

## IN THE NEWS

**U.N. approves  
Palestinian committees**

The U.N. General Assembly passed a series of resolutions widely seen as anti-Israel.

The body passed its annual resolutions Thursday extending the mandates of the so-called Palestinian committees, which support the Palestinian agenda at the United Nations.

The assembly also again passed resolutions on Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the "peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine."

**Reform wants funds  
to help fight HIV/AIDS**

The Reform movement called for greater funds to battle AIDS.

The movement's Religious Action Center commended the Bush administration for its unprecedented financial commitment to battling the disease worldwide, but said more needed to be done.

"To extinguish the HIV/AIDS pandemic, funds are required totaling more than double what the U.S. and the rest of the world has committed for the coming year," the center said in a statement timed for World AIDS Day on Thursday.

**Lawsuits dropped  
against Holocaust heirs**

A battle was won in the fight for restitution of property in Berlin to its Jewish heirs.

The KarstadtQuelle company dropped its lawsuit to retain four properties in the former East Berlin that once belonged to the Wertheim family, which ran one of the biggest department store chains in pre-Hitler Germany.

The decision was greeted with enthusiasm by lawyers for the family and by the Claims Conference, which has filed and fought the cases.

Lawsuits over other properties once held by the Wertheim family now held by KarstadtQuelle could still be brought.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**



# WORLD REPORT

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## HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF? Y-O-U-N-G J-U-D-A-E-A

Young Judaea volunteers fill a truck with supplies in Montgomery, Ala., during Caravan 4 Katrina. The caravan distributed food, books and toys to children dislocated by Hurricane Katrina.

## At biennial, Conservative Jews look to recapture place in the sun

By SUE FISHKOFF

**O**AKLAND, Calif. (JTA) — How should Conservative Judaism cope with dwindling membership, growing intermarriage rates and society's increasing religious and political polarity, while remaining true to its base in halachah, or Jewish law?

Those are some of the vexing questions the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism will tackle when it convenes Sunday in Boston for its four-day biennial.

There are more: Who will replace Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, longtime chancellor of the

movement's flagship Jewish Theological Seminary, when he retires next summer?

It's no accident that the opening plenary talk by Rabbi Harold Kushner is called "What does it mean to be a Conservative Jew?" That's a question that will be on everyone's mind at the Dec. 4-8 conference, says Rabbi Joel Meyers, head of the Rabbinical Assembly, the Conservative movement's rabbinic arm.

"What the movement is struggling to do is set a public position for the 21st century," he says.

The challenge comes as Conservative Judaism, which once set the agenda for American

*Continued on page 2*

**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## Conservative Jews look to recapture their place in the sun

*Continued from page 1*

Jewry, has lost its numeric edge, dropping from 43 percent of affiliated Jews in 1990 to 33 percent in 2000, according to the two latest National Jewish Population Surveys. Conservative Jews are older as a group than the Reform or Orthodox, yet they hold most of the key positions in Jewish communal leadership, contributing to the aging of that leadership.

Meyers insists the Conservative movement "is strong" and says enrollment in day schools and camps is up, even as the movement's outreach to young adult Jews is languishing.

In an effort to stem the hemorrhaging of members in Conservative synagogues and soften the movement's image of being cold and unwelcoming to the intermarried, Rabbi Jerome Epstein, the USCJ's executive vice president, will unveil a far-reaching initiative on keruv, or outreach, directed primarily at interfaith families in Conservative congregations.

In the works for the past year, the initiative, described by Conservative leaders as much more forthcoming than the movement's current approach to keruv, is being kept under tight wraps — though every movement leader, half a dozen congregations and selected outsiders already have seen it.

Epstein, the driving force behind the initiative, notes that in 1986 he headed the faction that pushed for promoting in-marriage rather than actively welcoming the intermarried. Now he's spearheading an outreach approach that Charles Simon, head of the Conservative movement's Federation

of Jewish Men's Clubs, calls "a major reversal" of the movement's current attitude.

Insisting it's "an evolution, not a reversal," Epstein says he didn't believe two decades ago that the Conservative movement "had the resources to both promote in-marriage and keruv." But with intermarriage a reality, he says he has "come to the conclusion that whether we can or can't do both, we must."

Epstein says the new approach "goes beyond the idea of keruv as welcoming the intermarried," but without transgressing any key Conservative values.

"There are many things that are permitted that we have not done," he hints.

The initiative calls upon congregations to actively encourage conversion, particularly of non-Jews already in Conservative families.

"The process we've traditionally had, which makes it difficult to convert, was probably valuable at a particular time," Epstein says. "While I'm not looking to recruit people off the street, for those who have already chosen to be part of a relationship with a Jew, we ought to be passionate and compassionate toward them."

Epstein believes keruv is the biggest challenge facing Conservative Jewry.

"Our success here will determine not only the destiny of the movement but the destiny of American Jewish life," he maintains.

The Conservatives are broadening their embrace of the intermarried just two weeks after Reform leader Rabbi Eric Yoffie proposed at that movement's biennial that Reform congregations ask non-Jewish spouses to consider conversion.

Are the two approaches converging? Not really, Meyers says.

"Maybe at the edges Conservative is becoming more Reform," he acknowledges, "but the two movements are distinctive. The Reform movement's position is that each person and rabbi is autonomous and does their own thing, while we believe in halachah and mitzvot. We have a clear idea of how people should behave."

"The Reform movement reaches out" and

makes intermarried members feel comfortable, says Rabbi Moshe Edelman, director of congregational planning and leadership development for the United Synagogue.

"We're saying, reach out and gather in for the sake of sanctity, of kedushah," or holiness, he adds. "We're not looking for a comfort zone."

Edelman has been test-marketing the keruv initiative to groups within and outside the Conservative movement, and says it has gone through at least a dozen iterations as input from the test groups is incorporated.

The initiative offers "a suggestion of approaches" rather than dictating policy, Epstein says.

That's how it should be, Simon says — an outreach approach that incorporates the views of many people and institutions, rather than one imposed from the top down.

"Everyone in the movement agrees it's important" to deal with outreach to the intermarried, "we just haven't yet come to agreement on how it should be done, which is fine," he says.

Epstein expects that the new openness will impact the movement's Camp Ramah and Solomon Schechter day schools, both of which place restrictions on children of non-Jewish mothers. The day schools, for example, require such students to convert within a year of admission.

Discussion of Schorsch's replacement, a hot topic among movement leaders and rabbis, will take place more circumspectly, in corridors and private meetings rather than plenary sessions.

The seminary's search committee is still evaluating candidates. Despite an ever-changing short list that surfaces on the gossip circuit, committee members remain tight-lipped. Rabbi Gordon Tucker of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, N.Y., the former dean of JTS, rabbinical school, and Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, dean of the rabbinical school at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, are two current favorites.

"Traditionally the chancellor has served as a unifying voice, the 'rabbi' of the movement," Meyers says, but the next person to fill that position could take it even further.

**For those who have already chosen to be part of a relationship with a Jew, we ought to be passionate and compassionate toward them.**

**Rabbi Jerome Epstein**  
USCJ's executive vice president

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# Elections present opportunities in Mideast

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Americans pinning their hopes on Middle East peacemaking usually dread regional elections: When Israeli or Palestinian leaders need to act tough for their constituents, progress toward peace usually stops.

That would seem to be the case now with both peoples going to elections soon — but some now feel the election season may accelerate the peace process instead of inhibiting it.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, running against the Labor Party's Amir Peretz, a pronounced dove, is playing to Israel's center, running on a platform that envisions Palestinian statehood.

Barely a month ago, before Peretz invigorated the Labor Party with his upset primary victory over Shimon Peres, the key showdown in Israeli politics looked like a match between two hawks: Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu, both vying for a Likud leadership tussle then set for April.

Now Sharon has split from the Likud and set up his own centrist party, Kadima, and general elections are set for March 28. Running against a dove means Sharon is likelier to play to the middle.

The Bush administration has taken the cue, and is dismissing concerns that elections will get in the way of progress.

"Elections happen in democracies all the time," U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said last week. "At the working level, the work continues. And that's what we would expect to happen."

McCormack made it clear that the administration expects Israel and the Palestinians to maintain momentum from the Rafah accords, brokered earlier this month by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, which opened the Gaza Strip to travel and trade for the first time since Israel evacuated the territory in early September.

"It's there in black and white," McCormack said. "Everybody knows what they agreed to. And it's really a matter of just implementing the agreement at this point, which is going to require work."

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan echoed that call Tuesday while marking the U.N.'s "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People."

"The electoral season should not be allowed to prevent the parties from the essential work of building mutual trust and following through with the implementation," Annan said. The United

Nations, the United States, the European Union and Russia constitute the "Quartet," the group guiding the Middle East peace process.

McCormack specified progress in improving and modernizing transit stations for people and goods at Gaza crossings, targets Israel and the Palestinians have said are within reach.

Rice's involvement represents a new level of involvement for the Bush administration. She delayed the Asia leg of her tour to make sure the Rafah agreement was hammered out.

"We realized we had to come to our senses," said Saeb Erekat, the top Palestinian Authority negotiator, who was in Washington this week to meet with Rice. "This shows a third-party role can succeed."

■  
Democrats in Congress suggested they would push for a greater U.S. role.

"We're at a time of real opportunity. The United States needs to show the same kind of resolve as Sharon," Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Democratic whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, said Tuesday in a meeting with JTA's editorial staff in New York. "This kind of opportunity might not come again in the short term."

Hoyer said the U.S. should serve as a catalyst, not dictate terms of an agreement. One measure of U.S. involvement would be helping to defray the costs of resettling evacuated Israeli settlers in any future redeployment, Hoyer said.

The United States needs "to let Israel know that we are prepared to support the financial burdens that resettlement

and withdrawal from the West Bank will entail," he said.

The Bush administration also expects the Palestinians to move forward on the peace process ahead of Jan. 25 legislative elections.

In their meeting Tuesday, Erekat urged Rice to press Israel not to interfere in the elections. He claimed that Israel has failed to respond to seven requests

to set up a joint committee ahead of the elections.

Israel is upset that the Palestinian Authority is allowing Hamas to run in the elections, noting that the Palestinians are obligated under the "road map" peace plan to dismantle terrorist groups.

Speaking after the meeting with Erekat, McCormack suggested that Rice made clear that there was a link between pressure on Israel and Palestinian performance in stopping terrorism.

"The secretary underlined the importance of the Palestinian political process continuing to move forward, with an eye toward parliamentary elections in January," McCormack said. "She emphasized the importance of the Palestinian Authority living up to its obligations with regard to security as well."

Hoyer also said action against terrorists is a prerequisite for U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

"The Palestinians know we are prepared to help them, but we're not prepared to help them until they take steps that are essential to pursuing peace," he said. Such pressure should take place privately, he said, not through public pronouncements.

Erekat was optimistic after his meeting with Rice. The tectonic political shifts in Palestinian and Israeli political cultures represent a "turning point," he said.

But he wasn't sure where that would lead.

"Have you ever heard a group of cats outside your window shouting?" he asked. "Can you tell if they are making love or fighting?" ■

**'The electoral season should not be allowed to prevent the parties from the essential work of building mutual trust.'**  
**U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan**

**NEWS  
ANALYSIS**

# Jewish school stars in film on Jewish lesbian

By PENNY SCHWARTZ

BOSTON (JTA) — In the poignant opening frames of the new film "Hineini," Shulamit Izen thumbs through stacks of books at her local library, searching for an answer to the following question: "Is it possible to be Jewish and a lesbian?"

In the hourlong documentary, filmmaker Irena Fayngold looks back at Izen's quest to reconcile these tensions while seeking acceptance as a religious Jewish lesbian at Gann Academy — The New Jewish High School, in Waltham, Mass.

The film includes plenty of tug-at-your-heartstrings moments, including a school assembly where Izen, known as Shula by her family and friends, and several teachers and students come out openly as gays and lesbians.

Ultimately, Izen's courageous organizing efforts result in the formation of Open House, a support and educational group, named after the Israeli gay and lesbian organization with the same name.

With hindsight, Fayngold's film reveals both the pathos and humor involved in the soul-searching that Izen and Gann Academy experience as they grapple with the issues of tolerance raised by Izen and her supporters.

Izen, who is now a 21-year-old junior at Brown University, is the clear heroine of the film.

But the unexpected second star of the film is Gann Academy.

"This is not the story of one girl's activism. It's a story about a pluralistic community struggling with contemporary American life," Fayngold says.

At the heart of the issue for traditional

Jews is a passage in Leviticus that states the traditional Jewish position clearly: "It is an abomination for a man to lie with a man as he lies with a woman."

But others have argued that this is only one biblical passage and that Judaism should show flexibility and accept gays and lesbians.

Unlike denominational Jewish day schools, Gann Academy intentionally draws its students from all strands of Judaism and a wide variety of Jewish practice.

## ARTS & CULTURE

Rabbi Daniel Lehmann, Gann's charismatic and popular headmaster, openly admits, in the film and in an interview from Israel where he is on sabbatical, that Izen tested the school's moral foundation. "The school's commitment to pluralism requires us to meet the challenges of a diverse Jewish community and she was pushing us" to create an environment where "diversity would have an opportunity to be explored," Lehmann explains.

It took three-and-a-half years to make the film, explains Fayngold, whose day job is as a producer for public television.

There were bumps along the way. After originally turning her down, the school eventually allowed Fayngold access to the school's archival material and the school's headmaster and permitted teachers from the school to speak openly in the film.

Given the hometown advantage, it's not surprising that "Hineini," which means 'Here I Am,' in Hebrew, premiered to a sold-out audience at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, on Nov. 13, the closing day of the Boston Jewish Film Festival.

A second showing was added one week later to accommodate the demand for tickets. But the film's potentially controversial theme — acceptance of open homosexuality within the Jewish educational world — has touched a chord well beyond Massachusetts, known for its

status as the first-state in the nation to allow same sex marriage.

Requests for film bookings have been pouring in from Atlanta to Berlin, according to Sara Rubin, executive director of the Boston Jewish Film Festival and Idit Klein, the film's producer and executive director of Keshet, an educational and activist organization for Boston's Jewish gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual community.

The film is next scheduled for a Dec. 11

screening in Washington.

Rubin is not surprised by the buzz created by the film.

"Gay and lesbian films are in demand," she says. "We usually show a few every year."

But to Rubin's knowledge, Hineini is the only film that focuses solely on a Jewish high school. Klein says Keshet has received a \$25,000 grant to produce teacher guides to be used in conjunction with the film.

Nationally, about 4 percent of high school students identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, a percentage Klein thinks is mirrored in the Jewish community.

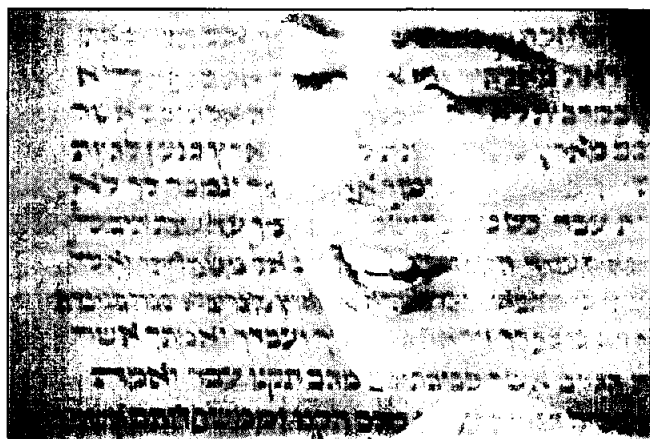
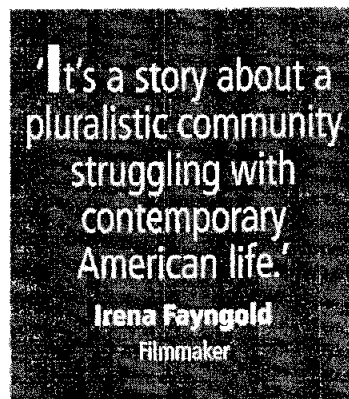
The film was funded by an anonymous donor who initiated the idea for the film after hearing a presentation by Izen while she was a student intern at Keshet. Lehmann, the headmaster, who was in Boston for the opening, has a few reservations about the film, one of which is the portrayal of the school assembly, which does not reveal the school's extensive involvement in planning the program.

This kind of detail would be instructive and valuable to other schools, he says. But it is legitimate to focus on Shula, he says.

"You never know what people will create. The school is portrayed pretty fairly. It reveals some of our best traits and some limitations," he says, adding that he hopes the film is helpful to other people and institutions.

The film also makes clear that Izen had unyielding support from her family.

"I was lucky," Izen told JTA. "My parents were amazing. My mom said, 'you are doing this fight, but I'm supporting you.' It gave me strength and something to fall back on," Shula says.



Courtesy of Keshet

Shulamit Izen in Irena Fayngold's documentary 'Hineini.'

# JDate comes out of the closet

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

NEW YORK (JTA) — For all the nice Jewish boys looking for other nice Jewish boys — and nice Jewish lesbians looking for love — JDate.com has come to the rescue.

The Jewish online dating site expanded its search capabilities this month to allow gay men and lesbians to seek matches. The Web site, which is popular among Jews of all ages, now asks people for their gender and the gender they're searching, allowing men to search for men and women to search for women.

When his sister didn't marry a Jewish boy, Gary Pinsky was told by his mother that he had to. Pinsky, 32, joined JDate several weeks ago after returning to New Jersey after living in South Africa for several years. He said he thinks he can find serious suitors on the Jewish dating site.

"I've gotten three responses since I've joined," said Pinsky, a production stage manager. "They've all been very nice and seem to have a good head on their shoulders."

That's a big difference from other gay and lesbian dating sites, he said, where potential matches are less serious, and largely not Jewish.

"I didn't find a lot of Jews out there," said Pinsky, whose first date is scheduled for this week.

Gail Laguna, the vice president for communications at Spark Networks, JDate's parent company, said the Web site's revision came at the request of many Jewish singles.

"We've gotten a lot of feedback from people wanting to use same-sex searches," Laguna said. "It comes as a natural evolution for us."

With more than 600,000 active members, JDate has become one of the standards for niche online dating sites across the country. The profiles of two Jewish congressmen have even been spotted on the site.

JDate officials say the original Web site did not intentionally exclude gay searches, but there was not a demand for it when the site was unveiled in 1997. Since that time, though, they've heard from gay Jews seek-

ing a portal to online Jewish dating.

The new site includes other requested features, including a better system for identifying non-Jews. The site has become popular with non-Jews seeking Jews, and non-Jews now can express a willingness to convert as part of their online profiles.

But the expansion to gay searches has had the most immediate impact. In less than a month, 700 members have registered for same-sex searches, Laguna said.

Seth Kamen of Bethesda, Md., watched his best friend meet her fiancée through JDate, and said he hopes to meet a Jewish guy through the service as well.

"Judaism is a large part of my life," said Kamen, 28. "I want somebody who can share that with me."

Beyond celebrating holidays, Kamen said he's looking for someone with whom to raise Jewish children. Indeed, with more gay men considering adoption and child rearing, the issue of finding a mate of the same religion has taken on added significance.

"Anything that can bring together two Jewish parents, whatever sex they are, is an important thing to do," Kamen said.

The Web site's success has been spurred in part by advertisements in mainstream newspapers, and even on a billboard in Manhattan's Times Square. Laguna said there were no plans to market to the gay community, or to include gays and lesbians in JDate's current media campaign.

The Jewish world's policies on gay rights and gay marriage vary wildly. Reform rabbis perform gay unions, and the issue has been a hot topic within the Conservative movement, which unlike the Reform movement does not permit the ordination of openly gay rabbis.

Orthodox groups oppose homosexual acts; the struggle of gay Orthodox Jews was the subject of a 2001 documentary, "Trembling Before G-d."

JDate's Web site, shown above, now allows for same-gender searches.

Laguna said she hopes more observant Jews won't be offended by the addition of same-sex searches.

"If this offends a member's religious beliefs, it won't affect their visit to the site," she said. Straight people will not receive profiles of gay members, or vice versa.

And it can be a big boon for gay Jews seeking partners with similar backgrounds.

"I like the odds that there will be a mature, responsible Jewish person out there for me," Kamen said.

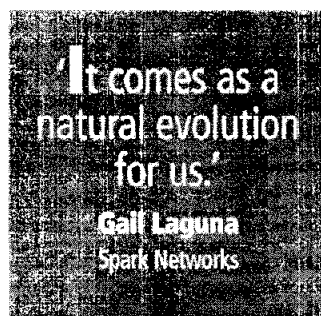
## Congregation and Sharon linked by name

NEW YORK (JTA) — A congregation in Seattle named Kadima welcomed Ariel Sharon's new political party of the same name.

The executive director of the Reconstructionist congregation, Sharon Davis, told the Jerusalem Post that the synagogue "wishes Prime Minister Sharon the very best with his huge party name."

The congregation has commissioned a Torah to be written by a woman and operates a Middle East peace camp, the Post reported.

BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES



# Ben-Gurion U. pushes to be biotech player

By DINA KRAFT

BEERSHEBA, Israel (JTA) — Steam pours out of a towering microscope so powerful it can reveal the inner space of cells, as Ohad Medalia uses liquid nitrogen to cool down the instrument.

The young Israeli chemist arrived at Ben-Gurion University following a post-doctorate at the Max-Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Germany — and shortly after the wooden crates holding the three-ton, \$3 million Transmission Electron Microscope arrived as well.

The microscope is the first of its kind in Israel and one of only seven in the world. Medalia hopes the 3-D images of cells it reveals will provide insight into various types of tumors, cancers and other diseases, such as Alzheimer's and diabetes.

Medalia is one of a crop of top young Israeli scientists being recruited after their studies and postings abroad to return to Israel for cutting-edge research at the newly established National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev, or NIBN, associated with Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba.

■  
The NIBN got a major boost last month when the Israeli government pledged \$30 million toward a \$90 million research fund, part of a \$3.6 billion, 10-year plan to develop the Negev region.

The remaining \$60 million of the fund is being drawn from donations by the institute's chief benefactor, Swiss banker Edgar de Picciotto, other donors and competitive research funds. De Picciotto said

he was motivated to invest in biotech after a personal battle with cancer.

Stoked by government funding, Israel is developing a strong base in biotechnology. Life-science research, much of which focuses on biotech, accounts for about 35 percent of civilian research in Israel, and there are perhaps 500 Israeli companies in the field, with roughly half founded in the past five years. The Economist magazine estimated that \$800 million was

invested in life sciences in Israel in 2004.

Medalia had job offers in Europe and at other top Israeli institutions. He chose to do his

research in a relatively remote region because of the chance to collaborate with colleagues who freely exchange ideas, and because of the investment and commitment of a university determined to make itself and the NIBN into one of the world's top biotechnology centers.

"I think the opportunity is here. Everyone will agree this is the only academic institution in Israel that's going up and not down," Medalia said, as a cell from a mouse's liver appears on computer screens behind the giant microscope.

■  
As Israel's most geographically remote and also youngest university, Ben-Gurion has struggled to compete in the past, but

it's now pushing to become a major player in biotech. Ehud Olmert, who currently serves as both trade and finance minister, has been the main Cabinet proponent of getting money to Ben-Gurion as part of larger government efforts to develop the Negev.

Other Israeli universities are not ceding this

field to Ben-Gurion. They're investing in biotech as well, setting up companies connected to the universities to turn the concepts developed on their campuses into marketable products and devices.

The unbridled academic freedom at universities breeds top level research, but universities lack the commercial and multidisciplinary orientation to develop products from that research, the director of NIBN, Irun Cohen, an internationally renowned

immunologist and researcher, explained.

Cohen said the institute is an important venue for turning the best of university research into biotech products.

"The two don't go together but they need each other — biotechnology creates products based on academic research," said Cohen, sitting in his office in the NIBN building, part of a new complex of sleek science buildings on campus.

A visitor can see Ben-Gurion growing: the campus is dotted with cranes and bulldozers. A large lot has been carved out for a high-tech park that will house some of the biotechnology buildings.

Some of Ben-Gurion's most driven scientists are recruited to work at the NIBN in a setting where they're encouraged to focus on research and to produce free from departmental concerns such as tenure and promotions. In order to remain part of the institute, researchers have to show results.

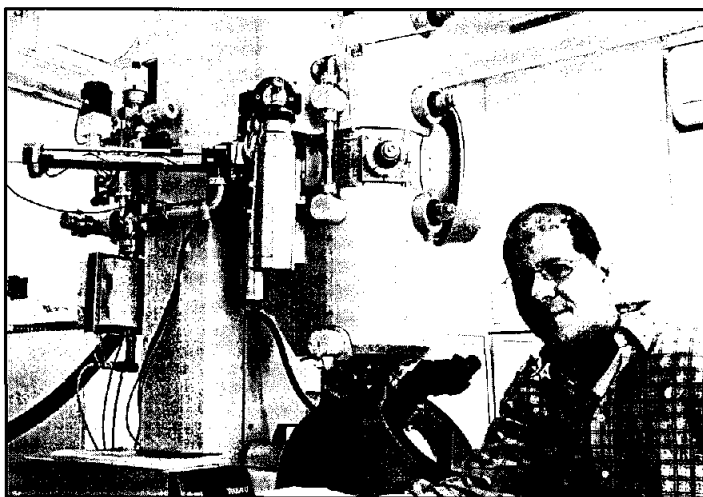
"The idea of the NIBN is to try to institutionalize the research itself, to see it through to the stage where it can be commercialized," Cohen said.

Among the institute's cutting-edge researchers are Smadar Cohen, chair of the biotechnology department, and Jonathan Leor from the biomedical engineering department. They have developed a method of creating tissue "scaffolds" to regenerate heart muscle after heart attacks by injecting a biodegradable polymer directly into the damaged cardiac area.

The material forms a scaffold that helps strengthen the heart muscle during recovery and may even help stimulate the growth of new blood vessels. The pair's research indicates that this leads to a healthier cardiac system after heart attacks and a reduced death rate. ■

Israel's  
youngest  
university tries  
to bloom in the  
desert.

FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES



Chemist Ohad Medalia works with Israel's first Transmission Electron Microscope in his lab at Ben-Gurion University.



## COMMUNITY

## TRANSITIONS

■ David Gappell was named director of programs and grant-making in Israel for the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

■ Arnold Gerson was named executive vice president of AMIT.

■ Manfred Moross was named chairman of the board of governors of the Weizmann Institute of Science.

## HONORS

■ The American Jewish Congress honored Chilean President Ricardo Lagos with its Light Unto the Nations Award for his commitment to democracy.

■ The Reform movement honored Rabbi Eugene Borowitz with the Maurice N. Eisendrath Bearer of Light Award for Service to Reform Judaism.

■ Lisa and Ilsa Klinghoffer, children of Leon Klinghoffer, who was killed in the 1985 terrorist attack on the Achille Lauro, were honored by the Anti-Defamation League for their anti-terrorism efforts.

■ Hadassah Magazine handed out the 2005 Harold U. Ribalow Prize for literature in New York. Jenna Blum, the author of "Those Who Save Us," a novel that takes an unsentimental look at the Holocaust, received the award.

■ Jonathan Rosen won the 2005 Reform Judaism Prize for his novel "Joy Comes in the Morning."

■ The Anti-Defamation League honored Fareed Zakaria, the editor of Newsweek International, with its ADL Hubert Humphrey First Amendment Freedoms Prize. The group also honored Percy Sutton, a longtime New York City politician and civil rights activist, with its American Heritage Award.

■ The State of Israel Bonds Insurance Division honored the Guardian Life Insurance Company for its support. Guardian Life Insurance has purchased more than \$24 million in Israel Bonds.

■ Marvin Leff was honored for his 28 years as national executive director of AMIT.

■ Seven athletes were elected to the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in Israel. Among those making it to the museum were champion automobile racer Kenny Bernstein, Olympic Gold Medal-winning swimmer Jason Lezak, bowling stalwart Marshall Holman, lightweight boxing champion Al Singer and Pulitzer Prize-winning sportswriter Ira Berkow. Also getting the nod were the Brazilian beach volleyball star Adriana Behar and Albert Rosenfeld, an English rugby star of the early 20th century.

■ The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation won the 2005 AMIA prize, an annual award of the Argentine Jewish community, for its educational activities.

## Court case challenges groups

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A U.S. Supreme Court case next month pits the American military against colleges and universities. But for much of the Jewish community, it pits their traditional views on gay rights against their interest in curbing anti-Israel rhetoric in higher education.

The high court will hear the case of *Rumsfeld v. FAIR* on Dec. 6. It challenges the constitutionality of the Solomon Amendment, which would cut all federal higher education funds to colleges and universities that refuse to allow military recruiters onto campus.

Several law schools have prevented military recruiters from meeting with students on campus, protesting the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy toward gays and lesbians.

The Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights, which represents law school professors and student organizations, claims the Solomon Amendment, passed by Congress in 1996, violates law schools' free-speech rights. A federal appeals court found the amendment unconstitutional last year.

Many Jewish groups have been sympathetic to the gay community's civil-rights issues but have chosen to stay out of this case. While leaders note that they don't get involved in all cases, they concede that part of the reason is a conflict between support for gay rights and support for the federal government's policy of placing restrictions on federal aid to colleges and universities.

Court watchers in the Jewish community say the Solomon Amendment could set a precedent for allowing Congress to set parameters for federal funds it gives to institutes of higher education. Jewish groups see that as an opportunity to move legislation through Congress to stem anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric on campus.

"It's already a precedent," said Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, and author of "The Uncivil University: Politics and Propaganda in American Education." "Ultimately, if campuses can't deal with systematic anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric, I would be in favor of legislation

that holds them accountable at the state level and federal level."

The federal government places parameters on much of the money it doles out, but has been loathe to place restrictions on the \$180 billion it gives to colleges and universities each year, fearing it will stifle academic freedom on campus.

Jewish groups have been concerned about programs like Title VI, which gives federal funds to university programs on foreign cultures and languages. Several Jewish leaders claim the money has been used to promote anti-Israel and anti-Semitic biases.

They're working on Capitol Hill to get an advisory board to monitor money doled out through Title VI, but if that doesn't work, Jewish leaders say they like having another potential option.

"The Solomon Amendment was a congressional nuclear option," Tobin said. "The threat of federal intervention on this issue is the last thing you want if colleges and universities do discriminate."

Even so, it has led several Jewish groups to move away from their usual alliance with gay-rights groups.

The American Jewish Congress blasted the "don't ask, don't tell" policy when it was unveiled in 1993. But Marc Stern, the organization's counsel, said the issue goes beyond the military's gay-rights policy.

"We gave a lot of sympathy with the unease for the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy," Stern said. "I'm not sure, however, that ill-at-ease means the military should be excluded from universities."

"Don't ask, don't tell" allows gays and lesbians to serve in the military provided they don't disclose their sexual orientation. It was unveiled by President Clinton in 1993 as a compromise after military leaders objected to his push to allow gays and lesbians to serve openly.

Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, said the issue hasn't garnered much attention in the community.

"It just never found its way onto our radar screen," he said. "I don't think we had a single conversation on it internally." ■

**'The Solomon Amendment was a congressional nuclear option.'**

**Gary Tobin**

**Institute for Jewish and Community Research**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Sharon hints at Iran strike

Ariel Sharon hinted that military action, by Israel or another country, would succeed in halting Iran's nuclear program.

"Such a capability exists," the Israeli prime minister told reporters Thursday when asked if there could be military means of preventing Iran from getting the bomb.

While he endorsed European-led efforts to curb Iranian uranium enrichment, a key step for making nuclear weapons, Sharon said Israel would not sit idly by if the diplomacy fails. "Israel, and not just Israel, cannot accept a situation in which Iran has nuclear weapons," he said. "Israel is not helpless and is taking all the steps it needs to be taking."

### 'Truce' nears end

Hamas could fully resume its attacks on Israel next year, a leader of the Palestinian terrorist group said.

Khaled Meshaal said Thursday that Hamas had no intention of renewing a "truce" called by Palestinian terrorist groups when it expires at the end of 2005.

"All circumstances on the ground, the regional political atmosphere and the Palestinian situation are not encouraging to renew the truce," he told The Associated Press.

Brokered by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas after his February summit with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the truce has led to a scaling back of terrorism, but not a complete cessation of violence.

Israel has welcomed the relative calm but continued its counter-terrorist operations in the absence of a decision by the Palestinian Authority to crack down on Hamas and other factions as required by the U.S.-led "road map" for peace.

### Peres bolt boosts Sharon

By endorsing Ariel Sharon, Shimon Peres has significantly increased the prime minister's chances of re-election, a poll found.

According to Thursday's survey in Ha'aretz, 30.5 percent of Israelis say they are likelier to vote for Sharon's new Kadima Party now that Peres has backed Sharon.

Only 15.5 percent say Peres' announcement Wednesday that he was quitting Labor reduced their likelihood to support Kadima in the March 28 election.

Sharon is the clear front-runner in the race, with 47 percent backing, the poll found.

In a distant second place at 18.5 percent was new Labor leader Amir Peretz, followed by Benjamin Netanyahu, the likely next head of the Likud Party, at 10 percent.

### Israelis come up with AIDS campaign

A group of Israelis launched a bell-ringing campaign aimed at raising AIDS awareness.

The Bells 4 AIDS campaign, created by the Jerusalem AIDS Project, said Thursday that more than a million people worldwide would take up its call to ring bells for 60 seconds to mark World AIDS Day.

"Our greatest reward would be to hear a million bells ringing around the world, making a collective noise for more awareness about HIV/AIDS and share the responsibility in prevention and care," the chairman of the project, Hanny Epelboim, told the Jerusalem Post.

According to the newspaper, the group is planning to set a new Guinness World Record in bell-ringing for a public health cause.

## NORTH AMERICA

### U.S. to world: Condemn Iran

A senior U.S. official called on the international community to condemn what he termed Iran's disruptive role in the search for Israeli-Arab peace.

Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, outlined Iran's role in backing Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist groups that target Israel in a major Iran policy address he delivered Wednesday.

"When Palestinians and Israelis are rightfully celebrating the benefits of Gaza withdrawal and the opening last week of the border crossing at Rafah, Iran is moving in the opposite direction by encouraging terrorism in the Middle East to thwart the possibility of peace," Burns said. "The world community needs to find a stronger voice in opposing Iran's support for terrorism."

### Poll: U.S. Jews back Israel

Most American Jews support Israel but rarely defend the Jewish state in public, a new poll found.

The study, conducted by Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research for the Israel Project, found that 82 percent of American Jews support Israel — 63 percent said they did so strongly — and that Jewish identity is more intense for Republican Jews and synagogue members.

The survey also found that 19 percent of American Jews never defend Israel, while 24 percent said they did it rarely and 18 percent said they did it a few times a year.

The remaining people said they talk about or defend Israel at least once a month.

The study also found Jewish identity for men aged 18-49 was 13 percent lower than for women of the same age.

Pollster Frank Luntz, who explained the results in Washington on Thursday, said the Jewish community should do more to reach young men, by discussing Israeli sports and pop culture, and placed the onus on parents, from whom 45 percent of Jews said they first learned about Israel.

## WORLD

### Hungarian soccer officials pressed

Hungarian Jewish leaders asked soccer officials to act after anti-Semitic slurs were chanted at a recent soccer game.

The chants were made at a game between Ujpest FC and MTK Budapest, a team founded by Hungarian Jews, The Associated Press reported.

Ujpest officials said they would ban anyone who made the remarks. But they also criticized MTK fans for calling Ujpest supporters Nazis.

### Group helps psychologists in Russia

More than 60 psychologists from Moscow Jewish institutions learned about mental-health issues this week.

The participants — psychologists from welfare and community centers and Jewish day schools — attended lectures and workshops by some of the best known Russian experts in the fields of psychological counseling, trauma debriefing and psychological assistance to children with special needs.

Those who attended the conference, held Tuesday through Thursday, agreed to create a regional group to ensure an ongoing professional exchange between psychologists working in Moscow Jewish nonprofits.

The conference was organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.