



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli Chief Sephardi Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron rejected a compromise on the controversial issue of conversions in Israel.** The reported compromise would have allowed Reform and Conservative rabbis to participate in the selection and preparation of converts. Only Orthodox rabbis would perform the actual conversions. [Page 2]

■ **The American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League filed a friend-of-the-court brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to rule that a New Jersey school district wrongly laid off a schoolteacher.** The case, *Piscataway Board of Education vs. Taxman*, involves a white teacher who was fired while a black teacher was retained in order to promote diversity under an affirmative-action plan.

■ **The Senate has confirmed Martin Indyk as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs.**

■ **U.S. Immigration and Naturalization officials turned over 390 documents to Israel in an attempt to convince the Jewish state to extradite a Maryland teen-ager accused of murder.** Samuel Sheinbein is considered an Israeli citizen because his father was born in Palestine in the late 1940s. Israeli law does not allow the extradition of its citizens.

■ **Israel released nine more Arab prisoners as part of a deal worked out after the botched assassination attempt of a Hamas leader last month in Jordan.** Israel, which freed Hamas co-founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin and 20 prisoners last week, is expected to free a total of 60 prisoners as part of the deal. [Page 4]

■ **The Swiss have found 800 more accounts opened by foreigners during the Nazi era, according to a Swiss newspaper.** The names of the account holders will reportedly be published Oct. 29 along with the list of dormant accounts held by Swiss citizens.

**Because of the Sukkot holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Oct. 17.**

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Israel's peace movement fights to regain posture among public

By Aliza Marcus

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On the day before Yom Kippur, while some Israelis were crowding supermarkets for last-minute shopping, others were gathered outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house for a last-minute plea before the start of the Day of Atonement.

"We don't want another Yom Kippur, we don't want another war," chanted the crowd, referring to the 1973 surprise attack by Arab countries on Yom Kippur. "Give us peace, not war. Give us security, not an insecure peace."

Amid the burning candles and the sound of trumpets blaring, a bearded man holding a placard imprinted with a call for peace stopped a woman handing out stickers for Peace Now, Israel's leading dovish group.

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" he asked.

"We met a few weeks ago at the Ras al-Amud protest," she replied, handing him a sticker.

Two years after Israel's peace movement was demoralized by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an extremist Jew opposed to giving land to Palestinians and by the subsequent election of Likud leader Netanyahu, peace activists are starting to fight back.

Political analysts say the peace movement in Israel has suffered not just from the Labor loss in the 1996 elections — but from the victory of Rabin's peace deal with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in 1993.

"They were hit by their successes, when the [Rabin] government adopted their policies and pre-empted their energy," said Yaron Ezrachi, a fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute in Jerusalem. "Then they were disorganized after the election of Netanyahu because of their earlier successes," he added.

"It's now beginning to recover, because in the second year of the present administration, there's a sense of a crisis that requires recapturing the old movement for peace," said Ezrachi, author of the recently released "Rubber Bullets," a book about the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising, or intifada.

Israeli polls show consistent support for the Oslo accords.

In August, a poll found that 59 percent of the people backed an independent Palestinian state, and 51 percent supported giving the Palestinians some sort of sovereignty over eastern Jerusalem, where the Palestinians want the capital of their future state.

Israel's peace activists, believing that they can transform the attitudes found in such polls into grass-roots action, have been very busy recently.

### 'It's been one disaster after another'

And, finding themselves confronted with a peace process that was stalemated for seven months before the resumption of talks last week, and with a government they believe is moving in the wrong direction, activists have found a new urgency for their cause.

Peace Now activists have been signing up new members by phone, and in the days before Yom Kippur, young men and women took up positions across the country, handing out bumper stickers and exhorting Israelis to join the group. The pre-Yom Kippur demonstration outside Netanyahu's house was the culmination of a month of actions by Peace Now, which last month marked the four-year anniversary of Israel's peace deal with the Palestinians by staging a large Sept. 13 rally in Tel Aviv.

Last month, they set up protest tents in Ras al-Amud, where U.S. businessman Dr. Irving Moskowitz had sparked a political crisis by moving Jewish families into a house he had bought in the predominantly Arab neighborhood in eastern Jerusalem.

"It's been one disaster after another, and it's all going to lead to war," said Galia Golan, a spokeswoman for Peace Now. "But we've made a decision to keep hitting," she said.

"People feel that all his policies, taken together, are just leading us further and further away from peace."

The Sept. 13 rally in Tel Aviv was heartily welcomed by many leftist

Israelis, who added that it was long overdue. "There were suicide bombers when we were negotiating, and suicide bombers when we weren't," said David Leshen, a 30-year-old architect who attended the rally.

"I hope Netanyahu will watch this rally and understand that people want negotiations, that there has to be a Palestinian state," he said.

The reassertion of Peace Now — which in the early 1980s was credited with unifying Israeli opposition to the war in Lebanon — has not gone unnoticed.

"The real question is not why suddenly now, but why not before?" journalist Lily Galili wrote last month in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. "Something is definitely happening." □

## Sephardi chief rabbi rejects proposed conversion solution

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Sephardi chief rabbi has rejected a proposed resolution to a crisis over conversions performed in Israel.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron's rejection of the reported proposal was a major setback for the Ne'eman Committee, which has sought for months to find a compromise satisfactory to all streams of Judaism on the controversial conversion issue.

Under the terms of the proposal, Conservative and Reform rabbis would be able to participate in the selection of candidates and in preparing them for conversions, but only Orthodox rabbis would actually perform the conversions.

"Under no circumstance is this an acceptable situation," Bakshi-Doron said Sunday of the proposal.

"Such converts would not be real converts," he added.

The conversion issue jumped to the fore of both Israeli and Diaspora concerns in April, when the Knesset took a first step toward passing legislation that would codify Orthodox control over conversions performed in Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu subsequently created a committee, headed by Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman, to find a compromise acceptable to the three major Jewish streams.

If the committee, which includes representatives from the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements, does not reach a compromise, the non-Orthodox movements are expected to pursue their conversion-related court cases.

The Orthodox parties would then likely pursue the conversion bill, which requires two more Knesset votes before it can become law.

Ne'eman was reported to be recommending that the non-Orthodox movements be awarded official recognition, enabling people to choose a rabbi of any denomination to perform a marriage ceremony.

The Chief Rabbinate, under this proposal, would send two Orthodox witnesses to attend the ceremony — as required under Orthodox law.

This recommendation, reported in the Israeli media Monday, immediately raised the ire of the Orthodox political parties.

Knesset member Aryeh Deri, the leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, warned that his party would secede from the governing coalition unless the Knesset passed the conversion legislation after it returned from its fall recess.

Deri also sought action on new legislation that would effectively bar non-Orthodox representatives from serving on local religious councils.

The councils, supervised by the Religious Affairs

Ministry, have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage, kashrut, burial and other religious matters for all Jews living in Israel.

Deri's call for the new legislation comes in the wake of a series of rulings by the High Court of Justice requiring the government and local authorities to allow Reform and Conservative representatives to serve on the councils.

The court is expected to rule later this month on the right of Reform and Conservative Jews to sit on religious councils in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Kiryat Tivon.

Bakshi-Doron also weighed in on the issue this week, telling the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that he favored the abolition of the councils altogether "in order to divorce religion from politics."

He said the services these councils provide ought to be provided by the rabbinate in each individual city or rural area. □

## Brother of Netanyahu's rival may seek Jewish Agency chair

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The brother of a former minister who resigned after a well-publicized dispute with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has emerged as a possible candidate for the chairmanship of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Netanyahu, however, was apparently less than enthusiastic about the nomination when three of the Likud Party's coalition partners informed him last week that they support the candidacy of Salai Meridor.

Meridor, a senior minister in the agency executive, is considered a popular choice.

But his elder brother, Dan, ran afoul of the prime minister earlier this year and was forced to resign as finance minister.

After he resigned, Dan Meridor strongly indicated that he plans to run against Netanyahu in the next vote for the Likud leadership.

Salai Meridor is believed to support his brother's quest.

A delegation representing the National Religious Party, Tsomet and The Third Way met with Netanyahu at the prime minister's initiative last week after each party had independently written to him endorsing Meridor's candidacy for agency head.

After the meeting, a representative of one of the parties said they had found the prime minister "insultingly" noncommittal.

Knesset member Yehuda Harel of The Third Way told reporters that the premier had listened silently as he, along with fellow legislators Hanan Porat of NRP and Moshe Peled of Tsomet, endorsed Meridor.

After they spoke, according to Harel, Netanyahu said only, "I have heard you."

The three men were then ushered out.

Harel said the delegation came away feeling upset and insulted.

Harel added that the three parties are certain that Meridor would win broad support from Jewish Agency activists in Israel and abroad.

The Likud has struck a deal with Labor in which each side's candidate will serve for half of the chairman's four-year term, which begins with the December session of the Zionist Congress.

Under the statutes of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization, the final list of candidates must be presented later this month.

The Labor Party's candidate will be the incumbent chairman, Avraham Burg. □

## Jewish activists suing police for action at Million Man March

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two years after the Million Man March filled Washington's central mall with supporters of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, two Jewish protesters are suing the National Park Police.

Ronn Torossian and Moshe Maoz claim that their civil rights were violated when police told them to leave the mall, tore signs out of their hands, and searched one of them and removed papers from his pocket, their attorney said in an interview.

The pair was at the Oct. 16, 1995 march, where they were representing AMCHA—Coalition for Jewish Concerns, a Riverdale, N.Y.-based group led by Orthodox Rabbi Avi Weiss.

Attorney Gordon Pearson said the lawsuit would be filed this week in United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

Torossian, 23, and Maoz, 24, are seeking as-yet-unspecified monetary damages, he said.

At the mall, they held signs reading "David Duke and Farrakhan: Two Sides of the Same Coin," and "The Nation of Islam Is a Nation of Hate."

Torossian said they were surrounded by between 50 and 100 African Americans, who at various times spat on them and shouted, "Hitler should have finished you off" and "We're going to get you. Go home, Jew, go home."

A National Park Police officer told them that they were inciting a riot and that they had to leave or else they would be arrested, he said.

"It's despicable that they didn't protect us," Torossian said of the police.

"They have an obligation to protect those who peacefully protest."

The pair's treatment "was a violation of their First and Fourth Amendment rights," which permit free speech on public property and protect citizens from unreasonable search and seizure, Pearson said.

His firm is handling the case without charge at the request of the American Civil Liberties Union, which offered its services to Torossian and Maoz shortly after the march.

### 'We have to make sure we don't have a riot'

Maj. James McLaughlin, who was the commander in charge of the hundreds of police officers on duty on the day of the march, said in an interview that he does not recall any report of the two men's demonstration at the time.

But in responding to their account of what happened, he said, "Beyond [concern over an individual's civil] rights is public safety, and we have to make sure we don't have a riot on our hands," said McLaughlin.

He now serves as the spokesman for the National Park Police.

"Any time we have a group which is going to cause a disruption at an event, for their own safety we tell them to leave the area.

"If a skinhead or member of the Ku Klux Klan should show up somewhere, we would remove them," McLaughlin said.

In a separate legal action brought by Jewish protesters around Nation of Islam events, AMCHA's Weiss is suing Howard University and one of the school's security guards.

Weiss claims that a security guard grabbed a sign from him struck him on the hand while ordering him and four other protesters to stop their April 1994 demonstration

outside a university auditorium where Nation of Islam leader Khalid Muhammad was appearing.

The case is scheduled to go to trial Nov. 19, also in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Weiss is seeking more than \$100,000 in damages. □

## Medieval Dubrovnik shul reopens for Rosh Hashanah

By Edward Serotta

DUBROVNIK, Croatia (JTA) — With its walls freshly painted, floors sanded and varnished, and a new tile roof installed overhead, the elegant, baroque synagogue of Dubrovnik reopened its doors for Rosh Hashanah 5758.

The synagogue first opened in 1655. Located deep in the center of Dubrovnik's medieval walled city, it has faithfully served a community that has never exceeded 250 members.

With fewer than 40 Jews remaining in recent years — most of them elderly Holocaust survivors — the congregation had no funds to restore damage caused by Serb shelling in 1992 during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

The congregation watched as the synagogue's splendid blue ceiling, decorated with dozens of golden stars, began to fade and rot.

Nearly every window had been shattered. Ancient wooden shutters did what they could to keep out the wind and rain.

Otto and Jeanne Ruesch of Washington — who stopped by the synagogue while touring Dubrovnik in January 1996 — came to the rescue.

"We were stunned at the condition of this beautiful place, and we were so taken with the community that we decided to try and help," said Otto Ruesch, who is Catholic.

Standing next to a beaming Bruno Horowitz, president of the Dubrovnik Jewish community, Ruesch recalled how after he returned home to Washington, he phoned all his Jewish friends and asked them to help.

Horowitz soon came to Washington and gave an impassioned speech in the home of the synagogue's benefactors.

Nearly \$35,000 was raised that night, and Horowitz phoned his daughters in Dubrovnik and told them to get the contractors ready.

Horowitz and Ivana Burdelez, a Croatian scholar specializing in Dubrovnik's Jewish history, pored over records, plans and letters dating back hundreds of years.

"We drove the contractors out of their minds," said Burdelez, "because we wanted this thing done perfectly."

Speaking at the opening of the synagogue shortly before Rosh Hashanah services was Yechiel Bar Chaim, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's representative for the former Yugoslavia.

Peter Galbraith, the U.S. ambassador to Croatia, also spoke at the ceremony.

A representative of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman also brought words of greeting.

After the dedication speeches, the over-capacity crowd gathered around the bimah as a rabbi from Israel — whom the JDC brought in for the occasion — began the service.

It was the first time the synagogue had seen such a crowd since Rosh Hashanah services in 1940.

At that time, Dubrovnik's tiny Jewish community — which had 87 members — was filled with German, Austrian and Czech Jews fleeing what was to soon to engulf them all. □

## Government panel begins probe of failed Mossad affair in Jordan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The government committee investigating the failed Mossad attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader in Jordan has begun its probe.

During the committee's first day of hearings Sunday, the head of Mossad, Danny Yatom, was the first witness to appear.

Yatom was reported to have presented evidence that Khaled Mashaal, the target of the botched Sept. 25 assassination attempt, has long been on Israel's list of potential targets. The implication was that Mashaal is indeed a major player in the fundamentalist Hamas movement, contrary to what some members of the opposition have recently suggested.

Yatom, according to an Israel Television report, reiterated his claim that all defense and security officials who should have been contacted did, in fact, have prior knowledge of the Mossad operation, and that the decision-making process was measured and thorough.

Yatom has been at loggerheads with the head of Israeli military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, and the head of the Shin Bet domestic intelligence service, Ami Ayalon, both of whom have claimed that they were not informed ahead of time about the ill-fated operation.

On Monday, Israel released nine Arab prisoners under the terms of a deal worked out with Jordan's King Hussein, who was outraged that the attack was carried out in his capital.

On Oct. 1, Israel freed Hamas spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin in exchange for the two Mossad agents captured after the failed attack. Last week, Israel released some 20 Arab prisoners, most of whom had Jordanian passports, as part of the swap.

The Canadian government recently recalled its ambassador to Israel, David Berger, after it was disclosed that the two Mossad agents had been carrying Canadian passports.

But Berger was set to return to Israel this week after Israel apologized for using the forged passports and promised it would not happen again.

### Infiltration attempt thwarted

Meanwhile, a Jordanian official claimed over the weekend that his country had suspended security cooperation with Israel pending the dismissal of all the officials involved in the failed assassination, which embarrassed Jordan in the Arab world.

But Israeli officials denied the official's comments, pointing to cooperation between Israel and Jordan on Saturday, when Israeli soldiers shot dead an armed infiltrator who crossed the border from Jordan to Israeli territory near the West Bank town of Jericho.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who came under intense criticism for the failed operation, created the committee last week "to clarify the events that happened in Jordan."

One member of the committee, former Mossad chief Nahum Admoni, resigned last week after it emerged that, in the days immediately following the assassination attempt, he had publicly defended the operation in radio and television interviews.

Admoni has been replaced by Dan Tolkowsky, a former commander of the air force.

But civil rights activists intend to petition the High Court of Justice to remove the other two committee members, Yosef Chekhanover and Rafi Peled, on the grounds that they serve on the boards of government-owned companies and therefore cannot be considered independent. Chekhanover is chairman of El Al; Peled, a

former police chief, is director-general of Israel Electric Corporation.

Attorney general Elyakim Rubinstein, in an effort to pre-empt such a challenge, has delivered a formal opinion to the prime minister under which Netanyahu would not discuss with the two anything pertaining to their directorships. □

## David Levy threatening again to resign from Israel's coalition

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy is again threatening to walk out of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition.

After threatening a boycott, Levy attended Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting, but sources close to him said his relations with the premier had hit rock bottom.

The sources said that the leadership of Levy's Geshet Party, which ran on a combined list with Likud in last year's national elections, would convene soon to decide whether to remain in the government.

Some Geshet Knesset members and activists, preferring to break with Netanyahu over social issues, are recommending that the party wait for the Cabinet's budget debates at the end of the year.

Geshet represents a largely Sephardi constituency with many lower-income voters and is uncomfortable with Netanyahu's conservative economic and social policies.

Levy has spoken out forcefully against last month's failed Mossad assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Jordan, saying that the botched operation has done serious harm to Israel. "If I had been a part of the decision-making process, I would have stopped it," he said.

Adding to his grievances was a report last week that Netanyahu had sent a secret message to Syria through French presidential channels without informing him. □

## Malaysia's premier accuses Jews of subverting Muslims

NEW YORK (JTA) — The prime minister of Malaysia is playing the Jewish card.

While speaking before a crowd estimated to be at 10,000 in a Muslim village last Friday, Mahathir Mohamad said he suspected Jewish groups had an "agenda" to block the progress of Muslims.

Mahathir went on to say that speculation on the Malaysian currency, the ringgit, could be the work of Jews. As he has on previous occasions, he singled out George Soros, a wealthy investor who is Jewish, for deliberately trying to hurt the Malaysian economy by speculating.

In denying the comments Saturday, Mahathir again ruffled some feathers.

"I only made a statement, but the press went on to say that I was accusing the Jews. We cannot make such wild accusations," he said. "They will twist our arms."

Mahathir has come under criticism — with some demanding his resignation — for the recent slide in the ringgit, which has fallen 18 percent against the dollar since July. Observers believe that by attacking Jews he is trying to shift the blame in order to increase his support in the Muslim-dominated country.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said that Mahathir's statements were "consistent with his long record of anti-Semitism and belief in a Jewish conspiracy to bring about the downfall of Malaysia."

Approximately 20 million people live in Malaysia. More than half of them are Muslims.

Malaysia and Israel do not have diplomatic ties, and Israeli citizens are not allowed to visit Malaysia. □