



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Sharon blocks cease-fire talks

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon canceled cease-fire talks planned between Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Israeli government officials said Sunday that Sharon took the step because Palestinian violence against Israelis had not stopped even though Arafat announced a cease-fire last week.

Sharon has repeatedly called for 48 hours of quiet before the talks begin. Israel reported dozens of attacks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the weekend.

Rabbis speak at prayer rally

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, the spiritual leader of New York's Congregation Kehillath Jeshurun, sounded the shofar at a prayer service held Sunday in Yankee Stadium for the victims of the Sept. 11 terror attack against the United States. Four other rabbis, as well as leaders of other faiths, addressed the remembrance gathering.

Israel: P.A. freed terrorist

The Palestinian Authority arrested and then released a leader of the Palestinian militias who claimed responsibility for a Sept. 20 drive-by shooting in which a mother was killed in front of her children, Israeli officials charged.

The officials are demanding that Atef Abayyat be rearrested and that the Palestinian Authority take other meaningful steps against violence before cease-fire talks are held.

Violinist Isaac Stern dies at 81

Isaac Stern, considered one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century, died Saturday in New York at 81.

He played with conductor Leonard Bernstein and the Israel Philharmonic in Jerusalem soon after the 1967 Six-Day War, for Israeli soldiers during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and with a gas mask on after an Iraqi Scud missile attack interrupted a performance in Israel during the 1991 Gulf War.

Because of Yom Kippur, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Sept. 28.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Thinkers evoke Torah, Holocaust in backing strong response to terror

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — In contemplating how the United States should respond to the terror attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Rabbi Brad Hirschfield keeps thinking about God's anger when the angels rejoiced to see Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea.

According to midrash, God silenced the angels, telling them, "How can you sing when my creations are dying?"

"There are times when real action must be taken, but that real action must not be celebrated," said Hirschfield, a senior director at CLAL: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

As the United States prepares for a possible war on terrorism, many Jewish leaders and thinkers believe a dramatic response to the Sept. 11 attacks is necessary. But most hope that such a war harm as few civilians as possible and not become, as Hirschfield put it, a "celebration" of death.

Conversations with American Jewish leaders from across the political and religious spectrum revealed some similarities in how they think the United States should handle the issue.

Several, like Blu Greenberg, an Orthodox feminist leader, spoke of the need to balance the talmudic injunction to kill people before they can kill you with the teaching that "each life is a whole world."

"You can't just say, 'Rise up early and bomb Afghanistan to hell because that's where the evil is coming from,' because there's a lot of innocent life there," Greenberg said.

Greenberg hopes the United States will follow what she sees as Israel's policy of restraint with Palestinian violence — targeting leaders and strategic sites and avoiding harming civilians whenever possible.

Many of those interviewed for the article also hope that the world recognize that terrorism against Israelis should be condemned and stopped, and that longtime supporters of terrorism — such as Iran and Syria — be excluded from an anti-terrorism coalition unless they stop all support for terrorists.

But while support for some U.S. military action was virtually unanimous, those on the left were more ambivalent about infringements on the civil liberties of Americans and more eager to explore the root causes of terrorism.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said his group has been "bombarded" in recent days with requests to sign on to statements that staunchly oppose potential civil liberties restrictions.

But Reform Jewish leaders, who generally support such requests, are now hesitant to oppose any changes in American policy that might help prevent terrorism, Yoffie said.

"In the real world, we're going to have to make difficult decisions — people have to feel safe," Yoffie said.

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, dean of the University of Judaism's Ziegler School for Rabbinic Studies, which ordains Conservative rabbis, said he is "not comfortable with some of the voices saying we shouldn't do anything or who are labeling a military response as state terrorism."

"There needs to be measured action to prevent this from happening again, and to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Militia leader's extradition sought

Israel called on the Palestinian Authority to extradite to the Jewish state the leader of Palestinian militias in the West Bank.

The request came after Israel's Justice Ministry issued an arrest warrant for Barghouti so he can be questioned regarding his alleged involvement in several recent terror attacks against Israelis.

Israel: Tel Aviv attack blocked

Israeli security officials said Sunday they recently arrested two Palestinian men who were allegedly planning a terror attack on a major shopping and business complex in Tel Aviv's downtown district.

The two, who were arrested in August, were members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the officials added.

Sbarro attack re-enacted

An exhibition opened in the West Bank city of Nablus to mark the first anniversary of the ongoing Palestinian uprising, according to the Jerusalem Post.

At Sunday's opening, a Palestinian man re-enacted the Aug. 9 suicide bombing of the Sbarro pizzeria in downtown Jerusalem, the paper reported.

CNN denies it aired old video

CNN said there is "absolutely no truth" to a claim that circulated on the Internet that CNN used 10-year-old video when showing the celebrations of some Palestinians in eastern Jerusalem following the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

The video was shot that day by a Reuters camera crew, according to a statement issued by CNN, which subsequently broadcast the video.

The allegation was "started by a Brazilian student who now says he immediately posted a correction once he knew the information was not true," the CNN statement said.



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let the world know that this kind of behavior has consequences," Artson said.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Shalom Center, explained his views with the biblical injunction, "Justice, justice shall you pursue."

Some rabbinic commentators have explained that the word 'justice' is stated twice, Waskow said, to emphasize that "you should pursue just goals through just means."

For Waskow, that means pursuing terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden by drawing up evidence against him, using the U.N. Security Council as a grand jury, and asking the United Nations to authorize "whatever levels of limited force" are necessary to arrest bin Laden.

Both terrorism and its root causes — which he identifies as poverty and injustice — must be addressed, he said.

"Sometimes it seems the right says focus only on terrorists, don't focus on the cause, while the left says the real event is causes and all that and don't worry about actual terrorists," Waskow added. "Both are crazy. There's no reason you have to do one and not the other."

Some Jewish thinkers are drawing parallels between current Islamic terrorism and other evil movements that have targeted Jews — from the biblical Amalekites to the Nazis.

Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, said, "Just as there can be no compromises with Amalek, there can't be any compromise with terrorists."

Cynthia Ozick, a novelist and essayist, raised comparisons to the Holocaust.

"No one gave a damn when suicide bombers were blowing up pizza parlors — the world shrugged at it," Ozick said.

"The history of ignoring the Jews of Europe is being repeated right now. Because when it was only the Jews, nations shrugged. Then Nazis came and engulfed the world in fire."

Like Ozick, Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, said Jewish history teaches that "evil is real," and that the global terrorism threat is one that first struck Jews and is now spreading.

"We know this enemy — we saw it at Sbarro's and the Dolphinarium," Wolpe said, referring to the Jerusalem pizzeria and Tel Aviv nightclub that were attacked by Palestinian suicide bombers earlier this year.

"We're the ones who ought to be warning the world that this is a really serious struggle," he said.

While several people interviewed urged Americans to defend the rights and safety of Arab- and Muslim-Americans, some expressed disappointment that leaders of these groups have been unwilling to clearly denounce terrorism targeting Jews in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Yeshiva University's Lamm said that, until the Sept. 11 terror attacks there was no public Muslim voice arguing for moderation and that even in the aftermath of terror, Muslim and Arab groups have not condemned suicide bombings targeting Israeli civilians.

Muslims "don't have to support the 'Israeli occupation,' but they have to prove themselves in the sense of developing a core of Islamic thinkers, clergymen and academicians who without agreeing to Israel and its policies will condemn terrorism — whether in the United States, Israel or elsewhere," Lamm said. □

Iran: We're in contact with U.S. about terror

NEW YORK (JTA) — Iran's foreign minister said his country was in indirect contact with the United States over plans to fight world terrorism.

Kamal Kharrazi made the remarks Sunday on the eve of a visit to Iran by British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to discuss cooperation against terrorism.

According to some reports, Straw, who is the first British foreign minister to travel to Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, might be carrying a message from Washington.

In another development, Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi proposed a severe penalty for any country refusing to join an international campaign against terror.

Writing in London's Jewish Chronicle, Jonathan Sacks said, "Any country that refuses to join this coalition should be expelled from the United Nations." □

JEWISH WORLD

Expert: Iraq not part of attacks

The chief of Israeli military intelligence said he saw no signs that Iraq was involved in the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

"I know many people are wondering whether this kind of attack could be carried out without the help of a country, and they immediately point at Iraq or Iran," Maj. Gen. Amos Malka told the Israeli daily *Yediot Achronot*.

"But as far as intelligence is concerned, I cannot point at the moment to a connection."

U.S., Israel targets of protests

Thousands of Somalis took to the streets of their capital and burned American and Israeli flags to protest U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Hard-line Islamic leaders who addressed the crowd Sunday in Mogadishu said the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States were the "curse of Allah on America" and that "one man in Afghanistan cannot be blamed for that."

Americans warned in Indonesia

Scores of Indonesian men entered hotels on the island of Java and warned Americans to leave if the United States carries out revenge strikes against Afghanistan.

Witnesses said the men represented several radical Muslim groups.

Anti-U.S. sentiment has been growing in the world's largest Muslim country following the deadly Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Lithuania marks Holocaust

Lithuania held commemorations Sunday to mark the 60th anniversary of the start of the Holocaust in the Baltic nation.

Sept. 23 also serves as the anniversary of the 1943 liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto, in which thousands of Jews were forced from their homes and sent to Nazi death camps.

Supremacist faces new charges

A U.S. grand jury brought additional charges against a white supremacist who advocated violent action as a way of ridding the United States of its multiracial character and "Jewish influence."

Leo Felton was already charged in June with conspiring to bomb Jewish and African-American properties to ignite a racial holy war.

The new charges focus on Felton's alleged plans to blow up the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and rob an armored car to finance the underground activities of his white supremacist organization.

British Jews rally for U.S., Israel; lash out at the backers of terrorism

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — British Jews turned out in force this week for a rally supporting Israel and the United States.

The rally, held Sunday at London's Theatre Royal, was the largest event of its kind in Britain in years.

Amid tight security, more than 2,400 people filled the auditorium and spilled out onto the streets outside, where speeches were shown on closed-circuit television.

The rally, One People 2001, was originally intended to be in support of four missing Israelis — three soldiers and a businessman — who were kidnapped in two separate incidents last October by Hezbollah forces in Lebanon.

But as the Israeli-Palestinian violence wore on and the death toll mounted, British Jewish leaders turned the event into one of solidarity with Israel.

It was to have occurred on the same day as a similar rally in New York.

But following the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the New York rally was canceled.

In the attacks' aftermath, the British gathering's message was broadened to include support for the United States and condemnation of terrorism.

Jews came by bus from Leeds and Birmingham as well as London for the rally. They were joined by Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo and members of the British Parliament, including Stephen Twigg, the deputy leader of the House of Commons and former chair of Labor Friends of Israel.

It opened with two minutes of silence "for all those who have lost their lives to terror."

One speaker underlined the theme with a reworking of a verse from the Book of Micah: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall terrorize them."

Ori Tannenbaum — the son of businessman Elchanan Tannenbaum, who was among those kidnapped by Hezbollah last October — drew loud applause by demanding that countries that sponsor terrorism not be allowed to join President Bush's evolving coalition of countries to fight terrorism.

Tannenbaum named Syria, Iran and Lebanon as supporters of Hezbollah, and called upon "the free world" to get information about the four missing Israelis.

"Fighting terrorism and harboring terrorists cannot take place simultaneously," Tannenbaum said.

Milo, the Tel Aviv mayor, echoed Tannenbaum's theme, saying "There is no rationality in bringing into a coalition against terror those who host terrorists. It is unbelievable."

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, gave an impassioned speech in which he rejected the allegation that the United States was targeted by terrorists because of its support for Israel.

The two countries were both targets, he said, because of an even deeper affinity.

"The link between them is that Israel and the U.S. are free, open, democratic societies, and therefore they are the ultimate threat" to those who would stifle freedom in the name of totalitarian religion.

For Israel to be linked with the United States by extremists who condemn both, he said, "is a badge of honor."

He urged Muslim and Arab leaders to stop teaching their children to hate.

"When nations learn to love their children more than they hate their neighbors, we will have peace," he said.

Another speaker also dealt with the themes of love and children: Seth Mandell, whose son Koby was one of two Israeli teen-agers beaten to death and mutilated by Palestinians in the spring.

Choked with emotion, Mandell said he and his family would stay in their home "because we love the people, the beauty, the freedom to be who we are in our own land." He said the visit to Israel of two non-Jewish American childhood friends after his son was killed "made me love them all the more, and love mankind all the more." □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Jewish relatives of terror victims confront issues of death, divorce

By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK (JTA) — Rabbi Avi Weiss has three families in his congregation waiting for New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani to decide whether their relatives are missing or, indeed, dead.

“We’re in a period of mourning between death and burial, which is in limbo,” said Weiss, spiritual leader of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in the Bronx, N.Y.

The three linked to Weiss’ congregation are among the thousands missing after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

With more than 6,000 feared dead as a result of the New York attacks — an unknown number are Jewish — rabbis like Weiss are consulting experts in halachah, or Jewish law, to find out how to mourn without a body.

And just as halachah mandates what should be done from the moment of death to burial, it is explicit in what should be done in those cases when no body is found.

Rabbi Moshe Tendler, professor of talmudic law and medical ethics at Yeshiva University in New York, agrees that the question of when mourning can begin lies in Giuliani’s hands.

“The moment he stops talking about the search-and-rescue mission, it means they’re not looking anymore,” said Tendler. “And as long as they’re calling it a rescue mission, there’s still hope in someone’s heart.”

Although the search was continuing early this week — albeit with little hope that any victims might be found — Rabbi Jonathan Reiss, director of the Beth Din of America, said several families of the World Trade Center victims had already sought the Jewish court’s help.

What makes this an especially difficult case, Reiss said, is that there is no way to determine with certainty that a particular victim was actually in the building at the time the planes hit.

“On the Titanic, you had a list of passengers,” he said. “But in the case of the World Trade Center, it’s harder to ascertain. Every single case has to be dealt with on an individual basis, with tremendous sensitivity and careful consideration.”

Usually, Jews bury their dead within 24 hours.

In this case, Tendler said, Jewish law dictates that once the search is called off, shiva — or mourning — must commence as it would with any death, but without a funeral service.

“The service is a burial service and, in this case, there’s nothing to bury,” he said.

Tendler advised instead that a memorial service take place at the shloshim, the 30th day after death becomes official.

“Eulogies are for the living,” he said, “and they should be done at a point where the family is already over the crying period and can control their emotions a little better.”

Tendler said that in those instances when a body is recovered after the shiva period is completed, it is buried accompanied by a single day of mourning called yom likut atzamos, the day that the bones are buried.

There is nothing in Jewish law prohibiting having a tombstone for individuals who perished in the Sept. 11 terror attack, said Tendler.

But when asked, he advises a living memorial such as a

playground with a memorial plaque as a more suitable way to remember the dead.

Rabbi Mark Washofsky said he had heard of cases where Jewish families held memorial services for those lost in the World Trade Center attack, despite the fact that the search hadn’t been called off yet.

Washofsky said that these families, Reform Jews, decided for themselves that they had no hopes of finding their loved ones alive.

“The families wanted to do something ritually marking the beginning of the mourning process, and shiva would have been cut short by Rosh Hashanah, so they felt the need to do something quickly,” said Washofsky, who is an associate professor of rabbinics at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.

Issues of Jewish law regarding divorce may also arise if men’s bodies are not found.

More than one piece of evidence is needed to prove that he is dead, or else his widow is considered an agunah, or “chained woman,” because he never issued her a get, a Jewish divorce document.

Without such a document, a Jewish woman is not permitted to remarry, according to Jewish law.

Tendler said that in the case of the World Trade Center, every effort will be made to ensure that the man had died in the explosion.

If it could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that he was in the building, and that the marriage between he and his wife was a happy one, Tendler said that “a ruling would be given that surely he is dead, and she would be free to start picking up the pieces of her life.”

Halachic issues aside, the lack of a body can make what is already an extremely difficult grieving process even more so, experts say.

Samuel Heilman, a Queens College sociology professor whose latest book is “When a Jew Dies: The Ethnography of a Bereaved Son,” made the point that the purifying washing ritual performed after death is as much for the soul as it is for the body.

“The purification and burial can’t be done when there is an absence of a body,” said Heilman, noting that those rituals serve as a kind of “seeing-off” of the body.

Without a physical place for the family to visit the body, he added, “There’s no feeling of closure. It’s as if the soul that resided in that body has not reached its destination and is in tortured limbo because the body hasn’t been purified and laid to rest.”

Rabbi Earl Grollman agrees.

The author of the forthcoming “Living With Loss, Healing With Hope: A Jewish Perspective” said the lack of body allows the survivors to “hope against hope” that the missing will be found. “Denial is part of the grieving process, but it’s much greater” when there is no body, he said. □

Israeli helps identify remains

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli police forensics expert is in New York at the request of Jewish leaders to help oversee the process of identifying remains of victims of the terror attack on the World Trade Center.

Meanwhile, rabbis are preparing to give guidance on applicable Jewish religious law, which calls for direct evidence to confirm the death of a relative. □