

September 19, 1972

██████████
1-3-15 Mishifuna
Tunabashi
Shi Chila, Ken
Japan

Dear ██████:

I am writing to you at the request of Dr. Samuel Bavli, whose letter reached me just last night, as soon as we broke our Yom Kippur fast.

I really do not know what to say to you. I would like to sugar-coat what for me as well as for you is a bitter pill, but I believe that you too will prefer forthrightness and honesty from me.

Let me say, first, that no matter what my opinion of the validity of your actions according to Torah, I personally wish you every happiness. I think that that is understood.

I must tell you, ██████, that there is no way that Judaism can sanction your marriage to a non-Jew. Once you were accepted into our faith, you were recognized as a full Jewess, without reservations. As such, your proposed marriage to a non-Jew is no different from the inter-marriage of any other Jewess. Hence, the Halakhah simply does not recognize you as married to this man, but considers it an illicit liaison. There is simply no way out of it. From a Jewish point of view, therefore, I have no choice but to urge you most strongly to change your mind, no matter what the consequences, and no matter how fine a man he may be personally.

Should you, however, decide to marry this man -- and the word "marriage" I here use exclusively in the civil and not religious sense -- that does not relieve you from your moral, spiritual, and religious obligations to observe all the other mitzvot of the Torah.

That, from the point of view of Jewish religion and law, is all that I can say at the present moment.

I will never presume to judge you. If there is any judgment involved, it is against myself. If you remember, as I am sure you do, I pleaded with you during the many months that I guided your preparation for conversion, to desist. I predicted for you the troubles you would have in finding a proper mate. I was deeply worried that you would be injuring yourself, despite what was to me your obvious love of Judaism. Yet, you persisted and demonstrated a powerful desire to join our folk and faith. You even told me that you realize the difficulties you will find in marriage, and that you were prepared to forgo everything in order to become Jewish. I have no doubt that when you said that you were utterly sincere. However, I should have been wiser and exercised more foresight. But I weakened and could not resist your tears. That was my mistake, and I shall have to live with a troubled conscience because of it. I shall make every effort henceforth to correct my attitude should such situations arise again.

I am sorry, [REDACTED], and from the bottom of my heart I wish you well. I wish that you had met someone who would have been good for you and to you, and also would have shared the religion you embraced with such love. But such wishing is futile. All I can offer you now are my prayers that the Lord guide you to wise decisions and lead you to the kind of happiness that will not compromise your principles.

I can understand why you were reluctant to write to me about this matter directly. You need not feel so in the future.

I hope you will remain in contact with me, and I am willing to offer any advice that I can from afar.

Sincerely,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

b.c. Bavi
Glance
2 cc. PL