

AN OPEN LETTER TO YITZHAK RABIN

AN APPEAL FOR BASIC DECENCY

The world has recently witnessed a fierce struggle in the State of Israel between religious Jewry on the one side, and the government, its police forces, courts and archeologists on the other.

Since its establishment, the Israeli government has waged an ongoing battle against the beliefs and practices of traditional Judaism. Numerous laws and practices have been aimed against the Jewish religion. One aspect of this cruelty has been the long established practice of grave robbing, in which archeologists unearth those buried in ancient cemeteries, in order to perform "historical" or "scientific" research with their remains. The graves of our ancestors, including venerated Rabbis and laymen, which have remained undisturbed for thousands of years and were protected by a series of governments (Arabic, Turkish and English) who never dreamed of touching their holy bones, are now being desecrated by a, so called Jewish, Israeli government. Under government sanction the earthly remains of our ancestors have been removed to museums, to medical facilities for experimentation or simply cavalierly cast on the ground when not "needed". Today over twenty thousand skeletons may be found in Israeli museums which have been stolen from their graves over the years.

According to Torah belief, based as it is on the soul's continued existence after death and eventual re-unification with the body of resurrection, grave robbing is a monstrous sin. However, from any point of

view it is a vile practice to ignore the obvious desires of the deceased himself and his family who chose burial in the assumption that it would not be violated.

Recently, though, government policy has sunk to a new low. In the past the archeologists accompanied with police protection would desecrate cemeteries at night attempting to conceal their vile actions under cover of darkness or via other forms of deceit. Now, however, the Israeli courts have delivered another blow against the Jewish faith by ruling that the archeologists have the right to plunder any cemetery that they see fit. Indeed, this winter has witnessed two grave robberies by the government. The first took place in Mamilah, Jerusalem, where the desecrated cemetery is to be converted into a parking lot, and the second in the French Hill where the area is to be used as a part of a highway. Under the cover of "law", bulldozers destroyed these two ancient burial sites, while coffins and bones were carted away to be further violated in museums or simply left exposed on the roadside. At present the remaining section of this cemetery is under constant threat of further archeological excavations.

When thousands of concerned Jews attempted to protest this inhuman destruction they were attacked by the police in brutal fashion (typical of all such confrontations). Tear gas and rubber bullets were fired, fierce beatings followed resulting in broken bones, concussions and assorted injuries, followed by long term imprisonments.

Therefore, we the world religious Jewish community call upon you, Mr. Rabin, on the occasion of your visit to the United States. Please stop these desecrations of Jewish cemeteries. Don't tread with impunity upon the Jewish people's deepest feelings.

Why must Israel be different than any other nation? All nations that religious Jewry has contacted in similar circumstances have responded with consideration and compassion. They have comprehended our feelings concerning cemetery destruction. Why did Egypt understand? Why did Germany understand? Why did all central European nations understand us? Why have all nations responded by respecting Jewish cemeteries? Why then does "Israel", supposedly a Jewish state, fail to understand basic decency?

We appeal to everyone who has the ability to influence the Israeli government, the American government or any international body, to see to it that this abominable practice is immediately stopped. Raise your voices in protest against the Israeli government and demand that they cease desecrating Jewish graves, that they cease their callous disregard of Judaism and Jewish sentiment, and most important that they overturn the recent court decision which allows these horrors to proceed legally!

At this point we find it imperative to reiterate our principles concerning the Zionist movement, and the state of Israel. One of the basic tenets of our faith is, that since Divine will has placed us in exile, we are forbidden to have any nationalistic aspirations. We are bound by Divine oath to accept the yoke of diaspora, and live in peace and harmony within the nations that Divine destiny has placed us, and observe our religious practices, till our final redemption, when peace and tranquility will come to all mankind.

Central Rabbinical Congress of U.S.A. and Canada

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**JOIN US TODAY AT A MASS DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE
UNITED NATIONS AT 4:00 PM, AS WE APPEAL TO THE NATIONS
OF THE WORLD TO PROTECT OUR ANCESTORS GRAVES!**