

**TUNISIA ADDS ITS NAME TO THE LIST OF THOSE INITIATING TIES WITH ISRAEL****By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- In a move reflecting greater international acceptance of Israel in the wake of its peace initiatives with the Palestinians, Israel and Tunisia have agreed to take a first step toward normalizing relations between the two countries.

After meeting in New York on Saturday, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Tunisian counterpart, Habib Ben Yahia, announced their countries would establish economic interest sections in Tel Aviv and Tunis.

Under the terms of their agreement, which was reached with the help of Belgium, the two countries will soon exchange economic representatives. Because interest sections mark a lower-level exchange than the establishment of embassies or consulates, each country's representatives will be sent to the Belgian embassies in Tel Aviv and Tunis.

The question of when the two countries will begin stationing officials with higher diplomatic rank has been left open, pending further discussions.

Peres, who was in New York to attend last week's opening sessions of the U.N. General Assembly, later said the agreement will extend Israel's diplomatic ties in North Africa.

"This is an agreement we will pursue until we attain a full agreement on relations," he told Israel Radio. "At this point, we have some sort of relations with three North African states -- namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia."

On Sept. 1, Israel and Morocco announced they would establish economic liaison offices in Tel Aviv and Rabat, a move that made Morocco the second Arab country to establish ties with Israel. The first was Egypt, which signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1979.

**Israel Greeted With Increasing Acceptance**

Following the September breakthrough with Morocco, Israeli news reports suggested that Tunisia would soon follow its neighbor and initiate ties with Israel.

As the reports persisted, Tunisia issued a statement at the time saying it was not planning to establish official relations with Israel.

Israel has been greeted with increasing acceptance by the international community in the wake of the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization last September in Washington.

Prior to the agreement with Tunisia, Israel established ties with 21 nations in the past year. Israel now has relations with 146 of the 185 member nations in the United Nations, the highest number since the state was established in 1948.

Along with its agreement with Israel, Tunisia also plans to establish economic liaison offices in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho.

The PLO maintained its headquarters in Tunisia from 1982 until July of this year, when

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat moved his headquarters to Gaza. Over the years, Tunisian government officials reportedly urged Arafat to pursue dialogue with Israel.

After meeting with Ben Yahia, Peres met with the foreign minister of Qatar, Hamad Thani. Qatar also is said to be interested in forging relations with Israel but has been under pressure from the Syrians not to do so.

**ISRAEL LOOKS TOWARD ECONOMIC BOOST AS GULF STATES PARTIALLY EASE BOYCOTT**  
**By Mitchell Danow**

NEW YORK, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- Jewish and governmental leaders here have joined Israeli officials in hailing the decision by Saudi Arabia and its five Persian Gulf trading partners to ease the Arab boycott of Israel.

But while applauding the Gulf states' move last week to terminate the secondary and tertiary boycotts against Israel, pro-Israel activists said a total termination of trade restrictions against Israel were long overdue.

Israeli commentators called the move an important milestone in the peace process, and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres welcomed the decision as "an additional move in dismantling the walls of hatred and separation and boycott."

Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat said the easing of the boycott would provide a boost to the Israeli economy, which over the years has suffered the adverse effects of foreign companies fearful of ignoring the boycott.

The view from Capitol Hill was also optimistic.

"For the first time, I have some real hope that there are Arab states serious about ending the boycott against Israel," said Rep. Charles Schumer (D-NY), co-chairman of the Congressional Task Force to End the Arab Boycott.

"This is the kind of statement I've been looking for," Schumer said, adding that he hopes the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council will "do everything they can to persuade the rest of the Arab world to follow them."

Even two years before the founding of the Jewish state in 1948, Arab countries had imposed a trading boycott against the emerging Jewish state in an effort to undermine its economy and isolate it politically.

In 1951, the Arab League extended the restrictions, imposing a secondary boycott on companies engaged in trade with Israel and a tertiary boycott on firms doing business with those companies.

The announcement to terminate the secondary and tertiary boycotts reflects a dramatic change in Arab attitudes toward Israel in the year since Jerusalem signed the self-rule accord with the Palestinians.

A number of Arab countries have unofficially ignored the boycott as a direct result of the strides toward peace accomplished on the Israeli-Palestinian front and, more recently, in Jerusalem's improved relations with Jordan.

The announcement came in a statement

issued last Friday by Saudi Arabia following an annual meeting at the United Nations between the Gulf Cooperation Council and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Along with actively attempting to broker peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Christopher has placed a high priority on ending the Arab boycott.

American officials were disappointed in August, when at its meeting of foreign ministers in Cairo, the 21-member Arab League refused to put the issue of the boycott on its agenda.

That failure was largely the result of efforts by Syria, whose negotiations with Israel have been stalemated for months.

Following the August meeting, Christopher apparently turned his attention on the Gulf Cooperation Council -- which along with Saudi Arabia includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates -- hoping to achieve at least a partial break in the solidarity of countries participating in the boycott.

#### **Heavy Pressure On The Saudis**

According to Israeli media reports, Christopher put heavy pressure on the Saudis.

One of the arguments he used, according to the reports, was that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, given his difficult negotiations with Syria over withdrawal from the Golan Heights, needed some sort of "peace dividend" to help sway Israeli public opinion behind his efforts.

Dropping the indirect boycott against Israel, Christopher reportedly argued, was the least the Saudis could do to help advance the peace process.

One Israeli commentator noted that last Friday's developments marked the first time the Saudis came down from the fence, went beyond verbal declarations of support for the Middle East peace process and expressed their support with an open, practical step.

As a result of the Saudi move, Israeli citizens were given the message that it is worthwhile for their leaders to take chances in the name of peace, Israeli commentators said.

That message could well bolster public support for Rabin's initiatives on the Syrian front, according to observers.

Speaking to reporters in New York where he was attending last week's opening of the U.N. General Assembly, Peres called upon all the Arab countries to recognize a new reality in the Middle East -- that centuries-old hatreds will only serve to damage regional trading opportunities.

"The boycott has had a negative effect on the Arab countries as well (as on Israel), because today markets are more important than countries, and if you put limits to trade you limit your own capacity to trade in a changing world," Peres said.

In Israel, Commerce and Industry Minister Michael Harish said the real benefit of the Arabs' announcement was that it would serve as a prelude to official economic ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

In addition to trading opportunities lost as a result of the boycott, Israel has also suffered in the area of foreign investment, which has cost the country billions of dollars in foreign capital.

Observers believe that Israel will now benefit from the investments of foreign multinational

corporations, particularly those from Europe, Japan and South Korea.

In announcing the end of the Gulf states' participation in the secondary and tertiary boycotts, the Saudis also called on the Arab League to review its boycott policies at its next meeting, scheduled for March.

The Saudi statement was greeted warmly by David Strassler, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League, and Abraham Foxman, the organization's national director.

"At long last, it appears a major component of the economic war against Israel by the GCC is coming to an end," they said in a statement.

The move "demonstrates that the Middle East has indeed entered a new era," the ADL officials said, adding that "We hope that these developments will further encourage the Arab League to officially end the primary boycott of Israel."

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations called the move "an important step toward the repeal of the boycott by the League of Arab States, an action that could further contribute to further changing the picture of the Middle East."

In a statement issued by Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, and Malcolm Hoenlein, its executive vice chairman, the group said, "Just as we look to an end to the military and political aspects of the Middle East conflict, we hope that the economic warfare will now terminate so that all of the countries and people of the region will benefit."

*(JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv contributed to this report.)*

#### **AUTHORITIES IMPOSE CURFEW IN HEBRON FOLLOWING ATTACK ON ISRAELI SETTLERS** **By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- Israeli authorities clamped a curfew on the West Bank town of Hebron over the weekend following the stabbing of an Israeli soldier by a Palestinian youth.

The stabbing occurred last Friday night when a group of Israeli settlers had gathered for prayers outside the Tomb of the Patriarchs, which has been closed since a Jewish settler killed 29 Palestinians praying there in February.

A Palestinian youth, Nader Abu Shkedem, 20, of Hebron, rushed the crowd with a large knife. He was shot and killed by Israeli troops after he stabbed an Israeli soldier.

According to Israel Television, the assailant was a member of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, a group militantly opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.

The 21-year-old soldier, whose name was not immediately available, was stabbed in the back and shoulder. He was rushed to the Hadassah-University Hospital at Ein Kerem in Jerusalem, where he was later reported to be in a satisfactory condition.

Among the settlers praying at the Tomb was Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the founder of a Jewish settlement in Hebron in 1968.

Levinger later claimed he was the target of the attack, but said that he was always accompanied by soldiers who served as his bodyguards because he has long been a target for potential assailants.

## JERUSALEM'S MAYOR URGES CHRISTIANS TO SUPPORT A UNITED CAPITAL OF ISRAEL

By Michele Chablin

JERUSALEM, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- Without the support of the world Christian community, Jerusalem could be in danger of being redivided, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert recently told thousands of Christian visitors here.

Speaking before members of the International Christian Embassy, an interdenominational Christian group that wholeheartedly supports Israel, Olmert said that world public opinion could ultimately decide the fate of Jerusalem.

Olmert warned the participants, who came from more than 90 countries, that "some people want to split the city."

But, he said, "this city will never be redivided again."

"It will remain forever the united capital of the State of Israel," he said.

Scanning the room, which was overflowing with supporters of Israel who had marched in a colorful solidarity parade down the streets of the capital earlier in the day, Olmert said, "You bring the message of hope."

"More than anything else, this is the city of hope," he said.

Though not openly critical of the government's policies, the mayor, a member of the Likud opposition, implied that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is on the wrong track, both politically and religiously.

"I know there will be a challenge (to the status of Jerusalem), and it won't be easy. Even those commissioned by us to give us direction may not always have the strength of will and conviction to do what the Lord wants us to do," Olmert said.

### 'A Message To The Whole World'

"Please know that in the end, God's will will prevail," he assured his listeners.

Olmert called on the Christian gathering to support Israel and to "return in the millions" in 1996 to celebrate the city's 3,000 anniversary. This, he said, "will send a message to the whole world."

Many of the delegates, including some from Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, countries which do not have diplomatic ties with Israel, said they had come to Israel solely to show solidarity.

"We love Israel and the Jewish people," declared Barbara Melin from Del Ray Beach, Fla.

"I want to let Jews know that our thoughts and prayers are with them," said Melin.

"I'm here to support Israel," said Kerstin Ekholm from Finland.

"In the past, the church and many Christians took a stand against the Jewish people."

"I wanted to let Israelis know that many Christians believe in them and their country," Ekholm said.

Like many of the delegates, Ekholm said she disagreed with the Israeli government's decision to give up land in the pursuit of peace.

"Now, more than ever, it's important to show our support for Israel, because of the so-called peace process."

"What is the price for peace? I don't believe that Israel should relinquish any land, and that's especially true for Jerusalem," she said.

## JEWISH WRITER ISAAC BABEL GETS HIS DUE IN ODESSA EXHIBIT

By Lisa Glazer

ODESSA, Ukraine (JTA) -- The Odessa State Literary Museum is currently paying homage to Jewish writer Isaac Babel in an exhibit that will be on display until January.

Babel, who was born in Odessa in 1894, lived in the city when it was a cosmopolitan center for Jewish art, literature and politics. The excitement of this era is reflected in the museum itself, which has been exquisitely restored to remind visitors of the city's past glory.

The Babel exhibit includes illustrations from some of Babel's works, photos, postcards, books from his childhood and information about his life.

Famous as a Russian stylist as well as a Jewish writer, Babel is best known for two collections of short stories, "Red Cavalry" and "Odessa Tales." He also wrote two plays, "The Sunset" and "Maria."

Besides his writings about Odessa's Jews, who "bubble like cheap red wine," Babel wrote about the gangsters, prostitutes and beggars who gathered at the city's seaport.

In addition to the Babel exhibit, the museum is also presenting, through Oct. 1, a display of Jewish artifacts from Odessa and from Baltimore, its sister city. The display includes ritual objects for the Jewish home, such as a mezuzah, a Torah and a shofar.

Until perestroika -- the so-called "restructuring" of Soviet priorities -- and then Ukrainian independence, some of these displays would have been forbidden, said Anna Misjuk, a museum staff member.

"So many rich pages of Odessa's cultural life were closed," she said, adding that the changing times present vast new opportunities for research and exhibitions on the city's Jewish literary past.

Visitors are recommended to stroll through the permanent exhibit, which presents photos, books and fragments of writers' lives with imaginative, three-dimensional displays echoing the changing literary styles.

Close observation reveals the occasional references to some of Odessa's most famous Jewish writers. Besides Babel, it was also home at one time to Asher Hirsch Ginsberg, known as Ahad Ha'am; Chaim Nachman Bialik; Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch, who wrote under the pen-name Mendele Mokher Seforim; and revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky. Besides engaging in his political work, Jabotinsky was also a prolific fiction writer, both in Hebrew and in Russian.

## ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS UP 100% IN GERMANY

NEW YORK, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitic incidents in Germany have skyrocketed by 100 percent for the first six months of 1994 over the same period last year, the World Jewish Congress has reported.

German police reported 701 anti-Semitic attacks in the first half of 1994, compared with 343 in the same period of 1993.

Most of these incidents have taken place in the southwestern state of Bavaria.

Official figures show that 121 crimes aimed at Jews or at Jewish targets have been solved by investigators.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****WITH POPULAR MUSICIAN BY THEIR SIDE,  
ETHIOPIAN YOUTH SING THEIR WAY TO TOP**

By Michele Chabin

TEL AVIV, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- Although their backgrounds are worlds apart, popular singer Shlomo Gronich and a group of Ethiopian children have together formed one of the most popular singing groups in Israel.

Created four years ago by Gronich, the well-known Israeli singer/songwriter, the Sheba Choir is much more than an entertainment troupe.

With 10 talented Ethiopian children as members, Sheba has introduced Ethiopian culture and tradition to an entire generation of Israelis.

Gronich, a ponytailed 45-year-old musician who has written for and performed in scores of musical and theatrical productions in Israel and abroad, decided to establish the choir during the filming of a local television show about Ethiopian immigrants.

"A producer from Educational Television asked me to participate in the show," Gronich said in a recent interview.

"I'd collaborated with this producer on other occasions, and he asked me to come to the studio to work with the show.

"What I found when I arrived were about 40 Ethiopian boys and girls from Hadera," Gronich said.

A veteran when it comes to working with children, Gronich recalled with a laugh how his usual powers of persuasion did not work with the Ethiopian children.

"They were painfully shy and modest, and they wouldn't look me in the eye," he said.

"That's simply a part of Ethiopian culture," he said.

After auditioning the children, Gronich chose six of the most talented and launched the choir.

Within weeks, the children, ages 10 to 16, were traveling an hour from Hadera to Tel Aviv to attend regular rehearsals.

"It took quite a while for the children to become accustomed to Western music," Gronich said.

**Were Unaccustomed To Western Music**

"They were unfamiliar with the piano, and it was a very different sound for them," he explained.

After a year of hard work, Gronich added four more children and decided to take the group on the road.

While many of their early performances were commissioned by such groups as the United Jewish Appeal and the Jewish Agency for Israel as a means of attracting Diaspora fund-raising dollars for the absorption of new immigrants, the choir soon became popular among Israelis as well.

Appearing at local festivals and on television, Sheba soon became a household name, and the group ultimately recorded an album.

The group's best-selling song "Journey to Eretz Yisrael," which depicts the immigrants' arduous journey to Israel, pays homage to the Ethiopian's fortitude and love of Israel.

The song's video clip, which is full of beautiful, stark desert imagery, often appears on Israeli pop-music shows.

At their concerts, audiences invariably fall

in love with the fine-boned, white-clad children with the pure, high-pitched voices.

Singing in Hebrew and Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, they perform a type of ethnic music never heard before in Israel.

With Gronich on the piano, the singers sway and dance, Ethiopian style, as their voices soar in unison.

The songs, most of which were written by Gronich, reflect the children's dual Ethiopian-Israeli identity.

The choir's eight girls and two boys have traveled extensively in Israel and recently performed in Belgium and the United States.

The African beat, mixed with Jewish themes, pulls audiences to their feet, swaying along with the performers.

Gronich said he has "always been fascinated by ethnic music, especially African music.

"When I undertook this project, I suddenly found myself working with this kind of music, with these beautiful children," he said.

"There is a great feeling of love between me and the children, and I think that people can see it."

Now that some of the choir members are teen-agers, Gronich has decided to find a few more Ethiopian children to join the choir.

"It's time to bring new blood into the choir," Gronich said.

He added that some of the original 10 will leave the group.

"It's not easy to think of separation," Gronich said, "because we're like a family."

**ISRAEL PROTESTS USE OF 'PALESTINE'  
AT MONTREAL'S RECENT FILM FESTIVAL**  
Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL, Oct. 2 (JTA) -- The Israeli Consulate here recently sent a letter of protest to the director of the Montreal World Film Festival, which used the term "Palestine" to describe the country of origin of a Palestinian-Dutch production shown at the festival.

The festival, which ended last month, featured the film "Curfew," which depicts life in the Gaza Strip for a Palestinian family.

The film has garnered three awards since its release, including a UNESCO prize at the Cannes Film Festival, whose organizers apparently also listed Palestine as the film's country of origin.

Israeli Consul Aviva Raz tried unsuccessfully to contact festival director Serge Losique by phone for several weeks.

Finally, on Sept. 9, she sent a formal letter of protest.

She has received no response.

The letter explained that, according to the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization last September, Palestine is not a sovereign nation.

Raz asked that the term not be used again.

She stressed that Israel does not object to the showing of Palestinian movies internationally.

Losique was unavailable for comment.

But Suzanne Villeneuve, who handles public relations for the festival, said it was the responsibility of film producers or directors to fill out a form describing their film, country of origin and other pertinent details upon applying for acceptance.