



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Envoy's suspension questioned

A U.S. Jewish leader is wondering whether anti-Semitism is behind the suspension of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk's security clearance.

"Until I see other people in the same situation, I have to ask the question," Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, told Israel's Army Radio. Indyk, who is Jewish, is suspended pending an investigation into alleged security violations.

Meanwhile, Israel's Prime Minister's Office called the suspension an "internal affair" and expressed hope that the United States would continue to work toward a final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

Money sought for slain Olympians

Israel is seeking compensation from Germany for the relatives of the 11 Israeli athletes killed in the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre.

A meeting earlier this month between Israeli and German officials came after the release of a documentary film criticizing Germany's security preparation for the Games and their reaction to the kidnapping of the athletes by Palestinian gunmen.

Belgium to set up Shoah fund

Belgium will set up a fund to compensate victims for Holocaust-era stolen assets, dormant accounts and unpaid insurance policies.

Belgium's government and Belgian banks and insurance firms will contribute to the fund.

Vatican calls off interfaith day

The Vatican called off plans to have a day celebrating interfaith dialogue after the chief rabbi of Rome reportedly refused to attend.

Elio Toaff and his deputy refused to take part in the Oct. 3 event because of a recent Vatican document that said other religions are not equal to Roman Catholicism and because of the recent beatification of the controversial 19th-century Pope Pius IX.

Yehuda Amichai dies at 76

Yehuda Amichai, an internationally recognized Israeli poet, died of cancer last Friday at the age of 76. Amichai was known for blending modern ideas with ancient Jewish traditions, as well as his innovative use of Hebrew. [Page 4]

5760: A Year of Promise and Peril

Launching new initiatives to strengthen Jewish identity

By Barbara Trainin Blank

HARRISBURG, Pa. (JTA) — As a new century dawned, American Jewry continued to look inward toward programs and initiatives to strengthen Jewish identity.

The efforts to bolster identity come at a time when Jews feel relatively secure in the United States, despite high rates of assimilation and intermarriage and high-profile acts of violence against Jews this year and last.

In fact, some would say that security reached new heights when Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore tapped Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate in August, making him the first Jew on a major party ticket.

A series of initiatives aimed at building Jewish identity got off the ground in 5760.

Initial skepticism about the Birthright Israel program gave way to cautious optimism as 6,000 first-time visitors to Israel, the majority college students from North America, arrived in the Jewish state for 10-day free trips in December and January. An additional 1,500 individuals visited in the spring and summer.

Although the long-term impact has yet to be seen, most of the participants were highly enthusiastic about their experiences.

In June, the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella of the federation system, voted to become a full partner in Birthright, funded by co-founders Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt and 12 other philanthropists. Most of the 189 federations belonging to the recently formed umbrella organization have agreed to support the international program, and the Israeli government pledged \$70 million in April.

As the effectiveness of phase one of Birthright is evaluated by researchers at Brandeis University, and another group of young people prepares to leave for Israel in the fall, Steinhardt declares the program "extraordinarily fulfilling" but in need of widespread community support.

"It's important to take this phenomenal start and realize the full potential that exists to include all young Jews who have not yet been to Israel — a number estimated at 300,000 — as well as to marshal its resources to follow up the program so that a true Jewish renaissance occurs," he said. "The ball is now in the hands of the community."

Strengthening the Jewish family through Jewish education programs and synagogues was a renewed thrust of family and children's agencies around the country.

These programs help people "who grapple with normative life cycle issues and transitions — such as parenting, divorce, aging — by providing valuable information that combines mental health and Jewish perspectives," and an opportunity to connect with others in the community, according to Vicki Rosenstreich, director of Jewish Family Life Education for New York's Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services.

Such programs are often co-sponsored with Jewish community centers, which are looking for avenues to put the "J" back in their name through enhanced Jewish content.

The Jewish Communities Centers Association went a step further this year, emphasizing at a conference in May the need to create "Meaningful Jewish Community."

New ways of creating Jewish identity and community are also being tried out in many congregations around the country, in a movement loosely called "synagogue transformation."

Synagogue change was spearheaded primarily by the Reform movement, which in 1992 created the first systematic program in this direction, the Experiment in Congregational Education. Now, growing numbers of synagogues are participating in

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians reject partial accord

Palestinian officials rejected the idea of an agreement that would leave aside the issue of Jerusalem.

The rejection came as discussions continued on a possible meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, and as acting Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami prepared to go to Cairo on Monday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Shots halt Lebanese cars

Israeli soldiers fired shots in the air to prevent a motorcade of 50 Lebanese cars that tried to cross the border between the two countries in an area that is still under dispute.

The shots ended the relative calm along the border near the village of Shabaa Farms.

Terrorist experts visit India

Israeli counterterrorism experts are visiting India to advise that country's officials on their security needs, according to an Indian paper.

The team of senior Israeli police commanders and military intelligence officials is reportedly focusing on Kashmir, where Indian officials have been battling separatists in the Muslim-majority state.

Tel Aviv goes traffic free

Bicyclists dominated Tel Aviv's streets last Friday as Israel's most populous city marked a car-free day.

The city, normally full of traffic jams, was part of a European event designed to draw attention to environmental concerns.

Scholar dies at 83

An author who won international recognition for his research on early Christianity's relationship to Judaism died in Jerusalem. David Flusser died Sept. 15, his 83rd birthday. Flusser taught in the comparative religions department of Hebrew University.



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Synagogue 2000, a program that focuses on making synagogues more welcoming.

In addition, philanthropists Edgar Bronfman, Charles Schusterman and Steinhart announced a new initiative this year named STAR — Synagogue Transformation and Renewal. An organization that is nondenominational and independent of the federations offers the best hope for "systematic change" in the way synagogues work, STAR President Schusterman told JTA.

He also cited the linkage of congregational schools to synagogue transformation efforts and new curriculum initiatives to enliven part-time Jewish education.

Formal Jewish education — especially full time — has become a central component of identity for a growing number of families. According to a census conducted this year by the New York-based Avi Chai Foundation, approximately 185,000 students attend Jewish day schools — 25,000 more than a decade ago.

Optimism about the state of Jewish education was expressed by Jonathan Woocher, director of the Jewish Education Service of North America and newly appointed chair of the Renaissance and Renewal Pillar Committee of UJC.

He calls the effort "catalytic and supportive" rather than programmatic.

As always, Jewish involvement this year translated into political involvement.

And the big story of the year was arguably the selection of Lieberman as the Democratic vice presidential candidate.

American Jews were inundated with weeks of banner headlines about Lieberman — "the first Jew." Jews for the most part reacted with tremendous enthusiasm, though some expressed concern about potential anti-Semitic backlashes.

Elsewhere on the political scene, the Jewish community mobilized around gun control, partly because of hate crimes involving guns, including the attacks in August 1999 at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, Calif., in which Buford Furrow, Jr., a white supremacist, wounded five people, and a shooting spree in April by Pittsburgh resident Richard Scott Baumhammers that left five minorities, including a Jewish woman, dead.

That involvement was in evidence as Jewish mothers — and fathers — from around the country, including thousands of members of synagogues and Hadassah chapters, joined the Million Mom March for gun safety on Mother's Day.

Jewish groups also continued to fight for hate crimes legislation, which has been promoted by the Clinton administration, but is bogged down in Congress.

Jews did claim a partial victory with the passage of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, a religious liberty law affecting zoning for religious institutions.

At the Supreme Court, several church-state rulings attracted the attention of the Jewish community. Although most Jewish groups praised the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June prohibiting prayers at high school football games, the ruling left the larger issue of prayer at public school events unclear.

Some Jewish groups questioned another Supreme Court ruling that it is constitutional for religious schools to use taxpayer dollars to buy computers and other instructional materials, warning that these could be diverted for religious purposes.

Though Jews may be taking a less-absolutist position toward school vouchers and similar issues, the overall opposition to government funding for religious institutions remains strong, said Marc Stern, of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

Meanwhile, the kinds of initiatives chosen to strengthen Jewish identity as well as support human services here and overseas will be determined in part by the long-awaited National Jewish Population Study 2000.

Sponsored by the UJC, the telephone survey, which got off the ground in August, is the first large-scale national study of American Jews in a decade.

The study was postponed repeatedly over the past year to allow input from the new pillar committees created by the UJC.

"The resulting survey is greatly enhanced over that of 1990," said Lorraine Blass, UJC's senior planner. She said the study is more reliable because the sample size has been doubled to 5,000 households, and that it is more nuanced in terms of Jewish identity, which was once defined primarily as ritual behavior.

"Today we understand this is only one example of identity," Blass said. "The language and thinking of Jewish organizations has changed." □

JEWISH WORLD

Shofar blown for 'Iran 10'

Some 50 community leaders, rabbis and students in the United States held a mass shofar blowing outside the United Nations last Friday morning to demand the release of 10 Iranian Jews convicted of spying for Israel.

On Sept. 21, an appeals court reduced the prisoners sentences, but Jewish leaders say all 10 should be released immediately.

Meanwhile, Iranian Jewish leaders in Los Angeles refused to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazmi last week because the appeals panel did not overturn the convictions.

Religious freedom bill signed

President Clinton signed a bill designed to ensure protections for religious groups and secure religious liberties for prisoners.

The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act will prevent local zoning boards from attempting to keep out religious institutions.

Krayzelburg wins third gold

Lenny Krayzelburg, a Jewish immigrant to the United States from the former Soviet Union, won his third swimming gold medal at the Sydney Summer Olympics in the 4x100 Individual Medley.

Earlier in the Games, Krayzelburg won the 100- and 200-meter backstroke.

Attack closes Sunday school

A Jewish Sunday school director in Russia will not be allowed to hold classes at the public school following an attack last Sunday, a watchdog group says.

According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, the public school principal in Ryazan was physically attacked because of her connection with the Sunday school and later decided she could no longer rent space to the Jewish school out of fear for her life.

Riot erupts at neo-Nazi concert

A riot erupted in eastern Germany on Saturday night after police broke up a neo-Nazi concert. Forty-six officers and 15 people were injured in the incident.

Goussinsky's firm could be frozen

Russian officials moved to freeze the assets of a company owned by a Russian Jewish leader and media tycoon.

Deputy Prosecutor General Vladimir Kolmogorov said he would turn to Interpol if Vladimir Goussinsky refused to testify in the case against Media-Most.

Goussinsky, president of the Russian Jewish Congress, has been living abroad since the Russian government dropped embezzlement charges against him earlier this year.

'Joe, you're no rabbi,' Jewish leaders warn

By Gayle Horwitz

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Even as Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman's positions on issues from gun control to Hollywood are dissected, some Jewish leaders hope that he can keep quiet on at least one topic: Jewish law.

Interviewers "should stop asking him about it, and he should stop talking about it," said Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union.

He and other Jewish leaders are growing more concerned over the way Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, discusses Jewish theology — especially after his appearance on a nationally syndicated radio show Sept. 15.

In the course of a humorous conversation with host Don Imus, Lieberman was asked to clarify several issues of Jewish law and practice, including Judaism's position on intermarriage.

When asked if Judaism placed "a ban on interracial or interreligious dating, that sort of thing," Lieberman responded that there was "no ban whatsoever."

Lieberman elaborated, "But there's what I would describe as a natural tendency among a lot of Jews, as there is among a lot of Christian and other ethnic groups," to marry within the faith "to keep the faith going. But, believe me, there's a lot of intermarriage as well."

Earlier in the program, Lieberman joked about his decision never to say a Jewish prayer in which one thanks God for not having been born a woman. Imus quipped that the prayer's sentiment would not appeal to "soccer moms." Lieberman answered, "That was put in historically by the rabbis way back, and of course there is an explanation. But I don't accept that. There's a certain amount of latitude here."

Reaction to Lieberman's comments was tempered among Jewish leaders, who are still not in agreement over the extent to which Lieberman is responsible for presenting Judaism to the nation.

"It's an awesome responsibility," said Rabbi Avi Shafran, a spokesman for the fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America. "If he can, he should speak honestly, knowledgeably and clearly. But for whatever reason, his most recent comments about intermarriage were gravely misleading."

Most Jewish leaders agreed that Jewish law forbids interreligious marriage, but none said they would harshly criticize the politician for making the theological mistake.

"He's not a rabbi, he's a politician in a national campaign with the burden of explaining Judaism to millions of Americans," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Asking whether or not Judaism bans intermarriage is a question "loaded with political overtones," Yoffie added.

"Though his answer was not necessarily accurate from a halachic standpoint, saying Jews marry within 'to keep the faith' going was a way of gently explaining our tradition."

The Orthodox Union's Ganchrow agreed that it is "totally unfair to make" Lieberman a "paradigm of Orthodoxy, but he should leave questions of theology to the rabbis."

Ganchrow said people should take into consideration that the tone of the interview was "frivolous" and not deeply philosophical. Judging others, in general, is "un-Jewish," he added.

Still, the comments by Lieberman, who sits on the Orthodox Union's board of directors, surprised Ganchrow.

"Given that intermarriage is probably the number one problem affecting the Jews today," he said. "I don't know what went through Lieberman's mind when he said that."

Since the program aired, there has been no further comment from Lieberman about his remarks.

Steve Rabinowitz, a media adviser to the Gore-Lieberman campaign, said, "The campaign has no opinions on the senator's religious beliefs. He is free to express whatever he wants." □

OBITUARY**Yehuda Amichai, who chronicled Israel's beauty and pain, dies at 76***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yehuda Amichai, a world renowned poet and one of Israel's most famous writers, has died of cancer at the age of 76.

Amichai, who died last Friday, was known for blending modern ideas with ancient Jewish traditions, as well as his innovative use of Hebrew.

"He was very Israeli, and at the same time very Jewish in his writing," said his close friend, writer Aharon Appelfeld.

Thousands paid tribute to the beloved poet as the casket was placed in downtown Jerusalem's Safra Square on Sunday before his funeral.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ehud Barak were also present.

"One of the greatest artists of Israel and the Jewish world has gone from among us," Barak said in a statement.

Amichai was born in Germany to a religious family. His family immigrated to Palestine in 1936.

He served with the Jewish Brigade of the British Army in World War II.

A member of the Palmach, the strike force of the Haganah — the fighting force of Jewish settlements in prestate Palestine — Amichai also fought in Israel's other wars.

He wrote 25 books of poetry, some of which have been translated into English, two novels, two short story books and three children's books.

Amichai's poems have been translated into 37 languages, and was perennially mentioned as a potential candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The award is not given posthumously.

Regarded as Israel's national poet, Amichai lived in Jerusalem for his entire adult life, and his work often revolved around seeing the possibility of coexistence in opposites — in the mixture of tradition and modernity, beauty and bloodshed, that mark Israel's capital and Israeli life.

"In the United States, you have to travel miles to see battlefields, but this is a small country and everything is adjacent and jumbled together," he said in an interview with the Associated Press in 1994.

"I can stand on my balcony and tell my children, 'Over there, I was shelled for the first time. And over there, just to the right, just beneath those trees, I was kissed for the first time.'"

Amichai repeatedly urged reconciliation with Israel's Arab neighbors.

He also supported former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's initiative to seek peace with the Palestinians.

From the publication of his first volume, "Now and in Other Days," (1955), Amichai was known for modernizing Hebrew poetry — for fusing contemporary technological slang with biblical and medieval imagery.

He also fused personal and political themes such as love and war.

But he is perhaps best known for writing verse accessible to — and relevant to — the average reader.

His poem "From Man You Are, To Man You Shall Return," which was written during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, discussed a parent listening to the noise made by a soldier son going off to war as the parent accepts the prospects of the young soldier's premature death.

The poem became a consolation for Israeli parents who had lost their children in war.

As Doron Rosenblum, who called Amichai Israel's "Citizen No. 1," put it in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz: Amichai's lines "pop up every time someone wants to soften our harsh reality or make it palpably ordinary, when one wants to describe a slice of life richly, to speak about real Israelis: Those who ride on the bus, those whose voice gets swallowed in the 'rising rumble' of engines, who carry packs on their back, and have had their hair shorn by the military, or return home on Friday evening, when 'the laundry is already dry in the yard.'"

Israeli firm enters Olympics with virtual runners, finish lines*By Avi Machlis*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel may not break any world records at the Sydney Olympics, but an Israeli company is providing the technology that allows television viewers to see more than is actually happening at some Olympic events.

Orad Hi-Tec Systems is providing the technology chosen by several leading international networks to enhance their sports broadcasts during the games.

The Kfar Saba-based company allows broadcasters to integrate computer-animated images seamlessly into the "real" picture.

Among the techniques being used at Sydney are virtual runners, which run alongside the real Olympic athletes at a pace of the world record holder.

The virtual runners look like they are a part of the action and allow viewers to get a better feel how close the runners are to a world record.

Broadcasters are also using the company's Virtual World Record Line at several swimming and track and field events. For example, a computer-drawn line marks the spot a long jumper must cross to break a record.

"This will so far be the most significant global exposure of Orad's technology," said Avi Sharir, chief executive officer.

Networks using Orad's tools include NBC in the United States, ARD in Germany, NHK in Japan, France2 and Australia's Channel 7.

Orad is a publicly traded company on the Neuer Markt stock exchange in Frankfurt.

It also deals in virtual advertising, which allows broadcasters to overlay virtual ads onto a playing field or around its perimeter. But this technology is not being used at the Olympics, since there is no on-field advertising allowed at the games.

Meanwhile, RealTimeImage, another Israeli technology company, has also received a boost from the Olympic Games.

Sports Illustrated magazine is using the company's technology to help it process and edit thousands of images from the Olympics.

RealTimeImage's server allows editors on opposite sides of the globe to collaborate on photos without having to transfer them to a nearby server.