

**RABIN MAKES APPEAL TO HEARTS,  
MINDS OF JEWISH COMMUNAL WORLD**

By Larry Yudelson

MONTREAL, Nov. 21 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin went straight for the gut when he addressed North American Jewry last week.

It is the gut filled with "butterflies," as he once put it, over the risks and uncertainties inherent in his handshake with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Speaking before 4,000 people at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, Rabin emphasized his intimate knowledge of "the scars of war" even as he leads Israel to "peace with the most bitter and odious of its foes."

"It was a very emotional speech," Sylvia Kirshner of South River, N.J., said after the speech last Thursday night. "The way he opened it was absolutely a tear-jerker."

Rabin began his address with one of the most horrible tales of the Palestinian terror campaigns against Israel: that of Semadar Haran, whose husband and daughter were killed in a terrorist attack. Hiding in her attic in Nahariya, above the sounds of gunshots, Haran covered her other daughter's mouth so that her cries would not reveal them. When the attack was over, the mother had smothered her child in the attempt to protect her.

On the eve of the signing of the accord Sept. 13 in Washington, Rabin asked Haran to accompany him.

In the end, she declined.

**'The Danger Has Not Passed'**

"I can't shake (Arafat's) hand," Rabin quoted her as saying, "but you, the prime minister, you are my messenger. I ask you to shake his hand, on my behalf also."

In calling on a victim of terror to endorse his handshake with Arafat, and by recalling his comrades who fell in the 1948 battle for Jerusalem, Rabin was promoting the peace accord as that of a tough-minded general rather than a tenderhearted idealist.

And indeed, Rabin received far more applause for his devotion to security than for his pursuit of peace.

His first applause came when he said that while he believes the Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians and Lebanese want peace, "we put our trust in no one -- but ourselves."

"In any agreement, in any situation and under any condition, the security of Israelis will be in the hand of Israelis," he added to further applause.

"One hand we will outstretch in peace, the other we will keep poised on the trigger. We will live in peace and not with illusions.

"The danger has not passed," he said. "The hand of peace will, in time of need, pull that trigger."

Rabin addressed as well an issue that was an undercurrent at the General Assembly: The future of the Diaspora's relationship with Israel as it makes the transition from war to peace.

"We should be preparing now for the day in which new issues will occupy our hearts and

minds, because our support for Israel and our identification with Israel is based on more than the external threats to Israel."

Looking ahead for a "new agenda," Rabin addressed the concerns, a focus of much discussion at the General Assembly, about American Jewry's ability to withstand increasing intermarriage and assimilation.

"We might lose our young people and there is only one way to face this attrition -- profound, indelible Jewish education coupled with Israel experience," he said.

"By bringing Jewish youth to Israel, we achieve two essential objectives: we strengthen their Jewish identity and ties to Israel while simultaneously helping our Israeli youth to intensify their ties with the Jews of the Diaspora and their understanding of the concept of 'Am Yisrael,'" the Jewish people, he said.

"This is the time to rewrite the covenant between Israel and world Jewry. The thrust of that covenant must be Jewish continuity and survival through the reclamation of our youth."

**ANALYSIS:****SYRIA RETURNS TO CENTER STAGE  
OF MOVES FOR PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 21 (JTA) -- The Syria-Israel track has returned to center stage of the Middle East peace process.

There are persistent reports, attributed to highly placed sources, that Israel and Syria are close to issuing a historic declaration of principles that will serve as the backbone for future negotiations.

According to observers, the revival of talks, which were stalemated for months, is the main outcome of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's 10-day visit to the United States and Canada, which ended last weekend.

Although specifics are vague, politicians and pundits are now clearly turning their attention away from the dramatic breakthrough between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and even from the slow but steady progress on the Israel-Jordan front.

Instead, they are concentrating on the prospects for an accord between Israel and Syria.

According to reports, Israel would declare that it recognizes Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and Syria would declare that it is prepared to establish peace and diplomatic relations with Israel.

This exchange of statements, according to some sources, may be the goal that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher sets for himself when he visits the region in mid-December.

Christopher had a similar goal when he was in the region last July, but the signing of the Israel-PLO accord in September temporarily reassigned priorities.

At that time, Rabin made it clear that he was not interested in pursuing the Syrian track until the Israeli public had been given a chance to absorb the implications of the agreement with the Palestinians.

But now, according to sources here, the prime minister has told President Clinton that he

is prepared to resume serious peacemaking with the Syrians.

According to this scenario, Israel and Syria would resume their suspended negotiations in Washington after the start of the new year.

A variation of this scenario, which is also much discussed here these days, is that Christopher will try to keep Damascus "in play" while Israel proceeds toward realizing the first, crucial phase of its accord with the PLO.

Israel and the PLO are due to conclude their negotiations for implementing the self-rule accord by Dec. 13 -- when, reportedly no coincidence, Christopher plans to be in the region.

Implementation of the accord will then proceed in phases during the following four months.

According to the variation of the Syria scenario, President Hafez Assad would have to demonstrate his commitment to the peace process during the crucial four-month implementation period.

Assad would have to demonstrate a deliberate policy of non-interference -- both in regard to the Israel-PLO track as well as to Israel-Jordan relations.

Israel and Jordan, it is now clear, have initiated a fairly detailed declaration of principles that can lead quickly to a full peace treaty between the two countries -- provided Jordan's King Hussein has the political will to move toward peace.

Israeli observers say Hussein -- despite allowing his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to initial a statement of principles earlier this month in Amman -- is reluctant to take the final step toward a peace accord with Israel without a green light from Syria.

By giving that green light, Assad would go a long way toward proving to Rabin that he is earnest about putting peace negotiations with Israel back on track.

However, all is not in sync with this in the Israeli political community.

Efforts are mounting to pass legislation that would limit any future concessions on the Golan Heights.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, touring the Golan Heights on Sunday, said his party planned to introduce a bill this week or next in hopes that like-minded Laborites would set party politics aside and vote for it.

#### ISRAEL SET TO AGREE TO PLO DEMAND FOR POLICE FORCE PLANNED AT 15,000

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 21 (JTA) -- Israel is prepared to agree to the establishment of a 15,000-member Palestinian police force.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal announced Israel's agreement to the size of the newly established Palestinian police force, whose total size is nearly half of some earlier figures put forward in the past few months by Palestinian leaders.

The Jewish settlers, meanwhile, have pledged a campaign of resistance to a Palestinian police force, saying they will not honor even parking tickets issued by Palestinians.

The size of the Palestinian police force, along with the related issue of Israeli security in the territories, is among the issues being discussed at the negotiations for implementing the historic self-rule agreement Israel and the Pales-

tine Liberation Organization signed in Washington on Sept. 13.

The negotiations are scheduled to enter their seventh round in Cairo this week.

According to the agreement's timetable, Israel is scheduled to begin withdrawing its security forces from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho on Dec. 13.

In keeping with that schedule, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has instructed about 8,000 PLO army members currently stationed in Jordan and Egypt to be prepared to police Gaza and Jericho beginning next month.

Shahal said the negotiators had agreed to retain Israel's border police in the Gaza Strip and Jericho to patrol roads leading to Israeli settlements.

But the precise police role for maintaining security remains to be worked out, he said.

Shahal noted that Israel would not object to the use of light armored vehicles, revolvers and automatic weapons by a Palestinian police force.

The Palestinians have also demanded that their police be allowed to use power boats and helicopters.

Shahal added that Israeli settlers, who are routinely armed, would be required to obtain a license to carry weapons once the Palestinians begin to take over authority in the Gaza and Jericho.

But Shahal's statement conflicted with a comment from the chief Palestinian negotiator, Nabil Sha'ath, who stated last week that settlers would have "absolutely no right" to carry weapons outside their settlements.

Over the weekend, leaders of the settlers' movement announced plans to fight the accord with the PLO.

They said they would harass government officials and defy the authority of the Palestinian police.

#### 'Nobody In This Country Can Stop Us'

"Our government has acquiesced to allowing the who's who of the world's most-wanted terrorists to become policemen," one settler told Israel Television.

"It is particularly important that during this interim period we remain with the ability to defend ourselves," he said.

"We have the right of demonstration," said Ron Nahman, who is mayor of Ariel and a member of the Knesset from the Likud party.

"Nobody in this country can stop us, exactly as it was in the United States, when the Americans demonstrated against the Vietnam War," Nahman said.

Demonstrators protesting the self-rule accord confronted Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the airport Sunday upon his return from a 10-day trip to the United States and Canada, where he met with government and Jewish leaders.

Rabin told reporters at the airport that the Israeli government would stand firm on four principles during the negotiations with the PLO for implementing self-rule.

He said that all Israeli settlements will remain in place and that Israelis will bear the responsibility for the security of Israelis, both inside and outside the settlements.

Shahal also said that Israel will be responsible for the security of its borders; and that Israel is attempting to create conditions that will help the Palestinian police maintain law and order and prevent terrorism in the autonomous areas.

## IN BANGKOK, BEARDS AND BOCHERS HOLD MINYANS AMONG THE PAGODAS

By Alexandra J. Wall

BANGKOK, Thailand (JTA) -- When Yosef Kantor was ordained as a rabbi from the Lubavitch Rabbinical Seminary in 1990, he never anticipated having to slaughter 500-and-some-odd chickens each month. But this is part of the job description of the rabbi of Thailand.

In May, the 24-year-old Kantor, wife Nechama, 21, and daughter Chaya Mushka, 10 months, became the first reigning rabbinical family to serve the Jewish community of Thailand in more than 20 years.

Kantor, who was raised in both New York and Australia, served as a rabbinical intern in Ukraine for three months before his marriage, but this is his first post to head a congregation.

The Jewish community has sorely been in need of a spiritual leader. It asked the Lubavitch movement for a rabbi to serve during Chanukah, and Kantor impressed the community as someone who should remain all year.

"During the Vietnam War we had a succession of rabbis who were stationed here to serve the U.S. troops," said longtime congregant Ruth Gerson. "But in 1974 that stopped, and we've had many temporary people, and sometimes no one at all.

"It is very difficult to attract a rabbi to this part of the world, especially one with a family," Gerson continued.

Kantor's two immediate predecessors each lasted less than six months. Both were Israeli, and neither spoke English, which did not fare well with the international makeup of the community.

The some 150 families consist largely of businesspeople, attorneys and retirees from the West, Israeli Embassy officials, and several Iranian Jewish families who fled to Thailand when the Ayatollah Khomeini seized power in 1979.

Many are employed in the jewelry business.

"We wanted someone who spoke both Hebrew and English" and "someone who could really communicate well and relate to all the people," despite level of observance, said Gerson.

### No Denomination, Just Jewish

Kantor admitted that striking a balance which satisfies all members is not easy, but credits his non-judgmental outlook as one reason for his success in relating to his congregation.

"Whenever people ask me if our congregation is Orthodox, Conservative or Reform, I answer 'Jewish,'" said Kantor.

"If someone is less observant than me, he is still my brother, and I treat him with respect because he is a fellow Jew," the rabbi said.

"And due to the special nature of our community, people are of course more tolerant than they would be if they lived in, say, New York, where if they didn't like one synagogue, they could go to the next one down the road," the rabbi said.

The synagogues "down the road" happen to be in Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan.

Not having any support staff is Kantor's greatest challenge.

For example, before arriving in Thailand to assume his post, he had to complete a course in ritual slaughter to provide meat for those who keep kosher, and for the one kosher restaurant in Bangkok, which is under his supervision.

Nechama Kantor teaches religious school on

Sundays, organizes social activities, maintains the mikveh and is preparing to open a preschool in January, which she will also oversee. "These kids get no other Jewish education," she said.

Nechama Kantor's biggest complaint is about Bangkok's heat and pollution. She looks forward to the day when she can take Chaya Mushka outside for walks in unpolluted air, which is ironic, as she herself grew up in Los Angeles.

But husband and wife believe strongly in the missionary philosophy of the Lubavitch movement.

"We are shlichim, emissaries of the rebbe," said Yosef Kantor, as he emphatically gestured to a portrait of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, hanging on the wall.

"Numbers are not important," echoed Nechama Kantor. "What is important is that there are Jews here, and that they need a rabbi."

Nechama Kantor said that her husband placed the decision of whether or not to come to Thailand solely upon her.

Last year before Chanukah, the leaderless congregation requested help from the Lubavitch movement to locate someone who could help them celebrate the Festival of Lights.

Kantor was recommended by a friend who had visited the Bangkok community. He went alone, as his wife was expecting a baby.

He ended up staying two months. During this time, he made a good enough impression to be asked to return on a permanent basis.

"We wrote a letter to the rebbe and received his blessing," said Rabbi Kantor.

Both Kantors agreed that only God knows how long they will remain here. The lack of a Jewish education for their daughter might be a deciding factor when she reaches school age.

Kantor presides over two synagogues. The main Jewish community center, Beit Elisheva, is a three-story building, where they also live.

### Simply 'No Idea What A Jew Is'

For the more observant families, space is rented in a hotel in the gem district, within walking distance of their homes and businesses.

The one duty which does not fall upon the rabbi's shoulders is that of mohel, someone who performs brit milah, or circumcision. Since he arrived, one has not been needed.

But should the need arise, one is flown in from the Philippines. It also helps that if someone from the Israeli Embassy gives birth to a boy, it is written in the employment contract that the Jewish Agency will fly out a mohel from Israel.

Outreach to the more temporary people is also a priority of Yosef Kantor's.

From before Rosh Hashanah to after Simchat Torah, two Lubavitch rabbinical students came out from New York to organize for the holidays.

A 250-person dinner on the eve of Rosh Hashanah was held in the Banglamphu area of Bangkok, where most budget travelers stay. And a sukkah was built out of a "tuk tuk" (a three-wheeled open-air taxi) and parked on Khao San Road, in the area's hub.

The Israeli Embassy says some 30,000 Israelis pass through Bangkok annually. That number may increase with a newly established El Al route.

Michael Gerson, who was born in Thailand, said the community is difficult to lead because it keeps changing.

Although Kantor draws some attention, there are enough foreigners here so that he looks as out of place as anyone. "Your average Thai simply has no idea what a Jew is," he said.

## JAPAN EARNING NEW IMAGE AS AIDE IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21 (JTA) -- Within the Jewish community here, Japan has never been viewed as a positive force in Middle East affairs.

But now, especially in the wake of the historic Israeli-Palestinian accord, there is a sense among American Jewish and Israeli officials that Japan is beginning to play a useful role in the region.

"There really has been a flurry of activity" which "all points to a real front-and-center role for Japan," said Dan Mariaschin, director of international, governmental, and Israel affairs for B'nai B'rith, who recently returned from a trip to Japan sponsored by the Japanese government.

In the past, Japan was best known in pro-Israel circles for its adherence to the Arab economic boycott of Israel and for the public fascination with anti-Semitic literature.

However, in recent years, especially since the Gulf War, Japan has been seeking a prominent role in the Middle East.

"We tried to make, where possible, contributions in international conflicts," said Hideo Sato, first secretary in the political section of the Japanese Embassy here.

"The Middle East was one area where we thought we could play a positive role because of our good relations with Arab countries," Sato said.

And to play that role, the Japanese government had to upgrade its relations with Israel, Sato noted.

The Japanese are now talking about being more "evenhanded" in their dealings with the Middle East, Jewish leaders here say.

To most American Jews, the term "evenhanded" when used in connection with the Middle East has a negative connotation.

But Mariaschin said that in this case the term should be construed positively.

Japanese and Israeli officials have been exchanging visits, and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his new Japanese counterpart, Morihiro Hosokawa, are expected to host each other during reciprocal visits this coming year.

### \$1.7 Billion In Trade Last Year

On the economic side, where Japan is a global powerhouse, the two countries have increased their trade relations fourfold since 1986, according to Mariaschin.

In 1992, Sato said, trade between Israel and Japan totaled \$1.7 billion, and Japan is now Israel's second-largest trading partner after the United States.

Japanese officials have started speaking out against the Arab boycott, and most big Japanese companies are now dealing with Israel.

This contrasts sharply with the many years when Japan adhered strongly to the boycott, which negatively affects both Israel and companies doing business with Israel.

An island nation, Japan has been heavily dependent on Arab oil over the years.

As befits an economic superpower, Japan pledged \$200 million over two years at the recent donors conference held here to raise money for Palestinian development projects.

But Japan's involvement in the peace process has gone beyond its traditional financial role. Japan has spearheaded talks on the environment

between Israel, Arab participants and others, part of the multilateral phase of the peace process.

And Japan, which has an economic relationship with Iran, recently tried to encourage Teheran to support the Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles.

"Usually our policy is not to isolate any country," said Sato. "We are trying to persuade the Iranians to take more moderate measures," including curbing its opposition to the peace process and exerting its influence on rejectionist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, he said.

Jewish leaders here have said such activity is useful and should continue.

Still, Jewish and Israeli officials also have said there are some areas in which they are hoping for further changes in Japanese behavior.

"There is more to be done," Mariaschin said. "I'm not saying the millennium is here."

They would like Japan to take stronger measures against the Arab boycott.

"To a great extent, the Arab boycott as has been practiced in Japan has been downsized," said Neil Sandberg, the director of the Los Angeles-based Pacific Rim Institute of the American Jewish Committee, which was founded in 1988 in response to the upsurge of anti-Semitic literature in Japan.

"But there are still some residues of caution and even fear on the part of some Japanese companies," Sandberg said.

In addition to progress on economic issues, both Israeli and American Jewish leaders think much more needs to be done to curb the spread of anti-Semitic literature in Japan.

Anti-Semitism in Japan is a strange phenomenon because most Japanese do not come in contact with Jews or know very much about Jewish traditions.

The Jewish population in Japan numbers 1,000 at most, Sandberg said.

### 'We've Neglected Asia'

But many Japanese are fascinated by anti-Semitic books, which sell at newsstands and kiosks, and people buy them in large quantities, including versions of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," the Czarist-era anti-Semitic forgery.

Sato said he has discussed with American Jewish organizations the idea of establishing an information center in Japan that would promote understanding of Jewish issues.

"Cultural exchange will certainly promote understanding," said Sato, who noted that an "Israeli film week" was held in Tokyo early this year.

The burgeoning relationship between Israel and Japan has carried over to American Jewish leaders, some of whom are reassessing their once-negative feelings about Japan and hoping for closer ties.

All these changes are welcome news to Sandberg, whose Pacific Rim Institute is seen as a pioneering effort within the Jewish community to focus on Asia.

Asia is viewed here in Washington as increasingly important, especially in the wake of President Clinton's return from the Asia-Pacific economic conference in Seattle.

"Opening up relations between Jewish-groups" and Asia is crucial, considering that Asia is the home of almost half the world's economy and more than half the world's population, Sandberg said.

"Frankly," he said, "we've neglected Asia."