



NEWS AT A GLANCE

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■ Israeli police and army troops forcibly removed several hundred Jewish settlers from a rocky hilltop near the West Bank settlement of Efrat. The mass civil disobedience capped two weeks of protest of the government's peace policy with the Palestinians. About 30 people were arrested. [Page 2]

■ Germany's first female rabbi will soon take over the pulpit of two Reform Jewish communities in the western part of the country. Her appointment has rankled key German Jewish leaders and has whipped up a storm of media attention. [Page 4]

■ The Jordanian Senate approved legislation legalizing trade and commercial ties with Israel. The Parliament's lower house gave its approval to the measure last week. King Hussein is expected to endorse the legislation soon.

■ Israel's Cabinet agreed to slash some \$670 million from the government's \$44.3 billion budget for 1996. The 14-6 decision came after Treasury officials warned it was the only option if the government wanted to preserve economic growth. [Page 4]

■ Norway announced a significant improvement in the budget of the Palestinian Authority. Norway, which chairs an international group of donor countries aiding the launch of self-rule, attributed the improvement to cooperation among the Palestinians, Israel and the donor nations.

■ Leon Bor, the Israeli of Russian origin who hijacked a tourist bus in Germany last week, apparently shot himself in the head before he was fired at by police sharpshooters. The general prosecutor in the case made the disclosure, which was based on autopsy evidence. One of the tourists held hostage also said she saw Bor shoot himself.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Building Jewish identity, Israel programs hit their mark

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On a sweltering summer day, about 60 students sit hunched over a passage from Genesis.

Divided into pairs and trios, they loudly debate the text's meaning, throwing in some commentaries from Rashi or Rambam to bolster their arguments.

Sitting around small wooden tables, their hands in constant motion, they concentrate all their energies on the text before them.

Although there's nothing unusual about a bunch of students tackling a difficult passage, the ones in this room are far from typical yeshiva "bochers."

The students, 95 percent of whom are college graduates from North America, are participating in Pardes, a yearlong program that combines Jewish studies with community service.

Unlike most local yeshiva students, whose dress code usually consists of white shirts and black hats, these budding scholars wear T-shirts, shorts — or skirts.

The program is both coed and apolitical, something far from typical in religious Israeli circles.

With the new emphasis Diaspora Jewish communities are placing on "Israel Experience" programs, scenes such as those found at Pardes are becoming more and more common.

Alarmed by the high rate of assimilation and intermarriage among young Jews, many Jewish communities have begun promoting Israel-based programs as a means of fostering Jewish identity and continuity.

Subsidizing youth programs in Israel

To meet the demand, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization, with funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal, are earmarking increasing amounts of money for Israel Experience programs.

This year, a full 45 percent of the money dispensed by the WZO's Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education is subsidizing Israel programs for Diaspora youth.

Experts concur that even though time spent in Israel is not a cure-all, it does tend to enhance commitment to Jewish culture and values.

"Research, experience and common sense all show that the most powerful experience a youngster can have, in terms of building Jewish identity, is a positive visit to Israel," says David Harman, director general of the Joint Authority.

According to Harman, about 13,000 North American teens and young adults will visit Israel on organized programs this year.

Of these, 7,500 are participating in six-week summer trips run by such youth movements as Young Judaea, B'nei Akiva and Betar.

About 3,000 teen-agers are enrolled in post-high school programs, predominantly in a yeshiva setting, while 300 more attend yearlong work-study programs run by various youth movements.

Another 1,800 undergraduates study annually in Israel as part of their junior year abroad, according to WZO officials. Some 1,000 college graduates attend programs ranging from three weeks to one year.

Depending on their interests, youths can choose from a long list of adventures during their stay in Israel.

In addition to visits that combine study and sightseeing, young people can participate in archeological digs, volunteer to help new immigrants or try a professional internship.

"We wanted to offer a diversity of experiences, since not all kids are interested in the same things," Harman says.

Program directors and educators say the programs pay off in the long run.

"I don't have any statistics to quote you," says Gloria Dror, an academic adviser at The Hebrew University's Rothberg School for Overseas Students.

"All I can tell you is what the kids tell me — that the year they've

just spent in Israel was the best year of their lives," she says. "Either they come back to Israel later on, or they become more committed Jews back home."

Stu Snee, director of community relations at Livnot U'Lehibanot, a program that attracts North American college graduates with little or no Jewish background, says: "Coming to Israel and doing Livnot definitely enhances Jewish identity."

A work-study program that requires participants to repair dilapidated housing in the mornings and to engage in afternoon seminars on Jewish topics, Livnot "is a Jewish supermarket," Snee says.

"People come here and try out everything to see what they want to buy, in a noncoercive setting," he continues. "We emphasize community service and hiking. Both are a way to use the land of Israel as a classroom."

Snee is convinced that his group's three-month program profoundly affects many of the participants.

"We have 1,500 alumni, and we know they're living much more Jewish lives than before," he says. "Ninety-eight percent of them marry Jews, which is amazing when you consider that 50 to 60 percent came to the program with a non-Jewish boyfriend or girlfriend."

Baruch Feldstern, acting director of Pardes, says it is no coincidence that Jewish youths dating non-Jews are attracted to Israel.

"On a certain level, it could be that they are giving Israel [and Judaism] a last chance before they get married," he says.

'Alive, breathing and beautiful'

"It seems to me that the more Judaism and Jewish concerns become central in a person's life, the more they will want to share these values with their families. It follows that there will be less chance of intermarriage."

Although words such as these are enough to make some kids choke on their falafel, reality does seem to bear them out.

When asked how they rated their experiences in Israel, all 10 of the students talking to a visiting journalist could barely contain their enthusiasm.

The comments of Hallie Beecher, a 24-year-old Toronto native, were typical:

"I went to synagogue twice a year and to Hebrew school on Sundays. I hated it and rebelled as much as possible. I grew up with a Jewish identity, but no background."

It was not until college that she began to explore Judaism, in courses such as "The Hebrew Bible" and "Women in Judaism," she says.

"I had planned to spend a year in India after graduation, but my parents said, 'You've never been to Israel, so why not try that?'"

Beecher, who spent a couple of months on a kibbutz before enrolling in Livnot, calls her decision "the choice of a lifetime."

"It gave me a love for Judaism, an understanding of the way traditional Judaism is practiced," she says. "Judaism isn't just theory in a book, but alive and breathing and beautiful."

Prior to joining Livnot, Beecher was seriously involved with a non-Jew she met on kibbutz.

"He had planned to move to Toronto, but that's all over with now," she says. "I need to be in a Jewish marriage and to have a Jewish life with someone ready to bring Jewish continuity into the house."

And there's more, Beecher says. "My parents have been very supportive. They're checking out courses and synagogues for me back home," she says.

"It's ironic, but my experiences have brought my parents back to Judaism, too." □

Israeli forces evacuate settlers as Efrat claims nearby hilltops

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The hilltops surrounding the West Bank Jewish settlement of Efrat have once again become the center of a land dispute.

Israeli police and army troops this week forcibly removed several hundred Jewish settlers from Givat Hadagan, a rocky hilltop near Efrat where the settlers dug in two weeks ago to protest the government's peace policy with the Palestinians.

In what has been described as the most serious instance of mass civil disobedience since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization embarked on a path toward Palestinian self-rule, the settlers employed a strategy of passive resistance as security forces began carrying them off the hill on Monday.

Several settlers, in an effort to prevent themselves from being carried away, handcuffed themselves to each other and to rocks on the hilltop. About 30 people were arrested.

The issue of Israeli settlement expansion catapulted to the forefront of Israeli-Palestinian relations in December and January, when Palestinians protested settler plans to construct new apartments on hillsides near Efrat.

At that time, the Israeli government halted the settlers' construction plans when the Palestinians threatened to bring the peace process to a halt.

This time around, residents of Efrat and other Etzion bloc settlements in the West Bank erected a tent encampment on Givat Hadagan two weeks ago, staking claim to land that they assert is within Efrat's municipal borders and that they refuse to hand over to the Palestinians in any future peace agreement.

An order issued by the civil administration for the settlers to evacuate the site went into effect last Friday, but went unheeded.

Vows to continue

In anticipation of an army eviction, about 1,000 settlers gathered at Givat Hadagan.

The eviction began Monday morning, when police started dismantling tents and other makeshift structures.

In response, organizers began calling on Efrat settlers and their supporters to come to the site.

Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, commander of the Israeli army's central command, was among several senior Israel Defense Force officers who were on hand Monday to oversee the evacuation of the settlers.

As security forces began evacuating the settlers, commanders warned troops against using excessive force.

With their arms linked, settlers responded by singing nationalist songs.

"What the government has to realize is that they can take away these buildings and shacks, but we'll be back," Efrat resident Bob Steiner told Israel Radio.

"I think every movement needs a catalyst. I think Efrat will be the catalyst for the nation," he added. "What happens here will start taking over rest of country — civil disobedience until the government goes down."

During the day, some of the people removed from the site managed to return.

"I've never been prouder of residents of Efrat than in these two weeks," said Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, a former New Yorker who serves as the chief rabbi of Efrat. "We're not violent at all. We're merely insisting that this is our land, that we have a right to land."

As the evictions continued, a dozen settlers set up temporary structures on another hill nearby. Settler leaders vowed the effort would continue. □

Israel seeks extradition of detained Hamas activist

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — One week after the arrest of a senior Hamas official in New York, Israel has initiated extradition proceedings to bring the man to justice.

As a preliminary step, a Jerusalem court issued a warrant for the arrest of Musa Muhammad Abu Marzook on Monday.

Israel's State Attorney's Office said Israel would seek a temporary detention of Marzook in the United States until a formal application for his extradition is filed.

Israel will ask that Marzook be handed over to Israel to be prosecuted for a number of charges, including conspiracy to murder, Israel Radio reported.

Marzook, 44, was arrested July 25 at New York's Kennedy Airport after stepping off a plane from Dubai, a part of the United Arab Emirates. He is being held at a detention center in New York.

"We believe he is a leader of Hamas and has participated in activities which would exclude him from coming to the United States," said Carol Florman, a spokeswoman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which made the arrest.

Hamas, a militant Islamic fundamentalist group responsible for dozens of terrorist attacks in Israel, raises tens of millions of dollars in the United States, law enforcement officials estimated.

The warrant for Marzook's arrest came after Israel's decision to seek extradition.

That decision was made at a meeting Sunday night attended by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and senior army and Justice Ministry officials.

'Determined to fight terror'

Peres later said that the decision was a "matter of principle."

"It's clear that in a such a short time you cannot examine all the legal issues," Peres told Army Radio. "But you can do what we did, which was to make a decision of principles.

"No doubt, Marzook is the head of the Hamas. He has responsibility in the terrible things Hamas did," Peres said, adding that the political message Israel was trying to stress was that "Israel is determined to fight terror, the terror organizations and its leaders, without hesitation."

Prior to the meeting, legal sources had said it was unlikely Israel would submit an extradition request, given insufficient legal evidence directly linking him to terror acts against Israelis.

But security sources who attended the meeting were quoted as saying that a case could be built against Marzook, using intelligence information that showed he had issued directives for Hamas attacks on Israeli targets.

All parties at the meeting reportedly supported the request for extradition.

The first concrete steps toward filing that request took place in the Jerusalem Magistrate's court on Monday, where the state attorney asked for the arrest warrant.

The state attorney described Marzook as head of the Hamas' political bureau, setting policies on attacks, issuing orders for its activists and transferring funds for Hamas activities, including military operations.

A Justice Ministry statement outlined Marzook's activities over the past six years.

It said that between 1990 and 1993, Marzook dispatched emissaries to the territories, who were responsible for organizing Hamas military activities in the area.

The statement said he also took part in transferring

tens of thousands of dollars used to purchase weapons tied to attacks against Israelis.

In 1989, emissaries of Marzook arrived in Gaza, and issued detailed instructions for the establishment of the Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including its military operations. In 1991, he worked in the United States to increase Hamas' military activity in the territories, according to the statement.

In 1992, he sent an emissary from the United States to the territories, who carried with him substantial sums of money to finance Hamas activities.

The state attorney said these activities were evidence of Marzook's intent to "carry out murders, cause grievous bodily harm and inflict injuries with malicious intent, toward Israeli citizens and IDF soldiers."

The state attorney said the actions "violate various articles of the criminal code dealing with murder, manslaughter and related crimes." Not cited in the list of crimes, however, was terrorist activity.

Justice Minister David Libai explained that terror is not included in the extraditable offenses in the understanding between Israel and the United States.

"We are limited according to the convention of extradition between the government of the United States and Israel," he told Israel Radio.

The convention was signed in 1963, and did not include terror activities as extraditable offenses, he said.

Once Israel submits its extradition request, it will have two months to prepare evidence against Marzook if the request is approved.

But Libai was cautious.

"The fact that we are asking" for Marzook's extradition "doesn't require the American officials to keep him," he told Army Radio. "They can consider our request in their own decision-making or not."

Marzook is being held pending exclusionary hearings, which could take up to two months depending on the New York City backlog, said Florman of the INS. There is no bail in such cases, she added.

Received green card in lottery

According to the INS, Marzook received a green card in a 1990 lottery for would-be immigrants.

He has attended school in Louisiana on and off for the past few years. Officials refused to say who tipped them off to Marzook's presence on the flight.

Marzook was traveling with his wife and six children, four of whom are U.S. citizens, at the time of his arrest. There are no charges pending against his wife, Nadia Mohamad el Ashi.

The arrest is the latest move by the Clinton administration to cut off the access of Middle East terrorist groups to the lucrative American fund-raising market.

Earlier this year, President Clinton froze the assets of 13 terrorist groups and banned their agents from traveling to the United States. The detention of Marzook is the first arrest since the executive order went into effect.

A tape of a meeting with Palestinian activists obtained by Steven Emerson, a journalist who has tracked Islamic fundamentalists in the United States, reveals that Marzook has never hidden his desire to see Israel destroyed.

When the Jewish state was born it became "a spearhead in the heart of the Islamic world, and this spearhead needs to be confronted with a counter-spearhead to destroy it," Marzook told a December 1990 rally in Kansas City.

In an interview with a Lebanese newspaper last year, Marzook was quoted as saying, "We will continue with our jihad until Jerusalem is liberated and Palestine is returned to its owners." □

Appointment of female rabbi in Germany rankles establishment

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN (JTA) — The announcement that Germany's first female rabbi will soon take over the pulpit of two Jewish communities here has provoked a storm of media interest — and some controversy.

Bea Wyler, 44, the first woman to have a congregation in Germany, will lead new congregations in the cities of Oldenburg and Braunschweig — both in Western Germany. She will be inaugurated at both Reform temples Tuesday, but will be based in Oldenburg.

The congregation in Oldenburg was established three years ago and now numbers 100, said Sarah Ruth Schumann, chairwoman of the congregation there. Wyler was not available for an interview, Schumann said.

Wyler's rabbinical studies began in London and concluded at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, where she was ordained in May. Her appointment has gained widespread attention in the German media.

But one of the key Jewish leaders here has called the media attention "overdone."

"There is so much commotion you'd think there'd been a revolution," Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the central council of Jews in Germany, said in an interview.

However, Bubis said the appointment of a female rabbi goes "too far against tradition."

"It's strange for me," he added.

The news also rankled the Rabbis Conference in Germany — a group of a dozen rabbis who discuss religious matters. The conference will not accept Wyler into their ranks, Bubis said. □

One year after peace, Jordan moves to end boycott of Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Jordanian Parliament has passed legislation that effectively ends Jordan's participation in the Arab boycott of Israel.

The legislation, which legalizes trade and commercial ties with Israel, was approved by Jordan's Senate on Monday by a vote of 30-3. The lower house gave its approval to the measure last week by a vote of 59-20.

The legislation permits business transactions with Israel, as well as the sale of Jordanian land to Israelis.

King Hussein is expected to endorse the legislation this week.

The bulk of the opposing votes in the lower house last week came from the fundamentalist Islamic Action party. A spokesman for the party said the legislation would pave the way for "Zionist infiltration" of Jordan and other Arab states. Others who opposed the legislation argued that the Arab League had imposed the boycott of Israel, and that it should be the body to decide whether to lift it.

The legislation's approval came one year after Israel and Jordan signed the Washington Declaration, ending the state of belligerency between the two countries and paving the way for the two countries' peace treaty, signed last October.

Meanwhile, Israel and Jordan have announced a number of steps aimed at easing travel between the two countries. Beginning in August, Jordanians will be able to request visas to visit Israel at the Israeli Embassy in Amman, rather than wait for the appropriate papers at the border crossing.

The steps were taken in the wake of the growing number of complaints about delays and overcrowding at the border crossings between the two countries. □

Israeli court acquits guard who killed an Arab vendor

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jerusalem court has acquitted a security guard who fatally shot an Arab vegetable vendor earlier this year outside a Jewish seminary.

Dmitri Burman, 31, shot and killed Julani Abed, 25, as he and a second Palestinian drove into the Jerusalem seminary, where they worked.

They were planning to drop off a load of potatoes. A kitchen employee let them in the gate with a remote control switch, according to news reports.

But the guard, unaware that the truck had been given clearance, opened fire. The shooting came as the country was on alert for possible suicide bombing attacks.

The judges ruled that Abed's death was a tragic mistake, triggered by recent warnings about car bombs. □

Cabinet backs \$670 million cut in government's budget for '96

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Cabinet has agreed to slash some \$670 million from the government's \$44.3 billion budget for 1996.

With the Cabinet's approval, the 1996 budget will go before the Knesset for a final vote in October.

The 14-6 decision by government ministers to approve the cuts, reached during a marathon session during the Cabinet's weekly meeting Sunday, came after Treasury officials warned that it was the only option if the government wanted to deal with the budget deficit while preserving the country's economic growth.

Finance Minister Avraham Shohat argued against another option — raising taxes — a move certain to be unpopular with Israeli voters as the country's national elections, slated for November 1996, loom ever closer.

According to Shohat's proposed plan, the 1996 budget deficit will be \$2.27 billion, compared with the \$2.38 billion deficit estimated for this year.

Jacob Frenkel, governor of the Bank of Israel, supported the Cabinet's decision, though he had called for yet deeper cuts in spending.

Further discussions are scheduled to take place next month, when the Treasury is expected to ask the government to set national priorities and work with each ministry to cut costs.

Most of the opposition to the cuts came from ministers with social portfolios.

Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ora Namir said after the meeting that if the cuts were made, they would immediately affect society's weaker members.

Concerns have also been raised about how budget cuts would affect defense spending — particularly as government officials attempt to estimate the cost of redeploying the Israel Defense Force in the West Bank. The redeployment will take place when the next phase of Palestinian self-rule is implemented.

Most reports place redeployment costs between \$500 million and \$1 billion, which would include the cost of moving IDF bases and providing new security measures for West Bank areas not under Palestinian administration.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met last week with Finance and Defense Ministry officials in an attempt to resolve the differences between the defense establishment's request for an additional allocation of some \$833 million to fund "Rainbow 2," as the redeployment plan is called, and Treasury calls for a \$200 million cut in defense spending. □