

Jewish Communal Affairs

TAKING SERIOUSLY ITS ROLE as the world's largest and most powerful Jewish community, organized American Jewry concentrated its energies outward in 2002, focusing on the threats to Israel's security and the alarming rise of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment elsewhere in the world. Domestically, controversy swirled over the basic demographic facts of American Jewish life and their meaning, while the downturn of the American economy placed serious constraints on Jewish organizations as they sought to carry on their work.

FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Gauging the Administration

The events of September 11, 2001, generated apprehension in the ranks of many pro-Israel organizations. That day's catastrophe, the theory went, would induce the U.S. to bolster relations with the world of mainstream Islam so as to isolate and attack Al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists, and the most obvious way to accomplish this was pressure on Israel to offer new concessions to the Palestinians. But this anticipation also gave new life to the more dovish sectors of the American Jewish community, which had never been comfortable with the hard-line policies of the Sharon government in Israel.

As the year 2002 began, Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine and long-time supporter of the Israeli left, announced the founding of the Tikkun Community, "a new multi-issue national organization of liberal and progressive Jews" for which Israeli concessions were part of a far broader agenda. Its inaugural conference took place January 19–21 in New York. Drawing over 500 participants, the event focused on the need for Israel to evacuate all of the territories so that a Palestinian state could be established there, attacked the Bush administration on many fronts, and called for global "economic justice." Lerner hurt his cause two months later, however, with a full-page Tikkun Community advertisement in the *New York Times* (Mar. 22). As part of developing "a New Planetary Consciousness," the ad—with black scholar Cornel West listed as cochair along with Lerner—blasted Israel's "oppressive" occupation of

the territories and lauded Israeli reservists who refused to serve there, but did not criticize the Palestinians. Several members of the organization's advisory board immediately resigned, charging that they had not approved the text of the ad before Lerner printed it with their names on it, and two of them, rabbis of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan, withdrew permission for Tikkun to hold its next meeting in the synagogue. The next month, Lerner and some followers got themselves arrested in Washington while protesting at the State Department against Israeli occupation of the Territories.

Far more helpful to the peace camp was the personal diplomacy initiated by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. In his February 17 column, Friedman disclosed that, at a dinner in Saudi Arabia with Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, he had suggested that the Arab League offer "full normalization" of relations with Israel in return for evacuation of the Territories. The crown prince enthusiastically retorted that this was exactly the suggestion he was planning to propose to the Arab League at its next meeting. Friedman called this an "intriguing signal." Four days later, the *Times* ran an op-ed by Henry Siegman, the former director of the American Jewish Congress known for his dovish views, who related that other Saudi officials had told him the same thing, even suggesting that the Western Wall and Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem could conceivably remain in Israeli hands once peace was achieved.

These apparent indications of Arab willingness to compromise encouraged anti-Likud elements of American Jewry. In late February, with the "Saudi initiative" still fresh, Americans for Peace Now publicly criticized Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D., N.Y.) for meeting only with Israeli officials on a recent visit to the Middle East and shunning the Palestinian leadership. In mid-March, Seymour Reich, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (the umbrella body of Jewish groups on matters related to Israel), harshly castigated Israel's troop movements into Palestinian areas, accusing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of "flagrant disregard of his best friend, George W. Bush." Reich insisted that "Israel cannot afford to hurt the United States when this country has other goals that are consistent with Israel's objectives."

The pro-peace wing of the Jewish community expressed satisfaction when President Bush called, in an April 4 speech from the White House Rose Garden, for a freeze on settlements in the Territories at the same time that he denounced Palestinian terrorism. Within days, Israel pulled

its troops out of West Bank towns. The April 7 meeting of the Israel Policy Forum (IPF) was a virtual love-in for the administration. Featured speaker George Mitchell, the former Maine senator and author of the Mitchell Report for renewing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, exuded optimism about the chances for peace and was applauded when he called on Israel to “freeze all settlement activity.”

Apprehension about U.S. pressure on Israel, however, had not disappeared entirely in Jewish circles, muted though it was by admiration for the president’s condemnation of Palestinian violence and his leadership in the war on terror. On March 24, about 500 people rallied at the 92nd Street Y in New York City under the theme “We Stand With Israel Now and Forever,” and 100 other communities across North America took part by satellite hookup. This was actually a rescheduling of a pro-Israel event that had been planned by the Conference of Presidents, United Jewish Communities, and local federations for the previous September, but had to be postponed due to September 11. While the Jewish leaders who spoke at the 92nd Street Y—and Prime Minister Sharon, on the phone from Israel—praised the administration as a friend of the Jewish state, the common theme that Israel had the absolute right to defend its citizens was a clear if implicit sign of worry about American intentions.

Three days before, on March 21, the Conference of Presidents issued a statement that managed to achieve an American Jewish consensus only by avoiding points of conflict—it simply expressed solidarity with the state and people of Israel. To obtain approval from the more dovish constituent organizations, there was no reference to support for the *government* of Israel, while the price for assent from the hawkish groups was the absence of any call on Israel to return to negotiations.

Mobilizing American Jewry

A new upsurge in Palestinian suicide bombings culminating in the “seder massacre” in Netanya on March 27 that killed 29 (see below, pp. 198–99), led—but only slowly and gradually—to an altered balance of forces in the American Jewish community.

On April 1, with Israeli troops conducting Operation Defensive Shield—storming into Palestinian areas to find and destroy terrorists and their bases—Prime Minister Sharon spoke via conference call to the Conference of Presidents. He called on American Jews to mobilize on Israel’s behalf. “We need you today,” Sharon said. “There must be a supreme effort to contradict false accusations against Israel. We need you to express

public support, talk to people and groups who influence public opinion, demonstrate your love and support by visits to Israel.” Seconding him was Deputy Prime Minister Natan Sharansky, who notified the *New York Jewish Week* (Apr. 5): “With all of the information we have we know there are hundreds—if not thousands—of people actively involved in the terrorist infrastructure. The world must understand and not try to stop us in the middle of the war. That is the challenge for American Jews.”

But at that point, as the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* noted in an article tellingly titled “The Silence of the Lambs” (Apr. 8), there was no sense of crisis among American Jews. “We’re ratcheting everything up,” said Stephen Hoffman, head of the United Jewish Communities, but he was referring to a new Israel Emergency Fund campaign (it raised \$16 million within a few days) and a leadership mission to Israel, not to any dramatic statement or public event to influence American public opinion or policy. Alon Pinkus, Israel’s consul general in New York, noted that on the single day of March 29, two days after the massacre in Netanya, he gave 14 separate radio and television interviews. “As long as I am confronting Palestinian representatives, I have no problem,” he told *Ha’aretz*. “When I’m invited to appear opposite an American Arab I ask myself why there is no American Jewish leader to oppose him.” One possible reason for the muted response may have been that many American Jews, and leaders of their organizations, were away from home for Passover vacation, but observers sensed a deeper problem—a widespread feeling that Israeli policies were to some extent to blame for the situation.

With the American Jewish establishment seemingly passive, Rabbi Avi Weiss, a veteran communal gadfly, filled the leadership vacuum. In days, with backing from just a few small right-wing groups, Weiss managed to bring some 10,000 demonstrators to UN headquarters in New York on Sunday, April 7, to rally for Israel. Both impressed and somewhat shamed by Weiss’s accomplishment, the Conference of Presidents invited Weiss to a meeting the next day, and afterwards announced a national rally for Israel in Washington, D.C., for Monday, April 15. Two key points were clear from the outset—this was to be an ecumenical demonstration, not just a Jewish rally, and it would not be used to attack the administration. But the very short time left for planning the event left many details up in the air: How would Jewish organizations get the word out to their constituents? How would transportation from across the country be arranged? Where would the money come from? Who would be the featured speakers? And, most crucially, would attendance be large enough to impress the government and not embarrass the organizers?

All these questions were somehow answered, and the effect was stunning. Some 100,000–200,000 people came on April 15 and stood for hours in 88-degree heat—Jews running the gamut from dovish left to extreme right, secularists, Reform, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, and Hassidim, as well as non-Jewish friends of Israel—presenting a powerful display of pro-Israel solidarity. Only groups on the two extremes of the community did not participate—the sectarian Orthodox Agudath Israel refrained from officially endorsing the rally (see below, pp. 130–31), as did some small dovish groups that feared it would be seen as justifying Sharon’s policies. Indeed, some confrontations did take place at the rally between pro-Sharon demonstrators and those carrying “End the Occupation” signs. A far greater potential embarrassment for the organizers was the booing that greeted Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, speaking on the president’s behalf, when he made passing reference, in the course of his pro-Israel remarks, to the sufferings of the Palestinians and the need for a Palestinian state.

The Israeli government cooperated with the American administration over the next two weeks and, on April 21, finally withdrew from the West Bank towns it had entered. Later, it allowed Yasir Arafat to leave his compound in Ramallah after five months of confinement. The official position of the organized American Jewish community was that the U.S. was not pressuring Israel. Yet its underlying anxiety became evident in the days leading up to a planned Sharon visit to Washington in early May, where he was to meet with President Bush. AIPAC, fearing that Bush was about to press Sharon to negotiate with Arafat and commit to dismantling settlements and withdrawing from territories in line with the Saudi peace plan, geared up for a showdown with the White House by convincing both houses of Congress to pass, overwhelmingly, a resolution on May 2 strongly supporting Israel’s military incursions. Pleas from the White House to delete harsh language about the Palestinians from the resolution were ignored.

But Sharon’s visit was cut short after just one meeting with Bush when a suicide bomb attack in Rishon Lezion forced the Israeli prime minister to return home. Jewish leaders cited this most recent bombing as evidence for the continuing unwillingness of the Palestinians to disavow violence. Indeed, public-opinion polls taken at this time indicated a rise in public support for Israel, as ordinary Americans associated the suicide bombings with the events of the previous September 11. Mortimer Zuckerman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, sought to exploit the poll numbers on Israel’s behalf when he told a television interviewer that

it was the State Department that was pressing Israel for concessions against the will of the president, and that Bush's principled stand against terrorism could very well gain him a majority of the Jewish vote in his 2004 reelection bid.

The horrifying toll the terror attacks were taking in Israel led some American Jews to consider new approaches to the problem. Nathan Lewin, a distinguished constitutional lawyer in Washington, went so far as to suggest a public warning to would-be suicide bombers that their close relatives would be executed if the bombers went ahead with their plans, a proposal that elicited widespread outrage (*Forward*, June 7). On June 10, taking a far less radical tack, United Jewish Communities (UJC), the fund-raising umbrella body of American Jewry whose mandate was to aid needy Jews anywhere in the world, reversed a 35-year-old policy and announced that it would send funds across the Green Line to Jews living in Gaza and the West Bank. "Our dollars are following people, not institutions and organizations," said UJC president Stephen Hoffman. The reason given for the change was the need to help victims of the terrorist incidents that were proliferating in the Territories. The shift in communal opinion about such funding was evident in the muted reaction of the left-of-center groups that had previously mounted adamant opposition to sending UJC money over the Green Line. The New Israel Fund, for example stated that it would continue to confine its donations to Israel within the line, but it had no comment on the UJC move.

The Bush Speech and After

By this time, however, the constellation of forces in the U.S. had shifted once again in the wake of Israel's military offensive into the West Bank. Secretary of State Colin Powell publicly called for an interim Palestinian state, and a Gallup poll showed—for the first time in months—that a plurality of Americans felt that the U.S. was too supportive of Israel. With President Bush reportedly working on a major Middle East policy pronouncement, the annual policy conference of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the preeminent pro-Israel lobby) released a statement warning that a Palestinian state would necessarily be a terrorist state. And Aaron David Miller, senior adviser on Arab-Israel negotiations for the State Department, was booed and heckled when he told the right-wing Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) in Washington of the "futility" of a military solution to the conflict and said that Palestinians yearned for a state rooted in "democratic, pluralistic, humanistic values."

In this atmosphere of foreboding, the Bush speech of June 24 on the Middle East came as a great relief to the broad mainstream of American Jews (for full text see below, pp. 212–16). Despite the president's call on Israel to freeze settlements and his support for a Palestinian state, Bush's insistence that the Palestinians would have to end acts of terrorism and reform the Palestinian Authority—a clear signal that Arafat had to go—seemed to assuage lingering Jewish concerns. The widespread Jewish feeling that disaster had narrowly been averted was evident in the official reaction of the Conference of Presidents to the Bush address: “The president's speech called for rewarding an end to terrorism and not, as some had speculated, a reward for terrorism.”

The Conference of Presidents, which for some years had attracted criticism for alleged pro-Likud bias, ran into the same complaint again in July 2002. That was when Israel closed the offices of Sari Nusseibeh, the PLO representative in Jerusalem. The action, ordered by the Israeli government on the grounds that Nusseibeh and his office had connections with pro-terror elements, was controversial even within the Israeli cabinet, since Nusseibeh, the president of Al Quds University, was reputed to be a moderate opposed to violence. Without consulting its member organizations, the Conference of Presidents issued a written statement on July 11 entitled “Facts About Nusseibeh Belie Image,” defending the closure with alleged quotations from Nusseibeh that seemed to indicate radical leanings. This infuriated the more left-leaning members of the conference, who charged that the umbrella organization should not have taken a position absent a consensus of the membership, and that this incident was one more proof that the conference had become a tool of the Israeli right wing. Executive Vice President Malcolm Hoenlein defended the statement, pointing out that it simply reprinted documented remarks by Nusseibeh that were on the public record, which Americans needed to know in order to understand Israel's action.

Critics of the conference picked up more ammunition on August 23, when the organization's “daily alert” used quotation marks in referring to Israel's “occupation” of the West Bank and Gaza, and its “settlements.” For dovish American Jews who indeed believed that Israel was conducting an occupation and that the settlements were settlements, the suggestion that both of these were merely “so-called,” as it were, was another instance of right-wing bias in what was supposed to be a consensus organization. And toward year's end, as the countdown to war with Iraq began, the conference drew more criticism as Mortimer Zuckerman, its chairman, editorialized for war in *U.S. News and World Report*, the magazine he owned, despite earlier promises that he would not pub-

lish his private views about issues relating to Israel so long as he chaired the conference.

In the fall, more dovish voices in the American Jewish community spoke out forcefully once again, encouraged by renewed U.S. criticism of Israeli military actions on the West Bank and the administration's proposed "road map" toward a two-state solution, as well as the prospect of new elections in Israel. Americans for Peace Now, citing a study showing that most Israeli settlers chose to live beyond the Green Line for practical rather than ideological reasons, suggested paying the settlers money to leave their homes and relocate to Israel proper. The New Israel Fund launched a media campaign drawing attention to threats to Israeli democracy, such as the treatment of Arabs. Paul Menitoff, executive director of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), called on the U.S. to threaten a cutoff of U.S. aid to Israel and the Palestinians so as to induce them both to make concessions for peace, and this suggestion of moral equivalence evoked anguished and angry debate in Reform circles (see below, p. 135). When the Israeli Labor Party nominated outspoken dove Amram Mitzna to head its ticket in the March 2003 election, Charney Bromberg, director of Meretz USA, expressed the hope of many centrist and left-leaning American Jews that the vote would be a "referendum on the occupation."

The American Jewish rank and file seemed to be moving in the same direction as the dovish leaders. In November, Zogby International released the results of a poll showing an astounding 85 percent of American Jews agreeing with the statement, "Palestinians have a right to live in a secure independent state of their own." (The number had been 63 percent in answer to a similar question in an American Jewish Committee poll in July.) Little wonder, then, that the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) found itself alone in the Jewish organizational world (it did, however, have Christian fundamentalist support) when it launched a campaign in late November to oppose the creation of a Palestinian state mandated by the administration "road map."

And yet the widespread assumption—and hope—on the left that the administration planned to pressure Israel into concessions was thrown into doubt in early December, when the president appointed Elliott Abrams director of Middle East affairs at the White House. Abrams was a politically conservative, pro-Israel hard-liner, and the choice, according to the *New York Times* (Dec. 7), "thrilled those who had criticized the administration for being too tough on Israel and too deferential to the Palestinians. But it dismayed those, especially at the State Depart-

ment, who want Israel to ease its crackdown in the West Bank and Gaza.” Veteran diplomat Martin Indyk noted: “It does seem that the White House has decided to back off. If the administration were preparing for a new push on the road map, this would be an unusual appointment.”

Israel's Image and the Media

Complaints about alleged anti-Israel bias in the American media started soon after the outbreak of the second intifada in late 2000. Whatever degree of truth inhered in the criticism, the extreme sensitivity of American Jews to how the news from Israel was reported undoubtedly also reflected a sense of frustration at not being able to do much tangibly to help Israel.

In the early days of the intifada, National Public Radio (NPR) was among the more notorious media villains in the eyes of the pro-Israel public. In Boston, an organized movement to stop individuals from donating to, and companies from underwriting, WBUR, the local NPR affiliate, cost the station over a million dollars — nearly 4 percent of its annual budget — and convinced the management to commit itself to greater care in its reporting.

Criticism of the media reached new heights in the spring of 2002, when Israeli troops moved into Palestinian territory to root out terrorist cells on the West Bank in the wake of a series of suicide bombings, and charges that Israel had perpetrated a “massacre” in Jenin were heard. Jewish grievances were less about the editorial comment than over what was perceived as slanted news coverage that portrayed Palestinians as victims and Israelis as oppressors. Presenting the journalists’ side of the story, CBS anchor Dan Rather explained on April 2 that “this situation is immensely complicated. When you do your best to be an honest broker of information . . . particularly in this region with all the emotion and hatred, you always run the risk that someone will misrepresent what you said” (*Forward*, Apr. 26).

A grassroots group in Los Angeles organized by rabbis and calling itself “Stand With Us” organized a one-day boycott of the *Los Angeles Times* for April 17, Israel Independence Day, that about 1,200 people joined. John Carroll, the editor, responded to the boycott by saying: “Some readers may take objection to specific articles, but I am confident that, over time, careful readers of this newspaper will get a full, balanced account of these unsettling events.” But four days later the paper failed to cover the city’s Israel Independence Day Festival, an event that drew

some 30,000 people, an omission the *Times* called an oversight and Jews considered deliberate.

In Minneapolis, “Minnesotans Against Terrorism,” started by two men, took out ads in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* to protest the paper’s Middle East coverage—specifically, that it censored out the word “terrorism” from stories it took from other news sources that used the word in relation to suicide bombings. More than 350 people signed on to the ad, including nearly every major elected official in the state and a number of Christian leaders. A spokesman for the newspaper explained that the *Star Tribune* took “extra care to avoid the term ‘terrorist’ in articles about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of the emotional and heated nature of the that dispute.”

The *Chicago Tribune* and leaders of the Chicago Jewish community handled matters differently, avoiding open confrontation. In the wake of complaints in 2001 that the *Tribune* refused to use the word “terrorist” to describe Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or Hezbollah, the paper held two public forums for local Jews to express their grievances, and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago commissioned a study of the *Tribune*’s Middle East coverage. But it did not release the study’s findings, instead holding private meetings with the paper’s management. Michael Kotzin, executive vice president of the federation, said that such an approach was “more effective.” James O’Shea, managing editor of the *Tribune*, said that the overall coverage of his paper was in fact balanced, and that the critics were merely “finding headlines, pictures, looking at the placement of a story and picking apart those elements.”

Ironically, in the case of Atlanta-based CNN—whose hostility toward Israel was evident from the outset of the intifada—public manifestation of that hostility by its founder in 2002 brought a turnaround. In an interview published in a British newspaper, Ted Turner asked, “Aren’t the Israelis and the Palestinians both terrorizing each other? The Palestinians are fighting with human suicide bombers, that’s all they have. The Israelis they’ve got one of the most powerful military machines in the world. The Palestinians have nothing. So who are the terrorists? I would make a case that both sides are involved in terrorism.” Though he later apologized, the moral equivalency he had evoked between Israelis and Palestinians seemed to fit all too well the nature of CNN coverage. CNN quickly distanced itself from Turner’s views, but Israelis reacted angrily, one cable company dropping CNN and replacing it with Fox News. CNN tried to repair the damage, apologizing for giving too much airtime to the family of a suicide bomber and broadcasting a new series of interviews

with terror victims on Israeli TV. In the U.S., meanwhile, CNN chairman Walter Isaacson met with editors of Jewish media outlets to make clear that the cable network was not anti-Israel.

Since New York was the center of American Jewish life and the *New York Times*—long owned by the Jewish Ochs-Sulzberger family—the nation’s “paper of record,” Jews meticulously scrutinized the way the *Times* covered the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and many found it wanting. In 2001, hundreds of readers followed the lead of Rabbi Haskel Lookstein and suspended their subscriptions to the paper between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in protest of its coverage of the intifada (see AJYB 2002, p. 226). In the spring of 2002, Rabbi Lookstein, particularly incensed at the paper’s publication of a photo of the New York Israel Day Parade that highlighted the few anti-Israel demonstrators rather than the numerous pro-Israel marchers, announced plans for a more ambitious boycott to start May 9, Jerusalem Day, and to run “for at least 30 days.” It would include not only cancellation of subscriptions but also an end to the placement of advertisements and obituary notices in the *Times*. The announcement acknowledged that the *Times* “may not be the worst offender but it’s certainly the most influential” (*New York Jewish Week*, May 3). The *Times* acknowledged that subscriptions were canceled but would not give a number. Executive Editor Howell Raines said: “We respect our readers’ right to express their opinion. We are unhappy whenever we lose a single reader.” Raines expressed confidence that his paper covered the Middle East with “fairness and balance” and pledged that “we will remain vigilant to make sure that continues to be the case.”

Support for the *Times* boycott seemed strong in the Orthodox community but weak beyond it. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), questioned the “obsession” many Jews had with the *Times* and noted that “ADL has always fought boycotts.” Hebrew Union College went ahead with plans to honor controversial *Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (proponent and quasi-initiator of the Saudi peace plan—see above, p. 112) for “commitment to the betterment of humanity” on May 30. The *New York Jewish Week*, the major Jewish paper in the city, opposed the boycott, editorializing (May 10): “We need more constructive criticism, more marshaling of information, more voices speaking out for fair reporting, not a call to shut ourselves off from reporting and opinions we don’t want to deal with.”

During the summer, the American Jewish Committee devoted considerable attention to Israel’s image in the U.S. The AJC’s annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, conducted by pollster Stanley Greenberg in

July and released in August, indicated no erosion in Jewish support for Israel and in fact showed a higher level of American Jewish “closeness” to the Jewish state than ever. At the same time, 63 percent of respondents favored the establishment of a Palestinian state and only 33 percent opposed it.

The AJC was also a partner in another venture that reported its findings in August, the Israel PR Project, which was also backed by Israel 21C—a group of pro-Israel high-tech professionals in the Silicon Valley—and United Jewish Communities. Using conventional polling as well as sessions with focus groups having different demographic characteristics around the U.S., the project found far more sympathy for Israel than for the Palestinians, but also an escalating “plague upon both your houses” feeling—an overriding revulsion with what many Americans perceived as an unending cycle of war for which both sides deserved blame. The pollsters responsible for the project—Greenberg, Frank Luntz, and Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi—met with Israeli government officials and American Jewish organizations, advising them to score public-relations points by stressing the common values of Israel and the U.S., and Israel’s willingness to make concessions for peace.

In September, AJC and Israel 21C followed up with 30-second ads on cable television—first in New York and Washington, then in the top 100 markets (CNN refused to carry them)—hammering home the American-style freedoms that Israel guaranteed its citizens. David Harris, AJC’s executive director, noted that this was a new departure for his organization, which had previously relied on print and radio advertising. “There had been so many visual images presented,” he told the *New York Times* (Oct. 1), “that we felt that we had to go to television as well. We could not rely on television reporting to do our work for us.”

Battle for the Campus

2002 saw a sharpening of the ideological struggle between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian groups on American college campuses. In particular, critics of Israel in the academic community escalated efforts to strike at Israel’s economy by convincing universities to divest themselves of any holdings they might have in the Jewish state—on the model of the divestment campaign that helped end apartheid in South Africa. In February, for example, the National Student Conference on the Palestinian Solidarity Movement, convening at the University of California at Berkeley, launched a national drive to push divestment, an end to American

aid to Israel, and the “right of return” of all Palestinians to Israel. Although Hillel—the Jewish campus organization—the Jewish Agency, and Jewish federations located near campuses sought to combat the pro-Palestinian forces by providing speakers and educational materials, there was a widespread feeling that Jewish students at many universities around the country lacked the information and/or motivation to take on Israel’s detractors.

Israel’s military move into Palestinian territories in April aroused anti-Israel feeling on campus even more, and on April 9—which Jews were commemorating as Holocaust Memorial Day—there were pro-Palestinian rallies on several campuses. Again it was Berkeley that grabbed the headlines, as hundreds of demonstrators called not simply for changes in Israeli policies but for treating Israel like white-ruled South Africa and dismantling it. Signs accused Israel of genocide and compared both President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon to Hitler. By the end of the day 78 of the demonstrators had been arrested for occupying a university building and disrupting academic activity. Jewish students at Berkeley told a reporter that even before April 9 there had been a number of disturbing incidents, such as anti-Semitic graffiti, and that they had repeatedly been rebuffed when they tried to engage in dialogue with the pro-Palestinians (*Forward*, Apr. 12).

Petitions urging divestment from Israel circulated on a number of campuses, including Ivy League and other elite institutions, and they sometimes attracted long lists of signatures, including those of left-leaning Jewish academics. But since counter-petitions opposing divestment generally drew greater support, and Jews were prominent on the boards of many universities, no institution took the step of divesting from Israel (see above, pp. 92–93).

Another controversial issue on campus was the cancellation by many universities of their travel-abroad programs in Israel. Such decisions, motivated by security considerations, hurt Israel’s economy by strengthening the widespread assumption that Israel was an unsafe place to visit, and also played into the hands of those elements on campus eager to stigmatize and isolate the Jewish state. At the State University of New York (SUNY) it took the intervention of Governor George Pataki himself to reverse an administrative decision to cancel the study-in-Israel program of the university’s Albany campus.

Birthright Israel, the project begun in 1999 to provide every young Jewish adult with a free ten-day trip to Israel with the aim of bolstering the participants’ identification with the Jewish state and the challenges that

faced it, was an important tool in the campus struggle. However the uneasy security situation in the summer of 2002 cut deeply into registration for Birthright: some youth groups that had participated regularly in the program brought over far fewer people than in previous years, some canceled entirely, and others switched their itineraries to sites in the U.S. or Europe. Something of a scandal erupted when the national office of March of the Living, a popular program that brought teenagers to visit Auschwitz and then Israel, announced that it was canceling the Israel leg of the trip due to security concerns. The *Jerusalem Post* renamed it "March of the Timid," and Gary Rosenblatt, editor of the *New York Jewish Week*, asked (Apr. 5): "Are we, the American Jewish community, telling our children it is safer to visit a death camp in Poland than the eternal capital of the Jewish people?" Several local March of the Living affiliates defied the national office and sent their participants from Poland on to Israel.

The organized Jewish community geared up for the start of the fall semester—and September 28, the second anniversary of the outbreak of the intifada. Hillel, AIPAC, and other Jewish organizations—coordinating their activities under the banner of the Israel on Campus Coalition, a new umbrella group funded by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation—convened several meetings for Jewish campus activists with Israelis and American Jewish leaders to prepare them to advocate Israel's cause. On another front of the campus battle that September, Daniel Pipes, director of Middle East Forum, launched a Web site, www.campus-watch.org, to identify academics who were biased against Israel (see above, p. 94).

The campaign to challenge the predominant pro-Palestinian atmosphere in academia received an unexpected boost on September 17, when Harvard president Lawrence Summers publicly stated that "profoundly anti-Israel views are increasingly finding support in progressive intellectual communities. Serious and thoughtful people are advocating and taking actions that are anti-Semitic in their effect if not in their intent." Subsequently, about 300 university presidents signed an American Jewish Committee ad denouncing the anti-Israeli campus campaign for encouraging an atmosphere of intimidation.

One manifestation of what Summers and the other presidents had in mind was yet another National Student Conference on the Palestinian Solidarity Movement, held October 12–14 at the University of Michigan (see above, p. 93). Some 400 pro-Palestinian sympathizers came from about 70 campuses around the country. To ward off the inevitable

charge of anti-Semitism, the conference made sure to highlight the presence of anti-Israel Jews such as Professor Ilan Pappé of Haifa University and Adam Shapiro, the American Jew who had achieved celebrity in the spring by joining the besieged Yasir Arafat in his Ramallah compound. The conference reiterated the demand for divestment, though some differences among the participants were evident over the legitimacy of suicide bombings and over whether Zionism was inherently racist. Jewish reaction was divided, Hillel taking a nonconfrontational approach and holding a separate pro-Israel rally, and a more militant group, led by Rabbi Avi Weiss of New York, picketing the pro-Palestinian event.

Observers noted that most Jewish students at Michigan seemed ambivalent about the debate swirling around them. Journalist Matthew Purdy noted the same mood at Yale in November, where he found that even Jewish members of pro-Israel organizations empathized with the plight of the Palestinians. James Ponet, the campus rabbi, told Purdy: "They can't look at the world through one lens. The world's too complex. It doesn't refract down to a clear point" (*New York Times*, Nov. 17). By year's end, anti-Israel activity on college campuses seemed to have diminished, probably due to a combination of the failure of the divestment movement, a reduction in Middle East violence, and the emergence of a new rallying cry on the left—opposition to war with Iraq.

American Jews and Iraq

Despite imputations of heavy Jewish influence on the decision to invade Iraq, American Jews were hardly beating the drums for war when the administration first threatened hostile action in August 2002. Although the organized Jewish community was unanimous in its condemnation of Saddam Hussein's regime, Jews worried not only about possible Iraqi retaliation against Israel but also about a worldwide Islamic backlash against both the U.S. and Israel. However, even as the Conference of Presidents was in the process of polling its 52 member organizations by telephone about their views on a possible war, Mortimer Zuckerman, the conference chairman, angered some of those organizations by publishing an editorial in *U.S. News and World Report*, the magazine he owned, supporting war against Iraq.

Nevertheless, the conference itself did not endorse Zuckerman's views and maintained a position of neutrality. Even in the fall, after Congress voted President Bush broad authority to mount an attack on Iraq, the conference approved a resolution supporting the government's efforts to

have Iraq give up its weapons of mass destruction but said nothing about war or "regime change." The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), the public-policy umbrella organization for the federations and national Jewish groups, was more explicit about its reservations, voting to "support current U.S. diplomatic efforts to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and to only use force as a last resort." The two major national Jewish organizations, the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, declined to comment on the issue, while the American Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith favored explicit backing for the president to take whatever action necessary. AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobby, went so far as to assert that it would support the president should he launch an attack, and would, in such an eventuality, seek to mobilize support for the administration in Congress.

On the other hand, there were elements of the Jewish community that argued openly against war. The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, a member of the Conference of Presidents, bluntly opposed military action, as did Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary and, by virtue of his position, the leading figure in the Conservative movement in the eyes of most American Jews. Schorsch took the position that only a UN resolution could justify hostilities, a position that a number of other Conservative leaders disputed. Unilateral American action, Schorsch cautioned, could unleash a "tidal wave of terrorism that could come from the Arab street" (*Forward*, Sept. 20). The Reform movement was split over the issue. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), representing its lay leadership, passed a resolution on September 24 backing unilateral American action if necessary, but there was far less enthusiasm for war among the Reform rabbis.

DENOMINATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Orthodox Judaism

Although Orthodoxy constituted only some 10 percent, at most, of American Jewry, its visibility and prestige in American Jewish life continued to grow as its more moderate elements proved willing and able to work in concert with the rest of the community. On the pro-Israel front, more than half of those attending the April 15 rally for Israel in Washington were Orthodox, and AIPAC's annual policy conference, held in Washington the following week, gave ample evidence of growing Ortho-

dox influence in that high-powered body. Also, as American Jewry worried increasingly about maintaining the Jewish identification of its youth, it tended to perceive the Orthodox as role models for success in this endeavor. This was the reason for the prominence of Modern Orthodox speakers at the annual General Assembly (GA) of the United Jewish Communities (UJC), held this year in Philadelphia on November 18–19, which focused on Jewish continuity.

The new Jewish year that began in the fall marked the onset of the 100th year since the birth of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik as well as the tenth year since his death. The void in the leadership of Modern Orthodoxy created by his passing had still not been filled, and the first two of what would surely be many public commemorations took place in December, one at the convention of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (Orthodox Union, or OU), the other at a conference of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, the city where the rabbi had lived.

The future direction of Yeshiva University (YU), Modern Orthodoxy's flagship educational institution where Soloveitchik had taught for almost 50 years, seemed unclear through much of 2002 as it struggled to find a new president to succeed Dr. Norman Lamm, who had held the post for a quarter-century (see AJYB 2002, pp. 237–38). In its March 8 issue, the *New York Jewish Week* broke the story that a search committee, after working in secrecy for nine months, had come up with a surprise candidate. He was Dov Zakheim, undersecretary of defense, whose experience managing the multibillion-dollar Pentagon budget apparently attracted the enthusiasm of YU leaders eager to improve the managerial efficiency and financial accountability of their institution, whose annual budget was \$470 million.

Zakheim could hardly have been more unlike Lamm, who, in addition to extensive experience in the Jewish community as rabbi of a major synagogue, was, like the two previous YU presidents, a respected Jewish scholar and academician. Although it appeared that Zakheim had, at some point, been granted private rabbinical ordination, he could make no claim to expertise in the texts of traditional Judaism, and clearly would not be able to serve as *rosh hayeshivah*, head of the YU rabbinical school, a position that had previously gone along with the office of university president. In addition, though Zakheim had a Ph.D., he had worked as an administrator of a government bureaucracy rather than as an academic, and thus had no experience in university politics or fundraising, where networking and glad-handing worked better than giving

orders. Finally, while serving in the Defense Department under the Reagan and first Bush administrations, Zakheim had been vilified by many in the Jewish community for opposing Israel's development of the Lavi jet fighter. Although his stated reason for this was that the Lavi would cost too much money, his opponents charged at the time that Zakheim was acting against Israeli interests in order to protect the American F-16 from competition.

On Sunday, March 9, just after the *Jewish Week* story came out, Zakheim met with the board of the rabbinical school. According to some who were there, the session did not go well. Aware, also, of the degree of opposition to his nomination on campus—more than 400 students signed a petition calling for the new president to be a rabbinic scholar—he decided two days later, to withdraw his candidacy.

Since the search committee had been so certain of Zakheim's suitability that it had not prepared a list of alternate choices, another search would be necessary, and a new committee was formed to conduct it. Although the 74-year-old Lamm had announced his retirement for August, he agreed, in May, to stay on as president until a successor was named. After the trial balloons of several new candidates rose and fell over the next few months, 52-year-old Richard Joel was named to fill the position in late November, the official designation coming on December 5. Joel, national director of Hillel, the network of Jewish campus organizations, was even less of an academic or Jewish scholar than Zakheim: he possessed a law degree but neither rabbinical ordination nor a Ph.D. He was very highly regarded at Hillel, however, for his fund-raising and interpersonal skills. Since Joel, like Zakheim, did not have the expertise to oversee the rabbinical school, Lamm would stay on indefinitely both as *rosh hayeshivah* and chancellor of the university—the latter a largely ceremonial role.

Still, several of the rabbinic faculty maintained their opposition to the choice of a non-rabbi, and hundreds of students signed a petition against Joel—a good number even gathering, together with some faculty rabbis, to recite chapters from the Book of Psalms to “ward off” the evil decree. Even after the university board chose Joel as president, the separate rabbinical school board, in the end, named him not president, but CEO.

One challenge that had dogged YU for four years was a lawsuit filed by students at the university's prestigious Albert Einstein College of Medicine seeking to invalidate the school's housing policy on the grounds of discrimination against homosexuals. To many, the dilemma that the case presented went to the very essence of the university's ambiguous dual

mission as both a secular university and a Modern Orthodox institution. Two lesbian students at Einstein barred from living with their non-student partners in university housing charged the university with discrimination. Indeed, Orthodox Jewish law prohibited homosexuality, but, as an officially nondenominational school that received government funding, the medical school was bound not to discriminate. Two courts had accepted YU's argument that the policy of allowing an unmarried couple to live together only if both were students was not discriminatory since it applied to heterosexuals as well, but the New York State Court of Appeals reinstated the suit. To put a halt to the drawn-out litigation, which had cost the university considerable money as well as bad publicity in liberal circles, YU announced a change in policy in August, allowing students to room with anyone with whom they had an "interdependent" or "long-term" relationship. This came as a great disappointment to many Orthodox Jews who had hoped that YU would fight to defend its religious values. It remained unclear whether students at any other of the university's schools would make similar housing requests.

Another Modern Orthodox institution under heavy public scrutiny was the Orthodox Union (OU), a major synagogue body with a constituency of over 1,000 congregations. It had undergone an upheaval in 2001 after an outside investigative panel, chaired by Richard Joel, verified charges that its officials had turned a blind eye to physical and emotional abuse committed by a staff member, Rabbi Baruch Lanner, against teenagers who participated in the organization's National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY). Although Lanner had been fired as soon as the charges were aired, a lawsuit filed against him in New Jersey for similar abuse of students while he had served as principal of a day school—matters having nothing to do with NCSY or the OU—kept the Lanner affair in the public eye (see AJYB 2002, p. 238). In late June, 2002, Lanner was convicted, and in October he was sentenced to seven years in jail. His lawyers appealed, and Lanner was released on bail. At the OU's December convention, its leaders made a commitment to greater openness and, in tacit response to the charge that the lack of female role models encouraged an institutional culture where young women were afraid to come forward with complaints of abuse, had a woman deliver the keynote address.

In the area of religious practice, traditional Orthodox restrictions on the role of women in the synagogue came under challenge. A number of prayer groups in Israel had been experimenting for some time with women leading some parts of the service and being called up to the Torah, and

in 2002 a half-dozen American groups, most of them on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, were doing the same. The basis in Jewish law for allowing such an innovation was laid out in an article in the journal of the Modern Orthodox organization Edah, and the arguments set forth there were supported by the noted Israeli scholar Rabbi Daniel Sperber in a presentation to the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) in November. Even so, no established Orthodox congregation or well-known rabbi was ready to sanction the change.

The sectarian Orthodox, institutionally represented by Agudath Israel, continued to struggle with the impact of American values on Jewish tradition. Although a modest lifestyle was, in theory, essential to the Orthodox way of life, pressures generated by material success, consumerism, and “keeping up with the Schwartzes” were driving the costs of weddings, bar mitzvahs, and other lifecycle events ever higher. This problem was real for all sectors of American Jewry, as attested by a headline in the *Forward* (Feb. 22), “‘Today I Am a Master Card’: Bar Mitzvahs Break the Bank.” But the large number of children (ten or more was not uncommon) among the sectarian Orthodox, and the tightly knit nature of their communities, where everyone felt obligated to invite everyone else, only compounded the situation.

In March 2002, guidelines for spending at weddings, formulated by Agudath Israel rabbinic leaders from New York and New Jersey the previous November, went into effect: no more than 400 guests, meals consisting of no more than three courses plus dessert, a limit of \$1,800 to be spent on flowers, a maximum of five musicians, and no bar (wine and liquor bottles to be placed on the tables). As an inducement for families to stick to the regulations, the well-known rabbis who signed the guidelines announced that they would not attend weddings that did not comply. It was hoped that if these rules were effective in holding down costs, they would be adopted elsewhere in the country as well.

Far more divisive for the world of Agudath Israel was determining the appropriate stance that sectarian Orthodoxy should take regarding the State of Israel. Although the organization still remained true to its non-Zionist origins by officially rejecting the legitimacy of secular Jewish nationalism, the participation of sectarian Orthodox political parties in numerous Israeli governments and the widespread emotional identification with the Jewish state among virtually all sectors of American Orthodoxy created a potential conflict with official ideology. This came to the fore when the American Jewish community planned its massive national pro-Israel rally in Washington, D.C., for April 15. Agudath Israel

decided not to participate, claiming that it could not involve itself in public events where it was not certain that the program fit Orthodox criteria. (It organized a separate event, a prayer vigil for Israel, which drew 40,000–50,000 people in New York City on April 21.) This position was interpreted as allowing individuals and groups to attend the Washington rally so long as Agudath Israel was not seen as giving formal endorsement. And yet the decision to withhold official participation unleashed an unprecedented degree of disappointment and anger from the rank and file. Editors of the *Jewish Press*—the American Jewish newspaper with the largest circulation in the country, whose readership was overwhelmingly Orthodox—reported that the sheer number of critical letters, many from veteran Agudath Israel members, was unprecedented in the paper's history.

The strains implied in Agudath Israel's balancing act—striving to maintain its sectarian Orthodox posture, which required a degree of social separation, while, at the same time, Americanizing—formed the background for an important roundtable discussion at the organization's annual convention on December 27. There, activists from several different communities pointed out that what looked like anti-Semitism directed against them could sometimes be more accurately described as fear that the Orthodox were taking over. If Orthodox families moving into new neighborhoods, they noted, set up what amounted to isolationist enclaves, and looked out single-mindedly for their own interests, they themselves might be to blame for the consequent resentment expressed by other residents.

The year 2002 marked the centennial of the birth of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late charismatic leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hassidic movement. Since the death of the childless rabbi in 1994, his followers had not chosen a successor, but had gone on propagating his teachings around the world, with considerable success. More controversially, an indeterminate number of Chabad Hassidim believed that their rabbi was the promised messiah who would rise from the grave and bring redemption. In 2001, David Berger, a professor at Brooklyn College, wrote a book, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, calling on the Orthodox mainstream to treat Chabad messianism—which, he argued, had virtually taken over the movement—as heresy (see AJYB 2002, pp. 238–39). The debate continued into 2002, with Berger attacking Chabad at every opportunity, and its supporters responding that authoritative Jewish texts did mention the possibility of the Jewish messiah rising from the dead.

Conservative Judaism

For the first time in the history of the movement, all five of Conservative Judaism's national organizations held their annual meetings in one place, Washington D.C., at one time, mid-February. The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Rabbinical Assembly, the Cantors Assembly, the Jewish Educators Assembly, and the North American Association of Synagogue Executives convened with a total attendance of about 1,500. The meetings showcased Judy Yudof, the first woman to hold the presidency of the United Synagogue, and Rabbi Reuven Hammer, the first Israeli rabbi to head the Rabbinical Assembly. Both were seen as harbingers of the movement's future—an enhanced role for women and the increasing centrality of Israel.

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue, sparked controversy in Washington by publicly proposing what he called a "Conservative Compact of Jewish Commitment." Suggesting that it was unrealistic to expect the Conservative laity to adopt the discipline of Jewish law in its entirety—a goal to which the movement was officially committed—Epstein proposed setting minimal demands. For example, a Jew not ready to adopt the kosher laws (only about a quarter of Conservative Jews said they kept them) might refrain just from pork and shellfish, while one feeling unable to relocate to Israel might visit there, or even just put aside money for someone else to visit. If Epstein thought he was offering a practical way to move Conservative Jews somewhat closer to traditional practices, others were offended at what seemed to them a "dumbing-down" of Judaism. One rabbi, referring to Epstein, told the *Forward* (Mar. 1): "This is a movement that's lost nearly all its principles, and now he's planning to abandon the last of them." Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of the Jewish Theological Seminary rebuked Epstein for delivering his remarks without prior consultation with the movement's other leaders, and argued that an upswing in the Jewish observance patterns of younger Conservative Jews signaled a need for setting higher rather than lower standards.

Another controversial issue, this one coming up at the Rabbinical Assembly meeting, was over the heavy participation of Israeli Conservative rabbis in Rabbis for Human Rights, a pro-peace organization that, among its other activities, raised money to replant olive trees uprooted by Israeli forces to prevent terrorists from hiding behind them. In 2001, Conservative rabbis in Israel opposed to the group charged that it gave aid and comfort to Israel's enemies (see AJYB 2002, p. 240), but when their col-

leagues who were members ignored them, they decided to bring their complaint to the 2002 convention.

One issue not on the formal agenda in Washington but a prominent subject of talk in the corridors was the movement's position on homosexuals—specifically, whether their commitment ceremonies might be performed by Conservative rabbis and whether gays themselves might receive rabbinical ordination. The Reform movement had already given its approval to both, while the Conservatives had only gone so far as to welcome gays into the synagogue and support their civil equality. In the early 1990s, the movement's Committee on Law and Standards had debated the issue and came up with a number of differing opinions, but agreed, in 1992, not to sanction any formal change in the traditional position. Student sentiment at the Jewish Theological Seminary was reportedly strongly supportive of gay rights. But Chancellor Schorsch, responding to a question from a *Washington Post* reporter during the convention (Feb. 13), said that following the Reform position on homosexuality would both violate traditional Jewish law and fracture the Conservative movement.

By the end of the year, however, the issue was out in the open, as United Synagogue president Judy Yudof said she was preparing a letter to the Committee on Law and Standards urging it to rethink the matter, though she did not so far as to suggest explicitly that it reverse the existing policy. Yudof shrugged off the fears of Schorsch that reopening the issue could split the movement, and explained that she was reflecting sentiments she had heard from numerous Conservative laypeople.

The Jewish Theological Seminary came in for some embarrassment when it became known that Prof. Judith Hauptman, a noted talmudist on the seminary faculty, was pursuing rabbinic ordination not at JTS, but at the nondenominational Academy for Jewish Studies. She had received her Ph.D. at JTS, taking many of the same courses offered to the rabbinical students, but that was before 1983, when the seminary began ordaining women. Chancellor Schorsch had turned down her request to finish up the required coursework for JTS ordination on the grounds that it was inappropriate for a faculty member to attend classes together with her own students.

Etz Hayim, the first officially commissioned Bible commentary of the Conservative movement, had appeared toward the end of 2001 (see AJYB 2002, p. 240), but its full impact only began to be felt in 2002, when it won the Jewish Book Council's National Jewish Book Award for nonfiction and was the subject of a major article in the "arts and ideas" section

of the *New York Times* (“A New Torah for Modern Minds,” Mar. 9). By mid-February, when the Conservative organizations met together in Washington, over 100,000 copies had been sold. As noted by a number of reviewers, *Etz Hayim* embodied both the strengths of Conservative Judaism and its inherent intellectual ambivalence—the English translation and running commentaries elucidating the basis for Jewish religious observance in the modern world, and its appended scholarly essays on theological and archaeological topics suggesting serious doubts about the Bible’s historicity.

Reform Judaism

After the heated arguments in recent years over the endorsement of higher standards of adherence to Jewish ritual and over rabbinic officiation at same-sex commitment ceremonies, 2002 was a relatively quiet year for the Reform movement.

Despite Reform’s liberal approach to intermarriage—its congregations welcomed intermarried Jews and their families, Reform rabbis were free to perform intermarriages (many did), and Jews married to non-Jews taught in Reform religious schools—the movement drew the line at ordaining intermarried rabbis. The responsa committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), which provided guidance on Jewish legal issues for the movement, ruled that despite Reform’s commitment to reach out to the intermarried, “the ideal toward which we rabbis strive, teach, and lead is that Jews should marry Jews. Since one of the ways in which we convey our teaching is through personal example, a rabbi’s life and home should embody this ideal.”

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), Reform’s synagogue body, announced as his priority the improvement of congregational afternoon schools. The inadequacy of supplementary Jewish education had long been acknowledged in all of the movements, and interest in Jewish all-day schools had been felt throughout the Jewish community, including its Reform sector. But the UAHC, whose 914 congregations educated some 120,000 children in afternoon programs, understood that the day school was not a realistic alternative for the great majority of its families, and Yoffie asked that “instead of taking potshots at Hebrew schools,” congregations should launch an initiative to revitalize them.

The centerpiece of the plan was a new, unified curriculum called Chai Learning for Jewish Life, based on the three Jewish principles of Torah

study, ritual performance, and good deeds. It would replace the previous decentralized system in which there was no overarching shape to the different synagogues' curricula. Educational specialists placed in each of the UAHC's 13 regional offices would help individual afternoon schools. Other elements of the new system would be improved recruitment and training of teachers—including on-line courses for professional development—the participation of lay leaders in teaching, and a requirement that parents attend class with their children at least six times a year.

In May, Women of Reform Judaism, the organization of congregational sisterhoods, announced plans for a women's commentary on the Torah. To be edited by Prof. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi of the HUC branch in Los Angeles and written entirely by women, it was expected to take five years to prepare. Any Jewish woman, whether Reform or not, was welcome to submit material. Although a number of other commentaries from women's perspectives were already on the market, this was expected to be the first that would cover the entire Torah.

Reform Judaism's generally dovish stance on Israel and the Palestinians subtly shifted in the wake of the new round of Palestinian violence. In June 2001, Rabbi Yoffie had publicly acknowledged that the movement had "been wrong about Palestinian intentions," though he remained opposed to Israel's "occupation" of the Territories (see AJYB 2002, p. 226), and that December the UAHC passed a resolution denying that Israel had overreacted in responding to terror, while reiterating Reform support for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

In September 2002, however, Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive vice president of the CCAR, in a public letter in his own name but on CCAR stationery, urged the U.S. to threaten economic sanctions against Israel and the Palestinians if either or both proved reluctant to move toward peace. In early October, 34 Reform rabbis responded with a newspaper ad expressing support for the Israeli position, and soon afterward more than 120 Reform rabbis from several countries put out a 23-point statement rejecting any solution imposed on Israel from the outside and stating that "Yasir Arafat is clearly unable or unprepared to take the necessary steps to reach an agreement with Israel." Rabbi John Moscowitz of Toronto, who signed both the ad and the statement, told the *Forward* (Oct. 25), "There's an intellectual orthodoxy that says if you're a Reform rabbi you take a certain position. That is now being busted apart."

In December, UAHC board members meeting in Phoenix voted unanimously to recommend a change in the name of their 129-year-old organization. The original "Union of American Hebrew Congregations" had

been formed with the expectation that it would not just be a denominational body but would, indeed, encompass a *union* of virtually all American congregations—and that clearly had not come to pass. And as for *Hebrew*, the word had been considered less offensive to Christian sensitivities than *Jewish* in the year 1873. The suggested new name, Union for Reform Judaism, would be voted on by the organization's next biennial conference in 2003. A similar name change had been effected a few years earlier by the United Synagogue, the Conservative congregational group, which became the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Reconstructionist Judaism

After ten years as president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), Rabbi David Teutsch stepped down to return to teaching. During his tenure the number of students had doubled to 90 and the college's endowment had multiplied nearly six times, to \$12 million. Teutsch was succeeded on July 1 by Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz, a former pulpit rabbi and the first RRC alumnus to head the 34-year-old institution.

Reconstructionists could point to two major accomplishments in 2002. One was the publication of the fifth and final volume of *Kol Haneshama*, the series of Reconstructionist prayer books. Like the preceding volumes, this one, consisting of prayers for the house of mourning, was egalitarian and excluded traditional references to a personal messiah, miracles, and the chosen people. The other accomplishment—the fulfillment of a long-held dream within the movement—was the establishment of a Reconstructionist summer camp for children: Camp JRF would open in June near Chicago with 40–60 youngsters.

Denominational Relations

As so often in the past, the “who is a Jew” question in Israel aroused Jewish denominational ire in the U.S. In March, Shas, the Sephardi Orthodox party, called on the Israeli Knesset to overturn a Supreme Court decision recognizing non-Orthodox conversions performed in Israel, and Prime Minister Sharon set up a committee to formulate a proposal to that effect (see below, p. 271). The American Conservative movement, warning that passage of such legislation would lead to the nonrecognition of Reform and Conservative conversions even if performed outside Israel, immediately called on its members to send letters of complaint to Prime Minister Sharon. In this instance, however, unlike the major “who is a

Jew” battles of the past, Israel’s perilous security situation and the priority American Jewry gave to rallying support for Israel’s diplomatic course made the bulk of the community reluctant to follow the Conservative course of public protest.

In a dramatic and well-publicized move, Hebrew Union College (HUC), the Reform rabbinical school, made a statement of Jewish ecumenism by honoring leaders of the Orthodox and Conservative streams of Judaism at the graduation ceremonies of its New York school on May 9. On the initiative of HUC president David Ellenson, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative), gave the major address to the newly ordained Reform rabbis and cantors, while both Schorsch and Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, chancellor emeritus of Bar-Ilan University in Israel and a long-time prominent figure in American Orthodoxy, received honorary degrees. Noting that the increased interest in Jewish ritual practice within Reform seemed to signal something of a convergence between it and his own movement, Schorsch saw nothing problematic in addressing the graduates. Rackman, on the other hand, predicted that he would be vilified in certain Orthodox circles for his participation.

Indeed, the degree of Orthodox sensitivity to any sign of “recognition” of the other streams seriously embarrassed the OU in June, when an ad sponsored by the Jewish Agency appeared in Jewish newspapers expressing support for American Jews “who have made the most meaningful decision to make Aliyah.” These sentiments were expressed in the name of all three major denominations and signed by the executives of the Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox synagogue bodies. The latter, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, the OU’s executive vice president, was sharply criticized by the more sectarian Orthodox for seeming to legitimize the rival groups by including his signature along with those of their leaders. The OU responded that it considered Reform and Conservatism inauthentic forms of Judaism, it had not seen the final wording of the ad before publication, and it had asked the Jewish Agency to discontinue the ad. Nevertheless, the OU saw nothing wrong with interdenominational cooperation on such nonreligious matters as support for Israel, and Weinreb said he would sign a new ad if the text were changed to eliminate possible inferences that Orthodoxy recognized non-Orthodox Judaism.

Another sign of differences within Orthodoxy over how to respond to the other movements was the reaction to the Conservative *Etz Hayim* Torah commentary (see above). Rabbi Avi Shafran, spokesman for Agudath Israel, said that by casting doubt on the historical truth of biblical

history, it was “no less shocking” than the Arab anti-Semitic libel that Jews used human blood to bake Purim hamantaschen. The OU and the Rabbinical Council of America, representing Modern Orthodoxy, distanced themselves from Shafran’s analogy.

Eagerly anticipated as a landmark in interdenominational relations, *One People, Two Worlds: A Reform Rabbi and an Orthodox Rabbi in Search of Common Ground* was published in October amid considerable publicity. The brainchild of a literary agent, the book consisted of e-mails exchanged between Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America, and Rabbi Yosef Reinman, an Orthodox scholar rooted in the yeshivah world of sectarian Orthodoxy, Hirsch arguing that there were many legitimate ways to be Jewish and Reinman insisting that Orthodoxy was synonymous with Judaism. Despite their deep disagreements, the two rabbis became close friends in the course of working on the book. Hirsch explained to reporters that he considered it important to present a serious theological defense of liberal Judaism, while Reinman, who said that he had requested and received approval from prominent Orthodox leaders to participate in the project, said that the book was not for Orthodox Jews, but solely for non-Orthodox readers, to acquaint them with the Orthodox perspective and possibly influence them to adopt it.

However, the rabbinical council of Agudath Israel and Beth Medrash Govoha, the yeshivah in Lakewood, New Jersey, that had ordained Reinman, both denounced the book for giving the impression that Reform Judaism, as a legitimate dialogue partner, was a possible alternative to Orthodoxy. Accepting their assessment, Reinman pulled out of a 17-city promotional tour that had been scheduled by the publisher, Schocken Books. Some observers compared this exertion of Orthodox pressure on one of their own rabbis to the verbal attacks on Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in Great Britain that forced him to withdraw and alter his latest book (see below, p. 372).

THE AMERICAN JEW IN 2002

Debating Demography

For over a decade American Jews concerned with the future of their community had been living under the cloud of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), which depicted an aging American Jewry

with widespread intermarriage and low fertility. In the late 1990s, the prospect of a demographically stagnant Jewish community took on a political dimension, as the evident growth of Islam in America raised the eventual possibility of more Muslims than Jews in the country and a consequent challenge to American support for the State of Israel.

During the 1990s, the Jewish community initiated numerous programs of education and outreach to promote what came to be called “Jewish continuity,” and the planned 2000 NJPS, commissioned by United Jewish Communities (UJC, the successor body to the Council of Jewish Federations, sponsor of the 1990 survey), was expected to indicate whether these initiatives had helped reinvigorate the community. Numerous complications arose, however, due both to a desire to reach a large and representative sample, and the need to address conflicting priorities of various constituencies in the UJC and outside it. The \$6-million survey was delayed, and the year 2002 dawned with no findings yet released.

A different survey of American Jewry was published in February, based on data collected the previous year. *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001* was the work of a team led by social scientists Egon Mayer and Barry A. Kosmin. Kosmin, principal investigator of the 1990 NJPS, objected to the UJC’s decision not to use the same battery of questions in NJPS 2000. Convinced that the lack of comparability between the two surveys would render the UJC’s 2000 product of little use, he and Mayer designed *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001* to replicate the methodology and sampling of the 1990 survey.

What they found was more or less a continuation of patterns noted in 1990. The “core” Jewish population—those who regarded themselves as Jewish by religion or said they were of Jewish parentage or upbringing but had no religion—declined from 5.5 million in 1990 to about 5.3 million in 2001. Just 40 percent of Jews who married since 1990 had spouses born Jewish; 9 percent married converts to Judaism; and the other 51 percent married non-Jews. The impact of intermarriage could be seen in the rise of the number of people living in a household that had at least one Jewish member, from some 8 million in 1990 to nearly 10 million. Fully 81 percent of cohabiting adults who said they were Jewish were living with a partner not born Jewish. Perhaps the most controversial finding was that a large sector of the Jewish population—far more, proportionately, than among other religious groups—defined itself as “secular.”

A second survey was released during the summer, a study of American Jewish college freshmen conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the University of California for Hillel, the national

organization of Jewish college students. It found that among the sample of freshmen with two Jewish parents, over 90 percent considered themselves Jewish, as did almost 40 percent of those with just a Jewish mother, and less than 16 percent of those with just a Jewish father. Of all the children of intermarriage surveyed, 40 percent described their religion as “none,” a higher proportion than self-described Jews or Christians. More than a quarter of the entire freshman sample said their parents were intermarried, just about matching the figure for children of the intermarried found in the 1990 NJPS. This seemed to indicate that the ramified programs launched since 1990 to ensure the Jewish affiliation of such children were not working.

On October 8, 2002, the UJC finally released the first findings from the 2000 NJPS, and they roughly corresponded with those of Mayer and Kosmin. The number of American Jews, according to the NJPS, had fallen from 5.5 million in 1990 to 5.2 in 2000, and the growth of the overall American population by some 33 million during that time meant that Jews now constituted just 2 percent of all Americans. The aging of American Jewry had continued apace, the median age of Jews rising from 37 to 41 over the course of the decade. Only 21 percent of Jews were children, as compared to 26 percent in American society as a whole. Jewish divorce rates were comparable to those of other Americans. As for fertility, Jewish women approaching the end of their childbearing years had an average of 1.8 children—below the replacement rate of 2.1—and 52 percent of Jewish women aged 30–50 were childless, as compared to 27 percent in the general population. Jews had a median household income about \$8,000 higher than other Americans, and were, on the average, far more likely to earn both bachelor’s and graduate degrees than others.

Those involved in the survey stressed that by contacting 177,000 people and interviewing 9,000 of them, this NJPS was by far the most thorough study ever conducted of America’s Jews. Stephen Hoffman, president and CEO of the UJC, said that “using state-of-the-art research and technology, our team went to unprecedented lengths to present the broadest picture yet of the American Jewish community.” Other survey results, dealing with Jewish identity and affiliation (including the much-anticipated intermarriage rate), were scheduled for release at the UJC’s annual General Assembly (GA), to be held in Philadelphia in November.

A battle for “spin control” followed. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) headlined the story “A Smaller, Graying American Jewry Poses New Challenges for Community,” and quoted sociologist Frank Mott of Ohio State University, cochair of the survey’s National Technical Advi-

sory Committee, saying: "It doesn't look good," since without "some significant changes" Jews "are not going to replace themselves." But the UJC, in its own press release, sought to head off the doomsayers, and ran the headlines "U.S. Jewish Population Fairly Stable over Decade" and "Older, Better Educated, More Diverse Community." The *Forward*, also eager to promote optimism, editorialized (Oct. 11) that "the decline isn't necessarily a decline, the 5.2 million isn't exactly 5.2 million, and the definitions of 'Jew' used in the 1990 and 2002 surveys may not even be comparable."

Disagreement over how to interpret the data was one thing, but outright rejection of the findings was something else entirely. Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, based in San Francisco, charged that the NJPS had come up with "utter nonsense" since it had used screening questions that excluded numerous Jews by immediately asking about Jewishness instead of leading up to it with preliminary queries. Tobin had conducted his own survey of 250 Jewish households, released the week before the NJPS preliminary report, on the basis of which he came up with 6.7 million American Jews, another 2.5 million "connected non-Jews," and yet another 4.1 million people with some Jewish ancestry. Tobin spoke out against the NJPS in no uncertain terms, saying: "Given the political climate, how destructive is it to put it that Jews are a declining population when exactly the opposite is true? It sends a terrible psychological message to the Jewish community, and also to anyone who might be considering joining the community." Writing in the *Forward* (Oct. 4), Tobin mocked "the business of despair" carried out by "prophets of doom" and urged American Jews to "take some satisfaction and pride in our ability both to adapt and endure" in America.

The demographic debate provided a platform for different ideological factions to promote their views about how to ensure the Jewish future. Predictably, the Orthodox advocated a return to Jewish tradition; proponents of outreach to the intermarried argued that the allegiance of the children of mixed-religion families was crucial for Jewish survival; and the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, an arm of the Jewish Agency for Israel, convened an "international emergency conference" on world Jewish population decline to discuss immigration to Israel and improved Jewish education in the diaspora.

But there was also a new voice in the mix, that of Douglas Rushkoff, author of the only op-ed on NJPS that the *New York Times* chose to print (Nov. 20). Rushkoff, identified as professor of communications at New York University and author of the forthcoming book *Nothing Sacred*:

The Truth About Judaism, claimed that numbers were irrelevant to Jewish life. "It is only by liberating ourselves from these metrics that we become able to understand how Judaism is not on the brink of extinction at all, but poised for renaissance." It was misguided, he argued, to promote Zionism and fight intermarriage, as if Judaism were a race or a tribe interested only in self-preservation. Instead, Judaism had to be seen as the ethical ideal of social justice that "can happen anywhere, between anyone." To judge by the invitations Rushkoff received to speak before Jewish audiences, such sentiments struck a chord with many younger, unaffiliated Jews, for whom the controversy between demographers and the competition between Jewish ideologies had little meaning.

Yet another dramatic episode in the saga of NJPS 2000 occurred on November 13, one week before the opening of the GA, where the rest of the findings were scheduled for release. That day, UJC announced it was dropping all sessions from the conference program relating to the NJPS, since it had learned that data had been "lost" two years earlier by Roper ASW, the outside research company that conducted the fieldwork for the study. Stephen Hoffman, the UJC head, appointed a new task force to investigate, saying that he had "lost total confidence" in the existing technical advisory committee, apparently for not telling him sooner about the mishap. The cochairs of that committee, Frank Mott of Ohio State University and Vivian Klaff of the University of Delaware, responded that the lost material was methodological rather than substantive, that it was insignificant, and that the findings should be released. But Hoffman, in an e-mail message to UJC leaders, explained: "I was faced with the choice of muddling through next week and answering critics on the fly, or pausing to understand what may be happening."

UJC promised that the findings would be released once the technical problems were resolved, but gave no indication of when that might be. Meanwhile, as rumors swirled—unsubstantiated, to be sure—that the findings were being withheld because they offended or jeopardized the funding of one or another interested party, the only thing on which everyone involved could agree was that the delay could seriously undermine the survey's credibility.

Should Interfaith Families Have a Voice?

The American economic climate during the year did not encourage the creation of new organizations. The only significant one that saw the light of day in 2002 was based on a Web site and called the Interfaith-Family.com Network. Its originator, Edmund Case, who had set up the

Web site some time before, explained that the new membership organization would function as a pressure group to get more rabbis to perform mixed marriages, and synagogues and Jewish organizations to be more open toward mixed-religion families. Case, who received grants from two San Francisco family foundations, one for \$80,000 and the other for \$95,000, to create the new organization, set a goal of 2,500 members over the first year.

Jewish communal leaders opposed to intermarriage had long attacked Case and his Web site for working to make mixed marriage normative in the Jewish community. One of the most outspoken of the critics was Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, who described the new membership group as a “lobby” in the full sense of the word, seeking to use political clout to erode and eventually erase the traditional Jewish taboo on intermarriage. Wertheimer considered this “a battle of ideas and a battle of values,” and predicted that the mobilization of the intermarried would generate a strong countermovement in support of Jewish endogamy.

Reaching Young Jewish Adults

It was already a truism of American Jewish life—supported by survey and focus-group research—that the fastest growing segment of American Jewry consisted of secular young adults deeply steeped in American popular culture and its values but possessing only a shallowly rooted Jewish identity. This had been the target audience for the community’s outreach efforts—special programming, free trips to Israel, innovative prayer services—during the 1990s.

The year 2002 saw the launch of a new three-issue-a-year publication aimed at such young Jews, *Heeb: The New Jew Review*. Its founder was Jennifer Bleyer, a 26-year-old graduate of Columbia University, who received a \$60,000 grant for the project from the Joshua Venture, a foundation partially funded by Steven Spielberg and the Bronfman family to encourage young Jews to develop innovative Jewish projects. Explaining that she got the idea for *Heeb* because “there were no magazines for Jews like me,” Bleyer described it as “the bastard love child of Emma Goldmann and Lenny Bruce” and said that it would be about “interesting Jews doing interesting things.” The first issue, which came out in February, cost \$4.50 and was available at bookstores and newsstands in several large cities. It contained articles about poet Allen Ginsberg, the gay Orthodox Jew Sandi DuBowski, a five-page pictorial spread of “Jewfro” hairstyles, a centerfold featuring Neil Diamond, and a discussion of whether the

Krusty the Clown character on “The Simpsons” TV show was “good for the Jews.” A second issue appeared in July.

The unceasing search for modes of Jewish identification that might inspire the kind of young, “hip” Jews targeted by *Heeb* to be proud of their Jewishness took some surprising directions during the year.

Leonard Nimoy, the legendary actor known for his portrayal of Mr. Spock on “Star Trek,” was a strongly identified Jew who involved himself in numerous Jewish causes and cultural projects, and Mr. Spock’s trademark two-finger greeting was Nimoy’s version of the biblical priestly benediction. Pursuing his interest in Jewish spirituality, Nimoy published a book of photographs in 2002, *Shekhina*, an “intensely personal photographic inquiry into the feminine manifestation of God.” As several of the photos were of nude or barely clad women wearing prayer shawls and tefillin, the Rabbinical Council of America called on its members around the country to protest the “offensive” material. Several federations and other Jewish institutions canceled appearances that Nimoy’s publisher had arranged for him to promote the book.

If Nimoy’s luster was tarnished, a fresh Jewish celebrity emerged from a new entertainment genre, reality TV, for a brief period of fame. The strikingly handsome 28-year-old Ethan Zohn won \$1 million by being the sole survivor of “Survivor: Africa.” On the show, he pointedly refused to eat ham. Zohn subsequently accepted several invitations to address groups of young Jews about his Jewish identity, emphasizing that he had won the competition, which placed a premium on selfishly forming and breaking alliances with other competitors, without sacrificing his ethical standards.

No one imagined that Sarah Hughes was Jewish, even after the Great Neck teenager won the gold medal for figure skating at the 2002 Winter Olympics. But eventually a Miami Jewish newspaper broke the story that her mother was Jewish and that Sarah had been brought up with some attachment to Judaism. “The danger in counting Jews is that sometimes you miss one,” lamented Lisa Hostein, editor of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “and this time we missed a big one” (*Forward*, Mar. 8.)

Ari Fleischer, President Bush’s press secretary, the most visible Jew in the administration and allegedly one of the most eligible bachelors in Washington, got married in November. The bride was Rebecca Davis, a Catholic. The interfaith wedding, incorporating Jewish and Catholic elements, was co-officiated by Rabbi Harold White and Rev. Michael Kelley. Rabbi White told the *Forward* (Nov. 15): “I have the feeling from what I’ve heard is that the children will be raised as Jews.”

On August 18, the *New York Times* announced that its “Weddings” sec-

tion in the Sunday edition would now be called “Weddings/Celebrations,” and would include announcements of the commitment ceremonies of gays and lesbians. The first same-sex couple to make it into the listings (Sept. 1) were Steven Goldstein and Daniel Gross. The two men had a Jewish commitment ceremony officiated by a Reconstructionist rabbi followed by a civil ceremony in Vermont, the only state where it was legal. Goldstein told the *Forward* (Sept. 6): “It means so much to us that the first same-sex announcement was a Jewish couple. It didn’t have to be us. We are so deeply proud of Judaism, its teachings, its commitment to healing the world; how appropriate that it was a Jewish couple.”

LEGACIES OF THE HOLOCAUST

Commemoration and Restitution

On March 8, President George W. Bush selected 55-year-old Fred Zeidman, a Houston businessman and friend of the president, to a five-year term as chair of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, which oversaw the enormously popular Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. It was widely expected that the president would eventually replace all 12 council members.

Unlike his predecessor, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, a Clinton appointee, Zeidman was not a Holocaust scholar. Observers were hopeful that Zeidman’s business experience and his personal ties to Bush would enable him to overcome the infighting that had hampered the smooth functioning of the council in recent years (see, for example, AJYB 2002, pp. 244–45). Zeidman told reporters that he wanted to “keep us out of the newspapers” and “just get everyone’s focus back on the museum and not on their own agendas.” Addressing concerns that its status as a government-supported institution (it received \$36 million in federal funds in 2002) might move the museum away from its prime focus on the Nazi Holocaust and toward a more universal involvement with instances of inhumanity around the world, Zeidman said that “this museum will always have a Jewish soul.”

Among Zeidman’s first problems was controversy over the site of Belzec, one of the Nazi death camps in Poland where some 350,000 Jews had been killed. The open area of the camp had been left as it was when the war ended until, in the mid-1990s, the museum reached agreement with the government of Poland to construct a memorial in such a way that the victims’ remains would be treated with respect. In July 2002, how-

ever, Rabbi Avi Weiss, a veteran Jewish activist in the U.S., charged that the Polish workers were desecrating the dead by disturbing ashes and bone fragments, and called for the museum to bring the work to a halt. Others, who had actually seen the work being done for the memorial, denied Weiss's charges.

There was sharp controversy in 2002 over how to allocate Holocaust restitution money. Early in the year, the debate centered on the choice of new leadership for the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany—commonly known as the Claims Conference—the primary Jewish body dealing with Holocaust restitution. Its retiring president, Rabbi Israel Miller, headed an international nominating committee that picked Israel Singer of the World Jewish Congress as president, and two other Americans as chairman and treasurer. Israeli officials complained that there had been insufficient Israeli representation on the nominating committee, in turn arousing resentment on the part of some Americans that Israelis, seeming to consider their country the heir of the victims, were seeking to appropriate a larger share of restitution money at the expense of actual survivors.

Another difference of opinion arose over the treatment of Holocaust survivors living in the U.S. A new American organization, the Holocaust Survivors Foundation, complained that disbursements from the class-action settlement for dormant Swiss bank accounts had gone disproportionately to Jews outside the U.S. at a time when about 40 percent of the 127,000–145,000 American survivors lacked the money to pay for home and medical care, according to a study conducted by the Association of Jewish Family and Children Services. The Holocaust Survivors Foundation also called for reevaluating the procedure, formalized in 1994, of allocating 20 percent of unclaimed reparations money for Holocaust education, documentation, and research, with the aim of redirecting much of it to needy survivors. Claims Conference officials, however, defended the appropriations to projects of Holocaust education and scholarship, and suggested that the broader American Jewish community, through its local federations, could better address the material needs of American survivors than the Claims Conference.

“Mirroring Evil”

The Jewish Museum in New York City set March 17 as the opening date for a new exhibition, “Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art.” Already in January, however, after the *Wall Street Journal* reported on the exhi-

bition catalog, a firestorm of protest erupted in the Jewish community. The nature of the upcoming exhibition outraged many New York Jews, who compared it to the Brooklyn Museum's "Sensation" exhibition in 1999 that had offended Catholics with a portrayal of the Virgin Mary smeared with animal dung, inducing Rudy Giuliani, the mayor at the time, to withhold city funding. There were calls for cancellation of "Mirroring Evil," and, if it opened, to boycott it.

"Mirroring Evil" presented the work of 13 American, European, and Israeli artists in their 20s and 30s, four of them Jewish. Four of the works drew particular criticism: an image of Lego boxes with photographs on the front of Nazi camps built out of Lego pieces; "Giftgas Giftset," with cardboard imitation gas canisters decorated with Chanel and Tiffany logos; an image of artist Alan Schechner holding a can of Diet Coke, superimposed on a photograph of Buchenwald inmates; and collages featuring a nude image of the female artist together with pictures of movie actors portraying Nazis. Lawyer Menachem Rosensaft, a son of survivors, a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and founding chair of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, said: "This is not a First Amendment issue. It's a matter of moral judgment and discretion. A Lego concentration camp? To me, that relegates Auschwitz to a game." Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, the living embodiment of Holocaust memory for many Americans, commented that "the kitsch and vulgarization of the Holocaust has taken a big step forward—or backward . . . I don't understand the artists, nor do I understand the Jewish Museum."

In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, curator Norman Kleeblatt noted that the focus was on the Nazis, not their victims, and that in these artworks "viewers would encounter the perpetrators face to face in scenarios in which ethical and moral issues cannot be easily resolved." The exhibition was intended to be "transgressive," noted Kleeblatt. "There is no safe distance. These works make us see ourselves in them," he wrote. Museum director Joan Rosenbaum asserted that survivors had been consulted in preparing the show, which had, in fact, been delayed a year so as to get sufficient input from numerous constituencies. She told *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman (Jan. 29) that the museum was not endorsing the particular artworks, but rather "the goals of the work, to make us think how easy it is to put distance between our lives in the present and what occurred in the past." In a letter to Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary—under whose auspices the museum operated—Rosenbaum claimed that the contro-

versial exhibit was “very much in the tradition of the Jewish Museum, whose great distinction is that it is indeed a ‘museum that makes you think.’ ” The museum scheduled a dozen public programs to help elucidate the exhibition’s implications.

Once it was clear that “Mirroring Evil” would open on schedule, boycott plans escalated. In a public speech on February 13, Rosensaft called on synagogues, Jewish schools, and churches not to visit the museum from March 17 through June 30, the day the exhibition was to close. The American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors endorsed the boycott, as did New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, whose Brooklyn district was home to many survivors (he called museum officials “intellectual whores”), and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, a conservative group whose president, William Donohue, explained that “usually it’s the Catholics whom the ‘creative types’ in the artistic community like to offend. Now it’s the Jews.” Several Jewish institutions that had scheduled events at the museum shifted them to other locations.

Intensive negotiations to head off a boycott produced concessions on the museum’s part: warning signs near the more controversial exhibits and a new exit allowing visitors to leave before seeing two works that had received the heaviest criticism. But the opposition remained adamant, Rosensaft declaring: “This does not in any way solve or ameliorate the problem.”

On March 10, a week before the opening, the *New York Times* Sunday magazine ran an interview with one of the artists, Tom Sachs, which deprived the exhibition of much of its credibility. Sachs made it clear that neither he nor, he thought, the other featured artists had any interest in the Holocaust or, for that matter, in anything Jewish. “I’m using the iconography of the Holocaust to bring attention to fashion,” Sachs said. “Fashion, like fascism, is about loss of identity. . . The death camps are examples of amazing German engineering and design. And there are strong links between military products and consumer products.” “Mirroring Evil,” it turned out, was all about the evils of consumerism.

About 100 protesters stood outside the Jewish Museum on opening day, March 17, shouting “don’t go in” and “shame on you” to the 1,300 people waiting in line to enter. But the storm quickly blew over, largely because the art critics panned the show. Kimmelman of the *Times*, for example, noted that: “The strange ritual of the art wars, which exhibitions like this always provoke, is to treat as significant what hardly deserves our attention in the first place.” Jerry Smith, in the *Village Voice*, pointed to the irony “that none of the art in ‘Mirroring Evil’ is worth protesting, except on artistic grounds.”

The boycott ended after one day and the exhibition quickly disappeared from the headlines, but not before revealing a deep split within the New York Jewish community between a highly educated sector steeped in postmodernism that (mistakenly) believed itself sophisticated and avant-garde in matters artistic, and another, primarily of an older generation, for whom the Holocaust was still much too close to be subjected to “transgressive” treatment.

Another Holocaust?

By any measure, anti-Semitism did not constitute a problem for American Jews in 2002 (see above, pp. 90–91). And yet the extraordinary upsurge in anti-Israel sentiment and attacks on Jewish targets elsewhere in the world, fueled by the ongoing bloodshed in Israel and the Territories—and sometimes impossible to distinguish from classical Jew-hatred—evoked a mood of deep pessimism in many Jewish intellectuals, who warned of a new wave of global anti-Semitism.

“The Return of Anti-Semitism” was the title of an article by Hillel Halkin, an American expatriate living in Israel, in the February issue of *Commentary*. “The new anti-Israelism,” Halkin declared, “is nothing but the old anti-Semitism in disguise.” Answering the claim that hostility toward the Jewish state had to do with its policies rather than its Jewishness, Halkin asked: “Who at London dinner parties makes nasty remarks about Hindus because India has militarily occupied Muslim Kashmir for half a century?”

The atmosphere turned even grimmer in the spring, as Israel’s military thrust into the Palestinian territories in response to a spate of suicide bombings sent anti-Israel sentiment in Europe to new levels. The *New York Times*, not given to hyperbole on this issue, wondered, in a lead editorial (Apr. 20), “whether, six decades after the Holocaust, we are witnessing a resurgence of the virulent hatred that caused it.” Ron Rosenbaum, writing in the *New York Observer* (Apr. 15), indeed claimed that a “Second Holocaust” was “a phrase we may have to begin thinking about.” In Rosenbaum’s view, “almost without exception every European nation was deeply complicit in Hitler’s genocide.” And therefore, “at some deep level, there is a need to blame someone *else* for the shame of ‘European civilization.’ To blame the victim. To blame the Jews.” Rosenbaum went so far as to predict a doomsday scenario: “a nuclear weapon is detonated in Tel Aviv.” Rosenbaum claimed to have no doubt that this was coming; “it’s not *whether*, but *when*.”

There were American Jews who believed that the coming anti-Semitic

wave might inundate America as well. The cover story for the May 6 issue of *New York* magazine was “Crisis for American Jews.” Writing about “How the War Came Home,” Amy Wilentz quoted *Village Voice* columnist Nat Hentoff saying, “if a loudspeaker goes off and a voice says: ‘All Jews gather in Times Square,’ it could never surprise me.” Wilentz reported that many American Jews she spoke with, including those who had previously favored far-reaching concession to the Palestinians, were deeply fearful, and “when Jews are frightened, the specter of the Holocaust is always in the background.”

Paul Berman picked up the theme in the *Forward* (May 24), noting how pro-Palestinian and antiglobalization rallies all over the country were condoning mass murder by justifying the suicide bombers. And he cited at length the writings of two respected intellectuals—Portuguese Nobel laureate José Saramago and New York University professor Tony Judt—who, in the course of attacking Israeli policies, argued that a Jewish state, like South Africa under apartheid, was racist by its very nature. This charge, Berman felt, denied the right of Jews to survive as a people. Berman recalled a time when “it was pretty unusual to stumble across diatribes against Judaism or anti-Semitic phrases in the intellectual press. But look what has happened. Something has changed.”

“Has a new and potent form of anti-Semitism come to life in the world?” asked Gabriel Schoenfeld in the June issue of *Commentary*. His answer was yes. After cataloging some of the incidents of anti-Jewish violence that occurred during the spring in Europe, Schoenfeld turned to the rhetoric that accompanied it. “The themes are also the same everywhere,” he noted. “Israel, a country victimized by terrorism, stands accused of perpetrating terrorism; the Jews, having suffered the most determined and thoroughgoing genocide in history, stand accused of perpetrating genocide.” In Schoenfeld’s view, the hostility to Israel was so unfair, disproportionate, and one-sided that anti-Semitism was “the right and only word” for it.

The first serious challenge from within the American Jewish community to such fears came from Leon Wieseltier, literary editor of the *New Republic*. His cover story for the May 27 issue of the magazine bore the title “Hitler Is Dead: The Case against Ethnic Panic.” Surveying American Jewry, Wieseltier found a “community sunk in excitability, in the imagination of disaster. . . . Death is at every Jewish door.” Wieseltier considered such nightmare scenarios absurd since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict upon which they were based was over territory, not over the survival of the Jewish people. And he went so far as to accuse pro-Likud Ameri-

can Jews of conflating Arafat with Hitler in order to deligitimize any compromise with the Palestinians. Predictably, Wieseltier's attempt to calm the waters drew attacks from those who took the threat of anti-Semitism more seriously. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, sent a letter to the *New Republic* insisting that Jews were living through "the most significant wave" of anti-Semitism since World War II. And Harvard professor Ruth Wisse responded in *Commentary* (Oct.) that in 2002, as in the 1930s, "when deadlier forms of anti-Semitism are on the rise, there is massive intellectual resistance to acknowledge the threat, and most political analysts still treat anti-Semitism like a hiccup that will soon give way to regular breathing."

The difficulty in assessing the new wave of hostility to Israel and to Jews was evident at a two-day scholarly conference at New York University in early December aptly entitled "Confusion—Questioning Anti-Semitism, Anti-Americanism and Other Modes of Conspiracy." Some of the participants warned of the rise of a resurrected fascism, sociologist Gerda Lerner asserting: "It does not take much imagination to see another specter of genocide on the horizon." Others, however, blamed Israeli policies toward the Palestinians for evoking hostility, one Israeli academic asserting the existence of "Israeli fascism, Israeli terror and Israeli criminality" (*Forward*, Dec. 6).

THE ORGANIZATIONAL WORLD

Hard Times

The ongoing weakness of the American economy had profoundly negative effects on the organized Jewish community. Already hurt by competition from the increasing popular Jewish family foundations, Jewish communal organizations of all kinds found it harder to attract philanthropic dollars, and those that had relied on government aid had to cope with a dwindling supply of such funds.

Many looked for ways to cut their budgets. As the year began, Hadasah, the women's Zionist organization, carried out a 10-percent across-the-board cut in the staff of its New York office, eliminating 200–300 employees. Around the same time, United Jewish Communities, the largest Jewish charitable network in America, was reportedly considering a 40-percent cut, as much as \$20 million out a budget of \$44.7 million (in the end, however, much to the chagrin of many local federations, UJC

adopted a budget only \$2.2 million lower than that of 2001). Many of the large federations around the country, their endowments shrinking because of the declining stock market, reduced their overseas allocations so as to keep more money at home for local needs. Even so, a good number of the agencies funded by federations were forced into serious cut-backs, and some contemplated the possibility of shutting down.

The malaise of the Jewish organizational world, however, went far beyond finances. In 2002, the two large Jewish umbrella organizations—the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which dealt with Israel-related issues, and the UJC, which focused on philanthropy, were subjected to serious substantive criticism.

Conference of Presidents

The Conference of Presidents, as noted above (p. 117), had repeatedly come under criticism for allegedly toeing the Likud line uncritically. In August, Eric Yoffie, president of the UAHC and one of the critics, publicly called on the conference to revise its procedures so as to democratize its decisions. He suggested establishing a standing executive committee “with the largest organizations serving as permanent members and smaller organizations serving rotating terms.” This would have the effect of limiting the powers of the chair and the executive vice president—both positions held by people suspected of Likud sympathies—who, Yoffie felt, had heretofore made too many decisions without consultation (*Forward*, Aug. 2).

Two of the largest component organizations in the conference, the Anti-Defamation League and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, announced their support for the idea, while the Orthodox bodies and the American Jewish Congress, which were smaller and would lose power under the Yoffie plan, stated their opposition. Harvey Blitz, president of the Orthodox Union, warned that “the more structure you have the more chance you have to appear divided.” The stakes for the conference were very high. As the *Forward* noted in an editorial (Aug. 9), all it would take for the umbrella body to collapse would be for one of the major organizations to walk out. Indeed, Theodore Mann, a former conference chair, called for the dissolution of the conference because it was “an undemocratic institution and is not worthy of our great Jewish community” (*Forward*, Aug. 23).

No action was taken on Yoffie’s suggestion for reform. In December, the conference drew criticism again when, for the fifth straight year, it nar-

rowly rejected the membership application of Meretz USA, the American affiliate of the Israeli left-leaning party. Ostensibly, the reason for the decision was that the group's small budget and membership did not merit recognition as a "major" organization." Meretz USA and its advocates suspected that its link with a primary opposition party in Israel was the real motivation for the rebuff.

United Jewish Communities

UJC had been created in 1999 out of a merger of the old Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), United Jewish Appeal (UJA), and United Israel Appeal (UIA). UJC and the federation system constituted the fifth largest charity in the country, with combined income of over \$2.2 billion. In 2002, despite the adverse economic situation, UJC raised \$319 million for its Israel Emergency Campaign. But UJC had been the object of criticism from its inception, partly because of its failure to achieve the budgetary savings that had been anticipated, but more importantly, because its detractors felt that it had not come up with a "vision" that might mobilize the energies of the American Jewish community.

It was that alleged failure of "vision," along with "failure of will," "failure of voice," and "failure of spirit," that concerned Richard Wexler of Chicago, who chaired UJC's financial relations committee. On May 21, the *New York Sun* broke the story that Wexler had written a 157-page manuscript making these charges and others, entitled "United Jewish Catastrophes, a Love Story." Wexler told the *Sun*, "I don't know if I'm going to publish this. But I've written it as a cautionary tale of what can happen when people with the best intentions don't execute them, when you take something that could have been extraordinary and make it pedestrian." Wexler named names—including those of a UJC leader who publicly condoned intermarriage and another who allegedly used his position to raise money for the Gore campaign in 2000—and detailed embarrassing events, such as the decision, later countermanded, to give an award for statesmanship to Yasir Arafat.

In the end, Wexler did not publish his manuscript and UJC president and CEO Stephen Hoffman—whom Wexler praised for doing his best to redeem the organization's earlier blunders—named Wexler to chair the UJC's General Assembly (GA) in November. But the GA, held in Philadelphia, was widely considered a disappointment. For one thing, Israeli prime minister Sharon canceled a planned visit, and for another, the long-anticipated unveiling of the National Jewish Population Survey

(NJPS) was aborted when it was discovered that data had been lost (see above, p. 142). Many divisive issues came to the surface at the GA, including the refusal of several important federations to pay their dues (they paid up when threatened with termination), complaints from charities that funded Israeli and other overseas projects that they were not getting the resources they needed, and charges that the UJC budget itself was bloated. Inevitably, calls came for restructuring the UJC.

LAWRENCE GROSSMAN