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file
Richard Hirsch

Sunday, 13th March, 1977

Mr. Joseph Strelitz, President,
American Friends of Tel Aviv University,
7354 Ruthven Road,
Norfolk, Va.

Dear Mr. Strelitz,

Our mutual friend, Rabbi Herbert Friedman, has suggested that I communicate with you in your capacity as chairman of the American Friends of the Tel Aviv University, as well as a committed Reform Jew.

For the last four years, our congregation in Ramat Aviv has been utilizing a room in the Tel Aviv University. The University has been under considerable pressure, both from within its ranks and without, for permitting a Reform congregation to be housed therein. The congregation has scoured the entire area and there simply is no other facility to use. We have asked for land in order to be able to put up a building. However, because of political objections from the Orthodox parties, even our older more established congregation in Tel Aviv has had difficulty in acquiring land on which to build. You may have heard that last week, a commitment made five years ago to give land to the Tel Aviv congregation has been overturned by the City Council. We are fighting this through both legal and political means, but so far to no avail.

I am enclosing two letters which have been written to the President of the University, who, I believe, would like to be helpful but evidently is under great pressure from within his own ranks.

I have discussed the matter at length with Herb, who has suggested that I communicate with you and inform you of the developments. The University has now given us a deadline to leave its premises by the end of April. As you can see from the correspondence, I have asked for an appointment with Professor Ben Shahar, and am hopeful that we will be able to work matters out without calling upon you for your assistance. However, in case we run into difficulty, Herb and I would like to prevail upon you to play a constructive role on this issue.

I am hopeful that the next time you are in Israel, we can make arrangements to get together, so that I can inform you of the progress of our movement here and familiarize you with our challenges and problems.

Warmest personal regards,

Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch

✓ cc. Rabbi Herbert Friedman

6th January, 1976.

Prof. Haim Ben-Shahar,
President,
Tel Aviv University,
Ramat Aviv.

Dear Dr. Ben-Shahar,

Rabbi Ady Assabi, Coordinator of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, has given me the letter dated 31st December, 1975, from the Director, Information and Public Relations Department, Tel Aviv University, notifying him that the arrangements for the use of University premises by our Ramat Aviv congregation have been terminated.

I find it difficult to understand the action taken by the University. After I had discussed the matter with you, personally, by phone last year, I was subsequently informed by your secretary that the congregation would be permitted to remain.

At a meeting of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency last fall, I discussed this matter with Mr. Victor Carter, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the University and was told by him that he would discuss the matter with you and would impress on the leadership of the University the importance of permitting the congregation to remain.

A university is supposed to be a centre of intellectual and spiritual freedom and an agency for fostering a pluralistic society. A Jewish university should be especially concerned about providing a positive setting for Jewish learning and expression of Jewish values.

I, therefore, hope that, in your capacity as President of a Jewish institution of higher learning, you will encourage those responsible to reconsider their action.

I would welcome the opportunity of discussing this matter with you by phone or in person and hope you will communicate with me at your convenience.

I am writing this letter in English because I want to send a copy to our mutual friend, Mr. Carter.

Bivracha,

Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch.

cc. Mr. Victor Carter
AA Rabbi Ady Assabi.

2nd March 1977

Professor Haim Ben-Shahar,
President,
Tel Aviv University,
Ramat Aviv

Dear Professor Ben Shahar,

I am writing in connection with our Congregation in Ramat Aviv, which has been using facilities of the University since its founding. For the last two years there has been an extended series of meetings, communications and correspondence between the congregation and the University. The University has intermittently notified the congregation that it is terminating the use of university facilities. We believe that the underlying reason for this has been pressure from some Orthodox Jewish quarters, both within and without the university framework.

The most recent communication from your office to the congregation was a letter written by Mr. Yehiel Ben Tsvi on January 16, 1977, in which he notified the congregation that they would have to vacate by April, 1977 and urged them to seek facilities elsewhere. He also indicated, "the University for its part will do whatever is in its capacity, by turning to municipal and public bodies, in order to help find an appropriate place of prayer." I spoke to Mr. Ben Tsvi yesterday and he informs me that the University has not been able to find anything.

For our part, we have met with the national officers of WIZO which turned down our request to rent the WIZO hall in Ramat Aviv. Our request to rent the Histadrut facilities in Ramat Aviv has been rejected because of ongoing activities which are conducted on Friday evenings. The congregation has scoured the entire area, and has not been able to find another suitable place. In the light of the above, I am asking the university administration to reconsider its decision.

There are a number of factors which the University should take into consideration:

1. If the congregation were Orthodox, the government, both national and local, would construct facilities and/or provide temporary quarters. Because of discrimination against non-Orthodox congregations, our congregations have received neither land, buildings nor subsidies for rabbis and religious programs.

2. In the United States, it is common practice for newly established Jewish congregations to use university or similar facilities. Both secular universities and even universities sponsored by Christian faith groups will frequently go to great lengths to accommodate our congregations, in order

to encourage the pursuit of religion and to demonstrate good will toward Jews. It is incomprehensible that here in Israel, a Jewish university should not be able to find any room within its ample facilities for a group of fellow Jews, who seek to perpetuate the Jewish heritage, particularly when the said facilities are never used during the times required by the congregation.

3. Tel Aviv University is supported by the entire Jewish people. A significant number of your active supporters and contributors are identified with Reform Judaism, and the vast majority abroad are affiliated with non-Orthodox synagogues. In addition to direct contributions, the University receives support from the Jewish Agency. Yesterday, the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency, on which I have the privilege of sitting, approved a budget of many millions of dollars for the University. I do not believe that the supporters of the University would be pleased were they to learn that the modest request of a group of Jews to rent quarters for worship was rejected and that in the entire community no place could be found for them to gather.

I understand from our mutual friend Irving Bernstein, executive head of the United Jewish Appeal, that you are flying with him to South Africa this weekend. I hereby request an opportunity to meet with you as soon as possible following your return. In the meantime, I urge you to undertake the initiative for reconsideration of the position adopted by the University.

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to you of January 6, 1976 in a similar vein.

Bivrascha,

Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch

cc. **Mayer Shlomo Lahat**
Mr. Irving Bernstein
Mr. Yehiel Ben Tsvi

bc. **Mrs. Bruria Berish**
Mr. David Riegler
Rabbi Ady Assabi

Mr. M. Shaffer

האיגוד העולמי ליהדות מתקדמת
WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

13 King David Street
Jerusalem, Israel

Tel. 234-748, 232-444 טל.

Office of Executive Director

רח' המלך דוד 13
ירושלים

לשכת המזכיר הכללי

August 11, 1975

To : Dr. Alfred Gottschalk
From: Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch

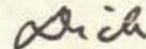
This is a reminder to you concerning our discussion on July 15, 1975 during which we reviewed the expansion of the College program to include a formal degree-granting program for Israeli rabbis in Jerusalem.

After reviewing the needs and the goals of the program, it was agreed that you would convene the College faculty committee dealing with this area in September (or October) and that then we would have time to get together to discuss the results at a meeting at the Biennial in Dallas. For your files enclosed is another copy of my memo dealing with needs of the Movement. Ezra will prepare the memo on the College's aspects of the program.

Since both you and I and other potential participants in the meeting will undoubtedly have hectic schedules at the Biennial, I am writing this memo now to make sure that we block off some time.

Ira Youdovin will be responsible for my calendar and I will appreciate it if someone from your office will communicate with him suggesting a time and place for the meeting.

Bivracha



cc: Prof. Michael Meyer
Prof. Eugene Mihaly
Prof. Ezra Spicehandler
Dr. Paul Steinberg

Rabbi Ady Assabi
✓ Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Rabbi Robert Samuels
Rabbi Moshe H. Weiler
Rabbi Moshe Zemer

Rabbi RICHARD G. HIRSCH

הרב ריצרד אשר הירש

June 26, 1975

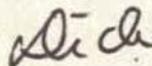
To : Rabbi A. Assaby
Dr. A. Gottschalk
✓ Rabbi H. Friedman
Prof. M. Meyer
Prof. E. Mihaly
Rabbi R. Samuels
Prof. E. Spicehandler
Dr. Paul Steinberg
Rabbi H. M. Weiler
Rabbi M. Zemer

From: Rabbi R. G. Hirsch

This is in preparation for the meeting
which will be held on Tuesday, ~~June~~ ^{July} 15, 1975, at
4.00 p.m. at the College.

Prof. Spicehandler is preparing a memo
on curriculum, faculty and other academic require-
ments from the perspective of the College.

Bivracha



האיגוד העולמי ליהדות מתקדמת
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Office of Executive Director

לשכת המזכיר הכללי

June 26, 1975

To : Dr. Alfred Gottschalk
Prof. Ezra Spicehandler

From: Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch

In accordance with your request I am hereby indicating why it is essential to establish at the College in Jerusalem a full scale degree-granting program for rabbis (and eventually for other Jewish professionals).

I. NEEDS IN ISRAEL

On the basis of our experience gathered over some fifteen years it is unlikely that any significant number of American-trained rabbis will come to Israel, and of those who do come or do express an interest in coming, most are not properly qualified to serve. It takes anywhere from five to ten years for an average person to become completely fluent in Hebrew. Moreover, most of our men do not have an adequate background nor acquaintance with Israel to meet the needs of an indigenous population. An Israeli rabbi not only has to speak Hebrew. He has to have something to say in Hebrew. In addition, in recent years there has been a precipitous drop in Aliya. Therefore it is clear that we cannot count on the American-trained rabbinate to be a source of leadership.

The original motivation for the establishment of the program in Jerusalem to train Israeli rabbis becomes all the more valid. From the positive perspective, the rabbis who are most in tune with the needs of the community are Israelis. Once an Israeli with an M.A. degree in Jewish studies has completed the supplementary work required for ordination, he is more likely to be adequately trained for his task than an American-trained rabbi. Also, while he is studying he can be used in a leadership capacity, as has been the case with the four students now at the College.

At the present time the following congregations are without full-time rabbis: Nathanya, Nahariya, Haifa, Nazareth, Ramat-Aviv, Ramat-Gan, and Beer-sheba. We have need for at least two full-time rabbinic youth leaders. The Leo Baeck School has at the present time need for four rabbinically trained teachers. The kibbutz, when it is established, should have at least one young rabbi resident there to be a member of the kibbutz and to give leadership to

educational programs to be conducted there, and should we develop the kind of intellectual center we have been talking about, several more could be absorbed. Thus, even within the present incipient stages of development, we could easily absorb fifteen rabbis in Israel alone. This does not allow for growth which, I am sure, would ensue as a result of the activity and momentum generated by a crew of such rabbis. We have already had numerous requests to establish new congregations which we have been unable to fulfill because of lack of rabbinic personnel; just as we have had several requests, even without any recruitment program, by Israelis to study for the rabbinate at the College. The potential is unlimited. My own philosophy is predicated on a "Johnny Appleseed" approach. Wherever we plant a rabbi who has something to offer, a progressive Judaism will take root, flourish, and bear fruit.

Our experience has demonstrated that when Israeli students leave Israel to be trained in the U.S. or in England, they tend to remain abroad. Of the at least seven Hebrew Union College trained Israelis, not one is at present serving our movement in Israel. If they are trained and graduated here, there is a much greater likelihood of their remaining here.

II. NEEDS OF PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

I have just returned from South Africa, attending a meeting of the Biennial conference of the Southern African Union. While there, the Southern African Union talked about developing an Institute of Higher Learning which will train teachers, educators and rabbis. I encouraged them in their efforts to train teachers and educators but suggested to them that they delay for the time being the attempt to establish a rabbinic training program until we see what develops with our Jerusalem program. I told them that there were a number of possibilities seriously being considered. It would, in my opinion, be the height of folly to establish another rabbinic training program in Southern Africa. There is every reason why our College in Jerusalem should become the training center for our world movement, with special emphasis on Latin America, the European Continent, South Africa, and Australia.

III. NEEDS FOR RABBIS IN POSITIONS OTHER THAN CONGREGATIONAL

There is a desperate need for educators, teachers and rabbis throughout the Jewish world, and our College in Jerusalem could become the center for training them not only for congregations of the Reform Movement but also for communal positions everywhere.

The College can and should become a training center for preparing teachers of Judaism for kibbutz schools, youth villages, and government schools. At the present time we have a standing request for the training

of such teachers for the Ben Shemen youth village and the Leo Baeck school and we have every reason to believe that the Ministry of Education would be interested in supporting such programs. Regarding the kibbutz, for example, the entire thrust of both conferences held at Oranim was that the kibbutz movements would welcome our approach to Judaism, and would be happy to have it taught throughout their high school network. But we must provide the teachers. We simply have not addressed ourselves seriously to recruiting and training men. We could permeate the kibbutz movement if we had the personnel. In sum, the College in Jerusalem could function for World Jewry in the same manner in which it is beginning to function in an expanded perception of its role for American Jewry in developing a wide variety of Jewish professional leadership.

IV. NEEDS OF THE COLLEGE

Until such time as the College develops programs for Israelis it will always have the character of a foreign transplant. To train American students for the American rabbinate does not make a direct contribution to Israeli life. Our movement needs an intellectual center which is nourished by and in turn nourishes Israel, because it is rooted in the soil of Israel. That can and should be the College.

V. CAPACITY OF THE WORLD UNION TO ABSORB RABBINICAL GRADUATES

It is clear that we are talking about significant sums of money within the Progressive Movement to employ the rabbis, educators, youth workers and semi-professional leadership who will be the graduates of the Jerusalem school programs. We should figure on an amount of approximately \$ 20,000.- per man to cover salary, expenses, and support budget. If the World Union were to have at its disposal 15 men over the next few years, for instance, that would mean an increase in the World Union budget over the next few years of \$ 300,000.-, a sum that should be attainable. I am convinced that we can generate the operating funds, even as we have already somehow or other managed to find the necessary funds, despite inadequate cooperation. There is no question that we are beginning to get more funds from our non-American constituencies and that we can continue to anticipate more funds for these and related programs through the World Zionist Organization.