


IN THE NEWS
Bomber kills Israeli soldier

A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at a West Bank checkpoint, killing an Israeli army officer.

The Islamic Jihad terrorist apparently was en route to Israel when the taxi he was taking was stopped at a surprise military roadblock.

Asked by troops to leave the vehicle, the bomber detonated his load, killing himself and an Israeli soldier, Lt. Ori Binamo, 21.

Three other soldiers were wounded, and a Palestinian in the taxi, who security sources said might also have been from Islamic Jihad, suffered fatal injuries.

The Palestinian Authority issued a statement condemning the bombing as "against the national interests of the Palestinian people."

Israel: No end to Gaza 'no-go zone'

Israel vowed to keep areas of the Gaza Strip off-limits to Palestinians until cross-border rocket attacks cease.

"The operations will continue as long as is required to ensure that the fire against us is curbed," Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Army Radio on Thursday, alluding to Israel's artillery barrage against areas of northern Gaza used for rocket launches.

Apology made to British Muslim group

A British Jewish group apologized for labeling a Muslim charity a terrorist organization.

As part of an out-of-court settlement, the Board of Deputies apologized to Interpal for a September 2003 item on its Web site that referred to "terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Interpal."

Britain's Charity Commission investigated Interpal and found its charitable activities in the Palestinian territories legitimate.

■ MORE NEWS, Pg. 8

REMINDER: The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Jan. 2.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

In France, riots show the need to improve Jewish-Arab relations

By **BRETT KLINE**

PARIS (JTA) — During the November riots in the suburbs of Paris, Dr. Bernard Kanovitch talked on the phone every day to his personal friend, Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Mosque of Paris and the leading Muslim official in France.

Kanovitch, who is in charge of Jewish-Arab relations for CRIF, the French Jewish umbrella organization, says Boubakeur was frustrated by the rioting but knew Muslim officials could do little to stop it.

"We talked every day and I know he was very unhappy," said Kanovitch. "As a Jewish community official, I could have simply turned my back on him."

But, he continued, "even if I know that many young people from both sides are not particularly interested in working with each other, there is a Jewish ethic that says, Get involved. So now more than ever we want to broaden the dialogue between French Jewish and Arab communities."

European Jewish Congress President Pierre Besnainou, who was born in Tunisia, has said that improving Arab-Jewish relations in France is his highest priority — and he's not alone.

French Jewish officials agree that the riots polarized the public and heightened the need to bring Jews and Arabs together.

"I think that the rioting radicalized public opinion in France, and not in a good way, and that includes a lot of Jews," said Yoni Smadja, head of the Hashomer Hatzair youth group, a secular group linked to the political left in Israel. "However, we know very well that the rioters do not represent all the young



Courtesy Kaisui Group

Pierre Besnainou, head of the European Jewish Congress.

Muslim Arabs and blacks in France. In addition, we have differences over the Middle East, but we still want very much to participate in programs with Muslim groups."

Karim Chayeb, head of communications for the Muslim Scouts of France — a non-religious organization similar to the Boy Scouts — noted that they would continue holding regular get-togethers with Jewish groups.

"The rioting changed nothing in our relations," he said. "Last year, we went with Jewish groups to the Drancy deportation camp,

Continued on page 2

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ Money and the Middle East can get in the way of Jewish-Muslim friendships

Continued from page 1

just north of Paris. Our scouts were very moved. The worst enemy for the kids is ignorance about other people.”

Perhaps the Jewish leader most involved with Arab groups in the field is Rabbi Michel Serfaty, who was born in Morocco and now lives in the Paris suburb of Ris Orange. He's putting together a program of contact groups for young people from the two communities.

“Young Jews will be learning about the structures involved in Islam and young Muslims about the Jewish community structures,” he explained, “and then both groups will go out to meet with the kids from the housing projects. We are getting help from French government ministries on this.”

Serfaty said a bus tour of 30 towns in the Ile de France region around Paris is being organized for April, with sports, cultural and artistic activities and even a theater troupe.

Serfaty said Muslim leaders had contacted him during the riots to go to a mosque in the Clichy suburb of Paris, where hundreds of cars were being burned and rioters battled with police. Local, more radical Muslim leaders refused to allow it, however.

Jewish groups in France have youth groups, local synagogues, sports clubs and private schools serving thousands of young people. On the Muslim side — aside from tiny local clubs that sometimes focus on Koran study — there are only the scouts and the similar Terres d'Europe,

and together they account for a few thousand young people at best.

They did participate in June in an activity that everyone refers to, and which made CNN International — a bus tour for Jewish-Muslim friendship. Organized by Serfaty, the trip left Paris on June 19 and toured cities and towns throughout France.

One problem is the lack of organization in the Muslim community, according to Younes Aberkane, a director of Terre d'Europe. Born and raised in Algeria, Aberkane trains high school math teachers in France. He said that when he worked on the bus tour, he found that some Jewish parents were afraid.

“They didn't want their children being taken into suburbs with potentially hostile Muslim young people,” he explained. “In the end, everything went smoothly, but I learned something:

We need young Arab adults to work with the kids to teach them to interact with the Jewish kids, to train them, in a sense, and we simply do not have those young adults that we need.

“In France, unlike the way it was years ago in North Africa,” he said, “many young Arabs do not want to be with Jews, especially in the poorer classes. They feel rejected by France, and Jews are a part of

that France. And French Jews are very vocal about their support for Israel.”

Business student Steeven Chiche, 19, a Jew whose family came to France from Tunisia and Morocco, says money and the Middle East get in the way of friendships.

“I have one Arab friend in school, and honestly I have more in common with him than with any of my French friends,” he said. “We eat the same food, we don't eat non-kosher or non-halal meat, we respect our religions and we have a strong sense of family. Most of my French friends don't have any of that.”

Said Mokhtar Bessam, 28, who was born in Oran, Algeria, and moved to France at age 5: “The Arabs are like the French: They are jealous of people who make money and like to spend it.”

“When I was in trouble, it was my Jewish friends who helped me, not my Arab friends,” Bes-

sam said. “It didn't matter that I was Arab; they simply had this great solidarity amongst themselves as Jews and as friends, including for me.

“I get together with my Jewish friends and smoke joints regularly,” he continued. “It's true, we don't agree on the Israeli-Palestinian situation, but hey, we live in France. And I would love to go to Israel with them.” ■

I think that the rioting radicalized public opinion in France.

Yoni Smadja
Hashomer Hatzair

Ukrainian town reaches out to Jewish pilgrims

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — A new facility to accommodate foreign Jewish pilgrims opened in Ukraine.

The new complex that features a synagogue, a ritual bath and a hotel was inaugurated this week in the town of Belz in Western Ukraine.

Belz, probably best known for its mention in the Yiddish song classic “Mein Shtetele Belz,” was once a thriving Jewish community that in the 19th century became the birthplace of the Belz Chasidic movement.

The local Jewish community was

mostly wiped out during the Holocaust. Today, the town of 2,500 residents does not have a Jewish community of its own.

After the fall of communism, the town has hosted thousands of foreign Jewish pilgrims that annually converge on Belz, whose old Jewish cemetery still contains graves of the past leaders of this Chasidic dynasty.

Some \$250,000 was spent toward the construction of the new facility for pilgrims.

The funds were primarily raised among the Belz Chasidic community in Israel. ■

JTA WORLD REPORT

Daniel J. Krifcher
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Noa Artzi-Weill
Marketing Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Group serves Chasidic dropouts

By SUE FISHKOFF

NEW YORK (JTA) — Chaim breezes into a diner on the Upper West Side of Manhattan clutching two huge shopping bags.

"I got some clothes. This plaid shirt, two for \$5, this leather jacket just \$20," says Chaim, 19, in the clipped, Yiddish-accented English of the Chasidic world he comes from. "I didn't know what to buy, my roommate went with me, he told me what's nice," he says, fingering a sweater gingerly.

Chaim is — or was — a Skver Chasid, born and raised in the fervently Orthodox enclave of New Square, N.Y. His world until recently was Torah, family and a close-knit community.

But now he's entering the secular world.

In September, he shaved his beard, left his parent's home and took a bus to Brooklyn, where he now goes to college and shares an apartment.

"I found it on craigslist," he says with pride, referring to the online classified site.

His new life comes with help from Footsteps, a 2-year-old Manhattan-based nonprofit group that helps dropouts from the haredi world transition into secular society.

No one knows how many American Jews have left the fervently Orthodox fold; most are believed to have come from the New York area. There are no statistics, and, until Footsteps was created, no organization to help them learn how to make it on the outside.

While the organized Jewish world doesn't usually think of Chasidic dropouts as "Jews in need," outsiders can't begin to imagine how frightening and complicated the everyday world can seem to a person who only knows the carefully controlled cocoon of Satmar, Skver or Bobov.

Particularly for a young person, whose departure can be hasty and unplanned, the road out of the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Williamsburg or Crown Heights is fraught with confusion and loneliness — and sometimes drug abuse.

"People who have decided to make this transition don't have a place to go," says Hella Winston, the author of "Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels."

Chaim isn't using his real name out of respect for his family still in the community. His journey from fervent Orthodoxy to young, secular Jewish New Yorker didn't happen overnight.

A year and a half ago, he says, "I heard there was such a place as a public library," where he could find a computer and Internet access.

"I didn't know how to use the mouse. I started tapping on the screen," he says, smiling in embarrassment.

He began reading about the world outside New Square, and soon realized "it's not all drug dealers and crazy, like they say in our community."

Slowly, he felt more and more alienated from his Chasidic world.

He planned his departure carefully. His first step was to get his GED, or high school equivalency, so he could apply for a loan to go to college. But Chasidic boys receive very little secular education, and he didn't know how to begin studying for the test.

In late February he met the founding director of Footsteps, 24-year-old Malkie Schwartz, an ex-Lubavitcher.

She introduced him to the few dozen other ex-Chasidim in her organization, and he enrolled in the GED class.

This summer Chaim passed his exam. He hasn't gone on a date yet — "Socially, I'm very awkward," he admits — but says he's looking forward to that, too.

"Without Footsteps, I don't know what I would have done," he says. "I wouldn't have my GED, I wouldn't be in college."

Winston recently heard from a young man who spent six months sleeping in New York City parks and subways after he left his Chasidic community.

"He had nowhere to go," Winston says. "America is a very individualistic society, and for people leaving a community it's important to have one to move into. Otherwise they run the risk of becoming lost."

Samuel Heilman, a professor of sociology and Jewish studies at the City University of New York, agrees.

"Missing their families" is a major problem, says Heilman, the author of "Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry." "For most people in the haredi world, the single biggest part of their lives, and the part that outsiders are often envious of, is connection to family and community."

And when they leave, those connections are radically broken.

A support system like Footsteps didn't exist when Schwartz left Crown Heights five years ago.

She was 19, and knew she would be expected to marry soon.

"I felt I couldn't make this decision for myself and for the large number of kids that would follow," Schwartz says. "I wanted an education."

She moved out, enrolled in Hunter College with financial aid and got her bachelor's degree.

But it was tough to go it alone. In December 2003, she organized a meeting for what she hoped would become a support group for former Chasidim. Twenty people showed up, and Footsteps was born.

Schwartz runs everything out of her apartment. GED classes, support groups, art and writing therapy groups, and discussions on health, sex and relationships are held at locations around the city. Once a month there are sessions on life skills.

Footsteps has received grants from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Alan B. Slivka Foundation, the Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women and an anonymous donor, and in early December was accepted into Bikurim, a program that provides office space and technical support for Jewish start-ups in New York City.

More than 200 former Chasidim have passed through Footsteps; about 40 are currently active, mostly young Jews in their 20s. One thing Schwartz would like to offer is a halfway house, a temporary safe space for those just leaving their communities.

Many of the former Chasidim in Footsteps are not observant anymore, but that doesn't mean they don't have strong Jewish identities.

Zelda Deutsch, 28, left her Satmar community in early 2003, along with her husband and their son.

The Deutsches no longer go to synagogue, but they speak Yiddish at home and celebrate all the holidays.

"My son is very aware he is Jewish, the environment in our home is filled with the way we were raised," she says.

'People who have decided to make this transition don't have a place to go.'

Hella Winston

Author

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

Will congregations pay for nurses?

By SUE FISHKOFF

WEST ORANGE, N.J. (JTA) — When home-care nurse Karen Frank makes a house call, she brings a Book of Psalms along with her stethoscope and blood-pressure monitor.

All three are essential tools, she says, to help care for her elderly Jewish patients, body and soul.

"I visit one old man with dementia," she says. "When he sees me he cries out 'misheberach,'" a Jewish blessing for restored health, "and I sing him the Debbie Friedman song. I hold his hand and he weeps."

Frank is a congregational nurse, hired by five synagogues and the MetroWest Jewish Health and Healing Center, a joint program of her local Jewish Community Center and Jewish Family Services, to provide physical and spiritual care to elderly Jews in the community.

There's a tremendous need for nurses like Frank as the American Jewish population ages rapidly. According to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey, one-quarter of America's 5.2 million Jews are 60 or older, and those 75 and older are the fastest growing segment.

Taking care of the sick always has

been an integral part of Judaism, from the mitzvah of bikur cholim, or visiting the ill, to the growing popularity of Jewish healing centers such as the one that sponsors Frank.

But the Jewish community has been slow to embrace the concept of congregational or parish nursing, which views nursing as a service that a congregation should provide to its members. Parish nursing is a long-standing tradition in the Christian world, dating back to the Middle Ages.

There are more than 8,000 Christian parish nurses in this country, but fewer than 10 Jewish congregational nurses. Frank is the only full-time one.

Why is that? Part of it might be cultural, suggests Wendy Bocarsky, founder and chairwoman of the Reform Jewish Nurses Network, a 3-year-old Los Angeles-based group that tries to bring together nursing and Jewish text skills.

"Jews tend to be very educated health-wise," she says. "Even if there's a nurse on staff in a congregation, people are going to call their doctor directly. In churches, people have a different relationship with their doctor; they tend to be more trusting. Jewish patients are," she adds, chuckling, "a pain in the butt."

Half of Frank's budget comes from the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, which seeded the project five years ago. The rest is shared between the synagogues and the JCC, each of which gets her services a certain number of days per month.

In her five years in the role, Frank has seen 1,170 patients. Her current caseload is several hundred people.

She recently hired a part-time nurse out of her grant money, with extra funding from the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care, to serve three neighboring congregations.

"We go into the home as representatives of the synagogue," Frank said last August in Seattle at the national convention of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education. "We are not from MediCare or the hospital, we are Jewish

nurses from their community. We check if they're eating, if they're clean, can they get to the bathroom, as well as being a professional Jew who can read psalms and discuss God with them."

One former client was depressed following a series of debilitating health problems.

"We talked about God a lot," Frank says. "She felt God had abandoned her. We fashioned prayers together, prayers like, 'God, why have you

left me? I feel so lonely.'"

Without such care, that loneliness could be filled by Christian missionaries, says Judith Berland of Springfield, Va.

"Jews for Jesus are going into the nursing homes and talking to the people we have forgotten," she says.

Rabbi Richard Address, director of the department of Jewish family concerns of the Union for Reform Judaism, is an active proponent of community-based nursing, but he knows of fewer than a half-dozen congregations that have bought into the idea.

When Bocarsky ran a training program for prospective congregational nurses last year at Hebrew Union College's Los Angeles campus, Address notes, just a few students signed up.

B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim in Glenview, Ill., hired a congregational nurse five years ago, using a \$25,000 gift from a congregant. When the gift ran out it was promised again, but the synagogue board didn't renew the program.

"I wasn't able to convince them," says congregant Sandy Krebs, a chaplain at a local hospital who spearheaded the program.

Krebs notes that two other nearby synagogues hired congregational nurses: One lasted a year, one for two years. When the initial grants ran out, neither congregation continued funding the positions.

Bocarsky, who volunteered as her congregational nurse for 14 years at Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Ana, Calif., says the Jewish community needs to recognize that health-care delivery has changed, and

'We go into the home as representatives of the synagogue.'

Karen Frank
Home-care nurse

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**



Sue Fishkoff

Congregational nurse Karen Frank tends to one of her elderly Jewish patients in the patient's New Jersey home in September 2005.

that the most vulnerable people are falling through the cracks.

"People are discharged too early from hospitals, and they're still sick when they get home," she says. "The synagogue needs to pick up the slack."

Some people say other health-care methods are better. Sharon Silverman is director of the Deutsch Family Shalom Center, a Jewish healing center at Temple Chai, a 1,100-member congregation in Phoenix. The center provides healthcare resources, hosts lectures and support groups, houses the congregation's bikur holim committee and runs what Silverman calls "services of peace and comfort."

They hired a community nurse for a few months nine years ago, she says, "but it wasn't necessary, this takes care of our needs."

Very few Jewish institutions are prepared to cough up \$20,000 for even a part-time nurse, Address notes, but some think creatively and get together across institutional and denominational lines. Frank is sponsored by Reform and Conservative shuls, as well as the JCC.

In Springfield, N.J., Reform, Conservative and Orthodox congregations split the costs for Jackie Herzlinger, a member of one of the sponsoring congregations who now works as a community nurse for all three.

"This program is about taking care of our own, our Jewish own," says Rabbi Chaim Marcus of Congregation Israel, Springfield's Orthodox synagogue. "It's not about denominations."

Three years ago Herzlinger secured a grant, and was able to hire two part-time nurses to help her.

"Why shouldn't we be helping our people feel good?" she asks. "Mental health is where it's at: We can't cure everything, but we can give people hope and courage."

Frank says her home visits are a way for synagogues to "reach out into people's homes when people are no longer able to access the synagogue."

Frank tells of her first trip to see one 97-year-old woman. When she introduced herself as the congregational nurse, the woman said sharply, "it's about time the congregation realized I'm still a member."

"Karen has always been there to listen, advise and comfort me when I needed someone to talk to," says Claire Bornstein, a woman in her 80s whom Frank visits regularly. "At this point in my life I am very much alone, and she has filled my life with encouragement and kindness." ■

Compassionate alternatives: Options in community nursing

By SUE FISHKOFF

WEST ORANGE, N.J. (JTA) — With the concept of community nursing catching on, there are several configurations for such programs beyond the congregational model.

Nurse Gilda Friedman works 10 hours a week for Jewish Family Services in Greensboro, N.C. Her position is funded by two grants, and she's available to any Jew in the community.

"My phone was ringing off the hook the first day," she says.

Friedman works mostly as an advocate, helping improve conditions in a local nursing home and visiting elderly Jews in the hospital to make sure they're getting proper care.

"If you don't have someone to advocate for you, you don't get the services you need," she says, telling of one 90-year-old woman who was being ignored by her physical therapist. "Once the nurses knew I was going to be there, they started paying attention to her."

In Wichita, Kan., the Jewish federation sponsors a part-time senior outreach coordinator who spends eight to 10 hours a week visiting seniors and other home-bound Jews, reading to them, helping them with paperwork and bringing food. She's not a nurse or a social worker.

"That would cost too much," federation executive director Judy Press says. But the federation doesn't balk at earmarking \$5,500 a year out of its annual campaign to provide this service to its elderly.

"These people are wasting away in

nursing homes, and no one visits them," she says.

In 2002 in Baltimore, a group of rabbis, nurses, social workers and other health care professionals formed Shleimut, a nonprofit that promotes team-based Jewish health care. According to the Shleimut model, a nurse, a rabbi and either a social worker or mental health worker team up to provide health care within the rubric of a congregation.

"We take the congregational nurse idea and expand it," says Shleimut's director, Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin.

Very few congregations have put together the complete team, Cardin notes. In the New York City area, for example, she says it's more common for

social worker in the congregation, while other synagogues are more interested in nurses first.

"This allows congregations to be all-encompassing caring communities, helping people to respond to moments of felt need," she says. "That moment could be felt by the person sitting next to you in shul, or by someone who plays cards with you. Then the professionals take the first step and reach out to make the call."

That's really what it's about, say those involved in the issue. Instead of Jewish communities looking at congregational nursing as an unnecessary or threatening professional service, it should be considered part of the increasing embrace of the synagogue community, just another way to care for the entire person. ■



O.U. gives grants to six synagogues

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Orthodox Union awarded \$100,000 in grants to six synagogues for programs "having a positive impact on their community."

It's the first time the Orthodox Union has provided financial awards to member shuls for programming initiatives.

Two of the winners are in New York City — Lincoln Square Synagogue and the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale — and a third,

the Pacific Jewish Center, is in Los Angeles.

The three other grants went to smaller communities in Omaha, Neb.; San Antonio, Texas; and Harrisburg, Pa. More than 60 entries were considered.

The competition originally envisioned awarding \$20,000 to each of five synagogues, but some winning entries did not need the full amount, making a sixth award possible. ■

For lawyer, win a case of 'intelligent design'

By CHANAN TIGAY

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — He's just won one of the biggest courtroom duels over evolution since the seminal Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, but Eric Rothschild hasn't had the time yet to relax.

Since a federal judge ruled Dec. 20 that a Pennsylvania school board acted unconstitutionally when it ordered inclusion of "intelligent design" in its schools' science curricula, the Philadelphia attorney has been busy fielding media inquiries, lining up speaking engagements and making up for the 1,200 hours he spent working on the case pro bono.

Still, sitting back Tuesday in an elegant conference room at the law firm of Pepper Hamilton, with an expansive view below of the city in which the Constitution was written, Rothschild puts the legal victory in perspective, expounding not only on what drew him to the case but also on how his Jewish background made it personal.

The principle of church-state separation "is a core constitutional principle that requires protection," says the bespectacled Rothschild, a 38-year-old Reform Jew.

"I do think that I'm probably particularly sensitive to intrusions on this constitutional right because of being part of a minority religion," he says. "I think the Jewish religion, Jewish practice, has thrived and felt a sense of security in this country because we really do have such a good structure for protecting religious freedom."

That structure works, says Rothschild, who was lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the case, along with Pepper Hamilton partner Stephen Harvey.

"I think if we were to allow science classes to become an arena for teaching creationist views, I might feel very differently," he says.

Intelligent design refers to the notion that the universe is so immensely complex that it must have been created by some intelligent force. Proponents say the idea should be presented alongside evolution in science classes. Opponents say it's nothing more than creationism in a secular cloak.

Rothschild's father, who grew up in an Orthodox home, left Germany with his family in the late 1930s. Rothschild's mother grew up in a more secular Jewish household. His upbringing was "a compromise between those two experiences."

One element of this upbringing was what Rothschild says was a particularly Jewish focus on "examination and reason." This focus is part of what drew him to issues like church-state separation.

In 1999, the Kansas Board of Education voted to remove evolution from public school science classes. Concerned, Rothschild began doing volunteer work for the National Center of Science Education, an evolution watchdog group. He since has served on the group's legal advisory panel.

As soon as he learned through the center of the intelligent design case in Dover, he was interested. He ran the idea by Pepper Hamilton's pro bono committee, which

approved the idea.

Thus began a 14-month odyssey during which Rothschild, who usually tries commercial litigation cases, prepared for and argued the intelligent design case under national media scrutiny.

"It's a hot issue," he says. "It got hotter as the year went along."

"There are very few instances where lawyers get lofted up on this platform," he adds — noting that it's not a position he minds.

Since taking on the case, Rothschild has been the subject of newspaper articles, appeared on "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," a public television show, and — what he calls the coup de grace — had a full-page caricature drawn in *The New Yorker* magazine. His parents recently gave him a framed copy of the drawing for Chanukah.

Rothschild sought out experts in biology, paleontology, theology and philosophy. Then there were the eight families who were the case's plaintiffs. Some of these parents were devout Christians who taught in Bible schools and believe in the idea of intelligent design; they just oppose its inclusion in public schools.

"The conviction and intelligence they brought to this always amazed me," Rothschild said.

Harvey, who served as Rothschild's co-lead counsel on the case, is a Catholic. While the lawyers' different backgrounds actually helped them in approaching this case, Har-

vey said, he also realized how much Judaism and Catholicism have in common.

After a recent conversation with a rabbi following a speaking engagement, Harvey said he came to realize that the Catholic and Jewish views on creation are largely similar.

"We believe, essentially, in theistic evolution," he says. "We believe that God is the creator of all things, but we're not necessarily convinced that he micro-managed."

Rothschild said the team's toughest challenge was facing down the "pretty impressive scientific facade" that intelligent design proponents have built up over the years.

In his closely watched decision, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III said the school board's claim that the move was meant to bolster science education through inclusion of alternate theories to evolution was simply a cover for its religious motives.

Some of the school board members had made statements about their religious beliefs to the media, making Rothschild's job a bit easier.

Still, he says, even "if this board had been more circumspect or better at covering its tracks, it wouldn't have changed the fact that it was unconstitutional."

"This will not be the last case of this nature," Rothschild says. "I think that future school boards and school districts aware of this decision have to think very carefully about whether they want to put their communities through this."

Susan Low Bloch, a professor of constitutional law at the Georgetown University Law Center, said it makes sense that Rothschild and Harvey approached the issue on two fronts: taking on intelligent design itself and attacking the school board's motives.

Ferretting out the board's purpose "is an important part of the test," she says. "If you have a religious purpose, it's almost impossible to uphold."

Rothschild disagrees with those who say that forbidding the teaching of intelligent design in public schools is an assault on religion.

"I think this case is very pro-religious," he says. "Our structures support a protective sphere of private religious practice. It is really about the separation of church and state, not the destruction of church." ■

The victorious lawyer in a recent evolution case predicts there will be more battles on the issue in the future.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

ARTS & CULTURE

'Romeo and Juliet' set in Mideast a hit in Hungary

By AGNES BOHM

BUDAPEST (JTA) — An adaptation of "Romeo and Juliet" to the Israeli-Palestinian context is proving to be a huge success in Budapest.

"Romeo and Juliet in Jerusalem" — Romeo is an Israeli Jew, Juliet a Palestinian — is being performed to full houses at the Hungarian National Dance Theater and has been invited next year to Sweden, Norway, Finland, the United States and Mexico, among other places. It also may be performed at next year's Israel Festival in Jerusalem.

Ivan Marko, a former dancer who directed and choreographed the ballet, taught and worked at Israel's Rubin Academy from 1991-1993.

"The conflict in my Romeo and Juliet ballet is not between two feuding families, but rather a clash between traditions, religions and cultures," he said. "We deal with two religions and cultures that are connected to each other in many ways, but still are enemies with hatred between the two peoples."

He hopes to show the audience that "love and humanism can overcome all enmities," Marko said. "As a Jew, I wanted to show how I feel about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

One of the changes in the show is that Romeo has no family, and a rabbi — who replaces the Catholic priest of Shakespeare's original play — is Romeo's symbolic father. The rabbi blesses the young lovers' secret marriage.

There's also a happy twist to what has become an iconic tragedy: After drinking from the poisoned chalice, the two lovers eventually regain consciousness.

"It's a happy ending, as it's my wish that finally the conflict ought to be solved," Marko said.

Juliet's face is covered during the show, except when she dances with Romeo. The music is Arabic when Juliet's family is on stage, and changes to Eastern European Jewish sounds when it's Romeo's turn.

Tickets for the performances are sold out for the next few months, and the show will move to a bigger theater next year. ■

Is Nathan Lane Jewish?

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — When the stage version of "The Producers" played in London in 2004, British reporter Toby Young was assigned by Vanity Fair magazine to interview Nathan Lane, the star of the show.

Young opened the interview by asking Lane whether he was Jewish. After a long pause, Lane snapped, "Yes, yes, what of it?" Encouraged by the answer, the reporter's next question was, "Are you gay?"

Lane responded by getting up and walking out of the interview.

When Young returned to his office, he was confronted by his irascible editor, Graydon Carter, who had already gotten an earful on the incident.

"What were you thinking?" stormed Carter. "You can't ask celebrities whether they're Jewish or gay. In the future, just assume they're all Jewish and all gay, OK?"

To get to the bottom of this important Jewish story, this reporter flew from Los Angeles to New York earlier this month to see if we could do any better than the hapless British journalist.

The press junket was underwritten by Universal Pictures, which flew in some 35 reporters to meet with the stars and director of the musical movie version of "The Producers," a monster hit on Broadway and elsewhere, which was recently released.

For those who have been hiding in a cave on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border for the past few decades, here's a quick synopsis.

Formerly high-riding New York producer Max Bialystock is on the ropes after a series of flops. When meek accountant Leo Bloom comes into his office to inspect the books, Bloom makes a discovery: If a producer raises a bundle of money to put into a show, but it closes immediately, he can reap a windfall.

So Max, with Leo's help, raises \$2 million from a phalanx of old, but amorous, ladies, finds the world's worst play, worst director and worst actors to guarantee instant disaster.

They hit paydirt with the script "Springtime for Hitler," written by a demented Nazi and Wehrmacht veteran. But the play becomes a hit.

Back to the press junket. We had been warned that Mel Brooks, who has guided and created every aspect of "Producers" in its various incarnations as non-musical film, musical play and musical movie, wouldn't be available.

Not expected was the crushing announcement that Uma Thurman, who plays the blonde Swedish bombshell in the film, wouldn't show up. But in any case, she isn't Jewish.

Right on schedule, though, was Lane, followed by Matthew Broderick, who portrays Leo Bloom. Each was allotted 25 minutes to field questions from a gaggle of three dozen reporters, so there wasn't much time for probing analysis and follow-ups.

Here's how my dialogue with Lane went.

Q: Even though you were born into an Irish Catholic blue-collar family, just about everyone assumes that you're Jewish and that you changed your name from Rabinowitz.

How did that impression catch hold and how do you feel about it?

A: Well, I did change my name. I was born Joseph Lane, but when I applied to the actors union, they said they already had a Joe Lane on the books and I'd have to change my last or first name.

I had played the character of Nathan Detroit, whom I liked very much, in "Guys and Dolls," so I took the name Nathan.

I'm really an honorary Jew, you know, all the best people are. I really do feel Jewish, even though I'm a Catholic. The way the church has been behaving, I'm happy to be Jewish. You know, I've played so many Jewish characters, it's been a great part of my life.

Next it was Broderick's turn.

Q: In playing Leo Bloom, and other Jewish characters in Neil Simon plays, did you draw on your own background?

A: I suppose so. I mean, yeah. My mom was Jewish, so some would call me Jewish. My background is very much that style of writing, Neil Simon and Mel Brooks, and "Your Show of Shows" guys are what I grew up loving. So I probably drew on my New York background and my Jewish background for that, sure."

So there you have it. ■

An in-depth interview with the stars of 'The Producers.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Officials worried about Thatcher's pro-Israel ties

Some British officials wanted Margaret Thatcher to break ties with Jewish groups in the 1970s, according to newly released documents.

The officials in Britain's Foreign Office feared that Arab countries would see Thatcher, who later became prime minister, as a "prisoner of the Zionists," according to the documents. One official even suggested that Thatcher change her parliamentary seat in a district with a significant Jewish population, but others disagreed.

Chavez makes anti-Semitic slur

Venezuela's president said in his Christmas speech that "the descendants of those who crucified Christ" own the riches of the world.

"The world offers riches to all. However, minorities such as the descendants of those who crucified Christ" have become "the owners of the riches of the world," Chavez said Dec. 24 on a visit to a rehabilitation center in the Venezuelan countryside.

Neo-Nazis sentenced in Germany

A German court sentenced three neo-Nazis to jail.

The three men received terms ranging from two to three years in prison for belonging to a group that promotes hate, a crime in Germany.

Two other men received probation and a fine, respectively.

Menorah in Latvia vandalized

A public menorah in Latvia was vandalized. Police launched an investigation after vandals toppled the 16-foot menorah in the capital of Riga early Thursday, breaking some glass parts.

The menorah was repaired and re-erected.

The vandalism is believed to be the work of hooligans, but not motivated by anti-Semitism.

Arrest at Chilean compound

A Chilean judge ordered the arrest of a doctor accused of torturing children at a compound formed by ex-Nazis in the 1960s.

Dr. Gisella Seewald, 74, is accused of torturing young Germans and Chileans trapped in Colonia Dignidad.

Seewald is accused of collaborating with Colonia Dignidad leader Paul Schaeffer at the community clinic where, young people testified, they were given electric shock treatments and heavy doses of psychotropic drugs.

The community has a history of torture and imprisonment, sex abuse of minors, anti-Semitism and human rights violations, and allegedly has harbored Nazi war criminals.

Georgian leader offers dual citizenship

Georgia's president offered dual citizenship to Georgian Jews who immigrated to Israel.

Mikhail Saakashvili made the offer Thursday as he took part in Chanukah festivities at the Great Synagogue in the capital of Tbilisi. "Jews who left Georgia for Israel need their own home in their historical homeland, but they can also have a home here, in Georgia," Saakashvili told the crowd that packed the synagogue, according to the Federation of Jewish Communities.

NORTH AMERICA

Bulgaria pressed on Holocaust compensation

U.S. congressional representatives pressed Bulgaria on a World War II-era compensation issue.

The letter urged Bulgaria's president and prime minister to see that the country's Jews receive their "rightful share" of the value of

a hotel built in Sofia on the site of a prewar Jewish school.

Bulgaria's Jewish community is appealing a Bulgarian court decision from July that rejected Jewish claims to nearly half the property now occupied by the Rila Hotel.

The property was confiscated in 1943, and an administrative court ruled in 1992 that the Jewish community was entitled to slightly less than 50 percent of it.

The letter, sent last week, was signed by two co-chairmen of the Congressional Bulgaria Caucus, Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) and Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-S.C.), as well as by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking Democratic member of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee.

MIDDLE EAST

'Al-Qaida' claims salvo

A group claiming to be Al-Qaida said it carried out this week's rocket salvo from Lebanon on Israel.

The claim was made Thursday through a statement posted on a Web site frequented by radical Islamists, but Israeli experts were skeptical.

They noted that Tuesday's barrage of Katyusha rockets originated in southern Lebanon, an area controlled by the Shi'ite terrorist group Hezbollah.

Al-Qaida, an extremist Sunni group, shuns Hezbollah, and its presence in southern Lebanon would be surprising.

Israeli officials believe the real culprits were Palestinian terrorists based in Lebanon, acting on orders from Hezbollah and Syria.

Anti-missile system OK'd

Israel approved an anti-missile system for civilian aircraft.

The Civil Aviation Authority gave a green light Thursday for the Flight Guard, an onboard radar that detects incoming missiles and automatically releases flares to throw them off course.

Produced in Israel, the \$1 million system is already in use aboard 200 military and civilian planes in 16 countries, usually on an experimental basis.

The new ordinance clears the way for its installation as a standard addition to El Al, Arkia and Israir planes.

Shinui crashes in poll

Israel's Shinui Party looks set for political extinction in the March 28 election, a poll found.

According to a survey commissioned by Army Radio and released Thursday, the secular centrist party may not muster enough votes to win even a single Knesset seat, a major drop-off from its strong showing in the 2003 election.

"All of our voters defected to Kadima," senior Shinui lawmaker Avraham Poraz told the radio station, referring to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's new, centrist Kadima Party.

Holocaust survivors below poverty line

Almost half of Holocaust survivors in Israel live below the poverty line, a group said.

Ze'ev Factor, chairman of the Fund for the Welfare of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, said Thursday that 40 percent of those he represents live on only \$450 a month.

He blamed that on the recent immigration of survivors from the former Soviet Union.

"These people are not eligible for any German reparations or an Israeli government pension," he said. Factor called on the Justice Ministry to speed the release of private Holocaust-era accounts found to have been held over in Israeli banks, so that the money can be used for survivors' welfare.