

**SHAMIR MAY BE READY TO CUT BACK ON SETTLEMENTS TO WIN U.S. LOANS**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is believed to be quietly seeking a deal with the Bush administration in which Israel would reduce settlement activity in the administered territories in exchange for desperately needed U.S. loan guarantees.

Shamir is said to have conveyed that impression in several private conversations, including an hour-long talk Tuesday with Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and its executive director, Malcolm Hoenlein.

Cardin and Hoenlein flew to Israel to brief Shamir on the climate in Washington and offer a frank appraisal of the chances the loan guarantees would be forthcoming if Israel continues expanding Jewish settlement in the territories.

Their trip coincided roughly with the end of the 120-day waiting period during which Congress was asked by the White House to forgo consideration of Israel's request for the guarantees.

The guarantees would cover \$10 billion in loans that Israel would use to help absorb the 1 million immigrants expected to arrive here over the next five years.

With the 120-day moratorium about to expire, Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, was scheduled to meet Thursday with Secretary of State James Baker, to present Israel's case for the loan guarantees as convincingly as possible.

Baker is expected to lay down stringent conditions and possibly offer to guarantee smaller amounts than Israel is asking for.

The United States may also demand from Israel firm commitments to make various economic reforms.

**Neither Side Wants Confrontation**

But Hoenlein believes both countries want to reach an accord that would enable the administration to recommend underwriting the loans.

"Both governments are facing elections this year," and "neither wants confrontation," he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

High-placed Israeli sources say the prime minister may be prepared to slow settlement-building in practice without disavowing it in principle or declaring a change of policy.

"We cannot make concessions on the principle of settlement in Eretz Israel," Defense Minister Moshe Arens said in a television interview Tuesday night. But he left open the question of whether the government is prepared to back off in practice.

Hoenlein said negotiations to reach an understanding between Jerusalem and Washington have already begun at a discreet diplomatic level.

Be he stressed the final decision would rest with President Bush, who on this issue seems to have bipartisan congressional support. It is highly unlikely Congress would approve the loan guarantees without a prior agreement having been worked out between the administration and the Israeli government, Hoenlein said.

During the meeting Tuesday with Shamir,

Hoenlein and Cardin are believed to have raised the issue of recent hard-line public pronouncements on settlement policy by several government ministers, including the premier himself.

The Shamir government is reported to have gotten some tough feedback from American Jewish leaders.

Seymour Reich, the immediate past chairman of the Conference of Presidents, was quoted by the media here Wednesday as sharply critical of Shamir's declaration earlier in the week that settlement-building would continue, no matter what.

The Israeli media also headlined a report that delegates attending next month's annual plenum of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council may push for a resolution urging an Israeli settlement freeze.

Cardin and Hoenlein apprised Shamir of the economic recession in the United States and the trend toward political isolationism influencing large sections of opinion there.

In that atmosphere, foreign aid is not very popular, Hoenlein explained. He said a key part of American Jewry's efforts to overcome resistance to Israel's requests would be educational.

The organized Jewish community will stress to American opinion-makers that the guarantees to Israel are not tantamount to loans from American taxpayers.

**SAUDIS TELL VISITING JEWISH GROUP THEY'RE COMMITTED TO PEACE PROCESS**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- A seven-member delegation from the American Jewish Congress spent four days in Saudi Arabia this week and left convinced that the Saudis are committed to the Middle East peace process.

The timing of the AJCongress mission, coming in the midst of an active Middle East peace process, has sparked both support and criticism from Jewish groups here, on the basis that the Saudis may try to negotiate with American Jewry and not with Israel.

While the Israeli Embassy here had no public comment, one official said anonymously that "one could see this as an encouraging sign for greater openness" by Saudi Arabia toward Israel.

"We hope that what will follow will be direct contact and meetings and visits between Israeli officials and Saudi officials," the embassy official said.

Such meetings could take place next week in Moscow during the international conference on Middle East regional issues.

But the official pointed out that AJCongress, like other Jewish groups, has also visited Jordan in the past, and such trips have not produced any direct improvement in Israeli-Jordanian relations.

Nevertheless, the official said that while dialogue between Arab states and Jewish groups cannot substitute for direct negotiations with Israel, such contacts promote greater understanding on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The AJCongress group, led by Robert Lifton, the group's president, and Henry Siegman, its executive director, reported receiving assurances from the Saudis that they do not question Israel's right to exist and would like to see a full and

formal peace established between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.

The Jewish visitors met with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal and with officials in economic development, education, health care and industry.

But they apparently were rebuffed in an attempt to meet with Saudi King Fahd.

#### Meetings In Egypt, Jordan

The delegation was scheduled to meet Friday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Saturday with Jordan's King Hussein, both of whom have previously met with Jewish leaders.

They are then planning to go by land from Jordan to Israel, where they expect to hold meetings Sunday with senior Israeli officials.

Siegmán said AJCongress expressed its interest in such a visit even prior to the start of the Persian Gulf crisis in August 1990.

The trip follows a meeting last November between the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

While the AJCongress visit may have been the first official one by a Jewish group, it is not the first time that Jewish officials have been to Saudi Arabia. In 1982, Thomas Neumann, then Southwest regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, visited Saudi Arabia as part of a congressional delegation.

Neumann, now executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, said the AJCongress mission could complicate the current Middle East prospects if the Saudis feel they can use U.S. Jewry to "bypass" and "sand-bag" Israel.

Positive reaction to the AJCongress mission came from Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. "I think it's a good development," he said.

Speaking from a vacation spot in Mexico, the Reform leader said there is a danger that the Saudis will feel that it is "easier to deal with American Jews than it is with the Israelis, but I'm sure the delegation from (AJ)Congress was careful to delineate that, and in that respect, I have no major problem" with the trip.

#### Trip Criticized By ADL Leader

The AJCongress visit may also have marked the first time that private U.S. citizens have entered the kingdom with passports denoting a prior visit to Israel.

The Saudis imposed no restrictions on any kind of religious objects that the delegation could bring in, Siegmán said prior to departing.

Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, said the AJCongress talks may be counterproductive in that they took place "at a time that peace talks are in progress and before the Saudis have as yet met with the Israelis."

Foxman said he similarly objects to having U.S. Jewish groups visit Jordan.

While AJCongress, like other U.S. Jewish groups, has said it will not negotiate with Arab countries on Israel's behalf, Siegmán said before his departure that his group would urge the Saudis to drop "symbolic restrictions" to increasing ties to Israel.

Those restrictions, in AJCongress' view, include continued Saudi participation in the 40-year-old economic boycott of Israeli goods and services by many Arab League countries.

#### **BRITISH PRIME MINISTER URGES JEWS TO PRESS ISRAEL ON ARAB EXPULSIONS**

**By Bernard Josephs**  
**London Jewish Chronicle**

LONDON, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- Prime Minister John Major has asked the British Zionist Federation to intercede with the Israeli government to prevent the deportation of 12 Palestinian activists.

The request was rejected by the federation's director, Dr. George Garai, who called it "unprecedented."

Major's letter was disclosed after the U.N. Security Council, currently chaired by Britain, voted unanimously on Jan. 6 to condemn Israel's order to expel the Palestinians.

The deportation orders were issued by Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens on Jan. 2, after a series of murders of Jewish settlers in the administered territories by Arab gunmen. The orders are being appealed to the High Court of Justice.

The prime minister began his letter by thanking the Zionist Federation for congratulating his government for its efforts to bring about the repeal last month of the U.N. General Assembly's 1975 resolution branding Zionism as racism.

Britain always considered the resolution "odious," and its repeal restores the standing of the General Assembly, the prime minister wrote.

He continued: "I cannot write without mentioning our strong opposition to the Israeli government's decision to expel 12 Palestinians from the occupied territories," which he said is, "of course, contrary to international law."

Major said he hoped that "prominent Jewish organizations in this country will take advantage of their contacts with the Israeli government to emphasize that actions of this kind do nothing to promote Israel's international image or the peace process."

In his reply, Garai said that "whilst it is true that we are in close contact with the Israeli government, our policy is that in the area of national security, where for instance the question of expulsions belongs, it is Israel's democratically elected government that takes the decisions on behalf of its citizens."

The British Zionist leader took issue with Major over the Security Council resolution, which he called one-sided. By condemning Israel, it "harmed the standing of the United Nations because of its lack of balance," Garai wrote.

Garai told the Jewish Chronicle later that in his 15 years as director of the Zionist Federation he had never received such a letter from a prime minister.

An almost identical letter was sent to the Conservative Friends of Israel by Douglas Hogg, minister of the Foreign Office.

#### **60 ARABS ARRESTED IN WEST BANK** **By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- Israeli security forces swept through the West Bank towns of Ramallah and Nablus overnight Tuesday and arrested some 60 Palestinians suspected of subversive activities.

Most of the suspects were linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the radical Palestinian groups opposing the Arab-Israeli peace talks.

The large-scale arrests were seen as part of an effort to curb the wave of shootings that began before the Madrid peace talks last October.

**REFORM JEWRY FIELDS OWN CANDIDATE  
FOR CHAIRMAN OF WZO, JEWISH AGENCY**  
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- The Reform movement, angry that there will be no election of U.S. delegates to this year's Zionist Congress, has decided to fight back in the classic democratic tradition.

It is fielding its own candidate, Rabbi Richard Hirsch, to challenge the re-election of Simcha Dinitz as World Zionist Organization chairman.

The WZO chairman automatically becomes chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the quasi-governmental agency that, among other things, funds the immigration of Jews to Israel.

Hirsch is the first candidate for the post since 1948 not representing either Labor or Likud. And his platform stresses the need to divorce the workings of the WZO and the affiliated Jewish Agency from the squabbling of Israeli politics.

"Those who spend the Jewish people's charitable gifts to Israel must be democratically elected," Hirsch said in a statement from Jerusalem.

The American-born Hirsch, who immigrated to Israel in 1973, is no newcomer to Zionist politics. He serves as head of the WZO Action Committee, which sets policy between congresses.

But Hirsch is given little chance of being elected, barring an alliance with Likud, which has not yet announced a challenger to Dinitz, who is a Laborite. Such an alliance would likely prove problematic for both sides.

Likud would have a hard time explaining to its Orthodox coalition partners in the Knesset how it elevated a Reform rabbi, who heads the World Union for Progressive Judaism, to the high-profile WZO post.

And the Reform movement might have difficulties explaining to its liberal constituency the need to grant the conservative Likud an expanded role in WZO and Jewish Agency management.

**Selects Half Of Agency Leadership**

Currently, the two bodies are run by a wall-to-wall coalition, which balances Dinitz's chairmanship with Likud's Meir Sheerit as treasurer.

It is the Zionist Congress, held every four or five years, which selects the coalition. The leadership of the WZO and half that of the Jewish Agency are chosen along political lines.

Delegates to the congress represent the various Diaspora Zionist organizations and Israeli political parties. Founded by Theodor Herzl as a parliament-in-exile of the Jewish people, the congress is still touted as the sole democratically elected body of the Jewish people.

And while the establishment of the Knesset as a real parliament has turned the Zionist congress into pretty much of a sideshow, the congress' selection of half the leadership of the Jewish Agency gives it a serious say in how the \$600 million being raised annually in the Diaspora for the State of Israel is spent.

This year's congress is scheduled for June, though there is talk now of postponement in the event that Israeli elections are held this summer.

The Israeli delegates to the congress, representing 38 percent of the body, are divided in proportion to their seating in the Knesset. How Diaspora delegates are chosen is the source of the present dispute, and Hirsch's candidacy.

In the recent past, the American delegation -- representing 29 percent of the congress -- has been chosen either by unanimous agreement among

the various American Zionist organizations or by full elections, in which all members of the organizations were eligible to vote.

But this year, all the groups except the Association of Reform Zionists of America decided the money needed for elections would be better spent helping immigrants from the former USSR.

**A Ploy By 'Old-Line Zionists'?**

The last Zionist elections, in 1987, polled over 200,000 voters at a cost of over \$1 million. This year's plans are not finalized, but the proposal under discussion would involve only a few hundred electors at a similarly streamlined cost.

ARZA, however, charges that Hadassah conspired with Labor to derail the elections, fearing the loss of further seats to ARZA and Mercaz, the Zionist movement of Conservative Judaism.

Dinitz, a Labor representative, was elected in 1988 with the crucial support of Hadassah, which last year announced it would boycott the congress if elections were held this year.

"This is an effort by the old-line Zionists to prevent the religious groups from coming to power," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, executive director of ARZA.

By old-line Zionists, Yoffie was referring to both the non-partisan groups like Hadassah, which saw its representation drop significantly after the last elections, and the American affiliates of Likud and Labor, which are weaker now than ever.

"In essence, it's an effort to do away with democracy forever, because it's clear to them that if Zionism remains democratic, the religious Zionist movements will assume center stage," he said.

Hadassah denies the charge, saying its only concern is that Zionist dollars be spent wisely.

Until 1977, Mizrahi, the Orthodox Zionist movement, was the only religious Zionist slate. But since then, ARZA and Mercaz have grown rapidly, leading to expectations that were an election to be held, they would increase their current 35 percent share of the U.S. delegation.

For its part, Mercaz has so far refused to endorse the Reform bid.

"It is a principle of Mercaz that we do not enter into agreements with Israeli political parties," said Rabbi Matthew Simon, its president.

**Given Little Chance Of Victory**

By contrast, the Reform party has lined up support of the Center-Shinui Movement in Israel and is wooing the support of the Citizens Rights Movement, both left-of-center Knesset factions.

Beyond that, "we're looking for all parties to support our candidate for chairman," said Yoffie. He hopes that Hadassah will put aside its ongoing feud and recognize that Hirsch's platform echoes its demands for depoliticization.

While Dinitz has been criticized by some Diaspora leaders as an ineffective manager of the Jewish Agency, conversations with several long-time veterans of Zionist politics failed to find one who thought Hirsch likely to unseat him.

"I think it's simply a kind of power play on the part of Reform, to squeeze out as much as possible from both sides," said one knowledgeable official of a Zionist group backing Dinitz.

The official, who requested anonymity, said he thought the Reform move could backfire, "since it makes more sense for Labor and Likud to make a deal between themselves.

"Reform will find itself on the outside," he predicted. But he cautioned: "No one knows how it will turn out."

## ISRAELI COURT BARS DISTRIBUTION OF DEAD SEA SCROLL FACSIMILES

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- One of the editors officially charged with reconstructing the Dead Sea Scrolls is suing the publisher of a book of scroll facsimiles, and has obtained a restraining order enjoining the American publisher from distributing any more copies of the work.

The suit, which seeks \$160,000 in damages, was filed in Israel by Professor Elisha Qimron of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba.

The suit names as defendant Hershel Shanks, editor of the Biblical Archaeology Society, which recently published a two-volume edition of Dead Sea Scroll facsimiles.

The Jerusalem District Court issued the restraining order against Shanks on Tuesday. No date for trial has yet been set.

Though he is not yet sure whether an Israeli court order can be enforced in the United States, Shanks is complying with it until the Israeli counsel he has retained advises him further.

"We're going to fight the lawsuit, but I don't want to be in violation of an Israeli court or be put in an Israeli jail next time I visit," he said.

The first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered by Bedouins four decades ago in caves near the Dead Sea. Over the next nine years, 800 leather and papyrus manuscripts were unearthed in nearby caves and ruins.

They tell the story of a sect of Jews, widely considered to be Essenes, who forsook mainstream Jewish life for a more ascetic existence. This knowledge has enriched understanding of the roots of modern Judaism and Christianity.

The translation and publication of the fragmented documents was left to seven scholars, who have maintained tight control over access to the scrolls. As the scholars retire, they pass on their rights to their proteges.

Qimron is the official editor of a letter included in Shanks' facsimile edition that is believed to have been written by the founder of the Dead Sea sectarians in the second century before the Common Era.

### Document Of 'Extraordinary Importance'

It is known as Miktsat Ma'asei HaTorah (Some of the Precepts of the Torah) and referred to, in scholarly circles, as 4QMMT.

4QMMT is believed to have been written by an author known as the Teacher of Righteousness, and details some 20 Pharisaic laws with which the sectarian leader disagreed, highlighting differences between the Qumran sect and Jerusalem's mainstream Jewish community of the day. It was the only letter found at Qumran, according to Shanks.

The 121-line document is "very important" and "said to have extraordinary importance for determining the identity of the Jewish sectarians who hid the Dead Sea Scrolls 2,000 years ago," Shanks said.

He published it in his "Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls" last November, after the letter was published, in an unauthorized version, in a Polish journal called Qumran Chronicle in December 1990.

Threats by the Israel Antiquities Authority forced the Qumran Chronicle's publisher to withdraw it from circulation, Shanks said, but unauthorized photocopies of the document had been circulating among scroll scholars for some time.

The court order, which enjoins the Biblical Archaeology Society from selling or circulating the book of photographs as long as it contains the copy of the letter, also names the two scholars who prepared the facsimile: Professor Robert Eisenman and Professor James Robinson.

Qimron, who succeeded John Strugnell, a professor of Christian origins at Harvard Divinity School, as the editor and possessor of the letter, told the court that he had reconstructed the letter over 11 years of painstaking work, and that it was included in Shanks' publication without crediting him or obtaining his permission.

### Copyright 'Expired 2,000 Years Ago'

Unlike the other documents in the "pirated" facsimile edition, which are photographs of scrolls that had been physically pieced together by scholars from fragments, Qimron said, the 4QMMT letter includes place where he filled in numerous gaps in the available text by deducing what the original must have said.

"I don't think he did more than complete a word or two or three from the text," Shanks countered. And "they're not his words, they're conjectures as to what the original text said. Any copyright of this text expired 2,000 years ago."

According to Qimron's lawyer, Yitzhak Molho, publishing the letter deprived Qimron and Strugnell of their due academic recognition and caused them the financial loss of anticipated revenues from publication and lectures.

Shanks has waged a six-year campaign to enable all qualified scholars to have access to the scrolls, which had been controlled by a small group of editors, and said that he regrets "that a few Israeli scholars are still trying to put the genie back into the bottle."

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

## NAZI SCHEME NOT BORN AT WANNSEE, ISRAELI HOLOCAUST SCHOLAR CLAIMS

By Lee Levitt

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Jan. 22 (JTA) -- An Israeli Holocaust scholar has debunked the Wannsee Conference, at which top Nazi officials are said to have gathered at a villa in a Berlin suburb in 1942 to draw the blueprints of the "Final Solution."

According to Professor Yehuda Bauer of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Wannsee was a meeting but "hardly a conference," and "little of what was said there was executed in detail."

Bauer addressed the opening session of an international conference held here to mark the 50th anniversary of the decision to carry out the "Final Solution." But it was not made at Wannsee, the Czech-born scholar said.

"The public still repeats, time after time, the silly story that at Wannsee the extermination of the Jews was arrived at. Wannsee was but a stage in the unfolding of the process of mass murder," he said.

Bauer also said fears that memories of the Holocaust are receding with time are unfounded.

"Whether presented authentically or inauthentically, with empathy and understanding or as monumental kitsch, the Holocaust has become a ruling symbol of our culture.

"Hardly a month passes without a new TV production, a new film, a new drama, a number of new books of prose or poetry dealing with the subject," the professor said.