

**OUR MAN
IN HAIFA**



CARL ALPERT

*Chief Rabbis
More Powerful
Than The President*

HAIFA -- The election of two new Chief Rabbis in Israel has not attracted as much attention overseas as the election of Israel's new President, but the fact is that the Chief Rabbis have considerably more power and influence than the President. The very institution of a Chief Rabbi, as a state functionary, seems strange to Jews overseas. Furthermore, we have not one but two - one serving the Ashkenazi community, and the other the Sephardi.

The office dates back to the time of the Ottoman Empire, when the government assured each

of its religious minorities full autonomy in matters of concern to them. The religious leader of the Jews was known as the Haham (the wise one) and with the addition of the Turkist translation he became known as Haham Bashi.

When the British mandate was established over Palestine after the First World War, the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, wanted to assure the rights of the Christian and Moslem communities. He continued the same principle of autonomy, and of course the Jews organized their religious affairs in parallel fashion. The supreme religious authority, created in 1921, became known as the Chief Rabbi.

Each community is given jurisdiction and control over matters which in other countries fall under civil law, such as marriage, divorce, alimony, burials, etc. Any attempt by Israel to change the system - for example, to strip the Moslem Shariah courts of their jurisdiction over these areas of religious concern to them, would cause the entire Moslem world to rise up in protest, and a revolution would probably break out at home.

Much of the day - to - day administration of these matters is carried on by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with which the Chief Rabbinate is associated. The Ministry handles the concerns of all religious groups in Israel, and assures the independence and autonomy of each.

The concerns of the Jewish community are many, ranging from yeshivas to kashrut supervision and to mikvehs, ritual baths. In each local community are religious councils, respon-

sible to the Ministry in Jerusalem, and drawing their budget from it. Salaries of the rabbis, religious court judges, and the various officials and functionaries, are all paid from the budget of the Ministry.

One of the most troublesome aspects of the whole institution is that while Israel recognizes the rights of Christians and Moslems, Bahais and Karaites and Samaritans, there is no such recognition of any rights for Liberal or Conservative Judaism in an establishment which is operated by and for orthodox Jews. The issues involved are going to erupt into open conflict with increasing frequency.

The Chief Rabbinate has two primary areas of operation. One is general supervision of most rabbinical functions in the country; the other is the Supreme Religious Court, which acts as a court of appeal from the many local rabbinical courts which handle divorce cases, and various disputes of religious concern. By new agreement, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapiro and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu will divide their ten year term. One will serve for five years as Chief Rabbi and the other as Chief Justice of the Court; for the second five years they will reverse their roles. Among recent incumbents this had been a matter of dispute.

Headquarters of the Chief Rabbinate is located in Hechal Shlomo, in Jerusalem. It is sometimes jocularly referred to as the Datican, a play on the words Vatican and dati, the Hebrew word for "religious."

The Chief Rabbis were elected by an electoral board consisting of 150 members, 80 of them rabbis and the remainder civic leaders at large. Most of the electors were chosen on the basis of political considerations, and the election campaign was a not very edifying spectacle.

The office of the Chief Rabbi is modified by the character and personality of the man who occupies the post. To this day Chief Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, who served in the Ashkenazi post from 1921 until his death in 1935, is regarded as the leading and dominant personality in the modern rabbinical history of the country. His administration was marked by courageous rulings which sought to interpret halacha, strict Jewish tradition, in terms of modern living. He was succeeded by Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Halevy Herzog, who came to the post after being Chief Rabbi of Ireland. Chaim Herzog is his son. The next Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi was Shlomo Goren, who brought a certain flamboyancy to the position. He earned pilot wings, and had a great sense of the dramatic, as evidenced by his blowing of the shofar atop Mount Sinai, among other exploits. The successive Sephardi occupants of the post have been marked by their dignity and scholarship, but they were not as well known in the West.

It is generally expected that under the administration of Chief Rabbis Shapiro and Eliahu, the Datican will enter a conservative period of strict interpretation of Jewish law, affording little hope to Jews who do not subscribe to orthodoxy.

LONDON (WNS) -- A memorial to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust is to be opened this summer in Hyde Park, London, with the consent of the British government. The first memorial of its kind in Britain, it will consist of a specially landscaped garden and a stone bearing a Biblical quotation in Hebrew and English. Government approval of the scheme was announced in Parliament by Neil MacFarlane, Undersecretary at the Department of Environment.

Re-elect

Al Levy...

**Al
Levy**



**CITY
COMMISSION
District
1**

**A Solid Record
On Issues That Count:**

During his term on the City Commission, Al Levy has always pushed to give the residents of Las Vegas a strong voice on the City Commission.

Has always voted to put more police officers on the streets.

Vigorously supported construction of the new County Jail Facility and more improvements to the City Jail Annex.

Has always strongly fought for Senior Programs such as

- the Senior Citizens' Law Project which provides free non-criminal legal aid to Seniors.
- expansion of the Senior Center on Bonanza Road.

Al has also been a strong vocal proponent for providing the City with more firefighters and fire stations, as well as updating fire safety equipment and techniques.

Al has consistently spoken out against the Public Service Commission and the exorbitant utility rate increases along with fighting for programs aimed at road improvements and flood control.

Al also works tirelessly to obtain answers for our difficult mass transportation problems.

And most importantly, Al Levy has always been one of the most available elected officials in Southern Nevada. His total open door policy has never been changed in the four years he's served on our City Commission.

**Al
Levy** A STRONG VOICE
FOR LAS VEGAS

Be Sure To Vote May 3rd ... Your Vote Does Count

736-6811

Evenings & Weekends
383-6513

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Certified Public Accountant

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