



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 102

Thursday, June 1, 2000

83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Lawmakers seek Wall penalties

Fervently Orthodox legislators in Israel's Knesset passed a preliminary reading of a bill that would impose a seven-year jail sentence on any woman who reads out loud from the Torah or wears a prayer shawl at the Western Wall.

In response, the head of the Na'amat women's organization said a bill should be passed imposing a seven-year sentence on any Knesset member who tries to pass ridiculous bills.

### Israelis polled on Ethiopians

Israelis have a generally positive view of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel, but are divided over whether to allow a mass immigration of 26,000 Falash Mura, whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity, according to a new poll.

The poll, commissioned by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, was released Wednesday as the organization announced a commitment of between \$3 million to \$5 million over the next two years to help finance the absorption of Ethiopian emigres. [Page 4]

### Barak denies extent of handover

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office is denying reports that he has agreed to hand over up to 95 percent of the West Bank as part of a final peace accord with the Palestinians.

However, a Palestinian official speaking anonymously told the Associated Press that the reports are true. Talks between the two sides are expected to resume Thursday.

### Syria drops Shabaa demand

Syria agreed to drop its demand that Israel turn over to Lebanon the disputed Shabaa Farms area near the Golan Heights, according to U.N. envoy Terje Roed Larsen. Hezbollah has threatened to continue attacks against Israel unless the area is returned to Lebanon.

In another development, Lebanon accused a U.N. team of bias toward Israel during its work to verify whether the Jewish state had fully withdrawn from Lebanon.

Tensions were said to be running high during meetings between U.N. and Lebanese teams of cartographers working to define the international border between Lebanon and Israel.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Israel quickly heals injured pride and rallies around prime minister

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If you blinked, you would have missed it.

For a brief moment last week, as its army beat a hasty and undignified retreat from southern Lebanon, Israel seemed to plunge into an abyss of self-deprecation and embarrassment. But now, the short period of Israel's international humiliation is over, and everyone — especially the prime minister — is fervently hoping it won't return.

Ehud Barak's enhanced public standing after the successful Lebanon withdrawal, pundits here say, will enable him to make far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians and brave the political backlash from the right.

With the West Bank quiet now after a period of violence, Barak has reportedly given the green light for a resumption of suspended "back-channel" negotiations between Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel's minister of internal security, and Ahmed Karia, the speaker of the Palestinian parliament.

The talks were in Stockholm, but will reportedly move to the Middle East.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz cited informed Israeli sources as predicting that the two sides will reach a framework for a final peace agreement within weeks. The drafting of the accord, the paper reported, has "passed the point of no return."

Other media here say the Israeli side is now entertaining proposals for Israel to relinquish 92 percent of the West Bank. Settlement leaders in the Jordan Valley warned Tuesday they would not abandon their homes if Barak hands the region over to the Palestinians.

As the focus shifts back to the Palestinians, the national mood is a far cry from last week, when it appeared to many that the once-invincible Israel Defense Force was coming home with its tail between its legs, whipped by a few hundred determined fighters supported by Syria and equipped by Iran.

Israel's deterrent credibility had been dealt a serious blow, people said.

This had been exacerbated, for all the world to see, by Israel's perceived heartless treatment of its allies — the soldiers of the South Lebanon Army. They and their families followed the Israeli troops to the border and begged for asylum in the Jewish state. Barak's stock in public opinion plummeted to an all-time low. People talked openly of the imminent collapse of his rickety coalition.

They speculated over whether former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's involvement in a police investigation would be over in time for him to make a comeback and challenge Barak for the premiership.

Twenty-four hours later, on May 24, with the last IDF soldier out — shown on television phoning his worried mom — the atmosphere metamorphosed.

Suddenly it was as though the army had returned from some triumphant feat of arms. People congratulated each other on the streets as though there was a victory to celebrate. By the weekend, the same Israel that midweek had been on the brink of despair, was rejoicing over the end of 22 blood-stained years in Lebanon.

Barak's name was on everyone's lips as the genius of strategy and statesmanship. Media columnists were eating their words as fast as they could, and joining in the mass splurge of national gratification.

The Hezbollah? Well, perhaps they would turn to politics, religion and social welfare now, and say farewell to arms.

Deterrence? Israelis rehearsed their prime minister's somber warnings to Lebanon

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Clinton, Barak to meet in Lisbon

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is scheduled to meet with President Clinton in Lisbon on Thursday to discuss the peace process. The meeting was originally to be held in Berlin, but was changed so Barak could return home to attend a ceremony marking Israel's capture of eastern Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.

### Terrorist bomb misses troops

Israeli troops accompanying a convoy of Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip narrowly avoided a terrorist bombing Wednesday. The convoy was making its way toward the settlement of Netzarim, when the troops noticed a suspicious object on the road. They turned the convoy around before the bomb exploded. No one was hurt.

### Turkey vows to press Iran

Turkey agreed to Israeli and American requests to try to prevent Iran from transferring arms to Hezbollah over Turkish airspace, Israel Radio reported.

The report said Turkey recently asked Iran to declare the contents of planes flying over its territory and said it reserves the right to order aircraft to land for inspection.

### Factories find jobs for SLA

Fifteen Israeli factories have found jobs for some 100 members of the former South Lebanon Army, the head of Israel's manufacturer's association said. Oded Tira said he expects more Israeli businesses to follow.

### Palestinian prisoners end strike

Palestinian security prisoners held in Israeli jails ended a month-long hunger strike after Israeli authorities agreed to their demands to improve conditions.

Officials said these included expanded family visits, phone privileges and an increase in available television stations.



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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](http://www.jta.org).  
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and Syria to prevent cross-border attacks, or face massive Israeli reprisals against Lebanese infrastructure and Syrian targets inside Lebanon.

The SLA? Granted that was unpleasant. But now Israel was welcoming thousands of them into its midst, providing them with temporary homes, schools for their kids — and liberal cash handouts to assist those wishing to settle abroad.

The conscience qualms aroused by this episode were being eased.

Barak's stock had never been higher. His instructions to the army to exercise restraint in the face of provocations on the other side of the barbed wire border fence were praised as statesmanlike.

Lone voices on the right muttering about a loss of staying power or of national pride were drowned out in a nationwide cacophony of congratulations. □

## Court allows Israeli lesbian couple to be co-moms; decision denounced

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's High Court of Justice this week ordered the government to register a lesbian couple as the mothers of the child they are raising.

The ruling was denounced by fervently Orthodox legislators, who called the decision degrading to the sanctity of the Jewish family.

The three-judge panel ruled 2-1 on Monday that registering the two women as the child's mothers did not reflect a biological relationship to the child, but a legal status.

The Interior Ministry, which refused to recognize the women, had argued that it is biologically impossible for a child to have two mothers.

The couple, Ruti and Nicole Berner-Kadish, have been together for seven years and hold dual Israeli and American citizenship.

Four years ago, Ruti gave birth in the United States to a son, Matan, after she was impregnated through a sperm donor.

Her partner, Nicole, adopted Matan under California state law.

In the majority opinion, Justices Dalia Dorner and Dorit Beinish noted that when an adopted child maintains contact with the biological mother, the population registry acknowledges both the adoptive and biological mothers.

Beinish wrote that the Interior Ministry's argument that it cannot recognize two mothers for one child "is no more than camouflage for the argument against recognizing an adoption based on single-sex relations between the biological parent and the adoptive parent."

Nicole Berner-Kadish said the couple, which was represented by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, based its case on the fact that Israel recognizes the legal standings granted citizens abroad, even if it does not permit such standings in Israel.

One example is its recognition of civil marriages conducted abroad, which do not exist in Israel.

In his minority opinion, Justice Abdel Rahman Zuabi said the couple should first have appealed to a family court to determine whether the adoption has legal standing in Israel. Though the ruling was limited to the technical definition of the child's registry, commentators noted the decision carried deeper implications regarding the recognition in Israel of single-sex unions.

The ruling was the latest in a string of favorable decisions by the high court on gay and lesbian relationships. In a previous ruling, the court ordered El Al Airlines to provide the same benefits to the gay partner of one of its employees as it gives to married couples. In another ruling, the court ordered the Israel Defense Force to grant bereavement benefits to the gay partner of a deceased officer.

Fervently Orthodox legislators denounced the latest ruling, calling it another example of the judiciary overstepping its bounds.

"We can't continue to compete with the Supreme Court. If the high court wants to run the country and religious issues, then [the justices] should go to elections," United Torah Judaism legislator Yakov Litman told Israel Radio.

National Religious Party legislator Zevulun Orlev said he would move to pass legislation defining the "Jewish family." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Philadelphia synagogue devastated by arson fire; motive not yet known

By Brian Mono  
Jewish Exponent

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Sifting through the ash-covered remains that were once treasured religious objects, administrators of Beit Harambam Congregation say they are determined to rebuild after their synagogue was scarred by arson over the weekend.

"We are going to grow stronger from this," said Eli Gabay, president of the 300-member congregation in Northeast Philadelphia. "We have to if we are going to survive as a community."

For Gabay and others, the experience felt like a "bad dream."

When congregants arrived for morning prayers last Shabbat, they came upon officers from Philadelphia's police and fire departments standing in front of a burned-out shell of a building.

Half of the synagogue's roof had caved in. All the windows were broken. The four Torah scrolls salvaged by firemen were likely damaged beyond repair by smoke and water.

All of the prayer books were ruined.

"We are just beginning to understand the level of decimation," said Gabay two days after the fire.

"We are literally digging into the rubble in order to locate anything that can be salvaged."

The hardest part of the experience so far, Gabay said, was explaining to his two young children that "this was done by someone who wanted our synagogue to not exist."

Police said the motive for the arson remains unclear and authorities are examining other arsons for a pattern.

They are also investigating whether the fire is related to a burglary that took place at the synagogue in January.

Gabay, however, sees a clear motive for the crime.

"To us, it is unequivocal that this is a hate crime," he said.

"Even if it started as a spree of vandalism or simple burglary, when an individual comes into a synagogue, walks through the main sanctuary" and sets a pile of prayer books on fire, "to us that is direct anti-Semitism, and it's a crime of hate."

The Sephardic congregation had occupied the converted house for more than 10 years, he said.

Members are primarily immigrants from Israel and Russia, along with some longtime Northeast Philadelphia residents, said Gabay.

Sgt. William Ansel of the Philadelphia Police Department said the arsonist broke into the synagogue through a rear window, piled up the prayer books and lit them with a match.

A mechanical clock stuck at 4:27 a.m. — and still hanging on the wall of the synagogue — helped police estimate that the fire started around 4:20 a.m.

The arsonist apparently dropped two charity boxes taken from the synagogue after tripping on a chicken-wire fence in a nearby yard, the officer added.

The congregation is considering renting a storefront to hold services for the time being.

Beit Harambam member Devora Neuman, a 73-year-old Holocaust survivor, said she had hoped she would never see another synagogue burned down.

"I was really shocked. I cannot get over it. I felt like I was back in Poland or Germany," she said, recalling the smoke in the sky in 1939, after Nazis entered her Polish village and destroyed the shul. □

*(The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, the Jewish Community Relations Council and the Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia have set up a fund to assist the congregation. Donations should be earmarked for the Beit Harambam Rebuilding Fund and mailed to the Jewish Federation, c/o Chris Nuneviller, 2100 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19103.)*

#### Denier begins speaking tour

Holocaust denier David Irving launched a three-month speaking and fund-raising tour of the United States by meeting over the weekend with some of the top names among fellow deniers.

The meeting was held at a secret location in Irvine, Calif., and was organized by the California-based Institute for Historical Review, a center of Holocaust denial for more than two decades.

Participants included an international array of activists, such as Arthur Butz of the United States, Robert Faurisson of France, Germar Rudolf of Germany and Ernst Zundel of Canada, according to the Los Angeles Times.

#### B'nai B'rith launches new drive

Youth groups and members of B'nai B'rith International plan to launch a petition drive in June to urge the U.S. Congress to expand current federal hate crimes legislation.

The campaign is part of the organization's new Enlighten America program to fight prejudice and reduce violence.

#### Gun bill to be introduced

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) said he will introduce "Ari's Law," a bill to stop the sale of gun kits without a background check or waiting period.

The bill is named for Ari Halberstam, a young Jewish man who was shot and killed near the Brooklyn Bridge in 1994 by someone who purchased an assault weapon through the mail as a gun kit.

#### Minister blasts anti-Semitism

Switzerland's re-examination of its wartime past has led to an increase in anti-Semitism, the nation's foreign minister said.

Speaking to Jewish leaders Wednesday, Joseph Deiss said anti-Semitism has manifested itself in several "unacceptable" ways, including "threatening letters to Jewish personalities or organizations."

#### Religion dropped from Greek IDs

Identification cards issued in Greece will no longer list a person's religion.

Greece's Jewish community had sought the removal of the religion listing for some 15 years.

#### German TV films Shoah comedy

A German television station is filming a comedy about the Holocaust.

In the film, which has the working title "Goebbels and Geduldig" and is still in production, a Jew named Harry Geduldig manages to infiltrate the Nazi Party and take the place of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels in order to free the woman he loves.

## Israelis accepting of immigrants from Ethiopia, according to survey

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis have a generally positive view of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel, but they are divided over whether to allow a mass immigration of 26,000 Falash Mura, according to a new poll.

The poll, commissioned by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, was released Wednesday as the organization announced a commitment of between \$3 million and \$5 million over the next two years to help finance the absorption of Ethiopian emigres.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president of the fellowship, said findings that Israelis are very accepting of Ethiopian immigrants indicate that the difficult absorption process can be improved.

"If we combine the positive views with greater financial allocation to help in areas of job training, placement and education, the immigrants here will indeed reach the same level one generation from now that others have," he said.

His comments included a warning: "If we don't take advantage of this window of opportunity, in the next five to 10 years it will explode in Israeli society."

One day before the poll was released, the Jewish Agency for Israel flew 100 Falash Mura from Ethiopia to Israel.

The group was the first to arrive since Interior Minister Natan Sharansky visited Ethiopia last month to assess the situation of the thousands of Falash Mura — Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity — who have amassed in transit camps hoping to emigrate to the Jewish state.

According to the poll, 49 percent of Israelis said Israel has behaved "adequately" in absorbing the Ethiopian Jews, and another 9 percent said the country has done an "exceptionally good" job.

Nevertheless, responses to several questions indicated that a strong majority view the immigration of Ethiopians as a great success, and 63 percent said they consider it a net gain for Israel.

Only 29 percent considered the immigrants a burden on the economy. Other responses contradicted complaints of racism often voiced by the Ethiopians. An overwhelming 89 percent said they would be happy to be treated by an Ethiopian doctor, and 95 percent said they would not mind having their child serve under an Ethiopian officer in the army.

One question touched on the issue of marriage.

Of those polled, 71 percent said they would consider it "a problem" for their children or grandchildren to date or marry an Ethiopian.

Those polled showed far less acceptance of Russian immigrants.

When asked who, if they were acting as an employer, would be their first choice between three equally qualified candidates for a job, only 3 percent said a Russian, while 38 percent chose a sabra and 22 percent chose an Ethiopian.

On the Falash Mura issue, 35 percent said they supported accepting the 26,000 Ethiopians waiting for approval to come to Israel as citizens.

Another 18 percent preferred granting entry to a limited group, while 26 percent rejected the Falash Mura completely and 21 percent had no opinion. □

## Calls for U.S. official's ouster follow remarks made in Israel

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — One of the more outspoken activists in the Jewish community is calling for the ouster of the U.S. national security adviser because of his comments about Palestinian violence being a "blessing" as well as a "curse."

In a May 21 speech at Tel Aviv University, Samuel Berger was quoted as saying that clashes between Israelis and Palestinians are "both the curse and the blessing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for the tragedy that awaits in the event of inaction also constitutes the greatest incentive for immediate action."

Berger spoke as Palestinians were rioting in the West Bank.

Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America, said in a letter to Berger that his statement "could encourage Arab terrorists to believe that the United States condones their violence."

Klein sent a letter to Berger demanding that he retract his statement and "unequivocally condemn" the violence.

The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs is also calling on Berger to be fired for his remarks. B'nai B'rith International has sent a letter to Berger expressing concern over the statement.

In response, Berger wrote to Klein that both the intent and the words of his speech were misinterpreted.

"My argument was that the proximity and interconnectedness between Israelis and Palestinians dictate that a solution to their conflict must be found," Berger wrote.

"The two sides must move forward because standing still ultimately means sliding back into a far more serious confrontation."

Berger also said he had made clear in the speech that "violence in unacceptable" and "fundamentally at odds with the peace process."

Klein said he found Berger's explanation "illogical" and said by not denying he made the remark about violence being a blessing, Berger in effect confirmed it.

If Berger does not retract his statement and apologize, Klein wants him fired.

"The Jewish people have suffered too much violence in this century and throughout our history to stand idly by while a government official suggests that violence against Jews can in any way be interpreted as a 'blessing,'" Klein said.

Klein is well-known in the Jewish world for having launched campaigns — some successful and some not — against people in a variety of posts because of their views or statements on Israel.

Those who dislike Klein's tactics have referred to his past campaigns as akin to McCarthyism and to Klein as the "thought police."

Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, said he had no problem with Berger's statement and that if Klein is unhappy then he should challenge or criticize the statement.

But to call for Berger's resignation is "crossing the line," Foxman said.

"Mr. Klein has made this his trademark," Foxman said. "It's not enough to disagree." Foxman and Klein have had many public disputes in the past. □