



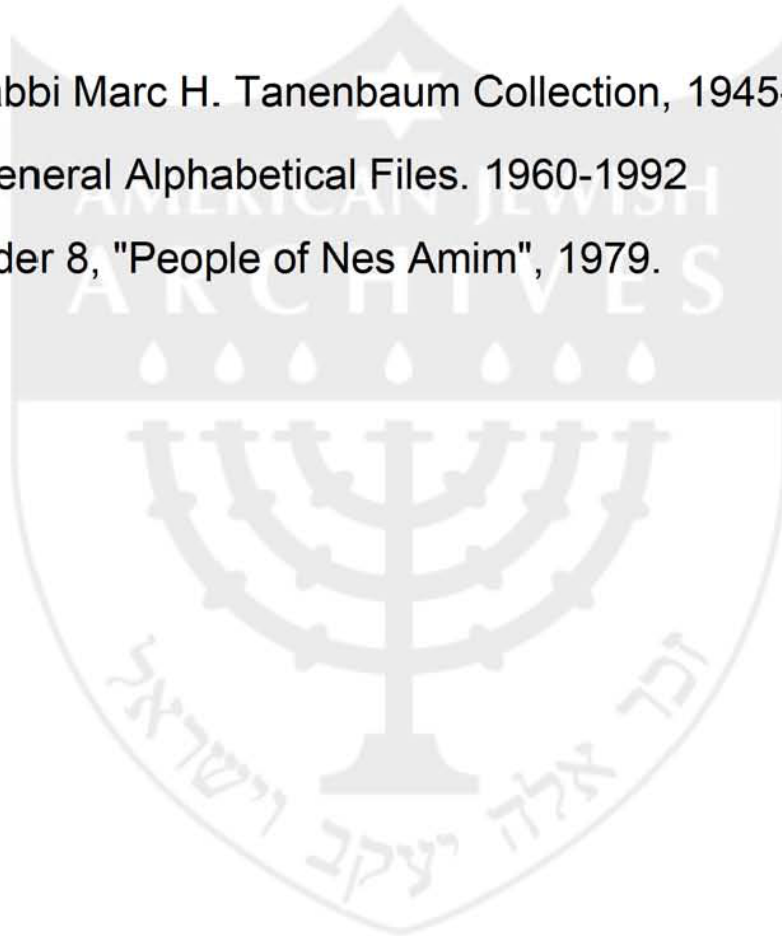
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 87, Folder 8, "People of Nes Amim", 1979.



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

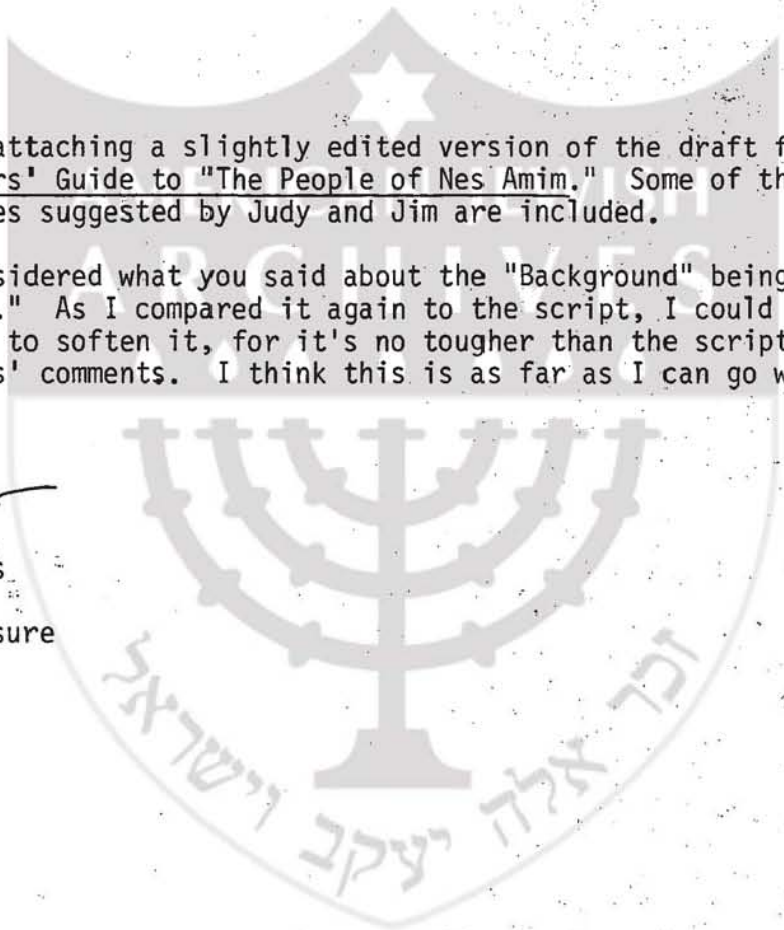
date March 14, 1979
to Marc H. Tanenbaum
from Inge Lederer Gibel
subject

I am attaching a slightly edited version of the draft for A Viewers' Guide to "The People of Nes Amim." Some of the changes suggested by Judy and Jim are included.

I considered what you said about the "Background" being "too tough." As I compared it again to the script, I could not agree to soften it, for it's no tougher than the script and Moyers' comments. I think this is as far as I can go with it.



ILG/es
Enclosure



A VIEWERS' GUIDEBILL MOYERS' DOCUMENTARY"THE PEOPLE OF NES AMIM"

"The People of Nes Amim" is a series of interviews with an extraordinary group of Christians, mostly Europeans, living in a collective settlement or "moshav" in Northern Israel. This one-hour documentary reports on the lives of some 120 people who support themselves by the cultivation of roses and avocados. Some of the younger people, ~~from Holland, Switzerland, Sweden and Germany,~~ come for a year. Others remain as part of the permanent community. This remarkable group of Christians are dedicated to a search for new understanding of the Christian roots of anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust, and the need for Christian solidarity with the people of Israel. The people of Nes Amim eschew any thought of conversion, any desire to be missionaries, both because they believe the Jews are already God's people, and also because of what has been done ^{to the Jewish} in the ^{people} name of Christianity.

Nes Amim, which means "A Sign to the Nations," is located in Northwestern Israel, between the shore of the Mediterranean and the hills of Galilee. Significantly, its closest neighbor is a Jewish collective called Lochamei Hagetaot (The Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz), not only because it houses one of Israel's major museums and research centers dealing with the Jewish revolts in the Nazi-organized ghettos of Eastern Europe ^{during World War II}, but because it was founded by the handful of people who survived that struggle.

Nes Amim was founded in the early sixties by a Dutch physician living in Tiberias, Johann Pilon, who died in 1975. His widow, Christine, explains:

"The holocaust is not a Jewish question; it is a Christian question. We are also sitting on our own ashes. It is the failure of Christianity that this could happen. This happened in the midst of Christian Europe. We sit on the ashes of six million Jews. We sit on the ruins of our relationship with the Jewish people. We must recognize the past, and start a new leaf... We need a whole new orientation toward life."

A young Dutch pastor, another leader of the moshav, adds:

"It is the greatest question for the Christian faith. Where were Christians during the holocaust? Where was God? Where were all the people who called themselves after the Jew Jesus? It is all unbelievable."

Mr. Moyers' documentary poses the question, "What is one authentic Christian response to the Holocaust and to Christian anti-Semitism?" and suggests that Nes Amim and its people, a group of ecumenical Protestants from the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, ^{England and North America} and Germany, are living an answer.

BACKGROUND, QUESTIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Background

Under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler (1933-45) and the resulting German occupation of most of Western Europe, carefully researched evidence indicates that 12 million ^{civilians} ~~people~~ were systematically ^{murdered} ~~slaughtered~~ (exclusive of those killed in actual warfare). Nazi theory branded many of these people as racial inferiors or religious and political radicals: Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and Russians, Jehovah's Witnesses, trade unionists and socialists. Only two groups, however, were singled out for total extinction: Gypsies and Jews. The name for this policy of total extinction for all members of a racial, religious or national group, simply because they are born into such a group, is genocide.

Six million Jews, including a million and a half children -- more than one-third of all the Jews in the world -- lost their lives during this period, most of them under the most horrifying conditions. It was as though all the scientific achievements of the West had been perverted into instruments of annihilation. The diabolically perfect mechanism of the death camps, the systematic torture, starvation and murder of the inmates, the final desecration of ritualized robbery of the dead bodies, including gold in the teeth of the corpses and the use of

body fat for the making of soap, have all been documented. As well, the failure, with rare and inspired exceptions, of European Churches to speak out while there was still time, and the cooperation in the destruction of European Jewry by many at least nominally Christians in occupied Europe, ~~as well,~~ the failure of the rest of the Western Christian world to open its doors to those seeking to escape, are some of the historic facts shaping the dedication of the Christians of Nes Amim.

The people of Nes Amim, including their pastor, Rev. Simon Schoon, feel acutely the responsibility for, as Moyers put it,

"...the dark pages of their historic faith, from the sermon of the Third Century Bishop who accused the Jews of killing God, to the terrible slaughter by the Crusaders, who drove the Jews into the synagogues of Jerusalem and burned them, to the inquisition, when thousands of Jews were sent to the stake, to the example of Martin Luther who called for the burning of synagogues and the expulsion of Jews.

"In time Adolf Hitler, whose civilization was shaped by centuries of Christianity, would not call just for their expulsion, but for their extermination. There were Christians who tried to stop it with individual acts of courage and resistance. But there were others, many others, whose anti-Semitism prepared the ground for the holocaust, and who looked the other way when it came. The people of Nes Amim have vowed not to forget those awful times, and in their own way, to atone for them."

Questions for Discussion

1. Anti-Semitism Historically

- a. What separated the early Christians from their Jewish roots?
- b. Why could ~~Jews~~ ^{the Jewish people} not accept Jesus as Messiah?
- c. What were the forces in the post fourth century Church which contributed to centuries of anti-Semitic teachings?
- d. How did modern racial theories build on traditional Christian teachings about the Jews and prepare the climate for the Nazi era in Europe?

2. The Holocaust: Christian resistance, Christian indifference, Christian cooperation

- a. What is the significance of the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles at the Holocaust Research Center and Memorial, Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem?
- b. To what extent did Christian resistance, where it existed in significant numbers, seriously interfere with "The Final Solution?" In Denmark? In Holland? In Italy? What is the difference between active and passive resistance?
- c. Was the Nazi plan to annihilate all the Jews assisted in those areas where large numbers of Christians were traditionally more anti-Semitic?
- d. Can the citizens of any nation prevent totalitarianism and persecution of minorities if they refuse to cooperate with their government, when that government wishes to pursue such goals? What should be the role of the citizens of nations outside the borders, when such governments are operative? What should churches and synagogues do?

3. The Rebirth of the State of Israel -- What Does It Mean for Jews? For Christians? In the light of the Holocaust?

- a. What do Christian and Jewish theologians like Franklin Littell and Ernest Fackenheim say about a connection between the Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel?
- b. What does the modern State of Israel mean to Christians? Does it fulfill scriptures? Should Christians ever proselytize among Jews in Israel or elsewhere?
- c. Should Christians be pro-Israel, or pro-Arab, or is it possible and preferable to be both?

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