

**ISRAELI-PLO TALKS ON AUTONOMY  
HAVE GOTTEN OFF TO A GOOD START**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- Negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on implementing Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho got off to a good start this week.

The personal atmosphere was warm and, at least at the start, there were no major obstacles. However, both parties were viewing each other's intentions carefully, trying to spot potential pitfalls.

In Beijing, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, nearing the end of his first official visit to China, said that even if the dialogue with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was unpleasant to some, once the decision was made that he was the partner, one had to make the best of the situation.

The Israeli-PLO talks continued in the Sinai border town of Taba, where the focus Thursday was the Palestinian demand for the release of Palestinian security prisoners.

Jamal Zakout, a former intifada leader in Gaza, told reporters that he hoped all Palestinian prisoners would be released. He said it was unacceptable that "PLO soldiers" would sit in jail while their leaders negotiate with Israel.

Even as Israelis and Palestinians learned that they could talk to each other without slamming doors, internal tensions within the decision-making echelons in Israel came onto the surface on Thursday.

Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur, who is close to Rabin, sharply criticized Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, a supporter of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. Beilin reportedly discussed the future permanent status of the territories when he met Arafat in Tunis on Wednesday.

Beilin told Israel Television on Wednesday that he had spoken with Arafat about "the direction of a permanent solution, in which direction things could go."

In a radio interview, Gur said Beilin's comments were "grave" because he violated Rabin's specific instructions.

He said Beilin's comments created the impression that the government was talking in different voices, which could give the impression that the public had not received true and reliable information.

In another development, Beilin met Thursday in Tunis with his Tunisian counterpart. Following the meeting, Beilin said Tunisia was interested in establishing relations with Israel, but in stages.

**LEFT-WING ISRAELI WRITERS  
BACKING SETTLEMENT SECURITY**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- A group of left-wing Israeli writers and intellectuals have issued a surprising manifesto asking that Jewish settlements not be removed from the territories -- not even under a permanent settlement with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Among the signatories are writers Amos Oz,

Professor Yirmiyahu Yovel and A.B. Yehoshua, who initiated the document.

The signatories, despite their support for the Israeli-PLO accord spelling out self-rule for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, called on the government to protect the security and welfare of the Jewish settlements.

"Good neighborly relations between Israelis and Palestinians will help reach a permanent solution," the manifesto reads.

It further asks that the Jewish settlements be allowed to remain in their places even under Palestinian rule, as a "recognized minority."

Yehoshua said the idea to issue the manifesto follows an ongoing dialogue with Rabbi Menachem Fruman of the West Bank settlement of Tekoa, near Bethlehem.

Fruman, who is known for his continuing efforts to talk with both the Palestinians and the Israeli left, told Yehoshua of the growing sense of despair among Jewish settlers in the territories. Many of them fear they will have to leave their homes, he said.

Fruman said that now is the time to renew the "historic alliance between the nationalist-religious bloc and the left in Israel."

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:  
PEACE ACCORD HAVING AN IMPACT  
ON ARAB-JEWISH RELATIONS IN U.S.**  
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- It all started the day Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn.

That night, Jewish and Arab Americans -- rabbis, Palestine Liberation Organization officials, organizational leaders from both sides -- gathered in a hotel ballroom here for a reception awash in positive emotion.

And since that day, when the dam burst and Jewish and Arab Americans reached out to one another, the two communities have been involved in a rush of joint activities that have shattered longstanding taboos.

Leaders from both communities now say that whatever lurks around the corner in the Middle East, things here can never return to the bad old days.

The two sides are starting to get to know each other as people, they say, not as symbols of evil.

And now that Israel and the Palestinians have signed a joint accord, leaders hope the two communities here can cooperate on a range of issues, not only those related to the Middle East, on which they share common concerns.

"In the past, there would be Jewish-Arab dialogue, and people would say, 'Let's talk about everything except the Middle East,' because it was so divisive," said Tom Smerling, executive director of Project Nishma, a group that seeks to educate about the peace process.

"Now, it's turned on its head. Cooperation on the Middle East has spilled over onto other issues" on which the two communities have always had common ground, Smerling added.

Project Nishma, along with the National Association of Arab Americans and the American

Jewish Congress, were the co-sponsors of that first reception Sept. 13.

Since last year, Jews and Arab Americans have cooperated in lobbying the U.S. government to act more forcefully on the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where both communities share a common concern about the "ethnic cleansing" facing Bosnia's Muslims.

#### People 'Tripping Over Each Other'

But since Sept. 13, Jews and Arabs envision cooperating on issues ranging from civil rights and health care to Palestinian economic development and educating Americans about the still-rocky peace process.

The Arab American Association and AJCongress have been working together to create a framework for Jewish and Arab American cooperation in communities across the United States.

The two groups are submitting their tentative proposals for joint activities to their respective agencies and will invite other groups to join them in their efforts.

Khalil Jahshan, executive director of the Arab American Association, said this week that some sort of organization was necessary because the enthusiasm generated across the country by the agreement proved to be somewhat overwhelming.

"It's like the Wild West out there. People are tripping over each other," Jahshan said. "It's good. It's a positive development. But we want to make sure people do not hug each other to death."

Henry Siegman, executive vice president of AJCongress, said his organization, like other Jewish groups, has long had a history of coalition-building on a wide range of topics, with other ethnic groups.

"There's no reason why Arab Americans should not be a part" of such a coalition, Siegman said.

The enthusiasm for joint activities also has been taken up by the Clinton administration, which has called for a task force of Jewish and Arab Americans to work together to encourage investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

And earlier this month, the Democratic National Committee's national party meeting was the site of one of the more extraordinary gatherings of this new process.

During the meeting, Jewish and Arab American Democrats held a joint late-evening reception to inaugurate what they hopefully called a new era of cooperation.

#### 'Walls Can Come Down'

For years now, the two groups have been battling over Middle East policy planks at Democratic party conventions.

But now, while they admit their disputes will not disappear entirely, they say they are looking forward to working together on domestic issues as well as on the Middle East.

A dozen Jewish and Arab American Democratic activists stood together on the platform in the reception room Oct. 7 with DNC Chairman David Wilhelm, under signs reading "National Jewish Democratic Council" and "Arab American Democrats."

Top-40 radio personality Casey Kasem, one of the Arab American officials on the podium, was eagerly hailed by Jewish baby-boomers on the platform as one of the formative influences in their lives.

The speakers told the crowd of about 100 that the majority of both Jewish and Arab Americans are Democrats, and that the two communities, as minorities in America, have a lot to talk about.

James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, spoke of how quickly the two communities had forged links after the famous handshake between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

"It's interesting how walls can come down," Zogby said. "When those hands touched, we turned to each other."

The signing enabled the two groups to "see each other as human beings, not as devils," said Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Democratic group.

The positive emotions emanating from the DNC reception were also evident at other recent events.

For example, the day before the DNC event, AJCongress and the National Association of Arab Americans joined for a symbolic tree-planting ceremony on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol.

While there were many more Jewish than Arab Americans at the ceremony, members of Congress and other speakers expressed their hopes that the tree symbolized the blossoming of peace between Arabs and Jews.

#### **JERUSALEM ORDERS THE DESTRUCTION OF BOOTHS ON LAND ZONED FOR ARABS** **By Cynthia Mann**

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- A week after the conclusion of the festival of Sukkot, municipal officials here have ordered the demolition of a group of wooden booths erected for the week-long holiday.

The booths, or sukkot, at issue stand adjacent to a yeshiva on the Mount of Olives, on land zoned for an Arab school.

Jewish settlement leaders are turning the booths into permanent homes in what they say is a first step in the establishment of a 200-family Jewish enclave in the eastern Jerusalem neighborhood.

They warned this week that there would be bloodshed if bulldozers arrived to carry out the city's order.

"We are prepared to call in the troops if need be," said Rabbi Binyamin Elon, the head of the Beit Orot yeshiva, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Thousands gathered at the yeshiva earlier this week to show solidarity for the settlers. "We are here to say this is part of Israel," said the yeshiva spokesman.

Mayor Teddy Kollek said that he was adhering to a strict enforcement of zoning codes and that the settlers knew the land was zoned for an Arab school for area residents when they bought it.

The city delivered a demolition order Wednesday to the yeshiva, warning it had 24 hours to dismantle the booths.

On Thursday, municipal officials pledged that the structures would be demolished but refused to commit themselves to a timetable.

Deputy Mayor Ornan Yekutieli, meanwhile, accused the settlement leaders of incitement.

For their part, supporters of the yeshiva accused Kollek of issuing the order in a bid for Arab votes in the upcoming municipal election.

# REFORM, CONSERVATIVE CHALLENGE ORTHODOX GRIP ON ISRAELI MARRIAGE

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- The Reform and Conservative movements are joining forces to challenge the monopoly of Israel's Orthodox rabbinate to perform marriages.

The movements' leaders announced this week that they will perform marriages that are outside the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate.

While they already do so in individual cases, the announcement represents what the movements say is the first, "stopgap" measure in a stepped-up campaign to change Israel's matrimony laws.

They also acknowledge that the struggle against one of the state's legal underpinnings will be difficult.

"We certainly know there's going to be a long fight," said Pinhas Vardin, president of the Conservative movement in Israel. "But if we managed to sit down with Yasser Arafat, then anything is possible."

The Orthodox monopoly perpetuates a denial of basic human rights and of religious freedom, charged Rabbi Uri Regev, head of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism.

Israel's Interior Ministry does not recognize Jewish marriages performed in Israel unless they are conducted under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate or of the fervently Orthodox.

Civil marriages, as well as non-Orthodox Jewish ones, are recognized only if they are performed abroad.

To marry, countless non-Orthodox couples, the majority of Israel's population, must adhere to certain Orthodox traditions and rituals. These include determining a wedding date based on the bride's menstrual cycle, classes on religious purity laws, a visit to the ritual bath and a traditional delineation of gender roles in the ceremony and marriage contract, the ketubah.

The Reform and Conservative movements said that in the last six months they have had about 150 requests for their ceremonies.

Some couples are drawn to their alternatives, they said, because they are forbidden by the Orthodox to marry, such as a Kohen, a member of the priestly class, and a divorcee.

## 'Don't Feel They're Part Of The Ceremony'

An Orthodox marriage is also off-limits to an increasing number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whom are not considered Jewish by the Orthodox.

But most are drawn by the desire for a more modern and meaningful ceremony, they said.

"There are a growing number of young people with no (technical) difficulty in getting married at the rabbinate," said Vardin. "But they don't feel they are part of the ceremony and they want the feeling that it" belongs to them.

They are drawn to the two other movements, he said, "by the feeling that they are involved, even in writing the ketubah."

"A majority of couples don't understand the (Orthodox) ceremony," said Conservative Rabbi Michael Gritz.

The Reform and Conservative representatives said the alternative ceremony they offer is unique, and proceeded to describe what many American Jews take for granted as an option.

They called it an integration of traditional style with egalitarian and personalized elements: The bride is able to participate actively in the

ceremony and to give a ring to the groom; the ketubah has an egalitarian and personalized text; personal and creative motifs are permitted in the ceremony.

Regev, of the Progressive (Reform) movement, has argued in recent months that the problem of the Orthodox matrimonial monopoly will balloon as tens of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union are deprived of the "basic human right" to marry in the country in which they live.

And he has sharply attacked the Diaspora for not rallying to their defense and challenging the law on performing marriages.

In a recent interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, he called the Diaspora's silence on the issue "hypocrisy," particularly after its 1988 mobilization and battle over "Who is a Jew," which succeeded in winning recognition of non-Orthodox converts as Jews under Israel's Law of Return.

"The whole point (of the struggle) was to ensure their right not to be discriminated against in making Israel their home," he said.

"I find it difficult to understand how these same individuals and groups can remain quiet in the face of these same people, for whom they fought, being denied the right (to marry and) establish families here," he said.

Meanwhile, in their campaign for alternative wedding ceremonies, the two movements diverge on the question of the need for a civil marriage.

The Reform movement requires a couple to marry abroad in a civil ceremony as well as to participate in the Jewish ritual, so the couple will be registered in Israel as legally married.

The Conservative movement recommends it but does not require a civil ceremony.

The status of children is determined in Israel by the Jewish status of the mother and not affected by the performance of a civil marriage.

## ISRAELIS BEST FRENCH TEAM IN SOCCER

TEL AVIV, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- The champagne was chilled and waiting in Paris on Wednesday night, but it was not the French who drank it.

It was the Israeli national soccer team and its fans who toasted each other to mark their surprise 3-2 upset win over the French national team, casting a deep shadow over French hopes of taking part in the World Soccer Cup finals next year.

Despite its victory in Paris, Israel is already out of the running, having shown disappointing losses in previous qualifying games.

The French maintained their confidence up to halftime, when the score was 2-1 in their favor.

But 7 minutes before the end of the match at the prestigious Parc des Princes, Israel added another equalizing goal, with the final winning goal coming only 1 minute before the final whistle. The sudden Israeli win left the local team stunned, while the visitors were surprised and jubilant.

It was the first time in four years that the French national team lost an international match on its own grounds.

But the French had already been prepped. On Oct. 8, responding to an invitation from the Variety Club of France to the "State of Palestine," the Palestine Liberation Organization fielded a soccer team from the West Bank against a team of famous French veteran players.

## JEWISH GATHERING EXAMINES INEQUITIES FACED BY WOMEN

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- Two hundred women, most of them professionals and lay leaders in the Jewish communal world, gathered here this week to study the economic disadvantages faced by American women and to begin to determine how the Jewish community should respond to the problem.

Speakers at the Women's Economic Summit, convened jointly by the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the American Jewish Congress Commission on Women's Equality, made it clear that the economic problems with which American women grapple are many.

Some 35 other Jewish organizations also sponsored or endorsed the event, which was held Oct. 11 and 12.

Jewish women and the Jewish community have a role to play in addressing inequities that women face in the workplace, said speakers.

"We want to work through the Jewish community to address these issues in a Jewish way, and these issues also affect Jewish women," said Diana Aviv.

Aviv is outgoing associate executive director of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and will soon be working as Washington representative of the Council of Jewish Federations.

The economic status of American women is a concern to the Jewish community, as are myriad other domestic issues, she said.

"Conditions in society affect Jews who are directly victims in a society which is economically unstable. A society which is economically unstable is much more likely to be responsive to demagogic influences blaming Jews and blacks," she told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"Jewish women as a constituency have a major concern" about economic inequities, said Aviv.

In 1991, women earned just 70 percent of the wages earned by men, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

And according to a report from the National Academy of Sciences, up to half of that wage gap cannot be explained by legitimate factors like differences in education or experience.

### Jewish Women Asked For Political Input

Women earn less even working in the same occupations as men, according to the National Committee on Pay Equity.

Further, the benefits most often used by female, rather than male, workers, like maternity and family leave, often are not available and when they are, are usually unpaid, said speakers at the conference.

The way Jewish women can impact economic conditions for women is to get involved politically, said speakers.

"Economics and political power are two sides of the same coin," said Ann Lewis, chair of the AJCongress Commission for Women's Equality and former political director of the Democratic National Committee.

"It is the political process which distributes money. If women are not at that table, our issues slide to the bottom" of the list of priorities, she said.

Lobbying elected officials is a key way in

which to effect change, said Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Follow this through, she urged.

"Track legislation and voting patterns. Thank them if they vote the way they want, and reprimand them if they don't," she said.

Landsberg advised using "the power of religious coalitions. As religious people we have a responsibility to be a goad to the conscience of our legislators."

"Let them know that Big Sister is watching them," Landsberg said.

The key to changing the status quo will be in turning the activism at which Jewish women have historically been successful on behalf of Jewish issues, to advocating on behalf of issues important to women, said speakers.

"If we use the muscles we have, we can achieve everything on our agenda," said Lewis. "We are, after all, the majority."

"Just as the prophets did not restrain from demanding that God respond to man, we as women must not be silent or acquiescent," said Shoshana Cardin, chairman of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

A number of speakers suggested that Jewish communal agencies should begin addressing women's economic inequity by evaluating their own hiring, promotion, pay and benefits patterns and policies.

Speakers at the conference included two members of the House of Representatives: Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Elizabeth Furse (D-Ore.).

Other speakers included Sylvia Barack Fishman, assistant director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University; Joyce Miller, executive director of the U.S. Department of Labor's Commission on the Glass Ceiling; and Muriel Siebert, president of Muriel Siebert and Co. Inc. and the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

## ISRAEL RELISHES BURGERS, FRIES AS McDONALD'S RAISES ITS ARCHES

TEL AVIV, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- "Big Mac" arrived in Israel on Thursday, when the first of what is planned to be a major chain of McDonald's fast-food outlets opened its doors under the famous golden arches.

The restaurant opened with great fanfare when William Brown, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, and Ramat Gan Mayor Zvi Bar met with Amri Padan, McDonald's Israeli concessionaire, to relish the first burger served at the new restaurant, in the Canion Ayalon shopping mall in Ramat Gan.

The \$2 million restaurant, which seats 450, is the first of five Padan plans to open.

The restaurant does not have a kosher certification, as it serves cheeseburgers and is open on the Sabbath.

All the meat served, however, is kosher, as research has shown that Israelis prefer kosher meat, Padan said.

Other branches will not serve cheeseburgers and will have kashrut certificates.

McDonald's executive Jim Skinner, who is in charge of the Middle East region for the Chicago-based chain, said the Ramat Gan outlet is the first in the Middle East, but not for long.

A branch is to open in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, within the month, with others to follow in the Saudi city of Jidda, as well as Bahrain and Egypt.