

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Israeli Cabinet voted to halt construction of controversial new housing units at a site near the West Bank settlement of Efrat. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said his government acted in the interest of the peace process. Settlement leaders rejected a Cabinet proposal to allow construction at an alternate site. [Page 4]

■ German officials invited Israeli President Ezer Weizman to visit Germany in May to attend commemorations marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Weizman has accepted the invitation in principle, but apparently is reluctant to regard the visit as a gesture of reconciliation between Israelis and Germans. [Page 4]

■ The Israel Defense Force installed Amnon Lipkin-Shahak as its 15th chief of staff, replacing Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak. Formerly the deputy chief of staff, Shahak, 50, has played a leading role in negotiations with the Palestinians. [Page 4]

■ The flow of tourist traffic between Israel and Jordan has been primarily one way — east — since the two countries opened their borders in October. Some 20,000 Israelis have crossed the Jordan River, while only several hundred Jordanians have made the trip, according to official Israeli statistics.

■ Nearly 20 years after its completion, a report by a commission investigating the 1973 Yom Kippur War was made public this week. The commission, established to study the blunders that allowed Israel to be caught off guard, found that then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan had rejected the option of a pre-emptive strike against Egypt and Syria. The report also found that Israeli intelligence reports at the time were seriously flawed.

A new year, a new look

With this first issue of 1995, JTA introduces a fresh new look to the DAILY NEWS BULLETIN. We hope the facelift and new "News at a glance" column will make the DNB more enjoyable to read.

Marshall M. Weinberg Mark J. Joffe
President Publisher

NEWS ANALYSIS**Jewish activists prepare for battle as a new Washington moves into gear**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2 (JTA) — Three months ago Jewish lobbyists across Washington watched with trepidation as members of the House and Senate cast votes on a procedural motion that ultimately sounded the death knell for school prayer in the last Congress.

The phone lines lit up at Jewish organizations as jubilant leaders celebrated a yearlong quest for victory that only months before seemed a near-impossible task.

Some in the Senate visitors gallery pumped their fists in celebration, ending what has been widely described as one of the toughest battles ever fought by the Jewish community on the domestic front.

That was then.

Now, that battle, during which 31 senators changed their votes after a concerted lobbying blitz, pales in comparison to what lies ahead for the Jewish community as the new Republican-controlled Congress gears up for action, many activists say.

Armed with two months of post-election plans, strategies and blueprints for approaching the 104th Congress and its agenda, Jewish organizations are preparing to fight for many of the core issues that bind most of the Jewish community.

Lawmakers, who returned to the Capitol this week to take up their posts on Wednesday, are preparing for marathon sessions the Republican leaders have vowed to hold in order to deliver major legislation in Congress' first 100 days.

In addition to the expected battle on school prayer, Jewish organizations are gearing up for other struggles in the early days of this new Congress.

Other issues high on both the Republican agenda and the Jewish angst list include a balanced budget amendment, a repeal of the ban on assault weapons and plans to gut welfare assistance.

Welfare reform will most likely emerge as one of the most arduous tests for the Jewish community this year, activists say.

A move begun last year by the Clinton administration that will most likely be expanded by the new Republican majority would limit aid to welfare recipients. It would also fund reforms such as job training programs by ending aid to legal immigrants.

To some extent, Jewish concern over these issues stems from anxiety over what impact these cuts will have on Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union and elsewhere who turn to welfare when they are unable to find employment.

In addition, however, many activists say immigration reform goes to the core of Jewish security in this country because American Jewry, like many ethnic groups, was and is an immigrant community.

Groups also seek cooperation

While preparing their battle plans, Jewish organizations, mirroring virtually all of Washington, are also looking for areas in which to cooperate with the new congressional leadership.

"Certainly there are issues where we'll be able to work with the new Congress," said Jerome Chanes, co-director for domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Nonetheless, he said, "this Congress multiplies the challenges to the Jewish community by a factor of ten. There is a serious challenge to the issues at the core of Jewish security."

Recalling the school prayer battles in the last Congress, Chanes said, "Every year we have faced prayer legislation, but having school prayer facing us as a constitutional amendment and backed by the leadership is a transcendental change."

Congressional leaders have promised a vote on a constitutional school prayer amendment by July 4, although privately many Republicans are urging a delay.

"A school prayer amendment would be the Republican version of

Clinton pushing gays in the military," said an aide to a leading Republican member of Congress.

"If we don't stick to our core agenda, we'll also self destruct," he said, referring to the intense opposition Clinton suffered after he pushed to lift the ban on gays in the military in the first months of his presidency.

Looking beyond the first 100 days, Jewish activists are anticipating more protracted battles over such issues as programs for legal immigrants and the poor, foreign aid and U.S. involvement in the Middle East peace process.

Although many leaders in the new Congress repeatedly have expressed support for \$3 billion in aid to Israel, activists are treading carefully.

Some fear that staunch battles with lawmakers against domestic programs will shut doors when they return to ask for support for foreign aid.

Unlike in the last Congress, when Jewish groups helped shape legislation consistent with their agendas, in this Congress, "we'll see a much more reactive agenda," said Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

Can't lose sight of 'long-term objective'

Others believe that while the Jewish community will certainly have to move to a more defensive posture, "you're only reactive if you plan that way," said Diana Aviv, director of the Washington office of the Council of Jewish Federations.

CJF's office here, which will take the lead for the Jewish community on many of the domestic programs slated for change or elimination, has fanned out into task forces to follow the hectic pace of the new Congress.

"We can't react to everything. We need to make determinations of where we want to be without losing the responsibility to our long-term objective," Aviv said.

One of the earliest fights for many of the Jewish organizations will be against a balanced budget amendment, which enjoys widespread support among lawmakers.

By vowing to exempt social security from any budget cuts, lawmakers are likely to target discretionary spending programs supported by Jewish groups, such as aid to the poor, elderly, disabled and immigrant populations.

While a good deal of Jewish energy will be spent opposing congressional initiatives, there are expected to be some areas of agreement.

Some Orthodox groups, for instance, have found allies for a long-held belief that families should receive more tax credits for dependent children.

One such group, Agudath Israel, also hopes to find new allies in the Republican camp to support vouchers for private education.

"We're facing the same issues, but we're reorienting ourselves" in light of a more supportive Congress, said Abba Cohen, Washington representative for Agudath Israel.

Cohen did say, however, that his group will not support Republican moves to reintroduce prayer in the public schools.

Some Orthodox groups also hope to gain support for another one of their special priorities, the Workplace Religious Freedom Act.

Introduced late last session, the measure "is a key piece of legislation for us," said Betty Ehrenberg, director of the Institute of Public Affairs of the Orthodox Union.

The measure would guarantee that employers do not discriminate against Sabbath observers, among others.

And across the spectrum, Jewish groups have found support in both the Republican and Democratic parties for another one of their major concerns in the new year: anti-terrorism legislation.

A proposed State Department bill is currently being scrutinized by the Justice Department, and Clinton adminis-

tration officials plan to use the measure as an early example of how the White House and Congress can work together.

Jewish groups expect to press for the anti-terrorism bill early this year to give law enforcement officials legal teeth to go after Americans who support terrorist organizations such as the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas.

Supporting Republicans on anti-terrorism measures would also give Jewish lobbyists something to point to if they face expected scrutiny for opposing the new congressional leadership on many of the GOP's core issues.

While Israel's \$3 billion in foreign aid appears secure in the hands of the new Congress, many advocates privately suggest that problems could arise in the future when lobbyists who actively fought against members of Congress on domestic issues return to shake the same hands to ask for their support for aid to Israel.

Despite the potential dilemma, Jewish groups should not change their agenda, but rather heighten their awareness of the complexities, many here say.

"I don't think that the Jewish community should withhold support in areas we support, and at the same time we should not stand back when we oppose moves," said Jess Hordes, Washington director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Jewish Republicans move to the forefront

But some Jewish Republicans warn that the community will be shut out unless it moves to support GOP initiatives.

"You can't stand on the outside and lob all these bombs and then come in to ask for support on foreign aid," said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican organization. "The Jewish community is running the risk of becoming marginalized."

NJC has moved to the forefront of American Jewish organizations in the wake of the congressional upheaval.

The group recently launched a major drive to increase grassroots membership. And while many Jewish groups are suffering from lackluster fund raising, NJC received \$90,000 in new pledges and increased gifts from its officers since the election, Brooks said.

While Brooks fears that Israel's foreign aid lobbyists could face difficulties because of the Jewish community's opposition to significant portions of the Republican majority's agenda, those responsible for leading the charge on aid disagree.

"The U.S.-Israel relationship historically has received nothing but bipartisan support," said Steve Grossman, president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobby.

"I predict that this Congress will be no different."

Other pro-Israel activists said the primary foreign affairs-related battle that lies ahead for the Jewish community is not aid for Israel but maintaining congressional support for the Israeli-Arab peace process.

"It's no secret that many Republicans have criticized (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin's agreement with the PLO and the negotiations with Syria," one activist said on the condition of anonymity.

In addition, there is considerable disagreement in Congress over the wisdom of placing U.S. peacekeeping troops on the Golan Heights in the event of an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

While the peace process will undoubtedly suffer some attacks from the right, this activist, echoing the sentiment of many in Washington, predicted: "In the end, no one will want to bear the responsibility of holding up the peace process." □

THE CHANGING ORTHODOX WORLD**Haredi community bursting at seams, but is facing a growing economic crisis***By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK, Jan. 2 (JTA) — Two nights a week, Malkie D. farms out her five children to neighbors and gets into her battered station wagon to work as a car-service driver.

Malkie, who lives in the fervently Orthodox enclave of Lakewood, N.J., is eight months pregnant and can hardly fit behind the steering wheel. But she is desperate to earn money.

She has yeshiva bills to pay, though the schools have slashed tuition for her family. She buys her family used clothing by the pound at a warehouse. And she relies on welfare and food stamps to get by.

Her husband, Yankel, does not earn much of an income. He spent the first five years of their marriage learning full-time, getting a tiny stipend from the kollel (a religious learning program for adult men).

He has worked as a plumber since finishing his studies. After finishing kollel, a friend took him on jobs, where he picked up a few skills. He has little success getting his clients to pay his fee.

But he does not know what else to do. Nothing he learned in his years of study prepared him to earn a living.

Malkie and Yankel's story is not an unusual one in the haredi world, where a man's studying Talmud full-time in kollel has come to be regarded as the paramount expression of Orthodox commitment.

And, paradoxically, while many might view their grinding poverty as a failure of the haredi system, fervently Orthodox leaders view lives like Malkie's and Yankel's as a success story.

The primacy of learning in their lives has come to represent the success of the fervently Orthodox community's values in the New World.

"It is such a pleasure to see so many young people giving up careers" in order to learn in kollel, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, said in a recent interview.

But it has also created a large economic underclass of families unable to support the institutions of their community. And the institutions, in turn, are having an increasingly difficult time supporting their constituents.

'The highest Jewish bill'

The haredi community has "a smaller population and more institutions, is the poorest of all the movements and has the highest Jewish bill," according to Samuel Heilman, who holds a chair in Jewish studies at City University of New York, and writes about the haredi world.

"The paradox of Orthodoxy is that their success is the seeds of their failure," he said. "Keeping people in educational institutions for longer has created an enormous economic crisis for them."

There was a time when only the most talented students went on to kollel after high school, while the others prepared for a profession.

Today, most men go straight into kollel. College is no longer regarded as an unfortunate but necessary endeavor. It is strongly discouraged.

The community's leadership believes that by focusing increasingly on what they view as authentic Jewish values, they have managed to triumph over the external threats of Nazism and America's seductive secularism.

Jewish sociologists in the 1950s predicted that the iconoclastic ideals of fervently Orthodox Judaism could not survive on American soil.

But the fervently Orthodox have succeeded and

created vibrant communities where their strict interpretations of Torah take root in families with the highest birthrate in the Jewish world.

Though the percentage of American Jews who are Orthodox has declined over the past 20 years, from 11 percent to 6 percent, the proportion of Orthodox Jews who are haredi is growing, according to most experts.

Haredim still constitute a relatively tiny segment of American Jewry — about 106,000 people, or well under 1 percent, according to Heilman, who based his findings on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey.

Agudath Israel is the central institution of the haredi world. It represents the fervently Orthodox community to government lawmakers, aiding the community's schools with legal advice and programming and providing some social services, like programs for disabled youngsters and an employment agency.

Agudah's membership doubled

The Agudah's membership has doubled in the past 15 years, to 35,000 member families, according to Sherer, and its budget has tripled, to \$10 million, in the last decade.

The community exerts a conservative influence on American life and American Jewish life well beyond its numbers.

Even between campaigns, federal and state politicians court Agudath Israel's leaders.

And when Sherer recited the invocation at New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's inauguration last January, it was not because he and the mayor are such good friends.

It was, no doubt, a reflection of the fact that an Agudah voter-registration drive signed up more than 20,000 voters who likely voted straight down the Republican line.

Within American Jewish life, the fervently Orthodox have succeeded in undermining the legitimacy of Modern Orthodoxy, which promotes living as an observant Jew in the larger culture.

They view the assimilation of most of American Jewry as their vindication.

"Anything less than classical Judaism cannot and will not stem the hemorrhaging that our people are suffering," wrote Agudah leader Sherer, in a 1993 letter declining an invitation to join the North American Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity.

The community's leaders have long eschewed cooperation with American Jewry's other movements and organizations.

But as the financial crisis deepens, so does the sense of desperation.

"We don't want our children to become a part of the permanent 'schnorer' class which is developing in certain communities," said David Zweibel, director of government affairs for Agudah.

Nevertheless, the haredi community shows no signs of altering its priorities and encouraging its children to prepare for a way to support themselves.

Instead, they are looking elsewhere for financial aid — to government welfare programs and legislation like school vouchers for private school education.

And they are grappling to find a way to get on the allocations agenda of Jewish federations, even as they turn down invitations to participate in cooperative policy endeavors.

"We've essentially exhausted the community's own resources, and therefore we're looking to outside sources," said Zweibel. "One part of the picture ought to be government, another part the more general Jewish community. Both those avenues are underdeveloped," he said. □

Israeli Cabinet halts construction of controversial settlement expansion*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Jan. 2 (JTA) — After a full day of deliberations, the Israeli Cabinet has decided to halt the construction of 500 housing units at a site near the West Bank settlement of Efrat.

But the ministers have agreed to allow construction on an alternate site closer to the settlement.

Several Cabinet ministers, along with settlement leaders and Palestinians, expressed dissatisfaction with the Cabinet's decision on Monday.

The disputed site lies on a hilltop just over a mile north of Efrat near Bethlehem. Palestinians from the nearby village of Al-Khader claim the land belongs to them. Israeli settlers in turn claim they purchased the land privately and have the right to build upon it.

Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat last week called the construction plans at Efrat a "flagrant violation" of the Israeli-PLO self-rule accord signed in September 1993.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said the Cabinet had reached its decision to halt construction at the Givat Tamar site near Efrat in order to preserve the peace process.

"Under no circumstances will we continue to work at Givat Tamar," he told the Knesset, responding to no-confidence motions introduced by the right-wing National Religious Party and Tsomet.

The dispute over construction plans began Dec. 22, when bulldozers began clearing the 150-acre plot near Efrat. Ongoing demonstrations by Palestinians and Israeli sympathizers turned violent last Friday. Eleven Palestinians and seven Israelis were injured while attempting to break through an army cordon to reach the construction site.

At the request of Rabin, Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair issued a legal opinion this week. He said that the private contractors who bought the land had followed proper procedures.

But he also said that the government could break the contract, if it compensated the settlers' building association.

Rabin said Monday that it was the government's policy to allow private construction at existing settlements. But he also said he would prevent construction of new settlements, in adherence with the 1992 settlement freeze he put into effect upon taking office.

Ministers from the left-wing Meretz bloc voted against Monday's Cabinet decision. They expressed opposition to any further settlement construction, including the expansion of existing settlements, as a violation of the spirit of Israel's accord with the Palestinians.

Economics Minister Shimon Shetreet abstained from Monday's Cabinet vote. He and other conservative ministers said they are concerned that any ban on building could have implications for the future of the greater Jerusalem area, where future building activity is also envisioned.

Opposition parties, meanwhile, accused Rabin of bowing to pressure from Arafat.

"The government is knuckling under pressure of violence and political pressure," said opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu. "This is not a way to run a country."

Settlement leaders said they were planning protests in wake of the Cabinet decision.

Yinun Ahiman, the head of the Efrat local council, at first accepted the government proposal. But he later rejected it because he was opposed to plans to set up a ministerial commission to review settlement policy.

The Prime Minister's Office had maintained steady

contacts with Ahiman throughout the day on Monday in an effort to reach a compromise.

Palestinian leaders also criticized the Cabinet decision, saying it did not resolve the central issue — the expansion of settlements.

Palestinian Authority official Saeb Erekat said the Israeli government was only transferring construction from one hilltop to another.

"Rabin cannot solve the problem by diverting bulldozers from one hilltop to another," he said. "Negotiations will become meaningless, because negotiations, after all, are about land."

The issue was expected to surface later this week in Cairo, where Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were scheduled to resume their talks on implementing the next phase of Palestinian autonomy. □

Germany invites Israel's president to ceremonies marking end of war*By Gil Sedan*

BONN, Jan. 2 (JTA) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has invited Israeli President Ezer Weizman to visit Germany next May to attend ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* reported this week that Kohl would view a visit by Weizman as a gesture of reconciliation between the Jewish and German peoples.

Weizman already accepted the invitation in "principle," according to *Der Spiegel*, but he has been cautious about making an official announcement out of concern for possible protests by Holocaust survivors.

If Weizman does visit Germany, Israel is expected to link the trip to ceremonies commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries rather than as a gesture of reconciliation.

In a statement issued in Jerusalem on Sunday, Weizman's office said that the president was invited to visit Germany when German President Roman Herzog visited Israel in December. That visit was described by both German officials and their Israeli hosts as highly successful.

Kohl, who was elected last year for what will be his last term in office, is eager to complete the process of rehabilitating Germany into the family of nations before his term expires.

A visit by Weizman is regarded as an essential part of achieving that goal. □

IDF installs new chief of staff*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Jan. 2 (JTA) — The Israel Defense Force installed Amnon Lipkin-Shahak as its 15th chief of staff this week.

Shahak replaces Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, who retired from the military and is believed to be considering a political career.

Previously deputy chief of staff, the 50-year-old Shahak played a leading role in negotiations with the Palestinians during the past year.

A native of Tel Aviv, Shahak joined the Israeli army in 1962. He was named commander of the West Bank in 1983 and was head of military intelligence from 1986 until his appointment as IDF deputy chief of staff in 1991.

Shahak is considered close to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and there was little opposition to his appointment. □