

## CHIEF RABBIS INSIST THAT ETHIOPIAN JEWS MUST UNDERGO RITUAL IMMERSION

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 17 (JTA) -- Israel's two chief rabbis declared today that they would not yield an inch in their demands that Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia undergo ritual immersion, a religious conversion rite.

At a packed press conference at Chief Rabbinate headquarters here, Mordechai Eliahu and Avraham Shapiro, the Sephardic and Ashkenazic chief rabbis, respectively, insisted that halacha was immutable and inviolable. The Ethiopian newcomers must submit to immersion because it is a halachic requirement, they said.

The Ethiopian Jews, more than 10,000 of whom arrived in Israel by secret airlift last winter, regard the Chief Rabbinate's demand to be demeaning and insulting and casts doubts on their authenticity as Jews. The refusal of local rabbis to issue marriage certificates to Ethiopians who have not undergone immersion triggered a series of angry protests.

They culminated yesterday in a mass march by hundreds of emigres--men, women and children--from absorption centers in northern and southern Israel toward Ben Gurion Airport, the place where they landed only a few months ago. The intention was to dramatize their disenchantment with their treatment at the hands of Israel's rigidly Orthodox religious establishment.

They returned to the absorption centers on the promise that Premier Shimon Peres would intervene with the chief rabbis on their behalf.

### Rabbis Cite Fringe Elements

The two chief rabbis, who dismissed the protests as the work of fringe agitators, said they would be willing to "explain" halacha to Peres. They said they regarded the Ethiopian emigres, one of the most devoutly religious groups in Israel, as Jews in principle. But the fact that they have been separated from mainstream Judaism since the destruction of the Second Temple, cast doubts on their Jewish purity which only the ritual bath could remove.

Eliahu maintained there has certainly been a "mixing" of alien strains in some Ethiopian Jewish families over the centuries--meaning some may have married non-Jews--and therefore halacha requires a confirmation of the Covenant before any Ethiopian can be allowed to marry. "For marriage we need an even higher degree of certainty," Eliahu explained. There is no civil marriage in Israel and marriages performed by non-Orthodox rabbis are generally not recognized.

"There can be no negotiating or compromise over halacha," Shapiro said. "If something is halacha then it is halacha and that's all there is to it."

Both chief rabbis claimed their predecessors had insisted that the Ethiopian Jews must undergo not only immersion but symbolic circumcision--a drawing of blood. The latter demand was waived by Eliahu and Shapiro who said they were satisfied that the circumcision of infants performed in Ethiopia complied with the basic tenets of halacha.

But the chief rabbis' reliance on their predecessors was notably weakened by the fact that their two immediate predecessors, Ovadia Yosef and Shlomo Goren, the former Sephardic and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbis, respectively, have stated publicly that neither ritual immersion nor symbolic circumcision is required of the Ethiopian newcomers.

## REPORT IDA NUDEL IS SUFFERING FROM CANCER, PUBLIC APPEALS ISSUED TO GORBACHEV ON NUDEL'S BEHALF

LOS ANGELES, July 17 (JTA) -- Actress Jane Fonda and Mayor Tom Bradley issued public appeals here yesterday to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on behalf of Soviet Jewish refusenik Ida Nudel amid reports that her health has deteriorated.

Fonda and Bradley urged Soviet officials to allow Nudel, known as the "guardian angel" of the Soviet Jewry movement, to be reunited with her sister, Ilana Fridman in Israel. Nudel first applied for emigration from the Soviet Union in 1972.

In Israel, meanwhile, Fridman told a news conference that Nudel is suffering from cancer. Fridman, who spoke to her sister by telephone recently, said Soviet doctors had diagnosed stomach cancer "but there is some doubt about that diagnosis."

"From reports about how she walks and how she looks there is reason to fear that her general health is very poor," Fridman said. She said Nudel informed her that the KGB was trying to keep her isolated in the Moldavian town of Bendery where she now lives. "People are afraid to be her friend and she is very lonely," Fridman said.

Fonda disclosed that Soviet authorities have harassed Nudel in her efforts to obtain medical care, "once even being physically removed from a train to Moscow where she was to see a doctor." Local officials in Bendery have threatened Nudel with a new trial and prison term, according to Fonda.

"I ask you to understand the legitimate desire of Ida Nudel to be with her sister in Israel, particularly when her health is so precarious, and I implore you to make a gesture of good will and humanity toward Ida Nudel," Fonda said in an appeal to Gorbachev. "I ask you to investigate the conduct of the authorities in Bendery who have interfered with her efforts to seek medical care and who have threatened her with a new trial."

Nudel served a four-year sentence in Siberian exile for dropping a banner outside her Moscow apartment window asking that she be granted a visa. She first applied to emigrate in 1971.

Fonda has taken a personal interest in the plight of the 54 year old Nudel, and visited her in the Soviet Union last year. It was the first time Nudel was allowed visitors from the West.

Mayor Bradley, meanwhile, issued a similar appeal. In a letter to Gorbachev, Bradley said: "Ida Nudel has suffered enough. Respectfully, I ask that you allow her to obtain proper medical care and that you grant her an exit visa so she can join her family in Israel. The international community would certainly welcome such a humanitarian gesture."

Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union has decreased to a trickle in recent years. Only 37 Jews were allowed to leave the Soviet Union in June. So far this year, 464 Jews have been allowed to leave the USSR. In 1979, a peak year in Jewish emigration from the USSR, more than 50,000 Jews were allowed to leave.

#### U.S. DELEGATION TO WOMEN'S CONFERENCE REVERSES AN EARLIER POLICY DECISION

WASHINGTON, July 17 (JTA) -- The United Nations Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi has reportedly reversed itself from an earlier policy decision to not single out for special attention the issue of Palestinian women's rights.

According to reports from Nairobi, the U.S. delegation, led by Maureen Reagan, President Reagan's daughter, has now indicated a willingness to consider the issues of Palestinian rights despite the many problematic situations women face in other parts of the world.

The reversal drew a sharp rebuke today from Philip Lax, chairman of the International Council of B'nai B'rith, who charged politicization "could divert the proceedings from the vitally important and pressing issues facing women around the world."

"This is a regrettable reversal of the policy that the United States took prior to the Nairobi Conference," Lax said. "That is, to strenuously resist politicization and prevent the end of the women's decade conference from being wrecked on the rocks of self serving and cynical political goals."

The U.S., Lax continued, "has stood alone on matters of truth and consequence, despite pressure to do otherwise. We are sorry that this is apparently not the case in Nairobi." The conference, which began last Monday, continues through July 26.

#### CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER RE-NAMING A STREET IN BERGEN FOR ANNE FRANK

By David Kantor

BONN, July 17 (JTA) -- A fierce controversy is raging in the town of Bergen in Lower Saxony over a proposal to re-name a street for Anne Frank, the Dutch-born Jewish teen-ager who perished in the nearby Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Supporters of the change, among them local officials of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the DGB trade union organization have been receiving hate mail and anonymous telephone calls, some threatening physical harm. They have been labeled "German pigs."

Local leaders of the governing Christian Democratic Union (CDU) vigorously oppose re-naming Bergen Street Anne Frank Street on grounds that the citizens of Bergen are fed up with being saddled with guilt over the Holocaust. The change seems doomed inasmuch as the town council is dominated by the CDU which holds 20 seats to nine by the SPD.

Anne Frank, who died at the age of 15, became an international symbol of the horror of the Holocaust following the posthumous publication of her diaries after World War II. The proposal to name a street in her memory gained impetus after President Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited the Bergen-Belsen site last May 5.

The visit, a last minute addition to the President's itinerary, was intended to cool the heat of criticism over Reagan's visit the same day to a German military cemetery at Bitburg where members of the notorious Waffen SS are buried among other German war dead.

Guenther Ernst, a CDU official who publishes Bergen's weekly newspaper, said naming Bergen Street, which leads to Bergen-Belsen, Anne Frank Street would amount to a "permanent presentation of the horrors of the Holocaust" and "we cannot reasonably expect the inhabitants of this town to take this."

He added, "The people of Bergen are fed up with shouldering an additional burden of guilt for what happened at Bergen-Belsen." They will not, he said, be branded "with the mark of Cain."

Reporters who talked to local residents shortly before the Reagan/Kohl visit found the same attitude. They heard complaints from townspeople that they were unjustly burdened by the tendency to link their town with the terrible story of Bergen-Belsen where tens of thousands of Jews, Gypsies and Russian prisoners of war died.

The older inhabitants claimed they had known nothing of what went on inside the concentration camp, only a stone's throw away. Youngsters, born after the war, said their parents refused to speak to them about the subject and their schools did not provide them with knowledge of the systematic killing of Jews in the nearby camp.

Although Ernst said he had "nothing against" Anne Frank, town officials disclosed that several attempts were made between 1960-1970 to name schools in Bergen after Anne Frank. All were rejected by overwhelming majorities among the population as a whole and in the town council.

#### U.S. WINS 2 GOLD MEDALS AT MACABIAH

TEL AVIV, July 17 (JTA) -- The United States won two gold medals yesterday in first day competitions at the 12th Maccabiah Games which opened at Ramat Gan stadium Monday night.

Lewis Meyers of Richardson, Texas won the gold medal in men's diving, outscoring silver medal winner David Cotton of Honolulu, Hawaii, 536.25 to 527.95. The bronze medal went to Alejandro Worszylski of Mexico with a score of 419.05.

In the women's diving competition, Kim Engel of Coconut Grove, Florida took the gold medal with a score of 464. The silver went to Laurie Israel of Ann Arbor, Michigan and the bronze to Mindy Kalchman of Canada.

#### TALKS CONTINUE ON ECONOMIC PROGRAM

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 17 (JTA) -- Histadrut and government representatives resumed talks today aimed at fleshing out the agreements reached in principle early yesterday on how to implement the emergency economic program.

Yesterday's accord averted a nationwide general strike. But tension remained between the two sides on key issues. Still to be decided is how many government employees will be dismissed and the amount wage-earners will receive in compensation for reduced pay and higher prices.

The aura of goodwill that hovered over the announcement of labor peace yesterday was marred by Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai's warning today that unless agreements are reached in a few days, the government will resort to emergency regulations on the question of compensation.

The threat to impose the economic program by decree was one of labor's main grievances. The government also intended to dismiss six percent of the civil service workforce. Histadrut balked and the Treasury agreed to fire only three percent but insists that the rest take a three percent wage cut.

#### PERES AND SHAMIR SHARE COMMON GROUND ON POSITION TOWARD THE PLO AND PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN GENERAL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 17 (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres and Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir share common ground on Israel's basic positions toward the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian issue in general, aides to both men said today.

They spoke to reporters after Peres, leader of the Labor Party, and Shamir, the Likud leader, lunched privately in what both later described as a good atmosphere. Labor and Likud are the major components of the national unity coalition government. The two parties diverge on peace process issues, with Likud taking a harder line and Labor tending to greater flexibility.

#### Peres Hosts Two West Bank Palestinians

Their luncheon followed a three-hour meeting at Peres' home last night where the Premier hosted two prominent West Bank Palestinians, Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem, a leading moderate, and Hikmat Al-Masri of Nablus. Both are well disposed toward King Hussein and the Hashemite regime of Jordan.

Peres told a meeting of the 10-member Inner Cabinet (five Labor and five Likud ministers) today that the meeting was arranged some time ago and was not linked to the latest developments with respect to a projected U.S. dialogue with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Peres said he had not discussed substantive matters with his guests, but rather sought to elicit their assessment of trends and developments in the administered territories.

Peres discussed his meeting with Shamir over lunch. The Likud leader said afterwards he had no objections. The Prime Minister has a perfect right to meet with whomever he pleases, Shamir said. His aides later elaborated. They said Shamir made his position clear at the luncheon and Peres was satisfied.

They stressed that the government is still firmly united in its refusal to deal with the PLO and its objections to U.S. negotiations with a Jordanian-Palestinian team preliminary to and exclusive of negotiations with Israel. But the aides were careful not to define precisely the areas of agreement between Peres and Shamir, apparently because they would then have to touch on areas of disagreement.

#### Issue of Peace Talks Gaining Momentum

The issue of peace talks is gathering momentum. Reports from Washington this week confirmed that the U.S. has received a list of proposed Palestinian members of a joint delegation to hold a dialogue with the Reagan Administration. None of the names has been made public but there is strong speculation here that either Freij or Al-Masri, or both, are on the list. Officials here said no list has been forwarded from Washington.

Observers noted that the U.S. has finessed its 1975 commitment not to negotiate with the PLO by making a distinction between PLO officials and members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), some members of which belong to no specific faction of the PLO.

Washington also distinguishes between negotiations which it insists must be conducted directly with Israel—and dialogue with a Jordanian-Palestinian group that can be held, at least at the outset, without Israel's participation.

Israel's position is that any member of the PNC is perforce a member of the PLO. While Peres has avoided explicit rejection of U.S. talks with PNC members, Shamir repeatedly has condemned the notion.

#### CAUSE OF DYSENTERY EPIDEMIC FOUND

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 17 (JTA) — The Health Ministry today identified the seepage of raw sewage into the drinking water supply as the cause of a dysentery epidemic that hit towns in the Haifa Bay area in the last few days.

The Ministry's Department of Public Health and Hygiene has not yet pinpointed the site of the seepage but officials said the most serious danger is over. The water supply in the affected area has been bypassed and all regional water supplies have been chlorinated.

About 2,500 cases of dysentery have been reported in recent days, 80 percent of them among children. About 100 new patients were treated in hospitals and clinics today, much fewer than the daily figure earlier in the week.

There were some isolated cases in Haifa itself. The Health Ministry's Director General, Dr. Dan Michaeli, said those were not due to contaminated water but the result of physical contact between Haifa residents and people from the affected towns. He urged everyone in the region to boil their drinking water and pay particular attention to personal hygiene.

#### COURT OVERRULES SEIZURE OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF NAZI BOOKS, PAMPHLETS

AMSTERDAM, July 17 (JTA) — The district court in Groningen has overruled the seizure of large quantities of Nazi books, periodicals and pamphlets and ordered the public prosecutor to return the material to the auction house from which it was taken. The material, amounting to 600 lots, is from a private collection. The owner, deceased, stated before his death that he wanted it auctioned for the benefit of his widow. The auction house has sent catalogues to university libraries and potential private buyers.

# RIGHTS OF OBSERVANT JEWS TO HAVE ACCESS ON HOLIDAYS TO CEMETERIES TO BURY THEIR DEAD STRENGTHENED BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN N.Y., ILL.

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, July 17 (JTA) -- Legal rights of observant Jews to have access on holidays to Jewish cemeteries to bury their dead promptly, as required by Jewish law, have been strengthened by legislative action in New York and by judicial decree in Illinois, the only states providing such rights.

A measure passed by the New York State Legislature, which makes into law regulations of the New York State Cemetery Board protecting such rights for New York observant Jews, is awaiting an expected signing by Governor Mario Cuomo.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected on July 1 the appeal of a Chicago area gravediggers' union from a decision of the Illinois Supreme Court which held that a law was constitutional which made illegal labor agreements which ban Sunday burials.

The measure approved by the New York Legislature which requires New York cemeteries to "reasonably accommodate the religious needs of plot owners or other persons entitled to burial privileges for prompt burials" was sponsored in the Assembly by Sheldon Silver (D. Man.) and by John Marchi (R. Staten Island) in the State Senate.

Silver said the measure was drafted with the help of the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA) and that it builds on and strengthens burial regulations of the Cemetery Board obtained by COLPA in 1973.

## Provisions of the New York Legislation

The new measure gives the strength of law to the Cemetery Board regulations. Silver also said that the new measure continues the requirements of the Cemetery Board regulation that the cemeteries must provide burials on legal holidays when requests for burials are made by 9 a.m. of the day of the holiday. The legislation extends the time of request to 12 noon.

The Silver-Marchi measure provides that, within one hour of the request for burial, the cemetery must notify the funeral director, the bereaved family or other persons making the request, of ability or inability to comply. The regulations provide that the notification must be made by 10:30 a.m. of the day of the holiday, regardless of how early the request is made.

The Silver-Marchi measure provides for causes of action by the bereaved family or by the State Attorney General. The family can seek penalties and injunctive relief to force burials and the Attorney General can seek penalties and injunctive relief when he is informed of a violation.

Allen Rothenberg, COLPA president, said that, under the Cemetery Board regulations, enforcement power is limited to injunctive relief and civil penalties when there is a violation but the regulations are unclear as to whether an order must first be formally issued and then enforced in a court.

The Silver-Marchi measure provides that any member of the family of a deceased relative, injured by violation of the measure's requirements, may bring an action for recovery against a cemetery corporation for up to \$1,000, plus reasonable attorney's fees.

The measure also authorizes the Attorney General to seek an injunction against continued violations by cemeteries and imposition of civil penalties of up to \$1,000 for each violation.

Dennis Rapps, COLPA executive director, said the regulations are unclear as to whether the family and/or the Attorney General's office, which has substantial litigation resources, may act independently of the cemetery board.

## Background of the Illinois Legislation

The Illinois law, enacted in 1983 through the efforts of a number of Jewish groups, led by a local chapter of the Agudath Israel of America, was designed to accommodate the needs of observant Jews for prompt burials of their deceased because labor agreements with the cemeteries did not provide for Sunday burials.

The gravediggers' union challenged the law on a variety of grounds but it was upheld as an acceptable accommodation to religious practice. In May, 1984, a Cooks County circuit court upheld the law in all respects. The union appealed that ruling and in September, 1984, the Illinois Appeals Court and the State Supreme Court affirmed the lower court ruling. It was the appeal by the union from the State Supreme Court ruling that was rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mendel Singer, chairman of the Chicago branch of the Agudath Israel Commission on Legislative and Civil Action, which helped to get the challenged law enacted, said that law invalidates any labor contracts between cemeteries and workers in Illinois which totally ban Sunday burials.

Edwin Katz, a member of COLPA's Chicago chapter, represented a group of Jewish institutions in the case and led the fight for the law's constitutionality under the First Amendment.

## BURG AND ALONI RECOVERED FROM THEIR ILLNESSES

JERUSALEM, July 17 (JTA) -- Religious Affairs Minister Yosef Burg was discharged from Shaare Zedek Hospital yesterday, fully recovered, his doctors said, after undergoing intestinal surgery. Burg, 74, veteran leader of the National Religious Party, said he intended to return to work as soon as possible and hoped to attend the regular Cabinet meeting Sunday.

Dr. Alexander Schneider, chief of surgery at Shaare Zedek, told reporters Burg was fully restored to good health and that he recovered from his operation as quickly as a 20 or 30 year-old patient would.

Another public figure released from hospital this week is Knesset member Shulamit Aloni, leader of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), who suffered a mild heart attack after playing tennis two weeks ago. Aloni, 55, is convalescing at her home in Kfar Shmaryahu. She said she would soon return to work—and to the tennis courts.

\*\*\*

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- A small bomb exploded in downtown Haifa Wednesday but caused no casualties. The explosive device was placed in shrubbery near the Zim shipping offices outside the port entrance. Police said it was the fourth bombing incident in Haifa in recent weeks.