



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Barak, Arafat meet secretly

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat held a secret late-night meeting in Israel on Sept. 16 to discuss a final peace agreement.

During the 90-minute meeting, the two leaders reportedly discussed setting up a back channel for the final-status talks.

In the past, such informal discussions have been key for moving forward, while official contacts proved fruitless.

The meeting was the first between Barak and Arafat since they signed the Wye II land-for-security deal in Egypt on Sept. 4.

Arafat, meanwhile, is slated to meet President Clinton at the White House on Thursday, according to presidential spokesman Joe Lockhart.

### Arabs still threaten boycott

Arab leaders in the United States and abroad are saying they may still call for a boycott of the Walt Disney Co. even though the entertainment giant announced that an Israeli exhibit planned at Disney's EPCOT Center in Florida will not depict Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The leaders maintain that Disney has still not gone far enough in addressing their concerns about the exhibit.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office said that while Israel views the boycott threat seriously, "attempts to damage the status of Israel and Jerusalem as its united capital have failed in the past and will fail in the future."

### Israel imposes closure

Israel imposed a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip until the end of Yom Kippur.

Palestinians will be allowed into the Jewish state only for "urgent health or humanitarian reasons," according to the Israeli army, which traditionally imposes closures during Jewish holidays for security reasons.

**REMINDER:** Because of Yom Kippur, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday, Sept. 21.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Golan settlers have mixed feelings about the price of peace with Syria

By Avi Machlis

KATZRIN, Israel (JTA) — Rosh Hashanah may be a time of year when Jews around the world pray for peace, but for the 16,000 Jewish residents of the Golan Heights, those prayers were somewhat more difficult to recite this year.

They know that the price for peace with Syria is likely to be the return of all or most of the Golan, the strategic plateau Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. Although Prime Minister Ehud Barak has so far placed priority on peace with the Palestinians, few people here are ignoring his pledges to swiftly strike a deal with Syria as well.

"We are praying for peace — a peace with the Golan," says Sammy Bar-Lev, head of the regional council of Katzrin, the Golan's largest town, with 6,500 residents.

"It must be a peace we can live with, not a Yamit-style peace," he adds, recalling the return of that Sinai settlement to Egypt in 1982, when some Israeli settlers were forcefully evicted and the town was razed to the ground.

Later that year, Israel passed a bill that applied Israeli law and jurisdiction to the Golan. The move was never recognized internationally, and the annexation has provided the Golan's Jewish residents with little reassurance about their future.

Bar-Lev, a 30-year resident of the Golan, talks about years of uncertainty as successive governments debated the territory's fate. He is sure that Israelis will reject any agreement with Hafez Assad, Syria's president, that involves the return of the Golan.

Yet Bar-Lev wants Barak to make his strategy clear. "Life is continuing here as usual," he says. "Of course, people are a bit more worried, and even angry at the government for not making clear what are the red lines. But at least nothing is happening yet."

For Katzrin residents, the temporary delay in reviving the peace talks is little consolation. Many are confused by the government's policies and despondent about the prospect of losing their homes. However, none of those interviewed talked of any plans to violently oppose an Israeli withdrawal.

In part, the moderation reflects the differences between Golan settlers and their counterparts in the West Bank, who include those who are vehemently opposed to any Israeli withdrawal.

For West Bank settlers, life has been a constant struggle against the indigenous Palestinian population who accuse Israel of stealing their land, yet the Golan's land was virtually uninhabited when Israel entered, aside from a few Druse villages.

In addition, while many West Bank settlers are driven by a religious-nationalist ideology, many Golan settlers are left-leaning. They moved to the Golan either to bolster Israel's security or to improve their quality of life in 32 small towns peppered throughout the eerie but breathtaking landscape of brown, scorched earth and volcanic rock formations.

"This is like a small city, but we still have the mountain air," says Leah Ravid, 37. In this year's elections, Ravid voted for Barak, as did more than 57 percent of the Golan electorate.

She also voted for the Third Way Party, which campaigned on a single issue — keeping the Golan — but failed to win enough votes to return to the Knesset.

In 1978, Ravid became one of the founding members of Katzrin, and her first marriage was also the first Jewish marriage in the Golan Heights.

She later lived in the United States between 1982 and 1994, returning to Katzrin

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak plans Sachsenhausen visit

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak plans to visit the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp during a planned trip to Germany later this week. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is scheduled to accompany Barak on Wednesday to commemorate Holocaust victims.

Barak is slated to travel to Paris later in the day and meet with French President Jacques Chirac.

The French leader, who has repeatedly sought an expanded role in the Middle East peace process, met with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa over the weekend and is expected to confer with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat on Saturday.

### Israel presses Swiss on spy

Israel is pressing Switzerland to exempt a Mossad agent from appearing at his trial in the Swiss capital of Bern, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday. Israeli officials made the request out of concern that Swiss officials would reveal the agent's identity and endanger his life.

Swiss authorities filed charges last week against the agent, who was arrested in February 1998 during a botched attempt by the Mossad to wiretap the apartment of an alleged member of the Islamic fundamentalist group Hezbollah.

### Charges planned in Shoah scam

Israeli and German prosecutors are expected to file charges soon against attorneys in both countries suspected of embezzling hundreds of millions of dollars from a German pension fund intended for Holocaust survivors.

The news magazine Der Spiegel reported that two attorneys in Tel Aviv and Berlin allegedly took some \$600 million while posing as middlemen for processing pension fund applications.

Israel first sought Germany's help in investigating the allegations in August 1997.



## Daily News Bulletin

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with her second husband, Avishai, to open a small gift shop at the local shopping center.

"I am worried because I do not want to live in Tel Aviv, and I do not want to move back to New York," Leah Ravid says. If the government decides to evacuate the Golan, Ravid may petition or protest, but in the end, will leave peacefully.

Her husband, Avishai, is even more willing to leave for peace with Syria. He also challenges the traditional Israeli security doctrine that deems the Golan — overlooking the kibbutzim along the Sea of Galilee to the west and the Syrian lowlands to the east — to be essential for Israel's security.

"Israel is no longer a country of heroes and Syria does not need to send soldiers to make war — they can send missiles — so a mile here or there does not matter," he says. "The secret for security is peace."

He is also convinced that many Golan residents quietly agree with this position. "Under the table, all everyone is waiting for is compensation," he says.

Compensation will not help the Golan Heights Winery, the most well-known industry on the Golan. Established in 1983 on the outskirts of Katzrin, the winery now produces 3.6 million bottles a year, and generated revenues of \$15 million in 1998, including \$3 million in exports. The secret to success, says Adam Montefiore, the company's international marketing manager, is Golan grapes.

"The high altitudes and the soil makes this a unique vineyard area," says Montefiore. "To leave the Golan would be a disaster for the Israeli wine industry."

Back in Katzrin, workers at the Golan Residents Committee have just finished toasting the New Year over a couple of bottles of local white wine. In recent years, the organization has led a sporadically vociferous campaign against returning the Golan, and they are gearing up for another battle.

Peace would, says Avi Zeira, outgoing chairman of the group, endanger Israel's security to relinquish its strategic foothold overlooking the Syrian frontier, while at the same time, Syria remains a sponsor of terrorist groups and does not really seek normalization with Israel. Zeira also cites polls conducted at Tel Aviv University which consistently show that less than 30 percent of Israelis back a withdrawal for peace.

Nevertheless, Zeira knows it will not be as easy to rally Israelis as it was during the peak of Israeli-Syrian talks in 1995, just before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, when banners proclaiming "The People Are With the Golan" flew from balconies across the country.

"Since the assassination, it is much more difficult to get people out into the streets," he says. "Any protest activity is considered illegitimate."

Instead, the cash-strapped group is focusing on lobbying policymakers. It is also reviving a fund-raising drive this month in the Diaspora from offices in New York and Los Angeles. Between 1992 and 1996, the committee raised about \$1 million a year in the United States, which made up the lion's share of its budget.

Yigal Kipnis has no budget to get his message out. From his leafy home in Ma'aleh Gamla, a moshav on the western slopes of the Golan overlooking the Sea of Galilee, Kipnis, a farmer by day, has been coordinating a small peace movement of Golan settlers to counter the Residents Board since late 1995.

"Peace with Syria is a vital interest of the State of Israel," Kipnis says. "I would be very happy if we could make peace without leaving the Golan, but we will accept with understanding an agreement that includes returning the Heights."

His group does not actively demonstrate, but Kipnis — who first came in 1978 — says that in small meetings he finds more and more residents signing on to his message.

Israel, he says, conquered the Golan for two reasons: to provide a security buffer for the northern settlements from Syrian aggression and to ensure Israel's water interests. The Golan's streams are the source of about 30 percent of Israel's water.

If Israel can achieve these same two goals with a peace treaty, argues Kipnis, then why should the settlements remain?

"This is a Garden of Eden that we have never had, but a treaty with Syria will not be decided by our personal interests," he says. "The only reason the settlements are here is because Israel believed that peace with Syria was an impossibility. All of Israel's leaders realize this is no longer true."

Meanwhile, like other Golan residents, Kipnis is continuing with his daily routine. As if hoping against all odds for a future unlikely to arrive, Kipnis has just planted 52 acres of mango trees that will yield fruit in four years. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Groups urge immigrant benefits

Jewish, civil rights and immigrant advocacy groups urged Congress to restore benefits and services that were cut for needy immigrants as a result of the 1996 welfare reform overhaul.

At a Capitol Hill news conference last Friday, the groups urged lawmakers to continue the process they began in 1997 and 1998 of restoring certain disability, health and nutrition benefits to legal immigrants.

The American Jewish Committee said it is important that steps be taken to ensure immigrants due process and fair treatment.

### Holocaust deal called incomplete

Austrian banks are lagging in their efforts to provide restitution to Holocaust survivors, but French and German banks are making progress on the issue, said the head of a U.S. monitoring panel.

New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi, who heads a group of U.S. public finance officers that played a pivotal role last year in pressuring Swiss banks to settle with Holocaust survivors, called an agreement involving Holocaust survivors and Bank Austria "partial and incomplete" because it only includes some of the claimants.

But Hevesi said he is "very encouraged" by progress Germany has made toward settling claims over Nazi-era slave labor and that French banks appear willing to cooperate with Jewish groups in providing restitution.

### Congress warned on Web sites

Jewish groups warned Congress about the dangers of hate on the Internet.

Testifying last week before the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Anti-Defamation League urged lawmakers to conduct a comprehensive study of the problem and train federal prosecutors to crack down on bigotry that crosses the line into criminal conduct.

The Orthodox Union and the Simon Wiesenthal Center testified that a growing number of sites are promoting hate, mayhem and terrorism, saying the number has grown from one at the time of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 to 2,200 today.

### Jews for Jesus store protested

Some rabbis in a San Francisco neighborhood are planning to picket the planned opening of a Jews for Jesus bookstore in an area that is home to many Russian Jewish emigres and Orthodox Jews.

The shop in the Richmond District of the city is scheduled to open after the High Holidays.

"They aren't servicing a need. They are creating a need for their service," Rabbi Shlomo Zarchi said about Jews for Jesus, which has its national headquarters in San Francisco.

## Longtime JNF official Samuel Cohen dies at age 66 following brief illness

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — A longtime Jewish professional leader, Rabbi Samuel Cohen of Lawrence, N.Y., died Sept. 10 following a brief illness.

Those who knew and worked with Cohen during his four decades of communal service were saddened by his untimely death at 66.

Cohen held executive positions with many prominent Jewish organizations, but he is most closely associated with the Jewish National Fund, where he served as executive vice president for 20 years.

During his tenure, Cohen expanded the reputation and income of the fund-raising agency, best known for its tree-planting and land development projects in Israel.

He retired in 1997, a year after a controversial probe into the JNF's fiscal management cleared the organization of wrongdoing. But the probe led to a reorganization of the charity.

Cohen continued to work as a consultant for Jewish organizations until his death.

At funeral services Sept. 13 attended by a host of friends and colleagues, Cohen was remembered as a devoted communal leader "who deeply believed in the people of Israel, the land of Israel and the Torah of Israel," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, who considered Cohen a mentor.

During the 1970s, Cohen served in an executive capacity at the American Zionist Federation, now the American Zionist Movement, and at the American Jewish Congress.

Earlier he worked for 11 years with B'nai B'rith, and with the Long Island Zionist Youth Commission, a reflection of his lifelong interest in Zionism. Cohen was an ordained Orthodox rabbi and held a doctorate in education from Yeshiva University in New York.

A physically imposing figure remembered for his deep voice and impeccable grooming, Cohen also had an imposing leadership style.

His firm control of the Jewish National Fund was credited with raising the organization's profile outside the Jewish community and with increasing its annual campaign from \$6 million in 1977 to some \$30 million today.

At the same time, Cohen was associated by some with practices that led to a crisis of confidence in JNF's leadership and questions of fiscal accountability.

A 1996 investigation by a JNF-appointed panel found no malfeasance on the organization's part. It did note administrative and fiscal "inefficiencies," however, and revealed that only a small portion of money raised by the charity for land reclamation was reaching Israel.

As senior executive vice president, Cohen oversaw the institution of reforms at the agency, which his successor believes enhanced JNF's managerial and fiscal integrity.

Russell Robinson, the current executive vice president, told JTA, "What I found when I came here — because of Dr. Cohen's charisma, his depth of Jewish knowledge and his love for Israel — was a group of lay leaders that had a commitment second to none."

Rabbi Bernard Lander, president and founder of Touro College, said he gave Cohen his first job as youth director at the Queens Jewish Center, where Lander was then president.

From that day, Lander said in a telephone interview, Cohen never deviated from the path of service to the Jewish people, devoting himself "to Jewish life and the building of Jewish life here and in Israel."

A native of Asbury Park, N.J., Cohen came from a family of rabbis and communal leaders. His father, Meier, was a long-time executive of the Agudas Harabonim, a rabbinic organization founded in 1902. His brother Jack is a rabbi in Melbourne, Australia, and his brother Chaim is a rabbi and dean of Touro College in Manhattan.

Cohen is survived by his wife, Mira; two sons, Baruch and Michael; and a daughter, Miriam Silberberg. □

**TRANSFORMING A COMMUNITY (Part 4 of a series)****Agencies seek Jewish parents to adopt kids with Jewish roots***By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Wanted: Jewish parents for Jewish children.

Conventional adoption wisdom says that it's nearly impossible to find a Jewish child to adopt. But it's not.

Two organizations are looking for Jewish parents ready to open their homes and hearts to Jewish children.

One is the Denver-based Jewish Children's Adoption Network, begun almost a decade ago by Steven and Vicky Krausz.

The other is the Cradle of Hope adoption agency, which specializes in overseas adoptions.

"Every child, Jewish or not, has a right to their heritage," says Steven Krausz.

The Krausz's matchmaking service, formally known as an adoption exchange, places about 200 children a year. Most — but not all — are considered "special needs" children because of their age or because they have medical or emotional difficulties, or developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome.

The service gets calls regarding three or four children each week from rabbis, social workers, adoption agencies, attorneys and birth families, and tries to match each child with one of the more than 1,000 families who have signed on to their database.

The Krausz family, whom Steve describes as "black hatters," or fervently Orthodox, started the organization after they struggled to adopt a Jewish child themselves. They had had two biological children after two very difficult pregnancies and many miscarriages, and wanted to expand their family, he said.

As Jews, "we had nowhere to go," he recalls. The local Jewish family service organization "wasn't doing much, and we couldn't go to Catholic or Lutheran social services. The county wouldn't talk to anyone who wasn't black or Hispanic."

Then, through a social worker they had met, they heard about a 4-month-old Jewish girl whose mother was mentally ill and living on the street.

The city said it didn't care "if the baby is a Jewish kid," Krausz says, "but the baby's grandparents wanted her raised by a Jewish family." So they began fighting local bureaucracies for the right to foster-parent, and later adopt, the baby.

On the day they finalized their adoption of Elisheva 11 years ago, they were expecting their third biological child.

Since then they have adopted two more Jewish children, aged 4 and 6, both with Down syndrome.

After gaining custody of Elisheva, Krausz says, "we started getting calls from all over the country saying 'How did you find a Jewish child?'"

"There are people desperate to adopt a Jewish child, and people were calling us up saying there are Jewish children who need a Jewish home, and somebody needs to make a shiduch," he said, using the Yiddish word for match.

The couple called dozens of Jewish organizations around the country. "Nobody wanted to do it," he says, so he and his wife did. Since then, they have placed more than 1,000 Jewish kids in Jewish homes.

Krausz says it is untrue that Jewish law prefers Jews to adopt

non-Jewish children and convert them out of concerns they might be mamzerim, the halachic category that refers to children born out of a forbidden relationship such as incest or a married woman's adultery. Products of such unions are extremely rare in the Jewish community, he said, and completely avoidable in open adoptions, in which the birth and adoptive parents have contact.

Most of their children come from fervently Orthodox and Conservative homes.

Krausz says they frequently get calls from Chasidic fathers whose wives have just had their 10th or 11th child, this one with Down syndrome or spina bifida. Many in the Chasidic community, thinking the problem is hereditary rather than a genetic anomaly, believe that prospective spouses will not want to marry their other children, fearing an increased chance of producing children with birth defects, Krausz says.

Other babies come from Conservative homes in which a teenage daughter becomes pregnant. Reform girls, he believes, are more likely to have an abortion, and modern Orthodox girls, he contends, are more likely to place the baby in a non-Jewish home so their community doesn't find out.

Another group looking to make matches between Jewish parents and children believed to be of Jewish origin is Cradle of Hope.

The Silver Spring, Md.-based organization has placed about a dozen babies from the former Soviet Union who are thought to be Jewish, says Linda Perilstein, the agency's executive director.

Perilstein, who adopted two children herself, said the number of children of Jewish backgrounds seems to be increasing.

Sometimes the babies' records indicate their Jewishness. More often the organization and its contacts decode Jewish ancestry from the child's first or family names, which are generally markedly different than the names given by ethnic Russians to their children.

There is rarely incontrovertible proof, so the babies almost always undergo conversions once adopted by Jewish parents in the United States, Perilstein says.

But no matter how tenuous the child's Jewish lineage, she believes it is important that they be adopted by Jews.

"For parents, it's another point of connection," Perilstein says. "If you're not going to have the biological tie to the child, a lot of Jews cherish the cultural connection."

The ancestors of many American Jews came from Eastern Europe and "adopting a child from there helps them connect with that." □

(Jewish Children's Adoption Network can be reached at 303-573-8113. Cradle of Hope can be reached at 301-587-4400.)

**Turkish earthquake scam revealed**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli family that lost four members in the earthquake in Turkey several weeks ago has discovered that someone has been exploiting their personal tragedy for money.

Irit Franco, whose parents, brother and nephew died in the disaster, said recently that someone phoned her to verify whether the family was raising money to pay for headstones for the relatives who died.

After people in the Haifa area began receiving phone calls seeking contributions for such an effort, the family issued a statement saying that the calls were a hoax. □