding to criticism that the wartime pope, Pius XII, did not do enough to oppose the Holocaust, the Vatican announced Saturday it would release on Feb. 15 diplomatic documents from the tenure of the previous pope, Pius XI, who reigned from 1922 to 1939.

During those years, the future Pope Pius XII served as Vatican ambassador in Berlin and Vatican secretary of state.

The documents to be released include material from the Vatican diplomatic missions in Berlin and Munich as well as a series of documents relating to the rise of Nazism and the “condemnation of racism,” papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said in a statement.

Of these documents, he said, the Berlin diplomatic archive dating from 1931 to 1934 was “nearly completely destroyed or dispersed” during the 1945 bombing of Berlin and a fire at the apostolic nuncio’s palace.

Brown University scholar David Kertzer, author of the recent book “The Popes Against the Jews,” welcomed the release of the material but said it will only provide part of the picture.

“What they are doing is opening certain parts of the material relating to Pius XI, just the archives dealing with the Holy See and Germany,” he told JTA.

“But a lot of what was going on in the rest of Europe we won’t know. Will they be opening the rest of the archives in stages or will we have to wait another two years to see anything more?” he said.

“It’s a good thing that they will be opened, but until all the rest of the documents relating to Pius XI are available, it will be hard to put them in context.”

The Vatican announced last February that it would begin opening archives relating to Pius XII, starting with the prewar years.

Documents relating to Vatican-German relations during Pius XII’s papacy itself will be made available only starting in 2005.

Pius XII became pope in 1939 and reigned until his death in 1958. Critics have long accused him of turning a blind eye to the Holocaust and allowing Jews to die because of his silence.

Scholars and particularly Jewish groups have long called for the secret archives to be opened to clarify the matter, particularly as a process to beatify Pius XII is under way.

The issue has clouded Jewish-Vatican relations.

A joint Catholic Jewish team of scholars set up to study already published wartime Vatican archives collapsed last year amid angry recriminations because it did not obtain access to all the archives. □

## Marzel candidacy upheld

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli election panel voted to allow a former member of the extremist Kach movement to run for the Knesset.

As a result of Sunday’s decision by the Central Election Committee, Baruch Marzel will run on the slate of the far-right Herut Party in the Jan. 28 elections.

Both Israel’s attorney general and the chairman of the election committee had called for barring Marzel from running, saying there was no doubt he still has ties to the outlawed Kach group and continues to hold the views of its ideological founder, the late Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Appearing before the election panel, Marzel said he no longer espouses extremist views. The Labor Party said it plans to appeal the panel’s decision. □

## ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

## Bar Mitzvah held in Ukraine marks community's coming of age

By Daniel MacIsaac

KHARKOV, Ukraine (JTA) — It's not too often that a 13-year-old boy can change the world — or at least the world in which he lives.

So, it is difficult to underestimate the significance of the recent Bar Mitzvah of Menachem Mendel Moskovitz, known as Mendel.

As the eldest son of the Venezuelan-born chief rabbi of Kharkov, his calling to the Torah represented a coming of age of the Jewish community in post-Soviet Ukraine and of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement in particular.

Mendel's story began in New York, where his parents — Moishe Moskovitz and Miriam Amzalak — met and married and made their decision to move to the Soviet Union.

In the late 1980s, Soviet Jews were finally gaining a measure of freedom but — following 70 years of suppression — lacked direction and leadership.

Jews from abroad stepped forward to fill that gap and, along in 1990 with eight-month-old Mendel in tow, the Moskovitz family headed for Kharkov.

"It's hard to look back and try to remember what it was like," Rabbi Moskovitz says. "The wall was starting to come down in Eastern Europe and changes were taking place, but we didn't know much about Kharkov and we didn't know a word of the language."

But Miriam added they soon realized they were welcome in Kharkov and that they were to be part of something special — the rebirth of the city's Jewish community.

The massive red-brick central synagogue on Pushkinskaya Street had recently been returned by the government, after having served as a state-run sports club for most of its existence, starting shortly after its construction in 1913.

Both the synagogue and the city's Jewish community were in need of a rabbi.

"When we finally reached Kharkov, two boys met us and told us in English, 'We'll be your friends,' she recalled. "On the first Friday, we had a thousand people for Shabbat and 3,000 for the first Rosh Hoshanah."

They also had concerned parents — the rabbi's father comes from Hungary and his mother from Venezuela; Miriam Moskovitz's father is from Egypt and her mother from Czechoslovakia. She was raised in Australia.

"Our parents were very proud," Miriam Moskovitz says.

Her husband remembers their families' fears. "No one knew what was going to happen," he says.

Moskovitz says his parents' uncertainty stemmed from the experiences of his father, Nissan, growing up in Eastern Europe — and the time he spent at Auschwitz. But his son's success in Ukraine over the past 13 years, including the December opening of the new Holocaust memorial in Kharkov's Drobitsky Yar, has tempered Nissan's reservations.

"My father objected to my coming here at first — but he did come to understand the importance of the work here," Moskovitz says. "Watching his son standing beside" Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma — "the symbol of Ukraine — my father had tears coming down his cheeks."

The family's decision to come to Ukraine represented a long-term commitment.

The Chabad movement sends its emissaries to the former Soviet Union — and elsewhere around the world — for longer stints than most Jewish groups.

They learn the language, buy homes and raise their children in what turns out to be a dynamic, cosmopolitan environment.

The Moskovitz family is no exception. Mendel is the oldest of eight children, which includes one little brother and six younger sisters. They all attend schools launched with the help of the rabbi and the synagogue — and they all inspire the new generation of Ukrainian Jews.

"Mendel is the city mascot and symbol," Miriam Moskovitz says. "When people see him growing up they also think about the development of the community — and he has a positive influence on the other children as well."

Mendel himself — who has curly dark hair and brown eyes — takes it all in stride.

He has a calm demeanor and an intelligent face — he speaks English, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew and he likes to study music and physics. And for someone who has become the mascot for the 40,000 Jews who live in Kharkov, he was remarkably calm for his Bar Mitzvah, despite the ramifications of the special day for the community.

"For me it's a very special day," he says, adding, "though I'm not as nervous as everyone thinks I am."

Having been born in New York, Mendel identifies as an American.

He's also traveled the globe, visiting family in both South America and Australia. He says he enjoys Ukraine, too.

It is the place he's spent most of his life and which he has also watched grow up around him. The synagogue, for instance, continues to undergo extensive renovations — thanks in part to the support of the George Rhor Foundation — but is already one of the most beautiful and arguably the biggest in the country.

"I think Chabad and the Jewish community is very respected in Ukraine," Moskovitz says. "And we're becoming a more mature community, too — when we first came here, all the help was from the outside; and now part of that help comes from the inside, and that ability to make a difference is an important part of the community."

The rabbi says Chabad's commitment to staying in Ukraine and proving itself was a key to its success in Kharkov.

"When the media first interviewed us when we arrived and asked how long we would stay, I told them I wanted to be the last Jew to shut the lights off in the synagogue," he says.

Having helped establish a kindergarten, boys and girls schools, a medical clinic and a food program for the elderly, Moskovitz is actually helping build a legacy that can be left for future generations of Jews in Kharkov and Ukraine — who will be able to build on the foundation being laid today.

On hand for the Bar Mitzvah, the rabbi's mother, Ada, commented on that progress she and her husband have witnessed over the years.

"When we came to Ukraine first there was nothing, and now there is everything — and we see our son progressing in his community, too, and that makes us very happy," she says. "It's a big challenge to be a rabbi here, but seeing the community growing is his reward." □