

WORLD UNION FOR  
PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

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האיגוד העולמי  
ליהדות מתקדמת

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June 1, 2003

To: Dr. Israel Singer, President and Mr. Julius Berman, Chairman  
Claims-Conference

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you regarding the Claims Conference policy on the balance between welfare programs for survivors on the one hand, and educational programs on the other. As a relatively new member of the Board of Directors, my personal acquaintance with past policies is naturally limited. It is clear to me that the welfare of survivors is a primary obligation of the Claims Conference and our primary responsibility when distributing reparation funds. Yet, as a rabbi and as the Executive Director of an international Jewish organization committed to the preservation of the Jewish people and the promotion of Judaism, a goal which I hope we all share, I want to speak of the importance of maintaining, if not increasing, the allocations for educational programs on Holocaust related matters.

The funds administered by the Claims Conference come from various sources and represent reparation and compensation for different aspects of the destruction perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jewish People. A significant part of the destruction affected material properties serving the Jewish spirit, heritage and culture. Communal synagogues, schools, literature were meant to preserve Judaism just as much as they were meant to provide services for individual Jews. In the horrific destruction from *Kristallnacht* onwards these were targeted as well as the life, the body and the property of Jews collectively and as individuals. In maintaining our loyalty and responsibility towards the communities that were destroyed and on whose behalf we act, we need to maintain loyalty to the aspirations and goals that guided them in creating these communal assets, and the usage they chose to make of their own private property for the benefit of the Jewish collective.

These are the principles that guide us in the Jewish tradition as to administering charitable funds and *hekdeshim*. Without belittling in the least the significant difference between the assets that have been entrusted to us and these instances, we should not turn our backs on these considerations when we come to exercise our responsibility acting as the board of the Claims Conference.

It is in this spirit, that the preeminent Jewish thinker Emil Fackenheim concluded that in the post-Auschwitz world, world Jews are obligated to observe a 614<sup>th</sup> commandment, to survive as Jews lest we hand Hitler a posthumous victory. Indeed the *Shoa*, as a focal event in contemporary Jewish history, obligates us to remember and never to forget. We, standing on behalf of the victims, must carry out our duty in order to realize this obligation so that we can contribute and ensure the renewal of Jewish life and its preservation, the commemoration of a memory of the *Shoa* and transform it into a leverage for the strengthening of Judaism, the Jewish people and for *Tikkun Olam*, mending the ruptured world that has emerged from the fire and ashes of the *Shoa*.

In friendship,

Rabbi Uri Regev  
Executive Director

cc Gideon Taylor