



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Lieberman gets nod, offers prayer

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) agreed to be the Democratic Party's candidate for vice president.

Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, said he and Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore "said a short prayer together" during their phone conversation.

Lieberman will become the first Jewish vice presidential candidate in U.S. history.

Israel's minister for Diaspora affairs welcomed word that Al Gore had picked Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate.

"I am very proud that American society has matured" to the point that "a religious Jew can be a candidate of this high position," said Rabbi Michael Melchior, himself an Orthodox Jew. [Pages 1, 4]

### Israel postpones shul debate

Israel's Chief Rabbinical Council postponed a debate on a proposal to build a synagogue on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

Instead, the council appointed a special committee to study the issue.

Meanwhile, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, the senior Islamic official there, warned that building the synagogue would start a war "that only God knows where it would lead."

### Celebs join anti-racism campaign

Jewish leaders and government officials in Germany are recruiting celebrities to speak out against neo-Nazis.

Among those who have joined the campaign is former tennis champion Boris Becker, who has complained that his wife, the daughter of a black American father and a white German mother, has often been subjected to racial slurs.

Meanwhile, police removed a bomb from outside the home of a Jewish family in the southern German town of Bamberg. A police spokesman said it was too early to say whether the family was targeted because it is Jewish. It was also unclear whether the device was armed.

Because of Tisha B'Av, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Aug. 11.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Lieberman draws no line between religion and policy

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) has been in public life a long time and has left an extensive trail of votes and positions on the issues.

But when Al Gore named the two-term U.S. senator and former Connecticut attorney general as his running mate this week, as much was initially made of Lieberman's religion as his record on the issues.

Lieberman, who is Orthodox, will be the first Jew in U.S. history to be named to a major national party ticket.

Perhaps this scrutiny of his religion comes because Lieberman's religious convictions form the basis for his political beliefs.

His record shows him to be a moderate Democrat who crosses party lines on certain issues.

His moderate approach fits most of the agendas supported by mainstream Jewish organizations.

On many domestic issues, such as gun control, abortion and hate crimes, Lieberman supports much of what those organizations stand for: increased gun control, the right of a woman to choose and national hate crimes legislation.

One issue that may define him as a candidate — and at the same time divides the American Jewish community — is school vouchers, government money that could be used for private schools.

Lieberman co-sponsored legislation in 1995 that would have provided vouchers to low-income parents so they could choose to send their children to attend private or parochial schools.

Most Jewish organizations oppose school vouchers, fearing that even indirect government funding of parochial schools would still violate the separation between church and state.

But Orthodox groups side with Lieberman.

"Certainly he has been one of the key champions of school choice in the Senate," said Abba Cohen, director and counsel of the Washington office of Agudath Israel of America.

Lieberman's plan doesn't directly provide vouchers, but it is an incentive-based program and an "important step," according to Cohen.

Another issue that may demonstrate Lieberman's pragmatic approach is his stance on prayer in public schools.

While he generally opposes such prayer, in 1992 the Connecticut senator spoke out against a Supreme Court decision that struck down prayer in school graduation ceremonies.

"Students who are graduating will lose much more than they will gain from the prohibition of prayer at their graduation," he said.

The Supreme Court this year said student-led prayers at high school football games are not constitutional.

The court is expected to address the issue of student-led prayers at graduations in the coming term.

Lieberman also takes a centrist approach to foreign policy.

A strong supporter of Israel and foreign aid to the Jewish state, Lieberman did not want to put pressure on the administration to advance an American peace plan while

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Jewish leaders blast Shas rabbi

European Jewish leaders blasted the leader of Israel's fervently Orthodox Shas Party for saying that the Jews murdered in the Holocaust were the reincarnated souls of sinners.

Paul Spiegel, the head of the Central Council of German Jews, said that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's comment "doesn't say much for him having a certain wisdom." Tullia Zevi, the former president of Italy's Jewish community, said, "The whole argument that the evildoers were doing the right thing is ludicrous and scandalous." Meanwhile, Yosef backed off from his comments, saying that all the Jewish victims of the Nazis "were holy and pure and complete saints."

### Barak: Too soon for new summit

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office said it is too soon to talk about prospects for a new peace summit with the Palestinians. The statement followed reports of secret contacts between Israeli and Palestinian officials, and remarks by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat that he expects another summit meeting with President Clinton.

Meanwhile, Israel launched a campaign to sell its version of why the Camp David summit failed. Cabinet ministers Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Shlomo Ben-Ami are being dispatched to Europe and to some Muslim states to explain Israel's position at the failed talks.

### Barak fills 4 Cabinet posts

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak temporarily filled four Cabinet positions that were held by parties that left his coalition to members of his One Israel Party.

Communications Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer took over the housing portfolio, Finance Minister Avraham Shochat assumed the Infrastructure Ministry, Cabinet minister Haim Ramon took over the Interior Ministry and Justice Minister Yossi Beilin assumed the religious affairs portfolio.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were going on last year.

In a letter to the Clinton administration from 81 senators led by Lieberman, the Connecticut senator said, "It would be a serious mistake for the United States to change from its traditional role as facilitator of the peace process to using public pressure against Israel."

The letter praised Israel's support of the Oslo accords and cited Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's threats of violence.

Nevertheless, at the National Prayer Breakfast last year, Lieberman, over objections from some American Jewish groups and congressional lawmakers, welcomed the Palestinian leader and prayed that God would guide him and Israeli officials in the path to peace.

Lieberman also has showed his disapproval for the administration's use of a waiver to postpone moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in the interests of national security.

In 1999, Lieberman and nine other senators sent a letter sternly warning President Clinton against invoking the waiver, saying it would be inconsistent with the intent of Congress.

"Non-fulfillment of the law does no good to the U.S.-Israeli relationship or to prospects for Arab-Israeli peace," the letter stated.

Clinton exercised the waiver at that time.

But he indicated after the failed Camp David summit last month that his administration would reconsider its position.

Lieberman's Orthodoxy plays a major role in his politics — and he is not afraid to say so.

"One of the great values of American society, which I believe is shared by most all Americans, is a belief in God," Lieberman once said.

In an interview several years ago with Reuters, Lieberman said that his religious upbringing and religious education contribute to his identity. "And who I am determines how I vote on particular issues," Lieberman said.

Lieberman has said he would break Shabbat in cases of an emergency — and he has walked from his home in Georgetown to the Senate, several miles across Washington.

But one of the most memorable stands that Lieberman took was not on a policy issue, but on Clinton's behavior during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

In September 1998, just a few weeks after Clinton admitted he had a sexual relationship with Lewinsky, Lieberman was one of the first Democrats to speak out. He chose the Senate floor as his venue.

He called Clinton's behavior "disgraceful" and said the implications of the Clinton scandal were so serious that he felt a responsibility to his constituents and his conscience to voice his concerns publicly.

"Such behavior is not just inappropriate. It is immoral. And it is harmful, for it sends a message of what is acceptable behavior to the larger American family," Lieberman said.

"I am afraid that the misconduct the president has admitted may be reinforcing one of the worst messages being delivered by our popular culture, which is that values are fungible.

"And I am concerned that his misconduct may help to blur some of the most important bright lines of right and wrong in our society," he said.

Lieberman's strong moral stand showed his character, many analysts say, and will help Gore distance his ticket from the problems of the Clinton administration.

But even as he rebuked the president, Lieberman showed his loyalty to the Democratic Party and to Clinton, an old friend.

"Let us as a nation honestly confront the damage that the president's actions over the last seven months have caused, but not to the exclusion of the good that his leadership has done over the past six years, nor at the expense of our common interest as Americans," he said.

While Lieberman said that the president's behavior should be followed by "some measure of public rebuke and accountability," he eventually voted against convicting Clinton on the two impeachment articles that he faced in the Senate in 1999. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Bronfman may buy liquor unit

Jewish philanthropist Charles Bronfman is considering making a bid for the liquor division of the Seagram Co., which he currently serves as co-chairman. The company is being sold to Vivendi of France, which has indicated that it plans to sell the liquor business.

### Aussies praise Maccabiah move

The families of the Australian victims of the 1997 Maccabiah bridge disaster welcomed the resignation of the president of the Maccabiah World Union.

The families, along with Australia's leading Jewish groups, have been calling on Ronald Bakalarz to resign since the disaster left four Australian athletes dead and scores of others injured.

The president of Maccabi Australia, Tom Danos, said the victims' families still needed to receive compensation before Australia would participate in the 2001 Maccabi Games in Israel.

### German church may give to fund

Germany's Roman Catholic Church said it would probably contribute to a fund for Holocaust-era slave and forced laborers.

Last month, the church acknowledged that it may have used such laborers during the war. As a result, a church spokesman said Sunday, "a basic compensation is justified."

### Blair sends envoy to Middle East

British Prime Minister Tony Blair sent his personal envoy to the Middle East to offer support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Lord Levy has made frequent trips to the Middle East as Blair's envoy.

### New Zealand extremist jailed

Officials in New Zealand arrested a man who may have been planning to attack a Jewish target.

When they arrested Stefano Wayne Durante, customs and police officials found in his home a list of Jewish congregations throughout New Zealand as well as a cache of weapons, explosives and ammunition.

David Zwartz, president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, told JTA after Durante received a three-year jail sentence, "It is sobering and sad that anyone should develop what appears to be such psychopathic, racially based hatred, and methodically amass the means for violent action."

### Youths work to restore cemetery

Forty young people from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Israel began restoring one of Slovakia's oldest Jewish cemeteries. The work in Nitrianske Rudno is part of an annual summer camp run by the Slovak Union of Jewish Youth.

## Judge strikes down kosher laws in New York as unconstitutional

By Eric J. Greenberg  
The New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — Declaring that New York state's kosher laws excessively entangle government with religion, a Brooklyn federal judge has struck down the 118-year-old statutes as unconstitutional.

Orthodox kosher-law advocates immediately said they would appeal the July 28 decision by U.S. Eastern District Court Judge Nina Gershon, who ruled in favor of a Long Island butcher whose 1996 lawsuit claimed that the state's kosher laws violated church-state separation.

The ruling marks the latest in a string of legal losses for kosher food laws across the country, including New Jersey and Maryland.

Gershon found that New York's kosher laws violated the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by "endorsing and advancing religion."

"The entanglements involved here between religion and the state are not only excessive in themselves, but they have the unconstitutional effect of endorsing and advancing religion," she wrote in a 27-page decision.

Gershon also ordered a permanent injunction barring the state's Department of Agriculture and Markets from enforcing the kosher laws.

New York Gov. George Pataki called the decision "shocking" and said, "We'll do everything in our power to make sure that these laws that are so important to all New Yorkers are able to continue."

A spokesman for Brian Yarmeisch, co-owner of Commack Self-Service Kosher Meats, said, "We're thrilled with the results."

But attorney Nathan Lewin, who represents several national Orthodox groups, said the judge was "clearly wrong" and vowed an appeal.

Lewin argued that the kosher laws are not an entanglement with religion but "simply protection against consumer fraud in the area of religion."

"There's nothing wrong with protecting consumers against being defrauded, whether it be over kosher food or anything else," said Lewin, an Orthodox attorney who is representing the Orthodox Union, the nation's largest kosher certification agency; Agudath Israel of America; the National Council of Young Israel; and state Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.

Silver, an Orthodox Jew and one of the state's most powerful Democrats, said he would seriously eye an appeal.

"My initial reaction is there is a fine line between the establishment of religion and the accommodation of religion," said the lawmaker. "The state has a definite interest in protecting consumers. I believe the laws of the state are designed to accommodate religion. If some product is sold as kosher, the state has an interest in being able to know that the item is kosher."

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said the state must realize that with freedom of religion there are various ways of observing Judaism.

"I think the court has really acted very appropriately here and basically said that any individual who is a rabbinic authority should be able to provide certification," Epstein said.

Nathan Diament, O.U.'s Washington legislative expert, said Gershon's ruling was disappointing but not surprising.

Diament said the ruling means "the kosher food consumer is left to rely exclusively on the private sector, whether it be the O.U. or other kosher food certification agencies, to try and inform them what's kosher and what's not."

Yarmeisch filed the original lawsuit in January 1996. He claimed the state's kosher laws are based on "Orthodox Hebrew religious requirements," which discriminate against his store. Commack Self-Service Kosher Meats is under the supervision of a Conservative rabbi. □

(New York Jewish Week staff writer Stewart Ain contributed to this story.)

NEWS ANALYSIS**VP choice means Jews in U.S. have come of age, leaders say***By Michael J. Jordan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — American Jewish leaders are rejoicing that a Jew has reached a new height in U.S. politics, citing it as a milestone not only for the Jewish community, but for all minorities and America itself.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), among the most visibly religious members of the U.S. Senate and widely respected on both sides of the aisle, has accepted Al Gore's offer to serve as his vice presidential running mate.

Some Jewish leaders spoke of great pride in America itself, where a Jew can rise to the front and center of the political scene. Meanwhile, some lay Jews were uneasy about the reaction of the American public at large. Mostly, though, Jewish leaders and activists heaped praise on the Connecticut senator for his honesty and integrity, and a sterling sense of morality they say is derived from his faith as an Orthodox Jew.

"His value construct is so solid, his moral compass so defined, that it resonates with anyone who shares that definition," said Ethan Felson, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council in Hartford.

They said the fact that Gore and his advisers were confident enough to tab a Jew for the No. 2 spot is a sign of the country's political maturity. As recently as 1984, Walter Mondale reportedly decided against Dianne Feinstein, now a U.S. senator from California, because her Jewishness was considered a detriment.

"It's taken a while, but America has finally come of age," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "I think people now recognize that these are public servants who happen to be Jews, not Jews who happen to be public servants."

And in the process, the glass ceiling may have cracked, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"We're seeing another barrier come down," Hoenlein said.

"This is an important message to all young Americans: that anyone of hard work and integrity can answer the call to public service, regardless of religion, ethnicity or race."

Jewish leaders note, however, that the same strong convictions that enabled him to cross party lines on crucial legislation also means he will not always agree with mainstream Jewish consensus on crucial issues.

Nor will every American Jew vote for him. Lieberman runs against the grain with his support for school vouchers, while resisting the release of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard.

"This is no slam dunk for the Jewish community," said Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union, for whom Lieberman serves as a member of the board of directors.

"Joe Lieberman has a wonderful record to stand on, people love him and admire him, but it's not automatic that Jews will vote for him. People will judge him on the issues. And that's the way it should be."

Conversely, Lieberman is expected to continue to judge issues on their merit, regardless of what the majority of Jews think. In fact, one Jewish activist in Connecticut said his vaunted independ-

ence combined with Jewishness may make him more immune to Jewish pressure groups. While Lieberman has always been actively involved with Jewish causes, the activist said it sometimes appears that his Senate colleague from Connecticut, Christopher Dodd, is even more receptive to Jewish public opinion.

"I'm going to tell Joe Lieberman how Jews feel? He knows how Jews feel," said the activist, who requested anonymity.

"It would be chutzpah to say, 'If you do this, you'll alienate the Jews.' Joe's not a candidate of the Jews; he's a candidate who happens to be a Jew."

While Jewish leaders, accustomed to the limelight and the struggle to enter the mainstream, cheered the news Monday, they acknowledged the initial trepidation felt by some lay members of the community. Indeed, some wondered privately whether Lieberman's nomination "is good for the Jews."

So the question for some was not so much, "Is America ready for a Jewish VP?" but "Are Jews ready for a Jewish VP?"

"There is a schizophrenia in the Jewish community where, on the one hand, we want to exert influence, while on the other hand, we're sensitive to the question of Jewish power," said Foxman.

"I think there's still a remnant of this schizophrenia, this discomfort. But from where I sit, I think we've matured and moved past that."

Anxiety about the potential for such a high-profile Jewish politician — for example, if crisis strikes America, will Jews be blamed? — touches on a deeper pathology, one ingrained over centuries, if not millennia, say observers.

"There is a predisposition to create Jewish identity based on fear of 'the other,'" said Rabbi Irwin Kula, president of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

"There has been a lot of trauma, and the trauma is real. But this should be part of the process of healing that trauma. America is a qualitatively different place than any in which Jews have ever lived.

"It's a very new challenge to build Jewish identity in a place of freedom and affluence, rather than in persecution and insecurity. We should stop worrying about who's an anti-Semite, and let's be who we are." □

**Facts about Sen. Lieberman**

**Born:** Feb. 24, 1942, in Stamford, Conn.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree from Yale College in 1964; law degree from Yale Law School in 1967.

**Career:** Elected to Connecticut State Senate, 1970-1980; served as majority leader, 1974-1980. Served as Connecticut's 21st attorney general, 1982-1988. Elected to U.S. Senate in 1988, re-elected 1994.

**Legislation:** Supports abortion rights, school vouchers and gun control.

**Family:** Lives in New Haven, Conn., with his wife, Hadassah; they have one daughter together. He has a son and daughter from a previous marriage, and she has a son from a previous marriage. They have two granddaughters.

**Religious life:** Member of two Orthodox synagogues in Washington and Connecticut. He has said he will work on Shabbat only to promote "the respect and protection of human life and well being." He has said he will vote on legislation and participate in important meetings on Shabbat, but won't campaign. □