

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Marcheshvan, 5722
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mrs. S. Weiner
31 Park Road
Maplewood, N. J.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your two letters, as well as the enclosure. May G-d grant that henceforth you will not know of any more accidents and, in accordance with the text of the blessing of Gmel, "May G-d recompense you with all good forever."

Referring to the subject matter of your letter, in which you mention that I "admonish" you, I need hardly point out to you that it is not my custom to admonish for the sake of admonishment. However, when I see that a person could live on a higher level, no matter how satisfactory the present level seems to be, and if I think that I can do something to encourage that person towards the higher level, I would surely be amiss of my duty if I passed it over in silence.

In your case, I see three areas in which, with all due respect, I feel that you could do a great deal more: 1. With regard to your own opportunities. 2. In the matter of encouraging your husband to utilize his capacities to the fullest advantage. 3. In the conduct of your home, and above all, the education of your children.

I believe that during our conversation we touched upon the subject that, as the Torah has always been called Torah Chaim, the Law of Life, and has always been both the source of our life and existence as well as the guide in our daily life, it is infinitely more so in the present day and age. The danger to Jewish life and existence in the free countries, especially in these United States, is not the danger of physical extermination, G-d forbid, from another Hitler or Eichman, but there is, nevertheless, a danger which is no less destructive, the danger of assimilation. Precisely because there is no external antagonism and discrimination against the Jews, especially on the middle and lower class level (although in the upper classes, the tendency towards assimilation is checked by prejudice), the danger of mass assimilation is a very real one.

In addition, such factors as compulsory education and social and economic pressures of conformity, etc., coupled with the widespread ignorance of Jewish values, greatly increase the danger of assimilation from one generation to the next. If allowed to continue unchecked, who knows to what it might lead.

It is, therefore, the duty of every conscious and conscientious Jew

to do everything possible to stem the tide of assimilation, and it is truly a matter of saving life.

It is self-evident that such an effort should not be limited to the adult and older generation, but especially in regard to the younger generation, and the very young in particular. And needless to say, a person on whom Divine Providence has bestowed special capacities for influence, is especially duty-bound to use these capacities in the direction outlined.

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This is not the time to engage in theoretic research as to all the aspects of the situation, and postpone action pending the results of such research. For, when a house is on fire, there is no time to study the laws of combustion and methods of fire extinguishing, but everything must be done to extinguish the fire before the house is destroyed, with possible loss of life.

Another important point to bear in mind is the following -- there can be a two-fold approach to life: (a) To consider it as a matter of pleasure, in which case every effort should be bent towards getting the most out of life, in terms of pleasure, and in every situation to seek the easiest way out. (b) To consider life as a challenge, and to help make a better world to live in, especially as the society in which we live is far from perfection. In this case, every effort must be bent towards this end, even if it means the sacrifice of certain personal pleasures, and even if it requires a great deal of continuous physical and mental exertion. But, as a matter of fact, it is this latter approach that offers the maximum pleasure, real pleasure and gratification.

To return to the subject matter of our discussion. While we have met only once, I have formed a fairly clear idea of your capacities, as well as your husband's. Knowing that your husband had at one time studied at the Yeshiva in Jerusalem, and in view of his background, it is my feeling, as I also mentioned to your husband, that the fact that he had strayed to a movement where he does not naturally belong, should in itself be turned to good advantage. No one knows the ways of Divine Providence, but perhaps the fact that he is at present connected with that movement, may be because he is destined to bring about revolution in it.

Be that as it may, I have no doubt that you can do a great deal to influence and encourage your husband in the right direction, to follow an independent course, as is his inner desire. Similarly, you have the capacity to extend your influence beyond your immediate surroundings at home, to the community at large. This you can do both in a direct way and perhaps even more so in an indirect way, by raising the standards of your religious and spiritual living.

This brings me to the third area mentioned earlier, namely, the con-

Mrs. S. Weiner

-3- 12th of Marcheshvan, 5722

duct of your home and especially the education of your children, whom you surely want to see growing up to be conscientious Jews and to retain a certain standard of Yiddishkeit. It is possible to ensure this only if the children receive their education while they are still young, in such an atmosphere, and on such a level, that even when they come under the pressures of life, mentioned earlier in my letter, they will retain at least that minimum standard.

I say this in connection with your writing that your children had been attending a Hebrew Day School, but that you took them out from there and have engaged a private teacher instead. I need hardly point out to you that Jewish education is not confined to the acquisition of a certain level of knowledge and information about Jewish life, but rather that ^{the} ~~the~~ child should be brought up within such a life and within an atmosphere which is permeated with this kind of life. This is something that a private teacher cannot replace by teaching just a number of hours a week. Besides, when the Hebrew lesson comes after the boy has spent most of the day in public school, where he is given tests and homework, the Hebrew lesson cannot have the same importance in the mind of the boy as the public school, not to mention other factors such as the effect of classroom, discipline, community with other children, etc., etc. All this relegates the Hebrew lesson to a third or fourth place in importance, so that it often comes to be regarded altogether as an unnecessary burden.

To reiterate, the purpose of this letter is not to admonish, but only to point out to you those areas where you can attain a higher level of accomplishment and efficiency. As I also mentioned at the end of my previous letter to you, it is not a question of doing something to qualify as a true Jewish daughter, but, on the contrary, inasmuch as you are a Jewish daughter, and a member of the Jewish people whom G-d has chosen and singled out not for pleasures but rather for holiness and for bringing light and holiness into the world, that you owe it to yourself, as well as to your people, to make the fullest use of the capacities which Divine Providence has generously bestowed upon you and your husband, along the lines indicated above.

With prayerful wishes for your success, and

With blessing.