

**RABIN, EYEING PRIME MINISTERSHIP,  
OUTLINES PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 24 (JTA) -- Yitzhak Rabin, considered virtually certain to be Israel's next prime minister, has made clear that he intends to run the victorious Labor Party with a strong hand and will be beholden to no political or ideological bloc.

He promised a "reordering of national priorities" with emphasis on tackling pressing social problems, such as unemployment, and advancing the peace process without compromising Israel's security.

Rabin told a news conference in Tel Aviv on Wednesday that he hoped to set up a "stable government" that would be based "not only on one party on the left, but on the religious and other parties" that accept Labor's leadership and "our basic policies."

He said his government would "reflect neither the extreme left nor the extreme right, but the views of the majority of Israeli citizens," which the election results showed support Labor's policies.

Rabin spoke on the basis of almost-complete returns from Tuesday's elections, which gave the Labor-led left-wing bloc 62 Knesset seats, more than enough to block a Likud attempt to form a government with the far-right and religious parties.

Labor won 45 seats, up from 38 in the outgoing Knesset. The leftist Meretz emerged with 12, making it Israel's third largest party. Observers said the soldiers vote, not yet in, would not significantly change that picture.

But Rabin, who is more hawkish than many in his party, would not be comfortable governing alone with the ardent "doves" of Meretz. He is therefore not averse to taking some of the strictly Orthodox parties into his government and possibly even one on the far right.

**Orthodox May Be Ready To Join**

The leader of the strictly Orthodox United Torah Front, Avraham Shapiro, has already dropped broad hints that he would join a Labor-led government if the party's sages approved.

Arye Deri, leader of the strictly Orthodox Sephardic Shas party, which gained two seats for a total of seven in the new Knesset, also hinted that the Labor option was open. But he said Shas would not want to be the only religious party in the same coalition with Meretz, which is perceived as hostile to the Orthodox establishment.

Meretz for its part protested angrily at Labor's intention to negotiate in tandem with all prospective partners rather than set up a narrow, first-stage government with it as the sole partner and then talk to other prospective partners.

But Rabin and other Labor figures said they intend to proceed on a broad front and not tie themselves to Meretz for fear of prejudicing initial talks with the Orthodox.

Observers predicted that the outcome would find Meretz and the strictly Orthodox haredim uneasy bedfellows in the same government.

The National Religious Party, which represents the Orthodox Zionist movement, could also

be included, though its hawkish leaders are insisting they will not abandon Likud.

Rafael Eitan's far-right Tsomet, which soared from two to seven Knesset seats, is another possibility for a broader coalition.

**Opposed To 'Political Settlements'**

At his news conference, Rabin enumerated his party's basic policies:

\* Advancement of the peace process, first and foremost by negotiations with the Palestinians under the framework laid down in Madrid last October, the goal being to achieve the autonomy agreement prescribed by the Camp David Accords.

\* A "reordering of national priorities" so that government funding goes not to "political settlements" but to create jobs and help resettle immigrants.

\* Implementation of the electoral reforms introduced in the outgoing Knesset, "but not in the warped way they emerged in the eventual legislation."

\* Repairing Israel's strained relations with the United States.

On that point, Rabin said he had "no promises" but believed on the basis of his long experience with U.S. diplomacy that Israel would receive the \$10 billion in U.S.-guaranteed loans for immigrant absorption, as a result of his modified settlements policy.

"I have opposed political settlements for more than 20 years," the 70-year-old Rabin declared. He defined political settlements as those outside Greater Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights.

He called on the outgoing government not to make any new contracts or commitments for such settlements from now until the time he takes office.

Rabin said he wanted to set up his government quickly, but observed that he had "many options."

Apparently seeking to temper in advance the demands by potential partners in the religious and right-wing blocs, Rabin warned that he would accept a Labor-Meretz government if the other prospective partners made the negotiations too difficult.

Rabin indicated that while he had not limited the list of prospective partners, he did not expect Likud to be among them. He was confident, he said, that a "stable government" under his leadership would be able to implement his policies even with Likud in opposition and fighting hard against them.

**Shamir Hints He'll Step Down**

Meanwhile, gloom prevailed in Likud circles, but there was no sentiment to join a Labor-led coalition in order to stay in the government.

Instead, the "long knives" began to emerge. Recriminations were flying, and leading party figures were preparing for a bitter battle of succession.

Yitzhak Shamir, 76, made clear in a pre-dawn radio interview Wednesday that he would soon step down as party leader. "I am at the end of the road," the weary, deeply disappointed prime minister said.

Shamir disclosed that even if Likud had won

the election, he would have quit before the end of his term.

Some observers expected Shamir to throw his weight behind the candidacy of one of Likud's young rising stars, if only to foil the ambitions of David Levy and Ariel Sharon to succeed him.

Shamir could also endorse the candidacy of Moshe Arens, his closest ally in the government. But the extent of Likud's defeat indicated that the party needs a more forceful, charismatic figure if it is to make a comeback.

Totting up winners and losers, apart from Rabin himself, pundits singled out Rafael Eitan, leader of Tsomet, as the election's great success story.

They pointed to Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the 96-year-old sage of Bnei Brak, as a big loser. Schach's protegee, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, plainly failed to bring voters over to the United Torah Front, which was an amalgamation of the strictly Orthodox Agudat Yisrael, Schach's Degel HaTorah and Peretz, who sat in the outgoing Knesset as an independent.

Another big loser was Tehiya, the first of Israel's far-right parties, which was completely wiped off the political map.

Former Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i's New Liberal Party, a Likud breakaway, also failed to cross the 1.5 percent vote threshold.

#### LABOR VICTORY IN ISRAEL EXPECTED TO BE BOON FOR MIDEAST PEACE TALKS By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, June 24 (JTA) -- The Labor Party's victory in the Israeli elections is expected to jump-start the Middle East peace process, say Middle East analysts. But that alone is no guarantee of smooth progress, they caution.

American Jewish organizational leaders are hoping the impending change of government will also reduce the recent tension in U.S.-Israeli relations and lead to an early resolution of the dispute over Israel's request for \$10 billion in U.S.-guaranteed loans.

In Washington, Secretary of State James Baker said he looked forward to the peace talks progressing.

"I would hope that we could see the next round of bilateral discussions taking place just as soon as it is conveniently possible in the aftermath of the formation of a new Israeli government," he told reporters Wednesday.

Direct bilateral talks involving Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians began last fall in Madrid and were followed by four rounds of negotiations in Washington.

The parties have agreed upon Rome as the site for the next session, but a date has not been set. With Yitzhak Rabin expected by many to form a Labor-led coalition government within three weeks, a July date for the talks is considered a possibility.

Adam Garfinkle of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia believes the influence of the new Israeli government on the peace process will be dramatic.

"When Rabin says he intends to negotiate a self-governing agreement with the Palestinians in nine months, he means it," said Garfinkle.

He said he expects three major changes in the proposal for Palestinian self-governance that the outgoing Shamir government had presented to the peace talks.

First, the number of functional areas where

the Palestinians would be in charge would increase, "perhaps dramatically." Palestinian delegates had angrily rejected the present Israeli proposal, saying it gave them little freedom other than to collect their own garbage.

Second, said Garfinkle, "the prospect of a joint veto over land and water will be raised, without which no solution can be envisaged."

Finally, Rabin's negotiators are likely to propose an explicit role for Jordan in maintaining security in the populated areas of the West Bank that Israel might leave, said Garfinkle.

#### New Hope For Loan Guarantees

Given these changes, "I think an agreement will be reached," said Garfinkle. "The main problem is not the Israeli side. It's whether the Palestinian side is coherent enough to accept any offer.

"I think the U.S. will be cheered by the amendments in the Israeli position and will turn to the Palestinians and say, essentially, 'Nu?' And the Palestinians will have to come up with an answer."

Garfinkle expects the strength of the Palestinian negotiating team among its own constituency to be enhanced after Rabin announces a freeze on "political settlements," as he pledged in the election campaign.

"That will be a grand gesture," he said. "A settlement freeze would allow Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini to turn to their loose constituency and say, 'We have achieved something we've been wanting.'"

A settlement freeze also would likely secure the \$10 billion in loan guarantees Israel is seeking over the next five years for immigrant resettlement. Bush had conditioned the U.S. guarantees on a settlement freeze, which Shamir refused to offer.

With November's U.S. presidential election shaping up as an unexpectedly close race, Bush is believed to want to provide the guarantees to regain the support of Jewish Republicans.

That outcome would be clearly welcomed by American Jewish organizational leaders.

While cautioning that there is no certainty that Israel will now be able to obtain the humanitarian assistance, the Bush administration "has told us the loan guarantees are not dead and that whoever was elected prime minister would be invited to visit the U.S.," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"We will have to see what the new government will decide in the nature of the guarantees and the amount to request," he said in a telephone call Tuesday night from Israel.

Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, said, "I trust the traditionally warm relations between the U.S. and Israel will be quickly resumed and that the administration will act promptly on the loan guarantees."

One American supporter of Likud blamed Bush and Baker for Labor's sweep in Tuesday's elections.

"The decisive factor in this election was Bush and Baker's manipulation of the loan guarantee package, which affected Likud's ability to generate jobs for new immigrants," charged Howard Barbanel, chairman of the Likud Young Leadership organization in New York.

"By directly hitting immigrants in the pocket book, they helped influence the election," he said.

**ARABS FAIL TO FORM INFLUENTIAL BLOC IN ELECTIONS, BUT HAIL LABOR VICTORY**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 24 (JTA) -- Labor's victory over Likud in Tuesday's elections was hailed throughout the Arab world and by Palestinians in the administered territories who expect a Labor-led government to be more amenable to compromise.

But Israeli Arabs, through lack of unity and bitter quarrels between their candidates, lost a chance to become an influential force in Israeli politics and threw away thousands of votes in the process.

The Progressive List for Peace and Equality, headed by Mohammed Miari, who occupied its single seat in the 12th Knesset, failed to scale the 1.5 percent threshold necessary to enter the 13th.

The rival Arab Democratic Party, led by Abdel Wahab Darousha, apparently won two Knesset seats, though as of Wednesday, there was still a possibility that the party would be shut out when the final votes were counted.

Had Darousha and Miari run on a joint list, as many Palestinians were urging them to do, a significant Arab bloc might have emerged in the Knesset for the first time.

But the enmity between the two men, personal as well as political, wrecked months of negotiations mediated by influential members of Israel's Arab community.

On Wednesday, Darousha and Miari were each accusing the other of "stupidity."

Miari's party has a vote surplus agreement with the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, a virtually all-Arab Communist party also

known as Hadash. Such agreements allow a party to transfer its marginal votes to another party that has passed the minimum threshold.

Hadash, which had four seats in the last Knesset, will likely be reduced to three in the next.

Israeli Arabs who had hoped to wield a balance of power between the Jewish political blocs were disappointed and disenchanted with their own leaders.

In any event, Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin seems able to form a coalition without Hadash or Darousha; and he need not worry that those Arab left-wing parties will make a deal with Likud.

Rabin, in the election campaign, ruled out a coalition with "extremist" elements of either left or right, which appears to exclude the Arab parties from a Labor-led government. But Darousha, who once belonged to the Labor Party, said Wednesday that he didn't rule out re-joining it.

Palestinian leaders meanwhile expressed hope that the Labor victory would accelerate the peace process.

Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation negotiating with Israel, expressed satisfaction with Labor's win but reserved judgment as to whether a Labor-led regime would advance the talks.

Another Palestinian leader, Hanna Seniora, called the outcome "a turning point," according to the East Jerusalem daily Al-Fajr.

**IN THE BARS AND CAFES, ISRAELIS REGISTER THEIR SHOCK AND DELIGHT**  
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, June 24 (JTA) -- Jerusalem's bars and cafes were unusually crowded Tuesday night, but then, it was no ordinary night.

The crowds, lured outdoors by the elections and the mild summer weather, filled the Ben-Yehudah pedestrian mall and all its side streets. With immigrant musicians playing in the background, Israelis sipped espresso or downed pints of beer, depending on the tone of the conversation.

With few exceptions, the evening's discussions centered around the elections. As the clock struck 10 p.m. and the first results were broadcast by television and radio, the talking became louder and more animated.

At the Navah Cafe on Jaffa Road, the crowd was clearly pro-Likud. When the initial results indicated that Labor was leading by a wide margin, Avi Mizrahi shook his head in disbelief.

"I'm in shock," the taxi driver said as he watched the television and saw Labor celebrate its apparent win. "I feel like someone has hit me over the head with a hammer. This is really a tragedy."

This view was echoed by Yoni, an exterminator, who also voted for the Likud. "What can I say? I'm disappointed. A Labor victory isn't good for the country. Labor is on the wrong track."

At the Riviera Cafe off Ben-Yehudah Street, Sasha, a student who immigrated from the Soviet Union three years ago, said he was pleased by Labor's lead but skeptical about whether it would have an impact on the way the country is run.

"I'm left wing, so I'm happy about the way things have turned out. Still, I don't think much will change. Really, I don't expect much from the elections," he said.

**TALLY OF ISRAELI ELECTION RESULTS**

TEL AVIV, June 24 (JTA) -- Following are the results of Tuesday's elections in Israel, with 99.3 percent of the vote counted.

The final tally could change once there is a count of votes cast by soldiers, sailors and diplomats serving abroad.

Statisticians say that some 100,000 votes, over 5 percent of all votes cast, were wasted on the 15 parties that failed to win the necessary 1.5 percent of the vote to qualify for a Knesset seat.

Parties represented in the outgoing Knesset that did not make the threshold include Tehiya (3 seats), the New Liberal Party (3), Hatikvah (1), Geulat Yisrael (1) and the Progressive List for Peace (1). The turnout was around 77.5 percent of the electorate, a couple points less than usual.

POLITICAL PARTY	TUESDAY VOTE	OUTGOING KNESSET
Labor	45	(38)
Meretz	12	(10)
Likud	32	(38)
Tsomet	7	(2)
Moledet	2	(2)
Shas	7	(5)
National Religious Party	6	(5)
United Torah Front	4	(7)
Hadash Communists	3	(3)
Arab Democratic Party	2	(1)

## SUPREME COURT BARS PRAYERS AT PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

By William Saphire

NEW YORK, June 24 (JTA) -- Jewish groups by and large have hailed a U.S. Supreme Court ruling Wednesday forbidding the recitation during public school graduation ceremonies of prayers containing God's name or biblical passages.

The 5-4 decision closed a case that originated when a Jewish family protested against the invocation of God by a rabbi officiating at a junior high school graduation in Rhode Island. The justices ruled that such practices violate the First Amendment's guarantee of separation of church and state.

The decision was hailed as a great victory for religious freedom by secular Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League, and by the Reform movement too.

Orthodox organizations, which have long opposed bans on religious activity in public schools, expressed disappointment with the ruling.

The Supreme Court heard oral argument in the case, *Lee vs. Weisman*, last Nov. 6. Jewish groups concerned with maintaining strict separation of church and state feared that the court, with its conservative majority, might lower the constitutional barriers to governmental involvement in religion.

Orthodox groups, on the other hand, looked forward to such a move as a way of bolstering their long-fought campaign for government aid to parochial schools.

The Bush administration, too, wanted the court to abolish the 20-year-old *Lemon* test, established by the Supreme Court's 1971 *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* ruling, which determines when public involvement with religion is unconstitutional.

It argued that such involvement should be barred only when the government attempts to coerce religious activity.

### Case Began With 1986 Ceremony

The case ruled on Wednesday had its beginnings in 1986, when a Baptist minister officiated at the eighth grade graduation of Merith Weisman, a daughter of Daniel Weisman, a professor at Rhode Island College in Providence.

The minister asked the audience to "stand up and thank Jesus Christ for the students' accomplishments."

When the Weisman family complained to the school, the school made no reply.

In 1989, shortly before Merith's sister Deborah was to graduate from junior high school, her parents asked the school to "prevent the same thing from happening."

The school, saying it did not want to "break with tradition," provided a rabbi for the graduation's benediction and invocation.

"But this didn't solve anything, it only defeated our point," Deborah Weisman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in a telephone interview Wednesday.

The point was that no clergy, Jewish or otherwise, should officiate at public school graduation exercises, she said.

The Weisman family took the case to the American Civil Liberties Union. A federal district court in Rhode Island ruled in their favor in 1989.

The school board appealed the decision in 1990. The U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston affirmed the lower court ruling, arguing that a

rabbi's mention of God during an invocation and benediction violated the First Amendment clause barring government establishment of religion.

The case was taken to the Supreme Court last year.

The ADL filed a brief urging the court to prohibit prayer in public schools and to reaffirm the *Lemon* test, which requires that for a religious practice to be considered constitutional, it must have a secular purpose, must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and must not foster an excessive entanglement with religion.

### 'Nonsensical Decisions'

The Weismans' position also was backed in briefs filed by the AJCommittee, AJCongress, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and numerous Christian, educational and civil liberties groups.

COLPA, the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, which represents Orthodox Jewish organizations, filed a brief in support of the Providence school board. It argued that the *Lemon* test has been used by those intolerant of religion, specifically in unsuccessful challenges to the laws regulating kosher food.

David Zwiebel, general counsel and director of government affairs of Agudath Israel of America, said Wednesday that the Orthodox saw the Weisman case as "an opportunity to re-evaluate and reconsider the *Lemon* test."

"That test has not worked very well," he said. "It has little consistency and has led to nonsensical decisions. The Supreme Court decision, which reaffirmed the *Lemon* test, was disappointing. We had hoped it would be replaced," he said.

But other Jewish groups welcomed the decision and saw it as a victory in their campaign against prayer in the public schools.

Henry Siegman, executive director of the AJCongress, declared, "Today's decision banning prayers at public school graduations is a welcome reaffirmation that the nation's public schools may not serve as surrogate houses of worship."

Samuel Rabinove, legal director for the American Jewish Committee, said he was "euphoric" at the news. "We never expected the court to come down on our side," he said.

"We believe that all faiths will flourish best without government intrusion, however benign," the AJCommittee said in a formal statement.

### 'A Significant Victory'

Jess Hordes, Washington director of the ADL, said, "This is a significant victory for all who are supportive of religious liberty, particularly religious minorities."

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, called the decision "a reaffirmation of our fundamental right to freedom from state-imposed religion."

The initiator of the case, Daniel Weisman, called the court's ruling "tremendous," but added it was a "paper victory" that is meaningless until people "nudge school districts to uphold the law."

Even the rabbi who delivered the invocation in question seemed pleased.

"The decision is in the best interest of all civil libertarians," said Rabbi Leslie Gutterman of Temple Beth-El in Providence. "That the official posture of the government be neutral bodes well for diverse faiths."

(Contributing to this report were JTA student intern Yafitte Bendory and Cynthia Mann of States News Service.)