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# New Structures of Jewish Education in Germany

*Chinuch* or 'education' in the Jewish world unquestionably has its primary origins in the Jewish religion. Study of the Torah, the Talmud, and other written texts of Jewish tradition is a general prerequisite for Jewish learning in the strict sense. Today as well, receiving the essentials of a Jewish education is almost unthinkable without being familiar with the writings of the Torah, a certain knowledge of Talmud commentaries, and the discourses on Jewish Law (*halakha*). On the other hand, no one would question that Jewish education has made remarkable advances under the influences of modernity and the Enlightenment since the eighteenth century. 'Being Jewish' has become a much broader concept than just studying sacred works and observing Jewish commandments (*mitzvot*). Being Jewish has broadened to encompass a process of 'finding oneself,' developing Jewish art, discovering Jewish history and applying Jewish values and norms in a world that is mainly non-Jewish. The movement toward a modern, multifaceted Jewish world with new ideas, theories, reformist movements, and cultural innovations was probably nowhere stronger than in Germany. Germany's Jews were hungry to study their own heritage and religion, but at the same time highly motivated to study their surroundings, to engage in academic, economic, artistic, and humanitarian enterprises. Distinctly patriotic and admirers of Romantic writers such as Goethe and Rilke, composers like Beethoven and Bach and philosophers such as Kant and Hegel, they were also highly motivated to learn about German arts and philosophy. Masterminds of the Jewish Enlightenment such as Moses Mendelssohn and David Friedländer believed the Jewish search for wisdom should include the exploration of the larger world. Consequently, beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Germany's Jews strove to provide a well-rounded education for their children. It was no accident that figures such as Israel Jacobson founded a Religious and Industrial School for Jewish Boys in the small town of Seesen, Lower Saxony in 1801. This was the first Jewish school of any type in Germany. Shortly thereafter, in 1804, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty, opened the famous Philanthropin School in Frankfurt, an educational institution for poor Jewish children that had a student body of up to a thousand pupils, and became the greatest Jewish school in German history.

## Jewish intellectual perspectives

While there was ambition to provide an all-around education for children, Jewish adults discovered their thirst for education, as well. Thus, in the early nineteenth century, it also became popular to concern oneself with Jewish history and religion from primarily an intellectual perspective. Together with some colleagues, Leopold Zunz, who is considered the true originator of Jewish Studies (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) in Germany, succeeded in 1819 in founding the Association for Jewish Culture and Science (*Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*). However, the most famous German institution that promoted an unprejudiced, intellectual approach to Judaism in the early twentieth century was the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, led by Franz Rosenzweig, and frequented by such luminaries as Martin Buber, Leo Löwenthal, Bertha Pappenheim, and Gershom Scholem.

In short, it could be said that on the eve of Germany's darkest period, Jews had developed a complete system of education, offering manifold opportunities to study and be educated in all kinds of Jewish tradition and culture, including Yiddish, Hebrew, the Torah, Talmud, Jewish mysticism (*Kabbalah*), Zionism, Jewish philosophy, the Enlightenment, and religious art. Jews who lived in metropolitan centers such as Berlin, Frankfurt, or Munich and who were interested in a comprehensive Jewish education for their children, could enjoy an almost complete chain of Jewish education: kindergartens, schools, youth centers, and adult education frameworks.

During the Nazi period, not only hundreds of thousands of German Jews were killed or expelled; at the same time the Jewish infrastructure suffered almost irreparable damage. There was no expectation that Jewish life in the country of the perpetrators of the Holocaust had a future. The refounding of small Jewish communities in some of the bombed-out and heavily destroyed German cities including Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Dresden shortly after the end of the Second World War was considered a temporary measure in order to manage inheritance and compensation issues, and as a place where Holocaust survivors, refugees, and displaced, elderly or sick Jews could turn. In such a situation, educational work had no priority, and in fact was viewed as an impossibility. Refounded Jewish communities had no schools, no kindergartens, no Sunday schools, no adult education centers – nothing. Moreover, there was a severe shortage of rabbis, cantors, teachers, educators, social workers, and other professionals. Surprisingly, Jewish community life in Germany continued in the decades following the Holocaust, albeit on a small-scale, however, Jewish organizations and institutions remained rather cautious in planning new educational institutions, in light of the low birth rate among Jewish families, the rising rate of intermarriage, and increasing trends towards secularization.

## New Beginnings in West Germany

Nevertheless, a few communities in West Germany were active and motivated enough to try creating some new educational institutions – first of all, for children and teenagers. In 1966, the I. E. Lichtigfeld School in Frankfurt am Main opened its doors as the first Jewish elementary school in Germany after the Second World War. In fact, the Lichtigfeld School followed in the footsteps of the former Philanthropin School in Frankfurt. Twenty years later in 1986, the Heinz Galinski School opened its doors in West Berlin, with an initial enrollment of a mere 25 girls and boys. Meanwhile, three Jewish Adult Educational Centers (*Jüdische Volkshochschulen*) opened in the West: in West Berlin in 1962, in Munich in 1983 and in Frankfurt am Main in 1988.

At this point it should be noted that nothing comparable could occur in East Germany, the former German Democratic Republic. In contrast, in southwestern Germany in Heidelberg in 1979 even a University of Jewish Studies (*Hochschule für Jüdische Studien*) was able to be established, where young Jews and non-Jews study side-by-side and explore the Jewish religion and history, Biblical and modern Hebrew, art, philosophy, literature, and Israel, together with courses in pedagogy and community management. Aside from these general programs, the University of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg seeks to recruit and train professionals for the Jewish communities in Germany, to serve as administration workers, teachers, or social workers – even rabbis. Nonetheless, despite such ambitious projects such as the Jewish University in Heidelberg, central and vibrant places of Jewish education remained a rarity in postwar and divided Germany.

Then, almost everything began to change in the course of the 1990s. The unexpected influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union not only stabilized local Jewish communities and changed their composition. It also created the opportunity to shape a new Jewry in Germany. This was greeted by some media with euphoria, however, in short order, it became clear that not all Russian-Jewish immigrants were willing to join the local Jewish communities. Some considered themselves too atheistic to ‘join the club.’ Others were rejected as regular members because they were Jewish ‘only’ from their father’s side and could not meet Orthodox standards of ‘who is a Jew.’

Inside the Jewish communities, many aspects of community life now had to be negotiated and hammered out between veterans and newcomers; for example, how to organize future community life, what ritual and liturgy to prefer, how to integrate Russian art and culture, and numerous other issues. It was not rare that communities and their members had to grapple with mutual prejudices, clichés and finger-pointing, and the perspective for harmonious cooperation seemed fraught with obstacles. On the other hand, some common ground between ve-

terans and newcomers existed from the very beginning – for example, a shared feeling of solidarity with Israel and commitment to combat anti-Semitism and racism in Germany, and openness among community members in many places to conduct a political, cultural, and religious dialogue with gentiles.

Today we know that the Russian-Jewish immigration to Germany opened the way for a transformation in the character of Jewish life in Germany, the emergence of a new form of community typified by pluralism within Jewish communities stretching from Hamburg in the North to Augsburg and Munich in the South, from Essen in the West to Dresden in the East. Jewish learning was the catalyst for development of a vital and healthy pluralism: It became evident that a large number of Russian Jews had, more or less, completely lost their connection to Jewish tradition. True, they were proud of their Jewish origin; proud of being prepared to fight anti-Semitism, proud to be part of the modern intelligentsia. Yet Jewish tradition in its original forms, Jewish spiritual life, and a deeper knowledge of Judaism had disappeared under the constant pressure of the Soviet regime in the USSR. Subsequently, a large demand for both basic and advanced courses on Jewish religion and tradition developed as the number of local Russian-speaking Jews increased.

## Pluralism as a Driving Factor

At the same time, the rapid growth of the Jewish communities during the 1990s led to a very diversified and pluralistic Jewish landscape. Most of the local communities remained under the aegis of the roof organization of Germany Jewry – the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and many Jewish communities continued to maintain the model of the Unified Community (*Einheitsgemeinde*), despite wide differences in belief and practice. Others were established as independent liberal communities, mostly in West Germany; many of these ultimately joined the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany (UPJ). This was not the only new development. New, dynamic incentives for the Orthodox emerged, most under the sponsorship of the Chabad Lubavitcher movement and the Ronald Lauder Foundation. Chabad alone embarked on establishing close to a dozen branches across Germany. Last but not least, some secular initiatives as well were afoot, – for example, the Jewish Cultural Association (*Jüdischer Kulturverein*) in Berlin which appealed to its own specific audience of rather secular Jewish intellectuals.

From the start, Russian Jews have been the target of all of these new movements and networks. The initiators of these new groups understood that it was vital to erect a new infrastructure of Jewish education *as soon as possible*. As a

result of the rapid growth in the demographics of Jewish communities in Germany sparked by the Russian Jewish influx, a large number of Jewish educational institutions could be built on the critical mass they provided many new frameworks initiated, supported, promoted and administered by local Jewish communities. The transformation in the Jewish landscape over the last 15 years has been astonishing. A study sponsored by the L.A. Pincus Fund Jerusalem, published in 2011, recorded nearly 20 Jewish kindergartens in the country – compared to two or three before German unification in 1990. The researchers also found nine Jewish elementary schools, more than 20 Jewish youth centers, and some very active Jewish student projects in university cities, some of which aspire in the future to evolve into something similar to Hillel Houses devoted to invigorate Jewish life on campus. As the first town in postwar Germany, Berlin finally had a large enough concentration of Jews to support opening a Jewish High School (*Jüdische Oberschule*) in 1993, which now has an enrollment of more than 400 students.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, with the outset of the new millennium, Germany's new Jews marked the return of several Talmudic academies (*yeshivot*), followed by the opening of two new rabbinical schools – the first in Germany since the Second World War and the Holocaust. The first rabbinical school, the Abraham Geiger Kolleg (AGK) was established at the University of Potsdam – a modern institution that trains liberal rabbis and cantors.<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1999, the AGK carries on the tradition of the Institute for the Scientific Study of Judaism (*Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*) founded in Berlin in 1872 which was closed down by the Nazis in 1942. It is closely associated with the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany (UPJ) but serves the interests of any Jewish community seeking a liberal or conservative rabbi. Today, students from several continents are enrolled at the AGK, including a considerable number of women. In 2011, for the first time in postwar Germany, a female rabbi was ordained. Alina Treiger, born in 1979 in the Ukrainian town of Poltava, became a rabbi in the Jewish community of Oldenburg in northwestern Germany after joining the rabbinate. Treiger viewed her work as following in the footsteps of Regina Jonas, Germany's first female rabbi who was ordained in 1935 but perished in Auschwitz in 1944.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.josberlin.de](http://www.josberlin.de) (accessed September 9, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Abraham Geiger Kolleg and his profile, see the article by Walter Homolka in this volume.

## The Legacy of Esriel Hildesheimer

The second rabbinical school in Germany after the Second World War took a more Orthodox approach. The Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin, founded in the early 2000s, also rests on pre-War foundations that were part of German Jewry's historical educational tradition. The newly reestablished school embraces the legacy left by Esriel Hildesheimer and his renowned Berlin Rabbinical Seminary which was founded in 1873. Rabbis from all over Europe had received their training there, but it was finally closed by the Nazis in 1938. Today, the German, Russian, American, and Israeli students enrolled in the Rabbinical Seminary begin by studying for a number of semesters at the Beis Zion Yeshiva, housed in the same building as the Lauder Yehurun Educational Center in downtown Berlin. The seminary operates in close cooperation with the Central Council of Jews in Germany and provides intensive support for small and peripheral Jewish communities, primarily by sending rabbinical students to organize services on the Sabbath and holidays. In 2009, the first rabbinical students of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary were ordained. Usually graduates are expected to begin by working as rabbis *in Germany* no matter what their familial and geographical background. In contrast to the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, women do not study at the Rabbinical Seminary, however, not far from the Rabbinical Seminary, in the neighboring quarter in Berlin, a college (*midrasha*) has opened that offers theological studies for young Jewish women from all over Germany. The program includes basic Torah studies, Jewish law (*Halacha*) Hebrew language instruction, and principles of Jewish tradition. Visitors to Berlin can join special Sabbath learning programs coupled with staying with observant Jewish families living in Berlin.<sup>3</sup>

A number of other distinctly Jewish institutions of higher education complement the panorama and reflect the growth of the Jewish community in Germany, with its wide array of interests and needs: At the University of Applied Science in Erfurt, the capital of the federal state of Thuringia, a School for Jewish Social Work now trains professionals in social work and pedagogy who upon graduation are sent directly to serve local Jewish communities in need of their skills. Business students and future media professionals from Germany and abroad are invited to study at the Touro College in Berlin, where they can combine studies of media and communications, and economics, with Jewish history and Holocaust Studies and Communication

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<sup>3</sup> [www.lauderyeshurun.de/de/midrasha](http://www.lauderyeshurun.de/de/midrasha) (accessed September 9, 2013).

## The Fascination of Limmud

Sometimes successful educational endeavors are a top-down process initiated by renowned colleges, but others are grass-root enterprises. An impressive example of the latter is the annual *Limmud* Learning Festival in Berlin and other metropolitan areas. An extension of a Jewish initiative in the United Kingdom, the *Limmud* Learning Festival in Berlin was launched in 2006 and soon was transformed into a popular three-day-event where Jews of very different religious and political backgrounds and orientations meet to learn, discuss, and celebrate together. Each year the number of participants and workshops has grown so rapidly that it almost overwhelmed local hosting capacities (24 workshops in 2006, 105 in 2008, and 170 in 2009<sup>4</sup>). At the *Limmud* Learning Festivals, there are no traditional structural divisions that normally separate lecturers from students; on the contrary, people sit, discuss, and learn together, and any participant can also become a lecturer. Meanwhile, *Limmud* Festivals have become a fascinating laboratory where experts and laypeople with very different religious, philosophical, artistic, and political beliefs can exchange views but also experience a unique ‘learning experience’ in an atmosphere of fairness and tolerance. In consideration of the extremely heterogeneous structure of the Jewish population of Germany today, workshops at the *Limmud* conferences are offered in at least three languages: German, English, and Russian. The resonance and success of the *Limmud* Festivals is even more surprising considering the fact that almost all of organizational work is done by volunteers. This might be one of the decisive factors why organizations like the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the United Jewish Appeal, the L.A. Pincus Fund, and the American Joint Distribution Committee are eager to support such an impressive Jewish grassroots movement.

*Limmud* is a three-day festival – a highlight of the year, but in everyday Jewish community life in Germany educational work operates on a much more modest footing. In many communities, especially medium-size and small ones, there is a deplorable lack of financial resources and qualified personnel, making educational work anything but easy. In the meantime time is passing, and if Germany’s current Jewish youth does not become motivated to maintain strong elements of Jewish identity, first and foremost by education, consolidation of organized Jewish life in Germany could turn out to be a pipe dream. Some Jewish umbrella organizations try to mitigate this serious problem of decentralized, relatively-weak communities by systematic training for local lay leaders. For example, Lauder Germany provides one-year courses via distant learning, including three-

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<sup>4</sup> Ben-Rafael / Glöckner / Sternberg, *Juden und jüdische Bildung im heutigen Deutschland*, 2010.

day seminars every month. These courses, called the Jewish Life Leaders Program, should enable committed lay leaders to lead services, manage administration, solve internal conflicts, and deal with local media – handling their community’s daily affairs in the absence of any professional personnel.

Similar efforts to target interested Jewish adults and teenagers who possess little knowledge of Jewish religion, tradition or Hebrew are also undertaken by Chabad Lubavitch in Germany, which runs centers in some of the different federal states. In Berlin, Chabad successfully opened an own kindergarten (*Gan Israel*), an elementary school (*Or Avner*), and a “Torah College” for young Jewish men age 16 and above, who come from outside Berlin.<sup>5</sup>

## Jewish Studies and Theology

Beyond the realm of Jewish communities and networks, academic research and education on Jewish matters has also witnessed an impressive increase over the last two decades. Almost a dozen new academic institutions dealing with Jewish topics have been established across Germany in recent decades, among them departments of Jewish Studies at the Universities of Düsseldorf, Oldenburg, and Halle and research institutes such as the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European Jewish Studies in Potsdam, the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture in Leipzig, and the European Center for Jewish Music in Hannover. Most of these scientific institutions also attract a large number of non-Jewish students and scholars, as is the case with the University of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg.<sup>6</sup> Academic departments of Jewish Studies and most of the research institutes focusing on Jewish history past and present are funded by their respective federal states; the federal states view it as their public duty to impart knowledge of Jewish history, religion, culture, and philosophy – as well as knowledge about Israel, to promote Jewish-Christian relations far beyond academic circles. Graduates of Jewish Studies who do not opt for an academic career, often work as

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<sup>5</sup> Young students of the Chabad’s Torah College in Berlin normally use the one-year-program and study in parallel to their regular school attendance (usually high school or vocational school). Lessons in the Torah, the Talmud and Jewish law (the *Shulchan Aruch*) are offered in morning and afternoon sessions, and individual students can create their own personal study curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> Two factors may have caused the extraordinarily large proportion of non-Jewish students and scholars: The first, a general growing interest in Jewish history and Judaism among non-Jews after the Holocaust, not only in Germany, but also in other European countries. The second, are the still relatively small numbers of young Jewish people choosing these fields of study.



publishers, journalists, film producers, and employees at Jewish museums, or as lecturers at institutions devoted to political education.

Establishing an interdisciplinary Faculty of Jewish Theology that would mesh Jewish professional education, and the humanities and social sciences has been an unfulfilled dream in Germany since the nineteenth century. Some German universities had accepted or were interested in having small departments in Jewish Studies (*Judaistik*), that would operate under and round-out their Faculties of Protestant Theology, but independent Chairs of *Jewish* Theology called by some German Jewish rabbis and intellectuals for nearly 200 years, were ignored and unwelcomed. Apart from the general debate whether chairs of theology should be included in the framework of state-funded universities at all, or whether they should operate only as independent bodies<sup>7</sup>, the idea of a ‘Jewish faculty’ received fresh impetus at the outset of the new millennium when discussion developed in Germany regarding full equality among the monotheistic religions, including in the academic sector. Beginning in 2011, institutes and/or centers for Islamic theology were opened at the Universities of Tübingen, Osnabrück, Erlangen, and Frankfurt am Main, thus it became just a matter of time until the first Institute of Jewish Theology would be founded, to represent the third monotheistic religion in contemporary Germany. While leading Jewish scholars and intellectuals in Germany have voiced their belief that a ‘Faculty of Jewish Theology’ is long overdue, only in late 2013 did Potsdam University open a School of Jewish Theology – the first German university where Jewish theology has been granted equal footing with Christian theological faculties.

Rather indirectly, and sometimes even far from the universities, associations of Jewish culture and history have come into being that are very committed to preserving Jewish artistic and intellectual heritage, sometimes with clear aspirations to revive them. Some of these associations’ grants support the work of historians, archivists, and linguists who focus on uncovering forgotten treasures of Jewish literature, philosophy, music, and theater. Larger and older associations have also underwritten establishment of special libraries, either under their own trusteeship or in cooperation with local Jewish communities. Two successful endeavors of this kind that have sparked interest among Jews and non-Jews alike are “Geshher – Integration by Culture and Education” in Dortmund headed by former Muscovite historian Tanya Smolianitski, and the Israel Jacobson Society in Hannover led by Kay Schweigmann-Greve. Both associations operate mainly on a volunteer basis.

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<sup>7</sup> Underlying such debates is the controversy whether theology itself could be considered a distinct discipline of science or not.

Aside from this, in some academic and non-academic circles in Germany, the Yiddish language has again become an important topic of interest. Some departments of Jewish Studies, as those at the Universities in Düsseldorf, Trier, and Potsdam, are teaching Yiddish, while elsewhere, studying and collecting Yiddish literature has become their primary objective. The most active project in this regard is the Salomo Birnbaum Yiddish Society which was founded in Hamburg in 1995. Its founders were concerned that Yiddish was only taught at universities and they wanted to give the language a place outside purely academic institutions. The society looks forward to introducing many more people to the vast and varied treasures of Yiddish culture. Apart from offering a public space for introducing and discussing Yiddish cultural artifacts, the Salomo Birnbaum Society also supports Yiddish language classes and runs its own Salomo Birnbaum Library.<sup>8</sup>

Several centers of Jewish education in Germany operate with a very strong local focus, combining lectures and presentations on Jewish history with further educational training, offering complete programs for certain professional groups (for example journalists and teachers), but also periodically engaging in intellectual debates. Special mention should be made here about the Moses Mendelssohn Academy (MMA) in Halberstadt (in the federal state of Sachsen-Anhalt), which was founded in 1995 and is based on a public trust. The MMA works in close cooperation with the Moses Mendelssohn Center in Potsdam. It offers educational programs for all age groups, imparting basic knowledge of Jewish history, culture, tradition, and religion to Jews and non-Jews, especially in former East Germany. The MMA is located in the former Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary of Halberstadt, the Klaussynagoge, and also serves as a venue for international gatherings.<sup>9</sup> Another flourishing institution with a similar profile is the Hatikva Educational and Meeting Centre for Jewish History and Culture in Dresden (the capital of the federal state of Saxony). Hatikva<sup>10</sup> seeks to reach out to a universal audience, regardless of faith or worldview. Topics range from a general introduction to Judaism to classes on holidays, and daily and life cycle rituals and customs. Furthermore, Jewish sites in Dresden such as the synagogue are visited and explained. Hatikva also offers space for public discussions, with an online magazine about Jewish life in research and education called *Medaon*.<sup>11</sup>

The success of independent institutions and projects like Geshet, the Israel Jacobson Society, the Salomon Birnbaum Society, the Moses Mendelssohn

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<sup>8</sup> [www.birnbaum-gesellschaft.org](http://www.birnbaum-gesellschaft.org) (accessed September 9, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> [www.moses-mendelssohn-akademie.de](http://www.moses-mendelssohn-akademie.de) (accessed September 9, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> [www.hatikva.de](http://www.hatikva.de) (accessed September 9, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> [www.medaon.de](http://www.medaon.de) (accessed September 9, 2013).

Academy, and Hatikva is fueled by a combination of the members' idealism, local and political support, professionalism, and strong cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish participants. Since the public exchange of opinions stimulated by these projects affects a host of different sectors of the population and causes people to reflect on relations between Jews and gentiles – past, present, and future, one might consider them typical manifestations of “Jewish space” as described by Diana Pinto<sup>12</sup> in post-Holocaust communities in Europe.

All in all, a framework of Jewish education has emerged in Germany that was quite unthinkable 20 years ago. Especially in metropolitan centers such as Berlin and Frankfurt, a whole chain of educational institutions has developed, serving the needs of almost all age groups and even offering a selection to choose from. At the same time, a certain imbalance between Jewish centers and Jewish peripheries is evident, requiring new solutions that can provide educational support for Jewish communities located far away from cultural and academic centers.

## Primary Educational Interest: Israel, Hebrew, Jewish Arts

What educational interests are typical for the Jewish population in today's Germany, and what Jewish education programs are witnessing growing demand? The abovementioned study by Ben-Rafael, Sternberg and Glöckner *Jews and Jewish Education in Germany Today* which queried more than a thousand Jewish respondents reveals some trends.<sup>13</sup> The differences in interests in Jewish education between those Jews living in Germany for decades and those who immigrated from the former Soviet Union in the last 20 years are rather negligible. One of the survey's key questions was what kind of educational options do Jewish parents in Germany feel are missing for their children. Quite surprisingly, 50 percent of the respondents answered that nothing (!) was missing from their children's education right now. Among those who saw shortcomings, approximately 19 percent called for more information and lectures on Israel. Nearly 17 percent wished that their children could attend Jewish camps more often during holidays, and approximately 15 percent wished their children could receive more instruction on Judaism and Jewish tradition. Also, 15 percent of the respondents would like

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<sup>12</sup> Pinto, *Jewish Spaces versus Jewish Places?*, In: Wallenborn (ed.), *Der Ort des Judentums*, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Ben-Rafael / Glöckner / Sternberg, *Jews and Jewish Education in Germany Today*, 2011. All following numbers and statistics are drawn from this study.

to see their children learn Hebrew. As for the educational needs of Jewish adults in Germany, the same pattern emerged: Nearly 38 percent of the respondents answered that nothing (!) was missing at the moment. Among those who would like an opportunity for more Jewish educational programs, 27 percent were interested in more courses and events focusing on Israel. A slightly-higher number, 29.5 percent, displayed an interest in lectures and events focusing on Jewish arts. 20 percent would enjoy more programs dealing with Judaism in general, and 15 percent would like to learn more Hebrew, similar to the number who desired this for their children.

In the final analysis, expression of interest in various Jewish issues that respondents envisioned could or should be made available (through the auspices of Jewish community institutions, the state, or private initiatives) was expected. Yet, when it came to *practice* or availing themselves of existing opportunities – what Jewish parents are doing to provide their children with a solid Jewish education – the results were a source of consternation: Almost 63 percent of the respondents confirmed that, up to now, they had yet to provide any Jewish education to their children outside their own home. On the other hand, almost 75 percent of the parents were convinced of the importance of their children receiving a Jewish education. When 75 percent of parents consider a Jewish education necessary, but only one third of the children are, in fact, enjoying such an education, the discrepancy demands an explanation. There can be different reasons for this. First, access: It could be that there is a lack of local infrastructure and programs for Jewish education, because the respondent resides in a peripheral area with a very weak Jewish infrastructure. A second possible reason for the discrepancy could be quality: Absence of Jewish educational programs of quality, prompted parents to forego enrolling their children in existing programs. A third reason could be motivation: It may be that some mothers and fathers do not do enough to motivate their children to take advantage of certain Jewish educational offers in their vicinity. Finally, a fourth reason cannot be ignored: Apprehension. Parents may be reluctant to send their children to institutions where they become visible as *Jewish* children, and thus could easily become a target for anti-Semitism.

In summary, it can be said that the Jewish educational system in Germany has undergone impressive advances during the last 15 to 20 years. Many new Jewish kindergartens, schools, adult centers, learning festivals, and grassroots projects have arisen within the short span of two decades. Currently, there are very interesting enrichment activities – ranging from Jewish religion, tradition, and history, to the State of Israel, Jewish culture, and Hebrew mastery – being offered to different age groups. This is a positive feature of Jewish life in Germany, however, in the coming years, it will be of vital importance that the imbalance between relatively strong Jewish centers with comprehensive Jewish education, and a re-

lately weak Jewish educational and social presence on the Jewish periphery will gradually be corrected. As the survey verified, both veteran ‘German Jews’ and ‘Russian Jews’ are equally cognizant of the problem. This is an encouraging sign – demonstrating that the German Jewish community as a whole acknowledges the challenge.

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