



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Turbines to be moved on Sabbath

Fervently Orthodox parties in Israel expressed disappointment after Israel's Supreme Court ruled that large parts of an electrical generator could be transported on the Jewish Sabbath.

But a representative of the Shas Party said it was unlikely that Shas would leave Prime Minister Ehud Barak's coalition over Wednesday's ruling.

Jews mixed after vouchers nixed

Jewish groups gave mixed reactions to a move by an Ohio judge to strike down a voucher plan for students in Cleveland on Tuesday, just one day before schools in that city opened.

Opponents of the vouchers welcomed the ruling by U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr., saying that it reversed a poor decision by Ohio's Supreme Court, while supporters expressed hope that the ruling would ultimately lead to a final decision on the constitutional validity of vouchers.

Oliver said the program, in which the state gives \$2,500 to students from poor families to attend private or parochial schools, violates the constitutional separation between church and state.

Sheinbein plea bargain defended

Israel's attorney general defended a plea bargain reached with an American teen-ager who fled to Israel after a September 1997 murder in suburban Maryland.

Rejecting criticism from prosecutors in the United States, Elyakim Rubinstein told a news conference that the plea bargain with Samuel Sheinbein, in which Sheinbein will receive a 24-year prison sentence, is extremely harsh by Israeli standards. [Page 3]

Israel: Agreement near on Wye

Israeli sources are maintaining that a memorandum of understanding on the Wye accord will be reached before U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrives in the Middle East next week.

But a Palestinian Authority official said the talks have broken down.

Hisham Abdel Razek, the Palestinian minister responsible for prisoner releases, said the Palestinians discussing a possible release of prisoners will not return to the negotiating table until Israel states its position on the issue more clearly.

BACK TO THE BOOKS

Bringing Jews in through the nursery: Educators rethink the teaching of tots

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Jerusalem Talmud recounts the story of Rabbi Joshua, whose mother carried him in his cradle to the Beit Midrash, or house of study, so that "his ears would become accustomed to the sounds of the Torah."

Early childhood Jewish education has changed a bit since then, and though the curriculum may be more developmentally appropriate than it was in Rabbi Joshua's time, the field faces a number of challenges.

The bad news is that teachers in Jewish early childhood programs generally have extremely limited Jewish educations. And many schools feel lucky to hire anyone at all.

The field's low prestige and low salaries — they average \$20,000 with no benefits in the New York area — as well as a surge of other career options now available for women, who still dominate the field, make recruitment of new teachers extremely challenging.

A recent survey in the Detroit Jewish community, for example, found that 87 percent of its early childhood teachers were older than 35, with a significant number planning to retire in the coming decade.

The staff of the Beth El nursery school in Minneapolis recently had to call its parents and plead with them to consider teaching — otherwise, it would not be able to continue operating.

The good news is that there are stirrings of change in the nursery.

Since a 1993 Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education report revealed that fewer than half of early childhood educators possessed any Jewish education after the age of 13, a number of initiatives have been developed to strengthen teachers' Jewish knowledge, infuse the schools with more Jewish content and offer greater institutional support. Some are being backed with serious dollars from family foundations and major philanthropic players such as Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation and the Covenant Foundation.

Some examples:

- The Jewish Community Centers Association of North America is piloting a multimedia curriculum that will teach children and their parents some of the key concepts outlined in Pirke Avot, or Ethics of the Fathers. The JCCA also is piloting an "online learning community" for early childhood educators, and will send 22 educators to Israel for a study retreat every other year.

- A Baltimore program, Machon L'Morim, facilitates regular text study for Jewish educators and has developed an early childhood curriculum that infuses all topics with Judaic concepts and values.

- New York educators have formed the Commission on the Crisis in Jewish Early Childhood Education to draw attention to the poor salaries and to press community leaders to find ways to attract new people to the field.

- The Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations has, for the first time, hired a full-time staff person to assist the growing number of Reform nursery schools.

- Two Conservative movement initiatives are offering intensive Jewish learning opportunities for early childhood teachers and helping them bring more Jewish content into everyday programming at schools.

Advocates of Jewish early childhood education are talking about nursery school as

MIDEAST FOCUS

Norway: Syria ready to talk

Syria is determined to renew peace negotiations with Israel, said Norway's foreign minister. Knut Vollebaek made his comments Wednesday in the Gaza Strip before he brought a message from Damascus to his Israeli counterpart, David Levy.

But Vollebaek said Syria's faith in Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's government would not last indefinitely. While in Gaza, the Norwegian minister met with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Arafat invites rival groups

The Palestinian Authority invited rival groups, including militant Islamic groups, to participate in unity talks in the West Bank next week.

But it was unclear whether members of Hamas or the Islamic Jihad would attend. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has been trying to build Palestinian unity in advance of possible final-status talks with Israel.

Palestinian jailed for 13 years

An Israeli military court sentenced a Palestinian to 13 years in jail Wednesday for aiding in the 1994 kidnapping and murder of an Israeli soldier.

Ziad Zohidi Najib, 35, was convicted of allowing Hamas terrorists to use his house in a village north of Jerusalem, where they later held and murdered Nachshon Wachsmann.

U.N. compensates Haifa mall

A United Nations committee approved \$6 million to compensate a Haifa shopping mall that was struck by an Iraqi Scud missile during the 1991 Gulf War, according to Israel Radio.

The Lev Hamifratz mall sustained heavy damage when it was hit by the missile a month before its scheduled opening. As a reminder of the incident, a model Scud was erected inside the mall.

the first step in a lifetime of learning. They are trying to capitalize on the many hours — far more than spent in supplemental schools — that preschool children spend in Jewish schools, and they point to the huge potential of affecting tots at an age when they are most open to learning.

"Children have so much ability — they soak up knowledge like sponges," said Adrienne Cohen, director of early childhood education at the Forest Hills Jewish Center, a Conservative synagogue in New York.

Educators are also trying to ensure that nursery programs are central parts of the institutions that host them and not just afterthoughts or — as has been the case in many synagogues and JCC's — a revenue source to subsidize other programs.

Early childhood advocates are eyeing not just the kids, but their parents as well.

"In many places the early childhood program becomes a mini-community for families," said the Council for Initiatives study.

"For those parents who themselves have weak Jewish backgrounds or little connection to the organized Jewish community, an inviting and supportive environment can pave the way to greater Jewish involvement."

Ruth Pinkenson Feldman, the JCCA's director of early childhood services, did her doctoral research on the impact early childhood education programs had on the Jewish identities of parents.

She found that after enrolling their children in Jewish programs, a group of Philadelphia-area parents "wanted to learn more about Judaism, developed more friendships within the Jewish community and their home practice rituals were increased," she said in an interview.

In contrast, parents with similar Jewish backgrounds who had opted for non-sectarian nursery programs tended to drift further away from Jewish life, said Feldman, who is now coordinating the JCCA's Pirke Avot project.

People are also rethinking curricula, bringing in more Jewish concepts and not just discussion of holidays or how-to's.

"Much of the curriculum in early childhood has been focused on Jewish practice — how to light candles, what to do on the holidays," said Feldman.

While those rituals are important, they "make the most sense when children come from homes where that's already being done," she said.

"If we teach children where our values come from and what they are," she added, a child can apply those concepts "regardless of how many kiddush cups are in the house."

Shifting from holidays to concepts also allows for a more integrated approach to Jewish learning.

For example, the Machon L'Morim curriculum developed in Baltimore encourages teachers to bring Jewish concepts into all discussions and projects — while learning the parts of the body, students might explore the concept of b'tselem elohim, the idea that humans are created in God's image.

But nothing can happen without qualified teachers well versed in Judaism.

"The teachers needed to be introduced to text study as adults and be spiritually and emotionally reconnected to Judaism," said Ilene Vogelstein, director of Machon L'Morim.

The hope is that ongoing training and Jewish study will not only enhance the teachers' work, but elevate their status and — perhaps — pave the way to higher salaries.

Some critics question whether serious Jewish learning can occur at such a young age and suggest that communal funds would be better spent on institutions such as day schools.

But early childhood advocates argue that it's not an either-or and note that successful programs get families in the habit of Jewish learning and encourage them to enroll their children in day schools and supplemental schools.

"We want the families to taste Jewish learning so that they'll begin to build a commitment," said the JCCA's Feldman.

"No one ever left kindergarten feeling they knew all there was to learn about Judaism," she said "There's a world of learning ahead — this is just getting them on the right track." □



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JEWISH WORLD

1,000 immigrants arrive in Israel

The largest number of immigrants to come to Israel in a single day in the past five years arrived Wednesday.

A spokesman for the Jewish Agency for Israel said the arrival of the more than 1,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union was expedited so they could spend the High Holidays in the Jewish state.

Some 35,095 immigrants from the former Soviet Union have arrived so far this year, compared with 25,350 during the same period in 1998.

Nazi's son unlikely to get writings

Israel's attorney general will likely reject a request by the son of executed Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann to hand over the memoirs his father wrote in an Israeli jail before he was hanged, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Wednesday.

At a meeting Elyakim Rubinstein held earlier this month, it was decided that the 1,000-page memoir would be given to German researchers for study.

ADL protests Slovak editorial

The Anti-Defamation League is protesting an anti-Semitic editorial that recently appeared in a newspaper affiliated with Slovakia's largest political party.

In a letter to Jozef Migas, the chairman of Slovakia's Parliament, the ADL urged the Slovak parliament to publicly renounce the editorial in Slovenska Republika, which criticized a former Slovak prime minister for apologizing for Slovakia's involvement in the Holocaust and claimed Hungary was behind accusations of current Slovak discrimination against Gypsies in Slovakia.

It is "rather shocking and antagonizing" to read criticism of former Prime Minister Jan Carnogursky because he "apologized for the atrocities committed by Slovaks vis-a-vis the Jews during the Holocaust," said the letter.

Portugal lied to commission

Portugal tried to hide its dealings in Nazi gold from a post-World War II commission, according to the World Jewish Congress. Lisbon refused to admit to the Tripartite Commission how much Nazi gold it had received during the war and prevented the Swiss National Bank from releasing information about transactions involving Portugal.

Ex-hate criminal released

A man convicted in 1989 of conspiring to commit violent hate crimes was released from state prison to house arrest last week. Michael Bloom, 26, apologized to the Jewish community in a July interview with the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix.

Israeli official defends plea bargain for American teen accused of murder

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's attorney general is rejecting U.S. prosecutors' criticism of a plea bargain reached with an American teen-ager who fled to Israel after a 1997 murder in Maryland.

Elyakim Rubinstein told a news conference Wednesday that the deal, in which Samuel Sheinbein agreed to plead guilty to the brutal murder of 19-year-old Alfredo Tello Jr. in exchange for a 24-year prison sentence, was harsh by Israeli standards.

Stressing that Israeli and American legal systems are not identical, Rubinstein said the sentence is the maximum for a crime committed by a minor. He added that life sentences for adult criminals in the Jewish state are often commuted to 25 years.

"The court has the authority to review" the plea bargain "and to accept it, which is usually done," Rubinstein said.

"It is also authorized to consider otherwise, and the accused know this."

Regarding protests from U.S. prosecutors that Sheinbein could be paroled after serving two-thirds of his sentence, Rubinstein said, "The court will consider the criminal act and its nature, not only good behavior, so we don't know what will happen when Sheinbein seeks early release."

The attorney general was also critical of Maryland prosecutors who disclosed details of the deal prior to the Sept. 2 hearing, when Sheinbein is due to enter his plea in a Tel Aviv court. "We expect the American prosecutors and their statements to be more collegial, as we were to them," he said.

Sheinbein, 18, fled to Israel in September 1997, days after the burned and dismembered body of Tello was found in the garage of an unoccupied house in a Maryland suburb. Though he had never visited Israel before fleeing there, he claimed Israeli citizenship through his father, who was born in prestate Palestine.

Israeli courts upheld the claim and barred his extradition to the United States in accordance with an Israeli law barring the handing over of citizens who committed crimes abroad. The ruling led to a long extradition battle between Israel and the United States that strained political relations.

At the height of the dispute, some U.S. lawmakers had threatened to press Congress to cut Israel's annual \$3 billion in aid if Sheinbein was not handed over.

The Sheinbein case spurred the Knesset to pass a law in April making it easier to extradite Israeli citizens charged with committing crimes abroad.

Under the new law, those who hold Israeli citizenship but are not residents of the country can be extradited, while residents are tried in the Jewish state.

Sheinbein's alleged co-conspirator, Aaron Benjamin Needle, hung himself in prison in a Maryland prison in April 1998, just days before his trial was scheduled to begin. The plea bargain is a reversal of Sheinbein's previous plea, entered last month, when he denied premeditated murder, but admitted to dismembering and burning Tello's body.

Had he been convicted of the murder charge in Maryland, Sheinbein could have faced life in prison without parole. In Israel, he could be paroled after 16 years and entitled to weekend furloughs after six years.

The plea bargain drew criticism in Israel as well.

Meretz Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein, chairman of the body's Law and Legislative Committee, criticized Israeli prosecutors for reaching a plea bargain in such a politically charged case. "In the United States, if they sentence someone for murder, the punishment is very grave, either death or life imprisonment," Rubinstein said. "Here it is easier to convict, but punishment is also lighter."

Rabbi Michael Melchior, who is the Cabinet member responsible for Israel-Diaspora relations, warned that the incident casts Israel in a poor light.

He called the plea bargain "improper" from a legal and ethical standpoint.

"Israel is turning into a kind of haven for criminals who have committed the most grave offenses, like this murder," Melchior told Israel Radio. "The Jewish state should not be turned into a shelter. It is the wrong message." □

Palestinian intellectual faked his own history, writer asserts

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — An intellectual powerhouse of the Palestinian cause fabricated his past to promote himself as a symbol of dispossession and exile, according to the September issue of *Commentary* magazine.

Edward Said, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, has always claimed to have spent his formative years at his father's Jerusalem home.

He has said he attended St. George's School in Jerusalem and that he went into exile when his family was forced to flee in the face of threats by the Haganah, one of the prestate Jewish resistance movements, in November 1947.

After three years of research, Israeli academic Justus Reid Weiner said he has the evidence to show that Said's claims are a total fabrication. Said did not live in Jerusalem, did not go to school there and was not a refugee, Weiner writes in *Commentary*, a neo-conservative Jewish magazine. Instead, Said grew up in an atmosphere of luxury, privilege and affluence in Cairo, where his father — a U.S. citizen — was a wealthy businessman.

While he was born at his uncle's home in Jerusalem during a family visit, his birth certificate states that his home is Cairo.

Said could not be reached for comment.

Weiner, a scholar-in-residence at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and a lecturer in law at Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University, bases his conclusion on research that included delving into school registers and telephone directories.

Said, says Weiner, "has served up — and consciously encouraged others to serve up — a wildly distorted version of the truth, made up in equal parts of outright deception and of artful obfuscations."

Far from growing up in pitiful exile, writes Weiner, "the young Edward Said resided in luxurious apartments, attended private English schools and played tennis at Cairo's exclusive Gezira sporting club, as the child of one of its few Arab members.

"Whatever we finally make of all this," he added, "there can be no denying that the parable is a lie."

Said, who has served as an intermediary between the United States and the Palestinians and who wrote Yasser Arafat's famous "gun-and-olive-branch" speech to the United Nations in 1974, has since become an outspoken opponent of the Oslo accords.

One of Said's claims is that after his family was evicted from their home, it was occupied by Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. In an address to Palestinian students at Bir Zeit University last year, he asserted that "Buber, of course, was a great apostle of coexistence between Arabs and Jews, but he did not mind living in an Arab house whose inhabitants had been displaced."

The truth, writes Wiener, is that Buber was a tenant of Said's uncle, who evicted Buber in 1942.

Also, it was apparently the Egyptians, and not the Zionists, who were responsible for the downfall of Said's family.

The American citizenship of Said's father attracted the fury of Arab nationalists in Cairo who incited a mob to burn down his stores. The entire family business was subsequently nationalized by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

An Arab American organization released a statement this week

defending Said, arguing that the article does not question Said's contention that his family lost ownership of its house as a result of Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

"Commentary's article is an undisguised and clumsy polemic designed to negate the Palestinian experience and undermine Palestinian national identity," said the statement from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

But for some, the article is convincing.

"Said, it seems, was so much in love with the idea of exile that he simply had to create one for himself," wrote British writer Daniel Johnson recently. He noted that Said's work "Culture and Imperialism" identifies the "exilic" condition as the necessary prerequisite for the intellectual or artist to challenge the persistent grip of imperialism on Eastern culture.

Said's autobiography, "Out of Place," is scheduled to be published in September. It is expected to place Said's childhood in Cairo and to dispense with much personal mythology. □

Britain probes charges it helped some Nazis get jobs in Australia

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Britain has launched an "urgent investigation" into allegations it helped more than 100 German scientists secure military research jobs in Australia after World War II.

The allegations, which surfaced in recently declassified Australian government files, suggest that Britain and the United States handpicked the scientists to prevent the Soviet Union from recruiting them.

Of the 127 scientists who entered Australia between 1946 and 1951, a total of 31 were known Nazi Party members, including 10 who had worked for the German company that invented Zyklon-B, the poison gas widely used in the Nazi death camps.

Revelations that German scientists were sent to Australia, first published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, have provoked anger among Jewish groups in Australia and Britain.

In London, Jo Wagerman, vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, wrote Foreign Secretary Robin Cook last week asking for a full investigation into the affair.

"It is of very great concern that people who may have been guilty of the most horrendous crimes were shielded from justice in this way," she wrote. "It is vitally important that the veil of secrecy is lifted from this horrendous period."

A Foreign Office spokesman said the allegations were being investigated "as a matter of urgency."

"We recognize the sensitivities of the Jewish people who are concerned about this," said the spokesman. "We are taking this extremely seriously, and we will be informing the interested parties of what we find out."

The files reportedly show that the Western powers were concerned that German scientists would be recruited by Stalin to work on the Soviet Union's rearmament program.

An inquiry by the Australian government 13 years ago concluded that German scientists were not recruited "if they were considered unacceptable due to their association with the Nazi Party." The Executive Council of Australian Jewry criticized the Australian government for not revealing the reported recruitment scheme in the 1986 report. □