



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 150

Wednesday, August 9, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Lieberman: It's a 'miracle'

The Democratic Party will "tear down an old wall of division" when it nominates Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) as its vice presidential candidate next week, Al Gore said.

At Gore's side Tuesday in Nashville, Lieberman repeatedly mentioned God and the "miracle" of his being chosen by Gore.

During her speech, Lieberman's wife, Hadassah, made reference to the fact that her parents were Holocaust survivors.

Poll: Jewishness not a factor

Sen. Joseph Lieberman's Jewishness will not affect Al Gore's presidential campaign, according to a majority of those responding to a Gallup poll conducted for CNN and USA Today.

Among the respondents, 52 percent said Lieberman's Jewish heritage would have no effect on the campaign, while 26 percent said it would help and 13 percent said it would hurt the Democratic ticket.

The poll also found that Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush's large weekend lead over Gore had nearly vanished since Lieberman was named as Gore's running mate.

Families try to help 'Iran 10'

The families of 10 Iranian Jews jailed on charges of spying for Israel met a senior judicial official to request better conditions for the prisoners.

The relatives said they asked the official to double the number of kosher meals the prisoners receive to two a week, to return the prisoners' property, which was seized after their arrest, and to unfreeze their bank accounts.

Likud tries to topple Barak

Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon is trying to drum up the needed 61 Knesset members to topple the government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

To this end, Sharon met with legislators including David Levy, who recently resigned as Barak's foreign minister.

The Knesset will interrupt its summer recess next week for a special session called by 20 opposition legislators. The Likud Party wants to address the peace talks with the Palestinians and the prime minister's recent changes in government ministries.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Judaism at Lieberman's core in his political and private life

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Sen. Joseph Lieberman's first Friday in the U.S. Senate posed a problem for him — not politically, but religiously.

It was 1988, and the Senate session was running late into the night. Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, was obliged to stick around, despite the Sabbath.

Instead of walking all the way to his new home in the Georgetown neighborhood — or violating the laws of Shabbat by jumping in a taxi — he made alternate plans: He would sleep on a cot in his office.

When his Senate colleague Al Gore got wind of Lieberman's ad hoc accommodations, he implored the freshman lawmaker to stay at the nearby apartment of Gore's parents.

Lieberman consented. He was then surprised to find that Gore had arranged for the bathroom lights to be turned on and the bedroom lights turned off.

As Lieberman later recounted to rabbi and author Kurt Stone, "I may have had the most distinguished Shabbos goy in history."

Stone, who came to know Lieberman and his family in the late 1980s, has nothing but praise for the principled Connecticut senator. In his Washington and Hartford offices, there are mezuot on the doors and pushkas on the desks, for tzedakah, or charity. It is said that Lieberman, 58, calls his mother every day, and also prays daily.

He reportedly prayed with Gore on Monday after agreeing to be the Democratic vice presidential candidate.

"The best compliment I can give him is that he's a mensch — and I define mensch as growing up to be the person that your parents always hoped you would be," said Stone, author of the soon-to-be-released book, "The Congressional Minyan: The Jews of Capitol Hill."

Indeed, as Lieberman noted at an AFL-CIO meeting Monday on his way to accepting Gore's offer, he owes his value system to his parents.

His father worked the night shift loading and unloading a bakery truck before taking a similar job in a liquor business run by two brothers. When he began courting the sister of his bosses, they permitted the couple to marry only after Lieberman had raised his earnings to \$25 a week.

"It was my parents who taught me to value and honor work," Lieberman told the union crowd.

They also taught him the ways of Judaism.

Lieberman's parents were reportedly not particularly religious, and neither attended university. But his father became a self-taught Jew.

As Stone writes, in the liquor store Lieberman senior later owned in Stamford, Conn., customers walking in would often find him studying Torah, Talmud or midrash while listening to classical music.

Judaism became the core of the younger Lieberman.

At Yale in the 1960s, he was one of only a handful of Jews who kept kosher — so Lieberman was known as the one in the cafeteria always eating defrosted fish, says Stone.

When his first nominating convention for Senate in 1988 landed on a Friday night, Lieberman did not attend. Instead, he sent along a videotaped acceptance speech.

"It was a very symbolic and meaningful decision, the kind of thing that has

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.N. inaction at border protested

Israel's deputy defense minister criticized U.N. forces for failing to stem violence from the Lebanese side of the border. Ephraim Sneh's remarks came after firebombs were thrown at Israeli soldiers. U.N. officials said additional forces will be sent to another 11 positions in southern Lebanon, but did not say whether they would be close to the border fence.

A 25-year-old Canadian journalist was hit in the abdomen by three bullet fragments during Monday's border confrontation. Katia Jarjoura was wounded Monday after a Lebanese protester threw a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli army post and Israeli soldiers retaliated with gunfire.

Meanwhile, the government of Lebanon said it would send 1,000 soldiers and police to the southern part of the country on Wednesday.

Panel to foster religion dialogue

Israel is creating a national forum to foster dialogue among various religious and secular groups.

Rabbi Michael Melchior, minister for Israeli society and world Jewish communities, proposed the Yachad Council, which uses the Hebrew word for "together."

Palestinians prep for diplomacy

A two-week training program is being held in the Gaza Strip to prepare Palestinian diplomats for consular work abroad. The program is seen as a sign of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's plan to declare an independent state later this year, with or without a peace deal with Israel.

Jerusalem conference blocked

Israeli police prevented a conference of Palestinian businessmen from taking place in eastern Jerusalem. The action was the second in a week to prevent what police said was illegal Palestinian Authority activity in the Israeli capital.



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*
 Howard Lovy, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

deepened people's respect for him," says Ethan Felson, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Hartford. "He knows when his involvement is necessary and when he can employ other means."

Indeed, in Washington, when Lieberman's presence is needed in the Senate on a Saturday, he walks several miles to get there — with an escort for protection. He doesn't use the subway or elevator. If he is required to vote, the Senate leadership allows him to do so by hand, rather than electronically.

"They used to say that Jacob Javits was the most Jewish Jew in politics; that title now belongs to Lieberman," says Stone, referring to the former New York senator.

Not surprisingly, Lieberman has become something of a celebrity.

When yeshiva and day school students visit Washington, "The kids always ask do I know the Orthodox senator," said Abba Cohen, counsel and director of the Washington office of Agudath Israel of America. "They don't ask me if I know the president."

Lieberman continues to consult with his childhood rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz of Congregation Agudath Sholom in Stamford, Conn., who also officiated at his Bar Mitzvah.

In Washington, the Liebermans belong to the Keshet Israel congregation. Their daughter, Hana, recently celebrated her Bat Mitzvah and graduated from the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital in June. Lieberman spoke at her graduation.

With Lieberman bursting into the national limelight, and on the verge of being just a heartbeat away from the presidency, some Jewish activists express hope that the way Lieberman conducts his life will break down stereotypes of modern Orthodox Jews specifically, and Jews in general.

As Lieberman wrote in *The New York Times* in December 1992, "My parents raised me to believe that I did not have to mute my religious faith or ethnic identity to be a good American."

While Lieberman is loathe to yield on his religious rituals, he may in fact have to make compromises if he assumes the vice presidency.

Some politicians and pundits have raised the issue of whether Lieberman could fully carry out his duties on Saturday despite the fact the senator has already done so, when necessary, for 12 years.

His rabbi at the Keshet Israel congregation in Washington, Rabbi Barry Freundel, advised Lieberman that he can vote on Saturday for the Jewish tradition of pikuach nefesh, or saving people's lives. The senator recently clarified his interpretation of that tradition to mean he may work on Shabbat, but only to promote "the respect and protection of human life and well-being."

Lieberman's clarification should put those concerns to rest, say some Jewish leaders.

"What about some presidents who take a day off to play golf? Except Joe's day off would be Saturday, instead of Sunday," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and himself an Orthodox Jew.

Lieberman's religious values also infuse his political views, whether it be to protect the environment or to condemn President Clinton for questionable morality.

Described by acquaintances as open, thoughtful and low-key, Lieberman admits he sometimes confers with rabbis on particularly complex issues like abortion.

"When I was in the state Senate, I would agonize and agonize over this," he told Reuters in 1997. "And I did occasionally consult rabbinical sources over the generations. Ultimately I decided that, after all my struggling with this question, we really had to respect the right of women to choose."

Not all Americans will agree, of course, but some observers relish the thought of Lieberman injecting his Jewish values into public debate.

"It's one of the great accomplishments of Joe Lieberman's career," said Irwin Kula, president of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

"He never uses theology or God, but he's found a way to bring those values into American discourse and policy in a language all of us can understand.

"That's the American dream: not only that anyone can make it here economically, but that all these different cultures and views can come into the public square in real conversation about where we all want to go." □

(JTA staff writer Sharon Samber in Washington contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Lieberman run prompts Web hate

Anti-Semitic messages are sprouting on the Internet following Al Gore's selection of Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

The ADL, which monitors hate speech on the Internet, said such messages are appearing on message boards, discussion groups and e-mail lists.

Germany targets Nazi Web names

Germany is trying to block Nazi slogans from appearing in German Web addresses after discovering that someone had registered a site using "heil Hitler" as part of the address.

But German officials concede that there is little they can do about Internet sites based outside of Germany.

Jewish programs get grants

A program training people to teach Jewish texts in pluralistic settings was among the latest round of those receiving grants from Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation.

In addition to CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, projects receiving \$100,000 or more from the foundation include the Religious Action Center's summer leadership program for Reform college students and the Metivta/Spirituality Institute's retreat "to help rabbis deepen their own spiritual lives to more effectively respond to the needs of their congregants."

Russian TV station blames Jews

A city-owned Russian television station aired a report blaming Jews for the country's woes, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The broadcast on the St. Petersburg station was based on an earlier report from a local anti-Semitic newspaper.

Cemetery in Russia vandalized

Vandals desecrated 40 graves at a Jewish cemetery in the Russian city of Samara. City authorities are promising to investigate last week's incident.

'Fiddler' to come to small screen

Tevye is slated to reappear in a three-hour U.S. television version in a few years.

The TV version of "Fiddler on the Roof," to be aired over the ABC network, will be modeled on the classic Broadway stage hit, but with an eye toward a new generation that has seen neither the live musical nor the 1971 movie version.

Based on the short stories of Sholem Aleichem, "Fiddler" opened on Broadway in 1964 and ran for a then-record 3,243 performances.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Barak shuffles the deck just to stay in the game

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — No longer enjoying a majority in the Knesset, Prime Minister Ehud Barak moved rapidly this week to shift public attention away from his political weakness to his gritty determination to stay in power.

Barak filled four Cabinet positions that had been held by parties that left his coalition with members of his One Israel Party, and they quickly set about purging officials put in place by the previous ministers.

At the same time, government sources intimated that informal talks with the Palestinians are continuing with a view to resuming the peace negotiations broken off at Camp David last month.

And, in a third step designed to shore up his power — or at least the perception of his power — Barak launched into high-profile discussions with possible new coalition allies in an attempt to shore up his much-depleted coalition.

The purge at the ministries included the peremptory dismissal — it was billed a "resignation" — of the director general of the foreign ministry, Eitan Ben-Tsur, and the recall of Likud-appointed envoys abroad, among them the ambassador to France, former Likud legislator Eliahu Ben-Elissar. Barak, who took over the Foreign Ministry himself after the resignation last week of David Levy, plans to appoint a professional diplomat and close political confidant, Alon Liel, as director general. Liel served as Israeli ambassador to South Africa during the 1990s.

Levy reacted by claiming that Barak had "lost his senses" and was trying to ram through appointments while he still has power.

But Barak denied that he was "settling the score" with Levy, who resigned amid charges that Barak had conceded too much to the Palestinians at Camp David.

"It is natural for the director general to change when a new minister comes in," Barak said at a briefing Tuesday. "As for the ambassadors, their contracts were up, and they had known this for a long time."

In the reshuffling of other Cabinet assignments, 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 the religious affairs portfolio. These ministries had been held by the three parties — Shas, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah and the National Religious Party — that bolted the governing coalition on the eve of the Camp David summit.

Barak and his team of ministers soon made it clear that there would be a price to pay for these defections.

After taking over the Housing Ministry, which had been held by Yitzhak Levy of the NRP, Ben-Eliezer vowed there would be far less money for Jewish settlements in the West Bank and much more for Negev development towns.

Moving into the Religious Affairs Ministry, Beilin ordered the transfer of a key rabbinical department to the Chief Rabbinate. This department, which is responsible for the appointment of hundreds of rabbis around the country, has traditionally been a fertile source of patronage for the political parties that have run the ministry — most recently Shas.

Beilin said he would like to dismantle the ministry entirely, subsuming its functions into the Interior Ministry and the local authorities.

For his part, Ramon, stepping into the Interior Ministry, formerly a Yisrael Ba'Aliyah fiefdom, deliberately nurtured expectations that heads would roll.

In these and other ministries, dozens of aides, advisers, consultants, secretaries and drivers that were appointed by the former ministers have been swept out by order of the civil service commissioner.

The new caretaker ministers are now putting in their own people — to the great chagrin of the former coalition partners. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**A Jewish veep? Most voters could accept it, analysts say**

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Al Smith campaigned for U.S. president — and lost — in 1928, his Roman Catholicism was used against him.

When John F. Kennedy successfully ran for president in 1960, he felt the need to make speeches that distanced himself from the pope.

But Sen. Joseph Lieberman's Orthodox Judaism is not likely to be a burden for him as the Democratic senator from Connecticut goes on the stump as Al Gore's running mate.

In fact, analysts say, Lieberman's beliefs may even help him and Gore.

Americans apparently have come a long way when it comes to the acceptance of public officials from minority religions — even if they might have a little way to go, as indicated by a comment made this week about Lieberman by Sen. John Breaux (D-La.).

"I think people don't care so much about where he goes to church on Sunday, but just that he has the moral values and principles to lead the country," Breaux said.

Despite misunderstandings about when and where Jews worship, a poll that has tracked American views on religion and the presidency supports the view that religion is less of a factor for voters than it used to be.

In 1937, the Gallup organization found that 46 percent of Americans would vote for a Jewish candidate for president. By 1999, that number had climbed to 92 percent.

Smith, the son of Irish immigrants, was the Democratic governor of New York when he ran for president in 1928 against Republican Herbert Hoover.

Smith had other things that hurt him in that election. He was against the prohibition on alcohol then in effect in the United States.

He was also running against the incumbent party during a period of economic prosperity that lasted until the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression.

But his religion was certainly a factor.

One rumor circulated that Smith was in favor of building a tunnel underneath the Atlantic Ocean to connect Washington to the Vatican.

And a leaflet published in New York read:

"When the Catholics rule the United States, And the Jew grows a Christian nose on his face, When the Pope is the head of the Ku Klux Klan, In the land of the Uncle Sam, Then Al Smith will be our President, And the country not worth a damn."

Smith lost the election to Hoover, earning 41 percent of the vote.

By 1960, when Kennedy ran against Republican Richard Nixon, anti-Catholicism had waned, but it had not dissipated entirely.

Questions were raised about the Massachusetts senator's "dual loyalty" — that as a Catholic, he owed more allegiance to the Vatican than to the United States.

Even some liberal Protestant theologians voiced concerns about the lack of independence within the Roman Catholic Church.

In a speech at a Houston hotel in September, Kennedy tackled the issue head-on.

"I believe in a president whose views on religion are his own private affair, neither imposed on him by the nation nor imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office," Kennedy said.

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute," Kennedy said, adding that he opposed public funds for any church or church school.

That speech is credited with having put the issue to rest in the election — although while Kennedy earned 80 percent of the Catholic vote, he received less than one-third of the Protestant vote.

Observers say attitudes have changed in the United States in the past 40 years.

Unlike Kennedy, Lieberman supports school voucher plans that provide government funds to help needy students attend parochial or private schools.

And even districts with minuscule Jewish populations have Jewish representatives in Congress.

"There will still be a whispering campaign against Joe Lieberman, and there will still be an anti-Semitic vote," said Allan Lichtman, the chairman of the department of history at American University.

But, he added, "those who would not be likely to vote for Joe Lieberman on religious grounds would not be likely to vote for Al Gore anyway."

Gore doesn't need any help with the Jewish vote. Jews overwhelmingly vote Democratic, and the Clinton-Gore administration has been popular with most Jewish voters.

Of course, the vice president's selection of an observant Jew could help him among Orthodox Jewish voters, whose views are closer to Republican positions on issues like vouchers and school prayer.

But it's not clear if Lieberman will help the vice president among Southern conservatives, who are widely considered to be solidly in Bush's camp.

Many Christian fundamentalists are strong supporters of Israel — as is Lieberman.

Southern fundamentalists "would be happy to vote for Lieberman, but to vote for Lieberman, they'd have to vote for Al Gore," said Larry Sabato, a professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia.

Even among voters unlikely to support the Gore-Lieberman ticket, the moderate Connecticut senator could challenge a lot of pre-existing views about Jews in general — and Orthodox Jews in particular.

He's fair-skinned, quiet, not wealthy — and doesn't wear a yarmulka.

"He's going to break a lot of stereotypes," said Rabbi Kurt Stone, whose book about Jewish politicians, "The Congressional Minyan: The Jews of Capitol Hill," will soon be released.

But whether the stereotypes have broken in enough minds for religion not to come into play in the voting booth remains to be seen.

As Democratic pollster Mark Mellman put it, "We had a test 40 years ago with John F. Kennedy, and we passed.

"We have a test with Joe Lieberman, and I think the country is going to pass." □