



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Barak outlines policy goals

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak is presenting potential coalition partners with a 10-point plan outlining his policy goals.

The plan rules out an Israeli withdrawal from all of the West Bank and declares that Israel will retain control over all of Jerusalem.

A summary of a 39-page document that more fully spells out his goals, the 10 points make no mention of resuming negotiations with Syria and Lebanon. [Page 4]

### Report on Jerusalem pact denied

A senior Clinton administration official denied a USA Today report that Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat recently reached an accord regarding the future of Jerusalem.

"There's nothing going on," U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross said in an interview Monday after delivering a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference in Washington. "Barak is working on forming a government."

Ross earlier told AIPAC delegates to approach such reports "with great skepticism." [Page 3]

### Gore addresses AIPAC

The United States will boycott a scheduled July 15 meeting of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Vice President Al Gore said in a speech Sunday night at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference in Washington.

"The conference is a badly disguised attempt to single out Israel for criticism," Gore said. [Page 3]

### Aides: Netanyahu to resign

Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to resign from the Knesset this week, aides said Monday. Netanyahu has numerous offers to make lecture appearances and he has a standing offer to write a book about his tenure in office, they added.

They denied reports that Netanyahu is weighing offers from wealthy American Jewish backers, including cosmetics magnate Ronald Lauder.

Netanyahu has made no public appearances since he conceded defeat in last week's election and resigned as head of the Likud Party.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Are Reform rabbis on same page as congregants in urging tradition?

By Julie Wiener

PITTSBURGH (JTA) — In 1885, Reform rabbis gathered in Pittsburgh to adopt a platform that described observance of traditional Jewish laws governing diet and dress as "altogether foreign to our mental and spiritual state" and "apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation."

In a change of heart and a sign of very different times, Reform rabbis returned to the western Pennsylvania city this week to vote on a "statement of principles" that embraces traditional Jewish practices more than any of the three platforms that preceded it.

The vote was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon and was expected to pass. The issue clearly was the centerpiece of the annual three-day convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which began Sunday night and drew 600 rabbis from around the country.

The new principles have gone through five major revisions since their introduction last fall by Richard Levy, the outgoing president of the group.

The principles consist of a preamble urging Reform Jews to "engage in a dialogue with the sources of our tradition" and statements about Reform Jews' relationships with God, Torah, the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

Among other things, the document affirms the importance of studying Hebrew, promotes lifelong Jewish learning and calls for the observance of mitzvot, or commandments, "that address us as individuals and as a community."

Some of these mitzvot long have been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, speak to "the unique context of our own times," says the document, which urges observance in some form of Shabbat and holidays; tikkun olam, which the Reform movement emphasizes as social action; and tzedakah, or charitable giving. Earlier drafts of the principles, particularly a version that appeared in Reform Judaism magazine six months ago, specified other mitzvot, such as observing kashrut and wearing kipot, or yarmulkas, and tallitot, or prayer shawls, "in the presence of God."

The magazine's cover read "Is It Time to Chart a New Course For Reform Judaism?" and featured Levy wearing a yarmulka and prayer shawl and kissing the shawl's fringes, or tzitzit.

In addition to the principles and an interview with Levy, the magazine — which is distributed to the 300,000 households affiliated with Reform temples — also included a counterpoint by Rabbi Robert Seltzer in which he warned that the principles may turn Reform Judaism into "Conservative Judaism Lite."

Since that publication, the principles have sparked debates about the identity of Reform Judaism, which claims more American Jews than any other movement.

They have highlighted the divide between those who consider themselves "classical Reform" Jews and those who are more traditional in their religious practices.

In fact, the movement has been in transition for some time — from an era in which organ music and operatic solos were the norm during worship services, while wearing kipot and prayer shawls was universally eschewed to one in which congregants join in folk-style Jewish singing and many elect to cover their heads and wrap themselves in tallitot during prayer.

As rabbis and lay leaders discussed and revised the principles at a December board meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations — the Reform movement's

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Arabs plan post-election summit

Arab leaders are trying to arrange a summit to discuss reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process following last week's victory of Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat said Sunday.

Officials from Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are being invited to join him at the summit, Arafat added.

### Barak plan gets tepid response

Syrian and Lebanese officials gave a reserved reaction to reports that Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak plans to revive peace negotiations with the two countries.

Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss rejected the possibility of reaching an interim arrangement for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon concurrent with the start of peace talks.

A Syrian state newspaper said the "ball is in Israel's court" regarding the resumption of talks, adding that Syria would settle for nothing less than the return of the Golan Heights to the border that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War.

### New York's top cop to visit Israel

New York City's police commissioner will visit Israel soon in order to advise top police officials there on fighting crime, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The planned visit by Howard Safir comes after he and Israel's police chief, Yehuda Wilk, held talks in New York three months ago.

### Fires erupt amid heat wave

Firefighters are combating blazes across Israel that are being blamed on a heat wave.

More than 60 fires have erupted there this week, including two in the Arab village of Sakhnin that destroyed some 25 acres of woodlands.



## Daily News Bulletin

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congregational arm — and through a task force appointed to the job, rank-and-file Reform Jews have been sounding off on the Internet.

In response to its request for feedback, the Reform Judaism magazine Web site received approximately 70 pages of comments from Reform Jews throughout North America.

The comments began in December and were still coming in as the controversial vote approached.

Some respondents have been supportive.

"I think without some kind of standards, Reform Judaism will lose its standing in the world Jewish community and either break off as its own religion or eventually disappear," Ellen Lerner of Rochester, N.Y., wrote on March 9.

But the majority were critical, voicing fears that encouraging traditional mitzvot would soon give way to coercion and blur the lines between Reform and Conservative Judaism.

"If I wanted this much dogma, I'd be a Conservative Jew," wrote Don Rothschild of Denver on March 27.

"I feel disenfranchised by my own religion," wrote Barbara Stern of Winchester, Va. "It is beginning to feel like the only option that will be open to classical Reform Jews is the Unitarian Church, an option that will not be spiritually satisfying for many reasons."

Jean Hecht of Binghamton, N.Y., wrote: "I think the main objection I have to all this is that it is taking away from what we should really be doing, which is to build strong congregations.

"Such principles, while they may have lofty goals, will only serve to turn off potential members," she said.

"All the CCAR leadership is doing is to create a controversy where none existed before."

The board of one Reform temple, Lakeside Congregation in suburban Chicago, even passed a resolution urging the CCAR not to vote on any statement of principles.

As the rabbis gathered in Pittsburgh on Sunday afternoon, shmoozing with old friends, many said they were unsure whether the statement of principles would pass.

Several said they had not yet decided how they would vote.

Some expressed disappointment with the lengthy revision process, noting that the original document had been watered down.

But others felt the debates had been healthy, and that the new version better reflects the diversity of views within Reform Judaism.

"The statement in the original form was stronger, but to appeal to a broader audience it was diluted," said Rabbi Hillel Gamora of Seattle.

Now retired, Gamora served a temple in Chicago for over 30 years, and supports more ritual observance in the movement.

Rabbi Yossi Feintuck of Columbia, Mo., said the principles will help "soften the negative connotations from the 1885 platform" and counter the stereotype among many Jews that being Reform is simply an excuse not to observe mitzvot.

Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis of Indianapolis said, "Initially I was unhappy because I felt they were too eccentric, but now I will vote for it.

"The revisions are more encompassing, more descriptive than prescriptive."

But his yarmulka-wearing friend Stanton Lamek of San Francisco, said he preferred the earlier drafts that emphasized more tradition.

The two rabbis, friends from their days at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform seminary at which they were ordained in 1996, acknowledged that their differing viewpoints stem in part from their different congregations.

One rabbinical student, Brigitte Rosenberg, said she supported the original statement of principles, but complained that the new version is a "cop-out."

"To bring it before a vote, they really compromised," she said. "Now it leaves a lot open for interpretation."

She and classmate Shari Heinrich said their fellow students were divided on the principles and have widely divergent levels of observance.

They range "from people who lay tefillin to people who choose not to wear a kippah, from people who keep kosher to those who eat barbecue pork," Rosenberg said. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Gore rejects Palestinian demands to revive partition, 'single out' Israel

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Vice President Al Gore is siding with Israel in two key disputes with the Palestinian Authority.

Speaking to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on Sunday night, Gore rejected Palestinian demands to resurrect the United Nations' 1947 Partition Plan that divided Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem as an international city.

"The only bases for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations" are U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace, Gore said, prompting applause from delegates at the pro-Israel lobby's annual policy conference.

Resolutions 242 and 338, which called on Israel to return an unspecified amount of the territory captured during the 1967 Six-Day War, has been interpreted to recognize Israel's 1949 borders at a minimum. Gore also said the United States would boycott a scheduled July 15 international meeting in Geneva proposed by the Palestinians to protest Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The meeting would bring together signatories of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs treatment of civilians during wartime.

"The conference is a badly disguised attempt to single out Israel for criticism," Gore said, adding that the United States would urge other nations to boycott the session as well.

Israel's ambassador to the United States, Zalman Shoval, who sat on the dais during Gore's speech, said he was "very pleased" with the vice president's "positive" remarks.

"We are very glad our view has now been shared by the administration and by no less a spokesman than the vice president," he said.

With regard to resurrecting the Partition Plan, Palestinian officials have cited that plan, known as U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, as the basis for their claims to statehood and the return of refugees who fled their homes during Israel's War of Independence.

The Arabs rejected the plan when it was first proposed, leading to Israel's declaration of statehood, which the Arab states rejected by launching war against the new country.

Despite his rejection of the Palestinians' bid to revive the Partition Plan and to focus on Israeli settlements in Geneva, Gore, during his 30-minute speech to AIPAC, expressed strong support for both Israel and the Palestinians.

"The Palestinian people must be free to determine their own future. They must be able to live freely and in safety," Gore said, echoing President Clinton's recent promise to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat. "At the same time, Israel must have defined and secure borders. Israel must live free from the fear of terror," he said.

In the wake of Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak's victory, these goals can be achieved, Gore said. Barak's "remarkable record in defense of Israel's security makes him an immensely credible voice in support of peace."

Moments later AIPAC's president, Lonnie Kaplan, read a message from Barak to the delegates in which the prime minister-elect sought to silence growing tensions between members of his Labor Party and AIPAC.

Barak, who declined an invitation to speak via satellite to the conference, said in a letter to delegates, "Historically important tasks lie ahead of us, and only joining hands together can bring about their successful accomplishment."

Barak's associates have criticized the group for tilting toward Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel's election, a charge the pro-Israel lobby vehemently denies.

Meanwhile, a senior Clinton administration official denied a USA Today report that Barak and Arafat recently reached an accord regarding the future of Jerusalem.

"There's nothing going on," U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross said in a brief interview Monday after delivering a speech to AIPAC. "Barak is working on forming a government."

Senior Palestinian officials also reportedly denied the story as "baseless." □

#### Abdullah meets Jewish leaders

Jordan's King Abdullah told American Jewish leaders Monday morning that Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak's recent election has created a "clear mandate to move ahead" toward peace in the Middle East.

Responding to questions about recent Palestinian activity in the United Nations, including a newfound reliance on the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan as the basis for Palestinian statehood, the Hashemite monarch told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that "the maneuvering of the last few months" was "a direct reaction to the election process" in Israel.

While in New York, Abdullah planted a tree of peace in memory of his late father, King Hussein, in Central Park on Monday in a ceremony co-sponsored by the Jewish National Fund. Israeli Consul General Shmuel Sisso and New York Mayor Rudy Guiliani also participated in the event.

#### Germans warned never to forget

Germany's outgoing president warned his country never to forget the Holocaust during a speech Monday marking the nation's 50th postwar birthday.

Germans must maintain the memory of "persecution and mass murder, of war and deportations," Roman Herzog said in what was described as the last major address of his five-year presidency.

His successor, Johannes Rau, will be sworn in July 1 after legislators elected Rau to the post Sunday.

#### Progress reported on slave fund

Progress was made toward the creation of a German fund that would compensate Holocaust survivors who worked as slave laborers during World War II, according to the Clinton administration's point man on the issue.

Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, who also said negotiations on the fund would be stepped up in the coming months, gave the optimistic appraisal after meeting Sunday with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's chief of staff in Bonn.

Germany hopes to complete negotiations before Sept. 1, the 60th anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Poland.

#### Film about denial to be released

A Canadian firm plans to release a documentary later this year about an engineer who has argued that it was technically impossible for the Nazis to have used gas chambers in the Holocaust.

"Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter Jr.," directed by award-winner documentary filmmaker Errol Morris, debuted as a work-in-progress at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

## Kosovar refugees welcomed into Los Angeles Jewish homes

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The extended Vlashi family from Kosovo, all 28 of them, arrived at the Los Angeles International Airport around midnight May 20 and were engulfed by television cameras and the arms of the Jewish community.

Luggage retrieval was no problem. All the refugees' worldly belongings fit easily into small carry-on bags.

Leading the welcoming party was Hajrush Vlashi, who embraced the parents, brothers, sisters, and extended family members he had not seen since he left Kosovo for Los Angeles eight years ago.

Hajrush, like all his relatives, is Muslim. However, it was his Jewish wife, Renee Laub Vlashi, who turned to the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles when she was suddenly confronted with the prospect of putting up 28 relatives — with one or two dozen more to come.

Hajrush, a waiter, Renee, a puppeteer and college student, and their 20-month-old daughter live in a three-bedroom house in the city's San Fernando Valley. They made room in their own home for his parents and three siblings. The federation's Valley Alliance pledged to find homes nearby for the rest of the Vlashi clan.

When the request went out — mainly through synagogues and federation agencies — for money, clothing, household appliances and host families for the refugees, the response was electric.

"People have been incredible in opening up their homes," said Miriam Prum Hess, the federation's associate planning director.

Typical was the family of Bobbie and Steven Black and their four children, who decided on a few hours notice to make room in their five-bedroom home for a Kosovar family of five, consisting of a mother, son and three daughters.

The son, 17-year old Besnik "Nick" Vlashi, spoke in halting English of his home village partially burned and plundered by the Serbian militia at the beginning of the NATO airstrikes. Besnik said they took refuge with relatives and in camps in neighboring Macedonia before they were airlifted to New York and continued on to Los Angeles.

His father, like most men of military age, stayed behind in Macedonia "to protect the homeland," Besnik said.

To prepare for her guests, Bobbie Black converted her home into a "college-like dorm" and raced to the butcher and the local discount supermarket for supplies. On the agenda for the newcomers were visits to McDonald's — "They have never been to one," marveled Black's daughter — a baseball game and the new "Star Wars" movie.

Asked by reporters why she took in the refugees, Black, a music teacher, said quietly, "It was the right thing to do."

Her 17-year-old daughter, Katie, added, "We talked about the Holocaust at home and wondered how we might help someone else if the opportunity arose."

The refugees who arrived in Los Angeles were among the first group to be assisted by the Jewish community under the auspices of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. In addition to those being housed in Los Angeles, 30 remained in the New York area and five went to New Jersey.

Eventually, a total of 70 to 80 Kosovar refugees are expected

to arrive in Los Angeles, and "the figures go up every day," said federation President John Fishel.

It is uncertain how long the refugees will stay in their hosts' homes, but thanks to their relationship to Hajrush Vlashi, his kin are eligible to remain in the United States as immigrants.

Those who stay will receive assistance from the Jewish federation for permanent resettlement, while others have indicated that they want to go back home after the fighting ends.

Hajrush Vlashi expressed his appreciation for the Jewish help but hesitated when asked if he had also turned to local Muslim organizations. "There was no time," he said. "Now we have all the help we need." □

## Barak issues policy statement as coalition discussions begin

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With Israel's elections over, coalition talks are now beginning.

On Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak presented potential coalition partners with a 10-point plan outlining his goals.

The plan, which is a summary of a 39-page document that more fully spells out his goals, includes the following points:

- Security and an unrelenting fight against terrorism will be top priorities;
- Jerusalem will remain united under Israeli sovereignty;
- Israel will not withdraw from all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and
- A majority of Jewish settlers will live in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty — a statement that implies smaller settlements will be dismantled.

The remaining points deal with such domestic issues as education and embarking on a war on poverty. The plan makes no mention of resuming negotiations with Syria and Lebanon.

Barak's negotiating team began discussions Monday with four leftist and moderate parties: Meretz, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, the Center Party and Shinui.

After the talks, the head of Barak's negotiating team, David Libai, said there was enough common ground that initial talks with the four parties could be concluded before the end of the week.

The four parties were ready to be flexible in order to allow more hawkish groups such as the Likud and the National Religious Party to be able to join the coalition, said Libai, who served as justice minister in the former Labor government.

Media reports say Barak prefers to bring the rival Likud Party into the fold over the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

At least two other potential coalition partners — the Meretz and Shinui parties — have said they would not be part of a government that includes Shas.

In the Likud, meanwhile, members disagreed on whether to consider joining a coalition headed by Barak.

Outgoing Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, who reportedly may be offered the same position in the new government, told a party meeting Sunday that Likud should remain open to the option, but not at any price.

"If we're invited [to join the coalition] it will be based on our ability to go in a way that is similar or close to our way," Sharon said. "But under no conditions should we run to them." □