

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A French historian who helped uncover Maurice Papon's wartime role said further research had convinced him that Papon had indeed helped Jews rather than send them to their deaths. Papon, 87, is on trial for allegedly deporting 1,560 Jews while he was secretary-general of the Bordeaux region during World War II. Michel Berges said Papon had struck the names of more than 100 Jews from deportation lists.

■ The heirs of Paul Rosenberg, the owner of a painting by Henri Matisse stolen by the Nazis, are petitioning to get the artwork back from the Seattle Art Museum. Experts say "Odalisque" could be worth as much as \$2 million.

■ An American Jewish Committee official, speaking on behalf of a broad coalition of religious and human-rights groups, urged Congress to enact the Workplace Religious Freedom Act to ensure that "employers have a meaningful obligation to reasonably accommodate their employees' religious rights."

■ U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat urged the state of California to lift its moratorium on investments with Swiss banks. Eizenstat said the measures would be counterproductive and that the Swiss banks deserve a respite for their efforts to provide assistance to Holocaust survivors. Meanwhile, Massachusetts said it would cut its line of credit with Union Bank of Switzerland.

■ Jordan announced that it would take part in next month's Middle East regional summit in Qatar. Several Arab countries have announced that they would boycott the conference.

■ Racists, anti-Semites and other extremists are using the Internet to propagandize and recruit new members, according to "High-Tech Hate: Extremist Use of the Internet," a just-released report from the Anti-Defamation League.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Oct. 24.

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Heavy hitters pledge \$18 million to create new Jewish day schools**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Some of the biggest names in Jewish philanthropy have joined forces to create an \$18 million fund to establish 25 new Jewish day schools around the country during the next five years.

Day-school education is widely seen as the most effective antidote to assimilation, but relatively few Jews have access to schools where they live. Many of those who do have geographic access cannot afford tuitions and fees that in some cases exceed \$10,000.

Of the 1,166,000 Jewish children under 18, as counted by the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, an estimated 180,000 are currently being educated in some 700 Jewish elementary and high schools, according to educational sociologist Alvin Schiff.

Recent shifts in Jewish demography, like the growth of Jewish populations in some Southern and Western towns such as Austin, Texas and Atlanta, along with a growing embrace of day-school education as a priority for non-Orthodox Jews, have created a need for Jewish schools where none existed before.

The new Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education will issue matching challenge grants to community groups developing new schools of every Jewish affiliation.

The dozen members of the partnership want to "increase meaningfully the number of non-Orthodox Jewish youth in day schools and the quality of day schools throughout the spectrum, including the Orthodox schools," according to Michael Steinhardt, the new group's founder and chairman of its board of directors.

Steinhardt, who retired from his career as a hedge fund manager to develop new ways to attract people to Jewish life, also recently founded Kol Israel Chaverim: The Jewish Life Network, a Manhattan-based foundation funding other projects.

"We have experienced a substantial drop in Jewish knowledge," Steinhardt said in an interview.

"The goal of this institution is to try and change that, to begin helping people understand what being Jewish means so that they can make knowledgeable choices."

An effort 'ripe for partnership'

"This is so non-controversial, so overwhelmingly perceived as a positive thing, that it led me to say that if there was one effort I was making that seemed ripe for partnership, this would be it," he said.

Rather than providing funds for Jewish high schools, which many experts on Jewish education say are in short supply, the Partnership for Excellence has decided to focus on the creation of elementary schools and the extension of some of these schools already in business into the junior high school grades.

While the full program will be launched in September 1998, four pilot grants of \$100,000 have already been awarded to help start new schools this year.

In Austin, where the Austin Jewish Community Day School opened its doors this fall with 22 students in kindergarten, first and second grades, the partnership's grant has made a significant difference, said the school's co-president.

"It has given us the ability to bring in the best curriculum available and to focus on the growth demand that we are already experiencing," said Alec Sonenthal, adding that the school already is being asked to expand through sixth grade next year.

Prior to its opening, the only Jewish day school in Austin, which has seen substantial growth in the size of its Jewish community in the last few years, was a small Lubavitch school.

The partnership comes on the heels of the formation of the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee, a grass-roots group of Jewish day- and high-school leaders that is urging Jewish charities and wealthy individuals to concentrate their efforts on making day-school tuitions

affordable. While that group's founder, Chicago real-estate developer George Hanus, has been focusing his work on the need to rescue Jewish day schools already in business and struggling to stay open, he welcomed the new partnership.

"We are here to help all factions that want to get more kids into day school.

"Our movement can be allied with the partnership," he said, "to create a groundswell across the country."

Each of the 12 high-profile participants in the Partnership for Excellence has committed \$1.5 million — \$300,000 for each of five years.

That's not a lot of money for each of the partners to spend relative to their wealth and what they donate to other philanthropic endeavors, but it is symbolically important, Steinhardt said.

"There has been too much self-aggrandizement, too much focus on individuals rather than on the objectives in philanthropy in the Jewish community in recent years," he said.

Joining Steinhardt in the partnership are:

- Philadelphian Leonard Abramson, founder and former chief executive of U.S. Healthcare;
- The Manhattan-based Avi Chai Foundation, which itself was founded by investment mogul Sanford Bernstein, and which invests extensively in Jewish education;
- Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress and chairman of The Seagram Corp., and his brother Charles, Seagram's co-chair and president of the CRB Foundation, which helps send American Jewish teens to Israel, are each participating as separate partners;
- Real-estate developer Harold Grinspoon of Longmeadow, Mass.;
- Erica Jesselson of Riverdale, N.Y., and her son, Michael, of Manhattan, whose late husband and father, Ludwig, earned his fortune by trading in commodities markets;
- Jim Joseph, of San Mateo, Calif., whose family foundation also invests in day-school curriculum development;
- Morton Mandel, the Cleveland, Ohio-based electronics mogul and philanthropist who has, for several years, been investing in Jewish education through the New York-based Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education and other efforts;
- Charles Schusterman, the Tulsa, Okla.-based natural gas producer who is also heavily involved in philanthropy with Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life and the Israel Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem;
- UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, which has funded the creation of six new day schools and also provides \$3.3 million a year to other day-school-related support through its Continuity Commission and other channels; and
- Columbus, Ohio-based Leslie Wexner, chairman of The Limited retail empire, who has invested in training future educators.

New schools will receive \$300,000

Each new school that receives a grant will receive an average of \$300,000 over five years, according to Rabbi Joshua Elkin, who serves as director of the new organization.

Each school will have to raise at least as much money from non-tuition sources to match the partnership grants, he said.

In addition to the Austin Jewish Community Day School, the other schools that have already received pilot

grants are in Columbus, Ohio; Cherry Hill, N.J.; and Palo Alto, Calif.

A secondary project of the new partnership is to establish a database of top-level educational consultants and technical assistants available to aid any Jewish day school as it develops staff and administration, plans its curriculum and deals with a host of other issues.

The partnership, said several of those involved, is an experiment both in Jewish education and in models of philanthropy.

"We believe that this can test and demonstrate the possibilities for rich collaboration among philanthropists," said John Ruskay, chief operating officer of UJA-Federation of New York, in an interview.

"I don't know if it is the best answer," Charles Bronfman said in an interview from his Manhattan office. "It is an answer, one idea.

"On-the-job research will be important. Lets see what happens 20 years from now — will these kids be Jewish?

"This is an experiment, and what one does with an experiment is watch it," Bronfman said. "Let's see how it works." □

Orthodox rabbis join effort to aid vandalized synagogues

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The 800 members of all religious stripes on the New York Board of Rabbis are contributing money to two synagogues in Israel — one Reform, the other Conservative — which were attacked during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Reform Har-El Congregation in Jerusalem, and Hod V'Hadar Synagogue, a Conservative congregation in the Tel Aviv suburb of Kfar Saba, are each receiving \$1,800 from the New York group.

The board also urged the Israeli authorities "to vigorously pursue the perpetrators of these crimes."

The money was presented Tuesday to the Israeli consul general in New York, Shmuel Sisso.

Most notably, the contributions are coming, in part, from Orthodox rabbis in an era when prominent Orthodox rabbis in the United States and Israel publicly condemn Reform and Conservative Judaism as illegitimate, and as Orthodox participation in boards of rabbis around the country is fast diminishing.

Orthodox rabbis constitute more than one-quarter of the New York board's membership.

"There are issues where we do have our religious differences, but there are issues which transcend religious and theological issues, and one is the desecration of houses of worship," said Rabbi Marc Schneier, a vice president of the New York board and chairman of its From the Ashes Fund, which made the contributions.

"When it comes to acts of religious hatred, they cannot be tolerated.

On this issue, there is consensus and unity," said Schneier, himself an Orthodox rabbi.

Vandals attacked the Conservative synagogue after Kol Nidre services on Oct. 10, shattering the glass door and removing a mezuzah.

The Reform congregation in Jerusalem was also attacked by vandals, who painted swastikas and graffiti on its walls.

The board founded the From the Ashes Fund last year to assist African American churches around the country damaged by arson fires.

The board, through the fund, also made a contribution last year to an Orthodox synagogue in Queens, N.Y., which had been vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Yale students pursue legal battle without support of many Orthodox

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Four Orthodox Jewish students at Yale University are facing an uphill legal battle against the school — without the support of many Orthodox Jews.

In a case that has divided the Orthodox community, the students argue that pervasive sexual activity in the dormitories violates their beliefs.

Yale requires unmarried freshmen and sophomores under 21 years old to live on campus.

When attempts to reach a compromise failed, the students filed a federal lawsuit Oct. 15 seeking repayment of dormitory fees and unspecified monetary damages as well as a court order that would allow them to live off campus.

Under the threat of disciplinary action by the university, the students are paying the nearly \$7,000 housing fee for dorm rooms they do not use.

“Yale is denying rights that these students should have,” Nathan Lewin, the students’ attorney, said in a telephone interview.

“Yale offered no on-campus housing that was acceptable.”

Lewin said he plans to argue that Yale should be treated as a state school because of its close ties to the State of Connecticut.

Public universities have to meet a higher constitutional and legal threshold when it comes to religious accommodation, he said.

Yale officials said they are confident that they will win the case.

“The university believes that the lawsuit will be unsuccessful,” said Tom Conroy, a Yale spokesman.

“The fact that the lawsuit has been filed doesn’t change the university’s posture at all,” he added.

“We are more than willing to work with the students to find a way for them to live on campus; nothing’s changed on that front.”

While many Jewish legal observers called the lawsuit a “longshot,” Lewin said, “We’re right and we’re going to win.”

Yale has made other accommodations for its some 60 other Orthodox students.

These include a kosher meal plan and providing alternatives for students who can’t use electronic keys or turn on lights on Shabbat and holidays.

But the school has refused to budge on its requirement that the students live on campus.

Lawsuit a ‘last resort’

One of the students, Elisha Hack, said Yale “did not want to look for the alternative.”

Rabbi Daniel Greer, the father of one of the plaintiffs and the director of the New Haven Yeshiva, said the lawsuit is a “last resort.”

“If you have coed bathrooms, it is impossible to live halachically,” he said, referring to Jewish law.

In addition to claiming that Yale has violated their constitutional rights, the students also contend that Yale broke a contract made in its literature that it would not discriminate on the basis of religion.

In another argument, the lawsuit claims that the students could face felony charges for failing to report students who take photos and videos of sex acts by people under 18 years old.

“Sexual activity involving an unmarried male or female under the age of 18 is common in Yale’s residential

college dormitories,” the lawsuit states. While the students initially received widespread support in the Jewish community — both Orthodox and non-Orthodox — this support has waned.

Most Orthodox Jews on campus are not supporting the students — and the organized community is at best divided on the issue.

In fact, the top leaders of the Orthodox Union, an umbrella organization of Orthodox congregations, disagree with each other.

The O.U.’s Institute for Public Affairs labeled the lawsuit a “mistake.”

This occurred at the same time that the organization’s president, Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, reiterated his support for the students, even going as far as issuing a news release.

“If students want to lead a moral life that’s prescribed by their Bible, that was accepted before MTV came along, they should be given” that right, Ganchrow said in an interview.

At the same time, Ganchrow maintained that the best place for Orthodox students is at Orthodox institutions such as Yeshiva University, Stern College or Touro College.

But Richard Stone, the chairman of the O.U.’s Institute for Public Affairs, said, “It’s a serious mistake to have this matter in litigation.”

“If there is no way for them to live on campus, if there is no accommodation for them, maybe these schools are not for everybody,” said Stone.

He is also a professor of law at Columbia University.

Lewin, a prominent Washington attorney who has frequently represented Orthodox Jews in discrimination claims, said Stone is “just dead wrong.”

Agudah voices its support

For its part, Agudath Israel of America, representing the fervently Orthodox, is supporting the students’ lawsuit.

“What’s at stake is not just the rights of Orthodox students at Yale, but housing policies on campuses in the United States,” said David Zweibel, the Agudah’s director of government affairs and general counsel.

The lawsuit names the school, Yale President Richard Levin, Yale College Dean Richard Brodhead and Yale Dean of Student Affairs Betty Trachtenberg as defendants.

The plaintiffs are Jeremy Hershman, a sophomore from Cedarhurst, N.Y.; Lisa Friedman, a sophomore from Lawrence, N.Y.; and freshmen Elisha Hack and Batsheva Greer, both from New Haven.

Another student, Rachel Wohlgernter of Los Angeles, recently married in a civil ceremony in order to live off campus without fighting the school.

Wohlgernter has an Orthodox wedding service planned for December.

For his part, Rabbi Michael Whitman, an Orthodox rabbi who serves as director of the Young Israel House at Yale, is upset by the lawsuit and has offered his services as a mediator.

Whitman has asked for a pledge from the plaintiffs that they would pursue their case against the school without “maliciously Orthodox students living in the dorms and without blatantly mischaracterizing life in the dorms for most students.”

Hack responded, saying, “By criticizing Yale, that doesn’t mean I’m saying” that other Orthodox Jews on campus are “less Jewish than I am.” □

(Mara Dresner of the Connecticut Jewish Ledger contributed to this story.)

Peres peace center opens amid reports of small moves forward*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — They came to urge Middle East peace at a time when the once fast-paced negotiations have slowed to a crawl.

Some 140 foreign dignitaries gathered Monday in Tel Aviv for the dedication of the Peres Center for Peace.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, 74, received a standing ovation when he told the gathering that there was a "profound desire by the Israeli people to return to peace."

"We are together in a serious attempt to make peace a reality in this troubled and suffering region," he said of the center, which will work to advance joint Israeli-Palestinian economic projects.

Uri Savir, the former director-general of the Foreign Ministry who served as the first Israeli official to negotiate with the Palestinians in Oslo in 1993, will serve as the center's first director.

The ceremony took place as U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross was making his latest attempt to nudge the stalled peace process forward.

It also came just days before a senior defense official, who served as a former coordinator of government activities in the territories, was expected to propose a two-state solution for breaking the present impasse in negotiations.

Maj. Gen. Oren Shahor, who attended the center's dedication, was slated to propose the creation of a Palestinian state when he addresses a Peace Now luncheon Monday in Washington, according to sources with the dovish organization.

In January, Shahor was removed from the Israeli team negotiating with the Palestinians after it was disclosed that he had held unauthorized meetings with Israeli opposition leaders to update them on the status of the talks.

Shahor, now involved with the Labor Party, then left the IDF — after 32 years of service.

The center's first project is slated to be an industrial park on between Israel and the Gaza Strip, a move that could provide an estimated 50,000 jobs for Palestinians.

A conspicuous absence

Speakers at Monday's opening ceremony repeatedly referred to the bleak state of the current peace negotiations.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was conspicuously absent from the ceremony.

But other members of his government — including Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon — were present, as were President Ezer Weizman and several Jordanian, Egyptian and Palestinian officials.

Also in attendance was former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who spoke of the gap between the dreams of Oslo and the present reality.

Israeli-Palestinian relations "have eroded alarmingly," he said.

Ross, who also attended the ceremony, arrived in Israel on Sunday, when he began shuttling between the two sides.

Some progress was reported. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy was reported saying that Israel would limit settlement construction to a "necessary minimum."

The two sides also appeared close to agreeing on opening a Palestinian airport in Gaza.

This week's round of meetings were preparation for further discussions next week in Washington, where

Foreign Minister David Levy is expected to meet with Ross and Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, who serves as deputy to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Hours before the dedication ceremony of the center, dozens of guests attended a wreath-laying ceremony at a memorial to Prime Yitzhak Rabin that was erected on the steps of the Tel Aviv Municipality, the site of his assassination in November 1995.

"Welcome to this sad place," said Leah Rabin, the premier's widow.

"They killed the leader, but they will not manage to kill the spirit," Peres said. □

Canadian commission considers ban on Holocaust denier's Web site*By Bill Gladstone*

TORONTO (JTA) — The Canadian Human Rights Commission is holding hearings to determine whether it can prevent a leading Holocaust denier from spreading hate messages over the Internet.

A three-person tribunal of the commission heard four days of testimony last week in an effort to decide whether the California-based Web site of Ernst Zundel, an outspoken Holocaust denier who lives in Toronto, violates provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Section 13 of the act prohibits the dissemination of hate against an identifiable minority group via a telephonic device. The act has been used about a dozen times to prevent racist groups from using telephone answering machines to spread their ideology.

The tribunal is not a criminal proceeding, but its decisions are legally binding. It has no power to impose a fine, but it can order Zundel not to post similar objectionable messages on the Internet if it finds him in violation of the act. If he fails to obey, he could be found in contempt of court.

Acting on complaints from a private citizen as well as from Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall, who heads a municipal committee on race relations, the Human Rights Commission is attempting to decide whether the Internet qualifies as telephonic equipment and, if so, whether Zundel effectively retains editorial control over the material posted on the site, known as the Zundel site.

The Zundel site routinely appears near the top of lists generated when an Internet user searches for information on the Holocaust.

Although Zundel told the tribunal that the site is controlled by Ingrid Rimland of Carlsbad, Calif., his estranged wife, Irene, testified that he controls the materials that are posted and that he has been sending Rimland \$3,000 a month to cover the site's operating costs.

Both B'nai Brith Canada and the Canadian Jewish Congress have been granted intervener status in the case, allowing them to present legal arguments.

Because it is the first quasi-judicial case in Canada involving hate messages on the Internet, Canadian Jewish Congress officials believe that it will set a precedent.

"What we will have here is a map for legislators, the police and human rights commissioners to follow in the future," says Moische Ronen, chair of the Canadian Jewish Congress' Ontario Region.

"This is a complex and groundbreaking case, delving into the new realm of the Internet, in effect an uncharted territory for the legal system," said Marvin Kurz, national legal counsel for the B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights. "However, there is no reason why Canadian law should not be applied to this new form of communication."

The hearing resumes Dec. 11. □