

FROM THE OFFICE
OF THE CHAIRMAN

פ.ו.ח.

**SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST
FEDERATION**

84 DE VILLIERS STREET
P.O. BOX 18)
JOHANNESBURG
2000

TELEPHONE 37-3000

August 26th 1981

President of Israel
Mr Yitzhak Navon
Office of the President
JERUSALEM

CONFIDENTIAL



Dear Mr Navon,

re: Correspondence between the South African Zionist Federation,
South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Rabbi Menachem M.
Schneerson - Lubavitch

I think it would be useful for you to have copies of correspondence
between the South African Zionist Federation and Rabbi Menachem
Schneerson of New York.

I would appreciate it if you would regard this correspondence as
confidential.

Yours very sincerely,

Itz Kalmanowitz
CHAIRMAN

Encls.



**SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST
FEDERATION**

84, DE VILLIERS STREET,
(P.O. BOX 18),
JOHANNESBURG.

TELEPHONE: 37-3000

9th November 1979

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn
New York 11213
U S A

Honoured Rabbi

We write to you as the Chairmen of the two principal representative organisations of South African Jewry on a matter of grave communal concern.

As you are aware, the Lubavitch Organisation of Johannesburg has currently embarked on a major and costly school-building project. A general agreement exists within our community to which all major organisations subscribe that all project fundraising will be undertaken in a disciplined and controlled manner; we regret that the local Lubavitch Organisation has not submitted to this discipline. While we fully appreciate the important role played by the Lubavitch Movement in Jewish spiritual and educational life worldwide, and not least here in South Africa, we earnestly believe that this current project is ill-timed in terms of the community's very limited human and financial resources which at present are stretched to breaking point.

South African Jewry is a dwindling community, very well serviced by a comprehensive network of day schools, all of which are in a parlous financial state since they are in receipt of no subscriptions from government.

We append herewith the latest conference brochures of the S A Zionist Federation, the S A Jewish Board of Deputies and the S A Board of Jewish Education. These three bodies work very closely together and cater for the needs of the total Jewish community, including a disciplined and all-embracing fundraising structure.

Accordingly, we strenuously urge you to contact the Lubavitch Movement in Johannesburg to reconsider the present project, and we give you our firm assurance that no effort will be spared on the part of the organisations we represent to ensure that the educational requirements of the Lubavitch Movement here in Johannesburg are met through the existing available facilities.

With respect, we are sincerely,

I KALMANOWITZ
CHAIRMAN
S A ZIONIST FEDERATION

I ABRAMOWITZ
CHAIRMAN
S A JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213
493-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי

ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
29th of Kislev, 5740
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. I. Kalmanowitz
Chairman
S. A. Zionist Federation

Mr. I. Abramowitz
Chairman
S. A. Jewish Board of Deputies

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to confirm receipt of your letter of Nov. 9th, received with considerable delay.

Needless to say, it is difficult for me to go into the specific aspects of a situation overseas. However, knowing personally the people in charge of the Lubavitcher organization in your country and city, their dedication to service and their concern for the best interests of the community they serve, I am confident that a candid personal discussion with them will bring about the proper solution, one that will be doubly good - tov lashomayim v'tov labriyos.

I am impelled, however, to take a position in regard to one point in your letter which is almost independent of the issues. I refer to your basic premise that "South African Jewry is a dwindling community."

To be sure, going by bare statistics, the statement reflects the situation as it is at this moment. However, the mere fact of an existing situation need not be accepted as irreversible, hence to be dealt with accordingly. There are situations in our present day and age which call for a contrary response, in an all-out effort to reverse the trend. That this approach is both right and effective has been borne out by experience in similar situations in the U. S. A. and other countries, where the tide of dwindling communities and dwindling neighborhoods has not only been arrested, but also reversed, with notable success, though varying in degree.

With all due respect to your expertise and intimate knowledge of the S. A. Jewish community, I must take issue with your premise that a dwindling Jewish community must inevitably curtail its educational facilities. In most Jewish communities, including JHB, there are hundreds of Jewish children who are going astray and on the road to total assimilation for lack of adequate Jewish education. They constitute an untapped reserve, for whom existing facilities should not only be sustained, but also expanded.

As for the quality of Jewish education, there is surely no need to point out

to you that in order to achieve its purpose, Jewish education must be in keeping with the basic principle enunciated by the Wisest of All Men, King Solomon, who counseled: "Educate the lad according to his way, so that when he grows old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

In other words, whatever the advantages of a uniform educational system may be, or one that is limited to two or three streams at the most, it cannot compensate for the overriding benefits of a diversified system reflecting the pluralistic nature of most communities in our present day and age, and offering the best possible and most natural appeal to every child individually.

Virtually every Jewish community, including S.A. Jewry, comprises a variety of groups, each with a distinct identity in terms of ancestral heritage and traditions, as exemplified also in different synagogues, with different rites and customs, such as Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Yemenite, etc. All of them existing and flourishing side by side contribute to the advancement of the Jewish community as a whole. It is within this frame of educating the lad "according to his way" - that Jewish education can succeed most, provided, of course, the basics of Torah education, common to them all, are upheld.

You surely know that Gedolei Yisroel in all generations scrupulously upheld the validity of tradition in regard to the Nusach of Tefilah, tracing its variety to the original Twelve Tribes of Israel.

A case in point: When Lubavitch came to North Africa and established there Yeshivos and educational institutions, my predecessor, my father-in-law of saintly memory, who initiated the broad program, gave clear directives not to encroach upon the customs and rites of the local Jewish communities, though for themselves the Lubavitch personnel had their own Minyan to follow their own Nusach. This approach immediately won the trust of the community leaders and had a salutary effect on the success of the educational process.

Needless to say, parents are free to choose the type of school they prefer for their children, and even change their Nusach. But it must be voluntary. Experience has shown that whenever a uniform educational system has been imposed on a multi-faceted community, it inevitably proved disastrous.

I have expanded somewhat on the subject of Jewish education, because I believe that the principles outlined above are universal in their application, and may be helpful to clarify the issues. This is all I can say from a distance, especially since I am convinced that a heart-to-heart discussion can easily solve the problem, if there is one, as mentioned above. All the more so, in view of the fact that all parties are sincerely concerned for the best interests of the community.

In light of the above, the most practical purpose of my writing is what follows next, and this, too, pertains to the problem of S. African Jewry being a dwindling community, to quote you again.

Before concluding this letter, permit me to turn my attention, and yours, to another aspect of the problem of South African Jewry as a "dwindling community." Though this aspect is independent of the subject matter of your letter, it has serious implications far beyond the state of the community itself, and I would be remiss if I were not to take this opportunity of bringing it to your attention.

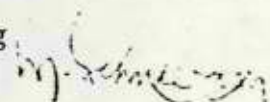
As you know, the RSA is one of the very few remaining friends of the Land of Israel in the present international arena. While common interests are, of course, important factors in international relations, there can be no doubt that the South African Jewish community and its leaders have had a significant part in developing and fostering this good relationship.

Needless to say, a healthy, vigorous and flourishing Jewish community is required in order to exert maximum influence on the government, and, clearly, such influence is bound to suffer if the community is allowed to dwindle, whether physically or spiritually, or both. Hence, if there is still a dwindling trend, it must be halted, and, indeed, reversed. I hope and trust, therefore, that if any communal leader, or influential member of the community, or any Jew with roots in the South African community contemplates leaving it, they will seriously reconsider it, bearing in mind the impact not only on the community itself, but also how it would affect their fellow-Jews everywhere, and in Eretz Yisroel in particular, inasmuch as כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.

Closer home, the South African Jewish community must surely be aware of its impact on neighboring smaller Jewish communities, particularly in Rhodesia, where despite recent erosion there is a firm determination to maintain a viable and normal Jewish existence and development. Obviously, the future of the South African Jewish community will have a great impact on these, as well as more distant Jewish communities faced with similar problems.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above vital points.

With esteem and blessing



FROM THE OFFICE
OF THE CHAIRMAN

IK/AEL/189

**SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST
FEDERATION**

54 DE VILLIERS STREET
P.O. BOX 181
JOHANNESBURG
2000

TELEPHONE 37-3000

26.3.1980.

Rabbi Menachem M Schneerson,
Lubavitch,
770 Eastern Parkway,
Brooklyn. N.Y. 11213,
U.S.A.

Honoured Rabbi,

I wish to acknowledge with many thanks your letter received here on 19 December, 1979.

I agree in principle with your comments regarding the importance of Jewish education in its widest context. Practical considerations of how best to implement these principles in a specific community is the responsibility of the leaders of that community and we look forward to co-operation and understanding from those responsible for running the Lubavitch Foundation in South Africa.

One paragraph in your letter (page 3) has caused particular concern to some members of the Federation's Board of Honorary Officers and I reproduce it hereunder:

Needless to say, a healthy, vigorous and flourishing Jewish community is required in order to exert maximum influence on the government, and, clearly, such influence is bound to suffer if the community is allowed to dwindle, whether physically or spiritually, or both. Hence, if there is still a dwindling trend, it must be halted, and, indeed, reversed. I hope and trust, therefore, that if any communal leader, or influential member of the community, or any Jew with roots in the South African community contemplates leaving it, they will seriously reconsider it, bearing in mind the impact not only on the community itself, but also how it would affect their fellow-Jews everywhere, and in Eretz Yisroel in particular.

It has been suggested that the above argument is opposed to the encouragement of aliyah.

Accordingly I would be most grateful if you would clarify what appears to be a somewhat ambiguous assertion. That is, when you state that Jews should reconsider leaving South Africa do you include Israel as a destination in that recommendation?

With respect and good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

I Kalmanowitz
CHAIRMAN



SAZEF
SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST FEDERATION
הפדרציה הציונית בדרום אפריקה
S.A. SIONISTEFEDERASIE

ZIONIST CENTRE / SIONISTE-SENTRUM
84 DE VILLIERS STR. 84
COR. / H.V. BANKET STR.
37-3000
ZIONFED
80024 SA
18 JOHANNESBURG 2000

OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR GENERAL
KANTOOR VAN DIE
DIREKTEUR-GENERAAL

PMA/HB/661

30th March 1981.

Rabbi Menachem M Schneerson,
Lubavitch,
770 Eastern Parkway,
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11213
U.S.A.

Honoured Rabbi,

Over a year ago, on 26 March 1980 the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, Mr I Kalmanowitz wrote to you requesting clarification concerning your attitude towards Aliyah from South Africa.

To date no response has been received to that letter and I enclose a copy herewith in case it went astray.

The Federation will be grateful to have your views on this significant issue as soon as possible.

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Professor Marcus Arkin
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

c.c. Mr I Kalmanowitz
Rabbi N M Bernhard

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213

493-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליוזבאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי

ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Sivan, 5741
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Prof. M. Arkin, Director-General
SAZF
84 De Villiers St.
18 Johannesburg 2000
South Africa

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to confirm receipt of your letter of March 30, 1981, which reached me with some delay. I regret that because of pressure of duties, this acknowledgment has been unavoidably delayed.

With regard to the subject matter of your letter, namely, a request for clarification of my view on Aliyah, I had hoped that in view of the fact that Aliyah is not an academic question, but has been going on for many years, the factual results would speak for themselves, and there would be no need for expressing views and opinions. However, since you are still requesting my response to a letter of over a year ago (26, 3, 1980), I will summarize my views, after some prefatory remarks.

Insofar as Lubavitch is concerned, you surely know that there is a flourishing Chabad Village near Lod of immigrants from behind the Iron Curtain, and more recently, a second Kfar Chabad is emerging with projects for additional hundreds of apartments. There is a Chabad settlement in Kiryat Malachi, Nachalat Har Chabad, and a Shikun Chabad in Jerusalem. There is also a rapidly expanding Kiryat Chabad in Safed. This organized Chabad Aliyah is, of course, in addition to the old Chabad Yishuvim since the time of the Founder of the Chabad movement (some 200 years ago). There have also been many individual families, not necessarily Chabad (Lubavitch), that have sought advice and have been encouraged to settle in Eretz Yisroel on their own merits.

Now with regard to Aliyah in general - aside from situations where there is a compelling need for emigration, as from Arab lands, the Soviet Union, etc., and aside also special cases such as reunification of families, and the like - it is clear that in order that Aliyah should achieve its goal, and not be counterproductive, and in view of the limited resources, there must be a set of priorities as to what kind of Aliyah should be concentrated on. Several basic factors must be taken into account:

1) That the new immigrant in Eretz Yisroel should be able to contribute towards the development and well-being of Eretz Yisroel; certainly not be detrimental to it.

2) The new immigrant should be able to be integrated into the economy of the land, and not become a burden on the already overburdened economy.

3) Even where the said conditions (1) and (2) are in order, the gain of a new immigrant, or group of immigrants, should be weighed against the loss which their emigration from their present country would cause to the local Jewish community. If the person happens to be a leader in his community, whose departure would seriously affect the well-being of the community, spiritually, economically, or politically - thereby weakening that community's support for Eretz Yisroel, the gain would be more than offset by the loss. We have seen this happen time and again, when the leaders of a community have been persuaded to make Aliyah, with the inevitable result that the community dwindled rapidly, physically and spiritually. In a small community, the departure of a single influential member, whether a Rabbi or layman, may make all the difference.

If there was a time, decades ago, when the above considerations (to which I have consistently called attention) were considered conjectural, the long-term effects of ill-conceived Aliyah no longer leave room for any doubts as to what kind of Aliyah is constructive. Far too long have those who are concerned with Aliyah, with all good intentions, considered only the immediate gain and ignored the loss in the longer run. Others, in their zeal to produce quick "achievements", have unwittingly or otherwise resorted to propaganda methods, etc., which were even more inimical to all concerned - Eretz Yisroel, the Diaspora, and the immigrants themselves, which has contributed, in no small measure, to the inordinate Yeridah.

A classical example is the emigration from Morocco. The Aliyah campaign was concentrated on the group of least resistance - the spiritual leaders, despite my warnings, behind the scenes, of the disastrous consequences of despoiling the local communities of their leadership. The basic argument was that "the leaders must show the way; the flock will follow." What happened was that the leaders did, by and large, make Aliyah, but the local communities became largely demoralized. In the end, hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews emigrated, not to the Land of Israel, but to France, to be exposed to forces of assimilation they had not known before.

N.B. → This was done despite the fact that Morocco was the most benign of Arab countries (as it still is, which is something of a miracle).

Needless to say, it is not enough to get someone to be an oleh; it is necessary to make sure, to the extent that this is possible, that the oleh will not become a yored, sooner or later. Surely there is no point - and it is not merely an exercise in futility but in squandering of limited resources - to persuade someone who is a 51% potential yored to make Aliyah, not to mention one who is 90% a potential yored. Yet, it is a matter of record, that

all too often Aliyah activists have ignored this basic principle, either through wishful thinking, or more deplorably, through setting up for themselves "quotas" to be fulfilled by all means, ~~in whatever manner possible~~ etc.

Of course, the inordinate Yeridah, especially in recent years, is not due solely to the lack of proper screening or selectivity, or the exaggerated promises and prospects offered to would-be olim. A very substantial number of the Yordim are native-born, which is painful subject in itself. We are speaking here of olim that have turned yordim, and/or their children who grew up there. The disenchantment of some olim is not always rooted in economics, though the situation would have been much better if there would be a closer coordination between the Aliyah department and the kelitah (absorption) agencies. Ultimately it is not the promise of a nicer apartment, a better job, and higher standard of living that will satisfy an oleh from the free countries, but the fact that Eretz Yisroel is uniquely different for a Jew; its uniqueness being its spiritual quality, being the Holy Land. If all the accent will be on the material aspects of life, with total disregard of the essential point, namely, that true and lasting Aliyah is inseparable from a spiritual Aliyah, there will inevitably be yordim, or, at any rate, disgruntled and embittered "foreigners" whose hearts and minds are elsewhere. Such an oleh is not likely to recommend to relatives and friends back in his country of origin to follow in his footsteps.

A case in point - which is also one of the basic factors responsible for the so-called Neshirah ("drop-outs") - is the policy of separating the younger generation from their parents that has been practised among such groups of olim where family ties and traditions have been very strong in their native countries. Ostensibly this was done for the purpose of hastening the process of "integration," but in fact it has proved disastrous in terms of, on the one hand, juvenile delinquency, etc., and on the other - in terms of the feedback of the parents that have been terribly hurt by it.

Now with regard to the specific question of Aliyah from the RSA. I regret to say that - certainly in retrospect - it has been a disaster both for Eretz Yisroel and for the S.A. Jewish community. Suffice it to mention that a substantial number of olim from S.A. are now in the U.S.A. and Canada, and, worse still, the majority of them comprises the most productive younger element. In other words, not only has the S.A. Jewish community paid a heavy price in terms of its own viability, but Eretz Yisroel has benefitted little from this Aliyah even in the short term, not to mention the long term loss resulting from a weakened S.A. community.

In this case, too, when the Aliyah campaign began in S.A., I warned against creating a panic as a means of spurring Aliyah. Aside from this being contrary to the Torah, especially when not absolutely justified by an imminent threat, it would adversely affect the good relationship of the S.A. government towards the Jewish community, as well as towards Eretz Yisroel. I further pointed out that the RSA was one of a very few friendly governments that consistently maintained its friendly policy. I believe that to some extent I succeeded in averting a stampede, but I have not succeeded in halting the trend

altogether. Certainly in the present world situation, one would have expected it to be self-evident that it is not in the interests of Eretz Yisroel to press for a mass Aliyah from S.A., considering that the RSA is one of only two friends Eretz Yisroel has in the whole world, and the one which - relatively speaking - is more consistent and stable than the U.S.A. It is something of a miracle that despite the attempts of certain persons to create a panic among S.A. Jewry, the relationship has not suffered substantially - at a time when other countries around the world have found it expedient to turn their backs on the beleaguered Yishuv and support its mortal enemies.

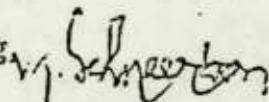
In summary, it may be said that the underlying problem of Aliyah has been the mistaken premise and inclination to "write off" the Diaspora Jews, and to use all possible means to encourage indiscriminate Aliyah, regardless of the inevitable "fallout." This has reached a point where even non-Jews are encouraged to settle in Eretz Yisroel (especially where there is a Jewish spouse), without requiring them to undergo Geyrut (conversion) according to the Halachah - the only kind of conversion that is valid, of course. Under this ill-conceived policy of "Aliyah at all costs," many a healthy and thriving Jewish community in the Diaspora has been seriously weakened, and in some cases destroyed, by despoiling them of their leaders, religious and lay, and men of means and influence, who were not only the mainstay of their communities, but pillars of support for Eretz Yisroel, and whose usefulness as such diminished or ceased in their role as olim. Clearly, a great deal of the effort and resources spent on futile, or even harmful Aliyah, would be better spent on strengthening communities in the Diaspora, through Torah education, fighting assimilation, and so on. A healthy Jewish community - Jewish not in name only - in the Diaspora is the best asset for Eretz Yisroel, as well as a source of truly good and permanent olim.

I trust you will accept the above remarks in the spirit they have been made, namely, not, G-d forbid, as rebuke or criticism for its own sake, nor as preachment, but in the sincere hope that this exchange of correspondence will induce some deep reflection and rethinking, and, more importantly, will stimulate concrete action for the real benefit of Jews, both in Eretz Yisroel and in the Diaspora.

Much more could be said on the subject matter, but I trust the above will suffice.

In conclusion, I would like to reciprocate with a request of my own - not for a clarification of your position on Aliyah in general, and on any of the points raised in this letter in particular, but - since "action is the essential thing" - what action you have taken, or plan to take, in connection with this matter; and with what results.

With blessing,



P.S. Inasmuch as certain sections of this letter ought to be treated with confidence, I trust you will use your discretion in sharing them only with appropriate persons for whom it will serve a useful purpose.

**SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST
FEDERATION**

41 DE VILLIERS STREET
P.O. BOX 18
JOHANNESBURG
2000

August 26th 1981

TELEPHONE 37-3000

Rabbi Menachem M Schneerson
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn N.Y. 11213
United States of America

Honoured Rabbi,

Further to our letter of 1 July 1981 signed by Professor M Arkin, we would now like to reply more fully to your comments dated 9th of Sivan.

Naturally, we respect the views you put forward therein on some of the possible errors committed in the past regarding general aliyah policy, although we do not by any means fully agree with all the strictures raised.

But in particular, we are unable to accept the thesis that 'in retrospect, aliyah from South Africa has been a disaster both for Eretz Yisrael and for the South African Jewish community'. The years since statehood have witnessed a growing involvement of South African immigrants in all walks of Israeli life across a broad spectrum. In religious affairs, in medicine and the academic world (including many aspects of pure and applied research), in politics, in journalism, and in the diplomatic corps, in law and accountancy, in all these spheres and others (including the performing arts), the South African impact has been profound.

In fact, visitors to Israel from other parts of the world frequently express astonishment when they learn that the South African segment of the population runs to not more than 15 000, since so many key positions in professional fields and major economic sectors are held by them.

Nor can we accept the argument that the South African Zionist Federation was responsible for 'creating a panic as a means of spurring aliyah'. (The Federation has always been most scrupulous in its aliyah promotional efforts to take the public relations aspect into full consideration); or that aliyah has been promoted from here in an 'indiscriminatory' fashion.

As we emphasized at the outset, we accept the comments you put forward in the spirit they were made, but we have to agree to differ on these fundamental issues.

We have had a full discussion with Rabbi Lipskar and Bernhard in Johannesburg. Here too we are left with a gap in our approach as far as emphasis is concerned.

As a courtesy we are drawing the attention of this correspondence to certain public figures in Israel - namely, President Navon, Prime Minister Begin and World Zionist Organization Chairman Mr Dulzin, all of whom we hope to be seeing later this month in Jerusalem. This will be handed to them with a request to keep the contents confidential.

With respect and all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Itz Kalmanowitz
CHAIRMAN