

30 Jabotinsky St.
Jerusalem
November 19, 1970

Dear Rabbi Jung:

By now you must have received my post-card, although with Israel's on-again-off-again mail strikes (they alternate with the biweekly phone slow-downs) it is hard to tell when a piece of mail will arrive!

However, while my first communication was a general "Hello," enough time has just about elapsed for me to have enough experience here to give you at least a preliminary idea of where we are headed in Gesher. Naturally, I can only offer rashei perakim at the present, and I hope to fill in all the rest when we meet, iyh.

The job to which Gesher is dedicated is even greater than I realized at first -- and I was under no illusions of excessive optimism. There is a great deal that must be done to bridge the two camps (and after every Ashkelon affair the gap grows ever wider), and the longer we wait the worse it becomes. On the other side of the ledger, however, a great deal can be done, and even if it is done on a small scale every little bit helps.

As you can well imagine, I've not only been doing a lot of speaking, but also a great deal of meeting both with Danny Tropper of Gesher and with other people who ought and might be interested in its work. My impression, as a result of all this, is that we have to concentrate more in smaller areas and do the job well, rather than scatter our energies superficially in too wide a field. Our major successes have been in the age group of upper-high school students, ages 16-18. We ran a Yeshiva-University-style Youth Seminar at Gush Etzion, and the results were extremely satisfying. I hesitated to discuss it with anyone until we could check ourselves. Such a check came with a "reunion" we arranged for the youngsters over Shabbat in Jerusalem, held just about a week ago. We invited 29 of the original 30 participants (boys and girls from non-religious schools outside of Jerusalem, mostly Tel Aviv and Haifa) to participate. Two called to say they were ill; all the others returned with their enthusiasm intact. We have been receiving letters from the participants, and now the principals of the schools are beginning to write -- and all of it most favorable!

The problem now is: do we continue with a general program of which this is only one part? Do we abandon everything else in order to specialize in this area? Or do we compromise by putting most of our efforts in this area and pay some attention to other interests (such as university, army, kibbutzim, adults, etc.)? I suspect our final answer will be one of the two last alternatives. First, we have more experience (from the States) here than elsewhere. Second, young people this age are most impressionable. Third, the 3-year army experience is most crucial in the life and education of an Israeli, and it seems best to give him this kind of "send-off". (It is, incidentally, heartbreaking to realize how very little they know not only of Judaism, but of religious Jews!)

If this, indeed, is the turn matters will take, it will have consequences on the nature of our future program. The help we shall then need from the States will be less in the form of well-known rabbinic and academic intellectuals, and more of people who can help in administering and advising, in funding, and in influencing young people specifically. (Interestingly, the intellectual curiosity per se of the Israeli is less than that of his American contemporary; there are good social and political explanations for the phenomenon.) We are thinking of getting a permanent place in the Jerusalem area (Etzion) for an all-year ongoing Seminar program, thus allowing us to develop a cadre of experienced advisors, lecturers, and leaders. Then, if all goes well, we would like to build such centers elsewhere in the country. It is a dream, but I think a realizeable one, and one that could, eventually, have a profound effect on the social-religious scene.

All of the above is only a partial report relating to Geshar. As you know from your far longer experience, there is much else that an American Rabbi is called upon to do once it is known that he is here. One thing I've learned already: for every radio or newspaper interview you grant, you have to allot three times the length of time to refute and correct the distortions...

The Ashkelon affair was a most unfortunate one. Some solution must be found to avoid such scandalous misjudgments in the future. I have been mulling over an idea and have broached it to Zevulun Hammer, one of the youngest MKs in Israel (Mifdal, of course). He was quite enthusiastic about it, has already floated a "trial balloon" in the press, and will probably make a formal proposal of it in Knesset next week or the week after. I will be pleased to give you more of the details we worked out when I return, iyh. Basically, it calls for 9-10 days off per year, on Rosh Hodesh, thus allowing for sports events, visiting, shopping, etc., on a day of Jewish significance, when the Halakhah can have no objections to it, and which will allow the secularists and religious alike to get some of the benefits of a 5-day week at least some of the time.

So much for "business." I have, of course, met with many people who are mutual acquaintances (other than Center people, such as the Green's and Hurwich's), and all ask to be remembered to you and Mrs. Jung. Most persistent in this respect is Dr. Hillel Blondheim, who also has a bakashah -- he's a great fan of the late Cantor Jassinowsky and wonders if you could inform him how to obtain either records or printed sheet music of his melodies and compositions. Rabbi Unterman wants to be remembered to you, as does almost everyone who learns that we are associated at The Center. Your family is well, bh, and thriving. We visit occasionally -- they were at our home a week or so ago -- and we see Tirzah every now and then too.

I am not troubling you about details of Center life, since Stanley keeps me informed of any details which require my attention (as: births, mazal-tovs, or --chalilah -- illness and death). If, however, there is anything I can do long-distance, please feel free to call upon me (after much effort we just got ourselves a telephone!)

I have burdened you enough, so I will conclude with warmest regards from Mindy to you, and from the both of us to Mrs. Jung.

Cordially,

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