

**U.S. PLANS FUND-RAISING CONFERENCE  
TO BOLSTER ISRAELI-PLO PEACE ACCORD**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- The United States has decided to convene an international conference to secure financial backing for the historic Israeli-Palestinian accord signed at the White House last week.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Monday that the United States would invite finance and foreign ministers from European, Middle Eastern and other countries to an international conference "to support Middle East peace."

"Today, on behalf of President Clinton, I announce our intention to lead a wide-ranging effort, not simply to give peace a chance, but to ensure that it will not fail," Christopher said.

Israeli and Palestinian representatives will be included in the conference, which State Department officials said would take place within the next several weeks.

In addition, the secretary said the Clinton administration would create a task force of leading Jewish and Arab Americans to help develop projects and private investment in the region.

Christopher cited an initial World Bank estimate that at least \$3 billion would be needed over the next 10 years to build a viable economic system in the impoverished West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The secretary's remarks, in a major foreign policy speech at Columbia University in New York, represented the administration's efforts to build on the landmark Israeli-Palestinian agreement that would grant limited self-rule to Palestinians, beginning with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Christopher said that with the help of the U.S. Congress, the administration hoped to come up with a two-year, \$250 million aid package for the Palestinians.

The sense here has been that the Americans would function more as an assembler of international sources of assistance and less as a provider of vast quantities of U.S. aid.

Foreign aid has not been a popular issue here lately, and it is doubtful that very large amounts of assistance would be forthcoming from Congress.

**Commitment To Israel 'Unshakable'**

But Christopher reiterated the administration's oft-stated commitment to Israel and its security.

"I restate a longstanding pledge to the Israeli public. As you and your leaders continue down the courageous path you have chosen, you should know that America's commitment to Israeli security and well-being will remain unshakable," he said.

The administration is ready to present Congress with a newly revamped plan for allocating foreign aid around the world, leading some to ask how long Israel will continue to receive its annual installment of \$3 billion in U.S. aid.

But the administration has hinted that Israel could actually receive more aid in the future because of its role in the peace process.

Christopher said that the administration is

"confident" that the Palestinians' needs will be met with the international aid effort, which would be partly coordinated by the World Bank.

The conference is to be convened by Christopher and Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, along with their Russian counterparts.

In his address at Columbia, the secretary also called for other changes in the wake of the historic Israeli-Palestinian accord.

He addressed the question of the longtime Arab boycott of Israel, calling it "illogical."

"The boycott is a relic of the past. It should be relegated to history right now," he said.

Christopher also called on the U.S. Congress to amend "statutes that inhibit dealing with the PLO and are really quite antiquated at this time."

The Palestine Liberation Organization, with which the Clinton administration recently renewed its dialogue, is reportedly seeking to open a diplomatic office here by next month.

But opening an office would require amendments to congressional legislation barring certain dealings with the PLO, long regarded as a terrorist organization.

**ISRAEL SENDS A TEAM TO TUNIS,  
IN PART TO NEGOTIATE WITH PLO**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- For the first time ever, Israel has sent an official delegation to Tunis, in part to discuss arrangements for Palestinian self-rule with officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is headquartered there.

The trip is significant because Israel and Tunisia do not have diplomatic relations. Last week, Tunisian officials were quoted as saying their government is ready to establish relations as soon as another Arab country does so.

Currently, Egypt is the only Arab country to have diplomatic ties with Israel. But in the wake of last week's historic Israeli-PLO agreement on self-rule, several Arab countries, including Morocco and the Persian Gulf states, have indicated interest in making such a move.

The three members of the Israeli delegation reportedly were given a subdued reception by junior protocol officials of the Tunisian Foreign Ministry.

According to news reports from Tunis, the Interior Ministry banned camera crews from photographing the delegation's arrival and told reporters they could not interview the three Israelis.

Officially, the Israeli team is in Tunis to help lay the groundwork for the next round of multilateral talks on refugees, scheduled to convene there Oct. 12-14.

But the team was also expected to take part in discussions with PLO officials on a variety of technical issues concerning the establishing of a Palestinian self-governing authority in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

The mission is the latest indication that Israel's top priority in the peace process at the moment is implementing the agreement on Palestinian self-rule.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made that

clear Sunday during his meeting with Hosni Mubarak at the Egyptian president's summer residence in Alexandria.

Despite that stated priority, the two leaders devoted most of their meeting to discussing the prospects of peace with Syria.

Rabin is reported to have told Mubarak that Syria must curb attacks by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement before any meaningful progress can be made toward a peace agreement with Israel.

#### **Mubarak Says Syria Wants Peace**

"The purpose of our negotiations with Syria is to achieve a peace treaty," Rabin told reporters after the meeting.

"We will continue to negotiate, but at this stage I see the key issue as good implementation of the agreements that were reached with the Palestinians," he said.

But Mubarak was optimistic that Israel would soon reach an agreement with the regime of Syrian President Hafez Assad.

"I think Syria genuinely wants peace. I heard this from President Assad several times," Mubarak said at a joint news conference after the summit meeting.

And in an interview Monday with Israel Radio, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said peace with Syria could be reached without delay if Damascus helps set the right tone.

"We don't criticize anybody," Peres said, referring to Syria, "but we feel peace must be (reached) in the proper air."

Rabin has recently expressed his open distrust of Assad, saying that the Syrian leader offers peace "with one hand," but "with the other hand" gives his support to militant Palestinian group based on Syrian soil.

Assad has given only qualified support to the Israeli-PLO agreement, and his country has for years served as host to some 10 militant Palestinian groups, including Hezbollah, that have vowed to derail the historic accord.

During the radio interview, Peres said he saw no reason why peace with Syria could not be achieved in the coming months despite Israel's current focus on implementing the accord with the PLO.

He said peace with Syria would have to be "worked out very carefully," away from the "headlines," and that he believes Israelis are ready to make concessions to Syria because they are "sincerely seeking peace."

#### **NEWS ANALYSIS:**

#### **ISRAEL'S ACCORD WITH THE PLO IS SOURCE OF WORRY FOR KING HUSSEIN**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- For years, Jordan's King Hussein has seen attempts to establish peace between his country and Israel evaporate.

His grandfather, King Abdullah, was murdered in 1951 because of his intention to make peace with Israel.

Hussein himself was on the verge of signing an accord with Israel in 1987, but then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir foiled the agreement that the king and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had worked out.

Now, when the bells of peace are ringing in the Middle East, when Hussein is no longer threatened with being the only Arab to make

peace with the "Zionist enemy," the king is unhappy.

In his eyes, the Israeli-Palestinian accord signed last week in Washington threatens the peace of Amman much more than that of Tel Aviv.

When Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Amman on Monday, the Jordanians made it clear that they intended to protect themselves within the changing political circumstances as much as they could.

Some 2.5 million of the 3.7 million residents of Jordan are Palestinians, with more than 1 million of them registered as refugees. Hussein fears that Jordan may become a target of Palestinian aspirations for a larger state.

Arafat has been speaking enthusiastically of a future confederation between a Palestinian state and Jordan.

But Hussein knows very well that a new Palestinian political entity, which is likely to be surrounded by an Israeli security belt, will have eyes for his territory -- if only because most Jordanians are Palestinians.

This is why, when Hussein addressed a news conference in Amman this week, his eyes seemed sadder than ever, even as he reiterated his commitment to the Palestinian cause and his respect for the Palestinian right to self-determination.

For the first time in the 45-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hussein no longer feels he and Israel secretly share a common enemy: the Palestinians.

#### **Steps Taken To Show Unhappiness**

Hussein's first reaction to the Israeli-PLO accord was negative. He expressed disappointment that the Palestinians had not consulted him beforehand.

But the king later realized that as a long-time overt supporter of the Palestinian cause, he could not remain against the accord. He subsequently endorsed the agreement, reiterating all the while the need for "Arab coordination."

In the past few days, Jordanian officials have taken several practical steps to show their unhappiness with the accord.

A senior Jordanian source said the government intended to deport to the West Bank all Palestinians who do not have permanent resident status in Jordan.

And last week, the Jordanians prevented several Palestinians from crossing the Allenby Bridge into Jordan. The action implicitly told the Palestinians that even after they take over the West Bank town of Jericho, the nearby Allenby Bridge will remain within Jordanian control.

Moreover, Hussein declared that he intended to keep his hold on the Islamic religious establishment in eastern Jerusalem and that he continues to regard himself as the guardian of all Islamic holy sites there.

In what is possibly the most significant step, Hussein has been considering the idea of postponing Jordan's parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for November.

The king apparently is worried that the election may provide a platform for Palestinians to strengthen their presence within the Jordanian political community.

Perhaps in an attempt to reassure Hussein, the Clinton administration last week released \$30 million in foreign aid to Jordan that had been held up to encourage Amman to comply with international sanctions against Iraq.

## ISRAELI AND PLO ENVOYS TO U.N. MEET PRIOR TO OPENING OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- Israel's ambassador to the United Nations joined the U.N. observer from the Palestine Liberation Organization for an informal lunch Monday, on the eve of the opening of a General Assembly session that is likely to sweep away decades of anti-Israel resolutions.

The meeting between Gad Yaacobi, Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, and Nasser al-Kidwa, the Palestinian permanent observer, one day before the opening of the 48th annual General Assembly, was arranged and hosted by Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Elaraby.

Egypt, along with the United States and Russia, the two co-sponsors of the Madrid-launched peace process, has agreed to help update, defer or eliminate the anti-Israel resolutions that the General Assembly until last year passed like clockwork to overwhelming Soviet- and Arab-backed majorities.

Yaacobi asked Kidwa to lend a hand to the effort as well.

The two diplomats also discussed putting forward a positive U.N. resolution, which would applaud the recent Israeli-PLO accord and call for funds for the development of the territories.

Yaacobi has said he is interested in a "working relationship" with the PLO at the United Nations. But he has stressed that he will be no less vigilant in insisting that U.N. bodies treat the PLO in accordance with its observer status in the world body, rather than as a full-fledged member.

But the Yaacobi-Kidwa meeting heralds a dramatic shift from the days when the PLO's anti-Israel rhetoric was the centerpiece of United Nations activity and an Israeli diplomat could not get his hand shaken in the U.N. corridors.

The anti-Israel tide at the United Nations began to turn in 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of a Western coalition in the Persian Gulf War and the opening of Middle East peace talks in Madrid.

This was seen most dramatically with the repeal that year of the 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism.

### Looking Forward To Changed Climate

Last year, many of the most egregious anti-Israel resolutions were toned down or not even put to a vote. On several votes, the number of abstentions equaled the number of supporters.

Yaacobi expects that "this year, perhaps, we will defer or change or eliminate some more."

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency shortly before the historic Israeli-PLO accord was signed in Washington, Yaacobi was looking forward to a changed climate at the General Assembly.

"Who will endorse the resolution calling for an international peace conference on the Middle East, which year after year is being recycled in the General Assembly? Who will endorse the resolution about the uprising of the Palestinian people?" he asked rhetorically.

"All those resolutions and many others will become visibly irrelevant in the eyes of many member states," he said.

In a foreign policy address Monday at Columbia University, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher called on the United Nations

to revoke "resolutions that challenge Israel's very right to exist."

If, as the Israeli and PLO officials discussed, the General Assembly passes positive resolutions supporting the peace process, that would be a marked contrast to the world body's opposition to the Camp David accords, which led to a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

Such support would also help the world body play a role in the implementation of the peace agreement, a role the Israeli government would welcome, said Yaacobi.

"The U.N. itself can contribute to the creation of a new economic, social, technological and scientific environment in the territories, and in the Mideast region," said Yaacobi.

Eight months ago the ambassador urged the United Nations Development Program to double its \$17 million in annual aid to the territories.

"We still think it's too little to cope with the very urgent needs," said Yaacobi.

International supporters of the peace accord, which grants Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, have agreed that the plan cannot work without increased economic aid to the territories.

With the announcement of the peace accord, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali established a high-level task force focused on the economic and social development of Gaza and Jericho.

### Full Equality Still Elusive Goal

Scheduled to prepare proposals by this week, the task force was charged with establishing an integrated approach toward development, coordinating development plans of other institutions and mobilizing international financial support.

Yaacobi welcomed the creation of the task force, which was scheduled to meet with Israeli officials here.

But oddly, acceptance by the United Nations of Israel's approach to the peace process and its rapprochement with the PLO may not be sufficient for Israel to achieve full equality at the United Nations.

Such equality, namely the ability to serve on the Security Council and other key committees, is dependent on being a member of a regional group.

Israel has long been excluded from the Asian group by the Arab countries, something which is unlikely to change until peace is achieved with Syria, at the least.

Given its longstanding isolation at the United Nations, Israel made little effort to join a regional group. Then last year, with ties established to a majority of U.N. member-nations and no longer considered a pariah by the world body, Israel began to seek observer status in the Western European and Others regional group. This group includes such Western but non-European nations as the United States and Australia.

So far, Israel has won support from most members of the group, but not the unanimous support it needs.

"The main problem emerging is related to the reluctance of members of the group to share with us" the limited number of elected positions at the United Nations, which are apportioned based on regional groups, said Yaacobi.

Yaacobi hopes to overcome the self-interest of the European states by appealing for a gesture in response to the recent breakthroughs in the peace process.

"It's very important," he said.

## BRATSLAV HASIDIM FLOCK TO UMAN FOR ANNUAL VISIT TO REBBE'S GRAVE

By Jed Sunden

UMAN, Ukraine (JTA) -- Following a tradition that dates back to the beginning of the last century, thousands of Hasidic pilgrims made their way to this small Ukrainian city lying halfway between Kiev and Odessa, to visit the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav at Rosh Hashanah.

Uman today looks like a typical post-Soviet-era city. The square in the center of town still has a huge statue of Lenin, alongside of which dozens of private entrepreneurs sell produce or consumer products brought over the border from Poland.

On the outskirts of Uman, factories, smokestacks and rows of gray Soviet-style apartment buildings are piled next to old, little cottages.

If it were not for the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav and the thousands of Jews who have come to his grave wearing their best black hats and caftans, there would be nothing to distinguish Uman from the hundreds of other small Ukrainian cities.

Born in 1772, Rabbi Nachman became famous for his teachings and mystical interpretations of Jewish texts.

A great-grandson of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Nachman emerged as one of the leading figures of the burgeoning Hasidic movement.

Suffering from tuberculosis, Rabbi Nachman moved to Uman to be near the mass grave of the Jews of Uman, who were forced to choose between conversion or death during the Chmielnicki revolt and massacres of 1648-49.

According to his wishes, when he died, Rabbi Nachman was buried amid the 20,000 martyrs of the Haidamak persecutions in the 18th century, which were more limited in scope than the Chmielnicki massacres, but even more terrible in their cruelty.

On his death bed, he promised his followers that he would personally intercede on behalf of anyone who visited him, saying that he would lift them out of hell by their peyos (earlocks).

Since then, his followers have returned to Uman every year on Rosh Hashanah to pray, sing and dance at his grave. He remains the only leader, or rebbe, that the Bratslav Hasidim have ever had.

### House Built Adjacent To Site

After the Russian Revolution, the Communist government tried to stop the gatherings by forbidding Jews from Poland to enter the country and by closing in 1937 the last synagogue in the city, turning it into a metalworks factory.

During World War II, Uman and its graveyard became the scene of intensive fighting between the Soviet and German armies.

Returning to the site after the war, the Jews of Uman discovered the cemetery had been devastated and the gravesite had been demolished by a hand grenade.

After the war, the Soviet government announced plans to build housing units on the site.

The sole remaining Bratslav Hasid living in Uman, a convert to Judaism named Reb Daniel, quickly bought the land. The precise site of the grave was found, and Reb Daniel built a house near it.

The wall of the house was placed flush against the grave with a window above it to

prevent extensions and insure that nothing else would ever be built over the site, thus protecting the sanctity of the grave.

Before he left for Israel, Reb Daniel sold the house to Yakob, a now-elderly Ukrainian who still lives there today.

Though the site was preserved, the grave remained off limits to Jews.

It was not until 1988 that the Soviet government, then experiencing the first awakenings of perestroika, allowed the first group of 250 Jews to visit the grave.

Since then, the number of Jews visiting the site has grown every year. About 4,000 Jewish pilgrims were expected for this Rosh Hashanah.

Air Ukraine added extra flights on its Kiev-New York route for what is known as "Uman week," and dozens of charters came in from Israel.

Visiting Jews seemingly took over Uman for the week, turning it upside down, but providing an incredible boost to the local economy.

A local organizing committee, which had been here since the beginning of the summer, rented out dozens of apartments in the housing complex that overlooks the grave to accommodate all the visitors.

Local banks set up mobile currency-exchange centers in parked cars near the gravesite, while hundreds of locals were selling souvenirs or trinkets of all sorts to the tourists.

Many local residents were able to make the equivalent of several months' salary during the course of the week.

### New Synagogue Quickly Erected

The main kitchen had over 100 Israelis as well as 20 Ukrainians working there preparing kosher meals. In contrast to past years, most of the food was not flown in from Israel but came from Ukraine.

A shochet, or ritual slaughterer, had been slaughtering meat for a month in advance.

Perhaps most impressively, an entire synagogue -- the first to be built in Ukraine since before the Bolshevik Revolution -- was put up in just 3 1/2 weeks by a local contracting company working overtime.

In addition, several mikvahs, or ritual baths, were built and were operating during the week.

The pilgrimage to Uman has become such a central event for Bratslav Hasidim that a small international uproar broke out when Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk agreed earlier this year to a request from then-Israeli President Chaim Herzog to transfer the remains of Rabbi Nachman to Israel.

Both the Israeli and Ukrainian presidents, who thought they would be doing the Hasidim a favor, were besieged by protests from the group, which insisted that the remains stay put in Uman.

Chaim Blum, an American living in Israel, has come to Uman for the past two years. "Reb Nachman said to come here to Uman to visit him on Rosh Hashanah, so Jews have always come, no matter what the difficulties. It is often difficult to do but it is important," said Blum.

For Itzhak Goluboy, a smiling, blond, 13-year-old Jewish boy living in Uman, the event takes on another significance.

For a week, instead of being a tiny community of 50 Jews, Uman is transformed into a thriving Jewish city. Said Goluboy: "When I came by the grave and saw so many Jews in Uman, I got very excited."