

קרי  
26 Tishri 5751

Dear Alex: *AKA*

I was very disappointed from the last meeting of the "Stammbaum Committee" in your house. As I went home, the idea occurred to me to write you a letter, as it is always better to put one's ideas on black and white. This also will give you an opportunity to think and reflect. During the discussions at the meeting, you, or rather the majority of those present, made some rash decisions which not only contradicted every other agreement made before, but changed the entire concept of the "Stammbaum". I was always under the impression that what had been worked on for the past 40 or so years was a true "Sefer Yuch'ssin" of the Yoel, Adler and Carlebach families; a book which will bridge generations, a book which will be an honor for the departed as well as a credit to their descendants. I thought it would be a distinction to be counted among the offspring of our ancestors, and in some positive way even create some sort of fellowship among the living members of these distinguished families.

The last meeting informed me that I was totally in error. Although one of the earlier basic rules had been that no non-Jew is to be included in the Sefer Yuch'ssin - which is what it should be - this rule was overturned - within minutes - over a cup of coffee, without further deliberations. I was the only one who objected. My argument was opposed because "we are not G-d's policemen", or because we are writing a "historical book", and "not a book on Halachah"! What naive and absolutely unbelievable and unacceptable arguments. Let me explain.

I noticed in the proof pages some very strange-sounding Hispanic names. Although this fact in itself is no proof positive that we are dealing with non-Jews, my curiosity was aroused as there is no provision in the questionnaires to indicate that the individual in question is indeed a Jew. The absence of such a question never bothered me in the past. I assumed that the people who send these pages around the world know whom they are dealing with. Now it turns out that the census people in reality do not know whom they are dealing with. Now, let's assume you get a name like "Jesus Rodriguez"; after the last meeting you have no reason to omit this person from your Stammbaum. After all, we are doing "History", not "Halachah". Now let's assume for a moment that this Mr. Rodriguez is a student in a Catholic monestary, or better, he is already a priest, a bishop or perhaps a cardinal, -will you still feature him in your "Sefer Yuch'ssin"? Where are you drawing the lines?

Isn't it enough that we have to include, for better or for worse, the various renegades and "black sheep" in our families, who, although they may have attained respectable positions in the secular world, are no credit to their ancestors in their stubborn rejection of all that was sacred and holy to them. Yes, we agreed that even if these individuals entered into a halachically forbidden marriage, neither they nor their spouses, provided they are Jewish, would be omitted from the register.

Now something new developed. It appears that two of our second cousins, two brothers who live in Australia, married non-Jewish women. Neither of these women converted to Judaism. But the children of one of the brothers became Jews, being admitted by the London Beis Din. The father of the children insists that these children, and presumably the mother also, be included in the family register. The meeting decided that the father was correct in his insistence, because "who can question the London Beis Din", and consequently the non-Jewish mother, and all other non-Jewish wives and their offspring will henceforth be included! I strongly objected to this line of thinking.

According to Halachah, the children in question, if properly admitted are indeed Jews, but they are "Gerim"; they are not the children of the gentleman, but they are "Bnei Avraham". You will not argue this point, unless you take it upon yourself to "pasken" against Talmud and Shulchan Aruch and a long line of Poskim to this very day. But what puzzles me is the following: How can the London Beis Din convert children when the mother refuses to convert? I spoke to some of the Baaley Hora'ah here, and they assure me that no responsible Beis Din will convert children under these circumstances. So the whole Giyur appears to be suspect, because how can there be any kiyum mitzvot with a non-Jewish mother running the house? (Unless, however, the children were adults at their conversion and did not live with the mother.)

I urge you and all who lend a hand to this effort, to this "Sefer Yuch'ssin", to reconsider your position. Even Hillel and Shamai did not hesitate to admit their error, and agreed with the "two weavers" who came from the Dung Gate in Yerushalayim (Eduyot 1,3). Non-Jewish spouses of family members do not belong in the Family Register. There is no difference between a one-night prostitute, a live-in mistress and a "legally-married wife". The fact that the union was "solemnized" in the St. Paul Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, New York, is of no consequence whatsoever. The entire concept of a "mixed marriage" does not exist in our vocabulary. There just is no such thing.

"The term "mixed marriage" is only popular usage, reflecting an existing situation, the kind against which our prophets already thundered since time immemorial...The only "problem" is that of the children. But this is no problem at all, since we have a clear and simple rule: when the mother is Jewish, so is the child. When the mother is non-Jewish, so are the children. There are no exceptions." (From Rabbi Zevin's answer to Ben Gurion, quoted in "Jewish Identity", Feldheim, N.Y. 1965)

Dear Alex, believe me, my heart is bleeding when I think that in our generation, the third after our Grandfather R. Shlomoh Carlebach, the matters that were raised at this last meeting should even be subjects of discussion. I heard it say that during his lifetime, none of the descendents of Shlomoh Carlebach violated the Shabbat openly. In his will and testament R. Shlomoh states that he expects all his children and their descendents to "learn" every day, Chumash, Mishna, Talmud etc., to attend as far as possible Tefillah beZibbur, mornings and evenings, not to enter a marriage when the wife refuses to cover her hair, etc. etc. And you want to tell me in all seriousness that our Grossvater would condone our sitting here in Yerushalayim, the holy City, and lending legitemacy to so-called mixed marriages of his grand- and greatgrandchildren?

Aren't we desecrating his memory and the memory of all our Kedoshim who gave up their very lives for every iota of our sacred tradition? And if Miriam Gillis thinks for one moment that her father z"l, our beloved Uncle Jo, would agree with her point-of-view, she is badly mistaken. True, her father was the "ohev Yisrael" par excellence. He loved every Jew, no matter how far he went astray. But what does this have to do with admitting goyim into our midst? I can hear him say, together with Grossvater and your father z"l, "bessodom al tovo nafshi, bikhalom al techad kevodi".

If our committee will not change its entire approach, I cannot see myself continuing in this group. I am not interested in "history", or better, the "Decline and Decay of the Carlebach Family". I will start another book, beginning with my father z"l. I further believe, that I am not the only one who shares my view. I have not spoken to my children, or the children of Leni o"h, and Esther. But I have an idea that I am not alone. I also believe that Shlomoh (Peter), the Dzialowskis and others will lose their interest if the facts are known to them. And it does not matter if you include 5 or 50 goyim; the entire project becomes a farce.

I said what I think was my duty to say. No more and no less should be said.

*גאון אברהם*  
All my best wishes,

*Sh*  
CC: Miriam Gillis, Ephraim Yair, Shlomoh Carlebach