

Personal Message to Potential Donors

Tuesday, 20 November 2007

As you are no doubt aware the Jews of Egypt were an important and vibrant Community until the 3 wars between Egypt and Israel saw their cruel exile (history). There are now a handful of Jews in Egypt and, although they appear to run their own affairs, they are under severe pressure and scrutiny from Government Agencies. During my current world trip I visited Egypt and had discussions with the leaders of the "Communities" of Cairo and Alexandria. Their situation is desperate as Synagogues, cemeteries and other properties as well as community records (births, marriages and deaths), a large number of sefarim, religious artefacts and other community assets are in a sorry state and there is no mechanism for Jews from Egypt in the Diaspora to assist.

Many initiatives in recent times and in many countries have managed to bring us together. Congresses have been organised, conferences, trips to Egypt, books published, web sites created, chat rooms, etc. These are all important and commendable initiatives that have enabled many families and friends to be reunited and memories revived. (links)

The Nebi Daniel International Association (Nebidaniel) of which I am a founding member is having delicate negotiations with the Egyptian Government in order to preserve our patrimony and ensure continuity when there will no longer be any Jews in Egypt. The progress is slow but the effort continues notwithstanding. In the meantime we are undertaking maintenance and improvement works at the Cemeteries in order to preserve the tombs and allow easier access for visitors.

My wife Racheline and I have undertaken a new initiative. At the World Congress of the Jews of Egypt in Haifa in July last year, We decided to set up an Endowment at Haifa University for the Study & Research of the History and Culture of the Jews of Egypt (see attached WCJE Final Resolutions). I have personally entered with the University into an agreement (attached copy) whereby:

1. I make an initial contribution of \$US50,000 (letter dated 24 December 2006 attached)
2. I undertake a world wide funding campaign ending 31 December 2011
3. The University undertakes to establish:
 - A chair, if I raise a minimum of \$US300,000
 - A Centre if I raise a minimum of \$US1 million
 - An Institute if I raise a minimum of \$US1.5 million

As you can see from the agreement, (documents) the funds raised remain in an investment account. The principal stays intact and only part of the Income will be used for this venture. It means that this initiative can be considered to last in perpetuity, long after we, the remaining witnesses of this 2nd Exodus have long disappeared.

Last Century, the Jewish Communities in Egypt made substantial (contributions) to the development of modern Egypt in every realm of endeavour, far beyond their relative numbers. It is important to record this proud history with an academic institution of the high reputation of the University of Haifa; (University of Haifa) not only to allow our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to realise who we were but also to counter the negative campaign of the Arab media and inscribe our history within the narrative of the various diasporas of the modern era.

I am sure you will agree that Education is the best way to respond to misinformation, propaganda and ignorance and I hope my initiative will achieve this purpose.

The minimum target of \$US300,000 will establish a Chair but I aim at more, to create a Centre or an Institute where we could have a repository of publications, documents and artefacts that can become the basis for a future museum. Other communities who have also been forced out of their Country of residence all have their centres or museums. We, the Jews of Egypt, have nothing and I am trying to correct this injustice.

During my recent tour of Europe (France and the UK) and the USA (Los Angeles, New York and Miami), Many people have made donations and I received significant pledges that are very encouraging as I am at the very beginning of my campaign.

Originally I was hoping that this project would receive the support of some of the 'super' wealthy Jews of Egypt in the Diaspora. Two or three large contributions would have sufficed to establish the Trust Fund. Unfortunately this has not happened as each philanthropist has his or her own priorities and I am now depending on a larger number of smaller donors. Ultimately this might be a "plus" as it would give the Endowment more legitimacy.

I am looking for your kind support and contribution. I should mention that donations are tax deductible in the USA and in many countries of Europe (how to donate). I also own naming rights for this project and I am quite prepared to relinquish this privilege to you or any of your loved ones. Every donation will be acknowledged, recognised and honoured no matter how large or how small (questions & answers - recognitions). Whether you contribute or not, please circularise this appeal among your friends and family as word of mouth is the best way to make this project known.

Joe Barda