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Jerusalem as a Political Football, 1971.

JERUSALEM AS A POLITICAL FOOTBALL

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

October 31, 1971

Saturday, September 25, 1971. In Ireland, two British soldiers were shot by members of the IRA, part of the city of Belfast was in flames, English sappers destroyed bridges between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. In Asia, patrols of guerrillas left Bengal State in India for action in East Pakistan, to destroy what they could of the transportation and of the commerce of that poorest portion of our world. The armies of India and Pakistan were being mobilized toward a war footing. In Southeast Asia, North Vietnamese shelled American fire bases near Cambodia; the Viet Cong threw mortars into American bases in South Vietnam and American bombers flew retaliatory missions north of the DMZ. In the Near East the Suez bristled with guns. Russian manned jets, faster than sound, flew within 30 seconds of Tel Aviv.

In New York City the Security Council of the United Nations met in emergency session. Their session was so urgent that the diplomats left their families and their golf games, so urgent, in fact, that it had to start before the Sabbath was over and Israel, the accused party, could not be present to take part in the proceedings. Israel stood accused of actions in violation of the charter of United Nations, crimes which constituted a real threat to world peace. The United Nations has never discussed the substantive issues involved in Ireland. It has dealt with the humanitarian problems, the refugees of Bengala Desh, but has not debated or

taken action on the political issues which threaten to throw that subcontinent into a state of war.

On September 25, 1971 the major threat to world peace as far as the U.N. was concerned involved Israel. At the end of these urgent discussions, Israel stood condemned of "Actions designed to change the status of the Israel occupied section of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and property, transfer of population, legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied sector." The charges seem portentous. Of what does Israel stand condemned? Of the expropriation of land and property. This phrase evokes an image of the seizure of the land and the property of the Jews in Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Syria by the Arabs; of the expropriation of billions of dollars of land and property held by the colonial powers and taken over by the newly independent states; of the expropriation of the land and property of land owners and Muzhiks in Russia by the Communists. But this specific charge, so full of ominous overtones proves on examination to describe nothing more than an urban renewal and relocation project in Jerusalem.

Item: In the old city of Jerusalem some 300 Arab families lived in hovels, in squalor, dwellings so poor and so mean that they violated the health and safety requirements of the municipality, hovels without running water, without toilets, without a window through which air could come. The city authorities would no longer tolerate this threat to the health of their citizens. They determined to pull those shacks down. But first they provided these 300 families new housing. Then

they bought the leasehold from the slum lords who, incidentally, turned out to be a syndicate of well-to-do Arabs from Morocco.

Item: Some three thousand Arab families had been removed from land in the old Jewish quarter of East Jerusalem; land which had been expropriated in 1948 from Jewish owners by the Arab Legion when it had attacked the city which the United Nations had declared to be an internationalized place. These dwelling places were all substandard, for the most part hovels. Better housing will be built on this site. The 3,000 families were relocated in new housing, their moving expenses were paid.

Item: Some 300 Jewish families and some 350 Jewish shopkeepers from an area just inside the Jaffa Gate were moved to make room for roads, some new municipal buildings and high-rise apartments.

One can question the advisability of this or that urban renewal program. No project of size can be carried out without destroying something of the ethnic identity, of the sense of community, which even the poorest community in a city possesses. But when there is a clear and present threat to health and safety; when it is a question of exchanging medieval slums for decent apartment living, then certainly a community has the right to decide what needs to be done for the well-being of its citizens. This particular program had been debated by the municipality of Jerusalem, on whose council sit both Arabs and Jews and was deemed appropriate. Whatever its merits, it hardly seems a major threat to world peace.

Now what of the charge of transfer of populations? Shades of Indian reservations and Siberia, but it turns out to involve only the transfer of these peoples to

better housing. Their total number -- perhaps 9,000. Obviously there is something more implicit in this charge. It came out in the discussions that day at the United Nations as representatives of Latin American and other church-states spoke of the threat of the Israeli occupation to Jerusalem's Christian population. The facts are these. In 1948 the city of Jerusalem had a Christian population of 25,000. By 1967, the Christian population of Jerusalem had been reduced to 10,800. Most of that loss took place in the eastern section. Once Jerusalem was reunited in 1967, the curve began to swing upward. Today, instead of 10,800 Christians living permanently in Jerusalem, there are some 12,500 and more are settling there every month.

Yet the charge hangs over these discussions. It seems to emanate from missionary and traditionalist Christian circles and to reflect a mood that somehow the Jews are making it difficult for Christians. I think the charge rests largely on two facts. The first is that the Jews have made it difficult for many of these missionary societies to do "their good work." For centuries now, many brotherhoods and convents have justified their service in Jerusalem by giving bread and food, some clinic facilities, a meager education to the impoverished of the old city. These poor have been their flock, their justification for being, their good works and in that sea they had fished for their souls. Then the Jews came along and brought urban renewal and social welfare and broke the chain of poverty and this population no longer needs the Christian charity of these good fathers and good sisters. They move out and the religious societies are frustrated,

there is no longer reason for their being. Where shall they find their good work? Where shall they give Christian charity? We have made it difficult for Christianity in this medieval sense to perpetuate itself in Jerusalem.

The second basis for their frustration lies in the fact that Jerusalem is changing, is becoming a living city. It is no longer an antique, a mausoleum. The figures speak for themselves. In 1948 there were 100,000 Jews in Jerusalem. By 1967 there were 195,000 Jews in just the Jewish or western section of the city. In 1948 there were 65,000 Arabs in east Jerusalem. In 1967 there were 65,000 in east Jerusalem. There had been no growth. There had been no change. These good western folk could feel that little had changed and little would. The 20th century, technology, bustle would not come. And now suddenly with the reunification of Jerusalem, the bustle of the west, its pace, its science, its economics, its haste has come in. They face a population which is no longer composed of the poor, the beggar, of those who live on charity and of the storekeeper who catered to the European middle-class. Now they must cater to a population of people on the move, changing, progressing, moving into the modern world. And that is a difficult transformation for people whose ways of life and institutions have fossilized over the centuries.

Another concern involved shrines and holy places. Jerusalem is the site of many shrines and Israel has kept them open and in good shape. This has not been the case. In 1948, the Arab occupiers immediately put restrictions on entrance to the holy places of the old city. Israelis could not come to them, even an Israeli

Arab could not cross the cease-fire line and worship at the El Aksa Mosque. No Jew could pray at the Wailing Wall. Of the 54 synagogues in the old city of Jerusalem every single one was either desecrated, vandalized or destroyed. The old Karaite synagogue which had been in use for a thousand years was desecrated and vandalized. The synagogue called Tifereth Israel, it bears our own name or we bear its, an old hasidic center which had one of the finest hasidic and Kabbalistic libraries in the world was leveled to the ground and the books were burnt. Of the desecration to the cemeteries on the Mount of Olives you know well. The buildings of the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus, its library, the Hadassah Hospital were forced to close, all this with narry any official complaint from the U. N. Compare Jerusalem after 1967. A law was immediately passed which gave to the groups which had squatters rights at each shrine control over the shrine. The Supreme Muslim Council controls the Dome on the Rock. The Franciscan order and the Sisters of Mercy control their respective holy places. There has been no violation of their sanctity. Money has been given for refurbishment. Any number of church related building projects in abeyance during the entire Arab control have been begun again and most significant of all and incredibly, the Jews have opened their borders to any Arab from any Arab country, except an armed guerrilla, who wishes to cross the Jordan River or land at Lydda and pray at the Dome on the Rock or elsewhere.

Unless we are with Alice in Wonderland what Israel has done in Jerusalem does not represent a threat to peace. However that body's real concern lay not

in the expropriation of land and property or the transfer of population but in the last charge -- "Legislation and actions aimed at the incorporation of the occupied sector." It has been the determined position of many diplomats that the way to solve the crises in the Middle East is to return the area to those conditions that existed there before May of 1967. Let Israel withdraw. The Arabs will have gained face; morality will be satisfied, no country should profit from war; and a stabilization of the area may follow. If Israel withdraws in exchange for some vague pledge which turns out to be less than firm, well, that's no skin off that diplomat's nose. If the Arabs mean by "withdrawal from all Arab land" not just withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, but from Arab lands defined as Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as well as the West Bank, the Golan and Sinai, well again that's another crises way down the line, in the meantime oil will be pumped, and if today's withdrawal weakens Israel's defenses tomorrow, again that's no skin off any diplomat's nose. His interest is in today's Arab markets, not in tomorrow's defense problems of the Israeli high command. There is a convenient moralism to this position, the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war. That phrase appears again and again in U. N. documents. It appears in the Resolution 242 of November 1967 which is the operative basis of any U. N. involvement in Near Eastern peace negotiations. I am all for pious phrases if in fact they are consistently applied and relevant to the situation. If the world wants to return all territory acquired by war then we should return this country to the Indians and the Soviets should return all the Moscovy to the Tartars,

Uzbeks and the Ukrainians. Obviously, every existing government rules a country conquered from someone else. It ill befits any nation to insist on the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war. But everyone wants peace in the Middle East and this phrase has a nice ring to it and can be used to convince uninvolved countries, operating by the usual diplomat's code of selective morality, that they can get good marks from the peace loving and nods of approval from the Arabs who see withdrawal as the first step in the dismantling of Israel. How their generals would like to see Israel crowded into those unfortunate, long, difficult to maintain borders of 1967, which were never designed to be borders in the first place.

The 1967 borders were simply the cease-fire lines at the end of the Arab-Israel war of 1948. If we want to speak of secure, meaningful borders let the nations recognize the historical truth that no such borders have been established in the Middle East. When the British were granted a mandate by the League of Nations over Palestine that mandate included Israel and Jordan, not only the West Bank but also the East Bank as far as the desert of Asia. The meandering borders of the partition plan voted by the U. N. in 1967 were never effective and voided by Arab attack. The borders in the Middle East are war made borders whatever lines you choose. Moreover, the November 22nd resolution of the United Nations was passed after 40 days of protracted discussion which deliberately coupled in this document a two-edged requirement: the withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied by war, and the establishment of conditions of peace, the

recognition of the sovereignty of each nation by every other nation in that part of the world. The resolution spoke of peaceful and "secure" borders, a phrase deliberately chosen to imply that the boundaries which had existed before 1967 were not necessarily appropriate or secure. There was a great deal of conversation about the rectification of boundary lines, so that there could be better, more geographically sensible boundaries between Israel and her neighbors.

Those who seek to find peace by insisting on an Israeli rollback to the boundaries of 1967 commit two sins. The first is the sin of simplicity. They assume that what has happened can be undone. They assume that once a war has occurred, the world can assume that that test of force had simply not occurred. As the Communists delight to remind us: "War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions." Their second sin is the sin of blindness. They read Arab documents which state that the precondition of negotiations is the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab lands and read "peace" for "negotiations"; "occupied territory" for "Arab Lands". The Arabs have never said that peace will follow withdrawal. "Arab lands" is a code word which means the erasure of Israel from the Middle East. What we see at the U.N. is a marriage of convenience between the peace-loving and the market seeking; the war loving and the advantage seeking. Only Israel has not been invited to dance at the wedding.

The issues which involve Jerusalem have their own complexity and this virtue that they highlight the hidden agendas of the various nations and point out the problems involved in any moralistic attempt to bring peace into the Middle East.

Let me review for you the situation of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has never been the capital of Palestine, of Israel, of the Holy Land except when Jews occupied the land. David ruled in Jerusalem and so did the Hasmoneans. The Romans had their capital in Cesarea. The Arabs had their capital in Baghdad and then in Damascus. The Turks had their provincial capital in Beirut. To the Jew and only to the Jew, Jerusalem is the heart of the Holy Land. He had no specific geography in mind when he went back to Israel, he had Jerusalem in mind. Zionism implies Mt. Zion and Mt. Zion is the mount of Jerusalem. When on Passover the Jew longed for deliverance he didn't use vague phrases like "from Dan to Beersheva," he said - "Next year may we be in Jerusalem." Jerusalem was the heart. And this is not mere teaching. Jews sensed this truth in May of 1967 when Jerusalem was reunited. When even those who had been raised in non-religious surroundings went into the old city were moved and so were we. Jerusalem is part of our being. For Jews a visit to Jerusalem is something very different from a visit to Haifa or to Tel Aviv. To the Jew, Jerusalem is Zion and therefore the return of Jerusalem to any other power is not negotiable.

The United Nations partition decision designated Jerusalem as a corpus seperatum, an internationalized place under United Nations authority. The Jew regretfully said "Aye" and the Arabs belligerently said "Nay"; and the Jordanian Legion marched into Jerusalem to claim it for its own. That November of 1947 the Jews of Jerusalem made an urgent appeal to the United Nations. "Send troops,

come help us we are being besieged. We are being slaughtered." Their message was never answered. There is an old principal in law that you lose title to your land if you do not defend it. Nevertheless, after the bitter fighting of 1967 and 1948 in which 2% of the entire Jewish population of Jerusalem -- man, woman and child -- lost their lives, after the city was split by the cease-fire line, the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations made another attempt to effect the internationalization of Jerusalem and the Jordanian government again said "Nay, mind your own business." The issue was allowed to drop. Never again during the entire period of Jordanian occupation did the United Nations occupy itself with the legal status of Jerusalem. Never once during all those years did the United Nations condemn the destruction of the synagogues and cemeteries or the closing of the shrines to pilgrims.

But let Israel gain sovereignty in Jerusalem and immediately there is a howl and cry about access to the shrines and about the Juridic status of the city. It was enough for Jordan to say "No." Apparently Israel must abide by rules other countries are not required to abide by. Why? A cynic would say because Israel cannot command the combined Arab, Third World and Communist voting blocs at the U.N. A historian might add because of some latent but very real anti-Jewish prejudices throughout the west, what Jules Isaac has called "the teaching of contempt," the traditional assumptions of the medieval church which held that Jews were guilty of deicide, of having killed the Christ, and that all Jews in all ages are somehow to be punished for that crime. We had been dispersed

for that sin. Presumably Rome destroyed Jerusalem in the year 60 because Jews had crucified Christ 40 years before. Since then God has meant us to be wandering outcasts, people beyond the law. The idea that the Pariah people could re-establish Jerusalem and make it a thriving city, that Jews are people alive, vigorous and strong, is an understanding which has come hard to many of the more conservative in the Catholic/Protestant community.

Jerusalem is the key issue because it focuses on the emotions and feelings which are facts and which limit the scope of negotiations. Jordan wants Jerusalem for herself and has fought twice in 1947 and in 1967 to gain that goal. Jews cannot give up Jerusalem. The world has oil and shrines on its mind and the teaching of contempt in its soul. That's the problem in the Middle East. We are not dealing with negotiable deeds to property, or pieces of paper which can be divided in any number of ways so that all partners in the deal will feel that they have been satisfied. You are dealing with emotion. You are dealing with history. You are dealing with passions which have been artificially stimulated, particularly of the Arab world, by years of unceasing revanchist propaganda. Every radio in the Near East has been spewing out the hate of, fear of the Israeli and the Jew. Do you remember the children's coloring books that were found in 1967 at Khan Yunis? These feelings will not simply dissipate because some diplomat wants a neat and quick solution.

My own feelings are these. The problems of the Middle East now defy solution. The first truth of policy on the Middle East requires an acknowledgment of that fact. We are children of the west. The west has been prosperous

so we are by nature optimistic. We have learned that in technical matters almost any problem can be solved; but in matters human, most problems defy solution. We change, times change, the problems may grow or diminish but they will not dissolve by direct attack. I am not optimistic about any quick solution in the Middle East because the passions are there and the issue is more than geography. And, I suspect that this being so, those who are most urgent for peace now are actually counter-productive when they try to induce people to sit down and to barter away land and sign contracts. The best treaty in the world is only a scrap of paper which can be torn up at will. Hitler showed us that in the Rhur and in Danzig and in Poland. It doesn't matter ultimately what you have on paper. What matters is what's in the nation's heart, what moves it. Hate and fear move the Arab world. Concern and fear move the Jewish world. For awhile we must accept temporary accommodations, palliatives, solutions like the opening of the Suez Canal which increase human wealth but solve none of the lingering issues at dispute, partial solutions. We will have to sit tight until a new set of forces appear in the Middle East. Any program designed to force Israel to withdraw to the borders of 1967 now, or six months from now, is bound to fail. The Israeli population cannot expose itself to that kind of danger for a scrap of paper. It must fail because Arab appetites will not now be satisfied with an appetizer.

What might the nations do to defuse the situation and gain time and hope? America might regularize her relations with Israel so that they are more than

back door charity and then the Soviet Union and the United States might agree to cease sending billions of dollars in sophisticated weapons into that part of the world. Without Soviet weapons, pilots and engineers, the Arabs could not wage war on Israel, and without Russian weapons, pilots and engineers, Israel would represent no more of a danger to any existing Arab state than she does today. If Russia continues to use Egypt and Syria for her own purposes, for her own expansion southward, because she sees a chance to bloody America's nose; if America is so concerned with arrangements that she continues to withhold counter-balancing weapons from Israel, I am afraid battles are inevitable. Weapons either are used or they rust. Generals have become insistent as their weapons begin to grow obsolete. They want to use them to prove their glory and their technical skill. The Middle East requires a breathing spell and that breathing spell can be gained only if the great powers somehow agree that they will cease to make the Middle East a test of will and weapons between their forces. Will this happen? Who knows. Russian ambition seems as endless and as global as American ambition once was. Russia has not yet had her Vietnam. It is not clear whether or not the United States is willing to make long term declarations of concern about Israel's inviolability. If Russia, Egypt and Syria feel that Israel can be leaned on, and that America will not lean back, they will lean harder and harder, and a little country must ultimately break under that force. If America is willing to put her power in the balance and to work with Russia on the larger problems, then perhaps we will have months and years of non-peace and non-peace

is better than bloodshed, and may be a prelude to better things.

Jerusalem, the city of peace. May it not again be a city of war.

Amen.



OF ACTIONS ... DESIGNED TO CHANGE THE STATUS OF
THE ISRAEL OCCUPIED SECTION OF JERUSALEM,
INCLUDING EXPROPRIATION OF LAND AND PROPERTY,
TRANSFER OF POPULATION, AND LEGISLATION AIMED AT
THE INCORPORATION OF THE OCCUPIED SECTOR.

What is to be done? All seems to change

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APPROPRIATION OF LAND AND PROPERTY - slide 4 to 10

steps for land, business, home, education - slide 1 to 10

Drugs, Supplies, Yarns, Sugar, equipment & food - slide 1 to 10

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WRHS AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

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had been displaced and needed for care

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TRANSFER OF POPULATION

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John H. ...
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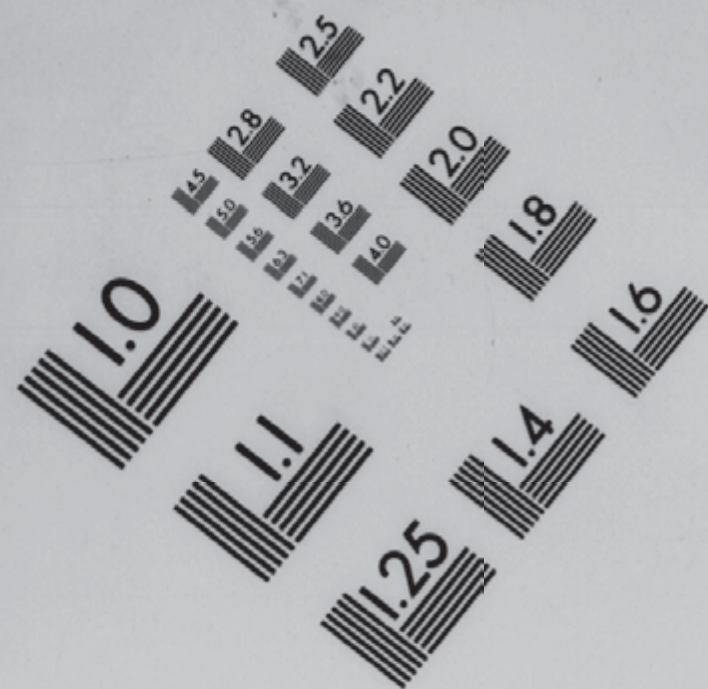
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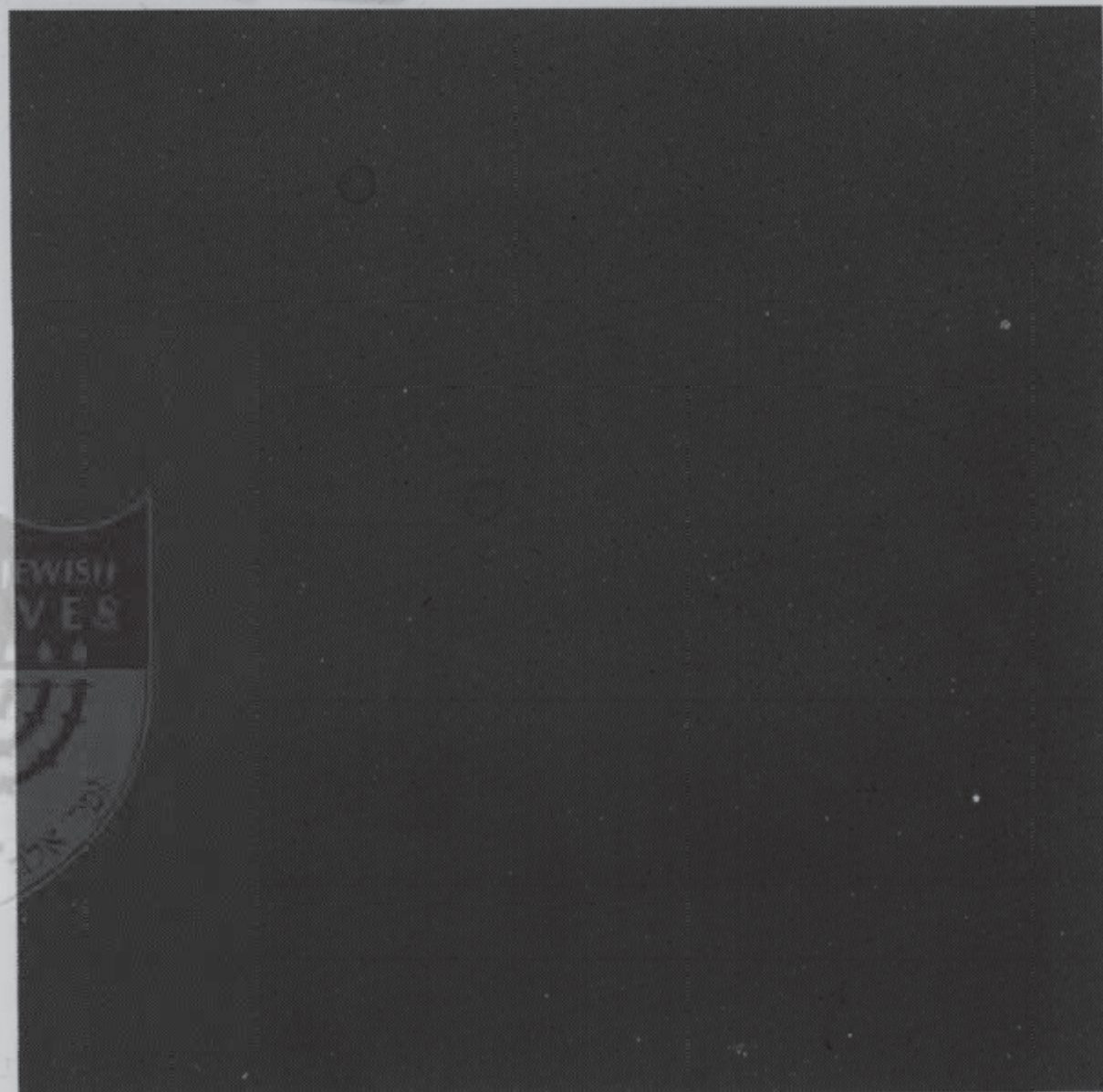
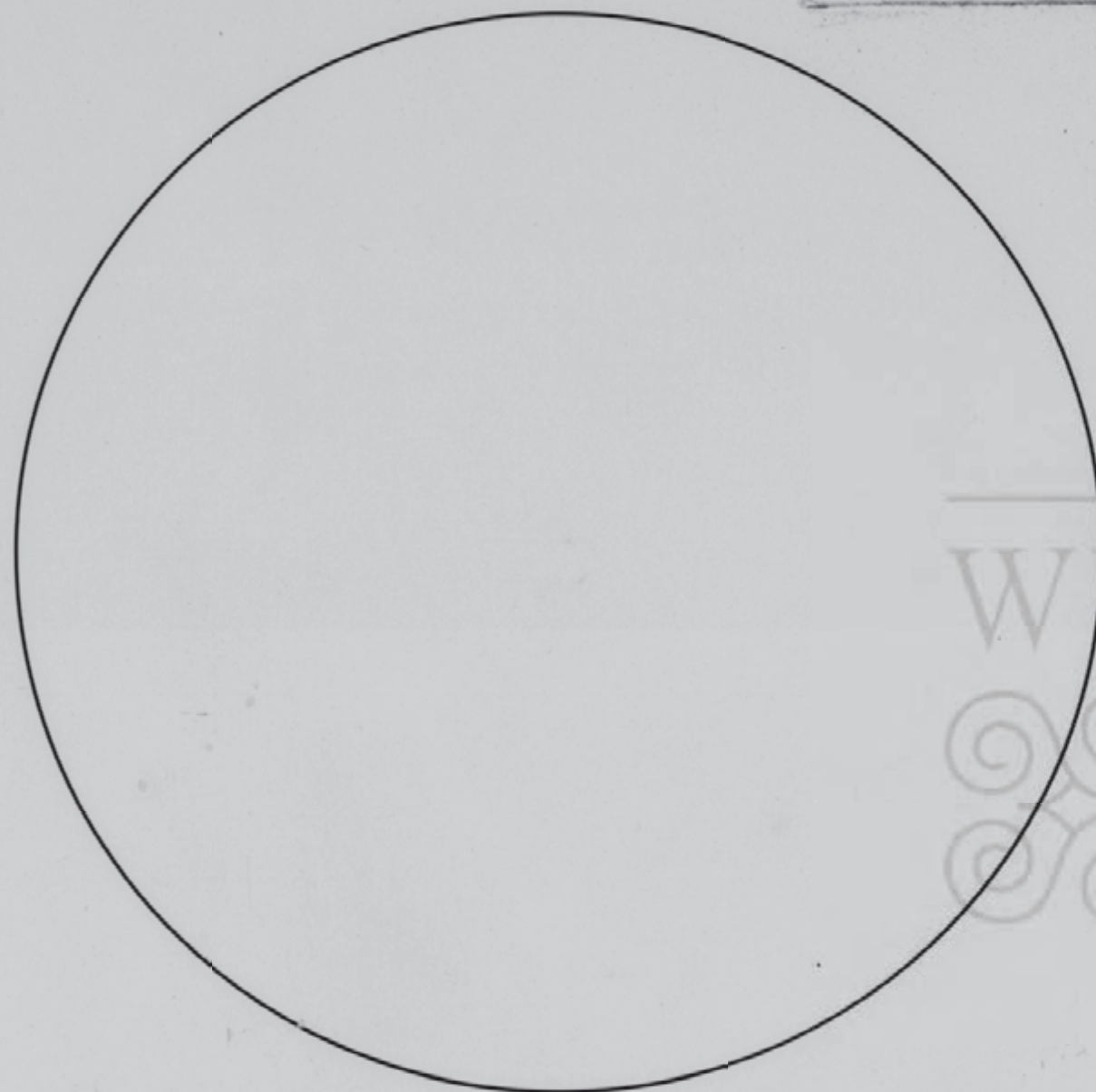
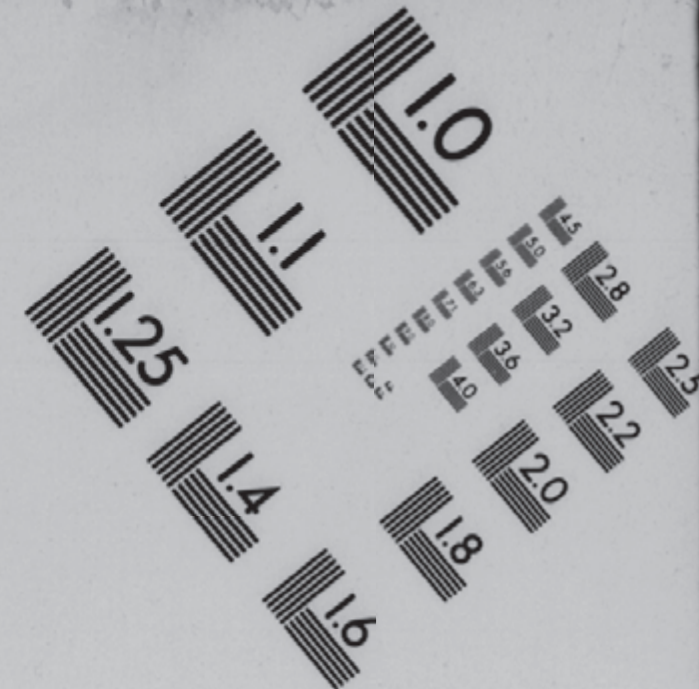
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HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10825 East Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44106



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REDUCTION RATIO:

REDUCTION
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