

IN THE NEWS

Sharon meets U.S. envoys on plan

Ariel Sharon conferred with three U.S. envoys regarding his plan for Israel to "disengage" from the Palestinians.

Thursday's visit to Jerusalem by Stephen Hadley and Elliott Abrams of the National Security Council and William Burns of the State Department was their second in less than a month.

Israel hopes the meetings will pave the way for an upcoming summit between the Israeli prime minister and President Bush.

Israel offers help to Spain

The mayor of Jerusalem offered to dispatch municipal grief counselors to bomb-rattled Madrid.

"Unfortunately, Jerusalem has extensive experience with handling such incidents," Mayor Uri Lupolianski wrote in a telegram to his counterpart in the Spanish capital after it was hit by a series of deadly bombings on Thursday that killed as many as 190 people. "As someone who has to cope with the scourge of terrorism on a monthly basis, I identify with the deep pain you are feeling and hope that this is the last attack suffered by Madrid."

Israel to scrap 20 settlements?

One in six West Bank settlements reportedly are slated for removal under a draft Israeli plan.

Ma'ariv reported that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon requested the proposal before meetings with senior U.S. envoys in Israel on Thursday.

According to the report, 15 to 20 of around 120 Jewish settlements in the West Bank could be evacuated as part of Sharon's plan to disengage from the Palestinians if the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan fails to gain traction.

Sharon's office did not comment on the report.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**



WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG



Brian Hendler

PURIM PARTY IN THE HOLY LAND

Areej Shalabi, left, an Arab teacher, stands on Sunday with her Israeli and Arab pupils. They are dressed in costumes for a Purim party at a mixed Israeli and Arab school in Jerusalem.

Delegation to anti-Semitism parley is set, and those snubbed are upset

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Several Jewish organizational leaders are fuming that they aren't included in the U.S. delegation for an upcoming anti-Semitism conference in Berlin.

Leaders of U.S. Jewish organizations are suggesting that the Bush administration is playing politics with the U.S. delegation to the conference, sponsored

by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Instead of selecting Jewish leaders who have been deeply involved in the issue of European anti-Semitism and who served on the American delegation to the first conference in Vienna last year, Bush picked Jewish leaders loyal to his re-election efforts, said those who were snubbed.

David Harris, executive director of the
Continued on page 2

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ *Delegation to anti-Semitism parley is set, and those snubbed are upset*

Continued from page 1

American Jewish Committee, said he believed this year's delegation was made with "political considerations."

"I'm sure that was a significant factor in looking at this year's delegation," said Harris, whose organization was represented last year in Vienna. "This is, after all, an election year, and that is the way Washington works."

Stephen Hoffman, the United Jewish Communities president and CEO who is on the delegation, denied any politicization.

"I'm assuming that part of what the White House is trying to do is pass the representation around," Hoffman said.

Indeed, White House officials say Bush merely was seeking to spread the wealth among Jewish leaders and holding to his policy of not reappointing people to commissions or other positions.

■

Delegates to this year's conference, announced last week, include Hoffmann; Betty Ehrenberg, director of international and communal affairs for the Orthodox Union; Jay Lefkowitz, a Washington lawyer and former domestic policy adviser in the Bush White House; Jack Rosen, president of the American Jewish Congress; and Fred Zeidman, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

Many of those on the list are active backers of Bush's re-election effort, including Zeidman, who has been raising money in the Jewish community for Bush; and Rosen, a lifelong Democrat who has actively supported Bush's Mid-

dle East policy. The Orthodox Union has been among the staunchest supporters of White House policies in the organized Jewish community.

The Bush administration previously had named former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, one of the first Democrats to openly back the president's re-election, to lead the delegation. Last year's delegation was led by another former New York mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.

Also named to the U.S. delegation this year were Stephen Minikes, the U.S. ambassador to the OSCE; Edward O'Donnell, the U.S. special envoy for Holocaust issues; and Tevi Troy, the White House liaison to the Jewish community.

Secretary of State Colin Powell told a delegation from the World Jewish Congress on Monday that he would like to attend the conference, scheduled for April 28-29. The State Department also has asked Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel to address the conference.

■

Left out of this year's delegation are representatives from the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, and NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia. All four groups were represented last year and are considered major players in combating international anti-Semitism.

"It was a bit of a surprise," said Mark Levin, NCSJ's executive director.

Leaders of the organizations are publicly downplaying the snub, suggesting they will still be in Berlin for the conference as representatives of their non-governmental organizations. Being part of the official delegation would have meant more prestige and clout, however.

"We believe that these four organizations have much to offer our government

— and at this point, whether we are part of the official delegation or not, we will make a contribution," Levin said.

But privately, many believe the choices could have an effect on what the conference accomplishes.

"This is not about egos," said an official with one of the organizations left out. "It is so easy for things to go wrong in Berlin, in real time."

Their representatives say that the four groups in question have long-standing ties

with European officials and have done much of the legwork for the upcoming conference.

"They're going to be turning to us and asking, 'Who are these guys with Koch?' " one Jewish official said.

But others suggest that these four groups are merely seeking attention, disappointed because they will not be able to highlight their participation in fund-raising appeals.

Zeidman said he would be in contact with all the members of last year's delegation to seek their assistance.

"We are doing everything we can do to integrate them into what we're doing," he said. "I personally don't want to lose their knowledge and their background."

Hoffman, too, said, "I've received quite a few offers to be briefed by people who were there last year, and I will be accepting those briefs."

But Rosen said he believed the AJCongress had a right to represent the Jewish community at the conference.

"It's clear to me that there is a place there for AJCongress," he said. "We clearly have standing as one of the choices."

Other members of this year's delegation were either unavailable or did not return calls seeking comment. The White House and State Department also did not respond to requests for comment.

'This is not about egos.'

Uninvited Jewish official

JTA WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Paula Simmonds
Marketing and Development Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more 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.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

British university cracks down

LONDON (JTA) — A British university has tightened its policy on professors' Web sites after Jewish groups complained of links to anti-Semitic material.

Birmingham University has told academics that by the end of this month, links from university-hosted sites must be

"relevant and legitimate to their academic or administrative work."

Danny Stone, head of a campaign mounted by the Union of Jewish Students, called the announcement "extraordinary news," adding, "A lot of hard work has paid off."

Israel a haven for those seeking cheap drugs

By GABRIELLA BURMAN
Atlanta Jewish Times

ATLANTA (JTA) — Looking for a new way to support the Jewish state in these turbulent times? Try buying drugs from Israel.

In recent months, companies buying discounted prescription medications from Israel and other countries have placed advertisements in U.S. Jewish newspapers and sent promotional material to Jewish groups proposing a new way to support Israel's economy while also saving money.

Consumers who rely on a heavy volume of medication to treat chronic conditions are flocking to the Web sites to purchase their drugs and support small businesses.

"It's depressing enough having to be on something for five years. I feel better knowing it's from Israel," said Janice Epstein, 51, a breast cancer survivor who lives in Columbus, Ohio.

Thus the increasingly prevalent — and questionable — practice of obtaining federally approved drugs from online business brokers is spilling over into the Jewish community.

Epstein buys Tamoxifen, a drug used to treat advanced breast cancer, from Pharmacy International, a Nevada-based company that buys drugs from wholesale distributors and drugstore chains in Israel, Spain, Sri Lanka, England and Canada.

Epstein, a former New Yorker, learned of the Israeli option through an advertisement in the New York Jewish Week.

"I asked my doctor about it and he said sure," she said.

She also asked her husband, a rabbi, if it was ethical to buy the drug from a country other than Israel if it could be bought for less.

"He said to do what was best financially," she said. Fortunately, she said, at the moment she does not have to make a choice. "Tamoxifen is cheaper in Israel than anywhere else."

Judith Aaronson, 89, of Los Angeles, purchases her medications from Pharmacy International even when she doesn't save "that much," she says.

"The drugs are mainly identical to what I would buy here. They look the same. My reasoning is to support Israel. I trust they know what they're doing," she said.

Others say supporting Israel is second-

ary to their need to save as much money as possible. According to reports, in the United States the working poor and people living on fixed incomes spend a substantial portion of their income on medication.

One 70-year-old New Jersey woman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "What would cost me \$300 here for a three-month supply costs me \$60. That's a lot of saving if you're taking something month after month."

Drugs sold overseas are often cheaper than those sold in the United States because governments in other countries either regulate the price of drugs or negotiate those prices with pharmaceutical companies.

"It's a real sad environment," said Nathan Jacobson, president and CEO of MagenDavidMeds.com, an online Israeli pharmacy that sells FDA-approved drugs to U.S. consumers. "People are forced to make choices between eating, paying the rent and taking their medication."

MagenDavidMeds.com, based in Ramat Gan, launched a direct-mail campaign last week to members of Congress, synagogues and membership organizations.

For the most part, the companies — Pharmacy International, MagenDavidmeds.com, Isrameds.com and a bunch of others — operate in a similar manner. Customers mail or fax their prescriptions and medical information to the provider, which in turn sends the prescription to a participating licensed pharmacist abroad.

Israeli law requires a doctor first to approve the prescription based on the customer's underlying medical condition before a pharmacist may fill the prescription.

The drugs then are shipped to the customer. The average shipping price is \$15.

"I want to help the Israeli economy," said Jacobson, of MagenDavidMeds. "I'm not hiding that we're for-profit, but we're spreading the wealth. It's really exciting."

Intentions notwithstanding, the practice also has been met with skepticism.

Tom Glaser, the Southeast region president of the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce, says he received information on one company six months ago, but felt it

was "not something we could get behind," because of questions the chamber had about "quality and legitimacy."

"I'd have to look into it,"

Glaser said. "I wouldn't do it without scrutiny. You'd have to prove to me that this is really benefiting the Israeli economy and it's not just a pass-through."

Glaser suggests that consumers visit the Web site www.buyisraelgoods.com for a list of U.S. retailers

that sell Israeli products.

Pharmacists, who are losing business to alternative pharmacies — last year an estimated 2 million American prescriptions were filled outside the United States — mostly are opposed to offshore prescriptions.

"My reaction is it's illegal," said Mitchel Rothholz, a Washington pharmacist who is vice president for professional practice at the American Pharmacists Association, which represents more than 50,000 pharmacy industry professionals in the United States.

The law that allows an individual to import a 90-day supply of medication is intended for products that are not available in the United States, he says.

The Bush administration, however, is not currently enforcing the law.

"You'd have to stop it at the borders," Rothholz said. "They're not doing it."

In the last two years, the online pharmacy trade out of Canada amounted to \$2 billion annually, Jacobson said.

In addition, purchasing drugs from an unknown entity "is risky," Rothholz said. "You aren't actually seeing the pharmacies these drugs are coming out of. There is no inspection."

Furthermore, he added, customers lose an "essential" relationship with their local pharmacist when they purchase medication via telephone or the Internet.

"With medications becoming more powerful, patients need someone they can talk to. Chronic and acute medications need to be kept in a central database to avoid risky drug interactions."

Ron Weddell, a majority owner of Pharmacy International, is unmoved by Rothholz' arguments.

On the issue of legitimacy, he said, "Customers take my word."

**'My reaction is
it's illegal.'**

Mitchel Rothholz

Washington pharmacist

'The Passion' showed evangelicals' true colors

By ARLENE STEIN

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (JTA) — A few years ago, a few moderate American Jewish leaders tried to allay Jewish fears that the Christian right was a threat.

American Jews had it wrong, they said: Former Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed, the **POINT** Rev. Pat Robertson and their ilk really were quite nice, even open-minded fellows — and strongly pro-Israel to boot. They were our friends.

The Anti-Defamation League publicly praised Reed's pro-Israel stance and invited Christian conservatives to ADL banquets.

Christians, in turn, organized nationwide prayer vigils and lobbying campaigns to support Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's vision of a greater Israel.

Basking in the glow of this newfound friendship, Reed proclaimed that the Jewish-Christian alliance for Israel was as important as the black-Jewish coalition for civil rights in the 1960s.

Then, a Hollywood film star produced, directed and bankrolled a cinematic portrayal of Jesus' final hours that depicted Jews as Jesus' killers, promoting an age-old anti-Semitic theme.

Fearing that the film would stoke new anti-Semitism, ADL national director Abraham Foxman pleaded that Gibson alter the film, the Pope disavow it and the Christian evangelicals that had become Foxman's allies sermonize against it — to no avail.

Foxman should have seen it coming.

For all their talk of loving Jews and Israel, conservative Christians' No. 1 priority always has been to expand their influence and numbers at home and abroad.

Several years ago, I interviewed dozens of Christian activists for a book I was writing about a campaign against gay rights that bitterly divided many Oregon communities, where I was living at the time.

When I disclosed my Jewishness to the evangelicals I met in the course of my research, they responded with boundless curiosity and kindness. A few asked if they could accompany me to synagogue, professing their great affection for the

Jewish people. Several spoke excitedly of their trips to Israel or their desire to visit there.

I found it all disarming, and even a little flattering.

But then the invitations to attend their churches arrived, along with offers to pray for me. I declined them graciously, and heard little else until my book, a critical but empathetic account of conservative Christian activists, was published.

The messages then began to get meaner and were often tinged with anti-Semitism.

"How could a Jew possibly write an unbiased account?" one asked.

Another told me to "go back to New York, where you belong."

Today, some of those activists have gone on to mobilize support for Israel, working to insure that the holy land stays in Jewish hands so that "saved Christians" like themselves can enjoy their final rapture out of harm's way.

Ever since Sept. 11, 2001, these Christians have felt further justified for their alliance with Israel by the conviction that Judeo-Christian culture must protect itself against the followers of Muhammad, in preparation for the coming "clash of civilizations."

My travels in evangelical America tell me that despite the claims of Jewish conservatives, and even moderate leaders like Foxman, conservative Christians are not our "natural allies."

In fact, most American Jews find them-

selves deeply at odds with the Christian right over a host of issues.

Witness the overwhelming support that the American Jewish community has given to the issue of gay marriage. In Massachusetts, a near unanimity of Jewish communal leaders support gay marital rights, and opinion polls nationally show Jews to be the most solidly in favor of gay marriage of any religious group.

Christian conservatives, needless to say, are chomping at the bit to make gay marriage the next major battle in the "culture war."

Even when it comes to Israel, evangelicals are out of step with American Jews and Israelis — most of whom would agree to trade land for peace if a viable peace plan were proposed.

Evangelicals, by contrast, support the maximalist ideology of the most fundamentalist Jewish settlers, who view territorial concessions as suicidal.

The Jewish-Christian alliance was based on the idea that Israel needs as many friends as it can get. But it needs good friends — friends who believe in the importance of a democratic Jewish homeland, not those whose support for Israel is based on inflexible

theological explanations for Israel's right to exist.

The rift over "The Passion" should be a wake-up call to American Jewish leaders: The Jewish-Christian evangelical honeymoon is over. It may even be time to file for divorce.

(Arlene Stein is a professor of sociology at Rutgers University and the author of "The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle Over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights.")



Arlene Stein.

Even when it comes to Israel, evangelicals are out of step with American Jews and Israelis.

AMIA case gets religious

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — A former police officer accused of playing a central role in the 1994 bombing of an Argentine Jewish center was compared to Jesus. On Wednesday, the lawyer for Juan Jose Ribelli compared the AMIA trial investi-

gation with the "historic trial" that ended with Jesus crucified. Jose Manuel Ubiera made his comments at the oral trial judging several Argentines accused of connections to the bombing, in which 85 people were killed.

Christian evangelicals are our good friends

By ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The lesson to be learned from recent differences between many American Jews and conservative Christians — on Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ" and on equal rights for gays — is not to walk away from relationships with evangelicals.

COUNTERPOINT

It is not to reject evangelical support for Israel. It is not to view the evangelical community in a simplistic way. It is not the lesson Arlene Stein offers in her JTA Op-Ed piece.

It is, rather, to reinforce a dual approach: working for and welcoming conservative Christian support for Israel at a particularly difficult time for the Jewish state and, at the same time, never backing off or toning down our principled positions on social issues about which we vehemently disagree with evangelical approaches.

One of the fascinating manifestations of the turmoil over Gibson's film has been to observe many on the left in the Jewish community saying, "We told you how bad evangelicals are," while many on the Jewish right, in a foolhardy effort to placate the religious right, defend a film with the potential to set back Christian-Jewish relations and to generate anti-Semitism.

There is too much at stake — Israel's security and the well-being of Jewish life

in America — to be blinded by narrow ideological approaches.

Israel needs the support of America today more than ever. The threats to the Jewish state from Islamic extremists, the bias of the international community and the poisoning of young people's minds have never been greater.

The role of the United States is critical not only in standing with Israel, but also in influencing others — particularly the Europeans — toward some fairness vis-a-vis Israel.

American support for Israel rests on many pillars. Most importantly, it is bipartisan.

There is no doubt, however, that evangelical activity on behalf of Israel is among the most significant elements in that support, not least because of that community's influence with President Bush. Whether it is in congressional initiatives, administration positions or public-opinion polls, evangelicals matter. It behooves us to act accordingly.

On the other hand, for many of us, conservative Christian perspectives on social issues that are critical to a healthy American society and Jewish life within that society are disturbing.

Whether it is church-state separation — at the heart of the comfort level that Jews enjoy in this country — or opposition to any religious group imposing its views on society — as seen in the struggles to maintain choice on abortion and equal rights for gays — we are deeply concerned about conservative Christian views and policy initiatives.

And we don't pull any punches in our opposition. We engage fully to prevent those religious-right policies from predominating in legislation, in the courts and in executive decision-

making.

Moreover, when some evangelical leaders articulate prejudicial views toward any religious group, as several did in anti-Muslim stereotyping, we speak up.

During the current controversy about the Gibson movie, we have been unhappy that more evangelical leaders have not acknowledged Jewish pain, the history of anti-Semitism associated with the deicide charge and the potential for recurring hatred of Jews.

But we shouldn't rush to judgment on the impact of the film on evangelical Christians. We need to be clear where we stand and encourage sensitivity and education about Jews and Jewish history.

The bottom line remains what it has always been: Evangelical Christians have never demanded a quid pro quo from American Jews for their support of Israel.

If they were to say that they would only work on Israel's behalf if American Jews halt their activity in opposition to them on social issues, we, of course, would say, "Sorry, no thanks for your support."

That has not happened.

They stand with Israel for theological reasons and because, as Christian activist Gary Bauer has said, the United States and Israel are on the front line together in the current struggle for freedom and democracy.

That's good enough for us.

(Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, is the author of "Never Again? The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism.")



Abraham H. Foxman.



Philippe Antonello

Mel Gibson directs the character of Jesus, played by Jim Caviezel, during the filming of the controversial new movie 'The Passion of the Christ.'

Wyoming mayor is Renaissance woman

By TAMI KAMIN-MEYER

BOSTON (JTA) — Barb Watters is not only the new mayor of Casper, Wyoming, she's also the savior of the city's Jewish community.

Watters is president of Temple Beth El, the only synagogue in Casper, and she's now only a class away from becoming a Reform movement-sanctioned Jewish community emissary.

This, of course, all after entering uncharted territory in January by becoming the first Jew to hold the top spot in Wyoming's largest city.

If things ever get out of hand at the city's lone synagogue — or at City Hall or at home, which Watters shares with her husband, Mark, and their two children, ages 20 and 15 — Casper's new mayor can draw from her experience as a Casper policewoman to straighten things out.

"Barb is a great example to Jews," says Rachel Komerofsky, director of outreach at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, which runs the course Watters is taking to become a community leader. The program, called Sh'liah K'hilah, trains lay persons in leading Shabbat and holiday services and meeting communities' life cycle needs.

Watters' leadership positions — in government and in shul — are the culmination of an interesting, if unusual, career path.

Twenty-four years ago, the Ohioan traded her familiar digs in the Buckeye State for the Rocky Mountains to pursue a career in law enforcement.

Those days, Watters says, landing a job in criminal justice was difficult unless you were white and male. So in 1980, when she saw an advertisement from the Casper Police Department, she applied and was hired.

"I went to Casper not knowing anyone," she says, but she moved because it was a great opportunity to gain valuable on-the-job experience. She describes the Casper of the early 1980s as "Godforsaken."

"There was tumbleweed blowing down the middle of Center Street," she says.

What was worse, the social scene for single Jewish women in Casper was bleak, to say the least.

"It was tough to meet eligible men," Watters recalls.

Fortunately, a thoughtful police ser-

geant on Watters' squad paired the rookie with his brother, who also was eligible, Jewish and looking for love. The couple went out on their first blind date in October 1981, and they were married in August 1982.

Watters retired from the force a decade later for stress-related reasons, and she began spending more and more time at the local temple.

Not long afterward, however, Temple Beth El fell into disarray when its main lay leader moved back East. Some members wanted to close the temple, but Watters and Sam Wiseman — who had taken over as lay leader after his son, the former lay leader, moved away — insisted on keeping the temple alive. They eventually prevailed.

"Without Barb there wouldn't be a temple," Wiseman says.

But Watters grew anxious about the temple's heavy reliance on Wiseman, a relative newcomer to Casper from New York who was the only one in town who could lead services.

"I started wondering what would happen to us," she says. "We can't afford a rabbi."

Somebody had to make sure the Jewish community in Casper was there to stay. Watters stepped up, enrolling in the HUC synagogue associate program, Sh'liah K'hilah, to get the Judaic education and confidence she needed to assume a larger temple leadership role.

But getting to class would not be easy.

Classes are held in Cincinnati, and the program is limited to 35 students. To achieve certification, students must take two Judaic Studies courses, online or in person, sponsored by an accredited college or university.

They must also participate in four days of practical training at one of two Reform movement institutions and demonstrate Hebrew-language skills in prayer or speech, according Komerofsky.

Though they are not rabbis, graduates of the program learn the skills and knowledge necessary to oversee many of the varying religious needs of a Reform

community, Komerofsky says.

For example, they may officiate at funerals, baby namings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and Shabbat services, but they cannot preside over weddings or conversions — and are discouraged from doing counseling.

Watters says, "I am now able to ensure that the Jewish community in Casper will keep going. As long as I'm in Casper, we'll have services."

The congregation meets Friday nights for dinner and prayer

services.

"Between 18 to 25 people come," says Watters, noting proudly that Temple Beth El is the "only Reform congregation in Wyoming with its own building."

By American standards, Wyoming's Jewish population is minuscule. It is one of only five U.S. states without a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary.

The synagogue in Casper is home to what Wiseman calls "35 member units" — families and individuals.

On High Holidays, 70 to 80 people attend services. Temple Beth El also has a Sunday school and adult-education classes.

On Purim, the synagogue's 60-year-old sanctuary usually is filled, and the synagogue holds an annual traditional seder on Passover's first night.

With the crisis at Temple Beth El over, Watters has shifted her focus to municipal concerns.

She was elected to a four-year term on Casper's City Council in 2000 and is now serving out the final year of her term. Because Casper utilizes the city manager form of government, meaning that a professional manager conducts the city's business, Watters' post as mayor is largely ceremonial.

Wiseman says Watters' talent and dedication fill him with awe.

"You can't imagine how nice it is" to have Watters around, he says. "It's a miracle."

He says he's not surprised by her political successes, either. "To become mayor in a town like Casper, you can't be a shrinking violet," he says.

**'To become mayor
in a town like
Casper, you can't be
a shrinking violet.'**

Sam Wiseman
Friend of Mayor Barb Watters

ARTS & CULTURE

New DVD marks 10th anniversary of 'Schindler's List'

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A little more than a decade ago, Steven Spielberg told this reporter that his upcoming film, "Schindler's List," would be a sure money loser.

Not too many prophecies have been this wrong.

Millions of people saw the filmmaker's three-hour-plus, black-and-white movie about a German businessman who saved 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust.

The film became a prize-laden, worldwide cultural phenomenon.

Now Spielberg is marking the 10th anniversary of "Schindler's List" with a new project.

This week, he launched the release of the film on DVD in the United States, and that will be followed by distribution in 50 countries.

Besides the movie, the DVD will include "Voices from the List," a 77-minute documentary of testimonies from actual Schindler survivors, and a behind-the-scenes tour, guided by Spielberg, of his Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

■

The Shoah Foundation, also 10 years old, is now processing the videotaped testimonies of some 52,000 survivors, liberators and other eyewitnesses of the Holocaust.

The total collection runs to about 120,000 hours, or 14 years, of round-the-clock viewing and will stand as a permanent historical and educational archive.

Billboard magazine is predicting strong demand for the DVD, partially — and ironically — fueled by Mel Gibson's controversial film "The Passion of the Christ," which has revived public debate on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

Two additional DVDs are being issued separately. "Giving Voice" shows students meeting with survivors and documenting their own experiences with intolerance.

"Broken Silence" is a collection of five films about the Holocaust. ■

A trio of Israeli films hits U.S. movie theaters

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The news that three Israeli movies are opening around the same time at commercial theaters in major American cities may not shake the foundations of Hollywood, but for the small Israeli film industry, it's a breakthrough.

For years, Israeli producers have been trying to get their movies out to U.S. audiences beyond those people who attend Jewish film festivals. With few exceptions, American distributors — the crucial middlemen — have not been willing to risk their time and money on Hebrew-language pictures.

Distributors usually cite the alleged public aversion to subtitled movies, and, truth be told, the production values and storylines of most Israeli films haven't been all that great.

But the theatrical releases of "Broken Wings," "James' Journey to Jerusalem" and "Alila" are surely encouraging signs for the younger Israeli directors coming to the fore.

One aspect is common to all three films. They focus on family, neighborhood or domestic social problems, with only the most tangential references to terrorism, suicide bombers and other events that define the image of Israel in most of the world. The films are also, at least in Diaspora eyes, unsparing in their criticism of Israeli society.

"Broken Wings," which won awards at international festivals in Berlin, Tokyo and Jerusalem, is being released by the prestigious Sony Pictures Classics.

A first feature by 34-year-old director-writer Nir Bergman, it chronicles the tribulations of the Ullman family of Haifa, whose father died recently after a prosaic bee sting.

The tragedy leaves it up to the 43-year-old mother Dafna, superbly played by Orli Zilbershatz-Banai, to keep her family afloat by working night shifts as a hospital midwife.

During the day, she deals with her two teenagers and two younger kids, who have all been traumatized by the father's death.

Much of the responsibility for looking after her siblings falls on 17-year-old Maya, who is torn between a budding career as a singer-composer and her unwelcome home duties.

Of the three films, "James' Journey to Jerusalem" is likely to be enjoyed most by American audiences.

The title character is a young black man from a remote and devoutly Christian village in Africa, who is chosen by his tribe to journey to the heavenly Jerusalem of the bible and report back on the wonders he has seen.

Starry-eyed and wild-haired, James arrives in the Holy Land only to be clapped into jail as an illegal immigrant. He is bailed out by the boss of a house-cleaning service for wealthy residents of Tel Aviv, but as a fast learner, James quickly organizes his fellow Africans into his own service crew.

Despite the film's humor, Diaspora Jews are bound to wince as James makes his way in an Israel where everybody cheats a little and the greatest fear is to be played for a sucker.

"Alila" is by veteran filmmaker Amos Gitai, who has been getting under the skin of his countrymen for 20 years with movies that dissect their warts, prejudices and insecurities.

Set in a shabby apartment building in a rundown Tel Aviv neighborhood, "Alila" is populated by a dozen characters who battle each other and their surroundings for survival and a small share of happiness.

Israelis of many backgrounds, they fight and stick their noses in each other's businesses.

Bergman believes that Israeli films are getting better, thanks largely to directors who trained in Israel's many university film schools and who cut their teeth on television productions.

A second factor is money. Practically all Israeli producers draw their budgets from national, municipal or private support funds, and despite the harsh economic conditions, the subsidies have been going up. ■

Unlike recent Palestinian films, Israel movies are focusing on personal life.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Russian Jews: Go vote!

One of Russia's two chief rabbis said Jewish voters have a religious duty to go to the polls Sunday.

"Taking part in a democratic election is not only a human right but in the first place is the fulfillment of God's commandment," Berel Lazar said Wednesday in a statement about Sunday's presidential vote. The campaign has been widely criticized in Russia as undemocratic and skewed to ensure a victory by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Progressive Jews sue Germany

The German branch of Progressive Judaism is threatening to sue the German government.

The branch says it is illegal for the government to support only the Central Council of Jews in Germany. In January 2003, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder signed a historic agreement with the Central Council, in which the \$3 million the government gives annually to the Central Council is supposed to provide for all streams of Judaism that accept matrilineal descent. There has not been an official reaction from the German government or the Central Council.

Europeans gain understanding

European leaders are showing a "greater degree of understanding" about the need for Israel's West Bank security fence, Ehud Olmert said.

Israel's deputy prime minister told a London audience Thursday that though he and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon recognize the difficulties of pulling out of the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, it is the only way to prevent further confrontation with the Palestinians.

Olmert was in England as part of a diplomatic initiative aimed at drumming up support in Europe for Israeli plans to separate from the Palestinians.

Olmert also said critics should realize that "disengagement was the only responsible strategy to ensure a Jewish majority in Israel."

MIDDLE EAST

U.S. Coordinate pullout with 'road map'

Any Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip or West Bank must be consistent with the "road map" peace plan, a senior U.S. diplomat said.

David Satterfield, the deputy assistant secretary for Near East affairs, said the United States regards Israel's plan for unilateral withdrawal as positive as long as it leaves room for the Palestinians to return to peace talks.

"If Israel now decides that its security needs dictate a certain level of disengagement, we must work and we are working that any such steps are fully consistent with the road map for peace and continue to lead to a realization of a two-state solution" to the conflict, Satterfield said Thursday at an Israel Policy Forum conference.

Jewish terror suspect

An Israeli soldier is under arrest on suspicion of arming a Jewish terror cell.

Police said Thursday that the suspect is believed to have supplied explosives to a Haifa man accused of planning a series of bomb attacks against Israeli Arabs.

The soldier's arrest brings to four the number of Israelis alleged to belong to the cell. One woman was injured in bomb attacks attributed to the suspects.

Plagued peace

Egypt's foreign minister said his country's peace with Israel is alive but flawed.

"The peace between Israel and Egypt is not dead. It has a few illnesses and viruses, but it is still alive and manifests mutual desire to see regional peace," Ahmed Maher told Israeli reporters accompanying Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom to Cairo on Thursday.

Israeli officials had hoped Shalom would secure an Egyptian pledge to help maintain security in the Gaza Strip after an Israeli withdrawal.

But Shalom's meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak ended inconclusively.

Terror alert to laborers

Israel urged Palestinian laborers coming from the Gaza Strip to shun terrorism. "We urge you to unite against these terrorists harming your livelihoods," read a pamphlet issued Thursday by the army to some 17,000 laborers who pass through the Erez border crossing to jobs in Israel.

Columbia families to visit Israel

The families of the astronauts killed last year in the Columbia space shuttle disaster will visit Israel.

The families who visit next week will meet top Israeli leaders, including President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. They also will visit sites connected to Col. Ilan Ramon, the Israeli astronaut killed when the shuttle disintegrated upon reentering Earth's atmosphere.

The families also will plant trees in a Jewish National Fund forest in honor of the seven astronauts killed.

NORTH AMERICA

Anti-Semitism rises in Canada

There were twice as many anti-Semitic incidents in Canada in 2003 as in 2001, according to a new report.

According to the Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents for 2003 released by B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights, 584 incidents were reported last year, the highest number in the 21-year history of the audit.

Two-thirds of the incidents were classified as harassment, about 30 percent as vandalism, and 2.6 percent — 15 incidents — as violence.

While threats of violence have increased steeply, the actual number of violent incidents has decreased, B'nai Brith found.

U.S.-Israel trade deficit 'troubling'

The United States is worried by its widening trade deficit with Israel, a top U.S. trade official said.

"U.S. exports to Israel have fallen every year since 2000 to the point where the deficit is approaching \$6 billion," the undersecretary of commerce, Kenneth Juster, told Reuters on Wednesday. "Given the expansive interaction with Israel, that's a troubling development." Israel exported more than \$12 billion to the United States in 2003, while U.S. exports to Israel were less than \$7 billion.

Sign leads to a resignation

A U.S. minister who posted a sign saying Jews killed Jesus resigned.

Maurice Gordon of the Lovingway United Pentecostal Church in Denver had posted the sign last month to coincide with the release of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."