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Engendering change

Does a record number of women
in the 19th Knesset indicate a
new era in Israeli feminism?

NEWS IN BRIEF

BARBRA STREISAND (Reuters)



Streisand to perform in Tel Aviv

Barbra Streisand, the iconic songstress/actress/diva, has announced that she will perform for the first time ever in Israel on June 20.

Accompanied by a 60-piece orchestra, the 70-year-old Streisand will end a select tour of Europe with the show at Bloomfield Stadium, which holds 16,000 spectators. Two days earlier, she is expected to perform privately at the Presidential Conference in Jerusalem in honor of President Shimon Peres's birthday.

"I'm happy that Barbra Streisand is coming to Tel Aviv for the president's 90th birthday. What will we do for his 100th?" Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai asked after the announcement was made.

Streisand is one of the most commercially and critically successful entertainers of the past 50 years, with more than 140 million records sold worldwide, eight Grammy awards, five Emmy awards and two Oscars.

Despite being active in Jewish and Israel philanthropy, Streisand has never performed before in Israel. Joining her onstage will be special guest trumpeter Chris Botti, along with duets with her son Jason Gould and her sister Roslyn Kind.

Before her arrival in Israel, Streisand will perform on June 1 in London, June 6 in Amsterdam, June 10 in Paris, June 12 in Cologne, and June 15 in Berlin.

• DAVID BRINN

Christians flocking to Yad Vashem

• BY CHRISTIAN EDITION STAFF

During Israel's annual Holocaust Remembrance Day observances in early April, a record number of Christians took part in the official state ceremonies held in Warsaw Ghetto Square on the campus of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

More than a dozen Christian organizations, led by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, joined the long line of Israeli dignitaries and private Jewish groups which laid wreaths in Warsaw Ghetto Square during the Remembrance Day ceremonies. Other Christians volunteered to assist the Yad Vashem staff in hosting the influx of guests from all over the world for the Holocaust remembrance events.

"This shows that the Christian world is becoming more interested in the Holocaust, even though it seems to be getting further away in people's memories and the survivors are getting older," noted Dr. Susanna Kokkonen, director of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, which works to increase Christian support for the museum and memorial site.

To further its mission of preserving the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, in 2006 Yad Vashem partnered with the ICEJ to create a Christian Desk at the museum.

Among its activities, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem has been organizing an annual conference for Christian pastors and ministry leaders to coincide with Holocaust Remembrance Day, which allows participants to attend the state ceremonies. This year's select group of 23 Christian leaders from 12 different countries was eager learn more about the Holocaust and put that knowledge to good use defending Israel from renewed anti-Semitism masquerading as anti-Zionism.



OFFICIALS FROM Yad Vashem and the Christian Embassy at the Holocaust Remembrance Day wreath-laying ceremony in Warsaw Ghetto Square. (Jani Salokangas/ICEJ)

"It's been a wonderful and very informative experience," said Pastor Marvin Barham from Little Rock, Arkansas. "For years I have been studying the Jewish roots of Christianity, to get to really know my faith as it was given to us by Jesus and the Apostles. And the Holocaust is the story of churches that had cut themselves off from those Hebraic roots. We need to learn about this history lest we become a generation that is ill-informed."

"It has been very moving and very meaningful to be here for these ceremonies and the leadership seminar," enthused Barbara Dingle, a Christian pro-Israel activist from London. "It's very important for Christians to learn about our mistakes and to teach others not to repeat them. I'm looking forward to applying what I've learned here on Israel's behalf."

"I felt that to be a better advocate for the Jewish state, I needed to have a more comprehensive picture of what happened in the Holocaust – and that is what we are getting here," related Rev. George Annadorai from Singapore. "It's especially good to hear from some of the surviving victims and learn where we went wrong in the past, and how Christians can be a part of the solution in the future."

"These in-depth seminars are a life-changing experience," said Kokkonen. •