



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

MARVIN SCHICK
ASSISTANT TO THE MAYOR
FOR INTERGROUP RELATIONS

June 16, 1970

The attached is for your information.
I thought the correspondence would interest
you.

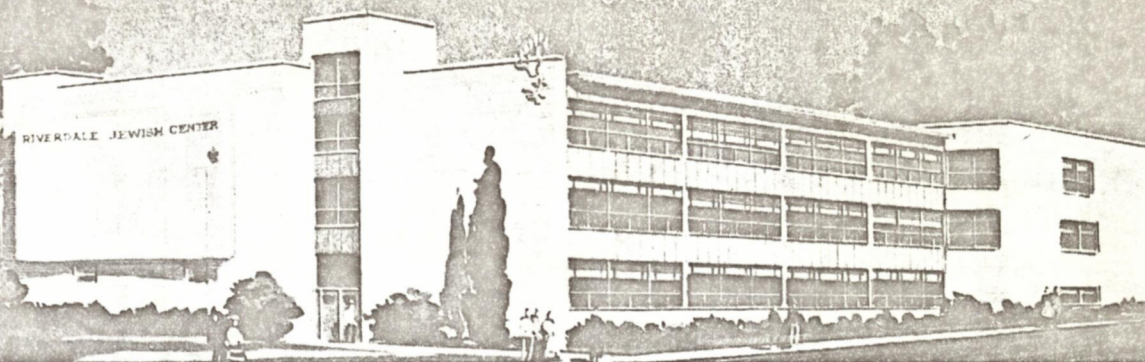
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Marvin", with a stylized flourish.

Marvin

RIVERDALE JEWISH CENTER

3700 Independence Avenue • Riverdale 63, New York

Kingsbridge 8-1850



JONAS TENENBAUM
PRESIDENT

DR. IRVING GREENBERG
RABBI

TZVI MARX
ASSOCIATE RABBI

MARTIN M. HOROWITZ
CANTOR

ABRAHAM FARKAS
SEXTON

STUART H. AARONS
MILTON STEINBERG
VICE-PRESIDENTS

MURRAY SCHECHTER
TREASURER

DR. RAYMOND KAUFMAN
FINANCIAL SECRETARY

IRVING SLEPIAN
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

OSCAR CHAIFETZ
RECORDING SECRETARY

כ"ה

May 26th, 1970

Mr. Marvin Schick
Assistant to the Mayor for Intergroup Relations
Office of the Mayor
New York, New York 10007

Dear Marvin:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DR. DONALD GRIBETZ
CHAIRMAN

DR. HERBERT BEIM
DR. HARVEY BENOVIETZ
STANLEY BENTZ
NATHAN BERGER
PETER H. BRANDT
MURRAY COHEN
SAM COHEN

HARRY FISHBEIN
IRVING FISHMAN
ARTHUR FLEISCHMAN
HECTOR GOLDMAN
DON GREENBERG

SEYMOUR HOFFMAN
AVRUM HYMAN
SAMUEL JACOBSON
LUDWIG JESSELSON
EMANUEL KESSLER
MILO KLEINBERG

BENJAMIN KLIRSFELD
EDMOND J. LANG
ISADORE LEVIN
GEORGE LIEBMANN
DAVID MANDELBAUM
MICHAEL NEWMAN

SOL OBSTLER
SAMUEL J. OHRINGER
EMANUEL POMERANTZ
SAMUEL RESS
LUDWIG ROLLHAUS
SIDNEY ROSEN

HAROLD ROTH
HERMAN SCHACHTER
ALFRED SCHOEN
ARTHUR SCHLOSS
J. WALTER SHERMAN
MARVIN SIEGEL

GEORGE SILVER
JOSEPH SOLOMON
DAVID SPIRA
WILLIAM J. TROPP
HENRI VERSTANDIG
FRED VORCHEIMER
IRVING WEISEL

DR. FELIX WIMPFHEIMER

I haven't responded to your letter of May 7th because of the overwhelming press of weight of my own work and burdens. I am truly sorry but I am not in position to act on your problem. One of the fruits of a community that is not sensitive to social issues or ethical concerns is that it doesn't even know how to protect its own interests in society. Perhaps the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations or some such group can be prevailed upon to take the initiative or maybe Rabbi Abraham Besdin, the new Associate Director of Rabbinical Council of America, AL 5-1900. He is an able person who can understand the significance of this project and maybe he has some free time since he is a new man.

Beyond this, I am physically incapable of following this up or anything else. If there were 50 Rabbis sensitive to the issues, then I am sure a few of them would be free to work upon it. It comes back to the same pedagogic and ethical issues that I have raised in the community. It is certainly no source of satisfaction to me to point out that you seem to be happy with trends in the community but unhappy with the fruits of such trends.

I am sorry that this is all I can do at this point. I truly believe that this is an important project and regret that your own effectiveness is crippled by the unresponsiveness of the community.

Sincerely yours,

Irving Greenberg
Irving Greenberg, Rabbi

IG:ek

P.S. Are you sure you contacted all the proper sources? I recall going home in the car with Henry Wimpfheimer and Naftali Cohen of the Breuer community. They mentioned they were on a committee concerning "neighborhood stabilization." Perhaps you should speak to them rather than the rabbi who maybe busy and less responsive to your concerns.

June 15, 1970

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
Riverdale Jewish Center
3700 Independence Avenue
Riverdale, New York

Dear Yitzchok:

Though I cannot remember the issue or the context, I seem to recall that about a year ago, in an exchange of correspondence, you wrote something quite similar to what you say in your letter of May 26. "It is certainly no source of satisfaction to me to point out that you seem to be happy with trends in the community but unhappy with the fruits of such trends."

I'm not sure what trends you have in mind, whether those toward greater ethnicity in political and social expression or those that encourage greater orthodoxy in religious matters or both types. While something of an oversimplification, it would be fair to describe me as being Orthodox in my religion and ethnic (and liberal) in my politics; yet, I find no practical or moral contradiction in applauding such developments while laboring to criticize and correct those perversions that occur in the unfolding of events.

While I believe that religious and ethical principles transcending ordinary pragmatic and rational reasons for choice do occasionally govern human relations, it is certain that for the most part what we humans do is so subject to error and other obvious human failings that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that at least some of the fruits of our most noble activities are poisoned. The dialectical nature of things derives not so much from objective historical laws or metaphysical principles as from the simple fact that men and women are ~~in~~finite in their wisdom and in their capacity to avoid a variety of personal sins. Reinhold Niebuhr, perhaps the towering ethical philosopher of this century, has repeatedly reminded us of the dual capacity, for good and evil, that governs human transactions.

This dialectic, as such, does not pose any hard intellectual questions. The difficulty essentially is that men, at least those who are most creative, are impelled to make choices as they go about their affairs, knowing that implicit in the act of choosing they have set forth a process that will partly pervert their intentions.

It is hard enough to bear the burden of recognizing that what is done today will be perverted tomorrow, as in the process whereby "revolutions devour their children." (You are a revolutionary of sorts.) More worrisome is the truth expressed by Camus that to rebel is to commit murder; that is, murder -- a sin -- occurs at the same moment as rebellion.

Still we cannot or should not avoid choice. I know that what I have advocated has borne some fruit that is not to my liking. But I would also point out that no matter what else my community would have done, I would still be pointing out the problems that I discussed in my previous letter. The important things are to be willing to risk failure and to be brave enough to reject those aspects of one's own existence, indeed those things which man himself has created that have not turned out well.

Best wishes and don't be too hard on the community: It may be all we've got.

Sincerely,

Marvin Schick

P.S. You write that "If there were 50 Rabbis" who are sensitive, etc., things would be better. Avrohom started his negotiations over Sodom with fifty tzadikim; there were none, and the city was destroyed. I am not sure how 50 Rabbis would measure against a similar number of righteous men. I do know that we do have at least some dedicated and sensitive Rabbis. There is hope.