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18 MAR 99

PETTY

ON REACHING FIFTY

AND

ON APPROACHING NINETY

A PAPER PRESENTED TO THE SPHEX CLUB - - MARCH 18, 1999

INTRODUCTION

In November, 1988, members of Sphex endured a paper presented by your speaker on the subject of Israel. The paper reflected on the history and personalty of Israel on reaching its 40th birthday on May 14, 1988.

On May 14, 1998, Israel reached its 50th birthday - - a time of great reflection in the life of anyone; even a country. And I was pleased to hear Pierre Guillerman present his paper in January of this year, entitled: "The Fifth Gospel", having as its premise the prophecy that Israel will survive as a nation.

However, the excellent presentation by Pierre created a good deal of personal anxiety for your speaker due to the sudden, harsh reality that Pierre was plowing in the same garden in which I was growing a paper for presentation to you tonight.

So, needing a topic for tonight's moment of truth, I reflected on the discussion following Pierre's paper and, in particular, the comment by member, Elisabeth ("Betsy") Muhlenfeld that relatively few people in the United States understand the political and

economic issues faced by Israel. I also reflected on an editorial by our secretary, Robert C. "Bob" Wimer, eulogizing his wonderful mother in which he remembered her commandment posted over the door to her kitchen that said: "bloom where you are planted". So, finding myself still in the garden, and knowing the thirst of Sphex Club members for further knowledge, I uttered that famous Hebrew word "Amen" meaning "so be it!" and grew to maturity this paper on current events in Israel.

And just to keep your interest at a fever pitch, I will also take a few minutes later in the evening for some comments on the unrelated topic of approaching 90.

### BACKGROUND

Much of what is to be discussed tonight is intended, first, to help us better understand some of the political, economic and religious issues facing the Israelis; second, to continue discussion started by Pierre's January paper and third to follow with some degree of understanding events that will unfold in the very near future. Sources for tonight's paper include the Economist, an international news and business publication; stories in The News and other print media such as The Wall Street Journal; and articles downloaded from the internet such as articles from the CNN website. Even to the most casual observer, there is no scarcity of news coverage on Israel and its middle east neighbors.

In what some have described as a moral discrepancy in the original idea, the constant issue facing the Israelis is the displacement of Islamic Arabs from parts of Palestine when the new Jewish state was created in 1948 following a plan adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in November, 1947.

To set the stage for where the Israelis are today, let's look at a map of the region after the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan and a comparable map showing the region in 1988. The 1988 configuration continues to this day [maps attached]. The 1988 configuration shows the areas occupied by the Israelis following the famous six day war in 1967, when Israel launched a "pre-emptive" attack on its neighbors, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In just six days, Israel achieved a sweeping victory, occupying Egypt's Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsular, Syria's Golan Heights, which had been used as a high ground to shell Israeli targets, and Jordan's West Bank. In 1988, Jordan's King Hussein renounced his claim to what is highlighted in yellow on the map as the West Bank as Palestinians there, mostly young Palestinians, began an uprising known as the intifadeh against Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Again, referring to the 1988 map, the independent Palestinian state, which the Palestinians, led by Yasser Arafat, are striving for, and which many Israelis now deem inevitable, would comprise the West Bank, the eastern portion of Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, all of which are now occupied by the Israelis.

The Israelis signed formal peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. There is still no peace with Syria and there is a constant border war going on with Lebanon. However, the principal problem that draws the most media coverage is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state through the amorphous activity referred to frequently in the press as the "peace process" regarding this issue. This "peace process" has been ongoing since November, 1967, when the United Nations passed Resolution 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab lands taken over in the 1967 war. In return, the Arab countries were to offer peace, primarily by eliminating terrorism, and to recognize Israel's right to exist. This so-called "land for peace" has been the bargaining chip to this day.

Lastly, before we talk about the mood of Israel at 50 an understanding of the term "Palestinian Refugees" is helpful. As I mentioned, the U.N. adopted a plan in 1947 dividing Palestine into two countries, one Arab and one Jewish. Led by Zionist leader, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, a Jewish government proclaimed the creation of the new state of Israel on May 14, 1948. The very next day, Israel was attacked by her Arab neighbors, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and what is presently Jordan. The Israelis assured their independence by winning this war and capturing about half of the land the U.N. had planned for the new Arab state. Palestinian Arabs, who had occupied Palestine for centuries, dubbed the 1948 war "the catastrophe". Almost one million Palestinian Arabs, left without towns or homes, fled Israel. Turned away from many Arab nations, most of the fleeing Palestinian

Arabs turned to refugee camps operated by the U.N. in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, mostly in harsh living conditions. Though one might think of the status of a refugee as being a temporary phenomenon, the Palestinian Arabs displaced by the 1948 war have been what the press has called the "Palestinian Refugees" for over 50 years.

### AFTER ZIONISM - THE MOOD AT 50

At 50, one might look in the mirror for lines in the face and reflections on any conflict between original dreams and present reality. At Israel's 50 birthday party last spring, the national mood was reported as sour. "Nobody feels like celebrating" was the common refrain. Yet, on the face of it, the Israelis have much to be proud of. Not the least of their achievements is survival itself, something that has not been taken for granted for much of Israel's life. The nation has prospered in spite of the continued heavy burden of defense to support its strong military. In recent years, per capita gross domestic product has risen to \$17,000.00, putting Israel within striking distance of many west European countries. Further, of interest to our own democratic culture, the Jewish state has remained true to the democratic ideals on which it was founded. Contrary to the perception of some, Israel is a much more vibrant democracy today than it ever was in its first three decades, when its politics were dominated effortlessly by David Ben-Gurion and his Labor Party. This Labor Party, one of the two major

parties in Israeli politics, was in power from 1948 until 1977 and is usually perceived as more of a pro-peace, liberal party traditionally comprised of better-educated European Jews. Lastly, Israel has fulfilled much of the Zionist dream of reuniting the scattered Jewish people in their biblical homeland. After recent immigration of some 700,000 Russians from the former Soviet Union, Israel is now the home of about one in three of the world's 15,000,000 or so Jews.

So why the sour mood? Primarily, the Israelis remain a beleaguered people. All of their neighbors are Arabs, few of whom are friendly. The current peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan remain cold at best. Annexation of the Golan Heights from Syria remains an irritant. Just last month, an Israeli brigadier general [Eraz Gerstein] and three others were killed in southern Lebanon by the Muslim militia group, Hezbollah. Incidentally, more than 900 Israelis have been killed in southern Lebanon since 1982. Up to 25,000 Lebanese and Palestinians have been killed there during the same period. Terrorism in the country is common-place. Iran calls for the destruction of the Jewish state and Iraq has already fired missiles into Israel's cities.

In spite of all that, Israel has been in grave danger before and yet retained its high spirits. What is lacking now is the old feeling of unity in adversity. And what really seems to drive this mood is the prospect of having to make a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians. This is because the Israelis know that in order to reach a final agreement with Mr. Arafat, they must make some of the hard decisions that

have been put off all the years when the Palestinians were unyielding. Some of these decisions are pretty basic: Where are Israel's eastern borders? Must peace mean giving up the West Bank, the place where Judaism began and where such famous biblical cities such as Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jericho are located? Will it require rebuilding a wall through the center of Jerusalem, the city considered holy by millions of Christians, Jews and Muslims around the world? Incidentally, this reminds me of the saying attributed to Mark Twain where he said he put a dog and a cat in a cage together as an experiment, to see if they could get along. They did, so he put in a bird, pig and goat. They, too, got along fine after a few adjustments. Then he put in a Baptist, Presbyterian and Catholic; soon there was not a living thing left [Philip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace? Zondervan Publishing House 1997, p. 33]. You wonder what would happen with a Christian, Jew and Muslim. Finally, would an independent Palestinian state really result in a lasting peace?

In trying to answer this question of an independent Palestinian state, Israelis have discovered and are having to deal with the issues that divide them. These are the political, economic and religious issues that sound familiar to our democratic society and which will drive the popular election of a new prime minister on May 17 of this year. Concepts such as hawk versus dove; liberal versus conservative; welfare state versus free market and special interest groups; church versus state, and political diversity are all part of the current landscape in Israel.

Listen as we go on.

After the capture of the West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza in 1967, the country split into two major political camps. The Labor Party, mentioned earlier, and its political allies favored some sort of territorial compromise so that the capture and occupation of land [the West Bank and Gaza highlighted in yellow on your map] might be traded for peace with the Arabs. The Likud bloc regarded the captured territory as part of Israel itself. The Likud Party, which is Israel's other major political party, first came to power in 1977 under Menachem Begin and is usually looked upon as a more populist, conservative to right-wing party comprised of many non-European Jews from Arab lands and North Africa. In Israel's political history, members of the Likud Party would be, in our political jargon, hawks and members of the Labor Party the doves.

To help us understand the Israeli political landscape, we should know that its political system is a parliamentary republic with the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The Israeli parliament is called the Knesset with 120 seats. Although Labor and Likud are the two major political parties, they seldom hold more than 40 seats each in the Knesset. In contrast to our Congress, more than 12 political parties hold seats in the Knesset. The head of state is a president elected by a majority of the 120 member Knesset but the real head of government is a prime minister who, only since 1996, is elected directly by the voters. Because of the wide diversity of political parties, the prime minister must, of necessity, form a coalition government in order to

have a majority in the Knesset. The current prime minister, Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, came to power in 1996, the first prime minister elected by popular vote, by appealing to Israel's right-wing. As an example of the precarious nature of coalition government, Netanyahu, in January of 1998, survived a no confidence motion but he held only a 61 to 59 majority of votes in the Knesset. Obviously, anything he did might splinter this coalition and, as we will see, the coalition fell apart when in December of 1998, the Knesset decided, by a vote of 81 to 30, to disband the government and call for elections on May 17 of this year.

Now let's go back to not the debate but the quarrel between Labor and Likud on what to do with the occupied territories after the 1967 war. This quarrel has always been bitter and turns on disagreements about religious and national destiny as well as security. However, most Israelis previously believed that the differences eventually could be resolved within the framework of the democratic system. Perhaps the somber mood at 50 is because the nation is not quite so sure.

Let's look at events following in the intifadeh, or "uprising", which began in late 1987. We all remember the television scenes of young Palestinians in the occupied territories throwing rocks at the Israeli troops. Finally, in September, 1993, after months of secret talks in Oslo, Norway, the Israelis, under Labor Party's Yitzhak Rabin, then prime minister, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) agreed on an interim framework for autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The agreement

pointed to a final peace agreement scheduled for May, 1999. The PLO had announced previously, in 1998, that it no longer laid claim to Israel proper but was concentrating on establishing an autonomous government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Oslo Peace Agreement was really the first significant efforts to resume the vague "peace process" begun with the U.N. Resolution No. 242 in 1967. Rabin's Labor Party had won a narrow electoral victory in 1992 from the Likud Party, whose hawkish government had been in power for 15 years. Under the Oslo Peace Agreement, Israel began to relinquish some of the occupied territory to the PLO and Israel experienced the euphoria of peacemaking. But this peace movement created internal conflict in the West Bank. We all remember in February, 1994, when a New York born doctor, Baruch Goldstein, an Orthodox Jew living in the West Bank town of Hebron, gunned down 29 Palestinian Muslims while they were praying. Goldstein was then bludgeoned to death by surviving worshipers. Then, within 26 months after Rabin and Arafat shook hands in Washington in front of international news coverage, Rabin, a former war hero in Israel, was assassinated by an Israeli ultranationalist gunman. Labor's Shimon Peres succeeded Rabin as prime minister but apparently was not trusted as well by the Israelis. In the 1996 general election, the first electing a prime minister by a popular vote, the lyrical descriptions by Peres of a Middle East at peace seemed to strike voters as dangerously other-worldly. By a narrow margin, Israel elected the Likud's untested, hawkish young leader, the telegenic Netanyahu. Being politically

dependent on nationalistic and rigorously religious coalition members of the Knesset, Netanyahu has come close to destroying the Oslo agreement with the Palestinians - precisely what Rabin's murderer wanted. Rabin's widow has blamed Netanyahu for having created an atmosphere in which the murder became possible. And on Israel's nationalist-religious extreme there are people who claim openly that Rabin's assassination did God's good work. The late 1990s, in short, have revealed a new, dark side of Israel's political culture.

The political landscape became more tense in 1997 when Israel began construction of a new Jewish housing development in predominately Arab east Jerusalem. Mr. Arafat condemned the project as an affront to peace. Later that year, the Israeli government, under Netanyahu, confirmed it had approved further expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank leading to a U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning Israel for continuing to build new settlements in the disputed territory.

In early 1998, President Clinton met Netanyahu and Arafat at separate meetings in Washington to try to jump-start the stalled peace process and in April, 1998, Arafat accepted a U.S. proposal that Israel turn over 13.1% of the West Bank to Palestinians. Netanyahu announced for the first time later in the year that he accepted the proposal as long as 3% of the land is designated as a nature reserve. Finally, in October, 1998, after negotiations at the Aspen Institute's Wye River Conference Center on Maryland's eastern shore, Arafat and Netanyahu agreed on a break-through land-for-peace deal in

the West Bank after a marathon 21-hour bargaining session mediated by President Clinton.

Netanyahu then had to defeat a no confidence vote in a challenge by Israeli hard-liners in the Knesset who were opposed to the Wye River accord. Then following a terrorist blast in an open air market in Jerusalem, the Israeli cabinet approved the Wye River accord but attached a string of conditions to its phased implementation.

The peace process timetable established by the 1993 Oslo Peace Agreement required that a final solution to the Palestinian problem should be in place by May 4, 1999. Seeing that this is unrealistic, a frustrated Arafat said that, if things are still stuck by then, he would unilaterally declare a Palestinian state. If he did, replied Netanyahu, the agreements underlying the peace process would be null and void and Israel would be free to do as it pleases. Then in November, 1998, Netanyahu suspended West Bank troop withdrawal citing Arafat's threat to declare Palestinian independence. The final result of these threats and counter threats, and the search by Netanyahu for Israel's political center, lead to a fractious debate in the Knesset. On December 21, 1998, the Knesset voted not to support Netanyahu's conditions attached to further Israeli withdrawals from the occupied territories and then decided, 81 to 30, to disband and call elections for May of this year. It is interesting that the elections are scheduled to be held almost two weeks after the May 4, 1999, deadline for Arafat's declaration of a Palestinian state.

Yet, in spite of all of the political rhetoric, and much like Americans who couldn't care less what has been going on in Washington, D.C., in recent months,

Israelis in general appear much less divided over the peace process than their politicians are. In late December, 1998, 70% of the population supported the Wye River accord. Many Israelis simply said they want the peace talks to go a little slower than they did before Netanyahu became prime minister, but faster than they did after he gained power and they want to trust the person conducting the talks. Down to only a one person majority in the Knesset, Netanyahu's Likud coalition had veered from hard line to soft to maintain its hold and it delayed economic reform to keep some special interests happy. The coalition couldn't do it and Netanyahu paid the price and now, at 49, will be running again for prime minister in May.

His main rival, Labor Party leader Eahud Barak, 56, is trying to pattern himself on Bill Clinton in 1992. He even has hired several of Clinton's advisors from that campaign, including James Carville, and traveled to Germany and Britain to see how left-of-center parties in those countries won victory by turning to the right. Yet, Barak, a former chief of staff of the armed forces, doesn't match the commanding personality of the assassinated Yitzhak Rabin and the election may come down to a centrist - - the polls say that most Israelis tend to identify themselves as centrists - - with the best personality.

Even though Russian immigrants have turned Israeli society slightly to the right, polls show a rising percentage of right-wing voters support the general idea of making peace with the Palestinians.

One of the candidate to watch for in May is Israel's version of Colin Powell: Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the 54 year old army chief of staff who is leaving his post and is expected to help form a party called Center. He has done little to clarify his views and has been dubbed "The Prince of Silence". He has become a favorite of the Israeli media. One Israeli columnist said: "People talk so much here that when you have someone who keeps his mouth shut, he's an idol.". The Palestine question is the burning issue and it should be an interesting election.

#### RELIGION AND THE POST-ZIONIST STATE

We spoke earlier of the absence of a festive mood on the 50th birthday. An incomplete peace with the Palestinians, suicide bombings, and internal divisions exposed by the peace process would be reason enough for absence of a festive spirit. However, there are two more sources of anniversary gloom. One relates to a bit of unfinished Zionist business and the other, paradoxically, is a product of Zionism's very success. Here I am broadly defining Zionism as the belief that rebuilding Palestine as a Jewish state was necessary as a haven for persecuted Jews and as a guarantee of ethnic and cultural survival - a movement that has been going on for about 100 years.

The business Zionism never got around to finishing was to establish a clear relationship between nation, state, land and religion - - what we might think of in this

country as church-state issues. According to one source [The Economist, April 25, 1998], Zionism originally was a reaction against religion - an outgrowth of the Haskalah, the 19th-century Jewish enlightenment that the rabbis of Europe most feared. But Zionism never completely repudiated the authority of Judaism's priesthood since the scattered and stateless Jews in Europe depended heavily on religion to sustain their sense of identity. When the state of Israel came into being in 1948, David Ben-Gurion, who was the first prime minister and who was born in Poland, decided against a definitive break with rabbinical authority. Instead, he agreed that all state institutions would observe religious dietary laws and that rabbinical law would prevail in matters such as marriage and divorce. He also allowed separate religious schools. Today, millions of dollars of government money are used to subsidize religious institutions and pay allowances to religious students, many of whom do not serve in the army. The result has been a constant war of attrition between the religious and the secular in which neither side ever gains the upper hand but each at one time or another comes to believe that the other is prevailing.

Today, it is the secular population, which is the majority, that feels most under threat. In recent decades the country has seen a relentless growth in the numbers, power and political self-confidence of the ultra-Orthodox citizens. These people, the black-hatted Haredim, are horrified by the secularism they see. Secular Israelis, in return, feel their liberties and lifestyles to be under constant siege. Every few weeks

brings some new affront to the free-wheeling secular values that Israel was once famous for. For example: a rabbinical plea for wives to be home by midnight or an attempt to close yet another public road on the Sabbath. The rhetoric and depth of hatred between the two camps can be extraordinary. To this day, Zionist and Haredim trade recriminations about their respective behavior during the Holocaust. Not surprisingly, during a recent opinion survey, Israelis were more worried by this internal conflict between church and state than by the conflict with the Arabs. [Refer to article on the court ruling dividing the Israelis in the February 15, 1999, issue of USA Today]

Having lasted for almost a century, the tension between Zionism and orthodoxy is a familiar one. But Israel is also beginning to confront a problem that arises from the success of Zionism. For at least the first half of Israel's life, the Zionist project - - building a state, defending the borders, gathering in the exiles from many different countries - - created a strong feeling of national cohesion. But, today Israelis are more affluent and secure and Zionism is no longer such a strong binding force. Although very few Israelis outside the ultra-Orthodox community are anti-Zionist, many feel that, after having created and consolidated the state, the Zionist project has run its natural course and it is time for Israel to move on. The question is - in what direction? At 50, the Israelis worry about what a "post-Zionist" state ought to look like as the country grows older. Even die-hard Zionist concede that many of the movement's

values and aspirations have become irrelevant in modern Israel. David Ben-Gurion, for example, wanted "to make the desert bloom"; but his vision has little resonance in an urbanized society whose economy is increasingly dependent on high technology. Mainstream Zionism was a socialist as well as a nationalist movement; but Israel is joining the global trend toward a free-market economy. Zionism envisioned a "mobilized" society with collective farms and a bold citizens' army. But, many Israelis today are eager to live as individuals, guided by private rather than public aspirations.

The waning of Zionist ideology is not just a matter of intellectual curiosity; it has consequences as well. This is because Zionism was Israel's melting pot. One of the movement's original aims a century ago was to create a new sort of Jew, liberated from what the Zionist saw as the demeaning experience of the Diaspora. The early Zionists revived the Hebrew language, adopted Hebrew names, rebelled against religious orthodoxy and tried to immerse themselves in a new Israeli identity. They succeeded. With a population of 6,000,000, Israel is unquestionably a full-fledged nation, united by religion and language, tested in war, and with a real sense of national identity. All of this is a remarkable testament to the nation-building efforts of a country of so many immigrants. It is difficult not to be impressed by a Knesset (parliament) whose members were born in dozens of different countries.

At some point though the business of nation-building comes to an end. It gives way to other priorities. Like older nations, Israel is discovering that its citizens feel the

need for sources of more local rather than national identity. Many Israelis once bent over backwards to erase their memories of the Diaspora but now are more inclined to emphasize their country of origin. This is gradually creating voting blocs such as we see in this country. No longer divided only into right and left, hawk or dove, religious or secular, Israelis must also now be considered as Russians or Moroccans, western Jews (Ashkenazim) or oriental Jews (Sephradim). The latest arrivals, the Jews from the former Soviet Union, who now form the biggest single ethnic group in Israel, have so far shown little desire to leap into an Israeli melting pot. They live in their own neighborhoods, have their own political party, read their own Russian-language newspapers and watch cable television from Moscow.

In the past, ethnic divisions such as these were suppressed in the interest of building the nation and fending off the external threat. Today they are beginning to change the shape of Israeli politics, giving rise to a system in which special interests and group interests grow stronger while traditional party allegiances, such as Labor and Likud grow weaker. Perhaps this change in its politics marks a coming of age for Israel. Today, Israel's political debate is not just between two traditional political camps, Labor and Likud, but is increasingly about different issues such as ethnic identity, class, economics, the impact of the global economy - issues that are familiar and older, bigger in richer countries such as the United States. It will be interesting to see whether this change makes Israel better able to make peace with the

Palestinians or merely serves to put new obstacles in the way. This is an open question and one that we should watch with interest. For what may be a sign of the times, National Public Radio announced last Thursday [March 11, 1999] that a 21 year old kindergarten teacher in Haifa was named "Miss Israel". She is an Arab! And she says "everyone must learn to get along". And, perhaps sensing world opinion on his side, the same broadcast reported that Mr. Arafat would delay his declaration of an Independent Arab State on May 4, 1999, if he got commitments from Europe and the United States that independence will come.

In my own view, I believe Israel is not yet too old and set in its ways to make peace with the Palestinians. I would hope the majority of Israelis share the optimism of Gayle Sheehey who in the foreword of her 1996 book: "New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time" quotes Goethe:

"What you can do, or dream you can, begin it,  
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

Amen.

## ON APPROACHING NINETY

Continuation of a paper presented to The Sphex Club -- March 18, 1999

On April 15, 1982, at the annual meeting of the Sphex Club, then president and now Emeritus member, William H. Barney, took a few minutes to review the history of the club. He first noted that the 1982 meeting marked 1,000 consecutive meetings of the club and then briefly reviewed its history.

Dr. Barney's history is on file at Jones Memorial Library and I have brought copies of his remarks for those of you who might want one tonight.

In his remarks, Dr. Barney noted that the club was organized on October 5, 1910. He went on to say: "Just why the club was founded is not entirely clear. The constitution, adopted later, states that 'the object is to promote the intellectual and social culture of its members and to encourage philanthropic, educational and civic progress in the community'".

October 5, 1910! Simple math tells us that the club is in the 90th year of its life. On the 5th of October of the next millennium, the Sphex Club will turn 90 and begin the 10th decade of its institutional life. In my mind, this is a remarkable feat.

While working in the public library on the topic discussed earlier this evening, it struck me that I had never been upstairs to Jones Memorial Library to see what records

of the Sphex Club were on file. I spoke with Lewis H. Averett, Coordinator of Reference at the library. Lewis was most helpful in leading me back to the file room which, incidentally, is an exception to the rules. When I explained that topics from previous papers might suggest to me a topic for a future paper, he enthusiastically encouraged me to have the Club continue to provide the library with minutes of meetings and papers. Lewis then provided me with a copy of the outline of the collection on file at the library and I have also made copies for those of you who might be interested tonight.

As I scanned at the index of collected Sphex Club documents, I found that minutes of club meetings were on file beginning with the original meeting in October, 1910, through the year 1982. I also found that a former secretary and member of the club, James B. Noell, had compiled a listing of club members from 1910 through approximately 1975. The listing included the date and topic of every paper that member had presented. A copy of the listing is here tonight.

I also found that the collection includes some, but obviously not all, of the papers presented by members after 1975 but the collection does not include any minutes of club meetings since 1982. A perusal of the old minutes can be extremely interesting. My brief excursion through a few of the more recent minutes brought back memories of distinguished Sphex Club members when obituaries were noted for Richard P. Gifford, who died in 1976 at the age of 54; Philip Lightfoot Scruggs, retired editorial

director of the News & Advance as well as an author, who died on March 23, 1977; and John D. Capron who died at the age of 82 on May 1, 1977.

But as I scanned the collection and thought of the approaching age of the club, I was struck by the fact that, much like the Jews who were scattered from Palestine in the first century A.D., in the Diaspora, the minutes of the club and papers since 1975 are also scattered and have not returned to their homeland, Jones Memorial Library.

Before our memories fade with advancing age and so that we can preserve the past history of the SpheX Club as part of the rich cultural heritage of our city, I propose that we devote some effort to the gathering in of the exiles, that is, the missing minutes and papers of the SpheX Club.

This may be a daunting task and time consuming but one that I feel is worth the effort. Life often seems to be full of half-read books and unfinished tasks but I suggest that we make the effort. As we do, I am reminded of the quotation from Tennyson that recently appeared in front of a church on Court Street:

"So Many Worlds  
So Much to do  
So Little Done  
Such Things to be".

Let's get started!

