



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Former U.S. President George Bush admitted publicly that the United States refused to give codes to Israel which would have allowed for an Israeli air force strike during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In an interview with David Frost, Bush defended the decision.

■ Canada and Israel reached a tentative agreement on a free trade deal that would eliminate all tariffs on manufactured goods and would include provisions for agriculture and fisheries. The agreement would be similar to the free trade agreements Israel has with the European Union and the United States.

■ Pope John Paul II, addressing foreign dignitaries, rejoiced in the progress of Middle East peace, but warned that differences about the status of Jerusalem could put the peace process in jeopardy. In a separate speech, the pontiff condemned anti-Semitism and deplored the longstanding tensions between Christians and Jews. [Page 3]

■ Israeli President Ezer Weizman met in Berlin with German resistance members from World War II and paid silent homage to the thousands who died in opposing Adolf Hitler. The trip was the president's first to the reunited Germany.

■ The Federal Court of Canada denied refugee status to a Jewish woman from Azerbaijan. The decision upheld a ruling by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board that stated, as a Jew, she could take advantage of Israel's Law of Return and go to Israel instead. [Page 3]

■ Israel released the last group of Palestinians to be freed from Israeli jails before the upcoming Palestinian elections. A total of 1,200 have been released under an accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

■ Norway's tiny Jewish community wants its government to pay compensation for Jewish property seized by the country's World War II collaborationist regime, the Norwegian chief rabbi said. The World Jewish Congress will discuss the issue when it meets next week in Jerusalem.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Linkage of Israeli-Syrian peace to elections may help Likud Party

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres may have painted himself into a corner by moving toward early national elections in the hopes of clinching a peace deal with Syria before voters go to the polls.

That deal, however, may not materialize in time.

Several Labor Party leaders have been muttering this week about the wily and experienced premier's apparent miscalculation.

They say it may play into the hands of the Likud opposition, which would be pleased to fight an election over the Golan Heights before a treaty with Syria could be concluded.

Peres himself is said to be furious about reports here that the government is "disappointed" after the latest rounds of peace negotiations with Syria.

Together with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who visited here last week, the prime minister sought to persuade local and foreign media that the talks are going even better than expected.

Christopher declared that he was the "opposite of disappointed."

Nevertheless, the mood in Jerusalem after Christopher's latest Damascus-Jerusalem shuttle is less than jubilant.

If the issue were solely the talks themselves, government policymakers would be less worried. After many months of idleness, these talks, restarted near Washington in late December, are indeed proceeding slowly.

But the slow pace of the talks is troubling Israeli Cabinet ministers and parliamentarians aligned with the Labor government.

They increasingly are concerned over the meshing of the two disparate timetables regarding the peace negotiations with Syria and this year's Israeli national elections.

At a top-level ministerial meeting Sunday night, Peres demanded that the link be severed between the talks and the elections.

"I am not going to talk about elections" he said, focusing solely on analyses of the negotiations with Syria.

However, the two items are at the core of Israel's public life at this time.

The prime minister will find it difficult to persuade the public that they are not connected.

Christopher's mission secured the agreement of Israel and Syria to two more negotiating sessions at the Wye Plantation in eastern Maryland, the setting for two three-day sessions in late December and early January between Israeli, Syrian and American delegations.

The negotiations, scheduled to resume next week, would be followed by another shuttle by Christopher early in February.

The next rounds in Maryland will feature senior military officers alongside the diplomats who did all the talking at Wye until now.

President Hafez Assad of Syria, wary as always, declined to send economists and water experts to join the negotiations, as the Israelis had suggested.

### 'End of the Middle East conflict'

Trying to put the best light on the state of the talks, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said Monday that Assad was not balking at the need to discuss the ideas of water resources and economic cooperation — these issues had come up already and would continue to be discussed.

Sarid said the major success at Wye was the agreement that a treaty between Israel and Syria would bring about the signing of treaties with other Arab states.

This would mean "the end of the Middle East conflict" between Arabs and Israelis, he said.

Syria's assent to this quest for "comprehensiveness" represented a major advance.

Yet, despite the "many encouraging signs" in the Wye talks, Sarid cautioned that the process would be long and arduous, and that periodically hyping expectations would be counterproductive.

Informed sources say Sarid's criticism about overstating expectations reflects a sharp dispute among key ministers and close aides to the prime minister.

Uri Savir, director general of the Foreign Ministry and head of the Israeli delegation at Wye, is still radiating confidence that a major breakthrough toward peace with Damascus is attainable soon.

Others, including Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, Savir's nominal boss, and Itamar Rabinovich, the ambassador to Washington and co-head of the talks with Syria, are said to be more circumspect.

Peres "is listening to both sides and not making his own mind up yet," according to one observer.

Formally, the prime minister can wait until mid-February before finally deciding whether to go for an early election in June instead of the originally expected date at the end of October.

June is considered the optimal month, because in July and August many voters — and especially young voters, who in opinion polls appear strongly pro-government — go abroad for vacation.

The months of September and October are unavailable because of the High Holidays.

Last week, Peres, at an ostensibly private meeting of staff and political supporters, suggested June 4 as a possible polling day.

Formally, nothing has been determined.

Indeed, in order to underscore that point, the Labor Party this week rejected an overture from an opposition faction, Tsomet, to support a bill calling for the dissolution of the Knesset and the holding of elections June 4.

Nevertheless, political insiders say the die already is effectively cast.

### **Likud had political doldrums**

Well-placed sources in both Labor and Likud say the election will in fact take place in June, and that it was Peres who deliberately determined this, weeks ago, when he scheduled the Labor Party's primaries for April instead of late summer.

Having done this, these sources say, he can hardly put off the election until the fall.

For one, there is the chance that those Labor candidates who do poorly in the party primaries become an intolerably fractious and dissident force within the party of the prime minister.

The shorter the period between the primaries and election day, the better for Peres.

Did Peres make his move too soon? Did he make it relying on a dramatic breakthrough with Syria, which now looks less likely to transpire? If so, has he endangered what seemed to be a veritably impregnable Labor lead in the opinion polls?

In Likud quarters, there was a marked upswing in the mood this week as the party gears up for an election campaign that it now hopes to fight on a platform which it believes is still popular: the supreme strategic importance of the Golan Heights as against the uncertainty of real peace with Syria and the wider Arab world.

Since Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, the Likud and its right-wing and religious partners have been in the political doldrums, watching their support in the polls nosedive and then fail to climb back.

The smooth handover of major West Bank cities to Palestinian control in November and December effectively emptied the right-wing's former "Land of Israel" policies of practical relevance.

After all, no pragmatic party would seriously advocate rolling back the agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organization and reoccupying by force territories handed over to the Palestinians.

Thus, the shaping up of the election campaign around the Golan comes as something of a windfall for the opposition.

Tzachi Hanegbi, a Likud member of Knesset and close confidant of party leader Benjamin Netanyahu, maintains that it is almost immaterial to his party whether the election day is advanced to June.

Hanegbi's position is bolstered by those who believe that even by October there will be no deal with the Syrians — and that the public's concern about the prospect of withdrawal from the Golan Heights will hold center stage.

Sarid, whose Meretz Party has also lost ground to Labor since the assassination, has his own interest in the election date not being brought forward.

"To set a date in June" would mean, in effect, to stop the negotiations with the Syrians now, he says.

By October, on the other hand, says Sarid, "even if we don't yet have a full treaty, we will hopefully have a number of important agreements with the Syrians to put before the public." □

### **Two priests declared to be martyrs**

*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — The Vatican has declared as martyrs an Austrian and a German, both Roman Catholic priests who died at the hands of the Nazis.

The declaration, announced last Friday in a Vatican statement, could eventually lead to the canonization of the two priests.

Pope John Paul II attended the ceremony.

Austrian priest Otto Neururer was tortured to death at the Buchenwald concentration camp, the statement said.

German priest Karl Leisner was ordained in 1944 while he was a prisoner at Dachau.

He died in August 1945 from a lung disease he contracted there.

The two men were part of a group of 12 Roman Catholics from various countries and various times in history to whom miracles, martyrdom or "heroic virtues" were formally attributed by the Vatican department that examines candidates for sainthood.

The pope recently said that he would announce this summer that an anti-Nazi German priest, the Rev. Bernhard Lichtenberg, would be put on the path to sainthood.

Lichtenberg, who died en route to Dachau, denounced the Nazis from his Berlin pulpit and closed his service with a prayer for the persecuted Jews. □

### **Israeli stabbed near Bethlehem**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel closed off Bethlehem this week after an Israeli was moderately wounded in a shooting attack on the outskirts of the city, now a Palestinian self-rule enclave.

The wounded man, a religious Jew, reportedly was shot and wounded Monday in a ceramics shop near Rachel's Tomb in an area patrolled by Palestinian police.

He was taken to a hospital in Jerusalem, where he underwent surgery.

The Israeli army declared Bethlehem a closed military zone. The area was handed over to the Palestinians on Dec. 21.

"The entry of Israeli citizens is forbidden for security reasons," an army spokeswoman said.

An Arab bystander said: "They have just reoccupied Bethlehem." □

Palestinian police also were conducting a search of the area. □

## Court upholds denying Jewish woman refugee status

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — A 65-year-old Jewish woman from Azerbaijan has lost another round in her effort to remain in Canada.

The Federal Court of Canada recently upheld a ruling by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board that denied refugee status to Antonina Grygorian on the grounds that, as a Jew, she could take advantage of Israel's Law of Return and go to Israel instead.

"Canada's refugee claims system is not just another quick fix to obtain landed status here," Judge Marcel Joyal said in a six-page ruling.

"The basic principle of refugee law is to grant such status only to those requiring surrogate protection and not to those who have ready and automatic right to another country's nationality," the judge ruled.

The original board decision, issued more than a year ago, had alarmed immigration lawyers and Jewish communal officials, who said it could lead to resumption of the "none is too many" policy regarding Jewish immigrants that prevailed in Canada before World War II.

"If the federal court upholds this decision, there might never be a Jewish refugee in Canada again," Irving Abella, past president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said after the original ruling.

Abella is the author of numerous books, including "None Is Too Many," which documents Canada's unwillingness to accept Jews in the 1920s and 1930s.

Although Grygorian has a daughter in Canada, the board ruled that she was not in genuine need of protection from persecution because such protection is available to her in Israel. Israel is "where she has an absolute right of citizenship, where the authorities have no discretion to refuse her and where, by her own testimony, she has no fear of persecution," the board ruled.

The board also noted that the Moscow-born woman could go to Russia, where she also has a potential, but not automatic, right of citizenship.

### 'Discourages asylum shopping'

Paul Hardy, a spokesman for the board, said it "tries to discourage asylum shopping — looking for the best places to go for your purposes."

In the board's view, "if you are indeed a refugee and you are being persecuted and in fear of your life, you should accept whatever haven is available," he said.

Hardy said, however, that the board decision is not considered a legal precedent.

Board adjudicators "are independent decision-makers and they are not bound by this ruling," he said.

David Matas, a Winnipeg-based immigration and refugee lawyer, said the board decision created "a lot of uncertainty and confusion" that may take years to untangle. He added that Israel's Law of Return applies only to Jews who willingly state an intent to immigrate there.

"It's a matter of waiting to see whether the Canadian government is going to try to remove unwilling people to Israel, and whether the government of Israel will accept such people," Matas said. "The sequence of events hasn't worked itself out yet."

If Israel won't accept an unwilling Jewish refugee, that person "runs the risk of being deported back to his or her country of origin," Matas said. "So the law could work in a very perverse way. It could violate the U.N. refugee convention by returning people fearing persecution back to the country of danger."

Perry Romberg, acting director of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada, was among Jewish

communal officials scrambling to make sense of the federal court ruling. "It's not just an immigration issue, it's a larger issue for the Jewish community," Romberg said.

"It almost feels like we're being excluded from the benefits of the law because of the existence of the State of Israel," he said. "Does this ruling imply that Jewish refugees no longer have the option of Canada? We don't know of any other community that has been singled out in this way." □

## Pope says differences on status of Jerusalem could imperil peace

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II over the weekend rejoiced in the progress of Middle East peace, but warned that differences about the status of Jerusalem could put the peace process in jeopardy.

Also this weekend, the pontiff condemned anti-Semitism and deplored the longstanding tensions between Christians and Jews.

In his annual State of the World address, the pope reiterated the Vatican position that Jerusalem should be a unique, multireligious entity.

However, last month, Leah Rabin, the widow of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, had an audience with the pope, after which she said the pope told her that he considered Jerusalem "the capital of Israel and as the capital of three faiths."

On Saturday, the pope addressed ambassadors and representatives — from more than 160 countries — who were gathered in the Vatican's ornate Sala Reggia.

In attendance were the Israeli ambassador and, for the first time, a Palestinian representative.

"Today, we cannot but rejoice to see here, for the first time, the representative of the Palestinian people," the pope said, noting that the Vatican had enjoyed diplomatic relations with Israel for more than a year.

"We had been looking forward to this happy state of affairs," he said, "because it is the eloquent sign that the Middle East has resolutely taken the path of peace."

Of Jerusalem, the pope said, "The religious and universal dimension of the holy city demands a commitment on the part of the whole international community, in order to ensure that the city preserves its uniqueness and retains its living character."

The pontiff said holy places that are important to the three monotheistic religions would lose "much of their significance if they were not permanently surrounded by active communities of Jews, Christians and Muslims."

He also said: "It is my hope that the international community will offer the political partners most directly involved the juridical and diplomatic instruments capable of ensuring that Jerusalem, one and holy, may truly be a 'crossroads of peace.'"

Saying that Christianity had a "particularly intimate relationship" with Judaism, Pope John Paul II on Sunday condemned anti-Semitism and deplored the longstanding tensions between Christians and Jews.

The pope, who called for religious tolerance among all faiths, criticized the "hatreds, persecutions and all the manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews in every time and by anyone."

The pope made the remarks during his regular noontime address from his window at the Vatican overlooking St. Peter's Square.

The "memory of tensions which so many times have marked the relationship between Christians and Jews" gave rise to "great pain," he said, adding that Christians should respect the "spiritual riches" of other faiths in order to build universal peace and brotherhood. □

## Singer Debbie Friedman enthralled Jewish audiences

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — It was practically a “kumsitz” at Carnegie Hall.

As everyone stood swaying arm in arm, singing along with Debbie Friedman, the warmth and sense of community — even as the snows of the worst blizzard in decades swirled outside — was more like a summer evening’s campfire than a singer’s debut at the famed venue.

Not every performer can turn the tension of her first appearance in the august concert hall into a cozy and intimate experience.

Friedman’s ability to draw people in seems to be one of her great gifts as a performer and at the heart of her success at attracting a growing audience to her prayerful music.

She is “by far the most popular” Jewish recording artist sold today, according to Velvel Pasternak, a prominent national Jewish music publisher and seller, and has “crossed over” denominational lines in a way that no one else but the late Shlomo Carlebach has been able to do.

“She seems to have hit a chord in those looking for a sense of spirituality which they are not getting from conventional Jewish sources,” Pasternak said. “Some people are not ‘turned on,’ prayerwise, by the Eastern European modality, and she seems to talk to them.”

The lyrics and folk-tinged melodies of her songs, many of which are both in Hebrew and English and are based on Jewish blessings and stories, are as sweet and uncomplicated as her voice.

The songs — on 13 albums produced since 1972 — seem to be as accessible to people with little Jewish literacy as those with a broad background.

Friedman’s music is especially popular in the Reform movement, where she got her religious education as well as her musical start.

But she is finding a large and growing audience among other Jews, including the Orthodox.

Even some Protestant and Catholic churches have integrated her music into their services.

She is constantly on tour, playing to audiences at synagogues, Jewish community centers, conventions and retreats.

### Dancing in the aisles

At the convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in December in Atlanta, she was welcomed with roars of approval and dancing in the aisles by the 4,000 Reform Jews attending the concert.

And after hearing Friedman perform at the Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education over the summer in Amherst, Mass., an Orthodox woman wearing a wig said, “I’ve been davening (praying) all my life, but today was the first time I felt like I was really davening.”

Friedman is one of dozens of well-known composers and performers of Jewish popular and folk music today.

Why is she so popular?

“She comes from a Jewish place, rather than being a New Age performer who later decides to do some Jewish songs,” said Irwin Rubinschneider, a mental health administrator who braved the blizzard with his family. They came to midtown Manhattan from the Flatbush section of Brooklyn to see Friedman perform at the sold-out Jan. 7 concert at Carnegie Hall.

“She appeals to all ages — the parents of the ’60s and the kids of the ’90s,” he said.

Despite the blizzard, the concert hall was almost 80 percent full.

Friedman, who does not herself have any children and looks a bit like folk singer Joan Baez, has written a lot of kid-friendly material.

“Galim Gal Galim,” or “The Wheels Go ’Round,” is just for kids, and her music provides most of the score to the “Tales ’n’ Tunes Chanukah” video.

The popular purple dinosaur Barney also sings her up-tempo version of the Aleph Bet song on his “Barney in Concert” video.

Friedman, 44, last year packed up her guitar and her faithful companion Farfel, a large dog of indeterminate ancestry, and moved from San Diego to New York City. “I feel like I’ve come home,” she said happily, ensconced on a white couch in her airy Upper West Side apartment.

She spends time at the Conservative synagogue Anshe Chesed, where she attends services. She also is active in feminist circles and, with Rabbi Michael Strassfeld, leads a service of healing once a month.

In addition to a basket of Farfel’s toys, her apartment boasts a baby grand piano and a recording studio complete with sound board and complex computerized technology.

A job playing in New York last spring at the feminist Passover seders run by the group Ma’ayan reconnected her with old friends and new, and led her to want to stay. “I want to be around Jews” in a way that can only be accomplished in New York, she said. “It’s the way I live my life.”

Many of Friedman’s songs from the past several years relate in one way or another to healing, a direction that has grown out of a battle she has been waging with her own illness. Eight years ago she was given a bad combination of medications to treat an illness and was left with permanent neurological and kidney damage.

She never knows when the camera’s flash or some other trigger will leave her aphasic or unable to move her legs, but she looks upon it pragmatically and even, in optimistic moments, as one of God’s more challenging blessings.

Her strong, pure rendition of the traditional prayer for healing known as “Mi Shebeyrach” has been integrated into synagogue liturgy and has become a staple of Jewish healing services across North America.

Her most recent album, “Renewal of Spirit,” is devoted to contemplative melodies related to healing and connection with God.

She has become known, in some circles, as “the high priestess of Jewish healing.”

“In many ways it’s given me a gift,” she said. “Healing is about what the illness teaches us. I’ve never had more clarity or understanding.”

“I’ve really been forced to feel illness, and life, and death,” she said. “I’ve learned that I can be damaged or impaired and still have those spiritual experiences.” □

### Jewish settlers forcibly removed

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security officials forcibly removed Jewish settlers this week who were living illegally in apartments in a Kiryat Arba neighborhood.

Police broke down doors and windows Monday to enter the buildings, which had been earmarked to house border police after the Israel Defense Force redeployment from parts of Hebron this spring.

The settlers, who moved in several months ago, had refused to leave, even after the Housing Ministry offered alternative homes.

They maintained that their presence was a protest action against the government’s peace accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization. □