

Netanyahu hints at flexibility on Jerusalem

By **URIEL HEILMAN**
JTA news service

NEW YORK — It was an otherwise unremarkable stump speech for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before a friendly audience of some 300 Jews in New York on July 7.

But then, in an off-the-cuff remark to a question on Jerusalem from the audience, Netanyahu dropped a hint that his government's insistence on Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem might not be ironclad.

"Everybody knows that there are Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem that under any peace plan will remain where they are," Netanyahu said in response to the question read by the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Malcolm Hoenlein.

The implication of Netanyahu's remark — that other neighborhoods of Jerusalem may not remain "where they are," becoming part of an eventual Palestinian state — was the first hint that the Israeli leader may be flexible on the subject of Jerusalem. Until now, Netanyahu has insisted that Jerusalem is not up for negotiation.

While the prime minister surely did not intend the gathering under the aegis of the Presidents Confer-

ence to serve as his forum for opening up negotiations over Jerusalem, the impromptu remark before an audience of prominent New York Jews and a handful of elected officials cast a slim ray of light on what Netanyahu thinks might be the Israeli capital's ultimate fate.

He reiterated the point in an interview with Chris Wallace on "Fox News Sunday."

"Are you willing to put East Jerusalem as a possible capital of the Palestinian state on the table?" Wallace asked, according to a transcript provided by Fox News.

Netanyahu responded, "Well, we have differences of views with the Palestinians. We want a united city. They have their own views. We can — this is one of the issues that will have to be negotiated. But I think the main point is to get on with it."

The remarks on Jerusalem were significant because Netanyahu's true intentions regarding the peace process remain largely opaque.

Netanyahu was a latecomer to the two-state position—endorsing the idea of an eventual Palestinian state only a year ago, after much prodding by the U.S. Plus, the governing coalition he has assembled is comprised largely of right-wing parties that do not believe in the current Palestinian Authority as a

partner for negotiations.

Earlier in the week following Netanyahu's Oval Office meeting, President Obama publicly declared he thinks the Israeli leader is genuinely committed to seeking a two-state solution.

"I believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu wants peace. I think he's willing to take risks for peace," Obama told reporters. "And during our conversation, he once again re-

affirmed his willingness to engage in serious negotiations with the Palestinians."

Privately, however, some U.S. administration officials have expressed doubts about Netanyahu's ability to make good on that vision. The Palestinian Authority leadership also claim Netanyahu is merely paying lip service to the peace process.

Netanyahu insists he is serious about peace talks, and that it is the Palestinians who are playing

games. "You either put up excuses or you lead," the Israeli leader said in his New York speech. "I want to enter direct talks with the Palestinian leadership now."

"I think we can defy the skeptics," he said, recalling the doubters that abounded when Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin began talking to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in the lead-up to the Camp David Accords, and when Richard Nixon visited China. "This is a challenge I'm up to."

HIP-HOP

CONTINUED from FRONT PAGE

The *New York Times* declared the young, emotionally vulnerable artist "the most important and innovative new figure in hip-hop."

Drake released his first album, "Thank Me Later," earlier this month, though his mixtapes have been widely circulating since 2006. In fact, Drake earned the unusual distinction of being nominated for a 2010 Grammy without the release of an album.

He's been traveling in the right company: Rap star Lil Wayne was the first mainstream act to incorporate Drake into his touring routine and served as somewhat of a mentor to the fledgling artist.

Drake was born to an African-American father and a Jewish mother who divorced when he was 5, according to an interview in *Heeb* magazine. He was raised by his mother in Forest Hill, a heavily Jewish neighborhood of Toronto, attended a Jewish day school and had a bar mitzvah, which featured the Backstreet Boys tune "I Want It That Way."

His father was primarily absent and, according to *The Times*, struggled with drug addiction and spent time in prison. His mother suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, which precluded her from working and forced Drake to grow up fast. In interviews he often portrays himself as a loner.

"I went to a Jewish school, where nobody understood what it was like to be black and Jewish," he told *Heeb*. "When kids are young it's hard for them to understand the

make-up of religion and race."

Drake told the magazine that he was often called a *shvartze*, a derogatory term for blacks.

"But the same kids that made fun of me are super proud [of me] now," he said. "And they act as if nothing happened."

Drake displays signs of Jewish pride; *Heeb* says he wears a diamond-studded Chai. He also wants to travel to Israel, the magazine reports.

With his complex identity, Drake is using the internalized experience of his childhood to infuse hip-hop with a rare emotionality. The *Times* gave his album an encouraging review, calling it "moody, entrancing and emotionally articulate," and adding that he "manages to balance vulnerability and arrogance in equal measure."

After struggling through childhood, Drake seems to be enjoying the current payoff — the *Heeb* interview chronicles him driving around Manhattan in a Bentley. Already, however, there have been reports of overspending and financial mismanagement.

Even so, with his career ascending, Drake doesn't seem to be worried about finances. He told *The Times* that he's more concerned about the insularity caused by fame.

"Did I sacrifice something?" he wondered. "Have I not realized what it is yet because I'm enjoying this too much?"

(This article was adapted from www.jewishjournal.com/hollywoodjew/)

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