

REFORM AND CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGE

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE?
 YOU THINK SO! (WELL, I HOPE YOU DO ,
 BUT , STRANGELY, IF YOU ARE A JEW--
 OR THINK YOU ARE--- THERE WILL , OR MIGHT
 BE THOSE WHO DISAGREE WITH YOU,

OF COURSE , IF BOTH YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR
 FATHER WERE BORN JEWS ~~AND PROBABLY 2800~~
 YOU WILL HAVE NO DIFFICULTY,

^{even then} BUT NOT ALWAYS, I STOOD AT THE GRAVE OF
 MY MOTHER (A.H.) ~~AND XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ^{already had been} WHILE (THE CASKET ~~WAS~~ PLACED
^{But} ABOVE THE GRAVE, ~~AND~~ BEFORE THE RABBIS
 BEGAN THE BURIAL SERVICE, THE DIRECTOR OF
 THE CEMETERY APPROACHED ME, POLITELY TO BE
 SURE, (HE HAD A CLIP BORAD IN HIS HAND,
 RABBI, HE SAID, I AM TOLD B Y THE
 FUNERAL DIRECTOR IN OMAHA THAT YOUR
 MOTHER WAS JEWISH, IS THAT SO?"

"OF COURSE, I SAID, THAT IS CORRECT",
 THEN, RABBI, WILL YOU BE GOOD ENOUGH
 TO SIGN THIS STATEMENT WHICH STATES
 THAT YOUR MOTHER WAS JEWISH?" I SIGNED,

NOW THAT CEMETERY TO BE SURE WAS AN OLD
 CEMETERY BUT IT WAS NOT WHAT ONE WOULD
 TERM AND "ORTHODOX" CEMETERY, FAR FROM IT,
 (IT WAS THE CEMETERY OF A VERY OLD REFORM
 CONGREGATION, BUT THE BY LAWS OF THAT
 CEMETERY STATE THAT NO NON-JEW , FOR WHATEVER
 REASON MAY BE BURIED THERE,

BUT LET US SPECULATE FOR A MOMENT,

LET US SUPPOSE THAT MY MOTHER WERE NOT JEWISH IN BIRTH BUT FOR HER 90 YEARS OF LIFE SHE HAD LIVED AS A JEW, WHAT THEN?

(WOULD SHE HAVE BEEN DENIED JEWISH STATUS?

FURTHERMORE, WHAT ABOUT HER CHILD?

ACCORDING TO JEWISH LAW (ORTHODOX HALACHA) THE CHILD OF A NON-JEWISH MOTHER IS A NON-JEW, NO MATTER THE FATHER, NO MATTER THE UP BRINGING, NO MATTER THE EDUCATION OR INCLINATION (UNTIL FORMAL FULL HALACHIC CONVERSION THE CHILD OF A NON-JEWISH MOTHER IS A NON-JEW, THE STATUS OF THE FATHER IS IRRELEVANT!

(WHY? WELL, SADLY, MOST TRAGICALLY, THERE WERE TIMES IN JEWISH HISTORY WHEN THIS RULE OF IDENTITY WAS MEANT TO PROTECT THE LEGITIMACY AND THE JEWISH^{ness} OF CHILDREN BORN TO WOMEN WHO WERE IN THE COURSE OF ^{↓ wars} POGROMS, VIOLATED AND RAPED AND THE FATHERS DISAPPEARED (THE PURITY OF FAMILY LIFE IS A PARAMOUNT CONCERN IN ALL OF JEWISH TRADITION (TO PROTECT BOTH THE CHILD AND ITS MOTHER, THE ASSUMPTION WAS THAT THE CHILD OF A JEWISH MOTHER WAS JEWISH NO MATTER THE PRESENCE ~~AND~~ THE STATUS OF THE FATHER.

[CURIOUSLY, ON THE OTHER HAND, JEWISH LAW DETERMINES "YICHUS" OR LINEAGE ~~IS TRACED~~ SOLELY BY THE FATHER'S LINE WITHIN THE

JEWISH PEOPLE, THE OFFSPRING OF A MALE KOHEN, OR PRIEST, IS A PRIEST ETC, MOTHER HAS NOTHING TO DO ~~WITH IT~~ WITH IT!

WHAT BRINGS THIS ISSUE SO FORCIBLY TO CONERN AT THIS MOMENT?

TRITE BUT TRUE! TIMES HAVE CHANGED, TWO ^{major} FACTORS ENTER INTO PLAY,

- 1, THE DRAMATIC INCREASE IN MIXED MARRIAGES,
- 2, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL,

BOTH OF THESE EVENTUALITIES DEMAND MORE FREQUENT ^{by both Orthodox & Liberals as to who is to} DECISION ~~AS TO~~ THE STATUS ~~XXX~~ ONE WHO IMMIGRANTS NINTO THE STATE OF ISRAEL, ^{must be decided} WHETHER HE/SHE MAY OR MAY NOT BE MARRIED THERE, BURIED THERE, INHERIT THERE OR BE A CITIZEN THERE UNDER THE LAW OF RETURN,

(ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD THE BATTLE CONTINUES ~~XXX~~ BETWEEN THE TRADITIONALIS AND THE MODERNIST AS ^{to} ~~THE~~ THE STUATUS OF CHILDREN OF A NON-JEWISH MOTHER,

(IN ALL OF MY RABBINATE I HAVE APPLIED WHAT I THOUGHT TO BE BOTH FIDELITY TO THE INTENT OF HALACAH AND A MODICUM OF COMMON SENSE AND LOGIC,

I HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT "JEWISHNESS"
WHATEVER THAT MEANS IS TRANSMITTED BY
THE FORCES OF GENETICS OR RACIAL STRAINS,
IT IS NOT GUARANTEED, CERTAINLY IN THE
MODERN ERA SINCE THE EMANCIPATION,
THAT THE CHILD OF A JEWISH MOTHER WILL
BE SELF-IDENTIFIED AS A JEW OR THAT THE
CHILD OF A NON-JEWISH MOTHER-- OR FATHER--
WILL NOT,

THE VERY SAME LOGIC CAN BE APPLIED TO
ADOPTED CHILDREN AND, IN MY PRACTICE, I
HAVE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT PARENTS WHO ADOPT
A CHILD ^{or are mixed married parents} AND HAVE OBVIOUS INTENT TO RAISE
THAT CHILD AS THEIR OWN IN THEIR OWN JEWISH
HOME IS JEWISH IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD,

(IN 1947 THE CCAR DEALT WITH THIS QUESTION
CAREFULLY AND ADOPTED A RESOLUTION WHICH
IN EFFECT SAID " THE DECLARATION OF THE
^{Parents} ~~RAISE~~ TO RAISE (THE CHILD) AS A JEW
WAS SUFFICIENT FOR CONVERSION" I.E., THE
JEWISHNESS OF THE CHILD, NATURALLY ONE
ASSUMES THAT THE PARENTS IMPLEMENT THAT
INTENTION,

(FOR EXAMPLE I WOULD NOT ACCEPT AS A JEW
A CHILD OF A NON JEWISH MOTHER WHOSE CHILD
FOR WHATEVER REASON WAS RAISED AS A
CHRISTIAN,

(IN 1961 AGAIN THE CCAR IN ITS RABBI'S
MANUAL (OF PRACTICE) ^{says} ESSENTIALLY THE

SAME THING ADDING ONLY THE FORCE OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION AND THE CEREMONY OF VALIDATION BY CONFIRMATION *makes the child's*

Jewish status certain & is equal to conversion.

[IT IS INTERESTING THAT NOTHING IS SAID IN ANY OF THE SOURCES ABOUT BAR/BAT MITZVAH HAVING ANY FORCE OF IDENTITY EITHER IN TRADITIONAL OR REFORM DISCUSSION:

1982
[LAST YEAR THE CCAR DISCUSSED THE MATTER AGAIN, THE DEBATE ~~XXXX~~ WAS HOT, WHILE THE MATTER WOULD SEEM TO BE SIMPLE LOGICALLY, IT WAS DEEMED BY MANY NOT TO BE IN ~~TERMS~~ *of* OF THE UNITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE,

best interests
[WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHOM WE DETERMINE TO BE JEWS AND OTHERS IN THE JEWISH WORLD DO NOT THERE ARE ~~XXXX~~ EVEN PROGRESSIVE JEWS IN CANADA, SOUTH AMERICA, GREAT BRITAIN, SOUTH AFRICA, ISRAEL AND FRANCE WHO WOULD NOT CONSIDER THE CHILD OF A NON-JEWISH MOTHER TO BE A JEW EVEN IF THE FATHER WERE!

[THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHO CRY FOR UNITY AMONG K'LAL YISROEL, THE WORLD JEWISH COMMUNITY AS IF WE WERE THE ONLY ONES TO RUPTURE THAT UNITY,

SO THE MATTER WAS TABLED FOR ONE YEAR'S FURTHER ~~XXXX~~ STUDY OF A QUESTION ALREADY RESOLVED AT LEAST TWICE BEFORE,

THIS YEAR THE RESOLUTION WAS OFFERED AGAIN,
IT WAS INTERESTING THT BEFORE THE
QUESTION WAS CALLED THE RULES WERE SUSPENDED
IN FAVOR OF A GREAT RABBI IN OUR MOVEMENT:
MOSES CYRUS WEILER OF SO, AFRICA AND ISRAEL
(A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR WHO PLEADED
THAT WE DEFEAT THE RESOLUTION, (IT WAS
PAINFUL TO VOTE AGAINST HIM FOR ME AND
may also be an overwhelming majority
~~XX THE WIDE MARGIN WHICH~~ PASSED THE
PRINCIPAL THAT " THE SAME ~~XX~~ REQUIREMENTS
MUST BE APPLIED TO ESTABLISH THE STATUS
OF A CHILD OF A MIXED MARRIAGE ~~XX~~
REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE MOTHER OR FATHER
IS JEWISH,

of the vote (FRANKLY I WAS SURPRISED AT THE ~~MAJORITY~~ ^{*vast size*}
BY WHICH THE RESOLUTION PASSED,

(BUT WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT VOTE HAS ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
IMPLICATIONS FAR BEYOND THE SUBSTANCE OF
THE ISSUE WHICH, I AM SURE, EVERY RABBI
HAS RESOLVED ONE WAY OR ANOTHER FOR HIMSELF
OR HERSELF,

(ALREADY THE STORM OF PROTEST HAS ARISEN
FROM ORTHODOX SOURCES BOTH HERE AND IN
ISRAEL, (SOME ORTHODOX AUTHORITIES COUNSEL
THAT NOW THEY MUST ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ WITHDRAW
FROM THE SCA WHERE ALL BRANCHES OF JEWS
IN THIS COUNTRY ARE REPRESENTED *for so long* .

LET THEM, IT WOULD BE A TRAGIC ERROR,
BUT LET THEM, I THINK WITH THIS ~~XXX~~ VOTE

MORE THAN ANY OTHER IN RECENT HISTORY
HAS FINALLY REPRESENTED THAT WE REFORM JEWS
HAVE SOME MEASURE OF MATURITY AND REGARD FOR
OUR OWN POSITION, (AND THIS REGARDLESS OF THE
VIEW OF THE JEWS WHO THINK DIFFERENTLY,

(I UNDERSTAND TRADITIONALISM/ I SUPPORT IT,
I DO NOT IN ANY WISE ASK THEM TO CHANGE,

(BUT I ASK ONLY THAT THEY UNDERSTAND OUR
POSITION, SUPPORT US AND CEASE TO ASK US
TO FIT THEIR MOLD,

(JUDAISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN THE CURRENT OF
CHANGE-- ~~AND~~ THE TRADITIONALISTS *included*

(BUT WE REFORM JEWS ARE EMANCIPATED ~~FROM~~ FROM
THE HALACHA AND THANK GOD WE ARE, (WE CAN MEET
THE NEEDS OF OUR TIMES, (AND I ASSURE YOU THE
OPEN SOCIETY AND THE SOCIAL FORCES OF
ENLIGHTENMENT ARE HERE TO STAY,

(THE BEGINNINGS OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT SAVED
UNTOLD THOUSANDS OF JEWS FROM ASSIMILATION
INTO CHRISTIANITY, ^{of course} (THESE WERE JEWS WHO BEING
EDUCATED AND UNABLE TO COPE WITH ORTHODOX JEWISH
LIFE WOULD EASILY HAVE DEFECTED FROM ~~JEW~~ JUDAISM
--- AND MANY DID-- HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE ~~EXISTING~~
DARING ALTERNATIVE OF A ~~LIBERAL~~ LIBERAL JEWISH
FAITH, *It is time to be clearing again.*

(THAT IS STILL OUR ~~ROLE~~ ROLE AND I HOPE THAT
YOU CAN JOIN ME IN SEEING OURSELVES AS A REAL
AND VITAL PART OF K'LAL YISROEL ALBEIT WITH

OUR OWN PARTICULAR VIEW OF JUDAISM TO BE ADDED
TO THE VIEWS OF OTHERS -- NOT TO DISPLACE THEM,

OUR EMPHASIS IS EDUCATION, JEWISH INVOLVEMENT,
JEWISH HOMES, JEWISH PRACTICE AND JEWISH
SOCIAL CONCERN. OUR RITUALS DISPLAY THESE
ATTACHEMENTS, OUR OBSERVANCES MARK THESE
VALUES. WE ARE AUTHENTIC JEWS,
BY OUR STANDARDS, AS ARE OTHERS BY THEIRS,

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

IN A SOCIETY THAT IS ASSERTING THE EQUALITY
OF HUMAN KIND, OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL RACES
AND THE SEXES, ^{faith} WE IN THE REFORM MOVEMENT
ASSERT THOSE SAME PRINCIPLES FROM THE
GROUND OF ^{our} RELIGIOUS ~~XXX~~ CONVICTION,

AND WE WILL REPRODUCE OUR KIND BY TEACHING AND
EXAMPLE AND NOT BY THE ACCIDENT OF PHYSICAL
BIRTH,

WE WILL ~~XXXXXX~~ ENFOLD OUR YOUNGSTERS WITH
LOVE AND EXPRESS THAT LOVE BY OUR BRINGING THEM
CLOSER AND CLOSER, DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO
THE THOUGHTS PATTERNS AND THE VALUES OF
JUDAISM. *We are authentic Jews.*

JEWISH PARENTS CAN BE GOOD ~~XXX~~ JEWISH PARENTS
AND JEWISH PARENTS CAN ALSO BE DELINQUENT
JEWISH PARENTS,

I AM PROUD OF OUR CONFERENCE OF RABBIS
FOR REFUSING TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THE
FUTILE HOPE TO RECREATE THE MIDDLE AGES
AND ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ^{of strong instead of} REACH INTO THE FUTURE ^{toward an} AGE OF A
VIBRANT JUDAISM. MAY WE ALL FEEL THE SAME,