



New Zealand Friends of Israel Association, Inc.



Honesty Integrity Commitment Vision Justice

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Moriah Jewish School remembers the Holocaust



More than 1.5 million children were murdered in the Holocaust – more than the entire population of Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city.

The children of Moriah Jewish School in Wellington are inviting children and members of the public to attend Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2010 by joining them at the Holocaust Memorial, Makara Cemetery on Wednesday 27th January at 3pm.

“In 2010 we are focusing on the 1.5 million children who were killed in the Holocaust, this is more than the total population of Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand,” says Kessem Goldberg (12).

“We’re collecting a button for every child who lost their life and we would like to ask people to donate buttons by bringing them on the 27th January or sending them to our school.”

The remembrance ceremony is co-hosted by the NZ Holocaust Research and Education Centre, the Wellington Regional Jewish Council, B’nai Brith Unit 5187 and the NZ National Commission for UNESCO. This year free buses

provided by the Wilson Funeral Home will leave parliament at 2pm and take people to the Makara cemetery.

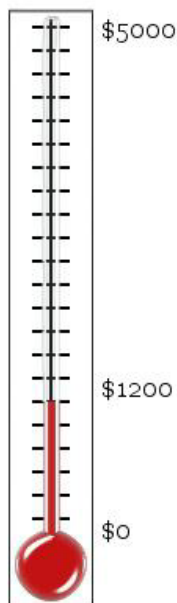
“Through learning programmes about the Holocaust, our younger generation comes to value the importance of tolerance and freedom in a just society,” says Dr Andrew Matthews, deputy chair of the NZ National Commission for UNESCO.

“This knowledge is essential to ensure that such atrocities never take place again.”

The children embarked on their project in 2008 and in spite of initial doubts are on track to have collected 1 million buttons by January 2010. People from around the world have sent buttons, well wishes and donations for the students’ planned memorial sculpture that will incorporate all the collected buttons. This year, Save the Children, has generously offered to act as a collection point for donations of buttons and money for the eventual memorial between the 25th and 29th January.

Sharing stories with Holocaust survivors has been a key part of the

2009/2010 Fund-raising Target



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project. Kessem says their stories show sadness, depression and loss but also hope and something to look forward to.

The students were particularly touched by Vera Egermayer who was only five when imprisoned in the Terezin Concentration Camp.

“In a time like the Holocaust it’s like living in a pitch black room. But every time someone does something for you it’s like someone coming in the room and lighting a candle. You need to focus on the light of the candle,” Ms Egermayer told them.

In spite of what she went through, Ms Egermayer’s advice, to focus on the light and not the darkness greatly moved the children and her vision has come to shape the student’s subsequent remembrance projects. The planned memorial, a maze incorporating the buttons, is also focused on her advice.

“We still find it hard to understand : How can people murder innocent children? By remembering we can help stop this horrible thing from happening in our generation,” says Jonah Ease (12).

“We feel a special bond to the buttons we have collected . . . as if we know the children and we are friends. We are so lucky to live in a time like today and in a safe place like New Zealand. We also feel total respect for the children of the Holocaust.”

Source: UNESCO website (<http://tinyurl.com/yj39pyr>) downloaded 22/2/2010.

The Power of Holding Hands

I was sitting on a beach one summer day, watching two children, a boy and a girl, playing in the sand. They were hard at work building an elaborate sand castle by the water’s edge, with gates and towers and moats and internal passages. Just when they had nearly finished their project, a big wave came along and knocked it down, reducing it to a heap of wet sand. I expected the children to burst into tears, devastated by what had happened to all their hard work. But they surprised me. Instead, they ran up the shore away from the water, laughing and holding hands,

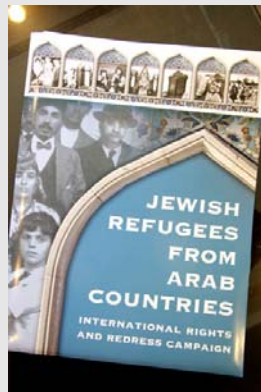
and sat down to build another castle. I realised that they had taught me an important lesson. All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating, are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody’s hand to hold will be able to laugh.

Rabbi Harold Kushner

Source: Canfield et al. “Chicken soup for the Jewish Soul”, page 106.

ISRAEL ADDS MIDEAST JEWISH REFUGEES TO NEGOTIATIONS

By Rachelle Kilger



Israel’s parliament discusses bill that will tie compensation for Jewish refugees from Arab countries to any future peace negotiations.

Israeli lawmakers are seeking a law that will make compensation for Jewish refugees expelled from Arab countries after 1948 an integral part of any future peace negotiations.

Lawmakers put together a bill demanding compensation for current Jewish Israeli citizens, who were expelled from Arab countries after Israel was established in 1948, leaving behind significant valuable property.

Originally submitted almost a year ago in the Knesset, Israel’s parliament, the bill passed its first hearing two weeks ago. Now various interest groups are pushing the bill with the Knesset’s 120 members before it is subjected to a second and third hearing next week.

The bill was sponsored by Member of Knesset (MK) Nissim Ze’ev from the Shas party and follows a resolution passed in the United States House of Representatives in 2008, calling for refugee recognition to be extended to Jews and Christians similar to that extended to Palestinians in the course of Middle East peace talks.

“I think the term compensation is too limited a term,” former Canadian Justice Minister Irwin Cotler told The Media Line.

Cotler, a vocal advocate of the campaign, was one of several international representatives at the Knesset conference discussing the bill, organized by MK Nissim Ze’ev on Monday.

“We’re not just speaking about financial compensation or indemnification,” Cotler said. “We’re talking about justice for Jews from Arab countries. This speaks to the question of, among other things, rectifying the justice and peace narrative of the last 62 years where the question of Jews from Arab countries has not been part of the narrative.”

“There have been more than 160 U.N. resolutions on the matter of refugees,” he continued. “All 160 dealt with Palestinian refugees only. I’m not saying they shouldn’t address Palestinian refugees, but I’m saying there’s no justice and no truth if it does not also address the plight of Jews seeking justice from Arab countries.”

According to the international advocacy group, Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), some 850,000 Jews were displaced from Arab countries after the State of Israel was established. These include Jews from Syria, Trans-Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

Speaker of the Knesset Rubi Rivlin (Likud Party) said the issue was an important counterweight to Palestinian claims for a right of return to homes from which they were expelled or had to leave in 1948, and which are now part of Israel.

“The Arab peace initiative, based on the Saudi initiative, has a clause that calls for a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue,” Rivlin said at the conference. “Israel is opposed to the right of return... we have to make an appeal today, to say that there is no room for bringing up the Palestinian right of return without the Jewish refugee issue being re-

solved. This has to be heard in the political discourse in Israel and in the international community.”

Rep. Eliot Engel (D – NY), who supported the congressional resolution and attended Monday’s conference, said there was hypocrisy in the way the international community dealt with the Palestinian refugee community.

“The Arabs today, as they have done for 50 years, use the Palestinian refugee population as political pawns,” Engel said. “They want them to live in misery. They want them to suffer and then to blame the Jews. The fact of the matter is that the blame lies right at the foot of the Arab states, be it Saudi Arabia or Jordan or Egypt or any of those countries that have lots of petrodollars and they don’t even spend a shekel to help their refugees.”

Monday’s conference was marked by heated arguments from members of the audience, which included Jews who were expelled from Arab countries in the years following the establishment of the state.

Gila Naftali, an Egyptian born Jew who was expelled with her family in 1956 when she was eight years old, said there has been a systematic marginalization of eastern Jews. She was almost banished from the auditorium by security when she lashed out at MK Danny Ayalon that “You don’t know what it’s like to be kicked out of your country within 24 hours.”

Ayalon, a proponent of the bill whose father left his belongings behind in Algeria to come to the fledgling country in 1948, shook Naftali’s hand on his way out, in a gesture of reconciliation.

The government came under criticism from Jews expelled from Arab states, who feel these initiatives are too little and too late. Others have questioned how the compensation, if acquired, will be allocated.

“I don’t just want compensation,” Naftali later told The Media Line. “Everybody will get the compensation. I want money for this building that was in our family for four generations,” she said, brandishing a sepia photograph of her former Cairo home.

Stanley Urman, executive director of JJAC said he was aware of these sentiments.

“I feel for their plight and their pain,” he told The Media Line. “We, the Jewish people and the State of

Israel, must take responsibility for not being successful enough in bringing this to the world’s attention.”

The fact that the U.S. has already passed a resolution to this effect could serve to impact any future negotiations.

“They have sway,” Urman said, in reference to the U.S. brokers.

“Whether they bring this up in a forceful manner is yet to be seen. The U.S. is a member of the Quartet and all seminal Middle East issues are going through the Quartet, so the U.S. certainly would be our voice at that table.”

The Israeli bill stipulates that “The state of Israel will not sign, directly or by proxy, any agreement or treaty with a country or authority dealing with a political settlement in the Middle East without ensuring the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries according to the U.N.’s refugee treaty.”

“In any discussion where the Palestinian refugee issue is brought up in the framework of peace negotiations in the Middle East,” it continues, “the Israeli government will bring up the issue of compensation for loss of property and giving equal status to Arab refugees who left their property after the state was established and to Jewish refugees from Arab countries.”

Ze’ev stressed that Iran was also included in the bill, even though it was not defined as an Arab country.

Levana Zamir, chairman of the international organization of Egyptian Jews said she welcomed the initiative.

“Finally, after 62 years, the Knesset is accepting a law that recognizes our rights,” she told The Media Line. “I’m just sad that my father didn’t have the privilege of seeing this. He fought for this and after he passed away I took the matter into my hands. As Jews from Egypt we should be very happy because there’s a peace agreement with Egypt, so once there’s a law, we should start demanding money.”

Zvi Gabai, who represents Jews from Iraq, said it was a shame this was not done sooner.

“In the meantime,” he said, “the Palestinians and spin doctors have exploited the Palestinian refugee matter and presented it as though the Palestinian refugees were the only issue and that there were no Jewish refugees, without presenting

two sides of the coin – that there were not only the Palestinians who suffered but also Jews from Arab countries who suffered and lost property, without bringing this matter to a decision, there will be no justice.”

The Palestinian Return Centre, a London-based organization defending the rights of Palestinian refugees with the aim of resettling them in their original homes, said it was not farfetched to believe that Jews would get compensation, but stressed that it was wrong to draw parallels between the two refugee populations.

“The Jews who were kicked out of Arab countries have found a place to live,” a spokesperson for the organization told The Media. “They have found luxury, work, good housing and a government. But the Palestinians have found nothing. They are not allowed to work in 70 professions in Lebanon. They’re not allowed to travel. They don’t have passports or basic freedoms and they’re being bombed in Gaza’s camps.”

“There is no parallel in the suffering,” the spokesperson continued. “The Palestinian suffered double what the Jews in the Arab countries suffered.... The [Arabs] have enough money and enough political will to solve the problem with Israel, but the problem is with Israel. If Israel is willing to conduct peace on the basis of giving rights to the Palestinians, I guess the Arabs would compensate the Jews, if that happened.”

Rachelle Kliger is a regular contributor to The Media Line and Jerusalem Post. (Source: <http://tinyurl.com/yqs25h>, downloaded 22/2/2010).

THE JEWISH KITCHEN



Cholent

Cholent is a sort of stew that came into existence through the ingenuity of Jewish housewives in Europe who were faced with the necessity of preparing a hot meal for Shabbat afternoon in spite of the injunction against beginning to cook foods on Shabbat itself. The stew was begun well before Shabbat and allowed to cook all Friday afternoon. Before Shabbat it was put into a big communal oven and allowed to simmer until lunch the next day. Today this once-lowly dish is considered a “gastro-nomical pleasure” and is served on State Occasions.

Ingredients

5 pounds potatoes
Flour
2 or 3 onions
pepper
paprika
salt
¼ cup tomato sauce
1 cup water
3 lb untrimmed second-cut brisket
2 cans kidney beans

Method

1. Pare and quarter the potatoes. Place in a large roasting pan. Sprinkle flour over the potatoes, making sure all are completely covered (this makes a delicious crust over the potatoes).
2. Dice onions and toss over the potatoes. Sprinkle salt, pepper and paprika over all ingredients.
3. Add tomato sauce, water to roasting pan.
4. Place untrimmed brisket over potatoes. Add salt and pepper to meat.

5. Cover the roasting pan and place in a 250 deg F oven. Roast for 8 hours. Check every two hours and add water if required. If too much liquid remove lid and roast uncovered until most liquid is absorbed.

6. Serve in Chicken Soup.

Source: Siegel, Strassfeld and Strassfeld: The First Jewish Catalog, The Jewish Publication Society of America; p25.

Prof Henrietta Mondry

Last month we were treated to a highly informative presentation from Prof Mondry on her latest book “Exemplary Bodies”. Her review of Jewish imagery and stereotypes in Russian culture was disturbing and alarming because associations with the blood libel, greed, criminal activity and conspiracy theories recurred regularly. These associations persist today in modern Russia and the post-Soviet States. It was saddening to hear that despite promoting anti-Semitism in the past, the Russian Orthodox church has never apologised for these wrongs.

CLASSICAL HEBREW CLASSES



Last month we mentioned that a new course is set to begin at Laidlaw College (Condell Avenue, Christchurch). Lectures will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 4.30pm and 6pm. Applications must be in by 30 January 2010 and lectures begin 2 March 2010. The course fee is \$1,125 for the year.

After discussing it with Laidlaw, they will allow “Non-assessed Students” to attend for a much-reduced fee.

If you are interested in participating in this course contact Laidlaw College to obtain a prospectus and application forms: Ph +64 (03) 354 4270.

Who is Jewish?

During basic training, our drill sergeant asked all Jewish personnel to make themselves known. Six of us tentatively raised our hands. Much to our relief, we were given the day off for Rosh Hashanah.

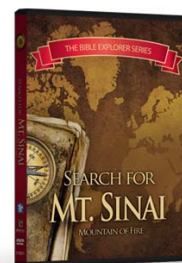
A few days later, in anticipation of Yom Kippur, the sergeant again asked for all Jewish personnel to identify themselves. This time, every soldier raised his hand.

"Only those who were Jewish last week can be Jewish this week," declared the sergeant.

Source: Readers' Digest

UPCOMING MEETING

7.30pm, 9 March 2010, Cashmere Club, Colombo St, Christchurch, gold coin donation for supper: With Passover or Pesach in March, we are pleased to present the following thought provoking video: “Mountain of Fire, Search for Mt Sinai” with an introduction by Peter Durrant.



This documentary takes us along an intriguing investigation into the question: What if the traditional site of Mt Sinai was not in fact the actual one described in Exodus? Join Bob Cornuke and Larry Williams on their expedition to Saudi Arabia. Whether you agree or disagree with their findings, it is certainly an entertaining presentation.

If you would like to be placed on our email list for announcements please register your interest at info@nzfoi.org.nz