



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Israel Defense Force chief of staff said an explosion of violence was not imminent in the territories.** Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee it appeared the sides were awaiting a visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

■ **The Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas rejected a Palestinian Authority request to stop terrorist attacks against Israel.** Hamas said in a statement that authority officials asked in last week's Palestinian "national unity" talks that the armed struggle be halted.

■ **Orthodox students at Yale are threatening to sue the college for religious discrimination.** The students want to live off campus because the mixed-sex atmosphere of the school dormitories contravenes their beliefs. [Page 3]

■ **The Legal Committee of the Swiss Parliament said no parliamentary approval is needed for the Swiss National Bank to contribute \$70 million to the Holocaust Memorial Fund.** [Page 4]

■ **An emotional reunion between a woman and the Yemenite-born mother from whom she was separated in Israel some 50 years ago prompted a flood of reaction from other Yemenite families who said their children disappeared in Israel in the late 1940s and early 1950s.** A member of Knesset called for the creation of a data bank that would help families reconnect.

■ **Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis told participants in an international Jewish conference that Jews made an enormous contribution to the Baltic nation.** Around 200 scholars from Israel, the United States and the former Soviet Union have converged on the Latvian capital Riga for the four-day conference on Jewish life in Eastern Europe.

■ **Doctors have discovered a genetic mutation that apparently leads to colon cancer among Ashkenazi Jews.** The mutation was found in 6 percent of 1,000 Ashkenazi Jews in a study conducted at Johns Hopkins University.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

Day schools face funding crisis even as the demand flourishes

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Day schools, heralded by many in the Jewish community as the best antidote to assimilation, are having trouble paying their bills.

The problem is, the predominant source of their income — parents — are having even more trouble keeping up with rising tuitions.

"The bottom line is that the system will go bankrupt in the next decade unless we figure out a way to pay for families that can't afford it," said George Hanus, president of Chicago's Ida Crown Jewish Academy.

As an unprecedented number of new Jewish schools open their doors this month — 10 new high schools alone — many of the 600 day and high schools already in business are struggling to make ends meet.

A new study on the financing of Jewish day schools, authored by educational consultants Marvin Schick and Jeremy Dauber, has found what many already suspected: Day schools are seriously underfunded. And annual tuitions — ranging from \$2,000-\$4,000 at some Orthodox yeshivas to well over \$10,000 at community and movement-affiliated schools in many metropolitan areas — remain a barrier for many parents who would like their children to receive an intensive Jewish education, say experts in the field.

The irony is that the dual crisis in underfunding and high tuition comes as the demand for day-school education is on the rise.

According to educational sociologist Alvin Schiff, about 60,000 youths attended day schools in 1962, while 540,000 children went to supplementary religious schools.

In just over a generation, the number of children in day schools has tripled, to more than 180,000, while the number in supplementary schools has fallen by more than half to 260,000. Despite the increasing demand, even more children would likely be in day-school classrooms if tuition were lower, said Schick, who is also president of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, an Orthodox yeshiva in Staten Island, N.Y.

The problem of how to boost day-school education and make it affordable is not a new one. But it has taken on increasing urgency as research based on the 1990 National Jewish Population Study has underscored the fact that the stronger a child's Jewish education, the more likely he or she is to grow into a strongly identified Jew.

Schools seek alternate funding

Yet even as a 30-year-old debate continues about whether local federations are doing enough to support day schools, the schools are turning to alternative sources of funding — and have begun some new initiatives.

In Chicago, for example, an unusual coalition made up of the 14 day-school and yeshiva presidents in the area has sprung up in an effort to permanently address the ongoing financial squeeze.

The schools, which span the religious spectrum, are calling the endeavor the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee. Their first step is to organize and host a Sept. 21 meeting, which is expected to draw day school presidents and other interested parties from around the country. The Chicago schools' network already had to secure a \$2.5 million loan guarantee from the Chicago Jewish federation so that they could stay afloat.

The amount of money budgeted by federations for Jewish education in general has not substantially increased in decades.

In 1969, Jewish students confronted national Jewish leaders at the annual gathering of the Council of Jewish Federations, demanding more money for Jewish education.

In a speech at the same gathering a year before, the activist Leonard Fein said: "The financial facts are plain: Jewish federations today provide about 9 percent of [their] support for Jewish education in this country, and that investment represents better than 20 percent of all the domestic expenditures of federations."

A 1994 study by JESNA: Jewish Education Service of North America, which has close ties to the Jewish federation system, found similar results: Of the money federations allocate for local needs, 24 percent is

dedicated to Jewish education. About half of that goes to day schools, according to JESNA.

Schick's study says that while 40 percent of the 154 day schools surveyed reported an increase in federation funding over the past five years when measured in absolute dollars, 67 percent of respondents said the allocation had decreased in terms of a percentage of the schools' budgets.

In Chicago, for example, the federation spends a higher percentage of its local allocations on day schools than the national average — 18 percent rather than 12 percent — for a total in 1997-98 of just under \$2.5 million. But that represents an increase of just under 1 percent over last year, the same amount by which the entire budget increased.

At the same time, schools' expenses have risen much faster. The overwhelming majority of a school's budget — some 80 to 85 percent — is spent on staff salaries and benefits even as recent surveys show that Jewish school educators are paid relatively low wages, experts say.

"We must bring this issue to the national agenda," said Hanus, a founder of the new initiative in Chicago. "You can get money to fund a Jewish community center, a hospital and to rescue Jews from Russia, but talk about educating our children is not seen as sexy."

Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, founder of the National Jewish Outreach Program and a longtime proponent of day school education, agreed. "It's criminal that the American Jewish community doesn't have a mega-fund guaranteeing a Jewish education for every kid in the country," he said.

Buchwald was part of an 80-member blue-ribbon Continuity Commission convened by CJF in 1993 with the mandate to find ways to address the twin crises of assimilation and intermarriage.

After three years of work, the commission came up with a list of suggested pro-continuity priorities, including day-school education. But no action was taken.

Members of the commission, including its director, Jonathan Woocher, said the need for consensus precluded the commission from endorsing a single approach.

"I'm a little disappointed that we weren't able to do more with it," said Woocher, executive vice president of JESNA.

Federations faced with competing demands

Part of the commission's debate, which continues to this day, was over which of many educational priorities to endorse. The debate has often centered on formal — day-school and supplementary synagogue schools — versus informal education such as family education, youth groups and camps.

Today each education-earmarked dollar has more programs competing for it than in earlier years, experts say.

And for their part, federation leaders are faced with many competing demands for dollars.

Steven Nasatir, the executive vice president at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, responded passionately to the idea that day schools should get funding taken from other needs. "Do we take it from care of the aged? Care of the hungry in Chicago or in Russia? Do you take it from community centers, which is an informal educational experience which touches a lot of people, though it's not intensive?"

"Playing take away won't happen" in his federation, Nasatir said. "A better thing is to say, 'How do we do more?'"

Indeed, Hanus, Nasatir and others agree that the future of day school funding lies in alternative sources of funding — particularly endowments.

The Chicago federation has promised the new day-school coalition that it would host and administer such an

endowment, which would raise a significant amount of money and pay for expenses primarily from the interest earned by the capital.

Though the idea is still in the planning stage, Hanus said he hopes to raise \$50 million over the next seven years, thereby providing enough scholarship money for any local child seeking a Jewish education.

The problem for parents struggling to send their children to day school is that schools generally offer limited amounts of financial aid. They often provide relatively small dollar amounts to a high percentage of students — and only token discounts for families who have two, three or more children in the school at the same time.

"We all know there are people who aren't taking advantage of this kind of education because they can't afford to," said Jane Eisner, a journalist in Philadelphia who sits on the board of the Perelman Schechter Day School in Wynnewood, Pa., where two of her three daughters are enrolled. Annual tuition at the school was about \$4,000 when her first daughter started eight years ago and is now \$8,275.

Alternative sources making a difference

The majority of funding initiatives in Jewish education is coming from a handful of private families and foundations. But such efforts are rare and, until now, have only lasted a few years until the donors decided to move their money to a different project, experts say.

Still, the alternative sources are making a difference, as the following examples illustrate:

- At one Philadelphia-area Conservative synagogue, a member has anonymously donated \$75,000 in each of the last two years to help synagogue members send their children to the area's Akiba Hebrew Academy.

- Of the 85 children from the congregation's 750 member families attending Akiba, said Rabbi Neil Cooper of Congregation Beth El/Beth Hillel, 50 have received about \$1,500 in tuition subsidies each year, which are paid directly to the school.

- In Seattle, the Samis Foundation is subsidizing tuition at the local Orthodox Jewish high school, lowering the annual cost for each student from \$7,000 to \$3,000.

- Enrollment has shot up by about 20 percent, from 59 to 68 students, since the subsidy began a year ago.

- Two years ago, when a Queens, N.Y., school serving 1,000 immigrant children from the Bukharan region of the former Soviet Union closed its doors for lack of funds, 40 percent of the students' families could not afford tuition at other yeshivas and were ready to send them to public school.

But the rabbis of the fervently Orthodox, or haredi, community took action. They created a special fund, Nechamas Yisrael, and asked every member of their community to contribute at least \$36 a year. Since then, Nechamas Yisrael has paid the tuitions for nearly 2,000 children at yeshivas in Brooklyn and Queens.

Jane Strauss of Minneapolis wishes there was a similar program for non-haredi Jews in her city.

Strauss' four children, ranging in age from 8 to 14, attend the Chabad Academy of Minnesota not because the education meshes with their family's religious philosophy, which she describes as "Conservadox," but because she pays a total annual tuition bill of about \$7,800. The other day schools in the Minneapolis area charge between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per child, and the largest scholarships available would cover only about 10 percent of the bill, Strauss said.

A divorced social service provider, Strauss is angry that she has to struggle so hard to give her kids a solid Jewish education.

"The Jewish community," she said, "has virtually disowned those of us of moderate income." □

Orthodox students threaten suit against Yale for its housing policy

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jeremy Hershman can't live in a Yale dormitory. It's not that he doesn't want to; his religious beliefs prevent it.

The 19-year-old from Cedarhurst, N.Y., has repeatedly told Yale officials that his Orthodox Jewish convictions are not compatible with the mixed-sex atmosphere of dormitory life. But Hershman, who is set to enter his sophomore year when school opens next week, is in a bind. Yale housing policy requires that all freshmen and sophomores live on campus unless they are married or over 21 years old.

Hershman and four of his schoolmates have threatened to sue Yale if it does not change its policy.

For its part, Yale has threatened disciplinary action if the students do not live on campus.

But this has not deterred the two sophomores and three freshmen who have decided that next week they will be living off-campus, paying thousands of dollars for rooms they will not use. "Yale permits and often encourages a lifestyle in the dormitories that there's no way a fully observant Orthodox Jew can live in," Hershman said in a telephone interview from his home on Tuesday.

He said he will live with two Orthodox graduate students near campus and will pay \$7,000 to Yale for room and board in addition to his rent this year.

Leaving 'when your roommate wants to have sex'

Last year, when they were entering freshmen, the school had assigned Hershman and Lisa Friedman, another Orthodox student, that a single-sex dorm would accommodate their concerns.

But when Hershman arrived on campus, he said, he found bathrooms that were used by both men and women.

He also attended an orientation lecture that told him how to ask your roommate to leave "when you want to have sex with your partner," he recalled.

He never slept in the dorm.

"The obligation to exercise care and modesty in living accommodations so as not to permit even inadvertent inappropriate encounters between men and women is a long-standing rule of Jewish religious observance," Nathan Lewin, an attorney, recently wrote to the dean of Yale College, Richard Brodhead.

"Their religious convictions forbid them from residing in dormitories that are readily accessible to members of the opposite sex for extended periods of time, including overnight visits," Lewin said of the students.

After the university received Lewin's letter, which threatened legal action, Yale's general counsel called Lewin.

"He kept impressing on me that this is an important policy of Yale, to have kids live in dormitories," said Lewin, who said he knew of no similar problem at any other university.

Tom Conroy, deputy director of public affairs at Yale, said the school places much emphasis on small residential communities, which include libraries and dining services, as the center of student life.

Conroy said that such living is an "integral and important" part of attending Yale. He said the university is open to discussing a solution for the students that would not involve living off campus.

For Lewin, a prominent Washington attorney who has frequently represented Orthodox Jews in discrimination claims, this is a simple case of "religious discrimination."

Lewin vowed to file a lawsuit if Yale does not change its policy. So far, Yale is not budging.

"We certainly do not believe that Yale is under any legal obligation to grant a waiver to these students. We have no plans to do so," Conroy said.

In an exchange of letters in the spring between Friedman and the college's dean of students, Betty Trachtenberg, the school's position was made clear.

"Rather than addressing the religious concerns expressed by the few students," Friedman wrote to Trachtenberg, "you said that students with those religious views should not have sought admission to Yale.

"It is hard to believe," Friedman continued in her letter, "that a university which boasts around the world that it has a diverse and multicultural community would be inhospitable to individuals with these sincerely held beliefs."

In a terse response dated June 17, Trachtenberg wrote, in part, "We will do everything to make residential college living not only acceptable, but pleasurable to you.

"After consultation with many members of the community who care very deeply about Yale's educational philosophy, one that includes the importance of the residential colleges as a force in a Yale education, I must again deny your request to live off-campus."

Lewin was particularly put off by another comment Trachtenberg wrote to Hershman. "I personally know many Orthodox Jewish students who live in the residential colleges throughout their four years at Yale and have done so without compromising their religious practices and beliefs," she wrote.

In his letter to Brodhead, Lewin wrote that Trachtenberg's observation about other Orthodox Jews "does not diminish the validity of the religious principle that is at stake."

For his part, Hershman is still hoping that Yale will change its mind. "I love it there," he said. "It's unfortunate this is happening." □

Stalled peace talks may affect Israeli-Japanese economic ties

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Tensions in the Middle East are on the minds of leaders in the Far East.

During a three-day trip to Japan this week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly was told by Japanese officials that closer economic ties between Japan and Israel would depend on breaking the stalemated Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

In a two-hour meeting with Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Monday, the Japanese leader told Netanyahu that Tokyo was looking for advances in the peace process so that Arabs could end their "pessimism," according to Japanese officials.

During his visit, which was aimed at strengthening economic ties with Japan, Netanyahu encountered criticism from officials of Israel's closure of the territories.

Netanyahu countered that the closure was a necessary security measure in the wake of a July 30 twin suicide bombing in Jerusalem that killed 14 Israelis.

Senior Japanese officials were quoted in Israeli media this week as saying that Tokyo was linking closer economic ties with Israel to progress on the peace track. In contrast, a senior political source in Netanyahu's delegation was quoted by Israel Radio as saying that Japan's foreign minister had told Netanyahu that Tokyo had made a strategic decision to accelerate economic cooperation with Israel.

Netanyahu, who was accompanied by Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman and a contingent of 16 Israelis representing high-tech businesses, was scheduled to visit South Korea after leaving Japan on Tuesday. □

Swiss legislators remove hurdle to central bank's donation to fund

By Fredy Rom

BERN (JTA) — The Swiss Parliament's Legal Committee has determined that the Swiss National Bank does not need parliamentary approval to contribute \$70 million to a fund for Holocaust survivors.

The 12-5 decision Monday countered the bank's long-standing position that such approval would be necessary.

The committee's vote "creates a new situation," said bank spokesman Gabriel Juri. "We will have to discuss this issue with the government."

According to sources involved in the approval process, the Parliament will agree with the committee's decision when it convenes for its fall session.

At that point — the Parliament is expected to take up the issue by the end of September or early October — the bank can immediately make the contribution to the Holocaust Memorial Fund, Lili Nabholz, the head of the Legal Committee, said in an interview.

"This is a good day for the Jewish people," said Thomas Lyssy, vice president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland. "We are optimistic that this money will be paid into the fund within the next few weeks."

The Holocaust Memorial Fund, valued at about \$116 million, was created in February with contributions from Switzerland's largest private banks and industrial firms.

The long-awaited Swiss National Bank contribution would significantly augment the fund, which is expected to begin making payments to survivors soon.

In its decision, the Legal Committee said the central bank's contribution to the fund, far from being a humanitarian "gift," should be viewed as restitution for the guilt the bank brought upon itself when it purchased millions of dollars of Nazi gold during World War II.

The central bank "did not ask for parliamentary approval when they did their questionable business with the Nazis," said Nabholz. "So why do they need our approval now?"

The committee reached its decision after holding a one-day hearing with legal experts, members of the central bank's board of directors and historian Jean-Francois Bergier.

Bergier is chairman of the Independent Commission of Experts, the international panel of historians created by Switzerland last December to study the extent of the country's financial dealings with the Nazis.

Bank's dealings were indefensible

According to sources within the Legal Committee, Bergier said the central bank's wartime dealings with the Nazis were indefensible from a moral point of view — particularly after 1943, when it was clear that the gold being purchased by the bank had been looted by the Nazis from the central banks of occupied countries.

Swiss National Bank officials have been loath to admit that their predecessors were guilty of financing the Nazi war effort via purchases of gold from the Reichsbank.

The central bank has a "rather imperfect knowledge of its own history," Jean-Pierre Roth, the vice chairman of the bank's governing board, said in an interview earlier this year. "We are not in a position to answer" all the questions about the bank's wartime actions.

Indeed, Roth defended those actions, saying they were part of the "national defense effort" and that the bank's activities were "directed at maintaining public confidence in the country's currency."

He also explained at the time that parliamentary approval of the bank's contribution to the Holocaust fund was necessary because the bank "has the authority to set monetary policy.

It does not have the right to spend any of its reserves without governmental approval."

But in at least one instance this was not the case. Some 20 years ago, the central bank purchased the five-star Hotel Bellevue in the capital of Bern, spending millions of dollars without parliamentary approval.

A parliamentary vote of approval, which now appears unnecessary, could have sparked calls for a national referendum on the issue.

Given the climate in Switzerland, which has been reeling from international criticism over the wartime actions of its government and banking officials, it is not at all clear that the central bank's contribution would have been approved in a referendum. □

(JTA foreign editor Mitchell Danow contributed to this report.)

Czech Holocaust survivors doubt Germany will offer compensation

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — For Vera Schimmerlingova, the possibility that Germany may finally pay individual compensation to Holocaust survivors in the former Soviet bloc is too little, too late.

"I am sick and tired" of discussions about compensation, said Schimmerlingova, a 72-year-old Czech Jew who survived the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. "We are all going to die soon anyway. I don't think the German government is really prepared to compensate us."

Her bleak assessment came after Jewish negotiators failed last week to reach an agreement with Germany on reparations to Holocaust survivors living in Eastern Europe.

Schimmerlingova and other Czech Holocaust survivors are frustrated and angered by Germany's long-standing reluctance to compensate them directly for their wartime suffering.

She is one of some 1,300 Czech Jews who would be eligible for compensation if the German government reaches agreement with the Jewish negotiators.

A joint commission established by the German government and a delegation of Holocaust survivors and Jewish officials of the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany is expected to recommend solutions in three months.

But even if Germany agrees to pay compensation to survivors living in former Soviet-bloc countries, the country will not be as generous with them as it was with survivors living in the West, German officials have said.

This has provoked anger among Jewish leaders here.

"This is the German government's last chance" to compensate Czech Holocaust survivors "because more of them are passing away every month," said Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic. "If the German government doesn't meet its responsibilities now, the German state will live in eternal shame."

Survivors living in Soviet-bloc countries were unable to apply for compensation during the Cold War, and Communist East Germany refused to make any payments.

Among the issues to be negotiated is whether the German government will make a one-time payment or provide pensions to survivors in Eastern Europe. It is estimated that between 15,000 and 40,000 survivors would be deemed eligible for compensation. □