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

Prof. M. Arkin, Director-General
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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 counter productive, 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, ~~however much it might cost~~ 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.

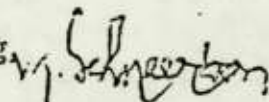
In summary, it may be said that the underlying problem of Aliyah has been the mistaken premise and inclination to "write off" the Diaspora Jews, and to use all possible means to encourage indiscriminate Aliyah, regardless of the inevitable "fallout." This has reached a point where even non-Jews are encouraged 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.