

**PEACE TALKS RESUME IN WASHINGTON  
WITH HOPE FOR PROGRESS WITH SYRIA****By Cynthia Mann  
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- The sixth round of Middle East peace talks resumed here Monday, with Israeli negotiators hopeful but cautious about the progress that might be achieved before the negotiations recess again at the end of next week.

After holding intensive consultations last week with top government officials in Jerusalem, the Israeli delegation returned to Washington on Sunday with "the hope that the coming weeks will truly lead to progress in the negotiations on all three tracks," Elyakim Rubinstein, the head of the delegation, said upon arrival here Sunday.

But "much patience is needed," he cautioned. "These are difficult issues -- there are no magical solutions."

"The first condition for progress," he said, is "openness and good will, and readiness to negotiate."

The biggest expectations for a breakthrough at this juncture lie in the talks between Israel and Syria. That is because Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has pledged to return part of the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace treaty with Syria.

Rabin's pledge followed a proposal presented by the Syrian delegation two weeks ago that called for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in return for peace and mutual security arrangements. Syria's recognition of Israel's security concerns was seen as a breakthrough.

But the chief of the Israeli team negotiating with the Syrians, Itamar Rabinovich, cautioned Sunday against the use of terms such as "breakthrough," emphasizing the protracted nature of the negotiations.

**Israelis Present Document**

And in Israel, Rabin told reporters it was too early to speak of an Israeli-Syrian accord.

"I wish I could inform you about an agreement between Israel and Syria or between me and President (Hafez) Assad," he told reporters at Ben-Gurion Airport as he embarked on a three-day trip to Germany.

"Unfortunately, I cannot tell you," he said, "because it doesn't exist."

Nevertheless, the two sides are expected to make incremental progress toward an accord in the coming weeks.

The process advanced a step Monday, when the Israeli team presented the Syrians with a "paper of principles" regarding the Golan Heights, in response to the Syrian document presented two weeks ago.

Rabinovich described the Israeli document as a "creative text, which first and foremost reflects the interests and the viewpoint of the State of Israel but also contains consideration of the interests of the other side."

But the Syrian delegation expressed disappointment with the paper Monday afternoon, saying it avoided the issue of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"The document did not address the issue of

withdrawal in any satisfactory way whatsoever," said Bushra Kanafani, the delegation spokeswoman. "How can we talk about peace when the other party is not committed to returning to us what is ours?"

But in Israel, Rabin said there would be no discussions of territorial compromise until Syria had agreed to discuss establishing "a real peace -- that is to say, open boundaries, diplomatic relations, embassies, normalization of relations."

He said such a peace must "stand on its own feet" and not be "dependent on what will be achieved or what will not be achieved in the other sectors of the Arab-Israeli conflict."

**Reports Of London Conversations**

And in Jerusalem, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the Syrians must understand that a compromise on the Golan Heights should be made by both countries, and not by Israel only.

Peres spoke at a hearing of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, where he was questioned about his use of the word "sensational" last week to describe the recent negotiations with Syria.

He explained that what he found sensational was the fact that after 44 years of belligerency between the two countries, Israel and Syria were discussing peace and exchanging documents.

But that did not satisfy a member of his own Labor Party, Knesset member Ephraim Sneh, who charged that "exaggerated optimistic declarations" such as those made by Peres were weakening the Israeli delegation's bargaining position in Washington.

Peres was also asked to react to a report in the Israeli newspaper Al Hamishmar that during his visit to London last week he had met with King Hussein of Jordan and talked on the telephone with the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa.

Peres first tried to sidestep the question, but then added: "There were no meetings." He did not refer to any possible telephone conversations, however.

In Washington, meanwhile, the Israelis hope to persuade the Palestinians this week to begin focusing on what they see as the core issue: the substance of a five-year autonomy arrangement in the administered territories.

Before the talks recessed Sept. 3, the Palestinians had insisted on dealing first with other issues, such as alleged human rights violations in the territories. The two sides then agreed to set up separate working groups on these issues.

Rubinstein said he hoped the two sides could now get down to serious negotiations over the autonomy plan.

The Palestinians have proposed the election of a legislature in the territories, a concept Israel rejects, while Israel has proposed the election of an administrative council with more limited authority over certain spheres of Palestinian daily life.

"We come with open hearts and hope that the other side will do likewise," Rubinstein said Sunday.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Gil Sedan in Jerusalem and Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

**FULL-SCALE INQUIRY TO BE LAUNCHED INTO OLD CITY REAL ESTATE DEALS**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- In yet another move by Israel's Labor government to curb Jewish settlement in the Moslem Quarter of East Jerusalem, a full-scale investigation will be launched into real estate transactions there under the previous Likud administration.

The Cabinet on Sunday asked Attorney General Yosef Harish and State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat to investigate possible violations of the law in the purchase or rental of real estate in the densely populated Arab neighborhood.

The legal status of all controversial real estate in East Jerusalem will be examined by a committee of experts to be appointed by the finance and justice ministers, the Cabinet decided.

Its actions followed a report on real estate transactions in East Jerusalem under the Likud administration submitted by a committee headed by Haim Klugman, director-general of the Justice Ministry.

Justice Minister David Libai said the Klugman report indicates that the previous government acted in East Jerusalem "in underground style," hiding behind such settlement groups as Ateret Cohanim and Atara Leyoshna.

The report said state-owned real estate appeared to have been transferred to private groups without clear legal criteria.

Former Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday that the government's inquiry into actions taken during his tenure was directed toward world opinion.

"The purpose is political and a clear signal to the Palestine Liberation Organization, to Arab states, to the United States" that the Rabin government is "ready to concede also on Jerusalem," Sharon told Israel Radio.

Attorney General Harish told the Cabinet he warned the government at the time that the confiscation of houses in the Old City of Jerusalem was illegal.

The government's actions on this issue are being closely watched by the Greek Orthodox Church, said Tourism Minister Uzi Baram.

He said the church is waiting to see whether the government will take steps to annul the takeover of St. John's Hospice by Jewish settlers a year and a half ago. Court proceedings on the case are pending.

Ateret Cohanim claims the building, originally owned by the Greek Orthodox Church, was purchased legally.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin maintained that the investigation into the Old City transactions reflects no change in policy.

Other ministers said, however, that the probe represents a "loud and clear" signal of a change in government policy on Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem.

**RABIN MEETS WITH GERMAN LEADERS TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC AID TO ISRAEL**

By David Kantor

BONN, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met here this week with top German leaders to discuss financial assistance to Israel as well as Bonn's involvement in the Middle East peace process.

Rabin met Monday afternoon with Chancellor

Helmut Kohl for a discussion of Israeli requests for financial assistance, better access to the European market and enhanced military cooperation, German news reports said.

The prime minister later paid a short visit to German President Richard von Weizsacker and was scheduled to meet as well with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel.

A more lengthy discussion of the peace process and German-Israeli relations was to take place at a dinner with Kohl, attended also by four top aides for each leader.

Israeli diplomats in Bonn have over the past few days stressed Jerusalem's interest in an enhanced role for Europe in the multilateral Middle East peace talks.

They said Europe's interest in a stable Middle East can best be best served by diplomatic involvement and economic assistance for countries engaged in serious negotiations.

The recent wave of violence against foreigners in Germany is likely to come up at the talks, Israel's ambassador to Bonn said on Monday.

But Israel is confident the German government will do its utmost to cope with the problem, he said.

**ISRAEL-CHINA AIR ROUTE SHOULD ASSUME TWO-WAY NATURE ONCE CHERRIES BLOOM**

By Hugh Orgel

BEIJING (JTA) -- Air China plans to inaugurate regularly scheduled direct flights to Israel next spring, to reciprocate for the service which El Al began Sept. 3 to Beijing.

Lian Fang Cai, regional sales manager for Europe of the Chinese national airline, spoke of the plan with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which came along on El Al's inaugural flight to the Chinese capital.

The Israeli airline's newest service opened up a direct air route between Israel and the Far East, replacing the circuitous journeys Israelis have taken in the past through other countries.

The first group of Israelis to fly directly here from Israel was greeted in what was described as an unusually cordial welcome as it began a 10-day tour.

Arriving Israeli journalists, travel agents and airline representatives were the guests of Lu Fen Yan, president of the China International Travel Service at a reception held in the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square.

In addition to heading the travel service, she is reportedly a senior and influential member of the Cabinet.

Welcoming the Israelis, she expressed hoped their visit would herald the start of fruitful cooperation between the two countries.

China and Israel established diplomatic relations in January.

El Al reciprocated the Chinese welcome the following evening with a reception for officials of the China Travel Service and Air China, the airline of the People's Republic of China, which also operates, through local subsidiaries, China Northwest, China East, China Southeast, Shanghai Air and other airlines.

The inevitable inaugural difficulties were handed capably by El Al personnel, as well as tour guides and officials of the Geographic-Neot Hakikar Travel Agency, which for several years has organized tours to China and the Far East for Israelis via roundabout routes with other airlines.

## SCHOLAR BELIEVES ETHIOPIAN JEWS WERE INDIGENOUS, NOT FROM ISRAEL

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- Contrary to popular belief, the Jews of Ethiopia are descendants neither of the exiled tribe of Dan nor of a mythical union between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, according to a new book by a Hebrew University scholar.

Rather, Professor Steven Kaplan believes the Jews of Ethiopia probably had their origin in an Ethiopian ethnic group sometime between the 14th and 16th centuries.

Kaplan considers the community in the wider context of Ethiopian history in "The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century," published by New York University Press.

The New York-born author is chairman of Hebrew University's African studies department.

Kaplan says his purpose is not to question the Jewishness of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel, since their religious status as Jews was determined by rabbinical authorities 400 years ago.

He believes Jews did indeed come to Ethiopia from Eretz Yisrael via the Arabian Peninsula in the first and second centuries of the Common Era, and that they exerted a lingering cultural influence, including the introduction of Hebrew and Aramaic elements into the ancient Ethiopian language, Ge'ez.

But although traces of their cultural imprint survived even after the arrival of Christianity in the fourth century C.E., they left no Jewish community as such, says Kaplan.

It is only in the Middle Ages -- sometime between the 14th and 16th centuries -- that references arise of a separate group standing apart from other Ethiopians, whose beliefs and rituals did not contain Christian elements.

This was a period of self-definition within Ethiopia generally, says Kaplan, in which each group expressed itself in distinctive religious concepts and practices.

### Developed Own Religious Ideology

The Beta Israel, or House of Israel, as they came to call themselves, were one of four such groups that can be identified, and the only ones who retained the biblical elements of early Ethiopian beliefs without expressly Christian motifs.

These people, who coalesced into an identifiable, self-ruled group in northwestern Ethiopia, developed their own religious ideology, practices and institutions, which incorporated monotheism, ritual purity, distinctive holidays and a unique prayer liturgy.

Their 20 sacred books of the Apocrypha reached them mainly through the Ethiopian Church and were translated into Ge'ez from Arabic only in the Middle Ages, says Kaplan.

Although the name "Jew" ("Ayyud" in Ge'ez) was applied to this group of people, Kaplan notes that it can also be found in medieval Ethiopian sources as a derogatory term for heretic or deviant elements.

Even the term "Falasha" was used generically to designate a group of people who did not own land. The word "falasi" in Ge'ez means a landless person or wanderer.

It was only in the mid-19th century that the Beta Israel first had contact with European Jews and learned of rabbinic Judaism, including Hebrew prayers, traditional holidays and other practices.

## ETHIOPIAN FERRIS MORA FLEE HOMES, CLAIMING HARASSMENT BY VILLAGERS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- Thousands of Ferris Mora, descendants of Ethiopian Jews who converted to Christianity, are being harassed by villagers who want their land and are fleeing to Addis Ababa.

Micha Feldman, the Jewish Agency representative in Ethiopia, has sent an urgent report to Jerusalem saying 4,000 of the Ferris Mora have reportedly reached the Ethiopian capital and are waiting for Israel to open its gates to them.

Israel has not made a final decision on the matter, but has so far been reluctant to allow the Ferris Mora into the country. A government-appointed fact-finding mission to Ethiopia concluded in June that the Ferris Mora, who number at least 25,000, had converted to Christianity 100 years ago and today lead a totally un-Jewish life.

This week Israel decided to allow the immigration of 100 Ferris Mora "on a humanitarian basis." Most of them are elderly people left behind after the May 1991 Operation Solomon airlifted most of Ethiopia's Jews to Israel. These elderly people are now being permitted to join relatives in Israel.

Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban said the move was not a precedent but rather one that involved these individuals only. The emigres would not be considered new immigrants and would not enjoy the same benefits as olim.

The Ethiopian government, which regards the Ferris Mora as Ethiopian citizens, is also placing obstacles in the way of their emigration. The government has said it regards attempts at emigration as interference in its internal affairs.

The Ethiopian Church indicated that bringing the group to Israel would be regarded as an attempt to reconvert them.

Tsaban is due to visit Ethiopia shortly to study the issue firsthand.

### DROMI OF WZO TO HEAD PRESS OFFICE

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- The former North American director of the World Zionist Organization's Information Department, Uri Dromi, has been named director of Israel's Government Press Office.

Dromi, 45, ended his service as director as well as WZO emissary in Los Angeles in July. He is a former chief education officer in the Israeli air force and is a colonel in the reserves.

The appointment was one of a series announced by the Prime Minister's Office last week.

Israel Radio correspondent Oded Ben-Ami was named media adviser to Rabin in his capacity as defense minister.

Ben-Ami, 39, was until recently Israel Radio correspondent in the United States. He has also served as political and parliamentary reporter for the state broadcasting service.

Aryeh Shomer, 47, was appointed deputy director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, a post in which he served from 1984 to 1989.

He served as director-general of the Ministry of Science and Technology for a two-year period beginning in 1989. Most recently, he held the post of head of the information department at Bar-Ilan University, from which he holds a degree in political science.

Ron Kramer, 40, will serve as assistant to the director-general of the office.

## JEWISH GROUPS URGE BUSH TO SIGN FAMILY LEAVE ACT

NEW YORK, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- Jewish organizations have hailed congressional adoption of the Family and Medical Leave Act and urged President Bush to sign the measure into law.

Bush has threatened to veto the legislation, which requires employers to give workers 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family and personal medical emergencies.

The bill was adopted Sept. 10 by the House of Representatives by a vote of 241-161. The Senate had passed the bill in a voice vote last month.

Endorsing the measure as a means of supporting the family against the pressures of the workplace were the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith Women and the National Council of Jewish Women.

The bill represents a compromise from earlier versions and provides greater flexibility for employers, AJCongress President Robert Lifton said in a letter to Bush.

"While I am aware of your concern with federally mandated benefits," Lifton wrote the president, "I know that you would agree that the federal government has a responsibility to address serious societal problems."

The act covers businesses with 50 or more employees, which account for 5 percent of all companies and about 50 percent of the nation's workforce.

He said the annual cost to employers as a result of the legislation was estimated at \$330 million.

"Surely a \$5 trillion U.S. economy can afford this investment" in strong American families, said Lifton. Moreover, the measure would make it possible to retain experienced employees who might otherwise be forced to leave the workforce.

### A 'Desperately Needed' Law

Recent studies have demonstrated that providing family and medical leave "is much more cost-effective than hiring permanent replacements for workers who need leave," Lifton said.

A priority for parents in the workforce is job-protected leave, said Joan Bronk, president of the National Council of Jewish Women, who termed the new measure a "desperately needed" pro-family bill.

In interviews with 944 salaried women who had recently given birth, 90 percent rated paid days to care for a sick child the benefit they most wanted in the workplace, said Bronk, citing a 1986 study by the council's Center for the Child.

Data collected from 2,000 employers representing 4,000 groups of workers, or 4.5 million employees, found that two out of three groups of workers receive no job-protected family leave.

Similar emphasis was placed on strengthening the family in a statement by Joan Kort, president of B'nai B'rith Women.

"BBW believes that employees should have the option of taking unpaid leave to bond with a new child or sit at the bedside of a sick family member without worrying about losing their job," said Kort.

Studies have shown that companies which offer leave benefits profit from the policy because their employees are more likely to be loyal and productive, she said.

## DEAD AT 64, CONGRESSMAN TED WEISS WAS CHAMPION OF JEWISH AND LIBERAL CAUSES

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 14 (JTA) -- Rep. Ted Weiss, the longtime Democratic congressman representing Manhattan's heavily Jewish Upper West Side, died Monday morning of heart failure.

Weiss, who was also the candidate of the Liberal Party, died just one day before he was to run in the primary election for a ninth term in Congress and three days before his 65th birthday.

A former New York City Council member, Weiss was first elected to Congress in 1976, succeeding former Rep. Bella Abzug in the 17th District, which included Manhattan's traditionally liberal Upper West Side, a largely Jewish area.

The district was redrawn and renumbered the 8th District for the upcoming Congress. Weiss' name remained on the ballot. Although redistricting has endangered the political futures of many veteran members of Congress, Weiss had been considered a shoo-in.

Born in Gava, Hungary, Weiss came to America in 1938 with his mother and sister. His Hungarian Jewish origins colored much of his life.

He was a member of the World Federation of Hungarian Jews and was often a speaker at its annual Martyrs Memorial held at the Park East Synagogue in Manhattan.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, senior rabbi of Park East, who is scheduled to speak at Weiss' funeral, said the congressman was "a very caring, compassionate, humble human being who was imbued with a sense of justice and never forgot the scars of the Holocaust and responded accordingly in his work on behalf of Soviet Jewry and Eastern European Jews."

### 'Always Working On Our Behalf'

Weiss was also a member of the Emanuel Foundation for Hungarian Culture and a member of its International Tribute Committee for Holocaust Victims.

"Ted Weiss helped us to put up the memorial for Holocaust victims in Budapest," said Andor Weiss, executive vice president of the foundation and not a relative. "He was always working in our behalf."

Weiss got involved in various issues of interest to Jews and Israel.

In 1984, he sharply criticized the State Department for granting a visa to the mayor of an Austrian resort who was identified as a former sergeant of the Gestapo infantry brigade responsible for the murder of Jews and other civilians.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, called Weiss "a champion in promoting America's democratic values and a consistent supporter of issues of concern to American Jews, including the security of Israel."

Weiss was also an advocate for the rights of Soviet Jews. He was a member of the Congressional Coalition for Soviet Jewry and "was in the forefront of political leaders concerned with freedom of emigration and the guarantees of religious and cultural rights for Jews," said Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

"He will be remembered for his concern for prisoners of conscience Natan Sharansky and Josef Begun, among others, his direct involvement in many refusenik cases and his steadfast and unswerving commitment to human rights," Cardin said.