



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Lieberman's loyalties questioned

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan suggested that Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman may be more loyal to Israel than to the United States, according to the Los Angeles Times. "Mr. Lieberman, as an Orthodox Jew, is also a dual citizen of Israel," Farrakhan said incorrectly. "Would he be more faithful to the Constitution of the United States than to the ties that any Jewish person would have to the State of Israel?"

In another development, a Newsweek poll indicated that Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore made only a slight gain after picking Lieberman as his running mate.

Republican candidate George W. Bush leads Gore by 48 percent to 38 percent in a four-way race, with 3 percent for Pat Buchanan and 3 percent for Ralph Nader, according to the poll. This reflects a one-point drop for Bush since a Newsweek poll earlier this month.

### 2nd Jew picked for V.P. race

One of the feuding wings of the U.S. Reform Party chose a Jewish dot-com multimillionaire as its vice presidential candidate.

The wing loyal to presidential candidate John Hagelin picked Nat Goldhaber, founder of an Internet direct-marketing company called Cybergold, to round off the ticket.

### Israeli envoy dies at 68

Israel's ambassador to France died of a heart attack in Paris over the weekend at the age of 68.

A former Mossad agent and legislator from the Likud Party, Eliahu Ben-Elissar spent two years as Israel's ambassador to the United States under the government of Benjamin Netanyahu. [Page 3]

### Victims' families sue gun makers

Families of the victims of a white supremacist's 1999 shooting spree at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in California filed a lawsuit against gun makers, saying they should be held responsible for the incident.

The Aug. 9 lawsuit alleges that six firearms manufacturers are liable for "public nuisance and negligence," and fail to take steps to prevent criminals from obtaining guns.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Compensation for Jews who fled Arab countries on public agenda

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For more than three decades after the creation of Israel in 1948, Samir Muallem and his parents tried to hold onto the sizable business assets of their Jewish family in southern Iraq.

In the early 1950s, many of his family members left for Israel, along with 650,000 Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Muallem and his parents stayed on, and were treated favorably by Iraqi authorities until 1967, when Israel's victory in the Six-Day War sparked an outburst of hostility against the few remaining Jews in the country.

Muallem's father was arrested and threatened with death. His uncle was forced to sign over the family-owned Technical Brick Company — one of the country's biggest brick factories — to the government for a pittance. Upon the father's release, they quickly fled to Iran, then headed for Israel.

"They had started rounding up Jews for interrogation and even liquidated some," said Muallem, 55, who estimates his father's stake in the brick company is worth \$110 million today.

"We just wanted to get out alive."

Now, 52 years after Israel's founding, the Muallem family is in the same boat along with masses of Sephardi Jews who were forced to flee following the establishment of Israel.

As the Israeli-Palestinian peace process enters its end game, their claims of property confiscation are coming up on the public agenda.

But even if peace breaks out, securing compensation from Arab countries will be no easy task, in part, say representatives of Sephardi Jews, because Israel and Jewish organizations never registered property claims properly.

President Clinton surprised many Israelis when, in an interview last month with Israel Television after the failed Camp David summit, he said the issue of compensation for Jewish refugees had been raised at the talks — and was even supported by the Palestinians.

"There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel," said Clinton, suggesting the establishment of an international compensation fund as a solution.

But there is a problem: When Jews arrived in Israel during the 1950s, efforts to register private property left behind in Arab lands were minimal.

"It was a very strange thing," said Oved Ben-Ozer, chairman of the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries.

He estimated that only about 5,000 files were compiled when the immigrants arrived and were housed mostly in tent camps — where surveys could easily have been conducted.

"I don't know if it was negligence or intentional, but the government of Israel simply did not register the property left behind."

In 1969, Israel's Justice Ministry appointed Ya'akov Meron, a professor of Islamic law, to compile records and serve as the point man on the matter.

Meron, who still holds the position, says there were some records when he took the post, and he denies accusations that efforts were not made to register property.

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### U.S. envoy expected next week

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross is expected in the region next week, according to the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

### Peres, Arafat to visit China

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Cabinet minister Shimon Peres plan to visit Beijing for separate meetings with Chinese leaders on the Middle East peace process. Israeli and Palestinian officials have been criss-crossing the globe to try to draw support for their respective positions.

In a related development, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the Palestinians may postpone their declaration of an independent state. He also ruled out the possibility of any Palestinian concessions regarding the status of Jerusalem, saying the city is "Arab land and no one can retreat on this issue."

### President riles secular Jews

Israel's new president tried to smooth a flap that erupted over remarks he made about secular Jews in an interview with a fervently Orthodox newspaper.

Moshe Katsav, who took office two weeks ago promising to promote unity, was quoted as saying that "if secularism dominated in the past hundreds of years, we would have long ago disintegrated and dispersed." Katsav later said his remarks were taken out of context.

### Rabbi gives support to Netanyahu

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef called on his followers to back former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he runs against his successor, Ehud Barak, in a future election.

In an interview published last Friday in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv, Yosef, the spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, backed Netanyahu just as a Gallup poll showed Barak and Netanyahu neck-and-neck if national elections were held now.



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However, in a telephone interview with JTA, Meron would neither say how many files exist today nor what is the value of the claims.

Meron also declined to confirm reports in the Israeli financial daily Globes that there are an estimated 10,000 files, and that Jewish property left behind in Egypt and Iraq alone could be worth up to \$4 billion today.

"If some day we do enter negotiations, we would not want the other side to know exactly how much we are talking about," Meron said.

In the Arab-Israeli peace process, the issue of compensation for Jewish refugees was raised as early as the original 1978 Camp David talks between Israel and Egypt. The peace agreement included an unbinding clause calling for "mutual settlement of claims."

But although some individual Egyptian Jews have petitioned Egypt, few succeeded and the issue was never seriously pursued by the Israeli government.

In part, explains Meron, the main difference between Israel's efforts to secure compensation from Arab countries and efforts to regain compensation for Holocaust survivors is that countries like Germany wanted to clear their name.

"They had an interest to come toward us," he said. "Unfortunately, the Arabs do not feel any obligation toward the Jews."

Furthermore, since Israel still does not even have diplomatic relations with most Arab countries, it cannot approach these countries directly.

The prospect of a peace agreement with the Palestinians could change that.

However, some say that until Clinton's remarks, the peace process did not spark Israel or Jewish organizations into action to prepare the claims.

According to Ben-Ozer, in 1995, during the Oslo peace negotiations, Israeli officials discovered that the Palestinians planned to present well-documented compensation demands and realized it was time to compile Israeli claims in response.

The World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries, however, was created as a political organization to counter Arab claims in the international arena, and was not capable of such a task.

Ben-Ozer accuses the Israeli government and Jewish groups of failing to provide \$1 million he requested about five years ago to allow them to carry out a registration drive.

"Now, again, Clinton spoke and everybody smells money and has woken up," he said. "What does everybody want from me? I have a tiny office and a part-time secretary."

With no budget to carry out a door-to-door survey or an advertising campaign, the group distributed 50,000 forms last year, but received little response.

Even if claims are soon documented, Israel will probably not try to raise Jewish claims against Arab countries to offset Palestinian claims against Israel.

First, the Palestinians reject any linkage of the issues, since they have no liability for property confiscated by Arab countries.

Furthermore, since the Palestinians have well-documented claims, the outcome of this linkage would likely lower Israel's liability — but also nullify the claims of Jews.

Although the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries and other Sephardi organizations support raising Jewish claims in talks with the Palestinians for political purposes, they reject any solution that would leave them without a claims process.

"It would be unfair and unacceptable," said Menachem Yedid, chairman of the Union of Syrian Jews in Israel. "There should be an attempt to find an arrangement within an international framework."

Rabbi Michael Melchior, the minister for Israeli society and world Jewish communities, has backed the position of the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries and says Israel has a moral obligation to pursue the issue.

Melchior says every effort must now be made to document the claims, although these claims should not be used to offset Palestinian demands.

Others are more blunt.

"When it came to European Jews, Israel made sure to go and document everything and fight in the international arena," said one Israeli official familiar with the issue, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"It is more than just a moral responsibility. These people were mistreated when they came to Israel, which tried to suppress their identity, and now it's time to do something about it."

□

## JEWISH WORLD

### Group warns Texas schools

A lawyer is distributing guidelines to all of Texas' school districts on how to get around a recent Supreme Court ruling blocking student-led prayers at high school football games, according to the American Jewish Congress.

The group warned that attempts to evade the ruling would result in more legal challenges that would "very likely be successful" and would force school districts to "spend their limited funds in wasteful litigation."

### Pope, Haider may meet

Austrian far-right politician Jorg Haider may meet with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in December when a Christmas tree is delivered from the Austrian state of Carinthia.

The Vatican arranged to receive a Christmas tree from Carinthia three years ago, before Haider became the state's governor.

According to Italian news reports, however, Italy's foreign minister made it clear in a letter to his Austrian counterpart that Haider is not welcome to visit Italy.

### Croatia vows property restitution

Croatia's president vowed to make the restitution of Jewish property seized after World War II a priority of his government.

Stjepan Mesic made the promise during an Aug. 9 visit to the Washington headquarters of B'nai B'rith International.

### Student gives Gore Web address

An Orthodox Jewish college student gave the Democratic presidential ticket a gift he bought five months ago — <http://www.gorelieberman.com>.

The campaign was so happy to get the domain name for the registration price of \$70, it promised University of Maryland sophomore David Jackson he would meet the candidates soon.

The site now mirrors the official campaign site, [www.algore2000.com](http://www.algore2000.com).

### Portland has biggest Jewish gain

The largest population increase of any Jewish community in the United States in 1999 was reported in Portland, Oregon, according to the 100th edition of the American Jewish Year Book.

Portland's Jewish population increased by 7,500, raising the city's total to 25,000.

Total Jewish population in the United States remained at 6 million, with 46 percent of American Jews living in the Northeast, according to the year-book, which is published by the American Jewish Committee.

## What's a Jewish Republican to do with Lieberman on the other ticket?

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If you are a Jewish Republican, you might want a leader who would support school vouchers, encourage fiscal conservatism, protect values, strengthen Israel and want to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

Sounds like Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

In fact, the man Al Gore picked to be his running mate is someone Republicans have trouble attacking and Jews may find difficult to stay away from.

The campaign of Texas Gov. George W. Bush stressed the differences between Gore and Lieberman and has even gone so far as to paint Lieberman as akin to a Republican. "Al Gore has chosen a man whose positions are more similar to Gov. Bush's than to his own," Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

Lieberman answered those charges last week, when he was officially introduced as Gore's running mate.

Republicans "responded to the news that Al Gore had picked me by saying that George Bush and I think alike," Lieberman said. "With all due respect, I think that's like saying that the veterinarian and the taxidermist are in the same business because either way you get your dog back."

Will the historic choice of the first Jew on a national party ticket make any difference at the polls for Jewish Republicans come November?

"I doubt if Jewish Republicans will change their minds," says Murray Friedman, an American Jewish historian who heads the American Jewish Committee office in Philadelphia.

Gore is expected to win around 80 percent of the Jewish vote.

Friedman believes that ultimately Jewish voters will go the polls with their eyes focused on the choice for president, not vice president.

In a statement, the Republican Jewish Coalition contrasted Lieberman's positions with Gore's. The RJC questioned what Lieberman was doing in the "party of Al Sharpton, the party that refuses to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the party that opposes parental choice in education." Jewish Republicans are bursting with pride that a fellow Jew got the call, said RJC Executive Director Matt Brooks, "but that doesn't necessarily mean you're going to vote for him." □

## Israel's first ambassador to Egypt remembered for work toward peace

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's first ambassador to Egypt after the 1979 treaty was signed is being remembered as a diplomat who helped cement the peace between the two countries.

Israel's ambassador to France, Eliahu Ben-Elissar, died of a heart attack in Paris over the weekend at the age of 68. As ambassador to Egypt, Ben-Elissar "poured content into the new peace between the two states," Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Sunday, praising his many years of service to the Jewish state.

Ben-Elissar served for 10 years in the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, before embarking on a career in politics. After Ben-Elissar joined the Likud Party, former Prime Minister Menachem Begin appointed him director general of the Prime Minister's Office in 1977.

Later elected as a Likud legislator, Ben-Elissar served for two terms as the hawkish chairman of the Knesset's powerful Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed Ben-Elissar ambassador to the United States in 1996 and to France in 1998.

Ben-Elissar's death on Saturday came just after he and several other diplomats had been recalled by Barak, who last week assumed the post of foreign minister after David Levy resigned the post.

Ben-Elissar died as he was planning to return home, the Foreign Ministry said. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**What will happen on Sept. 13?****Analysts paint different scenarios***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Whenever the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin lagged behind an agreed timetable in the peace process, he used to declare that “there are no sacred dates.”

Now, though using somewhat less direct language than his former partner in peace, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is implying the same thing.

On the record, and especially when addressing Arab audiences, Arafat is sticking to Sept. 13 as the date for declaring an independent Palestinian state.

But his spokesmen have explained that while Arafat has the right to make the unilateral declaration, he will not necessarily exert that right.

According to the latest evaluations of the Israel Defense Force's intelligence department, Arafat is now willing to postpone the declaration until Nov. 15, or perhaps even until Jan. 1, the anniversary of the founding of Arafat's Fatah Party.

Salim Zanoun, the chairman of the Palestine National Council, which is the parliament of the PLO, announced earlier this month that although the council's recent decision to declare an independent state on Sept. 13 was still in force, it would meet again to decide whether to stick to that date.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials are emulating Arafat's bob-and-weave rhetoric. “I hear various speculations and reports in the media,” Palestinian Minister of State Ziad Abu Ziad told JTA. “But from Arafat, I hear that he is determined to go ahead and declare independence on Sept. 13. I have heard nothing different from him.”

When asked whether this is final, he modified his statement.

“We still have one month until the target date,” he said. “Let's wait and see what will happen.”

As the date approaches, various scenarios are being painted as officials from both Israel and the Palestinian Authority deal with political realities after the failed Camp David summit.

A first scenario, painted in rosy hues:

Arafat postpones the declaration until after the U.S. presidential elections — and perhaps until after a final peace agreement is reached with Israel.

During the summit, Prime Minister Ehud Barak reportedly promised Arafat that if they reached a peace agreement, Israel would be the first nation to recognize the new Palestinian state.

With Israeli and American approval, the newly born state would gain instant worldwide recognition.

In a second scenario, employing a palette of bleak tones, Arafat makes the declaration in the absence of a final peace accord and Israel responds with political countermeasures of its own.

Palestinian threats to declare independence have long been part and parcel of the negotiations with Israel.

Last year, Arafat threatened to declare a state on May 4, 1999, the fifth anniversary of the start of Palestinian self-rule.

In response, then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to unilaterally annex parts of the West Bank.

Arafat refrained at the time from making the declaration because he did not want it to become an issue in the Israeli

elections — which, according to most analysts, would have played into the hands of Netanyahu.

Adopting a stance from Netanyahu's playbook, Barak has said that Israel would take its own unilateral actions — including annexing Jewish settlements in the West Bank — if Arafat declares a state.

Avoiding specific threats, a spokesman for Barak would only say this week that the issue of Palestinian statehood “is currently subject to negotiations, therefore any Palestinian entity will be the result of the present negotiations.”

A third scenario is painted in gray: A unilateral declaration, which would in effect remain on paper with no actual measures on the ground.

Israeli intelligence experts view this scenario as probable, as long as the Palestinians see a chance for an accord with Israel.

The intelligence department of the Israeli army has noted that contrary to doomsday prophecies following the collapse of the Camp David summit, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been exceptionally quiet.

Even if Arafat does declare a state, it is unclear how significant the move would be.

During his current post-Camp David tour of foreign capitals, Arafat met with Turkey's leaders in Ankara and tried to drum up their support for a Palestinian declaration of independence.

Bulent Ecevit, Turkey's premier, reminded Arafat that Turkey had already recognized Palestinian independence back in November 1988, when the PLO first proclaimed an independent state.

The declaration had no political significance at the time. It may be just as insignificant now.

Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, a staunch supporter of an independent Palestinian state, is among those who hold this view.

“Without the recognition of Israel, the declaration of independence would be meaningless,” he said.

This drew a tart retort from Palestinian minister Abu Ziad.

“He can analyze whatever he wishes, but the declaration of independence is very meaningful for us,” he said. “The purpose of Arafat's present tour is to secure as wide as support as possible for our independence, and I am sure we will gain such recognition, including European recognition.”

The fourth scenario is painted in blood:

Arafat declares independence, thousands of Palestinians take to the streets and stage attacks against Israeli settlements and traffic arteries in the territories. The attacks soon deteriorate into pitched battles between Palestinian policemen and Israeli soldiers.

Yisrael Harel, a fellow at the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and a columnist for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, ruled out this scenario.

In his view, a confrontation over an independent Palestinian state is unlikely because “one way or another,” Arafat will eventually gain the approval of Barak.

Harel, a former chairman of the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, does not anticipate violence once a Palestinian state is proclaimed.

Even if the Palestinians do opt for violence, the end result will be the same, according to Harel.

“Israel is not built to cope with low intensity conflicts, and Arafat will not engage in an all-out war,” he said. Even if Arafat opts for a Palestinian uprising, he said, “I have no doubts that at the end of the day Israel will consent to a Palestinian state.” □