

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER  
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May 26, 1986

To: Shimon Peres, Prime Minister of Israel  
From: The members of Har Halutz, a newly-founded  
community village in the Galilee

Honorable Prime Minister,

We, the founding members of Har Halutz are happy in our new community and proud of our project. Most of us are new immigrants from the United States who find the values of an enlightened Israel and the cause of fulfilling the Zionist idea to be a source of strength for ourselves and for the members of our group who are still in the United States.

As members of the movement for Progressive Judaism we came to the Galilee to build and to be built, and to add the development of this Galilee mountain to the works of our sister settlements in the Arava - Yabel and Lotan. We see ourselves as a vanguard, as a bridge to that large and splendid reform community which has begun to fulfill Zionist goals.

Our membership in Israel as well as abroad consists of Jews by birth and Jews who have converted to Judaism by choice. By our aliyah to the state of Israel, study of her language, integration into her population, contribution to her productivity and service in her army we are proving our desire to become rooted in the land and to add our contribution to the heritage of Israel.

We came with a positive spirit, filled with eagerness and hope, but found a sad reality which slaps us in the face. The Interior Ministry of the state of Israel is singling out our fellow member, Ehud Ryden, and refuses to register him as a Jew. Ehud, who converted to Judaism thirteen years ago, became a Zionist, uprooted himself from his California birthplace and came to Israel with his wife Yonat to build a home on a barren hill in the heart of the Galilee.

Honorable Prime Minister, can there be a finer Judaism than this?  
But the Ministry of Interior in Akko, in accordance with new directives, sent Ehud to the rabbinat in Haifa to obtain approval of his Reform conversion. Both we and Ehud are wounded by this act and fearful of the precedent it will set.

Today leaders of our parent movement in the United States have come to greet us and to consider the possibilities for settlement and development here so that they may return and spread the news of Har Halutz in their congregations. In their presence we turn to

rabbinate in Haifa to obtain approval of his Reform conversion. Both we and Ehud are wounded by this act and fearful of the precedent it will set.

Today leaders of our parent movement in the United States have come to greet us and to consider the possibilities for settlement and development here so that they may return and spread the news of Har Halutz in their congregations. In their presence we turn to you, in our names and in the names of those who intend to join us, and request that you say to your subordinate, the Minister of Interior: "Stop this discrimination!" This minister does not have the right to reinterpret the Law of Return to implement his own views and thereby make meaningless the clearly worded intent of the law that has served since the founding of the State.

We and the representatives of our movement abroad trust in you personally, Mister Peres, and ask that you return the process of recording of religion to its previous form so that all new immigrants will be proud of their Jewishness and of the State of Israel

Many eyes turn to you, and many hearts from both sides of the ocean wait hopefully for your response.

Yours Truly,

David & Keren Aharoni  
Hal & Esti Applebaum  
Avi Avital  
Mordi & Chaya Burstein  
Nitzza Fine  
Pesach & Gail Norton

Daniel & Dvora Oren  
Ehud & Yonat Ryden  
Haim Sharett  
Teak & Esther Silberman  
Steve & Erela Wilson

co-signed by 15  
members of the  
UAHC board of  
trustees, headed by:  
- Charles G. Rothchild  
chairmen of the board  
- Rabbi Danny Syme  
UAHC vice president  
- Al Vorspan  
UAHC social action

cc. Rabbi Izchak Peretz - Minister of interior  
Mr. Ya'acov Tsur - Minister of absorption  
Mr. Abraham Burg - diaspora advisor to the PM