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"Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman's Taped Message to Monroe, La.  
Leadership." 7 October 1959.

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RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN'S TAPED MESSAGE

TO MONROE, LA. LEADERSHIP ON OCT. 7, 1959

I am sorry I cannot be with you in Monroe in person this morning, gentlemen. I would have wanted very much to come, but it is physically impossible for me to be everywhere at once. This is a large country and there are many campaigns that are conducted simultaneously. However, I am glad you asked me to send this message, because it's the next best thing to coming in person and gives me a chance to talk to you almost face to face.

First of all I would like to express our thanks to certain people and these are not just perfunctory thanks, I really mean it. I have been told all about the work of Morris Blumenthal who led last year's campaign with such devotion and distinction, and I would like to offer my good wishes to his successor this year, to Stuart Dornberg, whose planning up to this point I have been told about and whose dedication gives promise of raising much more money this year than was raised last year. I am sure that if Mr. Dornberg does that, Mr. Blumenthal won't be angry.

And thirdly, I have heard about the record of Mr. Strauss, Clifford Strauss, whose leading role in the community is always depended upon to provide stimulation for the entire Jewish community of Monroe. I understand that you have with you this morning, Mr. Ed Polsen of New Orleans who was the Chairman of the campaign over there in 1958 and who has worked hard and loyally for the United Jewish Appeal. He has come over to Monroe this morning to help you with your fund raising. And I'd like to send my greetings also to Mr. Ullman, the field representative of the United Jewish Appeal who can help you and guide you and spur you on to even greater efforts if you need that.

On a purely local note, let me say one thing before I start talking about the problems which face us overseas. I heard about your temple drive and I heard this is a \$400,000 drive to complete a magnificent temple building. I'd like to congratulate you on the ability to put a big one like that across. It shows that you have the capacity to raise large sums of money. It also shows the depth of your Jewish interest and spirit. That's all to the good and I'm delighted to hear it.

But you and I understand that this lovely, wonderful, large temple project cannot affect our responsibility toward the United Jewish Appeal.

Let's just make very sure that we don't build our temples in America at the expense of reducing aid to helpless refugees overseas. It's proper that we should build our temples, but we must build them at our own expense. We can't build them at the expense of others who need our help. We should build our temples and we must at the same time increase our aid to Israel and Jews overseas.

Now let me tell you just what the situation is in Israel at this moment. Quite frankly things are getting very much better there. All the years of labor and effort and energy and love that we've poured into that project, are beginning to show good and great results. The economy of Israel is progressing handsomely. I could cite many things, let me just take a few.

Exports of good are increasing at a very rapid rate. Seven years ago, for instance, Israel was exporting \$40,000,000 worth of goods, commodities and services. This year Israel will be exporting \$280,000,000 worth of goods. Seven times as much in seven years. A phenomenal record of growth and achievement.

Or take another index, the national income, the gross national product. It's been growing at the rate of 10 per cent per year. Or take a third thing, this question that bothers us so much in the United States. The question of inflation. It's a terrible problem in Israel, in a growing country. And yet I think they've got it licked, or at least have got it under control. Prices have been stable there for the last 18 months and the index has been holding level.

Many people were in Israel years ago, and remember the actual food shortages. You might be surprised to have me tell you today that there's an agricultural surplus in the country. Israel this year is exporting 300,000,000 eggs. To say nothing of cheese and butter and milk and many other things.

On the industrial side, free industries are now producing 80 per cent of her own internal industrial needs. It is fantastic when you think of how few factories there were there just a decade ago.

The industries are now going ahead on the basis of trying to expand and increase their exports, not just supply internal needs, because if they can increase exports, they can earn more foreign currency. And speaking about that item, let me take that as the last thing that I would bring to your attention statistically speaking. For the first time in her entire history, Israel actually has a small foreign currency reserve. It never happened before.

So I think it is quite fair to say we have a great success story on our hands. We worked hard and all the labor is now beginning to pay off. Israel is here to stay, that's as clear as clear can be. The whole first decade of improvisation is all over]. The makeshift, the planning, the try it this way, try it that way, the failures, the successes, those are now getting behind us and we're moving out of the first decade of improvising and we're moving into the second decade of clear planning on the basis of known facts where there will be fewer and fewer failures.

There's another aspect about this that's terribly important. Any fears that people might have had about the permanence of Israel now are obviously groundless fears. If she's come through the first decade in this fashion in which I described, no one can say that she can be knocked out of the box, to use a slang expression. I'm speaking quite strongly about the political fact that the Arab attitude toward peace with Israel has always been based upon the premise that Israel was not permanent and that Israel would collapse from failure or bankruptcy or disintegrate within. And the Arabs always had the attitude that there was no need to make peace with Israel for soon Israel would remove herself or be removed from the scene of contemporary history. That's all groundless.

And slowly and surely the Arabs themselves must come to realize that if Israel is permanently on the world scene, they will have to find modus vivendi with her and learn how to make peace with her. So that actually the political prospects for peace in the long run come from this increased strength and stability that Israel now has. No more improvising, we're now in the period of stabilization.

With that hopeful and bright and happy picture, one might then say, well what help does she need any longer. If she actually has a foreign currency reserve, why do we have to raise any more money in the United States, or why are the leaders of the United Jewish Appeal asking for more money than last year, not less.

Well, good friends, there's another side to the coin. I've been talking to you about the economy of the country as a whole. About its general rate of progress. Now we've got to get down to cases about individuals in the country whose personal and individual status is nowhere near as happy or as successful as that. I'm speaking quite bluntly about the almost 1,000,000 new immigrants whom we've brought into Israel in these last 10 or 11 years. And one out of every three of whom, one out of every three of whom, has not yet been fully absorbed in the country.

It's about these people that I want to talk to you when we use the phrase the "unfinished job" or the "unmet needs" of the immigrants who have arrived. Two out of every three people have been settled. Settled to us means a house, a job, a school for the children, a hospital bed for every so many additional thousands of people in the country. Roads, water, electric power. Two out of every three people are settled in the sense that they have a roof over their heads, a job for the breadwinner of the family, a place for the children to be educated. And two out of every three of those new immigrants are themselves now actually earning enough, so that they in turn have become taxpayers in the country. That's a wonderful job of integration and absorption and we can be terribly proud of it.

But I'm talking to you about the other one. That one man out of every three who is still living in a personal condition of deprivation, of misery, of squalor and yes, even with an agricultural surplus in the country, sometimes of hunger.

Take the question of housing, for instance. There are 20,000 families still living in transit camps, which we call in Hebrew, ma'abarot. A transit camp is a place into which you put people with the clear assumption that you're going

to move them out. You have them in that place in-transit and you're telling him that if he stays there a while, as new houses are built you will put him into one of the new houses. As you keep people in a transit camp for four, or five, or six, or seven years, is this moral, can this really be called temporary? Is this provisional? is this in transit?

Many of these people have the feeling there not in transit for something better at all, but that they're stuck.

I wish I could describe to you what these ma'abarot are like. They're squalid, they're tin huts, they're canvas shacks, they're two by four's which are drawn with thin plywood or tenting around them. They leak, they're dirty, there's no sanitation. They're miserable. They're what we call in America shanty towns. And for us at this stage of the game still to have 20,000 families of Jews living in conditions of that sort, maybe 100,000 people, is a shame and a scandal and we want to eliminate it and to do that we need more money than we had before. We cannot lick this backlog of housing unless we have more money than we've had in previous years.

Ben Gurion said very simply: "A bitter people cannot build a free country." That's so true. Some of these people have waited so long for housing, they've become bitter. Families have disintegrated. Boys and girls of 16, 17 years old, run away from these places because they can't stand living there any longer. And they leave their parents, and they leave their homes. And the fathers and the mothers on the other hand become sad and disillusioned and say: We're failing our children, we're not providing a roof over their heads.

It's nobody's fault. It's the fault that a million immigrants have come in so quickly and we've gotten 900,000 of them adequately housed. It's the last 100,000 who are struggling and in misery and in whose behalf I am pleading.

Or take another matter. Not the matter of housing. Take the matter of farm settlements. We've established since the beginning of Israel, 11 years ago, 482 farm settlements on which we've put thousands and thousands of families of new immigrants and taught them to be farmers.

When you put 200, or 300 or 400 people on a farm, and you've got to teach them from scratch how to be farmers, it's ridiculous to think they can work with their hands. They need tools, they need tractors; they need cow sheds, they need cows in the cow sheds or the farm isn't going to begin to earn it's way.

And I should like to tell you of the 482 settlements we established, 350 of them have not yet received their investment to make them self-sufficient in order to make them pay off. If you have no chickens in the chicken coop and they don't lay eggs and you have no eggs to sell, that farm unit is not earning anything.

Why it's shocking and it's wasteful to bring people there to prepare the land, maybe to run some water in, maybe to run a road up to the place and then stop, because we have no more money. It's stupid. It's leaving the job half done. What happens is that the men begin to drift off because they've got to find work some place else.

And so these farms stay in a condition of partial development, half-way done, even three quarters of the investment made, but they're not up to the full snuff, where we can say to that farm unit of 200 families, you are now on your own. You have everything you need to make your own living with. That's what we call self-sufficiency. We've only gotten that far with 130. Three hundred and fifty farms still need, whether it's tools or cows or tractors or chickens, something's missing.

Then let's take a third matter. When I said that some of the men drift off the farms to look for work elsewhere, where do they go? Well we have a system in Israel, it's called avodat duckud, which is very hard for me to translate. It's sort of a WPA kind of a deal. It's partial employment, subsidized employment. The man needs work. There are road building jobs, bridge building jobs, rock crushing jobs, tree planing jobs, culverts, conduits, grading of roads and hill-sides. That kind of labor for which we've worked out a scale whereby we can afford to pay IL5 a day to a man. IL5 is \$2.50.

We worked out a minimum of 12 days a month. Twelve days a month. Which is IL60 a month, or roughly \$30. That's all that we can guarantee him, because we have no money to go beyond that. And so somebody else in the family goes out to work. The wife works, or the child works. And there are children of 10 or 11 or 12 years old who should be in school, who are out working because they've got to supplement the income of the father.

And I should like you to know very simply, there are thousands of families in Israel trying to live on \$30 and \$40 and \$50 a month. And those are the people I referred to before who, in the midst of plenty, sometimes hunger. Because there may be plenty in the food shops and on the vegetable stalls but you got to have money to buy it.

And I think that's a disgrace and I think it's shocking and I think that we shouldn't permit that to continue. There would be no necessity for this WPA kind of subsidized labor if all the farm settlements had everything they needed and the men could earn their livings on the farms, which is what they want to do and which is what they should do.

Well gentlemen, I've taken enough of your time as it is. You can see the point I'm making. Our pride and our honor are at stake, I think. We have no right to start something and not finish it. We started something here. We finished it 90 per cent of the way, I must admit. But for that last 10 per cent of the people in the ma'abarot, for that last ten per cent of the people on temporary employment, for the last ten per cent of the people for whom there are no schools and there are no hospitals, we must finish the job. Those whom we brought there have every reason to believe that we won't leave them stranded.

And those who are yet to come, because there are Jews in many places on this earth waiting to come to Israel...knowing that we've taken in the first million, they want to be part of the next crop of immigrants whom we will receive. Those



who are still waiting to come have every right to feel that we will help them, as we helped their predecessors. We have a two-fold job, gentlemen. We have the old job of absorbing the old immigrants and we got the constant job of receiving new immigrants who are pressing into Israel every day.

For these two things we need more money every single year and I'm asking you this morning at your meeting to contribute more money, every single one of you. So that you can have the feeling of dignity and honor and you can have the knowledge of knowing that with courage and with patience and with continued applicability to this job, what I described to you at the beginning as the general beautiful, wonderful picture of Israel's progress for the whole population in general, can become the picture for even these last under-privileged individuals.

Courage and patience will carry us through to the end with increased generosity. If you've understood the problem for the first 10 or 11 years up to now, I beg of you to understand it for the next few years and to give in increasing measure so that what we started, we will finish, in the best tradition of Jewish philanthropy.

Thank you very much.

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