

## IN THE NEWS

## Ariel Sharon meets settlers

Ariel Sharon met with West Bank settlers slated for evacuation.

The Israeli prime minister visited Homesh, one of four settlements in the northern West Bank to be removed under the summer withdrawal plan, on Tuesday for what residents described as a fruitful discussion.

"We will resist evacuation in every way possible, but if this plan is implemented we would like to be relocated en masse," Homesh's secretary, Reuven Tabib, said he told Sharon.

Like many of their Gaza Strip counterparts facing evacuation, the West Bank settlers have complained of a lack of government planning for their relocation to Israel proper.

In what was seen as a sign of rancor, no representatives of the three other area settlements to be removed turned up for Tuesday's meeting with Sharon.

## Foreign affairs chair steps down in House

Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), chairman of the U.S. House International Relations Committee, announced his retirement.

Hyde, 81, was known to be friendly to Israel, particularly focusing on religious freedom for Christians in Israel.

Hyde said Monday that he will not run for re-election in 2006.

## Loan guarantees to take three years

A joint U.S.-Israeli economic panel determined that remaining loan guarantees for Israel should be authorized at \$1 billion a year over the next three years.

The U.S.-Israeli Joint Economic Development Group met Monday in Washington and agreed to seek the loan guarantee funds over the next three years, after Congress extended the deadline for their use until 2008.

**In observance of Passover, the JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, April 25, and Tuesday, April 26.**

# WORLD REPORT

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## Jews welcome new pope, and hope that he builds on John Paul's legacy

By CHANAN TIGAY and RACHEL POMERANCE

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — As the regal red curtains were drawn back, clearing the way for the still-unidentified new pope to emerge on the balcony of the Vatican Basilica and offer a blessing to church faithful, many Jews joined the world's 1 billion Catholics in holding their collective breath.

The Christians were excitedly anticipating their Holy Father's arrival, eager for someone to fill the gap left when John Paul II, who served as pope for more than a quarter-century, died on April 2 at 84.

Jews, too, were awaiting the new pope's arrival — and wondering what his ascendancy would mean for them. Would he promote Jewish-Catholic relations as zealously as his predecessor? Would he turn his attention instead to mending fences between Catholics and Muslims? Would he push diplomatic relations with Israel?

In short, would he be good for the Jews?

As it turns out, Jewish observers of the Vatican say, world Jewry can breathe easy knowing that German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was chosen as the 265th pope.

"As far as Jewish people are concerned, Cardinal Ratzinger is a friend," said Gary Krupp, president and founder of the *Pave the Way Foundation*, a New York-based nonprofit organization that promotes religious understanding. "He is going to be as effective, if not more, than John Paul II" in furthering Catholic-Jewish relations. "He's not going to backtrack. I think he's going to be advancing these causes even further."

Ratzinger, who took the name Benedict XVI upon his election Tuesday, has been called a

hard-line conservative, a vigilant watchdog and an enforcer of strict church orthodoxy.

Ratzinger was born in Marktl am Inn, Germany, in 1927. He was ordained in 1951 and received his doctorate in theology in 1953, then taught theology and dogma at a series of German universities.

He was appointed bishop of Munich in 1977 and was promoted to cardinal by then-Pope Paul VI after just three months.

Since 1981, he has led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he was responsible for enforcing church doctrine. He became known in this role for his conserva-

tive views, upsetting some Catholics with his vocal opposition to religious pluralism and liberation theology.

Ratzinger also maintains conservative views on such issues as homosexuality and the ordination of women as priests.

But he also used his position as the Vatican's chief theologian under John Paul II to play an instrumental part in his predecessor's historic rapprochement with the Jews. In 2000, under Ratzinger's editorial direction, the Vatican released "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," a watershed document that acknowledged church errors in its past dealings with Jews, asking "whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts."

Ratzinger also oversaw the 2002 publication of "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures," which asserted that "the Jewish messianic wait is not in vain" and expressed regret that certain passages in the Christian

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Will Pope Benedict XVI be good for the Jews?

*Continued from page 1*

Bible condemning individual Jews have been used to justify anti-Semitism.

Israeli officials and Jewish groups issued statements welcoming the selection.

"Israel is hopeful that under this new papacy, we will continue to move forward in Vatican-Israel relations and we are sure that considering the background of this new pope, he, like his predecessor, will be a strong voice against anti-Semitism in all its forms," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said.

Rabbi Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, said Ratzinger had been instrumental in improving relations between Catholics and Jews under John Paul.

"He is the architect of the policy that John Paul II fulfilled with regard to relations with the Jews. He is the architect of the ideological policy to recognize, to have full relations with Israel," Singer said. "He was the ideologist behind the last pope — the theologian and the ideologist."

Not all Jewish leaders welcomed Ratzinger's selection, however. Some said that it was precisely his role as ideologist under John Paul that made him ill-suited to be the next pope.

Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine and rabbi of Beyt Tikkun Synagogue in San Francisco, is among the new pope's critics.

"It was with great distress that we watched as Cardinal Ratzinger led the Vatican in the past 25 years on a path that opposed providing birth control information

to the poor of the world, thereby ensuring that AIDS would spread and kill millions in Africa," Lerner said.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier of Manhattan's Park East Synagogue believes that while Benedict XVI will carry on the pope's legacy, he may not focus heavily on Jewish issues.

"I don't think Jewish-Catholic relations is going to be that much of a priority for him because there are other burning issues that he has to confront," such as the decreasing number of believers in Europe and the decreasing number of priests in the United States, he said. "He has to put the house in order."

Despite his stern religious bearing, those who know Ratzinger say, his intelligence, patience and personality make him good company.

"He's very, very sweet, very pleasant, very cordial and friendly," said Krupp, who met Ratzinger at his Vatican offices in early February. After Krupp accidentally missed an earlier meeting with Ratzinger, the cardinal brushed the oversight aside.

"Don't worry about it, it was just a mistake," Krupp recalled Ratzinger saying.

As a teen, Ratzinger reportedly was a member of the Hitler Youth. At the time, boys his age — Ratzinger was 6 years old when Hitler came to power — were pressured, though not required, to join the group.

Ratzinger served in the German army during World War II, but deserted after a short period. His policeman father reportedly engaged in anti-Nazi activity.

"For the Jewish community, it is extraordinary that the pope has personally experienced the evils of Nazism and the horrors of racism and prejudice," said David Elcott, U.S. director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee. "There's no cardinal whose life has been more entwined with that of the Jewish people than that of this cardinal."

Still, German Jews expressed some concern over Ratzinger's election.

"A few people who know him say he is not bad. He has good relations with some Jewish persons," Nathan Kalmanowicz,

head of religious affairs for the Central Council of Jews in Germany and a member of the Munich Jewish community, told JTA. "But the vast majority is afraid of what will happen. He is opposed to reform and not as familiar with Jewish issues" as the last pope, "and as far as we know he is not interested in promoting them — issues like the Holocaust."

Jacob Neusner, a theology professor at Bard College in upstate New York, was thrilled when

he learned Ratzinger was the new pope. The two men have been corresponding since 1990, when Ratzinger responded to Neusner's fan mail.

Neusner was impressed with an article Ratzinger had written about Jesus — in particular, Ratzinger's remark that there was no such thing as an objective biography.

"I got a lovely letter back, and since then we've exchanged about one letter a year," Neusner said.

In addition, Ratzinger complimented Neusner on his book "A Rabbi Talks with Jesus."

"It was an explanation of why, if I had been there in the first century, I wouldn't have followed" Jesus, Neusner said.

"He praised the book and said this is how interfaith dialogue should be carried on," Neusner added. "He doesn't believe in negotiating theological truths. He thinks disagreement is healthy and normal."

Speaking to JTA from St. Peter's Square, Rabbi Jack Bemporad, who teaches theology and interreligious studies at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, said he was witnessing "pope fever."

Though Ratzinger is "basically against religious pluralism," Bemporad said, he believes faiths can learn from each other and come together to address social causes.

"He recognizes fully the autonomy and the integrity of each faith," Bemporad said.

*(JTA Correspondents Toby Axelrod in Germany, Dan Baron in Jerusalem and Ruth Ellen Gruber in Rome contributed to this report.)*

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**Rabbi Israel Singer**  
Chairman, World Jewish Congress

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# Israel prepares to ask U.S. for aid

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The extended bloody conflict in Iraq, just a few hundred miles from Jerusalem, makes this both the best and the worst of times for Israel to ask for hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. assistance to get Jews out of the Gaza Strip.

The director general of Israel's treasury, Yossi Bachar, was in Washington this week to launch talks aimed at shaping Israel's request for cash to soften the landing of thousands of settlers due to be evacuated this summer from Gaza and part of the West Bank.

Bachar didn't bring a specific figure to Tuesday's meeting, attended by senior State Department and National Security Council officials, but a senior Israeli official told JTA that the amount to be requested from the United States was likely to reach \$1.6 billion.

The request comes as Congress already is considering Bush's request for \$82 billion in fast-track funds, mostly to be spent in Iraq, and at a time when the administration is cutting back on a wide variety of domestic programs.

Yet President Bush's need to persuade other nations to help foot the growing Iraq bill is driving his push for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to make good on his pledge to leave Gaza. Significantly, E. Anthony Wayne, the assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs, who chaired the meeting with Bachar, is Bush's point man on financial reconstruction in Iraq.

"It's not a time when Congress is looking to spend more money overseas," said a congressional staffer familiar with Israel's aid requests. "On the other hand, the overwhelming feeling is that Gaza disengagement is crucial for U.S. interests in the Middle East."

Already there are signs that the Bush administration and Congress will use the funds as leverage to extract concessions from Israel.

The request jibes with the estimates Israeli officials have cited for the transfer — some \$1 billion for new housing for the evacuated settlers and \$600 million to build new bases.

Yet Americans and Israelis emphasize

that the money Bachar is seeking would not go directly to assisting settlers. That's because the United States historically has opposed settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and congressional appropriators would be unlikely to pay to undo a policy the United States has warned for years was a mistake.

Instead, the money is to be spent developing the Galilee and Negev, the Israeli regions likeliest to absorb settlers.

Bush lent his weight to the plan last week when he met with Sharon at his Texas ranch.

"The prime minister believes that devel-

oping the Negev and the Galilee regions is vital to ensuring a vibrant economic future for Israel," Bush said. "I support that goal, and we will work together to make his plans a reality."

Israel has worked hard to make the request palatable by attaching it to projects favored by Americans: the development of transportation infrastructure and business parks that would promote private enterprise and employment; and assistance to Bedouin communities in the Negev, to show that the assistance isn't intended only for Jews.

One option might be to wrap the funds into Bush's next request for fast-track money for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, likely to come toward the end of the year. That also would provide Israel with an incentive to make sure the withdrawal goes smoothly.

In the meantime, legislators are using Israel's outstretched hand to extract concessions.

When Shimon Peres, the Israeli deputy prime minister who is to run the civilian part of the disengagement plan, was in Washington two weeks ago to make the case for U.S. assistance, the powerful chairman of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), criticized what he said was Israel's mistreatment of West Bank Christians.

Hyde said Israel's West Bank security barrier and its settlement policy are

"drastically undermining the mission of Christian institutions and the social fabric of their communities in the Holy Land."

Peres was caught off guard by Hyde's complaint, and replied that Palestinian Christians face graver threats from Palestinian Muslims than from Israel.

A staffer close to Hyde apparently leaked the information to Robert Novak, a columnist who never has been friendly to Israel. It was an extraordinary breach of the committee's privacy etiquette, but the message was clear: Improvements

for Christians, such as alterations to the route of Israel's West Bank security barrier that would ease hardship on Christian communities, would help ensure support for the cash Israel is seeking.

Other congressmen who are unhappy with restrictions that Congress — acting at the urging of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee — placed on the \$200 million in fast-track aid to the Palestinians may now try to link the two: Direct aid for the Palestinians in exchange for assistance with Israel's withdrawal.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) surprised his colleagues last week when he blasted provisions Congress wrote into the package that would keep the cash from going directly to the Palestinian Authority, and instead would channel it through nongovernmental organizations, provisions authored by AIPAC. AIPAC wants guarantees that the Palestinian Authority has severed its terrorist affiliations before it receives direct aid.

"If we are going to do business with the Palestinian Authority, and are going to expect them to be accountable for keeping things safe and providing a basic level of social services so people are able to eat, we should deal directly with them," Alexander said.

The White House also might see an opportunity. It has raised the volume in recent days in its complaints about Sharon's refusal to stop expansion of West Bank settlements that he plans to keep permanently as part of Israel. ■

**'The overwhelming feeling is that Gaza disengagement is crucial for U.S. interests in the Middle East.'**  
Congressional staffer

NEWS  
ANALYSIS

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Hamas still blacklisted

The European Union stood firm on designating Hamas a terrorist organization.

The European Union has been under pressure to recognize the radical Palestinian group, which has been making inroads in local elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as a legitimate political movement, but the security commissioner for the 25-nation bloc said Tuesday that there would be no change of policy.

Hamas is "an enormous problem. Even its educational foundations incite violence against Israel.

One just has to look at some of their school programs," Franco Frattini told the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. "Or they continue to provide financial aid to relatives of young kamikazes. These are all things that we cannot remain silent on."

### Warsaw Ghetto Uprising marked

Jewish officials, survivors and politicians commemorated the 62nd anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The main part of Tuesday's commemoration took place at the monument in Warsaw honoring those who resisted the Nazis beginning on April 19, 1943, after they heard the ghetto was to be liquidated.

The Jewish fighters held out for a month before the ghetto was finally overwhelmed and burned to the ground.

### Holocaust Vatican case back on

A U.S. court reinstated a lawsuit in which Holocaust survivors charge that the Vatican Bank stored looted assets during the Holocaust era.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Monday that survivors should be given the chance to prove that the Vatican Bank stored the assets stolen by Croatia's fascist wartime regime from Jews, Gypsies, Serbs and others, and profited from them.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Abbas says he's cracking down

Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinian Authority has disarmed gunmen in two West Bank cities under his control.

Briefing Israeli reporters at his headquarters Tuesday, the P.A. president said terrorist fugitives in Tulkarm and Jericho, where the Palestinian Authority resumed security control earlier this year, have been incorporated into P.A. security forces after they gave up their weapons.

He also said P.A. police have thwarted dozens of terrorist attacks aimed at Israelis, but accused Israel of not giving him enough time to establish his rule.

Israel has cautiously welcomed Abbas' efforts to rein in Palestinian terrorist groups but says this is no substitute for dismantling them, as required by the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan.

### Vanunu kept in Israel

Israeli authorities decided to prevent nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu from leaving the country for another year.

Interior Minister Ophir Paz-Pines on Tuesday extended a ban on Vanunu's travel, in place since the former Dimona nuclear technician ended an 18-year prison term for treason last April, citing concerns that Vanunu intends to spill more state secrets.

Vanunu, a convert to Christianity who disclosed the Jewish state's nuclear program to Britain's *Sunday Times* in 1986, outraged Israeli authorities over the past year by holding unauthorized interviews with the foreign media, a violation of his release terms.

### Abbas sends holiday greetings

Mahmoud Abbas wished world Jewry a happy Passover.

"With the advent of the Passover festival, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the people of Israel, and Jews everywhere 'Chag Sameach, happy holiday,'" the Palestinian Authority president said during an interview Tuesday with Israel's Channel Two television, switching briefly from Arabic to Hebrew for the greeting. "Passover is the festival of liberation. With your help, we Palestinians would also like to achieve liberation," he said, addressing the Israeli audience.

### Liberal Jews welcome gays to Israel

Liberal Jewish leaders in Israel announced their support for a controversial gay pride parade scheduled for Jerusalem in August.

Representatives of the Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist movements referred to a coalition of Israel's two chief rabbis and leaders of the country's Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim communities, which came together to denounce the parade, as an "unholy alliance."

Jewish values, said Rabbi Ehud Bandel, president of the Conservative movement in Israel, should include "tolerance, compassion, and the dignity of human beings, which are the basis of the Torah," according to Ha'aretz.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Bush sends Passover greetings

President Bush said Passover sends the message that "even in the face of struggle, hope endures."

In his annual presidential message for Passover, released Tuesday, Bush said the lesson of the holiday should be recalled as the United States works to bring hope to the oppressed.

"By passing this story from generation to generation, they teach the triumph of faith over tyranny and celebrate God's promise of freedom," Bush said in the statement.

### U.S. day honors Lubavitcher rebbe

President Bush declared Wednesday to be "Education and Sharing Day," in memory of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

"On Education and Sharing Day, we reaffirm our commitment to teach young people the lessons they need to preserve and strengthen our nation, and to reach as far as their vision and character can take them," Bush said in a statement Tuesday.

He said the late Lubavitcher rebbe's legacy shows "that a single life of conscience and purpose can touch and lift up many lives."

### Canadian Indian apologizes

A Canadian aboriginal leader apologized for a controversial statement he released that many viewed as anti-Semitic.

B'nai Brith Canada called the apology by Chief Terrance Nelson inadequate and repeated its call for Nelson's resignation.

Nelson, chief of the Rouseau River Anishinabe First Nation in southern Manitoba, said he regretted the statement he released last week that said media coverage of former aboriginal leader David Ahenakew's hate trial in Saskatchewan would increase aboriginals' hatred of Jews and turn Ahenakew into a martyr.

Nelson also made critical comments about Jewish ownership of Canadian media organizations, naming the Asper family, which owns newspapers and a television network.

"I realize now that my approach, tone and some of my comments were deeply hurtful and offensive to some members of the Jewish community," Nelson was quoted as saying in a news conference Monday.