

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, D. D.

RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE  
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213

December 20, 1966

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman  
Joint Distribution Committee  
60 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York

Dear Friend:

It was a pleasure to see you at the meeting last week. We ought to see each other more often.

Before we left, I mentioned something about the libraries in Northern Africa which may need some special attention on the part of the JDC. There is no doubt that all over North Africa, Algiers, Morocco and Tunisia, there are magnificent Hebrew libraries. Since this is not only one of the oldest continuous Jewish settlements in the world, it has also been one of the most learned. For example, on the island of Djerba off Tunis there has been even up to this day two fine Hebrew book dealers, and there must be many libraries there, since the Cohen congregation claims to go back to Mishnaic times.

In Casa Blanca, which is a more recent community, some magnificent rabbinic works have been published in the last quarter of a century. Some of the libraries, I am sure, are safe. For example, I received a list of a library offered for sale and it was a very fine library. I wanted to buy only the Halachic manuscripts and some printed responsa from it, but they wanted to sell it in total.

Besides such libraries that are under safe control, there must be scores of libraries that are moldering away in the cities which formerly had large Jewish communities. Once these books and manuscripts disappear, world Jewry will have suffered an irreparable loss. I have no practical suggestion. I have only a hope that the JDC in some way can investigate and find out which libraries can yet be rescued; that these be brought out safely and given, perhaps, as a gift to the Jewish universities in Israel and to the established Jewish libraries in the United States. Naturally these libraries will eventually sell their duplicates and these will enable new Jewish scholars to build up their working libraries. But whatever is done and however it may be done, the JDC has here a wonderful opportunity to serve world Jewry in a unique way. Perhaps the work cannot be done at all, but if it can, only the JDC can do it. I would appreciate your reaction to this suggestion.

Looking forward to seeing you again in the near future,  
I am

Sincerely,  
*Solomon B. Freehof*  
Solomon B. Freehof

SBF:t

cc - Laskone  
1/27/66

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, D. D.  
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE  
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213

December 28, 1966

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman  
1290 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10019

Dear Herbert:

I had answered that question a number of years ago and therefore it is not difficult for me to have the material for you. Rather surprisingly, the Shaaleh was asked of me by Mr. Bachrach, the President of Temple Emanu-El. I do not know whether he was opposed or in favor, but, of course, that was immaterial to me; I wrote out a responsum on it. Enclosed you will find a Xerox copy of it (it is in "Recent Reform Responsa" but you may not have a copy handy).

It was a pleasure seeing you at the meeting. I hope you will be able to do something about discovering whether there are libraries mouldering in North Africa.

With best wishes,

As ever,


*Solomon B. Freehof*  
Solomon B. Freehof

SBF:t

HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN

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what would you  
think about sending  
this to all execs?



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... who, in the heat of controversy, would  
 ... unity of our people? There is no answer  
 ... this case who want to exclude will find reasons for  
 it. We may face them, however, in the confidence that  
 they will not succeed. We are part of the Jewish people.  
 We share its destiny. We join in every great Jewish cause.  
 No legalists will succeed in persuading the majority of  
 Jews—Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform—that we must  
 cease marrying one with another. We may leave the deci-  
 sion as to "Who is a Jew?" to the sound instinct of our peo-  
 ple, which has expressed itself magnificently in the *spirit* of  
 the Halachia: "Let the people of Israel alone [they will find  
 their way]. If they are not prophets, they are certainly the  
 children of prophets" (b. Pesachim 66a).

AMERICAN JEWISH  
 ARCHIVES

Listing the Names of Contributors

*There is frequent discussion in charity drives whether  
 the name of the donor of a gift should be mentioned  
 and recorded in some permanent form. (From Mr.  
 Alfred Bachrach, New York City)*

This question of recording the name of the donor of a gift  
 for charity has been widely debated in recent years. Those  
 who favor the practice say that a man is entitled to the

(Responsum by Dr. Solomon B. Freehof,  
 Rabbi of Rodelf Shalom Temple, Pittsburgh)

pride that comes to him when it becomes known that he has been generous in a good cause. Also, mentioning the name of one donor encourages other donors to equal or to surpass his gift. Those who oppose the practice say that if a man gives only a small amount to a certain cause this is primarily his own affair and he should not be embarrassed by having the small amount permanently recorded. Because these opposite arguments each have weight, the practice as to permanently recording names varies from community to community.

Is there a preference in this matter to be found in Jewish legal tradition? It is obvious at the outset that a direct opinion can hardly be found in the tradition, because the present method of conducting drives is only a modern development. In earlier times they did not use our present method of audible auction to raise money for charity, though in one way there *was* something like it. For centuries the traditional synagogue was maintained by especially generous gifts, given on the various holidays. These gifts were for the purpose of securing the privilege of being called to the Torah, or participating in one way or another with the Torah ritual. The amount of the gift was actually determined by competitive bidding in the service itself, and the names of the donors, the successful ones and those who were outbidden, were all, of course, announced aloud in the synagogue. As far as I know, the names of these donors were not *permanently* recorded, but certainly they were publicly announced.

As for more permanent acknowledgment of gifts, we do have traditional opinions which are not only mentioned by various authors, but are recorded as actual law in the Codes. As we said, the raising of money in our present form for charity did not—could not—record itself in the literature, but what did record itself is close enough to our present charitable drives to be quite relevant to the ques-

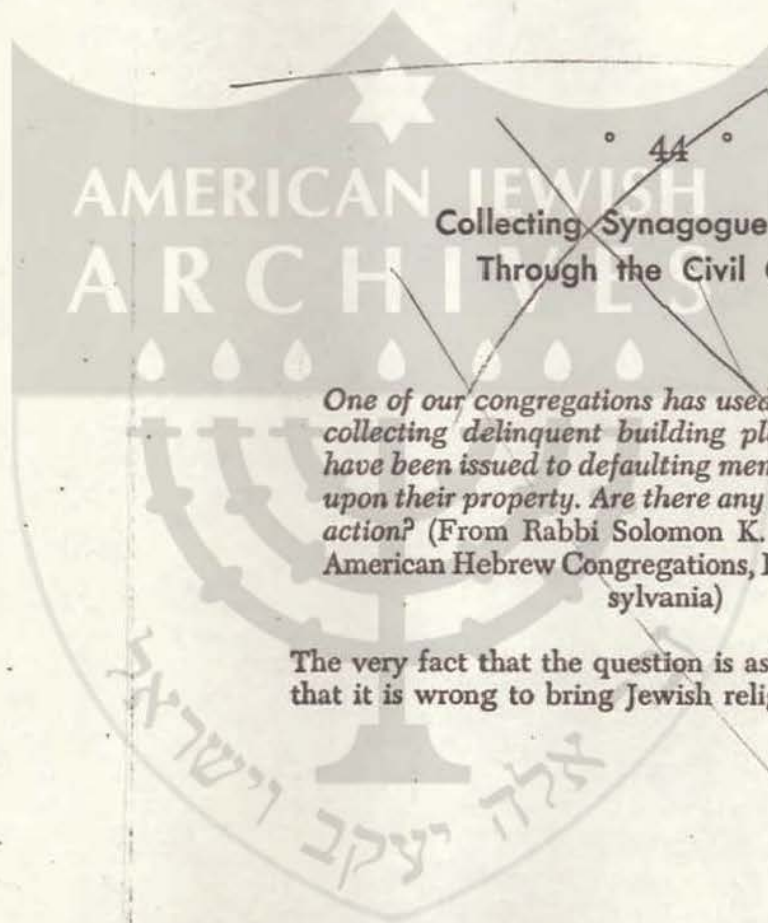
tion. Owing to the endless persecutions and expulsions, the central communal need was the rebuilding and refurnishing of the synagogues. With regard to that constant communal task there is the following discussion:

If a man gives a Menorah, a Torah cover, or other gift to the synagogue, should he have his name recorded on it or not? The classic discussion of this question goes back to the thirteenth century, to Rabbi Solomon ben Aderet in Barcelona, Spain, the greatest Spanish authority of the time. He says that there are both Biblical and Talmudic precedents for recording the names of the donors. The Torah itself mentions the names of the benefactors in connection with their good deeds. Thus, Reuben is mentioned for his deliverance of his brother Joseph; and Boaz, in Bethlehem, is likewise mentioned. As for the Talmud, says Solomon ben Aderet, there is in *Baba Bathra 133b* a clear record on the gifts to the Temple of Yose ben Yoezer and his son for their separate gifts. So, concludes the Spanish authority (this is in his *Responsa*, 582), it is proper to record the names of those who give gifts to the sanctuary, that they may have due memorial for their good deed, and also to open the door wide for other givers.

This opinion of Solomon ben Aderet is repeated by many later authorities, as for example, Mendel of Nicholsburg, in the eighteenth century (*"Zemach Zedek"* 52), and others. Finally, this is recorded in a rather remarkable way in the *Shulchan Aruch*, the official law code, *Yore Deah* 249 : 13, especially in the note of Moses Isserles (Kracow, sixteenth century). He says: "While it is a sin to boast of one's good deeds, nevertheless, it is proper to record the name of a donor on his gift, first, in order that this public record may prevent the gift's being misapplied to another purpose unintended by the giver, and, second, that it should be a memorial for him."

From all of the above we can come to a clear conclusion

as to the spirit of Jewish tradition on the matter of recording the names of donors. If the purpose of announcing and recording the gift is merely boastful vanity, then to record the name is actually a sin (as Isserles said); but if it is for the purpose of *safeguarding* the gift, that it should not be misused for purposes unintended by the donor, or certainly, if for the more important purpose of *encouraging* other givers, then we should record the names, following the opinion of the great Spanish authority, Solomon ben Aderet, and thus, as he said, "open the door to other doers of good deeds."



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Collecting Synagogue Pledges  
Through the Civil Courts

*One of our congregations has used legal processes in collecting delinquent building pledges. Summonses have been issued to defaulting members, placing liens upon their property. Are there any precedents for this action? (From Rabbi Solomon K. Kaplan, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)*

The very fact that the question is asked reveals a feeling that it is wrong to bring Jewish religious disputes to the

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December 1966

Dr. Solomon Freehof  
Rodef Sholom Congregation  
4905 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Dr. Freehof:

I would appreciate having your opinion regarding the whole matter of the public announcement of gifts to organized Jewish philanthropies. By public announcement I have reference to both oral and written forms of announcement.

It has sometimes been said that the procedure of public announcement violate Jewish tradition which requires giving to be anonymous.

I would appreciate your opinion on this whole question.

Very truly yours,

HAF:gb

Herbert A. Friedman