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Department of Medical Genetics

May 10, 1957

Dr. Kenneth Thimann
Biological Laboratories
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dear Kenneth:

Thank you for yours of the 7th. I am sorry if I have confused you by the differences of emphasis in my letter to you and to Jim. I have been hearing nasty rumors about the reasons for our not coming to Harvard, and wanted to scotch them more than anything else, certainly before any of them were taken seriously enough to impair the cordiality of our future relationships. Certainly, many people might well be astonished that I did not seize on such a magnificent opportunity unless there were insidious reasons.

But to be plain, there are no good reasons for not accepting your offer —none except the positive ones of my existing situation and prospects. If it should happen that these worked out less well than I hoped, I would want you to keep me in mind. I did and do want to assure you that these positive factors keep us here; not that negative ones keep us away from Cambridge.

So I really do not think you should hold off any longer, in the consideration of other candidates.

We have altered our travel plans slightly, and will be off to Australia August 1 — about November 15. I will be in New York for a Harvey Lecture December 19. I would be happy to visit Cambridge for a seminar the previous day (a Wednesday) if you would have any interest in this independently of, even in spite of the previous paragraph. I realize this may be far too awkward a time. I would ask for one Madison-Boston fare to facilitate Esther's accompanying me to Boston and N.Y. if she can manage it then. (Sizer at M.I.T. has also asked me about paying a visit, and it would be a pleasure to kill two birds with one stone if you can manage it.) I don't think I can get away before then.

Please don't think we haven't given Harvard a great deal of thought. We do feel we know the facilities and our colleagues quite well, so that ~~not~~ making the trip probably would have added little to the context.

I am flattered by and grateful for your persistence. With best regards,

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg