



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ At least 70 Israeli soldiers were killed when two Israeli military helicopters crashed near the Lebanese border. The helicopters were on their way to the southern Lebanon security zone. [Page 2]

■ One Jewish leader called U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's discovery of her Jewish roots "a tragedy of the Holocaust." Albright only learned recently that more than one dozen of her relatives died in the Holocaust. [Page 1]

■ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to meet with representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements during his visit to the United States, which begins Feb. 12. Religious leaders say they hope to convey to him the strong feelings among many U.S. Jews for the cause of religious pluralism in Israel.

■ The United States, Britain and France agreed to freeze distribution of gold bars worth \$68 million that Nazis looted from European banks. The gold could form the core of a fund to compensate Holocaust victims, U.S. officials said.

■ Swiss banks, with the consent of Swiss authorities, had the Nazis deliver \$12 million in looted Italian government gold to them in 1944 to pay off a war-time loan, according to a newly released document. The 1946 memo is the first document in which U.S. diplomats directly accused the Swiss of actively encouraging the Germans to take gold for them, Jewish officials said.

■ The Italian Treasury said it had set up a commission to assess who owns a stash of gold and other valuables apparently taken from Jewish victims. The valuables were located in an official vault after an inquiry by the Jewish community of Trieste.

■ Israeli photographers with exhibits at the Ramat Gan museum took their work to the streets to protest the mayor's decision to remove photos portraying nude men wearing tefillin. A representative of the fervently Orthodox community apparently had complained that the works were offensive.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### When Albright meets Netanyahu, Jewish roots could be new topic

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with Madeleine Albright for the first time as secretary of state, they will have something besides Middle East peace to talk about — their Jewish roots.

America's top diplomat has termed "fairly compelling" newly uncovered information that at least three of her grandparents were Jewish.

These grandparents, along with more than a dozen other relatives, died at the hands of the Nazis. Albright's parents never told her of their Jewish roots and raised her as a Roman Catholic, she has said.

The revelations, prompted by extensive research in Europe by The Washington Post, come only a week before Netanyahu is set to kick off a procession of visits by Middle East leaders hosted by Albright and President Clinton.

In meetings with Clinton, talks are expected to focus on solidifying the gains of the recent Israeli-Palestinian Hebron agreement as well as on trying to restart Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

But another focus of the visit is to begin working relations between Netanyahu's government and the new secretary of state.

News of Albright's Jewish roots stunned many this week — most of all Albright herself. When she was first appointed, many people, especially in the Arab world, were certain that she was Jewish. But Albright's office repeatedly confirmed that she was not.

According to information published in the Post that was given to Albright only last week, her paternal grandparents, Arnost and Olga Korbel, were Jews who died at Auschwitz. Albright's maternal grandmother, Anna Spieglova, was also killed by the Nazis. Other relatives died at Terezin, a holding camp for Czech Jews, before being sent to Auschwitz.

"Obviously it is a very personal matter for my family and brother and sister and my children," Albright told the Post. "The only thing I have to go by is what my mother and father told me, how I was brought up," the paper quoted her as saying. Albright's father died in 1977. Her mother died in 1989.

### 'Lots of luck and a little bribery'

Albright gave the Post a copy of an 11-page unfinished family history written by her mother. The handwritten manuscript, penned in 1977, after Albright's father's death, makes no reference to Judaism or relatives who died in the Holocaust.

The Post quoted Mandula Korbel as writing, "With the help of some good friends and lots of luck and a little bribery" the family "managed to get the necessary Gestapo permission to leave the country."

Albright's family fled Czechoslovakia in March 1939, days after Nazi forces occupied the country. Her father, a diplomat, took the family to London, where they stayed until after the war.

The family returned, but again fled in 1948 after a Communist coup, and settled in the United States.

Albright's first cousin, Dagmar Simova, who lives in what is now the Czech Republic, told the Post that Albright's parents did not tell her about the fate of her relatives because she was only 8 years old at the end of the war.

A copy of Albright's father's birth certificate lists Josef Korbel as "Jewish," according to the Post. In addition, names of relatives reportedly appear on the list of 77,000 Czech Holocaust victims inscribed on the wall of the Pinkas synagogue in Prague.

The revelations about Albright's Jewish roots are expected to have little direct impact on relations between Washington and Jerusalem.

Pro-Israel activists — as well as Arab critics — have long considered her a strong supporter of the Jewish state. A State Department official said the new revelations had "nothing to do with her job."

"This will have no effect on her performance as secretary of state," he said.

When Albright told Clinton about the information this week, "the

president said it was a fascinating story and encouraged Madeleine to find out more," White House spokesman Mike McCurry reportedly said.

"What Madeleine Albright is or isn't is a tragedy of the Holocaust," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "Her parents acted in one way or another because of what it meant to be Jewish."

Foxman, whose own parents placed him as an infant with his Catholic nanny in Poland to save him during the war — and eventually had to go to court to get him back — said, "In all the years of my life, I could not get my parents to articulate what was their thinking process. It saved my life and also theirs."

This is "a very, very personal thing" for Albright, Foxman said. "Nobody can really understand or fully comprehend what she is going through."

The revelation could liven up next week's meeting between Netanyahu and Albright. Netanyahu and Albright have more than Jewish roots in common. Both served as their country's ambassador to the United Nations.

Although Albright has devoted much of her work to other areas of the world, the Middle East is likely to occupy much of her time, analysts say, as the region continues to play a big role on the Clinton administration's foreign policy agenda.

"President Clinton has his eye on the history books," said a White House official involved in setting up the meetings. "He wants history to record him as the president who presided over Middle East peace."

Still, U.S. officials do not expect any major breakthroughs during Netanyahu's one-week visit to the United States, which begins Feb. 12. He has also scheduled meetings with other top U.S. officials and lawmakers as well as with American Jews. Clinton wants to "build on the momentum created by the accord on Hebron," U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross said.

The visit "will be marked by a business-is-back-to-normal attitude," said Joel Singer, an attorney in Washington who served as a chief Israeli negotiator with the Palestinians. "I expect there will be an attempt made by the U.S. administration to prove that relations between the U.S. and Israel are as good as they have ever been."

### **First victory lap for Middle East leaders**

The visit, Netanyahu's fourth since becoming prime minister, marks the first time he will come to the White House during a period of relative calm.

His first visit came in July, shortly after his electoral victory in May, a race in which Clinton had openly backed his electoral opponent.

The second came in early September as talks stalled in the region. The third visit was for an emergency summit Clinton had called after Palestinian police and Israeli forces exchanged fire in the wake of tunnel dispute in Jerusalem.

Netanyahu's visit next week is being seen by many as the first victory lap for Middle East leaders, now that the peace process appears back on track.

Netanyahu will be followed by Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Hussein.

One major focus of the meetings will be to try to hammer out an agreement that would enable Syria and Israel to resume their long-stalled peace talks.

Damascus has refused to reopen talks, on hold since last spring, until Netanyahu agrees to informal assurances given by the previous government. Syria believes that it had a deal that Israel would withdraw from the entire Golan Heights in exchange for peace.

Netanyahu is also expected to bring up the fate of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard, who is serving a life

sentence. Clinton has refused to pardon Pollard or commute his sentence to time served.

Pollard's wife, Esther, is urging Netanyahu to appeal to Clinton on humanitarian grounds to release her husband.

According to a letter Esther Pollard sent to Netanyahu, Pollard is suffering from a serious sinus condition that requires surgery. Pollard claims that prison officials have refused treatment at a hospital because of security concerns. Pollard remains in solitary confinement at a maximum security federal prison. □

### **Israel plunged into mourning in wake of helicopter collision**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has been plunged into deep mourning in the wake of the country's worst air force disaster.

At least 70 Israeli soldiers were killed Tuesday night when two army helicopters en route to the southern Lebanon security zone crashed in bad weather over an Israeli farming community in northern Israel.

According to initial reports, there were no survivors among the troops. No residents of the community, Moshav Sha'ar Yishuv, were hurt.

"Tonight we suffered a horrible tragedy," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. "We lost dozens of our best sons, brave soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces."

The head of the IDF northern command, Maj. Gen. Amiram Levine, confirmed the extensive casualties during a briefing for reporters.

Israel has maintained troops in the 9-mile-wide security zone since 1985 to prevent cross-border terror attacks and to prevent the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement from firing Katyusha rockets at northern Israeli communities.

Heavy fire was exchanged this week between Israeli and Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon. The crash took place amid an ongoing national debate about the wisdom of a continued presence in southern Lebanon.

The two helicopters crashed about 7 p.m. over Moshav Sha'ar Yishuv, located near Kiryat Shmona. Snow had been falling Tuesday in northern Israel, and there was heavy fog at the time. One of the helicopters crashed into a vacant house on the moshav. The helicopters were bearing large amounts of ammunition, and the impact set off a series of fiery explosions.

Firefighters, rescue crews and security forces rushed to the area, which was declared a closed military zone. Netanyahu canceled a trip to Jordan scheduled for Wednesday because of the air disaster. King Hussein expressed his condolences to Israel, as did Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

President Ezer Weizman, a veteran pilot, said he believed that it was Israel's worst air disaster.

Eyewitnesses described massive explosions lighting up the night sky. "It was near the guest cabins. We heard two explosions. I went outside to see what they were, and we saw a helicopter falling on one of them," Sylvia Cohan, a resident of Moshav Sha'ar Yishuv, told Israel Radio. "Everything exploded. It was total chaos."

"I heard helicopters overhead, and looked towards the valley when I saw a huge explosion," said Smadar Edelin, an eyewitness who saw the helicopters from the Hermon field school, which overlooks the community where the crash took place.

"At first, I thought it was a Katyusha rocket attack, which we are used to. Then I heard a smaller explosion and saw a helicopter flying low over the ground, and then it exploded." □

**NEWS ANALYSIS**
**Extradition of Hamas leader presents quandary for Israel**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — No one was enthusiastic about the option, but Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, just a few months before his assassination, saw no other choice.

A hot potato suddenly landed in Israel's lap in July 1995, when U.S. officials arrested Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook, the head of the political arm of Hamas, at a New York airport when he tried to re-enter the United States, where he had been living for many years.

The man had made it to the blacklist of Muslim fundamentalist activists as part of the general crackdown ordered by President Clinton against hostile extremist groups.

Rabin and his advisers confronted the question of whether to request Marzook's extradition on charges that he had helped plan Hamas terror attacks against Israelis.

Israel was engaged at the time — as it has been for several years now — in a bitter fight against Hamas terrorism.

Rabin was also losing political points because of the perception that he was unable to put an end to the terrorism.

Asking for the extradition of the man believed to be behind much of the terror seemed an appropriate move — but it was also one fraught with danger.

There was the fear that Marzook's presence in Israel might lead to additional Hamas terror attacks.

There was also the danger that he would become a Palestinian hero, and that his presence in an Israeli jail would intensify the debate over Israel's treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

On the other hand, Israel could not just stand aside and pretend that Marzook was only an American concern. Israel had to take a firm stand of its own against terror.

Rabin eventually decided in favor of the move, and Israel formally requested Marzook's extradition.

The Jewish state charged that he was engaged in a conspiracy to commit murder and other crimes against Israelis.

He was also charged with having raised money for the military wing of Hamas.

**Drifting away from public eye**

The Israeli assumption at the time was that a lengthy legal process would ensue, with Marzook repeatedly appealing the extradition request and thereby delaying the actual handover.

And indeed, Marzook acted according to this basic assumption, repeatedly appealing his court-ordered extradition to Israel.

But last week, Marzook's lawyers announced that their client had dropped his challenge to the request by the Jewish state.

They said he had lost his faith in the U.S. justice system after being imprisoned for 18 months and not being charged with a crime.

The hot potato was back in Israeli hands.

Israeli legal and intelligence sources said in interviews this week that Marzook's move was both surprising and clever.

Marzook, they said, had realized that he was slowly drifting away from the public eye.

A transfer to an Israeli security prison — with all its attendant publicity — had become for him a much more appealing alternative.

In addition, he would find Palestinian compatriots in an Israeli jail — to say nothing of the renewed pressures

Hamas might launch against Israel in the wake of his extradition.

Marzook's timing was good, the sources added.

In recent months, relations between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas have improved considerably.

Both parties appear to have reached an understanding that Hamas could become part of the Palestinian establishment in the self-rule areas — as long as it did not embarrass the Palestinian Authority by carrying out terror attacks against Israel.

But this understanding had prompted a major debate within Hamas about whether to continue its military struggle against Israel or to begin recognizing the new reality of the evolving Israeli relations with the Palestinian Authority.

"Never before in its 9-year-long history has the Hamas movement known such a strong sense of disintegration and lack of identity as it is experiencing nowadays," Arab affairs analyst Guy Bechor wrote this week in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Marzook is well aware of this debate, a senior intelligence officer said this week.

The officer added that Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat could end up striking a deal with Israel for the release of both Marzook and Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

Yassin is the founder of Hamas who has been serving a life sentence since 1989 for ordering the deaths of Palestinians who were suspected of collaborating with Israel.

In return for their release, the officer suggested, Arafat could agree to hand over to Israel a number of Arab terrorists now being held by the Palestinian Authority.

Beyond the concerns raised about what actions the extradition may prompt among Arab militants, Israel may therefore find Marzook to be a useful bargaining chip in future dealings with Islamic fundamentalists inside the self-rule areas and perhaps even outside.

Regardless of whether he is freed from an Israeli prison, once Marzook returns to the Middle East, he is expected to take over the reins of the Hamas leadership and put an end to the ongoing struggle between the group's local leaders and the leadership in exile.

Israel now faces the prospect of his imminent extradition.

Despite reports that Israelis officials are rethinking the extradition request, Israel is now pursuing the extradition process, Irit Kohn, director of the international department at the Justice Ministry, which signed the original extradition request, said in an interview.

**'Matter of law'**

Once Secretary of State Madeleine Albright approves the extradition, Israel will send police officers to the United States to escort the defendant back to the Jewish state, where he will face trial.

Israel could not have retracted its extradition request, the senior intelligence officer said, adding that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could hardly be more lenient toward a Hamas member than Rabin was.

"So far they have not released Sheik Yassin, so why should they let Marzook go?" the source added.

Carmi Gillon, the former head of the Shin Bet, said during a visit to New York this week that it would be "impossible" for the Jewish state not to bring Marzook to trial.

"It's not a matter of political interests," he said. "It's a matter of law."

But at the same time, Gillon, the official who had top responsibility for ensuring the security of Israelis, said he would prefer that "Marzook was somewhere else" besides Israel. □

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Ban on women's prayer groups sparks outcry — and new interest***By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — An effort by a New York Orthodox rabbinical organization to stop women's prayer groups may inadvertently be having the opposite effect.

The Vaad Harabonim of Queens, N.Y., which generally oversees the kashrut of local restaurants and food stores, on Jan. 14 issued a one-page resolution banning women's tefillah groups, as they are known.

But instead of putting an end to the groups, the ban is resulting in wide media coverage, and the prayer groups are getting calls from women who have never before participated and are interested in doing so, according to Bat Sheva Marcus, chairwoman of the Women's Tefillah Network.

"In an ironic way, it has brought the issue to public attention," said Marcus, whose group provides information and support to 40 groups around the world.

Sharon Kalker, coordinator of the women's prayer group Nishmat Nashim, in the Hillcrest section of Queens, said that since the rabbinic ban was made public, she has received so many phone calls from women interested in attending the next meeting of the gathering that "I hope I have enough chairs."

Most are located in the New York metropolitan area.

However, women's tefillah groups are in places as far flung as Portland, Ore., Denver, Jerusalem and Australia.

Women's tefillah groups provide an alternative communal forum for women, who are banned from ritual leadership roles in Orthodox synagogues.

Jewish law prohibits men from hearing women's voices lest they be distracted from their prayer and does not allow women to be counted in a minyan.

**Women dancing with the Torah**

Women gather on their own — in private homes and in synagogues — usually once a month on Shabbat or Rosh Chodesh, the first of each Jewish month, to pray, read from the Torah and celebrate girls' rites of passage, including baby namings for newborns and Bat Mitzvahs for adolescents.

They do not say those prayers, such as Kaddish, which, according to Orthodox Jewish law, require the presence of 10 men.

In its resolution, the 90-member Queens rabbinical organization recognized "the sincere desire of many women to express their devotion" to God and "highly commends this feeling, provided it is translated into action in the proper direction."

The prayer groups and other recent practices, such as Orthodox women dancing with the Torah on Simchat Torah and reading from the Scroll of Esther on Purim, though, were banned because they were "breaking the boundaries of tradition."

The rabbinical council cited the "disapproval of innovations" such as these by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik, who before their deaths were the leading modern Orthodox authorities.

It also cited similar positions issued by five Yeshiva University deans in 1985, as well as by the Council of Young Israel Rabbis.

Fewer than half of the rabbinical group's members reportedly voted on the resolution at the meeting, which was attended by 47 rabbis.

Several members reportedly walked out before the vote.

Almost all those who remained voted for it, however.

Two dissented and three abstained. One member has resigned from the rabbinical council over the issue.

"The rabbis feel a concern over this not so much about what's happening now, but because of what it could lead to," said Rabbi Manfred Gans, the spiritual leader of Congregation Machane Chodosh in Forest Hills, Queens. Gans supported the resolution.

Rabbi Yitzchak Sladowsky, the rabbinical council's executive vice president, declined to be interviewed.

But the rabbi said through his secretary that "this is really a local issue and we don't want to comment on it."

Rabbi Herschel Welcher, president of the Queens rabbinical council, did not return phone calls.

Longtime supporters and participants in women's prayer groups are angry about the ruling.

The rabbis who endorsed the resolution "don't think this is what nice girls do," said Blu Greenberg, an author, Orthodox feminist and founder of a women's tefillah group in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, N.Y.

"They became more aware of the growing strength of women's davening (prayer) groups. It's about fear, about their feeling threatened," said Greenberg, who is one of the conveners of an International Conference on Feminism & Orthodoxy, slated to be held later this month in Manhattan.

The rabbis are "trying to put the genie back into the bottle," Greenberg said.

The first tefillah groups were established by Orthodox women in 1978.

And while they are now a well-established part of the modern Orthodox landscape, the Queens rabbis' effort is not the first time that there has been an attempt to stop them.

The women's tefillah groups early on had the sanction of Rabbi Avi Weiss, who leads the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, N.Y., and is well-known for his political activism, but few other Orthodox rabbis backed them.

In the early days, except for a group that met in Weiss' synagogue, women's tefillah groups convened only in private homes.

**'Those on fence may bend'**

Throughout the early 1980s, mainstream modern Orthodox rabbis and community leaders rejected women's tefillah groups for reasons ranging from the sociological to those rooted in Jewish law.

The matter came to a head in 1985, when five respected rabbinic leaders affiliated with Yeshiva University published a responsa, or halachic opinion, prohibiting all organized women's prayer groups, in any form.

Some Orthodox rabbis subscribed to their position. Others opposed it.

Weiss published an analysis of his backing of the groups in a book titled "Women and Prayer."

The Women's Tefillah Network itself was organized as a result of that dispute, Marcus said.

Since then, the number of women's prayer groups has multiplied.

In 1989, there were 16 such groups, ranging in size from 15 to 300 members, Marcus said.

Last month, Marcus said, an additional four were established, bringing the total to 44.

Marcus said she is concerned that the Queens resolution could influence the many Orthodox rabbis who have not taken a stand.

"I'm afraid that some rabbis who are on the fence might bend under some political pressure," she said. □