

# **DEAN OF JTS RABBINICAL SCHOOL RESIGNS AFTER MAKING SEXUAL REMARK TO STUDENT** By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, April 4 (JTA) -- Rabbi Joel Roth, dean of the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school, has resigned in the wake of a scandal that has derailed the career of the Conservative movement's most prominent interpreter of Jewish law and tradition.

Roth resigned from the position March 29, several days after allegedly making a sexually explicit statement to a student at the seminary's West Coast affiliate, the Los Angeles-based University of Judaism.

Roth was one of six members of a committee interviewing a candidate for admission to the rabbinical school. According to an eyewitness, he made sexually suggestive remarks to the male student, leaving the other committee members stunned and angry.

"He said inappropriate things to the student," said Rabbi Eliot Dorff, the university provost and a member of the committee conducting the interview. Roth has "some deep-seated problems for which he needs help," Dorff said.

Roth did not return phone calls, and a family member, reached at home, said he was unavailable for comment.

But Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, the seminary's chancellor, said Roth resigned last week "because he felt he was becoming increasingly ineffective in his post as dean and was concerned it would impair the school, as well as the seminary."

The incident is significant in part because Roth has been a leading opponent of the Conservative movement taking a more liberalized approach on matters of sexuality. He recently led a campaign in the movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards to prohibit the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis.

It is also not the first time Roth has been accused of sexual impropriety. In fact, the Los Angeles incident occurred after a month in which Roth was surrounded by a storm of controversy over a much earlier incident in which he allegedly harassed a student sexually.

That incident, which allegedly occurred nine years ago, was brought to the attention of everyone at JTS through an unsigned letter distributed at the seminary four weeks ago.

## **1984 Incident Resurfaces**

The anonymous letter, which many believe was written by a rabbinical student, charged that Roth had sexually harassed a student in 1984 and that the JTS administration had not publicly admitted or dealt with what had transpired.

Roth served as dean of the seminary's rabbinical school for several years until 1984, when he stepped down.

According to several seminary graduates, Roth's 1984 resignation was part of a settlement to avert a threatened lawsuit from the family of the alleged sexual harassment victim. Roth, who is married, also promised at the time to seek counseling, according to these accounts.

In 1984, all rabbinical students were male.

Seminary officials confirm that something inappropriate transpired between Roth and a

student nine years ago, but they refuse to confirm or deny that it was of a sexual nature.

After resigning in 1984, Roth continued to teach at the seminary and later served as chairman of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

Rabbi Gordon Tucker succeeded him as head of the rabbinical school and occupied the position from 1984 until the summer of 1992, when he left on a two-year sabbatical.

Roth resumed as dean of the rabbinical school at the beginning of the current academic year. According to Schorsch, he will continue as a seminary faculty member, where he is a widely respected professor of Talmud and rabbinics.

In the course of several meetings of the law committee devoted to discussion of homosexuality in late 1991 and early 1992, Roth presented two responses that some supporters of gay and lesbian rights said were based on outmoded scientific sources and homophobic reasoning.

And while some said that the way Roth framed his views created a climate of rejection of gay and lesbian Jews at the seminary, the anonymous letter circulated in March is widely believed to have been written by a heterosexual woman student.

## **Community Troubled By Controversy**

The seminary community has been ripped apart by the controversy surrounding Roth. Both those who support Roth and those who feel that the seminary has mishandled the incident are concerned about the destructiveness of lashon harah, or gossip, and about what some have described as the administration's insensitivity to the sexual harassment of students.

Schorsch defended Roth after the anonymous letter was circulated and, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency after Roth resigned, portrayed the former dean as the victim of the letter writer.

"The anonymous letter placed him under the searchlight and made it difficult for him to conduct the affairs of the rabbinical school normally and naturally," said Schorsch.

A rabbinical student at the seminary criticized the chancellor for backing Roth. "Schorsch is out on a limb," the fourth-year student said. "He really undermines his support among the students."

The student, who requested anonymity for fear that he would be punished by the administration for speaking out, said that even before the anonymous letter was circulated many rabbinical students knew of the earlier alleged incident of harassment.

The administration's reluctance to deal head on with the questions about Roth's conduct have caused students great pain, the student said.

"Many students, as individuals, both before and after the letter, asked the administration to deal with this pastorally, to work this out in a communal way, so we would feel less isolated. It still hasn't happened and never will," he said.

When asked if there were any special programs slated in which the students' concerns would be addressed, Schorsch said, "We have counseling staff available and a very active student life office."

## U.S. MAY PERMANENTLY LIFT TRADE SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA

By Gary Pogrow

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, April 4 (JTA) -- The United States will review a host of Cold War sanctions applied against Russia, including the trade restrictions imposed by the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, President Clinton announced Sunday after a summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Russia has long sought to gain most-favored-nation trade status with the United States, but under Jackson-Vanik, America linked the trade benefit to Russia's emigration policies.

Clinton said he had been in consultation with Congress about removing the Jackson-Vanik restrictions against Russia permanently, but that the administration would not take a final position until after some more facts were checked.

The issue, Clinton said, is "a fact question: Are there any more people barred from emigrating which have not been allowed to?"

Clinton said Yeltsin assured him whoever wanted to emigrate was able to do so, but that the United States wanted to confirm this.

Yeltsin, however, implied in his remarks that the matter had already been settled.

"We've decided to do away with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and resolve other legislative issues," the jubilant Russian leader said at a joint news conference in which Clinton announced a \$1.6 billion of loans and grants to spur Russia's transition to a market economy.

Jackson-Vanik was enacted in 1974 as a means of putting pressure on the Soviet Union to increase the level of Jewish emigration. Since the current emigration boom began in the late 1980s, the United States has waived the trade restrictions on an annual basis.

But the United States has stopped short of permanently lifting the ban.

White House Communications Director George Stephanopoulos told reporters here that the administration would look into claims that up to 300 Jews are still being denied the right to leave.

### Jewish Groups Split Over Issue

In recent weeks, American Jewish groups have staked out differing positions, with some calling for Congress to permanently remove Russia from the terms of the amendment, others supporting a continuation of a year-by-year waiver if justified by the facts on the ground, and still others insisting that the amendment's full sanctions be enforced.

Calling for the rescission of Jackson-Vanik was the American Jewish Congress, which argued that "the most important protection that can be accorded Russian Jews -- along with all minorities in that country -- is to promote the stability of the Russian government and the preservation of democratic institutions and practices."

Removing the amendment would shore up democracy, the AJCongress maintains, since it would "constitute a significant gesture of support and would provide an additional stimulus and incentive for the still embryonic Russian private sector."

But the National Conference on Soviet Jewry sharply disagrees.

"There are still issues that remain to be resolved" regarding emigration rights and procedures, the agency's executive director, Mark Levin, said Sunday.

These include the failure, until now, to

establish a promised review commission to look into those denied permission to exit because of knowledge of so-called state secrets.

More fundamentally, Levin cites the "political uncertainty and volatility" of Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union as a reason not to eliminate Jackson-Vanik and instead continue the present process of granting a waiver on a year-by-year basis.

At the same time, Levin said, the National Conference strongly supports Western assistance to Russia "to continue the democratic and economic reforms," as well as the announced review of Cold War-era statutes.

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, on the other hand, believes that U.S. aid to Russia should be conditional on "measurable progress on human rights and the democracy infrastructure in Russia."

## ALIYAH FROM EX-SOVIET LANDS UP SLIGHTLY FOR FIRST QUARTER

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- First-quarter figures show immigration to Israel is up slightly this year, but officials here are reluctant to draw conclusions about whether this signifies a changing trend.

They say the unstable picture in the republics of the former Soviet Union, which are supplying the bulk of the immigrants, injects too much uncertainty into the process to predict patterns, even for the rest of the year.

One spokesman for the Absorption Ministry went so far as to say said he doubted immigration would reach the projected and budgeted-for level of 120,000 immigrants this year.

In March, 7,146 immigrants arrived here from around the world, with 6,120 coming from the former Soviet Union. That was up slightly from February, when 5,408 in olim arrived, including 4,612 from the republics.

In addition, 2,979 immigrants from the Soviet successor states arrived in the United States last month under the government's refugee program, according to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in New York. That is a slight increase over February's total, but still smaller than January's figure.

The March figures bring immigration to Israel from the republics for the first quarter of this year to 16,796. That is slightly ahead of where aliyah was at this time last year, when 15,383 immigrants arrived from the former Soviet Union in the first three months.

"The general trend of the last six months (shows) an interest in immigration as a result of the political and economic crises" in the former Soviet Union, said Yehuda Weinraub, spokesman for the Jewish Agency for Israel.

"But we'll have to see if the interest is sustained," he added.

"It is a little too early to generalize from the recent figures," agreed an Absorption Ministry spokesman. "I am not sure the flow will get stronger. We should wait and see."

Absorption Minister Yair Tshaban was visiting Ukraine on Sunday and was asked his prediction about this year's trends. According to the spokesman, he said the flow of immigrants from the republic would increase if the current economic instability there prevails.

Tshaban was on a trip to Russia, Ukraine and Moldavia, to observe the emigration process and to check on the needs of prospective immigrants.

**DEATHS BY ARABS HAVE DIED DOWN,  
BUT 1 ISRAELI MISTAKENLY KILLED**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's move to seal off Israel proper from the administered territories appears to have achieved its goal of stemming the bloody wave of violence that claimed 15 Israeli lives last month.

No Palestinian attacks on Israelis were reported over the weekend.

But the heightened tension in the territories resulted in the tragic killing of one Jewish settler in the West Bank. A policeman was shot to death by Israeli soldiers after he failed to obey orders to stop at two roadblocks.

The dead man, Eitan Massika, had left his home in Ma'aleh Efraim on Friday night and picked up three hitchhiking soldiers on his way west toward Tel Aviv.

Massika, 31, ignored soldiers' orders to stop at one roadblock, apparently suspecting they were Arabs. The soldiers notified the next roadblock ahead about the "suspicious" car.

When he also failed to stop at the second roadblock, soldiers fired at the car, killing Massika and wounding two of his hitchhiking passengers.

According to an initial army investigation, the soldiers acted according to regulations, firing at a vehicle that refused to stop at roadblocks.

Meanwhile, the ban on allowing Palestinians from the territories to enter Israel was expected to last until the end of the Passover holiday next week.

And even then, political observers said, there will be greater restrictions than before the crackdown.

The Israel Defense Force has also taken advantage of the closure to capture a wanted Palestinian gunman.

Security forces said that over the weekend they caught the terrorist allegedly responsible for the murders last month of two Jewish settlers, Yehzekel Avraham and Simcha Levy, who were killed in separate attacks in the Gaza Strip.

The IDF said it found a cache of explosives at the Khan Yunis home of the suspect, Abdul Aziz Masri.

**BOTH RABIN AND SHAMIR FACE CHARGE  
THEY IGNORED CALL TO FIRE GSS HEAD**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- A television report that both Prime Ministers Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin ignored recommendations to fire the head of the General Security Service has created a political sensation here.

In addition, both Attorney General Yosef Harish and Advocate General Dorit Beinisch issued a joint statement over the weekend denying an insinuation in the same report that they had recommended that the official be fired.

Although the report disclosed little new information and no changes were expected at the head of the GSS, known as the Shin Bet, public discussion alone of an official in such a sensitive position is enough to capture headlines in the local media.

Both Rabin and the Cabinet rejected charges about shortcomings in the performance of the Shin Bet director, whose identity is not allowed to be revealed by the media.

Rabin termed the report an old story and

said its broadcast now was "irresponsible and harmful in the war against terror."

Newspaper reporters noted that the recommendation to remove the official was 2 years old and speculated that either the political opposition or a power struggle within the secret service was behind the issue being raised anew.

The entire affair over the Shin Bet head began three years ago, when anonymous letters received at the office of the state comptroller faulted the director for various administrative issues.

As a result of the complaints, former Prime Minister Shamir in 1990 appointed reserve Gen. Rafael Vardi to investigate the complaints.

Vardi conducted a lengthy investigation, checking several incidents, including expenses for a paint job on the director's car, a recommendation for a work permit given to a Palestinian employed by the director's friend, a bouquet of flowers sent to State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat when she assumed office, and an unreported meeting with a journalist.

Although Vardi's report noted several irregularities in the behavior of the official, it reportedly did not include a recommendation to remove the official.

**DINITZ PLEDGES FULL COOPERATION  
WITH POLICE INQUIRY INTO FINANCES**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz says he and the Jewish Agency will cooperate fully with a police investigation into alleged financial irregularities at the agency.

The investigation was triggered by a formal complaint from Likud Knesset member Limor Livnat following a report by the Jewish Agency comptroller on the agency's financial affairs that was made public in February.

The report was prompted, in part, by highly publicized charges that Dinitz misused Jewish Agency credit cards, including for personal business. The charges were an embarrassment to the agency, which is the largest recipient of funds collected in the United States by the United Jewish Appeal and elsewhere by Keren Hayesod.

The comptroller cited financial irregularities but essentially blamed lax bookkeeping practices at the Jewish Agency.

In response, the agency's legal adviser issued an official statement saying that no bad faith was intended by Dinitz and that he had rectified any irregularities that might have occurred.

"The Jewish Agency and Simcha Dinitz have nothing to hide, and therefore are cooperating fully with the investigation," an agency spokesman said Sunday.

Dinitz has given instructions to Jewish Agency employees to extend their fullest cooperation to the probe, the spokesman said.

Sources close to Dinitz stress that no new evidence or information has surfaced since the report, and that the police were obligated to respond to the complaint, which they charge was a politically motivated move against Dinitz, a Laborite.

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Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Wednesday, April 7, or Thursday, April 8.

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**FOREIGN AID OUTLOOK:**

**ISRAEL AID LIKELY TO STAY SAME FOR '94 DESPITE PRESSURE TO CUT**  
[Part 1 of a Series]

By Deborah Kalb  
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 4 (JTA) -- The Clinton administration has voiced strong support for maintaining U.S. aid to Israel at its annual level of \$3 billion for another year, and experts predict Congress will go along with the president this time around.

President Clinton and his foreign policy team have been seizing every opportunity recently to voice support for Israel and its security needs, an attitude welcomed by American Jewish groups.

But foreign aid, as even Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin noted last month in a televised speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, is "not the most popular" topic "nowadays in the United States and on the Hill."

While the pro-Israel community expects this year's foreign aid bill to pass, it is gearing up for a tough fight.

Experts suggest the Clinton administration is reacting favorably to Rabin because the United States prefers the foreign policy of his Labor government to that of the Likud opposition now led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher "want this guy to stay in power," one analyst said of the administration's view of Rabin. "They recognize, which Bush never understood, that you don't get concessions from Israel by bullying."

In addition, many observers cite the delicate balance of the Middle East peace process as a reason for the United States to keep Israel's aid level constant.

"The U.S. shouldn't send a signal to any of the parties" in the talks that it "will start changing aid levels," said Gail Pressberg, president of Americans for Peace Now. "Aid is a very sensitive issue of foreign policy, and this is not the time to tamper with it."

At a Senate hearing last week, Christopher said that funds for increasing U.S. aid to Russia should not come out of aid to Middle Eastern countries, in part because of those countries' needs during the peace process.

**Israel Is The 'Good Guys' Again**

But the administration has sent conflicting signals over the future of aid to Israel.

While Christopher said last month that progress toward peace and improving Middle East economic conditions could lessen the need for American aid, a senior White House official suggested a week later that aid to Israel could be increased to compensate for any security concerns the country faced as the peace talks progressed.

Such an increase would follow the Camp David model. After the 1978 agreement with Egypt was signed, Israel was compensated for the relocation of military facilities and other costs connected with giving up Sinai.

The recent wave of Arab violence in Israel and the territories has made Americans more aware of Israel's security problems, sources say, and therefore could create a climate more sympathetic to Israel's financial and security needs.

"The general mood," one source said, "is that Israel is the 'good guys' again."

Any move to cut back on Israel's aid right

now, even if motivated purely by fiscal considerations, would send a signal the Clinton administration apparently has no desire to transmit.

The administration is "establishing its bona fides as a friend of Israel," said Daniel Pipes, director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia.

Pipes advocates reducing Israel's dependence on U.S. aid but argues that such a step is difficult for friends of Israel because of the political symbolism inherent in cutting aid to an ally.

Supporters of U.S. aid to Israel argue, as they always have, that the assistance benefits the United States by creating business and therefore jobs for the American military industry. They say foreign aid represents only about 1 percent of the overall U.S. budget and that 80 percent of foreign aid is actually spent in the United States.

But these advocates are operating in a difficult economic climate, geared more toward financial sacrifice at home than largess to those abroad.

The administration is expected to provide more specifics on its international budget soon, but so far it has said it seeks to slash over \$2.3 billion in "outlay savings" for fiscal years 1994 through 1997, from overall international budgets totaling over \$88 billion.

**'The Votes Will Be There'**

The cost-cutting mood is also prevalent on Capitol Hill.

It will be "much more difficult" this year to pass the foreign aid bill, said one Hill staffer.

In recent years, the staffer said, Republicans tended to support the aid bill because a Republican was in the White House. Now they might be less likely to support a Democratic president's foreign aid request. In addition, some Democrats may buck their party's traditional support for foreign aid as a show of support for domestic priorities.

One congressional aide said that immediately after Clinton announced his economic message in February, some in the pro-Israel community had begun sending out feelers on the Hill about offering a "little cut" in aid to Israel, if such a cut was, in fact, inevitable.

But in the wake of the administration's strong comments in support of maintaining Israel's current aid level, talk of "willingly conceding and taking a cut has dissipated," the aide said.

Another problem for foreign aid advocates is that unlike last year, foreign aid is no longer "protected" and walled off from domestic spending. This year, members of Congress could move money from the foreign aid account into a domestic program if they wanted to.

The situation regarding aid to Israel "is more dangerous than in years," one Hill staffer said. The administration support "is reassuring," the aide said, "but there is still fear" in the pro-Israel community.

Nevertheless, supporters of aid to Israel believe everything will eventually work out to their liking.

While the pro-Israel community will have to "put a lot of energy into advocacy and education," Pressberg said, "I think things on the Hill will work out. In the end, the votes will be there."

"The bottom line," said one congressional aide, "is that there's a lot of talk about potential threats about cutting aid to Israel, but there's relatively little chance that it will happen."