



Daily News Bulletin

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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Swiss central bank may pay

The Executive Board of Switzerland's central bank is expected to meet next Saturday to approve the bank's contribution to last week's settlement between two private Swiss banks and negotiators representing Jewish survivors.

The Swiss National Bank was not part of those negotiations.

Meanwhile, a top official with one of the Swiss banks involved in the global settlement of Holocaust-era claims said the \$1.25 billion agreement would pave the way for his bank's increased involvement in the American market. But Marcel Ospel of the Union Bank of Switzerland said no deal was imminent.

Jury awards man \$2.2 million

A jury in Los Angeles awarded \$2.2 million to a man who said his supervisors called him a "cheap Jew" as well as other anti-Semitic slurs.

Jeffrey Graber, 41, testified that he was frequently harassed during his nine years with Litton Guidance and Control Systems, a major defense contractor.

Graber told the Los Angeles Times that his supervisors also made racist remarks and jokes about Polish, Mexican and African American employees. [Page 3]

Palestinians impose curfew

The Palestinian Authority announced a curfew on the West Bank town of Jericho.

The curfew is part of a search by Palestinian security officials and Israeli troops for a Hamas leader who escaped from a Palestinian prison last Friday.

Imad Awadallah is accused of killing a Hamas bomb-maker in March.

Virtually rebuilding synagogues

Germany's Education Ministry gave \$50,000 to a German university to "rebuild" on the Internet three German synagogues that were destroyed during the Holocaust.

Up to 15 German synagogues may eventually be rebuilt as a result of the program.

The virtual synagogues are highly detailed, three-dimensional renderings put together from blueprints, photos and descriptions by people who worshiped at them. [Page 3]

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Reform, Conservative synagogues developing new methods of worship

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Walk into services at Congregation Ner Tamid in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., and a member of the Shalom Squad will greet you warmly — maybe even with a hug.

You'll be handed a prayer book, shown the correct page and escorted to an open seat. After services end, someone will approach you and engage you in conversation.

They have "improved the ambience and reception, and created a haimishe feeling of warmth," Joel Sperber, president of the congregation, said of the 65 Shalom Squad volunteers who take turns greeting congregants and visitors to the Reform temple.

Congregants from Washington, D.C.'s Temple Micah gathered recently at the home of a fellow synagogue member on a Saturday afternoon for their inaugural Zip Code Havdalah service.

"I met people who live near me and I didn't know they did," said Joyce Winslow, a member of Temple Micah. "We figured out who needed rides to temple, who was sick and needed help, who could use a meal.

"Now we know what's going on with each other. I've made three new friends," she said.

The Reform temple plans to organize similar Havdalah services this fall.

Both initiatives were born out of the congregations' participation in Synagogue 2000, a national project created to transform the way American Jews worship.

Now in its third full year of operation, Synagogue 2000 has brought together 16 congregations — half Reform, half Conservative — to develop ideas that could make synagogues more appealing to baby-boomers and members of Generation X.

The project is the brainchild of Ron Wolfson and Larry Hoffman, who had both been researching and thinking about transforming synagogue worship. In 1994, Rabbi Rachel Cowan, an executive at the Nathan Cummings Foundation in New York, brought them together.

Wolfson runs the Whizin Center for the Jewish Future at the Conservative movement's University of Judaism in Los Angeles. Hoffman is a professor of liturgy at New York's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform movement's rabbinical seminary.

Armed with a seed grant from the Cummings Foundation, they convened focus groups in several cities composed of Jewish lay leaders, professionals and clergy.

Out of these sessions emerged a few themes, including a longing for a sense of community and healing, a desire for more teamwork between the laity and clergy, and a need to create more stimulating services.

Wolfson and Hoffman also found that the elements that have made large Protestant churches so successful — tailoring services to a range of interests and needs and posting greeters at the entrance to the sanctuary — could also work for Jews.

Launching Synagogue 2000, Hoffman and Wolfson invited pioneers in Jewish healing, dance, music, art and architecture to be on the Synagogue 2000 national resource team.

Each of the 16 congregations selected created a team of 20 to 30 members, a combination of active veteran members and people on the periphery of congregational life.

The protocol and curriculum for the monthly team meetings were designed by

MIDEAST FOCUS

Soldiers demoted after melee

Three Israeli soldiers were expelled from their elite paratroopers unit after a member of Hezbollah infiltrated their post in southern Lebanon earlier this month.

Israel's army chief of staff, Maj. Gen Shaul Mofaz, has called the incident, in which the member of the Shi'ite fundamentalist group escaped despite being shot, a "grave operational failure."

Israel to double deportations

Israeli police will reportedly double the number of foreign workers to be deported from the country each month. So far, police have deported every month some 500 workers who were employed illegally.

After October, the deportation quota will rise to 1,000 a month, and within two years, the number will be increased to 2,000 each month.

New jobs program for Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a new jobs program. Under the program, the government will subsidize business for up to six months if they hire new employees and keep them on for at least double the amount of time the subsidy is paid.

But Amir Peretz, the head of Israel's Histadrut labor federation, said the subsidy was insufficient.

Netanyahu, Mordechai at odds

Tensions reportedly increased over the weekend between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

The two are apparently at odds over three major issues: the deadlock in the negotiations with the Palestinians, comments attributed to Mordechai favoring an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights — which Mordechai later denied — and the defense minister's demand that his brother become the Likud Party's candidate for mayor of the city of Tiberias.



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Wolfson and Hoffman to spark and enhance relationships between participants and God.

Each meeting begins with members sitting in circle and engaging in a silent prayer. The cantor leads them in song and the rabbi gives a brief sermon, all of which help set a spiritual tone.

Members then "check in" with each other. They share the highs and lows of their lives since the last meeting and, in the process, learn about each other's lives.

"When I hear their stories I don't feel like I'm hearing gossip or kitsch, but the inside of somebody's soul," said Winslow of Temple Micah.

"As I connect to them, I feel connecting to something bigger, something more transcendent. It's hard to stay away from a place where that happens, and I think that's what Synagogue 2000 is about," she said.

Study of Jewish liturgy and primary texts is a key component of the meetings, as is brainstorming new ideas for the congregation.

The very qualities that Wolfson and Hoffman want to permeate each congregation — the sense of community and spirituality — are developed in microcosm at each meeting.

Participating congregations have already implemented changes as a result of the team discussions.

At Town and Village Synagogue in New York, congregants redesigned the building's interior space to ensure that it is welcoming and comfortable.

A "spiritual ski group" has started at Temple Micah. Each meeting begins with a prayer and study before members go on to talk about upcoming adventures on snow. While traveling, participants recite the blessing over bread before sitting down to eat together.

At Congregation Ner Tamid there is an increased focus on kavanah, or conscious intention, in prayer, and on making worship more personal. Each week one congregant prepares a personal prayer.

A teen-ager thanked God that she got accepted into the college of her choice. Adults have thanked God for keeping their families healthy.

Ner Tamid has also put together "Jewish journey" groups, each focused on a specific theme. One is a bereavement support group and another is a course on Jewish history led by its members.

A physicians' group is in the works in which health care workers will study and examine the ways in which their Jewish and professional lives intersect.

But change hasn't been easy for any of the congregations, say participants.

"I was dead set against Synagogue 2000 after my first meeting" with the teams, said Sperber. "I thought it was a marketing approach bastardizing our religion. I realize now that it's a way for people to find meaning in their lives, and temple is a vehicle for that."

At Temple Micah, resistance arose to the idea, put forward by the Synagogue 2000 team, that prayer should kick off each congregational event, even occasions that are purely social. Four congregational meetings were devoted to discussing the issue.

The experiences have prompted Wolfson and Hoffman to add a team of specialists in the dynamics of change to their roster of experts, mostly consultants culled from the business world, to work with the pilot synagogues.

But now that its pilot program is well established, what's next on Synagogue 2000's agenda?

Wolfson and Hoffman just received their \$400,000 in annual funding renewed for another three years from the project's supporters: The Nathan Cummings, Righteous Persons and the Whizin foundations.

The Synagogue 2000 team is now working more closely with the Reform and Conservative movements in the hope that the denominations will adopt some of the practices they've developed.

It is also starting work with an interdenominational group of five congregations in one city — in this case, Washington, D.C.

The project in Washington is funded by the Jewish federation there in cooperation with the regional offices of the Conservative and Reform movements, and will bring Synagogue 2000 resources to one community for the next two years. □

JEWISH WORLD

Religious freedom law vetoed

The American Jewish Committee expressed disappointment at Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar's veto of a measure to protect religious freedom in his state.

Other Jewish groups could join the AJCommittee in opposing last Friday's veto, which Edgar said he made because this particular Religious Freedom Restoration Act did not apply to prisoners.

Coalitions including Jewish groups have lobbied for states to pass legislation supporting religious freedom after the Supreme Court ruled that a federal law that did so was unconstitutional.

Neo-Nazis rally in Denmark

Danish and German police arrested dozens of people who demonstrated in cities across their respective countries in honor of one of Hitler's deputies.

Neo-Nazis from Germany and Sweden had crossed into Denmark for the rallies in honor of the 11th anniversary of the death of Rudolf Hess.

Denmark has one of Europe's most liberal demonstration laws.

Opposition grows to memorial

Directors and curators of Holocaust memorials at German concentration camps said they opposed the idea of building a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

The statement released Aug. 13 came amid growing opposition to the memorial by German leaders.

The plan is supported by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who is currently trailing in polls for the Sept. 27 elections.

South African hit on Middle East

The leader of South Africa's opposition party criticized remarks made by the country's deputy president regarding the stalled Middle East peace talks.

Tony Leon, the leader of the Democratic Party, said Thabo Mbeki's remarks, in which he accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of "blocking the process toward peace," were an "oversimplification."

Mbeki made his remarks during Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's three-day visit to South Africa.

Vanunu appeal to be heard

An Israeli district court is slated to hear an appeal Friday from the man convicted of leaking Israel's nuclear secrets to a London newspaper.

Mordechai Vanunu, who will appeal for release on grounds of good behavior, was released from solitary confinement earlier this year. He has served more than 11 years of his 18-year sentence.

Jury awards \$2.2 million to victim of anti-Semitism

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A jury in Los Angeles has awarded \$2.2 million to a man who said his supervisors at a major defense contractor called him a "cheap Jew" as well as other anti-Semitic slurs for nine years.

Jeffrey Graber, 41, testified that he was frequently harassed during his service with Litton Guidance and Control Systems.

As a result, he developed digestive problems and eventually was put on permanent disability leave because of severe depression, the Los Angeles Times reported.

In a typical incident, Graber said, supervisor Jean Wood called him a "cheap Jew" for not contributing to a Christmas gift. Another time, when Graber told co-workers about a good deal he had gotten on a watch, Wood observed that he "must have Jewed (the seller) down."

Graber started working at Litton's photocopying and binding center in 1985 and left in 1994 on full disability for psychological problems caused by the supervisors' abuse, Graber's lawyer, James Leonard Brown, said. Graber said he stuck it out for that many years because he didn't want to lose a steady job with good benefits.

Graber, who has moved back to his home state of Michigan, told the Los Angeles Times that the supervisors also made constant racist remarks and jokes about Polish, Mexican and African American employees.

In its judgment, which has not yet been confirmed by the judge in the case, the jury found that each of the three supervisors was liable for \$10,000 in damages. The jury also assessed Litton more than \$555,000 for loss of wages and emotional distress, and more than \$1.6 million in punitive damages.

Litton did not comment on the case, but in court testimony Wood and two male supervisors said they did not know that Graber was Jewish.

"The reason I did this is because I wanted to stop this from happening in the workplace. I didn't do it for the money," Graber said. "I didn't think those things happened at a big company." □

German architecture students rebuild synagogues on Internet

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Synagogues that were destroyed by the Nazis are being rebuilt by German architecture students — on the Internet.

The recreation of up to 15 synagogues is the brainchild of Marc Grellert, a lecturer at Darmstadt Technical University, who launched the project after an arson attack on one of Germany's remaining synagogues in Lubeck in 1994.

"I wanted to do something to remind people that Jews were very much a part of German society before the Nazis," he said.

A pilot project has led to the "virtual construction" of three synagogues in Frankfurt using computer-aided design.

The virtual synagogues are highly detailed, three-dimensional renderings put together from blueprints, photos and descriptions by people who worshiped at them.

The German Education Ministry has provided a grant of more than \$50,000 for these three "synagogues" to be recreated by students as part of their course work in the upcoming academic year. The city of Nuremberg has agreed to pay for one of its old synagogues to be revived on computer, while Dortmund and other German cities are considering following suit.

Grellert hopes that enough money will be pledged to finance the 15 "virtual synagogues." He said he does not want Jewish groups to contribute. Non-Jewish Germans should pay for the "virtual reconstruction" of synagogues destroyed by the Nazis, he said. "Hopefully the project will remind people that synagogues were once part of the skyline in nearly every major German city," he said. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Leader of tiny community mobilizes aid for prisoners***By Lev Krichevsky*

BOROVICHI, Russia (JTA) — The young and energetic leader of this tiny Jewish community first visited Jewish inmates during High Holidays in 1996.

Now Edward Alexeev regularly visits the small number of Jewish men in this prison, which functioned as part of the Soviet gulag.

Believed to be the first local Jewish social service worker to visit Jews in prison in post-Soviet Russia, Alexeev admits that some of the prisoners are not repentant for their crimes, but, he adds, "if we do not help them, chances are weaker that these people will survive and ever return to normal life."

Alexeev says it is hard to persuade other Jewish groups to help Jewish inmates.

"Many refuse to believe that there are Jews in prison. But there are and they need the community to support them," said Alexeev, a 29-year-old social worker who heads the Jewish community of 200 in Borovichi, a town of 90,000 people about 300 miles northwest of Moscow.

Alexeev relies mostly on small donations from members of his community to buy food and used clothing for the inmates.

Some inmates are asking for spiritual help as well. "They ask for books on Judaism, prayer shawls, yarmulkas," Alexeev said.

Borovichi's Jewish community has also sent the prisoners prayer books and matzahs for Passover.

When Mikhail Rokhinson, one of the prisoners whom Alexeev visits, was 1, a Christian woman helped him and his mother escape from a Jewish ghetto in northern Belarus. Later, during the war, Rokhinson was separated from his mother. At the age of 3, he was placed into an orphanage in Leningrad. It was there that Rokhinson, a teen-ager at the time, received his first prison sentence — for stealing some bread from a street vendor.

Rokhinson, 58, a skinny man with big expressive eyes that contrast sharply with his tanned emaciated face, has spent 25 years of his life in prisons, mostly for minor theft.

He is now serving an 18-month sentence for a similar offense at the Correctional Labor Colony No. 22/3.

Much of Rokhinson's Jewish identity stems from his childhood experiences during the anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by Stalin.

"They hated me only because I was Jewish," says Rokhinson.

Recently, however, he has started to read books on Jewish history and the Torah. "The only dream I have is to go to Israel after I serve my term," he said.

Prisoners in Borovichi live in white-brick one and two-story barracks surrounded by several circles of walls topped with barbed wire. Guards on walls and barking dogs make the picture seem straight out of movies about the Soviet gulag, the infamous prison system created by Stalin 70 years ago.

There are no cells in Borovichi. Metal bunks line the walls of the sleeping quarters. The prison is now home to some 1,600 convicted criminals.

Many of the convicts in Borovichi, including the eight Jews, are repeat offenders.

The prisoners' contact with the outside world is mostly limited to letters from home and to a large television set in the far corner of the barracks.

No pictures of loved ones, postcards or placards decorate the walls. But the only kinds of wall decoration shows that the gulag has changed.

A Russian Orthodox icon and a large Star of David carved from wood hang on the walls of the barracks to show the respect the colony administration is now paying to the convicts' religious needs.

Alexander Shteinbak, another Jewish prisoner, said a non-Jewish convict made the Jewish star for him when Shteinbak arrived in Borovichi from a prison in central Russia more than two years ago. Shteinbak, a 32-year-old Muscovite serving a three-year sentence for fraud, wrote the letter to Alexeev in 1996, asking him to visit the Jewish prisoners on the High Holidays.

After the collapse of communism, Russian prisons opened their gates to religious organizations.

Prison officials hoped that the church and Western missionaries would bring money as well as moral consolation.

Under the law, prisoners must work, but the market reforms introduced in Russia since the fall of communism have destroyed the prison economy that was created during Stalin's era.

Now, prisoners must rely on the aid they can receive from religious charities.

Jewish inmates have watched Christian religious groups visit with other inmates, bringing them religious items and food.

"Books are okay," an officer with the prison administration said while inspecting brochures on Jewish tradition that Alexeev delivered on a recent afternoon to the colony along with a box of tea.

"But what they need more is someone to take care of them after they got released," said the officer, who declined to give his name.

The prognosis for these prisoners, Jews and non-Jews alike, does not improve after they are released. Russia has few rehabilitation programs for ex-convicts, many criminals are doomed to become repeat offenders and few employers hire people with criminal backgrounds.

Shteinbak is due to be released later this summer. Rokhinson's term will expire next May.

The men are awaiting their release with an uneasy feeling. With such odds against them, they know that they will be sorely tempted to turn once again to crime.

A Lubavitch rabbi in Moscow said the Jewish community should do more for former prisoners.

"It's a shame that these people had not received our adequate attention," said Rabbi David Karpov, who has been offering spiritual guidance for some Jewish convicts in Russian prisons by correspondence. He said the Jewish community should forgive and accept former prisoners. "These people cannot adapt to new life unless there is the Jewish community to help."

Zinovy Kogan, the executive director of the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations of Russia, said Jewish social service agencies have plenty of jobs for ex-cons.

"Such people can work for the Jewish community as social workers helping needy and elderly Jews," he said. "We need to show them that we trust them and that they deserve trust — regardless of what happened to them in the past." □