

**YEAR-IN-REVIEW ANALYSIS:****5754 IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
A YEAR BEYOND 'HISTORIC'**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- The year 5754 began and ended in Israel with events so monumental in its brief annals that even the word "historic" hardly seems to do justice to the dimensions of the change this year has wrought.

If, when Jewish history is written decades or centuries from now, there is to be a single year cited as the moment when the Jewish state achieved permanence in its geographical milieu, this was the year.

Historians, no doubt, will link the events of this year directly back to the first, great breakthrough to peace: the Camp David agreements and the peace treaty with Egypt of the late 1970s.

For the historians, with the benefit of a perspective that distinguishes between the transient and the truly significant, the fact that the first breakthrough was achieved by the Likud under then-Premier Menachem Begin, and the second by Labor under Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, with the Likud standing firmly in opposition -- this fact will fade into insignificance.

The sweeping view of history will see, rather, the firm grounding of both breakthroughs in the Jewish state's military strength, tested in wars, and in the determination of its people, whatever their political affiliation, to win their country a place of permanence in the Arab-dominated Middle East.

In large part due to the peace process, this past year saw Israel's wider acceptance in the international community, as well. The Vatican and Israel reached a landmark agreement that will lead to full diplomatic relations, and for the first time since 1981, the United Nations General Assembly accepted Israel's credentials without a challenge from the Arab nations.

Rosh Hashanah 5754 took place in the warm and brilliant afterglow of the declaration of principles, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization before a breathless and jubilant world on the lawn of the White House on Sept. 13, 1993.

The year ended in an even warmer atmosphere, generated by the dramatic, uninhibitedly enthusiastic scenes of Israel's leaders and Jordanian King Hussein meeting openly to renounce their countries' 46-year state of war.

One Agreement Reinforces The Other

The breakthrough with Jordan was greeted with untrammelled joy by the vast bulk of Israel's citizens, Jewish and Arab.

This acceptance stood in stark contrast with the scenes of parliamentary uproar and street demonstrations that characterized the yearlong (and still ongoing) public debate over the Rabin handshake with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

The Israeli-PLO agreement and the Washington Declaration signed July 25 by Rabin and Hussein exist in a striking interrelationship.

The agreement with the PLO -- marred by

controversy within each camp, within the Arab world as a whole and indeed within the Jewish world -- takes on a status of far greater stability as a result of the subsequent agreement with Hussein.

In the eyes of the world community, and in the eyes of the majority of Arab nations, the two agreements, and the ongoing negotiations emanating from each of them, represent a consistent movement forward toward Israel's ensconcement as an accepted state in this region.

There are those who prefer the PLO and the radicalism it represents, there are others who are more comfortable with the conservatism of the Jordan's Hashemites -- but by and large the Arab world accepts both of these units as fixtures in the firmament of Arab nationalism.

And Israel's accords with both Jordan and the Palestinians have invested Israel's very existence with that fixture-status, too.

'Hebron Massacre' Takes On New Meaning

Of course, there are those who object violently to the accords. The bloody objections of one Jewish settler, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, took on historic proportions.

Until this year, the words "Hebron massacre" meant, for Jews everywhere, the wanton killing by Palestinian Arab extremists of peaceful Hebron Jews in 1929.

Now, though, those same words have a similar meaning for the Arabs too.

Goldstein's killing of 29 Palestinian worshippers inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs on Feb. 25 -- Purim in the Jewish calendar -- will live on in the Arab mind as the epitome of violent Jewish extremism, and in Jewish history as a stain of shame.

Subsequent acts of Arab terrorism, including bombs in the Israeli towns of Hadera and Afula that left a total of 13 dead, and the fatal stabbing of two young Jews at a Ramle building site, were all advertised by Arab extremists as reprisals for the Hebron killings.

Plainly, though, Goldstein failed, as did the various Arab bombers -- if their purpose was to derail the peace process.

Arguably, in fact, the Hebron massacre and the subsequent wave of Palestinian terrorism served as a catalyst, expediting the conclusion of that vital first phase of the autonomy agreement.

Leaders on both sides were shocked into the profound and acute realization that to delay in the implementation of their accord would be to court the danger of its derailment amid a welter of blood and fanaticism.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu has made it clear that his party, if it returns to power, will not balk at the international undertakings entered into by its Labor predecessor.

The word "if" in the previous sentence is used advisedly.

While in the normal order of things, government and opposition change roles from time to time in democratic countries, no one can predict with certainty, as 5755 is ushered in, that the Likud will ever take power again in Israel -- just

as no one can predict that Labor itself will be returned to office.

Many pundits believe that both blocs will break apart -- if not before the 1996 election then before the end of the century -- with their various component parts reassembling into new political alignments no longer based on the increasingly anachronistic hawk-dove divide.

Indeed, 5754 provided Israelis with a first taste of political realignment, with the secession from Labor, and triumphal success, of one of the ruling party's brightest hopes, Haim Ramon.

Just 45, Ramon ran a devastating campaign to unseat the Labor incumbent in the top post in the still-powerful Histadrut trade union confederation -- and emerged as the winner.

Still formally a member of Labor's Knesset faction, Ramon was keeping the country guessing as to his plans for the next parliamentary election: Will he, with or without the left-wing Meretz bloc, form a new party and run against Labor? That truly would signify the collapse of the Labor Party as it has been known until now.

A Ramon-led grouping, moreover, could attract support from the pragmatic wing of the Likud, with people like Tel Aviv Mayor Ronnie Milo -- one of the Likud's own bright hopes -- moving across to give the envisaged new party a centrist balance.

The year 5754 also saw a key Israeli political figure articulate, for the first time publicly, the increasing discomfort that many Israelis feel over the fund-raising-based relationship between the Jewish state and the Diaspora.

Yossi Beilin, deputy foreign minister, an acclaimed architect of the current peace process and another young star in the Labor camp, called repeatedly for a no-holds-barred reappraisal of the relationship.

He urged that Jewish philanthropy focus on ensuring Diaspora Jewish survival -- rather than on the unwieldy and controversy-plagued Jewish Agency, which dispenses funds in Israel.

Beilin's position expressed a feeling, shared by many in Israel and the Diaspora that the new era of Israel-at-peace represents a challenging new departure for the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

As the year drew to a close, the evolution of a broader Israel-Diaspora partnership was dramatically and tragically shaken by a series of terrorist bomb attacks that claimed 100 lives at the Jewish community office building in Buenos Aires, killed 21 on a Panamanian commuter plane and struck two Jewish sites in London, where miraculously there were no fatalities.

Linkage Of Jewish And Israeli Fates

The fact that one of the London bombings struck the building of the Joint Israel Appeal just hours after a similar attack on the Israeli Embassy graphically underscored the inexorable linkage of the Jewish and Israeli fates.

As Jews sit down to their apple and honey this Rosh Hashanah, they will have a very great deal, in terms of monumental events, to ponder.

In many households, armchair punditry will focus now on Syria:

Will this last redoubt of rejectionism among Israel's neighbors break down during the year ahead, and, spurred by insistent American diplomacy, also sign a breakthrough peace agreement with the Jewish state?

YEAR-IN-REVIEW ANALYSIS: AMERICAN JEWISH LIFE UNDERGOES SOME SEISMIC SHIFTS AND SOME DRIFT By Yosef I. Abramowitz

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Ask a New York Jew to name the major domestic story that affected the Jewish community this past year, and he or she might say the conviction of the World Trade Center terrorists, the gunning down of Lubavitch students on the Brooklyn Bridge, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's Jewish support or the death of the Lubavitcher rebbe.

Pose the same question to a Jewish Los Angelino, and the answer would be unequivocal: the earthquake.

On January 17, 1994, at 4:31 a.m., a massive earthquake, measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale, ripped through the largely Jewish area of Northridge, killing a dozen Jews, displacing 5,000 others and causing \$30 million in damages to communal property. The community of half-a-million Jews is still reeling from the emotional and financial aftershocks.

Fault Lines In American Jewry

While Los Angeles literally sits atop a quake zone, American Jewry saddles some serious fault lines of its own. Much like any earthquake zone, this year was marked by sudden and unpredictable shake-ups, aftershocks and slow continental drift.

"It was a very tough year," says Glenn Richter, a long-time activist and observer of American Jewry. "Fundamental assumptions were challenged on every front; lines were crossed for the first time. And we have witnessed (Israeli Prime Minister) Yitzhak Rabin undermine Israel's security."

"It was a revolutionary year, a challenging year," agrees Rabbi Carl Perkins of Temple Aliyah in Needham, Mass. "Think how much of a challenge it is to make peace with Arafat, for Palestinian and Israeli soldiers to patrol side by side. But this is the kind of challenge we have been looking forward to for 40 years."

The divergent views of Richter and Perkins about the peace process represent more than simply the difference between a Kiddish cup that might be half full or half empty. It is reflective of the reality that 5754 was mixed and that it marked a time of transition and redefinition.

"It used to be clear who our friends and enemies were, both domestically and internationally," said Diana Aviv, director of the Council of Jewish Federations Washington Action Office. "But now these relationships are in flux."

"And, at the same time, we are in the process of redefining our relationship to a strong and economically viable Israel increasingly at peace with her neighbors," she said.

The road to Middle East peace continued to wind through Washington, but many mainstream American Jewish groups sat on the sidelines as Israel negotiated agreements first with the Palestinians and then with King Hussein of Jordan.

Closer to home, American Jewry was jolted by some of its traditional domestic coalition partners. The establishment black leadership reached out to militant Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

First, the Black Congressional Caucus entered into a "covenant" with the Nation of Islam,

only to renounce it after the Anti-Defamation League publicized the anti-Semitic remarks of Khalid Abdul Mohammed, Farrakhan's deputy.

Farrakhan dismissed Mohammed, but still endorsed some of his anti-Semitic beliefs. Next, Benjamin Chavis, recently ousted head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, invited Farrakhan to an African American leadership summit.

Jews, long been supportive of the civil rights organization, cried foul. Chavis shot back: "Never again will we allow an external force to attempt to dictate who we can meet with."

Throughout the country Jews shared a widely felt apprehension about the future of black-Jewish relations as long as Farrakhan was welcomed into the black leadership mainstream.

But the news was not all bad. Indeed, away from the glare of the media, the reality of black-Jewish relations on the municipal and congressional levels continued to be encouraging.

"Many whites of good will have joined us in our protracted quest for racial, social and economic justice," said Hugh Price, newly installed president of the National Urban League. "None has matched the Jewish community as long distance runners in the civil rights movement."

There was considerable turnover in Jewish leadership circles as well this year, ushering in a generation that was born after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Neal Sher, 46, took the helm at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee; Diana Aviv, 42, at the CJF Washington Action Office; Richard Pearlstone, 46, as national chair of the United Jewish Appeal; Rabbi Alan Silverstein, 45, as president of the Rabbinical Assembly; and Morton Klein, 46, at the Zionist Organization of America.

Young Turks also rose in Israel, but one in particular irked American Jewry. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told American Jews that Israel no longer needed their charity or paternalism. He proposed to set up a counterorganization to the UJA and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

And while Beilin's remarks were widely condemned as irresponsible, he struck a cord of truth when he suggested that Israel did not need American Jewish money as much as local communities do to combat assimilation.

At the same time, UJA phased out its Operation Exodus aimed at resettling Soviet Jews, and launched Partnership 2000, linking Diaspora and Israeli communities.

Crusade For Jewish Continuity

This year was filled with a mild crusade for Jewish continuity. Hillels, received new and more money this year. A record 7,500 youths went to Israel on various programs.

More schools and Jewish community centers began family education programs and a "Jewish Civics" curriculum for teen-agers was launched in five model communities.

Even outside the world of Jewish organizational life, Jews figured prominently in the public consciousness. A fifth of the planet watched as Steven Spielberg and "Schindler's List" swept audiences' hearts and the Oscars.

Millions of fans "kvelled" over Barbra Streisand's return to the stage. Jerry Seinfeld took Shoshana Lowenstein home to meet his "mishpachah" and Mayim Bialik ("Blossom")

hosted a video calling on Jewish teen-agers to become more politically active.

The religious movements faced their own challenges. The Conservative movement issued a paper on sexuality, suggesting the possibility of a degree of holiness in non-marital sex.

The Reconstructionists issued a new prayer-book, once again revamping God language to be more inclusive.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, leader of the Reform movement, broke with tradition and called on Jews to seek converts actively.

Haviva Krasner-Davidson received much publicity but no response when she became the first woman to apply to the rabbinic program at the Orthodox Yeshiva University.

Other events that triggered the communal seismograph included:

- * Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rebbe who was hailed by many of his followers as the Messiah, died, leaving behind an international movement with no apparent heir but an unshakable faith.

- * President Clinton turned down a request for clemency for convicted spy Jonathan Pollard, despite a massive grass-roots campaign to have his life sentence commuted.

- * Terrorist bombs killed 120 in attacks on Jewish targets in Argentina, Panama and Britain, forcing 11 Israeli consulates and nearly every Jewish organization in the United States to take on additional security precautions.

American Jews Feeling More At Home Than Ever

Despite a recent rise in public insecurity, however, American Jews, more than ever, felt at home. Indeed, 5754 was the year when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg donned her black robe and Judge Stephen Breyer was confirmed to become the second Jew on the current Supreme Court.

Beneath the politics and issues, American Jews did what people in earthquake zones do: marry, give birth, live and die. This year Eliana Glanzberg-Krainin of Philadelphia and another estimated 77,000 Jewish babies brought unimaginable joy and fatigue to their parents; it was also a year when Kaddish was said for the first time for Phyllis Bernstein of Maryland and the other 87,000 Jews who were buried in Jewish cemeteries.

It was the year Lauren Strauss and Jonathan Meyer (finally!) stood under the chupah, as did 16,000 other Jewish couples; it was the year 33,000 mixed-faith couples took vows.

It was a year when Michelle Bonder of Boca Raton, Fla., ascended the bimah at Temple Beth El, and, along with 43,000 other Jewish b'nai mitzvah this year, read from the Torah.

It was, like the other 339 years that Jews have celebrated, commemorated and lived in America, so different and yet so much like the year before it.

But for those who monitor each minor tremor amid the ebb and flow of 5.8 million individual American Jewish lives, while evaluating the fragile relationship between Israel and American Jewry, between blacks and Jews, and between the unaffiliated and affiliated, it was clear that the ground began to shift.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF JEWISH NEWS IN 5754

SEPTEMBER 1993

NEW YORK -- John Demjanjuk, acquitted in Israel of Nazi war crimes, returns to the United States seven years after being deported to face charges of being the notorious death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible."

OCTOBER

UNITED NATIONS -- For the first time since 1981, Israel's U.N. credentials are accepted in the General Assembly without a challenge from the Arab nations.

NOVEMBER

JERUSALEM -- After nearly three decades as Jerusalem's mayor, Teddy Kollek loses to the Likud's Ehud Olmert.

DECEMBER

ROME -- In a move toward ending nearly two millennia of strained relations between Jews and Catholics, a bilateral commission on Israeli-Vatican relations formally ratifies an agreement that leads to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel.

JANUARY 1994

GENEVA -- President Clinton meets with Syrian President Hafez Assad, marking the first meeting between American and Syrian leaders since 1990, and both express support for the Middle East peace process.

LOS ANGELES -- A devastating earthquake strikes here, severely damaging the University of Judaism, several prominent synagogues and Jewish communal facilities, among other institutions.

FEBRUARY

WASHINGTON -- Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan refuses to distance himself from anti-Semitic remarks made by a top aide, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, sparking outrage among the American Jewish community.

JERUSALEM -- Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat sign the Cairo Document, which resolves most of the security-related issues surrounding the self-rule accord.

JERUSALEM -- Jewish settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein guns down 29 Arabs praying in a mosque at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

MARCH

NEW YORK -- Police arrest a Lebanese national in the shooting of four Lubavitcher students traveling in a van on the Brooklyn Bridge. One of the victims dies from injuries suffered in the attack.

JERUSALEM -- In the wake of the Hebron massacre, the government declares the Kach and Kahane Chai political parties terrorist organizations and votes unanimously to outlaw them.

NEW YORK -- President Clinton denies clemency to imprisoned spy Jonathan Pollard, angering Pollard's supporters.

LOS ANGELES -- Director Steven Spielberg makes a plea not to forget the Holocaust at the Academy Award's ceremony where he wins seven awards for his film, "Schindler's List."

APRIL

JERUSALEM -- To avenge the massacre in Hebron, Hamas rigs a car bomb in the bus station in the northern Israeli town of Afula that kills eight people, including four teen-agers, and injures more than 50. A week later, a terrorist bomb planted by Hamas kills five Israelis and

injures 30 in the central Israeli town of Hadera on the eve of Israel's 46th Independence Day.

JERUSALEM -- Israeli troops begin pulling out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho after 27 years of Israeli rule.

VERSAILLES, France -- The 79 year-old Nazi collaborator Paul Touvier is convicted here in connection with the assassination of seven Jewish hostages during the Vichy regime, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

MAY

JERUSALEM -- Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization sign the implementation agreement in Cairo that grants Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

JERUSALEM -- Upstart Haim Ramon unseats the Labor Party incumbent to become head of the Histadrut labor federation, sending a powerful message to the Labor establishment.

BUCHAREST, Romania -- Longtime Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, the leading figure in the postwar Romanian Jewish community, dies here at age 81.

JUNE

NEW YORK -- After more than four years, 500,000 new immigrants and nearly \$900 million dollars, the United Jewish Appeal's formally ends its Operation Exodus fund-raising campaign to help Jews immigrate to Israel from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

NEW YORK -- Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, longtime leader of the Lubavitcher Chasidim, believed by some to be the Messiah, dies at the age of 92, leaving no heirs.

JULY

JERUSALEM -- Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat visits the newly autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho for the first time since 1967 and sets up permanent residence in Gaza.

BUENOS AIRES -- A bomb rips through the Jewish community headquarters here, killing about 100 people, injuring more than 200 and almost completely leveling the seven-story building. Israeli and American officials blame the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement for the attack.

PANAMA -- A bomb explodes on a commuter plane between Panama City and Colon, killing all 21 on board, including 12 Jews. The bomb is believed planted by Islamic fundamentalists.

LONDON -- Two bombs explode within 24 hours here, one shattering the Israeli Embassy and one damaging the offices of the Joint Israel Appeal. The explosions, blamed on Islamic fundamentalists, injure 18 but cause no fatalities.

WASHINGTON -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein sign a declaration at a White House ceremony that officially ends the 46-year state of war between the neighboring Jewish and Arab states.

AUGUST

WASHINGTON -- Judge Stephen Breyer is confirmed to become the next justice on the Supreme Court, where he will join Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the second Jewish justice to sit on the current high court.

JERUSALEM -- Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization sign a so-called "early empowerment" agreement extending Palestinian authority over five areas of civilian life throughout West Bank, launching the next phase of the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.