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Habib Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Begin
and the Lebanon Negotiations

We will not know conclusively until we have Israel's reaction in hand tomorrow, but Phil Habib's meeting with Begin today appears to have gone relatively well, at least insofar as Begin appeared to warm to the concept Phil put forward. Sam Lewis found Begin's reaction to your letter remarkably mature given the rampant press speculation in advance about a postponement of his visit. The Prime Minister clearly resented the press stories but understands that his visit will take place only after a Lebanese agreement has been achieved. Agreement today on the agenda for the Khaldah/Kiryat Shemona talks is encouraging. Nevertheless, the three weeks taken to achieve what we hoped would take a day only reinforces my view that we have been correct in pressing ahead with our parallel effort. We should know by tomorrow morning how strong Sharon's opposition is. If Begin can respond positively, Phil will go immediately to Beirut to present the concept to Gemayal.

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