



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. Jewish survey to begin

The first large-scale national study of American Jewry in 10 years is scheduled to begin Aug. 20 after months of delays.

Some 5,000 Jews are expected to be interviewed in the coming months in the National Jewish Population Survey.

The poll, originally scheduled to begin in January, was delayed so that leaders in its sponsoring agency, the United Jewish Communities, could offer input and so that questions could be tested.

The survey is expected to shape the priorities of Jewish organizations in the United States in the coming decade.

Katsav meets liberal leaders

Israeli President Moshe Katsav met with leaders of the Israeli Reform and Conservative movements for the first time since Katsav's election earlier this month.

Thursday's meeting, during which Katsav pledged to represent all streams of Judaism during his seven-year term, took place after the president came under fire from some Israeli liberals for comments seen as disparaging by secular Jews.

He later said his comments were taken out of context.

Arafat reconsiders deadline

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat said he would reconsider whether to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state on Sept. 13 if there is no peace deal with Israel.

Arafat's comments came as high-level talks between the two sides resumed Wednesday, and as U.S. envoy Dennis Ross arrived in the region to see if a new summit is warranted.

JCPA fills top slot

A former top official of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was named to fill the top slot at a U.S. Jewish umbrella group.

Hannah Rosenthal, a longtime Jewish activist and educator who has worked on women's and children's health issues, will be the executive vice chairwoman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs beginning in October.

Rosenthal replaces Lawrence Rubin, who left last month, earlier than he had originally intended.

American synagogues try to change to satisfy new hunger for spirituality

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — At Congregation Agudath Israel in Caldwell, N.J., more than 100 members gather twice a month to talk about their "spiritual journey."

They break off into groups of 25 people, gather in members' homes and discuss things like family peace and caring for the ill, using Jewish texts and their personal lives as springboards.

This is definitely not your parents' synagogue.

Derided as too touchy-feely for some tastes, programs like "spiritual journey" are promoted by their advocates as a way to keep Jews interested and active in their synagogues.

"It ties members to the synagogue when you have intense experiences with a small group of congregation members," says Amy Lipsey, 40, a self-described "seeker" and participant in Agudath Israel's group.

Such innovations are part of a growing movement called

"synagogue transformation."

With many Jewish leaders criticizing synagogues as uninspiring, synagogue transformation is becoming something of a buzzword in American Jewish life.

In the past decade, two national synagogue-change efforts — Synagogue 2000 and the Experiment in Congregational Education — have guided a number of congregations hungry for change, and both are expanding their reach.

Change is necessary, say the Synagogue 2000 and ECE proponents, because too many synagogues remain stuck in old patterns that do not resonate with contemporary American Jews. While earlier generations joined synagogues as "ethnic hangouts," they say, younger Jews are often on spiritual quests that could be answered — but usually aren't — in a synagogue.

In most congregations, writes Rabbi Sidney Schwarz, the founder of a suburban Washington congregation, liturgy is not accessible or engaging and most members are only marginally involved, joining simply so their children can attend Hebrew school and have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Like Synagogue 2000 and ECE proponents, Schwarz, the author of a new book calling for synagogue change, calls for synagogues to make their services more participatory, to develop healthy lay-clergy partnerships, to focus on the education needs of adults and not just children and to take on serious spiritual issues like the nature of God and purpose of life.

Toward this goal, a triumvirate of mega-philanthropists — Charles Schusterman, Michael Steinhardt and Edgar Bronfman — created an organization called Synagogue Transformation and Renewal last winter that will announce its plans in September. Those familiar with the planning say the new group will not work directly with individual synagogues, but will likely serve as a sort of think tank on synagogue renewal efforts and may offer professional workshops for rabbis.

But transformation and renewal can be difficult concepts to get your hands around.

Proponents say it can create trusting atmospheres and spur long-term discussions that might not have otherwise occurred.

But skeptics wonder if those who are attempting institutional change are simply holding a lot of meetings to decide on common-sense practices.

Rabbi Larry Hoffman, who founded Synagogue 2000 in 1996 with University of Judaism professor Ron Wolfson, frequently compares the whole process to therapy in

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.S. wants more say in sales

The United States and Israel are discussing plans that would give Washington more of a voice in arms Israel sells to other nations.

According to a U.S. official, the new arrangements would also reduce from 27 to four the number of countries that Israel sells arms to that the United States reviews.

Israel recently canceled the sale of a radar system to China after pressure from the Clinton administration and Congress.

Israel slams U.S. warning

Israel is criticizing a U.S. warning to Americans traveling in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

An adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Danny Yatom, said he tried to talk the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, out of the warning.

The Israeli army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, said there is no specific danger to tourists.

2 Lebanese cross into Israel

Two Lebanese Druse claiming to be fleeing Hezbollah crossed into Israel undetected, sending the northern region into full security alert.

The two, who speak some Hebrew, crossed the border by foot, hitched a ride in an Israeli military vehicle toward the Israeli community of Kiryat Shmona and later caught a taxi south before being stopped at a police roadblock.

Holidays could hamper athletes

Israel's Sports Ministry is considering whether to allow Israeli athletes to participate in competitions that would fall on the Jewish New Year at the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, which begin in mid-September.

Two of the finals are reportedly in competitions where Israeli athletes have a chance of taking home a medal.

that "you discover how to live so life has purpose and meaning, then you filter all that you do through a lens of purpose."

Rabbi Danny Zemel, whose Washington congregation was among Synagogue 2000's first cohorts, described the process as "the most energizing, enlivening process I've ever been involved in as a rabbi."

He said he frequently gets calls from other temples wanting to know "what's changed" as a result of the process, but "it's not like that."

"It's about studying, it's a process and things happen, or might even change but it's not like dominos, one thing falling after the next. It's because the congregation's involved in a process, all of a sudden it occurs to you to do certain things."

Nonetheless, the transformation process does spawn projects and initiatives, like Agudath Israel's spiritual journey group.

Zemel's Temple Micah now invites congregants observing a loved one's yahrzeit to give a short memorial speech before the synagogue includes that person in the Kaddish prayer.

Temple Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif., which was involved in the ECE project, made such changes as offering a family Shabbat school and hiring a full-time staff person to coordinate adult education.

Reform Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, which a board member, Jane Saginaw, says was once "lovely, but staid" is now experimenting with new services and programs, such as a twice-monthly Friday night family service that uses a congregant-created prayer book and consists primarily of singing.

Synagogue 2000 centers its work around PISGAH, an acronym that is not only the Hebrew word for "heights," but stands for six "spokes" of synagogue life: prayer, institutionalizing change, study, good deeds, ambiance and healing.

Formed four years earlier than Synagogue 2000, the ECE has a similar approach and has worked with 14 Reform temples. A project of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, ECE encourages congregations to make education central to all synagogue activities rather than simply a function of the religious school. Not everyone is an advocate of change on the institutional level, though.

And even some champions of transformation efforts, like Agudath Israel's Rabbi Alan Silverstein, question whether Hoffman's therapy metaphor is appropriate. While Synagogue 2000 "can elevate the synagogue to another level," says Silverstein, Hoffman "really believes the synagogue is more ill as an institution than I think is the case."

Even if it is true that synagogues need change, all the talk about process and transformation strikes some as a bit too touchy-feely.

David Liebeskind, a longtime member of Temple Sinai in Stamford, Conn., and a management consultant by profession, says that while he respects those involved in the process, he and several other congregants have grown frustrated with the Reform congregation's participation in the ECE program.

"I personally wouldn't waste the resources with these grandiose programs because I don't think the payout is going to be as good as spending the time and money elsewhere," he says.

One Conservative synagogue member in Detroit says she has a better suggestion. Federations would be more helpful if they simply paid for more staff positions at synagogues. "What kind of money are the federations paying Synagogue 2000 people to come to their towns and state the obvious?" she asked.

Nonetheless, change proponents insist that congregations can become vibrant even without money. According to Schwarz and Hoffman, if a synagogue does a good job of building community, members will be able to — and want to — take over much of the work that had been relegated to professionals. In fact, they argue, such volunteering will strengthen members' feelings of ownership in the synagogue.

While synagogue transformation has caught the public interest, it is still unclear whether the advocates for change will usher in a new era of synagogue life, or whether most congregations will continue with business as usual.

Because transformation efforts mirror many ideas about institutional change used in the business world, it should resonate with congregants and lay leaders, says Isa Aron, the HUC professor who coordinates ECE.

"Now it's a lot easier than years ago," Aron says. "Now if you go to a congregation and talk about this, not everyone looks at you like you're crazy." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Brothers reunited after 59 years

Two brothers separated by the Holocaust were reunited at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem this week. Lazar and Leibisch Sheiman had last seen each other in Poland in 1941.

Both brothers now live in Israel.

Albright: U.S. will help find killers

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pledged to increase U.S. assistance in the investigation into the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

Capping a five-day visit to several South American countries, Albright met with Argentine Jewish community leaders at the rebuilt AMIA building, where she paid homage to the victims of the 1994 bombing, which killed 86 people and injured hundreds of others.

Online learners to earn degrees

The Conservative movement's seminary is planning to grant degrees to students who take classes online. Students in the Jewish Theological Seminary's Distance Learning Project can earn master's degrees in Jewish education and interdepartmental studies.

Barak slammed on Jerusalem

A leader of Israel's opposition Likud Party denounced Prime Minister Ehud Barak for portraying the potential division of Jerusalem as the "expansion and strengthening" of the Holy City.

In a speech in New York on Thursday before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Limor Livnat also called for new elections and a government of national unity.

"The redivision of Jerusalem would mean the redivision of our people and the redivision of our national soul," said Livnat.

Hebrew teachers to get boost

Members of the largest organization of North American Jewish educators voted to focus on addressing the critical shortage of teachers and principals for Hebrew schools, day schools and other institutions.

The vote at the 25th anniversary conference of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education comes as the group tries to increase its role in influencing where Jewish money is spent.

Group helps Turkish Jews

A New York-based Jewish group is donating more than \$1 million to foster Jewish education and culture in Turkey and the Balkans. The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture's grants will support individuals and groups trying to combat assimilation and build Jewish life.

Lieberman's speech hottest ticket in town, as Jewish history is made

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Joseph Lieberman didn't use the words "Jew" or "Jewish" during the biggest speech of his political career.

But on Wednesday night, he made it clear why his nomination as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate represents the fulfillment of the American dream for the grandson of Jewish immigrants.

Mollie Welinsky, 72, had to shout to be heard above the din as some 18,000 Democrats cheered Lieberman to the rafters of the Staples Center at the end of his vice-presidential acceptance speech.

"That was a fantastic speech that had everything. It was funny, to the point, sentimental and patriotic," said Welinsky, standing in the midst of the California delegation Wednesday evening.

"Lieberman proved that Al Gore couldn't have made a better choice to show the diversity of the Democratic Party," said Sarah Carren of Stockton, Calif. "Everyone was thrilled with his wife, she's a great speaker, too."

"He said all the right things and said them with grace and humor," agreed Karen Wingar of Pasadena, Calif.

Lieberman's speech was interrupted 27 times by stormy applause and standing ovations by delegates waving elongated red signs spelling out Lieberman and chanting "Go, Joe, Go."

The same exhortation was flashed in neon signs encircling the great hall.

Howard Welinsky, Mollie's son and chairman of Democrats for Israel, had received a call earlier from California's Latino Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, asking whether Welinsky would like six passes to the evening's proceedings.

"Every Jew in America would like to be in Staples Center tonight," responded Welinsky, gratefully accepting the passes.

Opening his remarks with "Is America a great country, or what?" and closing with "Only in America," the grandson of immigrants expressed his pride and gratitude to the United States.

"I have seen" the goodness of this country "through the eyes of my grandmother," Lieberman said.

"She was raised in Central Europe, in a village where she was often harassed just because of the way she worshiped God.

"Then she immigrated to America. On Saturdays, she used to walk to the synagogue, and often her Christian neighbors would pass her and say, 'Good Sabbath, Mrs. Manger.'

"It was a source of endless delight and gratitude for her that here in this country, she was accepted for what she was."

Lieberman was introduced by his wife, Hadassah, who described "Joey's" bedrock values as based on "family, faith, congregation and neighborhood."

Her husband, in turn, spoke of Hadassah's family background as the daughter of Holocaust survivors.

Hadassah Lieberman's father was a slave laborer during World War II, and her mother spent time at both Dachau and Auschwitz.

"Her family was literally saved by American GIs who liberated the concentration camps," he said.

"Then her parents escaped communism and were welcomed as immigrants to America and given a new life.

"The fact that a half century later, their daughter would be standing on this stage is a testament to the power of the American dream."

Delegates cheered again when Lieberman introduced his 85-year old mother.

Near the end of his speech, the Connecticut senator spoke of his and his party's goal: "To overcome the differences that are still between us, to break down the barriers that remain, and to help every American claim the limitless possibilities of their own God-given lives." □

Reform faction's presidential pick has a Jewish veep candidate, too

By Andy Altman-Ohr

Jewish Bulletin of Northern California

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — The Jewish community has been woozy over the news that there was one Jewish vice presidential candidate.

Steady yourself, because now there are two.

At the splintered Reform Party convention in Long Beach, Calif., last weekend, Nat Goldhaber of Berkeley, Calif., was selected Saturday to be the running mate of John Hagelin, whom the party's anti-Pat Buchanan faction picked to be its presidential candidate.

The turn of events caught Goldhaber, 52, and his wife, Marilyn, by surprise.

"I went down there to enjoy the convention and to avoid all the dirty tricks of Mr. Buchanan," Goldhaber, a Reform Jew and a member of Temple Sinai in Oakland, Calif., said Tuesday.

"Dr. Hagelin asked me if I wanted to be chairman of his campaign, and I said sure, even though I was a little reluctant to do that. Then he prevailed on me to at least put my hat in the ring."

Like Hagelin, Goldhaber's name has never been heard by most Americans, even though he is a multimillionaire and well-known in Silicon Valley.

In 1987, he sold a software company he developed, Tops, to Sun Microsystems Inc. for a reported \$20 million. Early last week, he pocketed about 6 percent of MyPoints.com worth about \$27 million on paper when the company completed a merger with Goldhaber's Cybergold.

He founded Cybergold in 1995, offering rewards to customers as an incentive to respond to Web site ads and offers. He has headed several other start-up companies as well, and owns two planes, a Cessna 414 and a Citation jet.

"I lead a wonderfully happy life," Goldhaber told the San Jose Mercury News.

"I have enough money to last a lifetime. The question is: What do I do going forward? I'd like to give things back in a different arena."

Goldhaber is a major financial backer of Hagelin, a physicist who was the Natural Law Party's presidential candidate in 1992 and 1996.

Although he hasn't run for political office himself since 1964, when he lost a bid for class president of Oakland's College Preparatory High School, he is eager to spend the next three months campaigning as well as boning up on the issues.

"It's absolutely going to take 100 percent of my time hopefully for the next eight years," Goldhaber said, sounding like a slick politician already.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he bellowed to the delegates at the convention, "it's hard to believe this, but we have a chance of winning the White House in November."

Goldhaber's status as a Jewish candidate might have received more play in the media had he not been beaten to the punch a few days earlier by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who was named as Al Gore's running mate on the Democratic ticket.

"Excellent," Goldhaber said was his initial reaction when he heard about Gore's choice.

"It's terrific that Jews are now being considered for senior positions in the American political domain, but we're still a long way from having a Jewish president," he said. "The good thing is that the U.S." is moving in the direction of greater tolerance in all areas.

The fractious and raucous Reform Party convention left the Buchanan and Hagelin camps arguing over which candidate is the real nominee and should receive \$12.5 million in matching federal funds.

A court ruling is expected within two weeks, but Goldhaber said he and Hagelin will campaign for the White House even if they don't get the funds. Buchanan, meanwhile, hinted on C-SPAN that Goldhaber was chosen as a Hagelin's running mate in large part to bankroll the campaign.

Eight years ago, Ross Perot spent \$60 million of his own money on his campaign, but Goldhaber said contributions are limited for this campaign because the Reform Party is accepting federal funds.

And anyway, Goldhaber said of his wealth, "I'm not in Perot's league."

Goldhaber and his wife joined Temple Sinai about four years ago. The couple's 12-year-old triplets, who attend Jewish day school, are only 10 months away from celebrating "a triple bar mitzvah."

His Vienna-born mother, Sulamith, moved to pre-state Israel as a teenager and met her German-born and Egyptian-raised husband, Gerson, when both were attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the late 1940s.

Sulamith and Gerson immigrated to the United States to pursue doctorates at the University of Wisconsin, she in nuclear chemistry and he in physics.

"I was born in Wisconsin," said Goldhaber, whose given first name is Amos, "but I was conceived in Jerusalem."

A devotee of Transcendental Meditation, as is Hagelin, Goldhaber also holds a bachelor's degree from Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa.

He said two of his reasons for backing Hagelin are the candidate's positions on finding renewable energy sources and agricultural reform.

Goldhaber estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the Reform Party's old guard — not the Buchanan backers, he said — are Jewish.

"Jews are activists and generally dissatisfied with the status quo," he explained, defining the party as one that has a reform-oriented political agenda but no social agenda.

"Ross said people's lives should be their own business," he added.

"Ross Perot's original vision of the Reform Party was a good one: Let's see whether or not we can bring sound and honest solutions to problems that beset our country and international relations by removing from the process the confounding influence of campaign contributions and the political infrastructure in Washington.

"We are not beholden to the same gods that are worshiped in our Congress — the gods of PAC money and special interest groups."

Goldhaber said Hagelin is a "supporter of Israel" as well as "a supporter of applying scientific innovation to the solution of very real problems which, in my estimation, is a Jewish outlook." □