

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of India

C/o Magen Hasidim Synagogue,
8, Moreland Road,

BOMBAY-11, INDIA

Dated July 15, 1963

Dear Dr. Weiss,

Your letter of July 3 together with the cheque for \$ 500-00 was delivered to me on Sunday the 14th, at a time, when we were intrigued about the prolonged silence. The official receipt will be forwarded as soon as I have the Bank's confirmation.

I shall endeavour to the best of my ability to make as detailed a report on the activities of Rabbi Gotthold as possible. I do not want to be misunderstood when I say that Rabbi Gotthold has so far carried on most of his business independent of the Union.

Right from the date of arrival, (even the arrival was not intimated to us in advance) the Union Officers seem to have been allocated the insignificant part of silent watchers. He could not be received/welcome as were the other dignitaries, nor conducted any place excepting a few Synagogues, where he attended either the Sabbath eve or Shahrith services and delivered sermons.

He has dealt with a few cases of divorce and conversion, but who referred the cases to him or who were the parties involved, we have no knowledge. The cases from Bombay, Thana, Poona and Ahmadabad were mostly of those persons, who were registered to immigrate to Israel and were recommended by the Jewish Agency through the Synagogues (all conservative except Ahmedabad) or the individuals concerned.

(scheduled at MHS) A lecture arranged by the Jewish Women's Council at the Jewish Club and a series of lectures (of which the first was by the Torah and Hebrew Education Sub-Committee of the Bombay Zionist Association had to be cancelled at the last minute because, it is understood that the Consul-General for Israel instructed the Rabbi not to make any Public appearances, even at Synagogues.

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When Mr. Penkar and I met the Rabbi for the first time, we had communicated Rabbi Lamm's desire that the Union should have a Lay Beth Din formed. He could instruct the members of the Beth-Din in the right way to deal with religious problems, especially conversion and divorce, to train a good sopher in the halachic way of writing the Gittin and the procedure for delivery, etc.

At the meeting of the Executive Rabbi Gotthold was firm in his desire that Union should give him a mandate to carry on his ecclesiastic activities independently. All this has caused a bit of discontentment and a few expressed their views after the meeting that the Rabbi was here not at the invitation of the Union but only seeking its cover and that mainly his activities were concerned with the persons, proposing to immigrate to Israel.

The Rabbi visited a few villages with persons not connected with Union and tried to gather historical information and ~~the~~ customs. This leads to a bit of suspicion and the opposition openly take advantage of the issue. He has expressed his wish to fly back to Israel all of a sudden on or by July 22. He has also asked me to arrange if possible, a meeting of the officers of the Union, the U.S.I. and the Reform for the afternoon of Sunday 21, with a view to come to an understanding that no Congregation shall carry out any conversion or arrange Gittin and that such cases will be referred to a small Board to be set up of this three Organisations and with advise from Israel or England, the cases will be dealt with. Whether this will materialise and how far it will be workable, I have my doubts, but, I shall have to proceed without consulting the Executive.

I am sure Rabbi Gotthold himself will render his report, if not already done. However, I consider it better to ~~leave~~ leave it to you to judge whether the Union or the Community as a whole has benefitted to the extent it should have and whether the Union's finances were well invested.

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According to Rabbi Gotthold two more Rabbis were expected to visit us very soon depending on his recommendations. If the conduct of the affairs are to be similar on their arrival as well, it will be preferable that the Rabbis arrive at a more opportune time, when not only the Union but the entire community will be ready to receive and welcome the learned guests and they in turn shall be in a position to establish a firm religious mode of life for our community, in this far land of ours.

The Officers of the Union and majority of our affiliated congregations are satisfied that the mission of Rabbi Gotthold is genuine in all respects, but are of opinion that it could have been more fruitful and successful, were the officers of Union given an opportunity to organise the campaign, and taken into confidence and guided in the halachic way of conducting the religious affairs of the Community.

It was gratifying to learn from Rabbi Gotthold that the R.C.A. and the O.U. took a very firm stand, with regards to the ugly affair of the Bene Israel in Israel, with the Chief Rabbinate and our grateful thanks are due to you for your kind efforts and the success, they await.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

A.D. Jhirad

(A.D. JHIRAD)
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