

**POPULAR AIPAC DIRECTOR QUILTS POST  
AFTER REMARKS DISPARAGING ORTHODOX  
By Larry Yudelson**

NEW YORK, June 28 (JTA) -- One of the most respected leaders of the organized American Jewish community and influential political professionals in Washington has stepped down from his post in the face of protests over remarks he made that were seen as disparaging fervently Orthodox Jews.

Thomas Dine resigned Monday as executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, ending a 13-year stint at the helm of the powerful pro-Israel lobby.

The AIPAC leadership immediately appointed Howard Kohr, its managing director, as acting executive director of the agency and launched a search for a permanent replacement, a process it hopes to conclude by the end of the year.

The remarks that touched off the protests and ultimately led to Dine's resignation were made four years ago to David Landau, an Israeli journalist who is currently news editor of the Ha'aretz newspaper and Israel bureau chief of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

But they did not appear in print until the publication this month of Landau's book, "Piety and Power: The World of Jewish Fundamentalism."

"I don't think mainstream Jews feel very comfortable with the ultra-Orthodox," Dine was quoted in the book as saying. "It's a class thing, I suppose. Their image is -- smelly. That's what I'd say now you've got me thinking about it. Hasids and New York diamond dealers."

In response to this passage, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, a group representing fervently Orthodox Jews, wrote a letter to Dine in protest, calling the remarks "both shocking and heartbreaking."

Had similar remarks been made about African Americans or Reform Jews, wrote Sherer, "you would be compelled to resign your position. Are Orthodox Jews," he asked, "entitled to lesser respect?"

**Concerned About Effectiveness**

In a letter sent last week to Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, a member of AIPAC's executive committee and a leader in the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, Dine distanced himself from the quoted remarks, saying they were meant to describe perceptions, but that he did not personally subscribe to those sentiments.

Nonetheless, at a weekly conference call of senior AIPAC officers last Thursday, "a consensus developed about the serious nature of the book, and the potential for damage to the organization and the U.S.-Israel relationship," said Steven Grossman, AIPAC's president.

Grossman told JTA he accepted Dine's resignation "because Tom obviously gave it a great deal of thought."

"Tom was deeply concerned that those words may have had an effect on undercutting his effectiveness as a leader of this organization," Grossman said in a telephone interview.

At Agudath Israel, Sherer said he would have been satisfied had Dine made a "public, meaningful display of good will" that "would have

to be very drastic" but still shy of the resignation that was proffered.

"The resignation is the decision of the board of AIPAC," he said.

Some longtime observers of AIPAC and the Orthodox community expressed skepticism that Dine would have been allowed to leave solely because of pressure from the Orthodox community.

They suggested that other considerations must have convinced him to end a 13-year tenure during which he built the organization from one that had 24 employees and 8,000 members when he started to one that today boasts 150 employees and over 55,000 members.

"I think it's the straw that broke the camel's back," said one of those observers. "Agudah's not so important to it."

Grossman, however, denied that the issue went beyond Dine's quoted remarks.

**A Tough Year For AIPAC**

Dine's resignation is the latest in a series of high-profile embarrassments for the lobby.

AIPAC suffered a humiliating rebuke last August, when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin charged that the lobby's confrontational style on behalf of Israel during a battle for U.S. loan guarantees had actually undermined the Jewish state's interests.

There was also a scandal centering on the organization's information-gathering activities and the recent public rebuke of an AIPAC officer for publicly attacking the Israeli government's policies of territorial compromise.

But perhaps the most embarrassing incident came in November, when AIPAC's president at the time, David Steiner, resigned after admitting he had untruthfully exaggerated the lobby's clout in a telephone conversation secretly taped by a man posing as a would-be contributor.

Among other things, Steiner admitted boasting falsely that he had been "negotiating" with Bill Clinton's presidential transition team on candidates for secretary of state.

But Grossman denied AIPAC had been badly weakened by these incidents and even predicted the lobby would emerge from the controversy over Dine's remarks in a stronger position.

"The organization is as strong and as self-confident as it has ever been," he said. "That's Tom's legacy."

Still, Dine's departure is being lamented by some who see him as one of the organized Jewish community's most effective voices in Washington.

"It's regrettable; he has done a tremendous job," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

For Sherer, there are two lessons that the Jewish community should learn from the affair.

First, "those Jews in the Jewish establishment with positions of responsibility have to learn" who and what the Jews in "all circles of Orthodoxy stand for," he said.

Second, "the Jewish establishment has to rethink its policy as to who its leaders are," he said. "One cannot become a leader purely on his or her technical abilities," but has to be "endowed with a deep understanding and commitment to Judaism."

## RESIDENTS OF KIRYAT SHMONA LIGHTLY WOUNDED BY ROCKETS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 28 (JTA) -- Six residents of the Upper Galilee town of Kiryat Shmona were lightly wounded when Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon hit several apartment buildings early Monday morning.

The injured Israelis, including two young children, were treated in the hospital for shock, cuts and bruises.

Three rockets landed on the apartment buildings at 5 a.m., while residents were still asleep.

Six buildings with dozens of apartments were damaged by the blast and flying shrapnel, and dozens of residents were moved temporarily to other homes so that repairs could be made to the buildings.

Army sources said the Katyusha rockets had come from bases north of the Israeli-controlled security zone in southern Lebanon.

The army's commander of the northern front, Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, toured the area and assured residents that the Hezbollah raid was unrelated to a helicopter gunship raid carried out earlier by Israel on Hezbollah bases north of the security zone.

But other military observers doubted his statement, pointing out that Hezbollah recently stated it had abandoned an older policy of indiscriminate rocketing of Israeli targets and would now launch Katyusha attacks only in retaliation for attacks made by Israel or the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army.

Consistent with that policy, Hezbollah announced Monday that the missile attack on Kiryat Shmona had been "provoked" by the Israeli helicopter raid in which four rockets were fired at two empty houses in Zartar al-Sharkiya village 1.5 miles north of the zone Sunday evening.

Reports from Lebanon said a Lebanese army officer was seriously wounded in the raid.

Hezbollah gunmen reportedly fired anti-tank missiles at the helicopters, but missed them.

### No War Of Attrition Seen

Hezbollah spokesmen in Beirut said the Katyusha attack was also carried out to mark the As-Shura Shi'ite festival commemorating the death of Imam Hussein.

Gen. Mordechai said the Katyusha attacks, the latest in a series after a relatively quiet period, were not a result of earlier Israeli raids and did not herald the start of a war of attrition.

Arab affairs experts expressed contradictory reasons for the renewal of Katyusha attacks.

Some said they were due to recent Israeli raids on Hezbollah bases inside Lebanon, while others thought they resulted from a split in the Hezbollah leadership, with some in favor of a resumption of "indiscriminate" attacks and others holding that they should be fired only in retaliation for attacks by the Israel Defense Force.

Monday's missile attack followed last week's assassination by Hezbollah gunmen of three residents of the security zone whom the Iranian-backed Shi'ite organization accused of being collaborators with the enemy.

Another Israeli helicopter raid was carried out June 25, when gunships attacked a base of Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the Al-Bass refugee camp southeast of Tyre.

## LABOR CELEBRATES A YEAR IN OFFICE WITH BOOKLET TOUTING ACHIEVEMENTS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has released a 144-page report detailing what he considers to be the achievements of his first year in office.

The report was the culmination of a week-long public relations campaign to mark the first anniversary of the elections that brought the Labor Party to power.

The book, presented to President Ezer Weizman, boasts of the government's achievements, noting that for the first time in years, unemployment in Israel is going down.

The report also applauds the government's foreign policy and handling of the Middle East peace process.

The opposition has been furious over the anniversary effort, criticizing not only the government's chutzpah to boast about its own successes -- which the opposition disputes -- but also the government's use of public funds to print the glossy report.

Rafael Eitan, leader of the right-wing Tsomet party, even went so far as to ask the Central Elections Committee to intervene, charging that the pamphlet's publication violated election laws.

But despite the protests, the celebrations went on undisturbed. On Sunday, Rabin hosted a party for 160 in the garden of his official residence, inviting ministers, Knesset members and senior officials.

The prime minister was in an exceptionally good mood, thanking guests for their contributions to the government's achievements and apologizing for his comment, when he took office, that he would have the beginnings of a Palestinian autonomy plan in place within "six to nine months."

Rabin said he had created too much hope prematurely by those remarks.

### Likud Prepares Its Own Report

After the speeches were over and there was little food left to serve, Rabin strolled over to President Weizman and handed him the report.

According to the pamphlet, Israel's foreign policy has succeeded in four major areas: the multilateral peace talks, which will mold the shape of the region in the aftermath of a settlement; the signing of trade agreements with the European countries; the opening of eight new diplomatic missions in the former Soviet Union; and the implementation of massive reform in the foreign service.

The Likud party, for its part, has not sat idle during this week of government self-congratulation. To counter Rabin's pamphlet, it has published its own 47-page report cataloguing the "disappointments" in the government's first year.

Likud has stressed that all of the achievements the government has pointed to -- such as major development of roads and junctions -- were actually initiated by the Likud government before Rabin took power.

And not to be outdone by Rabin, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu went to see the president on Monday to present Weizman with his pamphlet, titled "A Year of Disappointments."

Rabin did not take too kindly to Netanyahu's move and tried to prevent Weizman for seeing Netanyahu, claiming it would be unstatesmanlike of the president.

# TOP AMERICAN CATHOLIC ASKS ISRAEL TO END CLOSURE OF THE TERRITORIES

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, June 28 (JTA) -- The United States' highest-ranking Catholic authority has written to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres asking him to end the current closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In a June 10 letter, Archbishop William Keeler, president of the United States Catholic Conference, wrote to Peres of the "great concern" he has about the territories' closing.

"We are very troubled by the imposition of collective sanctions on the people of the Territories. We are alarmed, moreover, at the rise in death and woundings there, particularly among young people, as a result of (Israel Defense Force) action," the letter said.

Keeler wrote that he has "special concern" about the closings creating "impediments for worship for Christians and Muslims who have been accustomed to visit the Holy City for prayer.

"Restriction of access to hospitals, grave reductions in employment, lack of access to educational and social services imposes an unjustifiable burden on a large population for the offenses of a few," he wrote.

"We urge the Government of Israel promptly to implement alternative measures to prevent violence without imposing such unjust burdens on all the people of the Territories."

Peres has not yet responded to Keeler's letter.

Avi Granot, the Israeli Embassy's Washington-based counselor for church affairs, said he hopes Keeler "realizes that the purpose of the closure is to prevent tremendous influx of terrorist activity and violence, and has proven to do exactly that, so life has been better for everyone in the area."

## Letter Reflects 'Friendship' With Peres

Granot said Israel's Civil Administration in the territories considers every request by residents of the territories for permission to attend religious services in Jerusalem.

"Buses have been arranged and permits have been issued," he said, "to make life easier for people in the territories."

Granot said that Keeler's frank letter is a reflection of the friendly relationship he has with Peres.

"There is a sense of chemistry and friendship, a rapport" between them, Granot said.

Before being elected president of the Catholic Conference last November, Keeler headed Catholic-Jewish relations for the conference's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Cardinal John O'Connor of New York succeeded him in that post.

In a related letter, also dated June 10, the chairman of the conference's Committee on International Policy, Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul/Minneapolis, wrote to the Rev. Michel Sabbah, the Roman Catholic Church's patriarch of Jerusalem.

Copies of both letters were made available to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Roach wrote that the Catholics' interest in lifting the territories' closure is being pursued with the Israeli Embassy, with the U.S. government and with members of the American Jewish community.

# TUNISIAN PRESIDENT URGES E.C. TO STEP UP PRESSURE ON ISRAEL

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, June 28 (JTA) -- In a speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Tunisian President Zin al-Abidine Ben Ali urged the international community to pressure Israel into stopping its "colonization of the occupied territories."

Ben Ali also urged members of the parliament to "recognize Palestinian people's legitimate rights."

"The international community, and notably the United States and Russia, must force Israel to stop building colonies, to end its acts of provocation and to respond positively to the peace efforts," Ben Ali said during the parliament's monthly session.

He said "peace is impossible without respecting international legality toward all the Arab occupied territories, including the city of Jerusalem."

Speaking about the relations between the Arab countries of North Africa and the European Community, the Tunisian president suggested drawing up an agreement between the two sides "to help solve the difficulties of integration of North African immigrants in Europe."

"The best and most efficient way to cope with the issue of integration is to make a better effort to solve development problems in the countries of origin," said Ben Ali, who currently chairs the Union of Arab Maghreb countries, which includes Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Algeria and Mauritania.

## NEW GROUP PLACES ADS REOPENING BATTLE OVER STATUS OF PEACE NOW

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK (JTA) -- In ads placed in the New York Times and 18 Jewish newspapers across the country this month, a hitherto unknown Jewish organization called Pro Israel has tried to reopen an organizational battle that many thought was settled in March.

But the ads, which attacked the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations for accepting Americans for Peace Now as a member, have cost Pro Israel at least one endorsement.

Pro Israel had used a letter from Likud party leader and Knesset member Benjamin Netanyahu in its initial fund-raising campaign.

In the wake of the ad, Netanyahu withdrew his support, saying his endorsement was given for Pro Israel's announced goal of increasing support and understanding of Israel, not for attacking other Jewish organizations.

At the Conference of Presidents, which admitted Peace Now by a 27-10 vote on March 29, only one letter has been received in the wake of the ads critical of the decision, according to Executive Vice Chairman Malcolm Hoenlein.

"For a group that's pro-Israel, there are many more important messages they could have used their funds for," said Hoenlein.

And at Peace Now, President Gail Pressberg said the ads, while a "nuisance," may have done more good than harm for her organization.

"A couple of people wrote us, 'I never heard of you, it sounds like you're doing good work, here's the double-chai (\$36) contribution that Pro Israel wanted,'" she said.

## AGUNAH ACTIVISTS SAVOR POSITIVE STEPS BUT SAY MUCH WORK IS STILL TO BE DONE

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, June 28 (JTA) -- They have been spit at, punched, ridiculed and cursed as whores.

But the Orthodox feminists who have endured these insults in their efforts to bring the plight of women trapped in unwanted marriages to the attention of the Orthodox community had cause for some rejoicing recently.

The Rabbinical Council of America, an organization of 1,000 Orthodox rabbis, took steps at its annual convention this month to try to prevent husbands from using a get, or religious divorce, as an instrument of blackmail to extort money, child custody and other concessions from their estranged wives.

The group unanimously approved a resolution requiring the use of prenuptial agreements in all marriage ceremonies. These agreements provide financial incentives for estranged husbands to grant a divorce.

The RCA's resolution also calls for synagogues to ostracize recalcitrant spouses who refuse to appear before a beit din, or religious court.

Though these measures are significant, the activists caution that there is still a long way to go before Orthodox rabbis are using every halachic, or Jewishly legal, tool at their disposal to ensure that women do not become agunot -- chained in often abusive marriages because their husbands are unwilling to grant them a divorce.

The reforms needed, these activists added, are often not even matters of halachah. Rather, they include issues such as the absence of reliable court records and the natural empathy that male dayanim, or judges, feel for the husbands in most cases.

Thanks in large part to these self-described "Torah feminists," the plight of agunot is working its way, in slow but important increments, up the agenda of Orthodox Jewish organizations and individual, influential Orthodox rabbis.

This year, in fact, has been dubbed by an international coalition of Jewish women's groups to be the year of the agunah.

Educational efforts are under way in the United States, Canada, Israel, England and Australia and a special push is being made to encourage men to yield on divorces during the 10 Days of Penitence that fall between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

### Women Eyed Suspiciously By Yeshiva World

The women organizing these efforts are viewed suspiciously, at best, in the yeshiva world, and their influence is seen as both a positive and negative force.

"In certain cases, they have been quite helpful; in some situations, detrimental," said Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz, the widely respected head of two religious courts: the beit din of the Rabbinical Council of America and the court of the Chicago Rabbinical Council.

"Sometimes there's a terrific backlash" when the activist women speak out, he said. "The men don't want to be pilloried."

Norma Baumel Joseph of Montreal is one of the activist pioneers who had rabbis telling her 15 years ago that only one or two women were in the position of being agunot.

One rabbi compared the problem to a "minor

toothache that will go away," she said. But it did not go away.

In North America there are believed to be more than 1,000 Jewish women being held captive by recalcitrant husbands. In Israel, estimates range between 5,000 and 16,000 agunot. And around the world an unknown number suffer.

Rivka Haut, an editor and longtime Orthodox feminist, said that "every beit din agrees that the number is growing."

Today the rabbis acknowledge that the problem is widespread.

We are "extremely sensitive to the plight of women in igun, women chained by recalcitrant, extorting husbands," said Schwartz.

"Every effort is being made to try and alleviate this problem," he said.

But Baumel Joseph and other activists say that change is slow and much remains to be done.

Many batei din should be reformed totally, the activists said, because corruption and insensitivity to women are widespread, and the courts' practices work against women.

### Women At A Disadvantage In Court

Most women are at a disadvantage from the beginning because their husbands generally have the yeshiva background that enables them to understand the language and practices of the beit din, while the women do not.

And the husband often knows the judges personally, while the wife may not. "Many men take the women to the rabbi of their synagogue, or their rosh yeshiva (yeshiva principal), where there is definite bias," said Haut.

On top of that, "the rabbis have a natural empathy for the husband as a man, as a father, that they do not have for the wife."

And then there is the blackmail women sometimes face not just from their husbands, but from the courts as well.

"There are rabbis who use their position as a dayan on a beit din to line their pockets. They ask women for money to do things that they should be doing anyway," said Haut.

"Most women haven't got a clue when they enter the process," she said.

Added to this entangled labyrinth which few women can easily negotiate is the fact that with many of the ad hoc batei din, called zablas, which are springing up in increasing numbers, there is no system of accountability.

Rabbis "just appoint themselves, just set up a beit din and no one really oversees them," said Haut. "The rabbis have to begin to feel accountable to the Jewish community."

Record-keeping also poses a serious problem.

According to Susan Aranoff, a professor of economics who, with Haut and others, founded Agunah, Inc. a decade ago, "there are Orthodox batei din which conduct proceedings with no record, no stenographer, no tape (recording.)"

"How do you appeal a process when there are no records?" asked Aranoff.

Added Haut, "No beit din keeps computerized records. This is something we've been asking for years. In kashrut, in every other aspect (of Jewish law) they do, but here records are not kept well."

"These are not halachic problems. The problems in the beit din system are caused by an abuse of halachah, and it's almost always the woman who suffers," said Haut.

"We lay the blame squarely on the rabbis' shoulders," said Baumel Joseph.