

WORLD BEAT

edited by Marta Garelik

Increase In Cult Activities

(JTA) — There has been a significant increase in cult activity within Israel. These groups include:

* Transcendental Meditation, whose plans to construct a kibbutz in Migdalim in the West Bank have been approved by the Jewish Agency. The Health Ministry in Israel was unaware until recently that TM was not only a therapeutic but also a religious group.

* Hare Krishna, a sect of an Eastern religion, recently had two of its members tour Israel's major cities and deliver talks to large audiences in an attempt to gain recruits for their planned kibbutz.

* Church of Scientology, headed by Ron Hubbard, is one of the largest groups active in Israel. It has been reported that 20 percent of the teachers in the Beersheba educational system are affirmed Scientologists. The Church has translated Hubbard's basic book, "Dianetics," into Hebrew.

* Unification Church headed by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, has attempted to gain legitimacy for its organization by inviting on a regular basis top Israeli professors to conferences sponsored by Church "front" organizations.

Free Health Insurance Chopped

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Knesset Finance and House committees acted to end free

health insurance for some 4,000 people, including Cabinet ministers and their deputies, judges of the civil and religious courts and Knesset members themselves. Senior civil servants whose wages are linked to those of deputy Cabinet rank, are threatened as well with cuts in their health benefits.

The beneficiaries were entitled to free coverage both at home and abroad. For Knesset members and their spouses, the benefits were a lifetime privilege. Their children were covered up to the age of 18. Knesset members received over a half billion Shekels in health insurance funds during the first half of fiscal 1985. The Finance Committee has allowed for appeals and a special subcommittee will hear appeals from the judiciary.

Gentile Teaching Holocaust Message To Gentile Community

NEW YORK (JTA) — The New York State Board of Regents honored both a teacher and a school volunteer for outstanding contributions to Holocaust education.

The 1985 award went to Clayton Adams of Kenmore, New York. Adams, a social studies teacher in Kenmore West Senior High School, created an elective Holocaust Studies course 14 years ago and has been teaching the subject since then.

In accepting his award, Adams told the Regents: "The Holocaust is not the private suffering of the Jews and

other victims of the Nazis. It was and should be treated as a public tragedy. I want my students to understand that it was mankind's disaster and that its message and its impact didn't stop 40 years ago." He pointed out that most of his students are not Jewish.

Arab Birth Rate Exceeding That Of Jews

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Arab birth rate in Israel and the administered territories exceeds that of Jews, according to the latest figures released by the Central Bureau of Statistics. In 1984 there were 78,600 births among the Arab population compared to 74,500 Jewish births.

About 24,000 of the Arabs were born in Israel proper and 30,400 in the West Bank. The balance of Arab births was in the Gaza Strip. Demographic experts expect this trend to continue in the coming years. In 1984, 3,472,000 Jews lived in Israel and the territories compared to two million Arabs under Israeli jurisdiction.

House Approves Bill Requiring Universities To Disclose Foreign Donor Gifts

(JTA) — The House legislation, requiring universities to disclose sizeable gifts from foreign donors, was introduced by Rep. Robert Matsui (D-Calif.) and was passed in December. Based on a proposal drafted by American Jewish Congress lawyers, the bill is designed to discourage intrusions on academic freedom by foreign sources that attempt to tie political or propaganda strings to such gifts or obtain exclusive rights to university research findings. Such arrangements have become increasingly common in recent years.

Similar legislation is expected to come before the Senate this year.

Roman Tombs Provide Priceless Information About Italian Jews

(JTA) — Scholars estimate that in Imperial Rome, underground labyrinths were lined

with up to 100,000 tombs. The tombs provide priceless information on the daily lives of Jews in the earliest European diaspora. The Italian Jewish community is seeking financial support and archaeological expertise to aid in Italian Jewry's maintenance of the catacombs which will no longer be under the custody of the Vatican but will become the Italian government's responsibility.

Since Italy's reunification in 1870, and more formally since the 1929 Concordant between the Italian government and the Holy See, some Jewish and Christian catacombs in Italy have been under the control of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Sacred Art.

In February 1984, the Secretaries of the State of Italy and of the Vatican signed a revised version of the Concordant under which the Holy See agreed to relinquish its management of all "non-Christian" catacombs.

Though Italy's 35,000 Jews had long and anxiously awaited this move, they now fear that lack of funds and archaeological know-how might well impede the restoration, further exploration and, above all, conservation of the catacombs.

There are about a dozen major Jewish catacombs — underground burial networks going back to the first century BCE and spanning the next five — known to have existed in Italy. Archaeological explorations dating back to the 1600's testify to their existence in Rome, Sicily, Sardinia and the southern region of Apulia — especially Venosa and Bari.

The epigraphs in the catacombs — about 75 percent in Greek, most of the rest in Latin and a small number in Hebrew — reveal the wide range of arts, trades, and professions of early Italian Jews: from the artists, actors and scribes to lawyers, bankers, physicians, merchants and sailors — as well as their family, social and religious community.

Most of the Jewish catacombs were plundered in the long centuries before the

Vatican authorities took over their supervision, and their treasures still surface at private auctions. These thefts stopped with the Vatican take over in 1929.

Laws Drafted To Curtail Press Freedom In Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir disclosed to a shocked and outraged audience of journalists that certain government quarters have drafted draconian laws which would severely curtail freedom of the press if they were ever to be adopted.

The bill presently under consideration by the Cabinet would forbid the media from publishing the names of a suspect until the person has been formally charged with an offense. "There are values of freedom of the press and of the public's right to know," Zamir said, "but they cannot supplant the right of an individual who stands defenseless against the might of the media."

Tid-Bits

TEL AVIV (JTA) — A 69-year-old resident of Acre, known locally as the pick-pocket champion of the Soviet Union, was sentenced by the Acre magistrate's court to five months in prison and a 250,000 Shekel (nearly \$200) fine — for pickpocketing. Asked by the judge why he continued picking pockets from passers-by after he had come to Israel he replied: "That's my profession."

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Mice on the Golan Heights are committing suicide in large numbers by leaping to their deaths off high cliffs. Scientists explain the phenomenon as an instinctive response to over-population. The sudden shortage of mice is being felt by the Golan Heights owl population, which depend for their food on a plentiful supply of rodents.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Three hundred and thirty thousand Jews have emigrated from Israel since the establishment of the State. These figures are substantially lower than previous estimates of between 500,000 and 750,000. The report, compiled by the Central Bureau of Statistics, also noted that a further 120,000 non-Jews had left during this period. Some 170,000 "yordim" (emigrants) live in the U.S., according to the report. Thirty-two thousand of them are academically educated, including about 8,000 engineers.

NEW YORK (JTA) — The editors of The New York Times Book Review magazine selected "The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945," by David Wyman as one of the 10 best books of 1985.

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