



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

UJC names professional leaders

Stephen Solender will stay on permanently as president of the United Jewish Communities. The appointment caps a yearlong process to fill the group's top professional slot, which Solender held in an interim capacity for six months.

In an unexpected move, the organization — formed by the merger of the United Jewish Appeal, the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Israel Appeal — also appointed a former assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Transportation, Louise Frankel Stoll, as chief operating officer.

In addition, David Altshuler, director of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage — a Living Memorial to the Holocaust, will head the UJC's new, yet-to-be-named, independent foundation.

Court OKs church-state ruling

The U.S. Supreme Court is allowing Arizona residents to receive a tax break for contributing to groups that offer scholarships to students at parochial schools. The justices unanimously decided Monday to let stand a ruling by the Arizona Supreme Court that the law does not violate the separation of church and state. [Page 1]

Austrian far right scores big

Austria's xenophobic Freedom Party appears to have won second place in Sunday's general election.

Preliminary results showed the Freedom Party with 27.2 percent of the vote, up from 22 percent in the 1995 election, the best showing by a far-right party in Europe since the end of World War II. [Page 3]

Gore speaks out on Buchanan

Vice President Al Gore urged Republicans to repudiate Pat Buchanan's view that Hitler posed no threat to the United States and that America would have been better off had it not entered World War II.

In a statement, Gore called Buchanan's views "an insult" to Americans who gave their lives during the war and said he didn't "understand the confusion at the highest levels of the Republican Party when they are asked to stand up for such basic principles."

Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Republican National Chairman Jim Nicholson have come under criticism for urging Buchanan not to bolt the Republican Party, despite his controversial views.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Cases before U.S. Supreme Court could provide hint on voucher views

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — An important church-state case on the docket of the U.S. Supreme Court could serve as a bellwether for the justices' stance on the controversial issue of taxpayer aid to religious schools.

The high court, which began its new term this week, is slated to hear arguments in a case concerning the constitutionality of a federal law that allows public school systems to lend library books, computers and other instructional items to religious schools.

The case could have ramifications for school voucher programs — the hot-button issue at the heart of the debate over taxpayer funding of parochial schools and long a source of division in the Jewish community.

Although the case does not directly address vouchers, legal analysts say it nonetheless could signal the positions of the justices on the issue.

The 1999-2000 term may also produce rulings that could significantly change the balance of power between the federal government and the states — an issue that carries broad implications for Congress' legislative authority and, by extension, for the lobbying activities of the Jewish community and other interest groups.

The justices are expected to add dozens of other cases to the docket over the next few months, possibly weighing in on various church-state disputes around the country.

In fact, on Monday, the first day of the court's term, the justices decided to leave intact a ruling by the Arizona Supreme Court that allows Arizona residents to get a tax break for contributing to groups that offer scholarships to students at private religious schools.

Without comment or dissent, the court let stand the lower court's ruling that the Arizona law does not violate the separation of church and state. The action could prompt other states to adopt similar measures.

Other cases pending in lower courts about prayer at high school graduation ceremonies and football games may also reach the high court this year, according to Steve Freeman, director of legal affairs for the Anti-Defamation League.

The justices are expected to eventually rule on school vouchers, but it remains unclear whether they will do so this term, particularly after turning away a key case last year involving Wisconsin's voucher program.

For now, Jewish legal observers are focusing their attention on *Mitchell vs. Helms*, a case that will set the stage for the justices' first major church-state ruling of the new millennium.

The case involves a 14-year-old Louisiana dispute over the question of whether computers and other instructional material paid for with taxpayer money can be used by religious schools.

A federal program requires public school districts to share instructional equipment in a "secular, neutral and nonideological" way with students enrolled in nearby private or parochial schools.

But a federal appeals court in New Orleans last year struck down the practice, saying that providing educational materials other than textbooks for religiously affiliated schools violates the separation of church and state.

The Clinton administration has defended the law, saying the program has safeguards intended to prevent the equipment and materials from being diverted for

MIDEAST FOCUS

Ex-Shin Bet agent goes on trial

A former agent for Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service went on trial for allegedly failing to prevent the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Avishai Raviv, code-named "Champagne" by the Shin Bet, pleaded not guilty on Sunday to the charges.

Raviv was recruited by the Shin Bet in 1987 to gather information on far-right-wing activities.

Ex-slaves sue for deprivation

Israelis who worked as child slave laborers for the Nazi war effort filed a class-action lawsuit for "deprivation of childhood" in a U.S. court.

The lawsuit, filed Monday, came as discussions regarding a German compensation fund for ex-slave laborers are expected to resume later this week in Washington. A lawyer for the plaintiffs said the lawsuit, in which the plaintiffs are asking for \$75,000 per victim, was filed independently of those talks.

Dig starts near Temple Mount

Israel launched new archeological excavations in Jerusalem near the Temple Mount, which both Muslims and Jews claim as holy ground.

The move by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is seen as symbolic, demonstrating his strength in peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Anti-Benetton campaign launched

An Israeli peace group is cosponsoring a campaign to prevent Italian textile giant Benetton from opening a plant in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Since the campaign was launched, Benetton's main offices in Italy have been flooded with protest messages, according to officials with Gush Shalom.

The officials added that they had been informed by Benetton that the plant is being planned by a subsidiary over which the company has no control.



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religious use. Several Jewish organizations, along with other church-state watchdog groups, plan to join a friend-of-the-court brief urging the justices to uphold the appeals court ruling and strike down the program as unconstitutional.

The groups intend to argue that the government should not be granting educational materials to parochial schools for fear that the materials can be easily diverted for sectarian purposes.

Several Orthodox Jewish groups, however, have filed a separate brief, backing the administration's view that the loaning of educational materials should be allowed and does not constitute a church-state violation.

The decision is expected to clarify what has become a nebulous area of law.

The appeals court cited previous Supreme Court decisions that have banned any materials other than textbooks from being lent to parochial schools.

But a 1997 Supreme Court ruling holding that public school teachers can offer remedial help at parochial schools raises the question of exactly where the line should be drawn on government aid to religious schools.

For that reason, church-state watchdogs say they will be monitoring the case closely.

"I think it will be an extremely important bellwether in terms of where the court's thinking is on church-state separation issues," said Jeffrey Sinensky, the American Jewish Committee's legal director and general counsel.

A ruling in the case is expected early next year.

In the area of states' rights, Jewish legal observers will be watching to see if the court, under Chief Justice William Rehnquist, continues the judicial trend of curtailing congressional power while expanding states' rights.

A series of rulings in recent years have gone a long way toward redefining federal-state relations, increasingly handing over authority to state and local governments.

That theme is expected to be tested again in a number of cases — most notably, a case involving the constitutionality of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, which lets rape victims sue their attackers for violating their civil rights.

In that case, as well as another involving the right of workers to sue state employers who discriminate based on age, the court will decide the extent to which Congress has the authority to pass laws that affect mainly state and local concerns.

Any scaling back of federal authority over such matters carries important ramifications not only for Congress' ability to legislate, but for interest groups that seek redress at the federal level for state and local problems, according to legal analysts.

That could directly impact the Jewish community, which has traditionally focused its energy and resources on Washington.

A further tipping of the balance toward states' rights could force the community to reassess its political strategy, according to Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

"It certainly means that we have to pay more attention to state legislatures, and we have to be more prepared to shop things state to state," Stern said.

Already, Jewish activists have been lobbying to pass individual state religious freedom statutes following a 1997 Supreme Court ruling that struck down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as unconstitutional.

The federal law was intended to make it harder for government to interfere with free religious practice, but the court ruled that it exceeded Congress' authority and infringed on states' rights.

"I think it's going to be the overwhelmingly dominant theme of the term," Stern said of the redefining of federalism.

"It's possible that we'll be looking at a very substantially altered constitutional landscape between the state and the federal government come 10 months from now," he said.

As the court opened its term on Monday, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was present on the bench, just 17 days after undergoing surgery for colon cancer.

The Jewish justice reportedly had a big smile on her face and actively questioned lawyers during their arguments, putting to rest questions about how a prolonged absence would affect the court. □

JEWISH WORLD

Camp commander found guilty

The commander of a World War II concentration camp in Croatia was found guilty Monday of crimes against humanity and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Dinko Sakic, 78, was convicted of responsibility in the killings of about 2,000 people while he ran the Jasenovac concentration camp in 1944.

The Croatian judge said Sakic "maltreated, tortured and killed inmates and did nothing to prevent his subordinates from doing the same."

During World War II, an estimated 500,000 people were tortured and killed at Jasenovac, known as the "Auschwitz of the Balkans."

The great majority were Serbs, but victims also included Jews, Gypsies and anti-fascist Croats.

Gloved one visits Carlebach shul

Pop star Michael Jackson joined worshipers last Friday night at Manhattan's Carlebach Shul, an Orthodox synagogue that integrates singing and dancing into services.

According to Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, author of "Kosher Sex" and Jackson's companion at the services, the musician is not planning to convert, but has been wanting to attend Jewish services for some time.

"He loved it, he was clapping his hands with the music," said Boteach, adding that Jackson particularly enjoyed a Shabbat hymn about "the mountains and valleys and all of God's creation singing together about the peace of the Sabbath."

Swiss fund's deadline expires

A Swiss humanitarian fund set up in 1997 to benefit needy Holocaust survivors announced that it had allocated more than 90 percent of its cash. The announcement came as the deadline for claims expired last Friday.

Some 310,000 Holocaust survivors have been paid about \$500 each, with hundreds of applications still pending.

The more than \$180 million fund set up by Swiss banks is separate from a \$1.25 billion settlement reached with Holocaust survivors last year.

Ted Arison dies at 75

Israeli-American billionaire Ted Arison, 75, died last Friday of a heart attack at his Tel Aviv home. He was buried at Kiryat Shaul Cemetery on Sunday.

Born in Zichron Ya'acov in 1924, Arison made his fortune in the United States with the Carnival cruise lines.

He returned to Israel in 1990, where his investment group became a leading economic influence, with controlling shares in Bank Hapoalim as well as in some of Israel's largest construction and communications firms.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

European far right feels triumphant after strong showing in Austrian vote

By Ruth E. Gruber

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Far-right leaders across Europe are saying the strong electoral showing made by their colleague in Austria could well be a harbinger of better days to come.

But as it became clear that the xenophobic Freedom Party of Jorg Haider, notorious for once praising Hitler, was locked in a close battle for second place in Austria's general elections, the party's gains triggered alarmist headlines across Europe and drew criticism from Jewish leaders.

"It is a horrible blow against European unification, against tolerance in Europe, against everything that has been achieved in Austria in the last 10 years," Andreas Nachama, president of Berlin's Jewish community, told JTA.

"I am worried about the influence it might have on Europe, on all the surrounding countries. It is the wrong sign in the wrong place."

In New York, the Anti-Defamation League said Sunday's vote has "frightening implications for Austria's political system and society."

At the other end of political sensibilities, anti-Semitic Hungarian legislator Istvan Csurka predicted that the "strengthening of Haider's party will bring basic changes in Europe." Other tributes poured in from far-right parties in Germany, France, Italy and elsewhere.

The words of worry from opponents of the far right — and praise from its European supporters — came after preliminary results showed the Freedom Party with 27.2 percent of the vote, up from 22 percent in the last election in 1995.

It was the best showing by a far-right party in Europe since the end of World War II. Haider called his party's gains "sensational."

The party was just 14,000 votes ahead of the conservative Austrian People's Party, which won 26.9 percent, down from 28 percent in 1995.

The preliminary count showed Chancellor Viktor Klima's Social Democratic Party still in first place, with 33.4 percent of the vote — a sharp drop from 38 percent in 1995 and the party's lowest showing since 1945.

The Greens won 7.1 percent — a major increase from 4.8 percent last time.

Final results of the neck-and-neck race for second place, crucial for the formation of the next government, will not be known for several days, until some 200,000 absentee ballots are counted.

Whatever the final result, political observers predicted weeks, if not months, of complex haggling before a stable government is formed.

The Freedom Party's success may represent more of a deep-seated desire by Austrians for political change than an endorsement of xenophobia or neo-Nazism.

An exit poll of 2,200 voters carried out by Vienna's Center for Applied Political Research indicated that 47 percent of Freedom Party voters backed Haider because of his anti-foreigner policies. But 65 percent said they wanted the party to expose scandal and misbehavior in government, 63 percent just wanted change and 48 percent had long been Freedom Party voters.

Klima, as head of the largest party, is expected to be asked to form a government.

But he has ruled out forming a coalition with Haider, and the People's Party has pledged to go into opposition if they end up third. That means the Social Democrats may have to form a minority government whose stability could prove fragile.

"Haider had one short-term and one long-term goal," said Marta Halpert, director of the European office of the Anti-Defamation League.

"The first was to break up the 'monopoly' on power held by the current grand coalition, the Social Democrats and People's Party, which have shared power for roughly 50 years. His foremost ambition — to become chancellor of Austria — is still up in the air." □

(JTA correspondents Naomi Segal in Jerusalem and Agnes Bohm in Budapest contributed to this report.)

APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM**Mississippi preacher devotes life to birthing red heifer in Israel***By Peter Ephross*

NEW YORK (JTA) — If Clyde Lott has his way, several hundred cows will fly to Israel this December. And the Mississippi preacher has some unlikely allies in his quest: Jews living in Israel and the West Bank.

The cows, the first of what Lott hopes will be 50,000 sent to the Jewish state, are part of his plan to fulfill a biblical prophecy that a red heifer be born in Israel to bring about the "Second Coming" of Jesus.

The return of Jesus is part of a Christian apocalyptic vision of the end of time, which includes the slaughter of those who don't accept the Christian messiah as their savior.

These apocalyptic expectations are being heightened by the approaching millennium.

A cattle rancher and ordained minister with the National Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, Lott believes, like most fundamentalist Christians, that three preconditions mentioned in the Bible are necessary for the coming of the Messiah: the state of Israel must be restored; Jerusalem must be in Jewish hands; and the Temple, last destroyed in 70 A.D., must be rebuilt.

The modern state of Israel, of course, was established in 1948, and since 1967, the Jewish state has controlled all of Jerusalem. That leaves the rebuilding of the Temple, and since a red heifer was part of the sacrificial ritual in the Temple — mentioned several times in the Bible, including in the Book of Numbers, chapters 19-22 — many believe the birth of a red heifer in Israel will signal the Temple's return.

Many Jews believe that the same preconditions will bring about the coming of the Jewish Messiah.

An apparently red heifer, Melody, was born in Israel in 1996, but it soon grew a white tail.

Lott's quest began 10 years ago, when he heard from a preacher that the apocalypse might be approaching.

"A seed was planted in me, and once there, that seed didn't leave me alone," says Lott, 43.

In 1989, Lott drove to Jackson, Mississippi's capital, and asked the state's agriculture minister, Roy Manning, for help. Manning wrote to the American envoy in Greece in charge of Middle East agricultural exports, explaining the biblical connection and adding that the cattle would "adapt quickly to Middle Eastern climate" and be of excellent quality.

The letter eventually made its way — 90 days later and "with a lot of postage stamps on it," says Lott — to the Temple Institute, a private organization in Jerusalem dedicated to rebuilding the Temple. The institute contacted Lott and invited him to come to Israel, which started a relationship that has since brought Lott to Israel and the West Bank more than a dozen times.

After landing at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport for the first time, Lott went to Jerusalem's Old City.

"All we saw was white-shirted, black-hatted, bearded men all around," he recalls. "I'd never seen anything like it in my whole life."

Indeed, when Lott sat down with rabbis who are officials with the institute, one of the first thoughts that came to his mind was, "It

was almost like I was sitting down with men in the Old Testament."

Lott and the members of the Temple Institute, which is headed by Rabbi Chaim Richman, didn't talk about their religious differences, preferring to focus on their common desires to help Israel prosper and see a red heifer born in the Jewish state.

Given modern technology and Lott's efforts to export an American breed of red angus cow, hundreds of red heifers could be born in Israel.

The birth of a red heifer would "unquestionably be seen as a sign from God to take further steps in rebuilding the Temple," says Richard Landes, the head of Boston University's Center for Millennial Studies, which is on the Web at www.mille.org. This could have disastrous political implications because rebuilding the Temple on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, which contains several Muslim holy sites, could antagonize the entire Arab world.

Lott's project is not the only one in which Israelis and Christians are working together to birth red heifers in the Jewish state. At least two other American Christians are breeding similar cows in the United States in hopes of bringing them to Israel, according to Gershon Solomon, the leader of the Temple Mount Faithful, another group dedicated to rebuilding the Temple.

But Lott's project, which he estimates could cost millions of dollars if the 50,000 cows are indeed sent, is by far the most ambitious.

The Temple Institute, which is no longer working on the project and declined to say why, helped connect Lott with cattle ranchers both in Israel and the West Bank.

Lott admits that there are differences between his group and the Israelis they work with. He doesn't focus on the apocalypse, saying his goal is to create a "stable and friendly relationship between apostolic Christians and Israel in which the barriers that have separated the two for 2,000 years will be torn down."

"The common denominator between us is cows," he adds.

The theological differences also don't bother Haim Dayan, president of Ambal, Israel's main cattle organization, who is currently working with Lott.

The types of cows Lott is breeding can flourish in Israel, he says, and "we can make a profit with them."

If Lott and his friends think the cows "will make the Messiah come faster, that's OK with us," Dayan says, noting that two of the three Israeli breeders that Lott is working with are observant Jews.

Lott and the Israelis with whom he works share more than just an interest in bovines.

Lott's group — the Canaan Land Restoration of Israel Inc., which has offices in the Israeli town of Beit She'an — is also working to send a new type of grass seed to Israel. He and some of his Israeli partners hope the cows will increase economic productivity at agricultural settlements across Israel and throughout the West Bank — and, therefore, persuade Israel not to trade this would-be productive land for peace. But as the Rev. Guy Garner, an American from Georgia who helped set up the group's Israeli office, puts it, "The main thing is getting the cows and seeing if God sees fit to have one of them be the red heifer."

Meanwhile, Lott has given up his family's livestock business to focus on the red heifer project full time.

"It's become a lifelong goal," he says. "I don't do anything else. I will be consumed with this" until the church is taken to heaven "or I go to my grave." □