THE EXECUTIVE OF THE ZIONIST ORGANISATION [Not translated: Hebrew text,

**THE BEZALEL NATIONAL MUSEUM** presumably letter head]

FOUNDED 1906 BY PROFESSOR BORIS SCHATZ

Jerusalem, PO Box 398 [Hebrew text]

Phone 5652 [Hebrew text]

9 – X – 1947

[October 9th, 1947]

Monsieur Léon Birtchansky

18, rue Jean Goujon

Paris

Dear Sir,

Now that I have arrived back in Jerusalem, I am finally able to thank you for the gifts that you have so kindly given us. Firstly, the canvas of the rabbi by Decamps, then the silver tephillin cases, and lastly the [three] faience Passover plates. It will be a real pleasure to have them here. I also wanted to thank you for giving us the Hanukkah lamps.

I am also very grateful for the addresses that you gave me, and also your son. I hope that he has now been in contact with Mr Wiesner, who was kind enough to promise me some etchings by Rembrandt when your son was there.

You were also so kind as to offer further gifts yourself, and as you know I am particularly interested in works by Levitan, to whom I would like to devote an entire room.

You will be acknowledged by name as the donor of these gifts.

I hope to be in Paris in November, and look forward to being able to express my gratitude in person to you, to Madame Birtchansky, and to your son.

With my very warmest wishes,

[Signature]

9 – X – 1947

[October 9th, 1947]

Monsieur Zacharie Birtchansky

9, rue du Boccador

Paris

Dear Sir,

Now that I am back in Jerusalem I am eager to thank you deeply for the kind contribution you have made to our efforts. The beautiful pastel drawing by your famous uncle, the painter Levitan, is being transported to Palestine, and we shall be extremely proud to display it. Yet, my dear Monsieur Birtchansky, as I said to you before, this will not be enough – and I do not mean the quality of the drawing, not that of course – but you will understand me when I say that one picture alone will not be enough to convey a true understanding of the work of this painter to our public. It is my vision to bring a whole collection of the work of this great Jewish artist to Palestine to give our visitors, and especially the young generation, an impression of his art.

I told you about the grisaille piece that we have by this artist, “Le retour à Sion” [Return to Zion]; this was a gift from Professor Schur. Since then, I have been able to purchase three more works by the master, so that our collection now consists of five of his works. But it goes without saying that this is not enough for a special room devoted to Levitan.

My dear sir, you are the greatest collector of Levitan’s work, and I beg you now to reflect upon the importance of having a collection of this artist’s work here in Jerusalem in the heart of Palestine, to give the Jewish people here a true image of his work.

You were so generous as to promise me another piece on loan, but unfortunately I was not able to secure the all-important self-portrait, since you were planning to send it to Moscow [typo? “Moscour”]. But, as you are aware, Moscow already has a large number of works of high quality by this artist, and one more or less will not mean as much to Moscow as it does to us. Do not doubt me when I say that, with no exaggeration, thousands of people will admire it here.

I fully understand Madame Birtchansky’s reluctance to be separated from that beautiful landscape, and that she preferred to promise to bequeath it to us – but let us not forget how young she is!

I hope to come to Paris in November and would be delighted to see you and Madame Birtchansky again, and please believe me when I say that I would be deeply grateful if you felt able to add to your initial gift to us.

I remain most sincerely and gratefully yours,

[Signature]

II – 7 – 1950

Monsieur Zacharie Birtchansky 50/7/132

9, rue du Boccador

Place d’Alma

Paris

France

Cher Monsieur,

Please forgive me for not writing to you before today. I am sure you will understand how much work was awaiting me after an absence of 10 months. The work has overwhelmed me and I have had to delay writing to you.

However, I am eager to thank you for your generous gift on behalf of our Board, who appreciate your gesture of friendship to us. The Board has decided that it would like to name our collection of Levitan’s work after you and Madame Birtchansky, providing that you will donate a further “20” pieces by the artist.

Not only the Board but also the friends of the Museum have been charmed by the canvases, which are of remarkable quality. The pictures will have their [own] room, if all can be agreed. We are also grateful to our Ministry for dedicating an entire room to your gifts in the names of Madame and Monsieur Birtchansky.

I am afraid that I have not been able to make photocopies of the canvases by Levitan as I had promised you, due to the lack of materials in our country. I thank you for your patience in this matter. In the meantime, I will send some photos of the pictures that we have here.

I hope that you are in good health and beg you to send my greetings to Madame. I send you my very best wishes.

[Hebrew text]

[Signature]

M. Narkiss

Director

[152]

Monsieur Birtschansky

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………26 January ? [handwritten ?]

P.S.

You were kind enough to promise that one day you would give us a copy of the catalogues and documentary reproductions of the artworks that [? you do not have].

Might this time now have come?

If not, would you be so kind as to let me know when this might be possible.

[Signature]

[M.N.]