



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ California State Treasurer Matt Fong lifted his state's sanctions against Swiss banks. Fong, who was scheduled to address a conference of state and municipal officials in New York on the Nazi gold issue Monday, cited the banks' progress in identifying dormant accounts from the Holocaust era.

■ Swiss banks began making their first payments to claimants of pre-1945 accounts that were published in newspapers earlier this year. The Swiss Bankers Association refused to disclose any further details.

■ The United States has given Israel about 10 days to present a 'credible' proposal on a redeployment in the West Bank. American officials warned that they would not work for Palestinian acceptance of the plan if Israel offers to relinquish too little territory. [Page 3]

■ Israeli soldiers wounded some 30 Palestinians in clashes in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians were protesting construction by the Israeli army on what they claim are Palestinian-owned agricultural fields.

■ A man on trial for World War II atrocities confessed in a German court that he stood guard near a Ukrainian village where Jews were shot. Ernst Hering, 75, is charged with rounding up Jews and sealing off the village of Israelowka in the 1942 massacre.

■ The German Defense Ministry said it has launched an investigation into how a convicted neo-Nazi was invited to give a training speech in 1995 to army officers. The German army has been racked with neo-Nazi incidents recently.

■ Crosses and Stars of David were removed from the grounds of Auschwitz. The decision was taken after protests about the presence of crosses at the former Nazi death camp.

■ Israeli officials asked a Jerusalem court to allow for the extradition of a U.S. teen-ager alleged to have committed a murder in Maryland. Samuel Sheinbein, 17, fled to Israel in September.

### PROFILE

## From Wall Street to philanthropy: This man searches for good returns

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Dow is plunging and Michael Steinhardt isn't happy.

Just before leaving his office to participate in a panel discussion at a United Jewish Appeal lunch — devoted to a subject, he grumbles, about which he knows nothing — Steinhardt calls in a young man wearing a black velvet yarmulke who manages his personal investments.

As Steinhardt peers at the stream of numbers blinking on the financial-data screen dominating his desk, they confer urgently about what the man will sell off while his boss is out.

Steinhardt formally retired from managing \$3 billion of other people's money in late 1995, but it is clear that the man who acquired his first stocks at the age of 13 — a Bar Mitzvah gift from his father — hates being away from the office while the market is volatile; he still thrives on the exhilarating stress of risky trading. In the world of Wall Street, where fortunes are made and lost in the quickest of trades, Steinhardt is legendary, a peer to men like George Soros, who have much higher public profiles than he.

In the sphere of Jewish philanthropy — a universe that traditionally operates on an entirely different set of natural laws than does the financial world — he is fast becoming one of the most influential individuals around.

And unlike many other Jewish philanthropists, Steinhardt devotes nearly all his giving to non-establishment Jewish institutions and programs.

"I'm struck by the irony of an extraordinarily achieving community such as ours being in a period of demographic decline," says the 56-year-old Teddy Roosevelt look-alike, speaking in his office that towers over Central Park.

"I'm challenged by the thought that the community needs new risks," Steinhardt, who tends to downplay his role in Jewish endeavors, says during his first major interview with the Jewish press.

It's when faced with challenges and risk that Steinhardt seems to feel most Jewishly alive — and has often gained his best returns. The same independence and strong ego that led him to success in both bull and bear markets is leading Steinhardt to start new programs, to try to make them bigger and better — even when similar undertakings already exist.

Take his forthcoming "Birthright Project," for example. He plans to provide a free trip to Israel to any Jewish youth in the world.

Whether they live in Malibu or Melbourne, are totally secular or religious, rich or poor, Jewish youth will only have to ask to receive vouchers good for free round-trip airfare and other expenses.

Why not work with a similar, if smaller-scale, effort already on the ground, such as the Charles Bronfman-funded Israel Experience?

"I want to recreate it, put it on the map in a very different way," Steinhardt says, adding that he is going to try to line up 20 or 25 other wealthy Jews to commit \$1 million for each of five years to the endeavor.

"I try and focus on innovation. I'm not interested in contributing to existing organizations, many of which I regard as vestigial."

### Lifetime as a spiritual seeker

The impatience pays off in business, but ruffles a few feathers in the Jewish establishment. Some grumble privately about Steinhardt pouring so much into new projects — including his recent initiative to help establish Jewish day schools — when already existing programs are in sore need of cash. Still, no one is willing to publicly criticize the man who could one day be their white knight.

But it's not just his willingness to plunk down big money for independent new projects that sets Steinhardt apart from most other Jewish philanthropists. He has spent a lifetime as a spiritual seeker, often trying to work out irreconcilable dichotomies.

A self-declared atheist, he has made Shabbat dinner a centerpiece of his family's life. An avowed secularist, he has long been engaged in religious discussion with Orthodox rabbis. His Jewish journey has taken him on a roundabout route. It is one that finds him in a place without any theological

comforts, but where the possibility of making a substantial contribution is its own reward.

"I find joy and meaning in the hope that I contribute something to a renaissance in the non-Orthodox Jewish world," he says. "The values of our community are the best that humankind has created, and to perpetuate it is, I think, worthwhile."

Those who know him best view Steinhardt as a sincere religious seeker. When Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, who runs a foundation Steinhardt set up two years ago — Kol Israel Chaverim: Jewish Life Network — meets with him, the rabbi is "never quite sure if it is going to be a business meeting or whether it's going to turn into a religious discussion.

"Frequently we spend an inordinate amount of time talking theology rather than philanthropy," Greenberg says. "Easy talk, conventional talk, he feels is vapid, doesn't nurture souls or people. Your average layman, let alone your average Wall Street money manager, is not wrestling with the meaning of life, or of being a Jew."

Steinhardt's daughter, Sara Berman, 22 and the features editor at the weekly Forward newspaper — in which her father bought a 50 percent stake in 1995 — recalls that while she was growing up, Shabbat dinner was central to their family life and they visited Israel every year or two.

At the same time, they attended Manhattan's Reform Central Synagogue, mostly on the High Holidays.

"Despite feeling that it wasn't a religious home, we definitely knew Judaism was very important," Berman says.

Married, Berman now keeps a kosher home and belongs to an Orthodox synagogue.

Her brother David, 28, is a partner in a Wall Street hedge fund, which manages high-yield, high-risk investments, and brother Daniel, 26, "is on his own spiritual search," according to his father, living in Sedona, Ariz., and learning organic gardening.

### **Rebellion began in college**

Steinhardt's Jewish life started out in typical fashion in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., which at the time was almost exclusively Jewish and Italian. The home in which his parents raised their only child was traditionally religious.

Through high school, from which he graduated at 16, he and a friend went to Shabbat morning services at a little shul in their neighborhood, where they engaged the older men in debate. And until he left home to attend the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, he donned tefillin daily.

It was while he was in college that his spiritual rebellion began. While studying Nietzsche and other philosophers, he says, "I began to question everything, like how turning on lights [on Shabbat] is like work. It seemed sort of remote, antiquated to me.

"I would flaunt my lack of religious faith. I would drive my mother crazy by eating on Yom Kippur," he says, adding, "I have this streak of provocation even today."

While in college, he went to a Shlomo Carlebach concert and introduced himself to the charismatic and controversial Orthodox anti-establishment rabbi.

They began an association that was to last decades.

In fact, his spent his first date with Judith — his wife of almost 30 years — at the late Carlebach's Upper West Side apartment, for a Yom Kippur break-the-fast.

Carlebach officiated at their wedding and, over the years, Steinhardt underwrote several of the projects with which Carlebach and his twin brother, also a rabbi, were involved.

In 1978, Steinhardt found himself at a crossroads: He felt unsatisfied spiritually and professionally, but did not know which path to take. So with the financial world casting a dubious eye, Steinhardt, at the top of his field, left his own firm, Steinhardt Partners, for a year's sabbatical. He went to Carlebach for guidance and walked away, he says, empty-handed. "It was the first and only time I came to him in need, and he had nothing to give me," he recalls with regret.

He spent his year off at home, occasionally studying Torah with Shlomo's twin, Eli Chaim, learning yoga with some of the women in the neighborhood of his Bedford, N.Y., property, north of New York City, and trying to figure out a way to make businesses in Israel more attractive to foreign investors.

Steinhardt went back to work, asking himself how he could use his money to pursue his areas of interest.

He went into the movie business by forming Steinhardt-Baer Productions, which still exists but to date hasn't produced any commercial successes.

He also started investing more seriously in Israel. In the early 1980s, he introduced Merrill Lynch to Israel, where the firm now has substantial presence as underwriters of Israeli securities. He also began building a private menagerie on his 51-acre estate, filling it with exotic wildlife and flora. He began by collecting every kind of duck and swan in the world, which led him to wallabies and zebras, llamas and dozens of other species.

Steinhardt says his personal net worth totals a bit over \$300 million, much of it devoted to investments and charities close to his heart.

With a handful of others, he bought a controlling interest in Israel's Bank Hapoalim this fall, and a couple of years ago purchased control of Israel's Maritime Bank.

### **Focus on things Jewish**

But he devotes most of his time to philanthropy, with his main focus now is on things Jewish.

Steinhardt recently brought together 11 other major philanthropists to donate a total of \$18 million over five years to start new Jewish day schools.

For the last three years he has quietly devoted about \$25 million to getting the Jewish Life Network off the ground. The Manhattan-based foundation is run by Greenberg and his son, J.J. It is developing half a dozen projects designed to attract the unaffiliated, helping them connect positively with their Jewishness.

Another endeavor is a new school of Jewish chaplaincy in Manhattan that will train rabbis, professionals at Jewish organizations and others in the Jewish ways of aiding the chronically and terminally ill.

He donates money to New York's UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and the Israel Museum.

Despite an intellectual commitment to non-Orthodoxy, ultimately he's an equal-opportunity supporter.

At the same time that he is considering establishing a Jewish secular high school in Manhattan, he also gives money to a Philadelphia-based Lubavitch rabbi organizing peer Jewish connections among university students.

He is particularly interested in student efforts.

Through Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, he started the Jewish Campus Service Corps, which this year has 77 recent college graduates doing outreach in unorthodox ways to Jewish university students.

He underwrote the start-up of Lights in Action, a five-year-old, student-run group promoting Jewish identity.

"It's nice to get a 50- or 60-year-old to get more interested in their Judaism, but in the end it's probably less valuable," says the man who always has his eye on the bottom line.

"I might as well go directly to their children." □

## Albright gives Israel 10 days to develop 'credible' proposal

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has less than two weeks to develop what the United States calls a "credible" plan for redeploying from the West Bank.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said she plans to meet again with Netanyahu in Europe as early as Dec. 17.

American officials said Albright expects to hear details on the scope of the Israeli redeployment at that meeting.

Albright, who is pressing for progress in the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process, met separately in Europe over the weekend with the premier and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

After holding what she called "useful and constructive discussions" with Arafat on Saturday, Albright returned to Paris for a second, previously unscheduled meeting with Netanyahu.

The Israeli leader convened senior Cabinet ministers after returning to Israel on Sunday to discuss the redeployment.

Netanyahu's Cabinet approved a conditional redeployment last week.

The redeployment would occur only after the Palestinians agreed to begin accelerated final-status talks and to fulfill their commitments under the Oslo accords, including increased security cooperation.

But the Cabinet decision did not specify the extent of the redeployment, and a ministerial committee was set up to work out details of the pullback.

U.S. officials warned that they would not work to convince the Palestinians to accept Israel's proposal if the scope of the redeployment is too little.

Under the Interim Agreement, Israel was to carry out three redeployments in the West Bank.

The first phase was rejected in March by the Palestinians because Israel would relinquish about 2 percent of the West Bank territory. That redeployment was never implemented.

Earlier this year, media reports said Netanyahu was considering a redeployment of about 6 to 8 percent.

The Palestinians have said they expect to assume control over at least 30 percent of the territory in each of the three phases of redeployment.

Arafat, who on Sunday briefed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on his talks with Albright, was quoted as saying that he was "encouraged" by the American position and that he believed the United States would demand a "substantial" pullback by Israel. □

## Histadrut, government near accord to end massive strike

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The general strike that has crippled Israel for five days appeared to be nearing an end Sunday night.

The Histadrut labor federation suspended the strike after Histadrut and Treasury officials agreed to a compromise proposal.

Workers had been protesting the government's refusal to honor a pension agreement signed with the previous Labor government.

Histadrut chairman Amir Peretz announced that he and Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman had agreed to a proposal put forward by the president of the national labor court.

"If the document is agreed upon by this evening, we will be able to declare an end to the action by the workers," Peretz told a news conference.

Peretz said that under the agreement, the finance minister had agreed to most pension issues and to consulting with workers on privatization plans.

Final approval of the suspension was given at a meeting of the Histadrut's large trade unions.

The strike, which began on Dec. 3, shut down government offices, air and rail service, the stock exchange and banks.

Thousands of travelers were stranded at Ben-Gurion Airport for several days, and Israeli Aviation Authority officials estimated that about 15,000 Israelis were unable to return home.

At the center of the strike was Ne'eman's refusal to honor collective agreements the Histadrut signed with the previous Labor government shortly before last year's election.

Likud officials had maintained that the agreements were a Labor Party ploy to gain votes and had refused to honor them.

Ne'eman said he hoped "the nightmare imposed on the public is over."

"There has been irreversible damage, to exports, tourism and Israel's image abroad," Ne'eman told reporters.

A spokesman for Israel's manufacturer's association maintained that the strike had cost the economy more than \$570,000. □

## Israel charges Mossad agent with falsifying Syria reports

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An agent for Israel's Mossad has been arrested and charged with supplying false information on Syria during the past two decades.

Investigators suspect that Yehuda Gil, 63, also kept up to \$57,000 in funds intended for other sources.

The incident is the latest in a series of recent scandals to shake the Israeli spy service — but it was unclear what impact Gil's information had on Israeli policy.

Israeli media reported last week that Israel nearly went to war with Syria in the summer of 1996 because of disinformation.

Gil's lawyer, Yigal Shapira, denied that his client intentionally misled the government.

But Shapira said that in the past three or four years, Gil, who is retired, has been under pressure to provide fresh intelligence information and had recycled material he had previously gathered from his source.

Shapira rejected allegations that his client had taken money that was intended for his source.

The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that a search of the retired agent's home found thousands of dollars of Mossad funds.

Investigators were looking for another \$150,000 that they suspect Gil had kept illegally.

A judge lifted a censorship ban over the weekend to allow the publication of Gil's identity.

The disclosure drew a pointed reaction from politicians.

Labor Knesset member Ori Orr, a member of the Knesset subcommittee on the secret services, said the subcommittee would discuss the incident's implications for the intelligence establishment.

The Mossad's image has already been battered this year by September's failed assassination attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in Jordan. □

**New game show on television:  
The Bible tries to beat 'Jeopardy'**

*By Peter Ephross*

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Bible has been around for more than 3,000 years — but can it beat out “Jeopardy”?

That’s the question that will be answered beginning next spring if a game show based on the Bible hits the airwaves.

The show, tentatively titled “In the Beginning,” is the brainchild of Michael Callie, a former joke writer for the “Hollywood Squares” game show and a former comedy club owner.

The seed for the idea came, Callie said in an interview, when a friend suggested it to him at a party four years ago.

As complaints grew about the lack of family fare on television, and as he watched the increasing number of talk shows he describes as being devoted to “outdoing each other with freaks,” Callie decided to elaborate on the idea.

Developing a game show with biblical content meant that Callie has had to answer a lot of questions not normally faced by game-show developers — interfaith issues, for one. They’re not new to Callie, a Reform Jew who is married to a Christian Scientist.

Current plans call for teams of the same denomination to compete against each other — a Roman Catholic church will only play against another Roman Catholic church, for example, and an Orthodox Jewish congregation will only play against a similar group.

But after speaking with rabbis who told him that Jews know a lot about the Christian Bible, Callie plans to have both Jewish and Christian contestants to answer questions from both bibles.

In order to limit controversy, Callie is limiting his show to “fact-based” questions approved by scholars at the University of Southern California’s school of religion.

Citing figures that there are 280,000 churches and synagogues in the country, Callie said finding contestants won’t be a problem.

As far as the nuts-and bolts of the show, Callie describes it a “typical bells-and whistles” program.

There will be separate shows for children and adults.

Two teams of three contestants each will answer questions about the Bible — categories include Psalms and Wisdom, Royalty of the Bible and The Prophets.

There will also be a lightning round, in which contestants will answer as many questions as quickly as possible in two minutes.

The prize money will be given to a charity or community service project designated by the church or synagogue.

**‘Taking the greed out of the game show’**

“We’re taking the greed out of the game show,” said Callie. “It’s a feel-good show with a guaranteed happy ending. Someone who is in need benefits at the end.”

The show is being distributed by LeSea Broadcasting. LeSea, which is primarily known for Christian programming, plans to run it on the six television stations it owns — which range from Oklahoma to Hawaii.

LeSea’s national sales manager, Craig Wallin, said he hopes eventually for 70-percent market penetration.

“We are catching the wave of viewer interest in positive family programming, which has been generated by the major networks with such shows as ‘Touched by an Angel’ and ‘Nothing Sacred,’ ” he said, mentioning two

current shows with religious concepts. “In the Beginning,” Callie said, will be limited to Christian and Jewish knowledge and contestants — at least for now.

“Maybe later on, we’ll have a show for the Koran,” he said. □

**Jewish community organizes  
anti-hate rally in New Zealand**

*By Jeremy Jones*

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — The fight against hate crime has spread to New Zealand.

The country’s Jewish community, spurred by a large increase in racist attacks, hosted a rally last week in the capital of Wellington with the aim of developing a strategy to stop racist groups. Among those addressing the rally were three members of Parliament and a national race relations official.

David Zwartz, president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, said in an interview, “Our historical experience has led us to believe that it is important to take early action so as to stop something small from developing into something much more dangerous.”

He added that “New Zealanders are not generally racist, but have little real idea of what to do when racism is developing.”

In recent weeks, a number of attacks on refugees and immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Middle East — along with the emergence of a neo-Nazi group known as Unit 88 — have gained prominent coverage in the media and focused attention on skinhead groups.

The reference to “88” is a common international neo-Nazi code for the repetition of the eighth letter in the alphabet. It stands for “Heil Hitler.”

Zwartz said “there was nothing to suggest that Unit 88 was “acting on its propaganda.”

There are 5,000 Jews living in New Zealand. □

**Ex-premier still blames Jews  
for Quebec autonomy setback**

*By Bram D. Eisenthal*

MONTREAL (JTA) — The former premier of Quebec has done it again.

Addressing students at the University of Alberta recently, Jacques Parizeau reiterated his belief that Jewish voters and other minorities caused the October 1995 defeat of a referendum calling for Quebec independence.

“The Jewish Congress of Canada, the Greek Congress of Canada and the Italian Congress make a very good fight against sovereignty,” said Parizeau, who has been touring Canada to promote Quebec’s independence.

Parizeau’s remarks come as Quebec prepares for elections next year. Another referendum on sovereignty is expected to be held soon afterward. While Parizeau is now a private citizen, he remains popular among hard-line separatist supporters of the governing Parti Quebecois.

Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard refused to condemn his predecessor’s remarks. Bouchard defended Parizeau as “an eminent citizen of our people.”

The Parti Quebecois blocked a motion sponsored by the opposition Liberal Party to formally criticize Parizeau. Jewish leaders reacted angrily to the ex-premier’s remarks.

“Our goal has always been to promote, in a thoughtful and moderate manner, the interests of Quebecers and all Canadians by speaking to the entire population,” said Reisa Teitelbaum, Quebec chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

“It is obvious that this is not an objective shared by Mr. Parizeau.” □