

## IN THE NEWS

### President Bush boosts Ariel Sharon

President Bush said Israel stands to improve its security by withdrawing from the Gaza Strip.

"The disengagement is, I think, part of making Israel more secure and peaceful," Bush told Israel's Channel One in an interview broadcast Thursday.

### Withdrawal activists rally in Rabin Square

Tens of thousands of Israelis rallied in Tel Aviv on Thursday against the upcoming Gaza Strip withdrawal.

At least 70,000 protesters crowded into Rabin Square for a demonstration under the banner "Gush Katif, I Pledge Allegiance," a reference to the main Gaza settlement bloc.

Speakers from the Yesha settler council urged anti-pullout activists to block security forces en route to evacuate the area next week and to pressure the government to hold a referendum on the plan.

### Reform leader talks to evangelicals

The leader of the Union for Reform Judaism addressed the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Stressing the importance of Israel's security in remarks Thursday, Rabbi Eric Yoffie said that as long as terrorism persists, Israel is entitled to defend itself by means of a security fence.

Still, he said, he recognizes that the "Palestinian people are in pain." Yoffie added: "What we have asked of our many friends in the Christian world is simply this: Do not minimize the impact of terror, and do not demonize or isolate Israel as if, somehow, she alone were responsible for the current conflict."

Yoffie received a standing ovation following his remarks, church spokesman John Brooks told JTA.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**

# WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

Benjamin Netanyahu speaks at a news conference after handing in his resignation as Israel's finance minister at the Cabinet meeting on Sunday.

## Behind Netanyahu move, some see ambition, others see West Bank fight

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Benjamin Netanyahu's resignation from the Israeli Cabinet may have come too late to scuttle Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank, but it seems almost certain to change the face of Israeli politics.

Leaving the Finance Ministry just 10 days before the pullout is scheduled to begin, Netanyahu threw down a challenge to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and set in motion a process that could split the ruling Likud Party.

Most pundits are convinced that the move will not derail the Gaza pullout, but it could considerably strengthen the Israeli right in

its opposition to further withdrawals from the West Bank.

On the economic front, Netanyahu was widely praised as finance minister for initiating tough policies that led the economy from near collapse to robust growth. But analysts say his resignation is unlikely to lead to any major policy changes or have a lasting economic impact.

As for Netanyahu's political future, leading pundits see in the move a huge gamble that could vault him into prime minister — or consign him to the far-right margin of Israeli politics.

At a dramatic news conference Sunday, Netanyahu gave just one reason for his

*Continued on page 2*

NEWS  
ANALYSIS

## ■ *Netanyahu's move is seen as a step in his plan to become Israel's next prime minister*

*Continued from page 1*

resignation: The withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank will be catastrophic for Israel's security, he said. Gaza will become a base for Palestinian terrorism and its port will be a conduit for terrorist weapons, while giving away territory with no quid pro quo from the Palestinians will encourage more terrorism, he argued.

"I cannot be party to this," Netanyahu declared.

His forceful presentation begged a question: Why, if the policy is so dangerous, hadn't he resigned earlier, when it might have been possible to change things?

Netanyahu replied that he didn't believe stepping down earlier would have made any difference and that he first wanted to push through his economic reforms.

Most pundits were skeptical. Some suggested that Netanyahu was finding it increasingly difficult to explain to his staunchly right-wing family his continued service in a government whose central policy effort he so strongly opposes.

Others had more political explanations: Netanyahu's own polls, they said, showed right-wing rebel Uzi Landau winning about 12 percent to 15 percent of the vote in a Likud leadership race. Those are votes Netanyahu needs if he is to have any chance of unseating Sharon.

His resignation, this theory goes, allows Netanyahu to take over from Landau as leader of the far-right in the Likud and — with those votes added to his own natu-

ral, more moderate constituency — win the party leadership.

Hanan Krystal, a veteran Israel political analyst, says Netanyahu believes the withdrawal plan will collapse under a wave of Palestinian terrorism. That will strengthen his national standing by proving his analysis correct.

Netanyahu then has a two-stage plan to regain the premiership, according to Krystal. First, he says, Netanyahu will capture the Likud by appealing to the far-right, though he knows that's not a base to win a national election. Once installed as party leader, Krystal predicts, Netanyahu will move back to the political center, recalling concessions he made to the Palestinians as prime minister in the late 1990s.

But Netanyahu already has had some setbacks. Other Cabinet ministers critical of the withdrawal plan failed to join him in defecting. Moreover, the mainstream media and the public largely were critical of his move.

In Yediot Achronot, an Israeli daily, the journalist Sima Kadmon slammed Netanyahu for lying about his intention to resign right up until the day before he did.

"We have already heard that it's permissible to lie for the Land of Israel, about devaluing the currency and for security. But for a career?" she wrote.

A Yediot poll showed that 47 percent of the public thought Netanyahu was motivated not by ideology but by personal and political interests.

A poll in Ma'ariv, another Israeli paper, indicated that 47 percent of Israelis would prefer Sharon at the head of Likud, compared to only 28 percent for Netanyahu. Among Likud members, who will choose the party leader, Sharon was well ahead, by a margin of 51 percent to 34 percent.

Though Netanyahu's move generally was welcomed on the far-right, some right-wingers dismissed it as too little too late.

Writing in Ma'ariv, political analyst Ben Caspit suggested that Netanyahu's timing was an attempt to have his cake and eat it too. According to Caspit, Netanyahu didn't really want to stop the withdrawal from Gaza — "because, if

he did, Washington would sever all ties with him" — but he also didn't want to be party to it "because, if he were, the Israeli right would turn its back on him."

Some pundits argue that the importance of Netanyahu's resignation is not Gaza but the rest of the West Bank. With Netanyahu in power or leading the opposition, right-wing settlers are convinced they'll have a much better chance of holding on to dozens of

West Bank settlements that may be targeted for evacuation in any subsequent round of withdrawals.

As for the Israeli economy, it doesn't look as if Netanyahu's departure will change much. In the first hour after his resignation, the Tel Aviv stock exchange fell by 5 percent, its biggest single-day downturn in three years. But the next day, after Sharon nominated Trade Minister Ehud Olmert as finance minister and both underlined their commitment to continuing Netanyahu's policies, the main market indices regained between 2.5 percent and 3 percent.

"The Israeli economy is strong. It will not be hurt by Netanyahu's resignation. But it would be badly hurt if the disengagement were canceled or postponed," the Yediot Achronot economic analyst Sever Plotzker wrote, because its contribution to Israel's economic recovery "is much greater than all Netanyahu's reforms put together."

Sharon aides make clear that the prime minister has no intention of stepping aside for Netanyahu. The showdown within the party will come within the next few months.

If Sharon wins that contest, Netanyahu could lead a sizable faction out of Likud and join up with the far-right. If Netanyahu wins, Sharon could take Likud moderates with him into an electoral alliance with the Labor Party and Shinui.

Either way, it's difficult to see how the Likud can remain unified with both men in it. A lot will depend on how the Gaza withdrawal plays out.

More than Netanyahu deciding the outcome of the withdrawal, the outcome of the withdrawal could decide Netanyahu's political future.

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# New Ugandan coffee co-op unites religions

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — In his three decades at the helm of the Thanksgiving Coffee Co. in Fort Bragg, Calif., Paul Katzeff has pioneered the process of buying coffee beans directly from Third World growers and funneling money back to them after sales to promote economic self-sufficiency and social justice.

But Katzeff had never helped Jewish coffee farmers, who don't usually figure in the ranks of small Third World growers.

That changed with the recent release of Mirembe Kawomera, or "Delicious Peace," a Fair Trade — and kosher — coffee produced by a new cooperative of Jewish, Muslim and Christian coffee farmers from the Mbale region of Uganda.

"We think this coalition is unique in all of Africa," says coffee farmer J. J. Keki, leader of the 700-member Abayudaya Ugandan Jewish community that is at the core of the project.

It started 18 months ago when Katzeff got a phone call from Laura Wetzler, the Uganda coordinator for Kulanu, a Washington-based Jewish charity that promotes community-empowerment projects around the world. Wetzler travels to Uganda every January to help the community maintain its projects.

She asked Katzeff if he would be interested in buying coffee from a group of local growers that she was trying to help.

"I rolled my eyes and said to myself, 'Oh, here's another young person touched by the poverty,'" recalls Katzeff, a Bronx native who cut his organizing teeth in the 1960s working with the East Harlem Tenants Council and organizing black workers in Mississippi.

Katzeff knew how complicated the international coffee trade is, and the idea of this young woman sitting in Uganda making cold calls to corporate executives made him shake his head.

"Then she said, 'I'm from Kulanu, and I'm working with a group of Jewish coffee farmers here,'" Katzeff said.

Katzeff thought Wetzler must have called him because he, too, is Jewish, but she said she was just working her way through coffee companies and his was 41st on the list.

Then she told him the complete story: She represented a cooperative of 400 coffee farmers organized by Keki, who was going door-to-door asking his Muslim and Christian neighbors to join the Abayudaya Jews

to improve their general lot. The co-op was trying to circumvent price gouging by local middlemen and was looking for a foreign market.

Wetzler told Katzeff about the Abayudaya, descendants of a Ugandan general who adopted Judaism in the early 20th century. Nearing extinction during the reign of the dictator Idi Amin, the community revitalized itself in the 1980s and drew the interest of Kulanu, which sent a delegation in 1995 along with a Conservative rabbi, who formally converted the community.

Today the Abayudaya are helped by various foreign Jewish organizations; they have a school, a synagogue and several small-scale economic projects. The community raises money through Jewish tourism and selling crafts and CDs of its music.

"I said, 'OK, I'll buy all you've got, every single bit,'" recalls Katzeff, who says the project "interested me as a Jew."

Katzeff changed his own business practices after a 1985 trip to Nicaragua, when he realized "that the coffee industry was living off the sweat and blood of the coffee farmers."

Katzeff began guaranteeing what has become known as a "Fair Trade price," which he says is "20 to 40 cents a pound higher" than the usual price coffee farmers receive from the major companies and which doesn't change with market fluctuations.

The idea that he could use his company to help African Jews who had joined forces with Muslims and Christians impressed him.

"In the midst of so much strife, these people decided to cooperate instead of compete," he says. "They made a conscious decision to increase the size of their pie and share it for a better life."

Reached in Uganda, Keki describes the Abayudaya Jews' good relations with their non-Jewish neighbors. Though Jews are a small minority in the region, Keki was elected chairman of the local council, which he says shows the lack of local anti-Semitism — and which makes him the only Jew elected to public office in Uganda, Wetzler says.

After Keki formed the co-op, Wetzler made the connection with Katzeff and located a nearby co-op that already had Fair Trade

certification, which is expensive. Keki's group buys coffee from local farmers and funnels it through the Fair Trade co-op, which processes it and sends it to California.

Katzeff visited Uganda to sign the contract, spending Shabbat with the Abayudaya Jews.

"They picked me up at the hotel and said I didn't look Jewish," he quips. "Then they took me to their shul, with all the men on one side and the

women on the other. They did the whole service in Hebrew. Afterwards, we ate only food that didn't have to be cooked — fresh fruit and vegetables. No one worked all day."

"They had one little, hand-cranked de-pulping machine to run those 100 tons through," he says. "They were determined to get their first crop out. It was incredible."

Keki and Katzeff signed a three-year agreement guaranteeing Fair Trade prices for all the coffee the co-op can produce. Eighty percent of the money is put in an escrow account to be plowed back into developing the co-op's infrastructure, with the goal of doubling output by next year. A dollar surcharge on each pound sold will be sent directly to the co-op — hopefully yielding a further \$30,000 this first season.

"It's all about sustainability," Katzeff says. "When they're able to produce five times as much, they'll be able to support all their own social programs."

"I hope it will help us buy food and clothes and send our children to school," says Keki, who has spoken widely in America and is aware of the significance of his interfaith effort.

"When we read the news, we see that most of the problems in the world are caused by religion," he says. "Here we are using religion in the name of peace. We hope that wherever our coffee goes in the world, it will promote peace."

Noting that the co-op has a Jewish president, a Christian vice president and a Muslim executive secretary — and that one-third of its board is female — Katzeff describes the venture as "a shining light for peace" in the region.

"This is the most important project I've ever done," he says.

(*Delicious Peace coffee is available at [www.thanksgivingcoffee.com](http://www.thanksgivingcoffee.com) or 1-800-648-6491.*)

**'We hope that wherever our coffee goes in the world, it will promote peace.'**

**J. J. Keki**

Leader, Abayudaya Ugandan Jewish community

# Palestinian attacks raise questions for Israel

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — From the looks of it, some Palestinians appear to have joined Israeli opponents of the Gaza Strip withdrawal.

How else to explain the Palestinian escalation of violence as Israel makes final preparations for a withdrawal that will leave Palestinians in full control of their own fate in Gaza?

The answer relates directly to what will happen in the Palestinian arena after Israel's withdrawal from the coastal strip, slated to begin Aug. 15.

The Palestinians are in the midst of a power struggle between the old guard of the Palestine Liberation Organization and malcontents who range from the Al-Aksa Brigade — the terrorist militia of the mainstream Fatah Party — to fundamentalist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

This power struggle eventually will be tested in elections, originally scheduled for last month but postponed at least until January. Palestinian radicals want to reach those elections armed with the credit for kicking the mighty Israeli army out of Gaza under fire.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said recently that Islamic Jihad, which did not sign on to the cease-fire agreement that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas reached with the terrorist groups

last winter, had decided to do everything possible to upset the Israeli withdrawal. The radicals believe Israel will withdraw in any case, and they see a withdrawal under fire as a win-win situation.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a mid-July suicide bombing in Netanya that killed five Israelis.

Hamas, which did agree to the cease-fire, wants to settle accounts with Abbas for having postponed the elections.

Following a mid-July Kassam rocket attack on the Israeli community of Netiv Ha'asara, which killed a 22-year-old woman, the P.A. security forces took real action against Hamas for the first time since 1996. Interior Minister Nasser Youssef sent armored personnel carriers to prevent further attacks, but Hamas activists set the trucks on fire.

The incident spurred a series of confrontations between Hamas and Islamic Jihad supporters and P.A. security men. Three Palestinian youths were killed and 45 people were wounded in the clashes.

Danny Rubinstein, the Palestinian-affairs analyst for the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, labeled the developments the "Third Intifada," this one against the Palestinian Authority. However, Abbas' hard line seemed short-lived, as radicals quickly went back to humiliating and even kidnapping P.A. officials, with a tepid response from the P.A. leadership.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad dare to attack Israel because they're more motivated than the P.A. security forces, which were deeply involved in terrorist attacks during the intifada and appear now to have little inclination to crack down on their recent comrades in arms.

Moreover, they may feel Abbas is no longer in total control of the system and has lost considerable public support.

That assumption may be erroneous: The latest public poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion showed that 75 percent of Palestinians support Abbas' call for Hamas to abandon vio-

lence, and 76.5 percent expressed support for the continuation of the cease-fire with the Jewish state — though figures for Palestinian violence toward Israel presented this week by Israeli security officials suggest that the "cease-fire" existed in name only.

In July alone, for example, there were 436 attacks on Israelis, including the firing of 142 mortar shells, Ha'aretz reported.

Israel reacted to the attacks with a resumption of "targeted killings" of terrorist leaders.

Why doesn't Abbas show leadership and put an end to provocations by the radicals, at least those from within his own party? Many analysts believe Abbas' timidity and his frequent assertions that he is too weak to act bode ill for the situation in Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal.

Israeli security sources said over the weekend that unlike his predecessor, the late Yasser Arafat, Abbas may want to tame the radicals but prefers to maintain Palestinian unity at all costs.

If that's the case, some Israeli analysts suggested, Abbas could end up just like Arafat — irrelevant in Israeli eyes.

Asked whether Abbas would meet Palestinian obligations under the "road map" peace plan to dismantle terrorist groups, his top aide, Diane Buttu, said the P.A. president is focused on establishing a unified security force that "can operate on a national platform."

What exactly will happen with security in Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal is an open question.

According to reports in early August, Israel has agreed that Egypt will post 750 troops along its border with the Gaza Strip.

The new deployment, which would effectively overturn a clause in the 1979 Camp David peace accord demilitarizing the Sinai, will begin Sept. 1 along the Philadelphia Corridor, Israel Radio reported Monday.

Under the deal, Egypt will be responsible for preventing arms smuggling from Sinai to Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza.

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

If Abbas refuses to crack down on terrorists, Israel may view him as irrelevant.

## THE DISENGAGEMENT SUMMER



Brian Hendler

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

# Gaza's biblical roots questionable

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Modern Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip resumed only after the 1967 Six-Day War, but even with those settlements set to be evacuated, Jewish roots in the sandy strip of land where Egypt, Israel and the Mediterranean Sea meet run deep.

Opinions differ on whether the area was or was not included in the Land of Israel conquered by the ancient Israelites in the Bible.

Samson is the only biblical Israelite noted for having set foot there. In the 17th century the false messiah Shabbatai Zevi gave the area a bad name when he launched his movement from its shores.

After a contentious debate, Israel's Knesset voted last year to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip and evacuate the 9,000 or so Jewish settlers

who live in suburban-style settlements there, where sprawling green lawns and playgrounds are protected by wire fences and military towers.

The settler population is dwarfed by the 1.3 million Palestinians who live in densely populated Gaza, which is 25 miles long and just six miles wide.

During biblical times, Gaza was part of the land promised to the Jews by God but never part of the land actually conquered and inhabited by them, said Nili Wazana, a lecturer on Bible studies and the history of the Jewish people at Hebrew University.

Wazana, who is currently writing a book on the borders of the biblical Land of Israel, said there are contradictory references to Gaza in the Bible. One passage in Judges — often cited by Jewish settlers and their supporters — says the tribe of Judah took control of the area. But other biblical stories contradict this — a pattern typical of the Bible, she said.

"On almost everything, you will find an opinion and an opposite opinion. It was not a homogenous text. It was not written at same time, and there are competing ideologies," Wazana said. "The question of Gaza is one of the issues where you will find different opinions."

Most Israelis saw neither historic nor strategic reasons for staying in Gaza. But to Yigal Kamietsky, the rabbi of Gush Katif, the main Jewish settler bloc there, Gaza is an integral part of biblical Israel.

"Gaza is part of the Land of Israel, no less than Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak," he said. "There is no doubt it is part of the borders." He said that not only was it considered a mitzvah to settle there, but that "if we were not here, I am not sure the State of Israel would still be there."

Kamietsky said Jews in the Gaza settlements act as a buffer for those Jews living within Israel's pre-1967 borders. Indeed, some Israeli officials fear that once Israeli troops and settlers are withdrawn from the strip, Palestinian terrorists may concentrate on building rockets that can hit the Israeli city Ashkelon, north of Gaza.

The one period when Jews appeared to have sovereignty over Gaza was during the time of Hasmonean rule, when the Jewish King Yochanan — whose brother was Judah the Maccabee — captured the area in 145 C.E.

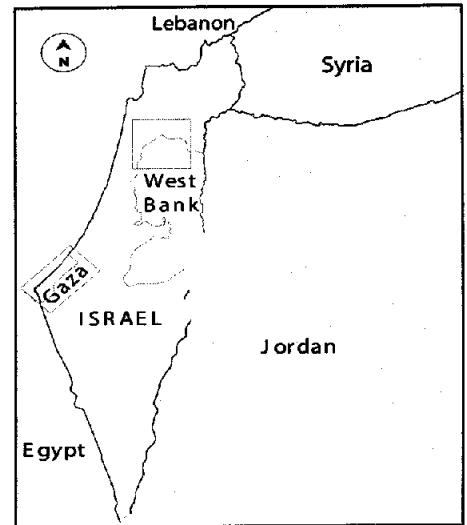
Haggai Huberman — who has written extensively on the history of Jewish settlement in Gaza over the centuries and is writing a history of the Jews in Gush Katif — maintains that the Jews who lived there always considered themselves residents of the Land of Israel.

He says that Jews have lived on and off in Gaza since the time of Roman rule, their settlement following a pattern of expulsion during times of war and conquest and return during more peaceful periods. The remains of an ancient synagogue found in Gaza date to around 508 C.E. Its mosaic floor, unearthed by archaeologists, is now displayed in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

There reportedly was a large Jewish community living in the area when the Muslims invaded in the seventh century. The Jews were noted for their skills as farmers and for making wine in their vast vineyards.

After the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, some Spanish and Portuguese Jews fled to Gaza. They abandoned the area when Napoleon's army marched through but later returned in the early 1800s.

When the first wave of Zionist settlers arrived in the region at the end of the 19th century, a group of 50 families moved to



Ehud Tal/Consulate of Israel in New York

Israel and neighboring countries.

Gaza City. According to Huberman, they established good relations with local Arabs.

The settlers stayed until they were expelled in 1914 — along with Gaza's entire Arab population — by the Ottoman Turks during World War I. The Jews returned in 1920. But tensions simmered with Arab and Jewish nationalisms on the rise, and the relations with local Arabs began to sour, Huberman said.

The major Jewish presence in Gaza on the eve of Israel's War of Independence in 1948 was a kibbutz called Kfar Darom, set up in 1946. It was evacuated during the war and was among the first places

to be resettled by Jews after 1967. Initially inhabited by Israeli soldiers from the Nahal brigade, it soon evolved into one of several civilian settlements established in the 1970s as the settler movement gained strength.

Any attempt to downplay Jewish roots in the Gaza Strip "is part of the disinformation being spread," said Eran Steinberg, a spokesman for the Gush Katif settlements.

For her part, Wazana said present-day debates over territory mirror those in the Bible.

"Descriptions of borders reflect different ideologies even back then," she said. "People have put words in the mouth of God even in biblical times. If you have an ideology, you will find the right words to support it."

THE  
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'The question of  
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opinions.'

Nili Wazana

Lecturer, Hebrew University

# Maimonides helps professor solve modern issue

By LIEL LEIBOVITZ  
New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — On one side of this country's gaping church-state divide, guns drawn and cocked, stand evangelical Christians powerfully pushing for a place for religion in the public square.

On the other side, trigger fingers poised, stand secularists — many of them Jewish — wary of a single brick being dislodged from the high wall separating church from state.

In between, with a proposal for civil coexistence that some might call outlandishly naive, is a former yeshiva bocher, or boy, from Brookline, Mass., wielding not a gun but the formulations of a 12th-century Spanish rabbi.

With a new book offering what he sees as a common-sense middle path between extreme camps fighting the church-state wars, Noah Feldman has put himself at the center of one of this country's fiercest debates. And the 35-year-old New York University law professor is not raising the specters of the Founding Fathers or Supreme Court justices of yesteryear — or even departed presidents — as both sides in the debate do to justify their cases.

For Feldman, the man of the moment is Maimonides, the Sephardic renaissance figure famous for bridging the worlds of faith and secular knowledge.

"I'm not a utopian but an optimist," Feldman said. "I believe in the ability of people to reason with each other, and that includes believing people.

"In that sense, I come from the Maimonidean perspective. It's complex, but if you sum it up it would be that the exercise of reason is itself a divine command. Reason has no reason to be afraid of religion, and neither does religion have reason to be afraid of reason."

The confluence of reason and religion, it seems, is what Feldman's life has been about. He began his intellectual path in the Maimonides School, a modern Orthodox day school in Brookline, before attending Harvard, Oxford — where he studied Islamic political thought as a Rhodes scholar — and Yale Law School.

Most recently he made headlines when he helped draft the new Iraqi constitution.

In a wide-ranging, hour-long interview with the Jewish Week from Maine, where

he is spending the summer, Feldman peppered his speech with references from both spheres of his life: One moment he's talking about outgoing Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the other about Ovadia Yosef, Israel's former Sephardic chief rabbi — spiraling into a spirited discussion of the Constitution only to veer into halachic law a moment later. Both are cemented in his intellectual cortex, and both guide his new proposal.

In a nutshell, Feldman's solution to the church-state debate, laid out in "Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem — and What We Should Do About It." is based on mutual respect, goodwill and civil discourse.

Here is a summary taken from a recent New York Times Magazine piece Feldman wrote on the issue: "Despite the gravity of the problem," he stated, "I believe there is an answer. Put simply, it is this: Offer greater latitude for religious speech and symbols in public debate, but also impose a stricter ban on state financing of religious institutions and activities."

It's a proposal that has the warring factions scratching their heads. On the one hand, Feldman's call for banning federal funding of religious institutions — including school vouchers for yeshiva education — puts him at odds with arguably the central item on the agenda of most religious groups in the country, Jewish ones included. Yet Feldman insists that banning federal money will strengthen, not weaken, religious education, and he offers his own experience as evidence.

"I went to a wonderful school," he said of the Maimonides School, founded by Rav Joseph Soloveitchik. "The reason it was so good was that it wasn't dependent on government support. If it were, its approach and curriculum might have been extremely different."

On the other hand, Feldman went on, the nation could tolerate a touch of faith on display in the public square, sending a message of inclusion to America's faith-driven millions. Here, he cited as an example the recent Supreme Court decision to allow some displays of religious symbols in or around

state courthouses, while barring others.

"I was basically encouraged that Justice [Stephen] Breyer, who was the swing vote, realized that we have to be somewhat open to public displays of religion," Feldman said.

While he said the court's decision did not make much sense from a legal perspective, it was nonetheless a "pragmatic compromise of the Aharon Barak style," referring to the chief justice of Israel's Supreme Court, who is a personal friend of Breyer.

Feldman's proposal, with its arguments that

often fly in the face of perceived wisdom, is a vision of civic-mindedness and rational discussion, a debate made possible only if each side recognizes the merit of the other's worldview. Feldman himself, with his diverse background, seems a perfect conduit for such a message.

"I don't doubt that some people on both sides are cynically motivated," he said, "but I know a lot of people on all sides of this debate know what it's like to be a part of each community, and I think there's sincerity on all sides and a deep commitment to try and make the American project work."

A first step toward such an achievement involves understanding the origins of the current conflict.

The approach that Feldman calls "legal secularism" — which advocates a complete divorce of church and state — was born largely as a result of the massive Jewish immigration of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"With Jewish immigration," Feldman said, "it became clear that you couldn't describe the United States as a Christian nation. Legal secularism was fueled by the concern that if we keep religion out of public life, it will make certain Jews not feel excluded."

Partly in reaction against legal secularism's successes, he said, a religious rebirth occurred, often bringing together divergent denominations such as Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Jews in an effort to repeal some of legal secularism's achievements.

With each side digging deeper into its own ideological foxhole, the culture scuffle erupted into war.

'Reason has no reason to be afraid of religion, and neither does religion have reason to be afraid of reason.'

Noah Feldman

Law professor, New York University

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## TISHA B'AV FEATURE

## For some Jews, holiday a way to mark recovery

By JANE ULMAN

**E**NCINO, Calif. (JTA) — Last summer Sarah Appleby, then 24, spent part of Tisha B'Av, helping to fingerprint a large mural with three panels. One panel represented loss, another mourning, and a third rebuilding and renewal.

"It was pretty abstract," she said.

But she says that experience, in conjunction with other activities, helped her and a group of 11 other Jewish young adult participants in Adamah — a three- or six-month fellowship at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Conn. — to find a personal connection to the holiday.

Traditionally, Tisha B'Av, which occurs on the ninth day of the month of Av and marks the destruction in Jerusalem of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. and the Second Temple in 70 C.E., is commemorated by observant Jews who fast, sit on the floor and chant Eicha, or Lamentations. They mourn the loss of the Temple and lament other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the millennia, including the end of the Bar-Kochba revolt in 135 C.E., the expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the Holocaust.

In recent years, some communities and denominations, including many Reform Jews, have moved away from observances of Tisha B'Av — which begins this year at sundown on Aug. 13 — because they believe the Temple is no longer central to Jewish religious life.

Other groups, however, such as Adamah, have found ways to infuse the holiday with new meaning and thus increase observance and appreciation for it.

"I don't really identify with the loss of the Temple," says Appleby, who chanted Lamentations with her Adamah group on Tisha B'Av evening, "but I like having a day of mourning for Jews to look at things that we've lost and to connect those to personal hard times and current-day difficulties."

Those difficulties can include individual anguish such as addiction, societal suffering such as genocide or poverty, or global suffering such as environmental devastation. But all use the same metaphor as a springboard. ■

## Jewish scouts unite

By ALIZA KARP

**BOWLING GREEN, Va. (JTA)** — When Boy Scout Troop 711 from Alaska lost four of its leaders in a freak electrical accident on the first day of the recent National Scout Jamboree here, the one Jewish scout in the Alaska contingent was left in a quandary.

On the Sunday morning of the gathering, when jamboree activities were suspended for a few hours, all of Noah Magen's troop mates were headed to religious services for their respective faiths. But what does a Jewish scout do on Sunday?

For Noah, the answer was the Shul Tent, where daily services and special programming were provided for Jewish scouts.

The Boy Scout Jamboree, which is held every four years at Fort A.P. Hill, near Fredericksburg, Va., brought together more than 35,000 Boy Scouts and another 8,000 volunteer staff for the July 25-Aug. 3 gathering — the largest jamboree since 1964.

For the fourth time, Tzivos Hashem, a Jewish children's organization within the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, provided special programming for the estimated 1,000 Jewish scouts who attended this year's jamboree. In addition to hundreds of scouts who are members of nonsectarian troops, there were also scouts from all Jewish troops at the 10-day event.

Some 100 observant scouts and leaders of the Shomer Shabbat, or Sabbath observant, contingent — made up of Jewish scouts from across North America — prayed together daily.

Although all the scouts may not belong to Shomer Shabbat troops in their hometowns, the Shomer Shabbat contingent allows Jewish scouts at the jamboree to be as observant as they choose, providing kosher food and scheduling daily prayers and Sabbath services. On the jamboree's Friday night, the Shul Tent and the adjacent Chapel Tent were overflowing with 500 Scouts for Shabbat services.

Scout Patrick Matson, the sole Jew in Troop 271 from Ocean Springs, Miss., wanted to attend the Friday night services. In order to abide by the buddy system required at the camp, he brought a Catholic friend with him.

Matson found the service, filled with Hebrew songs and English prayers, spirited and fun. "My friend said the service was amazing," he said.

After the services, a non-Jewish Scout in his late teens went to Rabbi Pinny Gniwisch, the chaplain for the Northwest

Region of the Boy Scouts of America, and told him in a strong Southern accent, "I don't think I ever met a Jew before, but if it is always like this, sign me up!"

Each jamboree participant was required to visit the Religious Relationships Booth representing his particular religion.

The Jewish booth was a constant buzz of activity. Ben Shreibman of Troop 41 from Cleveland put on tefillin for the first time in his life.

Six Jewish Boy Scouts were called to the pulpit in the Shul Tent to recite blessings over the Torah for the first time in their lives.

The Tzivos Hashem program in the Shul Tent drew close to 1,000 Boy Scouts. The event, which opened with brief greetings from Boy Scout dignitaries, included a play staged by the Shomer Shabbat contingent, a juggling display, and a lively audience-participation singing session led by Rabbi Shmuly Gutnick from the Crown Heights area of Brooklyn. The jamboree Web site dubbed him "The Reggae Rabbi."

The scouts then went to various booths in the Shul Tent, where they crafted their own shofars, braided their own Havdalah candles, had their pictures taken in front of a panorama display of the Western Wall in Jerusalem while wearing tefillin, and wrote private letters to God that would be mailed to Israel to be placed in the Wall.

Participating in these activities allowed many of the Scouts to complete the requirements for the Jewish Boy Scout award, the Ner Tamid Award.

When he ran out of the patches given for this award, Bruce Baker, the vice chairman of the Connecticut Yankee Council of the Jewish Committee on Scouting, saw it as a good sign.

"That says so much that Jewish scouting is alive and well," he said. ■

An estimated 1,000 Jewish Scouts attended this year's jamboree.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Tough talker in trouble

An Israeli soldier is under arrest on suspicion of threatening to assassinate Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The conscript was taken into custody Wednesday night after comrades serving with him at a checkpoint outside the Gaza Strip reported that he had inquired how to get to Sharon's nearby desert ranch.

Asked why he wanted to know, the soldier allegedly replied, "So I can go and shoot him."

### Mofaz upbeat on evacuation

Most settlers remaining in the Gaza Strip when its evacuation begins next week will leave without a fight, Israel's defense minister said.

"In the first two days of the evacuation, most residents will leave the Gaza Strip without resistance," Shaul Mofaz told reporters Thursday during a tour of military facilities outside Gaza.

The Israeli government says that more than half of Gaza settlers have already applied for state-funded relocation.

### Terrorist talks about attacks

A Syrian arrested in Turkey for suspected Al-Qaida links said he had planned to attack Israelis.

"I have no regrets. I was going to attack Israeli ships. If they come, my friends will attack them," the detainee shouted to reporters as he was taken to a Turkish court Thursday.

Five cruise liners carrying Israelis to Turkey have been diverted to Cyprus since last week, in what Israeli officials called a response to an Al-Qaida plot.

Another Syrian is also under arrest in Turkey in connection with the case.

### Bedouin soldier behind bars

An Israeli soldier who killed a British activist in the Gaza Strip was jailed for eight years.

Wahid Taysir, a volunteer from Israel's Bedouin Arab minority, was sentenced by a court martial Thursday to 10 years in prison for manslaughter and another 18 months for obstruction of justice but was told that three-and-a-half years of the sentence would be suspended.

It was the toughest punishment handed down to an Israeli soldier for an unlawful killing in a combat zone during the Palestinian intifada.

The ex-sergeant confessed to shooting Tom Hurndall, a member of a pro-Palestinian activist group, in the southern Gaza town of Rafah in 2003 and to falsely telling investigators that Hurndall had been armed.

### Minority in the homeland

Jews are no longer the majority group in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip combined, a study found.

According to data supplied Thursday by the daily Ha'aretz, Jews constitute slightly more than 49.3 percent of the population in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The figures were supplied by Israel and the Palestinian Authority's statistics bureaus.

The paper included as non-Jews some 185,000 foreign workers in Israel and almost 300,000 immigrants who are not Jewish under Orthodox law.

### Israeli university to host Sri Lankans

An Israeli university will host a group of doctors and nurses from tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka.

Haifa University's School of Public Health will host the 10-person group next week.

The public-health course the doctors and nurses will take is intended to help them improve the medical system back home, said Dr. Ehud Meron of the Haifa school.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Lawmakers seek Palestinian accountability

The leader of a U.S. congressional delegation to Israel said Congress would be willing to continue financially assisting the Palestinian Authority if terrorism abates.

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), who is in Israel with other Democratic representatives, said he was pleased to see Israeli and Palestinian security officials cooperating on plans for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and would be asking Palestinian Authority leaders to make more arrests and take other action against terrorists.

No one is going to invest in the Palestinians "without terror coming to a halt," Hoyer told JTA on Thursday.

He plans to send the message to P.A. leaders in meetings over the weekend.

The delegation, sponsored by an educational organization affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, also met with Gen. William Ward, President Bush's envoy to the region, and members of the Israeli Cabinet.

### Abramoff to face fraud charges

A federal grand jury in Florida is expected to indict lobbyist Jack Abramoff on bank fraud charges.

Abramoff, a leading figure in an investigation of Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, has been accused of using a fake wire transfer to defraud lenders of \$60 million in the purchase of a Florida gambling boat company and of using the company's income to finance Republican fund-raising ventures.

Abramoff was a leading figure in the Washington Jewish community; he had been a benefactor of a Jewish day school and a kosher restaurant.

### Middle East politicians to meet in Canada

Canada's justice minister is leading plans to host roundtable discussions for Mideast justice ministers.

The forum organized by Irwin Cotler for officials from Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority is tentatively planned for late December or January.

Cotler and his parliamentary secretary, Paul Macklin, visited the Middle East last month and met separately with Tzipi Livni, Abed Shakhaneh and Farid Al-Jallad, the justice ministers of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, respectively.

## WORLD

### Rosen named to top interfaith post

Rabbi David Rosen was named president of the most prominent Jewish group dealing with international interfaith affairs.

The American Jewish Committee's international director of inter-religious affairs, Rosen was named to head the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.

IJCIC represents organized world Jewry in its relations with other world religious bodies, such as the Vatican.

### Auschwitz video denounced

A Jewish group urged European officials to remove from Web sites an Internet video that depicts a rave party at Auschwitz.

The three-minute video "Housewitz" shows Nazi soldiers as DJs and intersperses black-and-white still photos of the Holocaust with color images of youths at a party. The Associated Press reported.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has asked the OSCE to press European nations to take the video off the Web.