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Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 63, Folder 8, Israel and Libby Mowshowitz Award, 1992.

[speech by Dr. Solomon Mowshowitz,
presenter of Mowshowitz prize to
Rabbi Tanenbaum]

**PRESENTATION TO RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM
ISRAEL AND LIBBY MOWSHOWITZ AWARD
Wednesday April 29, 1992
New York board of Rabbis**

We regret that Rabbi Tanenbaum can't be here this morning, all the more so because it is on account of his health. We wish him a Refuah Shelemah b'toch sh'ar cholei Yisrael. Considering that it is right and proper to speak more freely of an individual lashevach in his absence than one may in his presence, let us take this opportunity to do so.

I am grateful that Mrs. Tanenbaum could be here to accept this presentation. Rabbi Tanenbaum once said about her: "...during our years together, Georgette has made me possible." At the time, no doubt, he spoke graciously and truthfully. I know this, because "Truth with Grace" is a formula from which he has sought never to deviate.

I
They say that when Eddie Cantor began to make real money he went out and bought himself - of all things - a yacht. He even bought himself a snappy nautical-looking captain's uniform so he could look the part. He just couldn't wait to show this outfit off - so symbolic of his having "arrived" - to his mother.

"Look Ma!" he said, I'm a captain. His mother (who must have been a lot like my mother) looked him skeptically up and down.

She sighed: "By you, Eddie, you're a captain; and by me, you're a captain; but by the Captains are you a captain?"

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, today's recipient of the Israel & Libby Mowshowitz award, is by the Captains of this world, an acknowledged and formidable captain. New York Magazine described Rabbi Tanenbaum as "...the foremost Jewish ecumenical leader in the world today."

National and international organizations, religious, political and civic leaders around the world, heads of state, popes and presidents have taken to heart and benefitted from Rabbi Tanenbaum's counsel, wisdom and occasionally - his candid criticism.

II
In his former capacities as National Interreligious affairs director and as Director of International Relations at the American Jewish Committee, Rabbi Tanenbaum represented and communicated effectively the Jewish Reality around the world - to leaders, organizations and governments, at the highest level. He was the only Rabbi at Vatican Council II. We are only now beginning to recognize fully the colossal historic significance of Nostra Aetate. Rabbi Tanenbaum's participation was crucial for the delicate diplomatic challenges associated with the drafting of Nostra Aetate.

III
Rabbi Tanenbaum served as a member of the prestigious Human Rights Research Committee of the Foreign Policy Association's study of Priorities for the 1980's. He has testified before both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Rabbi Tanenbaum's accomplishments, achievements, credentials - I cannot recite them all! What I will attempt in my brief time is to go beyond these accolades and ask: how did they come about? Why is it that when Rabbi Tanenbaum talks, world leaders listen? What has earned him universal respect? What are the personal values that are the engine of his luminous career?

IV

First of all, there is the breadth of Rabbi Tanenbaum's vision. He looks beyond the immediate event and sees things clearly in their wide historical perspective. He knows the difference between b'chiah l'dorot and b'chiah shel chinam, recognizes when to compromise and when to insist.

Second, there is the breadth not only of his vision, but also of his human concern. While we all recognize Rabbi Tanenbaum's struggles on behalf of the Jewish People, some may not be as informed about with his work on behalf of refugees and victims of war and oppression all over the world, including Lebanese, Nigerians, Ugandans and Haitians. Notably, his efforts on behalf of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia contributed significantly to the saving of tens of thousands of lives. The National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry, which Rabbi Tanenbaum founded and co-chaired has aided not only Jews in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but oppressed Christians as well.

Above all is Rabbi Tanenbaum's supremacy in communication. There has never been more at stake for us Jews in achieving effective communication of our point of view. Rabbi Tanenbaum has attained a crucial balance between Public Relations and real dialogue, between advocacy and substantive communication, between diplomacy and authenticity. He has transformed the traditional role of the shtadlan: to transcend shtadlanut... Public Relations, yes - but also real dialogue. Advocacy, yes - but also genuine communication. Diplomacy, certainly - but also authenticity.

Breadth of vision, of human concern, genius for communication: all of these would not amount to anything were it not for Rabbi Tanenbaum's, diligence, professionalism and hard work. It is revealing that in his response on receiving the prestigious "Interfaith Award" of the International Council of Christians and Jews in May of 1988, Rabbi Tanenbaum said that his adopted three-fold motto was "be effective, know the facts and do it right."

V

I'm told that in some circles Rabbi Tanenbaum has acquired the somewhat ironic title of "Navi Lagoyim" - prophet (or spokesman) to the Gentiles. Let's inspect this title more closely.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, as you well know, was not the first to have it. The title of "Prophet to the Gentiles" was first given by God to the prophet Jeremiah. One might have thought that such a title would be more aptly applied to a prophet such as Jonah - who spoke (albeit reluctantly) to Goyim, and whose message was directed primarily at them. But Jeremiah, the first Navi Lagoyim, spoke to the hearts of the Jewish people, as he does to this day.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, in his capacity of Navi Lagoyim also speaks directly to the Jewish heart. He has recognized that in order to communicate the Jewish Reality to others, we must have a clear vision of it ourselves. The way we talk to others both reflects and illuminates who we are, and who we believe we are.

We are grateful for Rabbi Tanenbaum's diplomatic mastery, but even more enriched by his vision of ourselves, for the crucial sense of balance that shows Jews how to be in the World.

First, passionate concern for Jews, but not only for Jews, and not only for Public Relations purposes... to have the kind of world in which the Jew and the Jewish people can live.

Second, how shall we communicate with Goyim in the post-holocaust era? How to recognize what things have changed, and what those changes demand? Our guides are Rabbi Tanenbaum's unwavering clarity and sense of balance - neither grovelling shtadlanut nor angry solipsistic rhetoric will serve, but only his formula of Truth with Grace.

Finally, Rabbi Tanenbaum's central message to us is to take the idea seriously that Jews bring something to the World.

Rabbi Tanenbaum has spoken of his passion for making a real difference for the good, and an abiding faith that what we do can matter.

This has also been the lesson I have been taught - through word and deed - by my parents. It was with great difficulty that they came this morning. My parents are here because Rabbi Tanenbaum has earned their unqualified respect and affection. That alone, is good enough for me.

It is therefore a privilege and an honor for me to present Rabbi Tanenbaum with the Israel and Libby Mowshowitz Award.



The New York Board of Rabbis



Cordially invites you to the

RABBI ISRAEL AND LIBBY MOWSHOWITZ CONFERENCE

Wednesday morning, April 29 at 10:30 A.M.

at

*The New York Board of Rabbis
10 East 73rd Street
New York City*

At which time the Mowshowitz Prize will be presented to

RABBI MARC TANENBAUM

Rabbi Tanenbaum will deliver the Lecture

"Why Jewish-Christian Relations?"

RSVP: (212) 879-8415

Luncheon Meeting for Officers and Board of Governors at 12:00 Noon



MAZEL TOV!!

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, has been a pioneering leader and thinker in interreligious relations and social justice movements during the past 30 years. A modern historian, writing recently in Commentary magazine, characterized Rabbi Tanenbaum as "the leading figure among Jewish ecumenists" in fields of interreligious relations and social justice. Newsweek magazine recently devoted its Religion section to an interview with Rabbi Tanenbaum describing him as "the American Jewish community's foremost apostle to the gentiles...who has been able to solicit support from all factions of the Jewish community." In a cover story entitled "The Ten Most Powerful Rabbis," New York magazine (January 22, 1979) described Rabbi Tanenbaum as "the foremost Jewish ecumenical leader in the world today."

A poll of America's religion newspaper editors published in the Christian Century in January 1978, voted Rabbi Tanenbaum one of the ten most respected and influential religious leaders in America (he was ranked fourth after Dr. Billy Graham, Dr. Martin Marty, and President Jimmy Carter.) Sacred Heart University of Bridgeport, Connecticut, conferred an honorary doctorate on the rabbi - his tenth doctorate - characterizing him as "The Human Rights Rabbi of America."

In February and December 1978, he was invited by the International Rescue Committee to join delegations of prominent American leaders to carry out fact-finding investigations of the plight of Vietnamese "boat people" and Cambodian refugees in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The IRC reports to and meetings with President Carter and heads of other governments contributed to the saving of the lives of tens of thousands of Indochinese refugees.

President Carter invited Rabbi Tanenbaum as the American Jewish leader among ten national religious spokesmen to discuss "the State of the Nations" at Camp David "summit" meetings on July 10, 1979. The rabbi is the Jewish spokesman at the January 10, 1980, White House Conference on Energy and Conservation.

Recently he served as the American Jewish consultant to the NBC-TV nine-hour 'special' dramatizing "The Holocaust" and earlier was consultant to the NBC-TV 'special' "Jesus of Nazareth." President Carter appointed Marc Tanenbaum to serve on the Advisory Committee of the President's Commission on the Holocaust and as co-chairman with Senator John Danforth for the National Holocaust observances. In March 1979 he was invited to consult with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and German parliamentary officials in Bonn on the abolition of the statute of limitations on Nazi war criminals and other murderers. Rabbi Tanenbaum was invited by West German government authorities to head a delegation in 1978 that consulted with Oberammergau officials on the revision of that Passion Play for the removal of anti-Semitic contents.

Rabbi Tanenbaum is a founder and co-secretary of Joint Vatican International Jewish Consultative Committee and of a similar liaison body with the World Council of Churches. He was the only rabbi at Vatican Council II, where he was widely consulted by Catholic and Protestant authorities during the deliberations that led to the Vatican Declaration on Non-Christian Relations which repudiated anti-Semitism and called for fraternal dialogue between Christians and Jews. In March 1979, he participated in the first official audience of world Jewish leaders with Pope John Paul II in Vatican City, and he was an official delegate welcoming the Pope at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York during his triumphal visit in October 1979.

One of America's most effective and popular lecturers and orators, Rabbi Tanenbaum has lectured at major universities, seminaries, religious and educational bodies in the United States, Europe, and Israel and at numerous national and international conferences. He has served as visiting professor at the Graduate Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, and has lectured at Cambridge University, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Graduate Theological Union, Notre Dame, Catholic University, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the U.S. Air Force University and the U.S. Army College.

Rabbi Tanenbaum was appointed in May 1976 to serve as chairman of the Jewish-Christian Relations Commission of the New York Board of Rabbis, which is comprised of 1,000 Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform rabbis and is the oldest and largest rabbinic organization of its kind in the world.

Under his direction the American Jewish Committee has involved major Jewish scholars and religious leaders in national academic institutes and seminars with every major branch of Christendom - Roman Catholic, mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox, and Black Churches, with similar programs in every major city in the United States. Rabbi Tanenbaum has also served as co-chairman of the first international colloquium on "Religion, Land, Nationalism, and Peoplehood," held at Hebrew University in 1970 which involved the participation of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, African religions, as well as Christians and Jews. He also served as co-chairman of the first International Colloquium on Judaism and Christianity held at Harvard Divinity School in 1966. He also helped organize a congress of African leaders on "The Bible and Black Africa" in Jerusalem, and served as co-chairman with Prof. C. Eric Lincoln of the first national consultation on Black-Jewish Relations at Fisk University.

Rabbi Tanenbaum has directed the landmark religious research studies examining intergroup content in Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish teaching materials in the United States, Italy, Spain, French-speaking countries, Germany and Latin America. These studies have been the basis of the revision of virtually all negative stereotypes in the textbooks produced in the 1970s.

A major force in the promotion of social justice and human rights, Rabbi Tanenbaum helped organize the American Jewish Emergency Relief Effort for Victims of the Nigerian-Biafran Conflict; has aided refugees from Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ireland, Cyprus and Lebanon, Bangladesh; he is national co-chairman of the Interreligious Coalition on World Hunger; and national co-chairman of the Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry. He was also a founder and program chairman of the historic National Conference on Religion and Race, which has been regarded as a turning point for the promotion of civil rights in the 1960s. He has served on various Presidential, White House, and United Nations commissions on children and aging, race relations, and food and population problems.

Rabbi Tanenbaum has been frequently invited to serve as a Jewish spokesman before various Congressional and Senate Committee hearings - the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on "Moral Aspects of American Foreign Policy" (Jan. 1976); Senate Special Hearings on World Hunger and America's Food Policy (Dec. 1974); the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearings on Jerusalem, and the Joint Congressional Hearings on the Helsinki Accords with regard to "Religious Liberty and Minority Rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe." He has lectured on moral issues before members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, the U.S. Army, Navy Chaplain Corps, U.S. Marine Corps, and the Air Force Academy. He also served on the 1980's Project on Human Rights of the Council on Foreign Relations, and as a member of the steering committee of the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Committee's Citizen Dialogue.

Rabbi Tanenbaum is the author and co-editor of "Speaking of God Today," "The Jerusalem Colloquium," "Our Moral Resources for International Cooperation" (in collaboration with Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr), "Religious Values in an Age of Violence," "Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation" Scripture, Theology and History," "Greek Orthodox and Jewish Dialogue," "American Religious Values and the Future of America." His essay on the "Holy Year and Its Origins in the Jewish Jubilee Year," published by the Vatican Commission on the Holy Year in 1975 has appeared in French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch and Japanese. He is also the interreligious academic consultant to the New Media Bible.

His other written works include A Guide to Jewish Traditions and Holy Days (Epic Records); co-authorship with Prof. Leonard Swidler of Jewish-Christian Dialogue (published by National Council of Catholic Men and Catholic Women). Rabbi Tanenbaum's essays and monographs on Jewish-Christian Relations, and on religion, social justice and world community have been published in such volumes as Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal (published by the University of Notre Dame Press and Association Press); Torah and Gospel (Sheed and Ward); The Star and the Cross (Bruce Publishing Company); Concilium, The International Review of Theology which published an essay of Rabbi Tanenbaum's on "How Modern Jews Celebrate Their History," and "Humor in the Talmud," in English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish. He has also contributed several articles on Catholic-Jewish relations published in Collier's Encyclopedia; as well as to numerous scholarly, religious, and general journals both here and abroad.

For program materials on Jewish-Christian Relations write to:

Interreligious Affairs Department
The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022
212-751-4000 Ext. 201

Marc H. Tanenbaum



Didn't Just Stand There

The Rabbi didn't...doesn't just stand there! He walks, runs, marches, rides and flies. He talks and confers. He listens and looks, writes, criticizes, and preaches. He prays. He does it all for religious co-existence, nationally and internationally. He is a modern Jewish apostle to the gentiles, to the Jews, to the world.

His odyssey began in Baltimore, in a family of Ukrainian immigrant background. The boy loved language and became a winning debater and orator. At 19, in 1945, he finished college, considered medical school. But he went on to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In 1950 he was ordained.

He was "there" when significant mainline Protestant-Jewish community discussions got going, circa 1951. From 1954-60 he was Executive Director of the Synagogue Council, developing it as a force for building associations between Jewish communal and religious agencies and with others. He was "there" in the '60s when Vatican II broke the ice for

Catholic-Jewish discussions.

He moved from an administrative role at the Synagogue Council to a program role at the American Jewish Committee, one of the major secular agencies that speaks for Jews of all shades of belief. Serving as Director of Interreligious Affairs he built his reputation as one of the most influential religious leaders in America.

Then, a logical move. He became the AJC's Director of International Relations. The job fits one with his world-wide experience and concern for human rights, refugees, problems of hunger, foreign relations.

The strength to keep going and doing. Where does it come from? The moral and spiritual courage? Try a deep personal faith, and a strong, supportive worshipping community.

Ask somebody who's tried it. Somebody like...Dr. Marc H. Tanenbaum, the man who is RIAL's 1983-84 Earle B. Pleasant awardee...for distinguished interreligious leadership.



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