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**JEWS HAIL U.S. SENATE VOTE
TO ENHANCE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27 (JTA) -- In a tremendous victory for a broad coalition of Jewish and other religious leaders, the Senate this week overwhelmingly passed a landmark bill to enhance religious freedom in the United States.

The 97-3 Senate vote Wednesday on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act came after a 31/2-year battle by the coalition of religious groups.

The legislation would make it harder for the government to encroach on the free exercise of religion.

It was designed to circumvent a 1990 Supreme Court ruling deplored by Jewish groups that gave states greater leeway in outlawing certain religious practices.

The House of Representatives unanimously passed the bill earlier this year.

Not only did the bill's backers push the legislation through the Senate, but they lobbied hard enough to beat back an amendment that would have offered exemptions for prisons.

Offered by Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), the prison amendment was defeated 58-41 on Wednesday.

Backers of the amendment feared an onslaught of prisoners demanding special treatment in the name of religious freedom.

Jewish leaders and others were concerned that if an exemption were made for prisons, other interest groups would seek additional exemptions, and the carefully crafted legislation would be derailed.

Forced Autopsies

Last week, a coalition of 38 religious leaders, led by the American Jewish Congress, wrote to U.S. senators urging passage of the act.

The bill was designed to circumvent a 1990 case, Oregon Employment Division vs. Smith, that dealt with the use of the hallucinogen peyote in Native American religious practices.

Jewish groups consider the ruling a dangerous precedent for laws that could restrict such ritual practices as kosher slaughter.

The Smith ruling has resulted in decisions unpalatable to people of various religions.

For example, Orthodox Jews have been required to undergo autopsies in some circumstances, in violation of their families' religious beliefs.

Jewish groups greeted the bill's passage with outpourings of enthusiasm, noting the effectiveness of the broad grass-roots coalition backing the bill.

The only senators to vote against the bill were Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Harlan Mathews (D-Tenn.).

The bill now returns to the House for a final vote.

It is then expected to be signed into law by President Clinton, who has said he supports the legislation.

Among the bill's sponsors in Congress were Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.).

**ARAB STATES HAVE MODIFIED VIEW
ON ISRAEL, AMERICAN GROUP SAYS**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 27 (JTA) -- A delegation of the American Jewish Congress this week reported a "profound change" in the attitudes toward Israel after meetings with leaders of Arab countries and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In the wake of the declaration of principles signed by Israel and the PLO in Washington, there appears to be a "deep and abiding commitment to help move the peace process forward," said Robert Lifton, president of AJCongress.

A top-level Jordanian official said, "We no longer want to throw Israel in the sea, we want to swim with" it, reported Henry Siegman, executive director of the AJCongress.

While the Jewish leaders secured no commitments to end the Arab boycott against Israel, they were confident they impressed upon their hosts that the boycott is an impediment to the successful development of the nascent Palestinian economy.

The delegation called a news conference here to report on its meetings in Egypt with President Hosni Mubarak and Arafat; in Saudi Arabia with the foreign minister, Prince Saud Faisal, and other Saudi leaders, including the minister of Islamic affairs; and in Jordan with King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan.

The group was accorded "remarkable access," Siegman said.

Investment Impeded By Boycott

At Mubarak's invitation, Arafat flew from Tunis to meet the delegates, who included business leaders.

They told Arafat that it is urgent that the Palestinians start to pull together an infrastructure to deal with the money coming into the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, where autonomy will be implemented first.

The investment is needed to raise the standard of living quickly for the Palestinians "on the ground, so everyone has a stake in the process," Lifton said.

But such investment, at least from the U.S. private sector, is impeded by the Arab boycott, the group emphasized.

"No American CEO will take the risk," and "no corporate counsel in America" will advise a client to get involved in a venture that would risk violating U.S. anti-boycott laws, said Lifton.

Mubarak was "visibly moved," he said, when the impact of the secondary boycott against Israel was explained. "They thought the American Jewish community would rush in with all (their) money to support the process and they were shocked to find (American business leaders) say that's not going to happen."

The group conveyed the message that "the Israeli public has had a lot to swallow" with the PLO accord and that it is essential that the Arab world show some reciprocity, Lifton said.

But, Siegman said, the Arab leaders indicated that the absence of any formal peace agreement with Syria inhibits them from taking more formal steps toward normalization with Israel.

MORE PRISONERS TO BE RELEASED, CHIEF PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR SAYS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 27 (JTA) -- More Palestinian security prisoners are due to be released this week, according to Nabil Sha'ath, chief Palestinian negotiator in the autonomy talks in the Sinai border town of Taba.

Israeli officials were not confirming the statement, but they did indicate that there had been substantive progress in the talks on the transfer of civil authority to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Sha'ath, speaking with reporters about the Taba talks, said negotiators had reached an agreement for a release of additional Palestinian prisoners this week as well as on a schedule for future releases.

Israel released more than 600 prisoners Monday in a move designed to build Palestinian support for the self-rule accord that Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed Sept. 13 in Washington.

Another Palestinian negotiator claimed that an agreement was close that would provide for the return of Palestinians who had been deported by Israeli authorities for subversive activities.

But Israeli spokesman Ami Gluska appeared to try to minimize the issue of Israel's return of prisoners and deportees.

"There is a disproportion between the importance of the subject as it is being (portrayed) in the media and the place of the subject within the context of the negotiations," he told Israel Television.

Before the talks resumed this week, Sha'ath sent a message condemning the murders of two Israeli soldiers by the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas to the head of the Israeli negotiating team, Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak.

The two hitchhiking army reservists were picked up Sunday in Gaza by two Hamas men posing as religious Jews. The reservists were shot in the head and their bodies left at the side of a road.

In Gaza on Wednesday, Israeli security forces released a fugitive belonging to the PLO's Al Fatah wing, in an apparent concession to Palestinian negotiators who have demanded that the Israel Defense Force halt its hunt for fugitives.

Halil Hussein Zino, 23, a member of the militant Fatah Hawks group, was released after he promised not to engage in further terrorist acts.

ISRAELI PLANES HIT BACK AT HEZBOLLAH By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 27 (JTA) -- Israeli air force planes on Wednesday attacked Hezbollah targets in the security zone of southern Lebanon following an upsurge of mortar attacks by the Islamic fundamentalist group.

A spokesman for the Israel Defense Force announced that all planes had returned safely to base after firing accurate hits.

Israeli and allied South Lebanon Army forces had been taking an almost daily pounding from Hezbollah gunmen in the zone. The attacks culminated Tuesday evening in the slight wounding of three IDF soldiers in the Soujud region of the zone.

The Islamic Resistance Organization, the

fighting arm of Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for Tuesday's shelling.

On Sunday, one IDF soldier was seriously wounded in a clash in the same area, after Islamic Resistance gunmen ambushed a combined IDF infantry and armored patrol.

Two of the attackers were killed by IDF troops in that incident.

The Soujud region is close to Hezbollah supply lines, with its tree- and brush-covered hilly terrain affording good cover for attackers.

ISRAELI BUDGET PASSES FIRST ROUND AFTER RABIN TURNS ON THE PRESSURE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 27 (JTA) -- Israel's 1994 state budget was passed by a comfortable majority in its first vote before the Knesset.

The favorable result in Wednesday's vote -- 59-46 with three abstentions -- came as a result of some last-minute arm-twisting by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Finance Minister Avraham Shohat.

The vote on the budget is traditionally considered a vote of confidence in the government.

The budget is now to be forwarded for Knesset committee approval. The final budget vote should take place before the end of 1993.

Rabin and Shohat cajoled a group of recalcitrant Knesset members from their own Labor Party, as well as members of the two Arab-led leftist parties -- the Arab Democratic Party and the Communist-led Hadash -- and three members from the United Torah Judaism bloc, which usually stands in opposition to the Labor government.

As a result of Rabin and Shohat's efforts, only one of all these Knesset members, Labor's Ya'acov Shefi, voted against the budget.

The Arab Knesset members and the other Labor waverers lined up solidly behind the bill, while the three United Torah members abstained.

Avraham Shapira, the leader of United Torah, said his party had found "good will" on the government's part toward the party's budget demands.

If this good will were translated into action, he said, his faction would support the bill in all future votes.

Shas, another fervently religious party that is wavering between rejoining the coalition or lining up with the opposition, voted for the budget following a reported deal with Shohat.

The one Labor rebel, Shefi, who is a union leader at the unrest-plagued Israel Aircraft Industries, defied Rabin's threat to "throw him out of the faction."

The overall state budget for next year will be approximately \$44.3 billion.

Major outlays called for in the budget include: \$11.7 billion for debt servicing and repayments; \$6 billion for defense spending; \$9.1 billion for social services; and \$5.6 billion for spending on domestic programs, which includes a \$700 million increase in spending on education.

Shohat predicted in an address to the Knesset on Monday that the government is looking forward to accelerated economic growth as a result of the Sept. 13 signing of the self-rule accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Shohat also cited Israel's improved standing in the international community following the historic signing as a factor in the anticipated economic growth of the country.

FOCUS ON ISSUES:

REFORM JEWS BEGIN STRUGGLE FOR NEW SENSE OF SPIRITUALITY

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) -- Reform Jews are thirsting for God.

The quest now is to develop a language for spirituality and a Reform way to grapple with the existential questions of Jewish life.

"Reform has made explicit the universalism in Judaism, but now we must make more explicit the resources for a personal relationship with God in our tradition," said Rabbi Samuel Karff of Houston's Congregation Beth Israel.

At the 62nd biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the number of sessions devoted to spiritual issues, and the number of people who crowded into them, attested to the fact that the Reform movement is beginning to grapple with the theological issues it long eschewed in favor of concentrating on social action.

According to Rabbi Daniel Syme, senior vice president of the UAHC, Reform Jews are ready to deal with theology.

"Never has the expressed need for spiritual sustenance been so great," he said in an interview. "The workshops are in response to demand."

Reform Judaism, which began 120 years ago as a response to Jewish Orthodoxy and as an outgrowth of the religious and philosophical enlightenment of the 19th century, has historically distanced itself from Jewish tradition.

The movement rejects halacha, or Jewish law, as binding and emphasizes instead the right of each Jew to make autonomous decisions about Jewish practice.

Not long ago yarmulkes, the head coverings traditionally donned by Jews while praying and studying religious texts, could hardly be found in Reform temples.

At one point, the Reform movement even moved Shabbat worship from Saturday, the Jewish sabbath, to Sunday mornings.

More recently, even after resistance to tradition had softened, the Reform movement focused almost exclusively on social action as the vehicle for expressing Judaism's prophetic mission.

Time To Reclaim Mitzvot

In most Reform temples, there was little energy devoted to Judaism in purely religious terms.

But all that is changing.

Tools for incorporating spirituality into Jewish life are being borrowed from many streams of Jewish thought and behavior.

At the workshop on "Consecrating the Ordinary," Rabbi Peter Knobel of Beth Emet/The Free Synagogue, in Evanston, Ill., advised the overflow, standing-room-only crowd to reclaim mitzvot, or commandments, in their traditional forms as a way of integrating spiritual practice into life.

He spoke of reciting the "Modeh Ani," the prayer traditionally recited in the morning upon waking that thanks God for restoring life; of reciting Shacharit, the morning service; and of saying the "Shema" as he goes to sleep each night.

Knobel, who is also president of the Reform movement's Commission on Religious Living, advocated integrating blessings into each daily activity, to elevate and consecrate even the most

mundane acts of life, much as the most observant Jews do.

He also suggested double-dating correspondence, even to non-Jews, with both the English and Hebrew dates at the top of the page.

In contrast, another panelist, Rabbi Alan Berg of Peninsula Temple Beth Am in San Mateo, Calif., spoke of integrating spirituality in ways that seemed more inspired by the creative format developed by the Jewish renewal movement.

He urged that Reform Jews relate Torah-based images to things they encounter in their daily lives. For example, when you see a tree, he suggested, think about the Garden of Eden.

Other images he suggested included a picture of hugging the Torah, the image of the bush burning in front of Moses without being consumed, and the image of the Red Sea splitting as the Israelites escaped from Egypt.

The Reform movement's emphasis on individual autonomy has had some problematic consequences, rabbis said.

'Unclear About Who We Are'

Autonomy has resulted in the movement's reaching in so many different directions that "we're unclear about who we are," said Arthur Gross Schaefer, a rabbi from Los Angeles who left the pulpit out of frustration with this issue.

Moreover, autonomy may have been taken too far and destroyed concepts that are necessary for Jewish spiritual growth. It may have been a central reason for the lack of spiritual direction for which so many Reform Jews now search, said one observer.

The emphasis on autonomy will continue to pose an obstacle for rabbis trying to guide their congregants toward spirituality through observance when most members of the denomination's 850 congregations do not want Reform Judaism to expect spiritual discipline of them.

"It's a tension between making demands and losing members," said Gross Schaefer.

Reform Jews, Karff said, must develop a sense of "commandedness" and consider "what God wants from us."

The movement has "been too cavalier in setting aside the sanctified in Judaism, like covering our head in prayer," Rabbi Dow Marmur of Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple said at one workshop. "The cumulative effect has been indifference."

As the denomination struggles to balance the often-contradictory demands of individual autonomy with developing ways to express spirituality that will bring people together, Reform Jews are anxiously seeking a relationship with the divine.

At a session titled "Bringing God Back Into Your Life," workshop leader Syme encouraged participants to stand and speak of a time in their lives when they most felt connected with God.

There have been times, he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency earlier, when a roomful of people sits silently. No one gets up to speak about having a relationship with God.

But now, at the biennial, Reform Jews were eager to do so. About 30 people stood and spoke of times of tragedy when they felt the presence of God. Others spoke of sensing God during the course of their day-to-day lives.

And one woman spoke of the power of God she had sensed the day before, when, during Shabbat services she had stood in common bond with 4,000 other Reform Jews to recite Judaism's enduring statement of faith, "Shema Yisrael."

**THE JERUSALEM MAYOR'S RACE:
AT 82 AND AS POPULAR AS EVER,
KOLLEK BIDS FOR ANOTHER TERM**
[Part 1 of a Series]
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- After 28 years as mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek is in danger of losing his job.

At the age of 82, Kollek is a grand old man of Israeli politics. Finishing his sixth term as mayor, he remains enormously popular with ordinary people, who rush up to shake his hand and then complain about high municipal taxes or the cost of building the new City Hall.

Never shy to voice their opinions, Jerusalemites are wondering out loud whether their venerable mayor is too old to run for office yet again.

With the election next week, Kollek and his opponent, Ehud Olmert, are waging a battle for voters. Although clean by American standards, their respective campaigns have, on occasion, hit below the belt.

Kollek's campaign has focused on Olmert's lack of experience in running a city.

Olmert, a member of the Knesset from the Likud and a former health minister, has wasted no opportunity to portray Kollek as an old man whose time has passed.

The question is: Can Kollek complete another term in office?

Many think he cannot. They believe that, if re-elected, Kollek would hand over his post to an as-yet-unnamed successor within a few months.

Olmert is capitalizing on this assumption.

In one commercial, playing in local movie theaters, a roving reporter asks city-dwellers whether they plan to vote for Kollek. In the mall or on the street, people express their utmost respect for Kollek but say he is simply too old to continue.

"Teddy," one middle-aged man affectionately says in the commercial, "has done more for Jerusalem than anyone else. But it's time he moved aside and retired gracefully."

Asked point-blank whether he is too old to run for office again, Kollek said, "The people will have to decide that for themselves."

Labor Success Made Him Reconsider Retiring

During an interview in his office in September, a day after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat shook hands at the White House, Kollek admitted that he had planned to retire at the end of this term.

The success of the Labor Party in last year's general elections led him to reconsider, he said.

"When Labor won, I felt" that "the government would really try very hard to change the situation, as it has now proven.

"I believed (this progress) would have tremendous influence on Jerusalem, and vice versa; that whatever would happen in Jerusalem would have great influence on the possible success or failure of the government's attempts to come to some kind of arrangement with the Arabs -- to heal the wounds."

A longtime proponent of coexistence between Arabs and Jews, Kollek nonetheless foresees many bumps on the road to peace. "There are violent groups against (the agreement), there is a split in the Jewish people over the issue, both in Israel and abroad."

Kollek takes a pragmatic view when asked if

he sees Jerusalem as a model of coexistence. "The amount of violence here is comparatively insignificant to what it might be or what people prophesied for it."

But, he said, "We still have people who see a wall of fear between here and Arab parts of town, who are afraid" when they see Arabs.

Still, he added, "Jerusalem is a lot better than major cities in other parts of the world, including American cities. Our children still walk around alone in the evening."

Despite his positive attitude, the mayor is clearly worried about statements by Arafat and others claiming that eastern Jerusalem will be the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Immediately after the Israeli-PLO accord was signed in Washington, Kollek called an emergency meeting of the City Council to reaffirm the city's status as "the capital of Israel, united under Israeli sovereignty and administered by one municipality."

"The Palestinian delegation says east Jerusalem will be capital of Palestine? Some years ago they vowed to throw us all into the sea. They've come a few steps forward by recognizing Israel's right to exist. Now they'll have to go a step further," Kollek said.

'Jerusalem Cannot Be Their Capital'

Kollek believes that "the Palestinians have every right to expect that their religious and cultural heritage will be fully observed, and we have done a great deal to do this."

"Jews all over the world were held together for 2,000 years by the dream of the Temple Mount, of the Temple being restored. The Temple Mount is in the hands of the Moslems.

"We told them this doesn't mean sovereignty; it means absolute freedom of religion. It's limited in time until the Messiah comes. Then he will decide to whom it belongs. I think we have gone much farther than anybody, ever, to ensure freedom of religion," he said.

"The Jordanians didn't allow Christians, Jews or Moslems to go to their holy places during 19 years of Jordanian occupation. I think the demand for a secular authority for Jerusalem is unwarranted. It never existed," Kollek said.

He noted that "in the agreement just signed, it says that the question of Jerusalem will not be discussed for a three years. The Arabs won't give up their demands for Jerusalem easily. And we cannot give in and compromise on Jerusalem. They accepted Israel only because they came to the conclusion they can't defeat us."

Looking ahead, he says, "During the next three years we must strengthen the city to such an extent that they will come to the conclusion that Jerusalem cannot be their capital.

"This can only be done if we have a very strong immigration to Jerusalem," he said.

With typical frankness, Kollek called on Diaspora Jews to lend a hand for a unified Jerusalem. "Diaspora Jewry has a tremendous job to do. I've tried for years to say this to Jewish leaders, without any success."

He added, "I hope that the present situation will make it clear that assistance to Jerusalem must go beyond quoting slogans and Bible verses. What we need is more development, more tourism directed toward the city."

The Israel-PLO accord, Kollek said, is "not an easy situation. But it's a price we're paying for the hope that those children who just started school this year will not have to go to war."