

תשובה משיבת נפש

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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
 11 Tamuz, Erev Chag HaGaulo,
 5744. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. Moshe

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of May 12 reached me with considerable delay. My reply has been further delayed partly because of pressure of duties and partly also because I felt confident that you would see without my prodding that there can be only one answer to your question. Should you, however, still find yourself indecisive, my response is as follows:

1. There is surely no need to emphasize to you that intermarriage is a disaster from any viewpoint, and for both parties. It is particularly tragic as an act of treason to our Jewish people, especially after the Holocaust, since children born of a non-Jewish mother are not Jewish according to the Torah, Toras-Emes. Thus, instead of bringing new Jews into the world by marrying a Jewish wife, one would contribute to the decimation of our people and the "final solution" that Hitler and his followers began and nearly succeeded but for the mercy of HaShem.
2. Even apart from the religious-spiritual factor, which is the essential point, it is well known that ~~that~~ intermarriage usually results, sooner or later, in endless friction and unhappiness. That a casual, or even more serious kind of relationship in the past seemed to indicate compatibility, etc. is no proof, of course, that it would be so ever after in a marriage situation. On the contrary, it is inevitable that two persons of such divergent backgrounds - one descending from generations of oppressed and victimized people, the other from the world of the oppressors and predaceous - should not be affected by hereditary forces. As a physician you surely know how important the hereditary factor is and how it can surface after a period of dormancy.
3. On the other hand, to undergo a "cosmetic" or "plastic" conversion is, obviously, no solution to a seriously minded person, and even more abhorrent to an honest person. A true geyrus has to be such as to transform a non-Jew into a Jew, with a new Jewish Neshomo, like a newborn Jew of Jewish parents. Such a geyrus is one that is carried out in strict accordance with the Halachah; anything less is only a sham and a mockery.
4. The Halachah is very clear in its insistence that the would-be convert honestly and wholeheartedly accepts all the Mitzvos. Accepting all but one of the Mitzvos automatically invalidates the conversion, and the non-Jew remains a non-Jew exactly as before. Of course, it is possible to mislead a Rabbi or Rabbinic court by declaring one's readiness to accept all the Mitzvos; but one cannot mislead the Creator who is the One who imbues the Neshomo.

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5. In the particular case, it is inconceivable that a person who has been successful and contented as a non-Jew, and who has not been interested in the Jewish religion, indeed had been "turned off" by it, should suddenly realize with absolute conviction that the Jewish religion is the true religion, that she wants to become Jewish more than anything else, and honestly accepts to fulfil all the Mitzvos, etc.

6. As for the other party, it would be difficult to reconcile a seriously-minded, intelligent and conscientious Jew, who values his Jewish heritage and commitment, with being influenced by a personal desire, or physical attraction and the like, which, at best, can only be temporary, and can in no way be worth the sacrifice of eternal values and principles.

7. There is the well known "argument" that it is unfair to demand of a would-be convert in terms of adherence to the Mitzvos more than many born Jews adhere to in actual practice. Of course, this contention is inadmissible, since it is a requirement and stipulation of the Halachah to which the would-be convert must unequivocally commit himself, or herself. However, if one wants also a logical explanation of this and other matters connected with geyrus, it can be found in the book on this subject by Chief Rabbi Dr. I. Jakobovits. I do not recall at this moment the exact title of this book, it should not be difficult to ascertain from a Jewish library, or a librarian, or you could write direct to the author.

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8. Of all professions, that of a medical doctor is the most responsible and exacting, and requires the utmost peace of mind to cope with the everyday challenges of the profession. The Torah holds it in great esteem, considering the human doctor the direct agent of the "Healer of All Flesh Who Works Wondrously" to bring cure and relief both physically and spiritually, which go hand-in-hand together. Why, then, consider at all, or even be distracted by, complicating one's life with a situation replete with problems and doubts and adjustments, to say the least?

Much more could be said on the subject, but the above will surely suffice.

To conclude on the timely factor of this letter being written on the eve of the Geulo Anniversary of my father-in-law, the Rebbe of saintly memory (on the 12-13th of Tammuz) - I trust you are familiar with the background and significance of this historic Anniversary. One of its basic lessons for all of us is that when a Jew is determined to live and carry out his mission in life in accordance with the Will of HaShem, he receives aid from On High to overcome even insurmountable obstacles (such as the Baal HaGeulo faced daily in that country, under that regime, in the years 1920-27) - certainly when the problem is basically a passing one, and is in your own hands to resolve quickly and finally.

May HaShem grant that you should find it much easier to resolve than you might have anticipated, and much sooner.

With prayerful wishes for Hatzlocho in all above, and hoping to hear good news from you very soon,

With blessing,

M. Scherem