



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



Issue Number 66
February 2013

Netanyahu to US Senators: Priority is Iran

Iran Media: “Obama Expected to Nominate Anti-Israel Hagel as Secretary of Defense”



Leading with a picture of former Senator Chuck Hagel in front of an American flag (left), the Iranian online English language news network, PressTV, described President Obama’s nominee for the US Secretary of Defense as “an outspoken critic of Israel.” It reported that “... some in the Israeli lobby have reportedly reacted with alarm to reports of Hagel’s nomination as he is known as an outspoken critic of the Zionist lobby in Washington.”

“The political reality is ... that the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here,” Hagel told former Mideast peace negotiator Aaron David Miller, in a 2006 interview quoted by PressTV. “I have always argued against some of the dumb things they do,” he added. In a 2008 interview, Hagel said that he had never signed any of the letters by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) showing support for Israel or taking stances against Israel’s enemies. “I’m not an Israeli senator. I’m a United States senator,” he reiterated.

In 2009, Hagel signed a statement calling on Obama to encourage a unity government between the two major Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas.

Pundits believe that appointment of Hagel could spark tensions between Washington and Tel Aviv, but they predict no considerable trouble in his confirmation process in the Congress as he enjoys bipartisan support. [PressTV]



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a group of visiting US Senators during January that if reelected he will work to stop Iran’s illicit nuclear march. “My priority, if I’m elected for a next term as prime minister, will be first to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons,” he

told the group, which included Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY, photo at left). “I think that was and remains the highest priority for both our countries. I appreciate the American support and your support for that end.”

Even as Netanyahu refocused on the Iranian threat, the UN nuclear agency chief said he was not optimistic about talks with Iran on getting access to a military base Western powers suspect has been used for atomic-weapons related work. “The outlook is not bright,” Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said in Tokyo.

Western powers say Iran is trying to develop the capability to make atomic weapons, a charge the Islamic Republic denies.

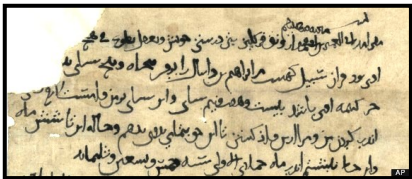
Amano said in Japanese comments translated into English: “Talks with Iran don’t proceed in a linear way. It’s one step forward, two or three steps back ... So we can’t say we have an optimistic outlook for the next meeting.”

At the meeting with Netanyahu, Senator McConnell touted strong bipartisan support for Israel in the United States, even while the Republican and Democratic parties face off on other issues.

“As everybody in Israel knows, there are a lot of things we disagree on in America, we’ve had big battles over deficit and debt, but there’s broad bipartisan support for Israel, and our agenda in this part of the world is the same as your agenda,” he said. “You’re one of our best friends and we’re happy to continue that relationship.”

US President Barack Obama’s nomination of Chuck Hagel to the defense secretary position raised eyebrows in Jerusalem and among pro-Israel politicians in the US, concerned over the former Senator’s Israel record. Critics accuse Hagel of opposing sanctions and being satisfied with containing Tehran, as opposed to preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon. [JPost]

Genizah Manuscripts Discovered in Afghanistan Revealing Jewish Presence Unveiled At Israel's National Library



A trove of ancient manuscripts in Hebrew characters rescued from caves in a Taliban stronghold in northern Afghanistan is providing

the first physical evidence of a Jewish community that thrived there a thousand years ago. Israel's National Library unveiled the cache of recently purchased documents that run the gamut of life experiences, including biblical commentaries, personal letters and financial records.

Researchers say the "Afghan Genizah" marks the greatest such archive found since the "Cairo Genizah" was discovered in an Egyptian synagogue more than 100 years ago, a vast depository of medieval manuscripts considered to be among the most valuable collections of historical documents ever found. Genizah, a Hebrew term that loosely translates as "storage," refers to a storeroom adjacent to a synagogue or Jewish cemetery where Hebrew-language books and papers are kept.

The Afghan collection gives an unprecedented look into the lives of Jews of Persia in the 11th century. The paper manuscripts, preserved over the centuries by the dry, shady conditions of the caves, include writings in Hebrew, Aramaic, Judea-Arabic and the unique Judeo-Persian language from that era, written in Hebrew letters.

"It was the Yiddish of Persian Jews," said Haggai Ben-Shammai, the library's academic director. Ben-Shammai said they included mentions of distinctly Jewish names and evidence of their commercial activities along the "Silk road" connecting Europe and the East. The obscure Judeo-Persian language, along with carbon dating technology, helped verify the authenticity of the collection, he said. "We've had many historical sources on Jewish settlements in that area," he said. "This is the first time that we have a large collection of manuscripts that represents the culture of the Jews that lived there. Until today we had nothing of this."

Muslim Brotherhood Official: Egyptian Jews Should Return to Egypt

A senior Muslim Brotherhood official called on Jews who immigrated to Israel from Egypt to return to Egypt and leave Israel to the Palestinians. Essam el-Erian said in a recent interview that every Egyptian has the right to live in Egypt, and Egyptian Jews living in Israel were contributing to the occupation of Arab lands.

Several online newspapers have reported that some 1.7 million documents, purportedly containing details about

The documents are believed to have come from caves in the northeast region of modern-day Afghanistan, once at the outer reaches of the Persian empire. In recent years, the same caves have served as hideouts for Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan.

Ben-Shammai said the library was contacted by various antiquities dealers who got their hands on them. In December 2012, the library purchased 29 of hundreds of the documents believed to be around the world, after long negotiations with antiquities dealers. The library refused to say how much it paid for the collection, adding that it hoped to purchase more and didn't want to drive up prices. The documents arrived in Israel in January.

The Cairo Genizah was discovered in the late 1800s in Cairo's Ben Ezra Synagogue, built in the ninth century. It included thousands of documents Jews stored there for more than 1,000 years.

Ben-Shammai said it was too early to compare the two, and it would take a long time to sift through the findings from Afghanistan. He said they were already significant since no other Hebrew writings had ever been found so far from the Holy Land. He said the Jewish community in the region at the time lived largely like others in the Muslim world, as a "tolerated minority" that was treated better than under Christian rule. Afghanistan's Jewish community numbered as many as 40,000 in the late 19th century, after Persian Jews fled forced conversion. By the mid-20th century, only about 5,000 remained, and most emigrated after Israel's creation in 1948.

The library promises the finds will be digitized and uploaded to its website for all to see. Aviad Stollman, curator of the library's Judaica collection, said much more would be gleaned after intense research on the papers, but already it tells a story of a previously little known community. "First we can verify that they actually existed – that is the most important point," he said. "And of course their interests. They were not interested only in commerce and liturgy; they were interested also in the Talmud and the Bible," he said. "They were Jews living a thousand years ago in this place. I think that is the most exciting part." [AP]

the assets of Egyptian Jews in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, were seized by Egyptian security services before they were deported to Israel.

Jews who lived in now long-gone Jewish communities in the Arab world have recently made headlines as Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon launched a campaign to have them recognized as refugees. He said any property owned by these Jews from Arab countries – some of whom left in 1948, some throughout the 1950s, and others just after the Six-Day War of 1967 – must be included in discussions for compensation of refugees. [JPost]