


**IN THE NEWS**
**House passes bill on anti-Semitism**

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution urging the United Nations to address anti-Semitism and anti-Israel policies.

Among other provisions, the resolution, which passed Tuesday by a vote of 409-2, calls on the United Nations to condemn anti-Semitic statements in all U.N. meetings and urges U.S. government action to combat anti-Semitism, particularly anti-Semitic incitement in the Middle East.

**Israel destroys Palestinian mortars**

Israel destroyed Palestinian mortar shell launchers in the Gaza Strip.

Wednesday's attack came a day after three laborers were killed in a Palestinian mortar attack on the Israeli settlement bloc of Gush Katif.

Also Wednesday, Palestinians fired several mortar rounds at Gush Katif settlements.

**Anti-Semitism meeting opens**

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance opened in Spain.

New York Gov. George Pataki, leading the U.S. delegation, warned representatives from 55 European and North American governments that "we must not allow the disease of anti-Semitism to infect another generation."

For the first time, the OSCE's annual meeting on anti-Semitism has been merged with discussions on prejudice against other groups.

The two-day confab is being held in Cordoba, a city where Jews, Christians and Muslims co-existed during the Middle Ages.

**Due to Shavuot, the JTA World Report will not be published on Tuesday, June 14 and Wednesday, June 15.**

# WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

## Study on Ashkenazi genes sparks intrigue, debate — and reflection

By CHANAN TIGAY

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — A reported link between Ashkenazi intelligence genes and susceptibility to genetic disorders is clearly mixed news for the descendants of Eastern European Jews.

It may come as little surprise, then, that reactions to a new study linking the two are a mixed bag as well.

After all, if what the University of Utah researchers say is true, some Jewish mothers may just have had their dreams for brilliant children turned to nightmares.

Beyond that, it may also mean that Ashkenazim have, albeit unwillingly, "been part of an accidental experiment in eugenics," as *The Economist* magazine put it in a recent article.

"It has brought them some advantages. But, like the deliberate eugenics experiments of the 20th century, it also has exacted a terrible price."

The mere mention of eugenics — which refers to a movement to improve humankind by controlling genetic factors through mating — is enough to ring bells that many Jews would rather not hear 60 years after the Allied defeat of the Nazis.

According to the study, slated to appear in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Biosocial Science*, Ashkenazim do better than average on IQ tests, scoring some 12 to 15 points above the test's mean value. But they also are more likely than any other ethnic groups to suffer from diseases such as Tay-Sachs, Gaucher's disease and Niemann-Pick — related conditions that can be debilitating and deadly.

The new study hypothesizes that the ge-

netic disorders could be the unfortunate side effects of genes that facilitate intelligence.

But for some people, ascribing collective traits to entire ethnic groups — especially to European Jews — reminds them that the Nazis heaped a pile of supposed genetic characteristics on that continent's Jews and used the characteristics as a basis to exterminate them.

Indeed, the researchers say they had difficulty finding a journal that would publish their findings.

For other people, criticizing such research on this basis reeks of political correctness. This is real science, they say, with real potential to help save Jewish — and other — lives.

"When you study genetics in order to cure diseases, that's great," said James Young, a Jewish studies professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the author of "Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation."

"But when genetics are studied as a way to characterize or essentialize a whole ethnic group or nation of people, then I think it's very problematic."

Still, he said, "I was kind of intrigued by this connection, and the dark irony of what it means to have your intelligence gene linked to a so-called genetic disease gene. It's kind of striking."

For Dr. Guinter Kahn, a Miami physician who lectures internationally on German doctors during the Holocaust, studies like this have real scientific merit.

"This stuff is being done with genes, and they're actually finding true results," he said.

*Continued on page 2*

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

## ■ *Is what your grandmother told you about Jewish smarts a mixed blessing?*

*Continued from page 1*

"The stuff they did in World War II was pure baloney motivated by the greatest geneticists of that time in Germany — but they all fell into the Hitler trap."

Although no one is questioning the researchers' motivations, some observers worry that their findings may be misused.

"Will bigots use this? Bigots will use anything," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

However, he said, their abuses should not block research that could benefit the Jewish community.

Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt agrees.

When it became clear that fewer Jews were killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau than had originally been thought, some Jews worried that this information would be manipulated by Holocaust deniers to back their claims, said Lipstadt, a professor of modern Jewish and Holocaust studies at Emory University.

"I had people say to me, 'We shouldn't talk about these things,'" Lipstadt recalls, "I said, 'No, no, no. It's always good to talk about the truth.' We should never be afraid of the truth."

As to concerns about what it means to say that one group of people is genetically smarter than others, Henry Harpending, a professor of anthropology at the University of Utah and one of the study's three authors, told JTA that such complaints boil down to political correctness.

"It's no secret," he said of the Ashkenazi IQ numbers. "Your grandmother told you this."

Indeed, the study notes that although Ashkenazi Jews made up just 3 percent of the U.S. population during the last century, they won 27 percent of the country's Nobel Prizes in science and account for more than half of the world's chess champions.

However, Harpending added, this is "the kind of thing that you're not supposed to say these days."

"We regard this as an interesting hypothesis and are a little surprised at the attention. On the other hand, geneticists kind of know that variation between populations is almost certainly in the DNA and they kind of don't talk about that" for fear of losing federal funding for their research, Harpending said.

"What we've done is started out with an idea and followed it, so what we have is a pretty interesting and pretty good-looking hypothesis — and it ought to be tested."

But could this research actually end up helping anybody? Gregory Cochran, one of the study's authors, hopes so.

"I don't have the cure to any disease in my pocket. I wish I did," he said. But "if this all pans out, you learn something about how the brain works. Who knows?"

The study says that because European Jews in medieval times were restricted to jobs in finance, money lending and long-distance trade — occupations that required greater mental gymnastics than fields such as farming, dominated by non-Jews — their genetic codes over the course of some generations selected genes for enhanced intellectual ability.

This process allowed these Jews to thrive in the limited scope of professions they were allowed to pursue. Further, in contrast to today, those who attained financial success in that period often tended to have more children than those who were less financially stable, and those children tended to live longer.

It is for this reason, the researchers said, that many Ashkenazi Jews today have high IQs — and it may also be the

reason they suffer from the slew of genetic diseases.

According to the researchers, many individuals carrying the gene for one of these diseases also receive an "IQ boost."

Rabbi Moses Tendler, who holds a doctorate in biology and teaches biology at Yeshiva University, said there is "no doubt that genetic makeup determines intelligence and, indeed, predisposes as well as offers resistance to genetic diseases."

But he took issue with the study's findings.

The fact that Jews did not intermarry until relatively recently, Tendler said, led to a concentration of various genes among their numbers, some good and some bad.

"Wherever they were, Jews lived on an island," he said.

Rabbi Arthur Green, dean of the Rabbinical School at Boston's Hebrew College, wondered whether the findings took into account all relevant factors in the development of Jewish intelligence.

He noted that during the period in which the researchers believe the Jewish intelligence gene began to be selected, the majority Christian world was, in a sense, selecting against such a gene.

"In that same period of 1,600 to 1,800 years, Christian Europe was systematically destroying its best genetic stock through celibacy" of priests and monks, he said.

In some of the Ashkenazi disorders, individuals experience extra growth and branching of connectors linking their nerve cells. Too much of this growth may lead to disease; increased but limited growth, though, could breed heightened intelligence.

In an effort to determine the effect of Gaucher's on IQ, for example, the researchers contacted the Gaucher's Clinic at Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem. Although the center did not have specific IQ numbers on patients at the clinic, the jobs they held were high-IQ professions: physicists, engineers, lawyers, physicians and scientists.

"It's obviously a population with enriched IQs — big time," Harpending said.

The findings are 'the kind of things that you're not supposed to say these days.'

**Henry Harpending**  
Study's co-author

**JTA**  
WORLD  
REPORT

**Howard E. Friedman**  
President

**Mark J. Joffe**  
Executive Editor and Publisher

**Lisa Hostein**  
Editor

**Michael S. Arnold**  
Managing Editor

**Lenore A. Silverstein**  
Finance and Administration Director

**Noa Artzi-Weill**  
Marketing Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

# N.Y. court to rule on rebbe's shul

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — The messianist controversy that has been tearing apart the Crown Heights Lubavitch community for more than a decade is now before the New York state Supreme Court.

The case pits the leadership of the international Chabad-Lubavitch movement against a handful of young messianists and the trustees of Congregation Lubavitch Inc., the group that controls the movement's main synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.

The case ostensibly turns on the wording of a commemorative plaque on the outside wall of the shul.

But what really is at stake is who controls the synagogue where the late Chabad rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, used to pray. It is the shul where he would hold his farbrengens — mass celebrations during which he would discourse to thousands of his disciples, men and women who hung on his every word.

For the better part of the decade since Schneerson's death in 1994, the 770 synagogue has been considered a stronghold of the messianists, a vocal minority of Lubavitchers who, against the wishes of the Chabad leadership, publicly declare that Schneerson is the Messiah.

In the synagogue's main sanctuary, a banner proclaiming Schneerson the Messiah is strung across a side wall. Many prominent Lubavitchers, including much of the movement's leadership, don't go inside at all.

The case before the court represents the most decisive action yet by Chabad's leadership against this messianist faction.

Plaintiffs in the case are Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and Agudas Chassidei Chabad, two of the three central bodies of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

Pitted against them are three Lubavitch yeshiva students and Congregation Lubavitch Inc., a nonprofit formed after Schneerson's death that lays claim to control of the synagogue.

The small plaque affixed to the wall outside the shul's main entrance commemorates Schneerson's laying of the building's cornerstone.

When it was first put up in 1995, the plaque referred to Schneerson in Hebrew as "of blessed memory," the traditional

Jewish term for a deceased person. It was defaced almost immediately and the phrase was scratched out, it was widely presumed, by messianists, who oppose any suggestion that the rebbe is dead.

The defaced plaque remained up until Nov. 4, 2004, when some young Lubavitchers, including the three named defendants in the current case, removed it in the middle of the night and tried to replace it with a plaque that referred to Schneerson as the Moshiach, or Messiah.

They were caught in the act, arrested and their new plaque was removed under police guard.

The conflict escalated: Merkos hired installers to replace the original, non-Messianist plaque, they were met by groups who pushed and shoved them, the police got involved and Merkos got a temporary restraining order against the three young men. Then Congregation Lubavitch Inc. tried to have the restraining order voided on the grounds that its gabbais, as duly elected trustees, were the only ones who should control the plaque, the synagogue and the surrounding buildings.

The restraining order stood, barricades went up, guards were posted and Merkos' plaque was finally affixed — and then vandalized by a blow torch.

It wasn't the first time violence erupted at the shul between Messianists and non-Messianists.

Police have been called in, police have been attacked, charges filed and young Lubavitchers have been arrested on more than one occasion.

But things came to a head last winter, and in early March, Agudas was brought into the case as co-plaintiff and Congregation Lubavitch Inc. became a co-defendant along with the three men involved with the plaque incident.

According to court documents from March, Merkos and Agudas are requesting, among other things, that the defendants be permanently enjoined from interfering with the new plaque.

They also want the court to declare that Congregation Lubavitch Inc. has "no

right, title or interest in" the synagogue, and that control rightfully belongs to Merkos and Agudas.

The trustees of Congregation Lubavitch Inc., for their part, responded in a brief May 25 that the case isn't about a plaque as much as it's about Merkos and Agudas trying to impose their own views about the messianic conflict on the rest of the Chabad community. As such, they say, it is an internal religious dispute, and the court has no business getting involved.

The defendants' May 25 brief also sought to sever the congregation's case from the complaints made against the three yeshiva students.

As concerns the plaque, the Congregation Lubavitch Inc. brief states that the "of blessed memory" reference is "an insult to the majority of the worshippers" who come to the 770 synagogue, "because a significant portion of the Lubavitch religious community do not believe it is appropriate to refer to Rebbe Schneerson as a memory," but believe instead "that he may be the Moshiach."

The trustees from Congregation Lubavitch Inc. say they tried to put up their own, "neutral" plaque that doesn't refer to Schneerson at all, but were prevented from doing so by the restraining order.

Defense lawyers submitted affidavits from various supporters to show that most Lubavitchers believe Schneerson is the Messiah, and that Schneerson ordered that disputes be handled internally by the Beit Din, or rabbinic court, of Crown Heights, the section of Brooklyn where Chabad headquarters are located.

Noting that the synagogue entrance is now blocked by barricades and a 24-hour guard, the brief further states that "the synagogue now looks like a crime scene, and worshippers who do not agree with Plaintiffs' religious message are offended every day when they enter the synagogue for prayer."

Neither side would speak on the record, as the case is still under litigation. The plaintiffs are expected to respond to the defendants' claims at the next hearing, scheduled for June 22.

The fight over the synagogue reflects a battle within Chabad.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Republicans angered by Dean comments

Republican Jews expressed anger at Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean, who said the GOP is "pretty much a white, Christian party."

Dean's comments Monday to journalists and minority leaders in California drew responses from Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition — who said the remarks "reflect a disturbing trend" in Dean's party — and Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.).

"Tens of thousands of Republican Jews across America, including myself, know that the Republican Party is a party of vision whose leaders understand the needs of American workers and families and the importance of spreading democracy in the Middle East," Cantor said.

Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman told Fox News that "a lot of folks who attended my bar mitzvah would be surprised" to learn his party is Christian.

Dean, whose wife is Jewish and whose children were raised Jewish, defended his remarks on NBC's "Today" show Wednesday. "What I'm trying to point out is that the Republicans don't include people," Dean said. "They are outside the mainstream."

### Four panels to investigate academy

The acting secretary of the U.S. Air Force said he has deployed four separate Pentagon teams to address complaints of religious intolerance at the Air Force Academy.

Michael Dominguez said initial reports indicate there have been instances at the Colorado Springs campus where "respect has been lacking," and that academy practices and procedures may have contributed to the climate.

"The multiple reviews I have asked for, together with aggressive leadership action, will help us correct academy climate and culture," Dominguez said Wednesday in a letter to Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.). Capps and 45 other members of Congress sent Dominguez a letter last month.

### Public radio nixes New Israel Fund support

Public radio stations in San Francisco and New York rejected underwriting support from the New Israel Fund.

A senior advertising executive at the San Francisco station, KQED, wrote an e-mail saying the rejection of the group's underwriting credit stemmed from complaints about Middle East coverage on National Public Radio, the public radio network in the United States, The New York Times reported.

But KQED officials cited by the Times said the funding was rejected because the New Israel Fund, which works on social justice projects in Israel, is an advocacy group.

Some Jews long have complained that NPR coverage is pro-Palestinian, and two ombudsmen recently were appointed to examine the coverage.

"The rejection strikes us as unfair and a matter of concern," said Naomi Paiss, communications director for the NIF, who said the group's stance in favor of the upcoming Gaza Strip withdrawal places it firmly in the mainstream. "Our work on the withdrawal is the opposite of polarizing."

### Court sides with rabbi in zoning dispute

A U.S. court partially overturned a lower court's ruling that a Florida rabbi may not conduct religious services in his home.

The original ruling against Joseph Konikov came after neighbors complained that the services caused traffic and parking problems. The Orlando Sentinel reported Tuesday that the appeals court also

called Orange County's zoning code unconstitutional, saying it unfairly discriminates against religious gatherings as opposed to nonreligious gatherings like scout meetings or parties.

The case will proceed to a federal court in Orlando, though the county may attempt to bring the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Canadian group sees report as unbalanced

B'nai Brith Canada said a government report on citizenship revocation mistakenly focuses on the rights of people suspected of committing World War II-era war crimes who lied to get into Canada.

The group urged the government to reject the report. According to B'nai Brith's legal counsel, David Matas, the report is unbalanced because it recommends that matters involving citizenship revocation go before a criminal court, making it harder to deport war criminals.

## WORLD

### Pope to meet Jewish officials

Pope Benedict XVI will meet with 25 Jewish officials.

Thursday's meeting with the delegation from the International Jewish Committee on Inter-religious Consultations will be the new pontiff's first official meeting with senior Jewish officials.

IJCIC has been an official dialogue partner with the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews for 35 years.

### Religious leaders remember Stalin's victims

Participants in an interfaith forum in Moscow paid respect to clerics of different faiths killed by Stalin.

Religious leaders representing Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish communities from some 30 countries who gathered in Moscow for a two-day interfaith forum were present at the impromptu ceremony organized Wednesday morning by a Russian rabbi and a cantor.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Guantanamo-style scandal for Israel?

Israeli prison guards were accused of desecrating Palestinian-owned Korans.

Israeli Arab lawmakers demanded a probe Wednesday into allegations that three copies of the Koran were torn during a recent search for weapons and unauthorized cell phones in Megiddo Prison, where hundreds of Palestinian terrorists are held.

As Palestinian prisoners went on a hunger strike, members of Israel's Muslim community warned that the Jewish state could face a scandal on par with the one surrounding allegations that U.S. guards at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, desecrated the Koran while interrogating suspected Islamist terrorists.

But Israel's Prisons Service denied wrongdoing, calling the allegations unfounded.

### West Bank building boom

Israeli settlement construction has increased significantly since last year, the government said.

The Central Bureau of Statistics said Wednesday that construction began on 564 new homes in the West Bank in the first quarter of 2005, up 83 percent from the same period in 2004.

It was not immediately clear if the building was taking place in the large settlement blocs Israel has said it plans to keep under any final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

By comparison, the bureau said overall housing construction had dropped by 6 percent in Israel, except in Jerusalem.