



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### U.S.: Israel should pay P.A. taxes

Israel needs to free up tax moneys it has withheld from the Palestinian Authority since the outbreak of violence to help relieve the "economic pressure on the Palestinians," the U.S. State Department said.

"This is a point we have made frequently, and I think fairly often to the Israelis," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said at a briefing Wednesday.

Boucher said Secretary of State Colin Powell plans to discuss the issue when he meets with Israeli officials over the weekend, when he begins a five-day trip that includes stops in several Middle East countries.

### Labor divided over unity gov't

Israel's Labor Party remained divided over whether to join a national unity government, with party centrists pitted against doves who oppose the move.

Meanwhile, another possible obstacle to forming a unity government emerged as Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon instructed his Likud negotiators Thursday to reject Labor's request to receive the finance portfolio instead of defense.

### Agency to discuss Falash Mura

The emigration of Ethiopia's Falash Mura will be among the top agenda items next week when the Jewish Agency for Israel's 121-member Board of Governors meets in Israel.

However, the "national aliyah project," a joint effort of international Jewish groups and the State of Israel aimed at facilitating the absorption of Ethiopian emigres, will be postponed until Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon has formed a government, said a JAFI spokesman. About 100 Falash Mura are arriving in Israel each week.

### Sharon: Speak up for Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon urged Diaspora Jews to "raise your voices" and "take every necessary step" to ensure Jerusalem remains united under Israeli sovereignty.

Addressing a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in Jerusalem on Thursday, Sharon also said the Diaspora is "a strategic asset to Israel" and promised to strengthen ties with world Jewry.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Florida Jews preach tolerance over park that mixes Moses, Jesus

By Joyce Moed Charman

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (JTA) — For Dawn Short and Jennifer Willis, the wait to visit a newly opened "messianic Jewish" theme park was worth it.

Ticket sellers bluntly told Short and Willis when they arrived on Saturday that the Holy Land Experience park was too crowded to accept more guests.

But instead of heading home, Short, a Methodist, and Willis, a Pentecostal, spent some time in Orlando and returned to the park in the afternoon.

"We were determined to get in," said Short, who made the two-hour drive from her home to Orlando after reading about the religious theme park in a local newspaper.

The two women eventually got in.

Short says she learned more about the Bible in just two hours in the park than she did in years of Bible school.

Josephine Alford, a Christian visiting from northern Florida, also enjoyed the park.

Alford's only regret was that she couldn't spend all day in Orlando's newest attraction.

These aren't the only tourists who have headed to Orlando this month, hoping to find not Disney but the deity.

Since the newest addition to Orlando's theme park row opened Feb. 5, some 30,000 visitors have bypassed the world's most famous mouse to visit the Holy Land Experience, a controversial park that tries to re-create biblical times through stage productions and a Middle Eastern-style marketplace.

The \$16 million theme park, which mixes Jewish and Christian symbols, has sparked heated attacks from some Jewish leaders.

They assert that the park's founder — a Jew who embraced Jesus — has created a giant proselytizing tool.

But a protest, planned on the park's opening day by the extremist Jewish Defense League, fizzled.

Many local leaders say the best action Jewish groups can take against the Holy Land Experience may be no action at all.

"We have to understand that in a democracy, we have to tolerate all situations," said Rabbi Joel Levine, spiritual leader of Temple Judea of West Palm Beach, and chairman of the Cults and Messianics Task Force of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County.

"Everyone has a right to practice their religion. We can't picket" the park, he said. "We could have a Jewish Israel park, and we wouldn't want them to picket it."

Instead, Levine said, Jewish groups should focus their efforts on education.

"I think the Jewish community is doing a good thing by letting people know what Holy Land is: a Christian amusement park," Levine said.

Park founder Marvin Rosenthal says he never intended to hide that fact.

"Every piece of literature created by the park states its evangelical purpose," said Rosenthal, who directs an Orlando-based Christian ministry, Zion's Hope.

But Jewish leaders say the Jewish themes that dominate the Holy Land Experience are misleading, and will deceive people into believing that Jews support the park's message.

Critics point to the Holy Land Experiences gift shop, for example, which sells jewelry that contains Jewish stars, but does not sell crosses.

Some Jewish leaders also say Rosenthal's background raises warning flags.

Rosenthal, an ordained Baptist minister, was born into a Conservative Jewish family

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel wants end to U.S.-led panel

Israel asked the United States to stop the activities of a U.S.-led committee that was created to probe the causes of the violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Barak sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell on Wednesday, saying the Mitchell Committee should suspend its work because of the ongoing Palestinian violence.

### Report: Arafat has flight plan

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat may flee to Iraq with his top officials if violence in the territories continues to escalate, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Citing Jane's Foreign Report, the newspaper said Arafat sent some of his advisers to Baghdad last month, when they made arrangement for a potential evacuation of the Palestinian leadership.

### Terror 'work accident' in Hebron

A large explosive device detonated accidentally in the Palestinian-controlled part of Hebron. Israeli security officials described Thursday's incident as a terrorist "work accident." Security officials said the explosive was apparently intended for use in an attack against an Israeli target.

In another incident, an Israeli sustained light to moderate wounds in a drive-by shooting Thursday morning at an intersection in northern Jerusalem's French Hill neighborhood.

### Sniper: I was told to aim for legs

A sniper in the Israeli police's anti-terror unit testified Thursday that a senior police official gave officers permission to fire at the legs of demonstrators during Israeli Arab riots in the town of Umm el-Fahm last October. The sniper appeared Thursday before a commission investigating the police killings of 13 Israeli Arabs during the riots in northern Israel.



## Daily News Bulletin

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and says he never formally converted to Christianity. "I think the word that comes to mind immediately is 'deceit,'" said William Rothschild, assistant regional director of the Anti-Defamation League's Palm Beach office.

"The organization is entitled to build a theme park, but our problem is the way it's being presented," Rothschild said.

He added that it's part of Rosenthal's "ministry to entice as many Jews as he can, to expose them to a mixture of Christian and Jewish values. We're concerned about it. We feel that what they're presenting is the philosophy that you can be both — and if you're not both, you're not complete — and that invalidates Judaism."

For \$17 a ticket — \$12 for children — Rosenthal aims to transport guests 7,000 miles away and 3,000 years back in time. The journey starts when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and ends just before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in the first century.

There's a 45-foot-by-25-foot model of first-century Jerusalem.

Guests also may wander through Calvary's Garden Tomb, a re-creation of Jesus' resting place, where actors portray his death, burial and resurrection.

A high-tech production of Israel's ancient priestly system — replete with lightning bolts and fog — awaits visitors within a model of the Wilderness Tabernacle.

Replicas of the Qumran caves let guests peek at the place where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the 20th century.

Costumed actors sing and perform scenes from the Bible in the marketplace, near a replica of Herod's Temple and alongside a re-creation of the Old City's Via Dolorosa.

The biblical theme is evident even in the smallest details.

Recorded sounds of camels, goats and sheep bray from loudspeakers along the ancient-style paths, as street vendors peddle milk and honey-flavored ice cream.

The theme park was designed by Orlando-based ITEC Entertainment Corp., which also has created rides for Walt Disney World and Universal Studios.

Each exhibit at the Holy Land Experience will provide dramatic and factual insights that will teach the message of the Bible, Rosenthal said.

Rosenthal said he toyed with the idea of building a religious theme park for nearly 20 years, inspired by his extensive tours of Israel.

He wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to visit the Holy Land, even if they couldn't travel overseas, he said.

The answer to his prayers came in 1989, when Rosenthal heard about a densely wooded, 19-acre site in Orlando that was tangled up in a bankruptcy proceeding.

With the backing of some wealthy investors — including Robert and Judith Van Kampen, whose collection of rare bibles will be part of a museum slated to open at the park next year — Rosenthal offered \$1.2 million for the site, a fraction of its value.

His offer was accepted and, a few years later, state officials offered to pay \$1.4 million to build a highway interchange on four acres of Rosenthal's land.

To Rosenthal, it was a sign that God was smiling on his plan.

"The Bible is God's word, and there's no better place to share that than one of the most major tourist locations in the world," he said.

The idea that the park targets Jews for conversion is fallacious, Rosenthal said. So far, fewer than 1 percent of the park's visitors have been Jewish, he added.

But, he added, "I do believe Jesus is the messiah, and to believe in him is the most Jewish thing a Jewish person can do." □

## Details released on Israeli suspect

JERUSALEM (JTA) — New details have been released regarding a British passport holder detained in Israel last month on suspicion of planning to carry out terrorist attacks for Hezbollah.

According to reports, the 32-year-old suspect, Jihad Shuman, arrived in Israel in December, was staying in Jerusalem and was in telephone contact with his operators in Lebanon.

The suspect was detained in early January with a yarmulke, timer and tourist maps of Jerusalem. On Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak ordered him held in administrative detention for the next six months. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Yahoo won't budge on court order

Yahoo is refusing to meet a deadline imposed by a French court to halt the sale of Nazi memorabilia accessible on its Web site by the end of the week.

A spokesperson for the Internet portal said the company has no intention of complying with the ruling, issued in a Paris courtroom last November.

The judge declared Yahoo would be fined up to \$14,000 per day for ignoring the ruling, but the issue may be moot because the company says it has nearly eliminated all auctions of Nazi goods from its site.

### Britain slams suspect's detention

Britain criticized Israel for holding without trial a British-Lebanese citizen who Israeli authorities allege was sent by Hezbollah to carry out attacks in the Jewish state.

"We have protested in the strongest terms to the Israeli authorities," the British Embassy in Tel Aviv said Thursday.

### 'Mein Kampf' ruling stirs surprise

Czech Jewish leaders expressed surprise after an appeals court overturned the conviction of a publisher for producing an unabridged Czech version of Hitler's "Mein Kampf."

The court said there had been a number of procedural errors in the original December trial of Michal Zitko, who at the time was given a three-year suspended prison sentence and fined.

The appeals court referred the case back to the lower courts.

### Aussie Jews try to block leaflets

Australian Jewish leaders filed court papers in an effort to stop the distribution of anti-Semitic material by a veteran pamphleteer of racist materials.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry on Wednesday asked the court to order Olga Scully to stop distributing material that has been declared unlawful, and to have her apologize for the anti-Jewish literature, cartoons and audio cassettes she has distributed during the past four years.

### Anti-Semites rally in Ukraine

Anti-Semitic groups in Ukraine have become more active recently after keeping a low profile last year, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

One such group, known as UNA-UNSO, recently held a rally in Lvov, attended by local government officials, where anti-Semitic slogans were on display. Among the slogans on view near the group's flag were: "Zhids are the executioners of mankind" and "Jewish-Zionists destroyed millions of Ukrainians." Police did not attempt to prevent the rally.

## ADL urges that Nation of Islam be excluded from faith-based plan

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As religious groups prepare for the expanded role they will likely play in providing social services, the Anti-Defamation League is trying to make sure that one group will not take part.

The ADL recently met with John DiIulio Jr., director of President Bush's White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives — which opened Tuesday — and urged that the Nation of Islam be excluded from the program.

DiIulio "showed great understanding and sensitivity," said Jess Hordes, director of the ADL's government and national affairs office.

Representatives of the faith-based office could not be reached for comment.

Bush's plan to provide government funding to faith-based organizations — to run programs such as homeless shelters or drug abuse programs — is raising questions about how to define "religious groups" eligible for federal money.

Stephen Goldsmith, an adviser to Bush on faith-based initiatives, said earlier this month on CBS' "Face the Nation" that religious groups would be evaluated just like other groups, and grants would be awarded based on their performance.

An organization that preaches hate or violence won't qualify, said Goldsmith, the former mayor of Indianapolis.

Asked who determines whether a group preaches hate, Goldsmith admitted, "These are not easy questions."

The ADL has registered several complaints to Bush's faith-based plan, saying that ways must be found to ensure that there is no religious discrimination in hiring and that secular alternatives are available to religious programs.

The ADL's counsel, Michael Lieberman, who attended the meeting with DiIulio, said the government should not be in the business of deciding who is a hate group and who is not, and therefore the phrasing of legislation to implement the initiative will be crucial.

The ADL plans to work with members of Congress to craft legislation establishing safeguards that protect the integrity of religious organizations and ensure that beneficiaries of social services are not subjected to proselytizing.

In a letter to Bush last month, the ADL said one of the safeguards should be "ensuring that extremist, terrorist or hatemongering groups are not able to receive government money."

Bush ignited a furor last year when he said that the Nation of Islam is based on universal principles, and therefore should be allowed to compete for government funding.

He later retracted his statement, saying he confused the Nation of Islam with the larger Muslim faith.

In a letter to the ADL last March, Bush explained his confusion and said he was familiar with Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam's leader, and his "history of hateful and anti-Semitic comments."

"I do not believe that any government funding should go to organizations like the Nation of Islam that spread hatred," Bush said in his letter.

The Nation of Islam could not be reached for comment.

Farrakhan long has been criticized for his inflammatory rhetoric, which includes calling Judaism a "gutter religion" and praising Hitler as a great man.

Farrakhan also has referred to Jewish businessmen in black communities as "bloodsuckers."

The ADL and other Jewish organizations periodically issue reports on racist and anti-Semitic statements from Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam.

The ADL has tracked Farrakhan since 1984, when he made anti-Semitic and racist remarks while working on Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign.

The Nation of Islam was on the ADL's radar screen even decades before that because of the group's anti-Semitic views and hate-filled teachings, according to Gail Gans, director of the ADL's Civil Rights Information Center.

Under Farrakhan's leadership, however, the group's membership and bigotry has grown, Gans said. □

## Anti-Israel report from YMCA body blasted by Jewish groups, local Y's

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) —YMCA and Jewish leaders in the United States are protesting a report by an international YMCA affiliate that urges the group "to take the side of the oppressed Palestinian people" in their conflict with Israel.

The report, titled "A Shattered Peace," was issued quietly in December by the World Alliance of YMCAs in Geneva.

The report accuses Israel of using "massive force against unarmed protesters and completely innocent people" during the violence that has raged in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since late September.

The authors acknowledge that they made no attempt to hear the Israeli side of the issue, ostensibly for lack of time.

Leading the criticism of the report is Kenneth Gladish, national executive director of the YMCA of the USA, headquartered in Chicago.

The report "can serve only to inflame the long-standing tensions in the region," Gladish wrote to Nicholas Nightingale, a Briton who serves as secretary-general of the World Alliance.

In a sharply worded follow-up letter, Gladish slammed the "prejudicial, political and polemic rhetoric" of the World Alliance, and warned bluntly that Nightingale "put at great risk the financial and organizational support" of the American YMCA.

His criticism was echoed in California.

"I am appalled by the report, which is dramatically unbalanced and fails to recognize the suffering on all sides," Larry Rosen, president and CEO of the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, said in a phone interview Tuesday. "It undermines the quiet, behind-the-scenes efforts by YMCAs to achieve a peaceful solution in the Middle East."

Rosen noted that the World Alliance, despite its name, has no governing or policy-making role for the YMCA organization, and functions mainly as a facilitator in arranging conferences and interchanges among self-governing YMCA branches.

In its report, the World Alliance also claims that the world media has a pro-Israel bias, blasts the "increasing brutality of the Israeli army and settlers" and charges Israel with "systematic and widespread human rights abuses."

The report also calls for the creation of an "international protective force" to shield Palestinians from Israel's supposed ferocity.

One curious aspect of the report is that it seems to have been issued with the goal of attracting minimal attention, even from YMCA branches.

The 3,000-word report was released in the December issue of the World Alliance magazine and posted on its Web site — neither of which, apparently, enjoys a wide readership.

"We didn't know of the existence of the report for nearly a month after it was posted, and then learned about it through a call from an Israeli reporter," said Arnold Collins, spokesman for the national YMCA of the USA.

Collins said the World Alliance had not formally responded to Gladish's critical remarks, but that a "dialogue" on the issue was under way.

Acknowledging the widespread criticism, however, the World Alliance has posted a defense of sorts on its Web site, at [www.YMCA.int](http://www.YMCA.int). The rebuttal states that the investigating team was

unable to visit Israel "for reasons of time and circumstances.

"Our position is not against the Israeli people," the rebuttal continues. "We condemn all violence and reaffirm that Israel has the right to exist within safe and secure boundaries."

The Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center are among the Jewish organizations protesting the report.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, scheduled a news conference for Feb. 26 and said he would demand that YMCA branches around the world cease funding the World Alliance unless the report is rescinded.

Cooper spoke on Tuesday from Washington, where he discussed the matter with members of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee.

Earlier, he visited Canadian YMCA leaders in Toronto.

"If we ignore this matter, there is the danger of a disastrous domino effect, in which other nongovernmental organizations will gang up on Israel to justify the behavior of the Palestinian Authority," Cooper said.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said in a statement that "to release a report that does not mention Palestinian violence or concern for Israeli victims, under the auspices of the international YMCA, provokes the situation more than it subdues it."

The YMCA has branches in 130 countries, with 2,372 centers in the United States alone. □

## As he receives Hungarian medal, Jewish leader calls for restitution

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — For some Jewish leaders, the battle for restitution continues no matter what the occasion.

On Tuesday, Hungarian President Ferenc Madl presented a medal to the secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, Israel Singer, for his efforts on behalf of Jews around the world.

"We highly appreciate your efforts in seeking appropriate compensation for the Hungarian Jews, once a major Jewish community in Europe," said Madl, who during a ceremony in Parliament presented Singer with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary.

During his speech, Singer — who has represented the interests of Holocaust survivors in negotiations with several European governments — said that the honor was not for him, but for the Jewish people as a whole.

"One day, Christians, Muslims, Jews and Gypsies are going to be equal," Singer said. "The struggle has not been concluded yet."

In an indication of his readiness to continue the struggle, Singer spoke with Madl after the ceremony about an issue that has stirred passions among Hungary's Jews.

The Hungarian Parliament is offering to make a one-time payment to relatives of Jewish Holocaust victims that would amount to about \$140 — a pitiful sum in the eyes of the local community. Singer made it clear during his conversation with Madl that he shared this view.

In an interview with JTA after the ceremony, Singer said, "One should remember what an insult it is to tell Jews that their relatives are worth so little."

Singer also said during the interview that compensation efforts on behalf of Holocaust survivors in Eastern and Central Europe are "too little, too late." □