



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 13, Folder 7, Buber, Martin Centennial Study Conference & Tour, 1977.

May 27, 1977

Rabbi Leonard Zion
145 Hanover Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Dear Leonard:

As I promised when we had lunch earlier this week, I have discussed our conversation with Marc -- who sends his apologies for not meeting with you that day -- and I am submitting the following rough proposal for you to share with your associates at Garber Travel.

1. The American Jewish Committee would be the coordinators for the Martin Buber Centennial Study Tour and Conference with Marc added to the International Advisors Committee listed in your present brochure and working closely with Marvin Fox.
2. We would contact several outstanding Christian scholars, specialists on Buber, to serve as keynote speakers at the Conference. At least one of these would also be asked to serve as the "Christian tour leader" who would, with one of the Jewish leaders to be decided on, stay with the tour from beginning to end.
3. Presuming that the dates, January 3rd through 5th, are set for the Conference at Ben Gurion University, we would aim for a maximum of 150 top level quality Christian and Jewish scholars, academics, seminary presidents, etc., stressing that they might carefully select a number of highly qualified graduate students to share this experience with them.
4. The Conference itself would remain in the hands of the Committee as Fox has organized it, along with Marc's input and the input of the Christian scholars to be selected but the itinerary of the study tour itself would be the responsibility of this office and our office in Jerusalem with whom I coordinate this program. Basically, I would recommend a minimum nine-night tour program with at least five of those nights to be spent in Jerusalem, perhaps one additional night in Beersheva for special programming on some socio-political-historical contents not touched on in the Conference itself and perhaps several nights at an Orthodox kibbutz guest house (I realize that

Rabbi Leonard Zion
May 27, 1977

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if we really get 150 people, we may need more than one guest house but that's a problem we can work out when the time comes). The final night could be in Tel Aviv. Programming for these days would combine meetings with leaders in government, education and interreligious dialogue and with particular emphasis on those areas of Buber's interest touching on Arab-Jewish rapprochement.

5. We would be willing to use our extensive mailing lists to bring information on this tour to the attention of Jewish and Christian leaders and scholars around the country.

6. Finally, we would obviously have to cover our expenses for this work and would require a guarantee from Garber covering our mailing costs plus a \$20 per participant fee for the balance of the arrangements.

Please let us know, after you have discussed this outline with Garber, whether you wish to enter into this proposed agreement or if you have any questions about what we are proposing. If you have time on the 6th, when you're in New York, perhaps you'll want to stop by to discuss this proposal.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Inge Lederer Gibel
National Coordinator
Visitors to Israel Program

ILG/es

cc: Marc H. Tanenbaum

June 22, 1977

Leonard Zion

Marc H. Tanenbaum and Inge Lederer Gibel

Martin Buber Centennial Study Conference and Tour

We attach much importance to your proposal regarding the possibilities of AJC central involvement in the observance of a Martin Buber Centennial Year, beginning in 1978, and the organization of an interreligious tour in connection with it. A quick word about our assumptions:

1) As we well know, and as a recent AJC survey of Christian literature about Buber confirms, Martin Buber represents one of the most positive Jewish influences in key intellectual and spiritual centers of both Protestant and Catholic communities, as well as among vanguard Evangelicals. As Dr. Frank Eakin, Jr., professor of Religion at the University of Virginia, has written:

"Buber is crucially important to me as one who both called into question traditional Christological statements and affirmed anew and emphatically the humanity of Jesus. Buber was a sensitive advocate of many concerns which are basic to my own Judeo-Christian faith position...The distinction which he drew between I-Thou relationships and I-It experiences has permeated religion, education, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. It is also an invitation to healthy and productive living...Finally, I could never relegate Buber to an exclusively Jewish niche. Christians individually and the Church are infinitely richer because of him."

2) In the real world of present-day Israeli politics, and in American-Israeli relations under the President Carter administration, a Martin Buber Centennial observance, well-organized and well-publicized, could only help strengthen the positive and creative image of Jewish contributions to Western civilization, and thereby reinforce the moral claims of Judaism on Christian peoples at its highest levels of value.

In light of this, AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department is prepared to consider seriously the following options for making the Centennial a major international intellectual event:

a) Help establish an American sponsoring body of leading Christian and Jewish personalities who would support the Centennial Year both symbolically and practically;

b) Call a meeting of such personalities in September or early October to brainstorm a series of significant activities in Israel (and in America) that would lift up Buber's contributions to Christians and Jews;

c) Assist in the interpretation of the "Jewish scholars" meeting on Buber scheduled now for January 3-5, in Jerusalem as the first of a series of major events for the Centennial;

d) Plan and implement at least one major international conference of leading Christian and Jewish scholars in Jerusalem in mid-1978. This might be focused on Buber's impact on the religious interrelationship between Jews and Christians. To that extent the conference would have a strongly "theological" bent, and its appeal would be addressed heavily to Christian theologians, clergy, seminarians, Christian institutional leadership.

In view, however, of Buber's considerable impact on other areas of thought and ideas - education, sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology - it is also important to conceive of this as an international meeting whose theme would be more broadly conceived, something like:

"The Legacy of Martin Buber of the World of Ideas and Culture."

Such a broader concept would allow for an appeal to specialized groups in each of the above-mentioned areas of intellectual discipline, central among which would be the religious influence. There would also be a key session on Buber's commitment to Jewish-Arab rapprochement.

e) An interreligious tour would be organized for the conference, which would serve as the first section of such a tour for academicians, ministers, seminarians and religious writers. AJC's Visitors to Israel program would accept primary responsibility for conceiving, planning and implementing the tour, which would be tailored to the interests of the various groups of specialists that might become involved. Garber Travel would be the agent for the tour.

f) AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department would have a definite interest in the publication of proceedings, assuming that prepared papers and the discussions are of high quality caliber.

g) There would also be a positive value to be gained from concentrated involvement of the mass media. A TV documentary on Martin Buber using film clips of him (if such are available) and excerpts from the conference proceedings would make a great deal of sense. When you consider how much benefit has been derived from the TV interview with the late Dr. Abraham J. Heschel, especially on Christian audiences, you have some estimate of the possibilities for positive effects from a Buber TV film.

h) An enterprising program of this kind will raise the question of funding and possible foundation grants. This would require consultation with Bert Gold.

MHT/ILG/es

cc: Bertram H. Gold

P.S. Additional agreement based on ILG May 27 letter to LZ, particularly paragraphs 1, 5 and 6.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

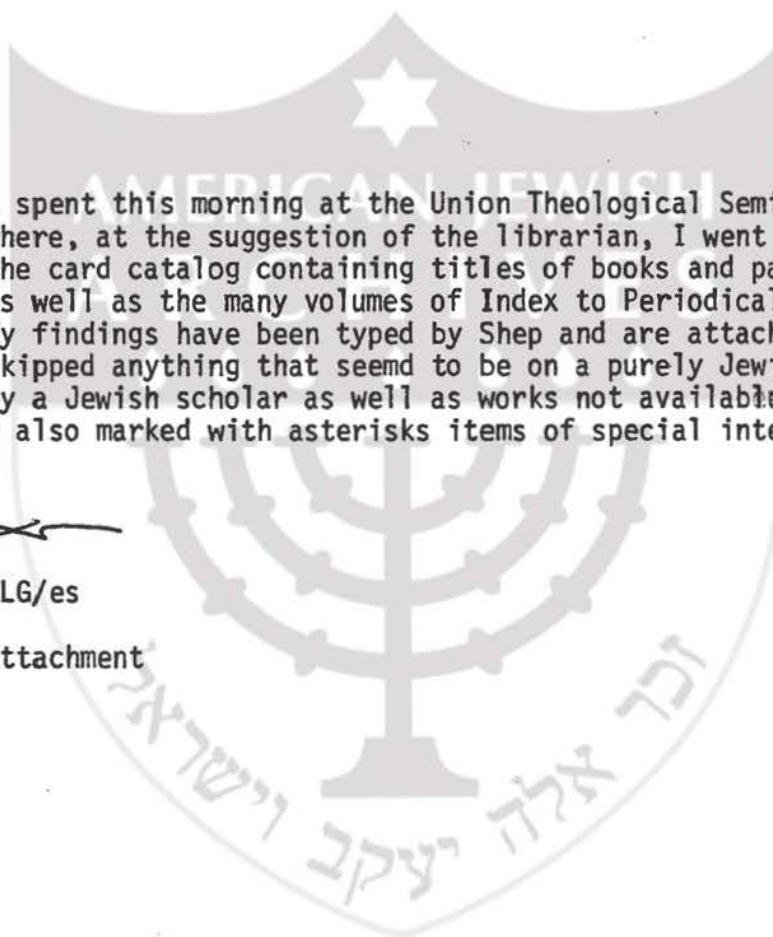
date July 29, 1977
to Marc H. Tanenbaum
from Inge Lederer Gibel
subject

I spent this morning at the Union Theological Seminary where, at the suggestion of the librarian, I went through the card catalog containing titles of books and pamphlets as well as the many volumes of Index to Periodical Literature. My findings have been typed by Shep and are attached. I skipped anything that seemed to be on a purely Jewish theme by a Jewish scholar as well as works not available in English. I also marked with asterisks items of special interest.



ILG/es

Attachment



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Herbert Mead & Martin Buber
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Pendle Hill Publication 1973
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Cornell University Press 1968
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TO: LEONARD ZION

FROM: MARC H. TANENBAUM AND INGE GIBEL

DATE: JUNE 20, 1977

RE: MARTIN BUBER CENTENNIAL STUDY CONFERENCE AND TOUR

We attach much importance to your proposal regarding the possibilities of AJC central involvement in the observance of a Martin Buber Centennial Year, beginning in 1978, and the organization of interreligious tours in connection with it. A quick word about our assumptions:

AJC

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of leading Christian and Jewish scholars in Jerusalem in mid-1978. This might be more narrowly focused on Buber's impact on the religious interrelationship between Jews and Christians. In that event, the conference would have a strongly "theological" bent, and its appeal would be addressed more heavily to Christian theologians, clergy, seminarians, Christian institutional leadership.

In view, however, of Buber's considerable impact on other areas of thought and ideas - education, sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology - it is also quite possible to conceive of an international meeting whose theme would be more broadly conceived, something like:

"The Legacy of Martin Buber of the World of Ideas and Culture".

Such a broader concept would allow for an appeal to specialized groups in each of the above-mentioned areas of intellectual discipline, central among which would be the religious influence.

e) Interreligious tour could be organized to implement either model - the Jewish-and-Christian dialogue tour; or the "interdisciplinary tour" model. In either case, AJC's Visitors to Israel program would accept primary responsibility for conceiving, planning, and implementing the tour programs. These would be tailored to the specialized of the various groups of specialists that might become involved in one or more Buber Centennial conferences.

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Rabbi Leonard Zion

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Please let us know, after you have discussed this outline with Garber, whether you wish to enter into this proposed agreement or if you have any questions about what we are proposing.

It was a real pleasure getting to know you a bit and I very much look forward to our future cooperation.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

cc: Marc H. Tanenbaum

Inge Lederer Gibel