



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Bush drops voucher plan

President Bush conceded that his school voucher plan would not be part of his larger education initiative after committees in the Senate and House of Representatives voted to drop the program.

Most Jewish groups say vouchers, which would give federal money to parents who choose to send their children to a private or parochial school, violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

But many Orthodox and politically conservative Jews back vouchers as a way to give parents increased educational choice and make Jewish education more affordable.

### Peres: Bush devoted to peace

President Bush is "totally devoted to the peace process," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said after meeting with Bush at the White House. If Israeli-Palestinian talks resume after violence ceases, the United States should act "as a facilitator, not as a negotiator," Peres said Thursday.

A day earlier, after meeting U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Peres said, "A cease-fire should be and can be done only by the United States."

### Argentina, S. Africa aliyah sought

Faced with diminishing immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, the Jewish Agency for Israel aims to step up its aliyah efforts elsewhere, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The paper said the agency plans to increase its activities in Argentina, South Africa and France.

Jewish Agency Chairman Sallai Meridor was quoted as telling the paper that at least 40,000 new immigrants must make aliyah annually in the coming years in order for Israel to maintain a Jewish majority of at least 80 percent.

### Arafat's wife 'hates' Israel

Yasser Arafat's wife said she hates Israel and doesn't believe the Palestinians should normalize relations with the Jewish state.

In an interview with a Saudi magazine, Suha Arafat also said she rejects meeting with Israeli women's groups because Israelis are "responsible for the problems our children have." Arafat also said she keeps on the move because she believes Israeli operatives have made her a "political target."

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### As U.S. Muslims outnumber Jews, both alliances and concerns grow

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Judaism may no longer be the No. 2 religion in the United States — and it's losing ground.

The long-anticipated demographic change was highlighted last week with the release of a new study estimating the U.S. Muslim population at 7 million. If true, it would mean that American Muslims already outnumber American Jews, whose population is estimated at 6 million. Christianity, of course, has by far the largest number of followers in the United States.

Jewish leaders say the change represents both challenges and opportunities. Muslims may be adversaries to Jews in framing America's Mideast policy, but they also are potential allies in efforts to strengthen the separation of church and state and to defend the rights of religious and ethnic minorities.

"The days when Jews were seen as the premier non-Christian religion are behind us," said Jonathan Sarna, Braun professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University.

The new population estimate — one piece of an extensive study that is part of a larger research project on religion in America — has been met with skepticism.

In a recent New York Times article, the director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University suggested the true estimate of Muslims is closer to 4 million to 6 million, but is "pushing up."

The 7 million estimate is based on the assumption that for every Muslim associated with a mosque — some 2 million according to the study — there are 3.5 other Muslims.

Critics also point out that some of the Muslim organizations that sponsored the study, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations, have an incentive to pad the numbers because they are trying to increase their political clout in Washington.

A spokesman for CAIR did not return calls from JTA.

Regardless of the exact totals, no one disputes that the American Muslim population is growing and will eventually outnumber the American Jewish population, which — due to intermarriage and relatively low birthrates — is shrinking.

"We're heading toward a situation very soon, if not already, where Muslims will outnumber Jews," said John Zogby, president and CEO of Zogby International, a polling firm that has conducted studies of both the Muslim and Jewish communities.

American Muslims are not all Arab or even, necessarily, sympathetic to their co-religionists in the Middle East. According to the study, 33 percent of mosque members are of South Asian origin, 30 percent are black and 25 percent are of Arab descent.

Martin Raffel, associate director of the Jewish Council of Public Affairs, said, "I'm sure the overwhelming majority of Muslim Americans spend more of their time thinking about local issues that affect their lives — schooling for children, housing, employment, quality of life in the U.S." — than about the Middle East.

"The critical question here is to distinguish between the growing American Muslim community on the one hand and certain anti-Israel Arab and Muslim organizations that have been seeking to make political inroads in Washington and in communities around the United States," Raffel said.

As members of minority religions and ethnicities, Jews and Muslims share certain interests, some Jewish leaders say. Neither group wants Christianity to be seen as the national religion, and both have specific religious needs — such as dietary laws and holidays — that they want respected. The potential for Jewish-Muslim cooperation has

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon, Peres disagree on Arafat

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon charged Thursday that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat has made a "strategic decision" to launch attacks on Israel and has given a "green light" to militants.

A day earlier, his foreign minister, Shimon Peres, said during a visit to the United States that "some dissident groups" have participated in killing Israelis "without the knowledge of Arafat."

### U.S.-led panel's report expected

A U.S.-led committee probing the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence last September is expected to submit its findings to President Bush next week, according to reports in Israel.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz on Thursday quoted an Israeli political source as saying that the report is expected to stress ways to avoid future conflict while holding both Israel and the Palestinians responsible for the eruption of the violence.

### Cafe owners' families sue P.A.

The families of two Tel Aviv cafe owners kidnapped and killed in the West Bank town of Tulkarm three months ago are suing Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority for some \$5 million in damages.

In a suit filed in a Jerusalem court, the families of Moti Dayan and Etgar Zaituni said the Palestinian Authority encouraged violence and murder.

### Conductor: Don't block concert

Pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim said he is outraged by Knesset attempts to prevent him from staging an opera by the anti-Semitic composer Richard Wagner at a festival in Jerusalem.

"I can identify completely with the people who don't want to listen to it," Barenboim told Israel Radio on Thursday. "But I can't identify with the fact that they are trying to stop other people from hearing it."



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largely gone untapped so far, but there have been some alliances at the local level.

At Dartmouth College and Oberlin College, joint kosher-halal dining facilities have been established.

David Gad-Harf is executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit, a community where Muslims already outnumber Jews. Detroit has the largest concentration of Arabs in the United States.

While a majority of Detroit's Arab Muslims live in Dearborn — in a different county from the suburbs where most Jews reside — a growing number of South Asian and Bosnian Muslims are moving to Jewish neighborhoods, Gad-Harf said.

Despite the renewal of Mideast violence in late September, several local Muslim groups have made overtures to the Jewish community, Gad-Harf said.

"There's growing interest among Muslims in establishing relations with the local Jewish community, and we're very pleased by that," he said.

As for the Middle East, "we agreed to disagree and everyone agreed it was in our best interest not to focus on it," Gad-Harf said.

It is harder for national organizations to avoid the Middle East — and relations between national Muslim and Jewish groups have been weak, if not outright hostile. Jewish leaders complain that even when the peace process was on track, Muslim groups rebuffed overtures and allowed extremist voices to speak for Muslim Americans.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, recalled his disappointment seven years ago when Detroit Muslim leaders turned down an invitation to an ADL conference for a session honoring a black civil rights activist.

After the signing of the Oslo accords, "the American Jewish community did a quantum leap in assessing their views of Arafat" and the Palestinians, Foxman said, "but the Muslim American and Arab American communities weren't involved in any change at all."

Muslims have argued that Jews are too quick to apply the "extremist" label to any Muslim who criticizes Israel or sympathizes with the Palestinians.

Muslim-Jewish tensions flared in 1999 when Salam Al-Marayati, director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Los Angeles, was nominated to serve on a congressional commission on terrorism. Al-Marayati was considered moderate by national Muslim groups and some L.A. Jewish leaders.

Several Jewish organizations, including the ADL and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, protested the appointment, saying Al-Marayati had condoned terrorist acts against Israel. Al-Marayati's nomination was withdrawn.

Al-Marayati could not be reached for comment for this story.

Some observers say Jews would be wise to invest more energy in strengthening relations with American Muslims.

The Jewish community should "single out the South Asian community and make an effort to ally with them in the hopes that this will later have positive implications for our relationships with other elements within the Muslim population in this country," Sarna said.

Others say the increased Muslim demographics should motivate American Jews to be more active in their advocacy for Israel. "We've gotten complacent and stopped doing the things they're doing — the ABC's of lobbying, advocacy, impact and influence in state capitals and Washington," Foxman said.

Jewish leaders also point out that the American Jewish community has always been more influential than its numbers indicate, and will still be able to make its voice heard even if outnumbered by Muslims.

"If you look just at numbers, the Jewish community shouldn't have been as successful as it has been," Foxman said. "What we made up in numbers is the level of advocacy, financial support and getting the vote out."

Murray Friedman, director of the Jewish history center at Temple University, echoed Foxman's assessment of Jewish influence.

In addition, said Friedman, director of the Mid-Atlantic States office of the American Jewish Committee, Muslims are not necessarily Jews' adversaries.

"The Jewish community ought to be a bit more relaxed with regard to the growing number of Muslims," Friedman said. "Muslims come in different packages. They're not all Arab and they're not all devotees of the Palestinians." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Jews, Vatican to protect sites

Jewish and Vatican leaders are working on a document decrying recent attacks on holy sites and calling for their protection, according to the World Jewish Congress.

The document, which is expected to be released Friday in New York, will call on people of all faiths to treat the holy places of others with care and respect, according to the WJC.

### Goussinsky 'symbol of free press'

A Russian Jewish media mogul who fled the country after being indicted on charges of fraud was introduced at the National Press Club in Washington as a symbol of international press freedom.

Vladimir Goussinsky, who was forced to sell his independent television station because of Kremlin pressure, "symbolizes the worldwide struggle for a truly free press," Richard Ryan, the president of the Press Club, said in introducing the former president of the Russian Jewish Congress.

Goussinsky told the audience that the Russian government "is using the system of justice today to fight against its opponents."

### Russian Jews eyed for conversion

"Messianic Jews" recently launched television programming aimed at converting Jews in the former Soviet Union, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The programs feature "born again" Jews who tell how they have experienced "the supernatural power of Jesus," or tell of their healing experience.

The programs air Saturdays on Ukrainian National Television, and are beginning to air on Russian television stations as well.

### Conference to focus on agunot

The director of Israel's rabbinical courts and seven well-known Orthodox rabbis from the United States will participate in a conference Sunday on "approaches to deal with the agunah crisis."

The Brooklyn gathering with Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Dahan will discuss strategies for helping observant women who are prevented from remarrying because their estranged husbands refuse to give them a Jewish divorce. Those needing more information can call (718) 338-0833.

### New leader for Czech Jews

Prague's Jewish Community elected 32-year-old Tomas Jelinek as its new chairman, replacing Jiri Danicek, who has taken on the role of vice chairman.

Jelinek, who works in Czech President Vaclav Havel's office, said one of his main goals would be to bring different strands of the community together.

## Parents of L.A. shooting victim sue JCC for having faulty security

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The parents of a boy wounded by a white supremacist during a shooting rampage at a Jewish community center in 1999 are suing the center, charging it did not provide adequate security to prevent hate crimes.

Charles and Eleanor Kadish filed the lawsuit Monday on behalf of their son Benjamin, who sustained the most critical injuries among the five people shot by Buford Furrow Jr.

Benjamin, who was 5 when the shooting occurred on Aug. 10, 1999, continues to bear the scars of the assault on his abdomen, buttocks and legs, as well as suffering continuing emotional trauma, the lawsuit claims.

The charges were rejected by Nina Lieberman-Giladi, executive vice president of the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Los Angeles.

"We are not responsible, directly and indirectly, for the crimes committed by Mr. Furrow and the injuries he inflicted," she said. "We cannot be responsible for the unpredictable act of a madman. We firmly believe that the lawsuit is not appropriate."

After the shooting spree at the center, Furrow killed a Filipino American mailman. He pleaded guilty in March and is serving two life sentences.

Another community center source, who did not wish to be identified, said, "I don't think it is possible for any Jewish organization to anticipate such a hate crime, and I'm not sure what would have constituted enough security to prevent it."

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the Kadish family in Los Angeles Superior Court by attorney Joseph Lovretovich.

In a 12-page brief and during a phone interview, he claimed that Furrow targeted the North Valley JCC because it lacked security.

"Furrow admitted that he stalked three other Jewish institutions as possible targets, but passed them up because security was too tight," Lovretovich said. "Furrow was not on a suicide mission. It seems almost like all the circumstances funneled Furrow directly to the North Valley center."

The lawsuits seek compensation for Benjamin, who still walks with a limp and requires psychological counseling; his older brother Joshua, who was at the center during the shooting but was not wounded; and the Kadish parents.

The amount of damages is not specified but will include the cost of medical bills, which Lovretovich estimates as close to \$500,000, and loss of income by the parents, both self-employed, of about \$80,000.

Also sought are compensation for pain, suffering and emotional distress of all family members.

As far as can be determined, none of the other victims of the shooting — two other young boys, a teen-age counselor and an adult receptionist — are filing lawsuits, although Lieberman-Giladi said she could not comment on that.

Alan Stepakoff, whose son Joshua was wounded in the shooting, said he would not sue the JCC. He refused to comment on the Kadish lawsuit. □

(Wendy J. Madnick of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles contributed to this report.)

## Einstein, Ben-Gurion won't be 'saved'

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Mormon Church has agreed to remove the names of more than 200 deceased Jews from a list of people being offered a chance — in the afterlife — to convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, according to The New York Times.

The agreement to take the names, which include Albert Einstein and David Ben-Gurion, off the list, came after a request from the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "It's insulting," Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Wiesenthal Center told the Times. "What they're saying is that without baptism we can't be saved."

In 1995, Mormon officials agreed to take the names of several thousand Holocaust victims off the database. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Israelis confounded by Palestinians as no end to intifada can be seen***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel doesn't understand the Palestinians, lamented a former official who has spent years trying to do so, and this is why Israel doesn't know how to deal with them.

The speaker was Ami Ayalon, until recently the head of the Shin Bet security service, which fights an ongoing war against Palestinian terrorism.

Ayalon, who became former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's go-between with Palestinian officials after his Shin Bet service, suggested a "simple" solution to the conflict with the Palestinians when he was interviewed this week by Israel's Channel Two Television.

Give the Palestinians an independent state and the seven-month intifada will be over, Ayalon said in the interview.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat chose the path of violence over diplomatic negotiations because "Barak lost all the confidence the Palestinians had initially given him," Ayalon said.

Israel is "strong enough militarily, and I would like to believe morally, to give the Palestinians their own independent state," he said.

The interview was noteworthy because the comments sympathetic to the Palestinian cause came from a man who once stood at the core of the Israeli security establishment.

It also was noteworthy because of how isolated Ayalon is in his analysis of Palestinian motivations.

Not only hawkish members of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government would disagree with Ayalon; many leftists, disenchanted with Arafat, also consider Ayalon's analysis naive.

Across the political spectrum, Israelis feel they have good reason to suspect the Palestinians. While many Israelis had believed that the violent Palestinian uprising that began in late September would burn itself out, it shows no signs of abating.

Time and again, Arafat pledges to reduce the violence — and Palestinian attacks intensify. Shooting and bombing attacks continue at the rate of dozens a day.

This week, for example, just as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was announcing that Israel and the Palestinians were nearing agreement on the terms of a cease-fire, Hamas terrorists killed an Israeli in a West Bank ambush. The victim's father had been killed in another West Bank drive-by shooting in January.

Do the Palestinians really want to end the violence?

Some Israelis thought there was light at the end of the tunnel last week, when the two sides discussed reopening the casino in the West Bank city of Jericho.

Immensely profitable for the Palestinian Authority, which is a joint owner, the casino was among the first casualties of the violence that erupted last September. Before that, it provided a living to more than 1,000 Palestinians, drawing thousands of Israelis for whom gambling is illegal within Israel's borders.

If Israel would let Israelis come back to the casino, Palestinian negotiators promised, the Palestinian Authority would bring an end to attacks on the Jordan Valley road, a major traffic artery between Jerusalem and the Galilee.

Israeli drivers have all but stopped using the road for fear of roadside ambushes.

Many Israelis were outraged, saying the Palestinians should

not be permitted to keep the peace where it is profitable for them to do so, while attacking Israelis elsewhere. Others noted that the offer seemed to resolve doubts about whether the Palestinian Authority can control the anti-Israel violence if it chooses.

The talks broke down when Sharon said he would not rescind an order preventing Israelis from traveling to the West Bank. Without Israelis, who were the leading patrons of the Jericho casino, there was little point in pursuing the idea of reopening the gambling mecca.

Israelis also were optimistic that the violence might end when Arafat reportedly issued an order last week for an end to Palestinian mortar attacks on Israel. Within days, however, the attacks resumed — and Palestinian militia members denied ever having received the order from Arafat in the first place.

Even Peres, one of the lone voices in the Sharon government who still believes that Arafat is a partner for peace, said he has no explanation for the Palestinian leader's behavior.

Even if Israel can reach agreement with Arafat on a cease-fire, many wonder whether he would be able to deliver on the deal.

Arafat often tries to shirk responsibility for Palestinian violence, saying it emanates from elements he does not control. Sharon, however, increasingly is holding the Palestinian Authority responsible for all attacks that originate in areas under its control.

Since taking office earlier this year, Sharon said he would target Palestinians responsible for attacks on Israelis, but would seek to avoid collective punishment against the general Palestinian population.

The policy was based on the assumption that the civilian population eventually would force the Palestinian leadership into a cessation of hostilities. So far, however, the opposite appears true.

Far from seeking peace, the Palestinians have created a new militia that draws its membership from Arafat's own Fatah faction, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. When rumors circulated this week that Arafat wanted to disband the new militia, hundreds of Palestinians took to the streets of the Gaza Strip in protest.

In addition, many Palestinians believe that the success of Hezbollah fighters — whose war of attrition forced Israel to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon — shows that Israel understands only the language of force.

Public opinion polls have shown overwhelming support among the Palestinian public for continuing the violent uprising — 80 percent of respondents, according to a recent poll by the Palestinian Jerusalem Media and Communications Center — with 75 percent supporting suicide bombings.

A rare dissenting voice is Bassam Abu Sharif, a political adviser to Arafat and one of Arafat's closest associates. Abu Sharif criticizes Palestinian terror attacks directed at Israeli civilians.

"Your attacks should be aimed at the soldiers deployed at the entrances to our cities," Abu Sharif said during a television interview. "Why don't you attack them, and not blow up children on their way to school?"

Abu Sharif charged that attacks on Israeli civilians give Sharon rhetorical ammunition against the Palestinians as he seeks support from the international community. Abu Sharif's interview did not play well in some Palestinian quarters.

Three days after it aired, Islamic religious leaders in Bethlehem demanded that Abu Sharif be declared a collaborator with Israel.

Little wonder that the Israel Defense Force continually warns that dealings with the Palestinians are likely to get worse before they get better. □