

*This is a better
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From:
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Bombay 9

To:
The Editor
"Mebassar"
c/o Magen Hassin Synagogue
Bombay

Dear Sir:

I make bold to address you on the matter which is of vital importance to every Bene Israel in India.

a. Presumably you have read in the "Mebassar" of February 1963 that in January of this year the Kenesseth, by a majority, defeated Mr. Emma Talmi's Bill which sought to punish the marriage Registrars who attempted to impose restrictions on the performance of marriages between Bene Israel of India and other Jews in the State of Israel. The Government of Israel has accepted Bene Israel for the purpose of recruitment as bonded labourer to dig roads and trenches on the borders of the Israel State; but where marriage with other Israelis are concerned they have left the Bene Israel to the tender mercies of the ravenous Rabbinical wolves who seek to impose on them an inferiority status, in precisely the same manner as it was imposed on Jews in Eastern Europe, Hitler's Germany and Arab States. With the formation of Israel State these refugees from Arab State and Eastern Europe have now assumed the roles of arbiters to decide the purity of Jews from India and are attempting to the same inferiority status on Bene Israel which was imposed on the Jewry in Eastern Europe and Arabia.

b. The second disturbing news published in the same issue of "Mebassar" is about the visit to India of Rabbis Goren Senior Chaplain to Israeli Armed forces, for the self-imposed task of finding out whether the Bene Israel community of India at all consists of even a fragment of "pure Jews".

c. The third disturbing news is the attempt made by Mr. Kelman of the Jewish Agency in Bombay to bring an Israeli Rabbis to set right our divorces.

In this connection I may state that the Bene Israel community in India never intended to seek any recognition from the Jews outside India during its isolation for over 2,000 years. They remained true to Torah without the help of a Rabbi and kept themselves scrupulously aloof from intermarriage with local Indian communities by segregating the progeny of such intermarriages. Are we the descendants of these proud Bene Israel forefathers now prepared to submit ourselves to scrutiny by the descendants of those Jews of Eastern Europe and Arabia who had for some generations given up the practice of Judaism freely at forbidden food and lapsed by marriage and conversion among the majority communities of Europe and Arabia?

As regards (a) it is not possible for us to exercise any influence over Kenesseth. But so far as (b) and (c) are concerned, it may be possible for us to come to a unanimous conclusion whether we should welcome any intrusion by these foreign Jews in our marriage and divorce question or even approach them for elucidation of problems which the elders of the congregations among Bene Israel in the past solved by the use of the common sense.

Whatever my personal views in these matters I feel that as an individual I am competent to take any decision, and therefore propose to invite a conference of the Presidents of Bene Israel synagogues, prayer halls, congregations, etc. in the Sir Kadoorie School Hall on Sunday, the 31st March 1963 at 10 a. m. to decide whether we should stretch our arms to welcome these visitors and meekly subject ourselves to their scrutiny. I shall feel obliged if you will kindly make it convenient to attend the meeting give frank and fearless expression to your views thus enabling the community as a whole to come

to a unanimous decision.

Thanking you and hoping to receive an early reply intimating
to me your willingness to attend,

I remain,
Faithfully yours,

The President & Vice-President of
Bene Israel Synagogues and Prayer Halls.
Vice President Union of Orthodox Jews.

Vice-President-United Synagogue of India
President-Bene Israel Purity Association

The Editor Maccabi

The Editor Mabbasar

The Editor, Velimattam Otham