



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Jewish activists geared up to lobby for changes in welfare reform proposals as a House and Senate conference committee prepared to reach a compromise overhaul of the system.

■ Israel released the plane that landed on Israeli soil after it was hijacked from Iran. Two Israeli F-16 jet fighters accompanied the plane until it left Israeli air space. All the passengers returned to Iran, except the hijacker, who was held for questioning. [Page 4]

■ The Washington signing ceremony for an interim agreement on Palestinian self-rule was postponed once again. Political sources said Sept. 28 was the new target date for signing a completed agreement for extending Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank. [Page 3]

■ Israel imposed an indefinite closure on the Gaza Strip "for security reasons," according to Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shahal. Israel reportedly expected terrorist attacks timed to coincide with the approaching High Holidays. [Page 3]

■ Opponents of the Israeli government's peace policies outnumbered supporters at a Capitol Hill hearing. Jewish activists charged that the House International Relations Committee had made a deliberate attempt to skew the hearing to be critical of the Israeli government.

■ Israeli jets fired rockets on positions of the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement in southern Lebanon. The attacks took place a day after an Israeli army combat engineer, Lt. Nitai Sheftes, 23, was killed by a land mine laid by Hezbollah fighters.

■ Israeli security forces shot dead two Palestinians in the West Bank town of Nablus. The shootings took place in two separate incidents when stone-throwing Palestinians confronted Israeli forces.

Because of Rosh Hashanah, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Sept. 26 and Sept. 27.

## Offensive references to Jews deleted in new version of Bible

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jews haven't been treated very well in the Christian Bible — until now.

The elimination of traditional New Testament language castigating Jews for the suffering of Jesus in an edition just published by the Oxford University Press is being well-received by most Jewish experts on Jewish-Christian relations — but not all.

Jesus lived and died as a Jew.

But his followers who authored the books read as the Gospels wrote them as they were making the final break from the Jewish people.

They were eager to distance themselves from the people who they believed were responsible for the death of the man they viewed as God incarnate.

The New Testament condemnation of the Jews has been used by everyone from Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler and countless lesser-known despots through the centuries to justify tyranny against Jews.

Now the editors of "The New Testament and Psalms: A New Inclusive Translation" have changed that language in order to portray the story of Jesus' life and death in a way that is not offensive to Jews.

They also altered the God-language to make it gender inclusive, so that instead of "Father," the metaphor used for God is "Father-Mother." These and other changes in the new Bible reflect a heightened sensitivity during the past 10 to 20 years over the way language is used, according to the editors.

In the texts of Matthew, John, Acts, Corinthians and the other chapters of the Christian Bible, negative references to Jews are deleted.

Where it said "the Jewish leaders," the newly released Bible says "the leaders," or where it said "Jews," it now says "men," for example.

### Language changes welcomed

In the new version's introduction, the editors write: "When 'the Jews' is used to refer to the ethnic people, it remains unchanged.

"When it is used to refer to unbelieving people, it is rendered 'the religious authorities,' or simply 'the leaders' or 'authorities' to minimize what could be perceived as a warrant for anti-Jewish bias."

The language changes were welcomed by several Jewish experts on Christian-Jewish relations, though not all agreed that the new edition will be useful.

"I commend them for [taking out] the anti-Jewish stuff, which was originally mistranslated," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

The Gospel of "John has been used to beat up on Jews for 2,000 years and this is a step forward," he said.

Irvin Borowsky, who is chairman of the American Interfaith Institute, worked for a year with the Oxford University Press editors to eradicate the language hostile to Jews.

All "murder and abuse of Jews leads back to the inaccurate references in the New Testament," he said.

"We are very happy as Jews that they are aware of the need to modify the references to Jews made by other Jews in the 1st century," said Borowsky.

"We are enormously encouraged," he said. "These changes are the very first in 1,800 years."

The American Interfaith Institute is a Philadelphia-based organization working to remove anti-Judaism from all Christian liturgy.

Not everyone was as pleased, however.

Rabbi Jacob Neusner, a professor of religious studies at the University of South Florida, in Tampa, and the author of more than 600 books, said the new translation is "thoroughly dishonest."

"I don't blame them for being embarrassed" by what it says about Jews, "but you don't get to rewrite history or the Bible," he said.

"They have an enormous burden and this effort at evasion of a very ugly truth I don't think will make a whole lot of difference to anyone."

Neusner also charged that the eradication of broad anti-Jewish statements from the Christian Bible is, in fact, a negation of Judaism itself.

"They're erasing from history the fact that the Jewish people en masse did not accept Jesus' claim — not then and not ever.

"By removing the Jews from the status of his enemies they also remove from the Jews the status of having their own religion.

"We're not benign toward them nor they toward us. We deal with conflicting truths and to pretend that they're not conflicting doesn't remove the conflict," said Neusner.

"Those who want to draw murderous conclusions [from the Christian Bible] will not be fooled because the entire story is one that sets Jesus against the Jewish people."

What's more, even those who welcomed the language changes are concerned about whether the new Bible, with its radical break from the traditional text, will be widely accepted by Christians.

Christian leaders' "public statements about Jews and Judaism and their theology about Judaism have become increasingly more positive over the last 50 years, but the use of Bible in liturgy is a much more conservative process," said Michael Signer, a professor of Jewish thought and culture at Notre Dame University, a Catholic institution.

According to Rudin, "If scholars use it that's one thing, but we're talking about what the people hear from the pulpit and read every day. This scholarship needs to be used in the First Presbyterian Church in Peoria, or wherever."

"I want to be sure that in their quest for amity with Jews and women, they haven't defeated their own purpose and that the book won't be used because it's not authentic enough," said Rudin. □

## Israel to press for slot in U.N. regional grouping

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Advances in the Middle East peace process ensure that Israel will find a warmer climate at the United Nations, but Israel's struggle to attain membership in a regional group remains a challenge, according to Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gad Yaacobi.

At a briefing to mark the opening of the 50th session of the U.N. General Assembly this week, Yaacobi noted the improvement in the "atmosphere" at the United Nations and in Israel's overall standing in the international community since the signing of the Declaration of Principles with the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993.

Israel now has relations with 155 of 185 member states.

Last year, Israel "was not condemned even once by the Security Council," Yaacobi said.

And, for the first time four Israelis were elected to U.N. posts in secret ballots.

Yaacobi predicted that the warming trend would only accelerate with the implementation of the next stage of the self-rule agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But "much remains to be accomplished," he added.

Israel still does not enjoy "the basic right of every member-state" to be a member of a regional group, he said. Membership in a regional group is essential to qualify for a rotating seat on the Security Council as well as seats in other key U.N. bodies.

Although the Asian group is Israel's rightful place, "regional political realities" deny it entry into the group, said the ambassador.

"No one expects Iran and Iraq to accept us," Yaacobi added.

Instead, Israel has been actively seeking a seat in the West European and Others group, whose members are Western-style democracies from three continents. They include Western European countries, Canada, Australia and the United States.

But Yaacobi said some members of the WEO group are unenthusiastic about Israel joining simply because it would be at the expense of their representation.

"They will have to share a limited number of seats," he said.

The 50th U.N. session will be marked by active lobbying by Israel for support for this membership, Yaacobi said.

Yaacobi said Israel is hoping that the General Assembly would adopt a strong statement of support for the peace process — co-sponsored by the United States, Russia and Norway — similar to the one issued in last year's session.

Israel, meanwhile, has been working closely with Russia on a draft resolution commemorating the end of World War II slated to come before the General Assembly Oct. 18.

Israeli amendments to the resolution have been adopted by Russia, including one that mentions the death camps.

But Israel's proposed inclusion of a specific reference to the Holocaust has been thwarted by some non-aligned countries, including Muslim states.

Yaacobi said he does not consider the rejection of the Holocaust reference a "slap to the Jews," considering its source and that Israel will not withdraw its support for the measure as a result.

Instead, he said he would use the occasion of the commemoration to speak to the General Assembly about the meaning of the end of the war to the Jews and its relationship to the founding of Israel. □

## Synagogue returned to Georgian Jews

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze flew to a remote mountainous town this week for a celebration of the return to the local Jews of a synagogue that had been confiscated by Communist authorities decades before.

At the celebration in the town of Oni, Shevardnadze joined a 10-member delegation of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee that was visiting Georgia at his invitation.

The 67-year-old former Soviet foreign minister recently survived an assassination attempt.

The JDC delegation head, Ambassador Milton Wolf, said the president talked at length about the history of good relations enjoyed by Jews and their neighbors in Georgia.

About 12,000 Jews live there.

The JDC delegation met with Jewish leaders in Georgia.

They also visited a public school that opened this month with a computer class made possible by contributions from the JDC and the local Jewish community.

Delegation members also traveled to Ukraine, where Foreign Minister Genadi Udovenko told them that "the process of renewal of the religious life of Jews in Ukraine is under way," Wolf said.

About 500,000 Jews live in Ukraine. □

**Israel and Palestinians set new target date for agreement***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The signing ceremony is off — once again.

After a marathon round of Israeli-Palestinian talks this week aimed at reaching an interim agreement on Palestinian self-rule, the two sides failed to reach an agreement in time for a hoped-for signing ceremony Thursday in Washington.

Political sources in Jerusalem said a new target date for signing the completed agreement had been set for Sept. 28.

The negotiating teams, led by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat, resumed their discussions at the Red Sea resort of Taba on Wednesday, continuing a series of talks that had already totaled more than 30 hours this week.

Although progress was made during the week on such issues as water rights in the West Bank and the Palestinian elections, differences over control of the West Bank town of Hebron prevented the two sides from reaching an agreement.

But by Wednesday, even as the two sides were reporting that they had made progress on Hebron, a new sticking point emerged: Israeli maps indicating its planned troop redeployments in the West Bank.

The Palestinians complained that the maps threatened to "cantonize" self-rule areas into islands surrounded by Israeli-controlled areas.

The talks nearly broke down when Arafat stormed out of a session Tuesday night, charging that the Israelis were "throwing sand in the Palestinians' eyes."

But he agreed to return to the talks two hours later, after U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak telephoned him and urged him to return to the bargaining table.

Peres later told reporters that Arafat had misunderstood the maps. "We don't intend to create cantons on the West Bank," he said.

As the week progressed, the sessions continued to be "difficult," as the two sides put it. News reports were less diplomatic, referring to frayed nerves and flaring tempers.

**Israel softens stand**

Also threatening the atmosphere at the talks was an Israeli decision Wednesday to impose an indefinite closure on the Gaza Strip. The closure, which keeps thousands of Palestinian day laborers from their jobs in Israel, was imposed "for security reasons," said Police Minister Moshe Shahal, who would not elaborate.

Israel reportedly expected terrorist attacks timed to coincide with the approaching High Holidays.

Despite the difficulties, Israeli and Palestinian officials said Wednesday that the talks were in the final stages, and what was left was for teams of experts from both sides to work out the details.

In addition to the maps, Hebron continued to top the agenda of discussions.

The Palestinians dropped their demand for the immediate removal of the 450 Jewish settlers from Hebron as a condition for signing the agreement.

This came in response to Israel's softening its stand on giving the Palestinians some security control in the city.

Army Radio reported that Israel had offered to increase the number of Palestinian police officers stationed in the town from 200 to 250.

But the Palestinians were demanding double that figure. The Palestinian side also reportedly asked that joint

Israeli-Palestinian patrols be stationed near Jewish settlements in Hebron and near the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

Israel reportedly rejected this demand.

As for Palestinian prisoner releases, Israel has agreed to increase the number of prisoners to be freed in two stages from 1,500 to 1,800. The Palestinians are demanding the release of all 5,500 prisoners they say are still in Israeli jails.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that the two sides agreed that Israel would have responsibility over Rachel's Tomb, located on the outskirts of Bethlehem, as well as over the stretch of road leading from Jerusalem to the holy site.

The sides also agreed that Jews and Muslims would have free access to two other sites, Joseph's Tomb and the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and that no physical changes would be instituted at the sites without mutual consent.

The two sides also agreed to establish a committee that would notify each side of any archaeological finds.

In Jerusalem, the Knesset interrupted its recess Wednesday for a special session, during which the opposition accused the government of deceiving the Israeli public by negotiating an agreement that would ultimately lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. □

**Jewish state welcomes visit from Japanese prime minister***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama visited Israel this week as part of a tour of the Middle East aimed at increasing Tokyo's role in the regional peace process.

Murayama, the first Japanese prime minister to visit the Jewish state, told his Israeli hosts Sunday that his country would open a trade promotion office in Israel.

The move was welcomed by Israeli officials, who said it signaled that Japan was no longer honoring the Arab boycott. For years, Japan adhered to the boycott for fear of endangering its oil supply.

Murayama later held a 90-minute meeting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who briefed him on the Middle East peace process.

While in Jerusalem, Murayama also paid a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, where he wrote in the visitors book that he hoped such horrors never reoccur.

On Monday, Murayama traveled to the Gaza Strip for a meeting with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat. During the meeting with Arafat, Murayama pledged \$200 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority.

He also said Japanese observers would help monitor Palestinian elections, to be held after self-rule is extended in the West Bank.

Later Monday, Murayama arrived in Jordan for what was the last stop of his Middle East tour, which also included visits to Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. □

**Five from settlers group detained***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police this week briefly detained five members of a grass-roots settlers movement on suspicion of incitement and distributing illegal documents.

Police issued the detention orders Monday, after searching the homes of the five men, all of whom belonged to Zo Artzeinu, or This is Our Land, a group that organized recent countrywide protests against Israel's ongoing negotiations with the Palestinians.

The five, who included Zo Artzeinu leaders Moshe Feiglin and Shmuel Sacket, were released on bail. □

## Saga of hijacked Iranian jet spurs renewed pleas for MIA

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The fate of missing airman Ron Arad came to the forefront for Israelis once again after a hijacked Iranian jet was forced to land on Israeli soil this week.

Arad's mother, Batya, and his two brothers, Chen and David, flew to the Ovda military air base in the southern Negev on Wednesday to ask the passengers of the hijacked airplane to issue a plea to the Iranian government for Arad's safe return.

"When you return, each of you appeal to your government, to [President Hashemi] Rafsanjani to help us get information about him and his release," Batya Arad told the passengers.

One of several Israel MIAs being sought by government officials and by distraught family members, Arad bailed out from a fighter plane over Lebanon in 1986 and was believed to have been held by pro-Iranian troops in Lebanon. The last time any message was received that he was alive was in October 1987. Since then, there have been sporadic reports that he was subsequently transferred to captivity in Iran.

At the air force base, the family distributed leaflets about Arad, as well as "Free Ron Arad" stickers.

Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein said Israeli officials had questioned some of the passengers about Arad.

But most of the passengers on the hijacked flight said they had never heard of Arad.

"I feel sad for the family, but I believe whatever my government says about this story," Mehdi Darayli, an English teacher from Tehran, told Israel Radio.

Others said they felt that they were being subjected to a propaganda effort. "We are civilians, not government officials," one of the passengers, an engineer from Tehran, told Israel Television. "This is all public relations for the Israeli government."

### Pistol-brandishing flight attendant

The saga of the hijacked plane began when a pistol-brandishing flight attendant in his 30s commandeered the Boeing 707 during a flight Tuesday morning headed from Tehran to the Persian Gulf resort island of Kish.

He demanded to fly to Europe. But the plane, which was short of fuel, landed in Israel after both Jordan and Saudi Arabia refused its request to land.

The hijacker surrendered to Israeli security officials after the plane landed. The passengers, mostly tourists, spent the night at the Ovda base. The men were questioned by security officials.

On Wednesday, Israel released the hijacked plane and its 174 passengers and crew some 35 hours after it first touched down on Israeli soil.

The plane took off several hours after the planned departure was delayed by what military officials described as technical problems.

Two Israeli F-16 jet fighters accompanied the plane until it left Israeli air space. The plane was then routed over Turkey for the three-hour flight back to Iran.

The hijacker, who reportedly sought political asylum in the United States, was detained for further questioning.

Earlier Wednesday, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had approved the plane's release after holding top-level consultations. The Ministerial Committee on National Security issued a statement officially announcing that the Israeli government was letting the flight return to Iran, with which Israel maintains no diplomatic relations.

Arad's family called on Israel to hold the plane as a bargaining chip for Arad's release, but the government rejected the idea.

"I believe that we made the right decision not to support any piracy in the air," Rabin said.

The Cabinet issued a communique stating that "Israel stands by its strong opposition to air piracy and is releasing the plane and passengers despite the hostility of the Iranian regime towards Israel."

Iran had demanded the immediate return of all passengers, including the hijacker.

Iranian Television had condemned Israel for holding the passengers and crew, and demanded their immediate release from "occupied Palestine."

Shortly before the plane took off from Israel, Iran's U.N. envoy, Kamal Kharrazi, accused Israel of hostage-taking and called the hijacking a "pre-planned Zionist operation."

Israel rejected Iran's demand that the hijacker be extradited. Instead, police said, he was taken to Eilat for further questioning. Israel Radio reported that the hijacker would be handed over to authorities from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Five other passengers reportedly asked for asylum in Israel, but they were traveling with the rest of the passengers when the flight returned to Tehran. □

## Germany to honor 11 Israelis killed at 1972 Munich Olympics

By Gil Sedan

BONN (JTA) — Israeli and German Jewish officials have dropped their plans to boycott the dedication ceremony of a monument honoring the 11 Israeli athletes killed in a terror attack during the 1972 Munich Olympic games.

The officials lifted their boycott of next week's ceremony after the German Olympic Committee assured them that the plaque on the monument would explicitly mention the fact that the Israelis were victims of a terrorist attack.

The plaque's original text said the athletes were the victims of "violence," without specific mention of the attack by Palestinian terrorists.

The omission enraged the Israeli and German Jewish officials invited to the Sept. 27 ceremony.

Among those who stated their intention to boycott the ceremony were Israeli Ambassador Avi Primor; Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany; and Yoram Oberkovitz, a member of the Israeli Olympic Committee.

The German Olympic Committee changed the plaque's text after intensive negotiations with the Jewish officials. Committee members said they would not be able to change the text in time for the ceremony, but they pledged to do so as soon as possible.

Palestinian terrorists belonging to the Black September movement infiltrated the Olympic village on Sept. 5, 1972, the 11th day of the Munich Olympics.

The terrorists killed two Israeli athletes and took nine others hostage, demanding the release of 200 Arab prisoners in Israel.

In a shootout at the airport later that day when German police attempted to free the hostages, all nine hostages were killed, as were a German policeman and five of the terrorists. Three of the Palestinians were arrested.

The games were halted for 24 hours.

Relatives of the Israeli victims blamed the German police for botching the airport rescue attempt and sued the local authorities for compensation.

The trial is still pending. □