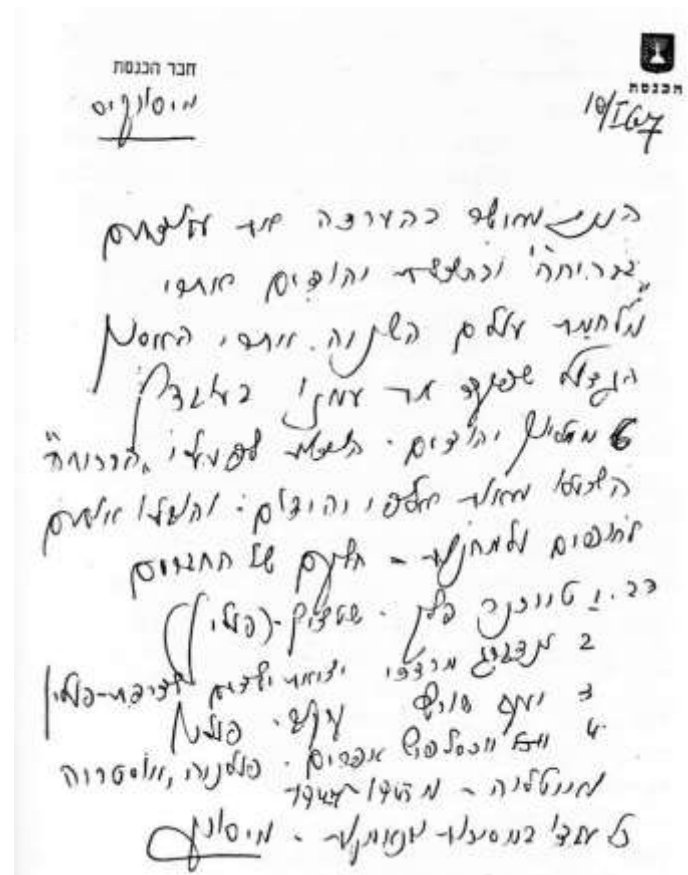


TRUE CHARITY

In memory of the blessed Mr. Yaakov Welcman who was murdered in Jerusalem on the 23rd of Menachem Av 5698 (20/8/1938).

We tend to remember and pay tribute to the people who in their lives occupied respectable places in various areas of life – in society, culture, politics, etc., who were leaders of their community and their mentors. But no, such was not Mr. Yaakov Meir z"l. He did not value public honor, did not pursue awards and publicity. His work was done modestly, not in order to receive an award. With all his heart and soul, he devoted himself to every person in distress. However, he saw the essence of his destiny in the last grace preparing the deceased before burial, the grace of true charity.

If there was a lonely and childless person, when he falls ill and there is no one to feed him in his sickness, talk to him, hear him, encourage him and take care of him – Mr. Yaakov Meir would help him with everything he needed. Then, Mr. Yaakov Meir would forget himself and his family, hurry to the patient, make friends with him, eat at his bed and stay for a moment until the ill was relieved, that he was not lonely anymore, that someone cared about his health. At midnight, in heavy rain and in cold, Mr. Yaakov Meir hurried through the dark alleys of Mea Shearim¹, while everyone was deeply asleep, towards the



Letter of appreciation and thanks from MK M. Surkis, one of the leaders of the "Escape", to the "Escape" activists from Kutno

¹ TN: ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem.

home of the lonely sick, the lonesome person. But when he arrived near the house, heartbreaking cries and bitter cries were already heard. Then Mr. Yaakov Meir would enter the house of the deceased, comfort the mourners, ask them to lie down and rest and himself would sit next to the dead and recite psalms until the morning light.

At the outbreak of the events in *Eretz Israel* in the years 1936-1938², he was not careful for his soul, entering every remote and dangerous corner, in order to bring the blessed of the nation to the tomb of Israel. He brought them to the grave of Israel on the Mount of Olives³ and did not obey the orders of the authorities to bury them in a mass grave, because of the emergency, by the light of the Moon he dug a grave for each of them. In his mind, only one *mitzvah* – the sanctity and honor of the dead.

In Jerusalem, a barren and old Jew died. The man lived alone, with no relative or caretaker. Neighbors who felt the foul odors rising from the old room refrained from approaching it and peek inside, and even a doctor who was called refrained from entering. Then Mr. Yaakov Meir broke down the door, opened the windows, moved the corpse to the cemetery and there brought it to the tomb of Israel. But he refused to accept payment for his trouble, lest the *mitzvah* be violated.

Mr. Yaakov Meir objected to accompanying the dead driving and even from very distant places from the cemetery and even if it was a newborn baby, he was brought to burial according to the *mitzvot* of the sages and righteous of men of Jerusalem as they did in past generations, who observed the *mitzvah* of honoring the dead, accompanying only by foot.



Mr. Yaakov Welcman z"l

Mr. Yaakov Meir was a simple Jew, righteous honest and honest with God. Resident of Jerusalem for over thirty years, one of the first workers to pave the road to *Yemin Moshe*⁴. Then, there was a break. However, he abandoned his art and devoted himself entirely to "*Chevra-Kadisha*" affairs. With great urgency he provided for his large family. At the outbreak of the plague in World War I, in Jerusalem he volunteered to bring the plague victims to the grave of Israel and even on Saturdays and holidays he did not stop his holy work – all for the honor of the dead.

Mr. Yaakov Meir was born in 1888 in Kutno, Poland. He studied at a *yeshiva* and his desire was to immigrate to *Eretz Israel*. And indeed, this dream was fulfilled. When he came to Israel, he settled in Jerusalem near the Western Wall and from there moved to Warsaw Houses⁵. On the last Friday of his life, he said goodbye to his family and kissed everyone, and when they asked him to explain the matter, he replied that his heart foretold him evil. Indeed, on his way back home from the Western Wall he was shot and seriously injured by the Arabs on St. Paul Street. Eyewitnesses said that he called out to the people who passed by and returned: "Do not go down to Musrara⁶, the Arabs are shooting at the Jews!". He was brought to Hadassah Hospital, where he had surgery, but the next day, on Shabbat, he felt unwell, said a confession and even gave the blessing of the beginning of the month of Elul. On midday Shabbat, he recited the *Shema-Israel* prayer and his soul departed after saying the word "one"⁷. He was fifty-year-old when he died.

May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life.

The WELCMAN family

² TN: beginning of the Arab Revolt against British rule, in order to prevent Jewish emigration and the creation of Israel. A number of terrorist attacks were targeting Jews.

³ TN: where the oldest cemetery in Jerusalem is.

⁴ TN: one of the first neighborhood of Jerusalem outside the Old City, named after the benefactor Moses Montefiore. It was established in 1892. Montefiore windmill is still there.

⁵ TN: ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem, also called Nahalat Yaakov, near Mea Shearim.

⁶ TN: Arab neighborhood at the Damascus Gate exit of the Old City of Jerusalem.

⁷ TN: The last word of the first sentence of the *Shema Israel* prayer.