

IN THE NEWS

Bomber strikes southern Israeli city

A Palestinian suicide bomber wounded 20 people in southern Israel.

The terrorist tried to board a bus in Beersheba on Sunday but, after being chased away by suspicious security guards, he blew himself up outside.

The Beersheba bombing was seen as an embarrassment for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who earlier Sunday said that the cease-fire he declared with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon last February would hold indefinitely.

Cabinet approves Egypt's role in Gaza

Israel approved the transfer of its security control of the Gaza Strip's southern border to Egypt.

By a vote of 18-2, Israel's Cabinet on Sunday agreed to allow Egypt to post 750 troops along the 8-mile corridor to stop arms smuggling from the Sinai to Palestinian terrorists in Gaza.

Some Israeli security experts, including the chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Yuval Steinitz, had come out against the deal, which effectively rescinds a clause in the 1979 Camp David peace accord with Egypt requiring that the Sinai remain demilitarized.

Israel and Vatican end their sparring

Israel and the Vatican resolved their dispute over a sermon by Pope Benedict XVI that failed to condemn a Palestinian suicide bombing.

Israeli officials said over the weekend that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had conceded that Jerusalem was too aggressive in its response to the July sermon in which Benedict failed to mention the Jewish state in a litany of countries recently hit by Islamist terrorists.

In return, the Vatican apologized for the omission, which it called unintentional.

WORLD REPORT

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Specter, fighting cancer, thrives on chance to lead Roberts hearings

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Soon after the late ABC News anchor Peter Jennings was diagnosed with lung cancer earlier this year, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), himself fighting Hodgkin's disease, wrote to the journalist.

Work is the best antidote for cancer, Specter told him.

Specter may be trying to prove the point this summer: At a time when many cancer sufferers concentrate solely on fighting their illness, Specter, 75, has become a more frequent guest on Sunday morning talk shows and is at the center of some of the most controversial issues of the day. Next month he'll be in the spotlight as he chairs Judge John Roberts' confirmation hearings for the U.S. Supreme Court.

At times Specter represents his party's faithful; on other issues he bucks the leadership. Friends and colleagues say taking on big fights is trademark Arlen Specter.

"I think his job has been a substantial factor in saving his life," his son, Shanin, a prominent Philadelphia trial attorney, told JTA. "He said there were a lot of days he didn't feel like getting up. But he got up every day because he had work to do he felt was very important."

Since arriving in the Senate in 1981, Specter has made a name for himself by taking positions that at times angered the Republican Party leadership and at times miffed his moderate Pennsylvania constituency.

He gained national attention as one of the few GOP opponents to the Supreme

Court nominee Robert Bork in 1987. But it was his tough questioning of Anita Hill, the lawyer who accused the Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment in 1991, that shaped Specter's early reputation.

The questioning did not sit well with female voters in Pennsylvania, and Specter fought a difficult re-election battle a year later against Lynn Yeakel.

Judy Palkovitz, a volunteer from Pittsburgh, was recruited to speak to women who weren't planning to support Specter's 1992 re-election bid.

"There were a lot of people who felt he went overboard with Anita Hill," said Palkovitz, 63. "I have friends throughout the country who will never forgive him for what he did to

her, and that is baggage he has to carry."

Morton Klein, the president of the Zionist Organization of America and a friend of Specter's, said the lawmaker went around the state explaining his record and barely won re-election.

"He was very contrite about maybe not handling that issue in the most sensitive matter that he should have," Klein said.

Specter — who became the first Jew to run for the Republican nomination for president in 1996, but withdrew before the first primary — now is in a "perfect position to get a second crack at history," Palkovitz said.

By all accounts, Specter is relishing the opportunity to spearhead Roberts' confirmation hearings as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"This is the culmination of his career,"

Continued on page 2

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ Arlen Specter, suffering from cancer, chairs hearings for a Supreme Court nominee

Continued from page 1

said Terry Madonna, the director of Franklin and Marshall College's Keystone Poll.

"He has been waiting his entire senatorial career for this moment."

To win the chairmanship, earlier this year Specter had to fend off conservative Republican critics who feared he wouldn't reflect their views on abortion and other hot-button issues.

While Roberts is considered very likely to be confirmed, Specter has made it clear that the nominee won't get a free pass.

Specter has already signaled to Roberts that he will question him about "judicial activism" and the court's tactic of denigrating congressional measures it overturns, statements that have won praise from Democrats.

His questioning of Roberts could further rankle the GOP leadership — but they may be getting used to Specter bucking party discipline by now.

"This is not a doctrinarian party," said Matt Brooks, the executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition.

■
Specter has always been willing to speak his mind no matter where the party is, Brooks said, comparing him to Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), who feel comfortable articulating positions that buck the party line.

"He's always known that he represents a point of view that, while it has become a minority view within his own

party, is a majority point of view within the country," Shanin Specter said. "He feels very comfortable articulating those views."

Often described as indefatigable, some observers say cancer hasn't slowed Specter. He didn't miss a day of work during his illness, even continuing to attend his morning squash games.

This summer he has been leading the fight to lift the ban on embryonic stem-cell research, a position supported by much of the American Jewish community.

Specter fought the White House for a vote on the measure this fall, threatening to include it in a health and human services spending bill he controls as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services.

Many believe Specter's efforts forced Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), the Senate majority leader and a heart surgeon, not only to schedule a vote on the measure but also to change his position and support stem-cell research himself.

Specter made headlines in May when Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), a key opponent of embryonic stem-cell research, asked him when his life began on the ABC News program "This Week with George Stephanopoulos."

"Well, Sam, I'm a lot more concerned at this point about when my life is going to end," Specter said.

Associates say it's not surprising that Specter has used his illness as a platform and that he chose not to wear a wig after his cancer treatments caused severe hair loss.

"There's something about him that says, 'This is who I am and this is just the way it is,'" said Joseph Smukler, a past chairman of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia. "He's a very forceful guy."

■
Middle-ground positions have helped Specter consistently win majorities in Pennsylvania, a state that voted last year for Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) for president but which is also home to one of

Congress' staunchest conservatives, Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

When you so often stake out middle positions, there's a good chance you'll anger both liberal or conservative voters at one time or another. Palkovitz, a leading donor to Specter over the past two decades, recently parted company with him, upset that the pro-choice lawmaker backed a ban on so-called

partial-birth abortions in 2003.

"I thought he was being used by the people who were against abortion, who didn't really give a fig about him," she said. "I told him people like me will remember."

Other people in the Jewish community remember Specter's strong support for Israel and his leadership in the fight for Soviet Jews in the 1980s.

"He's known as the best supporter of Israel among all the Jews in the Senate," Klein said. "He's at the forefront: He stands up, he lobbies and he makes phone calls."

■
Specter is considered part of a dying breed of moderate northeastern Republicans, often compared to former Sen. Jacob Javits of New York and former New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, who went on to become a U.S. vice president.

He goes full throttle on every issue he takes on, from challenging Anita Hill to challenging his own party leaders.

Supporters and critics alike say Specter has a strong political sensibility, which allows the Pennsylvania senator the ability to walk very close to the edge while rarely crossing over.

After all, said Madonna, the Keystone Poll director, this was the man who advocated the "single-bullet theory" in 1964 as an investigator into the assassination of President Kennedy on the Warren Commission.

"He thrives on these contentious moments," Madonna said.

"His entire career he's been at the center of a lot of controversial issues, and I don't think he has sleepless nights because of them." ■

This is the culmination of Specter's career. He's been waiting his entire senatorial career for this.

Terry Madonna

Director, Franklin and Marshall College's Keystone Poll

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Canadian cemetery buries intermarried

By BRAM EISENTHAL

REGINA, Saskatchewan (JTA) — On a patch of green land in this Canadian province, a wrought-iron gate stands at the entrance to a new cemetery, the words “Dedicated to the partnership of love and faith” inscribed on its doorway.

The Cemeteries, as the burial ground is known, is the brainchild of Noel Sandomirsky, a federal court judge who is a lifelong member of the 100-year-old Beth Jacob Synagogue and the chairman of its chevra kadisha, or burial society.

What sets the two-month-old burial ground apart is its purpose: The Cem-

eteries is meant for Jews wishing to be buried next to their non-Jewish spouses, something not ordinarily allowed under Jewish law.

Sandomirsky, 63, is married to a convert, and Beth Jacob's spiritual leader of eight years, the yet-to-be-ordained Jeremy Parnes, has a non-Jewish partner.

In fact, most of the 700 Jews remaining in the once-thriving Regina community — roughly 400 of whom belong to the unaffiliated but largely Conservative Beth Jacob — are tolerant of interfaith relationships.

Sandomirsky recalls a vibrant, healthy Jewish population in the Regina of his youth — many young Jews met and married through the B'nai Brith Youth Organization. Now, however, there are only about 15 children in the community who will attend Beth Jacob's Hebrew school this year.

“I realized some time ago that the sphere of assimilation and how we deal with that historically involved religions that tend to excommunicate those who fall in love outside their faith,” Sandomirsky says. “That's a high price to pay for falling in love. We should encourage these people to stay within the faith, creating a counterbalance to assimilation and the danger of losing people.”

Sandomirsky decided to apply this concept to death as well. He looked into halacha, or Jewish religious law, and sought out the possibilities for such an arrangement. The Cemeteries is the result.

Separated from other Jewish burial grounds on the property by greenery, trees, shrubs and a large entrance gate, the Cemeteries comprises 42 plots in three rows of 14 each, enough to last the community for quite some time.

The odd-numbered grave sites are reserved for Jewish members of the synagogue, the even-numbered ones for non-Jews. Between each of the rows is a steel post laid into a cement block. A small, stainless-steel link chain is inserted between each post, creating an 18-inch-

high barrier. That's not too high to impede visitors wishing to pay their respects to a deceased couple, while it does create the barrier required by Jewish law, Sandomirsky says. To the judge in him, it appears to be a fair and appropriate solution.

“After a lifetime together, the couple should have the privilege — indeed, the right — of being buried side by side,” he says.

Rabbi Alan Bright, the spiritual leader of the Conservative Congregation Shaare Zedek of Montreal, said the concept sounds acceptable to him.

“I have no problem with the theory as long as there is a barrier, and it does not have to obscure

the view,” Bright says. “As long as there is a barrier, burying a Jew next to a non-Jew is permissible according to halachah.”

In small European Jewish communities, he says, the situation of Jews being buried in close proximity to non-Jews arose all the time. In the Montreal suburb Beaconsfield, he notes, “we have a row of trees that acts as a natural barrier between the Jewish and non-Jewish portions of the cemetery.”

Sandomirsky says that some older and more traditional members of the community objected when the idea was first proposed but their concerns were assuaged through dialogue.

“When the rubber hit the pavement this past summer, there was no opposition at all,” he says.

So far, the idea is proving popular.

“We've already had three couples purchase plots in the first two months of operation.

“And I've also had inquiries from Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Jeremy” — all in the province of Saskatchewan — and Winnipeg in Manitoba, Sandomirsky says.

He adds that he's not aware of similar arrangements elsewhere.

“I have visited a number of cemeteries over the years, and I have never come upon anything like this,” Sandomirsky says. “I didn't base the idea on an existing place” — just on the idea of eternal love. ■

‘After a lifetime together, a couple should have the privilege, indeed the right, to be buried together side by side.’

Noel Sandomirsky

Founder, Canadian cemetery for intermarried couples

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ The Air Force is expected to unveil new guidelines for religious tolerance. The guidelines come after cadets at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., said they felt pressure to choose their military duties over religious observance, and were in an overtly Christian atmosphere. Retired Navy chaplain Rabbi Arnold Resnicoff was hired by the Air Force in June to address the military's religious climate. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told Jewish leaders last week that the guidelines could be replicated throughout the armed services.

■ The subject of the film “Hotel Rwanda” will speak in Washington on the crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Paul Rusesabagina will join others who have recently visited Sudan at the National Press Club for a briefing, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, NAACP, Jewish Community Relations Council and the Greater Washington Jewish Task Force on Darfur.

■ Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, meets in the West Bank with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei. The visit will focus mainly on the withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip and attempts to restart peace talks. Solana met Sunday with top Israeli officials. His visit ends Tuesday.

TUESDAY

■ Leaders of several American Jewish organizations will travel to the Arizona-Mexico border to highlight dangerous conditions there. Monday's trip, which will also include Christian leaders, is in support of comprehensive immigration reform legislation to improve safety at the border. The American Jewish Committee, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs will be represented.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Gaza graves moved

Israeli military rabbis began moving Jewish graves out of the Gaza Strip.

The exhumation of 48 Israelis buried in the cemetery of the main Gaza settlement bloc, Gush Katif, began Sunday, with the remains transferred to Israel.

The next of kin will decide where to rebury their loved ones.

The entire operation, one of the final stages of Israel's evacuation of Gaza settlements, is expected to take no more than five days.

Israel to admit Gaza villagers

Most residents of a Gaza Strip village that has sheltered Arabs who helped Israeli security forces will be moved to Israel.

Israeli Defense Ministry officials said Sunday that 200 of Dahaniya's 300 inhabitants will receive government compensation and be moved en masse to Tel Arad in southern Israel.

Those eligible for relocation are Palestinians or Bedouins who either have Israeli citizenship or are undergoing naturalization.

Of the remainder, some have already moved to Israel to live with residents while the rest are expected to be absorbed by the Palestinian Authority.

Many Palestinians consider Dahaniya traitorous as it has taken in both Palestinian informers and Bedouin Arabs who helped Israeli forces in the Sinai before it was handed back to Egypt under a 1979 peace accord.

Hamas leader: We're not done

A top Hamas terrorist came out of hiding to gloat at Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

"Now you have left Gaza humiliated," Mohammed Deif, a bomb maker for the Islamic terrorist group who went underground after surviving an Israeli airstrike two years ago, said in a videotaped message released over the weekend. "Now the Israelis have all gone to hell," said Deif, his face hidden.

He vowed that "all of Palestine" — referring to the West Bank and Israel — would now "become hell," hinting that Hamas planned to resume terrorist attacks now that Israel's pullout from Gaza is complete.

Gaza protester dies

An Israeli woman who set herself on fire to protest the Gaza Strip withdrawal died.

The 54-year-old West Bank resident succumbed last Friday to injuries sustained Aug. 7 when she doused herself with kerosene and lit it at a police checkpoint outside Gaza. Police described the incident as a protest suicide.

The woman was to be buried in the settlement of Kedumim. She was the only Israeli fatality linked to the withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank.

Arrests in mosque attack

Israeli police arrested two suspects in the desecration of a Tel Aviv mosque.

A man and a woman were taken into custody last Friday and confessed to throwing a pig's head, wrapped in an Arab scarf, at the Hassan Bek mosque last week, police said.

Authorities are describing the desecration as a hate crime, saying the couple hoped to spark Muslim rioting that would prevent Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

But the Israeli Arab response was muted, and the suspects face charges of violating the sanctity of a shrine and incitement to violence.

A lawyer for the two said the woman had no connection to the

crime and that the man had sought to "convey a message to the world."

Leaders of the Islamic Movement said they would set up guard units to secure Muslim holy sites.

Conservative rabbis give the gift of pizza

Rabbis from Israel's Masorti movement delivered hundreds of pizzas and sodas to Israeli forces involved in the Gaza evacuation.

After convincing a pizza store owner that their initial order for 120 pizzas was real, Rabbis Barry Schlesinger and Andy Sacks made their first delivery — to a busload of soldiers on their way into southern Gaza.

"The gift of pizzas was a small gesture, but it was enough to make one soldier tear up," Sacks said.

The pizza project was made possible when thousands of dollars poured in after an e-mail appeal to rabbis in the United States.

Children from the Masorti, or Conservative, movement's NOAM youth group also prepared and delivered 450 packages of candy and other items to children being evacuated from the Gaza settlements.

NORTH AMERICA

Controversial circumcision ritual defended

Fervently Orthodox officials are refusing to abandon a ritual circumcision practice that may have caused the death of an infant.

The officials refused despite months of meetings with New York City health officials, *The New York Times* reported.

Health officials believe three New York-area newborns got herpes, one of them fatally, from the practice of metzitzah b'peh, in which the mohel places his mouth directly on the wound.

"The Orthodox Jewish community will continue the practice that has been practiced for over 5,000 years," said Rabbi David Niederman of the United Jewish Organization in Brooklyn, after meeting with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "We do not change. And we will not change."

WORLD

E.U. lauds Israeli pullout

The European Union welcomed Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the commissioner for external relations of the European Commission, the executive branch of the union, praised the way in which Israel carried out its pullout.

She also said the commission is preparing a new aid package of \$74 million to help rebuild infrastructure and strengthen Palestinian institutions in the Gaza Strip.

This amount comes on top of a \$25 million package that has been pledged for the social support of refugees in Gaza.

The total support of the European Commission to the Palestinians is expected to be more than \$310 million this year.

Ghetto's liquidation marked

Survivors and their families joined others in marking the 61st anniversary in Poland of the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto.

Sunday and Monday's ceremonies include the opening of a new Jewish center and a march through the city's streets.

Some 230,000 Jews lived in the city before World War II.

Cemetery desecrated in Germany

Vandals desecrated a Jewish cemetery in Germany. Swastikas and other Nazi symbols were painted on gravestones in Ebersburg, a town in western Germany, police said.

Police are investigating the incident.