



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.

Series H: United Jewish Appeal, 1945-1995.

Subseries 2: Correspondence, 1947-1982.

Box	Folder
29	7

"Personal Letters." 1957.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

Personal Letter

From

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN
Executive Vice-Chairman, United Jewish Appeal

CONFIDENTIAL
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

165 West 46 Street, New York 36, N. Y.

1st January, 1957

Dear Friend:

I have attempted, through writing these letters every month or so, to keep you quite current with international events in the Jewish world. Since writing you last on 7 NOVEMBER, almost two months ago, so much has happened, that I hardly know where to begin. These recent weeks have moved with such dizzying speed that we are all a bit breathless. One thing stands out clearly, however -- we are already deep in the midst of a new refugee period in Jewish life and the number of people involved mounts every single day. It was this overall fact which, when presented in the fullest possible detail at our meetings of 30 November and thereafter, caused the assembled leadership to vote into existence a 100 million dollar Emergency Rescue Fund above and beyond the regular UJA campaign for 1957.

There burst upon everyone, either suddenly or gradually, the realization that we were faced with a world-wide rescue program involving perhaps more than 100,000 Jews from many parts of the globe. This program would require Israel to prepare for the largest immigration in many years -- and would also require resettlement of substantial thousands in many other countries, including United States, Canada, Australia, South America and Western Europe. During recent days many of us have developed the feeling that we are passing through a bad dream which we experienced before -- ten years ago, at the end of the Hitler period, when there were hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees streaming down the roads of Europe looking for haven.

You know the main outlines of the Hungarian story -- but perhaps the Jewish details are not so well known. As of this date, about 150,000 Hungarians have fled to Austria. Of this number about 13,000 are Jews. All the resources of the JDC, Jewish Agency, the United Hias Service, and the small Austrian Jewish community have been mobilized to care for them. They are in the same situation as all others who have escaped -- cold, hungry, tired, penniless. Our hearts go out to them and we want to do our very best to help them find a new life. So far more than 1,000 have come to the U.S. and a few hundred have been resettled elsewhere. We have spent a great deal of money in the past few weeks and will be required to spend much more. It is also clear that the Hungarian movement is not ended, for the rate of influx into Vienna continues to be about 300 Jewish refugees daily. Our agencies, with our money, seek to provide rooms and beds, clothing and food, counsel and advice, and most importantly, a new country. I am honestly worried about a new DP population developing in Europe with all the paraphernalia of camps and assembly centers if we cannot move them fast enough.

Whatever will be the final figure of Hungarian immigrants to the United States, approximately 10% will be Jews. So that if the present quota is

raised to 40 or 50,000 -- we may expect 4 to 5,000 Jews. Some additional few thousand Jewish refugees may be resettled elsewhere. This will still leave the largest number to be absorbed in Israel.

And this will also be the situation with the Egyptian Jews, who are in terrible danger and are currently the targets of a reign of terror. By now the comparison of Nazi and Nasser methods is so wide-spread that all have surely heard it. And by now there is no doubt of the direct influence of ex-Nazis on the Egyptian government, which has employed many of them in positions of great importance. The story of Dr. Johann von Leer has been sent to you as the clearest example.

Parenthetically, we have not acted hastily in making this comparison of Hitler and Nasser. More than a year ago, when we were trying to warn people of the danger of Nasser's deal with Russia, the director of our publicity department put a slogan on my desk -- "Nasserism is Nazism". He was really wise, ahead of his time. I rejected the slogan then as being premature and too extreme. He pointed out the similarities of Hitler's deal with the communists, in 1939, so that he could attack the free world. But I said that we had to point out the danger of Nasser without being guilty of extremism or hysteria.

That was a long time ago. He was right, of course. Today the slogan is apt, fitting and correct. The pattern of Egypt's treatment of her Jews, which was planned long before the Israeli move into Sinai on 29 October, so closely resembles the Nazi pattern as to provoke the N. Y. TIMES to say:

"The methods used are so similar to what Hitler did before the war as to be frightening."

In Egypt today, there is imprisonment, deportation, confiscation of property, deprivation of citizenship, taking of hostages, issuing of yellow identity cards, stealing of personal effects, blocking of bank accounts, police brutality, intimidation -- all the earmarks of a total persecution of a total population. The Jews of Egypt are beleaguered, and in the words of Ambassador Eban who has protested officially to the United Nations:

"It is plain, then, that the world here faces a process which challenges its conscience. These are not acts carried out in the heat or the passion of war, for all of these measures were enacted and implemented after the cease-fire had been universally accepted, and, indeed, after there had been universal agreement for the withdrawal of non-Egyptian troops from Egyptian soil. These are measures taken not against armies but against helpless people who are totally within the power and jurisdiction of those who victimize them. These are not incidents suddenly improvised in a moment of tension. These are policies ordained by the Government itself and clearly, by the very perfection of these techniques, planned a long time ago."

In the last few weeks about 4,000 Jews have managed to flee from Egypt, most of them holders of various European passports. About 2,300 are in Italy, 1,200 in France, 250 in Greece and 300 scattered in other countries. An additional three ships are expected in various European ports in the next days -- one of them in Naples with 600 stateless Jews.

I have tried to be cool and factual -- but in the midst of this great scene of terror and flight and fear and despoilment, the blood boils -- and deep inside there is the anger which wells up at this new story of persecution. We can shout to the world -- "How long -- how long?" But in my heart I know that we must shout first and loudest to ourselves, for we must count mainly our own help and resources to heal the hurt and bind up the wounds of the sick and homeless. In the Biblical Exodus from Egypt, the column of fleeing slaves was led by a pillar of fire at night and cloud by day. In this modern Exodus, the new refugees must be led by the pillar of strength which we Jews of America represent.

AMERICAN JEWISH
North Africa also continues to provide a share of this mass of Jewish humanity struggling to leave areas of danger and darkness. There are 3,400 Jews from North Africa at this very moment in a transit camp in Marseilles waiting for passage to Israel. They left their countries with great difficulty during the past week; more continue to come every day; there is a constant steady flow seeking to get out; and as a result of the very heavy migration to Israel last year, there are thousands of families to be reunited. The morale of the North Africans is good and their adjustment and absorption are rapid.

One of the most exciting and important parts of this world-wide story cannot be set down too precisely in black and white. It must be understood and grasped as much by hint and innuendo as by any exact spelling-out. In one sentence, thousands of East European Jews are reaching Israel. Do you realize what this means? Think about its implications: making a tear in the Iron Curtain -- showing Jews there that we haven't forgotten them -- discovering that a decade or more of communist propaganda has not destroyed the Jewish spirit.

I cannot tell you at this time the details of this emigration, but I will be happy to do so in person whenever we come together at a closed meeting. Let me say simply that it is a heroic saga, of which we can be very proud. It is working well, and is extremely costly.

So -- that is the story of the Jewish world as 1957 dawns. Flight, terror, deportees, escapees -- more Jews on the road, leaving old countries, seeking new countries -- than we have been faced with since World War II. Hungary, Egypt, North Africa, East Europe -- all pouring out people who are running toward freedom. Some will wind up in U.S. and other countries. Israel will take most -- because its people are willing to and because other doors, except to a very limited extent, are closed.

And Israel herself, about which I have said nothing in this letter, continues her open-door policy; in spite of the economic dislocation caused by the recent mobilization; in spite of the rising unemployment; in spite of the tense situation in Sinai and Gaza; in spite of the stepped-up fedayeen raids of the last three weeks; in spite of everything, Israel's immigration policy remains -- "we will take in all who come out".

I am leaving for Vienna today. I shall visit Marseilles and Naples as well. In all these places I shall talk with Jews in flight -- with officials of the Jewish Agency and the JDC -- with all others who can give me an insight into this biggest refugee flood of a decade.

I shall be home in time to report to you on the closed-circuit TV program on 15 January. I shall also write to you, for there are some communities which the TV program will not reach.

One hundred million dollars in a Rescue Fund, above the regular campaign, is not an easy task to accomplish. One hundred thousand refugees is not an easy problem for the Jewish conscience to face. We need the money to save the lives. I pray that the leadership of American Jewry will understand this and will rise to the historic opportunity.

Sincerely,

Hubert A. Friedman



HAF files - Personal letter

Personal Letter

From

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN
Executive Vice-Chairman, United Jewish Appeal

165 West 46 Street, New York 36, N. Y.

21 January, 1957

Dear Friend:

On New Year's Day, Moe Leavitt, the head of the Joint Distribution Committee, and I flew to Europe to study the exploding story of Jewish refugees which I described in my last letter. Transatlantic telephone calls and cables were not sufficient to transmit the full impact and we wanted to see at first hand what was happening in order to understand all its implications.

It is a shocking story. The summary conclusion can be stated in one sentence: there will be more refugees on the roads of Europe in 1957 than there have been since World War II. They are coming from Egypt, Hungary, Eastern Europe and North Africa in such numbers as to cause sleepless nights of worry for all officials in the Jewish organizations in America, Europe and Israel who deal with refugee relief and resettlement.

On 6 January we stood at the dock in Naples and watched the arrival of the vessel S. S. MISR. It is an Egyptian ship, which normally carries Moslem pilgrims to Mecca. This time it carried almost 1,000 Jews who had been expelled from Egypt. The ship was chartered by the International Red Cross as a mercy vessel to bring to freedom Jews who were in Egyptian prisons. The pain and shock, the anger and bewilderment felt by these Jews poured out in a torrent when they found sympathetic people waiting to receive and greet them. They did not know we would be there. The first question was -- where do we sleep tonight? And when they saw the large group of friendly JDC workers; Jewish officers of the Italian community; Jewish Agency personnel who would arrange the further transportation to Israel; non-Jewish Italians of the Ministry of Labor who offered temporary shelter in an emigrant center; to say nothing of Jews from far-off America -- when they saw this reception, they cried for joy, knowing that they were not forgotten. And then they poured out their stories, purging themselves in an emotional outburst of all the pent-up feelings.

We talked to scores of them, one by one, to piece together the details of what had happened, and found upon comparing notes, that there was a similarity of pattern which had only minor variations. It usually began with a knock on the door at midnight, when a police officer, sometimes in uniform, sometimes in mufti, would deliver either an expulsion order or an invitation to prison. For those imprisoned, there was a day in the Cairo Citadel; then transfer to the Abassich (a Jewish school owned by the community which had been requisitioned and turned into a prison) for two months; then transfer to the Alexandria Prison for one day (the train ride made in handcuffs); and finally onto the expulsion ship, where the internee signed a statement that he was leaving Egypt of his own free will!

Two months and two days in prison -- often with police brutality, often hungry, always taunted and mocked, filled with anguish concerning the rest of the family outside -- this was the fate of thousands.

For those not interned, there was the frantic scurrying for boat and plane tickets -- the selling of furniture and personal possessions to scrape together a few dollars -- for all bank accounts were blocked, jobs were lost, businesses were confiscated, in a program of robbing Jews and gathering their wealth into the dictator's coffers. Nasser is following Hitler's methods.

Already more than 8,000 Egyptian Jews, some with passports, some stateless, have been expelled. This is a staggering figure, proving the dimensions of this action, but it is nothing compared to what lies ahead. The refugees with whom Moe Leavitt and I spoke were fully convinced that there will be the total expulsion of the entire Jewish population of Egypt, probably 45,000 to 55,000 within a few months. The officials of the Jewish Agency in Israel are frantically preparing to receive this flood.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

From Naples and Rome, we went on to Vienna. Great acts of heroism are being performed there. No one really knows the devotion of the little corps of Jewish social workers in the JDC and United Hias Service who are working 16 and 18 hours daily to handle the problems of the 17,000 Hungarian Jews who have already fled to Austria. About 4,500 of these refugees have been transferred to other lands -- approximately 2,100 to the U.S., 1,100 to Israel, 900 to Canada, 400 to Australia. More than 12,000 are still clogged up in Austria waiting for resettlement. Their care and maintenance constitute a tremendous financial burden. Their questions must be answered, and long lines wait patiently each day at the offices of the Jewish organizations, to see the case workers. Their eager and sometimes pathetic queries about visas to various countries must be handled with tact and patience. Sometimes I was not sure, as we watched this process, who was more tired -- the refugees themselves or those sitting at the little wooden desks trying to help them. It is an absolutely crushing job to try to give personal attention to so many thousands of bewildered and anxious people. Yet it is being done -- and done well.

Close to dawn one morning we drove to the Hungarian border. Across the frozen fields we saw them coming -- running, staggering, falling, running again. They come empty-handed, because the knapsack has grown too heavy on the back, and the suitcase has been thrown away during the final 20 or 30 kilometers which must be made on foot across plowed up and muddy terrain. Their clothing is ice-encrusted, their eyes are filled with weariness, and they have suffered casualties. We talked to one man whose wife had been shot by drunken Russian soldiers -- we talked to another whose two children, 8 and 2, were in the hospital with pneumonia and frostbite. There was much shooting to be heard along the length of the canal on whose bank we stood, which marked the actual frontier. Two Hungarian soldiers, not fifty yards opposite, shot as we turned our backs and walked away from the border-line.

At this spot, swirling with fog and mist, lonesome with the bleakness of winter, far from human habitation, we perceived something of the great adventure of the human spirit which is presently occurring as men seek to escape the tyranny of armed communist might. Would we want to desert them, the twice-persecuted, the Jews with Auschwitz numbers on their arms who lived through Hitler and are now running a second time to save all that is left -- life itself? No man among us can walk away from this problem. With full financial support, we shall have the means to feed and clothe, house and nourish, heal and counsel, finally resettle these 12,000 and more who come each night in a manner which Jewish dignity demands.

The Passover Haggadah says: "This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. All who hunger, let them come and eat: all who are in need, let them come and celebrate the Passover. Now we are here -- next year we shall be in the land of Israel; now we are slaves -- next year, we shall be free men."

Already the JDC is preparing supplies of matzos for scores of thousands of Jews in Europe this Pesach who will not be at a peaceful family table this year but who will be in camps, and reception centers, and on ships and docks. So looms the future.

In my last letter I wrote that "one of the most exciting and important parts of this world-wide rescue story cannot be set down too precisely in black and white." I think it is clear that the reason for this delicate approach is not to withhold information, but rather to prevent any indiscretions. In the interim, however, an article has appeared in the N.Y. TIMES from its Warsaw correspondent, and since this is now public knowledge, I am enclosing it in order to be certain that you are aware of the facts.

We saw some of these people. You could not wish for better human material. These are healthy, normal families, with children, leaving Iron Curtain territory, leaving anti-semitism, leaving Europe -- going to a place of freedom. These are Jews whom the communists have not been able to tear away from the Jewish heritage or people. These are Jews whom the communists have not been able to make into equals in the minds of non-Jews, even though there is supposed to be no discrimination under the Soviet constitution. These are Jews who want, therefore, purely and simply, to escape to the free air of a Jewish and democratic environment. They are having this deepest wish fulfilled. It will cost millions.

Our trip ended in Paris. Officials from the Jewish Agency flew in from Israel and Geneva to meet us, for a recapitulation of the entire problem. Now we could begin to see numbers, estimates, costs, time-tables. It was clear that a possible total figure of 100,000 Jewish refugees entering Israel in 1957 was an underestimate, or at least was on the minimum side.

It was also clear that the housing program in Israel would have to be drastically revised and accelerated. Thousands of new units will have to be started quickly, and much careful social engineering done to decide where to place these new groups of immigrants in a pattern of dispersal throughout the country. The sheer planning is quite staggering, to say nothing of the colossal financial burden. There are large numbers of children in the Egyptian and Polish groups, with all the auxiliary questions of schooling which that fact implies. Brain power and money will have to be available with speed and abundance.

Mr. Ben Gurion himself realizes this most acutely. On 3 January he made a major policy speech to the Central Committee of his own Mapai Party, in which he spoke these urgent words:

"One of the important results of the Sinai campaign is that we have assured ourselves of a lull on the military front Hence the priority must be given once again to the needs of immigration and economic independence This year we may expect from sixty to one hundred thousand immigrants. This is a heavy burden, but it is a sacred and precious burden, and it must now have first priority."

Our campaign is beginning to mount in pace and intensity. People realize this is an extraordinary moment. Already gifts are being made beyond the previous highest level of many individuals' giving history. Every man who is counted in the leadership group of the American Jewish community must now step forward and make a maximum personal gift to the Emergency Rescue Fund, in addition to his normal gift. This is now the moment for heroic and noble action.

Sincerely,

Hubert A. Friedman

P.S. The first national fund-raising meeting of the 1957 campaign will take place in New York on 2 February, at a dinner in honor of Samuel Leidesdorf. All gifts which could be made by that date would swell the first totals and launch the campaign at the highest possible level.

Encl:

Personal Letter

From

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN
Executive Vice-Chairman, United Jewish Appeal

165 West 46 Street, New York 36, N. Y.

25 March, 1957

Dear Friend:

It is hard to believe that I wrote to you last on 21 January, just after Moe Leavitt and I returned from Europe. So very much has happened since then. The past weeks have been among the most crowded we have lived through in recent years. Israel has been in the top headlines every day, and I am afraid will continue to be. Let me try to sort out the events, and put them in perspective.

You will recall we went abroad to prepare, among other things, for the arrival of the first large refugee ship from Egypt. Since that day in early January, the total number of Jews expelled from Egypt has risen to 14,000 souls. The large vessels have become commonplace. On the 6 of March, a ship arrived in Athens carrying more than eleven hundred Jews, of whom 339 were children under the age of 12. Another ship with more than one thousand on board, including 273 children, left Alexandria on 20 March. The next ship is due to leave on 5 April. This is an indication of how widespread the immigration has become, and how much human misery is involved.

And these mass sailings do not take into account the fact that every day planes leave with Jews who have managed to obtain tickets, and every few days smaller vessels leave with as many hundreds of Jews as can manage to crowd on board. The latest advice we have from Cairo is that there are more than 15,000 Jews, penniless and frightened, who are waiting for passage to be provided. It is another shocking and heartrending episode in the long history of our people.

I want to quote from a memorandum whose source I cannot divulge, except to say that it reached me through a most competent non-Jewish authority!

"The situation of the Jews in Egypt as described in the previous memo is deteriorating.

"The exodus ordered by the Egyptian authorities or imposed by the state of poverty into which the Jews have been plunged, without any hope of improvement, is continuing.

"The organization of the exodus remains, therefore, imperative and urgent."

A very important step occurred on 4 February, when Dr. August R. Lindt, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ruled that refugees from Egypt are eligible for UN protection. The United Nations High Commissioner can extend this protection only when he is convinced that there exists "a well-founded fear of persecution by reason of race, religion, nationality or political opinion." As a result of this ruling, Nasser's government now stands publicly condemned for engaging in persecution. According to the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN,

there were representatives of 20 governments present at the Executive Committee, including observers of the Egyptian Government, when Dr. Lindt made his ruling -- and not one challenged him. Thus, the shameful persecution of Jews is openly known to all. Giving the refugees from Egypt this status might condemn Nasser, but cannot rebuild their lives. This can be done only in Israel or any friendly country which will take these people in and give them a home. The fact is that more than six thousand have poured in to Israel in the last three months. I do not have to tell you how much money this takes.

As a gruesome footnote to this Egyptian chapter, let me add that I have just received from London a detailed manuscript giving the connections between the German army and Egypt -- also a description of the Nazi tie-up. It is too long to include in this letter, but I shall be happy to send a copy to anyone requesting it.

As far as the Hungarian story is concerned, approximately 17,000 Jews fled from Hungary into Austria. The present residual case load being cared for by Jewish organizations (either JDC or UHS) is approximately 5,000. It might appear from this that 12,000 have been successfully emigrated to countries of final settlement. That is not so. The resettlement figures only total about 9,700 (4,100 to U.S.A.; 2,250 to Israel; 2,400 to Canada; 750 to Australia; 200 to Brazil). This means that perhaps two thousand Jews have simply discontinued contact with the JDC and UHS, and are on their own, either in Austria or in various West European countries.

In case you have not already heard, by the way, I should like you to know that the United Hias Service, which has been doing a particularly fine job in Austria on the resettlement program, has been included in the Emergency Rescue Fund of the UJA for 1957. This has been done in the interest of economy and good planning. In other words, all agencies coping with the great refugee problems are drawing the extra funds needed from the one source, and therefore the contributions to the UJA Rescue Fund must be even greater.

But figures do not tell the whole story of human suffering. By now, it has been well established and documented that there were many anti-semitic episodes in the refugee camps in Austria. The nervousness and tension which this created in the minds and hearts of Jews is too awful to describe. Many of the Hungarian Jews have been victims of Hitler and still carry the concentration camp numbers tattooed into their flesh. Others had been persecuted by the communists. Having lived through this double torture, it was particularly disillusioning and even shattering to be faced with anti-Jewish hatred from their fellow refugees. In the face of this, the policy of the Jewish organizations, therefore, has been to attempt to maintain Jews separately, either in small hotels or private dwellings or separate camps. The needs for this as well as for the separate kosher facilities has caused a considerable expanse in the relief and maintenance budget.

Over the long run, of course, the best solution is emigration. I have a report analyzing the Hungarian emigration picture as follows: "The recently issued U.S. immigration schedule came as a considerable disappointment to the majority of the Hungarian Jews in Vienna. Furthermore, possibilities of emigration to overseas countries are restricted, and in the case of Australia there is the added difficulty that the travelling route goes via Iraq, and the Iraqi authorities refuse to give transit visas. The mood among Jewish refugees in Austria is reported to be changing, and it looks as though more are keen to go to Israel. It seems today that in the coming three or four months about 6,000 of the refugees concentrated in Austria will go to Israel."

As far as Jews in other parts of Eastern Europe are concerned, I still cannot spell out for you the incredible details. But you have undoubtedly seen some press reports and you know the situation to which I am referring. Anti-semitism in one particular country has mounted to such proportions, despite efforts on the part of the government to check it, that the Catholic church has taken official cognizance of it, and has thrown its influence into combatting it. In a front-page article in the Catholic weekly, the chief editor wrote, "It must be stated explicitly that anti-semitism cannot be reconciled with Catholicism. Anti-Semitism is completely pagan in essence." The NEW YORK TIMES, in reporting this story, added, "mainly because of anti-semitism a mass exodus of Jews for Israel is underway."

It appears that a minimum of 7,500 people will be coming out during March. By April there will be as many as 14,000 Jews holding exit visas. The pressing problem seems to be a technical one of transportation, with simply not enough railroad cars available. The Jewish Agency officials are talking about ships and even planes, in order not to lose time. The political situation in Eastern Europe is always such that one never knows whether today's golden opportunity to rescue Jews might not be tomorrow's lost opportunity. We dare not tamper with time in this case. The opening and closing of doors in Eastern Europe does not depend upon us. While exit is possible we must capitalize on every day. This precious portion of the world Jewish population must not be lost.

I had a cable yesterday from Israel which stated very simply that there are currently 4,000 refugees in Marseilles, Genoa and Athens awaiting transportation to Israel; that it is anticipated the immigration for March, April and May will be 31,000; and that the entire problem is being officially presented to Mr. Ben Gurion.

This is a flood. There is nowhere near the amount of money available from foreseeable sources to build the houses, prepare the settlements, provide the services necessary for the reception and absorption of these people. I think it is safe to say that we shall shortly see again the temporary housing of thousands in tents. There have been no tents in Israel for half a decade. There will be tents again in 1957.

You must realize what all this means to the people of Israel. During the very self-same period of the last few months when the refugee flood was mounting, Israel was living through the tension of uncertainty on the international diplomatic front. Her people did not know, and still do not, whether the borders would be safe, whether the Egyptians would be prevented from renewing fedayeen raids out of Gaza, whether shipping could go through Akaba and Suez. World support developed for Israel's position, but every day the Arab radio, whether from Cairo or Damascus or Jordan, called for war. Delicate negotiations were carried on in the UN and behind closed doors. The man in the street had every reason to be confused by the lack of clarity as to what the UN and the U.S. would do.

On one issue he was not confused. Thousands of refugees poured into his country, and he saw them at the port, the airfield, the trucks on the roads carrying them to outlying settlements. The man on the street did not utter a word of protest or caution. He did not say - enough. On the contrary, he moved over, made room for the newcomers, and drew pride and strength from the fact that Israel was fulfilling her holy mission of providing a home for the wanderers.

Golda Meir expressed this mood in her televised speech to our meeting in Miami. She said:

"I am sure that you know not all our energy was put merely into this diplomatic struggle that we carried on in the United Nations and elsewhere, but at the very time, in those very days and those very hours something of great vital importance was happening in Israel itself, boats coming in, planes coming in, people driven from their homes again in Egypt, people that were leaving Hungary because they were looking for a place that they wanted to live in, people from other countries -- you know of whom I speak -- who were leaving in masses to come home, to finally find a place from which there was assurance that they will not have to flee again, men, women and children.

"I wonder if all our energy and the ability of my colleagues in carrying on this diplomatic struggle wasn't the source of strength that we had from home, from this very thing that is going on there, this process of doing that for which Israel was established, a home for every individual Jew that wants it or needs it. It was this certainty, this knowledge, this having our roots in the reality of what is Israel that made it possible, I believe, for us to go on."

Very few Americans have received visas to visit Israel in the past five months. When the ban is lifted, I hope there will be a flood of tourists who will want to go, to see what has been happening during the past few months. Meanwhile, only a handful of men have been able to bring back eye-witness reports of life inside Israel during this tense period. One careful and sensitive observer is Rabbi Morris Lieberman of Baltimore, whose words I would quote:

"The combination of the Israeli determination to achieve physical security and their determination to fulfill the promise of the State as a haven of refuge leaves one breathless in admiration at the staunchness of their spirit. They set an example of heroism that matches anything in our history and which must serve as a challenge to our American Jewish community, which is so fortunate. I pray with you that our community will not fail to do its part at this critical hour in the life of our people. Tens of thousands -- men, women and children look to us for help. We will be unworthy of our traditions as Jews and of our freedom as Americans if we do not answer this summons."

Sincerely,

Hubert A. Friedman

P.S. I should like to bring to your attention a slim volume which will shortly be published, entitled, "100 Hours to Suez", by Robert Henriques. It is a well-written story of the Sinai campaign and the background reasons which lead to it. May I recommend it as an aid toward understanding the events of the past few months.

MSG

Personal Letter

From

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN
Executive Vice-Chairman, United Jewish Appeal

PC/fab

165 West 46 Street, New York 36, N. Y.

28 May, 1957

PRIVATE
CONFIDENTIAL
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Dear Friend:

Two months ago I last wrote to you about the mounting flood of Jews who were running to Israel. In these intervening weeks the flood has reached higher marks and continues to race along in full tempo. The people come from Egypt, Hungary, Eastern Europe, North Africa in such a powerful stream that this fact overshadows almost everything else that is happening in Israel. The attention and consciousness of all -- from the highest government officials to the most ordinary man in the street -- is completely captured by the urgent need to plan for the welcome and reception of the immigrants.

On Independence Day, May 6, the people of Israel celebrated in a great joyous holiday their ninth birthday. A tremendous parade was organized in Tel Aviv. A half million watchers lined the parade route. Captured Russian equipment was displayed. There were flags and songs and dances and speeches. The whole country was happily aware that it had come successfully through a time of testing and crisis. Yet the whole country was also aware that on the very holiday itself, 2,600 immigrants had disembarked from 4 ships, in the largest single daily influx recorded since 1951. This was a remarkable graphic demonstration, better than any words, of the essential meaning of the State of Israel. A state was created to give refuge -- and on the very day celebrating the birth of that state, a tremendous group landed on its shores to taste the freedom and safety and Jewish companionship they so badly sought.

In his official speech on Independence Day, Ben Gurion himself gave eloquent expression to this thesis. I have put together some excerpts from his words:

"Never since the end of the fighting in the War of Independence have we been faced by such a critical and testing year. We shattered the Egyptian sword that was suspended over our heads. In the Sinai Desert and in the Gaza Strip we destroyed the aggression bases of our strongest and most dangerous enemy. We opened the Red Sea passage for Israel and for international shipping to and from Eilat.

"Great and wonderful deeds have been accomplished in Israel within the few years since it was established. Hundreds of new villages have been set up, new towns have been built, industry has been expanded, a commercial fleet has been brought into operation. Free compulsory education

has been instituted, our colleges of higher learning have been improved, social reforms have been achieved, public services have been established, and last, but not least, we have organized, equipped and trained the finest and most effective army in the Middle East.

"The greatest achievement of the State in these nine years has, however, been the enlargement of the population by over a million Jews, partly by natural increase, but mostly by immigration from all the countries of the globe. We are happy that Israel is wide open. We know that there are millions of Jews who are forcibly separated from us, and that a large part of them waits and prays for immigration to Israel.

"The Jewish people in Israel and the world over will not recoil from this heavy burden."

In April 8,600 immigrants reached Israel; in May the figure will reach 12,000; for June the estimate is approximately 10,000. These are bald and naked statistics. I am sure we are all aware that an immigration of this size requires a plan of social engineering on the highest order. But the incredible amount of detail involved can easily escape the attention of all who are not living with it daily. I received a letter recently from Dr. Dov Joseph, treasurer of the Jewish Agency, whose absorption department is responsible for receiving the people. Let his words written on the 5th of May speak for themselves:

"We are today engaged in the not inconsiderable task of disembarking 2,600 immigrants from 4 ships within the space of 24 hours from last night until tonight. This is the first time since 1951 that we have been called upon to handle so large an influx of immigrants on one day. One shipload is from Egypt, most of the other immigrants are from Poland and Hungary.

"By tonight, they will all have been through the mill of the Ministry of the Interior, frontier police, the health authorities, special security check, and will have been examined, questioned, classified and allocated to their respective new homes by the officials of our Absorption Department. They will each have received the cash handed to new immigrants on arrival, the food package that will suffice for their needs for the first eight days in the country and, apart from those going to relatives, they will have received the contract entitling them to a home in Israel. Their baggage will be loaded onto lorries which will accompany the buses in which the immigrants will be conveyed to their homes in various parts of the country. There they will be received, shown to their homes, where they will find beds, mattresses, blankets, tables, chairs, oil stoves and other bare essentials to enable them to set up housekeeping at once."

We should be fiercely proud of the nameless officials who work so selflessly around the clock to make the reception of these multitudes as relatively smooth as possible.

You know that it has been a very delicate matter to discuss publicly the exodus from Poland. But I can tell you that the Gomulka regime is permitting Jews to leave. It is a latter-day miracle, in a way.

Let me try to give you some insight as to the reasons people are leaving.

1. There are those who are separated from families and who want to rejoin loved ones who reached Israel in years past. At the very first opportunity these eagerly lined up at the Israeli legation applying for passports.
2. There are those who have wanted to emigrate for years out of motives of Jewish consciousness and out of a special desire to live freely in a Jewish land.
3. There are those who had hoped to be able to integrate into life in Poland, but who are disillusioned at the continuation of racial and religious prejudice.
4. There are those who had adopted Christian identity during the Hitler period, and had saved their lives with false papers and the help of friendly Christian neighbors. During the years they had not revealed their identity even to their own children. But now their very children are feeling the sting of anti-semitism.

I heard a story recently which has a macabre twist of this theme. There was a family whose twin sons (never having been told they or their parents were Jewish) came home from school one day in a high state of elation. The father asked the boys why they were so overjoyed and was appalled to hear his own sons describe how they had beaten up a Jewish classmate that day. In one moment of horror the father saw the lie he had been living, as he heard the poison spewing from the mouth of his own children. He immediately decided to emigrate to Israel, in order to save his family from moral destruction.

The Polish Jews are of very high calibre in terms of human material and professional skills which they bring with them. This makes their absorption in Israel that much more of a problem. They cannot sit around in camps waiting to be integrated. They simply do not have the background or psychological mood which would permit this. They must be swiftly utilized and a place found for them in the farms and factories as rapidly as possible. They have a tremendous amount to give to Israel, which should not be wasted, and they must not be allowed to become subject to despair or disillusionment, after all they have been through. The breath of Hitler and Stalin was upon them. Now they must speedily be made to feel safe and secure and wanted. Tents and immigrant camps will not give them that feeling. There must be housing and jobs and absorption in the best sense.

This is what constantly requires a stupendous amount of money. Rescuing a man's life goes beyond just getting him out of Warsaw or Budapest. We must also get him thoroughly into Afula or Beersheba or Natanya. Craftsmen must be helped to find premises and tools and raw materials. Others must be helped to set up a small industry or business. Professional men (doctors,

accountants, engineers, etc.) must be kept in ulpanim for 5 months to learn Hebrew and their families must be supported in the meantime. Some must be taught trades and given temporary work until they find permanent employment with their new skills. And in addition to all of this, there is the really vast housing program involving the frantic building of 25,000 housing units so that everyone can have a roof over his head.

What is going on in Israel today is almost beyond comprehension, even for those who have seen it recently with their own eyes. Several competent observers who have returned to the U.S. in recent days have described to me the tumult and confusion and excitement, albeit there is plan and organization behind it all. Their words have left me with the thrill which comes from the doing of a great good historic work, and also with the challenge that we must absolutely spur ourselves to the maximum.

The campaign has been going well and many tens of millions have already been pledged in the communities to the regular and to the emergency rescue campaigns. Where the campaign is reaching its final stages, I would certainly hope that the devoted leadership would work with diligence to reach the last card and the last dollar.

But the moment has arrived when we must try to convert pledges into cash. We are calling a National Cash-for-Rescue Conference in New York City on June 8-9 at the Roosevelt Hotel. We are asking people to attend that conference as individuals and as community representatives and to bring with them as much cash as can be realized in the next period of weeks. A fine program has been arranged, including Senator Lyndon Johnson, Ambassador Eban, Dr. Nahum Goldmann and others. I would hope that we could mount an impressive demonstration, both in terms of cash and attendance, so that the people of Israel and Jews in all lands will know that we American Jews are ready to stand firm at this moment which Ben Gurion called "a time for testing".

He concluded his Anniversary address with words which have particular relevance to our responsibility in the UJA:

"In the year that lies ahead we shall place in the forefront of our endeavors the absorption of the immigrants and the effort to bring new life to the desert. This is a heavy burden which will demand of each of us, and of the Jews in the Diaspora, constant and unremitting effort. And there is one prayer in our hearts: May we all be able to say, when another year has passed and we celebrate the tenth anniversary of our independence, the people have not failed us."

Sincerely,

Herbert A. Friedman

P.S. If it is at all possible for you to be in New York the week-end of June 8-9, to attend the UJA Conference, I wish you would make every effort to do so. Please write me at the National Office and we shall be happy to make reservations.

KING DAVID HOTEL
JERUSALEM



מלון המלך דוד
ירושלים

June 12, 1957

Private and Confidential
Not for Publication

Dear Friend:

I have been in Israel for the past ten days, on my first visit since the Sinai Campaign last fall. I have been talking intensively and have been traveling widely in an effort to see what Israel is really like in mid-1957 after having experienced the highest flood of immigration in the past six years. After long talks with Mr. Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Dov Joseph and others, a fairly clear picture emerges at this half-way point. It is a picture of unending pressure, ingenious improvisation, constant struggle, without anywhere near enough money, to accomplish all that is required to absorb properly those who have come so far this year.

As of 30 June there have arrived here 50,226 persons, of whom 11,000 are from Egypt, 7,000 from North Africa and the balance from Eastern European countries whose specific names and numbers I would rather not put into writing.

It might be a matter of interest to know how these people have been distributed throughout the country. Twenty two thousand have gone to pioneering towns such as Beersheba in the Negev and Kiriat Shmone in the Upper Galilee; 10,000 have been settled in the already crowded Coastal Plain between Tel Aviv and Haifa; 6,000 have gone to existing farm settlements; 1,000 to Youth Aliyah; 9,000 to relatives and 2,000 fall in the miscellaneous category.

The people of Israel had just come through the Sinai Campaign when they were hit with this large immigration flow. They accepted it beautifully. The free, open door is still the greatest thing about this country. But mood and morale are one thing and practical problems are another. The absorption of this 50,000 is extremely difficult. There are three main practical problems.

The first of them is housing. Since last October 8,810 housing units have been constructed. Of this number 6,179 are 2-room, permanent concrete dwellings and 2,631 are asbestos-board huts. I must say that these huts represent a brilliant compromise between the full-fledged concrete unit and the very bad tin or canvas shack which was the previous type of temporary construction. The present asbestos-board hut can give good service for five or possibly even more years and, when painted, looks quite neat and sturdy.

The second big problem is employment. A standard has been set by which the Labor Ministry tries to provide enough public works so that an immigrant can receive employment for at least fifteen days a month, if he cannot find a job in industry or agriculture. This is obviously not the most desirable thing in the world, and many people speak of this as the Israeli equivalent of the WPA. For the moment, at least, this program attempts to provide each new family with a subsistence living.

The third question concerns the problems of the professionals among the immigrants and is really a new thing. The present wave of immigration from Eastern Europe and Egypt has brought with it a relatively large number of academically trained people in the free professions, such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists, journalists, artists, white-collar workers. These people can contribute a great deal to Israel, but in order to do so they must learn the language of the country. Therefore, they must be directed to the Ulpan -- a special school for speed-up Hebrew in which an educated person can learn the language in five to six months. Just to give you an idea, there were in Israel, at the beginning of January, 19 Ulpanim containing a thousand adult students. There are in Israel today more than 50 Ulpanim with 5,000 students.

The solutions of these three main problems demand a great deal more money than is available. An asbestos hut costs IL. 2,500. A permanent unit costs IL 6,000. To maintain the family of a professional while he studies at the Ulpan costs a great deal. We have had a good campaign this year but we have not produced anywhere near the amount of money required for the full absorption needs of this first 50,000 people, to say nothing of those yet to come.

The immigration continues. Enormous upheavals are taking place inside the Communist world. No one can predict what will occur as a result of recent events. Only one thing is clear -- Jews will continue to come to Israel.

The mood of Israel today is one of great strength and firm courage. The problems are back-breaking. The Treasuries of both Government and Jewish Agency are almost perpetually empty. The strain and tension go on without relaxation. But the rainbow which arches over the whole structure is love -- love for land and love for people. Lives must be saved, a land must be built. Everyone here is holding firm. Everyone of us in America must also hold firm as we face the future waves of Jews who will be coming here seeking safety and home.

Herbert Friedman

Herbert A. Friedman



VINELAND POULTRY LABORATORIES

Founded in the year 1914

VINELAND, NEW JERSEY

ARTHUR D. GOLDHAFT, V.M.D.
DIRECTOR

WEST COAST BRANCH
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

June 3rd, 1957

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman,
165 West 46th Street,
New York, 36, N.Y.

Dear Rabbi Friedman:

I am pleased to acknowledge your letter of May 28th with the notation "private, confidential and not for publication." I have read the letter carefully several times, including the quotes on pages one and two, which represent some excerpts from Ben Gurion's speech on Independence Day, and also the two quotes by Dr. Dov Joseph. Not one word has been said in your letter regarding the agricultural productivity and the great part that agriculture has played in the successful economy of Israel thus far. In the last paragraph of your letter where you quote Dr. Nahum Goldmann, you probably make very slight reference to agriculture when you state "and their efforts to bring new life to the desert."

Agricultural productivity in Israel during the last nine years represents another miracle. Agricultural land reclamation during the last nine years has been unequalled, unexcelled and unparalleled in world history. Land reclamation in Israel is being studied in many lands of the world and particularly in the undernourished and underfed areas. A number of the underprivileged countries are seeking advice and help from the agricultural experts in Israel and it is reasonable to assume that if the progress continues in the next decade or two, (as I am certain it will), as it has in the past nine years that the agricultural technicians and experts of Israel will be requested in many other lands, including the developed ones.

My wife and I have been in Israel on three different occasions working very closely with the various Ministers of Agriculture, animal husbandmen and veterinarians. Our primary activity and purpose was to help them produce an adequate protein food supply particularly as it is related to eggs and poultry meat production. I have a letter before me which I received the other day from Chaim Gvati, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, in which he makes the following statement:

"Since your last visit many noteworthy changes have taken place in the raising of poultry and what has been considered at that time in the days of shortage of food supply and fodder as a dream for the days to come in the distant future, has now become a reality. Our poultry breeders now supply an abundance of eggs and poultry meat in undreamed of

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman - #2

quantities. We have forgotten the days of shortage in eggs and meat. Nowadays they are found in abundance in shops and markets and at very low prices. The extension of the poultry farm makes it incumbent upon us to seek ways to export eggs and we have made several successful steps in this direction. I hope within the next few years we shall be able to export large quantities of eggs, and perhaps also poultry meat, for Europe, especially during the Winter season."

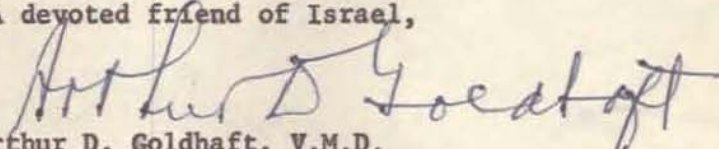
For your personal information, Rabbi Friedman, in 1956 Israel has exported over \$150,000. ~~in hard-currency~~ in the sale of eggs and baby chicks in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and environs. I am also happy to report to you that in 1956 Israel has been able to produce 65% of its food requirements in spite of the fact that we have had between 100 and 200% increase in human population in the past nine years. Here again, is one of the greatest achievements in world history so far as agricultural production is concerned, when you take into consideration the increase in human population as referred to above.

I want you to understand, Rabbi Friedman, that my only reason for calling this to your attention is because, first of all, it is extremely important that American Jewry be familiar with these accomplishments, and secondly, we have approximately 100,000 Jewish families engaged in agriculture in America who are devoted friends of Israel. Your Mr. Stavitsky just called me a few moments ago and extended a personal invitation to be present at your meeting. Since I am not local chairman, I asked him to write to my son-in-law, Dr. N.E. Wernicoff, and to Mr. Miles Lerman, who are co-chairman of the 1956 Vineland United Jewish Appeal.

You may be interested to know that I am a member of the Youth Aliyah, the Youth Reference Board of Hadassah, and acting as consultant on vocational agriculture. On the evening of May 28th, I presented a paper to this group entitled "Agricultural Progress in Israel." Some points which I refer to in this letter were included in my presentation to the above group.

With kindest personal regards and warmest best wishes for your continued good health, I remain,

A devoted friend of Israel,


Arthur D. Goldhaft, V.M.D.

ADG:S

7th June, 1957

Arthur D. Goldhaft, V.M.D.,
Vineland Poultry Laboratories
Vineland, New Jersey

Dear Dr. Goldhaft:

It was both a delight as well as something of an education to read your most interesting letter of June 3rd. You certainly marshal your facts lucidly and with an effect that is inspiring.

I must plead guilty to your indictment that I have been neglecting the subject of Israel's remarkable agricultural progress in my recent personal letters. This has been true despite the fact that I have been thrilled from time to time by information such as yours which has come to my attention. However, I just haven't been able to get around to writing about it. The UJA has been confronted during these past months with the overwhelming task of coping with the growing refugee problem overseas. Stressing the crucial nature of this problem, and of the pressing need to rescue Jews from Eastern Europe and the Arab countries as well as to resettle them, has seemed to me to have surpassing importance at this time.

After having been as deeply involved in this as I have, though, a letter like yours certainly serves in a healthy manner to freshen one's perspective. I am very eager to deal with this subject, and I definitely shall in a future personal letter -- utilizing the very enlightening information that you have provided. Obviously it comes from an eminently qualified authority.

Thank you very much for your wonderful letter, and for the important facts you included. Hearing from someone like you on a subject like this is a great and unusual pleasure.

Kind regards,

Sincerely,

Herbert A. Friedman
Executive Vice-Chairman.