

Israel And The Nations Of Africa

One by one, the nations of Africa are reaffirming their independence by restoring formal ties with Israel. In the process, they are reaffirming the legitimacy of Israel as an equal member of the community of nations.

The development is a happy one, both for Africa and the Jewish State. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Israel dealt with its isolation in the region partly by reaching beyond its regional boundaries into Africa. There was a natural affinity between the young, struggling Jewish state that was making its desert bloom, and the newly-independent countries of the African continent. A combination of self-interest and altruism inspired the launching of a massive Israeli development assistance program in Africa.

At the same time, Israel as a developing nation itself was accepted by the African states as a country which could share its experiences in overcoming some of the same problems that much of the African continent faced then and continues to grapple with now.

Take Cameroon, the most recent to renew diplomatic relations with Israel. Before Yaounde joined most Black African capitals in cutting off ties with the Jewish state thirteen years ago, Israeli experts had helped establish two agricultural training centers in Cameroon and managed them until native personnel could replace them. A permanent team of Israeli volunteers founded and ran rural settlements at Obala and Garoua, where adolescents were trained in scouting, agricultural skills and civics. In the towns, they set up youth centers, which provided supplementary vocational education. And this is only a sampling.

It was as though Israel had never left in spirit when Prime Minister Peres summoned, on a moment's notice, a team of doctors and medical supplies to travel with him on his state visit to Cameroon. As Peres and Cameroon President Paul Biya announced the restoration of relations last week, the Israeli medical team was aiding in relief efforts for survivors of the horrible geological disaster that had just taken place.

The Peres-Biya announcement made Cameroon the fourth Black African state to restore relations with Israel since all but three broke them off in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur war and consequent Arab pressure. With the growing willingness in the Arab world itself to publicly deal with the Jewish state - witness Egypt and Morocco - the snowballing effect that Israel has hoped for might very well come about.

'Book Of Abraham,' Best-Seller On Jewish Theme, Is Sold For A Record \$231,000 To Dell Paperbacks

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to the bestseller list in the United States when it reached U.S. bookstores last April. Publisher's Weekly called it "fascinating reading" in this review:

"This massive novel aims to be nothing less than a history of the Jewish people, as traced through the generations of one family. Halter (the name means scribe, or record keeper) begins his time in 70 A.D. in Jerusalem, when a scribe named Abraham flees the conquering Roman army.

"The book follows the dynasty of scribes descended from Abraham through the centuries, until he links them to his own real-life ancestors, a line of printers, one of whom worked with Gutenberg in Strasbourg. The chronicle moves among dozens of cities in Asia and Europe, deftly encapsulating the historic events and social milieu of time and place, as each generation of this family hands down the so-called Book of Abraham, a record of births and deaths that also symbolizes the continuity of the collective Jewish memory."

Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel hailed it as "a fascinating portrayal of the history of our people...a wonderful epic that deserves to be translated into Hebrew to be used as required text in our schools....An exceptional book."

Marek Halter was born in Warsaw in 1936. When he was five, he and his family escaped the Nazis by crawling through the sewers under the Warsaw Ghetto and spent the rest of the war in the USSR. He returned to Poland when the war ended, then emigrated to France, where he has been living since 1950.

Eran Lagstein Bar Mitzvah At Temple Beth Sholom



Photograph by Marvin

Eran Lagstein, son of Dr. and Mrs. Zev Lagstein, was called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah recently. Dr. Louis M. Lederman, Rabbi, officiated. Hazzan Simon Bergman, Cantor, chanted the liturgy.

BONN (WNS) — A former SS guard, Otto Reidermann, 74, went on trial in West Berlin charged with the beating deaths of at least 20 prisoners, many of them Jews, at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria. The trial is expected to last until the end of this year. More than 15 witnesses are scheduled to give testimony.



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