



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Burglars break in — again

For the second time in just over a week, burglars broke into the Washington office of an American political consultant hired to advise Israel's Labor Party candidate for prime minister.

Files relating to Ehud Barak's campaign were seized after intruders broke through a second-story window and disabled an alarm system that had been installed in pollster Stanley Greenberg's office after the first break-in, according to a Labor campaign official.

### King Hussein returns home

Jordan's King Hussein received a jubilant welcome home following six months of cancer treatment at the Mayo Clinic in the United States.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat was among those welcoming the monarch, who was beaming after he piloted his plane into the airport in Amman. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent Hussein a message of well wishes, and two Israeli air force jets escorted the king's plane as it flew over Israeli airspace en route to Jordan.

### Israeli burial plot sought

Israeli officials are considering a request to reserve a burial plot in the Mt. Herzl national cemetery for the billionaire philanthropist who serves as the president of the World Jewish Congress.

The unprecedented request to bury a non-citizen in a section of the cemetery reserved for Israel's leaders came from an Israeli lawmaker, not from Edgar Bronfman, according to an official with the Jewish Agency for Israel. The agency is taking the request seriously because of Bronfman's efforts on behalf of the Jewish people, the official said.

### Jewish leaders criticize Falwell

A comment by Rev. Jerry Falwell that the Antichrist is a Jew is anti-Semitic and could potentially ignite widespread anti-Semitism, say Jewish leaders.

Falwell, who was involved in national politics during the 1980s and whose sermons are carried weekly on television across the United States, made these comments in a recent talk. He later explained that he did not think his comments were anti-Semitic, but that the Antichrist is a Jew because Jesus was a Jew. [Page 3]

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Latest political scandal fuels divisiveness in Israeli society

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An obscure drug trial that took place 17 years ago has become the focus of a public storm that is sweeping Israel with a peculiar ferocity.

Two weeks ago, few Israelis had heard of Yechiem Ohana, a Tiberias businessman who was jailed for 30 months in the early 1980s for trafficking in drugs — and who has been proclaiming his innocence ever since.

The issues in the case, first published last week by the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, are intricate and complex, and few people claim to fully understand them.

But this has not stopped anyone from taking sides.

Suddenly the country is divided between those who sympathize with Ohana's insistent demands for a retrial and those who repeat the police assertion that the man is a scoundrel, a forger and a fraud.

Although the case may appear to be just the latest scandal enveloping Israel, the heated debate surrounding it reflects, to an uncomfortable degree, the political fault lines that divide Israel.

Surfacing as Israel prepares for critical elections in May, the Ohana affair has exposed a fractured society whose deep divisions must worry all who care about the fundamental strength and cohesion of the Jewish state.

Those on the political left see Ohana's case as the tip of a huge conspiracy designed to compromise the Israeli justice system and undermine the rule of law. Those on the right see this interpretation as pure paranoia on the part of a beleaguered elite who are fearful of the rise to power of the Sephardim, immigrants and the Orthodox — in short, of the coalition that supports Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

To observe that Israel is in the grip of election fever, four months before the May 17 balloting, would be an understatement.

Feeding the fever were reports this week that Israeli police are probing possible links between a series of break-ins during the past four months in the homes of activists working for the Labor Party's candidate for prime minister, Ehud Barak.

Word of these break-ins surfaced just days after news broke of a similar incident at the Washington offices of Stanley Greenberg, an American pollster hired to work on Barak's election campaign. Greenberg's office was broken into again this week.

The reports led to predictably partisan comments, with Barak supporters complaining about an Israeli Watergate and Netanyahu backers saying such accusations amounted to provocation.

While such activity and recriminations are arguably unhealthy and premature, such partisanship is a fairly normal occurrence in many democracies.

But the reaction to the Ohana affair is different.

Ohana, a member of a well-known and politically powerful family, claims he was framed for trafficking drugs by a group of senior police officials who were conspiring to weaken the then-national police superintendent, Herzl Shafir, by blocking his appointment of a close ally to a top position in the northern police command.

The ally was a friend of Ohana. To have Ohana convicted of selling drugs would hurt the ally — and deny him the post.

Ohana claims, moreover, that the judge trying his case was blackmailed by the police officials over an illicit affair the judge had had with a minor. The judge, Theodore Orr, is now a member of the Supreme Court. If he were compromised by

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak lashes back on Pollard

Israel's Labor Party candidate for prime minister criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for making the release of Jonathan Pollard a campaign issue.

"If Pollard is released, it won't be as a result of the actions" of the Netanyahu government, "but in spite of the damaging measures of the government and its leader," Ehud Barak told Israel Radio. His comments came after the premier criticized Barak for not signing a letter Netanyahu sent President Clinton requesting clemency for Pollard, who is serving a life sentence in North Carolina for spying for Israel.

### Sharon to discuss Iran in Moscow

Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in Moscow for three days of talks with Russian leaders.

Sharon, who is expected to discuss the Middle East peace process with his hosts, is also planning to convey Israel's concern about the deepening ties between Russia and Iran.

### Hawkish legislator withdraws bid

The hawkish chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee withdrew his bid to challenge Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the party leadership. Uzi Landau said he reached the decision because he and former Likud Defense Minister Moshe Arens, who recently announced he would challenge the premier, appeal to the same constituency.

### Miss World rape allegation denied

An Israeli travel agent denied that he raped an Israeli model who was recently named Miss World. Shlomo Nour, 43, is being held until the end of January while police investigate Linor Abargil's charge that he sexually assaulted her at knifepoint in Italy last October, one month before she won the beauty competition.

Ohana's allegations, the credibility of the entire system could be dealt a massive blow. After allowing his name to be disclosed in connection with the case, Orr denied the accusations, adding that the materials submitted by Ohana in his request for a retrial — including documents Orr allegedly wrote — are forgeries.

The role of Ma'ariv in reporting Ohana's charges has also become controversial.

The paper's publisher, Ofer Nimrodi, is currently serving a jail term on charges of approving illegal phone taps. Nimrodi, too, has long claimed that he is a victim of the legal system and that others — specifically the publisher of the rival daily Yediot Achronot — have gotten away with similar wrongdoing.

The conspiracy theorists say Ma'ariv's role in the Ohana affair is an extension of its publisher's vendetta against the judicial and legal establishments.

The paper's editors insist that they were acting purely out of journalistic motivations and that they spent four months trying to corroborate Ohana's charges before they published them.

Along with going to Ma'ariv, Ohana also spoke with the chairman of the Knesset Law Committee, Hanan Porat of the National Religious Party.

Porat subsequently transmitted documents and evidence from Ohana to Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein, whom Porat urged to move for a retrial.

The conspiracy theorists point to Orthodox legislators' frequent feuds with the Supreme Court — which has issued recent rulings that whittled away at Orthodox control over religious life in Israel — as being behind Porat's decision to take up Ohana's case. Porat, however, maintains that his position made him an obvious choice for Ohana to approach.

Ohana and his defenders say his 17-year quest for justice can hardly have been motivated by present-day political considerations.

But the conspiracy theorists maintain that the quest — which, they concede, may have intrinsic merit — is now being exploited by political and economic forces intent on undermining the legal and judicial systems.

Riven by ideological, religious, ethnic and political divisions, Israel has clung desperately to the last few untainted institutions in its society that are the bedrock of national solidarity: the army, the courts and a legal system that ensures due process.

For the most part, these institutions have been kept out of the political fray. Their integrity and moral authority have always been cited as critical to the well-being of Israeli society.

But now, in the heat of a political campaign, the Ohana affair threatens to throw the courts and the police into the political wringer.

As a result, the legal system may emerge stripped of its prestige and credibility — a development that would surely weaken Israel. □

## Report: Arabs to support Barak and Shahak

LONDON (JTA) — More than 90 percent of Israeli Arab voters will support Labor Party leader Ehud Barak or centrist candidate Amnon Lipkin-Shahak in Israel's May elections, according to an Israeli Arab Knesset member.

In an interview with the London-based daily newsletter Mideast Mirror, Azmi Beshara added that Israeli Arab voters should extract a price from the two candidates for their support.

Israeli Arab leaders, representing a constituency that comprises 13 percent of the Israeli electorate, should negotiate with Barak and Shahak on a range of issues, including the civil rights of Israeli Arabs and the future course of the Middle East peace process, Beshara said.

A member of a communist party known as Hadash — Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, Beshara said Israeli Arab support for Barak and Shahak would hold in case a runoff vote for prime minister needs to be held on June 1.

He also told the Mideast Mirror that he thought Barak would probably win more Israeli Arab votes than Shahak in the first round because the Labor candidate is better organized and better placed to win the community's support.

In terms of policy, however, he said it is difficult to distinguish between Barak and Shahak because the two appear to be running virtually identical campaigns. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Norway may drop murder case

A Norwegian state attorney is recommending that the state drop its case against an Israeli suspected of killing a Moroccan waiter in 1973 in an apparent case of mistaken identity.

The move by the attorney comes after his office conducted an informal investigation of the suspect, retired Mossad agent Michael Harari.

In 1996, the Jewish state agreed to pay compensation for the killing of the Moroccan waiter, who was mistaken for the Palestinian mastermind behind the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

Despite that agreement, Israel has never accepted responsibility for the assassination.

### Legislator may seek Senate

U.S. Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) is talking to supporters about the possibility of running for Senate in 2000.

Lowey, one of 23 Jewish members of the House of Representatives, would seek the seat of retiring New York Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.).

### Greek shul campaign mounted

The former director of the Jewish Museum in Athens is mounting a campaign to restore a synagogue on the Greek island of Crete that was damaged by Nazi shelling.

Nicholas Stavroulakis estimates he will need another \$100,000 to meet his goal of reopening the Etz Chayim Synagogue by March.

Most of the \$400,000 raised so far for the project has come from private organizations, including the New York-based Ronald S. Lauder Foundation.

### Poland holds 'Day of Judaism'

Poland marked its second annual "Day of Judaism" to foster interfaith dialogue.

As part of the event, a number of Polish churches included the day's theme as part of their services.

In addition, 1 million postcards bearing a photograph of Pope John Paul II together with Rome's Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff were distributed in all the country's parishes.

### Latvian book subject of probe

The Latvian government called on the country's prosecutors to determine whether a recently reprinted book contains anti-Semitic propaganda or glorifies Nazi ideology, according to Latvia's official news agency.

"The Fearful Year" describes crimes committed against Latvians during the Soviet occupation of the Baltic nation between the summer of 1940 and Nazi Germany's invasion of the country a year later.

## Falwell's remark on Antichrist sparks charges of anti-Semitism

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Rev. Jerry Falwell's recent statement that the Antichrist is probably a Jewish man alive today is anti-Semitic and could potentially ignite widespread anti-Semitism, according to officials at Jewish organizations.

It has also done serious damage to the dialogue between Jews and evangelical Christians, they say.

Falwell's statement "borders on anti-Semitism at best and is anti-Semitic at worst," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"Falwell's is an influential voice among evangelical and charismatic Christians," said Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs for the ADL.

What Falwell said reflects his "lack of understanding of Judaism and the Jewish people in God's design. He sees us only as the ones who prepare the coming of Jesus," he said.

"It is a great disappointment after more than 30 years of dialogue; he's still in the Middle Ages."

Last week Falwell told about 1,500 people gathered in Tennessee that he believes Jesus will return within a decade.

Before that event can take place, Falwell and others believe, a figure known as the Antichrist will arise and spread universal evil, but will be conquered at the Second Coming of the Christian messiah.

Is the Antichrist "alive and here today?" Falwell asked his parishioners and millions of viewers who see the service broadcast by television and radio during Sunday morning services at his Lynchburg, Va., church.

"Probably," he said, "because when he appears during the tribulation period he will be a full-grown counterfeit of Christ.

"Of course he'll be Jewish," he said.

Falwell was quoted as saying that he did not intend his remark to be anti-Jewish.

He said that he meant only that the Antichrist must be Jewish because Jesus was a Jew.

That idea is a "hateful myth," said Foxman of the ADL.

"Reverting back to a distorted interpretation of the text of the New Testament, he revisits the worst in intolerance that resulted in the persecution of the Jewish people and inquisitions."

Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, along with Jack Rosen, president of the group, issued a statement saying that the influential reverend's view "will have an inevitably incendiary and degrading effect on Christian attitudes toward Jews."

Falwell's view is "a common theological position," Klenicki said, "although it has been put aside in the last few years because of the ongoing dialogue we have with the evangelicals trying to explain our position."

His latest statement "sets all that back," the rabbi said.

As part of the dialogue, Klenicki has addressed students at Falwell's Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., several times over the past few years.

Concern is also spreading among leaders of Jewish groups that Falwell's will be the first of many such remarks as the turn of the millennium approaches.

Falwell has, in the past, been a strong supporter of the State of Israel and has met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"He supports Israel for his own Christological ends," Klenicki said.

"My concern is that when the year 2000 comes and he realizes that the Jewish people will not convert to Christianity, that he'll be critical of the State of Israel," he said.

Baum and Rosen of the AJCongress are urging Falwell to look to the example of the Catholic Church, which, through theological and educational policy statements, "has demonstrated its sensitive awareness of the great harm that can be caused by the careless spread of doctrinal anti-Semitism." □

## Gore urges Israel, Palestinians to implement Wye peace accord

By Matthew Dorf

NEW YORK (JTA) — Vice President Al Gore has joined the growing chorus of U.S. officials criticizing Israel for freezing the implementation of peace accords with the Palestinians.

In his first speech to a Jewish audience since formally launching his candidacy for president, Gore last week called on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to implement the October Wye peace accord with "no new conditions."

Gore issued his call to both parties, but Israel has been the sole target of criticism from the Clinton administration for imposing such conditions.

The Wye agreement linked Israeli further redeployment from the West Bank to specific Palestinians steps to crack down on terrorism. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has postponed the redeployment outlined in the accord, citing Palestinian violations of the accord that are not recognized by the United States.

Gore's speech Jan. 13 to the Israel Policy Forum, a group founded to support the Oslo peace process, came in the midst of a U.S. push to convince the Israeli government to fulfill its promise to redeploy from additional territory in the West Bank.

Shortly before the vice president's speech, senior State Department officials told key U.S. senators that the White House might not follow through on \$1.2 billion in additional aid for Israel to help pay the costs of the redeployment until the peace process is back on track. This delay will likely postpone a request for an additional \$400 million for the Palestinians as well.

A senior Palestinian official in the United States said that any aid for Israel would benefit Netanyahu's election campaign. With this in mind, the Palestinians will not press for the aid now.

"We do not need the money that badly," he said.

To the applause of the some 600 gathered at the fund-raising dinner, Gore said, "The president and I call on both sides to implement Wye as signed with no new conditions."

The speech likely ended speculation that Gore, seeking the presidency, harbored more hawkish views than the president on the peace process.

Gore echoed Clinton's comments last month in the Gaza Strip calling for the peace accords to recognize the "legitimate interests of the Palestinians."

Dore Gold, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, who attended the dinner along with a handful of ambassadors from Arab states, refused to comment after Gore's speech.

In Israel, meanwhile, Netanyahu this week reiterated his earlier stance that implementation of the Wye agreement would not be affected by upcoming national elections.

"We want to move forward, and we shall move forward the minute those obligations are carried out. With elections or without elections, this is a commitment that we have made and we shall keep," Netanyahu said.

In the aftermath of the Wye accord, amid left-wing criticism over too little progress and right-wing anger over too many concessions, the Knesset voted to move elections forward to May from the year 2000.

As Gore jumped into the turbulent waters of the peace process,

he also reiterated long-standing U.S. policy on Israel. The entire U.S.-Israel relationship does not rest on the ups and downs of the peace process, the vice president said.

In addition, whatever happens in the Israeli election, the United States remains true to certain "bedrock principles."

"The United States of America will spend every effort to promote security for the State of Israel," he said.

Calling U.S. support for Israel "ironclad," Gore also said that security will best come from a secure and lasting peace. "The United States of America will continue to devote all of our faith, energy and optimism to the pursuit of peace with security in the Middle East." □

## Plan emerges for memorial, but Parliament must give OK

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — German Jewish leaders are welcoming a compromise decision reached over the weekend to build a combined Holocaust monument and research center in Berlin.

But the details of the plan remain sketchy, and the new plan still has to be approved by the German Parliament.

The plan, which was negotiated by former U.S. Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal, the head of the soon-to-be-opened Jewish museum in Berlin, adds the research center and a giant wall of books to the monument, which was designed by American architect Peter Eisenman.

The compromise, which was agreed to by Eisenman, Chancellor Gerhard Schroder and his cultural minister, Michael Naumann, both of whom originally opposed the monument, would also reduce the size of Eisenman's memorial from 2,700 to about 1,800 stone slabs.

"The current model is much better than the previous design," German Jewish leader Ignatz Bubis told JTA.

Bubis and other Jewish leaders had been upset with plans by Germany's center-left government, which took office in October, to drop construction of a monument in favor of a combination research center, library and exhibition space.

But they have generally stayed out of the recent debate over the memorial, saying it was a matter for Germans to decide.

While the compromise appears to end a decade of dicker over the proposed memorial, it does not end all questions. The agreement appears to pave the way for an arrangement between Blumenthal's museum and the memorial, although exactly what that relationship will be remains unclear.

For example, one proposal would bring Steven Spielberg's video archive of interviews with Holocaust survivors to Germany. Bubis has suggested the monument's research center as the site, but Blumenthal wants the archives at the museum.

Spielberg, who has said he is interested in placing his archive in Berlin, is scheduled to discuss the matter when he comes to Germany next month for Berlin's annual film festival.

Whether the proposal will be approved by Germany's Parliament, which is not expected to discuss the project until this summer, is also unclear.

One problem might be the higher costs of the combined monument and museum complex, which has jumped from \$18 million for a monument to an estimated \$54 million. □