

June 23, 1961

Rabbi Zev Gotthold
Ministry of Religions
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Rabbi Gotthold:

Just two days ago Dr. Samson R. Weiss wrote to you concerning the situation of the Bene Israel in India and Israel, and the apparent acceptance of Rabbi Nissim in the face of pressure by the Agency.

Speaking personally, I cannot conceal my great distress at the Israeli Rabbinate refusing to budge when petitioned by their Orthodox colleagues in America, but evidently knuckling under completely with a sudden appreciation of the flexibility of the Halakhah when confronted by political pressure. It is to my mind, and again I speak personally, a major tragedy.

I am even more distressed by the fact that Rabbi Nissim and the Sephardi leaders did absolutely nothing when as the representative of the U.O.J.C.A. and the R.C.A. I begged him to recommend someone as a rabbi for India. It seems as if a Conservative layman -- Mr. B. B. Benjamin of the United Synagogue of India -- has more influence with the Israeli Rabbinate than an Orthodox rabbi from the United States.

But in addition to the umbrage that an American Rav can rightly take in this situation, I am concerned that Rabbi Nissim will be bestowing recognition upon the United Synagogue of India and therefore completely undermine the work of the Orthodox Union in India. Is there no way of impressing upon the Rabbinate in Israel the importance of at least consulting with those of us in the States who have tried so hard to keep Orthodoxy alive in the Bombay area?

I might mention that I have as yet received no replies from either Rabbi Rozovsky or Rabbi Unterman.

I know that you probably are even more aware of the dark side of things than I am. Nevertheless, I felt impelled to write the above. Please do see to it that anything that can be done to rectify the situation and prevent any difficulties from arising in the future is done.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Norman Lamm