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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Reform rabbis pass guidelines

American Reform rabbis overwhelmingly adopted a new statement of principles to guide the movement that claims the most adherents in America. The document, which passed Wednesday after heated debate, encourages more tradition and spirituality. [Page 1]

Milosevic faces indictment

The international Yugoslav war crimes tribunal indicted Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for alleged war crimes and signed his arrest warrant, a source close to the tribunal was quoted as saying Wednesday.

The source said the indictment, which was expected to involve alleged war crimes in Kosovo, would be announced Thursday from the tribunal's headquarters in The Hague.

Shas rejects coalition terms

The coalition negotiating team of Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak imposed two conditions if the fervently Orthodox Shas Party wants to join the next government: that Shas leader Aryeh Deri sever all connections to the party and that Shas give up control of the powerful Interior Ministry.

But Shas negotiators said after the meeting that they would rather sit in the opposition than meet those demands.

Israel takes in more refugees

A second group of 100 Kosovar refugees arrived in Israel from Macedonia on Wednesday.

The group, which arrived on a plane chartered by the Jewish Agency for Israel, includes members of some 19 families, as well as relatives of refugees who arrived in Israel in April. [Page 3]

Israel, Lebanon hold talks

Israel and Lebanon have been holding talks via Western intermediaries aimed at withdrawing troops of the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army from a portion of the southern Lebanon security zone, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Wednesday.

Israel views the SLA pullout as a confidence-building gesture in advance of negotiations with Syria, the paper added. Meanwhile, Israeli troops killed two Hezbollah gunmen during fighting Tuesday night in the security zone.

After heated debate, Reform rabbis approve 'centrist' changes in principles

By Julie Wiener

PITTSBURGH (JTA) — The Reform movement's much-anticipated "Statement of Principles" may rival the Torah for the most carefully scrutinized text in Jewish history.

The two-page statement, which seeks to spell out just exactly what Reform Judaism is about, was discussed for close to two years, underwent six drafts, garnered over 30 amendments and sparked heated debate among Reform rabbis and their congregants.

The controversial document was adopted Wednesday by an overwhelming margin of 324-68, with nine abstentions. It was the centerpiece of the Central Conference of American Rabbis' four-day convention in Pittsburgh this week.

The statement seeks to reverse the movement's 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, which stridently rejected Jewish tradition and rituals.

It aims to redefine Reform Judaism for the coming years: celebrating the movement's growing acceptance of tradition and spirituality, while reaffirming Reform's longtime commitment to inclusion, social action and diversity of thought.

Among other things, the document:

- Affirms the importance of studying Hebrew;
- Promotes lifelong Jewish learning;
- Calls for observance of mitzvot, or commandments, "that address us as individuals and as a community";
- Urges observance in some form of Shabbat and holidays;
- Encourages tikkun olam, which the Reform movement emphasizes as social action, and tzedakah, or charitable giving.

"Some of these mitzvot, sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as a result of the unique context of our own times," says the document.

Earlier drafts of the principles, including 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." In the end, a document very different from the original was adopted by the Reform rabbis, one that many rabbis here believed had been diluted too much.

The seemingly endless revisions made for a "pareve" document with little energy or inspiration, critics said. But Rabbi Richard Levy, outgoing president of the CCAR, called the adoption of the principles a "wonderful moment for Reform Jews."

Levy, who had authored the magazine piece and had been pictured wearing a yarmulka and a prayer shawl, said the document "will liberate Reform Jews to say there is nothing in the Torah which is barred to me."

When asked to respond to critics who said it was watered down from his original version, Levy said, "What was passed was a statement that reflected the large number of Reform Jews."

Levy, who stressed the reaffirmation of Reform Judaism's commitment to inclusiveness and social action, said, "I hope the Pittsburgh principles will deepen the lives of Reform Jews and make the entire community aware of our seriousness."

But many rabbis in Pittsburgh expressed disappointment with the way the platform had been changed.

"The principles now are not particularly substantive," said Rabbi Richard Kirschen, assistant director of the University of Michigan Hillel in Ann Arbor. "I want a

MIDEAST FOCUS

Non-Orthodox marriages featured

A group that opposes the Orthodox monopoly over life-cycle events in Israel was scheduled to hold the first of four fairs designed to promote non-Orthodox weddings for Israelis.

Booths at the fair will offer alternative marriage contracts and feature travel agencies offering wedding packages abroad.

The Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center is also distributing a new guidebook on how to circumvent Orthodox weddings.

The fair in Jerusalem will be followed by similar events in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheba.

High court considers detainees

Israel's Supreme Court met Tuesday to consider whether the Jewish state has the right to hold 21 Lebanese citizens as bargaining chips for the release of Israeli soldiers captured in Lebanon.

Among those being held by the Jewish state are Shi'ite leaders Mustafa Dirani and Sheik Abdel Karim Obeid, who were kidnapped during Israeli raids in Lebanon.

A ruling will be handed down at a later date.

Hospital honors King Hussein

Tel Aviv Hospital named its oncology wing after Jordan's King Hussein, who died of cancer in February.

Hussein's son and successor, King Abdullah, thanked the center during a ceremony Tuesday, calling the gesture a sign of cooperation between the two countries.

Tremor shakes Israel

An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale shook parts of Israel on Tuesday night, but caused no damage or injuries.

The tremor's epicenter was located near the island nation of Cyprus along a fault line that has been active in recent years.



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document that reflects who I am as a Reform rabbi, and this doesn't."

While both supporters and opponents complained of the statement's blandness, many acknowledged that insipidness is the fate of any committee-written document.

They also said that the Reform movement's rank-and-file members might not yet be ready for something stronger, and that the statement should be viewed as a beginning, rather than the last word on Reform Judaism.

The movement's commitment to diversity of thought was highlighted during Tuesday night's lively — if prolonged — discussion on proposed amendments at the CCAR convention. The evening was filled with passionate debate on everything from the correct application of Robert's Rules of Order and grammatical fine points to just how accepting the movement should be of interfaith families.

One of the most heated discussions surrounded an amendment involving the intermarried.

The amendment, which initially implied openness to all intermarried families, was changed — after much debate — to a carefully worded statement saying, "We are an inclusive community, opening doors to Jewish life to people of all ages, to varied kinds of families, to all regardless of their sexual orientation, to gerim, those who have converted to Judaism, and to all individuals and families, including the intermarried, who strive to create a Jewish home."

Throughout the debate, shouts, ayes and nays alternated with laughter and applause. With the aroma of popcorn and other late-night snacks wafting through the air, the proceeding — in a packed hotel ballroom — took on a carnival-like atmosphere at times. At one point, Levy called out, exasperated by requests for new amendments and revotes, "People, we cannot keep changing our minds!"

Minor skirmishes erupted over the chair's decision not to let someone speak out of order. There was discord as to whether "encouraging" immigration to Israel would render American Judaism extinct. (The rabbis voted no, it would not.)

Although the debate was initially allotted a modest two hours, it quickly became clear Tuesday that the discussion on the statement would spill over. At 5:30 p.m., with only a handful of the proposed amendments discussed, the rabbis voted — after much squabbling on details — to adjourn until 8 p.m.

In the interlude that followed, most seemed to take the delays and quibbling in stride, seeing them as a sign not of discord, but of everyone's desire to create the strongest document possible.

"The problem is it's like Talmud — everyone takes every word so seriously," said Rabbi Morris Kipper of Coral Gables, Fla.

"The process is typical," said Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus of Homewood, Ill. "We like to argue. Two Jews have three opinions, and so much more so for rabbis."

Even the document's detractors praised the lengthy process, with many noting it had served as a catalyst for much-needed soul searching.

"I'm glad the gravity is being taken seriously and it's not just being rammed through," said Rabbi Lance Sussman, who had sent numerous e-mails on the CCAR Internet discussion group arguing against the statement of principles.

A professor of Jewish history at the State University of New York at Binghamton, Sussman said he opposed the document because he was "bothered by the fact that it was brought here to Pittsburgh in essence to repudiate what a former generation did under different circumstances.

"It's like being angry at a deceased grandparent," said Sussman, who was one of the last to stand up on the floor and urge his colleagues to vote against the document on Wednesday morning. "This is too much too fast for too many people in the movement."

But in the end, Sussman was a minority voice.

The vote, which occurred at Temple Rodeph Shalom, the largest Reform temple in Pittsburgh, reflected a consensus view among the rabbis that some statement was necessary, even if it wasn't everyone's ideal.

"I supported it in the end with some reservations, but I feel it is a statement that reflects at least in part who we are as Reform Jews," Rabbi Jerome Davidson of Great Neck, N.Y., said, echoing the views of many here.

"It's a centrist document and it moves us from where we were a century ago," he said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Likud expects to be in coalition, officials say after initial discussions

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak is intent on bringing the Likud Party into his coalition, according to Likud officials.

Emerging confident from discussions Tuesday at Barak's temporary headquarters in a Herzliya hotel, Likud officials said the head of Barak's coalition negotiating team, David Libai, had said as much in their talks.

"They want us very much," said outgoing Communications Minister Limor Livnat. "They said so loud and clear."

Outgoing Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav, who also participated in Tuesday's talks, said Libai "explicitly stated" that Barak felt it important for the Likud to be part of the next government. The Likud delegation, which arrived at the talks from a stormy caucus meeting in which members disagreed over whether it was possible to join a government under Barak, admitted to being slightly taken aback by the overtures.

"I have to say that to a certain extent I was pleasantly surprised by an approach which was one of partnership, and not of another faction to which policies are dictated," Livnat said.

Barak's apparent courtship of Likud contrasted to his negotiating team's talks Tuesday with the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

Barak's negotiating team said that if Shas wants to join the next government, leader Aryeh Deri should sever all connections to the party and Shas should give up control of the powerful Interior Ministry. But Shas negotiators said after the meeting that they would rather sit in the opposition than meet those demands.

"Whoever wants us will get us as we are," said outgoing Interior Minister Eli Suissa. "We won't be performing any cosmetic surgery in order to get into a coalition."

Outgoing Labor Minister Eliyahu Yishai told reporters that Deri, who resigned from the Knesset last week, continues as head of Shas.

Barak has been flooded with appeals from supporters to exclude Shas.

In last week's elections, Shas boosted its Knesset representation from 10 to 17 seats in a campaign that largely assailed the Israeli legal system for what it said was an ethnically motivated conviction of Deri in March on bribery and fraud charges.

With Shas' moderate views on the peace process, however, some Labor Party members view it as a preferable coalition partner to the more hawkish Likud.

Barak's negotiating team has been holding meetings this week with all of the parties that will be participating in the incoming Knesset.

After talks Wednesday, representatives of the National Religious Party, echoing statements from Likud a day earlier, said their party is being courted as a possible coalition partner. Another round of tougher negotiations with the various parties is expected to begin next week. □

More Kosovars receive haven in Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A second group of 100 Kosovar refugees have arrived in Israel from Macedonia.

The group, which arrived Wednesday on a plane chartered by the Jewish Agency for Israel, includes members of some 19 families, as well as relatives of refugees who arrived in Israel in April.

"The main criteria" in choosing the refugees "was to preserve whole families," Uri Konforti, a Jewish Agency official told Israel Radio.

The Jewish Agency brought the refugees to Israel on the return leg of a flight that had delivered eight tons of food, medical supplies and clothes to Macedonia.

Most of the refugees are to be housed at Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, in northern Israel, where the group that arrived in April is housed. Others will be taken to Kibbutz Kramim, near Beersheba in southern Israel.

The refugees are being given the status of tourists, and their stay in Israel will be coordinated by the agency and the Ministry of Absorption. □

Lawsuit targets 3 German firms

Three class-action lawsuits were filed earlier this month against three German drug firms accused of participating in Nazi medical experiments on concentration camp inmates.

The lawsuits were filed May 13 in Newark against Bayer, Schering and Hoechst.

A similar class-action suit was filed against Bayer last February in Indiana.

Brief filed in church-state case

The Orthodox Union joined other religious groups in asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review a ruling that bars religious groups from using public school facilities for religious purposes during non-school hours.

The move stems from an appeals court ruling upholding a decision by the New York City Board of Education that prevents an evangelical group from renting a public school for its weekly religious services.

Columnist slams U.S. advisers

New York Times columnist and former executive editor A.M. Rosenthal received the Guardian of Zion award from Bar-Ilan University's Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies.

During his acceptance speech Monday night, Rosenthal was critical of the "professional American political hacks" who had served as campaign advisers to the prime ministerial candidates in the Israeli elections.

The consultants' tactics "insult the intelligence of the voter," he said.

Rabbinic art exhibit opens

Sweden's ambassador to the United States and U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) opened an art exhibit last week based on themes drawn from rabbinic literature.

"Legends of the Ba'al Shem Tov" is on display for the next few weeks in the Cannon House Office Building. Lantos, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor saved by Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, sponsored the exhibit after learning that a copy of a passport issued during the war by Wallenberg and now hanging in Lantos' office belonged to the family of Ferene Flamm, the artist who created the exhibit.

Harlem Boys Choir to tour Israel

Israel recently invited the Harlem Boys Choir to perform in the Jewish state as part of the choir's 30th anniversary year.

During a 10-day tour of Israel from May 22 to June 3, the choir will perform at several Israeli venues, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Rishon LeZion.

NEWS ANALYSIS**Palestinians target settlements before Barak forms government***By Gil Sedan*

NABLUS (JTA) — To all appearances, this West Bank town is thriving.

The streets are humming with traffic, a central street market offers a rich variety of fruits and vegetables and Israeli bargain-hunters can often be seen shopping in the narrow alleys of the casbah, or old town.

The scene is a change from the ugly days of the intifada, the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising. But the sense of prosperity is only a mirage, according to Palestinian official Hassan Ayoub.

"We have more than 30 percent unemployment, and the land in the neighboring villages is shrinking constantly because of Jewish settlers," he says.

Ayoub is head of a local Palestinian office, the Protection of the Land and Action Against Settlements, part of a broad Palestinian initiative that is moving into full gear even before Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak forms his government. Ayoub's office, which is guarded by a heavy metal door that always remains locked, is located in an office building in downtown Nablus.

Working inside are several former members of the militant National Front for the Liberation of Palestine, including Ayoub, who used to be on Israel's most-wanted list.

Behind a heavy door, the officials whom Israel used to regard as terrorists are now engaged in a new kind of war — an intensive campaign against Jewish settlements.

They have prepared maps that are updated with the names of Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements; they have records of every mobile home that Jewish settlers have moved into the region; and they have accumulated the names of influential Israeli journalists — all part of their plan to launch an anti-settlement campaign in the Israeli media before Barak takes office.

"The settlements are the core of the problem in the eyes of the Palestinians," says Tayssir Khaled, a member of the 18-member PLO Executive Committee. "The settlements embody the Israeli occupation."

There is nothing new in Khaled's statements. What is new is the sense of urgency. And while the Palestinians are going on the offensive, settler leaders have grown defensive in the wake of last week's Israeli elections.

With the passing of the days when their efforts were championed by the government of outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the settlers are now trying to hold on to their previously achieved territorial gains. With this in mind, some of their leaders are even calling on the Likud Party to join a Barak government.

Pinchas Wallerstein, who resigned as chairman of the Settlers Council within days after Netanyahu's election defeat, admits that the main settlement drive is now over.

"Our strength depends now on our determination to preserve our achievements," he says. "If Barak tries to dismantle settlements, our internal strength will count much more than one hill or another."

Indeed, the last months of the Netanyahu government saw increased settlement activity. Since the signing of the Wye agreement last October, 19 new settlements sprang up in the West

Bank, according to the Peace Now movement.

While many of the new "settlements" were sometimes nothing more than a few shacks or mobile homes intended to create "facts on the ground," and while they were often set up within originally planned settlement boundaries, the Palestinians took such efforts very seriously.

If there was any doubt about where the government stood, Ariel Sharon made it clear late last year, when after his appointment as foreign minister he urged settlers to claim "every West Bank hill."

As late as May 7 — 10 days before Israel's elections — settlers protected by the army laid a claim to land near Nablus.

Even before Barak began his coalition negotiations this week, the Palestinian Cabinet, meeting over the weekend in Nablus, issued a communique urging the incoming government to order the cessation of all construction activity in the territories.

And last week, the Palestinian observer to the United Nations asked the U.N. Security Council to press Israel to stop construction for Jewish housing at two sites in eastern Jerusalem — Har Homa and Ras al-Amud — that Netanyahu had approved only days before last week's Israeli elections.

With their latest initiative, Palestinian officials are trying to tone down some of the euphoria sounded in the Arab world in the wake of Netanyahu's election defeat.

Where settlements are concerned, Palestinian officials do not want to give Barak the traditional 100-day honeymoon.

Instead, they want action now to renew the sense of urgency regarding settlements.

For Palestinian officials such as Khaled, the ultimate goal is nothing less than the dismantling of all settlements.

"First they must vacate the hills they have taken over in the past few months," Khaled says. "But in the final-status negotiations, they will all have to go."

For his part, Barak gave a major clue this week as to where he stands on the settlement issue. In a 10-point plan outlining his policies, he says a majority of Jewish settlers would live in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty, implying that smaller settlements would be dismantled.

For settler leaders, meanwhile, caution is the prevailing sentiment. Aharon Domb, the secretary-general of the Settlers Council, is one of those who believes that Likud should join a Barak coalition.

"The upcoming year is a year of fateful decisions, and it is not right to be in the opposition at this time," he says.

Other settler leaders are adopting similar stances.

Eliezer Hissdai, the mayor of Alfei Menashe, spoke over the weekend of the need to stop "the struggle over the hills."

Uri Silberman, mayor of the regional council of the South Hebron Mountains, wrote in an open letter to settlers in the region, "The local leadership should not be power-hungry, militant, arrogant and conservative. The local leadership should be quiet and wise, and should know how to create a dialogue."

Ron Nachman, the mayor of Ariel, also believes in engaging the Palestinians in dialogue.

"I offered the mayor of the neighboring town of Salfit cooperation in developing a sewage project," Nachman says. "At first he was interested, but then he asked for the permission of the Palestinian Authority.

"Obviously permission was not granted." □