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Conversion, correspondence and memoranda, 1989.

DR. WALTER JACOB
RABBI
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15213

August 18, 1989

Dear Friend:

Enclosed is a digest of the meetings held July 9 - 14, 1989, in Jerusalem. They represent some progress. Out of them came the enclosed proposal and guidelines which are to be the basis of further discussion. As you will note Elyakim Rubinstein from the Prime Minister's office is a signator as well and has agreed to push whatever we ultimately decide.

The guidelines will present relatively few problems with, of course, some further modification. I think that the basic pattern would be agreeable to most of us in the Conference especially as we are dealing only with those who are going to make aliyah. So conversion "according to Halakhah" would mean **miqvah** and **tipat dam** along with training. No question about **torah misinai** would be permitted nor would questions about observance be allowed. That is the meaning of point I in the guidelines. This may need to be specifically spelled out.

As you can the proposal comes in two forms, A and B. The first would establish a **bet din** of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in the United States, the second would rely on American Rabbis for a **bet din**. In either case those who are recommended by the "commission" must be converted by the **bet din**. These and other stipulations will need to be included in a further document which detail the prerogatives and restrictions of the **bet din**. Without such guarantees we would be unable to move further. This documents still needs to be worked out and we all agree that such a document is necessary.

The positive side of a **bet din** of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in New York is that the Chief Rabbinate currently has jurisdiction in Israel and these individuals are going to move to Israel. One might suggest that the conversion be completed in Israel, however, by the presence of the **bet din** in New York will feel American pressures rather than Israeli pressures and it will have to work in close association with "the commission"

By going down this road we would acknowledge that this is primarily an Israeli problem and not essentially an American problem.

Proposal B would range for a **bet din** composed of American Rabbis. This solution would state that this is primarily an American problem not an Israeli problem. Here we remain completely divided over a composition of the **bet din**. The chief rabbinate and Louis Bernstein have insisted that the three rabbis be Orthodox. We have tried a variety of other solutions, i.e. a **bet din** composed of five or nine with representatives from the Reform and Conservative group or a **bet din** composed of "observant" Reform and Conservative Rabbis but none of those solutions have been acceptable to the Orthodox although both Shamma Friedman and I argued vigorously for them.

As you can see a trip to Israel except for a good look at the rare books of the Schocken Library - well worth a visit - was a working journey with virtually no free time. Matters have moved forward, both Rabbi Lamm and Rabbi Schorch have been consulted and have basically agreed to the proposal and guidelines with a variety of modifications. Our process, of course, is a little more complex as we have decided from the beginning to include a representative body of the CCAR. Therefore I am turning to you for your thoughts and suggestions.

The other matter which still needs further discussion and on which we have made no progress at all is that of those who have already converted. Both Shamma Friedman and I feel that the "Ethiopian solution" is totally unacceptable to us.

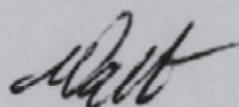
Throughout the days in Jerusalem I consulted with Richard Hirsh who I felt would be able to look at all of this both through the eyes of the Israeli Reform Movement and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He opposed the presence of a **bet din** of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in New York and felt that that would tend to move their jurisdictions to the United States. He was also opposed to simply having Orthodox Rabbis involved in a **bet din**. We discussed this as well as many other matters in great detail. He was, of course, interested in keeping the discussions alive and moving forward. He was also unenthusiastic about any representative of the Chief Rabbinate in New York, but Zeev Rosenberg stated that this would occur irrespective of what we might decide.

As you can imagine the Israeli Government particularly after the last Supreme Court decision is again under considerable pressure therefore, Elyakim Rubinstein's signature. They would like this matter resolved as quickly as possible. We, however, should move in a way which will be completely acceptable to us rather than rushing into something without adequate consideration.

Please write me your thoughts and suggestions. There is a good likelihood that our group will meet in New Orleans. I am looking forward to your responses.

With best wishes for a continued pleasant summer.

Sincerely,



Walter Jacob

/bb



July 25, 1989

Rabbi Walter Jacob
Rodeph Sholom Congregation
4905 5th Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Guidelines

1. Conversion would be according to halacha. The process should follow the letter and spirit of "MODIIN LO MIKZAT KALOT UMIKZAT CHAMUROT." Matters of doctrine are beyond the scope of this process.
2. Time of training period to depend on intellectual capacity of proselyte and time he devotes to study. Minimum of six months. The proselyte must develop basic understanding and commitment of Judaism, history, and practices. There should be demonstration of commitment to Israel as well.
3. The prospective proselyte should come with recommendation of rabbi who will assume responsibility for his training and commitment. The rabbi must determine a genuine and healthy interest in Judaism and Israel.
4. It is expected that the prospective proselyte demonstrate some knowledge of Hebrew.
5. There must be an attitude of cordiality and kindness to all prospective proselytes, keeping in mind that these people are going to live in Israel.
6. We expect the proselyte to make a meaningful contribution to a Jewish charity of his own choice.
7. Any proper conversion in the past will be accepted without the requirement of a second conversion.

July 13, 1989

P R O P O S A L

It is understood that the Israeli Chief Rabbinate will appoint a rabbinic representative (attached to the Israeli Consulate) for matters of conversion involving olim. It is essential that this rabbi will have demonstrated that he is attuned and open to the needs and realities of the American Jewish situation.

A joint commission will be set up, consisting of one rabbinic representative designated by each of the heads of the three institutions, Hebrew Union College, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Yeshiva University and the above-mentioned attache.

By unanimous consent, the commission will adopt guidelines for conversion (proposed guidelines attached).

After examining each candidate for conversion, the commission will unanimously recommend for conversion those candidates it deems acceptable to a Bet Din for conversion established by the Israel Chief Rabbinate, in New York.

(A)

Louis Bernstein



Walter Jacob

Shamma Friedman

Zeev Rosenberg

July 13, 1989

P R O P O S A L

It is understood that the Israeli Chief Rabbinate will appoint a rabbinic representative (attached to the Israeli Consulate) for matters of conversion involving olim. It is essential that this rabbi will have demonstrated that he is attuned and open to the needs and realities of the American Jewish situation.

A joint commission will be set up, consisting of one rabbinic representative designated by each of the heads of the three institutions, Hebrew Union College, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Yeshiva University and the above-mentioned attache.

By unanimous consent, the commission will adopt guidelines for

conversion (proposed guidelines attached).

After examining each candidate for conversion, the commission will unanimously recommend for conversion those candidates it deems acceptable to a Bet Din composed of American rabbis.

(B)

Louis Bernstein

Walter Jacob

Shamma Friedman

Zeev Rosenberg



Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Gerut

Schocken Library - Jerusalem

July 9 - 14, 1989

Present: Shamma Friedman, Conservative; Louis Bernstein, Orthodox; Walter Jacob, Reform. From July 10, Zeev Rosenberg, Office of the Chief Rabbinate

I arrived in Israel on the evening of July 6 and made the necessary arrangements and held some preliminary conversations with my counterparts on July 7. Actual meetings, however, did not begin until July 9.

July 9

The three of us met for approximately two hours and discussed the proposals which had been presented previously as well as some new thoughts. Walter Jacob recommended that it might be wise to begin the entire process on a local level or at least to run the local and national efforts concurrently. This led to a fairly lengthy discussion of the Denver plan and the reason for its failure as well as efforts now underway in Philadelphia and Los Angeles. In each of these instances the actual conversions are accomplished by an Orthodox Bet Din. Walter Jacob mentioned that although this might be acceptable on a local level where an intimate relationship between the rabbis has been established and where other communal pressures will move everyone toward fairness and a certain degree of tolerance. This, however, cannot be guaranteed on the national level therefore it would not be possible to use the same pattern there.

We then continued with our discussion with previous

proposals, i.e., an anonymous Bet Din and a Bet Din of Israeli rabbis who would represent North American Jews and be acceptable to the Chief Rabbinate. Louis Bernstein indicated that neither one of these proposals would be acceptable to the Chief Rabbinate and probably also not his Orthodox group. After considerable discussion we agreed that it was inappropriate for Lou Bernstein to represent the Chief Rabbinate. It placed him in a difficult position which should be avoided. We agreed to adjourn until a representative of the Chief Rabbinate could join us and participate actively in all the discussions. This was arranged for the next day as we heard later in the afternoon.

July 10

Zeev Rosenberg the Deputy Director General of the Office of the Chief Rabbinate joined us. We spent several hours dealing with the background of our work, the proposals thus far discussed and the general problem which we are seeking to address. There was a good deal of discussion and much give and take. We talked about a large number of possible avenues of approach as the Chief Rabbinate was unwilling to accept a Bet Din composed of one Conservative, one Reform and one Orthodox Rabbi. We then agreed that these classifications should really play no role in our discussion at all, and that we should and must concentrate on the simple requirements of the Shulhan Arukh which is for three "observant Jews." We proposed that the panel of fifteen such individuals be composed with five from each of the American groupings and that they all be "observant," and acceptable across denominational lines. From this group a Bet Din of five would be

constituted and would serve as the body involved in Gerut. Their rabbis must be acceptable to each of us and to the Chief Rabbinate. It was agreed that this proposal would be taken back to whomever each individual felt needed to be consulted and we would meet again the next day.

July 11

We met for almost six hours. The Chief Rabbi did not provide a direct answer to our question but indicated that a "consul" or "representative" was in the process of being appointed by the Chief Rabbinate to deal with the question of Gerut in North America. This came as a complete surprise to all of us but we heard that this proposal had been in the making for a long time and would come to fruition in the next six months. I indicated that it would be totally inappropriate for this individual to conduct conversions although it might be appropriate for him to simply deal with the technical aspects of screening which now must be done in Jerusalem in a rather cumbersome and sometimes embarrassing and awkward manner. We again had long discussions about the nature of a Bet Din composed in a formula of one-one-one or three-three-three or three-one-one but reached no agreement on this matter.

We decided subsequently to discuss with the appropriate individuals the matter of the "consul" or "representative." We met for approximately six hours.

July 12

Despite our rather negative feelings about the "consul" or "representative" we heard that this was not a matter open for

discussion but would simply occur whether we agreed or not. We expressed our disappointment on this matter especially as we have been meeting now for some time and as a representative of the Chief Rabbi's office met with us in April.

We then talked about the nature of this individual and suggested that (a) he must be aware of the problems of the North American scene (b) be instructed to cooperate and work with each of the denominations, and (c) in matters of Gerut, work only as a part of our committee; and that three individuals appointed by the presidents of the seminaries and he would constitute a working committee to pass on matter of Gerut. Although at this point the actual body to conduct the Gerut was left undefined. It was agreed that this working body of four individuals must reach a consensus on each individual who applies, that there is no veto power and that if the work of this committee is vetoed by the Chief Rabbinate we quickly abandon and denounce the effort. We met for approximately three and one half hours.

July 13

We decided after appropriate consultation to work out a concrete proposal for the joint commission and also guidelines for conversion. A rough draft was adopted. It was agreed on the guidelines for conversion. No matters of doctrine would be asked and that no matters of practice would be asked either. The document will be further refined on Friday. We spent a long time discussing individuals who already converted and both Shamma Friedman and I strongly objected to the "Ethiopian Solution" in which a second conversion would be necessary. Thus far we have not

discovered an appropriate path of this dilemma and that matter remains on the table. We met for three and one half hours.

July 14

We discovered that according to diplomatic rules the "consul" or "representative" cannot be part of a North American Commission and could only sit ex officio. Both Shamma Friedman and I protested vigorously to this and indicated that any solution which did not include an official representation with vote, etc. was unacceptable to us and that there was clearly a way of moving around this obstacle through the appropriate legal wording. We spent a considerable amount of time on this matter. We also agreed that we would present two proposals which would involve two possible paths for a Bet Din. One, a Bet Din yet to be defined composed entirely of North American rabbis. Another Bet Din, yet to be defined composed entirely of Israeli rabbis. We agreed that in either case the role of the Bet Din was only a formality and that their powers would be completely restricted by the commission. The commissions recommendation would have to be followed.

I indicated that as the proposal was now constituted it presented very few advantages to a prospective convert who intended to settle in Israel. It might be far easier for that individual to simply use a local Orthodox Rabbi or to forget about the possible problem entirely, settle in Israel - which is perfectly possible as the Law of Return would recognize a Reform convert as a Jew according to Zeev Rosenberg. No one mentioned the restrictions lately imposed by the Ministry of Interior. When some

problem arose in the future which required the rabbinate then the individual who by now would know his way around Israeli bureaucracy could find an appropriate solution for his/her problem. I also indicated that I would recommend the latter path rather than this rather torturous approach which was news not particularly welcomed.

We therefore left with two proposals and a set of guidelines which need the discussion of each of the groups and we plan to meet again when that has taken place.

In the interval between meetings I consulted regularly with Richard Hirsh and we talked both about long term strategy as well as the implication of each of the proposals as they were put on the table. His advice was invaluable and he was always extremely helpful.

The chief step forward in these discussion is that a representative of the Chief Rabbinate now sits at the table with us as an equal and must treat each of the representatives as a colleague. Furthermore, in the spirit of our discussion in Cincinnati the discussions are alive and we will not allow them to die.

OCTOBER 13, 1989

DR. WALTER JACOB
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PA 15213

DEAR WALTER:

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER OF AUGUST 13, I AM PLEASED
AT THE DIRECTION THE ISSUE HAS TAKEN SINCE WE MET IN
THE STATES. I WOULD MAKE NO FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO
THE ORTHODOX. IT IS TIME FOR CONCESSIONS ON THEIR
PART.

KEEP WELL, BE WELL.

SINCERELY,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:MP

VIA FAX - TO: RABBI WALTER JACOB - CONG. RODEF SHALOM
FAX NO.: 412-621-5475

TO: RABBIS ALFRED GOTTSCHALK, SAMUEL KAREF, WALTER JACOB,
JOSEPH GLASER, AND RICHARD HIRSCH

FROM: RABBI ERIC H. YOFFIE

DATE: September 19, 1989

A meeting was held on the matter of joint conversion procedures on Friday, September 15, at JTS. Since none of you was available to attend, I represented the Reform movement at the request of Joe Glaser. I was able to speak to all of you prior to the meeting for briefings (with the exception of Fred Gottschalk, whom I could not reach).

Attending the meeting in addition to myself were Eliakim Rubinstein (Israeli government), Uriel Palti (Israeli government, N.Y. Consulate), Louis Bernstein (Orthodox), Ismar Schorsch (Conservative), and Shamma Friedman (Conservative). The meeting was friendly and constructive, and lasted approximately two hours.

During the previous week, Rubinstein had met with Reform representatives -- Fred, Sam, Joe, and Dick were involved, I think -- and later with Conservative representatives. Our starting point was three documents prepared by Shamma Friedman which reflected what had been agreed upon by all parties up to that time. The three documents are attached: 1) Memorandum of Agreement; 2) Agreement of Minutes of the Memorandum of Agreement; and 3) Guidelines.

The following is my summary of the discussion and the points of agreement reached during the meeting:

1. Schorsch began by suggesting that the Chief Rabbinate should be a signatory to the Memorandum of Agreement, but Rubinstein and Bernstein both indicated this would be impossible, and the point was dropped.

2. We discussed the second paragraph of the Memorandum of Agreement. Friedman had added a final sentence to this paragraph which made reference to the Guidelines. He said that the Guidelines were an essential part of the agreement since both the Commission and the Bet Din would have to operate in accordance with their terms, and it was therefore essential that they be specifically mentioned somewhere. After some discussion, it was agreed that the sentence would be moved from the Memorandum of

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to accept all recommended candidates, and he thought it could be pressured if it were to deliberate here; second, he thought it would be unfair to the candidates to require them to go to Israel for conversion, and he was afraid there would be technical difficulties with the arrangements.

I responded that if there were serious questions about whether or not the Bet Din would operate as we had agreed, then the process was doomed. Since we had continually been assured that there was no problem in this regard, there was no reason for us to assume that a problem exists. In any case, the Bet Din members would be living in Israel, where they could be subjected to pressure throughout the year. It was unrealistic to assume that in three or four days here we would be able to influence them. Either they are committed to the process or they are not.

Regarding technical arrangements, I noted that the potential converts were all making aliyah anyway, so going to Israel should not be a problem. Furthermore, the representative of the Chief Rabbi at the New York Consulate was specifically charged with the responsibility of assuring that the conversions went smoothly.

The conclusion was that if the Reform movement felt that it was a matter of fundamental principle that the Bet Din operate in Israel, then it would operate in Israel. No one else saw this as a matter of basic principle. Nonetheless, Schorsch was still not completely comfortable with the decision, and he asked that Sam or Walter call him to discuss it.

We did briefly discuss other options, such as having American rabbis sit on the Bet Din, but Rubinstein showed no interest in this approach so we dropped it.

6. We also had a lengthy discussion on the projected timetable. As I anticipated, I was subjected to a great deal of pressure on this point. Rubinstein and Bernstein were pushing very hard for a signed agreement by the end of the holiday period, and Schorsch said that he could do this. As agreed, I stated that we would need approval by Fred and by the Executive of the CCAR, which does not meet until December. Bernstein and Rubinstein were insistent that we do better. I finally said that it might be possible to get a decision in November -- Joe had mentioned that perhaps the Executive could meet at the Biennial, and there was some talk of reaching people by phone or mail -- but I made no commitments of any kind, and indicated that we would take the matter under advisement.

7. On the matter of who would sign an agreement, Bernstein and Schorsch agreed that it would be easier if the seminary presidents only signed. I made no comment on this.

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My understanding now is that Rubinstein will take the agreements back to Israel and will meet with the Chief Rabbis, and that he will then be in touch with Walter.

I have two final observations:

1. Uri Regev read about the agreements in the press in Israel, and he called me to express some concerns. He is afraid that an agreement we sign might be used in the future by Likud

and religious party leaders to bring about an amendment in the Law of Return. Uri fears that with the documents of our agreement in hand, an MK from the NRP might approach Labor and say: "The Reform say right here that their conversions will be according to Halakhah, which is what the amendment calls for. Why must you be more demanding than the Reform Jews themselves? Furthermore, a mechanism is in place to guarantee that their conversions will be accepted here without difficulty. What reason is there any more not to amend the Law?"

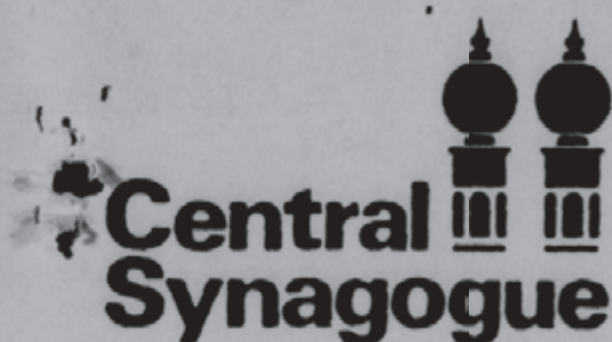
I must admit that I do not know what to make of this. It is not something that I had thought about, and I would be interested in Dick's comments. Uri's solution is that the agreement should include a statement by all parties that no further efforts will be made to amend the Law of Return.

2. While the documents were in English, our conversations were in Hebrew. It became clear on several occasions that linguistic ambiguities were arising as a result of operating in two languages. If an agreement is reached, I would suggest that the documents be translated in advance, and that both Hebrew and English versions be signed at the same time. The Hebrew version will be what is read in Israel, and I think it would be a serious mistake to permit someone to translate into Hebrew after the fact without our approval. I have learned from my experience in the WZO that translations are by no means an incidental matter.

I was pleased to be of help. With relief, I now return the matter to Walter's care.

EHY:dg

Attachments: 3 Pages



123 East 55th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
TEmpleton 8-5122

Stanley M. Davids
Rabbi



September 12, 1989

Dr. Walter Jacob
Rodef Shalom Temple
Fifth and Morewood Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Walter:

Thank you very much for your letter of August 18, for the enclosures, as well as for a copy of Shamma Friedman's revision of August 23. I have read all of the materials over quite carefully, and in fact have discussed some of the items and shared impressions with Peter Knobel. The following represents some of my initial responses.

I find myself quite sympathetic to the position of Richard Hirsch with regard to the possible establishment of the Bet Din of the Israel Chief Rabbinate here in New York. That Bet Din, whether we will it or not, would soon take on a life of its own. It would be regarded by many as a source of Halachic decision making, despite any protocols or documents which we might have endorsed in advance. This is the kind of institutional intrusion which, after the first generation of representatives has moved on, will very likely take on a form and a style which could be quite troublesome to those of us committed to full religious pluralism in Israel, and to ongoing religious pluralism here in the United States. I am not comfortable with the suggestion, and I feel that it represents a highly probable near- future intrusion on the autonomy and the authority of North American Reform Rabbis.

Similarly, I share Dick's reluctance to have the Bet Din consist only of Orthodox rabbis. I cannot possibly imagine how such a proposal could ever be passed by the plenum at a CCAR Convention.

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This proposal leaves us with nothing to hide behind: not only would there be no Reform or Conservative rabbis on the Bet Din, but there would also be no women. What is the trade off here? What, in fact, are we as Reform rabbis gaining? And is there anything resembling a decent likelihood that a proposal such as this could gain approval from our colleagues?

I am reminded, Walter, that immediately following the most recent elections in Israel, both political parties felt enormous pressure to support a move toward electoral reform. As a matter of fact, it was rapidly assumed throughout the Diaspora that electoral reform was right around the corner and thus the stability of a democratic form of government in Israel was to be shored up. Now, new realities have emerged. The peace process has slowed down to a feeble limp; the economy is in dire distress; the Intifada has become routinized as has the accompanying anger and frustration. Sum total? The major political parties are unwilling to aggravate the smaller parties lest the current government collapse and splinter coalitions be required. Why mention this? Because the kinds of pressures which emanate from Israel regarding the establishment of uniform "at least for Aliyah" standards for conversion will undoubtedly shift in accordance with the current aforementioned conditions. Israel is too troubled over other matters to feel a focused attention on matters of conversion -- and thus, I believe, the current Israeli scene does not bode well for a fair and open negotiation between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

Therefore, I would not be quick to yield on matters regarding the membership of the National Bet Din, nor on the involvement of an official Israeli representative here on American soil. We will gain little from such acquiescence.

With regard to your minutes of the July 9 - 14 meetings in Jerusalem, let me first express my gratitude for the depth and

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caliber of work which you have undertaken. You are representing our Conference in superb fashion.

As I read the minutes through, I certainly came to understand your mood and the pattern and development of your thoughts. What I missed was the sense of how the others in the discussion were responding. I heard one voice, felt one set of responses, and did not know how to evaluate the conclusions because I could not grasp what Shamma, Louis or Zeev were saying and/or proposing. In the future, it would be extremely useful if the diaries of your meetings could contain insight into the comments of the others. For a specific example, I would love to know how Louis Bernstein explained the ultimate collapse of the Denver Process. Since I have heard Stanley Wagner's position, and since I have heard Steve Foster's position, learning how Bernstein put his spin on the matter would be both interesting and significant.

Your minutes also indicate that the Chief Rabbinate was proceeding on its own, with or without our concurrence. They are presenting us with a fait accompli, and through us are seeking means of legitimizing their coup. As mentioned above, I do not think we should be anxious to come along for the ride.

Near the end of your July 12th comments, you mentioned your hope as to the qualities and nature of the Chief Rabbi's representative in New York. This, I presume, fits into the category of Baracha L'vatalah. I am also not clear what consensus means in this setting. You stipulated that the disagreement of one of the four parties does not veto the process -- but can the process go ahead with one out of four disapproving? In fact, it would seem that the structure as discussed permits a veto by the Chief Rabbinate -- and as to what the impact of our denouncing such a veto will be either publicly or privately, I don't see much good coming of it.

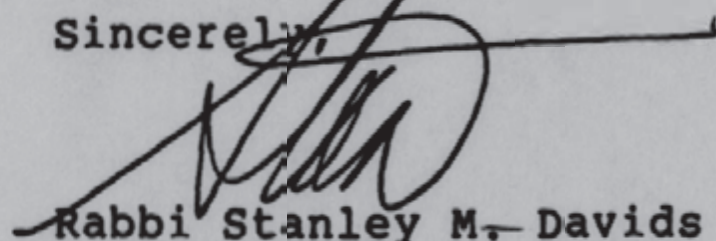
Page 4

I thoroughly approve of the manner in which Kabbalat Ol was discussed. That no matters of doctrine would be asked or matters of practice for that matter -- that certainly is most acceptable and appropriate.

Your final conclusion, is of course, valid and satisfying. You now sit on a rabbinic committee as a full and recognized member, together with a representative of the Chief Rabbinate. It is also quite satisfying that the discussions continue. I find myself, however, more convinced than ever before that the best thing we can do is to organize and to strongly encourage local rabbis in local communities to work out arrangements patterned more or less upon the Denver Process. At the very time when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations will be undertaking a program at the UAHC biennial questioning the rightward drift (or lunge) of our movement, I feel a poisoning of the atmosphere which will leave very little space for a resolution for a National Bet Din which places the "real" rabbinic work in the hands of Orthodox rabbis.

You are doing a fantastic job. Thank you for keeping all of us informed. Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Stanley M. Davids

Memorandum of Agreement

We, the undersigned, having met to discuss necessary arrangements for conversion involving perspective olim, in order to guarantee that they be fully accepted as Jewish, in Israel, for all purposes, and in order to enhance the unity of the Jewish people, have agreed as follows:

A Joint Commission for Conversion will be established, consisting of one rabbinic representative designated by each of the heads of these institutions: Hebrew Union College, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (affiliate of Yeshiva University). The Commission's procedures will be in consonance with the guidelines (attached) which have been established by a conference of these institutions' representatives.

The Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel will appoint a rabbinic representative (attached to the Israeli Consulate), whose functions will include matters of conversion involving olim.

After examining each candidate for conversion wishing to make Aliyah, the Commission, in full coordination with the above-mentioned attache, will unanimously recommend those candidates it deems acceptable, and they will be presented by the attache to a Bet Din established by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, for conversion before Aliyah.

Hebrew Union College

Jewish Theological Seminary

Yeshiva University

Israel Ministry of Religious Affairs

Israel Government Secretary

~~(The Commission will be established by the undersigned)~~

AGREEMENT OF MINUTES OF THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

A. The Memorandum of Agreement will be in force initially for two years from the date of its signing, and will be automatically renewed if there is no objection from any of the signatories; any objection must be transmitted six months prior to the expiration date.

B. It is understood that the Chief Rabbinate will appoint a representative who is attuned and open to the needs and realities of the American Jewish situation. Every effort will be made to inform and consult with the other signatories concerning the ~~appropriate~~ ^{appointee} prior to his appointment.



Guidelines

1. Conversion would be according to halacha. The process should follow the letter and spirit of *מוריעין לו מקצת קלות ומקצת חמורות*. Matters of doctrine are beyond the scope of this process.
2. Time of training period to depend on intellectual capacity of proselyte and time he devotes to study. Minimum of six months. The proselyte must develop basic understanding and commitment of Judaism, history, and practices. There should be demonstration of commitment to Israel as well.
3. The prospective proselyte should come with recommendation of rabbi who will assume responsibility for his training and commitment. The rabbi must determine a genuine and healthy interest in Judaism and Israel.
4. It is expected that the prospective proselyte demonstrate some knowledge of Hebrew.
5. There must be an attitude of cordiality and kindness to all prospective proselytes, keeping in mind that these people are going to live in Israel.
6. We expect the proselyte to make a meaningful contribution to a Jewish charity of his own choice.
7. Any proper conversion in the past will be accepted without the requirement of a second conversion.

DR. WALTER JACOB
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September 20, 1989

Dear Friend:

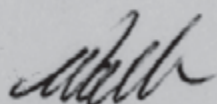
Enclosed is a report from Eric Yoffie on a meeting which he attended in New York presenting the Reform Movement. Unfortunately it was not possible for me to attend as I had scheduled to lecture at the same time. Some of the changes which were suggested at the meeting are helpful. We also must think of a way of adding to the phrase "according to Halakhah" so that this does not present problems to us.

I am also enclosing the thoughtful letter of Stanley Davids which gave us a number of other issues.

Your thoughts and reactions would, of course, be most welcome. I will try to set a time when we can meet, perhaps during the Biannual if not earlier.

With best wishes for the New Year once more and kindest regards.

Sincerely,


Walter Jacob

6" 112

/bb

SEPTEMBER 26, 1989

DR. WALTER JACOB
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PA 15213

DEAR WALTER:

I AM IN RECEIPT OF YOUR LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 20 AND APPRECIATE
IT. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT THERE ARE OTHERS BESIDES MYSELF
WHO ARE DETERMINED NOT TO BE READ OUT OF THE MOVEMENT.

KEEP WELL.

SINCERELY,

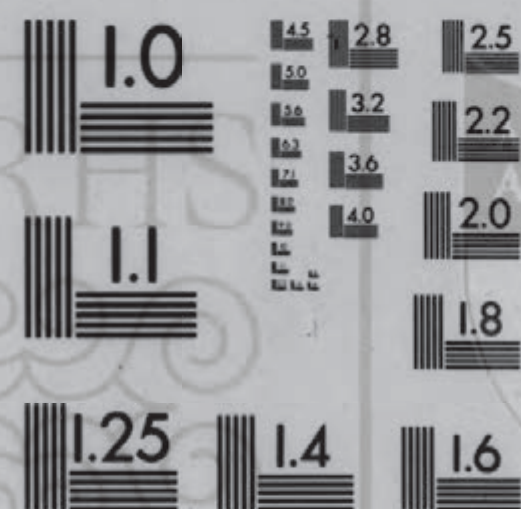
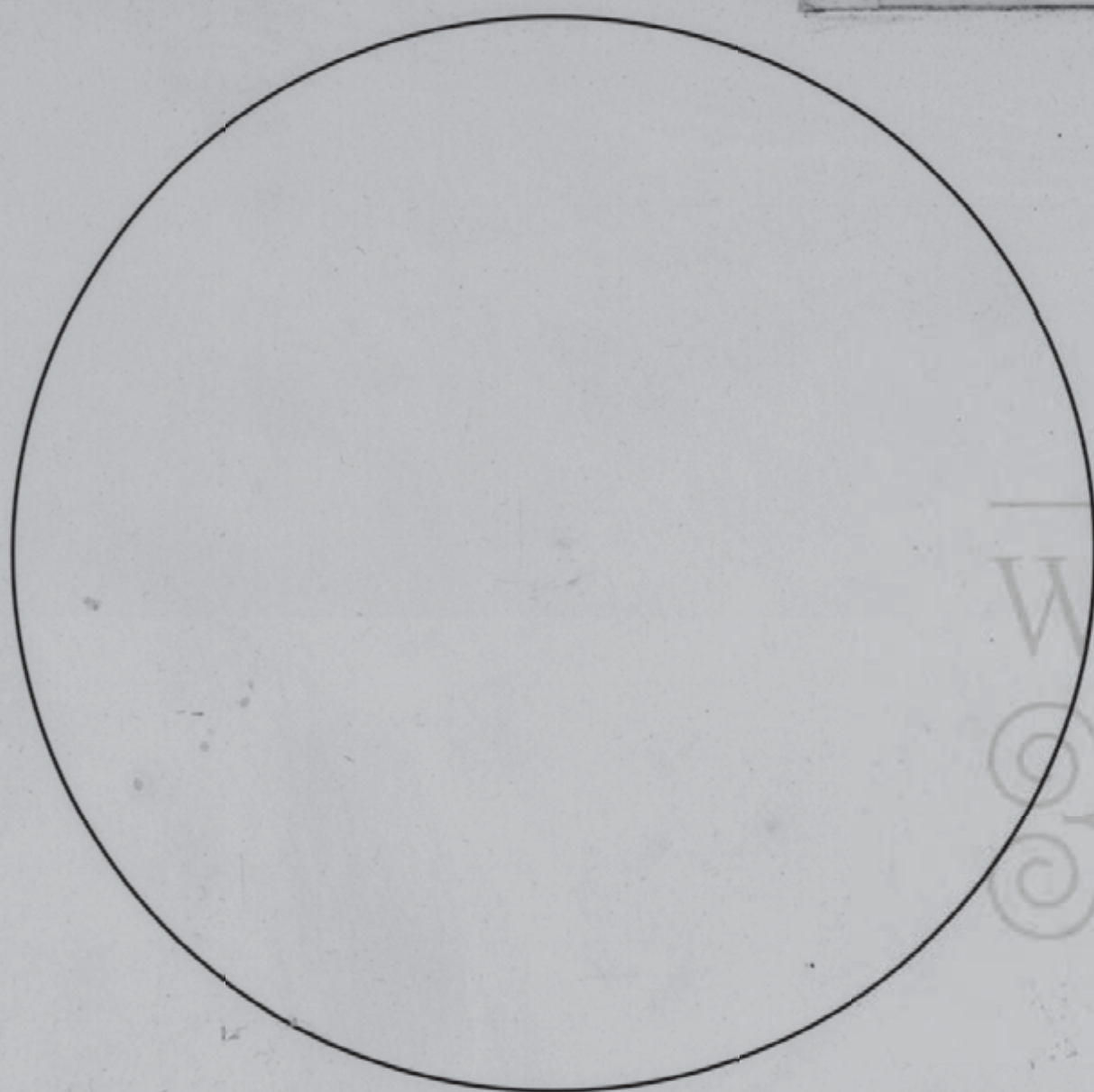
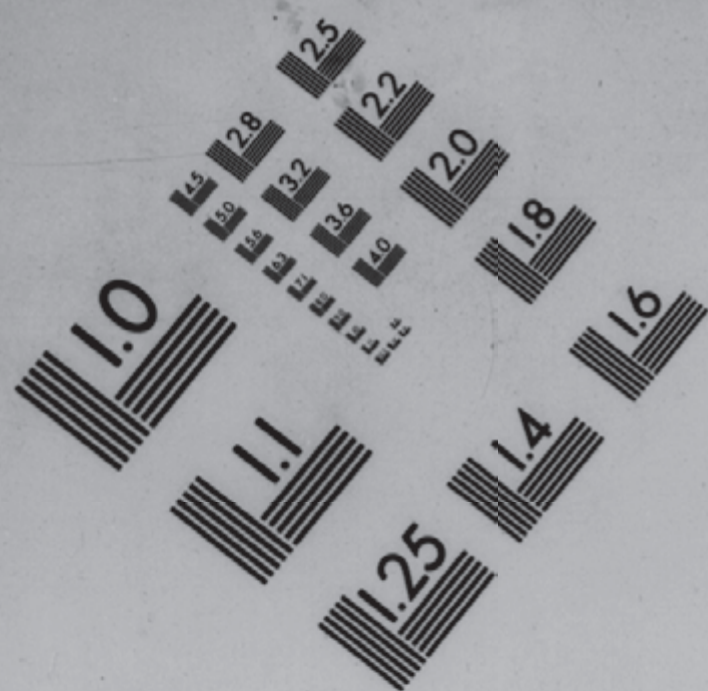
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:MP

**CONTINUED ON
NEXT ROLL**



THE WESTERN RESERVE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10825 East Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44106



0 12x 16x 20x 24x 28x 30x 36x 40x 48x

SHOULD MEASURE .25" AT REDUCTION

REDUCTION RATIO:

REDUCTION
RATIO 13X

