



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Fire strikes Ukraine shul

A fire completely destroyed the grand hallway of the five-story Central Choral Synagogue in Kharkov, Ukraine.

But the blaze, which is believed to have been an arson attack, did not reach the building's sanctuary, according to the synagogue's rabbi, Moshe Moskovitz.

The damage caused by the fire is estimated at about \$1 million. No one was injured. [Page 4]

### Report: Arafat wrote to Clinton

Yasser Arafat reportedly wrote a letter to President Clinton questioning Israeli intentions to carry out any further West Bank redeployments.

The Palestinian leader wrote that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will find a pretext not to carry out a 13 percent redeployment and will also avoid another pullback that was to have been made by the end of August. [Page 1]

### U.S. firm on Ras al-Amud

The United States plans to hold Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a promise he made last September not to build in Ras al-Amud, a mostly Arab neighborhood near Jerusalem's Old City.

"We stand by the commitment that we received from the government of Israel last September" that "there will be no construction in that neighborhood and that the overall nature of the neighborhood will not change over time," State Department deputy spokesman James Foley said.

Last week, the Jerusalem municipality gave final approval to build some 130 new homes for Jews in the area.

### Polish property issue resolved

Poland's Jewish community and international Jewish groups resolved a controversy on the return of Jewish communal properties in Poland.

The agreement, which provides for the return of 5,500 properties, marks the last major deal on the return of Jewish communal property in Eastern Europe.

Last year Jewish groups and the Polish government agreed to create a foundation to administer the properties, but Polish Jewish leaders later balked, saying that only the nine existing Polish Jewish communities had a right to reclaim communal property.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Israel, Palestinians move slowly toward redeployment agreement

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has grown too soft on the Palestinians — at least in the view of some of his ministers.

Hard-line members of the Israeli Cabinet are worried that Netanyahu is moving toward closing a deal with the Palestinian Authority that will transfer more West Bank land to Palestinian control despite recent terror attacks.

At Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting, a debate raged over how to respond to last week's terrorist bombing in Tel Aviv and to the recent murders of three Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Ariel Sharon, the hard-line infrastructure minister, called for imposing a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a tactic frequently employed by Israel after previous terrorist attacks acts.

"It is unacceptable that 100,000 Palestinians will continue working in Israel after such acts. Israelis are murdered, and the Palestinian Authority goes on with business as usual. This must be stopped," said Sharon.

Transportation Minister Shaul Yahalom of the National Religious Party also sought tough action, calling for a complete suspension of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations until Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat cracks down on terrorists.

"Arafat has urged his people to burn the floor underneath the settlers," said Yahalom. "Our reaction must be unequivocal."

In the past, the bombing and murders would likely have prompted Netanyahu to suspend the negotiations. But on Sunday, Netanyahu responded to the ministers' complaints with some unusually positive words about the self-rule government.

Contrary to the situation in the past, he said, there is no recent evidence of cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas militants.

Arafat himself could not have hoped for kinder words.

In view of recent Israeli-Palestinian tensions — provoked in no small measure by the nearly 18-month stalemate in the negotiations — Israeli political observers interpreted Netanyahu's comments as an attempt to keep the talks afloat.

Without doubt, the premier could have found ample reason to take a different stance. In the beginning of August, two settlers — Harel Ben-Nun, 18, and Shlomo Liebman, 24 — were shot dead while on a nighttime security patrol of Yizhar, a settlement of some 55 families near the West Bank town of Nablus.

Two weeks later, on Aug. 20, Rabbi Shlomo Ra'anani was stabbed to death in his trailer home in Hebron by a suspected Palestinian intruder.

And on Aug. 27, a bomb exploded on a busy street during Tel Aviv's morning rush hour. The attack left 21 people injured.

Just the same, the recently resumed negotiations on a further Israeli redeployment from the West Bank continue — although at a sluggish pace.

By most indications, there has been little progress. Netanyahu's special envoy to the talks, Yitzhak Molcho, has met several times in recent days with Palestinian officials, including Arafat. Several obstacles were removed, but gaps still remain.

Following his meeting with Molcho, Arafat sent Netanyahu a letter in which he agreed to an Israeli proposal that a portion of the lands included in a U.S.-sponsored proposal for a 13 percent redeployment in the West Bank be considered a nature preserve.

This would prevent the Palestinians from launching any construction projects in the

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel mulls redeployment

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet that he will agree to a 13 percent further West Bank redeployment, but only if the Palestinian Authority lives up to already-signed commitments, including the annulment of anti-Israel portions of the Palestinian Covenant. Little progress is expected in the negotiations this week, given Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's plans to attend a summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa.

### Hebron settlers arrested

Israeli police arrested three Jewish settlers from Hebron for allegedly throwing stones at Palestinians. Two others were arrested on suspicion of inciting violence against Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

### Israel condemns executions

Israel condemned the Palestinian Authority's executions of two members of the Palestinian security forces who were convicted of murder. Israel's Cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, said the executions provided more evidence of why Israel would "never agree to a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital."

### Mordechai visits Shanghai shul

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai visited Shanghai's newly restored Ohel Rachel Synagogue during his first day in China. Mordechai is traveling with top executives from Israel's largest weapons manufacturers, who hope to reverse a decline in bilateral arms deals. His plane arrived for the five-day visit carrying a shipment of medicines for the victims of floods now ravaging the country.

### Soldiers injured in crash

Four Israeli soldiers were injured when their helicopter toppled on its side while landing in southern Lebanon. The soldiers were on their way to join an Israeli outpost in the Lebanese security zone.

area, which comprises some 3 percent of the proposed pullback.

But in his letter, Arafat rejected most of the Israeli conditions for bringing the talks to a successful conclusion.

A major stumbling block is who will have responsibility for security in the preserve. Israel is demanding total security control. Arafat wants to share in these responsibilities.

There are other points of contention:

- The Palestinian Covenant: Netanyahu is sticking to his demand that the full Palestine National Council be convened to revoke the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter. Arafat maintains that the smaller Central Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization can do the job just as well.

- Extraditing terrorists: Israel wants the Palestinian Authority to transfer terror suspects to the Jewish state. The Palestinians want to try such suspects themselves.

- Reciprocity: Israel insists that it will redeploy from additional portions of the West Bank only after the Palestinians fulfill their security commitments toward Israel. The Palestinians insist that such moves take place simultaneously.

The two sides are acting as though they have all the time in the world, and according to some Israeli officials, the premier has a reason for not wanting to rush.

There is a power struggle taking place in the Palestinian camp, the officials say, and Netanyahu is waiting to see who emerges victorious.

Ahmed Karia, the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council who recently held talks with Molcho, is pushing for a moderate line. Meanwhile, the two officials who have steered the Palestinian negotiating team in recent months — Saeb Erekat and Arafat's second-in-command, Mahmoud Abbas — feel that they are being co-opted by Karia and are calling on Arafat to take a tougher line toward Israel.

Meanwhile, Arafat does not believe that Netanyahu means business.

He reportedly wrote a letter to President Clinton last week questioning Israeli intentions to carry out any further West Bank redeployments.

Arafat wrote that Netanyahu will find a pretext not to carry out the 13 percent redeployment and will also avoid another pullback that was to have been accomplished by the end of August.

Arafat rejected a redeployment offered by Israel last year, saying not enough land was involved.

He reportedly told U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross in Oslo last week — and repeated the message during a meeting with Molcho in the Gaza Strip — that he feared that even if he were to reach an agreement with Israel, Netanyahu would not implement it because of pressures from Israel's right wing.

But, by the same token, one may question whether Arafat can fulfill an agreement. He, too, suffers from growing difficulties on the home front.

This week he approved for the first time the use of capital punishment in a case involving two Palestinian policemen. The two, who were brothers, were convicted in a hasty trial on charges of murdering two other policemen, who were also brothers, in a family feud in Gaza's Nusseirat refugee camp.

Arafat approved the death sentences, which were carried out Monday, because of growing Palestinian demands that he crack down against the growing brutality of Palestinian security forces against their own people.

Arafat also walks a delicate tightrope with Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin, whose ability to rally the Palestinian masses remains strong.

Indeed, last week's bombing in Tel Aviv came one day after Yassin called for attacks on Israel to retaliate for the recent U.S. missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Arafat, like Netanyahu, faces too many internal pressures to allow himself to be too generous in the negotiations.

Some optimistic observers believe that the hard-to-get tactics currently adopted by both sides are but part of the end game for a soon-to-be-concluded agreement.

They believe that the two sides will sign an agreement Sept. 13 — the fifth anniversary of the signing of the first Oslo accord on the White House lawn.

But given the pace of negotiations — and the acts of violence accompanying them — the pessimists are not about to abandon their positions anytime soon. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Class-action suits filed

Holocaust survivors filed a class-action lawsuit in Newark, N.J., against several German firms that allegedly profited from slave labor during the Holocaust. The case comes on the heels of a similar lawsuit already filed in a Brooklyn court. Volkswagen, Krupp, Siemens and Daimler-Benz are among the firms named in the suits.

### Clinton, Bronfman to meet

President Clinton is scheduled to hold a private meeting with World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman in Moscow this week, the WJC said. Bronfman is slated to be in Moscow to attend the dedication of the Holocaust synagogue and memorial museum. The meeting, in which they are expected to discuss Holocaust restitution issues, is the first between the two men since Bronfman met with Clinton in the White House in 1996 to ask him to press for an inquiry into European countries' financial transactions with the Nazis.

### Mass held near Auschwitz

A priest from a Polish Catholic fringe group celebrated Mass amid the more than 150 crosses that were erected recently near the Auschwitz death camp.

Some 200 worshipers applauded the priest when he criticized the Polish Bishops Council, the highest body of the Polish Roman Catholic Church, which last week called for the crosses' removal.

### Brazil to get artworks

Four artworks looted by the Nazis are reportedly being turned over to the Brazilian government. The works, including paintings by Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet, are valued at nearly \$6 million. The paintings were sold to wealthy Brazilian families after Nazi officials fled to South America with their plunder after World War II.

### Swiss party seeks gold's return

Switzerland's leading party called on the Swiss National Bank to return all Nazi-looted gold that it purchased from wartime Germany.

The president of the Socialist Party, Ursula Koch, told Swiss Television, "We should not wait until new pressure from the United States will force us to do it."

### Hull to meet with Jewish leaders

A member of hockey's Hall of Fame is expected to meet soon with Canadian Jewish and black leaders to explain pro-Hitler and anti-black remarks attributed to him last week in a Moscow newspaper.

Bobby Hull requested the meeting in order to tell his side of the story. The meeting is expected to be held within the next two weeks.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Return of Einstein summer home brings back memories of Nazi era

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A recent news item reported that the former summer home of Albert Einstein in the Berlin suburb of Caputh, which the Nazis eventually confiscated from "the enemy of the people Einstein," will be returned to the heirs of the famed physicist.

The brief item took me back some 60 years.

I started living in the Einstein House, as we called it, in 1935 as a 10-year-old. The building then served as a student dormitory for a progressive Jewish boarding school called Landschulheim Caputh.

Even though the Nazis were tightening the vise on German Jewry, I remember my two years in Caputh as a rather idyllic time, brightened by some of the most innovative and caring teachers I have ever known.

These teachers created, somehow, a sheltered island amid the approaching storm clouds.

We put on a lot of plays, some classical but mostly those we or our teachers wrote ourselves. I remember playing the role of Thisbe in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," to an appreciative audience of parents.

Today, I recall only a few incidents when the outside reality broke through. In one, we were taking a hike through the nearby woods when we were waylaid by a bunch of Hitler Youth, who started cursing and spitting at us.

Our adult leader was the school's physical education instructor, a burly Jew from Denmark, relatively shielded at that time by his foreign citizenship.

In short order, he roughed up the two biggest of our tormentors, after which the rest beat a quick retreat.

A few years after I had left, the Gestapo closed the school and arrested the principal, teachers and some 80 remaining students.

Few survived the Holocaust.

Skip half a century to 1992, when the German Foreign Ministry invited me to visit the country of my birth as an American reporter and asked me to set my own itinerary. As an afterthought, I put down Caputh as a stop, and one morning a chauffeur-driven car and a guide picked me up at my Berlin hotel.

We drove through Potsdam, largely destroyed during the war, and arrived in Caputh, which had survived unscathed.

The main building of the school had been renamed the Anne Frank School by the East German Communist regime prior to reunification.

In that incarnation, it housed some 24 teen-agers with learning and physical disabilities.

The principal, Joachim Frede, said he did not know what the building was used for during the war.

Frede did know that in 1945 it was reopened as a home for war orphans before becoming a special-education school in 1982.

I asked him to take me to the Einstein House, which with four other buildings scattered throughout Caputh provided living quarters for the Jewish boarding school that I attended.

The Einstein House was now uninhabited, but in good condition. It was exactly as I remembered it: a rambling, rustic, wood-frame house with the outside staircases, balcony and window shutters painted white.

Someone had affixed a simple tablet, which read, "Albert Einstein lived and worked in this home from 1929 to 1932 during the summer months."

I am glad that the Einstein heirs are getting the house back, though I doubt they would ever want to live there.

Its hallways and rooms are haunted by the memory of too many of my teachers and schoolmates, whose short, illusionary safety dissolved in the carnage of the Final Solution. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Women of the Wall takes campaign to Israeli street***By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Borrowing a page from the Lubavitch movement, the Women of the Wall group has launched a new outreach campaign to give Israeli women a chance to wrap themselves in a tallit, the ritual shawl worn by observant men, and some women, during Jewish prayer.

The organization of women in Israel, who greet each new Jewish month by praying together at the Western Wall, got its inspiration for the campaign from the Lubavitchers, Jessie Bonn, a member of the group, confirmed in an e-mail message from Jerusalem.

The Lubavitch movement sends out emissaries to busy streets all over the world to offer Jewish men passing by the chance to put on tefillin, the ritual cases they fasten with long leather straps to their arms and heads during morning prayers.

But officials of the Chasidic movement are not seeing this bit of imitation as the sincerest form of flattery.

Rabbi Zalman Shmotkin, a spokesman at Lubavitch headquarters in Brooklyn, offered only a terse "no comment" and a suggestion that the less that is written about any association between the two groups the better.

Like most fervently Orthodox movements, the Lubavitch oppose the concept of women taking on ritual observances traditionally reserved for men.

Twenty to 60 members of Women of the Wall began gathering each month on the women's side of the Western Wall in 1988.

They were met with violence when men praying on the other side of the mechitzah separating the genders threw chairs over the divider at the women and cursed them.

The men were offended by what they viewed as women imitating a minyan, the prayer quorum of at least 10 men required by Jewish law to say certain prayers.

Some fervently Orthodox Jews also object to the fact that Women of the Wall raise their voices in prayer, contravening the prohibition against men hearing a woman's voice, lest they be distracted from worship.

The women filed a case with Israel's Supreme Court in 1989, a case that has dragged on without resolution.

Both a Knesset commission and a special committee headed by Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman studied the matter and asked the women to choose one of several other locations in the Old City, away from the Western Wall, in deference to Orthodox sensibilities.

For members of the women's group, though, none of those alternatives is acceptable; they want permission to pray as a group, with a Torah, at the holiest site in Judaism.

And since none of the mediated efforts has worked, the group expects to be going back to the Supreme Court soon for a decision.

In the meantime, Women of the Wall continues to meet to greet each Jewish month with group prayer in the women's section at the Wall. They then repair to another, less charged spot in the adjacent Jewish Quarter of the Old City to read together from the Torah.

They may not have received permission to pray as a group with a Torah at the Wall, but their ongoing presence is having a positive impact, Phyllis Chesler, a longtime feminist and a director of the

International Committee for Women of the Wall, said in an interview in New York.

Though there was, at first, great tension between them, now the "other women at the Kotel, including ultra-Orthodox women, are listening, smiling and being friendly and helpful," said Chesler.

"Recently a regular worshiper at the wall invited the Women of the Wall to participate in her kiddush," or brief reception after prayers.

Meanwhile, Women of the Wall is trying to reach out to other Israelis.

After getting permission from the Jerusalem municipality, the group recently set up a table, in busy Zion Square, with literature about its activities.

Members walked up to women and offered to have them try on a tallit.

When the group first offered the prayer shawls in early August, many women passing by were interested, wrote Bonn from Jerusalem. One apparently fervently Orthodox woman, "who had her head covered and was leading a trail of children, declined to don the tallis but was almost eager for her daughter to have the chance."

From this campaign, "women will begin to try it themselves, to experience it on their bodies, in their neshumes," or souls, wrote Bonn.

"From my experience today with religious women, I am becoming convinced that many have a secret curiosity about the experience," she wrote.

"If we want to tap into this hidden desire, to coax it out, develop it, then we must be proactive, excited teachers able to convey our pure motivations." □

**Fire damages huge synagogue in Ukraine's second-largest city***By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — One of Ukraine's biggest synagogues has been seriously damaged in what Jewish leaders suspect was an arson attack.

The fire Monday night at the Central Choral Synagogue in Kharkov completely destroyed the grand hallway of the five-story shul, but did not reach the building's sanctuary, according to the synagogue's rabbi, Moshe Moskovitz.

The damage caused by the fire is estimated at about \$1 million, but no one was in the building at the time of the blaze.

Police say the cause of the fire is not clear, but Jewish officials in Ukraine say they believe it was an anti-Semitic attack.

Moskovitz, a Lubavitch rabbi, said the synagogue would continue to function.

"People are worried that we are going to close the synagogue, but we are not going to do this under any circumstances," said Moskovitz in a phone interview from Kharkov.

The Kharkov synagogue, which has 1,000 seats, is the only functioning synagogue in Ukraine's second-largest city.

Built in 1910 as the city's main Jewish house of prayer, it was turned into a sports complex some 20 years later by the Communist authorities.

The Jewish community of Kharkov reclaimed the building in 1990. □