

WORLD BEAT

edited by Marta Garelik

Negev Becoming Produce Basket Of Israel And Europe

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Negev, Israel's arid desert in the south, is not only blooming but is also increasingly becoming the fruit and vegetable basket of Israel and Europe. In fact, an Israeli expert suggests, the Negev can turn into a major source of vegetables and fruit export not only for Europe but for the United States as well.

Menachem Perlmutter, the engineer chiefly responsible over the past 30 years for bringing Israel's desert to bloom, said that this was possible, mainly by the Israeli invention of drip irrigation.

"With drip irrigation we are able to water the Negev's sands with brackish water," he explained, noting that the ability to use brackish water, which is available most easily in the Negev, saves the need to use the expensive fresh water that is brought to the desert from over 100 miles away, in the north of Israel.

"We also use the hot sun of the desert, which for generations was considered a curse, for growing summer crops in the winter without additional energy and artificial heating." The curse of brackish water and scorching sun has become a blessing.

"In the Negev and the Arava (the region between the Dead Sea and Eilat) we are growing all kinds of fruit and vegetables, including green peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, dates, melons, eggplants, peanuts and more." Perlmutter contended that, in fact, Israel achieved records in growing cotton and peanuts.

He noted that while farmers in Arizona grow 1,200 kilos of cotton per acre, Israeli farmers in the Negev grow twice as much. In Georgia, according to Perlmutter, farmers grow 1,120 kilos of peanuts per acre; in the Negev the yield is 2,600 kilos per acre.

"Israel sets the best example on how to change the wasteland to life-supporting land," he said. There are 189 agricultural settlements in the Negev.

Emergency Contributions Aid Ethiopians

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — A special \$10,000 emergency contribution to aid famine victims in Ethiopia has been granted by the Jewish Community Endowment Fund here, with unanimous approval of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco.

The funds will be utilized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee which, along with Catholic, Protestant and non-sectarian agencies, has been providing humanitarian assistance to disaster victims in Ethiopia and other countries. To date, the JDC has shipped 70 tons of new clothing, cloth and medical supplies valued at \$500,000 to Ethiopia.

NEW YORK (JTA) — The National Board of Hadassah has authorized a grant of an additional \$200,000 over and above its current levels of support to Youth Aliya to provide for absorption of Jewish youth from Ethiopia now arriving in Israel in record numbers.

Campaign Launched To Attract Jews/Others Abroad To Buy Homes In Israel

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israel's housing industry, in its worst slump since the 1966/67 recession, is mounting a campaign to attract Jews and others abroad to buy homes in Israel.

About 25 of the country's largest construction companies will open joint sales offices, the first in New York City in March and later, one in London. Potential buyers of apartments and houses will be shown videotapes of the kinds of homes offered along with computerized printouts with full details of size, location and stages of construction.

The builders are offering a "fly-and-buy" package in which persons who come to Israel and purchase homes will be reimbursed for their air fare.

Prices range from \$40,000 for a three-room apartment to \$250,000 for a two-story

house. The builders said they have already interested members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in the project.

B'nai B'rith has agreed to sponsor a 200-unit complex for its members in the Jerusalem area, they said. The five-acre site will include a swimming pool, social club and other facilities.

Jewish Marriage and Divorce

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Temple University psychologist declared here that 40 to 50 percent of current marriages involving Jews are mixed marriages and that in two-thirds of such marriages, a Jewish man marries a non-Jewish woman.

A 1981 study showed that the lowest rate of divorce among Jews is among Orthodox Jews, with a slight increase in the rate for Conservative Jews. Reform Jews divorce at twice the rate of Orthodox Jews. Jews who do not identify with any of the major Jewish denominations divorce at four times the rate of Orthodox Jews.

Divorce rates in Israel have risen to 1.3 per 1,000, resulting in a three-fold increase in single-parent families in the past decade to 12,000 — 89 percent of them headed by women.

The recent past has witnessed drastic changes in divorce patterns — with a big drop in divorces occurring during the first year of marriage and an increase in later divorces by couples with children. The higher Israeli divorce rate, however, is still below the 5.5 per 1,000 in the United States and 2 to 3 per 1,000 in Western Europe.

Task Force on Addiction Organized

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (JTA) — The biggest problem regarding addiction to alcohol and drugs among Jews is the denial by the Jewish community that the

problem exists, according to Jewish leaders who met recently at Fort Lauderdale to establish a task force to act on the problem.

Al Golden, president of Riverside Memorial Chapels, said "no one would believe the number of Jewish youths I have buried in the last ten years because of drug overdose."

Ivan Goldberg, administrator of the Center for Recovery at the JFK Memorial Hospital in Atlantis, declared the problem appears in all age and income groups. He said, "There are even rabbis and airline pilots who are alcohol and drug dependent."

Goldberg added that about 30 percent of a group aged 18 to 30, at a drug treatment center which he knew about, were Jewish. "We probably have a greater higher rate of drug dependency among Jews than any other group in the world."

Arabs Turning Geneva Into A Mideast City

GENEVA (JTA) — Geneva, European headquarters of the United Nations, has become the favorite haunt of wealthy Arabs. They squirrel away their money in numbered bank accounts and have opened a dozen Arab banks and some 50 financial institutions in Geneva. They also try to buy villas. The latter is generally frowned upon. Switzerland has strict laws limiting the purchase of real estate by foreigners.

Nevertheless, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia owns three palaces in the country and Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Zaki Yamani has a villa and an apartment. He spends more time in Geneva than in Riyadh.

Dutch Ashkenazi Council Will Meet With Pope

AMSTERDAM (JTA) — The Council of the Ashkenazi Congregations after months of

emotionally charged debate, decided by a single vote that its representatives would meet with Pope John Paul II when he visits The Netherlands next May.

The 23-member Council imposed two conditions, however, that the Vatican must promise in advance that the Pope will utilize the meeting to announce the Vatican's recognition of the State of Israel; and that he must concede to the Jewish representatives the co-responsibility of the Catholic Church for the persecution of Jews for 2,000 years and specifically, for the absence of a public reaction to that persecution during World War II.

Tid-Bits

(JTA) — The Jewish chaplain's insignia depicts the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Until recently, these appeared in Roman numerals (a sly twist of history). Now that insignia has been redesigned with the Commandments represented by Hebrew letters, ready for wide distribution throughout the Army, Navy and Air Force. Poetic, as well as linguistic, justice.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Computers at Israel's financial centers can no longer cope with soaring inflation. The electronic chips function but the screens on the display terminals can contain only 15 digits, hardly enough for the billions of Shekels that represent relatively modest sums of money.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — About 300 of the young Israelis recruited into the army each year are rejected because they can neither read nor write. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin was informed during a visit to the Israel Defense Force special training center. He was told that about 90 percent of the illiterate youths are native-born.



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