

**IN THE NEWS**
**Rights group: Stop using human shields**

A human rights group blasted Palestinian terrorists for using human shields.

Human Rights Watch on Wednesday said that calling Palestinian civilians to protect homes of terrorists targeted by the Israeli army is illegal. The Jerusalem Post reported.

"Whether or not the home is a legitimate military target, knowingly asking civilians to stand in harm's way is unlawful," the group said.

This followed reports that Israel called off an air raid against the house of a senior Popular Resistance Committee terrorist Sunday after it was surrounded by hundreds of Palestinian civilians.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas member, responded that "We are so proud of this national stand. It is the first step towards protecting our homes," the Post reported.

**Iran denied funds for reactor**

Iran was denied funds to build a nuclear reactor.

The Associated Press reported Wednesday that the International Atomic Energy Agency decision on Iran was taken following three days of discussions on hundreds of requests from member countries.

The refusal of funds for the Arak reactor is tentative, meaning Iran could resubmit its request.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has insisted that his country's nuclear aims are peaceful, but also has repeatedly called for the destruction of the State of Israel.

**Reminder:**  
The JTA World Report  
will not be published on  
Friday, Nov. 24.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Israel backers say no need to worry as Iraq Study Group prepares report



Eric Draper/White House

President Bush sits across from James Baker, center left, and Lee Hamilton, center right, during a meeting with the Baker-Hamilton Commission in the White House on Nov. 13.

By **RON KAMPEAS**

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Headed by a man who once cursed out the Jews and beset by leaks suggesting accommodation of Israel's worst enemies, the study group on how to get U.S. troops out of Iraq has raised fears of new pressures on Israel.

Jewish and Israeli officials who have consulted with members of the Iraq Study Group say such fears are unwarranted, and that the group is mindful of Bush administration priorities in the region, including strong support for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government.

The Iraq Study Group, co-chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and former U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton of Indiana, is to present its conclusions to the White

House before year's end. Recent leaks from advisers drafting the recommendations anticipate recommendations that include engagement with Iran and Syria and pressure on Israel to accelerate peace with the Palestinians.

"It's hard to believe they would be that stupid, but it's not to be ruled out," said Joshua Muravchik, a scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "The idea that Iran, whose president says his goal is a world without America, would like to pull our chestnuts out of the fire in Iraq is loco. The second point, that they want to make solving Iraq contingent on solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict, is equally loco. All this stuff that has come out seems to me to be pretty darn foolish."

The study group already has drawn

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**NEWS  
ANALYSIS**

## ■ *Fears of pressure on Israel from the Iraq Study Group are unwarranted, say Jewish officials*

*Continued from page 1*

plaudits from players Israel considers its most dangerous enemies.

"They understand the realities of the Middle East," Imad Moustapha, Syria's ambassador to Washington, told JTA in an interview at his embassy. He has met with the study group three times.

The group was mandated by Congress but also welcomed by President Bush, who has maintained his father's deference to Baker's foreign policy experience.

It's that closeness, despite Bush's own unprecedented support for Israel, that has raised some concerns: As secretary of state in 1991, Baker pressured Israel to accommodate Palestinian demands; confronted by another Cabinet official with concerns that this would upset Jewish constituents, Baker said "F—the Jews."

One marker of a sea change was a New York Times interview last week in which Moustapha appeared to herald a new day ending his nation's isolation by the West.

"What would it take Syria to help on Iraq?" Moustapha quoted Baker as asking Walid Muallem, the Syrian foreign minister.

It seemed an augur: Within days, Syria and Iraq had resumed relations, with U.S. blessing. Israel has looked to the United States to squeeze Syria through isolation, hoping it will bring about an end to Syria's support for Palestinian and Lebanese terrorists.

Other reports suggested that the study

group would recommend greater engagement with Iran, which has considerable influence with the Shi'ite side of Iraq's civil war. That especially would be anathema to Israel, which is depending on the United States to isolate Iran until it agrees to stop enriching uranium, a step toward building a nuclear weapon.

A number of Jewish and Israeli professionals said not to read too much into Baker's past or into leaks from the study group: Its principal mission is to seek a way out of Iraq that accommodates Bush administration precepts, including a refusal to deal with terrorists or the nations that back them.

"All the indications are they are not going to put a great emphasis on Israel-centric issues," said one pro-Israel official, who has consulted with members of the group and who asked not to be identified because of the issue's sensitivity.

Leaks suggesting pressure on Israel came from advisers to the group who were repeating their own advice to the media in an effort to game the process, the official said. There was no indication that Baker and Hamilton would adopt the advice.

Olmert met with Bush just after the president met with Baker and Hamilton. Later, the Israeli prime minister told Hebrew-speaking reporters that Bush proffered no link between Iraq and the fundamentals of the Israel-U.S. relationship, especially on the need to contain Iran.

"I don't see any change in his approach to Iran," Olmert said.

Daniel Levy, a dovish Israeli activist at the Center for American Progress, said his understanding from those involved in the process was that Israel issues would be on the margins of the report, not its center.

"It will make a side reference to the Is-

rael-Palestinian issue, and there's likely to be a reference to the Syria front," Levy said.

Much also would depend, he said, on whether the Palestinians had taken the necessary steps toward peacemaking, including earnestly renouncing terrorism and accepting Israel's right to exist.

Efforts by moderate Palestinians to bring about such changes stalled last week when Hamas rejected conditions for a new government of technocrats.

In fact, Middle Eastern realities already were overtaking whatever goodwill Baker and Hamilton may have stirred by reaching out to Syria in compiling the report.

Pierre Gemayel, an anti-Syrian Cabinet minister, was assassinated Tuesday, and Western leaders saw Syria's hand behind the attack.

"The United States remains fully committed to supporting Lebanon's independence and democracy in the face of attempts by Syria, Iran and their allies within Lebanon to foment instability and violence," Bush said in a statement.

David Makovsky, an analyst with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said Syria was playing a double game, demonstrating conciliation on the one hand and toughness on the other.

"They can demonstrate to the Baker-Hamilton people that they can go to Baghdad and be a useful player, and at the same time demonstrate zero give on Lebanon because it's something they covet," Makovsky said. "This is not the way to win friends and influence people."

Moustapha denied Syrian involvement in the Gemayel hit, but speaking to JTA on Tuesday, he backed away from the enthusiasm for renewed U.S.-Syrian friendship that he had displayed last week to the Times.

"We want to engage on Iraq not as part of a deal we were looking to conclude with the United States," he said. "We want to engage on Iraq because it serves our own national interests."

**Syria 'can demonstrate to the Baker-Hamilton people that they can go to Baghdad and be a useful player, and at the same time demonstrate zero give on Lebanon because it's something they covet.'**

**David Makovsky**  
Analyst, Washington Institute for Near East Policy



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# German Jewish leader's dream fulfilled

By TOBY AXELROD

MUNICH (JTA) — The new head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany now has more time to bring her dreams to fruition.

Elected in June to serve out the term of Paul Spiegel, who died last spring, Charlotte Knobloch was unanimously confirmed Sunday for a full four-year term. The council's 120 delegates met in Dusseldorf, Spiegel's former home town, in his memory.

Like her predecessors Spiegel and the late Ignatz Bubis, Knobloch is a Holocaust survivor.

As a former hidden child, she represents a bridge to the next generation of Jewish leaders, those who grew up after World War II.

As a bridge, she carries hopes for the future together with somber remembrance of the past. Those sentiments sometimes seem to clash: While Knobloch saw a dream come true with the opening of a new Jewish community center in Munich on Nov. 9 — the 68th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom that Knobloch witnessed as a child — she also has spoken out against rising right-wing extremism in Germany.

Knobloch remembers when Jews in Germany never thought they'd see a new synagogue open in the heart of Munich. Of the handful of German Jews and tens of thousands of displaced Eastern European Jews stranded in Germany after the Holocaust, most wanted out.

"After 1945, none of us wanted to stay in Germany. Everyone wanted to leave, especially the young ones," Knobloch recently said in an interview with JTA. "Everyone who stayed has their story. They weren't staying voluntarily."

Knobloch's story begins with her birth in 1932: Her mother, Margarethe, had converted to Judaism to marry Fritz Neuland, an attorney and politician, but she left the family in 1936 under pressure from the Nazis' racial policy.

Young Charlotte was sent to live with her grandmother, Albertine Neuland, who later was deported.

Desperate to save his daughter, Fritz Neuland brought 10-year-old Charlotte to Kreszentia "Zenzi" Hummel, a Catholic woman who had worked as a maid for a relative. There Charlotte went by the name Lotte Hummel and lived as Zenzi's illegitimate daughter until the war was over.

A devout Catholic, Zenzi "lived in her own world," Knobloch recalls. "She always rejected any form of recognition" after the war.

"She said she already had been rewarded. The family had a reason why they took this risk," Knobloch says. "Their two sons were soldiers in the war, and they hoped that if they did a good deed, their sons would come back alive. And they did come back."

Knobloch's father survived the war, and Charlotte later went to work in his law office. She also followed him as leader of the official body of Munich's Jewish community, which he had co-founded.

She later became a vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany before becoming president this summer. She also heads the European Jewish Congress and is a vice president of the World Jewish Congress.

Knobloch married Samuel Knobloch when she was 18. They have three children and three grandchildren, two of whom currently serve in the Israeli army.

Knobloch has not always drawn applause from other Jewish leaders. She recently opposed Germany's decision to send peacekeeping troops to Lebanon, bending only after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert came out in favor.

And her recent statements comparing today's right-wing extremism to the situation in 1933, when the Nazis assumed power, were contradicted publicly by Central Council vice presidents Salomon Korn and Dieter Graumann, who expressed concern in more measured tones.

Crime statistics show an increase in right-wing extremist incidents over last year. Recently, pupils in a former East German town forced a schoolmate to wear a sign reading, "I am the biggest pig of all because I hang around with Jews."

Knobloch defended her approach.

"I was not expressing a personal fear, but I'm responsible for 120,000 registered Jewish citizens of this country, and I have seen that just raising a finger in warning is not enough," she says. "If I have to see

how a young person is paraded with a sign, like Jews were forced to do" during the Nazi period, "then it is not enough to raise one's finger. One has to use very drastic words."

Right-wing crimes are not the only problem: Neo-Nazis have used elections to gain a footing in a handful of state parliaments in Germany.

"I sometimes have the feeling that they come and go. But the intensity of the situation today has nothing to do with the jackboots and bomber jackets" of old Nazis, Knobloch says. "It's more subtle; it has to do with the influencing of young people, of influencing unhappy people."

It may be a passing situation, she says, "but one has to pay enough attention so it does not become a permanent situation."

Ever watchful, Knobloch also is ever the optimist. One of her chief hopes was to see Jewish life here flourish, and to some extent it has, especially since Jews from the former Soviet began to arrive after 1990.

Their integration has been a challenge, but the quadrupling of the Jewish population has prompted the building of new synagogues, the opening of Jewish schools and competition among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform institutions.

One might call Knobloch a seer: Some 20 years ago, when she first entered Jewish public life, she went to city authorities and suggested that they lay a cornerstone on the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, in 1988.

"They were very polite and nice and friendly, but there was little understanding for my idea," she says. "I naturally did not give up. I pursued it, and the result is that now, in 2006, a synagogue and community center and museum are opening here."

Jews and non-Jews helped raise money for the \$51 million project. The center reportedly already has the nickname "Charlottenburg."

"I hope that we in Munich will give a signal to all other institutions working hard to bring a certain normalcy back to Jewish life," Knobloch says, "so that Jews can feel the acceptance of the non-Jewish society, and not only on paper."

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

'After 1945, none of us wanted to stay in Germany... Everyone who stayed has their story.'

**Charlotte Knobloch**  
President, Central Council of Jews in Germany

# New crop of publications seeks Jewish 'users'

By SUE FISHKOFF

NEW YORK (JTA) — Ariel Beery is leaning over his espresso in a noisy coffee bar on East 44th Street, talking so fast about the new Jewish magazine he's just launched that it's best to sit back, close the notebook and let the words fly.

"Presentense is a transdenominational marketplace of ideas," he begins, explaining that the articles, essays, poetry and artwork in the 48-page glossy that marked its first issue in late October are all created by young volunteers around the world.

The 26-year-old Beery doesn't write a thing himself, he says, so he can give others the chance to express themselves. That's a risky step for a new magazine, particularly one that is depending on advertising, subscriptions and vendor sales rather than foundation grants. Not to mention one headed by such a young guy, who, like everyone else in the operation, is not being paid.

But that's all part of the aesthetic of this new, fast-growing crop of Jewish publications created by and aimed at the twenty- and thirtysomething market. There are a half-dozen print magazines and many more online ventures, all newer than five years old, all billing themselves as a new way to engage young Jews.

The fact that these alternative publications are proliferating speaks to the dynamism and energy of today's young Jewish writers, and puts them in good historical company.

"Every generation of American Jews creates publications that reflect the reality of its life," says Columbia University journalism professor Samuel Freedman, who likens the current Jewish media explosion to the emergence of the Jewish Daily Forward a century ago, and to alternative publications of the 1960s. "There's something happening at the grass roots."

Like those earlier publications, the new young adult oriented Jewish magazines and Web sites have created a community of writers and activists who know each other, read each other and often write for each other.

"The fact that it's so incestuous speaks well of the holistic aspect. It's part of the overall exploration of Jewish identity," says Esther Kustanowitz, who in addition



Sue Fishkoff

New publications aimed at the Jewish youth market.

to being senior editor at Presentense, runs two blogs, contributes to others and freelances for a host of Jewish print publications.

To critics from the organized Jewish community who complain that young Jews aren't affiliating, the purveyors of this content counter that they study, read, pray, blog, create Jewish music, fight for social justice, and are very affiliated — just not with the organized Jewish community.

Israel is front and center in these new publications, if not always in the usual packaging.

The most recent issue of Zeek, a highbrow journal of essays, art and literature, features the musings of a newly religious gay man in Jerusalem.

Sometimes the Israel focus is straightforward. Presentense scrapped its entire first issue, which was going to be about holiday cuisine, to focus on the summer war with Hezbollah, which it covered via first-person essays from Israeli soldiers, students and visitors.

"When Israel's at war and our people are dying, it didn't seem appropriate" to do otherwise, Beery says.

Jewish values, particularly social justice, charity and environmentalism, are very popular topics, as is Jewish history and religious life.

Culture, humor and the arts, especially books, film and music, take up a lot of space: Jon Stewart, Sarah Silverman, the

Balkan Beat Box, Borat — whoever's pushing the Jewish envelope.

But they differ from the mainstream Jewish media in their willingness to engage the world outside the Jewish community, their lack of interest in Jewish establishment organizations and their focus on people on the communal margins: gays and lesbians, Jews of color, Sephardim, left-wing politicians, non-halachic Jews, the intermarried, even non-Jews, whom these magazines hope are among their readers.

And even when the tone of an article is breezy or sardonic, serious issues are being discussed.

"The Jewish people are smart enough to want content," Beery says. "Jewish youth are not surface dimwits. Jewish

funders think they're these idiots that have to be shepherded towards the goal with sweets."

And that, Beery says, is insulting as well as wrong.

The biggest difference, however, may be that these new publications position

themselves as discussion forums rather than finished products. We're not talking at you, they say, we're a conversation you can join. To prove it, they often write in the first person, they maintain Web sites and blogs where readers are encouraged to debate or berate each other; and they sponsor salons, lectures and other events to create communities of like-minded young Jews who share their concerns.

It's a new vision of what a magazine can do.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

'The fact that it's so incestuous speaks well of the holistic aspect.'

Esther Kustanowitz  
Editor, Presentense

# Too many 'New Jew' publications?

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — Remember when Heeb, the self-proclaimed “New Jew Review,” was the bad-boy, new kid on the block?

Today, the nearly five-year-old magazine that the mainstream press insists upon calling “irreverent” (really, guys, get a thesaurus) is the granddaddy of a new generation of online and offline publications by and for Jews in their 20s and 30s.

This year was particularly fecund for new print publications, with the arts quarterly Guilt and Pleasure launching in early 2006, American Jewish Life (formerly Atlanta Jewish Life) in September, and Presentense in late October.

“The fewer people read in America, the more they write,” Gary Shteyngart, best-selling author of “The Russian Debutante’s Handbook,” said with some exasperation during a panel discussion earlier this month at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco. “We live in a culture where expression trumps everything.”

But some people wonder whether there’s a market to sustain all these ventures. One kid with a PC who doesn’t sleep much can run a blog, but a print publication — or an extensive Web presence sustained by advertising — requires real money.

Ilana Sichel, 23, editor of the 35-year-old Jewish student magazine New Voices, is doubtful.

“I’m surprised every time a new one is launched,” she says. “There’s so little money for print journalism.” Rather than a surfeit of ventures all seeking the same young adult readers, she would prefer “one or two terrific publications” where the best writers could work together.

“How many sub-niches in the Jewish literary world can really exist?” she wonders.

Heeb editor Joshua Neuman suspects that the young people behind these new ventures saw Heeb’s success and imagined they could do the same.

“For the past five years I’ve said over and over again that I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemies,” he cautions.

Some of the new publications depend solely or largely on grants, usually from Jewish organizations. That’s the case with Guilt and Pleasure, New Voices and Zeek,

which was founded in 2002.

Others are consciously forgoing foundation money, leery of the strings that may be attached to it.

New Voices, published by the Jewish Student Press Service, ran afoul of such strings this summer, when this year’s portion of a \$100,000 three-year grant from

the Solelim Fund, a venture philanthropy group of the UJA-Federation of New York, was slashed for what Sichel and others say was the magazine’s refusal to toe the Israel advocacy line.

New Voices, which distributes 5,000 to 8,000 copies of each issue to 400 campuses around the United States, lost \$20,000 of this year’s \$40,000 grant and had to lay off one of its three staffers. Sichel expects next year’s Solelim grant of \$30,000 to disappear altogether, cutting a big chunk of the magazine’s \$180,000 budget.

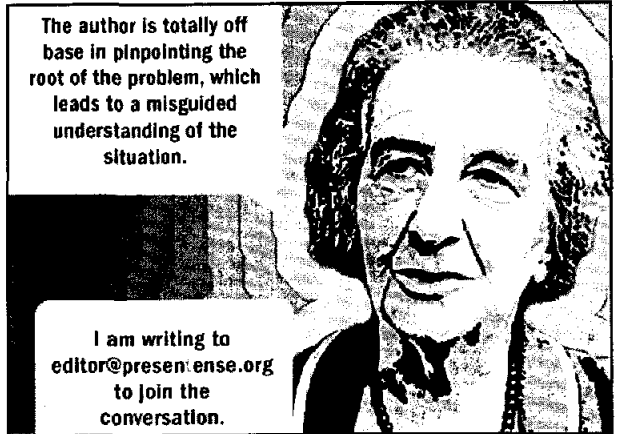
“When community leaders choose propaganda over dialogue, they reveal their condescending conviction that we are just malleable kids,” Sichel charged in an October 2006 editorial.

She says she finds it “particularly frustrating” that her donors “assume that publishing student work critical of Israel is dangerous” when, she says, open and honest dialogue is encouraged at Hillel, where she spent much of her time in college.

A spokeswoman for UJA-Federation declined to comment on why the grant was cut.

Columbia University journalism professor Sam Freedman, who is on the board of New Voices, says that publications put out by people in their 20s “should be daring and innovative.” They are, he says, “places where people find their voices.”

That’s true, say editors of other publications oriented toward younger Jews, which is why some of them avoid free money altogether.



Presentense

An ad using the image of Golda Meir on the letters to the editor page in Presentense, an independent magazine aimed at young Jews.

Miriam Eljas, the 28-year-old editor of Blueprint, a New York-based events magazine and Web site, has not sought foundation grants since she founded the publication five years ago.

“We wanted to be independent,” she says.

Supported completely by advertising, Blueprint distributes 20,000 free copies of its print version every month, and advertising is sold out online through 2007, she says.

Some of the new ventures don’t need institutional money. American Jewish Life, owned by Jewish investors in Atlanta, is one of the few for-profit operations in the field. Half its pages are filled with ads,

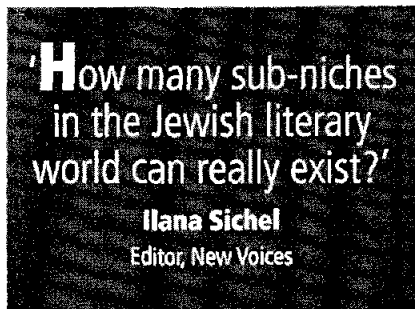
says editor Benjamin Cohen, many of them from blue-chip companies like Delta and Bell South.

“It’s a real magazine,” says Cohen, 31, who founded the popular jewsweek.com site in 2001. “I don’t want to be a Jewish mouthpiece for a federation. I want to run my magazine the way non-Jewish magazines run their businesses.”

American Jewish Life distributes 15,000 copies of each issue and pulls in approximately \$50,000 per issue in advertising revenue.

Cohen left jewsweek.com in April 2005. “You can’t pay the rent doing online magazines unless your last name is Steinhardt or Bronfman,” he says, referring to mega-philanthropists Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES**



# Uzbek Jews chronicle a rich past

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan (JTA) — Vladimir Solomonovich Polykovsky is the editor in chief of the Concise Uzbekistan Jewish Encyclopedia. And don't let the title fool you: When it's finished, the edition is expected to fill eight volumes.

"This work is needed so that the huge contribution of the representatives of the Jewish Diaspora is recorded and doesn't fade from memory," says Polykovsky, 75.

Much of what Jews achieved in Uzbekistan occurred during the Communist rule.

"This was Soviet science, culture, technology that was being made by Jews," Polykovsky says.

But he believes the encyclopedia will help the general population of the Central Asian nation as well.

"This has to be done for us, Jews, and also for Uzbekistan," he said.

Today's Jewish population of Uzbekistan, estimated at between 12,000 and 20,000, is a fraction of what it was in the late 1980s before the Soviet Union collapsed.

Since then, the majority of the once 100,000-strong community has left for Israel, the United States or Germany.

A large indigenous Jewish community — known as Bukharan Jews, after the Uzbek city of Bukhara — lived in what is now Uzbekistan for many centuries, involved in crafts and local and international trade.

Beginning in the late 19th century, when the region fell under the Russian influence, Ashkenazi Jews from the European sections of the Russian Empire settled in the region as well. Thousands more found a safe haven in Uzbekistan during World War II, when Jewish refugees and evacuees were fleeing Russia, Ukraine and Poland. Many of them stayed in Uzbekistan after the war.

Engineers, doctors and lawyers, they provided the area's first generation of local intelligentsia — and they will be the encyclopedia's focus.

Polykovsky himself built a successful career in science when Uzbekistan was still part of the Soviet Union: He wears a Communist-era medal of the Winner of Socialist Competition, and his business card meticulously lists his memberships in several academies and the scientific awards he received for his work as a geochemist.

He also has a strong Jewish identity.

Like many Jews of his generation in the former Soviet Union, he kept that pride to himself most of his life. But now that official Soviet anti-Semitism has been confined to the dustbin of history, he is quick to talk about his secular religion: the prominence of Jews in various fields.

The encyclopedia's office is housed in a rented three-bedroom apartment inside a rundown building, located on a typical Soviet-era residential block. Numerous files are scattered around the apartment with labels on them reading "Health Care," "Arts" or "Religion."

The encyclopedia's editorial board consists of eight people, with 25 more gathering information on a part-time basis.

Outside of one paid staff member, "all of us are volunteers," Polykovsky says.

The only benefit the editorial board members receive is a monthly transit pass, he says.

"On our board, we have experts on heavy industry, light industry, health care, education, literature and arts," Polykovsky says.

All of these are areas in which Uzbek Jews made substantial contributions.

The encyclopedia will be divided into separate volumes, organized by career. Thus, doctors will be listed alphabetically in the health care and medicine volume, and actors and musicians will find their place in the arts and literature volume.

No volumes have been printed yet. Polykovsky cites a lack of funds — his project receives only occasional support from local Jewish organizations and from a private individual.

Yet the editor proudly shows a homemade brochure titled "Jewish Doctors of Uzbekistan" that will become the basis for the volume on medicine.

Polykovsky is full of energy and those who know him say he can talk for hours about the undertaking he started three years ago.

Recently, Polykovsky and two of his

colleagues eagerly demonstrated their progress to a visiting journalist.

This includes a dozen posters with photos and text printouts on the walls. The posters — each highlighting the Jewish contribution to an area of knowledge — are occasionally used at conferences organized by the Tashkent Jewish community.

Polykovsky's own family history will earn several entries in the encyclopedia.

In 1921, his grandfather, Lev Feigin, organized the first orphanage for Bukharan Jewish children located in the town of Kokand. Today, a street in this ancient Uzbek town is named after him.

"Some famous people were educated at this orphanage," Polykovsky says.

Among them was Suleiman Yudakov, who became the father of modern Uzbek music and the author of the national anthem of the neighboring Republic of Tajikistan.

Other prominent Jews who will get their entries in the encyclopedia include the inventor of the first cotton harvester, introduced in Uzbekistan in 1938, and a geologist who discovered the first deposits of gold in this country. Today, Uzbekistan is the world's second-largest cotton export-

er and a major exporter of gold.

"Our community is dwindling today, but this titanic contribution our people made is being left unrecorded," says Zakhar Shtein, 68, another encyclopedia board member who was an engineer for the Soviet munitions industry. "We are documenting another page of Jewish history."

The encyclopedia will also seek to provide a measure of historical justice.

Although anti-Jewish restrictions in Soviet Uzbekistan were not as harsh as in Russia or other European republics in the USSR, Uzbek Jews knew there were limits to their career growth dictated by the official — although often secret — Soviet anti-Semitic policies.

"Jews were often passed over for a promotion," Shtein says. "We often come across the biographies of people with 150 to 200 scientific papers to their names. But when you read down to the state awards they received, there is nothing." ■

ACROSS  
THE FORMER  
SOVIET  
UNION

Our community is  
dwindling today, but this  
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unrecorded.

Zakhar Shtein  
Encyclopedia board member

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Can coexistence film inspire viewers?

By SUE FISHKOFF

**S**AN FRANCISCO (JTA) — After years of intifada, the election of Hamas to run the Palestinian Authority and this summer's war with Hezbollah, there's little trust left between Israelis and Palestinians.

Ronit Avni wants to change that.

The 29-year-old Canadian-Israeli film director/producer is part of the team behind "Encounter Point," a quiet but powerful new documentary about Israelis and Palestinians who have suffered terrible personal losses but are pushing past their pain to move their communities in the direction of peace.

Avni's partners include Brazilian co-director and writer/editor Julia Bacha and producers Joline Makhlouf, the first Palestinian woman pilot, and American-born Nahanni Rous. The four young women hope their film will move others to push for peace as well.

"Encounter Point" was shot in Israel and the Palestinian territories over a 16-month period. It follows eight narratives, including the story of Robi Damelin, an Israeli woman whose soldier son was killed by a Palestinian sniper; Tzvika Shahak, who lost his 15-year-old daughter in a Tel Aviv suicide bombing; and Ali Abu Awaad, who served time in an Israeli jail and whose brother was killed by Israeli soldiers.

All are active in the Bereaved Families Forum, a group that fosters dialogue among Israelis and Palestinians who have lost family members. Others in the film are involved with similar peace-building initiatives.

These people disagree politically, though they all come together on one point: If they don't talk to each other, the cycle of violence will continue.

"Encounter Point" can be appreciated on its merits. But Avni and her partners hope people will see the film, have their assumptions shaken and be moved to visit the Web site for Just Visions at [www.justvisions.org](http://www.justvisions.org), a non-profit organization they set up as a resource for dialogue and community-building. ■

## Jewish joke book turns 25

By URIEL HEILMAN

**BROOKLINE, Mass. (JTA)** — Here's one: Michael Bloomberg walks into a diner and orders coffee and a danish. When the bill comes in at \$14, the flummoxed billionaire mayor asks, "What, are danishes so rare in these parts?"

"No," replies the waiter, "but Bloomberg's are."

The story is a variation on a joke about Rothschild and 20-ruble eggs made famous in the Big Book of Jewish Humor, first published a quarter of a century ago.

The story also is partly true. Bloomberg spokesman Stu Loeser — an avid devotee of the Big Book of Jewish Humor — was sharing the joke about Rockefeller with Bloomberg when Loeser and the mayor were overcharged for danish and coffee at a New York diner. Before Loeser got to the punchline, however, the Jewish mayor finished the joke for him.

Whether that's a sign of the diffusion of Jewish humor into the national consciousness, the success of the 25-year-old compilation by William Novak and Moshe Waldoks or simply a telling anecdote about the mayor's sense of humor, is anybody's guess.

What's certain is that a quarter-century since the publication of the "Big Book," Jews are still laughing at themselves — and Americans are laughing along with them.

"Although many of the people listed on the cover are no longer around," Novak and Waldoks write in their introduction to the 25-year anniversary edition, which HarperCollins released this month, "and Sholom Aleichem is still dead, 'The Big Book of Jewish Humor' is still very much alive."

The authors sat down with JTA recently over a pair of pastrami sandwiches at Rubin's kosher delicatessen in Brookline, Mass., to talk about the book.

A lot has changed in 25 years, they said.

"When we first put the book together in 1981, we were not sure Jewish humor would continue," Waldoks said. "But Jewish humor is still active. It's more self-conscious, much more knowledgeable. It goes beyond the stereotypes."

The pair cited TV programs like Comedy Central's "South Park" and "The Daily

Show" with Jon Stewart, both mainstream shows laced with Jewish references and Jewish jokes. They noted that the central character on HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," Larry David, creator of "Seinfeld," goes beyond stereotypical portrayals of Jews.

"People were hiding who they were 50 years ago, when we were born," Novak said. "Now you have an educated Jewish youth culture."

"The younger generation is more comfortable with their Jewish identity," Waldoks says, noting the success of Heeb, the hip Jewish magazine and cultural phenomenon. "Assimilation has peaked."

Twenty-five years on, these authors are a little grayer and perhaps a little paunchier, but not much worse for wear.

Waldoks has become a rabbi at a nondenominational synagogue, Brookline's Temple Beth Zion, which he has transformed from a moribund Conservative temple into a popular

"egalitarian Chasidic" house of prayer and song.

Novak, who 25 years ago had but one book to his name, the rather obscure "High Culture: Marijuana in the Lives of Americans," has since become a bestselling author and ghostwriter, co-authoring books with celebrities such as Nancy Reagan, Lee Iacocca, Oliver North and Magic Johnson.

Though sales of the original "Big Book" far exceeded the authors' expectations — they estimate that more than 100,000 copies sold — the two say they're most pleased about how it has been used: by children, given as bar mitzvah gifts, passed from friend to friend.

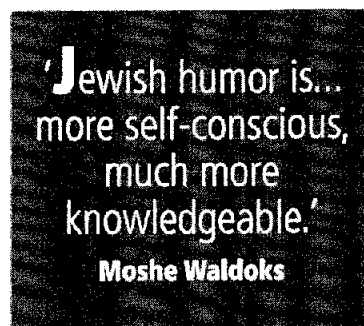
"It's a wonderful introduction to Judaism," Novak says. "This is a Jewish book your kids are going to enjoy reading. Buy it for that, if for no other reason."

Novak says he sheps nachas when his kids sit around the dining room table trading punchlines from the book. After 25 years, everyone already knows the jokes.

Novak's favorite Jewish joke is about the Jew who goes to the post office in Pinsk to ask how often the mail goes out to Warsaw.

"Every day," he's told.

The man nods and is silent for a moment. "Thursdays too?" ■





# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Rocket victim dies

An Israeli man died from injuries sustained in a Palestinian rocket salvo. Sderot resident Yaakov Yaakobov, 43, succumbed in the hospital Wednesday after being critically wounded in an attack a day earlier on the meat-packing factory where he worked.

He was the seventh resident of the southern border town to be killed in rocket attacks from the nearby Gaza Strip.

Security camera footage of Tuesday's incident, which was widely broadcast by world media, showed factory workers rushing to a bomb shelter after sirens sounded. Yaakobov lagged behind and was enveloped in the ensuing explosion.

Rocket launches against Sderot continued Wednesday.

Targets hit included the courtyard of a school, but no one was hurt.

An Israeli soldier was wounded Wednesday by a Palestinian anti-tank missile during a military operation in northern Gaza aimed at stemming Palestinian rocket fire. Israel's Security Cabinet met Wednesday to discuss a heightened military response to Kassam fire.

The Israeli ministers instructed army officials to plan for a large-scale ground operation in the Gaza Strip.

### 5 killed in Gaza

Israeli forces killed five Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip. Most of the fatalities from Wednesday's operations in Beit Hanoun and Jabaliya were members of Palestinian rocket crews engaged by Israeli special forces.

One crewman was captured shortly after launching a rocket across the border, a first for Israel. Palestinian gunmen moderately wounded an Israeli soldier in a missile attack on a tank.

Israel's Security Cabinet, meeting to discuss the spike in rocket salvos from Gaza, decided to press ahead with ground operations and "targeted killings" of Palestinian terrorist chiefs.

### Palestinians abduct aid workers

Palestinian gunmen briefly abducted two Red Cross workers in the Gaza Strip.

The two men, both Italians, were seized Tuesday near Deir al-Balah refugee camp and freed early Wednesday.

According to mediators who secured the release, the captors demanded an investigation into the 2004 illness that killed Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

After the abductions, the Red Cross announced that it was scaling down its Gaza operations to "life-or-death" missions only.

### Olmert: Iraq war good for Israel

The U.S.-led war in Iraq was good for Israel's security, Ehud Olmert said. Despite the unpopularity among Americans of President Bush's decision to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003, the Israeli prime minister said Wednesday that he had no doubt about the war's regional benefits.

"I know all of his policies are controversial in America. There are some who support his policies in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, and some who do not," Olmert told a visiting Orthodox Union delegation.

"I stand with the president because I know that Iraq without Saddam Hussein is so much better for the security and safety of Israel, and all of the neighbors of Israel without any significance to us." Olmert also told the group to remember that what unites Israeli and Diaspora Jews is greater than what divides them.

Olmert acknowledged differences of opinion over conversion and other issues, but called such differences "marginal."

O.U. officials expressed support for Olmert's commitment to a strong Israel-Diaspora relationship.

### Israel trains UNIFIL sappers

Israel's armed forces are helping the U.N. peacekeeper force dismantle cluster bombs left behind by their campaign in southern Lebanon.

Military officials said Wednesday that UNIFIL sappers were receiving training in Israel in safely disposing thousands of unexploded munitions in former Hezbollah strongholds attacked during the 34-day war this summer.

Israel has come under international criticism for its use of cluster bombs, many of which have been set off accidentally after the war by Lebanese civilians. Hezbollah is known to have used cluster bombs in attacking Israeli cities as well.

### Orthodox Jews visit Israel's North

A delegation of American Orthodox Jews visited areas of Israel's North devastated by this summer's war with Lebanon. In Israel for the start of the Orthodox Union's biennial convention, O.U. members on Wednesday toured northern Israeli towns that bore the brunt of the Hezbollah assault, witnessing relief projects initiated with hundreds of thousands of dollars in aid money collected on the O.U.'s Web site.

In Nahariya, a coastal city a few miles from the Lebanese border, 70 delegates observed a counseling program for children traumatized by the conflict. Other groups visited the northern towns of Upper Nazareth and Tiberias.

The O.U. convention opened Wednesday night in Jerusalem with an address by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and continues through Sunday.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Jewish groups file for inmates

Jewish groups filed a brief against government funding for an Iowa prison inmate rehabilitation program. The American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League filed the amicus brief Wednesday with the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in a case challenging the Iowa Department of Corrections' Innerchange program.

The state-funded program endorses evangelical Christianity, proselytizes inmates and discriminates against those who do not accept the belief system, the brief says. A lower court confirmed this, ruling that the program was unconstitutional and "so infused with religion that it is impossible to separate its sectarian from nonsectarian functioning."

## WORLD

### Latvia reviews compensation bill

Latvia's Parliament is due to discuss a \$57 million compensation bill for the Jewish community. The bill up for review Thursday, already approved by the Cabinet, says the money is to "compensate for the historically unfair consequences suffered by the Jewish community due to the Nazi Holocaust and Soviet occupation."

Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis has told Latvian media that since the state owns property that once belonged to Jews and Jewish organizations, compensation is the only fair way to deal with the long-term issue of property loss.

The money, to be paid out over 10 years starting in 2016, would go toward revitalizing the Latvian Jewish community of some 10,000.