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Yuli-Yoel Edelstein MK
Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora
Jerusalem

4th June 2009
יב בסיון התשס"ט

Dear Minister Edelstein,

I wish to congratulate you on your new responsibilities and to wish you all success in carrying out your unique mandate for being the official liaison of Israel to the Jewish world as well as the coordinating public voice of Israel to the outside world.

I am writing to you to present a special project, which I ask you and your office to consider supporting. It is a project whose successful conclusion would "reinforce and reinvigorate Jewish pride and affiliation, with the emphasis on Israel, Zionism, Jerusalem and the interdependence of Jews worldwide"¹.

I represent and am writing in the name of *The Committee For Bringing The Remains of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov To Jerusalem*. The Committee, works through the framework of the Non-Profit *Amuta For Restoring The Samburski Cemetary on Har Zion*. The Amuta is dedicated to the unique project of returning Rabbi Nachman of Bretslav from his current grave at Uman in the Ukraine and reburying him in Jerusalem.

The Amuta has received encouragement and founding support from late President Chaim Herzog z"l, when as President of Israel, he endorsed its noble objective together with the President of Ukraine, during the latter's state visit to Israel 17 years ago.

¹ Statement from the office of former Minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, Minister Nathan Sharansky

Since then, the project has received wide international support and has been supported by Torah sages, including Rav Ovadia Yosef, the late Rav Moshe Feinstein z"l, and leading politicians and public figures. President Shimon Peres, has lent his encouragement. Ehud Olmert as mayor of Jerusalem and subsequently as Prime Minister of Israel, pledged his support. The Amuta also received a permit from former Prime Minister Arik Sharon concerning potential development of a burial site on Har Zion and has been in negotiations with the Government company *Development of East Jerusalem Ltd* regarding the preparation of land on Har Zion for the creation of the burial site for Rabbi Nachman, and its designation as a national monument.

The family ancestors of Rabbi Nachman have also asked for his remains to be brought to Israel.

The whole project received added urgency in the aftermath of the horrific terror attack a few months ago in India against Beit Chabad. The site at Uman is a major Jewish site visited throughout the year by thousands of Jewish visitors. Security at the site is very lax. Many unsavory people frequent the site and prey on the visitors. There is real concern for their physical safety and that G-d Forbid the site continues to be a major potential target for terrorist action.

Now more than ever before, is the time to coordinate with the Ukrainian Government for the return of Rabbi Nachman to Israel. The Ukrainian government has not objected to the idea of removing Rabbi Nachman's body. In fact, there is recognition that the site could become an even greater international tourist attraction benefiting the Ukrainian economy. They have indicated that the grave should be granted the status of a Jewish holy site and that possibly the site be declared a national heritage site of Ukraine.

It is imperative that the Jewish people through the sovereign State of Israel reclaim a national treasure and ensure a proper national heritage site in Israel. The benefits to the Jewish people and to Israel of bringing Rabbi Nachman to Jerusalem are immense. The spiritual value attached to the bringing of the remains of a Tzaddik to Israel are inestimable. Rabbi Nachman's presence here would be a constant source of inspiration and strengthening of faith. It would attract hundreds of thousands of visitors and provide a major boost to local tourism. It would allow for greater security to all who wished to pray at his grave. The Government and State of Israel would provide security directly for its own citizens, for

the Jewish people and for all the many visitors. It would stop delegating such security to a foreign country, which alas has had and continues to have a heavy tradition of anti-Semitism.

The posthumous aliya of Rabbi Nachman would be a Zionist act of the highest order. Previous Israeli governments brought Herzl and members of his family. The repatriation and burial in Eretz Israel of Rabbi Nachman by the current Government would be to its everlasting credit.

The project however, requires practical ongoing Israeli government support. It needs formal adoption by the Government. An operational plan involving and coordinating all existing government, municipal and private resources needs formulating and implementing.

An office was allocated several years ago within the Prime Minister's Office to coordinate the return to Israel of members of Herzl's family. The Director of that office was appointed by the then Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, to work on the Rabbi Nachman project, and met with members of the Amuta. Such an office could again be made available for the housing of a team dedicated to the Rabbi Nachman project.

It is also absolutely imperative that in the interim, any visitors to the site in Uman receive increased protection. The Israeli Government must do all in its power to increase the protection of the Israeli and Jewish public wishing to visit the gravesite, including where appropriate the issuance of public warnings of the dangers in visiting the site in Uman.

You are a highly respected and important member of the Government, with significant experience of dealing with the outside world, with the diaspora and with aliya. You have the unique background of having grown up in the Ukraine. You undoubtedly understand the vital spiritual, economic and Zionist values of "Uman in Jerusalem", of bringing a national treasure to Zion.

You have been entrusted with the formidable and vital task of coordinating between the Jewish people and Israel and of furthering projects dedicated to "reinforcing and reinvigorating Jewish pride and affiliation, with the emphasis on Israel, Zionism, Jerusalem and the interdependence of Jews worldwide". Your Ministry would be the natural home for the Rabbi Nachman project.

On behalf of the *The Committee For Bringing The Remains of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov To Jerusalem*, I respectfully request a meeting with

you to discuss ways and means of advancing this vital national project and of seeking your advice and support in promoting the project within the Government.

Yours very sincerely,

Chaim Crown, Adv.

Cc: Gil Shefer, Office of the Prime Minister