



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Signing ceremony expected

Israeli and Palestinian officials expect to reach an agreement for implementing the Wye accord in time for a signing ceremony Thursday in Egypt in the presence of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The main sticking point in Wednesday's on-again, off-again talks was the issue of prisoner releases. [Page 3]

Israelis told to seek shelter

Residents of northern Israel were instructed Wednesday to go to bomb shelters, Israel Television reported.

The warning was issued after two Lebanese civilians were killed in Israeli shelling of southern Lebanon. Hezbollah has pledged to fire rockets on northern Israel in retaliation for any civilian casualties.

New York appeals march permit

Lawyers for New York are appealing a federal judge's decision to allow the organizers of the Million Youth March to hold their second annual rally Saturday in Harlem. City officials cited the anti-Semitic and anti-white slurs made last year by the march's main backer, Khalid Muhammad, when they attempted to block this year's event.

But the judge overruled the officials Tuesday, saying the right to free speech "applies not only to politically correct statements, but also to statements with which we may disagree and, indeed, abhor."

Last year's march ended in clashes between march participants and police in riot gear who moved in to enforce the deadline to end the rally.

Giuliani defends police action

The mayor of New York defended the fatal police shooting of an Orthodox man who attacked a police sergeant with a hammer.

The police officers, who fired at least 12 shots at Gideon Busch, "acted in accordance with police procedure and acted in a responsible way to save human life," Rudolph Giuliani said after a preliminary investigation of Tuesday's shooting.

Orthodox members of the Brooklyn community in which Busch lived are divided over the shooting, with some protesting what they describe as the use of excessive force by the police and others agreeing with Giuliani's assessment.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Creationism and the Bible 101: Schools reopen amid religion debate

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In Kansas, the state school board decides to remove evolution from its science curriculum.

In Cleveland, a federal judge throws parents and students into a state of turmoil when he blocks a state-funded school voucher program that lets students attend private or parochial schools at taxpayer expense — and then reverses his decision.

In Mississippi, school officials bar a student from displaying a Star of David symbol in class and then change their policy concerning "gang symbols" in the face of a public outcry.

Elsewhere around the country, school districts contemplate posting the Ten Commandments to help counter what they see as a lapse in morality.

As the school year begins, no ground has proved more fertile in the ongoing debate over the constitutional separation between church and state than America's public schools.

While church-state watchdogs say there is no evidence of any trend linking the disparate controversies that have been playing out across the country, such issues appear to have gained a higher profile in recent months.

In recent years, prayer in public schools and during graduation ceremonies has been the primary source of church-state contention.

Now issues such as school vouchers and displaying the Ten Commandments — topics that are playing out in both the political and educational arenas — have been providing additional grist for the church-state mill.

Some experts believe that recent incidents of school violence provided the impetus behind some of the recent activity. But in many ways there is little new about the debate over religion in schools.

"Adults have been playing these games with children for a very long time," said Marc Stern, a lawyer with the American Jewish Congress.

Schools have long provided a testing ground for many of the most divisive issues on the national scene, Stern said, pointing to the battles fought over segregation, women's equality and multiculturalism.

"If you're going to fight about the values that the government has and that are spoken in the name of society, the only place that surfaces in any systematic way is in the schools," he said.

Most experts say the recent attention to religion in schools is simply part of the normal ebb and flow of the debate.

"These issues kind of wax and wane," said Joseph Conn, a spokesman for Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

"Sometimes there will be a few months or a few years when the issues aren't so important, then suddenly you'll have a dozen different fronts.

"Right now we're just at one of those points where there's a lot of discussion on the issue."

The recent spate of violence in schools — particularly the massacre in Littleton, Colo., in April — may have a lot to do with that.

In the wake of the shooting spree and other incidents of gun violence, elected officials around the country have been pushing the Bible as a solution to what they say is a breakdown in morality. School board officials in Kansas made no explicit mention

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hamas says it murdered couple

The military wing of Hamas claimed responsibility for the murder of an Israeli couple earlier this week at a nature reserve near the West Bank.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who has warned that peace moves with the Palestinian Authority would halt if militants continue their attacks on Israelis, declined to comment on Hamas' claim until a police investigation of the murders is completed.

Barak to visit Berlin

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak will be the first foreign leader to visit Germany since the government moved from Bonn to Berlin.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder made the announcement Wednesday, the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. Barak will make the one-day visit on Sept. 21.

New liver treatment offered

An Israeli hospital obtained an experimental machine for patients with terminal liver disease. The machine provides external liver functioning for patients, similar to dialysis for kidney patients, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

The equipment arrived at the Tel Aviv medical center recently from Germany, the only country that has authorized its use.

Approval for its use in Israel is still pending.

Palestinian town to pay tickets

A Palestinian-ruled town in the West Bank is offering to pay any parking or traffic fines Israelis may incur in the hopes of attracting Israeli shoppers, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Israeli sources were quoted by the paper as saying that as the security situation has improved recently, more Jewish Israelis have been shopping in towns like Kalkiya that are located on Israel's 1967 borders.

of moral concerns when they voted in August to delete any references to evolution from the state's recommended science curriculum and its standardized tests.

But some observers believe that the decision reflects parental worries that their children are growing up without an agreed-upon moral compass.

Others see a larger trend.

Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs, sees the focus on religious issues as a reaction to what he calls a long-standing "anti-religion" bias in schools — an attitude he believes is at odds with the fact that most people in this country are religious.

"A lot of this has to do with the fact that the pendulum swung much too far in one direction, which is that religion across the board was really driven out of the schools, and there's still a bureaucratic suspicion, if not antipathy, toward religion," Diament said.

Now he said, the pendulum is swinging back because parents have become "frustrated" by seeing "such a central part of their lives trod upon and sometimes abused in their kids' schools."

Other Jewish observers see it differently.

"One of the things that I think a lot of these issues have in common is that they're all instances in which religious issues are being advanced for political purposes," said Mark Pelavin, the associate director of the Washington-based Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

He pointed to the juvenile justice bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year as an example of elected officials "trying to play political games with our first freedom."

The measure, which lawmakers said was aimed at instilling children with traditional values, permits the display of the Ten Commandments in schools and other public places. The measure stands little chance of becoming law because the Senate has not approved it, and President Clinton is likely to veto any such legislation.

Meanwhile, most church-state watchdogs emphasize that they are not calling for America's public schools to be "religion-free zones."

In fact, most continue to support a wide variety of privately initiated religious activities in accordance with a set of guidelines drafted five years ago by the AJCongress together with a coalition of religious and public policy groups.

The guidelines, intended to clarify permissible activity in order to help schools avoid divisive debates over religious issues in cases in which the law is clear, have since been updated and circulated by the Clinton administration.

While the guidelines delineate, for example, that students cannot be compelled to pray and that religion cannot be promoted in schools, they also make clear that students are permitted to pray individually and that teachers may teach about religious contributions to civilization.

"I think these guidelines have gone a long way toward addressing that confusion," said Pelavin, formerly of the AJCongress.

But he added, "one of the things we've said all along is that in a country this size, there are still going to be school officials that get it wrong." □

California home to popular hate group

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group that combines drug-selling with white supremacy is the fastest-growing hate organization in California, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Starting with 28 members in 1996, the Nazi Lowriders grew to an estimated 1,300 adherents nationwide by 1998.

Members of the group who are in jail have been segregated because of repeated attacks against African-American inmates.

The ADL's announcement came in the wake of several high-profile hate crimes this summer, including the arsons in three Sacramento-area synagogues in June, July's shooting spree in the Midwest and the rampage in Los Angeles in August in which five people were shot at a Jewish community center, and a Filipino American postal worker subsequently killed. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Pamphlet found at bombing site

Tuesday's bombing of an underground mall in downtown Moscow may have been carried out by individuals who subscribe to anti-Semitic and extreme leftist views.

Police made the conjecture after finding at the scene of the explosion a leaflet written by the Union of Revolutionary Writers, an obscure group that maintains a Web site that includes anti-Semitic propaganda. Forty-one people were injured in the incident.

Museum council fires back

The executive committee of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council challenged an attack on the council written by the museum's former director on the op-ed page of the Washington Post.

Walter Reich, who was ousted last year in the wake of a controversy surrounding the museum's invitation to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to tour the museum, wrote that an independent report issued last month vindicates his decision to resign last year out of principle following the Arafat episode, as well as his contention that the institution has been unduly influenced by the State Department.

The executive committee said Reich "is well aware of the fact that his employment contract was not extended for reasons far more pervasive than the Arafat matter," and called his allegation regarding State Department control "simply false."

Judge orders Brunner trial

A man believed to be the last major Nazi war criminal at large must stand trial for crimes against humanity, a French judge ruled Wednesday.

If the trial goes ahead without Alois Brunner, who is thought to be alive and hiding in Syria, it would be the third time that he would be tried in absentia in France. Brunner, 87, is believed responsible for the arrests and deportation to their deaths of some 80,000 to 150,000 Jews during World War II.

Shoah conference held in Vienna

Children and grandchildren of both Holocaust survivors and the perpetrators of the Shoah opened a three-day conference Wednesday in Vienna to discuss the troubling legacy of memory.

Participants include scholars, artists, researchers, psychologists and social workers, as well as survivors and members of the "second" and "third" generations from countries including Germany, Israel, Holland and the United States.

Themes include how being a descendant of either side influences personal identity, the issue of "money and justice," various ways in which the Holocaust is commemorated and the future of memory as the "eyewitness" generation passes away.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Barak hopes for final peace deal on all but Jerusalem by February

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It sounds like a tall order, but Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak seriously intends to have the essential elements of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute wrapped up by February.

With the practicalities of implementing the Wye River accord squared away — a deal on when and how to implement the agreement was due to be signed at a ceremony Thursday in Egypt in the presence of the U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright — Israel and the Palestinian Authority will be ready to embark on their final-status negotiations.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority held intensive negotiations this week in an effort to reach agreement for implementing the U.S.-brokered Wye, which was signed last October.

In dramatic on-again, off-again negotiations Wednesday, both sides said they hoped to reach agreement by the following day, when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak hoped to host the signing ceremony during Albright's visit to the region.

The new accord was expected to include a timetable for the second and third Israeli withdrawals from portions of the West Bank that were spelled out in the Wye accord. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu carried out the first of those withdrawals last November before suspending the agreement, citing Palestinian non-compliance.

The main sticking point in Wednesday's talks was the issue of prisoner releases. The Palestinian Authority called for the release of some 400 Palestinians held in Israeli jails — after originally demanding 650 — while Israel offered freedom for some 350 detainees.

But it was expected that these remaining differences would be worked out in time for Thursday's ceremony.

With this hurdle behind them, the two sides will turn next to the final-status talks, which will tackle some of the thorniest problems confronting them, including the status of Jerusalem, final borders, Palestinian sovereignty and the return of Palestinian refugees.

A formal opening ceremony for the talks was held two years ago, but no progress has been made since then, as the two sides became bogged down in disputes regarding the interim accords.

By February, according to Barak's timetable, Israel and the Palestinian Authority will reach a framework agreement that will lay down the guidelines for a solution of all the key problems between them, except that of the status and future of Jerusalem.

Subsequent intensive negotiations will result in a full-fledged accord by the year's end.

The February document, as Barak envisages it, will be no less historic than the original 1993 Oslo accord, in which Israel and the PLO exchanged recognition and embarked on the interim peace process.

The February document will presumably include:

- acceptance by Israel of Palestinian independence;
- acceptance by the Palestinian Authority that the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees does not pertain to territory within the State of Israel;
- an international mechanism to resolve the refugee issue;
- agreement regarding the presence of Jewish settlements in territory beyond Israel's 1967 borders;

The precise borders of the new Palestinian state will be the subject of the subsequent negotiations, but their outline will emerge in broad brush strokes from the February document.

Barak is operating under the premise that leaving issues unresolved beyond the timetable he envisages will only invite future strife.

Conceivably, the treaty planned for the end of next year could be concluded and signed with only the issue of Jerusalem left unresolved. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Jews rejoice as Torah given to Auschwitz town***By Ruth E. Gruber*

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Almost 60 years to the day after the outbreak of World War II, the shofar sounded and Jews danced with the Torah in the southern Polish town where the Auschwitz death camp was located.

Monday's ceremony in Oswiecim combined joy, tears, memory and hope, as a Torah flown across the Atlantic from the United States was installed in the only synagogue left standing in the town.

"It was an extremely emotional ceremony; very emotional for us all," Daniel Eisenstadt, executive director of the New York-based Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, told JTA by phone.

The specially commissioned Torah was brought to Oswiecim by about three dozen members of the Orthodox Cherry Lane Minyon of Great Neck, N.Y., who donated it to the foundation — which is sponsoring the transformation of the synagogue and an adjoining house into a Jewish study and prayer center.

The Lomdei Mishnaot Synagogue, a small, compact building with arched windows, was built around 1900 and — as one of about a dozen prewar synagogues in Oswiecim — was used until 1939.

World War II was triggered when the Germans invaded Poland on Sept. 1, 1939.

The Nazis brought thousands of Jews to the synagogue before they deported them to ghettos in 1941. After World War II, it was seized by the Communists and used as a warehouse, and in March 1998 it became the first building returned to the Jewish community under Poland's restitution law.

The dedication ceremony for the Torah was an affirmative symbol for the future as well as a defiant demonstration of Jewish survival.

"We danced in with the Torah scroll under a chupah," Eisenstadt said, "and inside the synagogue we all danced with the Torah for about 45 minutes. It was wonderful."

Women as well as men danced with the \$25,000 scroll, which is covered by a red velvet mantle decorated with a tree growing out of a flame.

Then the Cherry Lane Minyan's Rabbi Marvin Tokayer led the traditional siyum ceremony, which began with a blast from the Shofar. Each participant added a letter to complete the writing of the new scroll.

Among those taking part was Moshe Klueger, a Holocaust survivor from Oswiecim now living on Long Island, who had become a Bar Mitzvah in the synagogue.

Klueger's brother Shimon is the only Jew still living in Oswiecim, which before the war had about 7,000 Jews — more than half the local population.

Moshe Klueger broke down in tears, but also danced joyously with the Torah.

"The last time he had been there was before the war, praying with his father," Eisenstadt said.

Several adult children and teen-age grandchildren of Holocaust survivors also took part, as well as about 50 members of the

current Polish Jewish community. A number of local officials and townspeople also attended the ceremony.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation has raised some \$2 million out of a total of \$5 to \$10 million needed for the restoration of the synagogue and creation of the Auschwitz center. Work is expected to be completed within two years. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Venice cemetery, a treasure of Jewish heritage, restored***By Ruth E. Gruber*

VENICE (JTA) — One of the oldest and historically most important Jewish cemeteries in Europe is reopening as a cultural monument after having languished virtually abandoned for centuries.

Just after the High Holidays, Venice's historic Old Jewish cemetery will be formally opened to the public, following an intensive, year-and-a-half-long restoration and conservation effort.

Mayor Massimo Cacciari and other officials will attend the dedication ceremony Oct. 13, which will be followed by a gala reception at the Doge's Palace. The cemetery, founded in 1386, is one of the treasures of European Jewish heritage. Nearly 200 years ago, the poets Byron and Shelley used to go horseback riding there and were struck by its haunting desolation.

"Now that the cemetery has been restored, we plan to enable tourists to visit it on a limited basis, perhaps on two or three designated days a week," said a representative of Venice's 500-member Jewish community.

The internationally funded restoration project was directed by the Venice Jewish Community and the Superintendent of Monuments for Venice. It was funded through a public-private partnership with major support coming from Venice's regional government and the private preservation organizations Save Venice and the World Monuments Fund.

The massive effort entailed the repair, cleansing and restoration of hundreds of centuries-old tombstones, as well as the drainage of swampy areas, clearing of weeds, bushes and undergrowth and repair of the walls. All tombstones were also painstakingly documented and photographed.

Scores of stones that had lain face down were erected into a standing position, and fragments of monuments have been hung securely on the perimeter walls. In addition, more than 100 tombstones that had sunk or buried underground were discovered.

The cemetery was founded in 1386 after Venice's Doge invited Jews from the mainland to settle in Venice as bankers.

Its oldest known tombstone, that of Samuel son of Samson, dates from 1389 — decades before the earliest identified tombstone in the famous Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague. For four centuries, the ancient cemetery served as the only burial ground for Venetian Jews.

Funerals took place in convoys of gondolas that set sail from the Jewish Ghetto, at the northern edge of Venice.

Time and time again its area was decreased, its walls torn down or its tombstones uprooted to build fortifications along the Lido shore. The cemetery was finally abandoned in about 1770, and a newer cemetery, which is still in use today, was opened nearby. □