



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli fire kills four

An Israeli tank shell killed four Palestinians from a single family in the Gaza Strip.

Wednesday night's incident threatened to undermine an agreement for a gradual Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire. After the killings, the Palestinians canceled a security meeting scheduled between Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and Palestinian Authority Interior Minister Abdel Razek Yehiyeh.

Hebrew U. victims memorialized

American Friends of The Hebrew University is commemorating victims of the July 31 bombing at the Jerusalem university that killed nine.

The group is marking the end of the 30-day mourning period with memorial services around the country. At its four hub offices — New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Boca Raton, Fla. — American Friends will honor those killed in the attack and pray for the recovery of the more than 80 people injured.

In New York, there was a special dedication Thursday for Janis Coulter, 36, who was killed in the incident. Based in New York, Coulter was the assistant director of the office of academic affairs for the university's Rothberg International School.

British rabbi blames press

Britain's chief rabbi says his comments on the Middle East conflict were sensationalized and misinterpreted. In an interview that sent shockwaves through world Jewry, Jonathan Sacks was quoted this week in Britain's Guardian newspaper as saying the current stalemate with the Palestinians was "corrupting" Jewish culture in Israel. The Jerusalem Post, which called Sacks' remarks "morally inexplicable and astonishingly naive," called for his resignation.

However, in a letter to one of Israel's chief rabbis, Yisrael Meir Lau, Sacks wrote, "I deeply regret that sensationalist headlines have been used to portray me as a critic of Israel. I am not. Israel's case is a moral case," Sacks wrote. He added that he has "consistently supported Israel and made its case in the British media."

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 2.

Rabbis strive for inspiring words after a year of terror and tumult

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Typically an outspoken political activist, Rabbi Avi Weiss struggles for the right words when it comes to talking about Ground Zero.

"I can't go down to that place any more," says Weiss, the spiritual leader of the Hebrew Institute in the Bronx, N.Y.

On that fateful Sept. 11, the rabbi walked many blocks into the suffocating dust cloud arising from the collapsed World Trade Center, hoping he could help.

His actions were "insignificant" compared to firefighters, police and rescue workers who, he says, turned a place of evil into "a congregation of holy souls."

But one year later he sees a "rush of politicians and others to be at that spot," and while he understands the need

to see it, he won't go.

Instead, Weiss will mark the anniversary of the attacks as well as High Holiday services by asking his congregation for a period of "nonverbal communication" like the moment of silence that brings Israel to a halt on Memorial and Holocaust Remembrance Days.

But they'll also recite Psalms, read names and stories of victims, and talk about trust — "not only in each other, but finding it in your soul to trust in God."

Weiss is hardly alone in his struggle to find a way to talk about Sept. 11.

Last year's High Holidays came just days after the devastating attacks — and many rabbis ripped up their planned sermons to try to find the words to comfort their congregants. A year later, rabbis across the country are grappling with how to address a tumultuous year that saw a sharp increase in terrorism in Israel and a resurgence of anti-Semitism around the world even as their congregants tried to recover from the shock and pain of Sept. 11.

Some congregations will mark the one-year anniversary on the date itself, others will mark it on the Hebrew calendar day of the attack, the 23rd of Elul, which falls on Aug. 31 and coincides with Selichot services, which begin the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah.

But most rabbis plan to use the High Holidays — Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which begin Sept. 6 and Sept. 15, respectively, bracketing the Sept. 11 anniversary — to try to tackle what many say has been one of the most traumatic years in recent history.

Rabbi Barbara Penzner of Temple Hillel B'nai Torah in West Roxbury, Mass., says she and many colleagues have "struggled" to address the issues.

Some rabbis she knows will be retelling stories of Sept. 11 heroes, while others are discussing the terrorism Israel still faces each day. Others are exploring how fear shapes our response to the attacks, and some are simply asking where God was on that day.

"People are trying to find one aspect of this tragedy and the past year and trying to give people inspiration and hope," she says.

Penzner, the past president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, says she will explore whether the past year has made a real "difference" in our lives — or have things returned to normal?

"As Jews, we have a significant perspective, because we have lived through so many crises and calamities and we can appreciate how to live through events and not let them overpower us."

Rabbi David Wolpe of Temple Sinai in Los Angeles says he is still unsure how he

MIDEAST FOCUS

Plan would uproot settlements

The Israeli army reportedly has prepared a plan to remove Israeli settlers from nearly all settlements in the Gaza Strip and seven in the West Bank as part of an interim agreement with the Palestinians.

Spokespeople for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he is unaware of the plan, which reportedly was part of a proposal that would include provisional Palestinian statehood.

Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, said Israel would not evacuate any settlements while violence continues.

Rachel's Tomb to join Jerusalem?

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert favor annexing Rachel's Tomb to Jerusalem.

Under an Israel Defense Force plan, the biblical site is slated to be included inside a security barrier that will envelop Jerusalem, Ha'aretz reported. Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer hasn't given his approval to the plan.

Under the plan, a wall eight yards high and several hundred yards long would be built around the tomb compound, connecting the area to Jerusalem's municipal border, which is about three-tenths of a mile away.

'Lost tribe' arrives in Israel

Ninety-five members of an Indian tribe that claims to be a lost tribe of ancient Israel were slated to arrive in Israel.

The Bnei Menashe, who live in northeast India, claim they are descended from the biblical tribe of Menashe.

The contingent arriving Thursday will study Hebrew and Judaism before undergoing formal conversion to Judaism. With the group's arrival, there are 700 Bnei Menashe living in Israel.



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will deal with the subject. "It's indecent to ignore it, but it's not the totality of what we face or what the holidays are all about," he says.

Yet "there's a Jewish tradition of ritualizing and textualizing great events — how do you make it not of the moment, but a long-term event that affects our lives?"

One effort at finding such meaning is the recently published anthology "Living Words IV: A Spiritual Source Book for an Age of Terror," published by Sh'ma, a Jewish journal.

In past years, the annual anthology served as a collection of High Holiday writings, but this past year editor Susan Berrin said many of the pieces she gathered concerned the attacks.

Berrin saw "Sept. 11, 5762 as a moment in Jewish history," she says.

Penzner and others contributed to what Berrin says should serve as a guide for educators and rabbis.

So far this latest edition has sold 1,700 copies — triple the usual number, she says.

Rabbis are getting help in coming to terms with this past year from their movement's umbrella organizations as well.

The Orthodox Union, for example, is posting a video message from Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, the group's executive vice president, which reflects on "our fragility, our vulnerability, and the nature of good and evil," he says.

The O.U. is also sending out a Hebrew poem about tragedy by Moshe Sokolow, a Yeshiva University professor, which rabbis can incorporate into services.

Similarly, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism also e-mailed to its members a package titled "Project Zachor," which includes readings from specific Psalms, the mishebayrach, or prayer for recovery, for the survivors of the Sept. 11 attacks and the families of victims; and suggestions such as lighting a yahrzeit candle.

Like other heads of rabbinical organizations, Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of United Synagogue, says he has heard from pulpit rabbis that they are finding it difficult to craft messages this year.

"Most rabbis are trying to balance being sensitive to people who have lost individuals on that day, and the national crisis, with the need to move on with one's life and have a resolve to come away from this in a stronger way," he says.

"But people are struggling. It's not something where words alone make a difference — it's the tone as well."

As Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, put it, "There are no easy answers. In a 20-25 minute sermon, we're not going to solve these problems."

Still, like the other congregational groups, the UAHC has posted suggested liturgy for its member synagogues on its Web site, and officials like Yoffie have discussed Sept. 11 with member rabbis in national conference calls.

Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus of B'nai Yehuda Beth Sholom synagogue in suburban Chicago, who is also president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, says events of the past year have instilled a deep new fear in the community, a sense of a loss of control.

Immediately after Sept. 11, Dreyfus says, she, like many, recalls feeling that now Americans know how Israelis feel every day. Even though we "don't feel quite as vulnerable" today, she says, Israelis still talk about a "myth of security" in which people define their own safety rules to deal with suicide bombers.

"Ultimately, we're only human and we don't have control over much in our lives, but we have to think about what we do control."

For Rabbi Mark Diamond, executive vice president of the Southern California Board of Rabbis, that fear takes shape almost every time he drives past an airport on his way to work in Los Angeles.

"I see small planes landing about two miles from my house, and if it looks like they're banking too steeply over the San Fernando Valley, my heart skips a beat."

So one way Diamond will deal with that fear is the message he'll bring to his congregants at Temple Ramat Zion in Northridge, Calif., over the holidays.

"Israelis kiss their kids good-bye in the morning and wonder if they'll be reunited at dinnertime. And on Sept. 11, a whole bunch of people went off to work and never came home again," he says.

"The sacred gift of life, the notion of the everyday miracles of life — we should never, ever take them for granted," he said. "We don't know how long we're going to be here." □

JEWISH WORLD

Jews applaud as rights group calls anti-Semitism a 'danger'

By Sharon Samber

Sharon pressed on Law of Return

The chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel asked Ariel Sharon to quash plans to change the Law of Return. In a letter to the Israeli prime minister, Sallai Meridor asked that he take action against Interior Ministry suggestions to change the law.

The law guarantees Israeli citizenship to anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent. Israel's chief rabbis called for changes to the law, saying that two-thirds of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union are not Jews according to religious law.

Holocaust-denial meet denounced

The Simon Wiesenthal Center called on world leaders to condemn the Arab League's participation in a Holocaust-denial conference.

"What hope for real peace can there be, when the official umbrella organization of the Arab world embraces wholesale lies and slanders against the Jewish people?" the center's associate dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, said in a statement about Thursday's conference in Abu Dhabi.

Macedonia to make good

Macedonia will return communal Jewish property and return or provide compensation for heirless private property that belonged to Macedonian Jews killed in the Shoah. As many as 1,000 heirless properties are involved. Jewish sources said such compensation was unprecedented.

Finance Minister Nikola Gruevski made the announcement Thursday at a ceremony in the Macedonian capital of Skopje attended by local Jewish leaders and Jewish representatives from other Balkan countries. The communal property, including more than 10,000 square yards of prime land in Skopje, will be returned to the 200-member Jewish community.

Store pulls supremacist clothes

A U.S. department store chain is recalling clothes with symbols that are code for "Heil Hitler." Officials with Target said they were unaware that the "eight eight" and "88" on the baseball caps and shorts sold in Target stores are used by white supremacists to indicate "Heil Hitler," because H is the eighth letter of the alphabet.

Jackie Mason backtracks

Jewish comic Jackie Mason denied that he canceled a comedian slated to open for him this week because he is Palestinian. But Mason admitted that the fact that Ray Hanania advertised their different backgrounds made him "furious."

Hanania has admitted that he played up their different backgrounds to garner publicity.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For the third time this summer, voices in the human rights camp have spoken out against anti-Semitism.

In a report released Tuesday, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights said European governments are not accurately reporting or effectively combating anti-Semitic violence and must immediately acknowledge the "extraordinary dangers" that such violence poses in Europe.

Officials should develop systems to register, report and combat hate crimes, the report said.

"The fight against anti-Semitism should be integral to international efforts to combat racism," said Michael McClintock, who wrote the report, called "Fire and Broken Glass: The Rise of Anti-Semitism in Europe."

The report comes a year after the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, became a circus of anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli incitement. Efforts by European governments and institutions to monitor and confront the problem of anti-Semitism are insufficient, the report said.

"The rise in violence against Jewish communities across Europe is part of a broader pattern of racist violence — but the severity, pan-European scope and historical roots of this violence require particularly urgent attention as a part of this larger effort to combat racism," the report said.

However, Amnesty International issued a report last month criticizing Palestinian terror attacks on Israeli civilians as "crimes against humanity."

The report also criticized some U.N. actions since the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000.

Israeli officials and Jewish leaders long have criticized Amnesty and other human rights groups for being one-sided in their reporting on the Middle East conflict, saying they harp on alleged Israeli violations while ignoring their context or minimizing attacks against Israel or Jews.

Last week, the United Nations released a report indicating that the rise in anti-Semitism, along with an increase in xenophobia and the persistence of racist propaganda on the Internet, are the principal tendencies of contemporary racism and intolerance.

Nevertheless, Jewish leaders are not ready to call the reports a sign of real change, saying they merely acknowledge past one-sidedness.

Leaders also speculate that Jewish financial support for human rights organizations, historically strong, may have fallen in the past year because the groups seemed so anti-Israel.

That may have encouraged the groups to look at the issue of anti-Semitism more seriously.

"They're playing catch-up," said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "But human rights groups have a long history, and the reports are not going to change 40 years of history."

Hier welcomed the report, but believes it came about because human rights groups realized they were losing credibility in the Jewish community.

The Anti-Defamation League said the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and others had a lack of even-handedness that made them focus on violence from Israel but not from the Arab world, and had a "blind spot" when it came to anti-Semitism.

"The human rights community that stood by in Durban heard our complaints, listened to us and are now showing they do care," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

Indeed, in remarks accompanying the report, the Lawyer's Committee executive director, Michael Posner, made clear how powerful had been the impact of the Durban conference.

"The world needs to continue the global conversation about combating racism," Posner said. "To do this, though, it was clear we needed to address the very racism that marred the Durban meeting: anti-Semitism." □

THE DEBATE ON CAMPUS

College editors say trip to Israel will help inform conflict coverage*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For college journalist Evan Wagner, a tour along the seam line separating Israel and the West Bank brought Israeli security concerns into focus in a way that following the situation from afar could not.

Recalling the view of the Mediterranean from a vantage point along the Green Line, Wagner said he was surprised by how close everything is.

The tour “made a lot of those issues clearer than they could ever be by looking at a map or watching it on CNN,” said Wagner, 20, a senior at American University in Washington and a managing editor of the campus newspaper, *The Eagle*.

Wagner is one of eight college newspaper editors who recently traveled to Israel as part of an intensive two-week seminar organized by the Anti-Defamation League.

The program, now in its 10th year, had special resonance this time around, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict spurring heated debate — and tensions — on many American campuses.

As college students across the United States begin the new academic year, this select group of campus newspaper editors visited Israel in the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of the conflict.

With stops in Poland, Bulgaria and Israel, the program was also designed to educate student journalists about the history of the Holocaust and the Jewish state in general.

Wagner said he hoped what he learned on the trip would help him provide context for the newspaper’s coverage of campus activism related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“A trip like this, for me, translates into being able to put together better-informed” and more perceptive content, he said.

While in Israel the group toured Jerusalem, northern Israel and the seam line separating Israel and the West Bank.

They visited holy sites and museums, stayed on a kibbutz, were briefed by Foreign Ministry and defense officials and met with Israeli peers.

They heard from a diverse group of speakers, including Israeli legislators, Israeli Arab and Druse leaders, a representative from a regional settlement council in the West Bank, and Israeli, American and Palestinian members of the media.

Chatting in the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel on the last day of the seminar, the students said they were drawn to the program because of the opportunity it provided to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict up close.

“I believe very strongly that to understand any country, any place, any conflict, you have to see it firsthand,” said Mariano Castillo, 22, a senior at Texas A&M University.

Unlike the other program participants, for whom this was a first trip to Israel, Castillo came here six months ago on a mission organized by the American Jewish Committee.

“If there’s one thing I learned when I came in December, it was that one trip is not enough to understand all the complexities of Israel and of the conflict,” he said.

“Even though it’s only been six months since I’ve been here, so much has changed.”

For Castillo, one of the highlights of the week in Israel was a

meeting with Haifa Mayor Amram Mitzna shortly after he declared his candidacy for leadership of the Labor Party.

“It was really great to meet a leader of that caliber, someone who’s going to be a player in the next year or so and get his thoughts on where the country needs to go,” said Castillo, who will be writing this year for the campus newspaper, *The Battalion*, after serving as its editor in chief.

Johanna Hanink, a junior at the University of Michigan, said a chance encounter with a group of Israeli soldiers whom he met while visiting Auschwitz was one of the strongest impressions from the trip.

“Seeing that they are our age, that most of them are kids just like us, really changed my perspective on how things work here,” said Hanink, 20, who is editorial page editor of *The Michigan Daily*.

This year’s mission, from Aug. 5-Aug. 18, included college newspaper editors from American University, University of Michigan, Harvard University, University of California at Irvine, Oregon State University, Syracuse University, Wayne State University and Texas A&M University.

The main point of the program is to “expose people to a diversity of viewpoints,” said Ken Jacobson, assistant national director of the ADL.

While past groups spent some time in the territories, that was not possible this year because of the security situation, Jacobson said.

“We tried to find ways to compensate,” such as arranging a meeting with a Palestinian speaker, he said.

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence also affected the size of the study mission, which had fewer participants than in previous years.

While some of the students admitted that their families had expressed concern about their coming to Israel, personal safety was not a major issue for them.

“There are millions of people living here, who are managing with all the terrorism and conflict to live somewhat normal lives, or at least lives,” said David DeBartolo, 21, a senior at Harvard University.

“If they can do it, the least I can do to learn about the way they’re living is to come for a week and see it with my own eyes.”

DeBartolo and other student editors said their school papers’ coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict split into two categories: wire copy on actual news events and original reporting on how the dispute is playing out among campus interest groups.

The students described varying levels of campus activism at their schools surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At the University of Michigan, “there are a lot of people who feel like they have a large personal investment in what’s happening here,” said Hanink.

“So that has bred a lot of activism and tension on the campus,” which she said the paper covers.

“Our editorial policy is unique in that in our unsigned editorials we never take a position on international affairs. But we view the role of those unsigned editorials to define the borders of acceptable debate on campus,” she said. “We encourage both the Palestinian and Israeli activist groups to be vocal, to have a presence, but when one of those groups says something that we feel goes too far, we point that out.”

Hanink said that if before she might have hesitated about running a particular opinion piece, “this trip has helped me define my own boundaries for what are the acceptable extremes.” □