

Schools, Jewish Community

By ROBERT ARNOW

VICE CHAIRMAN GOVERNING COUNCIL
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION JEWISH EDUCATION

Keren Ami - or "My people's Fund," is the term popularly used to describe the community chest drive in which the children of Jewish schools traditionally participate. It was America's unique contribution to the nostalgic tradition of the Pushkeh or tin collector's box which graced Jewish homes and which was frequently used by children in door-to-door solicitations. American efficiency, as applied to the Jewish school, suggested that if the children were taught about Jewish philanthropic and organizational needs and were then trained to make regular and modest contributions, they would learn the meaning of Jewish civic responsibility. For more than three decades, this educational and fund raising technique has been practiced and promoted in Jewish schools around the country. But it was not until the American Association for Jewish Education undertook a survey of Keren Ami activities that we have had any appraisal of its dimensions, successes and failures.

In my report to the Governing Council of the American Association, based on the study just completed by Dr. Gerhard Lang, Consultant to the AAJE's Department of Statistical Research, I was unhappy to note that the technique of Keren Ami is not used so widely as we might have expected. While it is estimated that more than one mil-

lion dollars is raised by Jewish school children, the average contribution per child is only about 7¢ per week, or less than the cost of a candy bar. Such an amount does not reflect a serious consideration of the cause of Jewish philanthropy. Nor does there appear to be any meaningful relationship between the automatic process of bringing money and the more important process of learning why one is expected to make a contribution. The reports were sparse, but demonstrated convincingly that very few schools teach civics or explain the work of Jewish agencies, or involve students in an intelligent program which will help them understand the causes to which they allot funds.

The parochialism of Keren Ami allocations is palpable. While there are more than 250 beneficiary organizations, most of the schools seem to be guided by the rule of zealous support of their own parent or sister ideological institutions.

While it is to be expected that dramatic and urgent overseas needs will receive more grants than domestic purposes, there does not appear to be any reasoned analysis of what Causes most need money at a given time.

Equally consternating is the revelation that educational beneficiaries rank low on the school's philanthropic scale. Apparently, we have as little success in persuading students in Jewish schools that Jewish education is important as we have in persuading their parents and elders.

This study, followed immediately by a study on THE TEACHING OF JEWISH CIVICS, reveals one of the major gaps in making Jewish education relevant. I do not suggest that Keren Ami alone will make Jewish education more instructive than it has been; but it is evident from the size of the collections, the pattern of distribution, the absence of elated instruction, the failure to fully involve the children themselves, that we are grievously missing an opportunity to explain the Jewish Community -- its structure, its agencies, its social responsibilities, its internal and external relationships to our young children and to adolescents.

NEW YORK CITY: More than 4,500 students representing 36 nations have registered for Bar-Ilan University's undergraduate and graduate programs for the 1969-70 academic year, according to an announcement by Dr. Joseph H. Lookstein, Chancellor of the University.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Israel will double its agricultural investment in the Arava area, the 105 mile long strip running from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea, and will establish two new settlements as part of an overall plan to strengthen the area's economic and defence capabilities.

a Happy Holiday
from
WALKER FURNITURE CO.



301 So. Highland Dr. 384-9300

Before You Decide
WE URGE ALL READERS TO CONSIDER

Walt Epprecht's
LAS VEGAS

Dodge
WHERE THEY WILL BEAT
ANY DEAL ANYWHERE

NEW
Enlarged Location
3470 Boulder Highway
737-1061
ASK JACK TELL, WHO DRIVES ONE

ADY-DEE WASH
NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS
TO ALL OUR FRIENDS


"Your Baby's CLOSEST Friend"



"Rak a Dry Baby"

Call **384-3513**

616 MARYLAND PARKWAY



Happy New Year

BEST WISHES TO ALL OF OUR PEOPLE

THE DESURE FAMILY
DOUG, BEV, DENISE & DAVID