



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 53

Friday, March 19, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinton meets with Mordechai

President Clinton met with the centrist candidate for Israeli prime minister Thursday before the president and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton received an award from the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies. Israeli officials privately fumed that Clinton met with Yitzhak Mordechai, accusing the president of playing favorites in the run-up to Israel's May 17 elections.

UIA approves merger plan

The United Israel Appeal approved plans for its merger with the United Jewish Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations.

The UIA, which channels money from the UJA to the Jewish Agency for Israel, agreed Thursday to give up its ownership stake in the UJA and to become a subsidiary of the new entity once the merger legally takes effect.

As a result of the merger, the UIA Board of Directors will shrink from 91 to 32 members.

The merger is expected to be ratified at a meeting of North American federations in April.

Premier shrugs off visit

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu downplayed a visit Thursday by a group of about 10 foreign envoys to the Palestinian Authority's de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

The meeting was an "insignificant attempt" by the Palestinian Authority "to show that they have some sort of hold" on Jerusalem, the premier said.

His comments came despite his earlier assertions that he had put an end to such meetings, and after the Foreign Ministry had sought to prevent the meeting.

The top Palestinian official in eastern Jerusalem, Faisal Hussein, declared after the meeting that the eastern portion of the city would be the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Holocaust panel maps strategy

A presidential commission created to examine the fate of Holocaust assets in the United States approved a research plan to search for gold, art and cultural property, and other valuables.

The commission, chaired by World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman, convened this week and plans to begin its work immediately.

PROFILES

Jewish novices on Capitol Hill carry forth old political tradition

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As newcomers to Congress, their names may not be known to most casual observers of the political scene.

But Reps. Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.), Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) and Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) — the three least senior members of the 23-strong Jewish delegation serving in the House of Representatives — are among their party's most promising new political players. And they are some of the Jewish community's most highly regarded standard-bearers.

Like most of their Jewish colleagues, all three share a strong commitment to supporting Israel and the peace process, maintaining a strict separation of church and state, protecting society's most vulnerable and promoting social justice.

But they come at these positions from distinct vantage points — one as a longtime Jewish activist from Las Vegas who has dedicated her life to public service and community involvement; one as a former congressional aide from Brooklyn who gleaned a political education from the man he would succeed; and one as an inveterate social activist from Evanston, Ill., who has been an advocate for the public interest.

While she was campaigning last year to represent Las Vegas in Congress, Shelley Berkley was advised by a Jewish acquaintance to remove the Hebrew "chai" symbol she wore on a chain around her neck. It might be better, the acquaintance suggested, if she did not accentuate her Jewishness. Berkley refused. "I just felt it was important to wear my chai and be elected as a Jew," she said in a recent interview.

A lifelong Jewish activist, Berkley, 48, considers her Jewish identity "the very essence of who I am."

For years, she has been the public face of Las Vegas' burgeoning Jewish community, with a lifetime of involvement running the Jewish organizational gamut.

"It's very important for me to be a Jew, first and foremost, who happens to be an activist in politics," said Berkley, a former cocktail waitress and keno runner who has a law degree and served one term in the Nevada state assembly in the early 1980s.

"I didn't want to be someone in politics who happens to be a Jew."

Berkley represents not only the fastest-growing Jewish community in the country — nearly 70,000 Jews now live in greater Las Vegas, up from 20,000 in 1995 — but one of the nation's fastest-growing cities.

Appointed to the Transportation and Veterans Affairs Committee, she plans to go to bat in Congress to address the pressing needs facing her district's rapidly growing school-age and senior populations.

She also brings considerable knowledge — and a relatively hard-line view — to issues surrounding Israel and the peace process.

She was among a handful of members who boycotted Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's appearance at a congressional prayer breakfast earlier this year, calling him a "terrorist."

Berkley and her supporters in the Jewish community marked several weeks into her term with a ceremonial mezuzah-hanging at her district office.

Meanwhile, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) still has the letter 20-year-old Anthony Weiner wrote to him in 1985, asking for work as an unpaid intern. It was addressed to a congressman "Shumer."

"That letter frankly continues to haunt me," Weiner, who now holds Schumer's seat

MIDEAST FOCUS

Jordan rejects canceling treaty

The Jordanian Parliament rejected a motion to cancel the nation's 1994 peace treaty with Israel to protest Israel's decision earlier this week to cut water supplies to Jordan.

But the legislators protested the planned cut, saying it "violated a fundamental element of the treaty." Israeli officials defended the cut, saying it is necessary because of a regional drought.

First Lady plans Mideast trip

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton announced plans for an 11-day visit to the Middle East and North Africa at the end of the month that will take her to Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

Aides said the first lady will return to the region later in the year to visit Israel.

School holds mock vote

Israel's Labor Party candidate for prime minister scored a landslide victory over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in mock elections held this week at Tel Aviv's Bleich High School.

Ehud Barak received 56 percent of the vote, compared to 25 percent for Netanyahu, 12 percent for centrist candidate Yitzhak Mordechai and 2 percent for right-wing candidate Ze'ev "Benny" Begin. In past years, candidates visited the school before the vote, which correctly forecast the outcome of several national elections. A visit by Barak earlier this week was believed to have boosted his position, as he only received 45 percent support in a student poll a month ago.

Man arrested for bomb plot

Israeli police arrested a Beersheba man suspected of planning to plant bombs in mosques on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. The paper said Yehonatan Ben Yishai, who was detained six days ago, was not linked to any extremist groups.



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
Mark J. Jaffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
Lisa Hastein, *Editor*
Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

in Congress, said with a smile, adding that Schumer still finds the "highfalutin', grandiose letter about the great work that's going on in Washington" highly amusing.

Fourteen years after beginning his political career at the bottom of the Capitol Hill pecking order, Weiner said that coming to Washington at age 34 "is kind of a weird, almost eerie homecoming."

Long touted as a rising political star — at the age of 27, he became the youngest person ever elected to the New York City Council — Weiner continues to face high expectations not only in living up to Schumer's legacy, but in following a long line of influential Jewish lawmakers representing his heavily Jewish Brooklyn district.

Although he was raised in a secular household, Weiner said his parents and grandparents instilled in him social values that to some extent "are informed by the principles of Torah values and also our sense of history."

Since becoming a public servant, he said he has felt his Jewishness "growing stronger," partly from participating in a stream of Jewish communal activities.

Weiner has been appointed as one of three Democratic freshman whips, charged with keeping track of how his colleagues will vote. Some observers say he could be tapped for a leadership position if the Democrats regain control of the House in 2000.

Representing a district that is home to one of the largest senior communities in the country and some of the nation's most overcrowded schools, Weiner said he brings "a good deal of first-hand knowledge" to the debates surrounding Social Security, Medicare and education.

His most visible role, though, will likely be as a member of the House Judiciary Committee, where he said he hopes he can serve as a "middle-ground bridge" between political extremists on both sides of the aisle, much the way he believes Schumer did.

He remains optimistic that the fierce partisanship that has polarized the committee in recent years — culminating in last year's impeachment hearings — will give way to a spirit of compromise.

At the same time, he quipped, "I have been issued my body armor and helmet with the face visor, so I'll be prepared."

The third new Jewish House member, Jan Schakowsky launched her first successful nationwide campaign in the early 1970s as a housewife. Her cause: convincing the food industry to put freshness dates on products sold in supermarkets.

She made a name for herself as a leading social activist in Illinois over the next 20 years, fighting for the public interest and ultimately winning election to the state assembly in 1990.

In eight years as a state representative, Schakowsky continued to push a progressive agenda, helping pass measures to strengthen hate crime laws, secure voting rights for homeless people, and increase support for public libraries, day care centers and home-delivered meals for seniors.

As a newly elected member of Congress representing the most heavily Jewish district in the Midwest — it includes Skokie, Evanston, Chicago's lakefront and parts of its north and northwest sides — Schakowsky, 54, plans to continue to champion issues that affect ordinary people.

Schakowsky said she hopes to carry on the tradition of Rep. Sidney Yates by influencing the debate surrounding Social Security and Medicare, with the hope "at some point of being able to expand the Medicare debate to be talking about health care for all Americans."

Appointed to the House Banking Committee, she has already sought to become an active participant in issues affecting the Jewish community, supporting bills exempting Holocaust victims from paying taxes on restitution payments and strengthening the ability of federal authorities to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

Selected as a freshman whip along with Weiner, she, too, could be tapped for a leadership position if the Democrats regain power.

Throughout her career as a public advocate and public servant, Schakowsky said, she has been guided by Jewish values.

She said it is her "Jewish voice" and the tradition of "tikkun olam," repairing the world, that has served as the spirit behind her commitment to social justice.

"I think my clarity on those questions really does grow out of my Judaism and my Jewish context, and I rely on that a lot," she said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Hillel plans European expansion

A leading Jewish campus organization is preparing to set up centers throughout Europe.

Officials from European Hillel officially introduced the project at a three-day conference of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life held in Chicago earlier this week.

When the project is complete, Hillel centers will be active in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia and Hungary.

The project comes on the heels of the group's expansion throughout the former Soviet Union in the past few years.

N.J. rabbi pleads innocent

A New Jersey rabbi pleaded not guilty to charges of murder in the 1994 death of his wife.

At the same court hearing, a judge granted the lawyers for Rabbi Fred Neulander three months to read the court documents for the case, scheduling the next hearing for early June.

Berlin memorial faces setback

Jewish leaders are outraged after officials in Berlin refused to approve any plans for a proposed national Holocaust memorial in Germany.

The latest uproar over the project, mired in controversy for a decade, came despite a compromise on the memorial's design that was reached earlier this year.

Mordechai delivers keynote

The leader of Israel's new centrist party delivered the keynote speech stressing Jewish unity at a benefit dinner Wednesday in New York for the Friends of the Israeli Defense Force.

An adviser to Yitzhak Mordechai stressed that the former Israeli army chief of staff was not actively raising funds for his party at the event.

N.Y. burial agreement reached

Leaders of New York's Jewish community reached agreement last week with representatives of local burial societies and Jewish cemeteries on basic practices to expedite Jewish burials in the greater New York area.

New York Gov. George Pataki was among the state officials who facilitated the agreement among three groups: the Jewish Community Relations Council, the United Hebrew Community of New York and the Jewish Cemetery Committee of Greater New York.

The landmark agreement followed four years of discussions that identified policies conflicting with mourners' needs, such as verifying the Jewish faith of the deceased or arranging for holiday burial.

Embassy blast remembered, but the case remains unsolved

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The ceremony has become all too familiar: Kaddish was intoned, bells were tolled and the list of victims' names was read aloud.

For the seventh time, relatives of the victims joined local Jewish officials to mark the anniversary of the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy in the Argentine capital.

And in another familiar act each anniversary, calls came from Jewish officials in Israel and abroad to find those responsible for the bombing.

The commemoration took place as the Argentine Supreme Court, which is in charge of the investigation into the blast and has been the target of repeated criticisms for its slow handling of the case, was preparing to announce that it is going to exonerate four suspects.

According to sources close to the tribunal, the court will clear four Pakistanis who were briefly arrested days after the bombing but were freed more than six years ago after undergoing interrogation.

The court also plans to revise the bombing's death toll to 22 from the 29 reported in the immediate aftermath of the bombing.

As he has done in the past, Israel's ambassador to Argentina blasted the court, along with local police, at Wednesday's commemoration.

Surrounded by some of the heaviest security Buenos Aires has ever seen, Ambassador Itzhak Aviran addressed a crowd of 800 who gathered at the site of the bombing.

The ambassador said the Argentine Supreme Court "kept the case paralyzed for six years" and "never interrogated the Iranian diplomats" who were thought to be involved in the blast, but "were allowed to leave Argentina unmolested."

Aviran then turned his ire on the police.

"The day of the bombing, the police assigned to our security were gone. A patrol car noticed [their absence] minutes before the explosion, but did not report it to command.

"This is extremely grave, but the Argentine police never investigated what really happened."

Aviran reiterated the accusation that Hezbollah operatives were behind the bombing and were also responsible for the July 18, 1994, bombing of the AMIA community center in Buenos Aires.

The blast killed 86 people.

As with the embassy attack, no suspects have been charged in connection with the AMIA blast and the crime remains unsolved.

Aviran concluded by asking "all Argentines" to call for justice and demanding that "the Argentine government, in this, its 50th year of friendship with Israel, do everything to capture those who destroyed a part of Israel and a part of Argentina."

In Israel on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon called on the government of Argentina, "despite the difficulties and the time which has passed, to take every possible measure to find those guilty of this crime."

Sharon linked the embassy bombing to the "protracted struggle of over 100 years against Arab and Palestinian extremist terrorism," which "continues to strike at us in Israel, the Middle East and throughout the world." □

Israeli treatment approved for U.S. use

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli patent for isolating light proteins that could contribute to early detection of cancer cells has been approved for use in the United States.

Dr. Rivka Zussman and Dr. Igor Zussman, an Israeli husband-and-wife team, developed the procedure, which found that the level of these proteins is lower in healthy individuals than in those with cancer. □

As 'Kosher Sex' hits America, rabbi urges 'emotional intimacy'

By Sandee Brawarsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Most — and there aren't many — books about Judaism and sexuality have titles that read like lists: "God, Love, Sex and Family," "Love, Sex and Marriage," "God, Sex and Women of the Bible" and the poetically titled "Heavenly Sex."

But no title stands out as boldly as "Kosher Sex: A Recipe for Passion and Intimacy" by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, just published by Doubleday.

Already a best seller in Israel and in England, where the author lives, the book arrived in bookstores just as the author arrived in America to begin a whirlwind of publicity, including a scheduled appearance on the "Today" show on Tuesday.

An excerpt of the book appeared in the January issue of Playboy.

Dan Levine, of J. Levine Books & Judaica in Manhattan, said he had received hundreds of phone calls in anticipation of the book's publication.

"I expect it to sell very well," he said.

"The focus of this book is sex and the central position it occupies within marriage and relationships," the book's front jacket announces in large silver type. "Sex for pleasure is an end in itself. But 'Kosher Sex' is the fire of sexual attraction that creates union in the bedroom and closeness and intimacy in life."

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Miami, Boteach heads the L'Chaim Society, a Jewish education and outreach organization with branches in Oxford, Cambridge and London, and he appears frequently in the British media.

This year, he was a runner-up in Britain's preacher of the year competition.

The book's British publication brought much criticism to the Orthodox rabbi, who was pressured to resign from a London synagogue, although Britain's chief rabbi issued a statement of support for his work.

His rabbinic career in England has been controversial from the start: He began his work in Oxford as a Lubavitch representative, but was dismissed for his maverick ways.

Undaunted, he remained on campus, running L'Chaim, which had grown to be the second largest organization at Oxford, as an independent group.

"Sex is a subject that consumes us, confuses us," Boteach says, speaking in a pre-U.S. tour telephone interview from his London office, explaining his motivation to write "Kosher Sex."

The 32-year-old father of six, who has counseled hundreds of couples in matters of relationships, thinks of himself as a teacher, spreading the teachings of Judaism.

"I'm a rabbi. I'm not a sex guru. I'm not Dr. Ruth," he says.

For Boteach, marriage and family are the cornerstones of Judaism, and the purpose of a rabbi is "to bring peace between people, between husbands and wives, parents and children. Nothing brings me more pride than if I can save a marriage."

In his book, he writes: "The real reason I write about sex is that it is holy. It is as religious a subject as a discussion on belief in God."

He explains that his life direction has been very much

influenced by his own parents' divorce when he was 8. Like many children of divorce, he spent years wishing that his parents would remarry.

At 14, he gave up on that idea and began thinking about the rabbinate.

He writes: "Since I couldn't bring my parents back together, I became inspired to pursue a profession that was about mending hearts and healing wounds."

Boteach sees sex as "the central key in engendering emotional intimacy."

Kosher sex, as he describes it, is married sex. Readers may be surprised by Boteach's tone, with its lack of prudishness; he offers, without graphic details, advice about sexual aids and oral sex.

"Couples should leave no stone unturned in their sexual repertoire," he writes, and adds, a few pages later: "Total sexual focus on our spouse is the ultimate form of holy sex."

However, he believes that pornography and masturbation destroy intimacy.

"Most married couples today are either lovers or great friends," he writes, calling for the need to synthesize the two, intimacy and compassion, encouraging "the positive feelings and warmth that only sex can induce and only friendship can sustain."

He suggests that Jewish marital laws — with a period of sexual abstention — work to promote both sexual excitement and a deep emotional connection.

In a 20-point list, Boteach contrasts kosher sex with what he characterizes as the kind of "great sex" seen in the movies and described in most books on sexuality.

"Great sex is about the interaction of two bodies, kosher sex the integration of two souls."

"Kosher Sex" can be read as a book of sexual healing, a guide, an introduction to Jewish sexual ethics. Written in the style of a self-help book with lots of headings and brief sections, the book highlights the teachings with examples of real couples, drawn from the rabbi's counseling experience.

Boteach sees his audience as Jews and non-Jews, and points out that in Britain the book sold well in the non-Jewish market.

In fact, there's a group he calls "the Kosher Sex Club" — more than 600 couples who have been in touch with him about their efforts to begin observing Jewish laws of marital purity.

Boteach also includes a section, "Sex for Single People," discouraging premarital sex and always encouraging marriage, preferably at a young age.

He offers a 23-item Checklist for Marriage ("Do I find this person attractive? Is this a good person with a good heart?") and suggests to readers who can check off 18 items: "What are you waiting for?"

His next book, to be published in England this May, is entitled "Dating Secrets of the Ten Commandments."

When asked about homosexuality — which isn't covered in the book — Boteach says that he has become the "de facto rabbi to many gays" and says that some of the toughest questions he has been asked by students are in this area.

"I do not believe that homosexuality is an illness or deviance. The beauty of our religion is not an all-or-nothing sum game. The Torah consists of 613 mitzvot; there are 611 left for gays.

"I'm not going to change Torah. I'm not going to ostracize people. I treat homosexuals like people who smoke on Shabbat, eat a cheeseburger. No big deal." □