

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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The appearance of advertising in The News does not constitute a kashruth endorsement.

Editorials

A Decade Has Passed

Another year has begun, but this one is very significant for *The Charlotte Jewish News*. As of this issue, *The CJN* celebrates its 10th birthday and my 10th year as editor.

The paper has grown from 8 pages (non-advertising) to as large as 36 pages with advertising and a vastly increased circulation.

Through the years, the masthead has undergone several changes and the typography and content have improved as well. We have won many national awards and have been recognized on numerous occasions by other media.

Our printer has a new computer system which has been used for the first time for this issue. In the coming year, changes will become apparent and it is hoped that there will be an overall improvement in *The CJN's* appearance.

The growth potential of the paper is boundless. A volunteer staff and advertising salespersons are desperately needed for this growth and guaranteed continuance.

The CJN was the "brainchild" of Marvin Bienstock, Martha Brenner, myself and Ann Langman, who worked side-by-side with me as co-editor for the first five years. Marta Garelik has been editing "The World Beat" column since the paper's inception, for which I am very grateful, and Blanche Yarus has served as an advertising rep for over five years. With such a limited staff, I am still burning "the midnight oil" not only as editor but also as an advertising account executive.

Occasionally it is necessary to change the deadline...please check this page monthly for that information. Holidays and personal obligations make these changes necessary.

On page 11 of this issue, I have tried to put together a small tribute to the paper...a "looking backward" page. This is my way of saying "thanks" to you, the readers; to you, the contributing writers; to you, our loyal advertisers.

HAPPY NEW YEAR and HAPPY BIRTHDAY "CJN."

—Rita Mond

Who is a Jew—and Who is Arafat?

By Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
 (JTA)

There is a quality of Greek tragedy in the latest developments in the Middle East.

Most American Jews have been deeply disturbed by political efforts of the ultra-Orthodox religious parties in Israel to delegitimize their status as Jews.

A great deal of time and energy is being spent by Jewish leaders in persuading Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir not to capitulate to ultra-Orthodox ultimatums.

Meanwhile in Algiers, the Palestine Liberation Organization proclaims a Palestinian state, and presents Yasir Arafat as a born-again peacemaker.

While American Jews are busy trying to preserve their legitimacy as Jews, Arafat is busy working to win diplomatic recognition from Communist and Arab governments for his state without borders.

The irony is that he is making a media impression as a moderate and a lover of peace.

But if you read carefully the full text of the Algiers declaration, you will see that it is more deceptive rhetoric than real.

By saying that he accepts not only UN Resolutions 242 and 338, but the 1947 partition plan, the PLO will now claim not only the West Bank and Gaza, but also Western Galilee, Beersheba and Israel's coast.

Israeli and American Jews must deal with their religious problem, but they can not afford to be diverted from responding to Arafat's latest bag of tricks.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is director of international relations for the American Jewish Committee.

The Law of Return: A Caveat to our Righteous Indignation

By Rabbi Marc Wilson

We of the American Jewish community are understandably concerned/alarmed about recent developments in Israel: the declaration of an independent Palestinian state and the aftermath of an indecisive Israeli election. We are in particular turmoil — pained, angry, frustrated, indignant — over the prospect of Prime Minister Shamir forming a coalition of convenience with some of the more radical religious parties, who are demanding certain religious accommodations to assure their participation.

Our primary concern is the religious parties' demand to modify the Law of Return so that only conversions performed under strictly Orthodox auspices will be recognized in Israel as legally valid. This would, of course, have the effect of further delegitimizing the standing of Conservative and Reform Judaism in Israel.

The issue has now come to dominate the official and unofficial American Jewish agenda, locally and nationally. American Jewish organizations from CJF to our local Federation have taken out resolutions denouncing any move by Prime Minister Shamir to give in to political extortion and to the politicization of this basically religious issue. There has even been some talk in prominent public forums about threatening to withhold funds from Israel and from Orthodox institutions in America if the Law of Return is so amended.

The righteous indignation of the American Jewish community is understandable and to some extent indicated, but still deserving of our scrutiny and a note of reservation.

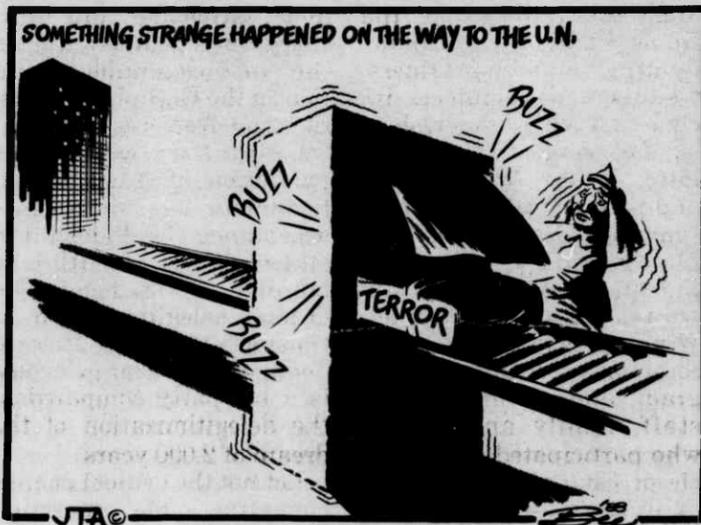
The politicization of religious goals is an anathema, whether it be in Khomeini's Iran, Falwell's America or the Agudah's Israel. I deplore the use of a religious

matter as bait for any political purpose. I deplore the idea that a majority of Israelis could be blackmailed into a policy with which they pointedly disagree, simply because that is what it takes to form a coalition government. And, I certainly deplore the idea that a conversion, even when performed to Halachic standards, would be ipso facto invalid simply because its officiant is a Conservative or Reform rabbi. I deplore any move to discredit the values and convictions I cherish, particularly when it comes not through philosophical debate, but through the vehicle of power politics.

Yet, I deplore with equal passion the oversimplification of this issue that has led to the misperception of all Orthodox Jews as a bunch of Ayatollahs. I deplore the growing trend toward "Orthodox bashing," as people fired up by righteous indignation forget all the good things that Orthodox Judaism contributes to Jewish religious and communal vitality.

We of the Conservative Movement should feel particularly vulnerable on this point. For when we stop our blustering, we are obliged to admit that our continuing religious existence largely depends on our Orthodox brethren. We may proudly produce our doctors, lawyers and PhDs, but they produce the vast majority of our shochetim, mohalim, soferim and mashgichim. We need them to slaughter our kosher meat, to circumcise our babies, to supervise our kosher food products, to write our Torahs, Tefillin, Mezuzot and Gittin, to provide the Mikva'ot we use for our conversions (the new Temple Israel excepted). We need them to provide the Yeshivot and outreach programs that rekindle the spark of Yiddishkeit in the young people who are alienated from our upper middle class values or who have been ensnared in cults. We need them to generally keep us honest by reminding us when we stray too far from Jewish authenticity.

We should be extremely careful when, in our righteous indignation, we attack the proposed change in the Law of Return as a breach of "Jewish unity." Don't get me wrong: It is a breach of Jewish unity. Keep in mind, however, that at one time or another every Jewish movement — Reform, Conservative, Orthodox — has adopted some policy that has been a breach of Jewish unity. Was not Reform Judaism's vitriolic rejection of Zionism and its acceptance of patrilineal descent a breach of Jewish unity? Was not Conservative Judaism's liberalization of the rules of Gittin (religious divorce) and conversion a breach of Jewish unity? Have we not all contributed to the ambiguity of "Who is a Jew?" and "Who may marry whom"? Can every Conservative



Winds of Change

By Ira Gissen, Director
 NC/VA Region
 Anti-Defamation League
 of B'nai B'rith

From cities all over the region, we are receiving telephone calls about discriminatory clubs. We are being asked about country clubs and downtown clubs that, for years, have excluded Jews from their membership. The phone calls are from prominent Jewish citizens in our communities. Many ask the same question: "I have been invited to a function at a club that will not permit me to be a member. Should I accept the invitation?" In some cases, our callers refer to a business meeting. In other cases, our callers refer to a social event.

We also have begun getting more frequent calls from a few outstanding Jewish members of the communities. Essentially, they tell the same story: "I have been asked by a member of the club if I would agree to have my name put up for membership." Oftentimes they tell me: "I'm not certain that I will be approved." On the other hand, some ask: "If I am approved, do I really want to belong to that kind of a club?"

The surge in interest in discriminatory clubs resonates throughout the region.

Why? In large measure, the clubs themselves are reacting to the recent United States Supreme Court decision which upheld the constitutionality of a New York City ordinance prohibiting discrimination by clubs of a certain size under certain circumstances. The clubs fought against the enactment of the New York City law. The clubs fought to have the courts overturn the law. They lost on both counts.

The Anti-Defamation League supported the enactment of the New York City ordinance. The Anti-Defamation League filed a brief *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) in the United States Supreme Court in support of the New York City law. We won on both counts.

But the Anti-Defamation League's concern about anti-Semitic membership practices in country clubs and downtown clubs long predates the New York City law. Our struggle with the problem of anti-Semitic clubs goes back many, many years. It has been a struggle to overcome one of the most insidious forms of anti-Semitism on the American scene. Progress has been slow, but steady. Now it looks like we may move

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See CAVEAT next page