

Jewish Education—A Community Responsibility

By ISRAEL A. ABRAMS

Jewish education has become the topic of the day in American Jewish life. Almost every Jewish national organization now has a special department for Jewish education. Starting with the American Association for Jewish Education, whose main work is in the field of education, and followed by the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Jewish Welfare Board, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Synagogues of America and the Zionist Organization of America, all deal with various aspects of Jewish education. Some of these organizations are interested in the formal, intensive phase and others with informal education.

There is, however, one basic problem that all organizations face — the problem of personnel. In the intensive Hebrew school field a dire need for trained teachers and executives is being felt. Similarly, in the group work and center field trained personnel are at a premium. The shortage of teachers is acute, not only in the Hebrew schools, but in secular education as well. To solve this problem in general education it was found necessary to merge the smaller schools into central school units. A similar effort is now being made in the Jewish field. The small school can no longer exist. A competent teacher does not care to accept a position in a small school where the facilities are limited, the classes poorly graded and the supervision inadequate. Such schools do not have a bright future.

It is interesting to read the report of the Essex County Bureau of Education, where it was found necessary to merge 37 small schools into 7 central schools (and transport the children from all

of these schools to the central institution by buses).

In our own community, the Hebrew Institute found it advisable to close its branch in the East End and to transport the students by bus to the Institute where the pupils can be more properly graded, under the care of well trained instructors and efficient supervision. This action of the Institute does not solve the problem in East End. The East Liberty Jewish community has a Jewish child population of close to 1000. To provide a proper Jewish education for these children a central Hebrew school is needed.

To conduct an efficient, well-organized Hebrew school an enrollment of not less than 250 pupils is required. Such a school must be headed by a capable director, a staff of from 8 to 10 teachers, a music teacher and arts and crafts instructor. The school must be housed in an adequate building. The budget of such a school would approximate \$50,000.00 a year, while its income would not exceed \$20,000.00. Such a central institution should be established in the East Liberty section as a communal institute, communally supported. Jewish education must become a community responsibility and it is high time that Pittsburgh Jewry consider this pressing problem.

As the New Year approaches, I extend my greetings to the editor of this paper and to the Jewish community in general, and I do hope that the year 5709 will be a year of Jewish educational activity and spiritual growth, and will witness the fulfillment of the prophecy that "And all thy children shall be the disciples of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children."