



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Infant stoning prompts rampage

Hundreds of Israeli settlers rampaged Wednesday near a West Bank village after an Israeli infant boy suffered severe brain damage following an Arab stoning attack the previous night.

At least three Palestinian buildings were set on fire by the settlers, who scuffled with Israeli security forces trying to disperse them.

### Brooklyn Jews angry at ruling

Jewish residents in Brooklyn's Borough Park were angered by a Justice Department decision not to pursue civil rights charges against four New York policemen involved in the 1999 shooting of a mentally disturbed Orthodox man who was wielding a hammer.

U.S. prosecutors said Tuesday there is insufficient evidence to prove that the police officers intended to use unreasonable force against Gideon Busch.

### Immigrants to get Medicaid

Legal immigrants in New York, including many Russian Jews, will have access to health care previously denied to them by the state.

The New York Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday that a state law limiting Medicaid coverage to immigrants for emergency purposes violated the immigrants' rights. An official at UJA-Federation of New York, which funds NYLAG, the legal agency that represented plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said thousands of Jewish immigrants will be affected by the ruling.

### U.S., Israel confer on settlements

The United States and Israel are working on a plan to freeze most settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Under the plan, Israel would not expand settlements beyond their current boundaries but could continue construction in settlement areas where homes have already been built.

### House panel condemns Taliban

A U.S. House of Representatives committee passed legislation condemning the Taliban government of Afghanistan's recent decision to force all non-Muslims to wear identifying badges.

"This resurfacing of tactics used against the Jews in Nazi Germany reminds all of us that we must remain vigilant," said Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), who introduced the bill.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### The death of one is the death of us all, say slain settler's kin

By Michael J. Jordan

LAWRENCE, New York (JTA) — For some, the notion of an Israeli settler in the West Bank or Gaza Strip conjures up the image of a yarmulke-wearing, gun-toting zealot hunkered down in a far-flung, Arab-surrounded enclave.

So Jerome and Sharyn Blaustein say they want to set the record straight about their sister-in-law, Sara Blaustein.

Sara, 53, was shot and killed May 29 by Palestinian gunmen as her husband, Norman, drove them from their home in the settlement of Efrat to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a mere 15 minutes away.

Norman — Jerome's twin brother — was injured in the shooting. More seriously wounded was Sara's son from her first marriage, Samuel Berg, who was shot once in the arm and twice in the back. He has been released from a hospital, but is still on IV.

And a woman the family was giving a ride to, Esther Alvan, 20, was hit in the head and died instantly in the back seat.

Killings in the territories seemingly do not evoke the same outrage among some American Jews as do the victims of terror in Israel proper, say the Blausteins and others.

Just as someone attacked while strolling through a crime-infested neighborhood in the middle of the night might garner less sympathy, say the Blausteins, some American Jews respond to news of terror attacks in the territories by partly blaming the victims, saying the settlers shouldn't have been there in the first place.

But Sara and Norman were no "radicals," the Blausteins say, and Efrat is no Hebron, perhaps the most hotly contested area in the West Bank.

The two had given up their comfortable existence in Lawrence, an affluent, heavily Jewish suburb in Long Island, N.Y. More difficult for them was parting with four granddaughters — the offspring of Sara's daughter from her first marriage — to fulfill a long-held dream to make aliyah and live in the Holy Land.

Jews should not have less condemnation for a Palestinian attack that takes place in the territories, says Jerome Blaustein, who maintains that an attack on settlers is an attack on Jews everywhere.

"If you consider Jews all one family, then you have one reaction to these murders," says Blaustein. "But if you separate yourself from other Jews, and say, 'Those are Orthodox, those are haredi and those are settlers,' then there's a different reaction and you can justify these murders."

"People who react this way don't know their own history: The Nazis murdered Jews even if they were one-quarter Jewish; it didn't matter whether they were religious or not."

Sara and Norman, who is also 53, made aliyah last August. They were retired, with three children each from previous marriages, and a teen-aged daughter, Atara, from their own. From Lawrence, the modern Orthodox couple settled into a nearly as comfortable existence in Efrat, a bedroom community that has evolved into one of the most desirable suburbs of Jerusalem — for those willing to live over the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 border with the West Bank.

The settlement is like any other community, says Jerome: "If you were to put on a blindfold and interview someone from Efrat and someone from Lawrence, you'd have difficulty discerning who was from where."

However, on the Efrat Web site — in addition to updates of which West Bank roads are open — there is a feature written by Efrat resident David Willner, "Why I'm Ready

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon lashes out at Arafat

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat a "murderer" and "pathological liar" in a TV interview.

In his strongest attack on Arafat since taking office in March, Sharon complained Arafat is welcomed around the world "with a red carpet," when instead of acting like a head of state, he is the "head of terrorists and murderers."

### Palestinian Americans get visas

Israeli officials say most of 100 Palestinian Americans who were initially refused exit visas in the aftermath of last Friday's Tel Aviv suicide bombing have since left Israel.

The officials said the individuals were allowed to leave after the United States intervened on their behalf. A State Department spokesman Wednesday had called the refusals "unacceptable."

### Journalist indicted for Israel ties

A Lebanese-American journalist has been indicted by the Lebanese government for "dealing with the enemy" for participating in a panel discussion last year with an Israeli official, the Washington Post reported.

Raghida Dergham, senior diplomatic correspondent for the London-based Al Hayat, shared a podium with the Israeli official last May to discuss the prospects for peace between Israel and Syria.

### Israel unearthing Gaza tunnels

Israel is excavating ditches along the Israeli-Egyptian border to expose tunnels used by the Palestinians to smuggle weapons, explosives and people into the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The paper reported that members of the army engineering corps involved in digging the 10-yard-deep ditches have come under heavy fire from Palestinians trying to stop them.



## Daily News Bulletin

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to Go to War." Sara and Norman chose Efrat because it has long been home to her brother, David Unterberg, and also because it is populated predominantly by English-speakers, especially Americans. Some Israelis, on the other hand, would never live in "the territories" out of principle.

But Norman and Sara felt that as Jews, they had the right to live anywhere in Eretz Yisrael — including Judea and Samaria.

The couple was aware that the settlement was on "disputed" territory — they disagree with the Palestinian view of it being "Israel-occupied" — but didn't consider it dangerous when they arrived, say the Blausteins.

If they had, says Sharyn Blaustein, they would probably have reconsidered, because Atara, now 14, was with them.

Norman and Sara were renowned for their hospitality, say family and friends.

Jerome Blaustein says their generosity extended to their volunteer activities — though some of those activities would be considered provocative by some Jews.

For years, the Blausteins worked for American Friends of Ateret Cohanim, which wants to maintain a yeshiva in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem.

They were also heavily involved with the Jerusalem Reclamation Project, which purchases property from Arabs in the Old City.

Sara and Norman were honored last year for their longtime service to the project.

Their volunteerism continued in the Holy Land.

Each Tuesday, Sara and a fellow Efrat resident took their turns at a daily vigil at Rachel's Tomb in Palestinian-controlled Bethlehem — site of numerous gun battles between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian gunmen since the violence began last fall.

The women brought candy to the Israeli soldiers guarding the tomb, "to let them know they were appreciated," says Sharyn.

Of great pride to the Blausteins was a new, handwritten Torah they had pledged to their Efrat congregation, a time-consuming, costly endeavor — upward of \$20,000, says Jerome. The Torah's dedication was to be a seminal event in their lives, and Norman had asked Jerome and his family fly out to be a part of it.

"Now, unfortunately, the Torah will be in Sara's honor," says Jerome.

Life in Israel fueled Sara's appetite for learning, primarily Torah and biblical studies.

"She was not just a congregant, but a student," says her rabbi from Lawrence, Rabbi Kenneth Hain of Congregation Beth Shalom.

"She was a person with a remarkably inquisitive mind and with very strong views on a whole host of issues, particularly relating to Israel.

"It wasn't a casual rabbi-congregant connection, which makes it all the more devastating a loss for the congregation, and for me."

Sara's last day began as any other during her short life in Efrat, according to the Blausteins. She began by praying with fellow congregants, then delivered a progress report on the Torah. She then headed out to serve her shift at Rachel's Tomb.

She returned to Efrat to accompany Norman to the Western Wall.

Norman was to fly to New York that night, as he does every few weeks to check in on the computer business he still owns; he had adopted a ritual of praying at Judaism's holiest site prior to each trip away from Israel — "a keepsake to keep in the back of his mind," says his brother.

The couple was on the road when, at roughly 3 p.m., a car reportedly carrying Palestinians passed the Blausteins on their left.

The attackers strafed the side of the vehicle with the fatal gunfire. Sara was buried May 30 in Israel; a memorial service in Lawrence is tentatively scheduled for June 27.

During the May 29 attack, one bullet grazed Norman's left cheek, fracturing his cheekbone, breaking his nose and eye socket, and shattering his glasses.

He lost his hearing and vision — a temporary condition, according to his doctors. Sight has since returned to one eye. His emotional recovery is also coming along.

"He's finally able to recount the story without breaking down," says Jerome.

Jerome says Norman will have no regrets about having moved with Sara to "disputed" territory.

"He says she died with a smile on her face, like it was frozen in time."

Jerome also says it is his hunch that, if anything, his brother "may now be on more of a mission, more determined than ever to maintain their dream of living in the Holy Land." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Ashcroft blasted for preacher ties

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft was criticized for attending an event with a preacher who called the United States a "Christian nation." Ashcroft praised D. James Kennedy after the televangelist said Tuesday that "as Christians we should prefer and select Christians to rule over us."

Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State said, "Ashcroft's failure to repudiate Kennedy's bigoted version of America is appalling."

### Senate mulls charitable choice

The U.S. Senate held its first hearings on charitable choice, the contentious part of the Bush administration's faith-based initiative that calls for an expansion of laws allowing religious organizations to receive government money to provide social services.

Representatives of Jewish organizations testified at Wednesday's Judiciary Committee hearing. A U.S. House of Representatives committee is scheduled to hold a hearing Thursday.

### Bush to visit ghetto memorial

President Bush will participate in a wreath laying ceremony at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in Poland as part of his trip to Europe next week, the White House announced Wednesday. He is also expected to attend events at the Warsaw Uprising Memorial.

### Germany warned about fake Jews

The leader of Germany's Jewish community urged his government to clamp down on immigrants pretending to be Jewish in order to enter the country.

Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said Wednesday that many non-Jewish immigrants — particularly people from the former Soviet Union — had taken advantage of special rules allowing those claiming Jewish heritage to obtain German residency. "In the future there has to be more scrutiny to ensure that the refugees are in fact Jews and not just people with some distant Jewish origins," Spiegel said in a newspaper interview.

### Anti-Semitic book prompts uproar

A Victorian manuscript widely described as anti-Semitic failed to sell Wednesday when it was put up for auction at Christie's in London.

The result was both disappointing and humiliating for the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the umbrella organization that sought to sell the document after suppressing it for nearly 100 years.

The Board's decision to auction the manuscript, "Human Sacrifice Among the Sephardine [sic] or Eastern Jews," provoked a furious reaction from leading members of Britain's Jewish community.

## Bush knowledge of Middle East impresses Jewish leaders at meeting

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Jack Rosen went to the White House for dinner last week, he thought it would be like presidential receptions he had attended before.

"I expected we'd walk into a large room with several thousand people," said Rosen, the president of the American Jewish Congress. "I figured the president would make a speech, and we'd all go home and the president would make us feel good."

But the May 31 "working dinner" at the White House was vastly different from protocol. In what Jewish leaders called a "magical" and "extraordinary" event, President Bush, along with many senior officials, engaged American Jewish leaders and Israeli President Moshe Katsav in an intimate conversation about the fate of the State of Israel and the conflict with the Palestinians.

The event gave American Jewish leaders an opportunity to express their views on key Israeli issues directly to Bush, and for his administration to try to earn its Middle East credentials with a community that has been skeptical.

The White House spoke candidly about issues at the heart of the Middle East peace process. Jewish leaders said he was very receptive to adding the Palestinians' Force 17 security guard and Tanzim militia to the State Department's Foreign Terrorists Organization list next fall and discussed granting rewards for the capture of Palestinians responsible for the killing of Americans in Israel.

The administration also expressed an interest in providing the \$800 million supplemental aid requested by President Clinton and Israel last year. The funds, requested over a two-year period, are intended to offset costs related to Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon last year and to the development of a program to defend against missiles threats from Iran and Iraq.

While the supplemental budget request released last Friday did not include aid to Israel, Secretary of State Colin Powell reportedly told the audience that it was still being considered. Bush's personal interest and knowledge of the Arab-Israeli conflict surprised several American Jewish leaders.

"He led the conversation," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "He had a very hands-on knowledge of the area, its problems and challenges."

Since Bush took office in January, there have been few public statements by the White House on the Middle East conflict, certainly nothing near the personal involvement that Clinton had during his time in office.

The lack of public comment has led to the popular opinion that this was a president who is uninterested in the Middle East.

But given the escalation of violence in recent weeks, the administration has increased its attention to the region, naming special envoys and endorsing an international report that set guidelines for ending the violence.

Even so, the personal involvement of Bush, Powell and Vice President Dick Cheney at the dinner, as well as senior advisers Karl Rove and Ari Fleischer, made an impression on the Jewish leaders.

"I walked away from that evening feeling this is a president who knows right from wrong and good guys from bad guys," Rosen said.

Bush also used the meeting to stress that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat would not be visiting the White House in the near future. Bush reportedly told Jewish leaders that an invitation to the White House is his trump card against Arafat and said he intended to use it.

The dinner was considered a direct outreach effort by Bush to the Jewish community. Jews gave the former Texas governor less than 20 percent of their vote last November. And while Bush's plans for education and faith-based initiatives spark concern among many Jewish leaders, Bush made friends last week by voicing a strong support for Israel, always a top priority of the Jewish community, especially during times of unrest.

"Privately and publicly this administration has said time and time again that Israel is a friend and an ally," Foxman said. "They are concerned about its safety and security." □

## Jewish charities disappointed by surprise omission from tax bill

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish charitable organizations are not going to get the help they were seeking in the new tax bill, as the final version leaves out a proposal that might have boosted donations by billions of dollars.

The bill, which was scheduled to be signed by President Bush on Wednesday, grabbed headlines for its tax cuts and \$1.35 trillion figure.

But Jewish groups were surprised and dismayed that a plan to let people who do not itemize their tax returns deduct their charitable contributions was left out in last-minute negotiations.

"To say that we are disappointed is probably an understatement," said Diana Aviv, vice president of public policy for United Jewish Communities, the Jewish community's central fund-raising and social services agency. "We thought the issue was dear to the president's heart."

The White House's larger faith-based initiative has always included a plan to expand the federal charitable deduction to 80 million nonitemizers.

In a speech on May 20, Bush was still touting that plan.

"My attitude is, everyone in America—whether they are well-off or not—should have the same incentive and reward for giving," Bush said.

But administration officials negotiating with Congress over the tax bill reportedly did not make it a top priority. They fought for other provisions — such as tax rate and marriage penalty reductions and eliminating the estate tax — and did not put in the nonitemizing provision.

The proposal was thought to potentially encourage almost \$15 billion a year in new charitable giving.

It is unclear how much Jewish charities would have benefited.

The White House says the president is hopeful the proposal will work as part of the larger faith-based initiative, which is still in its working stages.

An official at the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives said the nonitemizing plan was never intended to be included in the tax bill.

But Jewish groups, which had universally supported the proposal, see the failure to include the provision in the tax bill as the likely end of the idea.

"The tax bill is where you do tax policy," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Rosenthal said the proposal could have been used to reach out to younger people, get more nongivers to participate and change the culture of charitable giving in the country.

It remains to be seen whether the nonitemizing proposal will help expand the base of support for the more controversial points of the faith-based initiative.

Congress plans to hold hearings this week on one of the most controversial points of the administration's initiative, charitable choice, which allows religious institutions to bid for government contracts to provide social services.

One issue of particular interest to the Jewish community that did make it into the tax bill was the expansion of education IRAs, or education savings accounts.

For the first time, parents will be allowed to use the tax benefit

of the savings account to go toward tuition at private and parochial elementary and secondary schools.

Orthodox groups are supportive of the White House and say the education savings accounts expand parental choice.

Other Jewish groups, such as the Religion Action Center for Reform Judaism, have opposed the accounts not as a church-state issue, but from a public policy standpoint, saying they siphon off money from the public school system.

Those Jewish groups opposed to the education IRAs did not make too much noise about its inclusion in the tax bill.

A number of the groups had focused on what they see as the larger threat of direct government support for private schools, and fought their fight against vouchers.

Vouchers were ultimately blocked in the education bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, and they are not thought to have much chance of passage in the Senate.

Opponents of the education savings accounts say lower-income families that do not have thousands in their savings cannot take advantage of the benefit and those that can will find the annual benefit is nominal.

"Every little bit helps," countered Abba Cohen, director and counsel of the Washington office of Agudath Israel of America, a fervently Orthodox group.

Cohen said the accounts are not a government subsidy, and the Jewish community has to pursue every avenue to help those parents that send their children to Jewish day schools. □

## In attempt to quell violence, CIA director returns to Middle East

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — CIA Director George Tenet has returned to the Middle East and a role he played frequently in the Clinton administration as the facilitator of security talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

Tenet's arrival in the region on Wednesday came as both Israelis and Palestinians hewed to separate cease-fire declarations on the heels of some of the deadliest violence since tensions flared last fall.

The State Department said Tenet will have separate security meetings with the Israelis and Palestinians, but would not say whether he will facilitate a joint meeting.

Tenet will also be in contact with William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, who is also working in the region in an attempt to end the violence.

Tenet was a key participant in last July's Camp David peace talks, coordinating security meetings between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

But early into Bush's administration, Tenet was relieved of his Middle East duties.

A State Department official said the United States removed Tenet earlier this year because Israelis and Palestinians were using the security meetings to blame each other for the violence.

Tenet's return was contingent on both sides agreeing that their senior officials would be present and they would be willing to engage in meaningful talks.

"We need to come in with a constructive dialogue," said the U.S. official.

"There is a real opportunity to build, and we're not going to miss this opportunity." □