



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 187

Friday, October 8, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Slave labor negotiators far apart

Jewish negotiators expressed disappointment after German officials offered \$3.3 billion to settle the claims of Nazi-era slave laborers.

The German offer, which came on the second day of talks in Washington aimed at resolving the claims, would be shared among about 250,000 slave laborers, about half of them Jewish, and up to 1.2 million non-Jewish forced laborers from Eastern Europe.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs have demanded a fund of more than \$20 billion, but German negotiators said Thursday their offer is final.

U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, who has been mediating the talks, said both sides need to show "greater flexibility."

Talks are slated to continue next month in Germany.

Haider regrets Hitler comments

The leader of Austria's anti-immigrant Freedom Party said he regretted past comments that were seen as praising Hitler.

Jorg Haider, whose party finished second in Austria's elections Sunday, added that his comments had also been taken out of context by his opponents.

Israel cancels prisoner releases

Israel canceled its planned release Friday of 151 Arab prisoners. Thursday's move came after the top Palestinian negotiator on prisoner releases rejected the list of names Israel submitted.

Hisham Abdel Razek said Israel is offering to free prisoners who have almost finished their terms, while the Palestinians insist on the freedom of those who have many years left to serve.

Religious freedom violators cited

China, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar and Sudan could face U.S. diplomatic and economic sanctions for violating religious freedom, State Department officials said Wednesday.

The five countries were designated under a provision of last year's Religious Freedom Act.

The law also requires the State Department to prepare an annual report monitoring religious persecution around the world. The report, released in September, criticizes a number of U.S. allies, including Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Synagogues devise new curricula to make Jewish learning more fun

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — On any given school day at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism on Manhattan's Upper West Side, students are scattered all over the building.

They are in the stairway, painting Expressionist-influenced murals on biblical themes. They are in the classroom, building temples out of blocks, reading along with Hebrew books on tape or listening to the teacher tell a story.

They are in the library, reading Hebrew to each other or confidently rifling through reference books.

And they are having fun. Parents at this 85-family Reconstructionist and Conservative congregation say it can take up to half an hour to round up kids for their car pools at the end of the school day because the children don't want to leave.

Rethinking Hebrew School Part 2 of a Series

One mother, Peggy Dugan, reports that her 8-year-old daughter, Erin, spent the whole summer asking when she could go back to Hebrew school.

Long derided as uninspired places that do little to interest children in Judaism, Hebrew schools around the country — which are attended by the majority of American children who receive a Jewish education — are struggling to re-envision themselves.

Influenced by the success of Jewish camps, many Hebrew schools are exploring how to be more fun and more hands-on.

Some are revamping their entire structures, while others are enriching the curriculum with activities like retreats, problem-solving exercises and computer games.

"We're doing more hands-on things like building a sukkah rather than learning about a sukkah," said Rabbi Joel Hoffman, who directs a community-wide Hebrew school in St. Louis.

The new approach was one of the recommendations to come out of a major outside evaluation of the school.

"The children may learn fewer things, but they really learn it because they're more involved," said Hoffman.

That view was echoed by Rabbi Michele Sullum, education director of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism.

"The only way you can learn something is by doing it," she said, explaining why — frustrated that no one could read Hebrew — her school switched from a traditional classroom approach two years ago to an "experiential" model.

Now students learn prayer by praying each school day rather than memorizing a text.

And they learn Hebrew by reading "Hebrish," an innovative approach in which students read English stories transliterated into Hebrew letters.

The technique, which gradually introduces Hebrew vocabulary, makes children interested in deciphering Hebrew letters even before they have mastered the vocabulary, said Sullum.

In revamping the curriculum, Sullum was influenced by the Montessori approach to general education as well as her own fond memories of having been a "staff brat" at the Conservative movement's Camp Ramah.

By adapting the camp's songs, activities and highly social emphasis, the synagogue

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel changing Lebanon strategy

Hezbollah gunmen wounded two Israeli soldiers Thursday during an attack on an Israel Defense Force position in the southern Lebanon security zone. The attack came amid reports that Israel is scaling back its ground force attacks on Hezbollah positions in preparation for a withdrawal from Lebanon next year.

On Wednesday, the IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, acknowledged that the top army brass is "trying to keep our losses down" by shifting to a strategy of using jet strikes instead of ground forces. The Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported this week that the IDF had launched 100 air sorties this month.

Court hears settlement appeal

Israel's Supreme Court heard a request to halt expansion of the largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

While the justices did not make a ruling, their comments during the hearing regarding Ma'aleh Adumim on Wednesday indicate that the high court apparently agrees with the Israeli government's position that the matter of settlements is a political issue that should be decided in final-status talks with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he plans to review the legality of some 40 hilltop settlements established in the West Bank during the last months of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. He added Wednesday that any settlement deemed illegal would be dismantled.

Lawmakers want cheeseburgers

Thirteen Israeli lawmakers sent a letter to Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg asking that a non-kosher restaurant be opened in the Knesset building in addition to the kosher kitchen.

"I have no objection to the kosher kitchen," said Tommy Lapid, the leader of the secular Shinui Party. "It is time for a free choice."



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Lovy, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

tries to infuse some of its spirit into Hebrew school.

Temple Emanu-El, a large Reform congregation in San Francisco, is also modeled after camp.

Each grade is named after one of the 12 tribes of Israel, and keeps its tribe name year after year.

Children learn in small groups within their tribe and also get together for a variety of retreats and field trips.

"No lectures are allowed," said Emanu-El's rabbi-educator, Peretz Wolf-Prusan.

"It looks a lot like camp," he added. "When people come here to observe the school, there are circles of kids all over the place."

Other schools are keeping children in classrooms, but trying to make the learning more engaging.

For suburban Detroit Hebrew schools, that means bringing in technology. The community's federation is spending over \$700,000 to install computers in all of its congregational schools, train teachers how to use them and create a Web site designed to help children learn about Jewish life-cycle events.

Computers "can make synagogue learning a lot more fun and a lot more interesting," Robert Aronson, the federation's executive vice president said in March, when the project was announced.

Rachel Erlich, the media center director of Temple Israel, a Detroit-area school already using computers extensively, said, "Kids like the computer because it puts them in the driver seat, it's interactive and it's different."

Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, a Conservative synagogue in suburban Cleveland, is engaging students in a more old-fashioned way: through problem-solving projects.

The problems are designed to make Jewish concepts relevant to children's lives and interests.

Teachers are trained not to give children answers, but instead suggest where they might look — reference books, traditional texts, the Internet and even phone calls are encouraged.

In one problem, seventh graders must advise a fictional rock star what to do when she learns that the toys she endorses are made from sweatshop labor. To find the answer, they must research what traditional Jewish texts have to say about labor, slaves and proper business practices.

In fourth grade, students have to help a child decide whether to attend her grandmother's 80th birthday party or a friend's party.

Another problem, now-fifth-grader Jack Goldberg's favorite, involves viewing several Passover videos and then deciding together which would be the most appropriate for Christian students learning about Jewish traditions.

Goldberg, who often brings home the problems to discuss with his family, said problem solving is his favorite part of Hebrew school because "it's fun to discuss and talk about."

His mother, Meryl, agreed, noting that the problem solving has been a "springboard for family discussions."

"The kids enjoy the give and take as opposed to sitting and listening all day," she said. □

Pope gives convert a spiritual honor

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II has declared Edith Stein, a convert from Judaism killed at Auschwitz, as one of three female saints to be revered as a spiritual "co-patroness of Europe."

The pope made the announcement, which may harm Jewish-Catholic relations, last Friday to underscore the role of women in Roman Catholic and European history.

The pope said he chose Stein, a German Jew who converted to Catholicism and became a nun before being killed at Auschwitz in 1942, because her life story "is the symbol of the dramas of Europe in this century."

Many Jews reacted angrily when the pope made Stein a saint last year, saying she had been rounded up and killed because of her Jewish identity, not because she was a nun. □

JEWISH WORLD

Auschwitz disco permit scrapped

The governor of a southern Polish province revoked permission for a disco to be built near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

Tuesday's action came in response to protests that noise from the disco would disturb visitors to the site.

Local officials had previously given permission to open the disco in a building that once was a storage house for the camp.

Former SS officer arrested

German authorities arrested a former Nazi SS officer Wednesday on charges he killed seven inmates near Theresienstadt during World War II.

Julius Viel allegedly shot the seven as they were digging anti-tank trenches.

Viel, 81, worked as a journalist after World War II and was awarded the German federal medal of honor in 1983 for his newspaper columns promoting hiking.

First lady visits Jewish cemetery

Hillary Rodham Clinton visited a Jewish cemetery and a group of Holocaust survivors at a retirement home in Slovakia on Wednesday.

The visit by the U.S. first lady, who is an undeclared candidate for the New York Senate race next year, came after she met with students at a Jewish day school in Poland earlier in the week.

Amtrak to use Israeli technology

The main U.S. intercity rail service bought a new fare collection system that was developed by the Israeli arm of the Motorola company.

Amtrak plans to introduce the hand-held devices, which were purchased at a cost of \$24 million, on its high-speed rail service linking Boston, New York and Washington.

The new service, which has been delayed, is scheduled to begin operating next spring.

The United Parcel Service has used similar devices made by Motorola Israel for several years.

Early Holocaust novel reissued

A new edition of one of the most influential works of Canadian Jewish literature is slated to be reissued later this month.

"The Second Scroll," by A.M. Klein, tells the story of a Montreal journalist who wanders to Italy, Morocco and Israel after World War II in search of his uncle, a Holocaust survivor.

The new text, to be published by the University of Toronto Press, contains more than 70 pages of notes to explain the novel's allusions.

The book was originally published in 1951.

APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM

Evangelical Christian support for Israel intensifies as the new millennium nears

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — After Gershon Salomon spoke in Orlando recently about rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, a woman approached him and gave him a gold watch.

"Here, take it. This is the gold for the Temple. Take it to Jerusalem," Salomon recalls that the woman told him.

Salomon, the leader of the Temple Mount Faithful, a Jerusalem-based group dedicated to rebuilding the Temple, recently conducted a six-week fund-raising tour of North America during which he spoke almost exclusively to Christian audiences.

His visit, one of several organized by Christians for him in the past few years, comes as Christian-Jewish alliances, and, in particular, evangelical Christian support for Jewish causes, continues to grow.

The end of centuries is often fertile ground for apocalyptic movements, but as the year 2000 approaches, this is the first time that so many Christians and Jews have worked so closely together, according to Richard Landes, the head of Boston University's Center for Millennial Studies.

Political changes, such as the establishment of the Jewish state and the recapture of eastern Jerusalem, have led to a groundswell of support for Israel among fundamentalist Christians — of whom there are an estimated 40 million in America, according to Landes — accounting for what he calls "one of the most unusual and powerful alliances in modernity."

This support has made some Jews uneasy.

"During apocalyptic times, Christians have a tendency to be philo-Semitic," says Landes, a professor of history at B.U. "They believe that if they love Jews," Jews will convert. "That's the equivalent of a high school crush."

But alliances between fundamentalist Christians and their Jewish partners could prove disastrous if the coming apocalypse fails to meet the Christians' expectations, according to Landes.

The specifics of the so-called End Time can vary, but the scenario is usually something like this: Jesus returns to earth and has a seven-year battle with the forces of the Antichrist during which the "infidels" are slaughtered. Christians, including all who have converted, are spared the battle because they will be raptured — taken directly to heaven — before the fighting begins. After Jesus' forces triumph, he rules for 1,000 years, after which the final battle between good and evil — the Armageddon — occurs. God then destroys the forces of evil, and the final judgment takes place.

Christian support for Israel has translated to real dollars in recent years. This year alone, evangelical Christians will give approximately \$10 million to fund Jewish immigration to Israel through traditional American Jewish philanthropy.

Perhaps the most prominent Jewish-Christian alliance is the Interfaith Fellowship of Christians and Jews. According to its founder, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, it has donated more than \$20 million to the Jewish Agency for Israel during the past five years to help resettle Jews from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union in Israel. The group has an estimated 130,000 donors, 95 percent of them Christians, Eckstein said.

On Salomon's six-week trip, which included stops in Ohio, Texas, Florida, Idaho and Detroit, Salomon was hosted by Christian families.

"I was excited again and again at how many Christians in this country love Israel," said Salomon.

Salomon and his hosts share a core set of beliefs: a hawkish view toward Israel's security, a belief that the apocalypse is nearing, if not imminent, and a Bible-derived love for the Jewish state.

"I'm happy to love Israel and happy to love the Jews because the Bible tells me to," one of Salomon's hosts, Dick Saulsbury of Odessa, Texas, told JTA.

Saulsbury admits that he and Salomon disagree about the nature of the apocalypse. Saulsbury says the differences "bother me some," adding, "We would love" for the Jews "to become Christian, but that's between them and God." □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Israel tries to make peace with its own history in textbook battles**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis are looking upon Egypt's "celebration" of the 26th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War this week with a mixture of scorn and disenchantment.

The Egyptian commemorations glorified the victory over the "enemy" as if the "enemy" was not a neighbor with whom Egypt has signed a peace agreement; as if at the end of that war, the Israeli army had not been deployed only 65 miles from Cairo.

But aren't the Israelis guilty of similar historical sins?

That's precisely the argument of three new textbooks used in some of the country's state-run ninth-grade classrooms, which challenge some of the basics of Israeli historiography.

This argument, which comes as Israel and the Palestinians stumble toward peace, is a battle to learn about a chaotic past. But, more importantly, it is a struggle about an uncertain future as well.

The issue was brought to the fore this week when Education Minister Yossi Sarid urged the nation's teachers to discuss in their classrooms the lessons of the Kfar Kassem massacre, when Israeli soldiers shot dead 47 Israeli Arabs — including 15 women and 11 children — on October 29, 1956.

"We do not seek to hide and obscure. We do not seek to cover up the shame, but to deal with it openly and honestly," said Sarid, the leader of the secular Meretz Party.

When the incident took place 43 years ago, the victims had been returning from their day's work in the field and were unaware a curfew had been imposed. The massacre was one of the most serious atrocities ever carried out by the Israeli army, and the soldiers who perpetrated it were convicted of murder.

In one of the three new textbooks, "20th Century: On the Threshold of Tomorrow," historian Eyal Naveh uses recent revisionist scholarship to challenge some of Israel's sacred cows, such as the heroic battle of Yosef Trumpeldor at Tel Hai in 1920 and the notion that in Israel's War of Independence, Jewish underdogs triumphed against overwhelming odds.

Naveh, of Tel Aviv University, is not the first Israeli historian to challenge myths, but — with his book becoming the required text book at some of Israel's high schools — it is the first time that the controversial revision of Israeli history has reached the country's classrooms.

Much to the dismay of right-wing critics, the previous Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu approved all three controversial books, when the Education Ministry was in the hands of the Religious National Party.

A spokesman for Yitzhak Levy, the previous minister of education, said that Levy, too, was surprised — but it was impossible for the minister to monitor the "thousands" of committees approving books.

The books are the products of a movement that is more than a decade old. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of scholars known as the New Historians, led by Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim, challenged Israel's heroic image of itself during the War of Independence, arguing that the Arabs did not enjoy a military advantage during the war. They stressed that Israel had intentionally created the refugee problem because it wanted to ensure a

Jewish majority in the newly born state.

These works triggered counterattacks by military historians, such as Uri Millstein, who argued that the revisionist works were biased and intended to magnify the plight of the Palestinians.

One of the major issues of debate is the massacre in the village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem in April 1948, where the Jewish underground group Irgun killed approximately 120 Palestinians, including children, women and the elderly.

Historians differ over whether the bloodbath was an inevitable battle between two warring sides or whether it was an intentionally brutal attack intended to cause the mass exodus of Palestinians.

Some influential writers have sharply attacked Naveh's book in the press. Senior journalist Dan Margalit disputed the argument that the number of warriors on both sides was equal, supposedly breaking the myth that the War of Independence was the war of the few against the many.

"Suppose that's true," Margalit wrote. "The guns ratio was 154 to 25 in favor of the Arabs, fighter planes, 45 to 2, and population: 660,000 Jews versus 50 million Arabs."

Margalit also pointed at another issue now under heated debate: Who is responsible for the Palestinian refugee problem. In his now decade-old book, Morris called into question a long-held truth in Israel: that the flight of the Palestinians during the war was actually initiated at the request of Arab leaders who asked them to leave until the tide turned.

At least one scholar has written about what might be the issue's most important effect.

Shlomo Sand of Tel Aviv University wrote: "My concern as a citizen is that the appeasement process with the Palestinians move forward speedily. For this we need not only good educational books which will mold good soldiers, but also such books which will prevent the emergence of Yigal Amirs," referring to Yitzhak Rabin's assassin.

Whether the new textbooks will help Israeli students learn more about their history — and lead to a more peaceful future — remains unclear. □

Israeli casino idea denounced

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As if Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's disparate coalition does not have enough issues to disagree on, he has added another — legalized gambling.

Barak and Finance Minister Avraham Shochat announced Tuesday that they are considering opening casinos in the Negev Desert, saying legalized gambling in depressed areas in the region could create jobs and stimulate the economy.

The decision was based on the recommendations of a committee that four years ago favored opening casinos in Israel.

Advocates of the proposal are looking at the potential tax revenues from Israeli gamblers, who currently go across the Egyptian border to Taba, the West Bank town of Jericho or to illegal gambling houses in Israel.

The idea encountered immediate opposition from some Cabinet members and lawmakers from across the political spectrum, who said they would establish a Knesset lobby to oppose any initiative to legalize gambling. Israel's religious parties were particularly vehement in their opposition.

Perhaps "we'll encourage prostitution and tax that business" as well, Health Minister Shlomo Benizri said Wednesday. □