



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israel uncovered a terror cell as it arrested dozens of Palestinians in a crackdown on Islamic militants in the West Bank. Members of the terror cell had planned to bomb an indoor shopping mall in Jerusalem.**

■ **Israeli Labor Party leader Ehud Barak said he would consider joining a national unity government if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu changed his policies. Barak spoke after meeting with Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani of the Third Way Party, who initiated the idea of a unity coalition.**

■ **Palestinian West Bank security chief Jibril Rajoub denied American intelligence reports that Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat is suffering from a degenerative muscle disease. The denial came after Arafat fainted during an Arab League meeting in Cairo.**

■ **A Palestinian who lived in a building in Jerusalem's Ras al-Amud neighborhood that temporarily housed three Jewish families denied ever selling the structure to developer Dr. Irving Moskowitz. The Israeli government reached a deal last week in which the families who moved into the house were replaced by yeshiva students.**

■ **Jewish postal workers in Coral Springs, Fla., were granted time off for the High Holidays. The workers say management authorized the time off after receiving phone calls in support of the workers.**

■ **French bishops announced that next week they will declare the Catholic Church's "repentance" for not speaking out against the Vichy regime's anti-Jewish laws during World War II. Although some priests were in the Resistance, the church's leadership largely supported Vichy leader Philippe Petain.**

■ **A kibbutz has developed a bumblebee 15 times the normal size. The super bee, produced at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, will be used for pollinating crops. The kibbutz has already signed what it estimated was a \$1 million deal to export the bees to South Korea and Japan.**

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Embracing the arts as a way to achieve spiritual fulfillment

By *Connie Benesch*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Worshipers at High Holiday services might find something new this year: the arts.

Poetry, storytelling, musical performances and dance will play a significant role in ushering in the Jewish new year.

Indeed, a growing number of religious leaders across the country are finding that artistic expression heightens the religious experience.

"It's an emerging phenomenon," says Richard Siegel, executive director of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

The foundation is funding three synagogue-based residencies in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and Minneapolis as part of a three-year pilot program.

Meanwhile, 11 synagogues are experimenting with the use of music and movement in prayer and healing as part of the Synagogue 2000 program — a transdenominational project that is working to transform the synagogue.

"One of the things we are looking at is how we can create an authentic spiritual experience in the prayer service," says Ron Wolfson, director of the Whizin Center for the Jewish Future at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, which is spearheading the Synagogue 2000 project with the Hebrew Union College's Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman.

The idea, Wolfson explains, is "to embrace the arts not just as cultural expression, but as religious expression."

The trend has provided a new venue for artists interested in exploring Judaism.

Choreographer Liz Lerman, who runs Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in Takoma Park, Md., works with Temple Micah in Washington, D.C., to create 10-minute dance segments for the temple's family services as well as entire services of singing and dancing.

"People can't get enough," she says. "It turns into a dance of praise for people who know God.

"For doubters," she adds, "it makes them feel connected and feel like they belong in synagogue."

JoAnne Tucker, the artistic director of the New York-based Avodah Dance Ensemble, was so much in demand by synagogues around the country that five years ago she was able to quit her day job as a computer specialist at a bank.

A decade ago, Temple Beth El in Jersey City, N.J., commissioned Tucker to create a forgiveness-themed dance piece for the Selichot service, held late at night the week before Rosh Hashanah. This year, her company is bringing the work to Congregation Emanu El in Houston.

"For me, part of prayer is physical. We're introducing a variety of ways that movement can play an integral role in services," says Tucker, author of "Torah in Motion: Creating Dance Midrash."

Attracting young people with music and drama

For her part, the New York City-based composer Elizabeth Swados is aiming to reach young people with her innovative compositions. To that end, she is writing a Shabbat service for teen-agers.

"I don't think there's anything that's really attracting them to Jewish text and religion at this point," says Swados, whose musical theater pieces dealing with such topics as Job, Esther, the Song of Songs and biblical women are usually performed in synagogues and off-Broadway theaters.

One of the more innovative ways to combine art and Judaism is through Bibliodrama, the improvisational renditions of biblical scenes.

Bibliodrama is gaining increasing acceptance and popularity largely due to the efforts of pioneer Peter Pitzele and Rivkah Walton, director of the Institute for Contemporary Midrash in Philadelphia, an organization dedicated to bringing the arts into contact with sacred text.

The institute has held training in ways to interpret the Midrash, including art, dance, music and Bibliodrama. The workshops drew 70 participants this past July.

"When I saw Peter teach a Bibliodrama class at a rabbinic retreat, I

was just bowled over," says Shelley Whizin, vice president of the Los Angeles-based Whizin Foundation, which supports innovative approaches to Judaism. "Whatever character, whether it was Abraham or Sarah, they just became human beings for the first time in my life, not just one- or two-dimensional characters. They stepped out of the page and became human," adds Whizin, an advisory board member of the Institute for Contemporary Midrash.

Often, Bibliodrama performers invite those watching the presentation to imagine they are the famous personalities. Engaging in such improvisational re-enactments enables "people to see themselves in the text and see the text in their own lives," says Walton.

"The Bible is very porous," she says. "It rarely tells you about people's motivations, dreams and aspirations. There are often huge gaps of time and many, many silent characters, particularly women. Doing Bibliodrama is an opportunity to fill in the gaps. It's really Torah of the imagination."

Despite its growing popularity, incorporating the arts into traditional liturgy is not endorsed by everyone.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the umbrella organization of Reform congregations, suggests caution in bringing the arts into services.

The liturgical revolution is positive because "it gives us new insights to Jewish traditions," he says.

But being liturgically creative "does not necessarily lead to more heartfelt worship. All kind of other things need to be done, too."

Some rabbis oppose the innovations outright.

"I'm reluctant to replace the old prayers with new-fangled poems that may come and go," says Rabbi Richard Thaler of Sutton Place Synagogue in Manhattan. "There's great strength in traditions. It's a source of comfort and continuity."

But others say that bringing the arts into the sanctuary can attract people who might otherwise feel alienated.

According to Cantor Judy Fox of the Synagogue for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles, the advantage of adding the arts is that "somewhere in the service everyone's going to be interested."

"Some people are more theatrically and artistically oriented, so they get their spiritual fulfillment Judaically through music, song and readings," she says.

The arts can be particularly meaningful for people who find the service inaccessible because they do not know Hebrew or the traditional liturgy.

Says Joel Grishaver, the author of "The Bonding of Isaac: Stories and Essays about Gender and Jewish Spirituality": "In essence, the arts become bread crumbs that invite people into the study of Judaism." □

Conversion committee head hopeful solution can be found

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The head of the Israeli committee charged with resolving a crisis over conversions in the Jewish state said a solution could come soon, but at the same time he warned against imposing the pressure of a deadline on the effort.

Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman, whose committee members represent the three major religious streams, made the comments here last Friday at a briefing before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"The fact that we are at one table is in itself an important part of the solution," he said of the committee effort.

"I wouldn't push for a deadline because this will bring us to a dead end," he added.

Ne'eman's formal remarks focused on the Israeli economy, but the discussion inevitably turned to the volatile topic of religious pluralism in spite of the conference's traditional resistance to provide a forum for what it considers to be a divisive matter.

There has been a steady trickle of reports of various proposals on which the committee is nearing agreement. But Ne'eman did not spell out any of the plans either at the briefing or at the closed meeting he held afterward with the leadership of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements.

The committee was appointed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to find a compromise that would avert the passage of a controversial bill pending in the Knesset.

The bill, spearheaded by the Orthodox parties, would codify Orthodox control over conversions performed in Israel.

Netanyahu's coalition has agreed to suspend the legislative effort, and the Reform and Conservative movements have agreed to suspend litigation while the committee worked.

The non-Orthodox movements want to attain recognition of their conversions performed in Israel.

The committee was slated to present its recommendations by Aug. 15, but members have yet to reach an agreement.

Confident of 'a viable proposal for coexistence'

"I cannot assume the politicians will approve such a decision," said Ne'eman, "but I am confident" that the committee "will come up with a viable proposal for coexistence in dignity and in harmony and in unity."

Ne'eman underscored the complexity of the committee's challenge and, in essence, asked for patience from American Jewry, the vast majority of which is not Orthodox and has reacted angrily to the bill.

Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America, thanked Ne'eman for what he said were "unprecedented efforts" to find a solution. But he also reminded him that it was Netanyahu who set the deadline and that equality is "a fundamental principle of democracy."

Ne'eman replied, "Let's not create conflicts, let's not put more flames into the fire."

"The question is not 'Who is a Jew,'" he said. "All of us worship the same God, each in his own way, and nobody can deny, under Jewish law, the recognition of his brother as a Jew." But, he said, "The problem is intricate because it does not relate only to the immediate question of conversion."

He indicated that the committee had broadened its scope to try to find some solutions to the dilemma posed by roughly 100,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not Jewish "by any standard" in a country where matters of personal status are governed by the Orthodox establishment.

Philip Meltzer, president of ARZA, said it was apparent Ne'eman came to show American Jews how seriously Israel was approaching the problem and to ask for cooperation.

He said Ne'eman "made it clear" in the closed meeting "that if it is not worked out, it will be disastrous for the Jewish people." Meltzer added that his movement accepts Ne'eman's stance "with hope" along with "pessimism" about the committee's ability to reach a solution.

Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, said Ne'eman privately asked leaders "to give the process time." □

Anti-Semitic vandalism strikes Atlanta synagogue, senior center

By Neil Rubin

Atlanta Jewish Times

ATLANTA (JTA) — If the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts in the Atlanta area last week were seeking attention, they found a willing public.

For three days, local newspapers and television and radio stations covered the desecration of a local synagogue and the senior citizens' building of a Jewish community center as a major story. Elected officials and clergy turned out for two news conferences, and non-Jewish groups donated money to help bring the perpetrators to justice.

Sometime in the early morning hours of Sept. 14, vandals spray painted red swastikas and "Liberate Palestine/ PLO/ PLO" on a van owned by the Atlanta Jewish Community Center Weinstein Center for Adult Services. Other cars there also were vandalized.

About 15 miles away, the driveway of Congregation Beth Jacob had the words "Heil Hitler," "Jew Pigs Die" and swastikas painted on the sidewalk.

A nearby street sign warning people of children crossing the road also was daubed with the Nazi symbol.

Police did not say if they believed the acts were connected, but red paint was used at both places and the swastikas appeared similar.

In response to the attacks, a Georgia state legislator said he would try to pass hate-crimes legislation this winter. Attempts to include homosexuals as a protected group have stymied previous efforts to pass such a law.

"Thirty-eight states have some form of it and the political leadership of Georgia has failed to pass it," said Doug Teper.

"The sticking point is the language 'sexual orientation.' But whether you agree with someone's sexual orientation or not has nothing to do with the fact that crimes are being committed against them."

U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), who represents the area, was ill and could not attend either news conference, said Gary Cox, who runs her local office.

In a statement, she said she had "zero tolerance for all forms of bigotry in our community."

\$4,000 reward offered

At Beth Jacob the day after the attack, DeKalb County CEO Liane Levetan, standing in front of 14 area religious and political leaders, said that the presence of non-Jewish clergy was important.

"I'm Jewish and I'm proud of that, and I'm equally proud of all of the ministers and people of different faiths that are here today," she said.

Non-Jewish residents around the community center put notes of support on vandalized cars and stopped by to express their concern, said Harry Stern, director of the center.

Thomas Brown, director of public safety for DeKalb County, announced that area churches, the DeKalb Republican Party and the Dunwoody Homeowners Association had donated \$4,000 to be used as a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the culprits.

At Levetan's instruction, Brown asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's intelligence unit and the FBI to help find those responsible.

Neighboring Fulton County Commission Chairman Mitch Skandalakis said he was going to seek increased police protection for Jewish facilities under his jurisdiction.

During one of the news conferences, Rabbi Ilan Feldman of Beth Jacob said, "It's still a country in which being a member of a minority group brings powerful reminders that there are people filled with hate." □

Latvia finds no evidence in case against suspected Nazi war criminal

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Latvia has found no evidence to support allegations against a suspected Nazi war criminal now living in Australia.

Konrad Kalejs, 84, is alleged to have been a member of the mobile killing squad known as the Arajs Kommando, or Latvian Auxiliary Security Police, that collaborated with the Nazi SS during World War II.

Kalejs is accused of having participated in the killing of 20,000 Jews in Latvia during World War II.

He claims that he was a university student at the time.

About 75,000 Jews, or more than 90 percent of the country's prewar Jewish community, were murdered during the war by the Nazis — with help from local residents.

The Latvian Prosecutor General's Office said last week that the investigation into Kalejs' past included an examination of records and testimony originally gathered during the 1950s and 1960s by Soviet KGB officials who had investigated Kalejs and other alleged Nazi collaborators.

The office said that its investigation indicated that "several Latvians had participated in the persecution of Jews during World War II," but that it had no convincing evidence concerning Kalejs.

The prosecutor's office quoted a former KGB officer as saying that Soviet officials would have prosecuted Kalejs decades ago if they had found sufficient evidence against him.

Several dozen Latvians were tried in the former Soviet republic after World War II for collaborating with the Nazis. But some of them were pardoned as "victims of the KGB" after Latvia gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Latvian Foreign Ministry said last week that it will forward the findings later this month to the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, which recently called for the deportation of Kalejs from Australia to Latvia to face charges.

Kalejs moved to Australia after the war and later relocated to the United States. He is alleged to have used his position in the Australian Immigration Department, where he worked in the 1950s, to help fellow Arajs Kommando squad members settle there.

Kalejs was ordered deported from the United States to Australia in 1994. He subsequently fled to Canada, where he lived for three years.

He was deported by Canada to Australia in August.

Within days after he arrived in Australia, officials there said it was unlikely he would be prosecuted under Australian war-crimes legislation. □

Israeli jurist delegation visits Qatar

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A delegation of 15 Israeli lawyers and judges traveled this week to the Persian Gulf state of Qatar to attend an international conference of jurists.

The group is headed by former Supreme Court President Meir Shamgar.

Qatar and another Gulf state, Oman, established trade ties with Israel in 1995.

Qatar is hosting a regional economic summit in November that will promote business and investment in the Middle East.

But a number of Arab states have said they may boycott the conference to protest the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace process. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**New immigrants finding jobs through listings on Web sites***By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Tobian Mount knows the value of using the Internet to search for a job in Israel.

After moving from Colorado to Israel last December, he enrolled in an intensive Hebrew-language course and began his job search.

Not yet fluent in Hebrew, Mount found it difficult to scan Israeli newspapers for a job in the food industry, his chosen field. His lack of Hebrew also put him at a disadvantage in the marketplace.

Despite these obstacles, the 25-year-old immigrant was able to land a job within just a few months, thanks to a new site on the Internet.

"I was a store manager for Burger King in the States and was hoping for something along the same lines," says Mount, who now works as the night-shift manager of the Har Nof, Jerusalem, branch of Bonkers Bagels.

"My mother-in-law did a job search for me on the Web and discovered the AACI Jobnet," he says. If she had not seen the site, "I don't think I would have known about Bonkers."

Launched on Israel's Independence Day in May 1997, the Jobnet is the brainchild of the AACI — the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel — and Jacob Richman, a former resident of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Richman's free listings over the years of high-tech jobs compiled from newspaper ads have helped many potential immigrants and native Israelis find work.

The AACI has provided on-site job placement for new immigrants.

Hoping to promote aliyah and to assist those already living in Israel in their job search, Richman and the AACI joined forces about a year ago.

Armed with a plan that would encourage Israeli companies to advertise their job openings, the team received two start-up grants for the project: \$60,000 from Israel's Ministry of Science and \$179,000 from the SAMIS Foundation of Seattle.

SAMIS funds Jewish continuity projects in Washington state and Israel.

'Huge shortage of high-tech personnel'

Since its inception on the World Wide Web three months ago, the site — www.jobnet.co.il — has attracted 240 companies that have listed hundreds of jobs in both English and Hebrew.

Categorized by field, the jobs range from computer programmer and systems engineer to chauffeur and radio disk jockey.

"About three-quarters of the listings are high-tech," says Richman. "There's a huge shortage of high-tech personnel in this country, particularly in the computer and electronics industries."

This is not to say that liberal-arts majors should despair.

"Companies are looking for lawyers, administrators, secretaries, artists, translators, travel agents. There's a lot of diversity out there," Richman adds.

Any company wishing to list its openings on the Web site pays a fee ranging from \$75 to \$225, depending on the number of positions it lists.

Access to the site by job-seekers is free.

"Compared to the cost of a small ad in the weekend newspaper, which comes to \$300 to \$400, that's very low," Richman says. "We're hopeful the companies will think it's worth their while."

David Hersh, deputy executive director of AACI, believes that it is.

"Out of 600 job listings, about 120 have been removed because they were filled. We don't have any hard statistics yet, but I'd say at least 15 to 20 percent were filled by people utilizing the Jobnet."

Using Internet terminology to stress the high number of visits to Jobnet's site, Hersh says, "Since June 1, we've had 700,000 hits and over 22,000 visits from countless countries.

"In contrast, the Knesset site gets about 100,000 hits a month. The interest is obviously there."

Rochelle Regal, a human resources administrator at Accent Software in Jerusalem, says that about 25 percent of her company's applicants have come via the Jobnet.

"We advertise jobs in a variety of ways, but the Internet is one of the best," she says.

According to Zev Wernick, the overall manager for the Bonkers Bagels chain, the majority of job applicants are new immigrants.

The bagel company, which was founded two years ago by three immigrants — two American and one British — now has six stores and 100 employees.

"We're looking to get as many good people as possible, and we'll go to any source, including the Internet," says Wernick.

While acknowledging the role that sites like the Jobnet can play in fostering aliyah, Joe Romanelli, director of the North American Desk at the Jewish Agency for Israel, says jobs alone do not spur aliyah.

"Job-listing sites on the Internet definitely have a role to play," but finding a job is "not necessarily the impetus for making aliyah," says Romanelli.

"People have to be drawn to Israel for other reasons. They won't come if they're not interested." □

Israeli businessman admits to faking terror kidnapping*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli businessman who disappeared earlier this month has admitted that he fabricated the story that he was kidnapped by terrorists.

Ya'acov Schwartz, 63, told police Sunday that he had not been abducted for three days, as he had earlier claimed.

He did not say why he made up the story of his disappearance.

But police speculated that he acted in an effort to unite the Israeli people during the recent visit of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Earlier this month, Schwartz's family in Bnei Brak reported him missing when he failed to return home after visiting his father's grave with his son, Ronni, in southern Israel.

His car was found abandoned near the Gaza Strip, raising fears that Islamic militants may have seized him.

Schwartz was found Sept. 12 in an abandoned building in Ashkelon.

A police official told Israel Television that Schwartz said he had hid for two days in a Tel Aviv factory he owns before moving to Ashkelon.

Police began questioning him when they found discrepancies between his description of events and testimony gathered from witnesses.

Efforts to locate Schwartz, which involved some 700 policemen and volunteers as well as helicopters, are estimated to have cost more than \$300,000.

Albright, who was in Israel at the time, had asked the Palestinian Authority for assistance in finding Schwartz. □