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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Cheney: No change toward Israel

Vice President Dick Cheney said U.S. officials would not bow to Saudi terror mastermind Osama bin Laden's desire to have the United States end its support for Israel.

"The fact of the matter is that we will not allow him to achieve his aims," Cheney said on Sunday's "Meet the Press" television show. "We're not about to change our policies or change our basic fundamental beliefs."

Pakistan seeks Israel's exclusion

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made no commitment regarding a statement by Pakistani officials that they will only allow multinational forces into their country to assist in the attack on terrorism if Israel and India are not involved.

Speaking Sunday on CNN's "Late Edition," Powell said he understood Pakistan's sensitivities, but "at the end of the day, we will do what's appropriate and necessary."

Cease-fire talks called off

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called off cease-fire talks planned for Sunday.

The prime minister said the talks between Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat would begin only after two straight days without any Palestinian attacks against Israel.

In comments to lawmakers Sunday, Sharon said that holding talks now with Arafat, before Palestinian violence ceases, would give the Palestinian leader "legitimacy as a good guy." President Bush called Sharon last Friday to urge him to allow the meeting to take place.

Arafat said Sunday he is "committed" to a cease-fire with Israel, but did not say whether he would answer Israel's latest call for a truce.

Sharon said Israel would end all military raids into Palestinian-controlled areas if Arafat declares a truce.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Rabbis adjust High Holiday sermons to address questions raised by terror

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Rabbi Yaakov Luban ended the Jewish year by crawling to safety amid the devastation caused by the terror attacks on New York's World Trade Center.

Just days afterward, Luban, who was in a subway under the World Trade Center just before the towers collapsed on Sept. 11, was planning to give comfort and hope to his congregants during Rosh Hashanah.

"We have to listen and ask ourselves in what way can we change and be more sensitive to our fellow man," he said. "The response to evil is to live our lives in a more moral fashion," said Luban, the spiritual leader of Ohr Torah Congregation in Edison, N.J.

Until last week's tragedy, many rabbis had planned to focus their sermons on the past year of violence in Israel.

But the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon — which came less than a week before Rosh Hashanah and the onset of the Days of Awe, the holiest days on the Jewish calendar — forced an abrupt shift in tack and created new, pressing questions: How do you comfort a nation in mourning and bring in the New Year in the shadow of the worst terror attack in United States history? How do you discuss God, forgiveness and repentance in the face of evil?

Luban and other rabbis are grappling with these questions and trying to bring a message of understanding to congregants who, like people around the world, are looking for answers to basic philosophical and spiritual quandaries.

Even as many people find that words do not suffice, rabbis must try to find words for congregants who are looking for a sense of community and contact with each other — and with God.

For some rabbis, the tragedy — as awful as it was — provides an opportunity for heightened spiritual reflection.

"People are ripe; they are more open to spiritual and theological questions," said Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus of Congregation Beth Shalom in Homewood, Ill. "How can you not ponder the meaning of life now?"

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are by far the most well-attended services of the year in North America — and the time, traditionally, when rabbis deliver their most important sermons.

Dreyfus planned to address the idea of human control — and lack of control — over life and death. The central part of the Rosh Hashanah service focuses on that idea as it proclaims the arrival of God's judgment, as God reviews every creature and decrees individual destinies.

Last week's tragedy makes people realize they don't have control over death and that there is randomness and evil in the world, Dreyfus said.

The central prayer, the U'netaneh Tokef, says that "penitence, prayer and good deeds annul the severity of the decree," but those acts are not to be seen as preventing death, Dreyfus said.

Instead, "they give control over the quality and values of life," she explained. "They shape the quality of life."

The inability to comprehend evil damages our faith, according to Rabbi Daniel Nevins of Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills, Mich., a suburb of Detroit.

Faith in God's goodness allows people to reassemble what has been shattered in

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Wednesday, Sept. 19 or Thursday, Sept. 20.

MIDEAST FOCUS

Sharon: No Arafat in coalition

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called the possibility that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat would join a proposed U.S.-led anti-terror coalition "very dangerous." Such a development would "give Arafat the opportunity to continue terrorist actions without allowing us to act against him," Sharon said Sunday.

The "terror organization which is led by Yasser Arafat" should be a target of the coalition that Washington is building to fight terrorism, Sharon previously told American Jewish leaders. "There is no good terror and bad terror," the Israeli prime minister told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in a phone briefing last Friday. "I fear there is an attempt to draw distinctions between terror against Israel and terror against the rest of the world."

Palestinian killed in clash

Israeli tanks and helicopters attacked the West Bank city of Ramallah early Sunday morning, killing a Palestinian intelligence officer and wounding at least 40 others. Israel said the action followed a Palestinian shooting attack late Saturday that killed an Israeli motorist on a road in northern Jerusalem.

Knesset: We're with the U.S.

Israel's Knesset convened for a special session Sunday to express solidarity with the American people. The war against terrorism is "a war between good and evil, between humanity and those who thirst for blood," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told the assembled lawmakers.

On Saturday night, some 35,000 people attended a solidarity rally in Tel Aviv. Among those speaking at the event, which was held in Rabin Square and organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Tel Aviv municipality, were Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer.



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their lives, he added. "Without God, all we would have is despair and bitterness," Nevins said. "With God, we have the obligation to help and have hope."

To demand faith at such a difficult time could be trying for some people. Some may come to services just for a sense of solace and community, and won't believe that they can communicate with God.

People may wonder "How can I pray now?" but faith and turning to God is the only way to pick up the pieces, according to Rabbi Elazar Muskin, spiritual leader of Young Israel of Century City, Calif.

"God has given us a way to dialogue with him," Muskin said. "You have to turn to him."

Part of the problem during times of tragedy is the difficulty of accepting that not all in life is black or white, but that there are shades of gray.

The idea in Jewish tradition that each person has the capacity for both good and evil also is difficult for some people to accept.

And for some, the question of how God can allow good and evil to coexist can lead to a crisis of faith.

In the Bible, humans are said to be created in the image of God, and the God who places man and woman in the Garden of Eden is the same God who orders the Israelites to destroy the Amalekites and Canaanites.

"Complexity is at the core of religious experience," said Irwin Kula, president of CLAL — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

Kula, who will address the congregation of Aitz Hayim in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, Ill., over the holidays, said he will discuss the need to affirm life and to achieve internal security as well as external security.

While such spiritual and moral messages will be at the heart of most talks, some rabbis also will stay close to political questions.

For Kula, last week's terror attack will present difficult questions for members of both sides of the political spectrum.

The left will have to consider its own naivete, its belief that every party must have a seat at the table and its conviction that there is no primal evil. The right must consider how actions and economic and social conditions have brought about the current situation, Kula said.

Nevins, of suburban Detroit, said he planned to ask congregants to write letters to the United Nations urging the world body not to give moral cover to "immoral" governments. But not all rabbis planned to center their High Holiday sermons around last week's tragic events.

Rabbi Harold Schulweis of Congregation Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, Calif., instead planned to discuss the conflict between faith and science and to depict them as different conceptions of truth.

On Shabbat Shuvah, the Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Schulweis said he would discuss the attacks on Western civilization and values and the need for ecumenical healing.

Schulweis also said he believes talking about terrorism on Rosh Hashanah would amount to giving in to the terrorists' desire to destroy Americans' way of life.

But Schulweis appeared to be in the minority, as most rabbis were preparing to focus their New Year sermons on the attacks.

Luban, the New Jersey rabbi, planned to focus on the section in the Rosh Hashanah service in which a "still, small voice is heard" after the shofar is sounded.

The voice is small, Luban explained, because as the words filter down to man it's difficult to hear God and his message. But, he said, it can be heard.

Since Luban survived, he has heard many stories of miraculous escapes.

"In the tragedy, there was the hand of God," Luban said. □

U.S., Israel to share terror info

NEW YORK (JTA) — The United States has accepted an offer from Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer to share intelligence information about terrorist organizations.

Ben-Eliezer originally made the offer to U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Sept. 12, and conversations began shortly thereafter. □

JEWISH WORLD

Evangelicals' comments blasted

The White House is criticizing remarks by the evangelical Revs. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who blamed last week's terror attacks on the popularity of abortion, homosexuality, pagans and the American Civil Liberties Union in the United States. President Bush "does not share those views, and believes that those remarks are inappropriate," a spokesman for the president said last Friday.

On Sept. 13, Falwell said on "The 700 Club," Robertson's Christian television program, that "as terrible as" the terror is, it "could be minuscule if, in fact, God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve." Meanwhile, James Robison, an evangelical preacher who advises Bush, blamed the attack on U.S. arrogance in relationships with the Third World and foreign countries.

Two Jews remain in Kabul

Only two Jews currently live in the Afghan capital of Kabul, according to *The Associated Press*. Ishaq Levin, 72, and Zebulun Simentov, 72, live at separate ends of the same decaying synagogue. The synagogue's sole Torah scroll was confiscated by the ruling Taliban.

Gaza rally backs bin Laden

About 15,000 Palestinians marched last Friday at a rally in the Gaza Strip in which demonstrators carried posters of Saudi terror mastermind Osama bin Laden, whom U.S. officials accuse of being behind last week's terror attacks in New York and Washington.

Plainclothes Palestinian policemen later detained several journalists and confiscated videos of the event, according to the *Jerusalem Post*. Last week, Palestinian gunmen and Palestinian Authority officials reportedly tried to suppress media coverage of Palestinians celebrating the attacks against the United States.

U.S. pro-Israel stance blamed

The National Jewish Democratic Council condemned the recent comments of U.S. Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio), who on Sept. 12 blamed the deadly terrorist assault on America's support for Israel.

Traficant, long suspected of mob ties in his hometown of Youngstown, reportedly has accepted since 1996 more than \$20,000 in campaign donations from the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, a group the State Department describes as a front for terrorists.

Traficant "is an embarrassment to the Congress, and his congressional colleagues should marginalize him as much as possible and say publicly that his words are beyond the pale," NJDC Executive Director Ira Forman said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

As Washington talks of war, Europe takes a restrained tack

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Europe's differences with Washington over Mideast policy, its large Muslim populations and its dependence on Arab oil are leading the continent to temper American calls to avenge last week's terror attacks.

Europeans know that "war is not just hell, but that it is also extremely complicated," *The Associated Press* wrote from Paris this week. "War is no casual metaphor on a continent where mighty neighbors have fought one another for a century at a time, where anyone over 60 has a living memory of war."

As part of an extraordinary outpouring of solidarity immediately after the attacks, America's NATO allies invoked the organization's mutual defense clause for the first time in NATO's 52-year history.

The attack on the United States, the organization said, was an attack on all of NATO. This opened the way for a possible collective response by the alliance.

And the first few days after the attack saw enormous outpourings of support across Europe, where tens of thousands observed three minutes of silence last Friday for the victims of the terror attacks. But as the drums of war beat ever louder in Washington, European leaders increasingly are counseling caution rather than a hasty military reprisal that could play into the hands of the terrorists.

"Emotions, however justified and legitimate, must be avoided, as they translate into rushed or manipulated political decisions," Italy's *Corriere della Sera* newspaper wrote. "America has the right to punish the perpetrators and their accomplices. But it has an interest to do so only when it will have identified those responsible and furnished to the world documentary proof of their crimes."

French and German political leaders also urged caution.

"The worst thing we could do would be for the West to go against the Islamic world," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said. "It is the goal of these criminals to provoke a war of civilizations. We must not push Islam in general into the corner of terror because that would just make matters worse."

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Spain's Javier Solana — the former secretary general of NATO — said that "without a doubt, it is necessary to create a grand international coalition to fight against this plague of terrorism."

But he, too, warned against an excessive response that would "offend or humiliate" whole peoples or religions.

The attacks in the United States came at a time when many in Europe were deeply concerned that the Bush administration is disengaging from world affairs, pulling out of treaties and adopting a unilateralist policy.

Since at least 1967, Europe has been far more pro-Palestinian than the United States, and it favors broadening links with countries such as Iran and Libya that Washington considers "rogue states" for their support of terror.

The European position is due partly to commercial and economic interests, partly to the fear of terrorism and partly to geography, as the Arab world is virtually on Europe's doorstep. France and Germany — like Britain, Italy and other European states — have sizable Muslim populations.

Several European Union states have seen a resurgence of sometimes violent xenophobia and racist incidents in recent years, and illegal immigration is a deep concern.

For example, thousands of illegal immigrants, many from Afghanistan and other Muslim countries, arrive by sea in Italy each month.

Various European states have been the scene of terrorist attacks in recent decades, and suspects linked to Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden or other terror groups have been identified as having lived in several E.U. countries. Some have been arrested or investigated. Few contest the validity of this determination. Yet even in a continent that has seen the effects of both open warfare and terrorist attack, ambiguities exist here, too.

"How will the terrorist enemies in this war be defined?" a Polish observer asked privately. "What about the IRA? The Basque ETA? The Kurds? The Chechens? Will this new war on terrorism target them, too?" □

5761: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In space of one year, Israel went from brink of peace to verge of war

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — What a difference a year makes.

A year ago at this time, just before Rosh Hashanah, Israel still held out hope for peace with the Palestinians, even though they had spurned former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offer at the Camp David summit in July 2000.

Ariel Sharon was leader of the Likud Party, still considered too hawkish and controversial to have a realistic chance to become Israel's new prime minister.

Now, the Oslo peace process is dead as Israel contends with a violent Palestinian uprising whose end is not in sight. Sharon, the prime minister, is under attack from the right for not retaliating harshly enough against the Palestinian Authority — even against its president, Yasser Arafat himself. Just days before last year's celebration of the Jewish New Year, Sharon toured Jerusalem's Temple Mount, accompanied by an entourage of supporters. The following day, Palestinian violence began.

The aftershocks of that visit were clear.

The year 5761 began with a bang of rubber bullets and Molotov cocktails, escalating into drive-by shootings, gun battles, suicide bombings, mortar attacks, roadblocks and F-16 attacks.

The year of violence raged from the north, where Israel's own Arab population exploded in riots in the early days of the intifada, through the heart of Jerusalem, where a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 15 at lunch in a pizzeria and where four bombs exploded in one day alone in early September. By the end of last October, 13 Israeli Arabs were dead, leaving Jewish-Arab relations in a shamble and the Barak government in disarray.

Many West Bank settlers couldn't leave their homes for fear of snipers. Palestinians couldn't get out of their villages as the Israel Defense Force built roadblocks and checkpoints to keep terrorists out of Israel.

Gilo, a Jerusalem neighborhood built just over Israel's pre-1967 border, became a target for Palestinians shooting from Beit Jalla, a neighboring Arab village.

Places like Kfar Saba, a well-to-do bedroom community of Tel Aviv, and Netanya, a normally quiet beachfront city, became the front lines in a war of attrition.

As the intifada escalated, media coverage became an issue. Rock-throwing Palestinian children were wounded and killed in head-on battles with Israeli soldiers; cameramen rarely caught the Palestinian gunmen hidden among the crowd, while the Israeli forces were clearly depicted.

The photo of a 12-year-old killed in Israeli-Palestinian crossfire while huddling with his father in a doorway, touched off international condemnation of Israel. When two Israeli reserve soldiers were brutally beaten and mutilated by a mob in Ramallah in mid-October, Israeli outrage — and reaction — was quick.

President Clinton offered to help, pushing Barak and Arafat toward peace. But a series of summits in Paris and Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, failed to produce a lasting cease-fire. Finally, Barak gave in to the pressure and scheduled elections for prime minister.

Barak faced Sharon, the 73-year-old leader of the Likud Party, a former general best known for his invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and his staunch support for the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As elections approached, the pace of diplomatic activity

increased. Negotiations continued in the resort town of Taba, and Barak improved on his Camp David offer.

Many Israelis, however, doubted the Barak government's mandate to agree to far-reaching concessions under the shadow of elections. In any event, the talks foundered completely after Arafat launched a blistering verbal attack on Israel.

On Feb. 6, Israelis headed to the polls. Less than two years after electing Barak with a strong mandate, Israelis this time overwhelmingly voted against him, choosing Sharon in a landslide.

Israelis were tired of being scared. They wanted to return to the malls, their downtown shopping areas, the Saturday afternoons shopping for vegetables in nearby Israeli Arab villages.

They didn't want to hear about Tel Aviv yuppies getting murdered in the West Bank town of Tulkarm while shopping for pottery. Or soldiers being blown up in the line of duty. Or settlers being stoned and shot in their cars while driving home from work.

Yet Sharon's resounding victory was not a moment of rejoicing for many Israelis. The Arab community, for example, stayed home, refraining from voting.

Faced with seemingly implacable Palestinian hostility, centrist Israelis had chosen a man they never expected to have as prime minister. By early March Sharon brought together Likud, Labor, Shas and other parties in a unity government.

In its first half year in power, Sharon's Cabinet has concentrated on putting out fires, stepping up Barak's policy of targeted killings of leading Palestinian militants. Sharon also has proven more willing to send Israeli forces on brief missions into Palestinian-controlled territory to root out terrorists or destroy buildings that shield Palestinian gunmen.

Yet Sharon has shown himself, to many Israelis' surprise, to be surprisingly level-headed.

Following a devastating suicide bombing June 1 at a Tel Aviv disco that killed 21 Israeli youth, Sharon was expected to order a blow against the Palestinian Authority.

Instead, he chose not to respond, allowing American and European politicians to broker a weak cease-fire based on the Mitchell Commission report.

The cease-fire has remained more of a theory than a fact, and Israelis still are waiting for Sharon to lose his patience and strike back hard at the Palestinian Authority. Given what many see as Sharon's restraint, some vigilante settlers have taken matters into their hands, killing several Palestinians in drive-by shootings.

Still, he's hardly popular around the world. In June, war crimes charges were launched against Sharon in Belgium for his role in the 1982 massacre by Israel's Lebanese Christian allies of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

An Israeli inquiry mission at the time found Sharon indirectly responsible because, as defense minister overseeing the war, he failed to foresee and prevent the massacre.

But the anti-Israel calumny reached its peak in late August and early September with the U.N. Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

Arab and Muslim groups elicited the support of groups from around the world to condemn Israel as a racist and apartheid state whose treatment of Palestinians constituted war crimes. Israel and the United States walked out of the conference, which eventually agreed to a compromise statement in which the suffering of the Palestinians was acknowledged, but Israel was not mentioned by name.

And as Rosh Hashanah 5762 approached, there was no sign that the violence would let up. □