

The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore-18, Maryland

February 17th, 1947

Dear Nelson,

Your letter has just been received. By all means come whenever you can; our latch-string will always be out, and except for an out-of-town trip the middle of this week I expect to be at home for several weeks, without interruption. This spring I shall cut out engagements and decline others right along, since I shall otherwise have no time at all for work of scholarly type.

I am delighted to know that your energetic intervention forestalled the evacuation of the Jefferys. That would certainly have been a blow to us.

I can sympathize with your predicament. However, I must say that it comes at a time when further explorations in Palestine would probably be blacked and when a few years in this country would not hurt. I can easily see the difficult situation in which the Hebrew Union College finds itself. Quite aside from your personal qualifications, you are, thanks in large part to your long association with the School in Jerusalem, the only outstanding candidate (malgré vous) who is strictly neutral in the Zionist squabble which has again split Reform Jewry into two parts. Moreover, you are the only Jewish biblical scholar with both feet on the solid rock of fact and common sense, again because of your many years of excavation and exploration. This means that you are not going to found your philosophy of life and religion on preconceived speculative premises, but rather on pragmatic reality -- and on a historical reality which is harnessed to idealism rather than to party slogans.

Anyway, you are only forty-six, whereas I am fifty-five -- and still I expect to be back digging in Palestine in a few years, though not in the capacity of director of an expedition. All I want is to guide the methods and aims of a dig, not to get the doubtful kudos of "directing" it.

I must warn you: when you come you are certain to get from Ruth a sermonette on your duty to your wife and family! In other words, Ruth will throw herself vigorously on the side of the friends who are pushing you to accept election as president of the College. If you do accept, no one with the slightest knowledge of the facts can say that you played politics in order to get the job! And you are the only man of whom this could probably not be said fairly.

Cordially, W. D. Albright