

**DIASPORA JEWRY PLANS TO UNDERWRITE \$900 MILLION IN LOANS FOR SOVIET JEWS**  
By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, April 2 (JTA) -- As Israel organizes for the absorption of 1 million Soviet Jews by the end of 1993, Diaspora Jewry is poised to underwrite a \$900 million loan program to assist in what is being called a historic wave of immigration.

Jewish federations around the world will guarantee the loans by putting up their assets -- including future campaign earnings -- as collateral against potential massive loan defaults.

Arriving Soviet immigrants, who receive basic absorption grants covering first-year housing and other expenses, will now each receive \$1,000 of the package in loans backed by Diaspora Jewish communities.

"As one federation official put it: 'We're betting the ranch,' " said Charles Goodman, president of the Council of Jewish Federations, which represents some 200 North American federations and was the prime initiator of the program.

For what is believed to be the first time in American Jewish philanthropic giving, the community is resorting to a large-scale loan program to assist Israel, rather than relying solely on direct contributions.

The loan program will be complemented by a \$650 million fund-raising campaign, the last \$200 million of which will go to a reserve fund to cover loan defaults.

Goodman and others said loans were the logical step, given the requirements of the Soviet Jewish immigrants, who are streaming into Israel at a rate of a few hundred a day, and the responsibility U.S. Jews feel toward aiding Israel and Jews in distress.

"It just seemed the very appropriate way to finance this problem, because everyone is convinced it is well beyond our philanthropic capacity," to raise the sums of money needed, he said.

**Vote Set For April 16**

The loan program, along with the worldwide fund-raising appeal, will be put to a vote April 16 in Washington during an extraordinary General Assembly of North American federations.

Although formal approval is expected from almost all federations, CJF officials have spent recent weeks trying to anticipate and answer concerns, so as to ensure final support. Other Diaspora Jewish federations are expected to ratify the program and fund-raising appeal at a later date.

The fund-raising campaign will be split between the United Jewish Appeal, the major fund-raising arm of American Jewry, and Keren Hayesod, which raises money from Diaspora Jewish communities outside the United States. The UJA campaign goal is set at \$450 million; Keren Hayesod is responsible for the remaining \$200 million.

This comes on the heels of the 1990 Operation Exodus campaign, in which UJA raised \$420 million and Keren Hayesod raised \$180 million.

Although that campaign was by all accounts an overwhelming success, the unexpected surge in Soviet Jewish immigrants forced both Israel and the Diaspora Jewish community to radically rethink financial requirements. Close to 200,000 new

immigrants arrived in 1990, and this year 300,000 are expected.

Israeli officials have estimated the total costs of the immigration and absorption of 1 million Soviet Jews, including long-term housing, job creation and schooling, at a minimum of \$40 billion.

**\$450 Million From Jewish Agency Budget**

Diaspora Jewry's contribution to this will total around \$2.6 billion. This figure includes the \$600 million raised in Operation Exodus, the \$650 million to be raised in the new campaign and the \$900 million loan program.

The remaining \$450 million will come from the regular budget of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is mainly financed through annual donations to UJA and Keren Hayesod. The Jewish Agency pays the entire cost of bringing the immigrants to Israel, as well as a portion of their initial resettlement costs.

It will be responsible for distributing the moneys raised in the UJA and Keren Hayesod campaigns, as well as the loans guaranteed by the federations.

The loans will technically be guaranteed by CJF, but because CJF has no assets to speak of, federations will in turn guarantee CJF's loan and accept final responsibility for any defaults over the \$200 million reserve fund, said Frank Strauss, director of communications at CJF.

According to the preliminary plan that has been distributed to North American federation leaders, 148 U.S. federations will guarantee \$750 million in loans, while federated communities in Canada and elsewhere will be responsible for \$150 million in loans. The loans will be provided by Israeli banks.

If one or more federations decide against accepting the loan program, the federations that approved it will take on the extra indemnification, CJF officials said. The risk will be spread out among federations according to a formula based on their Jewish populations and their previous fund-raising capabilities.

Currently, if all the U.S. federations accept the program, financial responsibility will range from 0.02 percent of \$750 million for the small Rockford Jewish Community Council in Illinois, to 19 percent of the total for the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, said Strauss.

**Concern About Default Risk**

Although there is little chance North American Jews, through their federations, will turn down this program in the midst of the largest wave of Jewish immigration to Israel, some federation officials are raising questions about the potential risk in guaranteeing loans that in many cases exceed a particular federation's net worth.

"There's no record that would suggest that we know how to measure that risk," said Goodman of CJF. "We all recognize that we are taking that risk and that we will try to mitigate that risk as much as possible."

The loans, which will cover the Jewish Agency's share of the immigrant "absorption basket" provided by Israel's Absorption Ministry, will have a 10-year payback schedule.

Since March 1, the Jewish Agency has been

offering each new immigrant a \$1,000 loan instead of the grant it formerly provided. Once the loan program is approved, federations will accept retroactive responsibility for the loans.

Some federation officials are specifically worried that the generous 10-year payback period, with no payments required until after the fourth year, will hinder the Israeli banks' ability to collect money owed.

"I will not accept that a four-year delay will do anything but hurt repayment," said Mel Bondy, treasurer of the Allied Jewish Federation of Denver. He pointed out that after four years, it may be difficult for banks to track down people who took out loans.

"People don't like to wake up four years later and find that money is owed. People tend to forget these things," he said, adding that nonetheless, he would vote in favor of the program.

#### A 'Generous Payback Scheme'

And although Israeli citizens can run into trouble trying to leave the country if their debts are in arrears, the generous payback scheme of the loan means that "we won't know if they are in arrears for four years, so there clearly is an additional risk," said Goodman of CJF.

Israeli banking law does require that such loans also be guaranteed by two individuals in Israel, but for the Soviet immigrants, the rules were relaxed to allow one of the signers to be a relative over the age of 18. It is also unclear how many loans one individual will be able to co-guarantee.

While CJF officials acknowledge the risk involved, they say the history of immigrant loan payback is healthy and that small defaults will be covered by the reserve fund. They also counter that Israeli banks will track address changes and will periodically send reminders during the first four years.

As is usually the case with immigrants from "countries in distress," the Jewish Agency picks up transportation costs and the costs of shipping and storing luggage. With the onslaught of Soviet Jews, what was a transportation and storage budget that hovered around \$6 million in earlier years has now burgeoned into \$194 million for the remaining nine months of 1991 alone.

Officials of CJF, UJA and the Jewish Agency developed the idea of a loan program as a way to aid immigration without bankrupting Diaspora Jewry.

Officials feared that a multibillion-dollar fund-raising campaign, conducted while regular UJA and Keren Hayesod campaigns were under way, would stretch the Diaspora Jewish community beyond its ability to give.

#### **U.S. PATRIOT CREWS LEAVE ISRAEL, BUT COOPERATION WILL CONTINUE** By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 2 (JTA) -- The close collaboration that developed between U.S. Army crews and Israel Defense Force units operating Patriot anti-missile batteries in Israel during the Persian Gulf war will continue despite the Americans' departure Monday.

They left behind two Patriot batteries, which had been operated principally by Israelis from the outset, as well as an abundance of good will and mutual respect.

Col. David Heebner, commander of the U.S. Patriot crews, praised the IDF for its "superb

system, which enabled us to learn lessons very quickly and make changes" under combat conditions.

"We made changes in two weeks that would have taken two years to make under normal conditions," he said at a farewell reception hosted by Mayor Arye Gurel of Haifa.

"What was learned here was beneficial throughout the forces using the Patriot system," the colonel added.

The Patriots proved effective in intercepting and destroying Iraqi Scud missiles fired at Israel during the war.

The first Patriots were rushed here from U.S. bases in Germany after the initial Scud attack on Jan. 18. IDF soldiers had only just completed training in the United States to operate the Patriots, which Israel planned to buy long before the Gulf war started.

They went through their post-graduate course under fire, said the Israeli Patriot battery commander, who for security reasons was identified only as Col. Moshé.

Before the Americans left, the U.S. and Israeli teams agreed to hold cooperative meetings in the future. The idea is to exchange information gleaned from the operation of Patriot batteries in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel.

#### **TREASURE HUNT MAKES GOLAN HEIGHTS THE GOLDEN HEIGHTS IN PROMO STUNT** By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 2 (JTA) -- There is a treasure hunt taking place on the Golan Heights this week.

The territory Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war and annexed in 1980 has been flooded with tens of thousands of Israelis and tourists during the intermediate days of Passover, seeking a bar of gold at the end of the proverbial rainbow.

The gold rush is a promotional stunt organized and vigorously promoted by Israel Radio, the Golan Heights Development and Tourist Corp. and a local mineral water bottling factory.

The first prize is a bar of gold valued at about \$3,500. It awaits the canny searcher able to interpret the series of clues broadcast by Israel Radio throughout the day.

Digging or panning is not required. The winner is the person who first approaches a car parked "somewhere" on the heights and challenges the driver with the statement, "You're from the radio."

He or she will be given a certificate redeemable at Israel Broadcast Authority headquarters in Jerusalem for the gold ingot.

It is an old gimmick. One version was described more than 60 years ago in one of the late Graham Greene's first novels, "Brighton Rock."

But the Golan gold hunt is the latest in a series of quizzes and treasure hunts Israel Radio has run for the past three decades to gain listeners, but also to educate.

Most have been based on biblical, post-biblical, historical and archaeological themes.

There was no winner Monday, the first day of the hunt. Tuesday's prize therefore is two gold bars. It will be three Wednesday if there is still no winner.

The majority of prospectors of course are destined to lose. As a consolation, they have magnificent views of wildflower-strewn hillsides amid balmy spring weather.

**ORTHODOX PARTY IN ISRAEL URGING CLOSURE OF AIRPORT ON SATURDAYS**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 2 (JTA) -- In a new attempt to enforce Sabbath observance on all walks of life in Israel, the Agudat Yisrael party is pushing for the closure of Ben-Gurion Airport on Saturdays.

The issue is likely to lead to another conflict between the secular state and its religious minority, which has considerable political clout.

The international air terminal, a major source of revenue, has always functioned seven days a week. Its closure over the Sabbath could mean disastrous economic losses, say opponents of the plan, including Transport Minister Moshe Katsav.

But the Agudah, which held out longer than any of the other Orthodox parties before its five Knesset members joined Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's coalition government last year, is in a position to impose its will.

The initiative was taken by veteran Agudah Knesset member Menahem Porush, who, as deputy minister of labor and social welfare, controls the issuance of Sabbath work permits.

His sub-Cabinet status is the result of the non-Zionist Agudah's ideological reservations about holding Cabinet rank in a secular government. Although Shamir nominally holds the labor portfolio, he lets Porush run the ministry.

Porush has renewed the airport's Sabbath work permit until June. At the same time, he set up a committee of officials from his own ministry and the Transport Ministry for a detailed examination of the airport's functioning.

He has served notice that he proposes to severely limit, if he cannot altogether abrogate, the airport's work permit.

Civil servants and politicians of the two major parties, Likud and Labor, say the move is a potential disaster.

But given the delicate state of the governing coalition, few pundits predict an Agudah failure. Shamir's Knesset majority depends mainly on the strictly Orthodox, or haredi, parties.

The defection of any one would shave that majority dangerously thin. Agudah made clear that it would not hesitate to jump ship the moment Likud reneged on the religious concessions it offered as inducements to join the government.

**'Serious Blow' To Economy?**

One of those concessions was the shutdown of public transportation on the Sabbath. But in Israel, that applies chiefly to buses. While the coalition agreement promised tighter enforcement of Sabbath laws, Israel's only international airport was never specified.

Its shutdown would affect only the flights of foreign airlines, since the state-owned El Al is forbidden to fly on the Sabbath.

But closing the airport would close down Maman, the government-owned cargo handling and servicing company that provides ground service for foreign airlines.

Katsav called Porush's plan inconceivable. "If need be, I will intervene to prevent closure of Ben-Gurion or stoppage of Maman on Shabbat," said the minister, who is himself a Sabbath observer.

Not only passenger flights but Israel's vital cargo flights to Europe would be affected.

According to Shoshana Arbeli-Almoslino, a

Laborite who chairs the Knesset Economic Committee, "this would mean a serious blow to the economy, and particularly our agricultural exports. It would seriously disrupt our relations with foreign airlines, with grave repercussions for tourism and trade," she said.

But Agudah politicians dismiss such warnings. They point with triumph to El Al, whose profitability actually increased after it stopped Sabbath flights in the mid-1980s, despite dire predictions of economic disaster.

El Al's patronage has always been overwhelmingly Jewish, but many Orthodox Jews preferred to travel on foreign carriers that accommodated them with kosher meals than on a Jewish airline that flew on the Sabbath.

El Al's improved load factor after turning Sabbath observant can be attributed in part to the Orthodox passengers who flocked to it after winning their point, though the airline also reduced the overall number of flights.

But the airport is a much more cosmopolitan utility. Arbeli-Almoslino is urging Shamir to attend her committee meetings in his formal capacity as minister of labor when it debates Porush's plan.

**U.S. COMPUTER FIRM NEGOTIATING TO ESTABLISH PLANTS IN ISRAEL**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 2 (JTA) -- Intensive negotiations are under way to persuade Atari, the U.S.-based personal computer and videogames giant, to establish plants in Israel that would create some 3,000 jobs and exports amounting eventually to a half-billion dollars a year.

Atari, headquartered in Sunnyvale, Calif., and one of the world's leaders in computer software, had planned to open a plant in eastern Asia.

But Israel's minister of trade and industry, Moshe Nissim, during a recent visit to the United States, convinced Atari's majority stockholder, American Jewish businessman Jack Tramiel, to consider Israel.

Government officials said Atari's investment in Israel was conditional on the establishment of several subsidiary factories here to manufacture parts for a main Atari plant, such as printed circuitry, monitors and software.

According to the ministry, the cost of building the new factories or making the necessary improvements to existing ones is between \$75 million and \$100 million.

Israel is offering to bear about half the cost, with the balance coming from private investors enlisted by Tramiel.

The central Atari plant would benefit from various inducements Israel offers foreign investors. They include a grant of up to 38 percent of the investment if the factory is established in a development town like Kiryat Shmona.

Loans of up to 66 percent of the initial investment would be available if Atari opted for the new program of government-guaranteed loans.

The Atari plant initially would employ 600 workers, many of them engineers. Within five years, the work force would grow to 1,000. Computer and program sales are projected at \$150 million a year.

The potential exports from the subsidiary plants employing about 2,000 workers is \$300 million during the first years of operation, eventually reaching \$500 million.

## JEWISH FAMILY THAT WAS HARASSED GETS \$1.8 MILLION UNDER HATE LAW

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, April 2 (JTA) -- A Chicago family has been awarded \$1.8 million in what is believed to be the largest-ever judgment in a case brought under a state hate crime statute.

After a six-day trial and three-and-a-half hours of deliberation, a Cook County jury ordered Lucielle Olsen and her adult son, Neil Olsen, to pay \$1.8 million to their victims, Sherry Del Dotto, her husband, Larry Del Dotto, and their two daughters, ages 7 and 5.

The judgment was handed down March 27.

Sherry Del Dotto, who is Jewish, and her husband, who is Roman Catholic, filed the civil lawsuit against their former next-door neighbors in 1985 after they had been harassed for more than a year.

In June 1986, the Del Dottos moved to a different Chicago neighborhood in order to escape the hectoring. Today they live in fear that the Olsens will find out where they live.

"I am very afraid," Sherry Del Dotto said in a telephone interview arranged by her lawyer.

"I had to leave for the safety of my family," she said. "I didn't want my kids living next door to this kind of garbage."

The Olsens had repeatedly harassed the Del Dottos with anti-Jewish statements, white supremacist slogans and threats of physical violence. Both followed Sherry Del Dotto down the street, calling her names and spitting at her.

In August 1984, both Lucielle and Neil Olsen were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct and convicted in January 1985 for playing music so loudly that the Del Dotto's older daughter, who was then a toddler, was unable to sleep.

Neil Olsen was arrested again in August 1985 and convicted the following January of disorderly conduct after he painted anti-Semitic and other racist epithets on a car that he had parked in front of the Del Dottos' residence for six months, according to Richard Hoffman, the Del Dottos' attorney.

Sherry Del Dotto originally sought the assistance of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in 1985. At ADL's request, the Chicago law firm of Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal represented the Del Dottos pro bono.

### 'Just Backyard Bigots'

Lucielle Olsen, who is in her 70s, and Neil Olsen, who is in his mid-40s, are reportedly not well-to-do and are not expected to be able to pay the bulk of the damages. They are not affiliated with a hate group, according to Hoffman.

"They are just backyard bigots, as far as I know," he said.

The \$1.8 million judgment is the largest-known verdict to date in a lawsuit brought under Illinois' hate crimes statute and may well be the largest award in any suit of its kind in the nation, say ADL officials.

Sixteen or 17 states have hate crimes laws that provide for victims of hate crimes to bring civil lawsuits against the perpetrators, according to Steven Freeman, ADL director of legal affairs.

While in the absence of such laws victims are able to file a civil suit, these statutes make it easier for them to do so, he said.

There have not been very many large verdicts in cases like the Del Dottos' before, according to Freeman, because the statutes which make

them possible have only been added to the lawbooks within the past decade in many states.

The size of the verdict is "a strong indication of the seriousness with which these kinds of events are judged," said Barry Morrison, director of ADL's Greater Chicago regional office. "We hope this will serve as a deterrent to those who would be perpetrators of similar acts of harassment against Jews."

## TEMPLE IN LOS ANGELES AREA STRUCK BY ARSON FOR SECOND TIME IN MONTH

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, April 2 (JTA) -- Arsonists have again set fire to a Reform temple here that has been repeatedly defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti.

The fire at Temple Adat Elohim in Thousand Oaks, a community west of Los Angeles, caused \$8,000 in damages to a wall of the sanctuary and part of the roof. Three weeks ago, a similar arson charred a door at the Reform congregation.

The two fires, following a string of spray-painted swastikas and slurs in recent months, clearly indicate an anti-Semitic campaign against the congregation rather than a spate of random vandalism, said Marty Ricks, president of the temple's board of directors.

"Whoever is doing this doesn't want to give up," Ricks said. "It's somebody who really wants to burn us down. Up until this occurrence, I thought it was just kids trying to have some fun. It is more than that."

Another Thousand Oaks synagogue, Temple Etz Chaim, and Temple Beth Torah, in the nearby city of Ventura, were defaced by spray-painted graffiti during the week of Chanukah. In the town of Agoura, a Chanukah display in front of a private residence was stolen.

The most serious incident in this area occurred in early January, when a firebomb gutted a building at Aish HaTorah in North Hollywood, causing \$120,000 in damages. No arrests have been made in the case.

## NEPAL IS AGAIN SITE OF HIGHEST SEDER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 2 (JTA) -- The "world's highest seder" was held for the fourth consecutive year last weekend in Katmandu, capital of Nepal, a kingdom of 18 million nestled in the Himalayan mountain range, literally at the top of the world.

It was also probably one of the largest seders anywhere.

The Israeli ambassador, Shmuel Moyal, played host to about 900 guests, Israelis and other Jews, tourists, backpackers and business people, many from northern India. The Nepalese government provided a huge tent to accommodate them.

The Brooklyn-based Lubavitcher Hasidic movement supplied the kosher-for-Pesach food. Four young emissaries of the Lubavitcher rebbe delivered a ton-and-a-half of matzah.

The Israeli envoy said he started the tradition four years ago with a modest Passover feast. He had posted a notice on the embassy gates inviting any Israelis or other Jewish visitors to a seder he was holding for embassy staff. To the ambassador's surprise, over 100 people showed up.

The following year, the seder was held at a hotel. Last year, a marquee was erected on the embassy grounds.