



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Four workers for the Israeli phone company Bezek were lightly wounded after a bomb exploded near Ariel, in the West Bank. It was the first attack on Israelis since Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu was elected Israel's next prime minister. [Page 3]

■ Senior security sources said the Israel Defense Force chief of staff had instructed IDF officers involved in negotiations with the Palestinians to slow the talks until the government of Benjamin Netanyahu is established.

■ The House of Representatives is scheduled to debate the foreign aid bill Wednesday afternoon. The measure includes \$3 billion for Israel and \$75 million for the Palestinian Authority.

■ Former SS Capt. Erich Priebke refused to testify at the trial in Italy for his involvement in the Nazi murder of 335 civilians in 1944 at the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome. Priebke's lawyer said a four-page written statement would be submitted to the military court instead.

■ Israel's deputy chief of staff, Matan Vilnai, arrived in Ankara for a visit as part of the military pact that Turkey and the Jewish state signed in February. Turkish military headquarters said Vilnai would meet the army chief and deputy chief of staff to discuss cooperation between the two countries' armed forces.

■ The Austrian National Fund for Victims of National Socialism decided that claims to payments from the fund could be inherited if claimants die before having received benefits. The fund has so far collected data on 22,000 potential recipients.

■ A losing political candidate for parish council in Chalmette, La., reportedly sued the school board because a letter she wrote asking that her son be excused from a field trip to a Holocaust museum was leaked to a newspaper. In the 1992 letter, Debra Coleman Warner said that "allegations regarding treatment of Jews during the war years have been grossly exaggerated" and that she did not want her son exposed to "propaganda."

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Netanyahu enjoys new powers in talks to fashion his coalition

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "I'm not threatening," said the leader of the National Religious Party, Zevulun Hammer. "I'm sure we can work it out."

Hammer was referring this week to Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence that his Likud Party have more Cabinet positions than his prospective coalition partners, who together won more seats in the incoming Knesset.

The veteran NRP leader's unthreatening tone, so different from the atmosphere at the start of coalition negotiations in the past, reflected the major changes in Israeli politics resulting from the new electoral system.

As Israel's first directly elected prime minister, Netanyahu will wield a power unprecedented for that position.

And that power will be critical both now, as he works to form a coalition, and later, when he begins to govern.

Although it is still much too early to speculate just what policies Netanyahu will pursue, Israel's youngest prime minister will be free to stand up against any forces arrayed against him.

Netanyahu has said he intends to present his Cabinet to the Knesset when it convenes for its first session June 17.

And as he begins selecting his ministers — by law he has up to 45 days to assemble his government for Knesset approval — Hammer and the other potential coalition partners know that there is no one else to talk to.

Under Israel's new electoral system, which was designed to curb the powers of smaller parties, only one person can be prime minister: the person elected directly by the people.

And after his narrow victory May 29 over outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres — by a margin of 50.4 percent to Peres' 49.5 percent — Netanyahu is that person.

Because there is no alternative prime ministerial hopeful for the small parties to play off against Netanyahu, they cannot, as they might have done in the past, keep upping the ante in their quest for the best terms for their followers as the coalition negotiations proceed.

Potential coalition partners have just two options: Accept Netanyahu's terms or refuse to join the new government. If enough parties bow out, that would mean new elections and the prospect of losing all the impressive gains they made in last week's Knesset elections.

### Margin of victory irrelevant

Netanyahu won the direct vote for premier by fewer than 30,000 votes.

But the margin of his victory is irrelevant: He will be the next prime minister, and all the rest of the political community in Israel will have to get used to the rules of play that his premiership, under the new electoral system, is introducing.

Netanyahu's strengthened position will be evident both as he conducts coalition negotiations and when he begins formulating the policies of his new government.

The first Israeli politician to feel the cold blast of the new regime was the man who claims much of the credit for Netanyahu's victory: Ariel Sharon.

In a lengthy interview last Friday, Sharon spoke of how he had engineered a merger between Likud and the Geshet and Tsomet parties and how he had "conducted countless meetings and contacts with every shade of Orthodox and rabbinical leadership" in order to help lead Netanyahu to victory.

Sharon then went on to assert that the accords with the Palestinians calling for an Israeli army redeployment from most of the West Bank town of Hebron "will have to be reopened and revised."

He also called Arafat "a premeditated mass murderer," spicing the interview with a variety of other hardline policy statements.

He had barely concluded his remarks when Netanyahu's office issued an official statement saying bluntly that the prime minister-elect was the only

**1996 Israeli election results**

Party	New Knesset	Former Knesset
Labor	34	44
Likud*	32	32
Shas	10	6
Natl. Religious Party	9	6
Meretz	9	12
Yisrael Ba'Aliyah	7	—
Hadash	5	3
United Torah Judaism	4	4
The Third Way	4	—
United Arab List <sup>o</sup>	4	2
Moledet	2	3

\* The Likud list now includes two other parties: Tso-met, which held 8 seats in the former Knesset, and Gesher, a new party.

<sup>o</sup> The United Arab List combines the Arab Democratic Party, which held 2 seats in the former Knesset, and Islamic Movement representatives.

man to enunciate policy for the new government. Other purported statements of policy were to be ignored, the statement added.

Sharon has not spoken out again.

By Monday, relations between him and Netanyahu were said to be somewhat strained.

Sharon, who is thought likely to be named the new finance minister, is learning the meaning of a system that provides for a directly elected prime minister chairing a Cabinet of politicians who were not themselves directly elected, but sit as the representatives of their parties.

The smaller parties that Netanyahu hopes will join a coalition include the NRP (which won 9 seats in the incoming Knesset), Shas (10), United Torah Judaism (4), The Third Way (4) and Yisrael Ba'Aliyah (7).

Just as their negotiating clout is weaker than under the old electoral system, the power of Likud figures themselves to demand specific portfolios has diminished.

Sharon, for example, would prefer the Defense or Foreign Ministry portfolios. Yitzhak Mordechai, the No. 2 man on the Likud Knesset list, also wants defense.

But Netanyahu may offer this key post to Dan Meridor or Ehud Olmert, both considered Likud moderates — and there is little the other candidates can do about it.

Moreover, Netanyahu will be able to dismiss ministers with much less of a fallout than in the past.

Whoever is appointed defense minister is likely to be seen in the region and the world as the first indication of the direction of Netanyahu's policies.

In a masterful victory speech to thousands of cheering followers at Jerusalem's International Convention Center on Sunday night, Netanyahu pledged to proceed with the peace process.

"We plan to advance the process of dialogue with all our neighbors in order to achieve a stable peace, a real peace, peace with security," he said.

"Tonight I stretch out my hand in peace to all Arab leaders and to our Palestinian neighbors," he said. "I call on you: Come and join us, come and let us go in the direction of a real peace."

But he made no specific mention in the speech regarding an Israeli redeployment in Hebron or about his intentions concerning Orient House, the Palestinian Authority's de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

Hardliners in Netanyahu's own party and among his potential coalition partners want the redeployment postponed indefinitely. And Netanyahu himself promised in his campaign to shut Orient House when he came to power. But either step could trigger a wave of unrest throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In the coalition negotiations, Netanyahu shocked his potential partners by saying that Likud would occupy 10 of the available 18 portfolios in the Cabinet, including the top posts — the Defense, Foreign and Finance ministries.

In the past, portfolios were apportioned on the basis of the number of Knesset seats held by the respective parties.

Because many Israelis split their votes in the separate balloting for prime minister and the Knesset, both Likud and Labor lost a significant number of Knesset seats to the smaller parties.

The upshot is that the dominant party in the coalition, Likud, will have fewer Knesset seats than its allies.

But under the new system, the power of the prime minister is such that he can appoint his Cabinet virtually at will. Although there is a lot of speculation about Cabinet appointments, the only certainty at this point appears to be David Levy as foreign minister, a position he has occupied before.

The smaller parties do not like the system of allotment, but there is not much they can do about it. □

**Labor, Meretz officials trade barbs over defeat**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With the 20/20 hindsight of a Monday-morning quarterback, Labor Party officials have been holding a series of consultations in an effort to determine the factors that led to Prime Minister Shimon Peres' defeat last week.

In the days since Peres lost by a hairbreadth to Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, mutual recriminations have already been traded by Haim Ramon, who headed the media campaign for the Labor Party in the Knesset elections, and Ehud Barak, who led Peres' campaign in the separate race for prime minister.

On Monday, the secularist Meretz Party, Labor's coalition partner in the outgoing government, was added to the list of those to blame for Peres' loss.

Labor ministers said the left-wing party's campaign of intolerance toward religious Israelis, as well as what they said was Meretz' condescending attitude toward most of the Israeli public, hurt the Labor Party by association.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid responded that the Labor Party was ready to blame everyone but itself for Peres' loss.

Meanwhile, Labor ministers said Peres had issued a directive against initiating any contacts with Likud to discuss forming a national unity government.

Peres had indicated that Likud should initiate any such discussions. But sources within Labor said Peres was personally opposed to the idea.

With six other potential coalition partners from which to choose, Likud officials do not appear to be considering the option of a unity government. They said this week that Netanyahu hoped to present his government when the Knesset opens June 17. By law, the new leader has 45 days to form a government. □

**A NEW REGIME****Israel's youngest premier-elect is well-known to U.S. audiences***By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — He has gone from leading commandos in an anti-terror operation to become the youngest prime minister of the Jewish state.

Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, 46, will most likely bask in the attention that comes with his new job.

Referred to by some as the "master of the sound bite," the Likud Party leader, who squeaked by Prime Minister Shimon Peres in last week's elections by 29,457 votes out of almost 3 million cast, is a familiar face to Americans.

Netanyahu became the deputy chief of mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington in 1982. Two years later, he was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, a post he held until 1988, the year he was elected to the Knesset.

From 1988 to 1991, he was Israel's deputy foreign minister. From 1991 to 1992, he was a deputy minister in the office of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Netanyahu, who speaks English flawlessly, emerged during his years in Washington and at the United Nations as a principal Likud spokesman on "Nightline" and other American television news programs.

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, he became internationally known as Israel's spokesman, appearing in a gas mask on CNN.

Netanyahu, who became the Likud Party leader in 1993, shocked Israelis during his campaign for the position by going on television to announce that he had an affair, a scandal that came to be known as "Bibigate."

Netanyahu, who has been married three times, said he went public because opponents inside Likud were trying to blackmail him with a steamy videotape. He currently is married to Sara, with whom he has two young sons. He also has an 18-year-old daughter from his first marriage.

Last November, he was in the hot seat again, facing accusations that he had fostered the climate of extremism that led to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin — charges by Labor supporters that he vigorously denied.

Netanyahu, a skilled political operator, improved his chances for the premiership by negotiating a merger between Likud and the Tsomet and Geshet parties, which resulted in the heads of those parties, Rafael Eitan and David Levy, deciding not to enter the prime minister contest.

**Room resembled Oval Office**

Netanyahu, who ran an American-styled campaign that included commercials filmed in a room which resembled the White House's Oval Office, is the son of a Cornell University professor.

Born in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu spent most of his teen years in the United States, attending high school in suburban Philadelphia and studying architecture and business administration at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Netanyahu served as a soldier and officer in an anti-terror unit in the Israel Defense Force, leading commandos disguised as airport workers onto a commandeered Belgian Sabena airliner in May 1972. He was shot and wounded during that mission.

Netanyahu has written numerous articles in the American and foreign media and is the author and editor of several books, most of which deal with terrorism.

Until now, he has often been in the shadow of his older brother.

Considered a hero by the Jewish state, Yonatan "Yoni" Netanyahu died in action leading the spectacular 1976 Israeli raid on Entebbe airport in Uganda to free Israelis hijacked on an Air France plane by Arab and West German terrorists.

Interestingly, the Israeli rescue, which has been called a watershed event in the war against terrorism, was overseen in large part by then-Defense Minister Peres.

Netanyahu, during the latest campaign, flayed Peres as wrongly putting his trust in the Palestinians, citing as proof the string of suicide bombings in February and March.

Since 1976, Netanyahu has been the director of the Jonathan Institute, named after his brother, a foundation that studies ways to combat terrorism. □

**Israel's diplomatic corps to shift***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Some members of Israel's diplomatic corps, including Israel's ambassador to the United States, have announced their intention to step down when the new Likud government comes to power.

Ambassador to the United States Itamar Rabinovich was among those who said he would end his tenure as a result of Benjamin Netanyahu's victory.

Among the potential candidates for his post are Zalman Shoval and Moshe Arens.

Foreign Ministry sources said they expected Israel's consul general in New York, Colette Avital, to leave.

Israel's ambassador to Jordan, Shimon Shamir, denied that he planned to leave his post.

Ora Namir, who resigned from the Knesset to be appointed ambassador to Beijing, said she had considered a scenario of serving under a Likud-led government before accepting the position.

Elazar Granot, a Meretz appointment to the top diplomatic post in South Africa, said he expected to leave.

Uri Savir, the director general of the Foreign Ministry and coordinator of peace negotiations, is also expected to step down, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. Among those mentioned as a successor is Eitan Ben-Tsur, the ministry's deputy director general. □

**Bezek workers hurt in terror blast***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security forces this week were searching for suspects in the West Bank bombing that resulted in light injuries to four Israeli civilians.

On Monday, four Israeli telephone repairmen were injured by a bomb hidden in a grove in the village of Bidya, near Ariel.

It was the first attack on Israelis in the West Bank since the closure of the territories was eased after last week's national elections.

Security sources would not say whether the attack was directly linked to the outcome of the Israeli elections, saying that for the past few weeks, there have been warnings of bombings and kidnapping of Israelis.

Late Sunday, Jewish settlers contacted the Israeli phone company Bezek to complain that the main television cable had been cut.

Security regulations barred repair workers from going to the site at night. On Monday morning, a Bezek crew, which was escorted by police, arrived.

As the crew moved in, a bomb went off, injuring the four Israelis.

All were taken to a hospital, where they were later described as being in good condition. □

## Russia promises to renew license for Jewish Agency

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Russia has promised to renew by mid-June the Jewish Agency for Israel's accreditation, signaling an end to the tension since the agency's license to operate was suspended in April and several of its offices were shut down.

Political sources said it was still unclear what kind of new mandate would be granted to the agency and whether this would include emigration activities.

The pledge was conveyed to Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General Eitan Ben-Tsur during talks last week in Moscow.

Ben-Tsur headed a delegation that traveled to Russia in an effort to calm friction in relations between the two countries.

The delegation met with Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posovalyuk, who expressed his country's interest in maintaining good relations with Israel.

At the end of the visit, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that "the two sides reiterated their desire to develop good relations."

The statement also said, "Speculation which appeared in the media, in particular in Israel, on a worsening of relations between Israel and Russia do not portray the situation."

One of the issues for discussion was the transfer to the Russians properties in Jerusalem that belonged to the former Soviet Union.

Ben-Tsur reiterated Israel's intention to deal with the matter and the hope that the technicality which held it up would be resolved.

The statement also stressed the role of Russia in helping to advance the peace process on all tracks.

Moscow expressed the hope that after the elections in Israel, the process would pick up momentum.

The sides also discussed expanding cooperation in the area of agriculture, increasing the number of Russian participants in courses offered by Israel, and sending Israeli experts to help run an experimental farm in Russia. □

## Teens return to Ethiopia in program to boost pride

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Eli Sabo, a 16-year-old high school student, clearly remembers the day more than seven years ago when he and his family began their long journey to Israel.

"One day, a man came to our village and told us we would be taken to Israel," he said, his voice barely a whisper.

"It was all very sudden and unexpected," he said.

Sabo and his family boarded a bus in the rural province of Gondar for the two- to three-day journey to the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where they waited to be flown to the Jewish state.

"We waited and waited, but my father never saw his dream come true," Sabo said. "He died in Addis the week before the airlift."

Sabo, who still finds it difficult to talk about his father's death, as well as the loss of three of his siblings in Gondar, recently visited his homeland and confronted some painful memories.

In late May, exactly five years after he arrived via the Operation Solomon airlift that brought some 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in a single weekend, Sabo and seven of his classmates flew to Ethiopia for a two-week "rediscovery tour."

The trip was sponsored by British Emunah, with help from the organization's North American chapters.

The teen-agers, who are residents of the Emunah-funded Sarah Herzog Children's Home in Afula, "needed to find some emotional closure," said Shaharit Vazan, the home's assistant administrator.

Although the eight teens are excellent students, Vazan said, "like many Ethiopian kids, they suffered from a lack of self-esteem and identity problems."

"The purpose of the trip was to show them that the country and culture they come from is beautiful," Vazan said.

"We want them to be proud of both their cultures: Ethiopian and Israeli."

In many cases, Vazan said, "Ethiopian children, like child survivors of the Holocaust, were forced to leave their homes very suddenly and they were traumatized. It's as if their roots were chopped off before they knew what was going on."

Not quite sure what to expect when they arrived, the teens said they were full of hope and trepidation.

"I was nervous about going back, and I didn't want to be disappointed," said Asher Samuel, 16, who was nine when he left Azazo, his village in Gondar.

"Although I was young when I left Azazo, I still remember a lot," he said.

"I remembered my mother's house, the river and many friends. I did see some friends, but others weren't there and I was disappointed.

"What really surprised me was how poor everything seemed. Growing up, we didn't think we were so poor. I'm glad we don't live here anymore."

One thing that touched him deeply, he said, was the sudden appearance of two old friends, who walked several miles to greet him.

"We had already gone on to Gondar village, several miles away from Azazo, and I was walking outside when I heard someone call my name," he said.

"Two boys I used to know walked overnight to Gondar after they'd heard I was visiting. It was really incredible."

Shlomit Ya'akov, also 16, met some long-lost friends in the large village of Ambova, which once contained the area's only synagogue.

"Visiting the village was very special because I saw my teacher.

"He seemed happy to see me, and I know I was happy to see him.

"I wish I could have seen our old house, but it was torn down, and the synagogue was all boarded up. Even so, I'm glad I came because it puts a lot of things into perspective."

Although Sabo did not visit his home village because the journey would have taken several days, he and his classmates held a memorial service for his father in Addis Ababa.

"We went to the cemetery and said Kaddish, and it felt very good," he said.

"I know he would be happy that I'm living in Israel."

### Impoverished school

Shocked by the poverty in Ethiopia, and at times feeling a bit guilty at their own relative good fortune, the teens decided to adopt a school in the city of Axum.

In addition to donating some money while they were in Ethiopia, the group of teens plans to send used books, clothes and other supplies to the impoverished school.

"We're so fortunate in Israel," said Sabo. "It's the least we can do." □