

IN THE NEWS
Israeli thwarts double bombing

Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians suspected of planning a double suicide bombing.

The detainees, a man and a woman, were taken into custody in the Nablus area Wednesday following intelligence warnings that they had volunteered for a twin terrorist attack.

Their handlers are believed to be from Islamic Jihad.

In a separate operation in the West Bank city, two Palestinian fugitives were arrested following a brief gunfight with Israeli troops.

An army officer was lightly wounded in the clash.

U.S. teens detained in Israeli pot charge

Police in Israel placed three Maryland teenagers under house arrest after seizing about 840 grams of marijuana from them, a police spokesman said.

The youths, who were on the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education program, were taken into custody and held over the weekend in Kfar Saba, north of Tel Aviv, the Washington Jewish Week reported.

The teens, who were visiting Israel on a trip sponsored by the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, face charges for possession and sale of marijuana, according to a police spokesman.

Study: Anti-Semitism down, but high

The number of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States decreased slightly in 2005, according to a new report.

The Anti-Defamation League's audit, which looked at anti-Semitic activity across the United States in 2005, recorded 1,757 such incidents last year.

The numbers are down slightly from the 1,821 incidents in 2004, which constituted the highest level of anti-Semitic activity in nine years.

WORLD REPORT

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Supermarket aisles filled with outreach groups before Passover

By SUE FISHKOFF

LOS ALTOS, Calif. (JTA) — Anyone who walked into Albertsons here on Sunday would have run right into Margie Pomerantz's Passover table.

There she sat, next to the kosher food display right inside the supermarket's front entrance. A big handwritten sign reading "Passover in the Aisles" hung down from her table, on which lay piles of Passover recipe books, Haggadahs and other holiday resources.

Pomerantz and her fellow volunteers from Congregation Beth David, a nearby Conservative synagogue, were out looking for Jews. In a supermarket. Unaffiliated Jews, if possible, but they weren't being picky.

They handed out information and collected names. Someone from the synagogue will call later with an invitation to a Shabbat service or other Jewish program.

Scenes like this, with a non-aggressive method of doing outreach, are being repeated across the United States this week and next, in dozens of communities.

It's all part of Passover in the Aisles, a pre-holiday initiative conceived of by the Jewish Outreach Institute. Some Jewish groups have been doing this kind of outreach for a decade or more, but the biggest push seems to have come in the past three to five years.

No one has a ready explanation for that timing, but synagogues, JCCs and federations who have developed such outreach programs all say they've noticed the growing trend.

It is based on the idea of "public space Judaism" — taking programs out to where people are instead of waiting for them to walk into a synagogue or JCC.

"If we wait for people to come to programs within the four walls of our communal institutions, we'll be waiting a long time," says Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, executive director of the Jewish Outreach Institute, which provides guidance for such programs. "This is an attempt to bring Judaism to where people are."

Passover is a particularly good time for this kind of outreach, Olitzky says, both because it is one of the most widely celebrated holidays among all Jews, even the unaffiliated, and because it requires people to go to the grocery store to buy matzah and other Passover products.

Olitzky's group urges synagogues, federations and other Jewish groups to set up temporary shop in grocery stores, offering food samples, holiday information and friendly advice to Jewish shoppers. Volunteers are urged to be welcoming, but to avoid

asking questions that might be seen as too private.

Olitzky says his outreach model has a lot in common with Chabad's street outreach, which he admires.

But he says, what "makes ours different is we are less intrusive, less discriminating. We don't ask, are you Jewish?"

"It's important that Judaism be shared passionately in public spaces," Olitzky says. "That's what Chabad does, and that's what we do."

Beth David's assistant rabbi, Aaron Schonbrun, went to a Jewish Outreach Institute conference last year and says he was astounded at the concept of liberal Jews doing this kind of outreach. It wasn't what he learned in rabbinical seminary.

"We learned at the conference that you

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**PASSOVER
FEATURE**

■ Outreach volunteers offered shoppers food samples and holiday information

Continued from page 1

can't expect people to just write that check to the federation, especially not my generation," says the 29-year-old rabbi. "We talked about how to engage Jews in Judaism, not Reform or Conservative or Orthodox, but Judaism."

This is the second year Beth David has done Passover in the Aisles. By 3 p.m. on Sunday, after three hours in the store, there are just nine cards filled out at the Los Altos Albertsons, an hour south of San Francisco. But the volunteers have talked to dozens of shoppers.

■
"People are reluctant to walk up to a table," Pomerantz admits, noting the shoppers who warily eye the volunteers before grabbing their Passover items and hurrying past. "But those who come over are very appreciative of what we're doing."

One young woman who did fill out a card was Galit Azulay, newly arrived from Israel with her husband, who is studying for his doctorate in the area.

"We're here to buy food for the seder," she says, adding that the couple aren't affiliated and don't plan to be. She didn't pick up any of the information, but entered the raffle for a seder plate.

Carol Greenberg also stopped by the table. A member of a local Reform congregation, she congratulated the volunteers on their outreach efforts. "I'm so excited to see you here," she exclaims. Greenberg picked up a copy of their recipe book.

"I find that congregations' recipes are much better than books," she says. She also took one of the children's Haggadahs,

which she plans to give to her newborn niece. "It'll be a nice gift from her aunt, her first Haggadah."

Store manager Aide Garcia says she couldn't be happier to host the event. "It increases our business a lot," she confides. "It's a way to promote our kosher food."

The JCC in Columbus, Ohio, did its first Passover outreach in a Wild Oats supermarket in 2003. They chose a new neighborhood in the northwest part of the city, an area where young, professional Jews have been moving, to improve their chances of reaching the unaffiliated.

"In the core community, we have an affiliation rate of 90 percent, versus 20 percent in the northwest, where most of the growth is happening," says Lindsay Folkerth, outreach director for the JCC's J-Link project. J-Link is a community outreach program created two years ago by the local federation following a demographic study of the Columbus Jewish community by JOI.

■
The program, based on the JOI model, is called "A Taste of Judaism," and in addition to the raffle and informational booklets, volunteers offer samplings of charoset and chocolate macaroons.

In its three years of outreach programs at Passover and Chanukah, for which J-Link volunteers go to toy and pet stores, Folkerth estimates they've collected 1,000 names of local unaffiliated Jews.

Those who want to be contacted are called, and many have subsequently showed up at other synagogue or JCC events. A survey last year found that 90 percent "feel more connected to the Jewish community because of J-Link," she reports.

Folkerth says that one woman who had a Jewish father but was not raised Jewish came up to volunteers at a Passover table and related how her father gave her a Star of David necklace on his deathbed, urging her not to forget her heritage.

"She told us she'd always felt uncomfortable in synagogue," Folkerth says. The woman spent a long time talking to the volunteers, and has since become "very involved" in the Jewish community.

Seattle Rabbi Dov Gartenberg says his congregants "thought it was a little strange" when he set up a Passover outreach table in a local supermarket more than 10 years ago.

That was before he heard about the Jewish Outreach Institute program.

He now runs food booths at a Whole Foods store before Passover and Rosh Hashanah, and has teamed up with a popular local chef to offer tastes of Jewish holiday foods. This month they're offering a different charoset each week, along with recipes.

Gartenberg uses the tastings as a teaching opportunity. "As they taste, I say, this is what this food symbolizes, and it becomes a basis for conversation."

Gartenberg gets a lot of non-Jews at his booths, some of them dating or married to Jews, others who are just curious. He sees that as an important part of his outreach.

"Not only are we reaching out and touching Jews, we're sharing good will with the non-Jews who come up," he says.

SAJES, a central agency for Jewish education on Long Island, did its first street outreach 10 years ago before Sukkot. They set up a sukkah-building demonstration in front of a Home Depot.

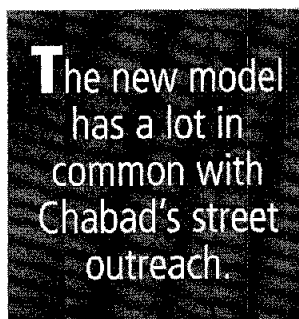
"It attracted everyone, from people who had never built a sukkah, to those who build one every year," says outreach director Shellie Dickstein. "I thought, we're on to something."

■
After that, SAJES created a task force to look at how to do this kind of outreach before every Jewish holiday. They especially wanted to reach intermarried families "to send the message that we're welcoming, we want to meet you," she says.

With an initial grant from the Jewish Outreach Institute, Dickstein's group created the "Celebrations" outreach model. They run a Passover Extravaganza, taking over an entire shopping mall and holding simultaneous events in several stores.

Some people who run Passover outreach programs say their goal isn't to collect potential members. Roberta Matz, outreach coordinator at the Center for Jewish Life and Learning of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, says most people don't like to give out their names in such venues.

Passover in the Aisles is valuable, she says, "for putting a face to the community," letting Jewish — and non-Jewish — shoppers see that the local Jewish community is warm and welcoming. ■



The new model has a lot in common with Chabad's street outreach.

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West and Israel cut off Hamas-led P.A.

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Now that Hamas officially has become the face of the Palestinian Authority, the West and Israel can't slam the door fast enough.

Palestinians who elected the terrorist group in January felt the bite of that decision within days of Hamas' assumption of power last week. All Hamas leaders, and officials associated with the terrorist group, were officially off-limits to U.S. diplomats by week's end.

With a couple of exceptions, the same was true of Europe, where Hamas also is listed as a terrorist organization. Israel already had suspended relations with the Palestinian Authority.

Western diplomats said the clampdown was inevitable, given Hamas' refusal to renounce terrorism and recognize Israel. But they also were scrambling to find ways to keep a line open to the Palestinian public.

"We are in a situation in which you have a government led by a party that we, the United States, consider to be a terrorist group," David Welch, the top U.S. State Department envoy to the Middle East, said last week in a roundtable interview with Arab journalists. "It's going to introduce a fundamentally difficult effort, fundamentally difficult problem, in the effort to get to peace negotiations."

Ehud Olmert, who was elected Israeli prime minister last month, says he remains committed to negotiating peace with Mahmoud Abbas, the relatively moderate P.A. president from the Fatah Party. The Bush administration is encouraging Israel to sustain ties.

Welch and Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser to the White House, met last week with their Israeli counterparts and encouraged them to continue seeking avenues to the Palestinians that would bypass Hamas. Dov Weisglass, Olmert's national security adviser, has set up a team of top Israeli officials to explore such options.

Olmert's commitment to negotiating with Abbas is relatively recent, however, and some analysts believe it is a formality, especially given Abbas' weakness. Olmert says that if he can't find a Palestinian partner, he will push ahead with unilateral withdrawals in the West Bank, as his predecessor, Ariel Sharon, did last year when he evacuated

Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip.

The diplomatic fallout from the Hamas takeover was predictable, but there were legal issues as well. The United States and Europe have suspended aid payments they maintained to the Palestinian Authority during the interim between Hamas' victory on Jan. 25 and its ascension to power last week.

Another substantial blow came Tuesday when Bank Hapoalim, the principal Israeli bank dealing with the Palestinian Authority, shut down all ties, citing international legislation criminalizing dealings with terrorists.

The Bank Hapoalim decision could herald other private sector cutoffs for the Palestinians. Officials at the Arab Bank in Jordan, which handles some P.A. business, are considering their next move.

P.A. officials say they're bankrupt, and that a fund-raising drive among Arab and Muslim nations hasn't even come close to meeting the \$250 million the authority pays in monthly salaries.

Israel fears that a total collapse of the Palestinian economy would destabilize its borders. Israel is endeavoring to come to an agreement with the Palestinians that would keep Palestinian markets open while preserving Israeli security needs.

Aid officials in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are shunning the Palestinian Authority, while wondering how to continue their programs without going through the P.A. infrastructure.

Even some programs that do not deal with the Palestinian Authority have suspended activities, said Larry Garber, director of U.S. Agency for International Development programs in the Palestinian areas from 1999-2004.

"There's no formal policy that says, 'Let's close down the programs,'" said Garber, who, as director of the New Israel Fund, maintains close ties with the aid community in the region. But some programs have been frozen, Garber said, because aid officials are worried that, "they may be required to interact with P.A. officials down the line."

The formal U.S. guidelines announced last Friday suggest the emerging Western

consensus on how to deal with the Palestinians: Work with Abbas and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the precursor to the Palestinian Authority that is free from Hamas input.

"There should be no contacts between U.S. government officials and P.A. officials who are under the authority of the prime

minister or any other minister in the Hamas-led government," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said. "They can have contact with Palestinian Authority President Abbas, officials in the office of the president, as well as officials and agencies directly under the author-

ity of the Palestinian Authority president."

That comports with a version of "The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act" currently circulating in the U.S. Senate, which bans all assistance to the Palestinian Authority but allows President Bush to maintain ties and financial support for Abbas and his office. The House version is tougher, but Capitol Hill insiders say the Senate version will probably prevail in conference.

Neither bill has reached the floor yet, but strong lobbying by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee has garnered co-sponsorship from over half the Senate and almost half of the 435 members of the House of Representatives.

Abbas appears more than eager to cut Hamas out of the negotiating loop, telling Israeli reporters in interviews that the PLO, which he chairs, is the only address for talks.

If Olmert really does negotiate with him, Abbas has pledged to bypass the Hamas-governed Palestinian Authority and take any peace deal directly to the Palestinians in a referendum. However, Abbas did not explain how that would work, given his inability to take steps such as dismantling Hamas' terrorist infrastructure even when his Fatah Party was in power.

There was a sign from Hamas that it might be willing to defer to Abbas and the PLO. Writing in London's *Guardian* last week, Ismail Haniyeh, the P.A. prime minister, called for the revival of the PLO. He said it was "essential so that it can resume its role in speaking for the Palestinians and presenting their case to the world."

NEWS
ANALYSIS

Bank Hapoalim
cut all P.A. ties, and
Jordan's Arab Bank
is considering its
next move.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

House passes Saudi boycott plea

The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution urging the Bush administration to call on Saudi Arabia to end its boycott of Israel.

Wednesday's resolution aims to pressure Saudi Arabia to live up to its obligations to end the boycott under the World Trade Organization.

WTO nations are not permitted to boycott other members. In return for U.S. support for its ascension to the WTO, Saudi Arabia reportedly promised to end its participation in the Arab boycott of Israel. Since then, however, Saudi Arabia has said repeatedly that it will continue to enforce the boycott.

Jewish groups protest budget

Jewish groups wrote members of the U.S. Congress to protest a budget bill likely to pass this week.

"The budget plan passed out of the House Budget Committee would make huge cuts to domestic discretionary programs," says the letter signed by the United Jewish Communities, the federation system's umbrella group; the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the umbrella body for Jewish community relations councils and national Jewish groups; the Reform movement; the National Council of Jewish Women; and B'nai B'rith International.

"These cuts would be extremely harmful both to our social service agencies that are dependent on public funding as well as the vulnerable populations we advocate on behalf of," the letter said.

Programs facing severe cuts include the Older Americans Act, the Social Services Block Grant, the Community Services Block Grant and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance.

Massachusetts health plan lauded

Jewish leaders in Massachusetts praised a bill that would require all state residents to have health insurance. Gov. Mitt Romney, a possible Republican presidential contender in 2008, is expected to sign the bill, which was passed by legislators Tuesday and would become the only one of its kind in the United States.

"This is a historic moment," said Nancy Kaufman, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, which played a leading role in the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, a coalition of 70 religious organizations.

"It's not perfect, but this bill comes as close as we could have hoped for as far as the principles of high-quality, affordable health care," Kaufman said.

New Orleans Jewish leader moves to Florida

The executive director of New Orleans' Jewish federation is resigning to take over the federation in Broward County, Fla. Eric Stillman, 40, told JTA he was leaving New Orleans after six years because the Jewish day school his children were attending closed following Hurricane Katrina.

When it reopens, it will no longer have a middle school, and Stillman said "we are not prepared to live under those conditions." Stillman, originally from Milwaukee, has had executive positions with Jewish federations in Palm Beach, Fla., Washington and Rhode Island.

Chicago philanthropist dies

Herman Spertus, a giant in Jewish philanthropy, died Wednesday at age 105.

Spertus was the major benefactor of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago, and served on the board of directors of the

Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago from 1959-1968.

He also raised funds for the Haganah, the pre-state Jewish militia, and later raised money for Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War.

An immigrant from the Russian Empire, Spertus made his fortune by establishing the Metalcraft Corporation, the first company to mass produce picture frames.

N.Y. Jews protest arrest

Fervently Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn protested after an elderly member of the community was arrested. Tuesday night's protest in Borough Park took place after a 75-year-old man was arrested. Protesters shouted "No justice, no peace" and set a police car on fire. The New York Times reported. Police said the man was uncooperative during the arrest, but locals said he is deaf in one ear and may not have heard officers' requests after he was pulled over.

WORLD

French murder suspect denies charges

The chief suspect in the recent brutal murder of a French Jew denied to an investigative judge that he committed the crime.

Youssef Fofana acknowledged that he was the leader of a gang suspected in the case but gave no explanation for Ilan Halimi's death, Fofana's lawyer said.

Fofana is accused of leading the gang that allegedly kidnapped and tortured Halimi, 23, who later died of his wounds.

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon undergoes surgery on his skull

Ariel Sharon underwent surgery to his skull.

Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem reported that the comatose Israeli prime minister was in stable condition after Wednesday's operation, which was ordered to repair damage to his head from previous surgery.

The operation was postponed from Tuesday because Sharon had a mild respiratory infection.

He remains in a coma from his Jan. 4 stroke.

Saudi held in Israel

A Saudi citizen held in Israel as an illegal immigrant is seeking asylum.

Israeli authorities revealed Wednesday that a Saudi man who entered the country illegally 11 months ago was in custody.

Though he is not suspected of terrorist activities, his situation is complicated by the fact that Israel and Saudi Arabia have no diplomatic ties.

The Riyadh government appealed to the Red Cross to secure the Saudi's release, though he does not want to be repatriated.

According to U.N. officials, the detainee has applied for asylum in a third country. The basis for his appeal, and the circumstances of his arrival in Israel, are unclear.

Turkish water deal frozen

Israel froze plans to import Turkish water. Israeli officials said Wednesday that the 2004 deal with Ankara, under which 1.75 million cubic feet of Turkish water was to have been shipped annually, was shelved due to high fuel costs.

As an alternative, a water pipeline may be laid from Turkey to Israel.

Pressure for a deal has alleviated as a drought Israel experienced in the early 2000s is largely over.