

IN THE NEWS
**Elder statesman
Max Fisher dies at 96**

Max Fisher, an elder statesman of the U.S. Jewish community, died Thursday in Detroit at 96.

Considered the dean of Jewish Republicans, Fisher advised every Republican president since Eisenhower. [Story, Pg. 3]

**Likud Party
rebuffs Sharon**

The Likud Central Committee in Israel voted overwhelmingly Thursday to urge the party's lawmakers to demand a referendum on the Gaza withdrawal plan.

But Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pledged to resist the call.

"The Cabinet and Parliament made decisions and these decisions will be carried out," Sharon said over catcalls from the crowd, referring to withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank slated to begin July 20.

**Clash erupts at
Moscow Jewish college**

Students and teachers at a Jewish college in Moscow clashed with local officials.

The clash occurred Thursday after officials ordered the occupants of the Maimonides Academy to vacate the premises within 24 hours.

The space was to have been given over to a foundation headed by the wife of Moscow's mayor.

About two dozen students barricaded themselves inside the building after a local official arrived to inform the school of the decision.

Maimonides Academy, a 13-year-old state-funded college, has been using the building for its Jewish and linguistics department for nine years, department dean Mikhail Chlenov, a veteran Russian Jewish leader, said.

Chlenov told JTA that officials revoked the initial order but the fate of the school remains unclear.

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WORLD REPORT

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Menachem Adelman/Agudath Israel

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

At sold-out Madison Square Garden in New York, Jews gather to celebrate Daf Yomi Siyum HaShas, the end of a cycle of daily Talmud study, and start the next one on March 1. [Story, Pg. 4]

Cardinal's remarks on salvation signal Jewish-Catholic progress

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — like the God of Jesus Christ — is the living God who maintains close and salvific relations with his people," a possible successor to Pope John Paul II told a conference of Catholics and Jews in New York on Monday.

The remarks Cardinal Angelo Scola of Venice made to nearly 100 Jewish and Catholic leaders convened by the World Jewish Congress used new and explicit language

as he expressed the sentiments of the pope, who has said that Jews and Catholics are brothers who share a covenant with God.

Scola's comments, which adopted the language of Jewish prayer and Christian theology, also reveal the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church has transformed its outlook toward Jews in the last 40 years.

"Somebody who went to sleep 50 years ago and just woke up would be astounded to hear that," said David Elcott, U.S. director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish

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■ At conference, Catholics and Jews meet, talk and learn together

Continued from page 1

Committee. "Almost no other church has anything comparable to that claim."

The conference came amid the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the document that revolutionized Catholic thinking and declared Jews not responsible for the murder of Jesus.

The conference, which hosted several possible successors to the pope, also came as worldwide news outlets monitor the pope's faltering health.

For Jewish observers, the question is whether the next pope will continue the advances made by the now-ailing John Paul II, who oversaw the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

In a visit to Israel in 2000, he prayed at the Western Wall, inserting in its cracks a typewritten note asking forgiveness for those who have caused Jewish suffering and committing Catholics to "genuine brotherhood with the People of the Covenant."

Judging by this conference, Catholic officials are determined to fulfill that legacy.

In speeches to the group, both Cardinal Claudio Hummes, another possible successor to the pope, and Cardinal Walter Kasper, a Vatican representative, reaffirmed the principles of *Nostra Aetate*, according to the WJC.

"What inspires Cardinal Hummes very much is the declaration contained in *Nostra Aetate* that indeed the Jews were chosen by God, the chosen people, and that God never ever regretted this choosing," said Rabbi Henry Sobel of Brazil, translating for Hummes, to JTA.

It's "very important that Catholics and

Jews work together in solidarity to help remedy the ills of the world," especially to promote peace, Hummes said, and added that Jews and Catholics must continue building understanding of one another.

For Scola, knowledge of the other leads to self-understanding.

For example, understanding the Passover seder sheds light on the Eucharist, just as the Hebrew Bible explains Christian liturgy, he told JTA.

In addition, the two faiths should work together to better the world, he said.

The conference, made up of an academic seminar and a tour of Jewish institutions in New York, was meant to advance Jewish-Christian relations, in part by initiating new cooperative projects.

Participants drew on past initiatives, like a joint effort to aid the impoverished in Argentina, in planning new initiatives to fight AIDS in Africa and genocide in Sudan.

Additionally, conference organizers invited Catholic leaders from places with few or no Jews as a key element in expanding the dialogue.

"We don't have that many Jews in India," said Bishop Thomas Dabre of India. "This helps me to be better predisposed" toward Jews and to working with people of other faiths.

For Jews, the conference also marked the growing participation of Orthodox Jews.

Many Orthodox Jews had abstained from such dialogue because of the pre-*Nostra Aetate* ban on theological dialogue by the late Orthodox rabbinical leader Rabbi Joseph

Soloveitchik, who was worried Jews might compromise their faith in an attempt to reach common understanding.

But that view seems to be changing.

Israel Singer, an Orthodox Jew and chairman of the WJC's governing board, told JTA that he once derided Catholic-Jewish meetings as an excuse for people to have themselves photographed with the pope.

His belief has changed, he said. "Mutual respect is something that we have learned from trying."

The Jews are looking for friends and allies around the world, he said. ■

It's 'very important that Catholics and Jews work together in solidarity to help remedy the ills of the world.'

Cardinal Claudio Hummes

Fleischer's book praises ex-boss Bush

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ari Fleischer remembers being advised by a former White House press secretary that despite the demands of the job, he should stop and smell the roses.

He recalled that advice as he toured the Auschwitz concentration camp with President Bush and the first lady in 2003. There were no roses, but much to fill the senses.

"I stood there, as an aide and as a Jew, watching the President of the United States visit the spot where my people were almost exterminated," Fleischer writes in his new book, "Taking Heat."

"I wondered what my relatives whom I never met would think if they knew I had returned to the place of their death as an aide to the President — a president who had emerged as Israel's best friend ever in

the Oval Office, a president who had profound warmth and respect for the Jewish people," writes Fleischer.

In the book, which was released by William Morrow on Tuesday, Fleischer details his impressions of watching Bush meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other Middle Eastern leaders on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and of Bush's decision to isolate the late Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

There is little new information in the book. However, Fleischer does say Bush was concerned about the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, and hoped the media would make a bigger deal of his remarks denouncing anti-Semitic acts.

Fleischer does not say much about his Jewish upbringing and does not address his decision to marry a non-Jewish woman, which surprised some in the Washington Jewish community. ■

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Max Fisher, 'dean' of Jewish life, dies at 96

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — A defining moment in the life of Max Fisher, the son of immigrant parents who became a Jewish icon, came in a meeting with President Eisenhower in 1965.

As head of the United Jewish Appeal at the time, Fisher met the past president to ask him to address the UJA on the 20th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. But during that meeting, he learned he would change history.

Eisenhower told Fisher he regretted forcing Israel out of the Sinai when he was president during the 1956 Arab-Israeli War.

"Max, if I had a Jewish adviser working for me, I doubt I would have handled the situation the same way," Eisenhower is quoted as saying in Fisher's biography, "Quiet Diplomat," written by Peter Golden.

"That's the day that Max figured out what he was going to do. He wanted to be that adviser," Golden told JTA in a phone interview.

Fisher, a man about whom superlatives are routinely used when observers try to describe his power and leadership in the American Jewish community, died in his home in Detroit on Thursday. He was 96.

"I dubbed him the dean of the community, and he certainly was until his last day," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Howard Rieger, president and chief executive officer of the United Jewish Communities, called Fisher a "quintessential Jewish leader and visionary who dominated American Jewish philanthropy for half a century." Fisher had been honorary chair of the UJC.

Fisher was born in Pittsburgh on July 15, 1908, the son of Russian immigrants. The family soon moved to Salem, Ohio.

He earned his wealth in oil and real estate. Last year, *Forbes* valued his fortune at \$775 million. The magazine ranked him at 383 on its list of the 400 richest people in America — he was also the oldest.

"He was the ultimate leader," said Robert Aronson, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, where Fisher served several years as president.

"He taught people that the most important thing you could do, no matter how wealthy or influential you were, was to

give back to your community. That was his spiritual belief."

Noting that "people listened to Max," Aronson said, "I would call him the 800-pound gorilla of the Jewish world. There won't be another one like him."

More recently, Fisher also helped finance the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Max M. Fisher Music Center, called "The Max." But Jewish philanthropy was his main mission.

None other than the son of Henry Ford, known for his anti-Semitic beliefs, became one of Fisher's best friends — and eventually a major contributor to Detroit's Jewish federation, said Joel Tauber, a Detroit resident and friend of Fisher's for 40 years.

"He was the leading Jew in North America," said Tauber, noting that his friend had led the Jewish Agency for Israel, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal.

Matthew Brooks, the executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, which Fisher founded in 1985, said, "The reason we are here today and the success we are seeing has a direct lineage to the vision he saw many decades ago. "When he gave advice, people knew not only that the advice was correct, but there were no other hidden agendas."

Those who had the chance to work with him revered his loyalty and his personal philosophy — patience and persistence.

When Tauber chaired the rocky merger of the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Jewish Appeal, Fisher stood by him when others tried to derail it. "He's just very tenacious," Tauber said.

Former Secretary of State George Shultz said he met with Fisher frequently, and worked with him to help organize a "soft landing" for Israel's inflated economy in the 1980s.

"Every pore of him was construc-

tive," Shultz told JTA. "He could criticize things but was always looking for something positive, to make it better."

Shoshana Cardin of Baltimore is a veteran Jewish leader whose politics usually were Democratic.

Fisher was unusually well connected, she said. If someone had a problem, he or she "could go to Max, and Max could help straighten it out. There is no Max who can do that now. There is no one who could take his place."

Howard Kohr, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, said Fisher was a consummate networker. "If you look over the history of the U.S.-Israel relationship, it's hard to find a single private individual who had a greater role on behalf of the State of Israel than Max," he said.

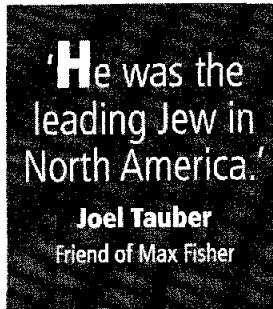
Former Secretary of State James Baker called Fisher an "extraordinary friend" who was a major force in the Republican Party.

"Back in the day when Max started, there were not a lot of prominent Jews supporting the Republican Party," Baker said. "And he built it up really darn good."

The relationships were also personal. When Fisher fell and broke his hip a year ago, he received phone calls from three presidents, Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush.

"Most guys push their way to the front," said Rabbi Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress. But not Max Fisher. Instead, "the front came to him." ■

(JTA Washington Correspondent Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed



OBITUARY



Courtesy of Republican Jewish Coalition

Max Fisher meets with President Bush in the Oval Office.

Jews gather to celebrate joy of Talmud study

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Henry Lowenthal of Baltimore used to prepare for business trips, he'd pack a bag full of typical travel sundries — along with a photocopied packet of pages from the Talmud.

As a top financial officer of greeting card giant American Greetings Corp., he traveled a lot, and he didn't want to miss a single day of Talmud study. Even now, Lowenthal, 73 and retired, travels frequently. But he no longer needs photocopied pages. Instead, he slips a CD-ROM that contains the entire Talmud into his laptop computer and studies.

Lowenthal joined some 27,000 other mostly Orthodox Jews at New York's Madison Square Garden on Tuesday night to take part in a celebration marking the completion of the study of the entire Babylonian Talmud, one page a day for 2,711 days in a row.

All together, more than 100,000 Jews gathered across North America on Tuesday night to mark the completion of the 11th cycle of the Daf Yomi, or daily page, since it emerged in 1923.

Celebrations at the Garden and the Continental Airlines Arena in New Jersey were the largest, packing in some 46,000 Talmud enthusiasts, according to Agudath Israel of America, which organized the events.

Daf Yomi groups also celebrated in Albany, N.Y.; Baltimore; Chicago; Salt Lake City; Birmingham, Ala.; and other U.S. cities. Another 100,000 took part elsewhere in the

world, including Israel, Venezuela, South Africa, Argentina, Russia and Australia.

Lowenthal is one of thousands of learners who are taking advantage of technology to bolster their study of the ancient Jewish text, which codifies the ancient rabbinic discussion and commentary on Jewish civil and religious law. The 21st century has seen the proliferation of several technological approaches being applied to Torah learning, beyond the CD-ROM.

There are also Webcasts of Talmud lessons, instruction over the phone and now, hot off the assembly line, what's known as the "ShasPod," a hand-held 20 gigabyte iPod loaded with mp3 files containing a complete set of talmudic shiurim, or lessons, by a rabbi named David Grossman.

"No computer necessary," reads an ad on the ShasPod Web site. "No technical knowledge needed. The

ShasPod is sent to you fully ready for the next cycle of the Daf HaYomi."

But for many of those who attended the massive Siyum HaShas at Madison Square Garden, the ceremony was a time to celebrate the old-school approach to studying the ancient text of rabbinic writings: hunching over an open book.

"Most people here, we grew up learning in yeshiva. We're used to opening up the Gemarah and learning," Moshe Usher Reinitz, a New York-area computer programmer, said, referring to a part of the Talmud.

"This other stuff is just supplemental."

The top floors of the Garden were filled with women, most of whom came to support their husbands or sons. They were, some said, taken in by the sheer breadth of the event.

"This is a once in

a seven-and-a-half-year event; it's amazing to see this many Jewish people together in one place," said Melissa Gardonyi, 26, from suburban New York.

In Los Angeles, more than 2,600 people filled the Walt Disney Concert Hall, where the early evening event drew a mostly Orthodox crowd and plugged into the East Coast gatherings by satellite.

Michelle Kleintert, Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Jewish community liaison, sat in the women's section, as did fraternal twin sisters Shoshana and Hadassah Klerman. They were among busloads of teenagers from local Orthodox high schools who attended the event.

"This reflects the continuity that we have with Torah throughout the ages, from the beginning of time until now," said Shoshana, a sophomore at the all-girls Beis Yaakov High School in Los Angeles's Fairfax District.

"You think that, OK, the Holocaust happened and these kinds of things happen and people try to wipe us out but we're still here."

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, called this year's event "one of the most significant events in American Jewish history; it shows the renaissance of the Jewish people after the Holocaust, not only in population but in terms of a recommitment to their heritage."

Leading rabbinic authorities have dedicated the Siyum HaShas as a memorial to the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Howard Gluck, a deputy Los Angeles city attorney, came with his two sons even though he did not undertake the lengthy Daf Yomi course.

"I wanted my children to be part of a very unified day celebrating the completion and the starting of the Talmud," he said. "It's an amazing thing to have a program where the same page is being studied in Los Angeles and New York, and in Poland and in Moscow and in Israel. The main thing is, we are all part of one family, the Jewish people."

After a fervent minchah, the afternoon

This is a once in a seven-and-a-half-year event; it's amazing to see this many Jewish people together in one place.

Melissa Gardonyi

New York resident

STUDYING THE TALMUD



Chanan Tigay

Orthodox men head toward a sold-out Madison Square Garden in New York to celebrate Siyum HaShas on Tuesday.

prayer service, at the Garden in New York, a series of rabbinical luminaries addressed the crowd from a huge dais on the arena floor that usually is home to the New York Knicks basketball team.

Overhead, beneath championship banners celebrating the Knicks and hockey's Rangers — and beneath the upper decks, which were reserved for women — scenes of gatherings from Calgary to Poland were piped in on large screens.

In the halls outside the arena itself, men chatted — with each other and on cell phones — and waited in long lines at concession stands to buy soft drinks, Twizzlers and potato chips.

After the last of the Talmud's 2,711 pages was taught — it came from the order called Niddah and dealt with issues of women's purity — the Madison Square Garden ceremony, which had been somber to that point, took on a wedding-like tone, with loud music and energetic dancing.

As a singer crooned "Siman tov u'mazal tov," thousands of black-clad men rose to their feet, grasped each others' hands and began swaying, dancing, shuffling.

A sea of bobbing black hats animated the arena. Hundreds of men slapped their hands onto fellow revelers' backs and formed a giant human train that circled the Garden's Second Promenade, causing the floor to shake.

Half an hour later, the crowd returned to their seats as the cycle was begun anew, with the teaching of the first page of the first order, Berachot.

The practice of studying a page of Talmud each day originated in 1923 at the First International Congress of Agudath Israel in Vienna.

It was designed not only to bring uniformity to the study of Talmud, but unity to Jews worldwide. It seems to have worked.

"Wherever you go in the world, you can find a Daf Yomi shiur and join them, and they're at the same page you're at," said Lowenthal.

Asked how it felt to be among so many Jews who were simultaneously completing study of the Talmud, Lowenthal began to cry.

"It's so emotional, I can't describe it," he said.

Seven and a half years ago, Josh Goldberg started learning the Daf Yomi. After three years, though, he stopped.

"You have to understand the amount of commitment" this takes, he said. "This is like going to the gym every day without missing."

Goldberg said he planned to start the new cycle Wednesday morning at 9 a.m. sharp, with a shiur being Web-cast at the Web site www.yadavraham.org.

"The Daf changes your life," he said. "It gives you structure."

For Jaime Zonana, 20, who comes from Mexico City and has spent the last year studying at a yeshiva on Staten Island, the event was about unity.

"You feel like you're here with the whole people," he said. "It gives you strength."

This year, for the first time, a program called Jewish Unity Live created a series of national programs with Jewish performers, films and celebrations coinciding with the siyum, planned to attract a non-Orthodox audience.

Organizer Rabbi Yitzchok Oratz said that Jewish Unity Live wanted to "take the energy and excitement of tens of thousands of Jews gathering and extend it to Jews of a more secular background, to allow those who haven't been studying Talmud to join in unity with their brothers and sisters who have."

In Scottsdale, Ariz., a Jewish Unity Live

event sponsored by the Phoenix Community Kollel attracted nearly 500 people.

Hadassah Lieberman shared stories of life on the presidential campaign trail with her husband, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), and musicians, including songwriter Peter Himmelman, entertained the crowd.

Rabbi Zvi Holland, director of the Phoenix kollel, said, "Jewish Unity Live seeks to share the joy and unity of Torah study with every Jew."

And for those who study, the connection runs deep.

"This is what the Jewish people is all about," said Daniel Himmel, who attended the Daf Yomi event in Boston.

"The reason the Jewish people are in the world is to do God's will through the commandments and to elevate mankind to standards of ethics, morality and love of God.

"We accomplish this by learning Torah."

(JTA intern Jordana Rothstein, David Finnigan of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, Shira Schoenberg of the Jewish Advocate in Boston, and the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix contributed to this report.)

Women share in joy at celebration

By JORDANA ROTHSTEIN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The eighth and ninth floors of Madison Square Garden, usually reserved for less-wealthy sports fans, were home for a few hours this week to a few thousand women attending the celebration of the completion of daily Talmud study.

Crowding in for single-sex elevator rides, the girls, wives, mothers and senior citizens attending Tuesday night's event excitedly wished each other "mazel tov."

For the most part, these women were not celebrating their own completion of the Talmud-reading cycle, known as Daf Yomi, because the reading generally is done by men.

For them, the event held a different meaning, one that they still found moving.

Many of the women standing on line waiting to use the men's rooms — reserved for the evening for women only — were brimming to share their excitement.

Rachel Avigdor, 25, had arrived with a busload of people from her synagogue in Connecticut. "Many of these men finishing are only able to do it because their wife supports their learning," she said. "The wife will get that merit, too."

She added: "When I get married, I hope

my husband will be a part of this, too."

One of the key speakers of the evening, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe, offered similar sentiments.

"We owe a big thanks to our wives, who have given up so much that rightfully belongs to them, for the sake of Torah," he said.

The women attending the event said they didn't mind their supporting roles, expressing a shared joy in the personal and global experience of the occasion, which was celebrated around the world.

"People all over the world are gathering for this. I have such a sense of pride — not just for myself, but for the entire Jewish people," said Ellen Silver, a 66-year-old woman from Brooklyn. Two of her sons completed the Talmud cycle this year.

Whatever their reasons for attending, the women seated in the Garden's top floors were a lively part of the celebration.

Enjoying kosher danish specially stocked in the concession stands for the occasion, talking on cell phones to friends and family or clapping and bouncing as men sang and danced below when the final words were recited, the women were a lively presence, even though they were not visible to the majority of the attendees. ■

Argentina to own up to cover up, probe blast

By LARRY LUXNER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — From their seventh-floor perch in downtown Buenos Aires, prosecutors Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Martinez Burgos have a sweeping view of this city's most important public square, the bustling Plaza de Mayo.

But the two men have had no time to enjoy the panorama. As chief prosecutors investigating the 1994 bombing of the AMIA headquarters only a few miles away, for the last six months Nisman and his chief deputy, Burgos, have been up to their necks in documents associated with the worst terrorist attack in Argentine history.

This office was taking center stage this week, when President Nestor Kirchner handed the two men top-secret files from Argentina's intelligence agency, SIDE.

The files are said to contain evidence never before seen by prosecutors attempting to discover who was behind the AMIA attack. Eighty-five people died in the attack, and some 300 were injured.

"This is the first time in the history of Argentina that secret information is being declassified and given to people not associated with the intelligence services," Burgos told JTA in an exclusive interview.

The ceremony where Kirchner released the files to Nisman and Burgos came a day before top Argentine officials meeting at the Washington headquarters of the Organization of American States are to assume legal responsibility for past administrations' mishandling of the investigation.

In so doing, they hope to re-establish Argentina's credibility with the OAS and defuse a 1999 lawsuit brought before the group's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights by Memoria Activa, a non-profit group of AMIA victims' relatives.

Burgos says it's time to stop deceiving victims and their families about what really happened. "Unlike previous investigators, we're going to work absolutely according to the letter of the law, no matter where it takes us," he vowed.

Until now, the prosecutors' office, the nerve center of the AMIA investigation, had been off-limits to journalists. But last week JTA became the first news organization to get past the front door, which is guarded by 24-hour security personnel and a bank of closed-circuit TV monitors.

The office, which takes up an entire floor in an old building used mainly by the

government, was established after the conclusion of a three-year trial last year. After that trial, five policemen accused of complicity in the AMIA attack were released for lack of evidence.

Case documents fill up 658 volumes, each 200 pages long. Another 600 volumes detail each of the 30 or so lines of investigation, according to Burgos. "We are now ordering every one of these volumes," he said. "It will take us four to five months to read and cross-reference this case."

Burgos, 37, is a criminal prosecutor with 10 years of experience under his belt. He had expected to be able to start working on the case as soon as he was appointed to his post, but bureaucracy got in the way.

"For the last four or five months, we've been trying to find resources to train people and set up the office so we could do our job," Burgos said. "We have lost all this time just dealing with bureaucracy. You have to put out three formal bids in order to buy a computer. We have to struggle just to get an Internet connection."

Nisman, who is Jewish, and Burgos, who isn't, oversee a staff of some 45 people and an annual budget of slightly more than \$300,000. Burgos says he needs more than twice that amount. "We're struggling to increase it," he said.

In the meantime, the two men are overworked. They arrive at 8 a.m. and generally don't leave before 9:30 p.m.

"We're going to take every action necessary to determine who made the bomb and where it was made, which groups entered the country from outside, how they entered, and who participated in this act locally," Burgos said.

"The Ministry of Justice owes a debt to Argentine society because it didn't advance this investigation for six years while it was being coordinated" by investigative judge Juan Jose Galeano, who was taken off the case and now faces trial for impropriety in his management of the case. "How can it be that 10 years after the attack, we still can't determine the ID number of the chassis of the vehicle used in the bombing?"

Just outside Burgos' office, an elaborate blackboard displays a diagram of the investigations being pursued. Among them are

looks at the "Triple Frontier," where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet; the so-called "pista Siria" or "Syrian connection"; the local Muslim community; and "Testigo C" or Witness C, an investigation that involves a foreign intelligence service that Burgos declined to identify.

According to Alejandro Rua, the top Justice Ministry of-

ficial responsible for the AMIA investigation, the prime suspects are now in either Lebanon or Iran.

"Iranians, Colombians, foreigners who lived in Argentina for several years were part of this plan," Rua told the Buenos Aires Pagina 12 last Friday. "It appears that Samuel el-Reda," a Colombian convert to Islam and husband of a secretary of the former Iranian cultural attache, Moshen Rabbani, "and a man from the Triple Frontier with a mobile telephone under the name of Andre Marquez coordinated the operation."

Rua deflected criticism of his agency, saying that important evidence exists that implicates both Rabbani and el-Reda.

"It's not like we're beginning now," he told Pagina 12. "What happened is that we have been working for these last 10 years with a false and incriminating hypothesis. The judges decided that this was done intentionally, a political game aimed at covering up the financial links between Carlos Menem and Iran, before and during the electoral campaign which he won."

In a later interview with JTA, Rua said his office is "fully cooperating" with Nisman and Burgos.

Rua, who is to testify before the OAS next week in Washington, said the efforts by the government of President Nestor Kirchner to solve the AMIA bombing stand in stark contrast to those of Menem, who at some point may be called to testify in what many now believe was a massive coverup.

"We admit that the Argentine government at the time violated the human rights of the defendants," said Rua. "We must recognize the reality of these facts. We can't tell lies." ■

Unlike previous investigators, we're going to work absolutely according to the letter of the law, no matter where it takes us.

Marcelo Martinez Burgos
Prosecutor

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

■ A Jewish activist was elected vice chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee. Susan Turnbull, who serves on the board of the National Jewish Democratic Council, has worked with Hillel and formerly served as the DNC's deputy chair.

■ Rita Kushner, Jonathan Mayer, Jim Prusky and Inna Simakovsky were appointed to the board of directors of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

■ Glenn Easton was appointed president of the North American Association of Synagogue Executives, an affiliate of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

■ Kenneth Bialkin, chairman of the board of the America-Israel Friendship League, was also elected as its president.

■ Lisa Palmieri-Billig was appointed as the American Jewish Committee's representative in Rome and liaison to the Vatican.

■ Cathy Siegel Weiss was appointed chair of the board of trustees of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles.

■ Rick Harkavy was appointed executive director of the American Jewish Congress' newest satellite office, in Seattle.

■ Jack Zigon was appointed senior adviser for media and strategy at the Israel Project, and Jennifer Packer was appointed senior adviser for media relations.

■ Rabbi Richard Bieler was appointed senior executive director for community affairs at Yeshiva University.

■ Emily Blanck was hired as the first full-time project director for Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa.

■ Fran Ginsburg was appointed executive director of the International Sephardic Education Foundation.

HONORS

■ The UJA-Federation of New York gave its Judge Joseph M. Proskauer Award to Arthur Siskind, while Jeremy Temkin received the federation's James H. Fogelson Young Leadership Award.

■ The Anti-Defamation League gave its second ADL Daniel Pearl Prize to New Yorker staff writer and Middle East correspondent Jeffrey Goldberg at its national executive committee meeting in Palm Beach, Florida.

■ The Office of the President of Israel, in co-sponsorship with the Jewish Agency for Israel, gave its President's Prize in Jewish Education to Alvin Schiff.

■ The Covenant Foundation awarded a grant to the Council of Jewish Emigre Community Organizations for its Jewish education program.

European Jewish educators meet

By LAUREN ELKIN

PARIS (JTA) — In a cafe in Paris, an elementary school teacher from Germany is talking shop with a school principal from Spain.

"What kind of material are you using to teach the Shoah to the really young students? I just found a great book. It's English, but in German it's called, 'When Your Grandparents Were Young!'"

"Oh really? I use a poem called 'Here We Don't Have Butterflies.'"

"Does anyone use 'Maus?'" the German teacher asks, referring to Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel, looking around the table at the other educators gathered for a quick coffee break. "I only use it with a group that already knows something about the Shoah," the Spanish principal explained.

At the Arachim Conference for European Jewish Educators, held Feb. 20-22 in Paris, delegates from across Europe were having similar conversations about teaching values, the English translation of "arachim."

The most pressing issue on the agenda was not how to teach specific issues, but how to build strong Jewish identities.

"How do you provide authentic role models and authentic experiences?" asked the principal of Warsaw's Lauder School, Helise Lieberman, in her presentation.

The answers varied from country to country. One hotly debated issue was whether to combine religious instruction with secular instruction.

In France, the separation of religion and state is reinforced even in Jewish schools, and it is not uncommon to find history textbooks omitting the fact that Alfred Dreyfus, a captain in the French army who was falsely convicted of treason in 1894 and wrongly imprisoned, was Jewish.

Renee Dray Bensoussan, a history professor at the University of Aix-Marseille and the Institut Andre Neher, explained that this is because the secular French curriculum must reflect the secular educational values of the state.

"To that we add the values of the Jew-

ish people. We make a clear distinction between the national program and our own program," Bensoussan said.

Jiri Kvetak, an instructor of Hebrew at the Lauder School in Prague, said one important problem is that "it's not clear who should be teaching — a rabbi, a conservative, a liberal — and whether or not we should be integrating religion into other subjects, into sociology, into psychology. We're trying to do both," he said.

As the Lauder School is the only Jewish school in the Czech Republic, this choice has implications on the future of the Czech Jewish community.

Some educators believe that progressive Jewish education affords the most growth opportunities to their students.

Sue de Botton, head teacher of the Keever School in London, advocates the benefits of interaction with students of other faiths. Learning about other religions, she argued, "makes yours stronger, not weaker."

For example, she said, "We took a topic on candles, and we invited the Catholic school" to come and talk about "how we use and how they use them. The children learned a lot from that. It's not going to make us want to go to a cathedral and light a candle, but it helps them learn about different religions."

Jewish schools throughout Europe are frequently ranked among the best in their respective countries, which attracts even non-Jewish students.

In the United Kingdom, the government has been modifying school admissions policies to allow access to anyone in the community.

"This makes it more difficult to teach Jewish education when the students are no longer entirely Jewish," said Simon Goulden, chief executive of the United Synagogue Agency for Jewish Education.

Tribe, the youth branch of the United Synagogue, has joined together with Yad Vashem to produce a project called "Sixty Days for Sixty Years."

The project encourages participants to learn the name of someone who died in the Holocaust.

'How do you provide authentic role models and authentic experiences?'

Helise Lieberman

Principal of the Lauder School in Warsaw

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Talking Israel at Columbia

Natan Sharansky will highlight a forum at Columbia University on anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism on college campuses.

Sunday's program comes amid ongoing controversy over the issues of anti-Israel bias and academic freedom at the New York City university.

The event is being sponsored by a pro-Israel faculty group, Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, and three student organizations.

Poll: Israel down among U.S. Jews

American Jewish attachment to Israel has decreased during the past two years, according to a new poll.

Some 26 percent of respondents to the poll conducted for the Jewish Agency for Israel said they were very attached to Israel, down from 31 percent in 2002.

The poll was reported in this week's issue of the Forward.

Those who had donated to an Israel-related charity decreased to 40 percent from 49 percent and those who had attended an Israel-related program dropped to 22 percent from 27 percent.

Women storm legislators on stem cells

Thousands of Hadassah members across the United States advocated for stem cell research and funding legislation.

Some 2,000 women lobbied state legislators as part of an "SOS State of Stem Cell" initiative sponsored by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, in two dozen states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Arizona and Maryland.

In 2003, President Bush issued an executive order banning all federal funding for new stem cell lines created after 2001.

But that decision was not binding on the states, and several are now considering stem cell research legislation.

Group urges sterile brit procedure

An Orthodox rabbinic group took a stand on a controversial circumcision practice.

The Rabbinical Council of America, the rabbinic arm of centrist Orthodoxy, recommended against the ancient practice of metzitzah b'peh, in which the mohel places his mouth directly on the wound.

The procedure has been in the news lately because New York City health officials believe it to be the way in which three New York-area newborns got herpes; one of the babies died.

The council says that when the blood is sucked from the wound when a brit is performed on a baby boy, it should be done through a sterile pipette.

The RCA says the less direct method fills the religious requirement and is "not only permissible, but is preferred."

MIDDLE EAST

Attempted violence in Nablus

Palestinian terrorists tried to bomb Israeli troops operating in the West Bank.

No one was hurt in Thursday's attacks around Nablus, but Israeli media quoted military commanders as saying tougher Palestinian Authority crackdowns were required in the West Bank for a nearly month-old cease-fire to survive.

In one incident, a bomb went off just after Jewish worshipers arrived under army guard to pray at Joseph's Tomb.

In the nearby Balata refugee camp, two explosive devices were detonated as troops carried out searches.

In an apparent move to calm Israeli concerns, the Palestinian Authority said its security forces had arrested several Islamic Jihad terrorists elsewhere in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in connection with last week's Tel Aviv suicide bombing.

WORLD

French Jewish official blasts U.S. Jewish groups

A European Jewish official criticized U.S. Jewish groups for harming French Jewry's ability to combat anti-Semitism.

French philanthropist Pierre Besnainou, treasurer of the European Jewish Congress, said that when the Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee and American Israel Public Affairs Committee have become involved in French affairs, "their manner has come across as presumptuous and somewhat patronizing, placing us in a delicate situation."

Besnainou expressed his views in a letter sent Feb. 7 to Roger Cukierman, president of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews.

"Four years ago, when anti-Semitic acts once again began to taint the honor of the Republic and increased the concerns of our community, the American Jewish organizations began a constant, obstinate and aggressive campaign of 'crying wolf.'"

The executive director of the AJCommittee took issue with Besnainou's views.

"As far as the American Jewish Committee is concerned, his views are simply ill-informed and totally erroneous," David Harris told JTA. "From the beginning we consulted closely, if not intimately, with the leadership of CRIF and other leading French Jewish personalities."

Group to help French Jews immigrate

An organization dedicated to helping French Jews immigrate to Israel was launched.

The Ami Fund was founded by French Jewish philanthropist Pierre Besnainou, who donated \$1.5 million to start it.

Ami Fund representatives said at a news conference in Jerusalem on Thursday that they hoped to help as many as 30,000 new French immigrants in the next five years.

Like Nefesh B'Nefesh, the North American organization that helps facilitate aliyah in partnership with the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Ami Fund plans to help immigrants both financially and professionally as they make their transition into Israeli society.

According to research presented at the news conference, more than 75 percent of French teenagers who visited Israel in 2004 do not see their future in France.

In part because of rising anti-Semitism, 7,000 Jews have emigrated from France to Israel during the past three years.

American Jews invite Muslim cleric

A visiting U.S. Jewish leader invited Russia's top Muslim cleric to visit the United States as an envoy of moderate Islam.

Jack Rosen, the chairman of the American Jewish Congress, invited Ravil Gainutdin, the head of the Russian Council of Muftis, at a meeting in Moscow on Thursday, Russian news agencies reported.

"The head of the Russian Muslims will present an example of the moderate and constructive Islam that denounces extremism and lives in peace with other ethnic groups and confessions," said one of Russia's two chief rabbis, Berel Lazar, who attended the meeting.