

**ISRAEL STICKING WITH ITS DECISION  
TO STAY AWAY FROM TALKS WEDNESDAY**
**By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Israel is sticking for now with its decision to stay away from the bilateral peace talks slated to resume in Washington on Wednesday.

The Cabinet on Sunday backed Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's suggestion that the talks convene instead on Dec. 9, five days later than the date proposed by the United States and accepted last week by Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

While officials here would not rule out the possibility of a face-saving compromise, the Cabinet's decision left the prospect that Israel would be the only one of the Middle East parties not to show up Wednesday in Washington, in what undoubtedly would be seen as a propaganda victory for the Arab side.

In Washington, President Bush made clear on Friday that the next round of bilateral talks, which began in Madrid on Nov. 3, would open Wednesday, whether or not Israel takes part.

When asked where that second round stood, Bush told reporters during a Christmas shopping trip, "There's going to be one. I don't know who's going to show up."

Israel's refusal to attend the talks on Wednesday, while officially explained as a request for additional preparation time, has been widely interpreted as an expression of Israel's displeasure over the way Shamir was treated during his visit to Washington two weeks ago.

Shamir had planned to discuss Israel's concerns about the location of the next round of the bilateral negotiations during his White House meeting with Bush on Nov. 22. But the evening beforehand, the State Department sent out invitations asking the various Middle East parties to come to Washington on Dec. 4.

**Weekend Diplomacy Fails**

Washington's failure to consult with Israel on the timing and location was seen here not only as a personal slap in the face to Shamir, but also as an indication that the United States plans to become actively involved in the peace talks whenever deadlocks arise.

The Bush administration had asked the Middle East parties to respond to its invitations by Nov. 25. Instead, Israel's Inner Cabinet replied two days later that it would agree to one or two meetings in Washington, but only on Dec. 9.

Syria and the Palestinian delegation, which also had not replied to the U.S. invitations, promptly indicated they would attend the talks on Dec. 4. Jordan and Lebanon had already agreed to that date.

In an attempt to defuse the issue, Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, met Friday with officials at the State Department, and diplomatic contacts were said to have continued over the weekend.

But Cabinet sources here said that if anything, the exchange with Washington had made matters worse.

Shoval reportedly had sought a firm commitment from the administration that it would pub-

licly support Israel's demand to shift the bilateral talks to the Middle East or nearby after one or, at most, two rounds of talks in Washington.

But the State Department would only affirm its support, in principle, for holding the talks "in the region at the appropriate time," without specifying that time.

**Low-Level Team May Be Sent**

Moreover, Shoval reportedly was told that the administration intends to come up with its own peace proposals in the event of ongoing disagreements among the parties.

That confirmed Israeli fears that the Arabs would be able to sidestep direct talks with Israel by negotiating with the United States and then relying on it to pressure Jerusalem.

"The major issue is not a few days here or a few days there," Shoval told reporters outside the State Department on Friday. "The major issue is that the Arabs, including the Palestinians, do not want to talk to us directly."

Shamir told the Cabinet on Sunday that diplomatic contacts with Washington had not provided any reason for Israel to change its opposition to the Dec. 4 date. He suggested it was time to give Washington a "signal."

Yossi Ben-Aharon, director general of the Prime Minister's Office, summed up the sentiment of the Cabinet in an interview with army radio.

"The way this thing is being conducted by the United States very much bothers us and outrages us," he said. The Arabs "have the impression that the United States is on their side."

Shamir admitted that Israel could suffer a black eye in world public opinion if it stays home from the peace talks on Wednesday. But he added that "hasbara" (public relations) considerations could not always be the major determinant of Israeli policy.

Sources here said that Israel might still send a low-level team of diplomats to Washington for the talks Wednesday. There is also the possibility that a team of officials led by Benjamin Netanyahu might be dispatched there to offset the Arab propaganda victory arising from Israel's failure to attend the talks at the proper level on the appointed day.

**JEWISH SETTLER BADLY WOUNDED  
IN SHOOTING NORTH OF JERUSALEM**
**By Gil Sedan**

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- A 40-year old resident of the West Bank Jewish settlement of Ofra was seriously wounded Sunday in a shooting attack on an Israeli vehicle in El-Bireh, north of Jerusalem.

The attack took place three days before the second round of bilateral peace talks were scheduled to open in Washington. A similar attack on a bus of Jewish settlers occurred near Nablus, just a few days before the beginning of the first round of peace talks in Madrid. Two people were killed in that attack.

Sunday's shooting took place just a few minutes before 6 p.m. Shots were fired at a private car that was on its way from Ofra to Jerusalem. The driver, who was not immediately identified, was wounded in the head and rushed to

the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem.

His young daughter, who was in the car with him, was reportedly unharmed but was suffering from shock.

Angry settlers from Ofra assembled at the scene of the attack, protesting "the poor state of security in the area."

The army clamped a curfew on El-Birah and began a wide search for the attackers.

Earlier Sunday, shots were fired at an Israeli soldier from a passing car on the same road, but further north, near the village of Ein Sinya. No one was hurt in that attack. The assailants fled the scene.

#### ISRAELIS SUPPORT SHAMIR'S HANDLING OF PEACE TALKS, BUT FAVOR COMPROMISE By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- While a majority of the Israeli public supports the Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud bloc as the party best suited to negotiate peace with the Arabs, a majority of Israelis also support territorial compromise to reach that end, in contravention of Likud's current policies.

The contradictory findings emerged from a Gallup Institute telephone poll of 513 Israeli Jewish adults taken last week and published Friday in the Israeli daily Hadashot.

The poll found that 44 percent of Israelis prefer a Likud government leading the peace negotiations. Eleven percent prefer a Labor government, and 37 percent prefer other governments.

Fifty-eight percent agree that Shamir is leading the peace negotiations well, while 21 percent do not believe so.

But contrary to these statistics, 54 percent of those polled agreed that there will not be peace without a return of territory; 33 percent disagreed with that statement.

Fifty-one percent agreed that now that peace negotiations are under way, the building of Jewish settlements in the administered territories should be frozen, while 40 percent disagreed.

The Shamir government has opposed calls for a settlement freeze, while the opposition Labor Party has backed it.

#### ISRAEL RELEASES 25 ARAB PRISONERS AMID REPORTS HOSTAGE WILL BE FREED By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- As reports were circulating that terrorist groups in Lebanon were about to free another American hostage, the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army on Sunday released 25 Arab prisoners who had been held in El-Khiam detention center in southern Lebanon.

The request for the prisoners' release was made by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, whose personal envoy, Giandomenico Picco, was back in the region this weekend, giving rise to expectations that at least one and perhaps all three remaining U.S. hostages would be released this week.

The request for the Arab prisoners' release was given to the Israeli team that is negotiating for the return of Israeli prisoners of war, their bodies or information on their fate.

Israeli team member Uri Slonim, an attorney, told Israel Radio on Sunday that the Lebanese detainees had been released even though no new

information had been obtained about Capt. Ron Arad, an air force navigator who is the only missing Israeli servicemen believed to be alive, or about three other Israeli soldiers who are feared dead but still listed as missing in action.

The Lebanese prisoners were released as a measure of personal respect for Perez de Cuellar and his efforts to achieve the release of the Israelis and members of the SLA held hostage.

A statement released Sunday by Israel's Defense Ministry read, "The secretary-general, on his part, relayed a request to Israel for a personal gesture toward him, which would assist him in concluding the processes related to the comprehensive realization of his initiative.

"Israel complied with his request and, following this, the SLA -- with the encouragement of Israel -- released 25 Lebanese detainees from El-Khiam prison."

#### Cicippio Could Be Next

The prisoners, mostly members of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah, or Party of God, were released by the SLA commander, Gen. Antoine Lahad.

Four of the freed detainees -- two men and two women -- chose to return to their homes inside the border security zone Israel maintains in southern Lebanon, where El-Khiam is located.

The remaining 21, whose homes in Lebanon are outside the zone, were escorted by Israel Defense Force and SLA troops to the border between the zone and the rest of Lebanon. There they were handed over to officials of the International Red Cross.

In Beirut, the group that calls itself the Revolutionary Justice Organization said U.S. hostage Joseph Cicippio would be released within 48 hours and that his release would be followed shortly thereafter by that of Alann Steen, another American.

The West's longest-held hostage in Lebanon, Associated Press correspondent Terry Anderson, would reportedly be freed by the end of December. In fact, Syria is expecting all three U.S. hostages freed within a week.

A source in Damascus was reported Sunday to have said that Israel's release of the 25 detainees heralds the way for the release of all hostages and prisoners held by Shi'ite groups.

Perez de Cuellar, who is due to end his term of office at the end of this month, hopes to effect the release of all Israeli prisoners and Western hostages before he turns his post over to his successor, Boutros Ghali of Egypt.

Perez de Cuellar's envoy met Sunday in Damascus with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, handing him a letter of thanks for Syria's assistance in helping obtain the release of Western hostages.

#### U.S. ARMY LAUDS ISRAELI MINE-CLEARER

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- A mine-clearing device developed by Israel won a commendation from the U.S. Army recently, after it used the device successfully on its Abrams tanks during the Persian Gulf War.

Israel Aircraft Industries, which designed and built the tank-mounted blade system, was presented with a certificate of appreciation by Col. Richard Johnson of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps.

It stated, "In recognition of the outstanding success and system performance of the M-1 (Abrams tank) mine-clearing blade system during Operation Desert Storm."

**CHINA HINTS IT IS CONTEMPLATING  
ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL**

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- China is gradually preparing to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, the Chinese foreign minister is said to have told a visiting delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center last week in Beijing.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, who is dean of the Los Angeles-based center, said in a telephone conversation from the Chinese capital that Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said Chinese and Israeli diplomats have been in regular contact and have "embarked on a gradual and progressive approach with the ultimate goal of preparing for normal relations."

The Wiesenthal Center group, which was on an eight-day visit to China, also met on Nov. 28 day with Li Shuzheng, deputy head of the Communist Party International Liaison Department. Li said it was her personal opinion that extending full diplomatic recognition to Israel would be linked to progress in the Middle East peace talks.

Hier said that when pressed, the Chinese foreign minister told him that "with concerted efforts by both sides, this process will be advanced soon." But Qian declined to discuss a more specific timetable, Hier said.

Qian opened the 55-minute meeting with the 15-member delegation by drawing parallels between the Chinese and Jewish people, citing their long experience with being persecuted, the high value they put on close family ties, and the hospitality extended in Shanghai to Jewish refugees from Europe during World War II.

Asked whether, on this basis, China might back the repeal of the 1975 U.N. General Assembly resolution branding Zionism a form of racism, Qian put the question aside, saying only that the Chinese had never engaged in racist or anti-Semitic attacks.

In an exchange on human rights, the Holocaust and the Middle East, Qian invoked the proverb, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others," which his listeners took as an allusion to Israel's policy toward the Palestinians.

Qian attributed the quote to the Chinese philosopher Confucius, although the Jewish participants thought it bore a remarkable resemblance to one of the most famous sayings of the Jewish sage Hillel.

**Holocaust Exhibit In Shanghai**

On Tuesday, the Wiesenthal group will participate in the opening of the center's Holocaust exhibit, "The Courage to Remember," in Shanghai. The display, consisting of 40 bilingual panels, is the first on a Jewish theme invited by the People's Republic of China, Hier said.

A companion exhibit by the Chinese Institute for Peace and Development Studies will focus on the lives of some 25,000 Jews who found refuge in China during the Second World War.

Hier's report is the latest in what seem to be a series of auspicious omens from Beijing.

Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens reportedly made a secret visit to Beijing in early November, according to reports in Israeli newspapers, one of which published a photograph of him ostensibly in the Chinese capital.

More recently, Israel's first Israeli official trade delegation visited China to set up a bevy of economic links between the two countries. The group's leader, Dan Gillerman, chairman of the

Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, predicted diplomatic relations between the two countries would be established in a few months.

Although Israel recognized the People's Republic of China after the 1949 Communist revolution there, the two countries never established formal diplomatic ties.

China's politics and trade placed it firmly in the Arab orbit, leaving it the only one of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council not to have diplomatic ties with the Jewish state.

China has recognized the Beijing representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization as ambassador of "Palestine." Through the years, China "consistently rebuffed Israel's repeated offers to establish diplomatic relations," according to a 1987 report by the London-based Institute of Jewish Affairs.

Still, by 1987, several low-level meetings had taken place between Israel and Chinese representatives at the United Nations, and China's first scholar went to Jerusalem to engage in research at the Hebrew University.

Then, at the October 1987 opening of the U.N. General Assembly, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian. It was Wu, now China's vice president, who met with the Israeli trade delegation.

Just as U.S.-Chinese ties were begun on the ping-pong court, Sino-Israeli links have been forged in the academic and travel arenas.

In early 1990, the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities opened an office in Beijing, chiefly sanctioned to foster scholarly exchanges, but whose staff is empowered to administer visas.

Reciprocally, China opened a tourist office in Tel Aviv.

**AUSTRALIAN MOSLEM PAPER TO STOP  
PUBLISHING ANTI-JEWISH CARTOONS**

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- The editor of Australia's major English-language Moslem newspaper has agreed to stop printing cartoons that depict Jews negatively.

Dr. Qazi Ashfaq Ahmad, editor in chief of the Australian Muslim Times and a man known for fostering interfaith dialogue between Moslems and Jews, said in response to protests, "It has never been the intention to place cartoons in the Australian Muslim Times that hurt the feelings of the members of the Jewish community."

Cartoons that appeared in three successive issues of the paper depicted figures with either hooked noses or large bellies and bulbous facial features. Jewish protesters said the caricatures "would not have been out of place in Nazi Germany."

Ahmad denied his paper, which serves Australia's 130,000 Moslems, had done anything other than attack Zionism. The cartoons, he said, "relate to Zionism and the political situation in the Middle East."

Despite Ahmad's quarrel with Zionism, he spoke earlier this year, during an appearance at the Jewish Free University, in favor of close cooperation between Moslems and Jews.

A spokesperson for Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission complimented the "appropriate" way that concerned members of the Jewish community had dealt with the issue and the paper's agreement to show a heightened sensitivity in the future.

## LOUIS FINKELSTEIN, DEAD AT 96, WAS CHANCELLOR EMERITUS OF JTS

NEW YORK, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Funeral services were held Sunday at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America for Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, its chancellor emeritus, who died Friday after a long bout with Parkinson's disease. He was 96.

Finkelstein, who transformed the seminary from a rabbinical school to a prestigious institute of higher Jewish learning, had an impact that also reached to secular society.

Among those he brought to the institute of Conservative Judaism was Chief Justice Earl Warren, who spent a Sabbath studying Torah at the seminary.

So extensive was Finkelstein's influence that in October 1951, the rabbi was the subject of a Time magazine cover story. On Jan. 20, 1957, he was invited to give a blessing at the second inauguration of President Dwight Eisenhower.

Finkelstein, who was also the seminary's Solomon Schechter professor of theology, had a long and distinguished career. He created the seminary's Cantor's Institute, the Seminary College of Jewish Music and a West Coast branch that became the University of Judaism.

He also founded, in 1938, the seminary's Institute for Religious and Social Studies, which in 1986 was renamed the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies.

In 1939, he created the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion.

The son of Simon Finkelstein, an Orthodox rabbi, and Hannah Brager Finkelstein, he was born in Cincinnati on June 14, 1895. When he was 7, his father assumed a new pulpit in Brooklyn and moved the family to New York.

A 1915 graduate of the City College of New York, Finkelstein received his doctorate from Columbia University in 1918 and was ordained by the seminary in 1919. He was rabbi of Congregation Kehillath Israel in the Bronx until 1931.

In 1937, he was named the seminary's provost. In 1940, he became its president, succeeding Dr. Cyrus Adler.

In 1951, when the post of president was abolished, he became the seminary's first chancellor, which he remained until he retired in 1972.

### Pioneer In Interfaith Outreach

Finkelstein was a pioneer in interfaith outreach. Under his leadership, the Institute for Religious and Social Studies brought together Catholic, Protestant and Jewish scholars to discuss theological issues.

"He made the ecumenical world aware of the centrality of the Judeo-Christian heritage," said Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, the seminary's current chancellor.

Finkelstein also authored numerous books. In addition to a four-volume work on the commentary on Leviticus, known as the Sifra, he wrote several books on the Pharisees, including the seminal volume, "The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith," which was written in 1938 and revised in 1963.

He "rehabilitated the Pharisees for Christian America," said Schorsch.

Among Finkelstein's other volumes were a biography of talmudic sage Rabbi Akiva, which he wrote in 1936 and revised in 1990; a book about the Egyptian-born Palestinian scholar Saadia Gaon; and a work on Jewish self-government in the Middle Ages.

## CALIFORNIA TOWN WILL GLOW WITH 28 CHANUKAH MENORAHS By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Because someone stole a homemade Chanukah menorah from the yard of a home in Agoura Hills, the streets of the town northwest of Los Angeles will be even more aglow this year during the Festival of Lights.

The stolen menorah, standing 6 feet high, had been constructed by Richard Bliss, his wife and their three children. It was standing on the lawn in front of their house, when a particularly mean-spirited thief made off with it.

The crime was never solved. But in response, 100 members of Temple Beth Haverim gathered in a local park a week ago with plastic pipes, pliers and electrical cords to fashion 28 more menorahs.

The chanukiot, each 4 feet high, with "candles" made of white plastic piping and topped by light bulbs, were to be lit in front of 28 homes Sunday evening, as the eight-day festival began.

"I am 100 percent convinced that without the vandalism last year, there would not have been 28 families building menorahs this year," said Richard Bliss, who supervised the project. "Without that bad seed being planted last year, this event would not have blossomed."

Rabbi Gary Johnson said the project would help instill in young members of the temple the tradition of displaying the menorah.

"Rather than getting back at someone, it is more of a feeling of 'Let's be positive and create something beautiful,'" said Johnson. "It was a consciousness-raising activity."

## ISRAEL HONORS CZECHOSLOVAKS WHO TRAINED HAGANAH TO FIGHT By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- A group of elderly veterans of the Czechoslovak army and air force were honored at the Israeli Embassy here last week for having trained recruits for the Haganah 43 years ago.

"We want to thank Czechoslovak friends who helped the State of Israel to be born and to survive," Israeli Ambassador Yoel Sher told a group of retired generals, colonels and other officers who trained the pilots, parachutists and other soldiers of what would ultimately become the Israeli army.

The training was done on Czechoslovak soil.

At the time the Nov. 27 ceremony was held, 14 former Czechoslovak officers who had participated in the training had been identified. Others are still being searched for.

Military and Haganah medals and diplomas were handed to the Czechoslovak officers by Chaim Gouri, an Israeli poet, journalist and filmmaker who himself received his parachutist training in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

He still remembers the Czech command words used in the training, and he recalled its rigors, which prepared him to fight in five wars for Israel's survival.

A retired Israeli air force colonel who was in Prague representing an Israeli manufacturing company told the gathering he had just been given the opportunity to sit once more in the pilot's cabin at the same airport where he received his training 43 years ago.

The decorated officers wished Israel a lasting peace.