

## IN THE NEWS

**G8 endorses  
Gaza pullout**

A summit of industrialized nations endorsed Israel's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. The G8 summit in Sea Island, Ga., which included Arab participants, ended its summit Thursday by calling on the diplomatic "Quartet" sponsoring Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts to meet in the region with Israelis and Palestinians before the end of the month.

**Resettling  
peacefully?**

Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip will be encouraged to relocate voluntarily as of August, Israeli sources said.

High-level discussions are under way in Jerusalem to decide on compensation packages for settlers who decide to move from Gaza to new homes in Israel.

Those who do not relocate by choice before September 2005 will be forcibly evacuated, the sources said.

The National Security Council, which is overseeing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, has recommended that the Gaza withdrawal be completed by October 2005. Few settlers are expected to take the offer of voluntary relocation.

**Probe advances in  
Paris yeshiva stabbing**

A man was placed under judicial investigation in France for attempted to murder a yeshiva student in a knife attack near Paris.

Eskander Guessine, described as an unemployed bookkeeper, is suspected of stabbing Yisrael Yiftah outside the Mekeor Yisrael Yeshiva, and of involvement in at least seven other knife attacks. The other knifings targeted non-Jews but the investigation specifies a racial motive in the initial attack.

He remains in police custody. Yiftah's condition has improved since an operation Tuesday.

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# WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

**PRIZE-WINNING PHOTO**

JTA took first prize at this year's American Jewish Press Association's annual awards for this photo by Brian Hendler of a 2003 demonstration in Jerusalem of Ethiopian Jews demanding the Israeli government expedite the process of bringing their relatives to Israel. [Story, Pg. 7]

## Is Syria's new ambassador the face of a new Damascus?

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Syria's ambassador to Washington says he wants peace with Israel because it's in Syria's interest, the region's interest and — "this might be bizarre for me to say" — Israel's interest.

Gregarious, grinning and looking younger than his 44 years, Imad Moustapha is the face of a new Syrian charm offensive

launched during a low point in Syria's relations with the West, and the United States in particular.

The Bush administration has made ending Middle Eastern regimes like the one in Syria — a hereditary autocracy and a U.S.-designated state sponsor of terrorism — a foreign policy priority.

Just before last year's U.S. invasion of Iraq, Syrian President Bashar Assad

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**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## ■ *Is Syria's new ambassador the face of a kinder, gentler Damascus?*

*Continued from page 1*

made possibly his worst gamble since ascending to power in 2000, reversing his late father's policy of giving Saddam Hussein the cold shoulder.

Not long after U.S. troops swept into Baghdad, administration officials hinted that Damascus could be next, though they later backed off those threats. Last month, President Bush slapped Syria with trade sanctions because of its failure to comply with U.S. demands to crack down on terrorism, end its weapons programs and clear out of Lebanon.

Syria expected some relief from Europe, but European nations also have reprimanded the Assad regime for flouting the West. The European Union is considering extending free-trade status to Syria, but first wants guarantees that Syria won't try to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Against that background, Assad's appointment this year of Moustapha, a computer science professor noted for his Western outlook, was no coincidence — nor were Moustapha's gestures toward Syrian Jews.

Within weeks of Bush's imposition of the sanctions, Moustapha took an official U.S. Jewish delegation to Syria. After the visit, Moustapha seems to have a newfound appreciation for the Jewish people.

"We are proud in our history that when the Jews were persecuted in Spain they came to Syria," Moustapha said in an interview with JTA at the Syrian Embassy in Washington. "This is something we

pride ourselves on."

Moustapha acknowledges the link between his outreach to Jews and Syria's desire to restart peace talks with Israel.

"Before marriage, you go into courtship," he says — though he cautions that the Syrian public is not ready for gestures to Israel itself.

Moustapha is articulate in English and works hard at maintaining an appearance of openness.

Moustapha describes the recent, affectionate receptions in Damascus and Aleppo for the 15 visiting Jewish men. The Jews represented the tight-knit Syrian-American Jewish communities in Brooklyn, Long Island and New Jersey.

Moustapha says tears welled up in his eyes when he observed delegation members, some of whom were born in the United States and never had visited Syria, weeping at the gravesite of a Jewish wise man.

Such scenes helped convince him that peace between Israel and Syria is inevitable, Moustapha says.

"The overwhelming majority of, I believe in my heart, Syrians and Israelis want to have a peace accord," he says.

That message was echoed recently by Moustapha's bosses.

In December, Assad told the New York Times he was ready to pick up negotiations with Israel where his father unceremoniously cut them off in early 2000. Syria's foreign minister, Farouk Sharaa, repeated that message this weekend in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper.

Moustapha goes even further, saying the quasi-peace Syria sought then is no longer applicable. In 2000, Syria resisted Israeli demands that peace include open borders and diplomatic exchanges.

"The moment you sign a peace treaty," he says, it ought to mean "end of the war, exchange of diplomatic relations, opening of borders, everything."

Moustapha dismisses the Syria Accountability Act, which the U.S. Congress overwhelmingly passed last year and which led to Bush's sanctions, as the product of a cabal of "neoconservatives and Israel's war camp."

Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, says, "We think

the Syrians have very serious problems, not just with Israel, not just with the United States, but with much of the global community." He added, "In a world that has condemned terrorism, Syria hosts a whole series of terrorist groups in Damascus."

Moustapha insists that Syria is meeting the provisions of the Syria Accountability Act and has shut down terrorist offices in Damascus.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), the lead sponsor of the act, said Syria has had years to meet its provisions.

"Suddenly we have this Syrian charm offensive," Engel told JTA. "These sanctions don't need to be on forever. I would love it if

Syria wants peace with Israel and a positive relationship with the United States. But we need more than words."

But Moustapha cites last year's murderous attack on a synagogue in Istanbul as an example of Damascus' changed ways: The alleged attackers fled to Syria, where they were promptly arrested and handed over to Turkish authorities.

"If you have doubts about us, or you think we are bluffing, call the bluff, come to us," he says.

A U.S. official scoffed at the assertion that the United States does not present Syria with proof of terrorist activity.

"Putting down a few shutters and cutting a couple of phone lines are cosmetic improvements," the official told JTA. "That's just using words to avoid taking responsibility."

Still, Israeli and U.S. officials are taking note of the Syrian overtures and of Moustapha in particular.

He uses terms once unthinkable for a Syrian official: He speaks of the "tragic events" of 20 years ago to describe the Syrian government's slaughter of at least 10,000 civilians in Hama during clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood. Not long ago, it was Syrian government policy to deny that any such killing took place.

Moustapha also expresses regrets about past treatment of the Syrian Jewish community, though he notes that it was not the only community singled out under Hafez Assad's regime.

"Yes, at one point we tried to prevent them from emigrating to Israel, but we have changed," he says.

**'We need more than words' from Syria.**

**Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.)**

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# Wisconsin capital debates twinning with Rafah

By LEON COHEN  
WISCONSIN JEWISH CHRONICLE

MADISON, Wisc. (JTA) — Rabbi Kenneth Katz, of Madison's Beth Israel Center synagogue, long has wanted the city to build a speed bump on a street near his shul to slow down reckless drivers.

Probably in any other city in America, that would have nothing to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But this is Madison, which, as a recent local editorial noted, "is one of the few American cities with its own foreign policy."

For the last couple of months, the city government has been debating whether or not to make Rafah, a Palestinian city of about 130,000 people on the boundary between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, the sister city of Madison.

Katz, who counts himself among Madison's Jewish opponents of the idea, said, "It is ridiculous for my City Council, which can't organize a speed bump on my street, to be wasting people's time on having a foreign policy."

But a lot of other Madisonians find this "foreign policy" issue very interesting. The controversy has been intense.

Steven Morrison, executive director of the Madison Jewish Community Council, said some City Council members told him the issue has generated more constituent contact than any other issue.

The two local dailies have taken opposite positions in editorials, with the Capital Times in favor and the Wisconsin State Journal opposed.

The controversy has spread beyond Madison, and the issue has received coverage in national and international media.

In the meantime, the city has erected a legislative speed bump to delay implementation of the sister city project while it tries to find a way to resolve the controversy.

Madison City Council President Brenda Konkel organized a meeting May 25 between members of the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project and delegates from the local Jewish community council, which is the primary opponent of the idea.

The meeting failed to resolve the matter; another meeting is scheduled for early summer.

Madison has had several sister city relationships since 1962; each sister city has received some modest funding from Madison's government.

The active proponents of the Rafah project are a group of about two dozen people, Jews and non-Jews. A Madison Jew, Jennifer Loewenstein, came up with the idea.

"I fell in love with the city and its people," Loewenstein said. "Rafah is the poorest of all Palestinian cities and has experienced all the kinds of things" Israel has done since the 1967 Six-Day War, she said, including targeted killings, army incursions and home demolitions.

In 2002, while her husband, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, was a visiting scholar in London, Loewenstein returned to Gaza and worked as a volunteer editor for the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, based in the Jabalya refugee camp.

Loewenstein said she became close friends with Al-Mezan staff members who lived in Rafah, often visiting their homes.

The Rafah-Madison project was introduced in Madison's City Council on March 24. No additional funding was required, since Madison's 2004 operating budget already included \$10,000 to support a sister city program.

But the Al-Mezan Center, which agreed to serve as an intermediary between the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project and the Rafah Refugee Committee and Municipality to "overcome initial language and cultural barriers," is a problem for some Jews.

The Al-Mezan is a member of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, which participated in the infamously anti-Israel and anti-Semitic 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

"Al-Mezan to this day has not distanced itself from or condemned" the anti-Semitic and anti-Israel messages of that conference, Morrison said.

The NGO Monitor, affiliated with the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, says that Al-Mezan's Web site "is entirely devoted to a deep-seated hatred against Israel, packed with inflammatory pieces and accusatory statements and reports."

But Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman, of Shaarei Shamayim-Madison Reconstructionist and Renewal Community, said she was told by B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group, said Al-Mezan is a "totally legitimate human rights organization."

"Other colleagues have assured me that it is not anti-Semitic," she added.

The Madison-Rafah Sister City Project's Web site also contains a statement from Al-Mezan's director, Issam Younis, saying that Al-Mezan in Durban "did not take part in any

of the activities or seminars that were described lately as an anti-Semitic and anti-Israel campaign."

Then there's Rafah itself. In recent months, Rafah has been the focus of intense Israeli military action. Because it straddles the border with Egypt, it has been the location of numerous tunnels used for smuggling weapons.

"Twinning with a Palestinian city is not a bad idea," Katz said. "But to twin with a city where at best the facts are in dispute and at worst is a major center for smuggling heavy weapons into Gaza cannot avoid being advocacy of a cause abhorrent to many citizens of Madison."

For her part, Loewenstein said, "I didn't choose Rafah because of weapons smuggling tunnels or resistance. That was not even in my mind. There was little attention being paid to Rafah at the time I chose it."

Amy Scarr, an attorney and a Jewish member of the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, said the purpose of the project is humanitarian.

"I would be hopeful that people from our group or others from Madison could travel to Rafah and from Rafah to Madison," Scarr said. "We could observe each other's form of government, their handling of green space and environmental concerns."

Jewish community official Lester Pines said that as soon as he heard about the project, he "suspected that the purpose was to participate in an ongoing attempt by many groups to delegitimize Israel." ■

**'We could observe each other's form of government, their handling of green space and environmental concerns.'**

**Amy Scarr, Madison**

Madison-Rafah Sister City Project

# Jonas: millionaire, 'tzadik' and average Joe

By JULIE WIENER  
NEW YORK JEWISH WEEK

NEW YORK (JTA) — Don't be alarmed if you visit the Newark headquarters of telecommunications giant IDT, open up the coat closet and stumble upon a lanky man in jeans, a wrinkled work shirt and running shoes.

That's just Howard Jonas, the company's 48-year-old founder, chairman and controlling shareholder, the one whose boyish enthusiasm, slightly awkward mannerisms and excitement about the little perks he enjoys as head honcho — like sushi delivered to his office for lunch every day and the opportunity to get the company swimming pool to himself — bring to mind Tom Hanks in "Big."

By the way, in addition to running this Forbes 1000 corporation, he is among the world's leading Jewish philanthropists.

Did we mention that while IDT is in the telecommunications, high-tech and entertainment industries, Jonas has no answering machine at home, dislikes and almost never uses a computer, and hates television?

That is only the beginning of the many contradictions Jonas embodies.

Jonas is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, yet largely maintains a quiet, middle-class lifestyle, residing in a relatively modest home in Riverdale with his wife, Debbie, and nine children, flying coach, driving a Ford station wagon, buying used furniture for the office and eschewing most luxuries.

Jonas, who was not raised as Orthodox, funds a range of Orthodox causes across the ideological spectrum, and he estimates that 25 to 40 percent of the 5,000 employees at IDT are Orthodox.

Yet he sympathizes with the ultra-secular Israeli party, Shinui, particularly its efforts to reduce government subsidies for the fervently Orthodox.

Entrepreneurial, hard working and visionary, Jonas has started several successful businesses since his first venture opening a hot dog stand as a teenager.

Yet he has been all but paralyzed by two major episodes of clinical depression and lives in constant fear that the illness will strike again.

Jonas and his wife give away more than 20 percent of their income to charity, favoring causes that help the impoverished.

And he is an ardent supporter of President George W. Bush and the Republican Party.

In his new book, "I'm Not the Boss: I Just Work Here," Jonas himself acknowledges, "I look at life differently than most people I know."

Quietly, Jonas and his high school sweetheart wife Debbie — the two graduated from Bronx High School of Science and Harvard University — have joined the ranks of American Jewry's largest philanthropists.

Between their family foundation and IDT's foundation, they donate approximately \$20 million a year, roughly 70 percent to Jewish causes, a whopping sum considering that most wealthy American Jews allocate the vast majority of their charity to secular causes. Jonas also is a JTA board member.

But you won't find any buildings or programs named for the couple, and it is only recently that Jonas reluctantly agreed to be honored at fund-raising dinners in hopes that it would encourage other people to donate. For Jonas, having something named for him "seems show-offy."

In addition to their institutional giving — the Jonases support scores of causes — they give to a seemingly limitless number of individuals in crisis, often referred through their rabbi, Avi Weiss, and leaders of other Jewish institutions.

"I'm privy to several things he's given to where there was no publicity attached," says Rabbi Israel "Izzy" Greenberg, executive vice president of Beth Jacob-Beth Miriam School for Girls, which the Jonases have supported for 15 years. "He does it purely for the sake of the mitzvah."

Beth Jacob-Beth Miriam, in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx, serves a largely low-income student body. The Jonases are the school's largest benefactor.

Weiss recalls the Jonases taking in for six months a poor family that was in New York receiving cancer treatment.

"There's always someone there," Weiss says. "The door is always open."

Then there are the people who come to the door. Every night, the Jonas doorbell

rings at least once with people asking for help.

Jonas has been giving away 20 percent of his income since he was a teen, and charities he aids describe him and his wife with words like tzadik and saint.

But Jonas doesn't even consider himself a philanthropist.

"When I was driving a delivery truck, no one applied this title 'philanthropist' to me," he says. "I don't think of myself any more as a philanthropist than maybe the person sitting three rows in front of me in shul who's running a sporting goods store."

In fact, Jonas is quick to say, he is far less generous than his wife, who in addition to caring for their children — they

range in age from 23 months to 22 years, and the family has never employed a nanny — visits sick people, helps parents of disabled children, drives elderly people to doctors' appointments and performs other

good-will projects.

"She really cares about individual poor people, individual sick people, people that are suffering," Jonas says. "I wish I was that kind of person. I always make resolutions to go to a nursing home and spend time with people, but I always find something else to do."

Pressed to explain the source of his generosity, this son of an insurance salesman who grew up in the Bronx says, "I always felt this incredible sense of privilege."

"There are no strings attached when it comes to any of his beneficiaries," says Rabbi Greenberg of Beth Jacob-Beth Miriam. "He doesn't get involved in the politics. He just gives based on merit. He's a real tzadik."

In his first book, "On A Roll: From Hot Dog Buns to High-Tech Billions," Jonas tells how he built IDT when he was 33, launching the company with a simple idea: cutting long-distance phone costs by re-routing international calls through the United States through something he invented called callback technology.

IDT, once housed in a converted funeral parlor in the Bronx, now is bursting at the

**N**ow Orthodox, Jonas was raised secular and as a kid was expelled from two Hebrew schools.

seams of its 18-story building in downtown Newark. It has approximately 5,000 employees worldwide (including 1,000 in its Israel office in Jerusalem), annual revenues of \$1.8 billion and ranks 746th on the Fortune 1000 list.

The Newark headquarters, where yarmulkes and black hats are a common sight, has a uniquely Jewish flavor. The company cafeteria is kosher, and multiple Jewish prayer services take place in the building throughout the day.

Raised as a secular Jew, Jonas was expelled from two Hebrew schools, one Conservative and one Orthodox. In high school, he grew interested in Orthodoxy, a shift he attributes in his book to his Orthodox grandmother and a search for answers amid the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s.

He and Debbie, who also did not grow up Orthodox, became fully observant only when the couple joined the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale synagogue as members shortly after graduating from Harvard.

Deciding to wear a yarmulke was the hardest part for Jonas.

"There's a sort of separation that naturally happens when you are overtly identified as Orthodox," he says. "Your family thinks you're different. Everyone sees you as a religious person."

Jonas does not like to be labeled. A few weeks ago, he felt self-conscious at a high-powered lunch for Bush supporters, worrying that people were making assumptions about him because of his specially ordered kosher meal.

It didn't help that while the others were enjoying shrimp salad and listening to Bush speak, Jonas was struggling to open the tightly wrapped plastic covering. He was sitting at Bush's table.

"I was trying to take off the tape as quietly as possible," Jonas recalls with a laugh. "Every time I pull it off it's like 'Screech!'" But, he said, Bush was "a nice guy. He looked over and said, 'Tough to get that kosher food out, huh?'"

That lunch was not Jonas' first meeting with the president. Photos of Jonas with Bush, and one with Vice President Dick Cheney, adorn IDT's executive suite. Jonas is an ardent Republican, and he will be one of 12 vice chairs of this summer's Republican National Convention in New York City.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Jonas has donated \$63,000 in the 2004 election cycle so far, the majority to Republican PACs and incumbents.



Michael Datikash

Howard Jonas: Telecom millionaire, Jewish philanthropist and average Joe.

Nonetheless, he is married to a liberal Democrat. This year, Debbie Jonas says she is voting for Bush because he is pro-Israel, but "it's killing me and Howard just gloats."

Despite their different politics, the Jonases say they share the same core values.

"I grew up thinking of Republicans as these evil, uncaring people, but Howard is certainly not uncaring," Debbie says. "He just has a different idea. In every fiber of his body he believes in capitalism and thinks it's best for everyone."

What is perhaps most remarkable about Jonas and IDT is that in the midst of their simultaneous rise to success, he found himself crushed by severe depression. He has suffered two months-long episodes of clinical depression.

One, which he writes about in "I'm Not the Boss," occurred in 1992-93, shortly after IDT was launched. The second bout, which he spoke about in an interview, was in 1998-99.

In the first depression, triggered by the tensions of starting a new company, he would "count the minutes until I could go downtown to see my psychiatrist and cry."

Jonas writes that he regularly contemplated suicide. The only thing that stopped him was Debbie telling him she'd never forgive him, and the kids would blame themselves and be scarred forever.

Jonas recovered on a family vacation to Israel, but five years later the depression returned. It all started when Debbie developed a tumor. It turned out to be benign, but in the three weeks between diagnosis and surgery, Jonas "completely

fell apart," his wife says.

Then a month later, their house burned down. This time the depression was even more severe. Jonas stayed at home for weeks at a time and didn't shower.

Debbie speculates that her husband's proclivity toward depression is rooted in underlying insecurity.

"He has this underlying feeling that he's not worthy of what he has and it could all disappear in a heartbeat," she says. "There's like a wounded child in there."

Jonas and his wife live in constant fear that the depression will return.

To prevent it, Jonas employs a range of strategies, including exercising regularly, taking anti-depressants "if I feel it coming on," trying to get enough sleep and staying focused on "the things that are important, like the kids."

So what was Jonas doing in the IDT coat closet? Taking computerized lessons for his latest project, learning to fly.

Jonas does not like computers. He worries they will suck up his attention for hours, preventing him from interacting with people and doing his other work. He manages to do his work and write his books without computers.

But since the flight lessons had to be done by computer, Jonas installed the machine in the closet, giving himself an incentive to finish up quickly.

In his new book, in which Jonas argues passionately for God's existence, Jonas says he is grounded by the awareness that "it could all come to an end tomorrow."

"Life has taught me to recognize that I'm not really in charge," he writes, "that I'm not the One pulling the strings." ■



# Reagan remembered as man who 'got' Jews

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Some Jewish officials said they had a certain perception of Ronald Reagan when they walked into the White House during the 1980s: that the 40th president of the United States was aloof and unfamiliar with the complexities of the issues of the day.

But when they walked out of meetings with Reagan, those perceptions often had changed.

"He was far brighter than he was given credit for," said Shoshana Cardin, former chairwoman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "He was far more knowledgeable."

Even Jewish leaders who didn't always agree with Reagan on political issues are remembering Reagan, who died Saturday at age 93 in California, as a man deeply committed to the issues the Jewish community focused on during the 1980s.

But beyond that, many remembered Reagan as a man who was open and interested in listening to the Jewish community.

"There was respect shown; there was no hostility," said Hyman Bookbinder, the longtime Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee. "With Reagan, you had disagreements but you didn't get angry with him."

Reagan's familiarity with Jewish concerns began in Hollywood, where as an actor he worked closely with many Jews, said Marshall Breger, the Jewish liaison in the Reagan White House.

Even before first running for office in the mid-1960s, he resigned from the Lakeside Country Club in Los Angeles because it refused to admit Jews.

Shortly after becoming governor of California, he spoke out in support of Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War and headlined a pro-Israel rally at Los Angeles' Hollywood Bowl.

"He had this tremendous ability to take people as they were, and he had a complete lack of social prejudice," Breger said. "It was evident when you heard him, spoke to him, came into contact with him."

The interests of the Reagan administration and American Jews intersected throughout much of Reagan's time in the White House.

As Reagan worked to end the Commu-

nist threat in the Soviet bloc, American Jews sought to give Jews there the right to practice their religion freely and emigrate if they so chose.

Reagan was able to use the Soviet Jewry issue as an entryway into negotiations with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

It framed the discussion when Gorbachev first came to Washington, a day after 250,000 people rallied there for Soviet Jews. And Reagan showed a strong personal commitment to the Soviet Jewry issue, whether he was dealing with Jewish officials or the Soviets.

When Theodore Mann returned from his first visit to the Soviet Union as head of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in 1981, the first call he received in his law office was from Reagan.

"He wanted to know all about the trip," Mann recalled. "We talked about the refusenik community, which he was very familiar with."

Cardin recalled that in 1987, when attending a White House ceremony marking the arrival in the United States of refusenik Vladimir Slepak, she began to see Reagan in a way she had not seen other presidents, especially Republicans.

"I realized we had in the White House probably the warmest, most attentive individual to individual needs," Cardin said. "This man cared."

Despite being a conservative Republican, Reagan still had a way of making a positive impression on a Jewish constituency that was mostly liberal and Democratic — even if they disagreed with him on domestic issues like abortion, taxes and social programs.

"There was no one who was better at working a crowd, and no one who was better at selling an idea, and that's why I think in hindsight the tensions faded," said Mark Pelavin, who was a legislative assistant at the American Jewish Congress in the Reagan years and is now associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Reagan's support allowed Jews to feel more comfortable backing and voting for Republicans, and it led to the growth of a Republican Jewish constituency.

"President Reagan is directly responsible for the founding of the Republican Jewish Coalition and was the leading figure in starting the movement within the Jewish community for greater support for Republican candidates," said Matthew Brooks, the group's executive director. "He set the tone, he set the direction and he really led the Republican Party to where it is now in terms of its commitment to reaching out to the Jewish community."

But there also were occasions of disagreement between Reagan and the Jews.

Reagan's decision to visit the Bitburg military cemetery in Germany in 1985, despite the fact that it contained graves of SS soldiers who had committed war-crime massacres, led to protests and a month of back-room negotiations between administration officials and Jewish leaders.

In the end, Reagan added a trip to Bergen-Belsen to appease American Jews, but many remained upset about the episode.

Reagan also upset many Jews when he pushed through the sale of powerful spy planes to Saudi Arabia.

But many Jews appreciated Reagan for his support for Soviet Jewry.

"I think it was easy to compartmentalize," said David Harris, a Soviet Jewry advocate who now is executive director of the American Jewish Committee. "Bitburg was Bitburg. It was very troubling, but this was a president who from the get-go had demonstrated his commitment to our issues."

In his 1980 debate with the incumbent President Carter, Reagan asked viewers, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"

After Reagan's death this week, Jewish officials said they saw a Jewish world that was better when Reagan left office in 1989 than when he took office.

"The decade began on very troubling and sour notes," Harris said. "The decade ended with much more optimism. I cannot attribute all of it to Ronald Reagan, but he certainly deserves his share of the credit."

(JTA Washington Bureau Chief Ron Kampeas contributed to this report.)

The interests of U.S. Jewry and the Reagan White House often intersected.

## FIRST PERSON

## It's not easy being American when everyone's Israeli

By JONATHAN UDREN

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — I've decided that I no longer want to be American. I'm not making a political statement or giving up my citizenship. I'm not even refusing to come back for a visit. I'm just sick of being American.

It's not even the fact that I'm American that really bothers me. It's more the fact that I'm not Israeli.

Sure, I have my Israeli identification card with my smiling face on it. I even have my Israeli driver's license. I'll vote in the next election, and the government will take my tax money once I start working.

But no matter how hard I try, I'm just not good at being Israeli. And even after nine months of citizenship and four months of Hebrew immersion, I still don't feel like I'm getting much closer. A few nights ago I went to the pizza shop and ordered a slice. The waitress didn't even entertain the idea of answering me back in Hebrew.

Lately I've felt a strange contrast here in Jerusalem. I feel completely at home, more at home than I felt even in America. But I feel that in so many day-to-day situations I'm standing outside peeking into the window of Israeli life.

In an attempt to escape from the English-speaking womb I've been nestled in since my aliyah, I've made some changes over the last several months.

The first step was to make an effort to improve my language skills.

I wanted not only to learn Hebrew in the morning, I wanted a chance to use my Hebrew in real-world situations. Over the last four months, spending four to five hours every day interacting with Israelis, I see the differences much clearer.

Despite their loud and tough exterior, there is a real honesty and sweetness to them. For example, the other day two men greeted each other with a huge hug, then kissed each other on the cheek.

One then put his hands on his friend's face. These were such loving and genuine gestures, unlike anything I had ever seen before between two male friends.

## JTA series on Ford Foundation among winners of AJPA awards

By JTA STAFF

NEW YORK (JTA) — "Funding Hate," JTA's investigative series on the Ford Foundation, was among three Simon Rockower Awards for Excellence in Jewish Journalism that JTA earned last week at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Press Association. The 23rd annual awards ceremony took place in Atlanta.

Black's four-part series chronicled the funding of Palestinian groups that engage in anti-Israel activity. JTA's photographer in Israel, Brian Hendler, won the top photography prize for a picture of a Falash Mura rally. Uriel Heilman, JTA's news editor, also won a Rockower for a story on a kosher food trade show.

Other winners were:

**The Louis Rapoport Award for Excellence in Commentary:** Newspapers and magazines with more than 15,000 circulation — Suzanne Singer, Moment, Washington, "Perspective." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Cynthia Dettelbach, Cleveland Jewish News, Beachwood, Ohio, "Dear Disgruntled Reader."

**Excellence in Editorial Writing:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation New Jersey Jewish News, Whippany, N.J., "The 'New Anti-Semitism' Demands a New Response." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Jewish Western Bulletin, Vancouver, "Equal Marriage Is Fair."

**The Boris Smolar Award for Excellence in Comprehensive Coverage or Investigative Reporting:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Edwin Black, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, New York, "Funding Hate." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Amy Keller, Atlanta Jewish Times, Atlanta, "Debunking the 'Neocon' Conspiracy Theory."

**Excellence in News Reporting:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Gaby Wenig, The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, Los Angeles, "Human Rights Activists or Aids to Terrorists?" Newspapers with less than 15,000 — Pauline Dubkin Yearwood, Chicago Jewish News, Skokie, Ill., "Sour Note."

**Excellence in Feature Writing:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Avner Hofstein and Amy Klein, The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, Los Angeles, "Mourning on the Fourth of July."

Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Pauline Dubkin Yearwood, Chicago Jewish News, Skokie, Ill., "Holocaust Torahs."

**Excellence in Arts and Criticism News and Features:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Boris Fishman, Forward, New York, "The Flaunted Necklace." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Fran Heller, Cleveland Jewish News, Beachwood, Ohio, "Powerful Works on Fabric a Tribute to Holocaust."

**The David Frank Award for Excellence in Personality Profiles:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Phil Jacobs, Baltimore Jewish Times, Baltimore, "Standing Tall." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Fran Nachman Putney, Atlanta Jewish Times, Atlanta, "Out of Africa: How Maritu Enyew Made a Jewish life in Atlanta." Magazines — Stacy Perman, Hadassah Magazine, New York, "Profile: Noreena Hertz."

**Excellence in Overall Graphic Design:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — j. the Jewish News Weekly of Northern California, San Francisco. Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Atlanta Jewish Times, Atlanta. Magazines — Babaganewz, Wheaton, Md.

**Excellence in Special Sections or Supplements:** Newspapers with more than 15,000 circulation — Forward, New York, "Genetics." Newspapers with less than 15,000 circulation — Intermountain Jewish News, Denver, "90th Anniversary." Magazines — Hadassah Magazine, New York, "The Matsav."

**The Noah Bee Award for Excellence in Illustration or Editorial Cartooning:** Cartoons, All newspapers — Steve Greenberg, j. the Jewish News Weekly of Northern California, San Francisco.

**The Jerusalem Foundation Award for Excellence in Jerusalem Reporting:** Samuel Katz, Moment, Washington, "The Terror Trackers." The Hadassah Award for Excellence in Writing About Women: Stephanie Siegel, The Jewish Chronicle, Pittsburgh, "Duquesne's Israeli Duke: Point Guard Fits in at Catholic School."

**The American Technion Society Award for Excellence in Writing about Scientific and Technological Innovation Out of Israel:** Wendy Elliman, Hadassah Magazine, New York, "From Cells to Cures."

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### U.S. wants Syrian action

The State Department said Syrian overtures for peace with Israel must be backed by substantive action.

Asked Thursday about the Syrian ambassador's call for renewed peace talks with Israel in an interview this week with JTA, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said Syria must show willingness to crack down on terrorism.

"We would certainly welcome any real willingness to move forward on peace with Israel and peace in the region," Boucher said. "But again, make clear that it's hard to reconcile those kind of statements with the support for violent groups that are trying to kill the dreams of the Palestinians and undermine any hopes for peace."

### Three Canadian teens charged

Three Toronto youths were charged for a spree of anti-Semitic vandalism.

Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant announced this week that hate crimes charges will be used against the three, who allegedly toppled dozens of gravestones in a Jewish cemetery, broke synagogue windows and painted swastikas and other hate messages on Jewish property in an incident earlier this year.

The suspects are Steven Vandermay, 18, and two 15-year-olds whose identities cannot legally be publicized.

### Trial on terror starts

An attorney for five Palestinian brothers charged in a U.S. court with aiding terrorism says his clients are being persecuted because of their religion.

Tim Evans made his comments Thursday as the case against the Elashi brothers began in Texas. The case precedes one expected to start this fall that says the brothers used their computer business to funnel money to Hamas.

### Envoy's father saved Jews

The daughter of a man who helped rescue Jews during World War II was named U.S. ambassador to Estonia.

The father of Aldona Wos sheltered Jews with his parents after the Nazis demolished the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.

Paul Wos also was a member of the Polish Resistance and a survivor of the Flossenbury concentration camp.

Aldona Wos, who is active in Republican politics, has served on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and was appointed ambassador this week.

### More opponents to workplace bill

A second major organization is opposing a Jewish-sponsored bill to extend religious freedom in the workplace.

In the coming days, Americans United for Separation of Church and State is expected to announce its opposition to the Workplace Religious Freedom Act.

The act would allow workers to seek accommodation for their religious practices as long as they don't create undue hardship for their employers.

The group's executive director, Rev. Barry Lynn, said the current legislation leaves too many unanswered questions.

"I see a great deal of risk here," he said. "You're introducing into law one more tool for people to try and orchestrate inappropriate lawsuits to claim religious freedom."

The Jewish community is uniting behind the bill, which the American Civil Liberties Union opposes. The Human Rights Campaign, a leading gay rights group, is opposing the bill as well.

## Higher authority gives the OK

The Conservative movement gave Hebrew National hot dogs its kosher certification. The approval for the dogs came after Triangle K began supervising Hebrew National products.

Following a tour of the company's plants, the company got the Conservative movement's seal of approval.

Hebrew National long has used the fact that its products are kosher in its advertisements, but many Orthodox Jews do not consider Hebrew National products kosher.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Fatah fugitive killed

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian fugitive in the West Bank.

The Palestinian, a member of the mainstream Fatah movement's militia, was shot dead Thursday while resisting arrest in Jenin.

### Violence against Palestinians up

The number of attacks against Palestinians by Jewish settlers is up, according to police reports. In a report issued Wednesday, West Bank police noted increased violence against Palestinians, particularly in the northern West Bank and Hebron areas.

They pointed to a 15 percent increase in the number of police files opened against settlers for attacks on Palestinians, mostly in cases involving theft of equipment, destruction of property or physical attacks.

In one incident near Hebron last week, five Jewish girls attacked a Palestinian woman pedestrian, Ha'aretz reported.

### Kach activist goes free

A far-right Israeli activist was freed after nine months in administrative detention.

Noam Federman, a member of the outlawed Kach movement from Hebron, left Ashkelon prison Thursday after a Supreme Court justice ordered his case reviewed. Federman was detained in October on suspicion of links to a group of West Bank settlers who tried to bomb an Arab school in Jerusalem.

### Israel's diabetes research triples

Israel is poised to become a leading center for the treatment and cure of diabetes.

A program at Hadassah University Hospital will triple in size by employing hundreds of researchers from around the country, and a new volunteer organization called D Cure will coordinate between all the activities relating to diabetes around Israel. The first two years of the roughly \$30 million Hadassah program will be funded by the U.S.-based Russell Berrie Foundation.

## WORLD

### Barghouti would get party's support

A French party running for the European Parliament said that if its candidates are elected they will donate their salaries to a convicted Palestinian terrorist.

The Euro-Palestine Party, which is running candidates in the Paris region in June 13 elections, said Thursday that its legislators' salaries will go to support Marwan Barghouti, who was sentenced to five life sentences by an Israeli court last month for his part in terrorist attacks against Israelis.

The party's list contains a well-known comedian recently convicted for racial incitement against Jews, as well as a number of leading Jewish anti-Zionists.