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Letters to Miriam Zafren from Leonard Gold and Michael Grunberger

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Letters to Herbert Zafren's Wife Miriam

LEONARD GOLD

July 5, 2005

Dear Miriam:

Not having been in touch for some time, I was shocked and very sad to learn of Herb's death. Although others were my teachers and mentors, I always looked upon Herb as a kind of youth movement "madrikh," or older-brother-figure in Judaica librarianship. In a field where some tended to sink into a kind of institutional chauvinism, Herb's sights were always set higher. Certainly, he belonged to and championed HUC-JIR, but his real mission was the common endeavor.

I first met Herb at a meeting in 1965 at the Zionist Archives and Library held in the hope of reviving the dormant alliance of Judaica research libraries as a step towards merging with others to form the Association of Jewish Libraries. I was still very much the novice, but Abraham Berger, who *was* my teacher and mentor, had prevailed upon me to attend. Many old-timers were there, and, frankly, they seemed a tired lot. But in their midst was a younger man. Though he was soft-spoken, his enthusiasm was infectious as he proudly displayed a volume of the brand-new *Dictionary Catalog of the Klau Library*.

Over the years, as you surely know, I became indebted to Herb for his wisdom and generosity. We served together on many committees. In the early seventies he was helpful when I had to introduce Hebrew-character data into the computer-assisted *Dictionary Catalog of The Research Libraries, The New York Public Library*. He had just completed work on machine-readable romanization of Hebrew for the ANSI Z-39 committee, and that turned out to be the stepping stone. Then, in the eighties, as I worked on the exhibition *A Sign and A Witness: 2000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts* he was unsparing in his help and encouragement. I still recall sitting in your kitchen and chatting with you and Herb during that demanding but exhilarating time in my career.

I last saw Herb at the Association of Jewish Libraries convention in Brooklyn in 2004. Though retired, it was as if he were still keeping an eye on things. I hope he also allowed himself to feel some of the pride and satisfaction he deserved for his part in the great strides the field has made. I offer condolences. May you find strength in good memories and the love of family and friends.

Sincerely yours,
Leonard (Aryeh) Gold

Dr. Leonard Gold, a past president of AJL, served as Dorot Chief Librarian of the Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library, until his retirement in 1998.

MICHAEL GRUNBERGER

July 1, 2005

Dear Miriam,

I was deeply saddened to hear the news of Herb's passing. Over the course of my career, he has been a wonderful friend and mentor to me. He was generous in sharing his wisdom and I always felt fortunate to have him to turn to for solid and honest advice.

I know that these last years have been very difficult. But I hope that you will be comforted in the knowledge that his was a life of great achievement, that his scholarly and professional legacies have touched so many people, and that his life's work as this nation's leading Judaica librarian will continue to nourish future generations. All who were fortunate to know him will sorely miss him.

Please accept my deep sympathy and sincere condolences.

Michael Grunberger

Dr. Michael Grunberger is Head of the Hebraic Section, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.