



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israel's Housing Ministry intends to sell 1,000 plots of land at Har Homa next year, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The Palestinians halted negotiations with Israel in March after construction began at the site. [Page 4]**

■ **Family and friends gathered at Yitzhak Rabin's grave in Jerusalem and the site of his assassination in Tel Aviv to mark the second anniversary of his death. [Page 3]**

■ **Officials of the World Jewish Restitution Organization approved a blueprint for distributing the entirety of Switzerland's nearly \$200 million Holocaust Memorial Fund. After the initial distribution of funds to needy East European survivors, payments of \$1,000 to survivors in other parts of the world are expected to be made next year.**

■ **German officials banned demonstrations planned for the eve of the 59th anniversary of Kristallnacht. The ruling applies both to neo-Nazis and counter-demonstrators who might want to commemorate the night when Nazis and their followers destroyed Jewish synagogues and property.**

■ **Former Vichy France official Maurice Papon showed documents at his trial that he says indicate he was suspected by Vichy authorities of disloyalty. He also said that prior to the war, he had been a member of anti-fascist groups. Papon is accused of deporting 1,560 Jews when he was secretary-general of the Bordeaux region during World War II.**

■ **Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai met with U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. They were expected to discuss U.S.-Israeli military cooperation.**

■ **An Israeli court ruled that then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon misled Prime Minister Menachem Begin regarding the extent of the military operation he planned for the 1982 Lebanon war. The court made the statement in a ruling rejecting a libel suit brought by Sharon against the newspaper Ha'aretz. [Page 4]**

NEWS ANALYSIS

Jewish donors play major role in filling the Democratic coffers

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Unfazed by investigations into his fund-raising practices, President Clinton went to Florida last weekend looking to make a dent in the Democratic Party's mounting \$15 million debt.

By the time Clinton returned to the White House, the Democrats were nearly \$3.5 million richer — thanks in a large part to continued Jewish loyalty.

At least 45 cents of every dollar raised at three separate events came from Jewish donors, according to Democratic sources.

That Jewish Democrats met the president's challenge with open checkbooks says as much about Clinton's stellar fund-raising abilities as it does about Jewish concern over the success of Democrats in next year's congressional races.

At the same time, Clinton's intensive fund raising has contributed to renewed calls for campaign finance reform, putting some Jewish political givers on a crash course with some congressional leaders.

All this comes as both the House and Senate pledged this week to bring campaign finance reform legislation up for a vote in the spring.

Clinton's fund-raising drive over the weekend was partially motivated by the knowledge that Democratic candidates running in Tuesday's elections were outspent by their Republican opponents.

In three of the major races — for governor in Virginia and New Jersey and an open New York congressional seat — the Republicans poured in significant funds.

Democrats want to make sure that their candidates do not face the same cash-flow problems next year when all 435 members of the House and 34 senators face election contests.

The largest event in Florida — billed as an "autumn retreat" at a hotel — netted about \$2.5 million from 50 donors, about half of whom were Jewish, according to party insiders.

Each donor gave at least \$50,000 to the Democratic National Committee.

The weekend marked the first time that a sitting president and vice president joined forces to fete donors.

Half of the participants at other, less expensive, events were Jewish, according to Monte Friedkin, a Florida businessman who has raised and contributed millions to the Democrats.

Jews central to the money system driving politics

While Republicans also attract large Jewish contributions, Jews make up a far larger share of Democratic givers.

And even though American Jews represent just about 2 percent of the American population, their political largesse has made them central to the money system that drives national politics.

Referring to synagogue fund raising and the annual United Jewish Appeal campaign, Friedkin said, "Jewish people are educated and trained in giving money."

As for Clinton's fund-raising success, Friedkin, who serves as the national chairman of the National Jewish Democratic Council, said, "It's my inclination that Democrats are coming out from the woodwork who were never involved."

There's an attitude that "we're not going to let the Democrats collapse."

But even as they keep giving, many Jews find themselves in a dilemma between reform and influence.

Privately, many say they long for changes that would limit the amount they can give.

This view comes on the heels of the 1996 election, the most expensive in history, and its scandal-ridden aftermath that has emerged from recent investigations into Democratic fund raising.

Here, too, Jews have played a role.

Some of the biggest Jewish contributors were unhappy earlier this

year to see their names splashed across newspapers, which published lists of overnight White House guests and coffee attendees. About a dozen were included on lists of those who were awarded flights on Air Force One.

So far, the investigations have not incriminated any of Clinton's Jewish supporters. But the Senate investigation, which was suspended last week, gave a public glimpse into the strong Jewish fund-raising machine.

Meanwhile, Jewish political activists are looking into how special-interest politics would fare under a new system. Pro-Israel political action committees, which give money directly to candidates, generally oppose campaign finance reform.

But Friedkin, who has concentrated his giving on congressional races, believes that Jewish interests would not suffer under a changed system. "Campaign finance reform is not bad for the Jews," he said.

"Everybody will just spend less money," he said.

But until Congress and the president enact campaign finance reform — if they ever do — Jews have vowed to remain a financial force in both parties. □

Alabama judge rules out prayer and issues guidelines for schools

By Faygie Levy

NEW YORK (JTA) — The ping-pong battle over prayer in Alabama's public schools seems to be over for now — and the governor's side has lost.

Last week, U.S. District Judge Ira DeMent let stand his preliminary ruling from earlier this year, which struck down a 1993 Alabama law that permitted student-initiated prayer.

He also issued clear guidelines of what will be allowed in Alabama public schools with regard to religion.

Among the things that are no longer allowed in Alabama schools: any form of organized prayer; distribution of Bibles to students either in the classroom or on the school bus; and scripture readings over public address systems.

The ruling is the latest development in the battles regarding school prayer in Alabama. In August, four Jewish siblings filed a federal lawsuit against their Pike County school district, alleging that they have been harassed by school officials and students and have been forced to participate in religious activities at school.

It is not known what effect the current ruling will have on that case, which is also expected to be heard by DeMent.

In his ruling this week, DeMent wrote that the court was "trying to protect the religious rights and freedoms of students in DeKalb County public schools" and to prevent the school district from "sponsoring religious activities."

School officials in DeKalb County, with the support of Gov. Fob James, had defied DeMent's earlier ruling.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, some school administrators had used the 1993 law as a shield to allow officials to encourage prayer in schools.

"It was refreshing to have a judge come out so strongly about what we feel has been some very dangerous trends," Jay Kaiman, Southeast regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, said in a telephone interview.

Kaiman added that the ruling is "not just an opinion of what not to do but took it to the next step" of what should be done.

In the ruling, the court called for the establishment of a monitoring system to ensure that DeKalb County complies. □

It also called for mandatory tolerance training for all teachers and administrators at county schools.

DeMent singled out the ADL's World of Difference curriculum as an example of the type of tolerance programs that he would like to see DeKalb County implement. His ruling stems from a 1995 lawsuit filed by Michael Chandler, a vice principal in the DeKalb County school district, who opposed the schools' involvement in prayers.

According to the ACLU, which represented Chandler, he had tried to stop the practice of prayers before sporting events. He also tried to prevent Bibles from being handed out to students and to stop teachers from appointing students to lead prayer services.

The ADL said this ruling not only sends a message to the school system but also to the governor's office.

The ruling "reinforces the fact that separation of church and state are held in high regard by our judicial system," Kaiman said.

James, the governor, is a staunch supporter of prayer in public schools. He has not yet issued a reaction to the court ruling, but a spokesman reiterated the governor's belief that people of all religions should be allowed to pray "any way they choose, any time they choose, without government interference."

James may appeal DeMent's ruling. If he does, ACLU Alabama's president, Martin McCaffery, believes that school officials in DeKalb County will continue to be "intransigent" and violate DeMent's rulings. □

Israelis getting new gas masks

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Many Israelis are reportedly exchanging their gas masks for new ones, fearing the escalation of tensions between the United States and Iraq over U.N. weapons inspections.

As many as 6,000 Israelis per day have been contacting the country's gas mask distribution centers, compared to 2,000 daily before the crisis, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

The United States has warned Iraq against expelling American members on U.N. inspection teams, which Iraq has been threatening to do since last week.

Iraq countered Monday by threatening to shoot down U.S. spy planes being used by international monitors in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War.

During that war, when a U.S.-led coalition drove Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait, Iraq bombarded Israel with Scud missiles. Israeli officials feared at the time that the missiles were carrying chemical warheads and distributed gas masks to the population. □

Women's soccer enters world arena

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's all-star women's soccer team has made an athletically unspectacular entrance into international competition.

During a World Cup preliminary match this week in Bat Yam, the visiting Romanian trounced Israel by a score of 7-0. However, the 500 spectators who watched the proceedings tried to remain upbeat.

"True, we lost, but on this field, it was women who lost to women and that's what's important," said Labor Knesset member Yael Dayan, who warmed the bleachers along with Knesset members Anat Maor of Meretz and Naomi Blumenthal of Likud.

"The fact that the Romanians played so well is proof that if we invest in our women, we can make the same achievements," Dayan said.

The all-star soccer team was assembled two months ago. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Rabin assassination remains contentious political matter

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Far from uniting Israelis in grief, the second anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has become a contentious political issue.

Both the political left and right have been accusing each other of exploiting the Rabin slaying for cynical partisan purposes.

While the assassination triggered a wave of horror across the country two years ago, the events surrounding the murder and its commemoration have been subsumed into the ongoing, raging political controversy that splits the nation.

The left, led by the Rabin family itself, began observances with a ceremony at the graveside in Jerusalem on Tuesday, the date of the assassination on the secular calendar. In addition to a demonstration that night outside the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem, a huge rally at Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, the site of the assassination, was scheduled for Saturday night.

Official observances are scheduled for Nov. 12, the 12th of Cheshvan, when the *yahrzeit* is marked on the Hebrew calendar. It is the date the Knesset has designated as a national day of mourning.

But an ugly political row reached strident tones this week, with the Labor Party demanding that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu use next week's Knesset commemorative session to apologize for the part he played in the political incitement that led up to the murder.

At the time of the assassination, there were accusations, foremost from Rabin's widow, Leah, that Netanyahu had not spoken out forcefully enough against the opposition's tactics — including calling Rabin a traitor for his peace policies and displaying posters of him dressed in a SS uniform — in the stormy months that preceded the murder.

Those charges were denied at the time by Netanyahu and other Likud officials — denials that continue to be sounded. Likud officials this week countered that Labor and its allies were exploiting the national mourning to hurl false accusations against Likud and its allies to make political capital from the assassination.

Netanyahu's wife, Sara, went a step further, telling a radio interviewer that the same sort of unbridled incitement that raged against Rabin in the period before his murder was now being directed against her husband.

Survey yields disturbing results

Perhaps even more disturbing than all the political wrangling was the release last week of a survey indicating that as many as 300,000 Israelis could justify the assassination of a political leader.

Netanyahu would be the most likely target of an assassination attempt, indicated the Israel Radio-sponsored survey.

It appeared a week after the National Religious Party-affiliated Bar-Ilan University, where assassin Yigal Amir studied, published a survey showing that around one in four of Orthodox youth — and one in 25 of secular youth — sympathized with the Rabin assassination.

The researchers warned that extrapolating from the respondents' answers to Israeli society as a whole was problematic. Just the same, the raw numbers of young people who agreed with Amir was disturbing.

Adding fuel to the flames, the National Religious Party's daily newspaper, *Hatzofeh*, published an article over the weekend suggesting that Rabin's assassination was

in fact a conspiracy involving the Shin Bet domestic security service and Shimon Peres, who succeeded Rabin as premier.

NRP leaders condemned the decision to publish the article, which was based on a book circulating on the Internet. But NRP legislator Shaul Yahalom, the newspaper's chairman, maintained that aspects of the Rabin murder file remain uninvestigated.

Ya'acov Ne'eman, minister of finance and a leading lawyer, also commented that some points raised in the article need further investigation.

Meir Shamgar, the former Supreme Court president who headed the commission of inquiry into Rabin's assassination, also weighed in this week, saying the government was free to publish classified materials submitted to his commission, a move he said would help dispel the renewed speculation about a conspiracy.

The inherent danger in this divisive debate was that the assassination would now be mourned by only half of the nation, the half that supported the peace policies for which, in the final analysis, Rabin was slain.

The other half, which put Netanyahu in power six months after the assassination, might be put in a position in which it is unable — emotionally or intellectually — to recover its genuine feelings of horror over the murder.

A 'part of national incitement'

"We, too, voted that the [*yahrzeit*] become a national day of mourning," Likud Knesset member Uzi Landau said this week. "But in practice it is becoming part of a new wave of incitement."

Landau was among the conservative spokesmen and commentators who defend the Likud's actions in the mass demonstrations that preceded the assassination.

Indeed, he and others pointed out that Rabin — in the heat of the political controversy that raged two years ago over how much, if any, land to give to the Palestinians — had used inflammatory rhetoric.

They recalled how Rabin, in his rough-spoken style, once accused the right of collaborating with Hamas, since the right called for the cessation of peace negotiations each time a Hamas terror atrocity took place.

They also noted how he repeatedly referred to West Bank settlers disparagingly, insisting that his primary responsibility was to the "98 percent of Israelis who live inside the Green Line" — the pre-1967 Israel borders.

Labor loyalists have countered that Netanyahu's recent assertion, which he made unknowingly into an open microphone, that left-wingers "have forgotten what it means to be Jewish" was far more divisive.

The controversy took another turn this week over the question of who will speak at next week's Knesset commemorative session.

Leah Rabin does not want Netanyahu to address the Knesset after President Ezer Weizman and House Speaker Dan Tichon. The Labor faction, clearly unable to adopt that position, preferred instead to demand an apology from Netanyahu as its condition for agreeing to his speaking for the government.

Within Labor itself, meanwhile, there was tension over whether Peres or party leader Ehud Barak should represent the party. Tichon agreed that both should speak, along with Education Minister Zevulun Hammer.

This provoked further outrage on the left, where Hammer's NRP and its educational institutions are seen as the ideological hothouses that engendered the atmosphere of religious and political fanaticism within which the assassin's decision to kill evolved. Last month, the Education Ministry was compelled to stop distributing a history book marking Israel's 50th anniversary because it did not include the Rabin assassination. □

Israel to sell Har Homa plots; Washington peace talks stall

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Housing Ministry intends to begin marketing plots of land soon at a controversial project that derailed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations earlier this year.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz, citing a ministry forecast report for 1998 and 1999, reported that some 1,000 plots of land would be offered next year at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem, with another 300 going on sale in 1999.

The Palestinians halted negotiations in March, when Israel began infrastructure work at Har Homa.

The first phase of excavations was recently concluded at the site, where some 6,500 housing units are planned. According to the report, the ministry also plans to sell some 9,000 housing units in West Bank settlements during the next two years.

The report was published as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met in Washington to discuss issues that were slated to include a "timeout" on Israeli settlement construction. The two sides were also to discuss security cooperation, launching the final-status talks and issues left over from the 1995 Interim Agreement, including the redeployment of Israeli troops from rural areas of the West Bank and the opening of a Palestinian seaport and airport in the Gaza Strip.

The talks got off to a rocky start Monday, when U.S. mediators complained that the Palestinian Authority had not sent enough experts on issues related to the Interim Agreement. Palestinian officials said that additional negotiators would arrive later in the week.

The talks had already been delayed a week because Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy postponed his trip to Washington, saying he needed specific negotiating instructions from his government.

American officials said Monday that they were irritated by what they viewed as political gamesmanship on the part of both sides.

The talks hit another snag when the two sides could not agree on what should be discussed first.

But after U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross stepped in to mediate, the two sides held discussions Tuesday at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Va. □

Court: Sharon misled Begin during 1982 war in Lebanon

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli court has ruled that Ariel Sharon, defense minister during the 1982 war in Lebanon, misled Prime Minister Menachem Begin regarding the extent of the military operation that he planned to implement.

With its ruling Tuesday, the Tel Aviv District Court rejected a libel suit filed by Sharon against the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. Sharon, now Israel's national infrastructure minister, sued the newspaper over a 1991 article which maintained that Begin had been deceived by Sharon regarding the wider objectives of the first incursion by Israeli troops into Lebanon.

"The evidence brought before me substantiated the arguments of journalist Uzi Benziman that Sharon was not honest with the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and exploited his trust in him," Judge Moshe Talgam wrote in his decision.

"Benziman has proven that Begin and the government did not approve a full-scale war, but a limited

operation. Approval for wider military actions was given later, when they were presented as essential for security needs."

The judge said that Sharon had planned in advance for a large-scale operation, "though it was never approved by the government."

Talgam said he was aware of the sensitive issue at hand. "I do not want to rule on a historical period. I am aware that Sharon views himself as the target of libel and his opponents view him as a possible future leader and a real danger," he said.

The court ordered Sharon to pay some \$10,000 in legal expenses. Sharon's attorney, Dov Weisglass, said he would appeal the verdict. "We disagree with every bit of the ruling," said Weisglass. "No evidence was brought before the court that Begin knew Sharon deceived him."

Benziman said that in light of the decision, Sharon should relinquish all political responsibilities.

"In the Lebanon war, Sharon implemented a pre-planned operation without the prime minister intending to do so. As a citizen, I wonder why Sharon continues to be active in state affairs," he said. □

Newly found artifacts indicate biblical temples used donations

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Making donations to support the local synagogue is nothing new — it happened more than 2,500 years ago.

While scholars have long believed that temples were built and kept up with donations, a shard of pottery that has recently come to light provides physical evidence of this practice.

The pottery, which appears to be a receipt for a requested donation of three silver shekels for the upkeep of King Solomon's Temple, is the oldest-known mention of the First Temple outside the Bible. It was found along with another artifact from the same period that records a request from a widow for property.

How the relics were discovered remains a mystery, but P. Kyle McCarter, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, believes they were found during a construction project in Jerusalem in the past few years. They were turned over to scholars from their current owner, the London collector Shlomo Moussaieff, who purchased them on the antiquities market.

While the exact date of the pieces of pottery are still in dispute, they are believed to come from anywhere between the 9th and the 7th century B.C.E.

In addition to providing additional proof of the historical authenticity of the Bible, the artifacts help explain how people lived in biblical times.

What the finds do "is bring to life, in an exciting way, the reality of the times," said Hershel Shanks, editor of the Biblical Archaeology Review, which is publishing an article on the relics in its November/December issue.

"You just stand in awe of something so close to reality from 2,700, 2,800 years ago."

The second piece of pottery records a widow's petition for a gift promised to her late husband.

"What she is proposing is that since the land was a grant from the king, he has the right to give it to her," said Frank Moore Cross, a professor emeritus at Harvard University.

Did the king grant the widow the property? Unfortunately, no one knows. But there's hope of finding a more satisfying end to the story. McCarter said it is possible that more than two pieces of pottery were found on the site, but no one knows where — or even if — they exist. □