

CONSERVATIVE RABBIS AGAIN REJECT APPLICATION OF A REFORM-ORDAINED WOMAN RABBI TO BECOME THE FIRST WOMAN CONSERVATIVE RABBI

By Ben Gallob

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y., May 17 (JTA) -- Conservative rabbis voted late yesterday at the 84th annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) to reject for a second year in a row the application of Reform-ordained Rabbi Beverly Magidson to become America's first woman Conservative rabbi by convention vote, but changed circumstances in the Conservative movement has made that issue academic and no future RA convention is ever likely to vote on that issue again.

Despite the backing of the RA membership committee and that of many Conservative leaders, Magidson, of Clifton Park, N.J., received 230 votes in favor to 99 votes against her application, 22 votes short of the required 75 percent of the convention majority needed to affirm her application. At last year's RA convention she failed in her bid by fewer votes.

The application of another Reform-ordained woman rabbi, Jan Kaufman of Washington, D.C. had been approved by the appropriate RA committees for consideration for convention action. But her application was tabled. Both she and Magidson were ordained in 1979 by the Hebrew Union College, the Reform seminary branch in New York City.

Process Of Ordination

Ordination into the Conservative rabbinate is by two means: attendance at the movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) rabbinical school which leads to ordination for successful applicants; or admission by a 75 percent vote of rabbis present and voting at an RA convention.

A chronic shortage of rabbis for Conservative pulpits has led the RA in past years to accept more than 500 applicants for RA membership -- and Conservative rabbinical status -- notably from Reform and Reconstructionist seminaries. But until Magidson made her unsuccessful bid for RA membership at the 1983 RA convention in Dallas, all of the candidates voted on for RA membership and status as Conservative rabbis had been men.

What The Vote Showed

Yesterday's vote reflected, in part, the objections of Conservative rabbis who believe that the only route to the Conservative rabbinate should be via the JTS rabbinical school. But until last October, women had been barred from admission to the school since its founding. In October, after years of heated debate, in which three recent successive RA conventions endorsed admission of women to the JTS rabbinical school, the JTS Faculty Senate yielded and agreed to do so, starting with the 1984-85 class in the fall.

Another basic source of opposition to women rabbis in the Conservative movement, on halachic principle, comes from a strong group of rightwing RA members and supporters in the active rabbinate, who came in

a body to the RA convention which ended today to oppose the admission vote on the two women Reform rabbis. Those conservative rabbis and scholars were a major force over the years in keeping the JTS rabbinical school closed to women but are now considered a weakened force in the movement.

Nature Of The Changed Circumstances

The changed circumstances which make an RA vote such as yesterday's ever unlikely again is not merely the fact that more than 20 women have been enrolled in the JTS rabbinical school for the coming fall term, but, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency was reliably told, one of the members of the school's entering class has earned sufficient JTS credits so that, barring unexpected developments, she will complete the school's academic requirements and be graduated next June and thus achieve ordination as the first Conservative woman rabbi in American history. Her identity was withheld by the JTA's source.

Accordingly, the JTA was told, when the RA meets in convention next spring, the woman will be a member of the 1984-85 rabbinical school graduating class whose members will be routinely voted into RA membership.

Magidson Disappointed But Not Surprised

Magidson, who serves as "solo rabbi" of a small Conservative congregation, Beth Shalom, in Clifton Park, said after yesterday's vote that she was "not surprised" but did have "deep regrets" at being rejected for the Conservative rabbinate a second time.

She added she understood "the sentiment" in the Conservative movement that the movement should wait for its first Conservative rabbi to go through the JTS rabbinical school qualifying process. Magidson said that, "had I been permitted to attend classes" at the school, "I would have gone to the Jewish Theological Seminary."

Rabbi Arnold Goodman of Atlanta, the outgoing president of the 1,200-member RA, said the vote showed there was still "a segment of our colleagues who are committed to wait for the first woman rabbi to be ordained by the Seminary." He added that the vote "further reflects the existence of colleagues whose interpretation of Jewish law leads them to conclude that there are still Jewish legal considerations that stand in the way of women being ordained as rabbis."

Rabbi Alexander Shapiro of Congregation Oheb Shalom of South Orange, N.J., the new RA president, told the convention that "the time will come when Rabbi Magidson and her fellow women rabbis will take their place in our ranks and share with us their insights, resourcefulness and scholarship."

Reaffirm View Of Jewish Identity

On another matter, the 600 rabbinical delegates, responding to a call from Goodman, reaffirmed the stand of the RA's Committee on Law and Standards rejecting any efforts to weaken the historic rule that Jewish identity can be passed on to children only by a Jewish mother.

At issue was a statement adopted at the 1983 Los Angeles convention by the Central Conference of Am-

erican Rabbis, the association of Reform rabbis, which recommended that children of mixed marriages, whether or not the mother was Jewish, were to have "the presumption" of being considered Jewish if-- with the consent of the intermarried parents -- the children were raised publicly as Jews.

In April, 1983, the RA Committee on Jewish Law and Standards voted 18-1 to reaffirm the traditional view in Judaism that the religion of a child is based solely on the religion of the mother, a position also held throughout Orthodox Judaism.

The JTA was told that such decisions are made only by the RA law committee and that the response of the delegates here yesterday to Goodman's call was simply a reaffirmation of the committee's ruling.

In calling for the standing vote of reaffirmation, Goodman declared "we will continue to accept only the traditional view that Jewish status is conferred matrilineally, not patrilineally."

HERUT AND LIBERAL PARTY SEEM ON VERGE OF ENDING 20-YEAR ALLIANCE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 17 (JTA) -- Herut and the Liberal Party appeared to be on the verge of ending their 20 year-old alliance today over Herut claims that the Liberals are over-represented on the Likud election list.

The Herut Secretariat gave the Liberal Party until tomorrow to accept fewer slots among the top 40 candidates Likud will present to the voters on July 23. Herut has proposed that the Liberal representation be reduced from 15 to 12 "safe" seats with another four candidates between the 40th and 50th spots where election to the Knesset is less likely barring a Likud landslide.

The Herut formula would reduce Liberal representation from 19 to 16 potential MKs. According to Herut activists, secret polls have shown that if the Liberal Party stood for election on its own it would win no more than two Knesset seats. Neither party has been tested independently at the polls since they entered into partnership in 1965, first as Gahal and later Likud. But each claims it can do well alone.

Shamir Reportedly Objects To Ultimatum

Premier Yitzhak Shamir reportedly objected to the Herut ultimatum. He met today with Liberal ministers Moshe Nissim and Gideon Patt in an effort to resolve the crisis. Shamir was said to have told them he did not want to see Likud split. The Liberal Party Executive was expected to convene late today to discuss the issue.

Deputy Premier David Levy said on a television interview yesterday that there was strong sentiment within Herut to announce immediately that the party would stand alone in the upcoming elections. But the Herut leadership decided to give the Liberals another chance, he said.

The Liberals for their part, flatly rejected a Herut offer of a total merger. Liberal spokesmen said this was a Herut ploy to take over Liberal Party assets and declared there was "no way that the Liberal Party would cover the debts of Herut."

The Liberals also let it be known today that they are negotiating with former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman for the creation of a large centrist party with the potential for at least 10 Knesset mandates. Such a party could hold the balance of power in a future coalition government.

Weizman, who quit Herut some years ago over policy differences with then Premier Menachem Begin, resumed political activity recently when he announced that he would stand for election in July at the head of a new party, Yahad (Together). (See separate story.)

He declined to comment today on the possibility of an alliance with the Liberal Party. He said he would welcome in principle a strong centrist liberal bloc. "This is what I expected Likud to be but since it did not fulfill the expectations, we formed Yahad," Weizman said. He said he would wait until the last minute before publishing Yahad's election list, a hint that a deal with the Liberals may be in the making.

Consequences Of A Split

Some Liberals are upset over a split with Herut. David Admon, chairman of the party's Tel Aviv branch, said today, "I am not concerned over the agreement with Herut but I am concerned that if Likud does not continue, we shall lose the government."

The Herut Central Committee has scheduled a meeting next week to decide whether or not to go to the polls in July without the Liberals. Begin, who has been in virtual seclusion since his resignation last August, has taken no position on Likud's internal crisis. In one of his rare interviews, he told a Voice of Israel Radio reporter that it was up to the party's institutions to decide the issue.

Some observers believe a split in Likud may well spell defeat for the government party in July. But the opposition Labor Alignment has troubles of its own, not much different in nature from those of Likud.

Problems In The Labor Alignment

The Labor Party is interested in making room for newcomers to the Alignment such as the Independent Liberal Party, the Black Panthers and a few MKs who have defected from the National Religious Party.

In order to secure safe seats for them, it is asking its long-time Alignment partner, Mapam, to sacrifice some of its own spots. According to the Laborites, the burden should not rest solely on them. But the Mapam Central Committee decided yesterday that it would oppose any changes in the election line-up.

WEIZMAN SPELLS OUT THE POSITION OF HIS NEW PARTY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 17 (JTA) -- Former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman spelled out the positions of his new Yahad (Together) Party on key issues today, the most serious of which, he stressed, is to rescue Israel from economic disaster. Addressing the Foreign Press Association here, Weizman maintained that neither Likud nor the Labor Alignment can win sufficient votes in the July 23 elections to govern alone.

His party, which he believes can win up to 20 Knesset mandates, would provide the crucial extra weight that would allow either of the major political parties to form a strong, stable government. It would give them the philosophy and direction to get the country "back on its tracks again," Weizman said.

Weizman, who quit Likud several years ago over policy differences with Premier Menachem Begin, charged that Likud has failed in the economic field. Any future government, he said, would have to amend the tax structure and encourage people to work.

Weizman's political program, as outlined today, is a departure from the traditional Herut policy. Israel must learn to live with its Arab residents and its Arab neighbors, Weizman said, and toward that end he said he was ready to talk to any and all Arab leaders, with-

out prior conditions, to achieve peace. "Even (PLO chief Yasir) Arafat if he were to abandon his Palestine covenant which calls for the destruction of Israel," Weizman said.

He maintained that Israel must get out of Lebanon as soon as possible. He said he had always opposed the conduct of the war in Lebanon. While there might have been justification to invade south Lebanon up to the 45 kilometer line in June, 1982, Israel made a grave mistake by thinking it could impose a regime to its liking on a neighboring country, he said.

Weizman believes Israel should recognize that Syria has legitimate interests in Lebanon and an Israeli withdrawal should not be made contingent on a Syrian withdrawal. The Syrians probably will not withdraw, but they have always in the past recognized the "red lines" beyond which they would not move and it is possible to reach an unofficial agreement with Damascus, he said.

Settlements Don't Serve Security Purpose

According to Weizman, the settlements on the West Bank no longer serve any security purpose "and we might even have to send troops to defend them in case of war." No new settlements should be built, though the existing ones could be strengthened, he said. He said that grandiose plans such as building a railroad line to Eilat should be abandoned while the government struggles to put its economic house in order.

Weizman said that while economic problems have top priority on his party's platform, its basic aim, as its name, Yehad implies, is the unity of all Israelis, "secular and Orthodox Jews, Ashkenazim and Sephardim." He added, "There is lack of faith in government here at present. We must restore that confidence."

Weizman disclosed that he had "tried to topple the Likud government" at the time of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps massacre in September, 1982, by talking to the Liberal Party elements in Likud. But nothing came of it at the time. He did not mention reports today that he is again talking to Liberal Party leaders about the possibility of joining forces in a new liberal centrist party.

AIPAC OFFICIAL SAYS ISRAEL 'WAS THE ENGINE' THAT PASSED THE FOREIGN AID BILL IN THE HOUSE

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, May 17 (JTA) -- Thomas Dine, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), claimed here today that "Israel was the engine that passed the foreign aid bill" in the House of Representatives.

The measure, adopted by a close 211-206 vote last Thursday was controversial because it contained aid for Central America, Dine said in a briefing at the office of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council. Many Congressmen supported the bill because it also contained an aid package for Israel, Dine said.

He noted in that connection that 21 of the 31 Jewish members of the House voted in favor of the measure and the 10 who voted against it did so because of the controversy over Central America.

The foreign aid bill includes \$2.5 billion in aid for Israel in fiscal 1985, all of it in grants. Dine noted that it is the first time that the entire aid package for Israel is in the form of grants. It includes \$1.4 billion in military aid and \$1.1 billion in economic aid.

The Senate will consider its own foreign aid bill early next month and there is already a move there to increase the aid to Israel by \$100 million, Dine said.

Israel-U.S. Relations Termed 'Very Strong'

He stressed in his briefing that relations between Israel and the U.S. are "very strong" on the legislative level and that "things that are taking place in U.S.-Israel relations now were unthinkable only a few years ago."

Dine said the good-will toward Israel in the House was further demonstrated recently when an amendment to the foreign aid bill introduced by Rep. Nick Rahall (D., W. Va.) which would have cut appropriations for development of the Lavie, Israel's second generation jet fighter plane, was rejected by a vote of 379-40.

Another issue that points to the strong relationship between Washington and Jerusalem today is the Free Trade Area agreed to by President Reagan and Premier Yitzhak Shamir on November 29, 1983.

Congressional action is required to provide the authorization and implementation of the project. AIPAC is "pushing very hard" on this issue, Dine said. He noted that there was opposition to the Free Trade Area from various business groups in the U.S.

Reagan and Shamir also agreed on strategic cooperation between the U.S. and Israel. Representatives of both countries are presently engaged in negotiations on this and while both governments are "tight lipped," the negotiations are progressing, Dine said.

AIPAC To Continue Pushing On Embassy Issue

The AIPAC official also spoke of pending legislation to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to transfer the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv. This matter enjoys broad bi-partisan support in both houses of Congress, he said. But it is a "controversial" issue and the Administration is opposed.

Nevertheless, Dine said, AIPAC will continue to press the matter and will push for legislation even "if it takes a couple of Congresses to pass such a controversial issue."

Dine predicted that U.S.-Israel relations will grow even stronger toward the end of this year "in kind, not only in rhetoric." "We are going to keep up the momentum," he said.

NEW OLIM HELPING THE IDF

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 17 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force has a new auxiliary composed of hundreds of recent immigrants who perform non-military tasks that ordinarily would have required calling up additional reserve soldiers, it was disclosed today.

The project is sponsored jointly by the World Zionist Organization and the IDF central command. The immigrants, residents of absorption centers all over the country, volunteer their time. This week a group of 60 new immigrants from North and South America, Europe and Ethiopia were engaged in fortification projects and at IDF outposts in the Jordan Valley.

Men and women up to the age of 60 are accepted as volunteers. On arrival at military posts they are issued IDF uniforms and are briefed on the military situation in the area. They sleep in tents in a special section and eat with soldiers at the regular mess. According to the army, the immigrant volunteers have already saved the IDF hundreds of man-hours of work.

FATE OF ISRAELI BABY WAITING FOR A LIVER TRANSPLANT HANGS IN THE BALANCE AS DOCTORS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND A SUITABLE DONOR

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, May 17 (JTA) -- The fate of Chaya Cohen, the 21-month-old Israeli baby who arrived in the United States two months ago for a liver transplant, continues to hang in the balance as doctors at the University of Minnesota Hospital in Minneapolis have been unable to locate a suitable donor.

Rabbi Chaim Zelikovitz of Long Beach, Long Island, who was instrumental in spearheading a successful fund-raising drive in the U.S. to defray the medical, hospitalization and other related expenses for the child, said today that two weeks ago a possible donor had become available.

But, he said, after doctors conducted tissue and blood tests, it was determined that the crucial matching needed for the transplant could not be met and the operation was not performed. He issued an urgent appeal for anyone who knows of a potential donor to contact the donor program at the University of Minnesota at 612-373-8484.

Growing Concern Of Child's Parents

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Zelikovitz noted the growing concern of the child's parents, Israel and Nurit Cohen of Netanya, who are being housed and cared for by Chabad House in St. Paul. Chabad has been providing them with their needs, including transportation back and forth to the hospital.

Chaya arrived in March after several months at Hadassah Hospital where attempts were made to treat her liver cancer with chemotherapy. But the chemotherapy which Chaya received for almost three months immobilized her and also resulted in pneumonia.

A medical report from Hadassah Hospital stated that the baby's liver cancer was resistant to chemotherapy and raised the option of a liver transplant as a possible means of curing her. Liver transplants are not done in Israel.

Last month, the medical staff of the hospital in Minneapolis gave formal approval for the operation. Zelikovitz said the parents have been provided with a beeper by the hospital to notify them when a donor liver becomes available. The operation must be performed within 24 hours of the demise of the donor.

Israel and Nurit Cohen remain "very concerned," Zelikovitz said. "Every day that goes by makes them more concerned. They know that each day brings her disease closer to the danger point." He said Chaya is given tests to see that the condition has not deteriorated to a point where the operation would be cancelled.

Problems Of Finding A Proper Donor

The prospects of obtaining a proper donor are compounded by several factors, the obvious being her age, Zelikovitz said. Many donors are victims of automobile accidents in which children do not make up a large percentage of fatalities. Furthermore, Zelikovitz explained that if a choice has to be made between Chaya and an American in need of a donor, the organ would go to the American.

Zelikovitz, while pointing out the immense difficulties in obtaining a donor, said the fund-raising drive has been a success. The hospital requires a guarantee of \$175,000 for the operation. He said the Baby Chaya Fund has raised nearly all of the required funds, less several thousand dollars.

Donations to the fund have come in from all over the country, primarily from the Greater metropolitan New York area, Connecticut and New Jersey. Also, donations, as little as \$5, have arrived from Massachusetts, California, Texas and elsewhere, including Canada.

Zelikovitz and his wife Yetta became involved in the case because Yetta Zelikovitz's brother, Rabbi Israel Meyer Wise of Jerusalem, who works with the sick in Israel and arranges for hospitalization outside the country when needed, arranged for Chaya's trip to the U.S. and her admission to the hospital in Minneapolis.

Zelikovitz is affiliated with the Mesizta Yeshiva of Long Beach. He said that those who wish to help should contact the Baby Chaya Fund, 31 East Penn Street, Long Beach, New York 11561.

EXPERT PREDICTS FORMATION OF AN ARAB POLITICAL PARTY

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 17 (JTA) -- An expert on Arab affairs predicted yesterday that Israeli Arabs, seeking a channel for political expression, may soon form their own independent Arab political party. Given Israel's Arab population of close to 600,000, it would have the potential to win 12 Knesset seats, according to Avner Regev of the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Research.

Regev discussed his two year study of Arab involvement in municipal elections at a symposium here. He said Arabs could achieve their political goals in two ways -- through the National Committee of Arab Mayors or by the development of an Arab party to participate in local and national elections.

He said this would be the outcome of a situation in which Arabs feel frustrated because they are unable to integrate into the existing framework of the political system. Israeli Arabs are disenfranchised with the existing parties which court Arab votes, mainly the Communist Party which is currently strong among the Arab electorate and the Labor Party. The Labor Party's Central Committee, however, yesterday approved a July 23 election list that contains but one safe seat for an Arab candidate.

Thesis Is Challenged

Regev's thesis was challenged at the symposium by Mayor Mohammad Abu-Assbe of the Arab village of Jatt, a member of Mapam which is a partner in the Labor Alignment.

He contended that Israeli Arabs could achieve more by working inside the existing political parties than on their own. He warned that an independent Arab party would be isolated by the Jewish political system, just as the Communist Party is isolated although it holds four Knesset seats.

Binyamin Gur-Arye, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs, also warned that an independent Arab party would further alienate the Jewish population from Israel's Arabs.

But an independent Arab party may be in the making. Arab radicals who split from the pro-Moscow Hadash (Communist) Party, have reached an agreement in principle with Israeli leftists, formerly of the Sheli Party, on a joint list in the upcoming elections. It will be headed by Mohammad Miari of Haifa, a lawyer and Arab nationalist. The No. 2 man will be Gen. (Res.) Matityahu Peled, formerly of Sheli.

Nazareth lawyer Kamel Daher, a member of the new group, told the symposium that it offered Israeli Arabs the only way to achieve recognition as a national minority with "more than just equal rights."