



# Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Explosion in Rishon le-Zion

At least two Israelis were killed in a suicide bombing Wednesday night in the town of Rishon le-Zion.

At least 40 were injured in the blast.

Earlier this month, a suicide bomber struck at a pool hall in the town, killing 15 people and injuring more than 60.

### Knesset passes budget

Israel's Knesset overwhelmingly approved an emergency economic package.

With support from Likud and Labor legislators who had not taken part in a previous vote on Monday, the Knesset on Wednesday gave preliminary approval to the bill by a 65-26 vote, with seven abstentions. **[Page 4]**

### Court upholds kosher law

A U.S. court upheld an earlier ruling that New York state's kosher law is unconstitutional. The court said Tuesday the law defines kosher solely by using the definition of Orthodox Judaism, while prohibiting other branches of Judaism from using the kosher label in a way consistent with their requirements.

The court also said the law improperly takes sides in a religious matter and requires the state to take an official position on religious doctrine.

The fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America blasted the ruling, calling it a "judicial body blow to the unsuspecting consumer."

### Jewish governor-to-be?

A Jewish Democrat will try to become the next governor of Pennsylvania. Ed Rendell, former mayor of Philadelphia, won the Democratic primary Tuesday and will face Attorney General Mike Fisher in the November election.

Another Jewish candidate, Bev Stein, lost the Democratic primary in Oregon to Ted Kulongoski. Five other Jewish candidates are vying for governorships around the country.

Because of the Memorial Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, May 27.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Web sites and programs help Israelis hurt by economic crisis

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — At one time, it seemed like an oxymoron to talk about an Israeli with good customer service skills.

David Greenblatt hopes to change that.

As CEO of Customer Service Management, a New Jersey-based customer service and telemarketing company, Greenblatt hopes to hire characteristically brash sabras in computer service centers he's opening across Israel — and provide thousands of jobs in the process.

Greenblatt's story reflects a growing trend of American Jews busying themselves with grass-roots initiatives to bolster the Israeli economy, which has been battered by the Palestinian intifada, a steep decline in tourism and the burst of the dot-com bubble.

"We want to help Israel, and we're frustrated as many Americans" are, Greenblatt said. "We can't do much to stop the tragic terrorism in Israel, but we are doing all that we can to provide support by putting jobs in Israel."

Israel's unemployment is almost 10 percent, according to Zohar Peri, Israel's economic minister to North America.

But he noted that unemployment already stood at 7 percent or 8 percent before the intifada began in September 2000, due to the worldwide recession and a weakened telecommunications industry.

As American Jews struggle to find innovative ways to aid their embattled brethren in Israel, purchasing power and economic aid have become tangible solutions.

Jane Scher was attending a Bat Mitzvah in December when she casually told another guest that her gift for the occasion came straight from Israel.

The guest grew wide-eyed as Scher explained that she shops online for Israeli products as often as possible these days.

When others at their banquet table proved similarly intrigued, Scher decided to promote Web sites for Israeli products so Diaspora Jews could use their consumer dollars to help Israeli vendors.

Scher tracked down a 14-year-old computer whiz at the celebration willing to create a Web site.

Two months later, shopinisrael.com was born.

At least 10 volunteers respond to hundreds of e-mails each day from people looking for certain stores or products and Israeli businesses hoping to sell their wares.

The site currently links to 150 Israeli businesses, ranging from art galleries to popular shops on Ben-Yehuda Street to a pizza delivery service for Israeli soldiers.

Another 110 businesses are waiting in the wings, with new ones joining the waiting list every day.

Scher, a mother of three from San Diego who involves her kids in the project, can't estimate how many transactions she's helped arrange, but her site has had 120,000 hits in its first three months.

"I had felt so helpless, and there just had to be something we could do to make the situation better in some small way for Israel and for the Israelis," Scher said.

"I never wanted to look back and say I didn't do anything," Scher said, adding that this is the first time she has felt that Israel's very existence was threatened.

One of the best aspects of her site, she said, is that it's a "mutually beneficial arrangement."

"I'm buying things that I love, and" the Israeli store owners "are selling, which is

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel kills 3 militia members

Israeli soldiers killed three Palestinian militia members Wednesday in the West Bank. The three were killed in an attack at a refugee camp near Nablus. One was the regional head of the Al-Aksa Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

### Suicide bomber dies near Jenin

A Palestinian suicide bomber died Wednesday near Jenin. The army later said his bombs apparently went off prematurely.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, the army rounded up hundreds of Palestinian men Wednesday in towns near Nablus and Jenin in a search for suspected terrorists.

### Palestinian terrorists begin exile

Palestinian terrorists who took part in the recent standoff at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity left Cyprus. Twelve of the Palestinians boarded Italian and Spanish planes in Larnaca on Wednesday and flew to their designated European host countries.

Spain and Italy each agreed to take in three Palestinians, Greece and Ireland two each, and Portugal and Belgium one each. The 13th Palestinian will remain in Cyprus until a host country is found. He is Abdullah Daoud, 41, head of the Palestinian intelligence service in Bethlehem.

### Israel survives Olympics ban

The president of the International Olympic Committee rejected a call from Iran to bar Israel from the Olympic movement.

Jacques Rogge issued his ruling Wednesday, when the IOC opened its general assembly in the predominantly Muslim nation of Malaysia. Despite pressure from Muslim states, Israeli delegates were granted visas and allowed to attend the assembly.



## Daily News Bulletin

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what they wanted to do in the first place," she said.

Scher's message — promoted by Israeli consulates, Jewish federations, synagogues and schools — has moved like an international chain letter via e-mail from one Jew to another.

Gillian Garrett, a 28-year-old New Yorker, mentions Scher's site on an e-mail distribution group she maintains that shares tips about American stores selling Israeli products. "Israel's economy is struggling now, and it's one of many ways to show my support for the homeland," she said.

Garret says she has never visited Israel, but the Jewish state is something she cares about.

Noam Pianko, a 29-year-old graduate student in Jewish history at Yale University, is another enterprising activist.

Two months ago Pianko started Shop2Give, a program of the Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel. With a team of volunteers that includes American students in Israel, he is raising money to buy products in downtown Jerusalem that Israeli social service agencies have requested.

"I was thinking about particular ways to provide financial and emotional support to those Israeli businesses that American tourists patronize," along with making a match "between two different communities that both need help," said Pianko, referring to Israeli businesses and social service agencies.

The American students will purchase the items — books, shoes and school supplies, for example — according to a "wish list" submitted by the agencies.

Through fund-raising letters by e-mail and regular mail, and a Web site ([www.bronfman.org/shop2give](http://www.bronfman.org/shop2give)) for direct giving, the group has raised over \$7,000.

An Orthodox group called Mesora also has used the Internet to respond quickly and globally to Israel's economic crisis.

The group's Web site, [www.USAIrael.org](http://www.USAIrael.org), links American and Israeli businesses to encourage foreign investment in Israeli companies.

That's also the approach officials are taking.

Israel's Economic Mission in New York is collaborating with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce to create partnerships between Israeli and American businesses.

The coalition is currently trying to expand the American market for Israeli foods, and will publicize the names of participating companies so American Jews can patronize them.

That initiative is part of the mission's charge to boost Israel's economy, Israel's Peri said, but the effort was prompted in part by the grass-roots work done by American Jews. "We are doing it also in response to a lot of requests" by American Jews, who called to ask where they could buy products from Israel, Peri said. □

## Mandela employer dies at 90

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — Lazar Sidelsky, a Jewish lawyer who gave a young Nelson Mandela a job as a clerk, died in Johannesburg at 90.

Taking on a young black man as a clerk was "something almost unheard of in those days," Mandela later wrote of his time with the law firm of Witkin, Sidelsky and Eidelman.

Three years ago, Mandela honored Sidelsky and his "first white friend," Nat Bregman, who worked for the firm with Mandela, at a kosher lunch at Mandela's home in Johannesburg.

Mandela said in his autobiography, "A Long Walk to Freedom," that Sidelsky treated him with "enormous kindness."

Sidelsky lent Mandela money and gave him an old suit. Mandela said he wore the suit every day for five years until there were "more patches than suit."

"Boss," Mandela said at the lunch, referring to Sidelsky, had "sufficient vision to make this contribution to black education."

When Mandela joined the firm, Sidelsky was involved in African education and gave money and time to African schools.

"He treated me as a brother and as an equal," Mandela said. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Bush again blasts Arafat

Yasser Arafat has let the Palestinian people down, leaving them "poor and isolated and frustrated," President Bush said.

Speaking to European reporters Tuesday before leaving for a trip abroad, Bush reiterated themes from a speech last month in which he said the Palestinian Authority president had failed his people.

"He's had a chance to lead. He had a chance to get a peace agreement with my predecessor. He's had chance after chance," Bush said.

### Racism in S.F. area condemned

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown joined the Anti-Defamation League in condemning a recent wave of anti-Semitic incidents in the Bay Area.

During the past eight weeks, more than 60 acts of anti-Semitism have been reported to the ADL's San Francisco office. These include an arson attack May 4 at Temple Beth Jacob in Oakland and a May 7 demonstration at San Francisco State University that was tarnished by anti-Semitic slurs and intimidation of Jewish students. Only 13 incidents were reported during all of 2001.

### Woman accosted in Berlin

Youths hurled anti-Semitic slurs at a Jewish woman Saturday in Berlin. Police said Tuesday the three teen-aged boys allegedly involved were probably of Lebanese background.

The woman said one of the youths was carrying a bag bearing the inscriptions "PLO" and "Hamas."

### Legislator quits after blasting IDF

A legislator resigned from a German political party after being criticized for accusing the Israeli army of using Nazi methods. Syrian-born legislator Jamal Karsli resigned Wednesday from the liberal Free Democratic Party, one week after joining the party.

In a letter, Karsli apologized for "formulations that were out of order." He said he is quitting because he did not want "to provide a cause" for the party's political opponents.

### Solidarity march in Brussels

A massive pro-Israel march is planned for May 29 in Brussels. People wanting to show their support are being asked to come from all over Europe.

### Anti-Semitism on Russian money

Ten-ruble banknotes bearing an anti-Semitic slogan reportedly are being circulated in Russia.

The typewritten words "Russia Without Yids" appear on both sides of the notes, according to a Radio Free Europe report.

## Can Jesus help you get a new job? Court decision could set precedent

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A charitable choice lawsuit is paving the way for future legal challenges, even before a decision has been handed down.

A federal district court likely will have to decide the constitutionality of a program that uses religion and proselytizing in its efforts, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled Monday.

The case, American Jewish Congress and Texas Civil Rights Project vs. Bost, is the first involving a constitutional challenge to a charitable choice contract.

The AJCongress says evangelical Christianity "permeates" the government-funded Texas Works Program, violating the separation of church and state. The program focuses on job training and placement.

The AJCongress charges that Texas Works proselytizes, since it tells participants that "change can only be accomplished through a relationship with Jesus Christ."

Charitable choice, which allows religious institutions to bid for government contracts to provide social services, first was introduced in 1996.

Under debate is direct funding to religious groups that use religion while delivering social services. Religious-based organizations do receive funds for their charitable service, but they must run nonreligious programs and follow guidelines that seek to safeguard against religious coercion.

The appeals court also directed the lower court to determine whether damages should be awarded in the case. That is a crucial point, as no one has ever received damages in a case where a government subsidy for religious teaching is determined to violate the Establishment Clause — the constitutional provision mandating the separation of church and state. □

## L.A. Times, Jewish leaders meet in an effort to deal with grievances

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Charges that the Los Angeles Times has a pro-Palestinian bias in its coverage have prompted an unusual meeting.

In an effort to thrash out the issue, four Jewish officials recently visited the newspaper's headquarters to share with the top editorial brass the widespread feeling in the Jewish community that the paper's day-by-day coverage leans markedly in favor of the Palestinians, and against Israel.

Last month, in a move coordinated with local Jewish community leaders, at least 1,000 of the newspaper's subscribers suspended home delivery for at least one day to protest what was viewed as the Times' anti-Israel tilt.

Jewish readers launched similar boycotts recently against The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Rabbis Marvin Hier and Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center; Aaron Levinson, interim regional director of the Anti-Defamation League; and John Fishel, president of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, represented the Jewish community at the meeting.

Facing them across the conference table were Editor John Carroll, Managing Editor Dean Baquet and Assistant Managing Editor Miriam Pawel.

"We addressed the widespread perception in our community that in its general reporting, headlines, photos and opinion pages, the Times showed a lack of objectivity and that the editors must find a way to address this perception," Levinson said after the meeting.

At the meeting, and in a later interview, Carroll attempted to dispel the notion that the paper holds itself aloof from reader criticism.

"The volume of complaints" charging an anti-Israel bias "has been such that I haven't been able to read it all. But I realize the depth of feeling in the Jewish community," Carroll said. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## Sharon re-evaluates his options as another bombing rocks Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is playing coalition hardball as the drumbeat of Palestinian terror resumes.

Two days after firing four Cabinet ministers from the fervently Orthodox Shas Party for failing to support the government's emergency economic plan, Sharon said Wednesday he would not change his mind.

His stance is earning him points among some Israelis, who long have accused Shas of pursuing narrow self-interest.

But others question the wisdom of Sharon's firings, aware that Shas support has been crucial to the survival of more than one Israeli government.

The political instability comes as another Palestinian bomber struck, killing at least three Israelis and wounding more than 40 in Rishon le-Zion on Wednesday night.

Police were looking for a car thought to have dropped off the suicide bomber a short time before the explosion, Israel Radio said.

A senior police officer said the bomber had a "European" appearance, including dyed blond hair, Ha'aretz reported.

The attack took place on the city's major pedestrian mall.

This was the second bombing in Rishon le-Zion in recent weeks. Fifteen Israelis were killed and more than 60 wounded in a suicide bombing at a pool hall on May 7.

"This was another cowardly act of terror committed by Palestinian terrorists who have once again resorted to their murderous deeds," said David Baker, who works in the Prime Minister's Office. "Israel will not buckle under in the face of terror, and we will use whatever measures are needed to root it out."

A massive Israeli invasion of the West Bank, undertaken in response to an escalating wave of Palestinian terrorism in March, had provided a brief respite from terror attacks.

There were several attacks this week, however. A bomb in the coastal city of Netanya on Sunday killed three people and wounded dozens. On Monday, a suicide bomber detonated explosives at a traffic junction in northern Israel, killing only himself.

The week was tumultuous on the political front as well. Two days after Sharon suffered a humiliating defeat when his emergency economic package was rejected, the Knesset overwhelmingly approved the same package on Wednesday.

With support from Likud and Labor legislators who had not taken part in Monday's previous vote, the Knesset on Wednesday gave preliminary approval to the bill by a 65-26 vote, with seven abstentions.

The bill, which calls for budget cuts of \$2.7 billion and raises taxes to fund the increased defense spending necessitated by the intifada, now faces at least one more vote before final passage.

Fervently Orthodox legislators from the Shas Party, who opposed the bill on Monday, absented themselves from Wednesday's vote. After firing Shas and United Torah Judaism ministers and deputy ministers for opposing the bill on Monday, Sharon remained firm Wednesday, saying the dismissals would not be rescinded.

A fifth Shas minister who is not a legislator resigned.

The dismissals were slated to take effect Wednesday evening unless a compromise was worked out before then.

Opinion polls published Wednesday showed wide public support for Sharon's move.

After announcing the firings late Monday night, Sharon reportedly instructed aides to break off all contact with Shas officials, including refusing to take their phone calls.

He also convened his political advisers to discuss the unfolding coalition crisis.

Without Shas, which has 17 Knesset seats, and UTJ, which has five, Sharon's coalition will shrink from 82 to 60 of the Knesset's 120 seats. Even so, Sharon's government is not in immediate danger of collapse, because 61 votes are required to bring down a government in a no-confidence vote.

Just the same, Sharon may have to depend more than ever on his uneasy partnership with the Labor Party.

Political observers are questioning how far Sharon can go in depending on Labor, which is suffering its own internal strains.

In a sign of those strains, only 12 of the 24 Labor legislators voted for the budget bill on Monday.

One, Nawaf Masalha, voted against, and the remaining 11 members voted with their feet — by not being present for the vote.

The guiding hand behind the split in Labor's vote was said to belong to Knesset member Haim Ramon, a potential rival to Benjamin Ben-Eliezer for party leadership — and an advocate for withdrawing from the unity government.

The day after Monday's vote, Ben-Eliezer blasted those Labor members who opposed the bill.

Slamming the conference table at a party meeting, Ben-Eliezer declared, "the circus is over."

Some commentators hailed Sharon for standing up to the powerful Shas Party where other prime ministers, including his Labor predecessor, Ehud Barak, had capitulated.

Sharon has a number of options before him, they said, including bringing the secular Shinui Party, which has six Knesset seats, into the coalition.

Shinui leader Yosef Lapid said his party believes the budget bill is "bad and faulty," but it abstained during Wednesday's vote "in order to send a silent sign of appreciation" to Sharon.

"For the first time, a prime minister has stood up to the blackmail" of the fervently Orthodox parties, Lapid said.

Lapid also said Wednesday his party would join the coalition if the government does away with subsidies to large families and drafts fervently Orthodox yeshiva students.

Shas legislator Yair Peretz predicted early elections if Sharon brings Shinui into the government.

"If the prime minister thinks of building a coalition with Labor and Shinui, I believe that within one month we will find ourselves in an election campaign, which none of us needs," Peretz told Israel Radio.

In addition to Shinui, Sharon is expected in the coming days to hold meetings with officials from the Moledet and One Nation Parties, as well as with the National Unity — Israel, Our Home bloc, a past member of the Sharon government.

In closed conversations, Sharon was quoted as saying that if he succeeds in bringing six or seven more Knesset members into the coalition, his government could continue to function through the beginning of next year.

According to reports, Sharon is not interested in going to early elections. □