

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

February 3, 1977

Professor Benjamin Gal-Or
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Technion City
Haifa, Israel

Dear Professor Gal-Or,

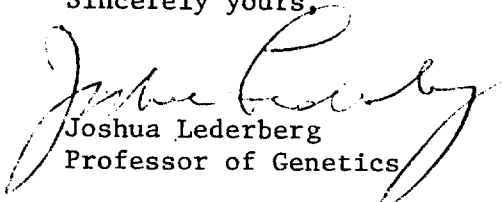
This is in response to your letter of January 24th concerning the conference at Oxford in honor of Professor Levich. I would be happy to lend my efforts on Professor Levich's behalf but the advice that I have is that this particular kind of intervention may be misplaced and may even be counterproductive. As my attachment to it would then have the risk of interfering with the use of my voice in other ways, I must reluctantly decline, for the time being. My views on this question are not rigidly fixed and new information or new insight might alter my perception of it.

The particular source of my concern is that the conference is being held in Oxford. More informed sources tell me that in the bureaucratic administration of Soviet law, the motive of rejoining one's family (sometimes stretch to one's extended kin) is a permissible basis on which an exit visa may be permissibly given. We are, of course, well aware of all of the frustrations and difficulties that the Soviet regime has imposed to hinder the exercise of this right. Nevertheless, according to the perspective of which I am informed, it will only make matters more difficult to introduce a diversionary element like the holding of a conference in still another country as the premise for which a visa is requested. This might appear to set an even more awkward precedent for other situations than does getting permission to Jewish scientists to immigrate to Israel.

According to this logic, were a conference to be held in Israel, perhaps with joint sponsorship from Oxford University, that would be a way of lending reinforcement to the primary model of efforts to deflect the Soviet position. If it were somehow possible for you to alter your plans in this fashion, I can even give you my advance approval of agreeing to your request that I be a sponsor.

Needless to say, if you have information or advice that might refute the position that I mention in this letter, I would be happy to hear it.

Sincerely yours,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr