

IN THE NEWS

**Bush, Cheney vow:
We'll stand by Israel**

President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney pledged to protect Israel in case of Iranian attack.

"I'm concerned" when the president of Iran "announces his desire to see that Israel gets destroyed," Bush said Monday in a speech on terrorism at Kansas State University. "Israel's our ally. We're committed to the safety of Israel, and it's a commitment we will keep."

It was just the latest reassurance from U.S. officials in the wake of a recent war of words between Israel and Iran over the prospects of an Iranian nuclear bomb.

Earlier, Cheney said on CNBC: "Obviously, we would support our friends in Israel under those circumstances were they attacked."

**Study: One in three
Israeli children poor**

More than one in three Israeli children are poor, new statistics show. Some 1.58 million Israelis lived below the poverty line as of June 2005, according to statistics compiled by the National Insurance Institute.

The number of children living in poverty, 738,000, has jumped from 482,000 in 2000.

**Israel scales back
West Bank missions**

Israel is scaling back military missions in the West Bank ahead of Palestinian Authority elections.

Security sources said Monday that raids against Palestinian towns in the West Bank would be suspended until Wednesday's balloting, to enable voters and foreign observers to move about unhindered.

But Israel still reserves the right to act pre-emptively in urgent cases of "ticking bombs" — terrorists en route to carrying out attacks.

Before the decision was enacted, Israeli forces arrested 24 suspected terrorists in overnight raids in the West Bank.

WORLD REPORT

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Untimely death of philanthropist shocks, saddens Jewish community

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Andrea Bronfman kept the book-lined study in her Jerusalem home exactly as it had been when the house belonged to her parents years before.

The gesture, say those who knew Bronfman, was characteristic of a woman who had devoted herself to perpetuating Jewish ideals and education both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Bronfman, a giant in the world of Jewish philanthropy, was killed Monday when a car struck her while she was walking her dog in Manhattan. She was 60 years old.

"She was a Zionist — and her parents were lovers of Israel and strong Zionists," said Marlene Post, who worked with Bronfman at birthright israel, the 6-year-old program that to date has brought nearly 100,000 young Jews to Israel for free 10-day trips. "She had excellent Judaic and Zionist values that I believe came from her parents."

"I don't even have the right words to say what a great loss this is," Post added. "Not only to her husband, Charles, personally, but to New York City, because she loves New York; to the Jewish world; but especially to Israel, where she was a champion of everything."

A chorus of Jewish leaders throughout the United States and Israel expressed shock and sadness at news of Bronfman's untimely passing, lamenting the hole they said her death would leave in the Jewish and philanthropic communities worldwide.

Born in London to a Scottish father and a mother from New York, Bronfman and her

husband — the billionaire businessman and philanthropist Charles Bronfman — maintained residences in New York, Florida and Jerusalem. They spent about three months of each year in Israel and in 2002 were awarded honorary Jerusalem citizenship.

In an interview in Ha'aretz last summer, Bronfman, known widely by her nickname, Andy, said: "I feel like the Wandering Jew."

Avraham Infeld, president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, first met Bronfman when she was a young woman in England and he was an emissary there for the Jewish Agency for Israel.

"She in every way was a symbol of life," he said.

Twenty years ago, the Bronfmans founded the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies Inc. The

foundation has supported numerous programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening Jewish life, in addition to programs not related to the Jewish community — from projects at the Hebrew University and the Israel Museum to the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada and Historica, and the Foundation for Excellence in the Arts.

Perhaps the organization's boldest and best-known project has been birthright israel, a program that the Bronfmans helped co-found.

"She was, unquestionably, a visionary with the project," Post said. "She was a keen planner and thought a great deal about it in its earlier years. She was definitely visible and active and involved in the early years. Later on Charles took a more leading role."

Bronfman was also a great patron of the arts and worked to establish a nexus between her concern for Israel and her artistic pursuits.

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OBITUARY

Bronfman's many philanthropic projects included the co-founding of birthright israel

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Tourism to Israel dropped precipitously at the height of the intifada, and this drop brought with it a sharp decline in revenue for Israeli artists who had been largely dependent on tourist dollars to earn a living.

So in 2003, Bronfman founded AIDA: the Association of Israel's Decorative Arts, which has helped expose Israeli artists to North American galleries and collectors and educate North Americans about decorative arts in Israel.

Lynn Schusterman, another major Jewish philanthropist and president of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, remembers Bronfman's passion as the two toured Israel looking for artists they could help out.

"I remember the fun that we had the very first summer the two of us were there, at the height of the intifada, running about Israel finding these artists in far-fetched places, wondering what would happen," said Schusterman. "I don't think she realized the effect this would have."

"She was just so alive, creative and always thinking outside of the box," Schusterman added.

Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Bronfman Philanthropies, said this project was emblematic of Bronfman's philanthropic modus operandi.

"Outside her immense passion for her family was a vigor and a deep personal connection to Israel, to the arts and to young people — and to connecting the

three as often as possible to her philanthropy."

For her 60th birthday earlier this year, Charles announced creation of the "Andy Prize," a \$10,000 annual award for an Israeli artist.

Bronfman's passing will leave a void in the realm of Jewish philanthropy, said Mark Charendoff, president of the Jewish Funders Network.

"Time will tell, but there aren't that many strong female role models at the very height of Jewish philanthropy and Jewish leadership," said Charendoff, who worked directly with the Bronfmans as the former vice president of their foundation. "Andy was not by any stretch of the imagination a silent partner or a junior partner in one of the most important Jewish families in the world.

"This really leaves a major vacuum for that kind of voice in the Jewish philanthropic world."

Infeld recalled Bronfman's hands-on approach to her philanthropy.

"She was always directly involved in what she gave money to," he said. "She became involved in the issues, and the financial help was only part of what she gave. She truly gave of herself," he said.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Bronfman turned her philanthropic eye to the attack's victims. She became founder and deputy chairman of The Gift of New York, a non-profit initiative to provide free tickets to a variety of cultural offerings and sports events for the bereaved families of the 9/11 attacks.

Other initiatives included 21/64, which supports young philanthropists; and Reboot, which nurtures young Jewish leaders outside the mainstream of organized Jewish life.

Friends and colleagues described Bronfman as attractive, dignified, vibrant — and highly intelligent.

"Andy was one of the smartest and wittiest persons I have met," said Amir Shaviv, assistant executive vice president at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, who worked with Bronfman, a JDC board member, on a committee devoted to rescuing and providing for the security of Jews around the world.

"Thousands of Jews in scores of communities around the world live more securely thanks to Andrea's work in the last decade."

Those who knew her also spoke of Bronfman's deep devotion to her husband, five children and six grandchildren.

"She was totally dedicated to her family, and to the Jewish people," Schusterman said.

The Bronfmans also were major supporters of the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella of the North American federation system, where Charles served as its first chairman and Andrea served on its Prime Minister's Council.

"The Jewish world has lost one of its best friends, a woman who exemplified Judaism's highest values and whose vision led our community into the future for generations to come," said UJC's chairman, Robert Goldberg.

Earlier this month, Bronfman attended a birthright israel "mega-event" in Jerusalem, where thousands of young Jews from around the world come together during their Israel trip to meet and celebrate. Later she attended the ceremony for the Charles Bronfman Prize, an award given to outstanding young Jewish humanitarians.

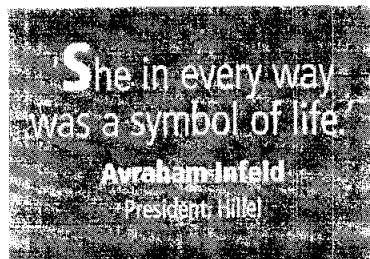
"We were all together at these events," Post said. "We were happy. She looked great. She was feeling good. She was so proud. The two of them were smiling and happy and everything was so good."

"Her way was that of the Jewish matriarchs and her passing leaves a void that can never be filled as she was niktifah b'dmei yameha — cut off in the prime of her life," Rabbi Israel Singer and Stephen E. Herbits, chairman of the World Jewish Congress and secretary-general respectively, said in a statement.

Charles Bronfman's brother, Edgar, is president of the World Jewish Congress.

Zeev Bielski, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, was one of many Israeli officials to lament Bronfman's death. Bronfman's passing was "a tremendous loss for the Jewish people," he said.

A memorial ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. on Wednesday at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan. Burial is scheduled for Friday in Jerusalem.



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Israeli Arabs poised to spread out votes again

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The recent turmoil in Israel's political scene, probably the most dramatic since the Likud Party's rise to power in the 1970s, seems to have bypassed Arab voters.

Despite initial predictions that Arab voters will abandon traditional voting and flock to the Zionist parties, a recent poll conducted by Elie Rekhess of Tel Aviv University predicts that the nearly 400,000 Arab voters will stick to the pattern of spreading their votes among various Zionist and Arab parties.

If all Arab voters were unified behind a single party, they could place some 14 members in the next Knesset.

However, judging by recent polls and the Arab electoral scene, internal schisms in the Israeli Arab sector will once again leave them a marginal and impotent factor in Israeli politics.

Not only will half the votes be divided among Jewish parties such as Labor, Kadima, Likud, Meretz and Shas, but votes for the Arab parties also will be spread out, among Hadash, which is affiliated with the Communist Party; Balad, Azmi Bishara's stridently Palestinian nationalist list; and the United Arab List, which is affiliated with moderate Islamist elements.

The status of the Arab parties is particularly sensitive since the minimum threshold in the upcoming election was raised to 2 percent. In other words, each party will need an estimated 70,000-80,000 votes to gain a seat in the Knesset.

The weakness of the survey is that it was conducted at the end of November, some four months before the actual election, a space of time in which anything could happen to influence voters. Events in Wadi Ara last week were a case in point: Police clashed with Arab demonstrators following the fatal Jan. 19 shooting of a young Arab.

"Events in Wadi Ara prove that the situation is very explosive," says Rekhess, senior adviser to the Abraham Fund, which promotes Jewish-Arab coexistence projects.

"It was a real alarm bell. The question of Israel's Arabs is still very high on the national agenda. Anyone who believes that it's over is mistaken."

The Wadi Ara confrontation coincided

with the beginning of the election campaign, possibly playing into the hands of Arab radicals.

Bishara used his party's convention Saturday in Shfaram to lash out at the Zionist parties for trying "to steal votes from the Arab sector." He said it is a "disgrace" that some Arabs would vote for Zionist parties.

But Bishara, as well as his colleagues in other Arab parties, faces a problem: A recent survey by the University of Haifa shows that Israeli Arab leaders are much more radical than their supporters. The survey was conducted by Sammy Smootha, who has followed Israeli Arab political trends for almost 30 years.

Smootha found a "striking" gap between the parties and their supporters. Whereas 60 percent of voters for Arab parties believe Arab citizens need to accept Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, only 18 percent of their leaders do.

Overwhelmingly, these leaders define themselves as anti-Zionist (nearly 86 percent), but only 32 percent of their voters do.

Abdul Wahab Darawshe, a former Knesset member and head of the United Arab List, concedes that there's a problem.

"The Arab public, just like the Jewish public, now tends more toward the political center," he told JTA. "Therefore the Arab parties should deal more with internal issues than with the Palestinian cause. Not that we do not fully support Palestinian national rights, but the Palestinians have their own leaders to take care of their interests."

According to Rekhess' forecast, several of the Arab parties may not pass the minimum threshold.

Darawshe, too, concedes that personal differences among leaders of the Arab parties are the main obstacle to Arab political unity.

Rekhess predicts that Labor will collect some 131,000 Arab votes in the election, more than any other party. However, the survey was taken shortly after Amir Peretz's victory as head of Labor, and the party's overall numbers since have dropped.

Additionally, Rekhess says, none of the Zionist parties has reached out to Arab voters.

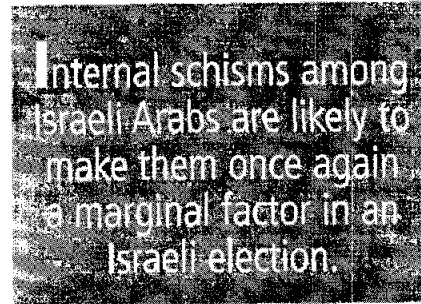
"Peretz and Kadima did not pay sufficient attention to the Arab constituency," Rekhess says.

"They did not integrate Arabs into realistic places on their lists, and so far they have not come with a revolutionary platform regarding the welfare of the Arab population," he adds.

However, he adds, the fact that the Zionist parties do not respond to Arab voters' expectations does not necessarily mean that their votes will go to the Arab parties. Many might just stay home, accepting the position of the Islamic Movement, whose more radical faction boycotts Israeli elections to avoid legitimizing the Jewish state.

That leads to one of Rekhess' most interesting findings: Some 50 percent of respondents wanted the Islamic Movement under the leadership of Sheik Raed Salah — who was released from prison in July 2005 on security charges — to run in the election.

Moreover, Rekhess adds, had the Islamic Movement participated in the election, it would have garnered 23 percent of the Arab vote.



NYC synagogue roof collapses

NEW YORK (JTA) — A roof collapsed at a historic synagogue on New York City's Lower East Side.

Sunday's collapse occurred at the First Roumanian-American Congregation on Rivington Street, The New York Times reported.

It's unclear whether the 150-year-old building could be salvaged.

The Torahs are apparently safe, however.

The synagogue was known as the Cantors' Carnegie Hall, since celebrities such as Eddie Cantor and Jan Peerce sang here.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Oman won't boycott Israel

The United States and Oman signed a free trade agreement on the understanding that the Persian Gulf state will not boycott Israel.

"I would like to assure you that Oman does not apply an aspect of the boycott, whether primary, secondary or tertiary," Maqbool Bin Ali Sultan, the Omani minister of commerce, wrote in September to the U.S. trade representative, Robert Portman, in a letter obtained by JTA. Portman signed the agreement last Jan. 19.

The formal agreement does not reference the Arab boycott, however. A similar agreement signed last year with Bahrain had anti-boycott language written into it, and the pro-Israel lobby may try to get specific language into any congressional resolution ratifying the Oman agreement.

Oman recently participated in a boycott meeting in Damascus, an action that would violate the language of the agreement with Bahrain.

Israeli Nobel laureate: Settlers mistreated

Israeli Nobel laureate Robert Aumann criticized the government's treatment of settlers evacuated from the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Aumann, who earned the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2005, said the care for the "deportees represents a national disgrace."

Aumann made his comments Saturday at the Herzliya conference on security.

Netanyahu backs territorial concessions

Benjamin Netanyahu said that as prime minister he would accept further territorial concessions to the Palestinians.

"In the framework of a peace accord, a government under my leadership would agree to make real territorial concessions, but will not compromise our security borders," the Likud Party leader said Sunday in a policy speech at the Herzliya strategy conference.

"In any event, with or without an accord, we have no intention of returning to control or annexing Palestinian cities and population centers" already ceded to the Palestinian Authority, he said.

According to political analysts, Netanyahu is trying to soften the Likud's hard-line image ahead of March 28 elections in Israel.

Opinion polls show the Likud trailing the ruling Kadima Party and the Labor Party in the race.

Peretz wants to keep Jerusalem united

The leader of Israel's Labor Party said he would keep Jerusalem united if elected prime minister.

"We will keep Jerusalem united and strong, with a Jewish majority and character," Amir Peretz said Sunday at the first Labor conference since the party chose its candidate list for March 28 general elections. The statement left open the possibility that Labor would support ceding Arab neighborhoods of eastern Jerusalem to the Palestinian Authority under a peace deal.

Award-winning film not getting play in Israel

An award-winning film about Palestinian suicide bombers will not be shown at major Israeli cinemas.

"Paradise Now," which was named best foreign-language film at the Jan. 16 Golden Globes, has been shunned by the eight Israeli cinema chains, distribution experts said Monday.

They blamed the decision on the film's sympathetic depiction of two West Bank men who volunteer for a suicide bombing mission, which has drawn criticism from Israeli terror victims.

For now, "Paradise Now" is having a limited release at Jerusalem and Tel Aviv art-house cinemas.

Carter calls for more withdrawal

Jimmy Carter urged Israel to uproot more West Bank settlements. "You can't have a Palestinian state living in peace and dignity if it is filled with Israeli settlements," the former president, who is in the region to help monitor Wednesday's Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections, said Monday in a speech at the Herzliya strategy conference.

Israel removed four West Bank settlements after its Gaza Strip withdrawal last year, and all major candidates in the March 28 general elections have said they would consider ceding further land to the Palestinians.

Carter, an architect of the 1979 Camp David peace accord between Israel and Egypt, voiced optimism about the chances of a similar rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Over time, I have seen despair and frustration evolve into progress," he said.

But Carter urged Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to crack down on terrorist groups, a requirement of the "road map" peace plan.

Israeli soldiers kill Palestinian boy

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian boy in the West Bank.

The shooting occurred Monday after the boy and a companion refused to stop suspicious activity on a road near Ramallah.

Meanwhile, an Israeli soldier was wounded by Palestinian gunfire near Jenin.

NORTH AMERICA

Katrina relief trip planned

A Jewish group is sponsoring a community-service trip to New Orleans for young Jewish leaders.

The American Jewish Committee's Hurricane Katrina relief trip will take place Feb. 17-20.

The deadline for reservations is Jan. 27. More information is available at www.ajc.org.

Initiative aims to pay for Jewish schools

The Orthodox Union launched an initiative aimed at helping Jewish parents pay for day-school and yeshiva tuition across North America.

The initiative includes the group's participation in a Feb. 14 rally in Albany, N.Y., that will press for making educational expenses for private-school tuition deductible on New York state taxes.

The initiative also aims to change the way schools are managed, develop fund-raising, increase access to government funds and increase partnerships with other parts of the Jewish community, the Orthodox Union said in a statement.

WORLD

Plaque goes up at German temple site

A plaque went up at the site of a former Reform temple in Germany.

Sunday's ceremony was at the spot where Berlin's Holtheim Temple once stood.

Money for the project came from Milk & Honey, a Jewish tourism service in Berlin.

The synagogue was dedicated in 1854 and was forced to shut its doors in 1942.

Severely damaged by bombing in the last years of World War II, it was later torn down by East German authorities.

The site currently houses a parking lot.