



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel congratulates Bush

Israeli officials congratulated President-elect George W. Bush on his victory.

They expressed hopes that bilateral ties would remain close under his presidency and that the new administration would continue efforts to help bring peace to the region. [Page 3]

### Lieberman: U.S. voters not bigots

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) saluted Vice President Al Gore for having "the personal courage" to select him as the first Jew to run on a major party presidential ticket.

In a speech on the Senate floor Thursday, Lieberman said that despite their election defeat, he and Gore had proved that U.S. voters are not bigots. [Page 3]

### Netanyahu wants Knesset vote

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would not run for the premiership when elections are held next year unless a vote is also held for a new Parliament.

"No prime minister can perform the job" with the current Parliament, he said Thursday.

### N.Y. consul to return home

Israel's consul general in New York will return to Israel after more than three years in the United States.

Shmuel Sisso will be replaced by Alon Pinkas, who has been a top aide to Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami.

### Hadassah names top professional

Ellen Marson was named national executive director of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

Since January 1999, Marson has served as the organization's national deputy director. Before that, she was a professor of Spanish language and literature at the City University of New York.

### Israel kills Hamas militant

Hamas officials said a Palestinian killed by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip was a member of the group's military wing. The Israeli army said soldiers killed Hani Abu Bakra and wounded two others after one of the men drew a pistol at a checkpoint.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### High-profile cases refocus attention on sexual misconduct

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — For those who look up to the American Jewish clergy, it has not been a good year.

Last week, one of the Reform movement's most prominent rabbis was suspended from the movement's rabbinical association for past sexual misconduct.

Shortly after his suspension from the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, widely respected as a Jewish thinker and teacher, resigned as president of the movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

The news about Zimmerman came on the heels of several other widely publicized incidents involving Jewish clergy:

- A Reform rabbi in Cherry Hill, N.J., faces a possible death sentence for allegedly hiring people to murder his wife in 1994.

- A Conservative cantor in the Chicago area was arrested over Thanksgiving weekend for alleged involvement in a prostitution ring.

- The Orthodox Union has just received a report investigating its handling of allegations that a New Jersey rabbi working for the movement's national youth group sexually harassed and molested teens. The report's findings and recommendations will not be made public until late this month.

The wave of incidents is refocusing attention on an issue that has come into public view only in recent years.

In the past, rabbinic misconduct — particularly sexual misconduct — was rarely discussed publicly. Many advocates for victims complained that rabbinical associations were more interested in protecting their members than the people they hurt.

Today there are stirrings of change. Leaders of the rabbinic organizations say misconduct remains rare, but in the past five years, three of the four denominations have developed new guidelines — or modified old ones — for addressing misconduct.

In addition, some rabbinic seminaries are raising the issues for rabbis-in-training, both before and after ordination. It is unclear what overall impact such changes are having, since no one appears to be tracking the issue or monitoring how the new guidelines are affecting the number of complaints or the actions taken against rabbis.

While some believe that recent high-profile cases may encourage victims to come forward, others worry that the pendulum may have swung too far.

They worry that fear of false accusations or misunderstandings are leading rabbis to become nervous about even innocently hugging congregants in need of comfort or counseling people behind closed doors.

One result from all the publicity is a growing awareness of the issue, which many expect will lead to less tolerance for misconduct.

"The wall of silence around clergy misconduct is being taken down," said Susan Weidman Schneider, editor of *Lilith*, a feminist Jewish magazine.

In 1998, the magazine published an article about women who said they were sexually harassed by the late charismatic Orthodox leader, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

Rabbi Debra Orenstein, a fellow at the Wilstein Institute in Encino, Calif., who has been an advocate on this issue in the past, said, "People are less skittish and afraid of saying this happens with rabbis and are therefore more willing to deal with it."

Rabbinic sexual misconduct is an extraordinarily complex issue.

It ranges from more obvious transgressions, such as sexual harassment and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Ben-Ami, Arafat discuss peace

Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami met Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in the Gaza Strip on Thursday night. Senior Israeli government sources said the meeting was held in an attempt to resume peace negotiations.

### Likud plans to play it safe

Members of Israel's Likud Party will cast two ballots when primaries are held Tuesday, one for a candidate on a list that includes former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the other for a candidate on a list that excludes him. Party officials approved the plan to ensure that Likud will be able to field a candidate should Netanyahu be ineligible to run when early elections for the premiership are held next year.

### Israel arrests alleged terrorists

The Israeli army detained members of a terrorist cell allegedly responsible for killing two Israelis in a shooting attack near Hebron last week. In fresh violence Thursday, an Israeli was lightly wounded in a shooting attack south of Hebron.

### Assassination attempt denied

Israel denied reports that authorities in Qatar had thwarted an Israeli attempt to assassinate Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in the Persian Gulf state during an Arab summit held there several weeks ago. A Lebanese newspaper reported that security officials in Qatar had uncovered the plot and deported the Israelis.

### Israel relaxes Palestinian ban

Israel relaxed a ban on Palestinians working in the Jewish state, a Palestinian official said.

But only 43 of 3,000 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who had obtained a permit actually entered Israel on Thursday, as the rest apparently feared for their safety, the official said.

inappropriate touching, to more ambiguous cases in which a rabbi has a seemingly consensual relationship with a congregant or staff person, but which is questionable because of the power dynamics involved.

It is difficult to know how prevalent misconduct cases are or what percentage are reported. It is also difficult to assess how fairly cases are handled, since rabbinic ethics committees operate in secrecy. That secrecy "by its very nature makes it difficult to evaluate the process at all," said Rabbi Shira Stern, chairwoman of the Reform movement's Women's Rabbinic Network.

The Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform rabbinical associations have created or modified policies concerning sexual misconduct within the past five years.

The Conservative movement's guidelines — in the works for several years — have not yet been printed and distributed to rabbis, but are expected to be completed in June 2001. The Orthodox rabbinical association has not modified its procedures in more than 50 years, according to Rabbi Steven Dworken, the group's executive vice president.

But the group's president, Rabbi Kenneth Hain, said the process may be re-examined if that is recommended in the Orthodox Union's new report on the handling of the youth abuse case.

The movements vary in how explicit their guidelines are about procedures for inquiry and punitive measures. The Rabbinical Council of America, which is Orthodox, and the Reform movement's CCAR made their guidelines available to JTA, while the Conservative and Reconstructionist associations gave overviews but would not distribute actual policies.

All the ethics committees request complaints in writing and give an opportunity for the accused rabbi to respond in writing. They then interview both parties and other sources, where appropriate, in order to ascertain what happened and how to respond.

When rabbis are found guilty, the responses range from a reprimand to suspension to expulsion from the association, depending on the misconduct and the assessment of the ethics committee. Some of the movements require therapy and a process of teshuvah, or repentance, in order for the charged to continue with their rabbinic careers.

In addition, the Reform movement informs any future employers of that rabbi about that rabbi's past transgressions and rehabilitation process.

None of the rabbinic associations could provide data prior to 1995, but since then, three Reform rabbis have been suspended for sexual misconduct and two Conservative rabbis have been found guilty but not suspended.

Both Conservative rabbis were required to undergo therapy and be monitored by the ethics committee, and one was forbidden from taking any rabbinic post other than teaching adult education courses.

Officials of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association would not disclose how many cases it has reviewed or what disciplinary action it took, and the Orthodox's RCA said it did not know of any cases of rabbinic sexual misconduct.

Rabbi Baruch Lanner, the Orthodox rabbi accused of sexually harassing and molesting scores of youth in the Orthodox Union's youth group, was not a member of the RCA, which is composed primarily of congregational rabbis.

Some worry that the movements' guidelines may be so stringent that rabbis and other Jewish professionals may not be able to do their jobs.

The added scrutiny on the rabbinate, and the fear that one misstep can ruin one's career and reputation, may add more pressures to an already-demanding career.

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, the Reform spiritual leader of the Community Synagogue of Port Washington on Long Island, N.Y., urges his colleagues to seek regular therapy and speak more openly with each other about the issues they face.

Some rabbinical schools also now offer some seminars in which sexual misconduct and other related issues are addressed.

Rabbi Arthur Gross Schaefer, a law professor and spiritual leader of two Los Angeles-area congregations who has written extensively on issues of rabbinic misconduct, would like to see more.

"We need programs at seminaries and out in the field to remind them that sex and power and excitement are very real," Schaefer said. "And if you do any counseling at all, emotions are going to be there and, like therapists, we need to be aware of what's happening and ensure that synagogues remain safe places." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### ADL: Papers backing Israel

Editorials in U.S. newspapers continue to back Israel in its current crisis with the Palestinians, according to a new survey by the Anti-Defamation League. Sixty percent of editorials between Oct. 16 and Dec. 1 clearly supported Israel and criticized the Palestinians, while 40 percent criticized both sides.

The results of the survey agree with those found in an earlier ADL analysis of editorials during the first few weeks of the 10-week-old conflict.

### Vatican: Pope may lecture Haider

The Vatican's chief spokesman hinted that Pope John Paul II may address Austrian right-wing leader Jorg Haider on human rights issues when the two meet Saturday. Jewish and other groups plan to protest the meeting, at which Haider will officially present this year's Vatican Christmas tree.

### Canadian museum to list works

The National Gallery of Canada is planning to list on its Web site more than 100 artworks that may have been looted during the Nazi era. The list has been published previously, but never over the Internet. The list is expected to be available Dec. 29 at <http://national.gallery.ca>, the museum said.

### Lithuania may return scrolls

Lithuania said it would study ways to return hundreds of Torah scrolls to Jewish communities at home and abroad.

When Lithuania regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the scrolls were placed in the country's registry of cultural heritage, making it almost impossible to turn them over to Jewish hands.

A bitter debate about restitution continued for years until the nation's Parliament voted in October to return the scrolls to Jewish communities.

### Rembrandt draws record sum

A Rembrandt painting from the collection of the late Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild has sold for more than \$27 million, shattering all previous price records for a Rembrandt. Robert Noortman bought "Portrait of a Lady" for \$21 million more than expected. The Baroness, daughter of one of the 19th century's greatest art collectors, died last year.

### Students set dreidel record

With 535 dreidels going at once, students at the University of Maryland set a world record Dec. 7 for the most dreidels spinning simultaneously.

The previous mark in The Guinness Book of World Records was 289 dreidels, according to the university newspaper.

## Lieberman ends speech, and campaign, with a psalm

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If there is such a thing as a vice-presidential candidate's swan song, Sen. Joseph Lieberman sang his on the Senate floor, adding a biblical reference.

On Thursday, Lieberman called the end to the vote recounts in Florida, which effectively handed the presidency to Texas Gov. George W. Bush, "disappointing." Yet he kept an upbeat tone, expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to run in what turned out to be a most unusual campaign and election.

Sounding like a legislator, a position he will retain for another six years as the junior senator from Connecticut, Lieberman said the voting problems in this year's election indicate that the voting rights of many poor and minority citizens may have been undermined. To remedy this situation, he suggested bipartisan investigation and reform.

Lieberman paid tribute to Vice President Al Gore for selecting a Jewish running mate, something no previous major presidential candidate had done.

In his concession speech Wednesday night, Gore said Lieberman brought "passion and high purpose to our partnership, and opened new doors, not just for our campaign, but for our country."

During the campaign, attention occasionally focused not only on Lieberman's religion, but his references to God and faith and his openness about the way his religious upbringing and religious education affected policy decisions. In his speech, Lieberman played down any fallout from his emphasis on faith and religion.

"The fact is that while my faith was the focus of much of the early media reaction to my candidacy, it was not even mentioned at the end of the campaign, and that is the way we had all hoped it would be," he said.

Lieberman noted the absence of bigotry in the campaign and the success of the Gore-Lieberman ticket in winning the popular vote count. Sill sounding like a candidate, he said, "Anything is possible for anyone in America."

Lieberman concluded by quoting the 30th Psalm, which talks about sorrow during the night but happiness the next day. He hinted that future political successes — whether for him and Gore, or for the Democratic Party — were on the horizon.

"So today, as some of us weep for what could have been, we look to the future with faith that on another morning, joy will surely come," he said. □

## Israel, Palestinians have hopes for Bush

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian officials have congratulated President-elect George W. Bush on his victory and expressed hopes that his administration would remain involved in Middle East peace efforts.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Thursday he was certain that Bush would continue to broaden the "courageous friendship and special relationship" between Israel and the United States.

Barak also said he was convinced Bush would follow in President Clinton's path and play an important role in helping to achieve regional peace.

Palestinian officials said they hoped the new U.S. leader would adopt a policy of fairness and objectivity in the peace process. The Palestinian Authority has long complained that the Clinton administration was biased towards Israel.

Observers in Israel agreed that the Bush approach to the Middle East peace process would differ from his predecessor's method.

"An end to the era of weekly phone calls," is how one analysis in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz summarized the difference.

Whereas Clinton was deeply involved in setting U.S. policy on the Middle East, Bush is more likely to act as a final "arbitrator" over the activities of the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the national security adviser and the CIA, according to senior Israeli sources quoted by Ha'aretz. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## Netanyahu seeks to convince Israeli public that he has changed

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Just 18 months after Benjamin Netanyahu was voted out of office, public opinion polls show that he would decimate Prime Minister Ehud Barak in a head-to-head contest — if Netanyahu can only get around the legal obstacles to his candidacy.

Ever smooth before the cameras, Netanyahu gave little hint when announcing his candidacy for prime minister Sunday about his positions on the issues, but he did offer some insight into how his campaign will be run and what image he hopes to project.

Two themes were especially prominent:

- The “new Bibi,” as Netanyahu is known, is a more mature, sober and chastened leader who admits to past errors and faults and openly seeks to mend inadequacies; and
- His ostensibly failed first term must be reappraised in light of the subsequent failures of Barak, the man who ousted him.

If the law is amended so that he can run, Netanyahu is expected to reprise his old formula of political inclusiveness, which some Israeli analysts have referred to as “Bibi’s rainbow coalition.”

His 1996 victory and subsequent coalition, which he hopes to rebuild, were based on an alliance of the right, the Orthodox and the Russians.

As part of that alliance-building, Netanyahu deliberately distanced himself Sunday from Barak’s “civil revolution,” a package of reforms that Barak introduced, and subsequently dropped, to counter Orthodox rabbinical control of personal status laws and of public Sabbath observance.

The plan included the introduction of civil marriage, public transportation on the Sabbath, limits on army deferments for Orthodox Jews and the dismantling of the Religious Affairs Ministry.

For his part, Barak, in announcing his resignation Saturday night, said he had been wrong to ease up on the “civil revolution” program in hopes of wooing the Orthodox parties.

The Israeli prime minister pledged to resume that program with renewed vigor.

The maneuvering between Barak and Netanyahu over the “civil revolution” shows the importance of the huge Russian vote to both candidates.

Much of the Russian community, which was crucial to Barak’s election in 1999, has swung back to the right.

Barak accepts the fact that few Orthodox Israelis will vote for him, and he made no mention Saturday of “One Israel,” his present Knesset faction that joins the moderate Orthodox Meimad Party to Labor.

For Netanyahu, who needs both the secular Russian vote and the Orthodox vote, the balancing act is trickier.

He believes, he said, that issues of religion and state should be resolved by dialogue, not by fiat.

That had been his watchword during his premiership, he said, and it would continue to guide him if re-elected.

Of course, the “new Bibi” message is bound to encounter skepticism, but Netanyahu is prepared for it.

“Look,” he said smiling, “I even came on time to this press conference.” Coming from a formerly chronic and notorious latecomer, this should have scored some credibility points — at least with the media.

Netanyahu noted repeatedly that he was “not free of fault” and admitted, eyes downcast, that interpersonal relationships had not been his strong suit in the past.

His decision-making now would be measured, he said, and he would seek advice widely.

No more would he be the loner who disdained his own allies and aides and repeatedly surprised them with his moves, sometimes rash and impetuous.

What the former prime minister did not say, but what others say on his behalf, is that this time around Netanyahu would be more circumspect with his choice of appointees, political friends and acquaintances.

Twice, in the past, Israel’s attorney general severely reprimanded Netanyahu for the ethics of his conduct.

In the “Bar-On Affair,” which occurred while he was premier, Netanyahu’s now-imprisoned ally Aryeh Deri, head of the Shas Party, tried to have an under-qualified but pliable lawyer appointed attorney general.

In exchange, Deri’s party would support Netanyahu on the controversial Hebron agreement with the Palestinians, which handed over most of the West Bank city to the Palestinians.

Later, when he left office, Netanyahu was investigated for his handling of debts and gifts.

Though he wasn’t indicted, his behavior was severely criticized.

The “new Bibi,” most likely, will be at pains to broaden his social milieu in order to stay above suspicion.

At the same time, many Israelis believe that the lengthy and hostile police interrogations after Netanyahu left office smacked of persecution — especially since the interrogations ultimately were fruitless.

Netanyahu certainly will make good use of the victimization claim if he runs for office.

Alongside the new Bibi, Netanyahu will ask voters to revise their view of the “old Bibi” in light of what came after his first term in office.

On the peace process, he claims that his slower, more cautious approach — often called obstructionism at the time — has been vindicated, given the new uprising by the Palestinians.

The fact that people worry more about terrorism today than they have since the rash of bus bombings in 1995-96 is incontrovertible.

While statistics on terror are open to debate, Netanyahu certainly will seek to use the current security anxiety to his advantage in the campaign.

He will stress that Barak has proven remarkably prone to the same criticisms, on both personal and policy levels, as Netanyahu.

Barak, too, has feuded with his own party, disliked his ministers, fought with his coalition partners and inspired intrigue and back-biting among staff.

As to whether his season in the political wilderness has been long enough, Netanyahu had a ready response on Sunday: “I never expected to be back so soon.”

It is hardly his fault if the public, through opinion polls, already is demanding his return. □