



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **GOP vice presidential nominee Jack Kemp told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that he stands by his record against racism, bigotry and anti-Semitism and called on Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan to renounce anti-Semitism.** Kemp made the remarks after being criticized for praising Farrakhan's self-help philosophy. [Page 2]

■ **Two Jews won Republican senatorial primaries in the states of Minnesota and Rhode Island.** Former two-term U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota will face Sen. Paul Wellstone, who is also Jewish. In addition, Rhode Island Treasurer Nancy Mayer will be on her state's Republican ticket.

■ **The Library of Congress canceled a CD-ROM presentation on the history of Romania compiled by a revisionist historian accused of holding anti-Semitic views.** Kurt Treptow has attempted in his writings to exonerate Romanian leaders responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews.

■ **U.S. Rep. Bob Filner, a Democrat up for re-election, was targeted by an anti-Semitic campaign in his Southern California district.** Campaign literature distributed at high schools and other public places called on voters to defeat "that Jew Congressman Filner."

■ **An Israeli court convicted Yigal Amir, who is serving life in prison for assassinating Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, on separate charges of conspiring to kill the premier and attack Palestinians.** Yigal Amir's brother Hagai Amir and friend Dror Adani were found guilty of the same charges. The three will be sentenced Oct. 3. [Page 4]

■ **A new book claims that Yitzhak Rabin verbally signaled the Syrians that he was prepared to trade all the Golan Heights for peace.** According to author Orly Azulai-Katz, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres learned of Rabin's secret pledge hours before the slain premier's funeral. Top officials of the Rabin-Peres administration would not confirm the account.

## THE DAYS OF AWE

### High Holidays mark period of reflection, reconciliation

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are a special time.

The Days of Awe, as they are known, have a rhythm unique among the cycles of the Jewish year as a period of reflection and self-evaluation as Jews the world over prepare for the Day of Judgment.

On Rosh Hashanah, according to Jewish tradition, God pencils each of our names into the books of life and death, deciding who will prosper and who will suffer in the coming year.

If we work hard to redeem ourselves during the next 10 days, we have a chance to change the course of events before God determines our fate on the Day of Judgment, Yom Kippur, when our future is inscribed in indelible ink.

It can be an intense time.

"It is inherently spiritually charged," said writer Francine Klagsbrun, author of "Jewish Days," a book examining important times during the year, to be published this fall by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

"The feel of the air is different, the feel of life is different and you are more attuned to spiritual parts of life, more attuned to relationships," she said.

Rabbi Kerry Olitzky described the period as a time to consider "all that Judaism has to offer to take a good hard look at ourselves and do what needs to be done."

The 10 days are a time "to seek out people to ask for forgiveness and to make decisions about how we're going to change our lives, to ready ourselves to stand as naked souls before God," Olitzky said.

Olitzky, a Reform rabbi, with Rabbi Rachel Sabath wrote "Preparing Your Heart For The High Holy Days: A Guided Journal," published recently by the Jewish Publication Society.

The rabbis of the Talmud advised that there are three ways to change our entry from being in the book of death to the book of life: prayer, charity and repentance.

A central part of repentance is taking responsibility for harmful words and deeds, and it is traditional during these first 10 days of the new year to ask forgiveness from those one has possibly hurt, in a practice known as "mechila."

Some people welcome the period, and the process of asking for forgiveness, as an opportunity for reflection and self-evaluation.

It can be a time of reconciliation, an opportunity to address the pain inflicted on each other within the last year and a chance to move forward.

Asking forgiveness is "the most moving and important part of the holiday because you take responsibility, finally," said writer Esther Broner.

"Otherwise, we're just students waiting for the report card and waiting to pass on to the next grade. This way we grade ourselves."

### Setting aside time to study something special

Rabbi David Wolpe, who teaches Jewish thought at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, said he uses the 10 days for reflection.

"In a sort of idiosyncratic way I do a personal inventory of my year," he said.

"I call people who I believe I've offended and ask them to forgive me for specific things I've done."

Many people set aside time to study something special during the 10 days.

Veteran activist Leonard Fein, the newly installed director of social action at the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, plans to use the 10 days this year to read books on theodicy, the exploration of how divine justice coexists with evil in the world.

Marc Stern, an attorney who runs the legal affairs department of the American Jewish Congress, is an Orthodox Jew who uses the period to study ethical works, focusing on the classical Jewish texts dating from medieval

times and on Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's writing on repentance.

He and his wife also sit down and evaluate the charity they have given in the last year, and write checks to Jewish and anti-hunger charities.

Another tradition of the period is "tashlich," the symbolic casting away of sins by taking crumbs out of pockets and tossing them into a natural body of water.

Broner and a group of creative feminist Jewish friends adapted that tradition for several years by building paper boats, talking about the sins that each vessel represented and sending them floating down the waters around Manhattan.

"We made flotillas of sin out of paper and sent them along the Harlem River, which hardly noticed because it was so full of sin by much larger polluters," Broner said in an interview.

She wrote "The Telling," the story of one of the first — and most enduring — feminist seders created by the same friends with whom she created this ritual.

But for tashlich they were not casting out just the sins traditionally associated with the 10 days. These women reinvented the ritual from their own perspectives.

"We had to get rid of what people thought of things we had done which they considered sins, like having ambition, pride, high energy, pain, lifestyles they criticized," Broner said. "In our creative lives these things were no sin at all, but were our drive."

Participants would bake challah and then they would sing songs and dine on a festive meal eaten on a borscht- and schmaltz-stained tablecloth that had been handed down to filmmaker Lilly Rivlin from her grandmother.

### **Celebrating the birth of the world**

"At the end we did 'tekia' (long shofar blows) and celebrated the birth of the world," Broner said.

Some Chasidic Jews take the casting out of sin one step further, in the ritual known as "kapporas," or atonement.

In the days leading up to the Day of Atonement, enormous flatbed trucks stacked with cages full of live chickens begin to park in neighborhoods inhabited by the devoutly Orthodox.

In the darkness of the night before Yom Kippur eve, the faithful crowd around the trucks to select the chicken that will serve as their personal sacrifice.

Each person takes a live chicken — men take a male bird while women take a hen — holds it by its ankles and swings it around their heads while incanting a blessing transferring their sins to the chicken.

Then the chickens are ritually slaughtered and defeathered in a building nearby whose floor runs red with entrails and blood.

The chickens are taken home to become the dinner eaten before the Yom Kippur fast, and the money that paid for them is donated to charity.

Once the 10 days are over, though, what happens to all the work that people have done on themselves and their relationships, and all the good intentions to do things differently in the coming year?

"The Kotzker rebbe once said that the hardest part of the binding of Isaac [for Abraham] was coming down the mountain" after Abraham had decided to heed God's command to kill his son, said Wolpe.

"That's true of the high holidays, too. People think the Yom Kippur fasting is hard but it's carrying the message past the day that is really hard.

"The 10 days are a time to build up so that when you come down the mountain, as it were, you come down with some momentum." □

### **Vice president pledges solidarity with Netanyahu**

*By Cynthia Mann*

NEW YORK (JTA) — In a pointed message to the Israeli prime minister this week, Vice President Al Gore pledged unwavering U.S. solidarity with Israel that "transcends party and personality" and expressed confidence that the new government would continue the pursuit of peace.

Gore made his remarks during the 40th anniversary celebration of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Tuesday.

Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu and GOP vice presidential nominee Jack Kemp also addressed the dinner, which drew 1,400 guests, including hosts of dignitaries.

Gore took the opportunity to praise the prime minister for meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and to prod him to press ahead for peace.

It was clear that Gore was bent on demonstrating that, despite the heavy investment by the administration in the peace process orchestrated by Netanyahu's predecessors, the United States is committed to honoring Israeli democracy and working with him.

"The balance Israel must strike in its aspirations for peace and its demands for security is a delicate balance," Gore said, "and ultimately it is the Israeli people who must decide how best to keep that balance."

"We are proud to walk by your side, Mr. Prime Minister, in our shared journey to peace and security," said the vice president.

### **'Friends have differences'**

"Of course we have our differences, but friends have differences," he said. Gore also said, "We did not have the same relationship with the Likud leadership" when it was in opposition. Netanyahu "did not see things just as his predecessors did," he added.

But, he reminded the audience that the late Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin "seized peace" with Egypt as soon as he had "the opportunity to safely do so," and said he was confident Israel would "seek peace with all its neighbors, cautiously, but energetically."

Gore said President Clinton had moved boldly to respond to recent Iraqi aggression against the Kurds in the northern part of the country in part because "Iraq's fondest wish would be to harm Israel." He said the United States acted to show Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that he could not "act with impunity."

For his part, Netanyahu reiterated Israel's commitment to the "quest for a secure peace." He talked of the approaching 50th anniversary of the State of Israel and the need to declare a worldwide "Jewish renaissance." Israel is "not just a state," he said, but an entity intended to preserve the common destiny of the Jewish people.

In Kemp's address, the vice presidential nominee attempted to answer recent criticism over an interview in which he praised the self-help philosophy of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Kemp said he stands by his long record against anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry and called on Farrakhan to renounce anti-Semitism. "Racial, religious and ethnic reconciliation is the highest moral cause of this nation on the eve of the 21st century," said Kemp, whose speech received a tepid response.

Mostly, however, he focused on foreign policy and the importance of preserving the alliance between Israel and the United States. Praising Netanyahu's economic privatization efforts, Kemp said he and presidential candidate Bob Dole would move the U.S. economy in the same direction of "greater growth and freedom." □

## Religious leaders examine ethics of health care reform

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — What would the rabbis of the Talmudic era have said about Medicaid?

A group of rabbis, Christian ministers and priests, doctors, medical ethicists and public policy experts gathered Sunday and Monday in New York for a conference to explore what the Jewish and Christian religious traditions can bring to bear on the debate about health care reform.

The conference, titled "Health Care: Right or Privilege? Moral and Religious Values in Health Care Reform," was convened jointly by Columbia University's School of Public Health; the Protestant, non-denominational Union Theological Seminary; and the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary.

The goal of the conference was "to give voice to the liberal religious community on an issue of such transcendent importance as health care," said Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, JTS chancellor.

Sessions were held at both the Protestant and Jewish seminaries, which are across the street from each other.

The thread woven throughout most of the participants' presentations was concern that the poor might be abandoned by the federal and state governments as they drastically cut back Medicaid and other forms of public assistance.

Several participants acknowledged the profound complexity of allocating scarce public revenue, the painful task of deciding whether more people should be provided with health insurance or fewer people should have access to the finest quality medical care.

But at the opening session — titled "How Did We Get Here?" — and the morning session of the second day — titled "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" — speakers did not dwell on the fine points of public policy. They instead focused on what their respective religious traditions have to say about society's responsibility to aid the needy.

### 'More and more outsiders'

Schorsch, in his presentation, spoke about what he termed "the communitarian ethos of Judaism."

"Judaism focuses on the welfare of the community rather than the rights of the individual," he said. The pre-modern European Jewish community applied the Torah and Talmud's ethical dictates and the result was Jewish communities where "the social contract was very inclusive," he added.

"Even visitors, students from abroad were taken care of."

In the United States today, he said, "my deep concern is about the growing exclusionary climate.

"There are more and more outsiders who are not part of the social contract, who are deprived of the blessings of the body politic."

Schorsch and other speakers pointed to the 41 million Americans who have no health insurance.

And they expressed concern that those numbers could rise as a result of the welfare reform bill President Clinton recently signed into law, which will cut off Medicaid and other social services to immigrants who have not yet become U.S. citizens.

"I find this direction very troublesome, and compare it to Kristallnacht, which was the final consequence of a growing exclusionary policy in Nazi Germany," said Schorsch.

"We have started down a very dangerous road. From exclusion you move easily to denigration to expulsion and even worse."

Rabbi Harlan Wechsler, a visiting assistant professor of Jewish philosophy at JTS, said the Jewish requirement to provide health care to the poor dates back to the Middle Ages, if not before.

He cited the Torah's commandment not to stand by while a neighbor's life is in danger.

"If he cannot breathe, if he cannot see, if he cannot hear, if his body is ailing, try to save him. Let us cry it from the mountaintop if it has not yet been heard!"

The Rev. James Forbes, senior minister of Manhattan's Riverside Church, used the biblical story of Cain and Abel, in which one brother kills another, as a metaphor for society's neglect of the needy.

Forbes called for the religious leaders in the audience of about 200 people to spark a "theological renewal" that he says will be necessary for Americans to cease "stooping to abandoning these most vulnerable" people.

"We, the church, the synagogue, the mosque, must help people recover the sense that we are all privileged," he said with oratorical fervor hallmarking his training as a Baptist minister.

"We must train leaders in moral and ethical considerations. Health and wellness is divine intentionality, and God will not stop until that promise is fulfilled."

Medical ethicist Nancy Neveloff Dubler, who runs the division of bioethics at Montefiore Medical Center and is a professor of bioethics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, recalled a tradition of doctors and hospitals working pro-bono to provide health care to the indigent.

That practice all but disappeared with the establishment, in 1965, of Medicare and Medicaid, government-supplied health insurance for the elderly and poor, she said.

"We need to make it reappear," she said.

Schorsch hopes that the success of the conference will lead to the creation of a coalition of Jewish, Protestant and Catholic religious organizations working together to rally their constituents and give voice to liberal religious concerns about health care reform.

One purpose of the as-yet unnamed coalition would be to counter the moral and legislative influence of conservative religio-political groups such as the Christian Coalition, Schorsch said.

The new coalition would be modeled on "the alliance forged between scientists and religionists on environmental issues," he said, referring to the 3-year-old National Partnership on the Environment.

"That lobby has been extremely effective in bringing environmental concerns to the religious community, and churches and synagogues are the most effective bridge to the masses."

Schorsch said the interfaith alliance he is proposing would "bring churches and synagogues to be much better informed on issues of health care and take much stronger positions." □

### Israel Defense Force soldier missing

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The family of a missing Israel Defense Force soldier fears that he was kidnapped by terrorists, but police believe that he went underground after a fight with his commanding officer.

Sharon Edri, 20, of the moshav Zanoach, has been missing since Monday.

After a furlough, Edri was summoned back to his camp, east of Netanya. But he instead went to a medical unit near Tel Aviv, where he was given permission for a one-day leave.

Edri's family said he telephoned on Monday to say he was coming home, but he has not been heard from since. □

**Rabin's murderer, two others guilty of plotting assassination***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli court has convicted Yigal Amir, the assassin of Yitzhak Rabin, of conspiring to kill the prime minister and of planning attacks on Palestinians.

Amir, 26, is already serving a life sentence for the murder of the prime minister.

The court also found Amir's brother, Hagai, and a friend, Dror Adani, guilty Wednesday of the charges of plotting to kill the premier and attack Palestinians.

A three-judge panel in the Tel Aviv District Court also found the three guilty on weapons charges and of conspiring to set up an illegal underground organization.

The three will be sentenced Oct. 3. Legal sources said they could each face more than 25 years in prison.

The lengthy verdict, read out by Judge Amnon Strashnov, countered Yigal Amir's contention that he acted alone when carrying out the assassination.

Strashnov accepted prosecution evidence that Hagai Amir and Adani actively proposed methods of killing Rabin. He termed them "full partners" in the slaying.

Hagai Amir and Adani each denied that they had conspired to kill Rabin.

Hagai Amir, 28, a weapons expert who prosecutors said made the hollow-point bullets used to kill Rabin, said he had heard of his brother's plans, but never thought he would actually carry out the assassination.

Adani, 28, said he had visited the Amir home in hopes of romancing the Amirs' sister and had gotten drawn into conversations about how to assassinate the prime minister.

But the judges did not accept their denials. "After reviewing all the evidence and reading the confessions of the suspects, I have no doubt that all three conspired to kill the prime minister," Strashnov said. □

**Reform group criticizes police in wake of anonymous threats***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israel-based group of the the Reform movement is criticizing the Jerusalem police for failing to find those responsible for making telephone threats to the movement's office.

The Israel Religious Action Center, an agency of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, filed the complaints after coming under a barrage of anonymous hate calls during the past three months.

Police officials said they had traced some of the calls to telephones located near the Chasidic yeshivas of Gur and Slonim in fervently Orthodox areas of Jerusalem.

The office's complaint comes amid increased tensions between fervently Orthodox groups and more liberal streams of Judaism that emerged after Orthodox parties won 23 seats in the Knesset and a strong role in the governing coalition.

Tapes of the threatening calls were played Wednesday on Army Radio.

"We will bomb you, destroy your offices. Your fate will be that of [Yitzhak] Rabin," said one caller, referring to the assassinated Israeli leader.

Knesset member Meir Porush, leader of the fervently Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party, deplored the calls but said he was sure they had not been made by yeshiva students.

Anat Galili, the spokesperson for the center, was critical of the police for not arresting anyone even though the first complaint was filed more than three months ago.

She noted that a caller making telephone threats to Aharon Barak, chief justice of the Supreme Court, had been arrested after just one day.

Barak received the threats a month ago, after the court issued a ruling that kept a major Jerusalem thoroughfare open on the Sabbath and religious holidays. Fervently Orthodox groups have held a series of demonstrations aimed at closing the street at those times. □

**Women demonstrate against Jerusalem market's dress code***By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Dressed in pants and blouses, two dozen women attempted this week to enter a supermarket here that limits entry to "modestly dressed" female customers.

The store, which is owned by the giant Supersol supermarket chain, served all customers until April, when it decided to cater to shoppers from the fervently Orthodox community.

The demonstrators, representatives of a half-dozen organizations devoted to equality and women's rights, were denied entrance Monday to the market on the grounds that they had not adhered to the store's strict dress code of knee-length skirts and elbow-length shirts.

According to the store's policy, women wearing shorts or miniskirts must don wraps if they want to enter the market, which is located in an industrial zone on the border of both religious and non-religious neighborhoods.

The demonstration came at a time of increased friction in Israel between religious and secular groups. Each side believes that the stakes involve nothing less than the future character of the Jewish state.

Stopped by a guard at the entrance, the protesters stood outside the store with placards that read "Don't Sell Out Women's Rights" and "How About the Women's Status Quo?" They also displayed a petition with hundreds of signatures from customers vowing to boycott Supersol stores until the dress-code is revoked.

Although most of the shoppers simply stared at the demonstrators in curiosity, one man shouted, "You are anti-Semites. You are not Jews."

Another shopper, who declined to give her name, told the protesters, "If you were walking into a mosque, you would be required to take off your shoes. These are the rules here, and you have to abide by them."

Ornan Yekutieli, head of the secularist Meretz faction in the Jerusalem City Council and the only male demonstrator, said, "It is unacceptable for the largest supermarket chain in Israel to bar segments of the public from a store in the middle of a busy industrial zone. It's like being in Tehran."

The store's policy, Yekutieli said, "is another step away from the Western 20th century toward a fundamentalist society."

Leslie Sachs, director of the Israel Women's Network, admitted that the market "is a private place and can do what it wants." However, she added, "we are still trying to tackle the problem through a consumer law that says governmentally price-controlled items like bread, milk and cheese must be available to all."

After the demonstration, which ended without incident, store manager Reuven Cohen said the supermarket's policy was out of his hands.

"We are designed to give service to the ultra-religious community, but we are nevertheless happy to serve anyone who comes into the store," he said.

"However, because of the sensitivity of women's dress in the religious community, we simply request women to put on a skirt." □