

American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth

633 Third Avenue, 21st Floor, New York, NY 10017 • (212) 339-6034 • Fax (212) 318-6176



The Nahum Goldmann
Museum of the Jewish Diaspora
Ind. The Abraham & Edita Spiegel Family Bldg.
Tel Aviv, Israel

March 15, 2000

Honorable Judah Gribetz, Special Master
c/o Richards & O'Neil, LLP
885 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022-4802

Re: In Re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation

Dear Mr. Gribetz:

Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, makes this submission in support of its request for a portion of the funds realized in settlement of the above referenced class action. This submission is made through the Museum's authorized representatives, Sam E. Bloch, Chairman of the American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth and Stephen M. Greenberg, President of the American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth and Campaign Chairman.

Beth Hatefutsoth recognizes and strongly believes that the bulk of the settlement funds should be distributed to Holocaust survivors. However, to the extent that assets are not distributed to survivors or their heirs, Beth Hatefutsoth, as a unique, renowned Jewish institution of memory, is seeking a portion of the settlement fund for the reasons and purposes set forth below.

Beth Hatefutsoth was established as a force to connect individual Jews and communities worldwide to their common heritage. Located on the campus of Tel Aviv University, this Museum has received international acclaim for its utilization of historical narrative, coupled with reconstruction and interactive environments, to create a moving journey through the experience of a people dispersed over two millennia. Far beyond the parameters of a traditional museum, Beth Hatefutsoth is an educational and historical repository of Jewish cultural heritage.

Survivors of the Holocaust, individually and as represented through the Claims Conference and the Landsmannschaften, were instrumental in the founding of Beth Hatefutsoth. Those who walked from the ashes of Nazi occupied Europe knew they carried within them the vital link to Jewish cultural identity - so ravaged by the Shoah, yet key for the survival of our people. It was widely held that they bore the responsibility of being the voice of those who perished.

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In its first two decades, Beth Hatefutsoth has served as a living testimony to the message of these survivors: *that it will be from within our common culture and heritage that we will find the Jewish vision of our future.* The issue at hand is no less than the validation of this mandate.

Beth Hatefutsoth, founded on the strength of their vision, ensures this mission through:

- historical and educational programs
- ongoing research, preserving heritage through development of historical databases and archives
- permanent and changing exhibitions illuminating vanished worlds and Jewish culture.

It should be emphasized that Beth Hatefutsoth is a preeminent source and clearinghouse for information on Jewish genealogy and all other aspects of family history. Its databases and archives have been instrumental in assisting in the identification of victims, survivors and heirs; indeed, its archives and databases were extensively used by parties to the litigation which resulted in the pending settlement.

Beth Hatefutsoth believes that the Jewish people as a whole were victimized by the destruction of Jewish life and communities in war-ravaged Europe. Such devastation created a fissure in Jewish historical identity which threatened, on the most profound level, the continuity of our people. Through the initiatives noted above, Beth Hatefutsoth has played, and continues to play, a substantive role in bridging this rupture, assuring that this legacy remains intact for future generations.

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Since the intent of Beth Hatefutsoth's founders was to continue this legacy, and such founders were acknowledged as representatives of those who perished, the support of the continued viability of Beth Hatefutsoth as a communal, educational and cultural resource would appear to be an appropriate recognition and remembrance of those who were victims of the Holocaust.

Nothing can reclaim the vibrancy of life in the destroyed communities or the richness of shared memories transmitted through the generations. However, the continuing reconstruction of that historical heritage by Beth Hatefutsoth can ensure that the generations of today, and those who follow, will have the lessons of the past as a resource for building the future.

While we have attempted earlier to describe the unique character of Beth Hatefutsoth, let us reiterate that this institution stands alone in meeting this mandate. We do not believe that an institution, of such vital importance to the Jewish people, should be dependent on the uncertainty of bureaucratic funding. Reliance on erratic funding sources could seriously impair the vitality of the institution.

Beth Hatefutsoth is hereby requesting \$50 million of the settlement fund. This amount will permit Beth Hatefutsoth to assure adequate funding in perpetuity to maintain achievement of its institutional mission. Any funding received through this settlement, as further amplified in the enclosed proposal, will:

- serve as the corpus of a fund to guarantee the very future of this unique institution of the Jewish people; and,
- allow a regeneration and revitalization of its facilities and the development and enhancement of educational programs and exhibitions.

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We thank you in advance for consideration of this claim in support of the continued efforts and mission of Beth Hatefutsoth. For further documentation and information which might be necessary for your deliberations, please contact the undersigned, or Kenneth J. Bialkin or Nancy A. Lieberman, at (212) 735-3000, of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom LLP, our counsel.

Sincerely,

Sam E. Bloch, Chairman
American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth

Stephen M. Greenberg, President
American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth

cc: Dr. Israel Singer, Vice President
American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth
Secretary-General, World Jewish Congress

Mr. Harvey Krueger, Trustee
Beth Hatefutsoth Board of Directors

Dr. David Alexander, Director-General
Beth Hatefutsoth