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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

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

Series I: Wexner Heritage Foundation, 1947-2004.

Subseries 2: Writings and Addresses, 1947-2003.

Box
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Folder
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"The Most Precious Gift." 16 June 1993.

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

LARRY GELLMAN
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

June 23, 1993

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
The Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Herb:

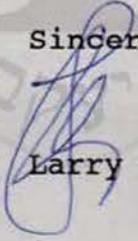
I just wanted to drop you a note to tell you how thrilled I was to be able to participate in the Jewish Theological Seminary Dinner honoring you last week.

In addition to the enormous expense, it was also horribly inconvenient to fly to New York for less than 24 hours. Nevertheless, there was no way in the world I would have missed it.

Your insight, dedication, and tenacity have truly been an inspiration to Jane and me. As I told you before, the Wexner Heritage Foundation program has been the single most influential experience of my adult life.

Congratulations on your well-deserved honor. It was a privilege to be part of a wonderful evening.

Sincerely,


Larry Gellman

LG:LC

Encls.



AND THE BUSH והסנה
WAS NOT אינו
CONSUMED אכל

June 25, 1993

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

THE JEWISH
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
OF AMERICA

3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027-4649
(212) 678-8000
FAX (212) 678-8947

Office of Counsel
(212) 678-8804

Dear Rabbi Friedman:

I am Counsel to The Jewish Theological Seminary, and was pleased to be a guest at the Max Arzt Dinner when you were presented with the Arzt Award. Unfortunately, we have never met, although we have many connections. I was a member, for several years, of the Young Women's Leadership Cabinet, and was the New York Regional Chairperson. I was also extremely active in UJA's Leadership Development Division in New York and led several missions to Israel.

I am writing you, however, not to discuss UJA, but to tell you how much I enjoyed your remarks at the Dinner. You clearly conveyed the honor you felt in receiving this Award and I was touched by your personal remarks about your connection to Rabbi Arzt and to the Seminary.

The matters you discussed also happen to be views that I share. In fact, it seemed to me they were the precise issues our new Graduate School of Education at the Seminary was created to address. We can't have schools or camps without good teachers. We can't have strong campus organizations unless we train the personnel to staff them. In short, we can't make it happen without training a new generation of Jewish educators.

In your acceptance speech you provided a vision. The Seminary stands ready and able to assist you in turning this vision into a reality.

May we all continue to go from strength to strength.

Sincerely,

Ann H. Appelbaum



Murray Lender
Chairman

Marvin Lender
Vice Chairman

June 21, 1993

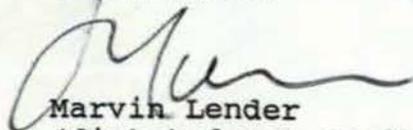
Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Department of Development, 400 Schiff
3080 Broadway
New York, New York 10027-4649

Dear Herb:

What a spectacular evening for a special person. I am pleased that the Seminary choose you to be the first rabbi outside of the Conservative Movement to be so honored. Also, how very nice that Les thinks so much of you that he agreed to chair the evening.

As I mentioned to you, your remarks were the most inspirational I've heard in a long time. I am privileged to know you and very pleased with the opportunity to participate in the recognition of the work that you have done for the Jewish people.

Todah Rabah,


Marvin Lender
(dictated not read)
rpm

8/31/93

Dear Brian -

I know you were present at the JTS dinner in June, but lots has happened since, and if your mind is like mine, sometimes it goes into overload, and one can hardly remember his own name.

Therefore, I'm enclosing a copy of that speech, to refresh your memory.

I have a visionary plan - probably a revolutionary one - which I want very much to talk over with you and Marty Kraar. Let's do it over breakfast, when we're fresh; or late afternoon, when we're willing to relax with a drink.

How about, as soon as possible?

Monday - 9/13 - anytime
Tuesday - 9/14 - anytime
Wed. - 9/15 - morning
Mon - 9/20 - anytime
Tue - 9/21 - anytime

Look at your book, give a date to Naomi - I'll call her.

As ever,
Herb

Dear Marty - ^{Kraar}

8/31/93

Last June the JTS gave
a dinner honoring me, and I made a
speech, copy enclosed.

I have a visionary, probably
revolutionary plan in mind and want
very much to talk it over with you and
Brian before I take any further steps with it.

How about doing this as soon as possible?

Monday	-	9/13	-	anytime
Tues.		9/14	-	"
Wed		9/15	-	morning
Mon.		9/20	-	anytime
Tues		9/21	-	"

Look at your books, give a date to
your secretary - I'll call her.

As ever,

Hech

BARUCH Z. HALBERSTAM

110-43 70th Road
Forest Hills, N.Y. 11375
(718) 263-5542

DEAR HERB:
HAVE YOU EVER
RUN INTO THIS
YOUNG MAN, THE
SON OF A RABBI?

EDUCATION

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Candidate for J.D., June 1994

Honors: Jacob Burns Scholar (highest academic scholarship)
Teaching Assistant, Legal Writing Program
Samuel J. Belkin Scholar

Activities: Lehman and International Law Societies

RABBI ISAAC EL CHANAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Yeshiva University

Candidate for Ordination, June 1994

Honors: Fellowship, Marcos Katz Institute for
Postgraduate Talmudic Studies, 1988-91

Studies Abroad: Mirrer Yeshiva; Jerusalem, Israel
Institute for Advanced Talmudic Studies, 1989-90

QUEENS COLLEGE, City University of New York

B.A., *summa cum laude*, June 1989 Major: Economics

Honors: Dean's List (all semesters)
Honors in Economics
Wexner Graduate Fellowships; National Finalist, 1990

Activities: Chairman, Evening Student Association
Academic Senator, Faculty Student Senate
Economics Honor Society

BARBARA & I
LOVED
THE J.T.S
DINNER IN
YOUR HONOR.
WE FELT IT
WAS OUR
HONOR TO BE
HERE.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

WILDES & WEINBERG, New York, NY

Law Clerk in pre-eminent immigration law firm. Researched, drafted and prepared applications for political asylum, permanent residence and to extend/change non-immigrant status. Researched and drafted memorandum concerning acceptance of foreign students at educational institution. Attended meetings with clients, and Immigration hearings.

Law Clerk, Summer 1993

PROFESSOR SUZANNE LAST STONE, New York, NY

Selected as a Belkin Scholar to assist in researching, drafting and editing papers, articles and book reviews to be presented and published in a variety of legal publications. Issues covered a range of legal topics, including First Amendment Theory, and the interplay of Psychoanalysis and Law.

Research Assistant, May 1993-present

SNITOW & PAULEY, New York, NY

Worked in commercial litigation firm, with active practice in state and federal courts. Drafted pleadings, motions, and discovery requests; researched and drafted memoranda on various legal issues. Attended oral arguments, hearings, depositions, and real estate closings. Assisted in initial preparation of pleadings in Crown Heights Jewish Community's suit against New York City.

Summer Associate, 1992

OTHER EXPERIENCE

CAMP LAUDER, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Zywiec, Poland

Developed and supervised Jewish cultural and religious seminar for teens and families from countries throughout Eastern Europe.

Coordinator, July 1991

JEWISH OVERSEAS LEADERSHIP TRAINING, Kharkov, Ukraine

Guided a group of American teenagers through the Soviet Union. Organized and managed a camp for Soviet children in Kharkov, Ukraine.

Director, August 1991

MORIAH COLLEGE, Sidney, Australia

Coordinated and supervised leadership training seminars at Moriah College, Sidney, Australia.

Assistant Director, Summers 1989-90

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fluent in Hebrew and Yiddish; basic German. Interests include skiing and basketball.

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WELL.
BENT
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3380



CLAL

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

July 7, 1993

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Herb:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Aaron Ziegelman

FOUNDERS

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Elie Wiesel
Rabbi Steven J. Shaw

This is a delayed note in response to your extraordinary talk at the Jewish Theological Seminary dinner which paid tribute to you. (The delay is because I have been traveling five days a week not because of any lack of appreciation for the talk.)

Herb, your talk electrified me. In essence, I came to pay tribute to you but remained to be inspired by you. By your generosity of spirit you took a moment which was honoring you and which could have, and perhaps even should have, been devoted to your personal life, and turned it into a moment of challenge and inspiration with your brilliant presentation.

I agree with every policy statement that you made. The vision and the breadth of your proposals is just what American Jewry needs now. As you spoke, I kept saying to myself if only this were the Plenary Session of the General Assembly or the Annual Conference of United Jewish Appeal so that everybody who should have heard this talk would have been there that night.

You are on to something very important and need to hammer it home again and again. While I realize that some of this material was published in *Moment*, you have to find many other opportunities to say and push these ideas--until they are adopted as the lifesaving policy of the American Jewish community.

May I add a second dimension of my appreciation for the talk? As I face the beginning of my ^{sixty} seventh decade, I wonder how much vigor I can show and how much contribution I can make in the next period of my life. The force and power of your statement gave me great encouragement. Perhaps I too will be spared to continue to push and direct and move people toward the policies which American Jewry needs. Your dynamic and robust call also gave me a benchmark for the kind of quality and breadth dimension that I hope to bring to my work in the next years.

Friedman, Rabbi Herbert
July 7, 1993

Page 2

You know that I am currently fixated on the idea that Judaism's main message is the triumph of life. There is a cosmic struggle between life and death and Jews are commanded to "choose life". One of the most important truths is that many people make very little contribution to the struggle on the side of life. Therefore, those who can make a contribution are particularly valuable. Frequently those who make a contribution make it early in life or in the middle years and then stop. It would be very understandable for people to slow down, to serve their time, to repeat themselves. The true extra margins of life over death come when people who have made an initial contribution make a second and a third effort as they get older. In this way, the force of life truly surges ahead.

As you spoke, I kept thinking of the remarkable career that you have pursued thus far. Your contributions at UJA alone are historic and would have justified your entire life. The fact that you then showed the courage to try to create the Academy in itself is inspirational and a model to all of us. The fact that it did not succeed does not take away from the courage and the vision which you brought in trying to create it. Then you went ahead and created the Wexner Heritage program--another major contribution. You made it at a time when you could have rested on your laurels. Now you come and add another important piece to the mosaic of your accomplishment by pushing for these new policies. This makes you truly a warrior, nay a hero, in the battle of life against death.

When the history of American Jewry in the twentieth century is written, your name will be written high on the list. When the battle for the new directions for community life toward the twenty-first century is described, historians will point out that you led again.

In short, you fulfill the blessing of the psalm. "They [the righteous] shall continue to blossom in the ripeness of their old age, they shall be fertile and verdant" (Psalms 92, 15). Please keep on bearing fruit. I, among many others, continue to enjoy the sweet taste and the wonderful nurture which you give us all.

Sincerely yours,



Irving Greenberg

IG:blm



CLAL

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

Leslie H. Wexner

July 7, 1993

To - ASU
copy to HERB

Mr. Leslie H. Wexner
POB 16000
Columbus, OH 43216

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Irvin Frank
Herschel W. Blumberg
Robert E. Loup
Martin F. Stein
Morton A. Kornreich

HONORARY ASSOCIATE CHAIR

Aaron Ziegelman

FOUNDERS

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
Elie Wiesel
Rabbi Steven J. Shaw

Dear Les:

I was one of the privileged who attended the dinner honoring Rabbi Herbert Friedman which you chaired. It was a wonderful evening which was highlighted by his extraordinary response. His message was so important that I kept praying that it would be heard by everyone in that room, including you, as well as many people who were not in that room. In essence, he was telling all of us that with all of our accomplishment we have not yet lifted our eyes high enough to meet the challenge of this moment. I took it as a personal goad and challenge--not as an adversarial comment but as an inspiration to try harder to meet the greatness of this moment.

As you gave Herb that wonderful introduction, I felt a deep gratitude to you. The introduction was done with taste, delicacy and power; it truly paid tribute adequate to a man of Herb's stature. Thank you for that sure-footed and well done talk which added honor to honor in that it came from you.

I also felt a second margin of gratitude to you. Under the influence of Rabbi Soloveitchik, I had come to the conclusion some years ago that the main message of Judaism is that it teaches that life will triumph over death. In Soloveitchik's view, every policy and every decision, personal and communal, adds to the side of life or to the side of death. Many people make no contribution at all. Those who make a contribution to the side of life typically make one contribution. Thus, most people make their major impact in their initial career years or when they come into leadership in the middle years. However, the true margin of life, says the Talmud, comes when people are in their older years--at a time when it is easy to drift or to repeat themselves or to shut down altogether--if then, they continue to make major contributions.

Wexner, Mr. Leslie
July 7, 1993

Page 2

Herb Friedman is a classic example of this pattern. His contribution at UJA was in itself historic--as you pointed out. (May I say that I personally was inspired by his model of Young Leadership Cabinet, developed late in his UJA career--in terms of developing CLAL.) Herb also sought to give an additional major contribution through his development of the Academy. Although that effort failed, you gave Herb the chance to make yet another contribution by setting up the Wexner Heritage Foundation and funding its program for him and with him. The truth is that many philanthropists give significant money and the return is just not there. By choosing Herb and giving him the freedom to move in this area, you have strengthened the vital life forces of American Jewry while at the same time you enabled him to make another major contribution. Thus his life is even more fruitful and helpful than it would have been otherwise. Thank you for making it possible.

Mazel tov again on your marriage. May this be the source of great joy and fulfillment for many years to come.

Warmest best wishes.

Sincerely yours,



Irving Greenberg

IG:blm

Abigail at the Institution Chicago.
I enjoyed meeting
Please send her my regards.

Rubin Guttman
55 Public Square Bldg., Suite 2130
Cleveland, OH 44113
(216) 696-4006

July 20, 1993

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
The Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

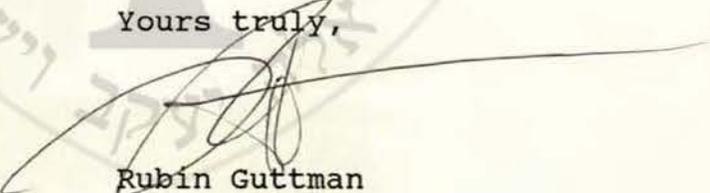
Dear Rabbi Friedman:

Thank you very much for all of the time which you and your staff spent discussing the Wexner curriculum with me, and ultimately encouraging me to attend the recent retreat. It was truly the experience of a lifetime. Rabbi Kimmelman and Deborah Lipstadt were stimulating and thought provoking. The physical environment was marvelous and the lavishness of the catering which was provided only added to the atmosphere.

Many thanks to Rabbi Laufer, you, the staff and, in particular, Les Wexner for making this opportunity available.

Best personal regards.

Yours truly,


Rubin Guttman

RG\cdb

JOSEPH A. KORNFELD

Attorney at Law

1170 Phoenix Tower
3200 Southwest Freeway
Houston, Texas 77027-7523

Telephone (713) 629-0670
Fax (713) 621-4060

August 13, 1993

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

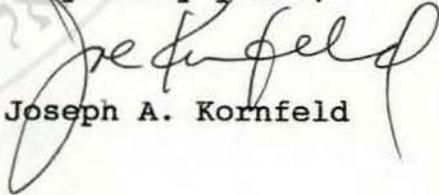
Dear Herb:

I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Houston Wexner Heritage Foundation Group for having been honored by the Jewish Theological Seminary. It is significant both that the Seminary selected a Reform Rabbi to be recipient of its highest award and that an institution of higher Jewish learning recognized your extraordinary achievements.

Joe Kaplan and I had the privilege of coordinating the participation of our fellow Houston Wexnerites in honoring you. Everyone participated and was eager to express his/her appreciation for the opportunities afforded to all of us through the Wexner Heritage Foundation.

But don't rest on your laurels -- there is still time to build a school in Israel! Mazel Tov on a well-deserved honor!

Very truly yours,


Joseph A. Kornfeld

JAK/tmb

cc: Joy and Joe Kaplan
3330 Tangle
Houston, Texas 77005

Nancy Beren
Larry Jefferson
2405 Belfontaine
Houston, Texas 77030

August 13, 1993

Page 2

Sarah and Denis Braham
5711 Dumfries
Houston, Texas 77096

Vikki and Rich Evans
2333 Underwood Street
Houston, Texas 77030

Sheryl and Tom Falik
10119 Sugarhill Drive
Houston, Texas 77042

Rhonda and Seth Freedman
2340 Underwood
Houston, Texas 77030

Brenda and William Goldberg
11734 Flintwood Drive
Houston, Texas 77024

Debbie and Mark Gottesman
5726 Valkeith
Houston, Texas 77096

Suzanne and David Jacobson
7715 Coachwood
Houston, Texas 77071

Amelia Kornfeld
10831 Kittybrook
Houston, Texas 77071

Eta and Ron Paransky
443 Hunterwood
Houston, Texas 77024

Esther and Gary Polland
5309 Braeburn
Bellaire, Texas 77401

Lee and Gary Rosenthal
3929 Delmonte
Houston, Texas 77019

Linda and Shelly Rubenfeld
3122 Robinhood
Houston, Texas 77005

Ellen and Dan Trachtenberg
11823 Dandelion
Houston, Texas 77071

August 13, 1993
Page 3

Becky and Joe Williams
3112 Lafayette
Houston, Texas 77005

Kay and Fred Zeidman
1602 South Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77006

JAK-FRII



Background Notes For "History" Speech, to be used with

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SPEECH

JUNE 1993

HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN

Emancipation - means someone grants us equality, citizenship, opportunity, etc.

We are long post-emancipation. Today we become whatever we wish and if we possess the talent and ability, there are no limits. Education and entrepreneurship have taken us to the top - presidents of five out of eight Ivy league universities are Jewish:

Yale University	President Richard Levin
Harvard University	President Neil Ruderstine (Jewish origin)
Princeton University	President Harold T. Shapiro
Dartmouth College	President James O. Freedman
Columbia University	President Michael I. Sovern
Brown University	
Cornell University	
University of Pennsylvania	

almost 10% of the Congress; several justices of the Supreme Court.

We become whatever we wish. Do you realize the implication of those 5 simple words. We can produce the strongest Diaspora in 3 1/2 millennia, or

we can produce our own extinction. Israel, sovereign state and militarily powerful, can prevent physical extinction of Jews anywhere in the world. When she was bleeding from her own war of independence in 1949 (one person in every hundred dead in battle), she rescued 50,000 Yemenite Jewry (it took only 2 Alaskan Airways old DC-4's). When it was necessary on the 4th of July 1974 (shortly after the terrible fighting of the Yom Kippur war) to rescue 200 Jews at Entebbe, she put to risk 7 huge aircraft worth \$100 m and suffered only one casualty. She will continue this tradition, wherever and whenever necessary. But she cannot rescue American Jewry from its own lack of will.

We become whatever we wish. The leaders must decide on the priorities, strategies, tactics and then persuade the people to follow. Hertzberg is pessimistic. Silberman is optimistic. Steven Cohen is a little bit of both.

Theory of Jewish History

My theory concerning the cyclical nature of Jewish history in the past holds that as each great affluent creative community in the Diaspora reached its glory days, the seed of its own decline was already carried within it. And at the same time, far away, in another place, some mysterious force was preparing a new nest which would grow and flourish into a strong community, able to serve as a new central focal point, just about the time that the older center would slide off the stage into oblivion. This cycle has repeated itself time and time again.

In the 6th Century BCE, Babylonia conquered Israel - destroyed the Temple, took the King and a large population eastward into captivity. Some 50 years later they were given an opportunity to return, but few did. Instead a larger community started to grow in the area of Babylon known today as Iraq.

By the 2nd century CE, after all rebellions had failed, Jerusalem, Masada and Caesarea fell, and Rome sowed Jerusalem with salt. The Babylonian Diaspora was strong enough to take center stage and lasted in that position for the next 800 creative years. The Talmud was produced there, as well as the Siddur; the Sanhedren was maintained, as were the two great academies of Sura and Pumbeditha; the synagogue was established as the central institution; sustained the population on a pleasant level.

During the succeeding centuries, from the 3rd to 10th, a wide-spread Diaspora planted itself wherever the Roman legions went - into the Rhine River valley; across to England; throughout France and Italy; wherever Christianity went - as well as into Asia minor, Greece and the Caucasus, where the large-scale Khazar conversion to Judaism occurred; and wherever Islam went in its march across North Africa. But of all these pockets of settlement, one, in Spain, sprouted the strongest roots, and progressed so solidly during the centuries that it became the new center as Babylonia gradually faded.

During the 11th to 14th centuries, in Spain were spawned the poets, philosophers, scholars, geographers, military commanders, rich merchants, and

political figures. In Spain was born Maimonides, the seminal figure of the truly influential with the monarchs. The age was so star-studded, sparkling, effervescent as to earn the appellation "golden".

While this volatile creativity was spreading its glow, no attention was paid to a new nest being prepared far to the east, in Poland and Russia. Jews from the Caucasus migrated northward and Jews from Germany migrated eastward. Slowly, imperceptibly, some dynamic historic force was in operation preparing for that moment when the Christian victory over Islam in Spain would bring the Jewish world crashing down as well. The combination of the pressure from the inquisition and the final expulsion snuffed out the Golden Age in 1492.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, a tiny band settled in the Caribbean and Brazil starting a new nest to be ready in a few centuries to play its role. As the Spanish expellees settled in varying numbers throughout Portugal, Italy, North Africa, Turkey, and the Netherlands, the Jewish population of Poland - Russia was accelerating rapidly and assuming the role of new creative center of the Jewish people. External problems of pogroms and poverty were indeed oppressive, but internally the people created for themselves a kingdom of the spirit, focusing on tradition, schoolroom, synagogue and home. There may have been only one decent meal per week, on Shabbat, but there was a form of self-government in the small shtetl communities which offered support and mutual

dependency. Talmudic academies flourished in the north while Chasidism suffused the south. From Vilna down to Odessa a vast heartland developed containing millions and millions of Jews. It was called the Pale of Settlement. This population was creative in Yiddish and Hebrew, traditional in observance, yet adjusted to the outside gentile world as the political and intellectual emancipation after the French Revolution reached them.

Who could dream that this populous world would ever come to a swift and murderous end in the middle of the 20th century? No one - except that mysterious force in history which was always ahead of the curve.

Toward the 3rd quarter of the 19th century, two phenomena cast their shadows forward. First - the tiny band of 23 which had landed in New Amsterdam in 1654 had grown in 200 years to a quarter-million, and formed a base strong enough to receive whatever waves of future immigration would roll onto American shores.

Secondly, the torrent of nationalist sentiment exploding throughout Europe swept the Jews along with it and the movement of Zionism was born. Small groups of pioneers left for Turkish Palestine. Thus, something new was happening now - not the usual process of one new nest being prepared hundreds of years in advance while a great center was still at the height of its influence, even though inevitably doomed to obsolescence and disappearance.

What was happening in the 1860's and 70's was the preparation of two

nests - one to the west and one to the east. What was history's plan now?

Would only one of them become the new center? Was one doomed to failure?

Why were two necessary? What strange happenings were growing in history's womb?

In 1881 the terrorist bomb which mortally wounded Czar Alexander Nikolayevich II, the enlightened autocrat who was called The Liberator for his role in emancipating the serfs - that bomb also blew up the Pale of Settlement with its millions of Jews. The successor Czar Alexander III was a rigid reactionary who approved a law the following year calling for the death of 1/3 of the Jews, conversion of another third, and forced emigration of the third remaining. The flood started speeding up and slowed down only with the advent of WWI in 1914. Between 2 and 3 million came to the U.S. - another million to countries in the free world. A few thousand to Palestine - and they have grown to almost 5 million today.

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rabbi Max Arzt Memorial Dinner

June 16, 1993

"THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT: A QUESTION OF WILL"

by Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

Chancellor Schorsh, Chairman Wexner, honored faculty, colleagues, dear wife Francine and children, fellow Wexnerites from so many cities, ladies and gentlemen:

In the handsome invitation to this evening's dinner, there is a sentence describing Rabbi Mark Arzt in whose memory this award is given. It said, "He came to the Seminary to be a spokesman and to help raise funds. Throughout his fund-raising endeavors, he always remained a Rabbi and taught Torah wherever he travelled". This description comes uncommonly close to the course of my own life. Thus accepting this award in his name leaves me with a comfortable feeling.

May I express personal appreciation to the Chancellor and the Seminary for crossing denominational lines in their selection of an Honoree.

Demonstrating the principle of Klal Yisrael is very important in today's religiously polarized world.

Leslie Wexner is bombarded with requests to chair communal endeavors. He has hands on responsibility for running the largest retail clothing chain in the United States. And now he is filled with the desire to spend as much time as possible with Abigail, his lovely new bride. In the face of all this, he stepped forward and volunteered to lead this dinner to success. I am grateful for the honor he has done me.

I should like to speak this evening on two subjects: my personal credo - so that you may know the religious and philosophical bases for my actions; and secondly, my fears and hopes for the future of the American Jewish community.

I believe in the uniqueness of the Jewish people. Even as we share the quality of human-ness with all others of the species homo sapiens, still we are quite different in so many ways. And if we were not different, we probably would have disappeared, as have all the others who started on the path of history when we did. You know the three elements of our uniqueness. First there is the covenantal nature of our birth as a nation, in which we were linked to a God and a moral code. Next, this was succeeded by the acceptance of an eternal destiny through the concept of redemption by a Messiah, in which a better world would be born for all humans to enjoy. How incredible! And lastly, there came the notion that the moral Covenant and the Messianic redemption must also be linked with a specific Land - a homeland-gained and lost, gained and lost - but the very yearning for which provided the strength to endure the passage of the centuries. Now the land is gained again, in our own

time, and we hope, for all time. How miraculous!

I believe in Judaism's gift to humanity. Alongside our uniqueness and separateness and particularity as a special people, we possess a quality of universalism in a measure which no other people or nation on earth, large or small, can claim. We are a people which truly believes in the equality of all persons; our sacred books stress that all human beings come from one God.

I believe the Diaspora is an integral part of the creative genius of the Jewish people, and our history offers plentiful proof of this thesis. The Diaspora has been a fruitful hinterland providing intellectual spark and charismatic personalities. The American Jewish future is cloudy, at the moment. But if it finds its way and maintains its Jewish identity in the midst of unprecedented freedom, there is the possibility that it will outstrip all previous Diaspora in terms of what it might achieve for Jewish creativity and continuity. So, here are the four seminal, simple beliefs that have directed my deeds and ruled my life, now in its eighth decade. The Chosenness of the Jewish people, its linkage to a Land, its Universal message for all mankind and the creativity of its ever-loyal Diaspora.

Turning to the Diaspora on this continent, we see American Jewry at the very height of its power, in all dimensions and aspects: unparalled material affluence; unexcelled political influence; the highest level ever of education and professional skills in its population; a solid self-awareness and sense of responsibility in that portion of our people which cares; the strongest system of

communal organization we have ever enjoyed. Entrepreneurship and education have brought us to these heights.

Lest hubris bring us crashing down, we must quickly recognize and admit to several deadly weaknesses which are in striking contrast to the picture just painted: massive ignorance of our heritage, leading to wide-spread assimilation; and a lack of respect for our traditions and values, leading to increasing rates of intermarriage, which cause the eventual disappearance of multitudes of nominal Jews. These are plagues which kill, gaping holes in the hull below the water-line which can sink the ship.

We should be able to overcome these weaknesses but the key question is whether we have the will to do so. The damage done during the past half-century must be reversed, but this will never happen if we merely make speeches, hold conferences, appoint task forces and commission studies. All of that is simply bureaucratic busy-work. We do not need any more studies to tell us what we already know. We need strong remedial action on a scale no one has ever suggested. There are five basic action programs which we know will go a long way toward saving us. These programs will require billions and billions and billions of dollars.

1. A network of day schools must be built, going all the way to grade 12, with standards equal to the finest private schools in the country. Hundreds of such schools are required, beautiful to look at, with ample grounds for sports, laboratories, libraries, club rooms, and top-level teachers in both Hebraic and general studies. I do not mean to denigrate in any way the achievements by so

many sincere lay people and professionals who have labored for so many decades to build day schools, but all their work has produced a grand total of 66 Solomon Schechter schools, embracing 16,000 children in the entire U.S., with only a handful of these schools going beyond grade 8. The first Schechter high school in Manhattan was established at the Seminary just last year. Should we take comfort that at least this much has been created, or should we weep and be challenged to respond to the real need? A huge national effort must be organized and coordinated to construct hundreds of Jewish day schools of Andover and Exeter quality, sending forth annually tens of thousands of committed, eager, proud young men and women.

2. Day school tuition today represents a crippling cost for average middle class families and often the cost becomes the compelling fact in the decision not to enroll their children. More parents than you think do toy with the thought of day school because they know intuitively that this intense education will help solidify the Jewish shape, identity and character of their children. But they are daunted by the costs which run into the thousands per year, even at the pre-kindergarten level. Simply stated, tuition should be free, or at most, a small symbolic amount, and the heavy millions for maintaining the school system in every town should be borne by total community funding, backed up by a national fund which will ease the burden for smaller and weaker communities.

3. Young people must be sent to Israel for a whole year, once during their high school period and once again during their college careers to study and

experience Israel, learning the language and loving the land. Residency in Israel is not a magic bullet which will automatically make a practicing and knowledgeable Jew out of every student, but all authorities agree that Israel does exercise a most powerful impact on these impressionable young folk.

4. Every college campus in America with one hundred or more Jewish students resident thereon should have a Center for Jewish Life, a.k.a. Hillel House. The professional staff must include the very best of the fresh young rabbinical graduates, with older and seasoned rabbinical personnel added to those campuses whose Jewish population reaches into the thousands. There are more than 400,000 Jewish young men and women attending the colleges and universities of this country. They are just a few years away from marriage. The campus is the final place where we can battle for their hearts and minds. The campus is the field into which we should plow the most money, the best personnel, the most enticing and imaginative programs. Instead, we are investing here the least of all.

5. Summer camps are incubators which bear great fruit. Everyone knows this. Several good years spent at an excellent summer camp, during the ages 10-15, will plant seeds, of ideology, ritual practice, habit and some Hebrew language. The Camp Ramah system consisting of only 6 camps, accommodating at most 5,000 kids, was virtually sold-out last summer and this. Creating enough attractive summer camps for all the youngsters in every town must be an item on the agenda of the total community together with a national funding program. Cost to the family must be minimal.

Do you sense the drift? The national community of all Jews in the United States who care about the continuity of our people and its heritage must accept the responsibility for establishing and maintaining a multi-billion dollar overarching program, from day school through college, including camps and long stays in Israel. All this effort would be directed toward the goal of increasing the sense of respect, pride, even love, which our young people can be made to feel for their Jewish identity. The ultimate objective is to make it hard for them to toss away their heritage casually or thoughtlessly; instead, to make it easier for them to cherish their tradition. If they will have learned something about their Judaism, come to recognize its worth, and pledge themselves to its preservation for yet one more generation, then our future will be safer than it would now appear.

New national mechanisms will have to be designed. The Council of Jewish Federations is turning itself into a Parliamentary democracy, based on a Board of Delegates (2 from each community) which can rather quickly make decisions on a national basis which the majority of communities will accept. That is a giant step forward. New leaders can be mobilized. A national consensus shaped. A massive funding mechanism constructed.

The United Jewish Appeal is turning inward toward internal needs. The executive vice-president has issued a call for sending 100,000 American Jewish kids to Israel every summer. Another giant step. But we would need to build an infrastructure in Israel to absorb them.

Lastly, the congregations and rabbis of America, of all denominations, the most gigantically underutilized force in the Jewish arsenal, must step out of the four walls of their synagogues into the broader light of the total community. They are a resource, for initiating converts into the peoplehood of Israel; for building community schools; for providing heavy manpower for the huge communal tasks lying ahead; for lending their professional cadres to the public campaigns necessary to sell the idea to the entire Jewish population that the "learning deficit" from the past must be reduced by raising the "educational taxes" for the future.

The brittleness which once characterized congregational-federation relationships must be replaced by genuine cooperation and a sense that the goals of each partner are not separate and competitive. The destiny of each is linked with the fate of the other. I feel that a comprehension of this fact is beginning to stir.

Seminaries must teach the same truth to their students. A vigorous search must recruit candidates for the rabbinate who are already communally minded and their orientation during the years of rabbinical studies must include the option of careers in community service, as well as in the pulpit. The Chancellor's report at the recent Seminary Board meeting alluded to this concept. What a gain it would be in this struggle for continuity if executive directors possessed a strong background in Jewish learning in addition to social work or business administration.

Opinions of experts vary:

Arthur Hertzberg is pessimistic about our future in America.

Charles Silberman is optimistic.

Steven Cohen, the social scientist, entitled his recent book with a question:

"American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?" That means he's not sure.

Jacob Marcus, the 92 year-old dean of American Jewish historians, believes we are entering an American Golden Age.

I am not certain where we are going, but I do know that anything we set our mind to is possible, so I know where we could go if we wished.

This program for continuity demands an act of will of such dimensions as have not yet ever existed in the 3 1/2 centuries of our life in these United States. All this is doable because there is no limit to the talent and ability and financial resources within our constituency. We can become whatever we wish. We can become the strongest Diaspora which ever existed in all history, or we can be witness to our own extinction, within the next century.

Stephen Wise showed how the possession of a large vision itself created the characteristics which would guarantee its attainment.

"Vision," he said, "looks inward and becomes duty. Vision looks outward and becomes aspiration. Vision looks upward and becomes faith."

Prodded by a sense of duty, ennobled by a sense of aspiration, sustained by a sense of faith, our little lives can acquire a dimension of incredible strength. Each one of us can become a small nuclear engine, driving with enormous power toward the goal: a free people living in a safe prosperous Israel, and in a creatively Jewish proud Diaspora, sharing the fruits of a good society with all neighbors in a democratic peaceful world, working for the betterment of all humanity. We belong to a people bold enough to have conceived, at the ancient beginning of existence, an end-view of human history. How audacious of this small tribe to have articulated, so early on, the grandest vision for humanity's final destiny - the concept of a messianic age in which the human species would someday create a world based on its highest values. We should be fiercely proud of ourselves as sons and daughters of the people Israel.

So - this is your dream to have and to hold, to cherish and make real, to give to your children and grandchildren as the most precious gift in the world. Make it come true. Make it come true.