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Netanyahu speech straining bipartisanship ahead of AIPAC conference

Source: JTA-2/25/2015

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's congressional address and its biggest-ever annual conference, AIPAC wants to keep the focus squarely on Iran and the traditionally bipartisan nature of American support for Israel. Tensions between Democrats and the Israeli prime minister are escalating ahead of his speech next week to Congress, with top Obama administration officials and congressional Democrats shifting their criticism from Republican machinations into outright personal attacks on Netanyahu. The intensification of tensions is creating a fraught backdrop for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's conference next week — its biggest ever with 16,000 attending, a 35 percent increase over last year.

Iran will be the principal focus of the March 1-3 forum, an AIPAC official said, and the single legislative request that AIPAC activists will bring to Capitol Hill on its final day will be an appeal for co-sponsors of a bill imposing new sanctions on Iran should the nuclear talks collapse. The activists will arrive just as Netanyahu presents his address, in which he is expected to deliver a broadside against the talks. The Obama administration opposes the sanctions bill, saying it could scuttle the talks before the March 24 deadline for an outline agreement. Notably, AIPAC is not pressing for an immediate vote, cognizant of Democrats who back the bill but want to allow the current round of talks to play out. An AIPAC official said urging members to co-sponsor the sanctions bill, introduced by Sens. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), is a means of pressuring Iran and perhaps getting a better outcome in negotiations. "This regime in Iran will not make concessions without ratcheting up pressure," said the official, who spoke with the group's customary insistence on anonymity. AIPAC is encouraging all lawmakers to attend the speech, the official said, and is appreciative of the pledge by the Democratic Party's top leadership to attend. Bipartisanship remains a key plank for the lobby, the official said. But that plank is taking a beating, with about 30 Democratic lawmakers confirming that they will not attend the speech on Tuesday. Top Democrats Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Harry Reid (D-Nev.) will be present — Reid provided he is recovered from a recent injury — but others may not.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), the top Democrat on the Senate's Middle East subcommittee, will not attend. Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), the Senate's second-ranking Democrat, and Dianne Feinstein, the most senior Jewish senator and the top Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, are both mulling an absence. Netanyahu this week declined an invitation from Durbin and Feinstein to meet privately with the Democratic caucus, saying it would compound what he says is the mistaken impression that his message is a partisan one. On Wednesday, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) became the fifth Jewish lawmaker to say she would not attend. Unlike the other four — Reps. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) and John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) and Sens. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) — Schakowsky has been close to AIPAC for years and has a substantial Jewish constituency in her district. Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and the most prominent Jewish figure to urge Netanyahu to cancel the speech, is urging lawmakers to attend. "The debate about the invitation should not obscure the profound issues at stake for both the U.S. and Israel, which have a common interest in insuring that Iran, the leading state sponsor of terrorism and a nation committed to Israel's destruction, should not have the capability of building a nuclear weapon," Foxman said. The AIPAC official said the lobby would emphasize that aside from the Obama-Netanyahu differences, government-to-government relations were smooth.

Israel and Jordan sign water, Dead Sea agreement

Source: JTA-2/26/2015

Shrinking Dead Sea projection



JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel and Jordan signed a bilateral agreement to exchange water and to work together to save the Dead Sea. Government officials from the two countries signed the Seas Canal agreement at a ceremony Thursday on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea. Dignitaries from both sides, as well as representatives from the World Bank and the U.S. embassies in Israel and Jordan, were on hand, according to a statement from Israel's Regional Cooperation Ministry. The agreement implements the first stage of the Seas Canal project, including the construction of a desalination plant north of Aqaba to supply water to the Arava region in Israel and to Aqaba in Jordan. Residual saline brines will be piped to the Dead Sea through an approximately 125-mile pipeline from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea in order to stabilize and save the Dead Sea. Also in the framework of the agreement, water from northern Israel will be piped to Amman. The effect of the process on the Dead Sea, as well as other environmental effects, will be monitored and studied. Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority signed a memorandum of understanding in December 2013 in Washington.

Tetzaveh

Exodus 27:20-30:10

G-d tells Moses to receive from the children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening till morning." The priestly garments, to be worn by the kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary, are described. All kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet—a full-length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim—linen breeches; 3) mitznefet or migba'at—a linen turban; 4) avnet—a long sash wound above the waist. In addition, the kohen gadol (high priest) wore: 5) the efod—an apron-like garment made of blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen—a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) the me'il—a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz—a golden plate worn on the forehead, bearing the inscription "Holy to G-d." Tetzaveh also includes G-d's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons—Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar—into the priesthood, and for the making of the golden altar, on which the ketoret (incense) was burned.



The Initiation of Aaron and his four sons

Tetzaveh Haftarah

Ezekiel 43:10-27.

In this week's haftarah, the prophet Ezekiel describes a vision of the altar that will be built for the third Holy Temple and its dedication ceremony--paralleling this week's Torah portion which discusses the dedication of the Tabernacle's altar. Shortly after the destruction of the first Temple, Ezekiel experienced a vision of the third Holy Temple that will be built by the Messiah. G-d tells Ezekiel to recount to the Jewish people this vision, and this hopefully will bring them to be ashamed of the deeds they did that caused the destruction of the Temple. "And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, let them know the form of the House and its scheme, its exits and its entrances, and all its forms, and all its laws and all its teachings..." Ezekiel then goes on to describe in detail the third Temple's altar, and also describes its seven-day inauguration ceremony and the offerings which will be brought on each day of that special week.



Leonard Nimoy, actor who played Spock on 'Star Trek,' dead at 83

Source: JTA-2/27/2015



Leonard Nimoy and wife Susan Bay (2013)

(JTA) — Leonard Nimoy, the actor best known for his role as Spock on "Star Trek," died Friday morning at his home in Los Angeles. The cause of death was end-stage chronic pulmonary disease, the New York Times reported. He was 83. Nimoy's Spock has proved to be one of the most famous television characters of the second half of the 20th century. Nimoy said that he based the character's split-finger salute, now a pop culture fixture, on a Kohanic blessing which involves a manual approximation of the Hebrew letter shin. Nimoy was born in Boston's West End neighborhood in 1931 to Yiddish-speaking, Orthodox Jewish immigrant parents from then Soviet Ukraine. In his later years, Nimoy rediscovered his Jewish roots. In 1991, he produced and starred in "Never Forget," a TV movie based on the story of a Holocaust survivor who sues a group of neo-Nazi Holocaust deniers, and four years later he hosted an NPR series in which Jewish celebrities read aloud Jewish short stories. In 2002, he published "Shekhina," a book of photographs of semi-nude Jewish women, which angered Orthodox leaders. And in 2009, he narrated a documentary about the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Elkins Park, Pa., which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Nimoy was nominated for an Emmy Award for his role as Golda Meir's husband in "A Woman Called Golda" in 1982.

Streit's matzah factory shuts down

Source: JTA-2/25/2015

Streit's, the last family-owned matzah company in the United States, announced in December that it would be permanently closing its 90-year-old factory after this Passover season because of longstanding mechanical problems and subsequent economic concerns. Sometime in April, the company will shift its matzah production either to its other factory across the river in northern New Jersey, where several other products such as macaroons and wafers are made, or to another non-Manhattan location. "We should've been out of here five or 10 years ago," says Alan Adler, 63, who oversees the company's day-to-day operations along with two cousins. "But we feel committed to the men [who work here] and we feel committed to the neighborhood, so we tried to keep this place afloat as long as we could. We probably could've stayed here even longer if I could've found somebody to work on the ovens." The ovens, identified only by "Springfield, Mass" on their side, date back to the 1930s.

China, World Jewish Congress to commemorate Shanghai Ghetto liberation

Source: JTA-2/27/2015

(JTA) — The World Jewish Congress and China's government are preparing a joint commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Shanghai Ghetto. The People's Republic of China and WJC intend to host the ceremony in September, the parties said in a joint statement to media on Wednesday. More than 23,000 Jewish refugees lived in the ghetto in Shanghai, which was then occupied by Japan — an ally of Nazi Germany and cofounder of the fascist Axis powers. Some of the refugees in the ghetto arrived there from Lithuania, where the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara gave transit visas into Japan to approximately 6,000 Jews in defiance of orders from Tokyo. (Book: *Visas for Life: The Remarkable Story of Chiune & Yukiko Sugihara and the Rescue of Thousands of Jews*).

"We will commemorate, for the first time, part of the Holocaust that tends to get less attention," said WJC President Ronald S. Lauder, who will chair the commemoration event. "This historic event also marks another step towards strengthening the bonds between the Chinese and Jewish people." The event, the first to be co-organized by the WJC and China, will bring 100 WJC representatives to Shanghai. Robert Singer, CEO of Lauder's organization, finalized the joint commemoration earlier this week during a meeting in London with Qiu Yuanpin, a Chinese minister of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. "It is in the best interests of world Jewry that we forge even closer relations with Beijing," Singer said. Yuanpin said in the joint statement with the WJC: "Both Chinese and Jewish nations have suffered at the hands of Fascist forces, but, ultimately, achieved final victory after unyielding struggle." Chinese officials in recent years have stepped up their rhetoric against Japan, demanding more explicit expressions of regret for atrocities committed during World War II from the current government of the island nation. Historical tensions between the Asian powers are further complicated by efforts by Japan's right-wing government to beef up the country's military capabilities, ending decades of a pacifist prohibition on maintaining offensive capabilities.

Missouri gubernatorial candidate with Jewish roots found dead

Source: JTA-2/27/2015

(JTA) — Tom Schweich, a Republican candidate for governor of Missouri, apparently killed himself shortly after telling journalists that a fellow party member was leading a whisper campaign saying he was Jewish. In recent days, Schweich had said that John Hancock, the chairman of the Missouri Republican Party, was spreading rumors that Schweich was Jewish. Schweich told Messenger that Hancock was trying to hurt his chances in the primary with evangelical Christian voters. "I don't have a specific recollection of having said that," Hancock told The Associated Press on Thursday, "but it's plausible that I would have told somebody that Tom was Jewish, because I thought he was, but I wouldn't have said it in a derogatory or demeaning fashion."

Influence of the Lamedvavniks

From: JEWISH STORIES by L. Grunfeld

Prologue:

36 Lamedvavniks figured in kabbalistic folk legend of the 16th-17th centuries and in hasidic lore from the end of the 18th century. At times of great peril, a lamedvovnik makes a dramatic appearance. Using hidden powers to effect the fate of the world, after which the Lamedvovnik returns mysteriously to obscurity.

CHAPTER #6- A tangible example

Everyone's attention was on the rabbi. Was he really going to give an example of a practical application with Kabbalah? Rabbi Kindberg began to tell the class about a *Mekubbal* who, after a long draught to the land, decided to pursue the onset of rain. During his youth, he'd been a follower of a great *tzadik* who taught his students in the wilderness while sitting on a rock. The *tzadik* had passed away but his disciple decided to visit this special rock. After some time of contemplation, he decided that he would write the Hebrew words for "*Mashiv HaRuach UMorid HaGesem*" on a piece of parchment and place it under the rock of the *tzadik*. Soon afterwards, it began to rain. The class was mesmerized. Each had envisioned themselves duplicating this event. Only one problem existed. While it would be relatively easy to obtain a piece of parchment, who would know where to find a rock upon which a *tzadik* had sat at one time or another. And of course the follow-up quandary: "Rabbi... how was the rain stopped?"

The rabbi smiled and gave the simple retort: "Well...the Mekubbal removed the parchment from under the rock!"

Shlomo Zvi, the cook was inspired -he would research the whereabouts of all the known *tzadiks* of the modern day. Rabbi Kindberg was smiling internally. He knew this would eventually increase Shlomo Zvi's attachment to Judaism. He was, however, not prepared for Yakov Arie's display of the nine-pointed diagram on the coin-sized amulet in his hands.

"Rabbi... have you ever seen this symbol?" asked Yakov Arie, who was now inspired to get additional input from the erudite seekers of hidden knowledge.

A wave of consternation shocked through the rabbi's awareness -but he didn't show it outwardly. Seemingly unperturbed he adjusted his glasses, giving the impression of inspecting the object and decided to respond calmly, "Yes. It's quite ancient. In fact it's both a teaching tool... and a puzzle!" The rabbi began to draw the symbol on the blackboard for all to see. (To be continued)



NOTE: Previous chapters available on website: <http://batkolnews.yolasite.com/bat-kol-copies.php>

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Founded in 1925, AMIT educates and cares for Israel's youth, including the most vulnerable children in Israel. The AMIT schools promote religious tolerance, service to the state and the recognition that every child is blessed with unique talents and abilities.

Contact: Rabbi Avi Kasten



שבת שלום

BAT KOL NEWS

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NEXT WEEK'S SERVICES*

Candle lighting	5:34 PM
FRIDAY Minha / Maariv	5:30 PM
SATURDAY morning	9:30 AM
SATURDAY Minha / Maariv	5:30 PM
Shabbat ends	6:39 PM
SUNDAY(Clock +1 hr ahead)	8:10 AM
FAST OF ESTHER	MARCH 4
PURIM	MARCH 5
SUNDAY (Clock +1 hr ahead)	MARCH 8

*Subject to change per Rabbi's announcements.