



IN THE NEWS

Israel strikes at Gaza arms factories

Israeli helicopters struck arms factories in the Gaza Strip.

Two Gaza City factories were destroyed in strikes last Friday, and a third was destroyed Saturday. One Palestinian was wounded in the strikes. Israeli security sources said the factories had produced rockets and mortars shells for Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups.

Last Friday, a sophisticated rocket fired from the Gaza Strip just missed a home in the Israeli town of Sderot.

Bush's nominees bolster Israel at U.N.

President Bush's nominees to represent the United States at the United Nations want to roll back what many consider to be the body's anti-Israel bent.

John Danforth, a former Missouri senator slated to take over John Negroponte's U.N. ambassadorship, said June 17 in Senate confirmation hearings that he wanted to end the international body's treatment of Israel as a "verbal punching bag."

Anne Patterson, nominated to be Danforth's deputy, said one of her first tasks would be to seek the elimination of the U.N.'s Division of Palestinian Rights.

Ohio imam convicted of lying on terror ties

A federal court convicted a Palestinian American imam of lying about his ties to terrorist groups when he applied for U.S. citizenship.

Fawaz Damra, imam of Ohio's largest mosque in Cleveland, could face five years in jail, deportation and loss of citizenship for lying about his ties to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups when he became a citizen in 1994.

Jurors were shown video footage of Damra raising money for Islamic Jihad and calling Jews "the sons of monkeys and pigs."

Damra's lawyers promised to appeal. Sentencing is set for Sept. 9.

WORLD REPORT

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Ten years after his death, reach of Lubavitcher rebbe still is growing

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — Ten years after the death of the last Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, his influence on the Jewish world continues to grow.

Tens of thousands of mourners were expected to visit Schneerson's grave in Queens, New York, on Tuesday for his 10th yearzeit.

Israel's two chief rabbis have called for a worldwide day of communal prayer, saying "the flourishing success of other groups, not only among chasidic circles," but among "the Jewish community at large, is in large measure due to the rebbe."

That's quite a claim — but one that Jewish figures of nearly all kinds echo.

"The rebbe has left an indelible impression on Judaism in the 20th century," said Rabbi Norman Lamm, chancellor of Yeshiva University and one of the leading figures of the modern Orthodox movement.

Though he criticized Chabad for building a "personality cult" around its rebbe, whom many Lubavitchers believe to be the messiah, Lamm said Schneerson "was an indomitable leader, a preeminent scholar and a truly creative visionary of organization. He consolidated the Chabad movement so that it was able to outlast his own life."

Lawrence Schiffman, head of the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life at New York University, will hold an academic conference next year on Schneerson's legacy, the first such conference outside the Lubavitch world.

"He showed the Jewish community that it was possible to revive and rebuild — after assimilation, persecution or both — and that this could be done on a tremendous scale," Schiffman said.

Schneerson's background was unusual for a Chasidic rabbi.

Born in 1902 in Russia into a Lubavitch family of prestigious lineage, he learned in yeshivas as a youth but went on to study math and science at the University of Berlin and the Sorbonne in Paris.

In 1941, Schneerson fled Nazi-occupied Europe for New York. In 1951, a year after the death of his father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Schneerson was proclaimed the seventh rebbe by Chabad elders.

Schneerson died childless and without appointing an heir after two years of illness during which he was unable to speak.

The lack of an heir, and some ambiguous statements Schneerson made in the years before his illness, fueled speculation among many of his followers that the messianic age might be approaching and that Schneerson was the messiah.

While many Lubavitchers still believe the deceased rebbe to be the messiah, the power of the movement's messianists decline with each passing year, though the issue remains a point of contention both inside and outside Chabad. The movement today is led by a 22-member board of rabbis that allocates funding from its headquarters in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, adjudicates disputes and serves other administrative functions.

Chabad outreach activities are growing.

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ Ten years after his death, reach of Lubavitcher rebbe continues to grow

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with more than 4,000 shlichim, or emissaries, spreading Schneerson's message in more than 70 different countries, more than double the number a decade ago.

In the former Soviet Union, for example, where the Chabad-led Federation of Jewish Communities is by far the dominant voice in Jewish life, Chabad's presence has grown from eight cities with full-time rabbis in 1994 to 102 cities today.

There's hardly a Jewish community anywhere in the world that doesn't have a Chabad center, and hardly a Jew that does not know of "the rebbe" and his shlichim.

■
Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, a towering figure in Jewish scholarship, says Schneerson almost single-handedly revived the image, and self-image, of world Jewry in the 20th century.

"Within the Jewish world, he took Judaism from being a disappearing religion to something that has a future," Steinsaltz said. He said the shift toward greater observance and greater interest in Jewish study evident today across the denominational spectrum is due to Schneerson's influence.

By sending his yeshiva students into the streets of middle America with beards and hats at a time when even observant Jews tried to hide their ethnic identity, Schneerson exerted the single greatest influence on the revival of Jewish pride in the United States, perhaps even more than the creation of the State

of Israel, Steinsaltz said.

Many Jews say they're inspired by Schneerson's teachings, especially his "sichos," or weekly talks, which still are being compiled and published at Lubavitch headquarters.

Schneerson most often is credited for his outreach work — not just the practical accomplishments, such as the creation of schools, holiday services and adult education classes, but the underlying philosophy that focused on each individual Jew with caring, warmth and love.

"The rebbe was the first person on American soil to put priority on what today is called 'kiruv,' " or drawing Jews closer to their religion, said Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive director of the Orthodox Union. "Today everyone is doing it, but there's no question that Chabad was doing it decades before anyone else."

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, also says Chabad's pioneering outreach work was the movement's most significant contribution to the Jewish world, and he gives Schneerson credit for it.

The approach of welcoming all Jews "with open hearts is a principle established by the rebbe, and that has outlasted him," Yoffie said.

■
Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, a former president of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College and now vice president of Jewish Renaissance and Renewal for the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella organization, says Schneerson's outreach methods continue to challenge the rest of the Jewish world.

"His outreach was a whole new way of reaching out to Jews wherever they are, soul by soul," he said. "The other denominations have not managed to duplicate this yet. You can see it in some of the mega-churches and in a few synagogues, but it has not happened yet in most of the Jewish community."

Chabad outreach even has changed the way Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews relate to each other, said Yale

University professor David Gelernter, a computer scientist and author whose Commentary magazine series, "Judaism Beyond Words," is being compiled into a book.

"Years ago, most black-hat Jews didn't want anything to do with the larger Jewish community," said Gelernter, who describes himself as modern Orthodox. "The rebbe's idea of being willing to talk to any Jew on his terms was revolutionary."

During the last 30 years of his life, Schneerson didn't leave Brooklyn except to make regular trips to the grave of his father-in-law, the sixth

Lubavitcher rebbe, in Queens.

But people came to the rebbe, first for personal consultations and then, when the aging Schneerson stopped receiving visitors in private, for "Sunday dollars," when Schneerson would greet thousands of people, one by one, outside his Crown Heights headquarters.

The dollar bills he handed out were intended to be used for charity, but many recipients felt they also brought good fortune.

Those who had private sessions with Schneerson recall those meetings with great emotion.

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, says Schneerson convinced him to become a rabbi.

"The rebbe was not interested in creating followers; he was interested in creating leaders," Sacks said in a memorial lecture delivered shortly after Schneerson's death.

There is a lot about Chabad that other Jewish leaders find objectionable, such as its messianism, cultural isolation and its belief that Orthodoxy is the only legitimate brand of Judaism.

But Chabad's influence has only grown.

"Increasingly, American Jews are thinking about what it means to be a Jew," Gelernter said. "That's very much the rebbe's doing."

(Sue Fishkoff is a freelance writer in Pacific Grove, California and author of "The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch.")

The Lubavitcher rebbe 'took Judaism from being a disappearing religion to something that has a future.'

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz

Leading talmudic scholar

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THIS WEEK**MONDAY**

■ The United Nations holds its first-ever conference on anti-Semitism. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Jewish organizational officials will speak. Historically, the U.N. has not addressed anti-Semitism in its own right, instead condemning it together with other forms of bigotry. Jewish groups hope the conference will result in a concrete plan of action, not just rhetoric.

■ One Voice: Jewish Women for Israel, a coalition of 11 major U.S. Jewish women's groups, holds a national call-in day to urge Congress to combat the rise of anti-Semitism worldwide.

■ Jewish women from the United States and the former Soviet Union meet for a Keshet Project conference in Moscow. Keshet opposes domestic violence and supports female small-business owners in the former Soviet Union. A subsequent boat trip up the Volga River will include briefings on the agency's programs and tours of projects in Russian provincial communities.

TUESDAY

■ President Clinton's autobiography, "My Life," hits stores. The book, which runs nearly 1,000 pages, includes details of Clinton's efforts to broker Israeli-Palestinian peace.

WEDNESDAY

■ The second annual Security Review Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe meets through Thursday in Vienna. It will focus on combating terrorism, border security and arms control.

■ U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell meets with Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat in Washington. The Bush administration has increased contacts with the Palestinian Authority because it wants the Palestinians to assume control of the Gaza Strip once Israel withdraws.

FRIDAY

■ President Bush attends the NATO summit in Istanbul through Saturday. Bush's time mostly will be spent trying to build support for a greater international role in policing Iraq, but he also will seek support for Israel's plan to withdraw from Gaza.

SATURDAY

■ Krakow opens its Festival of Jewish Culture, Europe's pre-eminent Jewish cultural festival, which runs through July 4. American actor and singing legend Theodore Bikel, the Klezmatiks and Israeli diva Chava Alberstein headline the performances.

SUNDAY

■ Educators and rabbis gather at Hofstra University, in Hempstead, N.Y., for a conference on early childhood and day-school education sponsored by the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education.

U.S., Europe disagree on fighting hate

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — Americans and Europeans agree on the need to combat anti-Semitism and racism on the Internet.

They just disagree on how to do it.

At a two-day conference in Paris last week organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, U.S. and European delegates differed sharply, and publicly, over how to maintain the boundaries between the preservation of freedom of speech and governments' fight against cyber-haters.

In a keynote speech at the conference, Robert Badinter, one of Europe's leading human rights jurists and a former French justice minister, expressed the widespread European view that democracies have the right to curb freedom of expression when it comes to anti-Semitism and racism.

"We are no longer living at the time of Thomas Jefferson," Badinter said. "We must adapt our necessary freedoms to an age where people are trying to threaten those freedoms."

Badinter's viewpoint was received positively by most of the OSCE's 55 member states. The OSCE chairman, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Salomon Passy, said that "freedom does not include the unrestricted right to spread hatred."

However, the United States strongly opposed calls by delegates to censor those who spread racism and anti-Semitism over the Internet. U.S. Assistant Attorney General Dan Bryant said the U.S. government opposes attempts that might suppress or censor Internet sites.

"The Internet is not an enemy of tolerance and human dignity," Bryant said, making reference to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. While there is "a threat to be feared," Bryant said the United States prefers to rely on "the marketplace of ideas." He said there is a certain "social value" in allowing those with unpleasant opinions to express their views.

Badinter said, "Imagine what would have happened if Dr. Goebbels had the Internet," a reference to the notorious Nazi propaganda chief. "We're not dealing anymore with someone printing 4,000 copies of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'

at the end of the 19th century," he said. "These sites reach millions of people."

Brian Marcus, director of Internet monitoring for the U.S.-based Anti-Defamation League, said the difference in attitudes toward Internet hate speech can be a plus.

"We can work together. If people use hate material in Holland, Dutch organizations can bring prosecutions while we in the U.S. can instruct the providers to remove the information from their servers," Marcus said.

While the U.S. Constitution protects the right to free speech, there still are a whole gamut of potential legal channels to crack down on hate speech, noted Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the U.S.-based Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Bryant said that the U.S. Department of Justice can take legal action against Internet hate sites without compromising the right to free expression.

He cited the example of a 1996 case in the United States in which threatening and racist e-mails were sent to Asian students at the University of California. In that case, the sender ran afoul of

federal civil rights laws that prohibit "interference by force or threat of force based on race or national origin with a person's attendance at a public university."

The offender ultimately received a one-year prison sentence.

But Badinter noted that the vast majority of hateful Web sites are hosted in the United States.

Suzette Brockhorst, secretary-general of the International Network Against Cyber Hate, said that many hate sites today go "jurisdiction shopping. A lot wind up in the U.S., where everything is protected by the First Amendment."

She said appeals to service providers to remove the Web sites are not sufficient because "it's Internet users who should be responsible for their actions."

She also noted that there are cases where U.S. officials seem not as concerned about free-speech rights, particularly when it comes to dealing with one specific international problem: "If it's done in child pornography, why can't it be done with hate speech?" she said. ■

The vast majority of Internet hate sites are hosted in the United States.

Robert Badinter

Former French justice minister

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Ohio imam convicted

A federal court convicted a Palestinian-born imam of lying about his ties to terrorist groups when he applied for U.S. citizenship.

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Jewish women alone in opposition

The National Council of Jewish Women opposes the Workplace Religious Freedom Act.

The group issued a statement opposing the act June 17, making it the first major Jewish organization to oppose legislation that otherwise has united the Jewish community — from Reform to Orthodox. "There are recurring problems related to pharmacists who use religion to justify the refusal to fill prescriptions for emergency contraception," the group's statement said, adding that the group could support the act if it were modified.

The bipartisan legislation gives employees the right to seek accommodations for their religious practices as long as the accommodations don't create undue hardship for their employers.

Broadcaster: Israel, reach out to blacks

Israel should reach out to the African American community, a black Christian broadcaster said.

The Rev. Glenn Plummer made his comments over the weekend while visiting Israel. Plummer said learning about Ethiopian Israelis was one of the main motivations for his trip.

MIDDLE EAST

British lawmakers: Israel shot at us

British lawmakers said Israeli troops fired at them during a Gaza Strip tour. The three legislators said a machine gun fired at them from an Israeli watchtower when they arrived Saturday in a marked U.N. convoy at the Rafah refugee camp, in southern Gaza. There were no casualties. Israeli army officials said they would investigate the incident.

Israel: Rafah moat remote

Israel played down its call for contract bids to dig a moat to stop Gaza Strip arms smugglers.

"There is still no decision on what exactly we will carry out," the director general of the Defense Ministry, Amos Yaron, told Israel Radio on Sunday. Last week, Yaron's ministry ran newspaper ads calling for bids to build a 2.5-mile long moat near Rafah, a Palestinian refugee camp on Gaza's southern border.

Shells fly on Israel's border

Hezbollah anti-aircraft shells hit an Israeli army base. There were no casualties from Sunday's salvo, during which shell fragments struck a base on Israel's northern border. Hezbollah regularly fires the shells in response to Israeli military flights over Lebanon.

War of the laws

Syrian lawmakers reportedly are preparing a retaliatory law that would prohibit trade with the United States.

The America Accountability Act would come in response to the U.S. Congress' Syria Accountability Act, which President Bush

signed into law last month, The Associated Press reported. The Syria Accountability Act mandates sanctions due to Syria's support for terrorism and its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Erez crossing reopened

Israel reopened its main Gaza Strip crossing point to Palestinian workers. At least 500 laborers crossed at Erez on Sunday to jobs inside the Jewish state, the first such traffic since the crossing was closed March 22 for fear of Hamas attacks after Israel assassinated Hamas' leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

Sharon challenged in court

Two Israeli lawmakers filed a petition protesting the decision to drop a bribery case against Ariel Sharon. "Corruption in the country is more of a threat than the Arabs," one of the lawmakers, Yossi Sarid of the liberal Meretz Party, told reporters Sunday after filing a High Court petition against the decision by Attorney General Menachem Mazuz to drop the case against the prime minister.

Mazuz ruled there was not enough evidence to indict Sharon in connection with bribery charges against a Sharon family friend.

WORLD

Visiting French official to skip Israel

France's foreign minister is to visit the Middle East next week but will skip Israel.

Michel Barnier's trip to the region, his first since becoming foreign minister in March, will include meetings with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

However, Barnier will not visit Israel during the trip, a decision said to be linked to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's refusal to meet him if he meets Arafat. A spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry said Barnier likely will visit Israel soon.

German law on memorials delayed

German lawmakers delayed a vote last week on a proposal to combine funding for memorials for victims of the Nazis and the Communists. Jewish groups have opposed the law, saying it draws moral equivalence between the two crimes.

Ukrainian Jewish lawmaker threatened

A Jewish lawmaker in Ukraine said he feared for his life after receiving threats following a demand that he join a pro-government party.

Evgeny Chervonenko, a member of the right-of-center opposition party Our Ukraine, told JTA that an anonymous caller told him last week to "do what that wise Jew Dobkin has done" — a reference to another Jewish member of Ukraine's Parliament, Mikhail Dobkin, who last month switched his allegiance to the pro-government Social Democratic Party.

Dobkin has denied media reports that he switched allegiances after being threatened. Also, 247 Ukrainian lawmakers supported a motion last week to investigate whether Chervonenko holds Israeli citizenship. Chervonenko, who also is vice president of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, denied the allegations.

Happy birthday, Rome synagogue

Rome's Jewish community marked the centennial of its Great Synagogue. As part of last week's ceremonies, officials presented a commemorative scroll to Brown University historian David Kertzer in honor of his father, who 60 years ago led the first services in Rome's Great Synagogue after the city's liberation from the Nazis in 1944.