



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 184

Monday, October 7, 2002

85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharon: No more Iraq talk

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told Cabinet ministers Sunday to stop making public comments about a possible U.S. strike on Iraq.

Speaking at the weekly Cabinet meeting, Sharon said such comments impeded U.S. efforts.

Sharon added that the Bush administration has requested several times that the comments be toned down.

Sharon is slated to meet with President Bush in Washington on Oct. 16.

### Falwell: Prophet a 'terrorist'

Jewish and Islamic groups lashed out at a conservative Baptist leader for calling the Prophet Mohammad a "terrorist."

In a transcript released last week of an interview slated to be aired Sunday on the CBS news magazine "60 Minutes," the Rev. Jerry Falwell also said he believes the prophet of Islam was a "violent man, a man of war."

### Rabbi to be tried again for murder

The retrial in the case of a New Jersey rabbi accused of contracting to kill his wife is slated to begin later this month.

Last week, a three-judge panel ruled that death penalty charges could apply again to Fred Neulander in the new trial, scheduled for Oct. 21.

Authorities say the rabbi wanted his wife gone so he could continue an affair. A trial last year ended in a hung jury.

### Ze'evi slaying remembered

Israel's Cabinet marked the first anniversary on the Jewish calendar of the slaying of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

"Ze'evi was dedicated, from his youth to the day of his death, to taking an active role in the struggle for the creation of the State of Israel, and for its continued existence and security, and in this struggle he fell," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Sunday.

On Oct. 17, 2001, gunmen lurking in a Jerusalem hotel hallway assassinated Ze'evi.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestinian claimed responsibility.

The group said it was avenging Israel's slaying of its leader two months earlier.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Are Jews becoming Republican? Election Day will tell, or maybe not

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The debate over whether American Jews are turning to the Republican Party is not likely to be settled when the votes are counted on Nov. 5.

With midterm congressional elections just weeks away, Republicans cite a variety of reasons why this year's polls may not show the political shift they have been predicting for the past year.

But Democrats say the election will be the best sign yet of where Jews stand on the political spectrum.

It's hardly a new debate. For years, Republican Jewish leaders have touted increasing support from the Jewish community, while exit polls continue to show that most Jews vote Democratic. Still, with a Republican president who is strongly pro-Israel and Republican voices in Congress taking the lead in support of Israel and the U.S. war on terrorism, the issue has garnered notice in mainstream media.

While several indicators hint at a trend, little information exists to make a definitive assessment. That makes Election Day an important test for both sides of the argument.

Any Jewish movement toward the Republican Party would strike at one of the Democrats' strongest voting blocs at a time when Congress is almost evenly divided between the parties.

"The Democrats will have to spend time and money courting Jews," said Ken Goldstein, assistant professor of political science and Jewish studies at the University of Wisconsin. "Every day they have to focus on keeping Jews in line is a day they can't focus on swing states."

Although Jews make up only about 2 percent of the American population, they are valuable in elections because of their high voter turnout and their geographical disbursement, said Norman Ornstein, an elections analyst with the American Enterprise Institute.

"You have a lot of Jewish votes in a number of pivotal states and ones that are contentious," Ornstein said.

Plus, Jews often are political leaders who bring a lot to the discourse, and they are key fund-raisers.

The habits of Jewish voters have been a curiosity for years. "It's a puzzle," Goldstein said. "Given their education levels, income levels and color of skin, Jews should look like Republican voters" — but, historically, they haven't.

During the 1990s, for example, Democrats won at least 73 percent of the Jewish vote in House of Representatives races across the country. Within the last two decades, Jewish support for Democratic congressional candidates peaked at 82 percent in 1982, according to The New York Times.

The high point for Republicans was the 32 percent of the Jewish vote they garnered in House races in 1988.

But Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, points to an RJC survey, produced by the Luntz Research Companies in April, showing that 48 percent of Jews surveyed said they would consider voting for President Bush for re-election in 2004.

The poll also found that Bush's performance moved 27 percent to say they were more likely to vote for Republicans for other offices. Despite such figures, and numerous articles over the past year describing a Republican tilt in the Jewish

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Alleged terror cell goes on trial

The trial of four members of an alleged eastern Jerusalem terrorist cell began Sunday. The four Arabs are suspected of involvement in numerous terror attacks in which 35 people were killed, including an attack last July at Hebrew University that left nine people dead and more than 80 wounded. They are also accused of involvement in an attack last March at the Café Moment in Jerusalem and of helping to arrange a suicide bombing last May at a pool hall in Rishon le-Zion.

Because the accused live in Jerusalem, they have Israeli identity cards, which enabled them to move freely. During Sunday's hearing, relatives of terror victims shouted obscenities and insults at the accused. Attorneys for the four requested additional time to prepare their case, Israel Radio reported. The trial was set to resume Oct. 22.

### Palestinians craft Jerusalem bill

The Palestinian legislative council backed a bill declaring Jerusalem the future capital of an independent Palestinian state. Yasser Arafat initiated the bill Saturday after President Bush last week signed a bill recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. In another development, Palestinian groups are asking Muslim and Arab states to recall their ambassadors from Washington if the decision is implemented.

When signing the bill last week, Bush said he was regarding the Jerusalem provisions as advisory, and he is not expected to follow them.

### Hamas seeking Israeli bomb labs

Hamas is trying to set up bomb labs in Israeli Arab areas, Israeli security officials say.

The effort, an attempt to work around Israel's military crackdown in the West Bank, is focused near the Galilee city of Afula, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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community, Jewish Democratic leaders say the perception is wrong.

At the least, Republicans and Democrats agree that Jewish voters look closely at the candidates and no longer support Democrats automatically.

In the past, Jewish voters feared that voting Republican would mean embracing a conservative domestic agenda such as opposition to abortion and support for school prayer. Now, some say, closer ties between the Jewish community and right-wing Christian supporters of Israel has opened some doors.

"The fear factor that has for years been the barrier for a large scale" movement of American Jews to the Republican Party "is going to be cooled down by the working relationship between the Jews and Christian evangelicals," Brooks said.

Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, says that — especially during times of crisis in the Middle East such as the two-year-old intifada — Jewish voting patterns reflect concern for Israel more than domestic agendas. Given the strong support for Israel from Bush and congressional Republicans, that has created a perception of a Jewish-Republican embrace.

"If American Jewish voters have a choice between someone who is anti-Israel and left of center and a pro-Israel person who is right of center, most Jews will hold their nose and vote right of center," Forman said.

But, he contends, Jewish voters most often don't have to make that choice. More often, he says, they're deciding between pro-Israel Democrats and pro-Israel or neutral Republicans. When both candidates are either pro-Israel or neutral, Jews lean toward the Democrats because of domestic issues.

Forman also says that votes for Jewish Republican candidates don't necessarily reflect a communal shift rightward.

For example, a Marist Poll last month found that New York's Republican governor, George Pataki, was locked in a dead heat with Democrat Carl McCall among Jewish voters, 47 percent to 46 percent. But do Jewish votes for Pataki signal support for his Republican policies, or for his leadership after the Sept. 11 attacks?

For his part, Brooks says it is not fair to focus on certain races and then try to divine a trend. The fact that Jewish voters are picking Republicans for any reason is significant, he says.

"The traditional instinct of the Jewish community to vote lockstep with the Democratic Party has eroded," he said. "Election by election, race by race, the Jewish vote is up for grabs."

For Jews to pick a Republican candidate, he says, there must be a credible alternative to the Democrat, and that candidate must seek out the Jewish community and emphasize the issues of importance to them.

A recent report by the independent Gallup Organization found that the partisan slant of the Jewish vote has remained stable over the past decade.

No poll has enough Jewish respondents to mark a trend. But, extrapolating from its surveys during the past 18 months, Gallup determined that some 50 percent of Jewish voters are Democrats, 32 percent are independent and 18 percent are Republicans. That mirrors responses from Gallup polls taken between 1992 and 2001.

"The patterns of party identification are very stable," said Frank Newport, Gallup's editor in chief.

The Democrats rallied around those results, issuing a news release declaring the end of the "fiction" that more Jews are voting Republican.

"It's been said before, time and time again, for the last 30 years," Forman said. But "the numbers for the last 30 years have said the opposite."

But Brooks notes that party identification may not be the best way to measure voting shifts. People frustrated with Democratic politics are more likely to vote for individual Republican candidates than to change their party affiliation.

Forman claims Election Day will show that most Jews still vote for Democrats. But Brooks says that November's results won't change his thesis.

With many Democratic representatives in heavily Jewish areas running unopposed, this year's vote will not be an accurate reflection of Jewish attitudes, Brooks says. He would prefer to wait until 2004, when President Bush runs for re-election.

All of which means that the debate is likely to go on after November, come what may at the polls. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Campus anti-Semitism blasted

Hundreds of college presidents will blast anti-Semitism on college campuses in a New York Times ad to appear Monday. Spearheaded by the American Jewish Committee's Task Force on Anti-Semitism, the statement was created in response to campus activism on the Middle East that in some cases has veered into overt anti-Semitism.

The letter was initiated by James Freedman, former president of Dartmouth College and chair of the AJCommittee's Domestic Policy Commission. It follows a September speech by Harvard University's president in which he said that some activities of the campus anti-Israel movement are anti-Semitic.

### Terrorist sentenced by Fla. court

An immigrant from Trinidad was sentenced last Friday in Florida for involvement in a terrorist bombing plot. Shueyb Mossa Jokhan, 24, pleaded guilty in July to conspiring to bomb targets that included the Israeli Consulate in Miami.

The plot, which authorities said was hatched in a Florida mosque, was thwarted by an FBI informant. Jokhan was sentenced to nearly five years in federal prison.

### Belgium apologizes for Nazi era

Belgium's prime minister apologized for the complicity of local government officials in deporting tens of thousands of Jews to Nazi Germany.

Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the 60th anniversary of the deportation of Jews by train out of Belgium, Guy Verhofstadt said his country had to acknowledge and assume responsibility. "In Belgium, too many were those who gave in to collaborating," he said. "We must have the courage to say it, to acknowledge it, to bear it."

### Ukrainian air crash marked

A ceremony was held in Ukraine for those who died when an airplane was accidentally shot down last year. Last Friday's ceremony took place near the crash site on the Black Sea.

The jet went down Oct. 4, 2001, when it was hit by a Ukrainian missile during training exercises. The flight was on its way from Israel to the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, when the plane crashed, killing all 78 people aboard, 66 of whom were Jews. Most of the passengers had emigrated from Russia to Israel.

### Warsaw Jews get Torah scroll

A liberal Jewish group in Warsaw received a 100-year-old Torah from the Reform community of Clarksdale, Miss.

The Torah was presented to Bejt Warszawa, a havurah-type community, during the High Holidays.

## Gay advocates in Israel applaud naming of first openly gay legislator

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA)— Activists in Israel's gay and lesbian community are hailing the upcoming swearing-in of the Knesset's first openly gay member, calling it a breakthrough in their efforts for greater recognition.

When the Knesset reconvenes later this month following its summer recess, Uzi Even, a Tel Aviv University chemistry professor, will become one of the Meretz Party's 10 lawmakers.

He succeeds veteran legislator Amnon Rubinstein, who is retiring from politics.

"This is a day of celebration for the gay and lesbian community, but also for the free and civic society in Israel," said Itai Pinkas, chair of the Association of Gays and Lesbians in Israel. "Those who for years tried to push the community outside the public discourse will now get a declared homosexual as a Knesset member."

Rubinstein was to have been replaced by the next person on Meretz's roster, businessman Benny Temkin, who is currently in Mexico. But Temkin announced he would decline the position for personal and family reasons.

The seat then passed to Even, 61, who was next on the list.

At a news conference, Even said he would focus on science, technology and education. He also promised to lobby for gay rights.

"I am proud to be a Knesset member and represent the community that sent me there," Even told the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*.

Labor Party Knesset Member Yael Dayan, who initiated the first Knesset conference on gay and lesbian issues 10 years ago — in which Even participated — welcomed his appointment to the Knesset.

Dayan invited Even to head a parliamentary subcommittee on gay issues that would function under the auspices of her Committee for the Advancement of Women.

Legislators from the fervently Orthodox parties condemned Even's appointment.

Shas legislator Nissim Dahan called the appointment "a black day for the State of Israel."

Even dismissed the criticism. Once the media hype blows over, he said, Shas "will have no problem cooperating with me in the Knesset. My vote will be equal to that of every other legislator." Even, who lives with his longtime partner, has played a key role in advancing gay rights in Israel.

In 1993, when the army found out that Even was living with a man, it removed him from his job as an intelligence officer. He later was invited to address the Knesset about discrimination against gays in the army. Orthodox lawmakers walked out when he spoke, but his efforts eventually helped outlaw such discrimination.

Within months, a regulation prohibiting discrimination against gays in the armed forces was signed by then-army chief of staff Ehud Barak.

Even later successfully sued Tel Aviv University to get the same benefits for his partner, Amit Kama, a communications professor, that the school extended to faculty spouses. Even and Kama also were among the first gays to become foster parents in Israel when they took in a 15-year-old whose family had thrown him out for being gay. □

## Bank official's wife sued

NEW YORK (JTA)— The wife of the European Central Bank's president is being sued for allegedly making anti-Semitic comments.

The Amsterdam lawsuit against Gretta Duisenberg, wife of Wim Duisenberg, accuses her of making anti-Semitic comments on Dutch radio during a pro-Palestinian rally last week. When asked how many people she could garner for a petition against Israeli action in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, she said "6 million" and laughed.

Dutch prosecutors said they are investigating the complaint and considering charges of their own. Duisenberg caused controversy last spring for flying a Palestinian flag from the couple's Amsterdam home. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**Conservative inroads in Polish city create controversy with Orthodox**

By Ruth E. Gruber

WROCLAW, Poland (JTA) — The recent Bat Mitzvah ceremony for two girls here marked a watershed for the second largest Jewish community in Poland.

But the Conservative ceremony came amid controversy surrounding the non-Orthodox conversion of a group of Wroclaw Jews just before Yom Kippur.

The controversy was part of an increasingly open conflict between community members embracing non-Orthodox Judaism and the Orthodox mainstream establishment.

"It's war," said one Jewish source in Warsaw who did not want to be identified.

Held during Sukkot in Wroclaw's historic White Stork Synagogue, the Bat Mitzvah ceremony was believed to be the first Conservative Bat Mitzvah ever celebrated in Poland.

The girls, Delfina Krieger and Iga Siedlecka, both 15, are daughters of leading members of the Wroclaw congregation.

Their beaming mothers blessed them and proudly placed tallitot around the girls' shoulders before they recited the blessing over the Torah. Neither girl was halachically Jewish by birth.

Both underwent Conservative conversions in the United States this summer after studying with Rabbi Ivan Caine, a retired Philadelphia-area rabbi who was sent to Wroclaw a year ago to serve as the community rabbi.

"My father's father was Jewish, and my mother was Catholic," Delfina told JTA. "It's confusing to grow up in two religions, and I didn't want that for my children. So I wanted to choose. I weighed them up and chose Judaism."

Two weeks before the Bat Mitzvah, the mothers of both girls were among 20 Wroclaw community members who underwent Conservative conversions conducted in Poland by a group of Conservative rabbis from Israel and the United States.

The umbrella group of Poland's Jewish community, the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, is Orthodox.

The conversions — like similar Conservative conversions carried out around the same time in the Czech Republic — outraged the Orthodox rabbinic establishment.

Warsaw's rabbi, Michael Schudrich, refused permission to use the Warsaw community's mikvah for the ceremony, so the conversion group used a mikvah in a private hotel in Krakow.

There, Sasa Pecaric, the Orthodox rabbi who heads activities in Krakow sponsored by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, attempted to bar access to the mikvah and shouted at the group that their conversions were "phony" and would not be recognized.

"It was very painful and upsetting," Caine, who later criticized the Orthodox rabbis in his Yom Kippur sermon, told JTA.

The dispute is an example of differing visions of Jewish religious life, differing communal aspirations and differing ideas of Jewish identity that are crystallizing a dozen years after the fall of communism enabled Jewish life in Poland to re-emerge from the traumas of the Holocaust and subsequent Communist oppression.

Each side says the other reneged on promises to cooperate.

Interest in Conservative Judaism in Wroclaw was sparked after an American couple, Ellen Friedland and Curt Fissel, were married

in Wroclaw in 2000 in a ceremony conducted by a Conservative rabbi they brought with them from the United States.

Caine was sent to Wroclaw in September 2001, and during the past year visited the city regularly and spent periods of several weeks there at major holidays. Wroclaw's Jewish community numbers about 700 people and has long embraced activists who are not Jewish according to halachah.

Most of the new converts had Jewish roots of some sort.

Since Caine's arrival in Wroclaw, the community has become more egalitarian, with women playing a prayer role and wearing tallitot. But a sizable segment opposes the trend, and the congregation has remained divided as to whether it should formally declare itself Conservative.

Poland's Orthodox religious authorities raised several objections to the Conservative conversions.

For one thing, they point out that the new converts run the risk of being isolated, recognized as Jews only in Wroclaw.

"With all the mistrust in the Jewish world already existing about Poland, they feel non-Orthodox conversions would just be more suspect," said Konstanty Gebert, publisher of the Polish Jewish monthly *Midrasz*.

"It is my understanding that these converts could have gone the extra mile and got an Orthodox conversion. It's more time consuming, but it's possible, and then they would not be rejected by other Jews," he said. "I'm afraid they will be hurt."

Schudrich, too, criticizes what he sees as an attempt to exacerbate existing tensions and formalize long-standing divisions among Polish Jews.

"Jewish unity is pivotal for the success of any Jewish community, particularly a small one," he said. "Someone who does something to try to split the community is working against the interests of that community."

He and other Orthodox sources said they felt that the Jews in Wroclaw may end up being manipulated in a turf war between the Conservative and Orthodox worlds. Caine, indeed, hopes Wroclaw will be in the vanguard of a spreading Conservative, or Masorti, movement in Poland and elsewhere.

"We are thrilled to see the beginning of a vital Masorti congregation in Wroclaw, which we think will spread to other cities," Caine told JTA. "I'm afraid that the Orthodox authorities will try to stop that," he said. "It seems like for them, they would rather have no revival than a liberal revival."

He rejected charges that the conversions he oversaw were "quickie" and not stringently prepared.

"We didn't just dunk them," he said, referring to the mikvah ceremony. "They studied hard."

But the conflict over Conservative conversions is not the only evidence of institutional splits within a Jewish community that numbers somewhere between 5,000 and 20,000 nationwide.

A liberal, havurah-type group in Warsaw, Beit Warszawa, was founded several years ago and appears to be flourishing.

It is not a member of the umbrella Union of Jewish Religious Communities, but it sometimes cooperates with the Orthodox congregation. For example, both groups joined forces for the first time at Simchat Torah ceremonies this year.

More worrying to the local Jewish establishment, however, is the recent formation of breakaway Jewish groups in Gdansk and Poznan that have been set up deliberately as rival organizations outside the union. □