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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak survives, Peres loses

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak survived a no-confidence vote in the Knesset. Legislators voted 50-50 with eight abstentions, which fell short of the 61 votes needed in the 120-member Knesset to topple the government.

In another Knesset vote Monday, Moshe Katsav, a Knesset member from the Likud Party, was elected Israel's eighth president in a secret parliamentary vote that defied all forecasts. Katsav defeated former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. [Page 4]

U.S. blasts Hezbollah threat

The United States lashed out at Hezbollah after the fundamentalist group threatened to destroy the U.S. embassy in Israel and kill its diplomats if the mission was moved to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

"We find these types of threats to be outrageous. Certainly it demonstrates Hezbollah's continuing support for terrorism," said State Department spokesman Philip Reeker. "Such violent threats deserve the condemnation of the entire international community."

Australia speaks out for 'Iran 10'

Australia's foreign minister said he held "constructive discussions" with Iranian officials about 10 Jews convicted of spying for Israel.

While calling the meeting a "good hearing," Alexander Downer said the officials, including President Mohammad Khatami, warned that they would not bow to international pressure.

Pipe bomb explodes in Germany

A pipe bomb exploded Monday in front of an office building in the eastern German town of Straslund, causing damage but no injuries.

Police said it was possible that right-wing extremists were involved. The blast followed a July 27 bomb attack in Dusseldorf that injured several Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Swiss firms admit to forced labor

Several Swiss firms said Monday that they might have used forced labor during World War II.

Swiss companies have until Aug. 25 to hand over data about forced labor in order to be included in a \$1.25 billion settlement for Holocaust victims and be shielded from future litigation.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jews in GOP out to prove they're not a contradiction

By Lisa Hosten

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Clifford May, director of communications for the Republican National Committee, jokes that there is a common bond between being Jewish and being Republican: Both are hard to explain to the outside world.

Vivian Young, a Jewish communal activist in Philadelphia, agrees, with one exception: She often avoids the explanation.

"I'm definitely in the minority" as a Jewish Republican, Young says, sipping a drink at a Jewish community-sponsored event on the eve of the Republican National Convention here.

As a result, she says, "I tend not to discuss politics with people."

The hundreds of Jewish delegates and supporters gathered for this week's convention are well aware they represent a minority in the political fabric of American Jewry.

But despite their minority status, they are passionate advocates of a political party they believe best serves the interests of their families, their community and their country.

"If you don't have a prejudice" against the Republican Party and "you're listening and looking, you'll find a strong awareness of Jewish concerns within the party," says Cheryl Halpern, national chairman of the Republican Jewish Coalition, which hosted a series of convention-related events this week.

Fully three separate Jewish-sponsored events on Sunday preceded the convention's Monday night opening, though at least one of those events — a community celebration co-sponsored by the United Jewish Communities and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee — featured arguably as many non-Jews and Democrats active in the Jewish community as there were Jewish Republicans.

One attendee, Kendal Unruh of Colorado — who dressed in a long skirt fashioned after the American flag and identified herself as part of a contingent from the Christian Coalition — expressed bewilderment that so many Jews vote Democratic when the Republican Party, and particularly its evangelical Christian component, is so supportive of Israel.

Indeed, it is common knowledge that Jews vote overwhelmingly Democratic, particularly in presidential elections.

While most Republican Jews foster no illusions that the 2000 presidential race between Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore will deviate from that tradition, many express optimism that shifts in the Jewish and political landscape bode well for a future link between Jews and the Republican Party.

And some suggest that link already has appeared in state and local races, where Jews have thrown their support in recent years behind, for example, Republican mayoral candidates in New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

They also believe that Bush, with his slogan of "compassionate conservatism," can speak to American Jews in ways that the old, harsher message of the Republican Party often didn't.

"The word Republican still tends to scare the hell out of American Jews," said Murray Friedman, a historian and the mid-Atlantic regional director of the American Jewish Committee.

The AJCommittee also hosted several events on the sidelines of this week's

MIDEAST FOCUS

Sept. 13 still deadline

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the Sept. 13 date for declaring a Palestinian state still stands. He made the comment in Jerusalem, where he met Monday with the director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Eitan Ben-Tsur, to sign an agreement extending the length of time foreign observers stay in Hebron.

Flight school may privatize

Israel's air force is considering privatizing its flight school to save money. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that the air force commander is anticipating smaller defense budgets if there is a peace accord.

Heart transplant fails

A 64-year-old Israeli man with an artificial heart died five days after the experimental device was implanted.

The head of the transplant unit at Sheba Medical Center near Tel Aviv said the artificial heart had worked well, but the patient died from previous damage to his system caused by a severe heart condition.

Druse passengers kept off plane

Israel's Arkia Airlines refused to let Druse passengers board a flight to Tel Aviv, citing security reasons. In what was the second such incident in two weeks, the passengers had ordered tickets and paid for them ahead of time.

But they were told upon arriving at the terminal in Kiryat Shmona they could not board because the required security checks could not be conducted.

U.S. tourism to Israel up

U.S. tourism to Israel is expected to increase by 25 percent in 2000, according to an Israeli tourism official. Some 515,000 tourists traveled to the Jewish state from the United States in 1999.



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Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

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Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

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convention. The word conservatism, in contrast, rolls a little easier off the tongue, Friedman said, speaking at a pre-convention forum sponsored by the AJCommittee on "The Republican Party and the Jewish Community."

Summarizing a case he made in a recent article in *Commentary* magazine, "Are Jews Moving to the Right?" Friedman said the idea of "compassionate conservatism" can be very attractive to Jews.

Still, Friedman said, Jews are largely put off by the Christian right, and the issues such as abortion and school prayer, on which they seek to influence the Republican Party.

To the degree that evangelical leaders Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell are seen as "part of the arsenal of Republican ideas and supporters," Friedman said, "Jews will have difficulty making a final move to the right."

Indeed, many Jewish delegates at the convention sought to distance themselves from some of the social issues espoused by the party platform.

"I'm a pro-choice Republican" who doesn't support the Republican platform on the abortion issue, Pennsylvania state Sen. Robert Jubelirer said at the AJCommittee-sponsored event.

But that should not be an issue on which to base one's vote, he said, echoing the view of many of the Jewish delegates who said they were pro-choice.

Several also said they did not believe that Bush was seeking to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion, and they took him at his word that the abortion issue would not be a litmus test for any potential appointee to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Instead, the delegates here focused on the economic and foreign policy issues being touted by Bush and his party.

In the area of church-state separation, some Jewish Republicans see a gradual shift in what one called the "absolutist" position on issues such as vouchers and faith-based domestic programs.

"Just as we are reassessing the role of religion in American Jewish life, we also have to look again at the role of religion in American life," said Elliott Abrams, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a think tank that is based in Washington.

Abrams, who led a round-table discussion about public policy issues of concern to the Jewish and Hispanic community, said the Jewish community is rightly beginning to reassess the issue of vouchers, government funds that parents can use at public, private or parochial schools.

To continue to support public schools as an absolute value is "not a moral position," Abrams said in an interview, when the public schools that Jews can choose are in affluent areas, as opposed to the failing inner city public schools many nonwhites are forced to attend.

Thomas Schatz points to his hometown of Washington, the nation's capital, as a good example where school choice, the option to send your child to any school in the district, works.

"Minority parents want vouchers," said Schatz, president of a group called Citizens Against Government Waste.

Schatz, a 47-year-old who says he turned Republican some five years ago and is a new board member of the RJC, represents what veteran Jewish Republicans see as an encouraging shift among younger Jews.

"A predetermination to be a Democrat tends to resonate with the older Jewish voter" that doesn't exist among younger Jews, Halpern said.

Acknowledging that Bush is unlikely to garner more than a quarter of the Jewish vote, if that, some say that the Jewish voices in the Republican Party — and the Jewish money — in the end is more important than Jewish votes.

Jewish ideas may be "more consequential than Jewish votes in the long run," May said at an AJCommittee forum.

He cited Jewish thinkers in the neoconservative movement and listed as key Bush advisers Ari Fleischer, the candidate's spokesman; Josh Boltun, a general policy adviser and Stephen Goldsmith, the former mayor of Indianapolis and a domestic policy adviser. □

JEWISH WORLD

Advocate says fast-track appeal could be good news for the Iran 10

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — One month after the conviction of 10 Jews sparked worldwide condemnation of Iran and its judiciary, the Islamic state seems to be responding by putting the prisoners' appeal on the fast track.

Whether the verdicts will be thrown out or reduced is another question.

But now there is at least hope that some of the 10 — who were sentenced to four to 13 years in prison for an array of alleged anti-state activities — may be released soon after the appeals, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Appeals in Iran typically drag on for many months, said Hoenlein, but an Iranian judiciary official announced Saturday that a three-judge panel — rather than the normal, lone judge — had been assigned exclusively to the case.

Moreover, spokesman Hossein Ali Amiri was quoted as saying, "The judges have been told not to investigate any other cases until this one is completed."

The 10 have already been locked up for 18 months, and allowed to spend just five minutes a week with relatives, said Hoenlein. According to Iranian law, said Hoenlein, prisoners are eligible for parole after one-third of their sentence is served.

The panel may consider the 18 months as time already served, which would free at least two of the prisoners. Furthermore, there is the possibility the panel may allow the convicted Jews to serve their sentences concurrently rather than consecutively.

That would mean Hamid Tefileen, for example, who is one of the alleged ring leaders and was sentenced to 13 years — nine years for aiding a foreign government and four years for membership in an illegal organization — could serve the two sentences simultaneously.

That would be a total of nine years in jail instead of 13.

With parole, Tefileen could be freed after another 18 months, Hoenlein said. □

Reported 1999 hate crimes jump 12 percent in California

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Hate crimes increased in California by 12 percent in 1999, according to a report from the state's attorney general.

The shooting rampage at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills in August and arson attacks on three Sacramento synagogues in June received the most media attention, but the largest number of hate crime victims were African Americans.

In a breakdown on the causes of the reported 1,962 hate crimes, which affected 2,500 victims, 60 percent were based on race or ethnicity, 22 percent on sexual orientation and 17 percent on religion.

Anti-Semitic incidents were classified under "religion" and represented by far the largest proportion of crimes in that category.

The findings support the results of an Anti-Defamation League study, released in April, which showed a 20 percent increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes in 1999.

The current report was released July 27 by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, who cautioned that the 12 percent increase may just indicate a greater alertness by individuals and police in reporting such incidents.

A similar point was stressed by ADL Regional Director David Lehrer, who said that while the publicity from the two high-profile attacks on Jewish institutions may have prompted some copycat crimes, they perhaps encouraged others to report hate-motivated crimes.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, sees the explosion of hate sites on the World Wide Web as a motivating factor in encouraging and empowering individual bigots. □

Shul sues over unpaid pledge

A Conservative synagogue in Pittsburgh is suing one of its members for failing to fulfill a \$25,000 pledge made six years ago.

The Tree of Life synagogue sued 70-year-old Vincent Nathan DiGiambattista — who said he was unable to pay the pledge because he was helping a bankrupt friend — for paying only \$900, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Catholic Shoah forum opens

A Holocaust education program for Catholic school educators is slated to take place this week in Washington.

Forty-five teachers from across the United States will participate in the conference at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The Anti-Defamation League developed the program, which will address such issues as Jews in the New Testament, and churches and the Holocaust.

Gay group holds conference

Gay and lesbian Jews formed two new groups at a recent conference: a networking group for Jewish communal professionals and a group promoting gay, lesbian and bisexual concerns within the Conservative movement.

In addition, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Jewish Organizations announced it will modify its name to include transgendered Jews.

It will also include as part of its name the words "Keshet Ga'avah," Hebrew for "rainbow of pride."

In another development, the first openly lesbian city council member in Israel told the conference that she plans to run for a seat in the Knesset in the next election.

If she wins, Michal Eden, a councilwoman in Tel Aviv who will run with the leftist Meretz Party, would be Israel's first openly gay legislator.

ADL: Polaroid ad OK

A Polaroid ad that features Chasidic Jews in a diamond vault is not offensive, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

The ad, which features actual Chasidim and has appeared in Newsweek and Business Week magazines, is one of seven showing unique places where Polaroid products might be used.

Web site honors Shoah victims

A Vienna-based group has collected the names of more than 14,000 Austrian Jews who died during the Holocaust and published them on its Internet site.

The Web site, www.holocaust.at, takes about 24 hours to run all the names, which linger on the screen for a few seconds before fading out.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Barak narrowly saves government, but presidential vote is slap in face

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak appears to be hanging on to power by a thread.

He may have narrowly averted the end of his government by surviving a no-confidence motion this week, but the Knesset sent a powerful anti-Barak message when it elected a member of the opposition as Israel's eighth president.

On Monday, legislators elected Likud Party lawmaker Moshe Katsav president in a vote that was believed to be as much a stinging rebuke to Barak as it was to Katsav's opponent, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

With the Knesset about to go into recess until October, Barak now has three months to stabilize his governing coalition and pursue the peace process.

Barak "is prime minister simply because there are not 61 Knesset members who want to go to elections," said Yaron Dekel, Israel Television's chief political commentator.

Barak "cannot pass anything in the Knesset — not a president, and not a budget and not gardening and watering legislation."

In the no-confidence balloting, legislators voted 50-50 with eight abstentions, which fell short of the 61 votes needed in the 120-member Knesset to topple the government. Twelve Knesset members did not attend the session.

Among those who abstained was Barak's foreign minister, David Levy, who has accused the premier of making too many concessions during the Camp David summit with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Levy had threatened to resign in the coming days if Barak does not make a serious effort to form a national unity government with Likud.

During the pre-vote debate, opposition leader Ariel Sharon also accused Barak of conceding too much, saying the offers Barak made at the failed summit "set a dangerous precedent for Israel." Before setting off for Camp David, Barak suffered the defections of three parties from his government, a move that left his coalition with only 42 Knesset seats.

During his speech before the no-confidence vote, Barak accused the defecting parties and the opposition of pursuing their own narrow interests instead of serving the public good.

"Rise above small-minded politics in order to bring peace to Israel," Barak told legislators.

Earlier, Katsav defeated Peres in a secret parliamentary vote that defied all forecasts. Katsav, 54, beat the 77-year-old Peres, who had been widely expected to win, in a second round of voting by 63-57. The additional balloting for the largely ceremonial — and nonpartisan — post was held after Katsav defeated Peres in the first round, but failed to receive the necessary 61 votes.

The opposition seized on the results as a renunciation of Barak's government.

"This was an informal no-confidence vote in the prime minister," Sharon declared immediately after the results were announced. "It shows what the national camp can do when it works together."

President-elect Katsav was to be sworn in at a ceremony Tuesday evening. Little known abroad, Katsav has served as a

right-wing legislator in the Knesset since 1977. He has held several deputy minister portfolios and served as tourism minister in the government of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Speaking after the Knesset vote, Katsav said he hoped his presidency would be "one of quiet and unity. I will work to reduce the tension in society."

Katsav's predecessor, Ezer Weizman, stepped down last month in the shadow of a financial scandal.

Katsav said that despite his lengthy activity in the Likud Party, "Today I have to lock the door on my political views, for the next seven years," when his term ends.

Born in Iran, the 54-year-old father of five has championed the rights of Israel's Sephardi population.

Along with the Likud, Orthodox parties welcomed the election of Katsav, who is religiously observant.

Monday's vote was a painful blow to Peres, for whom the presidency would have topped off a lengthy diplomatic and political career. It would also have shaken off Peres' image as a perpetual loser in elections. While he has held a variety of top posts, Peres has lost four out of five elections for prime minister.

Peres had counted on the support of Orthodox legislators.

But officials of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party said all of the party's 17 lawmakers had supported Katsav. A Shas leader, Rabbi Yitzhak Kadouri, said he had a vision a day before the elections that Katsav was God's favorite.

An architect of the Oslo accords, Peres shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat.

Peres would not immediately comment on the vote or his future plans.

"At this moment, the only thing I have to say is to congratulate Moshe Katsav on his election as president," Peres said. "I wish him success and all the best." □

Poles back punishing anti-Semites

ROME (JTA) — Three-fourths of Polish citizens support punishment for anti-Semitic activities, according to a recent poll.

The poll results were reported in the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* on July 23.

Thirty-four percent of respondents said people who wrote anti-Semitic graffiti should be punished by law, and 53 percent said they should be publicly denounced but not suffer legal consequences. Six percent said writing anti-Semitic graffiti should not result in any sanctions.

Similarly, 26 percent of respondents supported legal measure against Holocaust deniers, 54 percent said they should be denounced without legal sanctions and 9 percent said there should be no sanctions.

The survey also showed that 52 percent of non-Jewish Poles agree that "Jews are our elder brethren in faith." One-fourth disagreed with this statement.

Four years ago a similar survey showed that 40 percent agreed and 39 percent disagreed.

"The positive change is clear and rightly attributed to the recent activities of Pope John Paul II," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a leader of the Warsaw Jewish community and Warsaw consultant for the American Jewish Committee.

The pope apologized for Catholic anti-Semitism before he visited Israel in March. □