



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied that his government had decided to build new settlements in the territories. He also said Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have already agreed to 98 percent of the details for an Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron. [Page 4]

■ A leader of the Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party in Israel implied that the Holocaust was caused by the assimilation of Reform Jews in Germany. The Reform movement said it is considering a libel suit. [Page 3]

■ A plea by the president of the Zionist Organization of America to the Anti-Defamation League to cancel an upcoming appearance by journalist Thomas Friedman has sparked an inter-organizational flap. [Page 3]

■ Cosmetics heir and philanthropist Ronald Lauder is being eyed as the next president of the Jewish National Fund of America. [Page 2]

■ British Airways issued an apology to a New York prosecutor who said he was kicked out of a lounge at London's Heathrow Airport because he is Jewish. In letters to the Anti-Defamation League and to Aaron Tyk, an Orthodox Jew who was using the lounge to recite morning prayers, an official said the airline has clarified rules regarding use of lounges.

■ Labor Party Knesset member Yossi Beilin announced his candidacy for Labor Party leader, pitting himself against two other declared rivals, Ehud Barak and Ephraim Sneh.

■ Israel's acting permanent representative to the United Nations reaffirmed Israel's commitment to pursuing Middle East peace during an address before the U.N. General Assembly.

■ A worrying segment of Israeli youth is indifferent to the murder of Yitzhak Rabin and even feel solidarity with his assassin, a committee appointed by Israel's Education Ministry concluded. The committee said the phenomena was observed primarily, but not exclusively, among youths who attend state religious schools.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Modern Orthodox navigate moderation amid the tensions

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

RYE, N.Y. (JTA) — Yeshiva University President Rabbi Norman Lamm has often said that modern Orthodoxy's central problem today is that its adherents tend to be moderate about their passions, rather than passionate about their moderation.

Built on a philosophy of simultaneous observance of God's commandments and integration with the world, the movement is now seeking to reinvigorate that ideology of moderation.

This quest was clear at the 98th annual convention of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, held here over the long Thanksgiving weekend, where speakers and some of the 800 participants interviewed sounded similar themes. At the same time, it became apparent that the O.U., as an organization of about 750 synagogues plus about 25,000 individual members, seems to have succeeded in recharging itself as an institution with a clear sense of its own mandate.

The modern Orthodox quest comes at a time when, it is widely acknowledged, there are no truly great modern Orthodox rabbis leading the movement. The vacuum has been acutely felt by modern Orthodox Jews since the 1993 death of their principal theologian, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik.

It also comes as the modern Orthodox are grappling with tensions between the forces of assimilation and the influences of the right wing.

The religious and social behavior of modern Orthodox Jews has in recent years been pulled rightward by the more stringent, isolationist practices of the fervently Orthodox community.

At the same, assimilation and intermarriage are making inroads to the modern Orthodox community, though to a lesser extent than among religiously liberal and unaffiliated Jews.

Sociologist William Helmreich, who has studied and written about the Orthodox world, pointed out ways in which the right wing has influenced what used to be called modern Orthodoxy, but these days is often called centrist Orthodoxy. Men and women used to sit together everywhere, as they did at the O.U. convention, except in synagogue. Now it is common for the sexes to be separated at wedding receptions and other social functions, and for musical concerts to be open to men or women only, he said in an address to the convention.

In one case, Helmreich said, the principal of a Yeshiva University-affiliated high school announced that he does not approve of "Torah U'maddah," meaning literally Torah and science, but referring to the worldview endorsing observance with integration with secular society.

'Thrown out the good with the bad'

"Shakespeare, Freud, Marx and secular art" are now viewed as forbidden, he said. "We've thrown out the good with the bad, and as modern Orthodox Jews, we should want both."

"We can follow Agudah if we want," said Helmreich, referring to Agudath Israel of America, the organization representing fervently Orthodox, or haredi, interests. "But we will always be a paler shade of black and so not attractive to young people."

At the same time, several speakers at the convention urged modern Orthodox Jews to stop "looking over their right shoulders" and to focus more on their own mission. Most of what Helmreich said "is almost irrelevant outside of New York," said Rabbi Ilan Feldman, spiritual leader of Atlanta's Congregation Beth Jacob.

He decried as a "preoccupation and obsession" his movement's concern about the right wing.

"Let's grow from each other and not spend our time talking about why some other Orthodox Jew is a negative influence on us," he said.

Rabbi Bernard Lander, president of Touro College, clearly articulated the movement's struggle in his remarks. Touro is a New York City college attended by many haredi Jews who go to learn computer or accounting skills they need to earn a living.

Citing assimilation and intermarriage statistics, Lander labeled secular

colleges "the crematorium of our people" because they are where young Jews from traditional homes encounter secular values and date non-Jews for the first time.

"What chance do our young people have in co-ed dorms with co-ed bathrooms?" he asked. "Torah does not preach a segregated ghetto, but participation in civic affairs. But we must not forget the importance of boundaries, of separation."

Amid this quest for a renewed ideology, however, is a growing organization with an increasingly clear sense of purpose. The Orthodox Union is expanding to Israel its network of teen social clubs, the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, which has some 40,000 members in the United States.

Last autumn, the O.U. erected a sukkah on the beach in Tel Aviv and 1,000 Israeli kids went into it, according to Dr. Mandell Ganchrow. At the convention, Ganchrow was elected to a second term as president of the O.U. The O.U. is also establishing a National Jewish Sports League in several cities with the goal of using basketball to reach Jewish public school students who otherwise might be at risk of assimilating.

Last year, the O.U. initiated an in-home discussion-group project called Pardes, which has so far involved an estimated 12,000 people in eight countries and some 50 college campuses, according to an O.U. report.

The movement is also the only major American Jewish religious body to put serious emphasis on programs for physically and developmentally disabled Jews, through its Our Way and Yachad programs.

Strong online presence

The organization has created a strong presence online, where its home page on the World Wide Web gets about 8,000 hits a day, 2,000 from people who have never visited there before, said Rabbi Raphael Butler, O.U.'s executive vice president.

The site (www.ou.org) includes an "on-line halachah hotline" and "Vebbe Rebbe," to answer questions about kashrut and other aspects of Jewish law.

Financially, the O.U. has eliminated the \$750,000 deficit it had two years ago and has grown — in terms of its membership and its budget — by 50 percent in the last two years, Ganchrow said.

The O.U. currently spends about \$8 million a year on programs, he said.

The O.U.'s kashrut division, which oversees 3,500 food processing facilities and controls about two-thirds of the kosher food supervision market, generates millions in income a year, according to Rabbi Menachem Genack, the head of the department.

As the organization grows, the experience of one convention attendee, Abe Colton, makes clear the philosophical tensions inherent in being a modern Orthodox Jew today.

The Manhattan resident, who said that he does not like labels but that he has lived his life as a modern Orthodox Jew, has two children. One is making a life focused solely on the study of Torah; the other, he hopes, will be more fully integrated with the world around her.

His son, Colton said, is a talented Torah scholar in his fourth year of full-time study at a Jerusalem yeshiva. The young man's whole life now "is spiritual. He doesn't live in the real world but he's willing to sacrifice to learn Torah."

The 21-year-old young man now prefers not to walk down Manhattan streets when he comes to New York on his once-a-year visit, lest he be forced to look at women.

His daughter, who is now finishing yeshiva high school, will study at a Jerusalem yeshiva next year.

Colton said he hopes that she will be a housewife, and that he would oppose her marrying a man who wanted to learn in a yeshiva full time.

"It's the responsibility of the husband" to go out into the world and "support the wife," he said. □

Major philanthropist is eyed as possible new JNF president

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — It may be too soon to call, but Ronald Lauder — cosmetics heir, philanthropist and former U.S. ambassador to Austria — apparently is being eyed as the next president of the Jewish National Fund of America.

Some believe he and his high profile could be just the prescription for the organization's recovery, following problems that surfaced recently over its fiscal management.

JNF's current president, Milton Shapiro, is slated to step down after his second term concludes at the end of next year.

Lauder "is somebody who has experience in business as well as resources which could help in efforts JNF has undertaken to reorganize and address concerns that have been raised," said Malcolm Hoenlein.

Hoenlein is the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and a friend of Lauder's.

"He has demonstrated his commitment to Jewish causes and to Israel," Hoenlein added, recalling trips with Lauder to Eastern Europe, where he said Lauder has invested heavily in Jewish camps and schools.

Lauder, an active Republican and ardent advocate of term limits for political officials, is also close to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mark Cohen, JNF spokesman, declined to comment on Lauder or any other candidate who might be tapped for the top lay job.

He would only say: "There is a nominating committee in the process of being formed to select a slate of officers to help carry JNF into the 21st century."

Lauder was unavailable for comment, but his spokesman, Gene Secunda, said, "If, in fact, there is anything going on, I have no information about it."

New JNF officers are not scheduled to be elected until JNF's next annual board meeting in November 1997, and ordinarily nominations would not be made until the summer before.

But the nominating process has been advanced to get new leadership in place quickly in an effort to show JNF is serious about reform and restructuring.

The decision to change the timetable was one of several taken during annual meetings last month that focused on the fallout from an internal probe of the organization's spending and accounting practices.

The probe found no malfeasance, but revealed that a surprisingly small portion of the money raised — roughly 20 percent — actually gets to Israel, while a large portion stays in the United States for Zionist education and promotion of the JNF enterprise.

Publicity surrounding the findings shook confidence in the charity, whose mission historically has focused on reclaiming and developing the land of Israel.

A task force is being formed to determine how to increase the flow of dollars to Israel.

The organization also has launched a search for a replacement for Samuel Cohen, the top professional, who has moved to the post of senior executive vice president.

JNF also must find a replacement for Paul Jeser, the national campaign director who left to work for American Friends of Hebrew University. □

Invite to prominent journalist sparks flap between ADL and ZOA

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — When the Anti-Defamation League's regional chapter hosts its annual dinner-dance here on Sunday, the usual good fellowship will be spiced by a controversy over the evening's keynote speaker.

He is Thomas Friedman, the New York Times' well-known foreign affairs columnist, whose appearance has been sharply attacked by Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

In a letter to Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, Klein described Friedman as a man "who regularly defames Israel and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," and asked that the journalist's appearance be cancelled.

Klein appended a list of 13 alleged anti-Israel statements and actions by Friedman, starting with a recent Friedman observation that "all Netanyahu has done is polarize Israeli society and lead it into a dead end," and going back to 1974, when Friedman was a student at Brandeis University.

In a sharp response to Klein, Foxman said ADL was proud to present Friedman, "a responsible, knowledgeable, and incisive commentator" of the Middle East whose "opinions are always expressed within the context of support for the State of Israel."

Foxman upbraided Klein for his repeated personal attacks, not only on Friedman and the ADL director himself, but on U.S. diplomats Strobe Talbott and Martin Indyk, and Leonard Fein, director of social action at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In his next move, Klein issued an "Action Alert" to ZOA leaders and "Friends of Israel Around the U.S.," urging them to protest Friedman's appearance to the ADL.

Charges and countercharges

That did it for Foxman, who urged that Klein be expelled from the organized Jewish world. "Mr. Klein can invite anyone he wants, but we don't need this kind of thought police in the Jewish community," Foxman said in an interview. "He has lowered the discourse to a new level of personal intolerance and it is time that people stood up to this kind of behavior."

Klein characterized Foxman's statement as "hysterical."

Eight current and past ZOA leaders asked the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to reprimand Foxman for his statements and request an apology to Klein.

The letter charged that Foxman had violated an agreement, signed last year by most Jewish organizations, to assure "civility of debate and behavior" and refrain from "verbal violence" and "demeaning characterizations" that "violate basic Jewish tenets." Signatories to the letter, including five past national ZOA presidents, said they found it "ironic that an organization devoted to fighting defamation is now itself engaged in defamation."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said the matter had been referred to a committee recently formed in part to arbitrate differences between member-organizations over their roles and responsibilities.

"It's a new process but we hope to move as expeditiously as possible to review the matter and see what's appropriate," Hoenlein said. "We would like to see it contained rather than have it escalate further."

Meanwhile, what might have passed as a tiff between two outspoken men of different political views,

took on an international flavor when David Bar Illan, Netanyahu's communications director and one of the prime minister's top aides, also weighed in against Friedman.

"Friedman's whole history is that of an anti-Zionist," Bar-Illan said by phone from Jerusalem. "Any organization that purports to be Zionist should not give him a platform."

"His whole writing indicates a patronizing attitude toward the 'natives,'" Bar-Illan said, referring to the Israelis. "It would perhaps be palatable for the ADL to present him in a debate with a pro-Zionist."

As editor of the Jerusalem Post before joining the Netanyahu administration, Bar Illan wrote a regular column, "Eye on the Media," which was generally highly critical of the way the foreign media reported on Israel.

Told of Bar-Illan's remarks, Foxman responded that "it's a sad day for Israel, when the prime minister's spokesman issues an advisory on who is or isn't an appropriate speaker."

"Is he ready to issue an enemy's list? And were we wrong to give a platform to Mr. Netanyahu when he was in opposition to the Israeli government?"

In a phone interview, Friedman spoke generally off the record, indicating that he did not want to elevate some "fringe individuals" by getting into a public debate with Klein. He said he looked forward to speaking at the ADL dinner, at which 1,500 people are expected.

Meanwhile, Klein's attacks apparently are having some effect. Foxman said he was being deluged by an organized campaign of phone calls, faxes and e-mail opposing Friedman's appearance.

In Los Angeles, David Lehrer, the regional ADL director, said he had received a few anti-Friedman calls "from the usual suspects."

In addition, two full-page ads, both citing from the ZOA's indictment of Friedman's "anti-Zionism," are scheduled to appear in the Dec. 6 issue of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles.

But according to Foxman, with few exceptions, ADL supporters on the East and West coasts appeared to back their leadership in inviting Friedman. □

Agudat Yisrael leader blames Reform Jewry for Hitler's rise

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A leader of the fervently religious Agudat Yisrael Party this week stated that the secularized stance of Reform Jewry led to the Holocaust.

Pinchas Horowitz, the party's deputy chairman, made the controversial remark Sunday during a Tel Aviv news conference. The party had called the briefing to announce a rally against the High Court of Justice, whose positions the party views as anti-religious.

According to a recording of the news conference, which was transmitted by Israel Radio, Horowitz said Hitler had first come to power in Germany, where "95 percent of the Jews were Reform and assimilated."

"That teaches that when you destroy that which exists, the Shabbat, when you destroy Judaism, when you destroy faith in the Almighty, Hitler arises."

Horowitz, who publicly denied having made the comments, said during a radio program Monday: "The Reform are the ones who do everything to destroy religion."

In response, Reform movement spokeswoman Anat Galili said Agudat Yisrael's "manipulation of the Holocaust is sickening and not even worth relating to."

She said the movement had already filed a police complaint against Horowitz on the grounds of incitement, and that it was considering a libel suit. □

Netanyahu affirms support for expanding settlements

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Responding to worldwide criticism of Israeli settlement policy, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied this week that his government had decided to build new settlements in the territories.

At the same time, Netanyahu affirmed his government's support for expanding existing settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, adding that the rate of building under his administration did not even approach that of the previous government.

"Under the Labor government, the settlements expanded by 50 percent, the greatest expansion of the settlements in Israel's history," Netanyahu told a news conference Tuesday in Lisbon, where he was attending a meeting of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe.

"We are nowhere near that rate, and I don't say that happily," he said. "I think we would like to change that as well. I'm talking about existing settlements, not new ones."

The Netanyahu government has approved the construction of thousands of apartments in existing settlements, sparking anger from the Palestinian Authority and Arab states. The United States has voiced disapproval of the expansion plans. However, construction has not yet begun, a fact that has generated further protests by Jewish settlers.

Netanyahu attributed the delay in expanding settlements to budgetary constraints. The government is trying to slash \$2 billion from the 1997 budget, in an effort to bring the deficit under control.

Netanyahu's remarks came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators continued talks on implementing a long-delayed redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron and turnover of most of the West Bank town to Palestinian self-rule. Netanyahu said Tuesday that the agreement was 98 percent complete, and that the Palestinians were holding up a signing.

Earlier in the week there was speculation about a possible meeting between Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Lisbon. But Arafat decided not to attend the conference. Palestinian officials denied reports that they had made any overtures for such a meeting.

An agreement on Hebron would open the way to final status talks that will address, among other issues, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood.

Netanyahu, who opposes a Palestinian state, said he believed a permanent settlement with the Palestinians must consist of some kind of balance between self-determination and security concerns for Israel.

"I think the crucial test before us, is fashioning a third way between subjugation and unbridled self-determination. What we are going to propose in final settlement [will] balance the Palestinian need for freedom, and our need for security." □

Orthodox community group suspected of abusing funds

By Lawrence Cohler-Esses

New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Brooklyn Orthodox community's most prominent elected official has emerged as a key target in an investigation that has deeply shaken the area's political and communal leaders.

New York Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Borough Park) and at least two close associates stand at the center of the inquiry into alleged charities abuse, after federal and

city agents recently raided Brooklyn's largest Jewish community council.

According to knowledgeable sources, the trio's use of charitable and government funds administered by the Council of Jewish Organizations of Borough Park has raised numerous unanswered questions.

But law enforcement officials also said the scope of the probe is expanding rapidly beyond questions about the possible appropriation of COJO's money for personal use by Hikind and his associates.

"These people got a lot of state contracts, and one of the things we're looking at is who is giving them these contracts, and why."

The quiet neighborhood of Borough Park, New York's most heavily Orthodox Jewish community, was shocked when agents from the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Postal Service and the city's Department of Investigation roped off the block around COJO's headquarters at 13th Avenue and 53rd Street last month.

Executing a search warrant obtained in connection with a grand jury investigation, the authorities sealed off the council's offices, preventing anyone from leaving or entering, as they carted off boxes of files and records during the course of a search that lasted most of the day.

But according to Borough Park community sources and a source close to the investigation itself, in the weeks prior to the COJO raid, investigators also canvassed various merchants in Borough Park. Two questions emerged frequently during these exchanges, said these sources, who would speak only on condition of anonymity.

The questions concerned Hikind and his two associates, Rabbi Elimelech Naiman, the deputy director of COJO of Borough Park, and Paul Chernick, another senior COJO official.

Have Hikind, Naiman or Chernick, the investigators asked, bought any goods or services from your business? And if so, the investigators asked further, how did they pay for them — from their own funds or COJO's accounts?

Those questions are crucial, as investigators are said to have evidence that substantial sums went directly from COJO's accounts to personal purchases by Hikind and his associates.

Among these purchases, investigators believe, is \$3,000 used to cover a credit card bill that Hikind ran up on a recent trip to France.

Hikind has denied any wrongdoing.

Refusal to give a public accounting

The council, with a budget of more than \$5.4 million, administers a wide array of social services to the local community, ranging from English classes for Russian immigrants to job placement assistance and small business development consulting. The services are funded largely by government social service contracts obtained by COJO at the city, state and federal levels.

In August 1995, The Jewish Week disclosed that Hikind had obtained more than \$500,000 in state funds for two affiliates of COJO led by Naiman and Chernick, respectively. This money, in turn, was part of more than \$1 million the groups doled out to scores of consultants and grant recipients. Altogether, some 93 percent of the two groups' program expenditures were going to unnamed consultants and grant recipients.

COJO officials repeatedly refused to give a public accounting of this money. But the Jewish Week investigation revealed that Hikind's own aides, political advisers and at least one of his relatives were among the recipients.

Investigators now believe the sums of questionable expenditures significantly exceed the \$1 million the newspaper uncovered. □