



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 127

Friday, July 7, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Reform center in Israel attacked

Vandals attacked the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College center in Jerusalem.

Several glass windows were smashed Thursday and the word "Satan" was spray-painted in black near the building.

Several non-Orthodox institutions in Israel have been attacked in recent weeks. [Page 3]

Groups warned not to press Iran

Efforts by Jewish groups to help 10 Iranian Jews sentenced to prison for espionage will backfire, according to the defendants' lead lawyer.

"These pressures from abroad, which have taken the form of media onslaughts to incite public opinion, will have a negative effect on the case," Esmail Nasseritold Reuters.

"This is not in the interest of our clients."

Expectations low for summit

Israel and the Palestinians are playing down expectations for next week's summit meeting.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said the chances were 50-50, "like the toss of a coin," of reaching an agreement at the Camp David meeting.

Palestinian officials predicted the summit would fail.

JNF suspends workers

The Jewish National Fund said it suspended workers involved in the alleged uprooting of saplings planted by tourists.

The JNF also announced that retired Israeli Judge Arie Segelson will head an independent examination of the issue.

In addition, the JNF said it plans to sue the Israeli daily Ma'ariv, which first ran an article describing the incidents.

Germany passes slave labor bill

The German Parliament passed a bill establishing a \$5 billion fund for Nazi-era slave laborers.

As a result, payments could begin later this year, German officials said.

The lawmakers also passed a resolution apologizing to victims for what the Nazis did to them, including "taking away their rights, displacement, maltreatment and exploitation."

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Family education gains popularity even as it earns some average grades

By Julie Wiener

BOSTON (JTA) — It's an unseasonably hot Sunday morning in May, and about 20 parents clad mainly in T-shirts and shorts are joining their fourth-grade children in Temple Aliyah's modern, air-conditioned social hall.

The families in this affluent suburban Conservative shul here chat over bagels and orange juice, then begin a series of activities to learn about Israel.

They sort through Israeli postcards, discuss what the Jewish state means to them and watch a video about modern Israeli life. Each child makes a gold and silver-foil mizrach, a ritual object hung in the home to indicate the direction of Jerusalem.

"It's hands-on. You meet the other parents. It gets the kids out of the classroom," says Judi Appelstein, who has been catching up with her friend, Ellen Sherman, while their two daughters decorate their projects.

"It's fun to get out of Hebrew school," says Judi's daughter, Melissa, as an unidentified baby crawls by and tickles her feet.

So goes one program in Boston's flagship federation-synagogue family education partnership: Sh'arim, which means gateways.

Through Sh'arim, part of Boston's Commission on Jewish Continuity, the local federation helps fund part- and full-time family educators in 18 synagogues and sponsors training and professional development for them.

Since the early 1980s, Jewish educators have recognized that they need to engage parents more in their children's religious education.

While virtually all American congregations have brought in some elements of family education — whether occasional parent-child programs or more structured classes for parents — few have gone as far as Boston in encouraging congregations to hire staff people to develop family education programs. During the past five years, that effort has had mixed results, according to a study released earlier this year.

One of the most comprehensive on Jewish family education to date, the study was conducted by Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

It finds that parents in congregations participating in Sh'arim report a stronger attachment to Judaism and attend prayer services more frequently than before the program began in 1995. Synagogues offer an average of 25 family programs each year and are increasingly committed to making family education a central component of their offerings. However, the study also reports that parents' sense of connection to the congregation "increased only slightly."

Furthermore, according to the report, "there is little evidence to date that Sh'arim has had widespread impact on the Jewish quality of families' lives at home and in the community."

It has also had little impact so far on keeping kids involved after their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, said Carolyn Keller, director of the Commission on Jewish Continuity here.

She said the report will likely spur the community to think more about how to get families to bring what they're learning in synagogue programs into their homes.

That's "much harder" than simply running interesting programs, Keller said.

The study's findings are being shared with synagogues and family educators throughout the country. Participating Boston congregations are receiving detailed breakdowns of their own numbers so they can determine how successful their own programs have been. Asked what other communities might learn from the study, Susan

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.S. may pay if China deal nixed

The United States is considering compensating Israel if it cancels a planned sale of an advanced airborne radar system to China. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that the compensation might come in the form of an increased aid package for any future Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

Parties urged to stay in gov't

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak urged the *Yisrael Ba'Aliyah* and National Religious parties not to rush to pull out of the government because of next week's planned summit on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The parties are opposed to the concessions they expect Barak will make to the Palestinians.

Weizman to resign Monday

Israeli President Ezer Weizman is expected to submit his resignation on Monday, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported.

Weizman is stepping down in the shadow of an investigation over his acceptance of cash gifts.

Israel protests violations

Israel is protesting to the United Nations over Lebanese violations of Israeli sovereignty along the border.

The Israel Defense Force said Lebanese civilians are throwing rocks at Israeli civilians and military personnel, interfering with construction of a new border fence.

Minister denies agents' charges

Israel's deputy defense minister rejected reported claims by former Mossad agents that Israel gave no backing to an agent on trial in Switzerland for a bungled phone-tapping operation.

"There is no problem of political backing for the Mossad," Ephraim Sneh told Israel Radio.



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.

Shevitz, director of Brandeis University's Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service and one of the researchers, said, "Change cannot be expected overnight, and most clear changes happened in the congregations themselves and not the family, which is logical."

The report found that Jewish family education "has become an accepted part of" the congregations participating in Sh'arim, with most creating family education committees represented on the synagogue board.

As for what it takes for a family to increase its Jewish observance at home, the Boston study offers no specific answers, but urges those involved in family education to "explore new strategies for enhancing the impact of family education on home practices." It does not list any specific strategies.

Risa Gruberger, director of the Los Angeles-based Whizin Institute for Jewish Family Life, praised the Boston Jewish community for doing the study, noting that it is the most comprehensive research available so far on the topic.

However, Gruberger, whose foundation sponsors conferences on and circulates research about Jewish family education, cautioned against using the study — particularly the finding on the failure to transform home lives — to draw broad conclusions about the effectiveness of Jewish family education.

While the study "affects the larger field," Gruberger noted that it is also specific to one metropolitan area and a limited number of congregations, and that other communities may have different experiences.

As for the finding that Boston's program did not significantly increase families' feeling of connectedness to the synagogue, Gruberger said it is important to look at the "big picture" of the culture of the temple to understand why change may not occur, something currently being explored through various national synagogue renewal efforts.

While somewhat amorphous, the renewal efforts — which are being implemented in a relatively small number of congregations, but under discussion elsewhere — primarily revolve around strengthening community in the synagogue and making the institutions more welcoming and spiritually rewarding.

Most of the efforts also place a strong emphasis on education, seeking to involve parents and other adults as well as the children who attend Hebrew school.

Vicky Kelman, director of family education for San Francisco's Bureau of Jewish Education and a pioneer in the field, said the fact that Boston's family education program has not significantly affected families' connections to the synagogue or home behavior is "disturbing" and "tells me that's something we need to work on refining."

However, she noted that while "the purpose of Jewish family education is for families to take charge of their own Jewish lives and not be totally dependent on Jewish institutions to provide them with a Jewish life," ritual observance in the home might not be the best measure of whether such education is successful.

"If you come to synagogue with your kid, you may be drawn to greater Jewish involvement, but that might be going on an Israel trip with the family, sending your kid to a Jewish summer camp, forming a havurah with friends for a Shabbat dinner," said Kelman.

"That might not answer on a checklist of: 'Do you celebrate Chanukah and celebrate Passover?'"

Back in Temple Aliyah's social hall, teacher Nurit Gilon confirmed that family education still has a long way to go.

Walking around the room as children worked on projects with their parents, she called the effort "just a beginning," adding that it would be more effective to have parents in the classrooms on a regular basis, and not just coming to isolated activities.

Nonetheless, parents there seemed pleased as they shepherded their children out to the parking lot.

"How can I expect my son to make an attachment if I don't participate?" asked Nate Harel, who was born in Israel and said he wanted his children to learn more about the Jewish state.

Like many parents at the program, he said his own religious education was considerably weaker than what his children are getting at Temple Aliyah.

"I'm learning more than I ever knew, and it's good from that perspective," he said of the family education programs. □

JEWISH WORLD

Israel's Reform campus vandalized in another attack on liberal Judaism

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Vandals struck the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College in Israel this week, smashing glass windows and doors and spray-painting the word "Satan" in black letters on the ground.

Thursday's attack on the institute was the second on the HUC after a door was smashed there a few weeks ago.

It was also the fifth recent attack on a non-Orthodox institution, the most serious being the torching of a Conservative synagogue in Jerusalem last week.

"This has become a wave," said Motti Inbari, spokesman for the Reform movement in Israel. "There is a connection between the incidents."

Reform officials notified the police and said no suspects have yet been apprehended.

However, they said, night workers on the scene said men dressed in haredi, or fervently Orthodox, garb were seen nearby before the attack.

Rabbi David Rosen, the modern Orthodox director of the Anti-Defamation League's Israel office, said the perpetrators of recent attacks and those who agree with them must be taught "in schools and synagogues, through the media and from political and religious leaders," that differences of opinions must be accepted in a democracy.

"These acts, which seek to curtail freedom of religious expression, undermine democratic rule," he said.

The burning of the Ya'ar Ramot Conservative synagogue last week sparked a landmark condemnation from Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, Israel's Orthodox Ashkenazi chief rabbi. Condemnations were also voiced from some fervently Orthodox political leaders and printed in the haredi press.

However, Reform and Conservative leaders complained that many of these statements were ambiguous. Some even accused the liberal streams of carrying out the attack on their own synagogue to gain sympathy.

Meanwhile, Aharon Barak, president of Israel's Supreme Court, has promised a swift ruling on the legitimacy of non-Orthodox conversions in Israel.

If the court chooses to rule, it could create the most significant precedent ever on the conversion issue, which has been at the core of the pluralism debate and Israel-Diaspora tensions in recent years. □

Poland's new foreign minister rescued Jews during World War II

By Ruth E. Gruber

WROCLAW, Poland (JTA) — Poland's choice of an Auschwitz survivor as foreign minister has been enthusiastically welcomed by the Polish Jewish community. Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, 78, was granted honorary Israeli citizenship, and made a Righteous Gentile by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

"He is an excellent choice," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a member of the leadership of the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland. "He has an unbelievable record in Jewish affairs."

Bartoszewski was named last week to replace Bronislaw Geremek, who stepped down when the Freedom Union Party pulled out of the Polish government. Geremek, who is of Jewish ancestry, is a highly respected figure.

Bartoszewski served briefly as foreign minister in 1995. During his tenure, he created the post of special Polish Ambassador to the Jewish Diaspora as part of his decades-long commitment to improving relations between Poles and Jews.

As a young man during World War II, Bartoszewski actively rescued Jews.

He survived eight months as a political prisoner at Auschwitz, where he was used as forced labor to build the camp complex. Later, he joined the Resistance and took part in the bloody Warsaw Uprising against the Nazis in 1944. □

Coalition backs religion bill

A coalition of Jewish groups approved a bill to protect religious liberty.

The coalition, which includes the Orthodox Union, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Congress, agreed to support an abridged version of the Religious Liberty Protection Act after many groups abandoned support of a broader version of the bill last September.

The bill now covers such religious rights as land use and the rights of institutionalized persons, including prisoners. The bill is expected to reach the Senate next week.

Burger King boycott sought again

A U.S. Muslim group is calling for the renewal of a boycott against Burger King.

American Muslims for Jerusalem charged that the fast food company reneged on a pledge made last August to remove its logo and products from a food court in the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim.

Candidate denies anti-Semitism

An anti-Semitic allegation surfaced against a candidate in the heated race for the leadership of Canada's official opposition party.

At a rally for Stockwell Day, a Christian fundamentalist from Alberta, someone asked whether he had once "taught at a school where Jews were described as children of the devil."

Day quickly denied the allegation.

Holocaust denier drops out

A German university student withdrew from a doctoral program in New Zealand after it was revealed that he had been involved in extremist politics in Germany and Holocaust denial on the Internet.

Hans Kupka withdrew after a series of demonstrations were held at the school, including a vigil of protesters wearing yellow stars similar to those Jews were forced to wear during World War II.

Rabbi is eligible bachelor

A Conservative rabbi in Los Angeles is one of People magazine's 100 most eligible bachelors in the United States.

Gary Davidson, the 37-year-old, 6-foot-6-inch tall spiritual leader of Temple Beth Shalom, said in a Los Angeles Times article about his selection, "A lot of women are hesitant about being with a rabbi because they fear that they're dating a holy man, someone who's super religious. The truth is, I'm just a regular guy, and I like to do all the fun things on a date that anyone else likes to do."

Davidson joined the likes of actors George Clooney and Matt Damon on the list.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

A Jewish wedding in Poland celebrates miracle of rebirth

By Ruth E. Gruber

WROCLAW, Poland (JTA) — When Curt Fissel stomped on the glass after his wedding in this southwestern Polish city, the congregation erupted into loud applause and a resounding chorus of “Mazel Tov!”

But the joyous response went far beyond heartfelt good wishes to Fissel and his bride, Ellen Friedland, both of Montclair, N.J.

Their emotional nuptials took place Sunday in the historic, partially reconstructed White Stork Synagogue, which just four years ago was a ruin. It was the first Jewish wedding there in 36 years, and it marked a symbolic milestone in the life of the small but reviving local Jewish community.

“This is a sacred moment in Jewish history,” said Rabbi Michael Monson of Montclair’s Congregation Shomrei Emunah, who traveled to Wroclaw from New Jersey to perform the ceremony. “It is a statement to the world that the Jewish people, wherever we may be, are alive and well.”

Jerzy Kichler, Wroclaw-based president of the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland, called it a “kind of miracle.”

Fissel and Friedland, a political reporter for the New Jersey Jewish News, decided to marry in Wroclaw to make their personal joy a public celebration — not just of a united Jewish peoplehood, but of the rebirth of Jewish life in Poland since the fall of communism a decade ago. The near-capacity congregation included as many as half of Wroclaw’s estimated 600 to 1,000 Jews, nearly 200 non-Jewish townspeople and about 30 friends and family of the bride and groom from the United States and Israel.

“I’ve never been to a synagogue, and wanted to see a real Jewish wedding,” said Anna, a 19-year-old Catholic student who attended with her parents and aunt. “It was beautiful, amazing — there was more passion, love and friendship than in my church.”

Also present were representatives of local Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox churches, as well as the U.S. consul from Krakow and the German consul from Wroclaw.

Local television, radio and newspapers covered the event, which began with the signing of the ketubah — the wedding contract — and ended with a party featuring klezmer music, Israeli dancing and a kosher buffet prepared in the Jewish community kitchen.

“Our wedding is about more than a personal union bridging different lives and families,” said Friedland.

“It is also about a union bridging different Jewish communities, and it is about a union bridging different times in Jewish history,” she said.

“In the small marriage of two people lies an intangible, optimistic and enormous hope.”

Friedland, a journalist, and Fissel, a photographer, first came to Poland about four years ago.

Like most American Jewish visitors to Poland, they expected only to learn about Jewish death — the annihilation of 3 million Polish Jews during the Holocaust; the death camps; the devastated shtetls, cemeteries and synagogues.

They were amazed to find small Jewish communities that had begun emerging, like seedlings through ashes, after the fall of

communism. They became deeply immersed in chronicling — and championing — this still fragile rebirth.

Fissel, meanwhile, born a Christian, reclaimed his own distant Jewish roots and converted to Judaism.

“My Jewish roots are seven-and-a-half generations back,” he said, “but with my conversion I reconnected my Jewish soul to Judaism.”

Their documentary film, “Poland: Creating a New Jewish Heritage,” was completed in 1997.

During their work, the Jewish community in Wroclaw — and particularly the city’s White Stork Synagogue — became powerful symbols of the destruction and revival of Jewish life in Poland.

“Why Wroclaw? We don’t know,” said Friedland. “When we started coming to Poland, we felt the spirit of the 3 million dead Jewish souls and they brought us here, specifically here, to this synagogue and this Jewish community, at a time when the synagogue had no roof and no floor and there was little apparent hope for the future.”

Thanks to a more than \$1 million grant from a German foundation, the synagogue has a new roof and its ground floor has been restored, though its two balconies and exterior still need reconstruction.

“The rebuilding of the synagogue,” said Friedland, “is a metaphor for the rebuilding of personal, communal, religious, cultural and political lives.”

Before World War II, Wroclaw was part of Germany. Then known as Breslau, it was home to some 30,000 Jews, the third largest Jewish community in Germany. It was a center of the Reform movement.

The neoclassical White Stork Synagogue, built in 1827-29, was designed by the same architect who designed Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate. The famous Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary was located across the street.

During World War II, Wroclaw’s Jews were herded into the synagogue’s courtyard before being deported to Nazi death camps. The synagogue itself was desecrated and used as a stable.

After the war, Wroclaw became part of Poland. The synagogue was used again for worship until 1974. At that time, it was taken over by the Communist state after the regime’s anti-Semitic campaign forced most remaining Polish Jews to leave the country in 1968. Over the decades, it became a ruined shell.

Jewish life began to revive in Wroclaw after 1989, as young people began to claim a Jewish identity amid new religious, social and political freedoms.

Today, Wroclaw has Poland’s second largest Jewish community after Warsaw’s.

Nearly 45 children will be enrolled next year in the Jewish school, run by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, and community leaders are seeking a rabbi for the congregation.

The Jewish community took back ownership of the ruined synagogue in 1996.

Ambitious plans foresee turning the synagogue and the adjacent, rundown Jewish administrative buildings into a full-service Jewish community center, with a modern kosher kitchen, senior care center, medical rehabilitation center, mikvah, activity rooms and museum.

“It will be a real, living Jewish center,” said Kichler.

Already, the partially restored synagogue is used for concerts and other public events. □