

IN THE NEWS

**Award made
in Swiss settlement**

A U.S. judge awarded two Jewish families \$21.8 million, the largest award made to date from the Swiss banks fund.

Judge Edward Korman made the award Wednesday in a claim regarding the Nazi takeover of a prewar sugar refinery in Austria that had been owned by the Bloch-Bauer and Pick families.

Money for the award comes from the \$1.25 billion settlement Swiss banks agreed to in 1998 to pay out dormant Holocaust-era accounts.

**World Bank leader
to help P.A. efforts**

President Bush chose the outgoing World Bank president to coordinate efforts to reform the Palestinian infrastructure.

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice named James Wolfensohn as an envoy for the diplomatic "Quartet" — a coalition of the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia — focused on political and economic reform of the Palestinian Authority and efforts to reconstruct the Gaza Strip after Israel withdraws this summer.

**Egypt to deploy
troops along border?**

Egypt may post 4,000 troops on its border with Israel to prevent arms smuggling to Palestinian terrorists.

Israeli sources said Thursday that talks are under way with Cairo on the proposed deployment, which effectively would do away with a clause in the 1979 Camp David peace accord requiring that the Sinai Desert be demilitarized.

Security officials believe Palestinian terrorists are stockpiling weapons brought through the porous Israeli-Egyptian frontier.

But Yuval Steinitz, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and a critic of Egyptian policy toward Israel, warned against changing the "strategic situation" in the Sinai.

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WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, right, watches Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as they take part in the Knesset budget vote on March 29.

As withdrawal nears, Sharon faces challenge from Netanyahu

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After keeping a relatively low profile in recent months, Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has launched a forceful bid for the national leadership, blasting Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and trumpeting his own economic policy as a way to make Israel one of the richest countries on earth within a decade.

The move is not just an expression of personal rivalry. Netanyahu's overt challenge to the Israeli prime minister could split the already troubled Likud Party, and is sure to

have a major impact during and after the disengagement process from Gaza and the northern West Bank, scheduled to begin in July.

If the process fails, Netanyahu almost certainly will challenge Sharon and may well unseat him as prime minister. If disengagement succeeds, Sharon may well have to strike a deal with Netanyahu over what happens next — which could mean a less generous Israeli peace offer to the Palestinians.

Netanyahu chose the moment of one of Sharon's greatest political successes to mount his attack. In successive days in late March, Sharon overcame the last two

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ Netanyahu launches challenge to Sharon as withdrawal nears

Continued from page 1

remaining parliamentary obstacles to his disengagement plan. On March 29, the Knesset voted down a call for a national referendum on disengagement, and on March 30 it passed the 2005 state budget.

Defeat for Sharon in either vote would have meant national elections and an indefinite deferment of disengagement. Victory meant that at least as far as the Knesset is concerned, there is nothing to stop Sharon from going through with the pullback in the summer.

Netanyahu made his move as soon as the budget votes were counted. Instead of celebrating the government victory, he took the floor to warn that Israel's recent economic success would continue only "if the prime minister cooperated."

From the Knesset, Netanyahu went to a Jerusalem conference organized by the right-wing Besheva newspaper, where he launched an unprecedentedly harsh attack on Sharon's disengagement plan. The policy of unilateral disengagement, he argued, was getting the international community and the Arabs used to the idea that Israel could be pressed to make concessions while receiving nothing in return.

Referring to the policy of "reciprocity" he insisted on as prime minister from 1996 to 1999, Netanyahu declared, "We must get back to the policy we abandoned, the policy of asking for something in exchange for each and every one of the concessions we make."

As for the substance of Sharon's plan, Netanyahu said it was full of holes and would allow massive arms smuggling into Gaza. Finally, Netanyahu implied that he would be able to get a far better deal than Sharon on the West Bank after disengagement: Israel, he said, should simply take over the 75 percent or so of the West Bank that is uninhabited.

In an effort to mollify Netanyahu and stop him from placing himself at the head of a growing and hawkish rebel wing within Likud, Sharon invited Netanyahu to an intimate gathering of friends marking the anniversary of the death of Sharon's wife, Lily.

The two men held a long private conversation, but Netanyahu denies that they struck any political deal.

Indeed, Netanyahu is continuing to promote his leadership bid. On Sunday, the day Sharon flew to Texas for key meetings with President Bush and other U.S. officials, Netanyahu held a news conference to highlight his economic achievements.

"In the next two years Israel will enjoy the highest growth rate in the West," he declared.

Speaking of a grand economic vision, Netanyahu declared that "under his leadership" Israel could become one of the 10 richest countries in the world within a decade.

The subtext of Netanyahu's message is clear: Israel under him will prosper, whereas under Sharon the country has a dubious future.

The latest round in the longstanding feud between Sharon and Netanyahu dates back to October, when Netanyahu tried to topple the government by getting five Likud ministers to vote with him and the National Religious Party against disengagement in a key Knesset vote.

In the end, Netanyahu and his group caved in after the NRP reached a deal with Sharon. Sharon accused them of "planning a putsch."

Since then there has been speculation that at some point Netanyahu might put himself at the head of the strong anti-dis-

engagement camp in Likud, a move that could split the party. His attacks on Sharon over the past two weeks add weight to that scenario.

Bitter personal recriminations and strong ideological feelings are not the only reasons for a possible split. Likud insiders say the system for electing Knesset candidates could prove even more divisive.

Under the current system, a maximum of 25 of the current 40 Likud Knesset mem-

bers — plus the two Cabinet ministers who are not legislators — will be eligible for re-election. In other words, there will be no place for at least 17 of the present incumbents.

"This overcrowded situation is creating tremendous tension," said Yitzhak Regev, an influential Sharon supporter in the party's Central Committee. "Some of the present Knesset members might welcome a split and the chance for guaranteed places on a new party list outside Likud."

Much will depend on how disengagement turns out on the ground, Likud insiders say. If it fails and a new round of fighting with the Palestinians erupts, they say Netanyahu has worked himself into the perfect position to challenge Sharon for the leadership on a right-wing ticket, blaming the prime minister for the disengagement fiasco.

If disengagement succeeds, they say Netanyahu and Sharon could clash over what to do next, especially if Sharon proposes a second unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank — and this could split the party.

Alternatively, they say, Netanyahu might offer his cooperation if Sharon agrees to modify his political plans and hand over the reins of power at a specified date — such as 2008, when Sharon turns 80.

Bottom line: Sharon may have had his own way with disengagement, relegating Netanyahu to the role of a noisy bit player. But as the huge withdrawal project approaches, with all its attendant risks, Netanyahu, the former and would-be future prime minister, is bounding back to center stage.

'In the next two years Israel will enjoy the highest growth rate in the West.'

Benjamin Netanyahu

Finance Minister

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Study looks at Jewish voting patterns

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Newly compiled information suggests that a few more Jews voted for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry last November than originally reported, and highlights several areas where Republicans are gaining momentum within the Jewish community.

The analysis by the Solomon Project, a think tank associated with the National Jewish Democratic Council, shows that the Massachusetts senator received 77 percent of the Jewish vote to President Bush's 22 percent. That's a slight change from the 75 percent Kerry was said to have received in polls released soon after the vote.

The new information, released Tuesday, is based on a broader sample of exit polls that incorporates both the national poll released in November and a state-by-state poll that was not widely released.

The wider survey finds that Bush fared particularly well with Jewish men, garnering 28 percent of their votes, compared to 16 percent of Jewish women. In particular, he captured 35 percent of Jewish men younger than 30.

The new report could put to rest lingering questions about the extent of gains Bush made within the Jewish community. Many Republicans expected Bush would do well among Jews — especially in such targeted key states as Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania — because of support for his Middle East policy.

In the end, Bush won more than the 19 percent of the vote he received in the 2000 election against then-Vice President Al Gore and Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), the first Jew on a national ticket.

"There's been some small movement in the Jewish community toward the Republicans, but nothing really dramatic," said Stuart Rothenberg, an independent political analyst.

Rothenberg said he found the report's methodology "kosher," but Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he is wary of exit poll analysis because the results

on Election Day seemed to inflate Democratic strength.

"I think any credible person would look at this as somewhat revisionist history," Brooks said.

"I don't think this passes the credibility threshold in terms of statistical accuracy."

The report does confirm the potential for greater movement of Jewish votes to the GOP in the future. Republicans have been targeting young Jewish voters and the Orthodox, who are considered more likely to vote for the GOP because of their more

conservative positions on social issues.

The analysis uses a wide set of polling data on Jews taken in the weeks and months before the election to understand voting trends within subgroups of Jews.

While no analysis of Jewish votes has had enough Orthodox participants to garner a reliable result, Tuesday's report suggests that Bush may have received half or more of their votes. Three independent polls had Bush winning at least half of the Orthodox vote, but each had a sample size of only between 49 and 70 people.

A poll by the Mellman Group, which did surveys for the Kerry

campaign, found that 47 percent of Jews who attend synagogue every week supported Bush, compared to 48 percent for Kerry. The Democrat did substantially better among Jews who attended synagogue once a month or less.

"We know a lot more about different types of Jewish voters than we did a few days ago," said Ira Forman, research director of the Solomon Project and the NJDC's executive director.

Forman said the information highlighted that Democratic efforts to court Orthodox voters were inadequate. ■

There's been some small movement in the Jewish community toward the Republicans, but nothing really dramatic.'

Stuart Rothenberg

Independent political analyst

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Israeli undercover agent wins military honor

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — A Russian immigrant turned Israeli policeman has won the Jewish state's second-highest military honor.

Known only by his initial, Y, the commander of the border police undercover unit called Yasam was awarded the Ribbon of Valor on Tuesday for a string of deadly counterterrorist missions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yasam is the Hebrew acronym for Police Reconnaissance Unit.

"I just did my job as best I knew how," Y, a 30-year-old father of two, told Ma'ariv before the awards ceremony. "I wasn't expecting a decoration."

Yasam usually seeks out recruits among Sephardi Jews who can pass for Palestinians and handle covert operations. It might seem an odd home for Y, the piano-playing son of Muscovite academics who immigrated to Israel when he was 16. But he now has two dozen confirmed "kills" of terrorist fugitives to his name.

Y described Yasam as his Zionist calling. "Even in the worst of times, we always knew Israel was the place for us," he said. "The same went for the military. Even back in Russia, we would hear about the Israeli military. For me, it was a personal challenge to serve in it."

"The Holocaust is very deeply ingrained in me. With time, I understood how terrible it was, and understood that we, the Jews, must know how to protect ourselves without asking questions or permission."

Drafted into the paramilitary border police, Y performed so well that the commanders asked him to become an officer despite his faulty Hebrew.

"There is something wrong with his fear instinct. It does not exist," one comrade said.

Y describes undercover work as a matter of attitude.

Despite being the first serviceman to win the Ribbon of Valor in 23 years, Y has no intention of coming out of the shadows. ■

Jewish teens learn about Jewish giving

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — One of the newest trends in philanthropy and youth programming puts teens in charge, allowing them to decide where their money should go.

"You know how kids are always saying, like, we don't have a voice," says Lia Volat, 18, of Great Barrington, Mass. "This definitely makes me feel powerful."

Lia is expressing a view shared by hundreds of peers who have become involved in new teen philanthropy initiatives. Such programs have been sprouting across the United States, aimed at empowering Jewish youth and jump-starting their commitment to Jewish philanthropy.

The initiatives first target teens around the time of their bar or bat mitzvahs. That marks both a teenager's Jewish coming of age — and, in many cases, his or her first financial windfall.

Lia is one of about 20 board members of B'nai Tzedek, a program begun in 1997 by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, which serves western Massachusetts.

Board members, who must apply for the position, are required to raise a minimum of \$100, which the foundation matches two-to-one for a communal grant-making pool.

Over the course of a school year, the group determines a mission statement and gives funds to Jewish groups that make relevant proposals.

B'nai Tzedek also provides teen programming on tzedakah and gives teens a personal endowment fund. A teen's \$125 contribution

is matched with \$125 by the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Western Mass., which in other cases requires a \$10,000 minimum before it will advise a fund. The Grinspoon foundation kicks in another \$250.

"I think the most exciting thing about it is really witnessing the power and intelligence of teens to really make a thoughtful impact on the world," said B'nai Tzedek's director, K'vod Wieder. "I think they actually have insights that would do really well on adult boards, and we're going to explore that next year."

The Jewish Funders Network has been pushing the trend. The group sponsored a session on teen philanthropy at its annual conference in Baltimore last week that showcased B'nai Tzedek and the Rockville, Md.-based Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute, both pioneers in the field.

Teen philanthropy aims to counter another trend in which younger Jews increasingly donate their dollars to non-Jewish organizations, according to Eytan Hammerman, director of the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute.

Both B'nai Tzedek and the philanthropy institute integrate text study to help teenagers understand charitable giving in a Jewish context.

Philanthropy is becoming a hip thing for teens to do, Hammerman said.

"If you look at them based on what they're wearing and how they're sitting when it's snack time, you'd never guess that they would be about to engage in a discussion at the level or even above the level of those discussions that our most generous philanthropists engage in every day — that is, how to best maximize our resources to ensure the vitality and strength of our community and to

show that Jews care about the world."

The five-year-old philanthropy institute, which began with 20 teens, has quintupled in size.

Participants donate between \$200 to \$500, and the institute matches those gifts.

Among the recipients were the Abuyudaya Jewish tribe of Uganda, an Abraham Fund program to teach Arabic in Israeli Jewish elementary schools and the Association for Safe International Road Travel.

The group has published a guide that it has distributed to some 40 institutions, including high schools, synagogues and federations.

"I think it's going to make me not only more interested but also more educated when it comes to making decisions" about giving, said Kerry Brodie, 14, who is on the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute's board of directors.

For Kerry, a student at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, the experience illuminated the needs of people outside the Jewish world. The institute encourages donations to both Jewish and non-Jewish groups.

"I did consider Jewish causes more beforehand, and now I realize people are people and they all need the money," she said.

For Lia, the imperative to give only to Jewish causes felt limiting at first. But she began to realize that she could make a profound impact through focused giving.

For example, after seeing the film "Hotel Rwanda," she decided to direct money to a Jewish agency helping to resettle Somalian families.

Though Lia said she'll consider both Jewish and non-Jewish charities in the future, participating in the B'nai Tzedek program "strengthened my appreciation for the Jewish community," she said.

For B'nai Tzedek board member Adam Sinkin, 15, the experience drove home the importance of tzedakah.

"We learn so much about tzedakah and how it relates to being Jewish," he said. "Now I think Judaism is living a good life with the world."

'We learn so much about tzedakah and how it relates to being Jewish. Now I think Judaism is living a good life with the world.'

Adam Sinkin
B'nai Tzedek board member



Eytan Hammerman/JYPI

Teens from the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute present a grant to the Behrend Builders' Young Builders' Program.

Building Jewish identity by doing good works

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Benjamin Gittle-son has some unusual weekend plans. On Sunday he'll take the half-hour ride from Gaithersburg, Md., to the northeastern area of Washington for a day in the park — Watts Branch Park, once known for drug pushers and addicts, piles of decaying trash and thatches of overgrown brush.

Benjamin will be joining 100 to 150 other area teens from the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute in a daylong clean-up effort at the city park.

"A lot of high-schoolers see community service as something they're not looking forward to," says Benjamin, a 10th-grader at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Md. "This activity, among others we do, is enjoyable, and you really feel like you're bettering the community and making a big difference. I'm looking forward to it. It exposes you to a totally different area."

The park initiative is one of 33 civic-service projects in which young Jews from across the United States and Canada will take part Sunday. The efforts are part of J-serve 2005, billed by its organizers as the first-ever North American day of service for Jewish teens.

The youth philanthropy institute took part in a day of park cleaning last year, but this year is doing so under J-serve auspices.

J-serve's date corresponds with Youth Service America's National/Global Youth Service Day, an annual event where young Americans and youth abroad engage in tens of thousands of service projects. Organizers are expecting 4 million young people in more than 100 countries to take part this year.

"It's always nice to be part of something bigger than yourself," says Rabbi Sid Schwarz, president of Panim, The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, which is among J-serve's national planning organizations, along with the North American Alliance for Jewish Youth and the Jewish Coalition for Service.

Beyond that, Schwarz says, J-serve's emergence reflects a recognition among Jews that community service is growing in general society and may be a draw for young Jews not otherwise engaged in Jewish activity.

The Jewish world has been slightly behind the curve as far as general service programming is concerned, some J-serve organizers say.

"The general community has been doing much more in the way of universal services than the Jewish community has been doing," says Simha Rosenberg, executive director of the Jewish Coalition for Service. "In some ways we're catching up."

Jews were engaged in civil issues "at other points in the American Jewish experience," she says, but a

"focus on Israel and Jewish continuity may have slowed Jewish involvement in this sort of thing."

Nevertheless, Rosenberg says, "I think that this is something that is growing in Jewish life, and I see it as a really positive trend."

Jewish youth groups have participated independently in the national/global youth service day, but not under the aegis of any national Jewish organization.

As part of J-serve, among other projects, teen volunteers in Miami will create a luau-themed picnic for underprivileged kids; a group of young Jews in Irvine, Calif., will collect chametz, or leavened products that are not kosher for Passover,

and distribute them to local homeless people; teens in Detroit will help seniors in assisted-living and nursing facilities; and youngsters in Overland Park, Kan., will make peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches for a local shelter.

Area organizing groups in each city have been urged to make sure that some component of the day links the activities — which, like the park cleaning in Washington, may not be Jewish per se — to what is Jewish about them.

"We will definitely be adding a layer of Jewish education to the day," says Eytan Hammerman, director of the philanthropy



Eytan Hammerman/JYPI

Teens from the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute help clean up a park in Washington in April 2004.

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

institute. "After we do the hands-on park clean-up, we'll speak about nature, the environment and what Judaism tells us about caring for our world."

The Jewish component is essential, Schwarz says. "We have a vested interest in getting people to put a Jewish language on that. To understand that the activity that they're engaged in" has been going on among Jews for centuries. "What we've learned big time here at Panim is that if you don't give it language and labeling, people don't get it."

For Steve Culbertson, president and CEO of Youth Service America, which runs National/Global Youth Service Day, the development of J-serve is "enormously positive."

"It brings even more kids into this movement and I think we'll be educating more adults about the role of young people

as assets and resources," he says. "But I also think the fact that these are not necessarily Jewishly oriented service projects — in other words, that they look out rather than in" — is positive.

"It's an incredibly powerful way to build leadership and engage people in Jewish life," Rosenberg says. "People have a real opportunity to build community at the same time they're helping others."

Benjamin agrees.

"I definitely feel like this is one way to connect with Judaism," he says. "It's another way to fulfill my obligation as a Jew."

You really feel like
you're bettering the
community and making
a big difference.'

Benjamin Gittle-son

Maryland teenager

Demonstrators bring Mideast passion to Texas

By RON KAMPEAS

CRAWFORD, Texas (JTA) — Pro- and anti-Israel protesters brought a crowded corner of the Middle East home to Crawford, Texas, for a day.

More than 2,000 demonstrators gathered in the central Texas town Monday as President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met down a dirt road at Bush's ranch to discuss Israel's plans to pull out from 25 settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank this summer. That was far more than Crawford's resident population of 705.

Both sides were protesting the visit, but the overwhelming majority were Baptists who believe the removal of settlers violates biblical precepts.

The Baptists, who brought in leaders of Israel's settler movement to speak, wore orange T-shirts and caps emblazoned with the slogan "Israel belongs to the Jews."

Gadi Eshel, a leader of a pro-settler faction in Sharon's Likud Party, said the planned evacuation was a "complete blasphemy," earning a resounding "Amen!" from members of the crowd, many of whom were waving Israeli flags.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America — the settlers' principal U.S. backer — spoke to the protesters by phone.

"We will resolve this in a way that God wants it solved, not the way Ariel Sharon wants it solved," he said.

Down the road, a dozen pro-Palestinian demonstrators raised a Palestinian flag at the Peace House, established by dovish groups to press various anti-war causes shortly after Bush's 2000 election.

Not that the locals seemed to mind the intrusion — or even to notice it. While dozens of reporters crowded into the front part of Crawford Middle School, the kids had an "outside" day, spending much of it on the track in back of the school — not an uncommon occurrence, considering the frequency of world leaders' visits to Crawford.

Commercial enterprises naturally enjoy the attention. "Fly Waco," a billboard outside the nearest commercial airport reads. "Presidents, prime ministers and princes do."

This wasn't the first visit by an Israeli prime minister to a Texas ranch: Levi Eshkol and President Lyndon Johnson forged the U.S.-Israel strategic partnership at LBJ's ranch in January 1968. That agreement paved the way for massive military aid to Israel, which proved crucial in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

The friendship between Eshkol and Johnson was so close that Sharon corrected himself when he summed up his own relationship with Bush in a meeting Monday with Israeli reporters.

"These are the closest relations ever — well, the closest since Eshkol-Johnson," he said.

That match seemed an attraction of opposites: The large, loud, rough-hewn Johnson and the mild, small Eshkol, the

product of an Eastern European religious education.

During the Crawford visit, Sharon invited Bush on a reciprocal visit to his Negev ranch, and Bush accepted.

"I know you love the land," Bush said at their joint press appearance. "The prime minister was telling me he's really a farmer at heart, and I look forward to sharing with my friend what

life is like here in central Texas."

Sharon said later that an all-terrain-vehicle tour of Bush's ranch was a highlight of the trip. "We saw beautiful things," he said. "A river, a natural forest."

Sharon, who breeds cattle, also examined Bush's herd of Black Angus. There was no word, however, on whether the kosher pecan-smoked beef tenderloin that was served for lunch was of local provenance.

There's not a lot in Waco — known as the home of Baylor University and museums celebrating the local origins of Dr. Pepper and the Texas Rangers — to make an Israeli feel at home.

Not much but a few teasing signs: A sign at a local mall saying "Jerusalem Angel Country" does not seem attached to any existing store. A deli around the corner is called Schmaltz. Its featured sandwich — ham and cheese — belies any Jewish connection, however.

There is a Jewish community of about 400 people in town, and two synagogues, Reform and Conservative.

About 40 local Jews decked out in blue and white, waving Israeli flags and balloons, turned out Sunday to greet the Israeli motorcade when Sharon arrived at the Waco Hilton. A number of Sharon's senior aides got out of their cars to thank the delegation.

Rabbi Gordon Fuller of Congregation Agudath Jacob, the Conservative shul, said the heavily Christian town — Baylor is the largest Baptist university in the world, and a church seems to dot every corner — prods local Jews to take pride in their own identity.

"Kids here know who they are," he said.

'We will resolve this in a way that God wants it solved, not the way Ariel Sharon wants it solved.'

Morton Klein

President, Zionist Organization of America

BEHIND THE HEADLINES



Joshua Wander

Thousands of protesters gather in Crawford, Texas, for a rally against the Gaza withdrawal during Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to President Bush's ranch on April 11.

ARTS & CULTURE

Koret Foundation honors Jewish writers

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — Ten thousand dollars is a nice chunk of change, but organizers of this year's Koret Jewish Book Awards, who handed out checks for that amount to six authors, say the real gift they'd like to give the Jewish community is to allow writers and readers of Jewish books to interact more easily.

Decrying the "increasing barriers" between academia and popular culture, the Koret Foundation's advisory board chairman, Steve Zipperstein, told 200 invited guests at Monday night's award ceremony at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center that by "bringing together the best, most interesting Jewish writing of all sorts" in a weekend of author-led workshops, the foundation was trying "to make learning and literature part of one's immediate culture, not something exotic or rarefied."

In addition to awarding \$10,000 prizes in fiction, biography, philosophy, history and, for the first time, children's literature, judges waded through almost 200 entries in the category of "young writers on Jewish themes," bestowing \$25,000 on University of Oklahoma graduate student Tim Bradford.

The judges also created a special translation and commentary category to honor the University of California at Berkeley's Robert Alter for his monumental treatment of "The Five Books of Moses."

"Why ought writers to meet?" Zipperstein asked rhetorically during the ceremony, before launching into a paean to famous 20th-century writers' groups. Even those writers who create in self-imposed isolation must draw upon "a network of human dramas," he insisted, and their work needs "a community of readers" to give it cultural context.

Koret Foundation President Tad Taube said the group's sponsorship of the awards is predicated on the belief that promoting a greater appreciation of Jewish culture inside and outside the Jewish community is essential to ensuring Jewish survival.

"Now go out and buy books," Zipperstein said. ■

Alter on Bible translation

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — Despite the Talmudic injunction that calls upon every Jew to write his own Torah, only a handful of scholars throughout history have attempted the monumental task of translating the entire Chumash, or Five Books of Moses.

Yet Robert Alter, 62, who has taught Hebrew and comparative literature for three decades at the University of California at Berkeley, says he didn't find it daunting to tackle the text at the heart of his people's 3,000-year-old faith.

Representing more than five years of work, the hefty yet highly readable English version of the Torah employs the Biblical translation style Alter has made his own: a painstakingly careful approach to the text that respects the tone, word choice, cadence and rhythm of the original Hebrew, and tries to duplicate all those qualities in modern English.

Just as the Hebrew of the Torah is, in Alter's words, "simple, with a homespun quality," yet also "formal," his renditions into English are fluid yet not colloquial, tinted by a nuance of "archaic coloration" he feels is appropriate to the original.

Alter says he embarked on the project because he felt existing Biblical translations weren't very good.

The older Catholic and Protestant translators didn't know Biblical Hebrew well enough, he says. Even the Jewish Publication Society version, begun in the 1960s and today considered the Jewish standard, is marred by "a deficient sense of English literary style," and it shares the failings of the Christian translations, he says.

The compartmentalization of modern academia only hurts Biblical translation efforts, Alter says.

"Issues of literary style are not part of Biblical studies, take my word for it," he says.

For example, biblical Hebrew uses a limited vocabulary, and key words often repeat in the same sentence. Modern literary

preference is to find synonyms for those repeated words, which destroys the power and cadence of the original.

"If you're not a literary scholar you may not pay attention to this, but I assure you, your pulse is paying attention," he notes.

On the other hand, few literary scholars know biblical Hebrew well enough to hear the difference in nuance between the Torah's prose and its older language of poetry, or its dialogue, which is stylistically different again.

Alter's goal isn't to coddle believers. The author of 16 previous books, including "The Art of Biblical Narrative," "The Art of Biblical Poetry" and a 1999 translation of Genesis, Alter approaches the Torah as a literary scholar, with little interest in the text's historical or moral significance, and even less in its preacherly or theological import.

Not that those aspects aren't interrelated, he notes: The literary form of the text certainly has bearing on its moral or theological intentions.

"My sense is the literary vehicle is

'My sense is the literary vehicle is the way the writers wished to convey their religious vision, so you can't distinguish between a literary effect and a moral effect.'

Robert Alter

the way the writers wished to convey their religious vision, so you can't distinguish between a literary effect and a moral effect," he says.

Alter is close-lipped about his own faith, sidestepping questions about what it means for him as a Jew to translate the Torah. But he does say that the intense textual involvement required for translation leads a thinking person to question, not accept.

"When you look very closely, there are all kinds of things going on theologically in the original that don't quite fit traditional religious positions," he observes. For example, he points to Exodus 4, where God encounters Moses in a night encampment and tries to kill him.

"It's very strange and scary. The God that's operating in that enigmatic story is not at all like the God operating in Genesis," he says. "If you study the Bible closely, you see that values are more multiple, unstable and ambiguous than later religious authorities would have it." ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Close call for London Jews

An Al-Qaida poison plot uncovered in Britain reportedly targeted Jews. The Independent newspaper reported Thursday that an Algerian terrorist convicted of preparing large quantities of ricin planned to use it against the London Jewish community.

A British court found the Algerian, who had trained in an Al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan before moving to London, guilty Wednesday, but acquitted eight other Muslims in the case.

It was the first conviction under tough anti-terror laws introduced by Britain after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Liechtenstein's World War II record was mixed

Liechtenstein gave asylum to some 400 Jews during World War II but turned away unknown numbers, a study found.

Written by six historians and released Wednesday, the study found that the tiny principality's ruler, Prince Franz Josef II, and his family bought property and art objects taken from Jews, and used Jewish inmates from Nazi concentration camps for forced labor.

"Confronting the past strengthens a country for coming to terms with future problems," said Liechtenstein's foreign minister, Ernst Walch.

Dutch leader sorry for wartime collaboration

Holland's prime minister apologized for his country's collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust.

The Dutch wartime government "worked on the horrible process whereby Jews were stripped of their rights," Jan Peter Balkenende said this week.

His comments came before he helped mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Westerbork transit camp.

Thousands of people gathered for Tuesday's ceremony at Westerbork, where thousands had been held during the war before being deported to other camps.

Argentine rabbi lauded

Buenos Aires honored the memory of an American rabbi who spent much of his career in Argentina.

A square in the northern part of the city honors Rabbi Marshall Meyer, a fighter for human and civil rights who faced off against the Argentine junta and later returned to New York City to revitalize Congregation B'nai Jeshurun there.

He died 11 years ago.

Rome soccer fans go nuts

Eighty-five policemen reportedly were injured in Rome after clashes with soccer fans who chanted anti-Semitic slogans and held banners with swastikas.

The violence occurred Sunday during a match between Lazio and Livorno. Some Lazio fans, who are known to be right-wingers, yelled "Jews, Jews" at the Livorno players, yet also yelled "Fedayeen," referring to the assumed pro-Palestinian sympathies of Livorno fans.

On Tuesday, the Lazio team was fined.

Hungarian rescuer dies

Kalman Ferencfalvi, who saved approximately 2,000 Jews during the Holocaust, died last Friday at 84.

During World War II, Ferencfalvi ignored orders and designated Jewish workers to guard the Budapest headquarters of the International Red Cross, saving them from deportation, The Associated Press reported.

He also forged papers for Jews and others persecuted during the war.

In 1988, he was named a Righteous Gentile by Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

MIDDLE EAST

Build or bust

The mayor of a major West Bank settlement said its expansion would continue, contradicting Israeli officials' public statements.

"We will continue to build according to our master plan, and no one will stop us," Ma'aleh Adumim Mayor Benny Kashriel told The Jerusalem Post on Thursday, referring to a new residential complex that effectively would link the settlement to Israel's capital, several miles away.

News of the plan drew harsh words from the Bush administration, chief champion of the "road map" peace plan, which requires a halt to Israeli settlement expansion.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in the United States this week that no construction was imminent. But Kashriel said that land for as many as 3,500 new apartments in Ma'aleh Adumim had been set aside 10 years ago.

Israeli firms dot list

Israel supplied 20 of the 100 most promising companies on a business technology magazine's list.

Israel was second only to Britain in the number of promising firms in Europe and Israel, compiled by Red Herring magazine.

NORTH AMERICA

White supremacist killed in Canada

Wolfgang Droege, a white supremacist and Nazi sympathizer, was shot to death in Toronto. He was 55.

The German-born former leader of the Heritage Front, a now-defunct Canadian white supremacist organization modeled after the Ku Klux Klan, once was involved in a coup attempt on the Caribbean island of Dominica, for which he was jailed in the United States.

He also had been involved in weapons and drug-related offenses.

A fierce hater of Jews and non-whites, Droege grew up hearing stories about the Third Reich from his grandfather, who had been friends with Nazi official Julius Streicher.

Though he had lowered his involvement in white supremacist and anti-Semitic activities in recent years, Droege attended a legal hearing in 2003 for Ernst Zundel, a Holocaust denier deported to Germany in March.

After a dramatic standoff, police arrested Droege's alleged assailant, but have not suggested a motive for the shooting.

Jewish school wins

A U.S. high school debate championship was rescheduled to accommodate a New Jersey yeshiva.

The National High School Mock Trial Championship rescheduled the order of the competition, set for early May in Charlotte, N.C., so Teaneck's Torah Academy could participate without violating Shabbat.

The academy won the right to compete on the national level by winning New Jersey's state mock-trial championship earlier this year.

Rep. Steve Rothman (D-N.J.) helped push the initially reluctant board to allow the team to compete earlier than planned and then, if it advances, after Shabbat ends.

Don't pay retail

New York officials launched an initiative aimed at protecting New York Jews from price-gouging during Passover.

New Yorkers who believe they have been overcharged for kosher-for-Passover items should call 311, the city's hotline, or file a complaint online at www.nyc.gov/consumers.