



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Officials to pave way for Albright

Two senior U.S. officials plan to fly to the Middle East on Friday to advance Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk and Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross plan to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders prior to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's planned arrival in the region on Sunday.

### GOP candidates court Jews

The six Republican candidates jostling for their party's presidential nomination courted Jewish voters at a daylong event marking the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Republican Jewish Coalition.

One of the candidates, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), said during his speech Wednesday that as president he would "tend with care" the U.S.-Israel relationship and would "participate in the Middle East peace process only in pursuit of genuine peace and not some means to embellish my profile as a statesman."

Another candidate, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), said during his speech that Jerusalem should be the undivided capital of Utah.

He called the flub a Freudian slip.

### Health minister blasts gays

An uproar over remarks by Israel's health minister about gays and lesbians overshadowed a special Knesset session to mark World AIDS Day.

Shlomo Benizri, of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, drew an angry reaction for saying he would set up "closed wards" for gays and lesbians to treat "this genetic and mental defect."

Knesset member Yehudit Naot of the secular Shinui Party responded that "ignorance" is not a value.

### Chinese leader made secret visit

Before ending a six-day trip to Israel, the leader of the Chinese Parliament secretly visited Israel Aircraft Industries to observe a surveillance plane being built for Beijing, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Li Peng's visit was reportedly fit in between visits to the President's Office, Parliament and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Li's visit appeared to signal efforts to boost military cooperation with Israel.

## APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM

### While the world parties like it's 1999, what's a Jew to do when it's Shabbat?

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — What will you be doing New Year's Eve — or should we say New Millennium's Eve?

Will you be decked out in festive holiday finery, tripping the light fantastic, partying like it's (almost no longer) 1999?

Or will it not be Dec. 31 for you, but rather the 22nd of Tevet, simply, but pleasurably, another regular Shabbat?

Interviews with Jews from around the country and across the Orthodox-to-secular spectrum revealed that, for most, the last Shabbat of the millennium will likely be a bit of both.

Some would like to get as far away from both the Jewish and secular aspects of the weekend as possible.

Filmmaker and writer Lilly Rivlin is hoping "to go to India, to totally avoid it and go to an ashram," she said, where she will devote herself to meditating and dancing to what she described as New Age Indian music.

Some are going to do their best to ignore the importance of the date on the secular calendar and keep millennial revelry at bay.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a humanities professor at New York University, will do "what I always do on Shabbas," he said. "I will have dinner, will study the sidra [Torah portion of the week] a bit and go to sleep, and then the next morning I will go to shul. Period.

"Any Jewish hoo-ha about the millennium is essentially playing into Christian hands. It's not our party, not our millennium, and let's cut it out," Hertzberg said.

Bruce Temkin, director of young leadership for the New Israel Fund, and his partner are going "to try to avoid the overplanned significance and shmaltz of the evening," probably by having a quiet dinner with friends and family as they do most every Friday night, he said.

For Rabbi Avi Shafran, a spokesman for Agudath Israel of America, an organization representing the interests of the fervently Orthodox, it will be a Shabbat like any other.

"Shabbat stands for things very antithetical to things like the noise, the ribaldry and the wild parties that go on at any New Year's Eve and certainly at the turn of a millennium. Shabbat is about calm and peace and quiet. I hope it won't have to register at all at our Shabbas table, but if it does it will just be a reminder of the contrast between the Jewish world and the rest of the world," he said.

Yet other Jews expect to ignore the Jewish aspects of Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 this year.

"The fact that it's Shabbat isn't going to really affect my life or my celebration at all," said Sari Fensterheim, a New York-based video producer. She plans to go to her mother's beach house with friends. "We'll probably cook a nice dinner and drink some champagne, which sort of sounds like Shabbat dinner but isn't on purpose," she said.

For many, however, the confluence of Shabbat with New Year's Eve will be a chance to meld their Jewish lives with an acknowledgment of the fact that they live in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish world.

Rachel Levin and her husband plan to have friends to their Los Angeles home for Shabbat dinner, supplemented by champagne to toast the new year, said Levin.

"I'm pleased it's Shabbat, since to me it is so much about marking time. It's really

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### New envoy addresses U.N.

Israel's new permanent representative to the United Nations delivered his first official address during an annual General Assembly session that emphasizes the rights of the Palestinian people.

During his speech Monday, Yehuda Lancry said, "For peace to germinate, we must sow the seeds of reconciliation far and wide, heal the wounds of memories of violence and hasten the growth of fields of cooperation."

### Israel OKs mosque entrance

Israel will allow Muslims to open a new entrance to an underground prayer hall at the Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem, according to a spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Barak. A right-wing Israeli legislator accused the premier of caving in to Muslim pressure, but Barak spokesman Gadi Baltiansky said the passageway is necessary for safety.

### Anti-Arafat manifesto condemned

The Palestinian legislative council condemned a manifesto issued earlier this week that accused Yasser Arafat of mismanagement and corruption.

But after a four-hour debate, the council decided not to lift the parliamentary immunity of those dissident lawmakers who had signed the document.

### Army changing emigres' draft age

Hoping to save money, the Israel Defense Force plans to stop drafting immigrants older than 18 upon their arrival in Israel. Those who arrive before the age of 18 will continue to do army service.

The decision was met with mixed reaction in the immigrant community.

Deputy Absorption Minister Marina Solodkin said that while the decision might ease pressures on some immigrants who find it difficult to leave jobs even for a brief period, it would make their integration into Israeli society more difficult.



## Daily News Bulletin

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about being present in the moment, so I can't think of a nicer way to begin the next century than being with family and friends," said Levin, a program officer with Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, a Lubavitch rabbi famous for his book "Kosher Sex," suggested at a recent New York City appearance that one of the nicest ways for Jews to celebrate the millennium would be to invite non-Jewish friends over for Shabbat.

In Miami there will be a Shabbat retreat devoted to an exploration of the holy texts belonging to many of the world's religions, at Reconstructionist Temple Beth Or and its Sh'ma Center for Jewish Meditation.

After Friday night services will come an all-night reading of texts from the Jewish Psalms, the Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita, the Buddhist text Dhammapada, the Taoist Tao Te Ching and Christianity's Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, said Rabbi Rami Shapiro.

On Saturday he will run a day of silent sitting meditation, interspersed with text study, Shapiro said.

"One of the hallmarks of religion in the 21st century will be interspirituality, a sense that while each of us comes from our own tradition, we also recognize that the truth is not contained in any one, and we can learn from different traditions."

Other religious organizations are also capitalizing on the coincidence of special days in the Jewish and secular calendars. Reform Temple Emanuel, in Beverly Hills, Calif., is encouraging people "to start the millennium with God" by coming to services before continuing on to whatever party is planned, said Rabbi Laura Geller.

Most Reform congregations are expanding their Friday night celebration of Shabbat into something a little longer and fancier to mark the occasion, said Emily Grotta, director of communications for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism sent out a booklet of programming, sermon and publicity ideas to each of its member congregations, suggesting that Conservative synagogue leaders try to turn the focus of the weekend away from "expensive, extensive, explosive, exotic styles and locations" and to themes related to transitions, which are to be found in that Shabbat's Torah portion in the Book of Exodus.

A Conservative synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Ansche Chesed, will try to keep its members busy that Friday night with worship services, a dinner and entertainment late into the night. Champagne will be served at midnight, of course, and children will have a sleepover party with Israeli dancing.

"This cuts across the lines of people who are more interested in doing something Jewish and those who are not. It's a way to build one community," said synagogue President Michael Brochstein.

Somewhere between 10,000 and 50,000 sets of Shabbat candlesticks, candles, kiddush cups and bubbly grape juice will be sent out by the National Jewish Outreach Project to those who call 1-888-SHABBAT.

The organization will spend between \$100,000 and \$250,000 to persuade people to turn New Year's Eve into Shabbat, said Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, its director.

Yet even for some synagogues it isn't going to be a particularly significant Shabbat.

The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation solicited "a minyan of opinion" about whether to organize something movementwide for the Shabbat, said Executive Director Mark Seal, but though it is "a classic conflict between two civilizations, people don't feel it profoundly. A lot of people feel the hysteria in terms of a crisis is overblown and are planning low-key Shabbats," he said. □

## Insurer vows to pay claims

NEW YORK (JTA) — Holland's second-largest insurer agreed to pay all rightful claims brought by Holocaust victims or their heirs in California, state Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush said.

In an agreement announced Tuesday, Aegon also plans to establish a \$1.2 million humanitarian fund and cooperate with regulators in investigating claims. It came one day before Aegon was to appear at the first of two hearings to testify about its readiness to comply with a new California law that requires insurers to disclose details about Holocaust-era insurance policies. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Federation head to go to Agency

The executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta for 21 years announced that he is taking a senior post at the Jewish Agency for Israel. David Sarnat, who has been a vocal critic of the Jewish Agency in the past, will become the vice president of the organization's America section. Noah Levine, the associate executive director, will become the acting head of the federation.

### Shoah council members named

President Clinton announced Tuesday that he will appoint the Rev. John Pawlikowski and Jerome Shestack to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Pawlikowski is a priest and a professor of social ethics at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Shestack is chairman of the litigation department of a Philadelphia law firm.

### Envoy: Embassy will stay

El Salvador's outgoing ambassador to Israel pledged "with all the power vested in me" that his country's embassy will remain in Jerusalem, according to B'nai B'rith.

Rafael Angel Alfaro Pineda's comments come amid reports that El Salvador — which with Costa Rica are the only two countries with embassies in the capital of the Jewish state — would move its embassy to Tel Aviv. El Salvador reportedly has considered the move to protest a proposed closure of the Israeli Embassy in El Salvador.

### Lawyer may seek WTO pressure

A U.S. lawyer representing Holocaust-era slave laborers said he plans to ask the World Trade Organization to impose penalties on all companies that used such labor during World War II.

These companies "have never responded, morally or otherwise," Michael Hausfeld told the Reuters news agency. Negotiations for creating a compensation fund for slave workers are slated to resume next week in Washington.

### Jodie Foster to play Riefenstahl

Actress Jodie Foster plans to produce and star in a movie about a German filmmaker who made a documentary glorifying the Third Reich.

Foster's announcement regarding her project on Leni Riefenstahl came days after a German company said it is also making a film about the director of "Triumph of the Will," a 1934 documentary that is considered a cinematic landmark. "There is no other woman of the 20th century who has been so admired and vilified simultaneously," said Foster of Riefenstahl, who is 97.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Supreme Court case may clarify inconsistent church-state rulings

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — A forthcoming Supreme Court decision has the potential to redraw the rules regarding public funding of religious education, say legal analysts in the Jewish community.

Oral arguments in the case of Mitchell vs. Helms were heard by the high court Wednesday. The lawsuit, which began in 1985, involves a Catholic school in Louisiana that received publicly funded computers, software and library books for use in its secular studies curriculum.

A Catholic school student's mother, concerned that her child might encounter material that had to be "secularized" to comply with the requirement that the computers and software not be used to teach religious subjects, sued a representative of the school board to contest whether the materials ought to have been supplied at all.

A federal program requires public school districts to share instructional equipment in a "secular, neutral and nonideological" way with students enrolled in nearby private or parochial schools.

But a federal appeals court in New Orleans struck down the practice last year, saying that providing educational materials other than textbooks for religiously affiliated schools violates the separation of church and state. The Clinton administration has defended the law, saying the program has safeguards intended to prevent the equipment and materials from being diverted for religious use.

A friend-of-the-court brief was filed by several Jewish organizations — including the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, along with the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Federation of Teachers — urging the Supreme Court justices to strike down the program as unconstitutional.

The groups argue that the government should not be granting educational materials to parochial schools because it is difficult to ensure that they aren't used to teach religion. Religious school teachers, "regardless of how well-motivated they may be," are "simply not constitutionally acceptable guardians of the separation between church and government," they said in their brief.

On the other side are several Orthodox Jewish groups, which also filed a brief, that back the administration's view that loaning educational materials does not constitute a church-state violation. This coalition includes Agudath Israel of America, the Orthodox Union, the Rabbinical Council of America and the Torah U'Mesorah network of schools. Catholic organizations filed a similar brief.

The Supreme Court has, in the past, ruled that some materials may be provided to parochial schools with public funding, while others may not. The result has been an inconsistent and sometimes confusing set of rules.

"You can lend a geography book, but not a globe," said Marc Stern, co-director of legal affairs for the American Jewish Congress, who was served as one of the lawyers for the plaintiffs.

"The best outcome would be a clear statement by the court" that the separation between church and state "does not require government to discriminate against religious schools, and that it's appropriate for the government to provide financial or programmatic assistance to all schools," said Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

During oral arguments, the Supreme Court justices seemed concerned about the possibility that government funding for computers, for example, might free up money that had been earmarked for computers to buy Bibles, said those who attended the court session.

The justices' decision could potentially relate to school voucher programs — a hot-button issue at the heart of the debate over taxpayer funding of religious schools and long a source of division in the Jewish community.

A ruling in the case is anticipated next spring. □

**AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD****New Russian group leaps into political and communal fray***By Lev Gorodetsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — A new umbrella group has leapt into Russia's Jewish communal fray — and into the struggle for political influence with the Kremlin.

Earlier this month, the Russian branch of the worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch launched an organization of its own, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

The new federation, founded by some 200 delegates from several dozen Jewish communities across Russia who gathered at a Moscow hotel, set as its goal the representation of Jews from "all walks of life in Russia in all matters."

The establishment of the group demonstrates the increased strength of the Lubavitch movement — and the group's chief emissary in Russia, Rabbi Berel Lazar — in Russian life.

There is evidence that the new group is close to the government of President Boris Yeltsin, which is important as the Dec. 19 parliamentary elections approach.

Last week Russia's prime minister discussed his support for Jewish causes in a meeting with the group.

Vladimir Putin promised to assist the Jewish community in combating anti-Semitism, building schools and reclaiming former synagogue buildings for Jewish communities.

He also told the group's leaders that he acted personally to help rebuild Jewish life in St. Petersburg in the early 1990s, when he was head of the KGB branch there.

Lazar was appointed the head of the federation's rabbinical council. A 35-year-old born in Italy, Lazar settled in Moscow in 1990, where he lives with his wife and eight children.

Fluent in Russian, he seems to know all the ins and outs of political life in Moscow — Jewish and non-Jewish.

Lazar said, "We believe" synagogues are the "real active centers of Jewish life" in Russia.

The group is likely to cause some friction within the Jewish community, particularly among non-Orthodox and non-religious groups. Lazar said Reform and other non-Orthodox congregations can join the federation, but only if they register without calling themselves "Reform communities."

Leaders of Reform Jewish groups, or Progressive Jewish leaders as they prefer to be known in Russia, were not invited to the founding of the new federation, according to Rabbi Chaim Ben-Yaakov, a Progressive Jewish leader.

"Structures pretending to represent all Jews shouldn't be formed overnight. I hope the group will not create an internal war in the Jewish community," Ben-Yaakov said.

Despite the religious orientation of the group's organizers, a secular public figure — musician and composer Michael Gluz — was elected the first president of the group.

In addition to escalating the turf battles among Jewish groups and their leaders, the group could also play a role in the complex world of Russian politics. It could also undermine the influence of Vladimir Goussinsky, a media mogul who heads a rival umbrella group, the Russian Jewish Congress.

Many observers believe that Goussinsky's position as the chief representative of Russian Jewry has been compromised by the

formation of the new group, which brings the total number of Russian Jewish umbrella groups to four.

In addition to the Russian Jewish Congress, there is the Va'ad and the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations of Russia, headed by Russia's chief rabbi, Adolf Shayelevich.

Both Lazar and Gluz said they have good working relations with Goussinsky, who owns NTV, one of Russia's three nationwide TV channels, and has a share in the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv.

The Russian Jewish Congress, which is part of the World Jewish Congress, and the NTV channel have been the target of a series of recent attacks by the main Russian national TV channel, ORT, which called them traitors who are "helping Russia's enemies in the West."

ORT is controlled by another controversial Jewish business and media tycoon, the well-connected Boris Berezovsky, who has close ties to Yeltsin through his daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko.

At the same time, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who is known to be friendly with Goussinsky and usually attends all high-profile Jewish gatherings, was conspicuous by his absence.

Speaking at the founding conference of the new federation, Goussinsky warned Russian Jewish organizations against "getting involved in political games."

What the repercussions will be of this splintering of Russia's organized Jewish life remains to be seen. □

**Jewish voices among those heard at WTO demonstrations in Seattle***By Donna Gordon Blankinship  
Seattle Jewish Transcript*

SEATTLE (JTA) — The sound of a shofar and a rewritten version of a Passover song joined the chorus of protests here this week at the World Trade Organization conference.

Amid a week of violent protests and scores of arrests, Rabbi Jim Mirel and cantorial soloist Wendy Marcus helped lead a massive interfaith rally at a downtown church, calling on the United States to forgive the debts of Third World nations.

"It was a very warm, spiritually uplifting experience," said Gabe Cohen of Bellevue, Wash., who participated in the interfaith service and joined Jewish marchers after a morning minyan.

"On a personal level, I felt part of my people as we marched down Third and Pike, and we were singing hallelujah and chants from the service. It was really very invigorating."

Cohen, past director of the greater Seattle Jewish Education Council, said he wrote a special version of "Dayenu" focusing on the WTO, environmental issues, democracy and poverty. He also brought his shofar, as did a few other protesters, which they blew during the service.

A small morning service attracted protesters from around the West to sing and chant before the marching began Monday and Tuesday. When the group of 10 Jews, many wearing tallitot, reached the barricades near the conference carrying a banner decorated with a Star of David they attracted other Jewish protesters who were unaware of the early morning service.

"People came over and wanted to know what we were doing," Cohen said. "They gathered around and identified themselves as Jews. It was a good feeling all around. I'm glad we did it." □