



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 188

Monday, October 11, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Saddam said ready to negotiate

Jordan's King Abdullah will present President Clinton with a message from Saddam Hussein when he meets with the U.S. leader Tuesday to discuss the Middle East peace process.

The message reportedly says the Iraqi leader would negotiate with the United States and Israel. Abdullah told Jordanian reporters he was carrying an Iraqi message, but would not comment on its contents.

Jewish school opens in Berlin

A new school for Jewish teachers sponsored by the New York-based Ronald S. Lauder Foundation was dedicated Sunday in eastern Berlin.

The Lauder Judisches Lehrhaus seeks to create a new generation of educators for a community that has grown threefold in the last decade. With the arrival of some 70,000 former Soviet Jews, Germany's Jewish community is the fastest growing in Europe.

"Not many American Jews are supporting what we are doing here," American businessman and philanthropist Ronald Lauder said after the dedication ceremonies. "I ask them to come and see these kids and say to them, 'You can't be here. Go to Israel.' I hope many of them may decide to go to Israel — not as refugees, but as Jews. That's the difference."

Two other Jewish schools sponsored by the Lauder foundation are scheduled to be dedicated this week in Vienna and Warsaw.

Bus accident kills 15 in Israel

A bus carrying Israelis on a singles excursion to northern Israel skidded off a rain-slicked road and overturned in a ravine Saturday, killing 15 passengers and injuring 39 others.

The accident near Tiberias occurred because the road was slippery from Israel's first rain in months. Police investigators said the driver was traveling under the legal speed limit, but was moving too fast given road conditions.

Vatican defends wartime pope

The Vatican dismissed accusations that Pope Pius XII was an anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer.

While officials acknowledged last Friday that Pius XII did not speak publicly to defend Jews during the Holocaust, they said he worked quietly to help as many Jews as possible.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Foreign aid and Wye package get trapped in U.S. budget battles

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's backers in Washington have long sought to ensure that foreign aid to the Jewish state remains above the partisan fray.

This year, however, that has not happened.

With Congress and the White House battling over the budget, Israel's nearly \$3 billion in annual aid as well as funds to help Israel and the Palestinians implement last year's Wye accord have been caught in the political wrangling.

A \$12.6 billion foreign aid bill narrowly passed both houses of Congress last week, but President Clinton will veto the bill because it falls \$2 billion short of his request and does not include funding for Wye, a Clinton administration official said.

Nonetheless, the annual aid for Israel — as well as nearly \$2 billion for Egypt, \$225 million for Jordan and \$75 million intended for the Palestinians — is expected to ultimately find its way to the Middle East. Less certain, however, is when and how an additional \$1.3 billion — which represents the first two installments of a proposed \$1.9 billion, three-year package in Wye aid the administration is seeking — will be funded.

After the signing of the Wye accord last October, Clinton asked Congress to provide Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians with special funds to help implement the deal, which, among other things, called on Israel to undertake a further withdrawal from the West Bank in three phases in exchange for an aggressive Palestinian effort to root out terrorism.

At the time, congressional Republicans raised questions about how to pay for the package. Those questions became moot after implementation of the agreement was halted by then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But now, with the agreement moving forward after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat reached a new understanding in Egypt last month, funding for Wye has become an issue once again.

In a sign of the political showdown over spending priorities, all of the Jewish Democratic lawmakers in both the House and the Senate — in an unprecedented move — voted against the foreign aid bill. Nearly all of the 21 Jewish Democrats met late last month at the request of Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the senior Jewish Democrat in the House, and decided as a group to vote against the bill.

The Jewish lawmakers, who have routinely been the driving force in advocating for passage of the foreign aid bill, say they voted against the measure because it did not provide funding for Wye and because it shortchanged assistance programs in Africa and Latin America. Despite their opposition, the bill passed by a vote of 214-211 in the House on Oct. 5 and by a 51-49 vote in the Senate the next day.

The only two Jewish lawmakers to vote for the bill were Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), the two Jewish Republicans in Congress.

Lewis Roth, a spokesman for Americans for Peace Now, a group that has actively lobbied for the Wye aid, said it was important for the Jewish lawmakers to take such a stance.

"Jewish lawmakers in Congress recognize that U.S. policy vis-a-vis Israel does not take place in a vacuum," Roth said.

"If Israel is going to exist in a stable environment, then it is very important for the United States to be engaging as much as possible throughout the region and the world."

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, agreed. "A bill

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel to uproot settlements?

Jewish settlers demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem on Sunday as a ministerial committee on settlements was meeting to determine the legality of some 40 Jewish settlements that have sprouted on West Bank hilltops since the signing of last year's Wye accord.

The committee approved uprooting illegal settlements, and Barak is expected to make a decision in the coming days.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz quoted senior political sources as saying Barak was inclined to order that about 10 of the enclaves be dismantled on the grounds they were put up illegally.

Conservatives awarded funds

Israel's High Court of Justice ordered the Religious Affairs Ministry to provide the nation's Conservative movement some \$165,000 in funding it should have received in 1997 and 1998. The funding had been denied because of the ministry's discriminatory policy toward the movement, the court ruled Oct. 7.

Jordan protests settlers' actions

Jordan is protesting to Israel over the harassment Saturday of a Jordanian parliamentary delegation by Jewish settlers in the West Bank town of Hebron.

The legislators, including the speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, and their Palestinian escorts had to run to their cars and drive away as Israeli soldiers restrained the settlers, who were returning from Sabbath prayers.

Safe passage's opening delayed

Israel said it would take another week before it could open a safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

More time is needed to set up computers and distribute the magnetic cards for Palestinian travelers, according to an Israeli official.

that is dominated by the Middle East is not a good idea," the official said, expressing a view echoed by Jewish lawmakers and activists who say such a bill becomes an easier target for cuts. But Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, criticized Democrats for holding "Israel's aid hostage for their own political objectives."

He said the razor-thin vote was a "tremendous defeat for foreign aid in general."

Democrats, however, did not seem concerned about being attacked for voting down a foreign aid bill that included assistance to Israel.

"The pro-Israel vote was a 'no' vote," said Amos Hochstein, a top aide to Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee.

Republicans have also accused Democrats — who overwhelmingly supported the foreign aid bill when it first passed Congress during the summer — of voting against this legislation as part of a larger effort to scuttle passage of the various spending bills required to fund the government. After passing the House and Senate, the foreign aid bill then went to a conference committee to iron out differences between the two houses. The new measure was what was voted on last week.

By defeating these measures, the Republicans charge, they are trying to force congressional Republicans to provide more funding for the president's initiatives.

Republicans have also said the president did not specifically ask Congress to include money for Wye in the foreign aid bill. The administration official acknowledged that the White House did not specify that Wye be included in the foreign aid bill, but he said the measure was a "tailor-made vehicle and they chose not to use it."

Meanwhile, the partisan fight over spending priorities put the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in an awkward position concerning the vote, observers said.

The pro-Israel lobby usually leads the way in urging members to back the annual foreign aid bill. Although the group said it supports the bill because it includes Israel's aid, Capitol Hill aides and others said AIPAC did not aggressively lobby for it because the Wye funding — which it has been strongly lobbying for — was not included.

Realpolitik also appeared to play a role in the lobby's effort to steer clear of the partisan battle. AIPAC nominally supported the bill in an effort not to alienate Republicans who were looking for its backing to pass the bill.

On the other hand, it did not want to push hard for a measure that AIPAC officials knew had no support among Democrats, specifically the Jewish Democrats who led the way in trying to kill the measure.

"How can they lobby for a bill that all the Jews are against?" said one Democratic aide.

Those closely following the budget process say the White House and both parties in Congress want to fund Wye, but the question comes down to how to pay for it.

"The prospects for Wye aid are good," said one pro-Israel activist who asked to remain anonymous. "The issue is to find the appropriate vehicle."

After the president vetoes the bill, it will go back to House and Senate negotiators who could work with the White House to revamp the bill and send it back to the president.

What is more likely, observers said, is that the foreign aid bill and possibly the Wye aid could be wrapped up in a catch-all spending bill, known as an omnibus bill, for fiscal year 2000.

"Serious observers of the congressional budget process understand that the push for the Wye money is only just beginning," said Kenneth Bricker, an AIPAC spokesman.

As they await the outcome of the budget battle, the Israelis, who are hesitant to talk about the partisan fighting, are concerned there could be a delay in receiving the aid.

Each year, Israel normally receives its nearly \$3 billion in economic and military aid in a lump sum payment on Oct. 30. The provision, known as early disbursement, allows Israel to accrue interest on the money.

"Israel has started to implement Wye, specifically territorial movements that require the movement of forces and bases and all of the involved expenses," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. "We are already doing our part, and we hope other parties would do the same." □



Daily News Bulletin

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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.
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JEWISH WORLD

Austria vows to bar far right

Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima assured Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during a phone call Saturday night that he will not include members of Jorg Haider's far-right, anti-foreigner Freedom Party in a coalition government.

The Freedom Party came in second in Oct. 3 elections, with more than 27 percent of the vote, according to preliminary results. It could slip to third place once more than 200,000 absentee ballots are counted. The election results have triggered an emotional dispute between Austria and Israel, which has threatened to pull its ambassador from Austria if Haider's party is included in a coalition government.

Official protests shul reopening

A Greek official asked that Jews refrain from worshipping at a 17th-century synagogue that was rededicated Sunday after a three-year renovation.

The leader of Greece's Central Board of Jewish Communities reacted angrily to a letter from the head of the prefecture of Hania on the island of Crete asking the group to "do away with the religious ceremonies" because no Jews currently live in the town.

European Jews want bigger voice

Europe's Jewish communities want a voice in the restitution of Holocaust-era assets, the board of the European Council of Jewish Communities resolved at a meeting Sunday in Riga, Latvia. The group's resolution comes as an effort to reverse what it views as American and Israeli domination of the restitution process. In particular, the council said it wants to participate in lawsuits and negotiations over slave labor, bank assets, insurance claims and looted art.

German cemetery vandalized

Vandals desecrated tombstones at a Jewish cemetery in southern Germany. Authorities said they did not know the exact time of the incident, which came after 103 stones were overturned at a Jewish cemetery in Berlin last weekend.

Bradley to address O.U.

Bill Bradley is scheduled to speak to the Orthodox Union in New York on Monday evening. The speech by one of the two contenders for the 2000 Democratic presidential nomination is the first major speech by a candidate to a leading Jewish organization.

Ma'ariv founder dies at 81

The founder and former editor of the Israeli daily Ma'ariv died Oct. 6 at his desk. Shmuel Schnitzer, 81, who helped found the newspaper in 1948, served as its editor from 1980 to 1982.

Jewish groups criticize as 'pittance' German offer to former slave laborers

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — After months of painstaking deliberations aimed at creating a compensation fund for Nazi-era slave and forced laborers, German and Jewish negotiators are finally talking numbers.

The two sides, however, remain billions of dollars apart.

Germany's largest companies and the German government last week offered \$3.3 billion to settle the claims of hundreds of thousands of workers, including Holocaust survivors, who were forced to toil in factories and on farms to help fuel the Nazi war machine. Representatives of Holocaust survivors blasted the offer as "shameful" and "a pittance."

"This is nothing but an attempt to get rid of a problem cheaply," said Mel Weiss, a class-action lawyer representing survivors. "It's being treated by them as nothing but a business proposition."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs have previously called on the companies to pay more than \$20 billion.

They said the German offer was particularly insulting because, in terms of the dollar's value during World War II, it translates into only a few hundred dollars for each victim.

Jewish negotiators were also taken aback because they were led to believe the initial figure would be higher — between \$3.8 billion and \$4.4 billion, one source said.

"We're disappointed," said Gideon Taylor, executive director of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which has been negotiating on behalf of the Jewish community.

"People have to get paid, people need help. The survivors are dying, and we've got to finish this thing quickly."

German representatives defended their offer, which was put on the table during talks Oct. 7 at the State Department, saying it was final.

"This is about a lot of money," Wolfgang Gibowski, a spokesman representing German companies such as Deutsche Bank, DaimlerChrysler, Siemens and Volkswagen, told reporters.

"There won't be more, and that's it."

Otto Lamsdorff, the German government's representative at the talks, said the offer was a "substantive sum," particularly in light of budgetary constraints of the German government, which is putting up one-third of the fund.

But he acknowledged that the money "is not enough to help all those who feel they suffered during that period."

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

He added that the German offer "represents a basis for serious discussion."

Talks are slated to continue next month in Bonn, and officials are now setting their sights on reaching an agreement by the end of the year, with payments to begin in early 2000.

The German offer would affect some 250,000 concentration camp survivors — 135,000 of them Jewish — who were enslaved by German companies during the war.

They would receive about \$5,500 each, depending on how many seek payments.

It would also compensate between 475,000 and 1.2 million non-Jewish forced laborers from Central and Eastern Europe who were deported and sent to work in Germany.

Forced laborers would receive about \$1,950 each, depending on how many seek payments.

Agreement was reached, however, on one component of a settlement considered critical to Jewish groups.

The German companies and the government agreed to draft a letter or a statement of moral responsibility that would be sent out with payments from the fund, officials said. □

It's back to school for parents as congregations focus on family

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The school at Congregation Eitz Chayim boasted a unique curriculum, hands-on activities and had been cited in the Baltimore Jewish Times as one of the six best Hebrew schools in the country.

But children were regularly traipsing in late, missing school, not doing their homework and demanding to know why they had to be there.

In exasperation, Rabbi Cherie Koller-Fox, the education director of this nondenominational Cambridge, Mass., synagogue, did something simple.

Rethinking Hebrew School Part 3 of a Series

She sent out a letter asking parents to require the same attendance and performance standards of their children at Hebrew school that they do at "regular" school. The letter also asked parents to

sit down with their children and explain their reasons for sending them to Hebrew school.

To her surprise, it helped.

"Parents didn't mean to be doing something that would sabotage the Hebrew school," said Koller-Fox. "But kids pick up on it if they always have to do homework, but they do not always have to do Hebrew school homework. If parents are not consistent, they're sending a message I can't fight."

For decades, Hebrew school teachers and principals have been complaining about the lack of at-home reinforcement for what's going on in the classroom. Whether it's because they don't see Jewish education as a priority, lack confidence in their Jewish knowledge or both, many parents appear to view their responsibility to "teach your children" as ending once the car-pool obligations are fulfilled.

But around the country Hebrew school directors are starting to demand more. Some are simply speaking up and asking that their schools be taken seriously. Others are requiring or strongly suggesting that parents participate in certain family activities, classes or Shabbat services.

What they are finding is that if approached with respect, given choices and offered high-quality programs, parents are more willing to get involved than the schools had thought.

"Parents don't need to be dragged kicking and screaming," said Vicki Kelman, director of the Jewish Family Education Project at the Bureau of Jewish Education in San Francisco. "Many were just waiting to be asked."

While most congregational schools have implemented some form of family education — often just a special program or event — a number are engaging parents in more intensive experiences.

At Beth El Congregation in Baltimore, parents can choose between the traditional three-day-a-week Hebrew school for their kids and Project Mishpacha, a family education track. In Mishpacha — which 90 percent of the families select — parents come in one Sunday a month for "parallel learning" classes in which they learn on an adult level what the children are covering.

They also commit to attending eight Shabbat services and several family programs each year. In exchange for the investment

of parental time, children only have to go to school twice a week.

"Parents know what's going on and can help their children," said Ellen Budish, whose daughter Rebecca is in third grade. "It's not, 'Oh it's Sunday I have to go to school, but it's Sunday, we're both going to school and Mommy will be in classroom down the hall.'"

Intensive family programs can also strengthen the entire synagogue community, said Michelle Shapiro Abraham, who helped develop a series of family courses at the Reform Temple of Suffern, in suburban New York.

The series, called Passport to Jewish Family Living and Learning, started two years ago as an overhaul of a less popular family program, in which parents were required to attend programs corresponding to what their children were learning in class.

The new program, which is required for students in the third to sixth grades and their parents, offers more choices and encourages parents — and other congregants — to help with the teaching.

Among the course offerings: tours of Ellis Island and the Lower East Side, making stained glass mezuzot, volunteering at a soup kitchen and — in perhaps the most unusual venue — learning about the 18 sections of the Amidah prayer by participating in special activities on an 18-hole miniature golf course.

"I've learned an incredible amount, and my 12-year-old has too; he's never complained about going to a Passport program," said Carol Diamant, a parent who liked the program so much she opted for three times as many courses as the temple required.

At Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif., parents can attend classes while their children are in Sunday school. Or they can participate with their children in a Shabbat school called Shabbaton, in which the families pray together and then study both together and separately.

For Lisa Langer, the Reform temple's education director, what's important about the school is that it offers choices and that it's not simply an isolated program, but part of a larger congregational focus on education. Beth Am is one of 14 Reform congregations around the country participating in the Experiment in Congregational Education, an effort to create a "culture that values learning," said Isa Aron, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion professor overseeing the project.

Participants are charged with infusing all synagogue programs with Jewish learning, integrating the school more into the larger workings of the temple and engaging congregants of all ages in Jewish study.

Congregation Beth Am Israel in suburban Philadelphia is Conservative and not part of this experiment, but has a similar approach in its Shabbat school, in which parents, children and other congregants attend classes and services on Saturday morning.

"When the kids were at Sunday school, they didn't want to get up on Saturday, so I had to choose between them and going to shul," Abby Stamelman Hocky, a Beth Am Israel parent, said, adding that she enjoys the "rhythm" of coming to synagogue each week and of having a family respite from the "hectic world we're living in."

The Shabbat structure also encourages family discussions about Judaism, said Stamelman Hocky.

"On the car ride home, you're naturally talking about the Torah portion of the week and some interesting lesson that was learned," she said. "It's not like usual, when you ask your kids what they did at school and they say, 'Nothing.'"

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