

Christian Zionists 'Amen' Forcing Palestinians Out

by Edward Spannaus

It ought to be a scandal of major proportions, that an Israeli government official who advocates the forcible transfer to Jordan and Egypt of the Palestinians in the the West Bank and Gaza, has just toured the United States, welcomed by leaders of the Christian Zionists, who mislabel themselves "Evangelicals." The fascist policy of ethnic cleansing promoted by Tourism Minister Benjamin Elon ought to be denounced by all right-thinking Americans, and in fact, it would constitute grounds for denying him a visa to even enter the country. But rather, he is fêted by key figures of the so-called "Christian Right"—even though the Palestinians that Elon would drive from the land of Palestine, include a significant number of indigenous Christians, who are direct descendants of the first followers of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago.

Elon is the leader of the Moledet Party of Israel, whose official policy is the transfer of the Palestinians out of "Greater Israel." His party totally rejects the Bush Administration-backed "Road Map" peace plan, and calls for the nullification of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the dismantling of the Palestinian National Authority. It calls for naming Jordan as the Palestinian State, and Israel as the Jewish State.

Elon's latest tour began on Aug. 12 in Memphis, where he met with over 300 representatives of Christian Zionist organizations, organized by Ed McAteer, a founder of the Immoral Majority, who now heads the Religious Roundtable. During his seven-day visit, Elon was also scheduled to meet with Gary Bauer, former chairman of the Family Research Council; Roberta Coombs, president of the Christian Coalition; Mike Evans, chairman of the Jerusalem Prayer Team; and talk-show host Janet Parshall. He also stopped in Atlanta, and in Columbia, South Carolina.

"Our Christian evangelical friends understand quite clearly the importance of Israel fighting terror and not giving in to the whims of Palestinian Arab terrorists," Elon said before leaving for the United States. "We will not remove settlements or make concessions as our stay in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] is not temporary, and we will not permit the creation of a terrorist state in our Biblical heartland."

Last October, Elon appeared in Washington with House Republican Leader Tom DeLay—a rabid Christian Zionist—at the Christian Coalition's convention. The crowd cheered

wildly as Elon openly called for the expulsion of all Palestinians from the Palestinian territories and also from Israel. (The confused, if not deranged, audience also cheered, as DeLay called for Christian activists to back candidates who support Israel and who "stand unashamedly for Jesus Christ"—as if standing for Christ means hastening the day when the Jews go to their eternal perdition, according to their Armageddonist worldview).

Crackpot Theology

The genocidal Christian Zionists with whom Elon was meeting, needed no convincing to oppose the Road Map and its plan for the creation of a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel. The *Washington Times* recently quoted some of them, in connection with Elon's visit.

Mike Evans, a founder of the Jerusalem Prayer Team, stated: "We either have to oppose the Road Map or oppose the Bible. . . . Evangelicals have no debate on this issue."

"Bible-believing Christians believe all that land belongs to Israel," said McAteer. "It is a fatal, fatal mistake that George Bush is making," McAteer added, noting that Bush "is probably the most powerful man in the world, but he ain't more powerful than God. And God gave them that land. Every grain of sand on that piece of property belongs to the Jews because God gave it to [them]."

McAteer is a member for Americans for Safe Israel, which has raised \$70,000 to pay for 114 billboards urging Americans to call the White House to tell President Bush not to violate "God's covenant with Israel." AFSI is headed by Herb Zweibon, a right-wing Jew who says that the group "recognized a long time ago that the key to Israel's well-being would be with the Zionist Christian Right; those who believe in Scripture."

At the same time, a huge fight is raging within the World Jewish Congress over support for the Road Map and the issue of alliances with the Christian Right. Its President, Edgar Bronfman, accused right-wing Jewish organizations of deliberately creating a crisis by opposing President Bush and the Road Map; he and former U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger also sent a letter to President Bush opposing Israel's construction of the "security fence" in the West Bank. In turn, Bronfman was accused of "perfidy" by Isi Leibler, the WJC's senior vice president.

Leibler's cynical approach to his "Christian" allies was fully on display in an August 15 commentary in the *Jerusalem Post*, in which he wrote about "our new friends, the Evangelical Christians." But, Leibler cautioned, "it is important that we not delude ourselves." He noted that many Orthodox Jews and liberal Jews are uncomfortable about the Christian Zionists' support, since "their support for Israel is based upon the belief that the Jews must be sovereign in their land as a precursor to the Second Coming."

Leibler's solution: Shut up about it. "These and other theological issues should never be explored," he concluded.