

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Jane Sherman
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Ruth Broder
3 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Thursday, November 10, 2005
4 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Jewish Federation
5 SUBJECT MATTER: leadership role nationally and in
6 Israel (second interview)
7

8 MS. BRODER: Jane, we met earlier at the beginning
9 of the summer. We covered a lot of topics the last time.
10 Thank you for coming back because we did talk for a long time.
11 But there was one subject which I think is very important that
12 we really didn't go into. So I want to do some depth on the
13 Jewish Agency for Israel today because you're probably the
14 person in this community that knows more about the workings of
15 the Jewish Agency than anybody, and I think it would be very
16 valuable for our archives to know the relationship and how it
17 works.

18 After we had our interview, ^{you}~~we~~ went to Israel and
19 there was a tribute for your father. Just tell us a little
20 bit about it.

21 MS. SHERMAN: Well, they did do a very poignant
22 tribute to my father with music and dancing, where Salah
23 Maridore (ph. sp.), chairman of the Jewish Agency, Shimon
24 Peres, Martin Indig (ph. sp.) all spoke as well as myself.
25 Really it was a beautiful evening. It wasn't a crying evening

1 but they showed pictures of my father going back obviously to
2 his childhood, gave some history but basically his involvement
3 in Israel and the Jewish Agency. Regretfully they couldn't
4 use any film because they couldn't transfer it on this fancy
5 new equipment that was available. It was quite a memorable
6 evening.

7 All my siblings were there and Marjorie and most of
8 our husbands and some of our children. Three or four people
9 flew over from Detroit just for the evening. There were about
10 800 people there. It was held outside at the Israel Museum.
11 They showed the history and the life of the New Oleem (ph.
12 sp.) and what had happened. In fact the highlight of many of
13 the men was Ms. Israel. She's a new allah (ph. sp.). She's
14 been in Israel for a couple years. That was quite something.

15 MS. BRODER: And I assume you were good.

16 MS. SHERMAN: Well, you'll have to ask somebody else
17 about that. The CD is in the archives.

18 MS. BRODER: I'll make a point of seeing that.

19 Give us a short history of the Jewish Agency, what
20 it was before Israel and then what it became.

21 MS. SHERMAN: The Jewish Agency was the government
22 before May 19, 1948. Their role, besides doing normal
23 government activities prior to 1948, was to bring in many of
24 the refugees from the war. They'd give them guns and send
25 them out fight the war that occurred in 1948. After the

1 government was formed, the Jewish Agency became what is now
2 referred to as a quasi-governmental agency. The third law put
3 in effect in the State of Israel passed by the Kinnestet was
4 the law for the future of the Jewish Agency, where their role
5 was the in-gathering of the exiles and resettling the land.
6 And that's what they have been doing for the last 58 years.

7 We brought in more than 2.5 million, close to 3
8 million immigrants into the country. We built more than 800
9 kibbutzim and moshavim (ph. sp.), taken care of hundreds of
10 thousands of children and Youth Aliyah villages, and as far as
11 the immigration and absorption process, that continues today
12 and I imagine it will continue even though there's a new
13 focus, until every Jew that wants to come to Israel is there.
14 But it is the law of the State of Israel that is our role as
15 members of the Jewish Agency.

16 MS. BRODER: In 1971 the Jewish Agency was
17 reconstituted. I assume before that time the Israelis were in
18 full charge?

19 MS. SHERMAN: It wasn't just Israelis. It was the
20 World Zionist Organization.

21 MS. BRODER: Were they there before '71 even?

22 MS. SHERMAN: Yes. The Jewish Agency basically was
23 run by the World Zionist Organization prior to 1971. Even
24 though the money came from the Jews of the world, the World
25 Zionist Organization was made up at the time of different

1 political parties that were voted into the government of
2 Israel. That didn't mean they were political people that were
3 in the Kinnestet, but it could be a political party that sent a
4 representative from the United States or Canada or anyplace
5 else. They were the people that ran the Jewish Agency with
6 funds that were sent basically from the American Jewish
7 community but some funds came from the rest of the Diaspora.

8 MS. BRODER: What was the change that was made in
9 1971?

10 MS. SHERMAN: The feeling was, particularly on the
11 American side which I can speak to better, that when my father
12 sat down with Louis Pincus, who at the time was chairman
13 executive of the WZO and the executive of the Jewish Agency,
14 that the world Jewish community needed to have a say in what
15 was going on. So the Jewish Agency was reconstituted to
16 represent that interest. And 50 percent of the board was made
17 up of representatives of the Diaspora that were not members of
18 the WZO and 50 percent that were members of the WZO. So we've
19 had much more representation and much more involvement on
20 where and how the funds were expended and can get the World
21 Jewish community involved in what was going on in the State of
22 Israel.

23 MS. BRODER: And the governing board, the two parts
24 of it?

25 MS. SHERMAN: Yes. The agreement was made there

1 would be a chairman of the executive who would be head of the
2 WZO, at the time it was Louis Pincus and a chairman of the
3 board. The chairman was represented the Diaspora and in that
4 case it was Max Fisher.

5 Under the next tier down was the executive. The
6 executive of the Jewish Agency was represented 50 percent by
7 the Diaspora and 50 percent from the WZO, and that was made up
8 I think at the time of 24 members. Then the next layer was
9 the board of governors which was 72 members, again the same
10 percentages. The fund-raisers, as we were called at the time,
11 was made up of 60 percent from the United States and the rest
12 from the Jewish communities throughout the world, be it
13 Canada, England, France, et cetera. That percentage ratio is
14 represented to this day.

15 MS. BRODER: The head of the board of governors is
16 chosen how?

17 MS. SHERMAN: That's the Diaspora person. That
18 person can either put their name in or is put up for election.
19 They are approved by a nominating committee from the Diaspora
20 side, but they must -- this is way after 1971, I think 1991
21 when this was reconstituted -- they must have the advice and
22 consent of the WZO and vice-versa. Their side, we must give
23 advice and consent to their candidates for the head of the
24 executive.

25 MS. BRODER: Is the head of the executive always an

1 Israeli?

2 **MS. SHERMAN:** It always has been. I cannot see any
3 scenario where the WZO would elect a non-Israeli as head of
4 the WZO. I think it would be tantamount. It's against
5 everything they believe in. The World Zionist Organization
6 built the State of Israel. They are a major part of it even
7 though all of their members are not Israeli citizens. It's a
8 far reaching effect, whether it's the Reform movement or the
9 American Zionist movement or Hadassah. Many of these people
10 are not Israeli citizens but they're members of the World
11 Zionist Organization, which by the way every one of us can be
12 a member and can vote. But the advice and consent procedure
13 has gone through, it's not a veto, it's a fact that we
14 present.

15 Now, the way it really works with the chairman of
16 the World Zionist executive, the Louis Pincuses and others,
17 the prime minister, the name is put forward to the Diaspora by
18 the prime minister of Israel. He presents it to the WZO.
19 They bring it to us for advice and consent. That's the
20 procedure. Having just gone through it in May, I'm very
21 familiar with the system.

22 **MS. BRODER:** Okay. I think that brings us up to
23 date on the history and what they do basically, although I
24 know over the years it has changed with immigration patterns
25 and that sort of thing. Let's talk about your work.

1 **MS. SHERMAN:** I want to go back a minute because I
2 think it's very important. There was another reconstitution,
3 if that's the term you want to call it to the Jewish Agency,
4 and I'd like to do a little bit of the history.

5 In the early 1980s when the Jewish Agency and World
6 Jewry began to get involved in Project Renewal, communities
7 from World began to get very involved in what was going on in
8 the State of Israel. On an on-site basis. And they even
9 wanted more say because even with the reconstitution, between
10 1971 and 1981 nothing really changed. But now the World
11 Jewish community really became involved, particularly from the
12 American side, wanted to have more say in what was going on.
13 As time went on there are lots of things that they were
14 unhappy with, lots they were happy with, but they felt they
15 needed to have more say.

16 The Jewish Agency had this reputation of being a
17 place where the government officials put all their old fogies
18 just to let them sit out their years. We began to feel that
19 this needed to be changed. I believe it was 1991 there was
20 another change in the Jewish Agency. First of all the board
21 was enlarged. Number two, all sorts of decisions were made.
22 The director generals were no longer hired because the
23 chairman of the department had a favor to give out. It had to
24 go through a procedure, a tender went out and the best person
25 was hired for the job. A committee of the board of governors

1 was set to hire these people so that we would have really
2 accomplished people in the positions of director generals.

3 All the chairmen of the departments had to go
4 through the advice and consent. It was the time of the World
5 Settlement Department, the Aliyah Department, the Youth Aliyah
6 Department. Those were the three major departments in the
7 late '80s and early '90s; they all had to go through advice
8 and consent.

9 They also made chairmen of the committees from the
10 Diaspora. So every one of the committees that you had would
11 be representative committees. When the chairmen of the
12 committees left Israel, the head of the department ran the
13 department and they didn't have a lot to say about what was
14 happening. So you had a director general that is now
15 efficient, supposedly the most accomplished in his field, et
16 cetera.

17 There were still things that were not worked out.
18 The feeling was by the Diaspora that they had enough say.
19 They didn't want the chairmen of the departments to be
20 political -- I'm saying this not in a pejorative way but this
21 is the tone was used -- political hacks. So it came to the
22 position that there would be co-chairmen of the departments.
23 This happened in the late '90s. I think 1999, maybe 2000.
24 Each one of them had to go through advice and consent. The
25 World Jewish community had one chairman and the World Zionist

1 Organization put up another chairman. Today one is co-
2 chairman of the department.

3 I serve as co-chairman of the Israel Department,
4 Paula Edelstein is my counter-part. She happens to be head of
5 the Reform Movement in Israel. We do things in tandem. They
6 are no longer paid by the Jewish Agency. If she has an
7 office, I'm entitled to an office, if she gets a car phone I'm
8 entitled to one. I mean I don't want any of it but I'm just
9 telling you the procedure, that it is now we work in tandem.
10 We feel we have much more say in what's going on.

11 Another thing that has happened in the past four
12 years and I have to credit Salah Maridore for this. Many
13 feelings in the Jewish Agency being this type of quasi
14 government organization, not really relating to the Israeli
15 people the way we thought, because they had no representation.
16 I have to credit Salah Maridore, who's the immediate past
17 chairman of the executive, with putting on Israelis that were
18 not from political parties. He worked very hard to get the
19 World Zionist Organization to agree to give up ten of their
20 slots on the board of governors, on the executive, and ten of
21 those slots now are held by business people, professors,
22 people like Ave Nor who was a major founder of Amducks (ph.
23 sp.); David Kolitz; ~~who owns (indiscernible)~~; Alfred Strauss,
24 whose family who owns the big chocolate company; Professor
25 Ninman, who was the minister of justice, minister of finance

1 but happens to be a leading professor in the State of Israel.
2 They are there representing not any political party; they are
3 representatives of the State of Israel. It's made a major
4 change in the way things are done within the Jewish Agency
5 today.

6 MS. BRODER: It sounds very different than the way
7 it started.

8 Tell us what you've been doing. You've had a number
9 of jobs, chairmanships, let's so talk about your personal
10 involvement, what you did, what you're doing now.

11 MS. SHERMAN: Are you sure you don't want to hear
12 about the future of the Jewish Agency, you want to hear about
13 this?

14 MS. BRODER: Well, talk about the future of Jewish
15 Agency afterwards.

16 MS. SHERMAN: My involvement started out with you in
17 1973. We went to our first assembly. With the advent of
18 Project Renewal I became very involved and was asked to be the
19 co-chairman of Project Renewal. I served in that position for
20 a number of years. In 1983, when Chuck Hoffberger became
21 chairman of the board of governors, he called me, and I don't
22 think there was such an electorate nomination process as there
23 is today. Today we have a real nomination process with a
24 committee that's run by the United Israel Appeal. Candidates
25 go~~s~~ out and talk~~s~~ to their communities, et cetera. Anyway, I

1 got a call from Chuck one day, asking me if I wanted to serve
2 on the board of governors. I thought I'd been asked to go to
3 the moon, I was so excited. That's where I got the position
4 with Project Renewal.

5 MS. BRODER: Give a briefing of Project Renewal.

6 MS. SHERMAN: Project Renewal was a program that
7 Menachem Begin put forth when he became prime minister of
8 Israel. He believed we had a social under-class in the State
9 of Israel, which we did. Immigrants had come in in the late
10 '40s early '50s that had never really gotten out of the
11 mabarote (ph. sp.). They were living below the poverty line.
12 The problem is still there today, and I want to talk about in
13 today's world. They didn't really have a chance. If you take
14 a community, many of these under privileged people, garbage
15 wasn't picked up on their street, but if you lived in the
16 wealthier neighborhood the garbage was picked up. We felt
17 with Project Renewal it could be involvement; it wasn't the
18 establishment telling the people what to do; they were going
19 to become part of the process in deciding their future.

20 I remember having one meeting in Tel Aviv with the
21 mayor who was Chich at the time, where the residents of
22 Hatikvah, which was one of the most serious neighborhoods in
23 Israel, came in and screamed at him that their kids were not
24 getting the proper education. He provided it in north Tel
25 Aviv, he didn't provide it there. It was a chance for them to

1 vent, become part of committees and take care of the problems,
2 go to the government or mayor and make sure these things were
3 done on their own. It really was something like the Model
4 Cities Program. In Israel it worked partially.

5 We were in 89 communities, neighborhoods. It didn't
6 work in all of them, but we built pre-schools and we built
7 centers and we gave people programs to teach them leadership
8 abilities and taught their kids how to provide a pre-school
9 education and after-school education. A chance for them to
10 really help themselves. The Israeli government paid for 50
11 percent. It was supposed to be a 50-50 deal with the
12 Diaspora; the Israel government wound up paying much more.

13 That really was the start of Israeli's beginning to
14 go out and fight for what was rightfully theirs. So Project
15 Renewal -- by the way there's still one community 30 years
16 later is still involved in Project Renewal but we've gone into
17 a new program since then.

18 After I was chairman of Project Renewal, I was asked
19 to take over as chairman of Youth Aliyah. At the time that
20 was residential education for disadvantaged kids, many of
21 these same children that I'm talking about coming from the
22 environment of Project Renewal. We had 75 Youth Aliyah
23 villages and we provided residential education. We gave them
24 a chance to graduate from high school at the same level as the
25 average Israeli and to go into the army. To go into the army

1 at any time in Israel you had to be sophisticated enough,
2 whether it was getting in a tank and understanding how to work
3 it, or today of course it's all done with computers. You had
4 to do those types of things even 20 years ago.

5 So I chaired Youth Aliyah for four or five years,
6 went into a couple of other positions with the Jewish Agency,
7 and then in 1991 I was asked to chair what was then the Rural
8 Settlement Department. We were going out of the settlement
9 business because we didn't need to build any.

10 At the time we came up with something that we felt
11 needed to take over Project Renewal and that was Partnership
12 2000. Partnership 2000 was a completely different type of
13 thing. We never really got all the community involved in
14 helping themselves. The concept was to get more people from
15 all walks of life involved in what was going on in their
16 community. It is done on a regional basis. We have 42
17 partnerships today, some are consortiums, some are like
18 Detroit's involved in the Central Galilee, which involves a
19 large area. It's doing the same type of thing but it's
20 different programs. In every region you're doing different
21 things.

22 That was kind of a kick-off. We've done more
23 people-to-people relationships out of Partnership 2000
24 probably than anything else, where we've made major
25 relationships between Israelis and the Diaspora, where they've

1 become sisters and brothers and welcome in their homes. So I
2 had that for five years.

3 I had to take a year or two off. I came back and
4 chaired a subcommittee of the Aliyah Department. I then took
5 over the finance and administration, which is all the inner
6 workings, who is paying for the phone and the logistics and
7 where the rent's going and how many schlechim ~~(ph-sp.)~~ we
8 should be sending here, there and everything. The entire
9 administrative budget of the Jewish Agency.

10 MS. BRODER: Do you have a partner in that, too?

11 MS. SHERMAN: No. By the way, that was a budget and
12 finance subcommittee. They are chaired by Diaspora. They
13 have no co-chair.

14 By the way, when I was chairman of the Rural and
15 Urban Development Committee, which is with the Rural
16 subcommittee, I had a co-chair and never met him. Never saw
17 the man in my life. I know him now. He never came to a
18 meeting. Maybe it's because he had a strong woman running it,
19 but I never -- in the Youth Aliyah days there were no co-
20 chairmen. The Diaspora chaired the department.

21 Then I had one year as chairman of the allocations
22 and grants, which gives money to the three streams plus it's
23 like R&D for the Jewish Agency. They do three-year grants,
24 very much like what we did with the Fisher Community
25 Foundation here. A year ago I was asked to go back to what

1 was the Rural Development Department, then became the Rural
2 and Urban Development Department, which is now the Israel
3 Department, to co-chair that with Paula Edelstein.

4 At the same time the Jewish Agency went through a
5 strategic plan where we realized we had to come up to what's
6 happening in the modern day Israel. They're dealing with the
7 next generation, dealing with partnerships between Diaspora
8 and Israel and bringing Aliyah by choice. All said and good
9 we're still getting roughly 25,000 immigrants into the country
10 per year, maybe 11,000 from the former Soviet Union, a lot
11 from France right now. This is 2005 and after what happened
12 in the last four or five days we're going to get more. In
13 fact the French are buying up all the apartments in Jerusalem.
14 Three hundred a month from Ethiopia, ^{FALASHIMORAH} (Folishmora (ph. sp.)),
15 which will have to convert to Jews. By the way during all
16 these years we brought in 80,000 Ethiopians.

17 MS. BRODER: And there are still Ethiopians in
18 Ethiopia.

19 MS. SHERMAN: There are no Ethiopian Jews, and I'll
20 discuss that when we get to the future. But everything at the
21 Jewish Agency today is based on the next generation
22 partnership and Aliyah of choice. The whole concept. There
23 are now three different departments. There's an Aliyah
24 Department, an Israeli Department and an Education Department.

25 Even though the American Jewish community tries to

1 poo-poo the education department, first of all in all the
2 other countries throughout the world they need the education
3 department but thirdly so do we. This is the department that
4 is going to provide the long-term programs for our kids to go
5 to Israel, the Birthright programs. They do all the
6 educational programs, besides training teachers and doing
7 programming to send over here or anyplace else in the country.
8 The Aliyah Department, obviously -- I was with two Jews last
9 night that did not know what the word Aliyah meant. I was
10 absolutely stunned.

11 MS. BRODER: Do they know what Aliyah means?

12 MS. SHERMAN: They do now. Anyway, we are working
13 on Aliyah by choice. That means that programs like Nephish
14 (^{OK}ph. sp.), which is a program put together by a young man here
15 in the United States where they're taking over roughly 3000
16 Jews to Israel with jobs. They get a small stipend, but
17 they're the well-educated people. It's been going on for
18 three years and the return rate is almost zero.

19 MS. BRODER: Those are just Americans?

20 MS. SHERMAN: Just Americans. And they get a small
21 stipend, anything from \$2500 to \$25,000. Same thing from
22 France, that's still considered Aliyah. In fact we have a man
23 in France that's instituting the same type of program by the
24 name of Benanu (ph. sp.), to encourage French people to make
25 Aliyah. Even though there are many Jews coming from the

1 former Soviet Union, the number is down. Obviously we have
2 less of a pool. We can't bring in a million like we did in
3 the '90s. There's less reason for them to leave. This is
4 what the communities have been demanding. It's a new look.

5 Now I've got to go to my department because I talked
6 about the other department. The Israel Department took a long
7 hard look at what they were doing. First of all in the middle
8 '90s the Israel Department turned over all but four Youth
9 Aliyah villages to the government. I don't want to discuss
10 that it wasn't a good move, but we still own four. So we're
11 still involved in the four Youth Aliyah villages. And we were
12 involved in some settlement issues and all sorts of other
13 things and partnership.

14 We felt we had to go beyond that and we had to deal
15 with the scope of the three areas that the Jewish Agency is
16 dealing with. Next generation, which by the way the Education
17 Department is partnership. So we came up with a new program
18 called Youth Futures. It's going to be presented to this
19 community next week. Even though they've heard about it, I'm
20 presenting it formally.

21 There is a population in the periphery -- and I'm
22 only talking about the Galiel and the Negev -- in Israel
23 today. Many who came from the '40s and '50s and '60s are
24 grandchildren of those people. Many of them Ethiopian Jews
25 that have not had the proper education. The figures are that

1 in many of these areas, 60 to 70 percent of the youth that
2 finish sixth grade are illiterate in Hebrew, English and math.
3 And where Israel at one time was at the top of the spectrum on
4 testing zones with countries throughout the world, we used to
5 be third, we are now 38th out of 42 countries.

6 So we came through with a program that deals with
7 youth ages 6 to 18. We were involving partnerships, which I
8 will explain, and we were involving community volunteers in
9 the State of Israel.

10 There is a new segment in the State of Israel that
11 is like a Peace Corps for lack of a better word. I call them
12 Jews in Jeans. Young community volunteers who have finished
13 the army, finished or are in the university, who feel they
14 want to make social change in the State of Israel. They are
15 living in small enclaves and going into communities and
16 providing some extra training, extra work, and they get a very
17 small stipend or somebody pays for a scholarship at the
18 university, but it's minimal.

19 We are using these community volunteers who will
20 move into a city or region to work with the youth there as
21 their mentors. Everyone is being trained. One volunteer will
22 assume eight to ten children, where they are their mentor,
23 their leader, their mother, their father. They'll work with
24 the parents. They'll provide them psychological, social
25 mentoring. In the second year educational type programs.

1 Along with this we're going to provide in each
2 community areas what we call Centers for Excellence. If you
3 live in Keriechmona (ph. sp.) or you live in Bechan (ph. sp.),
4 your kids don't have the opportunity of a piano teacher or a
5 violin teacher or a soccer coach. We're going out and getting
6 volunteers throughout the community to become those people.
7 This is a community-wide activity. If I have a child that
8 needs piano lessons, that wants piano lessons, we'll find
9 somebody in the community that's going to provide those kinds
10 of services. They will have the some opportunity as my child
11 that lives in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem or wherever.

12 The third thing is that this program is being funded
13 through partnership. The Jewish Agency is putting in a third,
14 a community or individual philanthropist throughout the
15 Diaspora is putting in a third, and an Israeli philanthropist
16 is putting in a third. For them to be involved in the Jewish
17 Agency this way it's really a three-way program. It just
18 started last week where we've trained the first 50 community
19 volunteers, we're working in Hatzorinspot (ph. sp.). We are
20 starting in seven other communities this year and we'll add
21 nine more next year. This is going to be evaluated every
22 year.

23 We are going to provide these elementary school
24 children with the best advantages they can get anyplace else.
25 In high school we're providing them other types of programs.

1 Some we've been involved in like Ahtidem (ph. sp.), which is
2 run along with the army, the IDF. Neta, which was a program
3 that's run with Cisco Corporation, the Jewish Agency,
4 communities from abroad that provides computer education for
5 high school students so when they graduate, they know more
6 about building, programming and everything about computers.
7 So if they cannot matriculate into a university, they've got a
8 job out there. Those types of programs are being offered to
9 the high school level.

10 I think this is the wave of the future for all the
11 communities but especially for Israel. If we don't educate
12 these youth, and it has to be done in the periphery, because
13 we need to have the finest educational systems in the
14 periphery so we can get people to move out there, rather than
15 all of them staying in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

16 MS. BRODER: So our region, being the Galilee must
17 be very important.

18 MS. SHERMAN: If Detroit decides to go in, I would
19 assume they would go into Nazareth and ^{Megdal HAEMEK} McDowell Halamak (ph.
20 sp.). There is a need there. One of the things we're doing,
21 we need to move people out into Galilee. There's more Israeli
22 Arabs than Jews. We need to re-populate the Negev. We're
23 going to a lot of the older communities, development towns and
24 providing this program there. We're doing it in DeMona with
25 an anonymous gift without a community. DeMona probably needs

1 this program more than anybody. A year from now I'll have
2 some statistics on what it's been doing, but it's providing
3 the first chance these young people have had to make it. It's
4 important when you talk about 350,000 kids living below the
5 poverty line today in Israel.

6 MS. BRODER: We used to talk about the social gap.

7 MS. SHERMAN: This is more than the social gap.
8 It's poverty. A lot of it has come about because of the
9 intefada and more money was spent on security and at the IDF.
10 The school day has been cut way back. If the DeRock (ph. sp.)
11 report goes through hopefully it will have longer school days
12 and we'll be able to enhance this. But I don't know what's
13 going to happen.

14 MS. BRODER: You were just in Israel, bring us up to
15 date. You will continue with this project, I assume. You're
16 the co-chairman of it.

17 MS. SHERMAN: Yes.

18 MS. BRODER: This will be your priority for a while?

19 MS. SHERMAN: Well, I imagine the next year or two.
20 I want to get this program off the ground.

21 MS. BRODER: What just happened while you were --
22 they were just meetings?

23 MS. SHERMAN: Yeah. I just came back from the board
24 of governors. It was Bilsky, our new chairman's first board.
25 The October board meeting is always the budgetary meeting.

1 Our fiscal year starts on January 1st and we have to make the
2 budget for next year. Regretfully we're getting less money
3 from overseas. United States is raising \$100 million more and
4 we're getting less than a percentage.

5 MS. BRODER: Why is that?

6 MS. SHERMAN: I'd like to know why. They're
7 spending more at home. The only time we get more money for
8 allocations for overseas is if there's a war. It's no
9 different with the JVC than it is with the Jewish Agency.
10 Their overseas allocations are being cut.

11 There's lots of reasons. Some people sit in their
12 communities and they can't see beyond the forest. The
13 national organization I don't believe has done as much as they
14 can to really allocate for the overseas needs. I think this
15 is one of the failures of the merger of UJA and CJF. We have
16 nobody just advocating for the overseas needs, be it Joint or
17 the Jewish Agency. I believe we have lots of issues that have
18 to be dealt with here.

19 So we're dealing with a cut budget. The United
20 States Jewish Community is sending \$140 million next year
21 maybe, hopefully. I remember the days they used to send \$240
22 million. Do we have to have a war to get the American Jewish
23 community to understand the importance of the role they must
24 play in the continued building of the State of Israel? We
25 brought these immigrants into the state. It's our

1 responsibility, along with the Israelis who by the way are
2 paying the major burden of the cost, to see that they become
3 viable productive citizens. We're not doing that.

4 **MS. BRODER:** Are there still considered to be
5 communities at risk where we have to try to get people out?
6 France might be becoming a community at risk but are there
7 others?

8 **MS. SHERMAN:** There are a few. Iran obviously if we
9 could get everybody out it would be helpful if they want to
10 come.

11 **MS. BRODER:** How many Jews would you think, do you
12 have any idea?

13 **MS. SHERMAN:** I don't know. I imagine 5,000.
14 There's all sorts of feeling of who wants to come out of the
15 former Soviet Union.

16 **MS. BRODER:** What about Argentina?

17 **MS. SHERMAN:** Argentina the Jews are not interested.
18 A lot of them came after the crisis in Argentina. There are
19 Jews coming from Uruguay, Venezuela. Is it a crisis
20 situation? No.

21 **MS. BRODER:** Is Joint just as big in all the
22 operations in the other countries as it always was or is that
23 kind of tailing off a little bit?

24 **MS. SHERMAN:** They're spending a lot of money.
25 Their big campaign is to take care of Jews in the former

1 Soviet Union, the elderly. They're not getting restitution
2 money. They feel they have a responsibility to the aged.
3 That's not saying they're not working the other countries, but
4 they feel that's very important.

5 MS. BRODER: Okay. You want to talk more about the
6 future? You're saying a lot of what happens in the future is
7 going to be dependent on this new Israel committee that you
8 are now the chairman of. What other things do you see coming?

9 MS. SHERMAN: No. I'm saying that what I see in the
10 future, I think the fact that the Jewish Agency has changed,
11 gone through tough times, changing its focus to meet the
12 requests of the funders, I think is very important. I think
13 we're doing what is being asked. I think it's going to be
14 very exciting. When you're able to see in two years from now
15 what we do with the New Futures Program. One of the education
16 programs is called Messah, and that is jointly funded by the
17 government of Israel, who is throwing in, if we raise it, \$50
18 million to match \$50 million raised throughout the world. The
19 goal is to bring 20,000 students a year on long-term programs
20 to Israel.

21 This is over and above Birthright which we are
22 funded by the Federation, philanthropists, the government of
23 the State of Israel. We'll probably bring about 12,000 this
24 year, but we had 18,000 applications just from the United
25 States and Canada alone for 5,000 spots for winter programs.

1 We just don't have the funding to do it. Yet if you would
2 talk to the students who have gone on Birthright and they're
3 the ones that are going on the long-term Messah programs. If
4 we want to maintain a Jewish community 50 years from now, it
5 comes by getting our youth involved and understand the
6 importance to their future. That's why the next generation is
7 one of the foci of the program that we're doing.

8 MS. BRODER: Are many of the young people that go on
9 Birthright, do they stay or do they mostly come back?

10 MS. SHERMAN: No. It's 10 days. A lot of the
11 people going on the long-term programs are the ones that have
12 been on Birthright program. Whatever the type of program.

13 MS. BRODER: I'm just wondering if they're
14 projecting there will be an Aliyah out of all of this group of
15 people.

16 MS. SHERMAN: There is an Aliyah but I don't know
17 how much. We started Otsma (ph. sp.), which is a perfect
18 example, we thought there would be 2 or 3 percent and the rest
19 would go back and be speakers in the Jewish community.
20 Thirty-five percent went into the Jewish communal field, 10 or
21 15 percent made Aliyah. It's far beyond the figures. I
22 imagine when you get any young Jewish adult to Israel at a
23 formal stage in their life, and I can speak from personal
24 experience, if they've got the guts, they'll make Aliyah.

25 MS. BRODER: You want to say a little bit about the

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1 politics of Israel today and what's happening?

2 MS. SHERMAN: Well, today is a very important thing
3 and then I'll talk a minute about the Folishmora (ph. sp.).

4 Yesterday there was an election in the Labor Party
5 and Shimon Peres lost to Honor Peritz who's head of the
6 Histitude (ph. sp.). Labor is now part of a coalition
7 government. Per~~itz~~^{itz} has threatened to leave the government
8 because he feels that they haven't taken care of the
9 disadvantage, for lack of a better term. I believe personally
10 it would be very bad for the State of Israel. I think it's
11 the wrong timing. I'd like to see the Sharon government stick
12 it out and be able to stay in the elections next November.

13 I think the government has made major in-roads on
14 the road to peace. I think it would be a mistake. That's my
15 personal opinion. If somebody views this five or ten years
16 from now, they're not going to know what I'm talking about.
17 It's a moot point. I believe Sharon has really put his neck
18 out on the line with the disengagement thing, closing up the
19 Gaza Strip and West Bank and I think he'll probably do more.
20 I think it will only be detrimental to the State of Israel if
21 this happens. He's very popular. Forget about what party he
22 represents. The majority of the Israelis believe he's done
23 the right thing.

24 MS. BRODER: Talk a little bit about your upcoming
25 trip to Ethiopia.

1 **MS. SHERMAN:** We have brought in on Operation Moses
2 and Operation Solomon and a few people after that almost
3 80,000 Ethiopian Jews. Couple years ago the Israeli rabbinate
4 agreed with the Israeli government that there were Ethiopians
5 that had converted to Christianity many years ago, were forced
6 into conversion, that really were Jews, relatives of the Jews,
7 like the Moranos. They agreed that those Jews could come
8 back, those Ethiopians, they're not Jews, they could come back
9 to Israel not on the law of return but what is called the law
10 of entry. They would enter Israel, go through conversion, and
11 then they would become Israeli citizens.

12 By the way I have to tell you, all Ethiopians are
13 religious. They keep Shabat, they keep kosher, etcetera.
14 That's a tough statement. Basically all. So the government
15 of Israel and the rabbinate came to this agreement and we at
16 the Jewish Agency have been bringing in for the last year
17 roughly 300 a month.

18 The agreement was that most of these people are
19 living in camps in Odus (ph. sp.) and in Gondor (ph. sp.).
20 Because when word gets out they can come into the camps and
21 stay there. The number has been set at 17,000, the agreement
22 has now been made that we will bring in the last 17,000 and
23 that's it. Until we can bring them in we will provide -- we,
24 the Jewish Agency, the JVC and the government of Israel --
25 provide education for these people living in the camps.

1 First you have to teach them to read and write
2 Enharec (ph. sp.) before you can teach them to read and write
3 Hebrew. Give them the conversion process, meals, et cetera.
4 Obviously the faster we can get them into Israel, the better
5 off they'll be. The problem is the Ethiopians are living in
6 the absorption centers are not moving out because they have no
7 money to buy apartments and the mortgage grant that was given
8 to them up to two years ago was taken away. We've got to have
9 the Minister of Housing re-institute the mortgage grants so we
10 can get those Ethiopians out.

11 I'm not making it sound easy because the Ethiopian
12 immigration is the toughest in the world and we've done a
13 lousy job. That's not to say we've^{not} got some great Ethiopians
14 that have achieved the highest standards, but on the whole it
15 has not been a well-done absorption process.

16 We would like to bring them in at 600 a month but we
17 have to have a place to put them and we have to have the money
18 to do it. There's a new campaign the UJC started called
19 Operation Promise and that is to pay for this program. But I
20 have to say speaking from a Jewish Agency standpoint, we
21 cannot spend one penny until we have the cash. So that means
22 they'll stay in the camp.

23 So I'm going over there first of all to see what's
24 going on, to see where some of the money that we get from the
25 United States government grant is being spent on Ethiopians.

1 I'm going for three days, visit the camp, see what's
2 happening, to have an on-site visit and take some of the staff
3 with me. I think it's important to know what's going on.

4 MS. BRODER: Might their entire conversion still
5 take place on Ethiopian soil?

6 MS. SHERMAN: No. They want it done there. You can
7 see pictures of the kids running around. It's tough. Some of
8 these women have tattooed on their faces ^{v/}crosses. There's
9 some living in Israel today. All of them are coming in on
10 some sort of family reunification process.

11 MS. BRODER: That's very exciting. And you'll need
12 to raise more money for this.

13 MS. SHERMAN: Correct. Over and above the regular
14 allocation we're not getting.

15 MS. BRODER: Well, it's the same old story: there's
16 always an issue and there's always more people to bring in.
17 That's the story of Israel.

18 What else, what can you think of that we haven't
19 talked about that you'd like to talk about? We've talked
20 about leaving a legacy for your children last time. This
21 interview is not going to be complete. I think you have a lot
22 of years ahead of you of involvement in the community, both
23 here and Israel and we'll leave that at that. There's not a
24 period to this interview because I think you're going to
25 continue on.

1 **MS. SHERMAN:** Well, I love what I'm doing even
2 though I've been doing it for what feels like 150 years. I'd
3 like not to lose the connection with Israel. Doing something
4 productive for the state. In lieu of making aliyah, I made
5 aliyah, I'm just not living there. I guess this is the next
6 best answer to what I'm doing. But on the other hand I think
7 it's setting example for the next generation that they have to
8 be involved in what's going on in Israel. Our children and
9 grandchildren don't understand this. It's within our means to
10 teach them that. Better by example than telling them.

11 **MS. BRODER:** I think this is the biggest challenge
12 today, to get our children and grandchildren as involved even
13 as emotionally as we've been.

14 **MS. SHERMAN:** That's why the Birthright, the Massah
15 program, getting involved in Partnership 2000, getting
16 involved in Youth Futures, because we will use volunteers from
17 over here. I think it's very, very important for the next
18 generation.

19 **MS. BRODER:** We'll stop this interview. I'm sure
20 there will be others in future years. We thank you for
21 sitting still for two of these. I'm looking forward to see
22 what you'll be doing in the future.