

IN THE NEWS

Car bomber hits Jerusalem outskirts

A Palestinian car bomber killed at least one person at an Israeli checkpoint outside Jerusalem.

At least eight Israelis and Palestinians were wounded in Wednesday's blast at the Kalandia checkpoint.

The blast occurred as security forces converged on a suspicious vehicle.

According to security sources, a Palestinian inside the car is believed to have detonated a bomb either hidden on his person or rigged to the vehicle.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist arm of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack.

U.N. criticizes reform at P.A.

The United Nations criticized security reforms in the Palestinian Authority, calling them insufficient.

On Wednesday, the U.N.'s undersecretary general, Kieran Prendergast, said reform efforts undertaken by P.A. President Yasser Arafat, especially following a rash of violent protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip last month, were "slow and mostly cosmetic."

"This cannot be explained other than by a lack of political will to advance along that road," Prendergast told the U.N. Security Council.

Iran tests missile in range of Israel

Iran tested a missile that could reach Israel.

Iranian defense officials said Wednesday the country had carried out a field test of the latest version of its Shihab-3 medium-range ballistic missile.

Iran says its missile program is purely for deterrent purposes. The United States and Israel say Iran is seeking to develop nuclear warheads, which could be delivered by the Shihab-3.

WORLD REPORT

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For female rabbis, search for mate is like wandering through desert

By URIEL HEILMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's not easy for a rabbi to find a rebbetzin — especially if the rebbetzin is a man.

That finding was part of a new survey on the Conservative rabbinate that reported that female rabbis in the movement are about half as likely as their male counterparts to be married with children, and nearly three times as likely to be single as male Conservative rabbis.

The statistics have some wondering why these Conservative women seem to be having more trouble finding their mates than men — and whether the disparity extends to women in other Jewish religious streams.

"It is a highly atypical pattern," observed Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, director of rabbinic development at the Rabbinical Assembly, the rabbinic arm of the Conservative movement, which sponsored the study.

"I really don't know what to make of it," she said.

Noting "very unusual family patterns among female Conservative rabbis," the study found that 58 percent of women rabbis surveyed were either single or did not have children.

Called "Gender Variation in the Careers of Conservative Rabbis: A Survey of Rabbis Ordained since 1985," the survey of 233 rabbis, which was released late last month, also found that women rabbis are less likely than men to take up congregational posts or seek positions as the lead rabbi at large synagogues.

Some women in the Conservative rab-

binate said they found the statistics on marriage and parenthood unsurprising.

"A single woman rabbi dating is a difficult thing," said Rabbi Amy Eilberg, co-director of the Yedidya Center for Jewish Spiritual Direction, in northern California. "It's a very complicated process."

"There are men who are threatened by the image, threatened by the leadership level, uninterested in the level of commitment and obligation that might go with being married to a woman rabbi," said Eilberg, who was the first woman ordained by the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in 1985.

One fourth-year rabbinical student at JTS, Helene Kornsgold, said the statistics likely have as much to do with the non-traditional choice of a woman becoming a rabbi as with women's embrace of tradition in choosing Conservative ordination.

The traditional nature of Conservative rabbis' religious observance means female rabbis have a very limited pool of men from which to choose, she said. It's a Catch-22: The men must be sufficiently observant of Jewish tradition, but not so traditional that they're uncomfortable with egalitarianism — and marrying a woman rabbi.

"I think it's frustrating," said Kornsgold, who is single. "There are not a lot of people in that niche who are observant to the level that you need to be and comfortable with the egalitarian thing."

Jack Wertheimer, provost at JTS, said, "The larger question is: Where do observant Conservative Jews find their prospective

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BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

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mates? That's not such a simple matter."

A growing number of JTS rabbinical students have been finding their mates at JTS, though not only at the rabbinical school.

Rabbis commonly marry students at JTS' cantorial school, school of Jewish education, graduate program and, in some cases, undergraduate program.

"This is not a new phenomenon," Wertheimer said. "The late chancellor of the seminary, Gerson D. Cohen, used to joke that one of the most significant reasons students came to JTS was to meet a spouse."

Rabbi Joanna Samuels, the spiritual leader at New York's Congregation Hahonim, which is Conservative, said, "The challenge of finding a partner who is religiously observant and also is committed to egalitarianism and committed to the reality of having a partner who is in a public eye — it takes a very strong man to sign on for that."

Leaders of other Jewish denominations that ordain female rabbis said they did not think the gender disparity was as significant in their movements and that elements unique to the Conservative movement may make finding a mate uniquely difficult for female Conservative rabbis.

Of the three major Jewish religious denominations that ordain women rabbis, the Conservative movement is the newest to the idea, having begun ordaining women 20 years ago.

Since the movement began ordaining women in 1985, 30 percent of ordinations have been of women. Today, women comprise about 11 percent of the Conservative rabbinate.

Many of the men whom Conservative rabbis seek to marry may still be getting used to the idea, observers said.

By contrast, there have been Reform women rabbis since 1972 and female Reconstructionist rabbis since 1974.

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the executive vice president of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis, said female rabbis in his movement have not reported significantly more difficulty than men in finding mates.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Julie Wolkoff, co-president of the Reform movement's Women's Rabbinic Network, said challenges remain.

"There are a lot of conference workshops on child raising, family and the rabbinate. There are far fewer workshops on the single rabbi," Wolkoff said. "Being a single rabbi and trying to find a date is challenging in the pulpit and when everybody in the community knows who you are."

An informal survey of about 20 percent of the Reconstructionist rabbinate found that female rabbis are more than twice as likely to be single as their male colleagues.

More than denominational affiliation, career choice within the rabbinate may be a better indicator of the difficulty in finding a partner, observers suggested.

The demands of a congregational job mean it's harder to find time to date or balance work and family commitments than it is for rabbis who choose to go into Jewish education or other non-congregational work.

Ayelet Cohen, assistant rabbi at Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, a non-denominational gay-oriented synagogue in New York, said the statistics on unmarried rabbis in the Rabbinical Assembly survey are inextricably connected to

figures showing that female Conservative rabbis are far less likely to work in or seek to work in congregations.

The demands of being a pulpit rabbi simply are too great, she said.

"The traditional demands of a congregational job are not really possible unless there's one spouse at home who has the vast majority of home responsibilities," said Cohen, who is single.

"For the congregational rabbinate to remain a viable option for

people with equal roles in their marriages and people who want to be able to have full family lives — whatever that family looks like — the congregational rabbinate will have to change pretty radically."

And for those rabbis who do not have a family to manage, even finding time — and the means — to date can be difficult.

None of the movements explicitly bar a rabbi from dating a congregant, but ethics concerns make the practice somewhat difficult and, in some cases, frowned upon.

Though none of the religious movements has surveyed why rabbis — men or women — may be experiencing difficulty finding a mate, the traditional perception of a rabbi's job doubtless plays a significant role, observers said.

"My rabbi growing up was there 24/7," said one woman who asked not to be identified. "He was an excellent rabbi, but a terrible father."

"There is a perception that the rabbi is always there for everyone else's family and the rabbis' families really suffer," she said.

Given that perception — especially among rabbis in training — it's hardly surprising that pulpit positions are becoming increasingly difficult to fill.

"A decision to go into congregational work means highly compromised personal time," Cohen said. "It's becoming increasingly obvious that younger people are struggling with the decision to go into congregational work, and I think that this has a lot to do with it."

'Being a single rabbi and trying to find a date is challenging in the pulpit and when everybody in the community knows who you are.'

Rabbi Julie Wolkoff

Reform Women's Rabbinic Network

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Kerry's new Mideast adviser is praised

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The big blank space on Mel Levine's CV — being out of the inner circle of Middle Eastern diplomacy for 10 years — may be the biggest asset he brings to John Kerry, who took him on last week as his campaign's top Middle East adviser.

Levine, 62, served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California from 1983-1993, earning a reputation as one of Israel's closest friends on Capitol Hill.

For Kerry, bringing Levine on board is "a brilliant move," said Steven Spiegel, a scholar with the Israel Policy Forum, a dovish group that promotes U.S. engagement in the region. "You want someone in that kind of a position who has impeccable pro-Israel credentials, who is not controversial, who has broad respect from a variety of figures — that's hard to get these days. It shows the campaign is in close touch with the community."

Levine, who is Jewish, will play a key role in a close election in which both campaigns are chasing Jewish votes in swing states. Nonetheless, he downplayed his role in the Kerry campaign's "Middle East policy working group."

"One of the things that is unique about this presidential campaign, the principal foreign policy person for Kerry is Kerry," he said. "He's steeped in knowledge of these issues, so no foreign policy adviser should overestimate the role he or she would play."

That may be the case, but many in the Jewish community were relieved at Levine's hiring by a candidate who still is not particularly well known outside his home state of Massachusetts, and who — despite a 100 percent pro-Israel voting record during 19 years in the U.S. Senate — still is seen as an unknown quantity on Israel.

"Mel Levine is highly respected in the American Jewish community, and his appointment is a strong addition to the Kerry campaign foreign policy team," said Josh Block, spokesman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, where Levine until recently served as a board member.

"While in Congress, he was a potent force on what is now known as the House International Relations Committee, particularly on the Middle East subcommittee,

where he dealt with numerous highly important issues related to Israel's security," Block said.

Those sentiments were echoed by Abraham Foxman, the Anti-Defamation League's national director.

"Mel is an experienced congressman who during his years in Congress was active on foreign relations and a significant public advocate of support for Israel," Foxman said.

Kerry's campaign has been trying hard to close a perceived gap on the Israel issue with President Bush, who current Israeli leaders believe is the friendliest American president ever toward the Jewish state.

The Democratic candidate has made strides in recent months with a policy paper that struck all the right notes and by using his Jewish brother, Cameron, who speaks eloquently of the central role Israel plays in his family's Judaism.

Still, the pro-Israel community was concerned about a retinue of advisers — including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former U.S. ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk — who are perceived as being tainted by the failed Oslo peace process.

"These are people who reflect the policy of the past," one American Jewish official said. "Will it be a redux of failed policies?"

Levine's resume helps answer that question: He played a central role in the Democratic Party's pro-Israel policy until a year before the launch of Oslo in 1993, when he ran for the U.S. Senate but lost.

That means he's identified with Democrats from a time when the party unstintingly defended Israel against the policies of Bush's father, who was perceived as unfriendly to the Jewish state — not with the sometimes nettlesome relations that dogged U.S.-Israel relations during the Oslo process under a Democratic president.

"He has the background, but not the baggage," said another Jewish communal official, speaking anonymously.

Levine especially is identified with pro-Israel antagonism to the first Bush. It was Levine who, during a House hearing, chastised Secretary of State James Baker for publicly criticizing Israel for building in eastern Jerusalem when the Palestinians

and Arabs were doing little to engage the Israelis toward peace.

In one of the most rankling episodes in the history of U.S.-Israel relations, Baker told Levine that when Israel was serious about peace, "the telephone number is 1-202-456-1414," the number for White House switchboard.

"I remember that exchange quite vividly," Levine said with a chuckle. "I was surprised at the response: It clearly underscored the tension that existed at that time between those of us in Congress who felt Bush-

Baker were unduly harsh on the one hand, and the Bush-Baker position on the other. It crystallized that conflict."

Now a practicing lawyer, Levine didn't leave Israel behind after leaving Congress: In addition to his stint on the AIPAC board, he was named a co-chairman, along with Arab-American Institute President James Zogby, of Builders for Peace — an outfit that sought, with only moderate success, to facilitate investment in the nascent Palestinian entity.

After the Wye accords in 1998, Levine was named as a U.S. representative to a task force charged with monitoring incitement — experience that he said would help inform his advice to Kerry.

"You have to confront it directly and aggressively," Levine said. "It was understood belatedly by the Clinton administration to be an important issue. They clearly understood it, but they wish they had been more aggressive earlier."

Levine says Kerry agrees — and has proven his commitment.

"Kerry's been very direct and clear when he confronts examples of anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry," he said. "When he sees it, he knows it and calls it. He has been critical of" Egyptian President Hosni "Mubarak and the Saudis in a way other politicians should be."

Multilateralism may still be a hard sell to a U.S. Jewish community wary of a perceived pro-Arab tilt in much of the international community.

As welcome as Levine's appointment was, Jewish officials said the crucial element in understanding Kerry's approach to Israel is Kerry himself.

Bringing Mel Levine on board is a 'brilliant move.'

Steven Spiegel
Israel Policy Forum

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Powell: Arafat embodies dreams, not dialogue

Yasser Arafat embodies the Palestinian dream, but is no longer a useful peace partner, Colin Powell said.

"We know that Chairman Arafat occupies a unique place in the minds and hearts of his people. He is the embodiment of their desires and wishes," the U.S. secretary of state said Tuesday in an address to Seeds of Peace, a group that promotes Arab-Israeli dialogue.

"Mr. Arafat has this place with the Palestinian people; we do not deny that. But we have been disappointed by his actions over the years, and therefore we believe that we can only move forward if there is an empowered prime minister who will be seen by the international community, by the Israelis, by the United States, by the Quartet, as a responsible partner for peace."

The United States and Israel have boycotted the Palestinian Authority president because of evidence linking him to terrorist attacks.

Kerry attacker apologizes for Jewish jab

A prominent critic of John Kerry apologized for suggesting the candidate's Jewish background made his Catholicism suspect.

In a March posting to the conservative Web site Free Republic, Jerry Corsi wrote, "After he married TerRAHsa, didn't John Kerry begin practicing Judaism? He also has paternal grandparents that were Jewish. What religion is John Kerry?"

Kerry and his wife, Teresa, are Catholic, but Kerry discovered his Jewish ancestry about 18 months ago.

Corsi, a Catholic who co-authored a book questioning Kerry's courage during his Vietnam service, apologized Tuesday in an interview with The Associated Press.

"I don't stand by any of those comments and I apologize if they offended anybody," Corsi said.

Senators want Saudis listed

Two U.S. senators want the State Department to add Saudi Arabia to a list of religiously intolerant nations.

Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) wrote the department asking it to designate Saudi Arabia a "country of particular concern," which would subject it to economic sanctions if it does not improve treatment of religious minorities.

The letter notes that the department's own 2003 report found that religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia.

"It boggles the mind that even though our own government has concluded that religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia, the State Department still refuses to put any muscle into its relationship with Saudi Arabia," Schumer said.

A State Department official said the United States was pressing a range of human rights and anti-terrorism issues with Saudi Arabia.

MIDDLE EAST

E.U. aids Palestinians

The European Union announced an additional \$1.6 million in aid to Palestinians left homeless by Israeli military operations.

The grant is the second this year from the European Union to aid victims of home demolitions in the Gaza Strip, following \$1.2 million allocated in March.

The money will go through a U.N. agency to help provide temporary lodging for some 3,800 people whose homes were destroyed or damaged during incursions into the Rafah refugee camp in May and June.

The army entered the area to search for weapons-smuggling tunnels after seven Israeli soldiers were killed in the area.

Israeli Arab convicted in terror attack

An Israeli Arab was convicted for helping in a deadly terrorist attack.

On Wednesday, the Haifa District Court convicted Ahmed Kabhaa for his role in a November 2002 terrorist attack in Kibbutz Metzger where five people were shot dead, including two young children, and several others were wounded.

He was convicted of conspiring with a foreign agent, assisting an illegal organization and illegally possessing firearms.

Immigration to Israel down

Immigration to Israel is down by 7 percent in the first half of 2004.

The decrease is attributed to a 14 percent decline in immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The number of immigrants from Argentina is up 60 percent, with increases also from France, Britain and Ethiopia.

Outpost to stay

Israeli settlers won a court stay on the evacuation of the largest West Bank outpost.

The High Court of Justice on Wednesday extended by two weeks its suspension of a government order to remove Givat Haroeh. The outpost is the biggest of some two dozen that Israel has vowed to remove under the "road map" peace plan.

Residents told the High Court that the government earlier had promised that the outpost would not be evacuated. The government was given two weeks to respond.

WORLD

El Al terror scare

Rome's airport was briefly evacuated due to an El Al terror scare.

The 10-minute alert was called Wednesday when a passenger's shoes set off metal detectors near the El Al desk at Fiumicino Airport. But authorities soon declared it a false alarm, discovering that the Tel Aviv-bound man had anti-static copper wiring in his shoes.

Arrest linked to New Zealand desecrations

New Zealand police arrested a man who may be linked to recent attacks on Jewish graves. The man was arrested in connection with two attacks on Somali youths, the New Zealand Herald Web site reported. Police did not comment on the report.

Argentina gets new Israeli envoy

A new Israeli ambassador took up his position in Argentina. Rafael Eldad presented his credentials to the Argentine chancellery on Tuesday.

Eldad previously served in top positions at the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires between 1989 and 1992. More recently, he was Israel's ambassador in Peru.

Report: Type of circumcision can cause herpes

Eight babies were infected with herpes because of a traditional practice in which mohels suck blood from the infant's circumcised penis.

According to a report in the journal Pediatrics, the process known as metzitzah, in which the mohel takes wine in his mouth, applies his lips to the wound on the penis then sucks blood into his mouth to stop the bleeding, has led to the herpes cases in Israel and Canada during the past few years.

The report suggested ending the procedure, advising that instruments be used instead.