



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli-Palestinian talks resume

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators resumed talks at a Washington air force base.

The delegations, headed by Oded Eran and Yasser Abed Rabbo, were expected to meet for about a week.

Negotiators are focusing on the still-unresolved issues of a final peace accord, including the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlements and final borders.

A spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington called the issues "complex" and said he is "not sure that we can expect a breakthrough" soon.

Hours before the talks resumed, Israel withdrew from an additional 6.1 percent of the West Bank.

As a result of the latest withdrawal, the Palestinian Authority now controls about 40 percent of the West Bank.

### Chechen Jews fly to Israel

Some 29 Jews flew from war-torn Chechnya to Israel. The refugees, whose flight was sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel, will join relatives already living in Israel.

The Jewish Agency brought almost 700 Jews to Israel last year from neighboring Dagestan, which is also involved in the conflict between the Russian government and Islamic separatists.

### Pope arrives in Israel

Israel rolled out the red carpet for a historic pilgrimage by Pope John Paul II, the first papal visit there in 36 years. Israeli media devoted top headlines to the pope's six-day visit, which starts Tuesday.

Hours before the pope's scheduled arrival, Israel Television aired footage of a group of fervently Orthodox Jews laying a curse on the pope as a "hater of Israel." [Page 3]

### Nazi doctor's trial halted

The trial of an aging doctor accused in the deaths of nine children in a Nazi-run euthanasia clinic was suspended indefinitely after a psychiatrist testified the defendant was suffering from dementia.

The trial of Heinrich Gross, 84, closed about a half-hour after it began.

It appears unlikely that proceedings will ever resume.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Thousands of Jews hit the Hill to lobby on behalf of the elderly

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If you are not sure what Return to Home legislation is, you are not alone.

In fact, the legislation, which helps ensure that elderly people in a managed health care program can return to their home community after hospitalization, is unknown to many members of Congress and many in the Jewish community.

But on Tuesday more than 3,000 participants in the United Jewish Communities' Young Leadership Conference went to Capitol Hill to lobby for aid to Israel, hate crimes prevention laws, and — Return to Home.

How did this sleeper issue get to the top of the UJC agenda? And why now?

Even if health care choice for the elderly is not a hot issue, it nevertheless is an important one to the Jewish community, which has always been committed to the issue of access to long-term care for its elderly, says a UJC committee co-chair.

"It's a disgrace when Jews can't live out their lives in facilities that match their religious and cultural needs," said Ellen Kagen Waghelstein, who helped select the lobbying issues and coordinated the Capitol Hill visits for the UJC.

Managed care organizations are accused of excluding facilities not on their provider list, including many Jewish homes.

The UJC says thousands are affected by these practices, though no firm numbers are available.

Three bills before Congress include a provision to require any health plan that covers long-term care to ensure participants the right to return to their community of origin to receive long-term care services.

Enrollees have that right provided the nursing facility can give the specific medical care and services required and the facility is willing to accept the same payment rate as the providers in the HMO's network.

The last point should address the concern HMOs have of the legislation forcing them to incur higher costs.

But HMOs likely are fearful of any federal regulation and may regard the Return to Home legislation as a slippery slope toward further government intervention.

Interestingly, the legislation does not actually mention religion at all and focuses instead on the policy of continued care in one facility. But religious groups have seized upon the issue and formed a coalition of faith-based health care providers, run through the UJC's Washington Action Office.

The coalition says it wants to ensure that religiously observant and religiously affiliated individuals are able to return from hospitalization to an environment that is consistent with their religious beliefs and practices.

Many Jewish facilities, particularly federation-affiliated agencies, provide kosher meals, religious services, holiday celebrations, Sabbath observance accommodations, trained staff and rabbis, and other aspects of "culturally appropriate" care.

The UJC gives a few examples of problems associated with lack of health care choice available to seniors.

One story tells of "Rebecca H.," who lived in an assisted living facility on a Jewish retirement campus but was not allowed to return to the campus following her hospitalization.

She was sent to a different facility, but was unhappy away from her familiar

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israeli-Syrian positions narrow

Israeli media are speculating that gaps between Israel and Syria have narrowed.

The reports came even as Israel is downplaying expectations for President Clinton's summit meeting Sunday with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

The Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* said that barring any last-minute hitch, Clinton and Assad would announce a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

### 3 wounded in drive-by shooting

Three Israelis were wounded, one of them seriously, when gunmen opened fire on their car near Hebron.

Not long after Monday night's attack, a Palestinian woman was killed and her husband was seriously wounded when Israeli troops fired on their car.

### Mufti offers to meet chief rabbi

A Muslim cleric said he would be willing to meet privately with one of Israel's chief rabbis.

Mufti Ikrema Sabri's comments came after he refused to meet publicly with Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau during Pope John Paul II's visit to the Holy Land.

### Yad Vashem honors Latvian

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem honored a Latvian who risked his life to save a Jewish girl during the Holocaust. Because Emils Resnais died in 1951, his daughter accepted a medal from the museum in his honor during the ceremony.

### Law eased on Moldovan Israelis

The president of Moldova said the former Soviet republic is ready to recognize the double-citizenship status of people who hold both Moldovan passports and those from Russia, Israel or Romania. Pyotr Luchinsky's announcement comes amid reports that nearly a million people fall into this category.

environment and friends. Although she is happy to have returned to the Jewish home, she must now use her remaining financial assets to pay for her health care.

Kagen Waghelstein says the conference participants represent a bridge generation and the legislation affects their grandparents, the last generation of Holocaust survivors. Though there may not be a sense of immediacy on a personal level for many of the young leaders, she believes the issue will resonate with them.

"We're not the 'me' generation," she said.

Once briefed, conference participants indeed seemed motivated to pass on their education to their representatives and senators in Congress.

"I'm shocked," said Ron Moses, a doctor from Houston. "The federal government even provides ritual practice needs in prisons."

Moses believes that people who live near their family and friends and in comfortable surroundings will live longer and healthier lives, thereby cutting the long-term costs for managed care organizations.

"HMOs are being short sighted," he said.

For Elliot Rubinsky, the legislation truly "hits home," he said, because his grandmother had to be put in a Baptist home, where Rubinsky said her religious needs are being neglected. While he didn't know about the legislation before the conference, he thinks it's important for the sake of people from all religious backgrounds.

The impact of thousands of Jewish constituents lobbying their congressional representatives on an unfamiliar issue could work to the lobbyists' advantage.

Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.) may be more aware of the issue than most representatives considering the large percentage of elderly citizens in his district, and he says some members of Congress need "a bit of an education process" on the issue.

Wexler predicts there will be tremendous changes in health care policy over the next several years and said if "Return to Home" doesn't succeed now, at least elements of it should be incorporated into whatever health care legislation will pass. □

## Swine dine on table scraps from S. African kosher eatery

By Paula Slier

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — Step aside, free-range chickens: Here come kosher-fed pigs.

While the porkers are not about to be declared edible by any kashrut board any time soon, there are nonetheless some pretty happy pigs in the vicinity of Johannesburg that are enjoying their fair share of kosher food.

For years Sandringham Gardens, a Jewish old-age home, has been turning over its scrapings to thankful snouts.

The tradition has been around for so long that the current catering manager, Roy Levinson, is unsure as to how it got started in the first place.

But, he said, if the pigs can feast on "stuff that is going to be thrown out anyway, they can use it with pleasure."

The scrapings that find their way to the pig farm come straight from diners' plates, said Levinson, who emphasized that once something is sent out on a plate, it does not go back to the kitchen.

When questioned about the quality of the food at Sandringham Gardens, he said the residents consider it "very good."

If the residents aren't complaining, one can safely assume that there can't be much for the pigs to snort about.

Each day a big black rubbish bag is filled with leftovers that are then fetched by a driver from the pig farm.

A recent day, when Sandringham Gardens served chicken a la king, must have been pig heaven for the residents of the farm because the garbage bag was stuffed with chicken bones.

And Sandringham's menu for the coming week must certainly have been enough to set any porcine salivary gland going — lasagne, steak, chicken casserole, curry, hot beef on rye, brisket and hot dogs. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Kiev synagogue to reopen

The Great Synagogue of Kiev is slated to reopen Wednesday after years of reconstruction financed by local Jewish leaders. Built in 1898, the synagogue in the Ukrainian capital was confiscated by the Soviets in 1926.

Under the Nazi occupation, it was used as a stable. After World War II, it was used as a puppet theater before being returned to the community.

### Slave talks to resume in Berlin

Germany's chief negotiator in talks about distributing a \$5.2 billion German compensation fund for Holocaust-era slave laborers said he is hopeful a final plan will be worked out this week.

Otto Lamsdorff's comments came before the talks were slated to resume Wednesday in Berlin.

### California targets German insurer

California insurance officials said they plan to seek a court order to force a German insurer to discontinue its unpaid Holocaust-era policies.

The announcement came after Munich Re skipped a state hearing probing the firm's unpaid claims. The officials said they may ultimately seek fines against the firm or revoke the licenses of its U.S. subsidiaries to do business in California.

### Russian media get warning

Russia's Press Ministry warned the electronic media that allowing Chechen rebel leaders to speak on the air is a violation of the country's law on fighting terrorism.

The U.S.-funded Radio Liberty, which has recently become a target of criticism from Moscow over its allegedly biased coverage of the Chechen war, has frequently given Chechen leaders, including President Aslan Maskhadov, an opportunity to speak on its airwaves.

### German cemetery vandalized

German police asked for help in finding those responsible for desecrating a Jewish cemetery in Hanover. Vandals toppled about 90 gravestones, some of which were destroyed during the weekend attack, according to a police spokesman.

### Yiddish lesson given in Canada

A Canadian lawmaker recently mispronounced the word "chutzpah" during a session of the country's Parliament.

Canada's deputy prime minister, Herb Gray, immediately jumped to his feet and offered more Yiddish words to describe the lawmaker's question. "His questions are all gornisht," or nothing, and "absolute narishkeit," or foolishness, said Gray, who is Jewish.

## Pope begins Israel pilgrimage by calling for interreligious unity

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Pope John Paul II issued a call for peace and interreligious dialogue as he began a historic pilgrimage to Israel this week, the first papal visit here in 36 years.

"I pray that my visit will serve to encourage an increase of interreligious dialogue between the Jews, Christians and Muslims to seek in their respective beliefs a universal brotherhood that unites all members of the human family," the pope said at a welcoming ceremony at Ben Gurion airport outside Tel Aviv.

The pope arrived on a Royal Jordanian flight from Amman, where he began the weeklong millennium pilgrimage that is including Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

He was greeted on the tarmac by three Israeli children — one Jewish, one Muslim and one Christian — who presented him with a bowl full of earth, which the pope kissed.

Israel's president and prime minister then met the pope, and he was welcomed by Israeli Cabinet members and leading religious officials in Israel while a military band played "Jerusalem of Gold."

Shielded by black umbrellas from a cold drizzle, the pope noted the evolving ties between Israel and the Vatican, including the 1994 establishment of diplomatic ties. He spoke of the "newfound openness" between Jews and Christians and the need to deepen interfaith understanding.

Echoing his appeal earlier this week to Israel and the Arabs to remain committed to the difficult search for peace, the pope noted that the process "binds" all the people of the region to pursue a lasting peace, and said Christians and Jews must make efforts to overcome all forms of prejudice.

While the Vatican has described the pilgrimage as a spiritual journey, undercurrents of other issues likely to come up during the six-day visit to Israel and the self-rule areas were already evident at the welcoming ceremony.

In his remarks, Israeli President Ezer Weizman noted that the State of Israel was established out of the devastation of the Holocaust.

Weizman welcomed the pope's apology last week for the sins committed by the Roman Catholic Church against other peoples and called for continued cooperation to "fight anti-Semitism."

Israel welcomed the pope's unprecedented apology last week, but expressed disappointment it did not include an explicit reference to the Holocaust.

Before the pope's arrival, some Israeli officials said they believe an explicit mention of the Holocaust would be appropriate.

Israel is committed to providing the religions with access to their holy sites, Weizman said, adding that Jerusalem is the "heart of the Jewish people."

The political debate between Israel and the Palestinians on Jerusalem heated up this week ahead of the pope's visit.

Israel declared it would not allow the Palestinians to try to gain politically from the visit.

The debate came after Palestinians on Sunday floated a balloon over Orient House in eastern Jerusalem, the Palestinian Authority's de facto headquarters, bearing the Vatican and Israeli flags.

The pope's pilgrimage to sites linked to the birthplace and life of Jesus were expected to take him to Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem.

In addition, the pope was scheduled to meet with Israeli leaders, the chief rabbis of Israel and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Israel has taken unprecedented security measures for the visit, including stationing thousands of police officers and detaining right-wing Jewish extremists suspected of distributing anti-pope posters and planning to disrupt the visit.

The front pages of Israeli newspapers were dominated Tuesday by the papal visit. The Israeli daily Ma'ariv summed the visit up, welcoming the pope in Latin. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Attack on 'Haman' threatens coalition as peace talks resume**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With Pope John Paul II's arrival in Israel coinciding with Purim, some Israelis feared that fervently Orthodox children would dress up like the pope and mock him, or, worse still, hang him in effigy like the villain Haman in the Book of Esther.

But by the time he arrived here on Tuesday, the pope had been shunted off center stage in the haredi purimspiels that accompany the festive holiday.

Instead, the role of the contemporary Haman, the man who threatened the Jews, went to a homegrown figure: Education Minister Yossi Sarid.

In Sephardi and haredi synagogues throughout Israel, "Cursed be Yossi Sarid" was added to the traditional Purim prayer "Cursed be Haman."

Potential Jewish anger toward Christians became actual Jewish anger against Jews — and more than that, it reflected a deep divide in the country's governing coalition just as Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian talks were again showing signs of life.

President Clinton's announcement that he would meet with Syrian President Hafez Assad on Sunday in Geneva spelled the possibility that Israeli-Syrian talks, suspended since January, may soon resume.

And on Tuesday, Israeli-Palestinian talks resumed in Washington after more than a month of deadlock.

Hours before those talks resumed on Tuesday, Israel withdrew from an additional 6.1 percent of the West Bank, giving the Palestinian Authority control of about 40 percent of the West Bank.

It is against this backdrop that Prime Minister Ehud Barak, while welcoming the pope, also found himself frantically shuttling between his warring coalition partners, trying to keep his peace coalition afloat as a defining moment in the peace process suddenly loomed.

Most observers believe that once the summer sets in, U.S. officials will be preoccupied with the upcoming elections and be unable to engage in sustained diplomacy.

Israeli newspapers reported Tuesday that a deal with Syria has been negotiated down to the finest details in behind-the-scenes contacts that have proceeded continuously since formal Israeli-Syrian negotiations were suspended in January.

They say Clinton's personal intervention could lead to a quick clinching of the accord.

The alteration to the Purim synagogue liturgy, with its curses heaped on Sarid, reflected an ongoing battle between Barak's major coalition partners, the fervently Orthodox Shas Party and the secular Meretz Party, headed by Sarid.

Just days before Purim, in his weekly Torah lesson, the spiritual leader of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, called on his followers to lay a curse on the Cabinet minister.

"I can't restrain myself any more," Yosef said, as his comments were relayed by satellite to tens of thousands of followers around the country and the world. "This evil man Sarid is like Haman of old."

"May his name be blotted out," he said, lashing out at what his party believes is Sarid's deliberate efforts to stymie the growth of Shas' education network. "Curse Haman and Curse Yossi Sarid."

Shas accuses Sarid of undermining its financially troubled religious school system, which is daily winning new adherents to its schools and to Orthodoxy — and in turn providing the party with its main pillar of political support.

Under a deal recently worked out with the government, Sarid agreed to transfer funds to the debt-ridden school system on the condition Shas officials streamline its administration and meet certain educational criteria.

Countering the accusations that he is using his office to destroy Shas' school network, Sarid maintains that he has provided the funds even though the network has not fully complied with the financial reforms and management program that it agreed to.

Relations between Shas and Meretz could hardly be close, given the great chasm between them on religious issues.

But Barak, like his mentor Yitzhak Rabin before him, believed the two parties' support for the peace process — and for the requisite territorial concessions to achieve peace — would provide a sufficient basis for partnership in the coalition.

Yosef's attack on Sarid may have delighted his Shas-affiliated audience, but they embarrassed many of his admirers who are not Shas adherents.

Among those admirers is Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein, who is now being pressured to order a criminal investigation of the elderly rabbi — for possible incitement to murder.

Yosef's speech reminded many Israelis of the atmosphere of incitement that prevailed before the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an Orthodox student.

But Shas ministers warned Barak that if their rabbi is questioned, their party will secede from the government.

This would leave Barak with barely a legislative majority, just as Clinton makes what could be his last bid to reach comprehensive Middle East peace accords.

Thus, Barak was caught between the seemingly unbridgeable positions of Shas and Meretz.

On the one hand, he does not want to be seen as sanctioning Yosef's attack on Sarid.

But he also does not want to take any action that would deprive him of the pivotal presence of Shas — which has 17 of the Knesset's 120 seats — in his coalition.

Meretz, with 10 seats, is less powerful, but closer to Barak's core constituency, many of whom are outraged at Yosef's comments and are demanding that he face charges of incitement.

In the wake of his remarks, Yosef issued a "clarification," saying he had not meant anyone to use, or even contemplate, the use of violence, which is strictly forbidden under religious law.

But he declined to apologize to Sarid.

In the Purim world of topsy-turvy, it was perhaps natural that some commentators pointed to the pope's visit, and his efforts at Catholic-Jewish reconciliation, as an example of constructive leadership by a religious figure.

Jews and Catholics have 2,000 years of blood-soaked history to overcome. Yet the visit seemed to show they are moving forward.

Will the same be true between Jews and Arabs? And, for that matter, between the Jews and Jews in Barak's squabbling coalition? □