



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 77

Monday, April 24, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

King Abdullah visits Israel

Jordan's King Abdullah began his first official state visit to Israel on Sunday by meeting with Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Red Sea resort of Eilat.

Before the meeting, the king arrived in his royal yacht, which was escorted by Israeli navy vessels to a base where an official welcoming ceremony was held.

May deadline unlikely to be met

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators say they do not expect to meet a May deadline for reaching a framework for a final peace accord.

The two sides are slated to begin a new round of talks next Sunday in Eilat.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat was quoted as saying that he is hoping for swifter progress in the talks as a result of his three-hour meeting April 20 with President Clinton in Washington.

Vigil held after shul attack

Residents of an eastern German city held a vigil outside a small synagogue that was targeted with a Molotov cocktail on the anniversary of Hitler's birthday. Last Friday's vigil, attended by residents of the city of Erfurt, came a day after the first such attack on a German synagogue in five years.

German officials, including President Johannes Rau, condemned the attack and pledged their support in finding the perpetrators as quickly as possible.

Y.U. lesbians appeal case

Two lesbian students at Yeshiva University's medical school are again challenging the school's policy of requiring a marriage certificate in order to live in campus family housing.

The April 19 appeals hearing in the case involving the Albert Einstein College of Medicine came after the New York State Supreme Court dismissed the case last year, ruling that the students' complaint should be directed at the state of New York, which does not sanction same-gender marriages. [Page 4]

Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Thursday, April 27 and Friday, April 28.

Finishing touches being put on a long-awaited population study

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — If you get a phone call in the next few months from a stranger with lots of questions, don't assume it's a telemarketer.

The person on the other end of the line may be more interested in hearing about your Jewish identity than telling you about the latest credit card deal.

Researchers for the long-awaited National Jewish Population Survey 2000 — the first large-scale national study of American Jews in 10 years — will start ringing phones in mid-May.

If all goes according to schedule, the field work will be completed by November and findings released by mid-2001.

The 1990 population survey grabbed headlines primarily for its finding that 52 percent of respondents who wed between 1985 and 1990 had married non-Jews.

Although the statistic was subsequently critiqued by various sociologists who felt the study over-counted Jews on the fringes of communal life, "52 percent" became a battle cry in a decade of soul-searching and "Jewish continuity" initiatives.

Like its predecessor, this decade's study is charged with providing data on everything from intermarriage rates to levels of Jewish identity to philanthropic habits, and it is expected to shape the priorities of Jewish organizations and scholars for the coming decade.

Sponsored by the newly formed national fund-raising and social service umbrella organization, the United Jewish Communities, the approximately \$5 million study plans to survey 5,000 U.S. Jews, more than double the number reached in 1990.

Reflecting the changing priorities of the American Jewish community, the survey will focus more heavily on questions of Jewish education, identity formation and philanthropy and less extensively on questions concerning social service needs than the 1990 study did.

Originally scheduled to start interviewing in January, the study was postponed until May, ostensibly so that UJC's newly appointed leaders could have time to review the process and add input.

Planning for the study had begun under the auspices of the now-defunct Council of Jewish Federations, one of the two organizations that merged to become the UJC.

According to Don Kent, UJC's vice president of development and marketing, the input from UJC leaders about their priorities will ensure that the study is more relevant and useful than the 1990 one.

"One of the greatest failures of the vast majority of studies in the Jewish community is that research gets done and sits on the shelf," he said.

But because UJC leaders helped to prepare the survey, they will have a vested interest in seeing the results used in developing new programs, he added.

The survey has snagged its share of controversy, mostly stemming from dissatisfaction with what happened in 1990.

Several Orthodox leaders have claimed their community was undercounted in 1990 due to methodology that may have disproportionately emphasized Jews living in areas where Orthodox Jews are less likely to cluster.

Five Jewish social scientists — some of whom were involved in the 1990 study but not in the 2000 one — sent a memo last summer urging the UJC to, among other things, add focus group research, change the staffing and determine the intermarriage rate in a different way. NJPS planners say they have made some modifications in response to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Chabad rabbi hurt in hit-and-run

The chief rabbi of the Israeli town of Safed was listed in moderate to serious condition after an apparently deliberate hit-and-run attack. Safed police detained a city resident, Meir Baranes, for allegedly trying to run over Rabbi Levy Bistrizky, a leading figure in the Chabad Lubavitch movement.

Baranes, who claims the late Lubavitch leader Rabbi Menachem Schneerson is the Messiah, has been convicted by the Safed Magistrates Court for assaulting Bistrizky in a previous incident.

Baranes was also arrested last month for allegedly carrying out a death curse ceremony on Pope John Paul II prior to the pope's visit to Israel.

Israel to check on MIA report

Israel will investigate a newspaper report that an Arab official is willing to sell information about the burial places of three Israeli soldiers missing in action in Lebanon since 1982, Israel's deputy defense minister said last Friday. Ephraim Sneh warned that many people are willing to try to exploit the tragedy of Zachariah Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz.

Army won't open unit to women

In a reversal of an earlier decision, the Israeli army will not open its air force rescue unit to women for the time being, Israel Radio reported.

An army spokesman said the ban would remain in effect until it can be determined whether women can meet the physical demands of the unit.

Passover marked at Western Wall

Israel's chief rabbis held their traditional welcoming reception for thousands of Israelis who flocked to the Western Wall Plaza on a Passover pilgrimage.

Meanwhile, Israeli police allowed members of the right-wing Temple Mount Faithful group to ascend to the Temple Mount complex, but only in groups of two in order to prevent any disturbances.



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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those critics and have attempted to engage them in the process.

Steven Cohen, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and one of the people who drafted last summer's memo, declined to say whether he thinks the study is still flawed.

But he noted that it has been "significantly improved" and praised its planners for seeking the input of UJC leadership and making it more "policy-oriented."

In addition to the disputes over methodology, the logistics of devising a study that will pack a decade's worth of information into only 30 minutes of questioning — the estimated attention-span time limit for phone interviews — poses a challenge.

"How much can I ask about how many subjects before the person at the other end says 'Dayeinu' and hangs up?" said Egon Mayer, director of the Center for Jewish Studies of the Graduate School of the City University of New York and one of the volunteers serving on the study's National Technical Advisory Committee.

The original draft questionnaire, said Mayer, was over 100 pages long, and his committee has spent a lot of time cutting it down.

Stephen Solender, UJC's president and CEO, recently announced that, given the study's limitations, it will be followed up with a series of smaller national surveys addressing specific issues. However, the budget and timetable for the future studies have not been determined.

One factor that may affect the study's effectiveness, however, may have little to do with budgets, research techniques or length of survey.

"There have been so many phone scams and so many people using the phone to try to sell things that lots of people are wary of answering questions on the telephone," said Ira Sheskin, a geography professor at the University of Miami who is also a member of the advisory committee.

However, noted Sheskin, who has conducted 20 local Jewish community studies, Jewish surveys tend to fare better than commercial surveys.

"On my local studies we get between 80 to 95 percent of people to cooperate, even if it means calling them back after they hang up on you," he said.

Jim Schwartz, UJC's research director, said the study's planners "know we won't get 100 percent" but are "doing everything we can do to maximize the cooperation rate." □

The bagel, now a U.S. staple, becomes a victim of its success

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — America's largest bagel chain finds itself in the hole.

The Einstein/Noah Bagel Corp., which owns 539 bagel shops across the United States, announced last month that it won't be able to pay off a \$125 million debt and may have to shut down unless it finds new financing.

Other bagel makers are in similar straits, victims partly of overexpansion but mainly of changing American tastes, says an article in *The Los Angeles Times*.

The popularity of bagels took off about a decade ago, when health and weight-conscious consumers sought a substitute for the high-fat doughnut.

An average-sized plain bagel has only 1 gram of fat — but 300 calories — compared to a chocolate glazed doughnut's 14 grams of fat — and 260 calories.

With booming economic times, however, and few signs that past diet regimens have notably slimmed the American figure, consumers are ready to live it up, according to experts.

"Americans are either tired of experts telling them what's good or bad for them, or they're just too tired to care," noted the *Times*.

Giving weight to the analysis is the fact that while Noah shut down 14 of its stores last year, doughnut chains such as Krispy Kreme and Winchell's are opening up new locations at a record pace.

To some extent, the chain's stores became victims of their own success, with convenient supermarkets, doughnut shops and cafes like Starbucks jumping in and offering bagels to their customers. □

JEWISH WORLD

Despite U.S. government protests, states pursue unpaid insurance claims

By Sharon Samber

Swiss banks criticized

The head of a commission that spent three years probing dormant Swiss bank accounts from the Holocaust era is complaining that the banks are not following his recommendations.

Paul Volcker also reportedly complained to a U.S. judge overseeing a \$1.25 billion settlement involving the banks that they are unwilling to include all the accounts from that period in a central data base.

Swiss banking officials confirmed that they are willing to publish some 46,000 accounts out of a total of 4.1 million.

Calif. teens held after vandalism

Police in California arrested two teen-agers who allegedly defaced their school earlier this month with hate messages and swastikas after drinking.

The act by the girls, aged 14 and 15, "appears to be a spontaneous act of juvenile stupidity," said a police officer in the Santa Rosa Police Department.

The act, which also included references to last year's deadly shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, came after the diverse community launched a Jewish-led educational effort called the "hate-free community project."

Alleged guard may be deported

The United States moved to revoke the citizenship of an alleged Nazi collaborator living in Michigan.

The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations says Iwan Mandycz, 80, concealed his service as an armed SS guard at two slave labor camps in Poland when he applied for a visa to immigrate to the United States in 1949.

In November 1943, when Mandycz was allegedly serving at the Poniatowa camp, Nazi and SS troops shot 14,000 Jews in a single day.

Baltic leader slams anti-Semitism

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus denounced anti-Semitism and xenophobia in his annual state of the nation address to the nation's Parliament.

In his April 19 address, Adamkus also urged the legislators to take action against the newly elected mayor of the city of Kaunas, Vytautas Sustauskas, who recently praised two men believed to be Nazi collaborators as "national heroes."

Israeli hoopster defeats Maccabi

An Israeli player helped propel the Greek team Panatinaikos to a 73-67 European League basketball championship victory over Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Oded Katash, a former player for Maccabi, said over the weekend during a visit to Israel that he felt a "jab" in his heart with each basket scored.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As a complex battle over unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims continues in the international arena, smaller skirmishes are being played out in states across the United States.

In 1998, an international commission with strong backing from the United States was established to address the issue of unpaid insurance policies of Holocaust survivors or their heirs. The commission launched its full-scale claims and outreach program in February, targeting European insurance companies that never paid out insurance policies to the appropriate beneficiaries.

But some states feel the commission — which is charged with getting insurance companies to join it, publish names of policyholders and pay out those policies to survivors or their heirs — is not progressing fast enough. And they are taking the issue into their own hands. Last week, Minnesota became the latest state to enact comprehensive laws that make it easier for victims to recover their claims.

Two other states — California and Washington — already passed similar laws, and others, including New Jersey and Maryland, are following their lead.

But the states that are taking on insurance companies are running into trouble, not just from resistant companies, but also from the U.S. government.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, who serves as the special representative of the U.S. secretary of state and the president on Holocaust-related issues, has warned states against taking action, saying their efforts could "undermine the work" of the international commission and could complicate other negotiations regarding Holocaust-era reparations.

Minnesota's Holocaust Victims Insurance Relief Act instructs the state's Department of Commerce to assist victims and their beneficiaries in recovering claims, encourages European insurers to participate in the international commission and warns those companies that do not participate that the commerce commissioner may strip them of their certification to issue new policies in the state.

In a March letter to Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, Eizenstat said the legislation could be counterproductive to the efforts of the international commission. Legislators did alter certain provisions of the law, but the governor signed the bill despite Eizenstat's uneasiness.

One of Eizenstat's worries is that state laws could get bogged down in court and the ensuing lengthy litigation would delay payments to survivors.

Indeed, insurance companies in Florida — which acted on the issue prior to the creation of the international commission — have challenged the constitutionality of the state statute. The statute calls on companies to report what policies they had issued, identify unpaid policies and establish a restitution plan.

In Washington state, Insurance Commissioner Deborah Senn has been actively involved in the insurance claims issue since 1997. She wants to press for all the European insurers who sold policies between 1933 and 1945 to release their records, including policy lists, so that Holocaust survivors and their families can check for themselves to see if relatives' benefits had ever been paid.

"The vast majority of survivors have no records from that period, only memories," Senn has said. "They remember their parents' conversations. They remember the horror. They don't remember policy numbers."

A year ago, Washington State passed the Holocaust Victims Insurance Act of 1999. It established a Holocaust Survivor Assistance Office to assist survivors and heirs in recovering proceeds from insurance policies and other assets that were improperly denied or processed.

Roman Kent, chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, believes that the commission is making some progress. At the same time, however, Kent believes the commission is not moving fast enough and that the states' efforts might not necessarily be wrong. "We must bring it somehow to closure," Kent said. "By whatever means necessary." □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Gay couples return to court to gain housing at Yeshiva U.

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Yeshiva University is enmeshed in its own battle over gay and lesbian couples less than a month after the Reform movement affirmed the right of its rabbis to officiate at same-gender commitment ceremonies.

Two lesbian students and a gay-lesbian-bisexual student group are suing Yeshiva University's Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York for barring same-sex couples from living in its subsidized, on-campus married-student housing.

Gay and lesbian students at the university, like other students, are eligible for university housing, but their nonstudent partners are not.

While Yeshiva University is officially a nonsectarian institution except for its Orthodox rabbinical school, it is the oldest and largest American university under Jewish auspices.

According to Orthodox interpretation, Jewish law strongly prohibits homosexual relationships, and Orthodox leaders have been outspoken in condemning the Reform rabbis' recent resolution on same-sex unions.

Although the case was dismissed in New York's Supreme Court on March 15, 1999, the students — backed by the American Civil Liberties Union — are appealing.

They had their first court hearing April 19 before a panel of judges in the New York Supreme Court's Appellate Division.

The students' attorney, James Esseks, argued that by requiring students to present a marriage certificate in order to receive couples housing, the university's policy has an unfair impact on homosexual couples who are unable to marry.

As a result, he argued, it violates city and state human rights laws.

Yeshiva's attorney, Mark Jacoby, said the university has a limited amount of student housing available, and while it can provide housing to the children and spouses of students it cannot "open that up to all people who want to live with a partner."

He also noted that the university does not permit unmarried heterosexual partners to live together in university housing.

Asked by one of the judges if the university would recognize a same-sex marriage certificate from a government that recognizes same-sex marriages, Jacoby said it would, but Esseks stated that no state or nation recognizes gay marriages.

The Vermont Senate last week approved "civil unions," giving same-gender couples all the benefits of marriage under state law, but the vote recognized these unions only in Vermont.

The plaintiffs do not have legal domestic partnership agreements, and the university would not recognize it if they did.

It is not clear when the judges will issue a ruling.

In dismissing the original case, the judge wrote, "Einstein is not responsible for the fact that gay and lesbian students are unable to provide the college with a marriage certificate that validates their relationship with their partner.

"The plaintiffs' real complaint lies not with the defendants but, rather, with the refusal of the New York state legislature to sanction same-sex marriages."

During last week's hearing, the plaintiffs and about 15 friends

sat quietly in the seats reserved for observers. One of the plaintiffs, fourth-year medical student Sara Levin, 26, held the hand of her partner, Carla Richmond.

The other plaintiffs are: third-year medical student Maggie Jones, who has broken up with her domestic partner since the case was dismissed last year; and Gila Wildfire, acting in her capacity as secretary of the Einstein Association of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals.

With Levin approaching graduation and Jones no longer with her partner, the case's outcome will not affect them personally. Both said they are appealing nonetheless to help future students affected by the school's housing policy.

"Cases like this will determine how any institution designs its policies, and I'll be involved in lots of institutions as a doctor," said Levin after the hearing, shortly before leaving to prepare for a Passover seder.

Although when she enrolled she knew university housing was restricted to students and their spouses, Levin said she had "assumed they would accept a domestic partnership."

Richmond, a social worker who has been Levin's partner for eight years, said the two have been living in Brooklyn — a lengthy commute — because they were unable to find safe, affordable housing close to the medical school's Bronx campus.

"It's been an additional stress on her in what's already a stressful process," Richmond said. "She's had to make choices between being in an environment in which she has ready access and losing sleep because of having to commute, but having the support of a partner."

The two met as undergraduates at Columbia University.

Asked if they were united in a commitment ceremony, they said, "Not yet."

Interviewed after the hearing, their lawyer said that other New York universities with married-student housing, such as Columbia, make those facilities available to gay couples.

Yeshiva officials declined to comment on the case, but noted in a statement that the 1999 decision ruled that "our student housing policies are in full compliance with all anti-discrimination laws."

Because the appeal is pending, "no further comment would be appropriate at that time," adds the statement.

Although commonly thought of as an Orthodox institution, Yeshiva University has been chartered since 1969 as nonsectarian, enabling it to receive state and federal funding.

That nonsectarian status means it must abide by various anti-discrimination laws, forcing it at times to adopt policies offensive to the religious sensibilities of some of its alumni and donors.

In the mid-1990s, it refused to ban gay student groups at Einstein and its law school, despite demands from some Orthodox students and alumni. □

K.C. kosher wine OK'd

NEW YORK (JTA) — The state of Kansas will allow Kansas City's two kosher food stores to again sell wine as long as it is under supervision of the area's rabbinate.

Because of a recent reinterpretation of a state law, the state had told the stores they could only sell wine to rabbis and synagogues, a policy that would have forced many of the city's Jews to travel to nearby Missouri for kosher wine. □