



## IN THE NEWS

## Bush proposes direct P.A. funding

President Bush offered \$50 million in direct financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Bush's offer, made in a White House meeting Thursday with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, defies congressional directions not to send the \$148 million recently appropriated in aid for the Palestinians through the Palestinian Authority because of its past corruption and ties to terrorists. [Story, Pg. 3]

## Abbas wants back-channel talks

Mahmoud Abbas told U.S. Jews he wants to open back-channel talks with Israel.

The Palestinian Authority president met with more than 60 U.S. Jews on Thursday before heading to the White House for a meeting with President Bush.

Abbas told the Jewish leaders that coordination with Israel before its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip this summer was under way, but that he wanted to open back-channel talks on permanent-status issues including Jerusalem and the status of Palestinian refugees, to smooth the way to post-withdrawal talks.

"A mutual understanding is necessary to reach an agreement," he said. [Story, Pg. 3]

## British group overturns Israel boycott

A British academic union canceled a boycott of two Israeli universities.

Thursday's vote reversed a decision of the Association of University Teachers in April, when it voted to boycott Haifa and Bar-Ilan universities in Israel.

That decision drew outrage from Jewish groups, a major U.S. teachers union and some Nobel laureates.

**REMINDER: The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, May 30, due to Memorial Day.**

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# WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

Shortly after the completion of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, an Israeli soldier faces a group of Lebanese through the fence that now separates the two nations.

## Five years after leaving Lebanon, Israelis divided on wisdom of move

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA)— Five years after Israel completed its withdrawal from Lebanon, the jury is still out on whether then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak made the right strategic choice in pulling back troops without an agreement with Lebanon and Syria.

Despite the pullback, border tensions still flare up from time to time. On Monday, the day of the anniversary, Israeli troops were on red alert in anticipation of a dramatic cross-border attack by the terrorist group Hezbollah.

On the other hand, the Israel-Lebanon border has been largely quiet for most of the past five years, and pro-withdrawal analysts argue that a new strategic balance that serves

Israel's long-term interests has been created.

The impact of the withdrawal, however, goes well beyond the Lebanese arena, and its full historic significance probably will be gauged only in light of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Will radical Palestinian groups like Hamas adopt Hezbollah's tactics of cross-border shelling, or will the deterrent model created by the Israel Defense Forces in the north be applicable on other fronts too?

Analysts who emphasize the positive side of the balance sheet argue that the pullback enabled Israel to create a new strategic balance based on deterrence rather than occupation. By withdrawing to the international border, they

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ANALYSIS

## ■ Five years after withdrawal from Lebanon, its wisdom still is unclear

*Continued from page 1*

say, Israel regained the moral high ground and created a situation in which Hezbollah finds it difficult to justify further attacks.

Conversely, whenever such attacks occur, Israel can make a strong case for hitting back at targets in Lebanon and Syria, holding their governments responsible for not restraining the militiamen they control. This new strategic balance, they say, has ensured that the border has been mostly quiet since the withdrawal.

The pro-withdrawal analysts also argue that the Israeli precedent led to pressure on Syria to pull its forces out of Lebanon. Syria's recent withdrawal has increased international pressure on Hezbollah to disarm and stop providing Damascus with a proxy military presence, they argue.

In sum, these analysts say, the withdrawal sparked a dynamic that has created more favorable conditions for eventual peacemaking with Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, the situation suggests that a security doctrine based on deterrence might be similarly applicable in Gaza and the West Bank, after Israel regains the moral high ground by withdrawing from those territories as well.

■  
In a fifth-anniversary interview published in the Ma'ariv newspaper, Barak claimed vindication, arguing that the withdrawal had enabled the IDF to shorten its lines without having to make security sacrifices.

"I said at the height of the controversy that not only would our withdrawal create an invisible protective wall by delegitimizing shooting at us, it would also turn Hezbollah into a more political organization,

and that over time the Syrians would have to give in and leave Lebanon," Barak said. "All these things happened, beyond our most optimistic expectations."

One of the strongest arguments pro-withdrawal analysts make is the dramatic reduction in the death toll along the northern border. In the five years since withdrawal, 20 Israeli soldiers and civilians have been killed in hostilities in the north; in the pre-

ceding 18 years, the IDF lost an average of 25 soldiers in Lebanon each year.

Most Israelis seem to accept the pro-withdrawal arguments. An opinion poll in Ma'ariv showed that 55 percent believe the withdrawal improved Israel's situation, 12 percent thought it made things worse and 29 percent said it had made no difference.

■  
Critics of the withdrawal have their points as well. Scenes of Israeli soldiers retreating from Lebanon in disarray were greeted as a major victory by the Arab world and may even have sparked the Palestinian intifada that erupted 4 months later.

Alex Fishman, military analyst for Yedioth Achronot, argues that even if it didn't cause the intifada, the Lebanon withdrawal certainly served as an inspiration for Palestinians and led them to believe that they, too, might be able to drive Israel out by force — an impression seemingly strengthened as the Palestinians conclude that violence is forcing Israel to flee the Gaza Strip as well.

The anti-withdrawal analysts turn the strategic-balance argument on its head. Fishman says it's Hezbollah that has been able to create a balance of fear. Having moved more than 1,000 rockets into southern Lebanon and trained them on Israeli targets, Hezbollah could threaten or bombard Israeli civilians whenever Israel makes a move of which it disapproves, or whenever it thinks an attack might be politically advantageous.

Recent border tensions offer a good example. Senior Israeli officers, including Northern Command Chief Maj.-Gen. Benny Ganz, are convinced that attacks in the past

two weeks are related to upcoming parliamentary elections in Lebanon.

Hezbollah, they say, hopes cross-border exchanges with Israel will win big points with the Lebanese electorate. Months of quiet were broken when Hezbollah fired rockets and mortars in a number of incidents just weeks before polling day.

By attacking Israel, the officers say, Hezbollah hopes to present itself as the only force in Lebanon capable of stand-

ing up to Israel and resisting supposed "Israeli aggression."

The officers argue that the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon has not weakened Syria's links to Hezbollah. On the contrary, the withdrawal has left the Syrians more dependent than ever on their proxy for a foothold in Lebanese affairs, and for a lever to keep Israel and the international community aware of Syria's interests.

Therefore, the officers say, Syria is continuing to arm Hezbollah, and supports its candidates in the parliamentary elections.

Fishman argues that one of the worst developments for Israel would be if Hezbollah both retains its militia and becomes an even stronger political force after these elections. That could serve as a model for Hamas, which has struck a balance of fear by firing rockets or mortars at Israeli communities in or near the Gaza Strip whenever Israel does something of which Hamas disapproves — or even, as lately, to score points in internal rivalries with the Palestinians' dominant Fatah movement.

"We must not allow Hamas to create a similar balance of fear on the Gaza border and in the West Bank. They are already trying to dictate this formula, and we, foolishly, are allowing it, as if there were no lesson from Lebanon," Fishman writes.

The next few months could help decide the Lebanon argument. What happens with Hamas in the wake of Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank this summer almost certainly will influence the way Israelis understand the withdrawal from Lebanon in retrospect. ■

**'I said at the height of the controversy that not only would our withdrawal create an invisible protective wall by delegitimizing shooting at us, it would also turn Hezbollah into a more political organization.'**

**Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak**



### WORLD REPORT

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# Bush criticizes Israel, gives present to Abbas

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It was a classic case of “what one hand gives, the other takes away.”

President Bush’s announcement Thursday of \$50 million in funding for the Palestinian Authority reverses last month’s victory for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, when the pro-Israel lobby helped draft provisions in congressional appropriations that essentially blocked direct aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Bush’s news conference with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas also included tough language toward Israel, including warnings about Israeli settlement building and the West Bank security barrier.

The handout to the Palestinian Authority — just days after the mere mention of “President Bush” generated automatic cheers at AIPAC’s annual policy conference — defies bills from both houses of Congress last month.

Those bills all but ordered Bush to funnel \$200 million in Palestinian aid money through nongovernmental organizations, to Israel, or even to new tower for Hadassah Hospital — just about anywhere but the Palestinian Authority, which has been beset in the past by rampant corruption and ties to terrorism.

Bush’s gesture to the Palestinians, his criticism of Israel and his announcement that he’ll soon send U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to the region underscore his commitment to push for a Mideast breakthrough.

Appearing alongside a beaming Abbas, Bush drew a line between the \$50 million and his hopes that Israel’s planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip this summer will propel the peace process forward — and grant Bush the foreign policy success he longs for in his second term.

“To help ensure that the Gaza disengagement is a success, the United States will provide to the Palestinian Authority \$50 million to be used for new housing and infrastructure projects” in the Gaza Strip, Bush said. “These funds will be used to improve the quality of life of the Palestinians living in Gaza, where poverty and unemployment are very high.”

The amount was a surprise. Administration officials had said until about 10 minutes before the news conference that

it was not clear if Bush had settled on a sum.

AIPAC declined to comment on the announcement, but was likely to take some consolation in the fact that Bush didn’t issue a blank check, and said the money would be spent on special projects subject to oversight by U.S. officials. An internal State Department document obtained by JTA suggested the money would go to water treatment plants, municipal services and new homes.

Dovish pro-Israel Jewish groups welcomed the move as a necessary boost for Abbas, a relative moderate they see as the last best chance for peace in the region.

“It’s a good sign that the president is willing to work with Abbas and bring the parties together,” said Seymour Reich, president of the Israel Policy Forum and one of over 60 Jewish leaders who met with Abbas on Thursday before his audience with Bush.

Bush circumvented the restrictions on this year’s cash by dipping into last year’s allocations. Those funds also were subject to restrictions, but AIPAC’s friends in Congress suggested they were willing to look the other way to give Abbas a boost.

“President Bush has given President Abbas what he asked for; now Abbas must show that he can deliver for the Palestinian people and for everyone who has worked so hard to achieve peace,” said Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), the ranking member on the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House of Representatives’ powerful Appropriations Committee.

Israel did not go unscathed in Bush’s remarks.

“Israel must remove unauthorized outposts and stop settlement expansion,” he said. “The barrier being erected by Israel as a part of its security effort must be a security, rather than political, barrier, and its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities.”

The U.S.-Israel gap on settlement building was not new, but the warning on the barrier was Bush’s first negative reference

since last summer, when Israel’s Supreme Court ordered parts of the fence rerouted to accommodate Palestinian needs.

Palestinian spokesmen have alleged in recent weeks that the new route is more intrusive than the last, even though it’s closer to the pre-1967 boundary between Israel and the West Bank. Bush’s dig suggests he is listening to such complaints.

Bush repeated demands that Abbas crack down on terrorism, but commended him for taking steps toward ending violence.

“He’s committed,” Bush said. “That’s what he said he is going to do, and he’s now fulfilling it.”

“Fulfilling it” goes further than Israeli officials, who say they believe Abbas is sincere but misguided when he says he can neutralize Hamas and other terrorist groups by co-opting them into the political process while leaving their military infrastructure intact.

“The problem is the gap between his intentions and what’s happening on the ground,” an Israeli official, speaking anonymously, told JTA of Abbas. “Hamas is building itself as an alternative authority. They’re now involved in setting up a popular army, and time is running out on the ability to disarm Hamas.”

The \$50 million and the tough talk on settlements and the barrier fell short of the Palestinians’ wish list. They wanted Bush to accelerate the process and urge Israel to allow the Palestinians to re-arm, and they wanted those commitments in a letter.

Still, the gestures might be enough for Abbas before Palestinian legislative elections, where he needs a boost against Hamas.

Abbas also understood that while Bush may have spoken bluntly, his words were directed at a good friend — which is why Abbas reached out to Jewish leaders.

In a long and blunt but friendly exchange, Abbas said Israel was delaying coordination on the Gaza withdrawal. He also said he wants Israel to open back-channel talks on tough permanent-status issues, including Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees, so they don’t stymie negotiators at a later date.

President Bush has given President Abbas what he asked for.  
Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.)

NEWS  
ANALYSIS

# Israel and its foes work together on science project

By GIL SEDAN

PETRA, Jordan (JTA) — Here's some good news from the Middle East: Iran and Israel, bitter enemies, need no "Open Sesame" magic to be able to cooperate on an advanced scientific project.

In Alaan, a town just north of Amman — and at a comfortable remove from the spotlight thrown by political conflicts — representatives of the two countries are involved in developing SESAME, an acronym for Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East.

It's a rare and possibly unique example of scientific cooperation between Israel, Iran and other countries with which Israel has no ties, such as Pakistan, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Other members are Jordan, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Turkey. Libya is expected to join soon as an observer.

"The political importance of the project cannot be underestimated," professor Khaled Toukan, Jordan's minister of education and the project's acting director, told JTA.

"Scientists in the region work together in a spirit of cooperation for the sake of developing the Middle East," Toukan said. He was in Petra for the Conference of Nobel Laureates, which convened in that ancient Nabatean town last week.

■  
SESAME, the Middle East's first major international research center, is a synchrotron accelerator. It uses magnets to create a circular path for electrons traveling at nearly the speed of light, producing a beam of bright ultraviolet and X-ray light, about the diameter of a human hair, that is directed down beam lines to end stations.

"These beam lines are so much stronger than the known X-rays that they open up new options for scientific research," professor Moshe Deutsch, chairman of Israel's national council for synchrotron radiation and one of two Israeli participants in SESAME, told JTA.

SESAME is expected to contribute to a wide range of scientific research, including structural molecular biology, molecular environmental science, X-ray imaging, archeological microanalysis, materials characterization and clinical medical applications.

Synchrotron radiation is widely used in materials science and biomedical applications, including lithography for computer chips, absorption and scattering measurements and high-pressure applications to create artificial diamonds and other substances.

An international synchrotron-light source in the Middle East was first proposed in 1997, when peace seemed to be on the way. European and Middle Eastern scientists worked together, and with the contribution of an old German synchrotron, SESAME got underway.

The annual budget is anticipated to be between \$4 million and \$8 million.

■  
The model for SESAME was the CERN Laboratory, near Geneva. It was founded as a multinational consortium after World War II in an effort to bring former enemy countries in Europe closer, and now functions under the auspices of UNESCO.

"It succeeded beyond any expectation, and is now the world's leading high-energy physics laboratory," Deutsch said.

One Israeli newspaper recently came out with a headline that Israeli scientists were helping with Iran's and Egypt's nuclear programs.

"This is absolutely false," Deutsch said. "The synchrotron can have no military use."

But it can have immense political implications. All scientists — including the Iranians — were empowered by their governments; in fact, they are their governments' official representatives on the council, which meets in the region every few months. In other words, it's not merely an occasional collaboration between scientists, but rather official cooperation between the countries concerned, regardless of political animosities.

How is that possible?

"All participants deal only with com-

mon scientific ground and nothing else," Deutsch said.

Israel's other representative to the council, Eliezer Rabinovici of Hebrew University, is a theoretical physicist in a field that doesn't overlap with synchrotrons, so his own research won't derive any direct benefit from SESAME. Nevertheless, Rabinovici is an enthusiastic partner.

"I have been with SESAME be-

cause I believe we should contribute to our environment to advance peace and create a dialogue designed to break stereotypes," he said.

Rabinovici said that as a physicist he believed in the "parallel universe" theory, which posits a hypothetical universe that exists separately from our own. Some theories of physics postulate the existence of many parallel universes, possibly an infinite number.

"Meeting the other scientists was a way of satisfying curiosity about the 'parallel universe,'" he said. But, he noted, "we leave the political discussions for coffee breaks."

Why did Iran chose to participate in the project along with Israel?

"Iran used to be considered a villain in the world scientific community," Deutsch said. "For Iran, this is a way of getting out of isolation, but the scientific benefits of the project per se are a good enough reason."

Deutsch's comments were affirmed by his Iranian colleague, Reza Mansouri, vice minister for research at Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.

Contacted via e-mail, Mansouri told JTA that "international and regional scientific collaboration is one of the recommendations of science policy in Iran. It is then too natural to collaborate in this project."

Asked if Iran's participation together with Israel had any political significance, Mansouri replied with a brief but decisive "No!" ■

**'I believe we should contribute to our environment to advance peace and create a dialogue designed to break stereotypes.'**

**Eliezer Rabinovici**

Physicist, Hebrew University

# Nobel laureates offer advice to politicians

By GIL SEDAN

PETRA, Jordan (JTA)—It was a gathering of a number of world-renowned celebrities, but mostly of brilliant minds.

Stars like Bill Clinton, the Dalai Lama, Queen Rania, Shimon Peres and Richard Gere turned heads and attracted cameras, but the uniqueness of the Petra Conference of Nobel Laureates was the assembly of scientists who were asked to share their wisdom with political leaders and give them a word of advice on how to save "A world in danger," as the conference was called.

King Abdullah of Jordan and the New York-based Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity co-hosted the gathering, which was held earlier this month, just before the World Economic Conference Forum at the Dead Sea. Some 25 Nobel Prize winners attended the conference in Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabateans.

The intention was to recruit these non-political minds to formulate practical solutions for today's problems. Indeed, quite a few of the comments made were very different — and more thought-provoking — than the usual rhetoric of politicians, but the end result was disappointing.

Some felt the conference reflected the changing winds in the Middle East: It has been quite some time since Israelis were received so warmly in an Arab country.

Four Israeli laureates attended: Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who won the 1994 peace prize along with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat; Daniel Kahneman, who won in economics in 2002; and Aaron Ciechanover and Avram Hershko, who won in chemistry in 2004.

Peres' comments on the need to "privatize peace" — that is, to expropriate it from politicians — was quoted time and again. He won enthusiastic applause when he compared peace to love.

"You have to close your eyes sometimes so as not to see the imperfections," he said.

In an interview with JTA, Jordanian Prime Minister Adnan Badran praised Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan and entertained the notion of territorial exchanges between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, allowing for West Bank settlement blocs to remain under Israeli rule. Sharon could not have asked for a better advocate.

"I'm optimistic," Badran said. Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud

Abbas "gives hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. He is honest about negotiating a settlement through peaceful means. This will give hope for the Israelis."

Earlier, during a panel discussion, Badran spoke just as warmly about the American military effort in Iraq, warning that failure in Iraq would end American influence in the Middle East.

"The U.S. must succeed in Iraq," he said. "If they fail, it will be a disaster. Iraq must come out of the crisis as a model of democracy, just like Japan and Germany after the war. And just as they have done in Japan and Germany, the Americans should leave Iraq only after they have established democracy there."

Badran may have been one of the few participants so enthusiastic about American involvement in Iraq. The conflict was hardly an issue at the conference until Betty Williams of Ireland, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976, raised it.

"It's the things that didn't get said at this conference that bother me," she said in a passionate address. "To me the invasion of Iraq was not talked about."

She ridiculed talk about the democratization of Iraq, and mentioned a recent visit to a Baghdad hospital treating 300 children.

"Poor little pieces of humanity who don't have sufficient drugs to treat their ailments. I asked the doctor in charge, 'How many of them will live?' He looked at me and said, 'None.'"

"I come from a country which was invaded by Britain 850 years ago, and we are still dealing with the problem," she continued. "For how many years will Iraq need to cope with the American invasion?"

The difference

between the flowery rhetoric in Petra and the misery of the Iraqi people just several hundred miles to the east accentuated the gap between such closed conferences and the cruel facts of the real world.

Not only Iraq was absent from the discussion; so, too, were religious leaders and leaders of the business community. Some elements of religion, though, came under attack.

"The rise of religious fervor explains the rise in violence," Hershko said.

"I refer to the Goldsteins and Bin-Ladens equally," said Aqel Biltaji, an adviser to King Abdullah, referring to a right-wing Jew who killed Palestinians in Hebron and the leader of Al-Qaida. "They have nothing to do with God. These people are blind."

Many have spoken of the need to use science to change the world. But one speaker reminded participants that even with the best of ideas, funding is needed to implement changes.

Representatives of the business community, however, were hardly there. In fact, few of them were invited: They were on their way to the prestigious World Economic Forum, yet another closed club, which opened the next day on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea.

The rise of religious fervor explains the rise in violence.

Avram Hershko  
Nobel Laureate



BP Images

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres meets with Jordan's King Abdullah in Petra, Jordan, on May 18.

# Handbook helps women in Jewish religious courts

By JOANNE PALMER

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's rarely easy to get a divorce, but it's even more difficult if you're an observant Jew because to some extent you live in two worlds. You must secure not only a civil divorce but a Jewish one as well.

If you're a Jewish woman, you face an extra set of hurdles. You can't obtain a Jewish divorce, called a get in Hebrew, but must wait for the man with whom you once stood under the wedding canopy to give it to you.

If you're a fervently Orthodox woman, as most of attorney Margaret Retter's clients are, there's the possibility that you've been so terrified of going before a Jewish rabbinical court, or *beit din*, and so pressured by the man you wanted to leave, that you bargained away what should have been yours just for that get.

Retter is the founder and head of Din Legal Centers, a group that provides legal representation for women in both civil and religious courts. Using money provided by the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York, this spring her New York-based organization compiled and published *The Din Handbook: A Resource Manual*.

The book provides information about *batei din*, including questionnaires that representatives of three prominent courts filled out for her, along with emergency phone numbers and other help.

"This is the first time that the working and procedures and rules of a Jewish court are open to the public," Retter said.

"We were very excited about this," said Joan Wachtler, a board member of the Jewish Women's Foundation, which gives grants to organizations that support Jewish women and girls.

"Personally we all knew someone who had been through the morass of divorce; there wasn't anybody who didn't know somebody who had been through it," Wachtel said. "I get emotional talking about it, because it's such a frightening thing. It can take years, and these women are stuck."

She can't think of an issue that dovetails more directly with its mission than the *Din*, Wachtel said. "It's a quintessential women's issue."

Demystifying the *beit din*'s procedures is likely to help women, Retter has learned.

"I appeared before many Jewish courts

representing women, and I realized from the clients coming to my office and talking to me that there is great fear," she said.

Most of that fear is based more on myth than reality: The widespread assumption that *batei din* routinely mistreat women is not true, Retter said. "When we're there, our clients are treated with respect, and the rabbis listen," she said.

Because of that fear, however, a husband often can threaten to withhold a divorce from his wife unless she agrees to punishing financial settlements, Retter said. The wife often fears that a rabbinical court will not protect her, and she fears losing custody of her children.

Often that fear leads her to ignore summons to the Jewish courts, which then rule against her in their absence. Because agreements worked out in civil and religious courts are tied together, and because the final judgment of a *beit din* cannot be appealed, it's necessary for the wife to be represented in both places.

Sometimes women sign settlements that they find impossibly constricting, just to make the whole process stop.

"We want women not to be afraid of the *beit din*," Retter said, "because they ultimately have to appear there anyway. With the handbook, we're trying to make them more user-friendly."

Retter, who is married and has four children, grew up both inside and outside the fervently Orthodox world in Monsey, N.Y., and Miami. Her parents were both Holocaust survivors, and her father had strong connections to the Satmar Chasidim.

She went to law school and planned to stay in criminal law, but found that Orthodox women who learned she was a lawyer often asked for her help.

"They just assumed I would know what to do for a woman who was abused or needed an order of protection," she said.

Drawn by the women's stories, Retter eventually left criminal law to found *Din*.

One of Retter's clients, who requested that she be

called "M." because she fears publicity will harm her ongoing case, agreed to talk about *Din*. M.'s case is not atypical, Retter said.

M., 34, got married at 18 and had four children; her marriage lasted 11 years.

When counseling didn't work and with her marriage in tatters, M. asked her husband to leave. He refused.

She was afraid to go to a *beit din* because the folk wisdom in her community was that it would refuse her custody of the children. She knew about women who tried and failed to obtain a get. Those women, called *agunot* — "chained women" — live in limbo, unable to remarry, unable to have more children, unable to live their lives.

And she was afraid to go to a civil court, which was outside her religious world.

Eventually M. got a civil divorce, but the legal arguments continued as the civil and religious courts bounced her case back and forth. She had no money and no hope. Then she heard about *Din*.

"Margie got involved," M. said of Retter. "She knew how to talk to the *beit din*. She knew what my rights are. When I started calling they didn't listen to me, but when Margie called they listened."

"If I hadn't heard of her, I'd be at the end of my rope. I had so much misinformation," she said. "I was under the impression that there is no way that a woman has any rights, and that's just not true. But it's not about what's true, it's about perception."

## FOCUS ON ISSUES



Courtesy of Jewish Women's Foundation of New York

Margaret Retter is the head of Din Legal Centers, a group that provides legal representation for women in both civil and religious courts.

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Dead Sea Scrolls travel to museum in Berlin

By TOBY AXELROD

**B**ERLIN (JTA) — A new exhibit has opened here focusing on 100 years of art in Israel.

"The New Hebrews" brings part of the Dead Sea Scrolls out of Israel for the first time, in honor of 40 years of diplomatic relations between Germany and the Jewish state.

"Communication on a cultural level is of great importance for understanding between people," Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said to the several hundred guests attending the opening ceremony under high security on May 19.

The exhibit, housed in Berlin's Martin Gropius-Bau Museum, includes ancient artifacts and contemporary art, from film and photographs to sculpture, drawings and paintings. It opened to the public May 20 and will remain there until Sept. 5.

Among other things, the curators — a team from the German museum working with a team from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem — brought a portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls out of Israel for the first time.

"It is a kind of 'Mona Lisa' for us," James Snyder, director of the Israel Museum, said. "We are proud of its first voyage away from Israel."

Germany is Israel's biggest backer in Europe. Supporters of German-Israeli relations are making an extra push in this anniversary year to encourage connections between younger generations in both countries.

In fact, Lufthansa Airlines announced that it will subsidize flights to Israel for fans of a popular German rock group, the Sons of Mannheim, which will perform one concert on June 8 at the Tel Aviv Opera.

Band leader Michael Herberger said his strong commitment to Israel is based on his religious convictions as a Protestant and he looked forward to helping strengthen ties among young people in both countries. ■

## Show seeks nice Jewish boy

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The search is on for "a nice Jewish boy" — and no, this time it's not your mother who's looking.

A team of scouts is scouring the Diaspora for the ideal single Jewish man for a new Israeli reality television show.

Once selected, the bachelor, who according to producers preferably will be good looking and "financially secure," will come to Israel for the summer, when 15 young Israeli women will compete to capture his heart.

"We all grow up in Jewish houses and we know the dream of Jewish mothers is that their son finds a nice Jewish girl," said Gadi Veinrib, a producer for the show, to be called — what else? — "A Nice Jewish Boy."

The bachelor will be sent to Israel "to meet the nice Jewish love of his life," he said.

The show's producers will be holding casting calls for the show in New York, Los Angeles and a European city in the next few weeks.

Producers are trying to get the word out via Jewish organizations. Already they have been flooded by hundreds of queries, many from Jewish women offering their brothers, friends and cousins for the job. ■

In Israel, there also has been a huge response from women hoping to be among the pool of bachelorettes. Scouts also are searching for female contestants at university campuses, clubs and bars.

The show is also considering including Jewish women from abroad as contestants.

"What we are doing now is a worldwide search looking for the ultimate nice Jewish boy who is successful, has a nice job, and is good looking but still has not found his soul mate, his one and only," said Veinrib, who was among the production team of the hit Israeli reality TV show "The Ambassador."

"The Ambassador" struck a chord among Israelis concerned about the image of their country abroad. Veinrib, looking at that show's success, thinks "A Nice Jewish Boy" also will resonate.

"I think what we are doing here is

striking a nerve because assimilation is something we all feel strongly about, we as Israelis and Jews all over the world," he said. ■

According to Veinrib, the show will be one of the first to have an international cast. He said he thinks the differences in culture and backgrounds among the contestants, despite their shared Jewishness, will make for good television.

The reality series is to take place over the course of three months. It will be set in a luxurious villa, complete with a pool and a lush garden, in central Israel.

The young women will live there, and as in the American show "The Bachelor" will be courted by the man on individual dates. Every week another bachelorette will be eliminated, and by the end of the show, producers hope, the man will have found his future mate.

Hagai Lapid, the show's co-creator and executive producer along with Elad Kuperman, said Israeli women are enchanted by the idea of marrying a Jewish man from abroad. He believes that in part the pull comes from the assumption that such a man will have money, but it is also, he said, a reaction against the men in Israel.

"The men here are very aggressive and macho, and women in Israel prefer the personality of men from abroad, which is perceived as being more thoughtful, liberal and polite," Lapid said.

Lapid said he came up with the idea for the show after remembering an American Jewish athlete at the last Maccabiah games who held a sign saying that he was looking for an Israeli bride at the opening ceremony. The sign included his phone number, and he received calls from thousands of interested Israeli women.

Lapid said part of the deal for any bachelor candidate and the female candidates from abroad is that they would agree to live in Israel for a period of time.

The producers are looking for women in their early 20s to mid 30s and for men from their mid 20s to mid to late 30s.

Interested? Send photos and a C.V. to the show at kuperman@hot3.co.il ■

**Women in Israel prefer the personality of men from abroad.**

**Hagai Lapid**

Co-creator, executive producer

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Major reserve call-up planned

Israel plans to call up a record number of army reservists for its Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Security sources said Thursday that around 8,000 reservists would replace conscript forces sent to evacuate Gaza and the northern West Bank beginning in August. "Because of the disengagement plan, 2005 will see a record use of reserve units — between 90 to 100 percent, instead of 60 percent in a regular year," Brig. Gen. Ariel Heiman, chief reserves officer for the Israeli military, told the Ynet Web site.

### American P.R. campaign for West Bank

A new public relations campaign aims to improve Palestinian perceptions of America.

The campaign, which features billboards and television commercials in Palestinian areas, seeks to inform Palestinians that they benefit from American aid programs.

The ads, commissioned and paid for by the U.S. Agency for International Development, highlight improved health care, water and education systems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, paid for with the \$1.5 billion USAID has provided to Palestinians in the last decade. However, USAID could not find a Palestinian celebrity willing to participate in the campaign.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Hate crime bill reintroduced

U.S. lawmakers reintroduced a bill that would expand federal hate crime legislation in the United States.

The Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2005, introduced Thursday, would allow federal authorities to investigate and prosecute more violent bias crimes, including those based on a victim's race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability.

The bill has been introduced in every Congress since 1997 but has not passed, largely because conservatives oppose the sexual-orientation aspect.

### Democrats press Jews on academy

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) said the Jewish community hasn't been vocal enough about incidents of proselytizing at the Air Force Academy.

Clinton and several other Democratic senators met with Jewish leaders Thursday and discussed a recent report that suggests the Colorado Springs academy is unwelcoming to Jews and other minorities.

Several Jewish leaders defended the community's engagement on the issue, Jewish leaders in the room told JTA.

Jewish leaders asked for backing for measures that would support Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts or would sanction Iran.

### Teaching Israel on college campus

A U.S. university will launch a postdoctoral fellowship program on modern Israel.

In conjunction with Tel Aviv University's Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Northwestern University will host a teaching fellow in Israel studies.

A list of finalists for the position, who recently earned doctorates in the field, will be decided by the Dayan Center, and Northwestern will make the final decision.

Chicago's Jewish federation is funding the program.

The first fellow is expected to arrive on the suburban Chicago campus in fall 2005 or fall 2006.

### Vendor sales aid terrorists

Purchases of knockoff handbags and DVDs may aid Palestinian terrorist organizations, experts told a congressional panel.

Organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah are believed to be involved in sales of counterfeit products in the United States, and many vendors back the terrorist groups, but it's unclear whether profits are funneled to the organizations, analysts said at a hearing Wednesday before the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

### Survey: Program gets Jewish adults involved

A program in which participants do 100 hours of Jewish learning increases their involvement in Jewish life, a study found.

Sixty-four percent of survey respondents said the Me'ah program had motivated them to increase their participation in Jewish communal life by a major or moderate amount.

The study was carried out by the Center for Adult Education of Boston's Hebrew College.

The college founded Me'ah in 1994 in partnership with the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston and the Commission on Jewish Continuity.

### Neo-Nazis arrested in bomb plot

Two neo-Nazis in New Jersey were arrested in an alleged bomb plot.

The two men arrested recently are alleged to have tried to build a fertilizer bomb similar to the device used in the Oklahoma City bombing.

The men allegedly gave a federal informant 60 pounds of fertilizer and asked him to build them a bomb.

One of the men, Gabriel Carfa, is a leader in white supremacist Matthew Hale's Creativity Movement, authorities said.

### Montreal Chasidim threatened with eviction

Residents of a mountain community in Quebec are trying to stop a Chasidic group from using a summer retreat.

Residents of Val Morin want the Belz Chasidim to shut the small synagogue and children's center they have used as part of their summer vacation retreat for two decades.

Val Morin is in the Laurentian Mountains, less than an hour from Montreal by car.

Some residents have complained that the fervently Orthodox Jews don't use dumpsters to dispose of trash, fill the streets with bicycles, act arrogantly by avoiding eye contact and pray noisily.

They are asking that the synagogue and children's center, which are not in an area zoned for residential use, be shut down and moved to a nearby campground that the group owns.

Yenkel Binet, leader of the Belz group, said the complaints came from one couple, who he speculated had been "provoked" into filing a complaint.

## WORLD

### Arafat plaza opens in El Salvador

A plaza honoring Yasser Arafat was inaugurated in El Salvador.

The Israeli Embassy criticized the honor for the late Palestinian Authority president, which was inaugurated Wednesday in the capital of San Salvador. El Salvador is home to a strong community of Palestinian immigrants, and the country's president, Tony Saca, is of Palestinian descent.

### Meet and greet in Kiev

U.S. and international Jewish leaders met with the president of Ukraine in Kiev.

On Monday and Tuesday, the United Jewish Communities' leadership mission visited Kiev to get a firsthand impression of Jewish community development in Ukraine.

The delegation met with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko to discuss tolerance and multicultural education, interfaith dialogue and restitution of Jewish property. Members of the delegation praised Yushchenko's stand on minorities.