

2/27/89



ראש העיריה
رئيس البلدية
MAYOR OF JERUSALEM

February 14, 1989

Mrs. George Bush
The White House
Washington D. C.

Dear Mrs. Bush - Dear First Lady:

While I have already written to congratulate your husband, I did want to use this opportunity to extend warmest good wishes to you. There is no question that you too will share the great challenges of the years ahead.

Many of the press reports surrounding the United States elections and the Presidential Inauguration told of your special involvement in combatting illiteracy. I thus thought you might find it of particular interest to learn what we have done in that regard in Jerusalem since the reunification of the city in 1967.

We had faced some illiteracy in the Jewish population during the 1950's and early 1960's - Jewish women, particularly from Moslem countries, were not always given educational opportunities - but it was not very extensive and we succeeded in reducing illiteracy almost completely. However, the situation which we found in the parts of Jerusalem which had been under Jordanian control was very different.

Jordanian law decreed universal education but in practice only about 25% of the Arab girls in the Jerusalem area attended school. Today that figure is 100%. This, however, did not solve the problems of the older Arab women who had not gone to school. Moreover, as young girls became better educated, it gave impetus to their mothers and even grandmothers to learn to read and write.

The Jerusalem Municipality, with the aid of the Jerusalem Foundation, created a program to combat this illiteracy. For almost twenty years, we have offered free courses in Arabic for these women. Through the years, there have been an average of ten groups each year, with about thirty women each, at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. The courses, offered twice each year, are held in East Jerusalem public schools in the afternoon hours and last four months. Despite the difficulties of the present political situation, women continue to attend these courses.

In addition, we have organized subsidized classes in knitting, sewing, hairdressing and hygiene - skills which both provide a source of income as well as a way for large families to save money.

I do hope that it will not be long before I have the honor and pleasure of welcoming you back to Jerusalem - and I hope to be able to use that opportunity to visit some of these classes with you.

With kind regards to your husband and you and all good wishes.

Respectfully yours,

Teddy Kollek

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THE WHITE HOUSE

March 29, 1989

Dear Teddy Kollek,

Thank you for your wonderful letter of good wishes and good information, and please forgive the lateness of my response. My staff is still catching up from the big change, and your letter just reached me.

I am indeed involved in promoting literacy, and Jerusalem's programs for Arab women sound fascinating. The cultural issues that affect the acquisition of literacy -- such as varying traditions of education for women -- are so important to consider, and I know we face similar issues in America. It is truly heartening to know that the women continue to pursue their educations in spite of the difficult political climate. What an eloquent testimony to the deep human desire for learning!

I hope it will not be too long before I can accept your very gracious invitation to visit Jerusalem again and, perhaps, these very special classes.

George joins me in sending very best wishes and shalom.

Warmly,

And I look forward
to a tour of the old
city with you and Mrs. Kollek!

Barbara Bush

The Honorable Teddy Kollek
Mayor of Jerusalem
Municipality of Jerusalem