



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy affirmed his government's commitment to the peace process if the Palestinians crack down on terrorism. But Levy, who will address the U.N. General Assembly on Monday, said the two sides should proceed to final-status issues. "We can't continue with this unfinished symphony," he told members of the Jewish media.

■ U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reiterated her call for Israel to take "a timeout" on Jewish settlements. Albright's statement came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to build 300 new homes in the West Bank settlement of Efrat. Palestinian leaders warned that the construction, in the Gush Etzion bloc, could trigger more suicide bomb attacks.

■ The U.S. State Department rescinded an effort to attach the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act to the foreign aid bill after protests from congressional lawmakers. The legislation, which enables aid to the Palestinians, expired in August after the State Department was unable to certify that the Palestinians were in compliance with their accords with Israel.

■ Jordan is about to receive \$10 million in U.S. aid originally designated for the Palestinians. Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), who has refused State Department efforts to release the money to the Palestinians, signed off on a compromise with the administration to send the money to Jordan instead.

■ The Swiss Bankers Association agreed to freeze dormant Holocaust-era accounts of people believed to have been high-ranking Nazis and collaborators. [Page 3]

■ The Canadian Supreme Court upheld a decision to reinstate charges against three alleged Nazi war criminals. The three men face deportation if convicted.

Because of Rosh Hashanah, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Oct. 3.

A NEW YEAR DAWNS

At time of bitter divisiveness, are the Jewish people splitting?

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — It has been a dozen years since Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg warned that the Jewish people were headed toward an unbridgeable schism.

In an essay titled "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?" the prominent New York Orthodox rabbi predicted that a split would occur sometime soon after the turn of the millennium.

His warning was widely discussed — and dismissed by most as an overstatement.

But with this year's barrage of public vitriol and clashes between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, some believe that the only thing Greenberg may have been wrong about was the date.

"The language of argument has turned to the language of delegitimation," Greenberg said.

"This is not the language of family members fighting. This is the language of divorce."

There have always been deep divisions between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, as there have always been Jews who observed the letter of the law and those who rejected it.

The difference now may be that much of what fundamentally tied one Jew to another has changed over the past 15 years or so.

The Reform and Reconstructionist movement's policies permitting patrilineal descent to define Jewishness and their ordination of openly gay rabbis and official approval of same-sex civil marriages, as well as all the liberal movements' ordination of women, are cited by Orthodox Jews as examples of how far traditional and liberal Judaism have drifted apart.

Not only are Orthodox and non-Orthodox institutions becoming increasingly isolated from one another, there are few places today where Orthodox and liberal Jews can get to know each other.

The death of Jewish peoplehood?

As a result, many say, we are witnessing the death of Jewish peoplehood.

While much of the recent debate has centered on issues related to the Orthodox monopoly of religious life in Israel, there is plenty of alienation at home.

Consider the following:

- Many Orthodox leaders today urge their followers not to permit marriage between Orthodox and Reform Jews, whose status according to Jewish law has been uncertain since the Reform movement adopted patrilineal descent in the early 1980s. The decision to count as Jews the children born of non-Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers who are raised as Jews broke with the traditional practice of defining people by their mother's religion.

A session at the centrist Orthodox Union's convention last November was devoted to explaining why Orthodox and Reform Jews should not be permitted to marry.

- Few young Orthodox rabbis today join local boards of rabbis, which are essentially the only place where Jewish religious leaders of all denominations get to know one another and can discuss issues of common concern.

- The Conservative and Reform movements are rapidly expanding their own networks of camps and day schools in North America so that they can educate their own constituents rather than rely on the Orthodox.

- At the behest of their movement's leaders, some Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist Jews are cutting off contributions to Orthodox yeshivas and day schools.

For example, the Hebrew Theological College, a centrist Orthodox yeshiva with close to 400 students in Skokie, Ill., lost a significant bequest from a non-Orthodox contributor earlier this year.

- A Lubavitch-created traveling exhibit on Judaism, designed for children, was displayed at the New Jersey's MetroWest Jewish Community Center last March.

Several non-Orthodox synagogues from the area made a point of not

sending their Hebrew school classes. The local Conservative day school said it would not go, but under community pressure reversed its decision.

• Several times a year people tell Rabbi Greenberg that they would rather their daughters marry gentiles than Orthodox Jews.

“An Orthodox Jew would involve a much bigger shake-up of their lifestyle than a gentile,” Greenberg said of their rationale. “That’s a very dangerous situation.”

The separation between Orthodox and liberal Jews reaches beyond the organizational level to the home and even college.

While the fervently Orthodox have often lived in their own communities, the modern Orthodox community today is more segregated than it was in the past, often living in neighborhoods with other observant Jews. Non-Orthodox Jews generally live dispersed among non-Jews.

The days of Orthodox and non-Orthodox young people meeting on college campuses, too, are waning, as the culture of modern Orthodoxy shifts away from broad engagement with American culture.

A group of Orthodox students at Yale University, for example, is threatening to sue the school if they are not permitted to be exempted from its policy requiring all unmarried first- and second-year students under age 21 to live in dormitories.

The keynote speaker at the Orthodox Union’s convention last year, Rabbi Bernard Lander, president of Touro College, described college as “the crematorium of our people” because observant students are exposed to the temptations of non-Orthodox values and individuals. He urged the creation of more colleges catering to the needs of his community.

The divisions between Orthodox and liberal Jews played out in a particularly public and bitter manner earlier this year, creating angst particularly among those who have tried to narrow the divide.

Schorsch article raises hackles

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein of New York, one of the few well-known Orthodox rabbis willing to publicly engage in joint religious work with non-Orthodox rabbis — he even admits having attended a Bar Mitzvah in a Reform temple — was racked by a crisis of conscience six months ago after a spate of heated rhetoric reached the front pages of many mainstream newspapers.

Particularly disturbing, he said then, was an article on the front page of *The New York Times* in which Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Conservative movement’s Jewish Theological Seminary, termed Israel’s Chief Rabbinate “without a scintilla of moral worth,” and called for its eradication.

Schorsch’s remark came in the wake of a controversy caused by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, a hitherto little-known group of Orthodox rabbis that declared Reform and Conservative “not Judaism.”

At the time, Lookstein, who serves as spiritual leader of Kehilath Jeshurun and as principal of the Ramaz day school and high school — both of which are in Manhattan — said he was uncertain whether he could continue working with the non-Orthodox.

In the past there has been a mutually beneficial, if inadvertent, cross-fertilization between the movements.

Orthodox and liberal Jews understood each other even if they didn’t agree.

It was not unusual for Conservative Jews to marry Orthodox Jews, for their children to marry Reform or secular Jews and for a person’s identification with different movements to shift over a person’s lifetime.

Now the flow of adherents between the movements

has slowed, according to the 1990 National Jewish Population Study.

Even when the liberal leaders rejected the Orthodoxy of their youth, many retained affection for the tradition that had shaped them.

Today, the Reform and Conservative movements, which represent more than 80 percent of American Jews, are led by a generation mostly born in America.

With a newly articulated sense of confidence and impatience, they are saying that they are tired of playing by the old rules.

The Jewish Theological Seminary’s Schorsch, for instance, rejects the contention of some Orthodox leaders that he is at least partly responsible for the growing breach.

Orthodox Jews “would like Jewish unity on their terms, and I am saying that those terms are inequitable and that we will no longer accept them,” Schorsch said.

Although Orthodox and non-Orthodox Judaism can seem like two separate religions these days, some of those most concerned about the trend are still hopeful.

A dialogue between senior representatives of modern Orthodoxy and the Conservative and Reform movements has been quietly taking place since January.

The gatherings, which take place roughly every six weeks, are organized by Shvil HaZahav, a group founded by an Orthodox rabbi, Shmuel Goldin, who has a pulpit in Teaneck, N.J.

“In years past, when problems developed between the various groups, often a leader of one called his friend who was the leader of the other group, and sometimes it would lead to a positive effect,” Goldin said.

“Today I don’t have a friend in the other group to pick up the phone and call. It’s really a reflection of the fact that we’ve all become much more insular.

“If the only result of meetings like this is establishing personal connections and feeling comfortable talking to each other, that would be an invaluable result,” Goldin said.

Lookstein, who has been involved with that dialogue, has found that it has changed his mind about continuing the relationship with non-Orthodox Jews.

“If you look at Jewish history and consider the fact that we are here today, 4,000 years after Abraham and 3,000 years after the giving of the Torah, and that against all odds we’re going strong — even if we are arguing — then that should give us hope,” he said.

“A Jew who is not an optimist is lacking something in his or her Jewish soul.” □

Israelis return home from Jericho

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Ten homeless Jewish families have returned to Israel after spending nearly a month in Jericho, where they had sought — and received — asylum from the Palestinian Authority.

The families had sought refuge in the Palestinian self-rule area after being evicted from the Jewish Agency for Israel’s absorption center in Mevasseret Zion, where they had illegally moved in with other families.

Palestinian Preventive Security Service head Jibril Rajoub had welcomed them and set them up in a Jericho hotel.

However, the arrangement seemed unsuitable to Geshet Knesset member Maxim Levy, who, in the reconciliatory spirit of the upcoming holidays, urged the families to return to Israel.

“As someone who witnessed their eviction, there were certain mistakes made, and now we want to work to bring them home and give them a house in Mevasseret,” he said. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES
Rabbi goes to China, seeking freedom for imprisoned pastor

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein could not get Pastor Peter Xu Yongze out of his head.

The leader of the underground house church movement in China, Xu was imprisoned by the Chinese government earlier this year for heading what the state has labeled a "heretical cult."

His Protestant church, located in the central province of Henan, reportedly numbers in the millions, and Xu has emerged in recent years as a symbol of the movement for religious freedom in China.

His case has also been used to dramatize — and put a human face on — a campaign led by religious leaders in the United States to put an end to religious persecution around the world.

The issue has galvanized congressional leaders in Washington, who have vowed to pass legislation that would impose sanctions on any country engaged in religious persecution.

Eckstein, president of the Chicago-based International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, which has been working with a wide spectrum of religious leaders to raise awareness about religious persecution abroad, said Xu's situation was weighing heavily on his mind while walking to synagogue recently.

"I kept conjuring up these images of [Natan] Sharansky and Rabbi Akiva, people in my own tradition who have been persecuted," Eckstein said, referring both to the former Russian dissident who is now an Israeli Cabinet minister and to a leading rabbinic sage of the Roman period. "Thinking of Sharansky sitting in some jail somewhere, simply for living as a Jew, I asked myself, 'Isn't there more that I can do for Pastor Xu?'"

So he went to China.

His mission this month included several objectives: to appeal for Xu's release, to explain to Chinese officials that "it's not just the Christian right that is concerned about Christian persecution in China" and to encourage the government to make a gesture in favor of greater religious freedom in advance of Chinese President Jiang Zemin's upcoming trip to Washington.

Jiang is slated to meet with President Clinton in October.

The Chinese constitution guarantees freedom of religion for those who worship at registered state churches, but Beijing does not recognize religious groups that are not government-affiliated.

'They ought to at least inform us'

As many as 10 million people are believed to be involved in underground churches, and the government employs a policy of intimidation against them, regularly imprisoning people for practicing their faith, according to human rights experts.

Meeting with the head of China's religious affairs bureau, Eckstein proposed that China and the United States form a joint commission to address issues related to religious freedom.

Such a commission, he said, would ensure due process when incidents of abuse occur and create greater accountability on the part of the Chinese government.

"We don't know where Peter Xu is today," Eckstein said. "I think we need to create a kind of structure to engage the Chinese in dialogue on these issues and make them feel that they ought to at least inform us of what's going on."

Although he received no official response to his

idea, Eckstein said he sees his efforts as a successful first overture in dealing with the problem of religious persecution in China.

He is considering returning with a delegation of religious leaders to further press the issue.

"Everything we do should raise the ante and bring our prodding up a notch," Eckstein said. "They're not going to reach a Jeffersonian democracy by tomorrow, but if we continue to engage in this kind of dialogue and prod them on specific instances of abuse, I believe progress can be made." □

Swiss banks freeze accounts allegedly held by former Nazis

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The Swiss Bankers Association has agreed to freeze the dormant accounts of people believed to be former high-ranking Nazis and collaborators.

The move came in response to a request from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which found 105 suspect names after it scrutinized the list of 1,800 dormant wartime accounts publicized in July by the bankers association.

The names were identical to, or closely resembled, those appearing on lists of suspected war criminals and SS officers drawn up by United Nations officials.

In a letter to Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center, a senior official of the Swiss Bankers Association said he had advised all member banks to place the suspect accounts on hold.

The official, Christoph Meier, added that the names and status of these accounts will be submitted to the Independent Claims Resolution Panel, a group of independent international arbitrators created by the Swiss to review disputed dormant accounts. The panel will determine "if these assets belonged to war criminals or have been looted from victims of Nazi persecution, and to whom the related assets should properly go," Meier wrote.

He added that the bankers association would also discuss the matter with the Independent Commission of Experts, the international panel of historians that was created by Switzerland last December to study the extent of the country's financial dealings with the Nazis. The group is also known as the Bergier Commission, after its chairman, historian Jean-Francois Bergier.

Hier said that despite Meier's letter, "We remain concerned that current Swiss laws and regulations could still provide loopholes which would enable the transfer of blood-soaked assets to the families of Nazis."

Hier also urged the bankers association to immediately forward to the Wiesenthal Center all remaining names of dormant accounts so that they can be systematically checked against existing lists of Nazi officers and collaborators. □

Classical music increases egg yield

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A little classical music goes a long way.

That might be the advice of an Israeli couple who saw their hens begin laying more eggs after they began playing classical music in the coop.

Esther and Yossi Dubir of Kfar Hess said egg production shot up by 6 percent after they began piping in such classical composers as Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms and Vivaldi for their 7,000 chickens.

The couple said a psychologist had suggested putting on the music after other attempts to raise production levels failed. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**American Jews, foreign Arabs act to influence peace process***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Powerful foreign involvement in the Middle East peace process is on the upswing — and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is not the only player.

Three other interventions have made the headlines in recent weeks.

Taken together, these individual interventions may indicate a new norm in how Jews and Arabs living abroad who sympathize with the protagonists in the regional dispute exert pressure to achieve the results they desire.

Those involving themselves directly in the process include:

- Dr. Irving Moskowitz, the Miami-based businessman who for some years has bankrolled the Jewish religious-rightist effort to house Jews in eastern Jerusalem, has clashed with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his latest project in the predominantly Arab neighborhood of Ras al-Amud on the Mount of Olives.

- Prominent American Jewish liberals, including veteran activists Theodore Mann and Robert Lifton, have spoken out more assertively than ever before in favor of a vigorous effort by Washington to push both Israelis and Palestinians back to negotiations.

There was a clear implication in a recent letter sent to Albright by this group: Washington should pressure Israel as well as the Palestinians.

- As-yet unnamed Arab millionaires are said to be mirroring the Moskowitz-style involvement by actively planning to purchase choice real estate in Jewish-populated western Jerusalem.

According to Dr. Ahmed Tibi, a top aide to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, one such property is a centrally located office tower.

Moskowitz is not the only — and certainly not the first — wealthy foreign supporter of right-wing causes in Israel and the territories.

Gush Emunim, the largely Orthodox settler movement that grew up in the 1970s, was always active in raising funds abroad.

Cyril Stein, the British Jewish tycoon, is one of several noted philanthropists that has been associated with Gush Emunim.

Further to the right, the late Rabbi Meir Kahane drew virtually all of his material support from American Jewish sources.

Moskowitz's rise to prominence stems not so much from the size of the funds he puts at the disposal of land-purchasing groups, such as the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva, but from his unerring choice of super-sensitive sites and his close links to Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert.

Moskowitz-Olmert link cited

Indeed, Moskowitz was involved with — and present for — the opening last year of a new entrance to an archaeological tunnel alongside the Western Wall.

The opening of that entrance, which the Palestinians said threatened Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount, triggered three days of violence last September in which 15 Israelis and 61 Palestinians were killed.

Observers here, among them sources close to the prime minister, believe that Moskowitz is guided by Olmert for the mayor's own political ends.

They contend that Olmert aspires to be prime minister and regards periodic eruptions of tension over Jerusalem as a way of keeping his name in the headlines.

Moskowitz's battle last week with Netanyahu over

whether a Jewish presence should be maintained in Ras al-Amud served the mayor's publicity efforts, they say.

Under a compromise reached last week, three Jewish families living in a building owned by Moskowitz left voluntarily, but 10 yeshiva students stayed to maintain a Jewish presence.

The compromise saved Netanyahu from having to forcibly remove the families, a politically volatile step given threats from right-wing members of Netanyahu's coalition that such an action would bring down the government.

But Palestinian Authority officials condemned the compromise and a former Palestinian resident of the building came forward to counter Moskowitz.

Fuad Hadiyeh this week filed a police complaint which said that documents claiming that he had sold the building to Moskowitz were forged.

The recent letter issued by a group of prominent American Jewish doves can be seen, to a certain extent, as a counterweight to Moskowitz, who finds strong support among the relatively small but intensely motivated Orthodox community in the United States.

Mann, Lifton and the other 38 signatories who issued their letter to coincide with Albright's recent first attempt at peacemaking in the region intend to "educate" the Clinton administration about the diversity of views on Israeli-Palestinian peace within the American Jewish community.

Palestinians, meanwhile, have long been envious of Israel's ability to mobilize the Diaspora.

Fund raising for Palestinian causes has never seemed to tap into the substantial wealth of the Palestinian community abroad, let alone the wider Arab and Muslim communities.

But that may be changing. The heightened readiness of Palestinians abroad to take specific and outspoken political positions may serve as a catalyst for fund-raising efforts among them.

According to Tibi, individual Palestinian philanthropists are taking personal responsibility in advancing their side's position in the stalled peace process.

A century ago, when Zionism began, Jewish settlers raised funds abroad to buy land in Israel from absentee Arab landlords.

Now, with the Jewish tactics, at least among those on the right, fundamentally unchanged, the modern-day equivalents of the Arab absentee landlords may be shedding their passivity and learning from Jews how to use their wealth to influence the course of events in the Middle East. □

Peres creating new peace institute*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres has announced the creation of an institute aimed at advancing regional peace efforts.

The Peres Peace Center, which will be inaugurated next month, plans to initiate regional projects focusing on economic, technological and educational cooperation.

The center will work to identify strategies for regional agricultural development, and it plans to host dialogues between Israelis and Arabs.

Officials who have been associated with the peace process over the years, including former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, be among the institute's leadership.

Peres said this week at a news conference that the creation of such an institute is relevant especially now that peace-making efforts are facing difficulties.

The center is privately funded. □