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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...

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On Accepting Contributions from Christian Groups

[Be-Ahavah U-B-Emunah – Parashat Ki Teitzei 5768

Translated by Rafael Blumberg]

Question: I don't understand why the Rabbis have forbidden accepting money from Christian institutions such as the Christian "Friendship Fund". After all, that's a Christian organization that loves Israel and I don't feel like the money I receive influences me the least bit in the direction of Christianity.

Answer: First of all, I am puzzled by your great enthusiasm about living off the money of others. Have you suddenly become a beggar, what in Yiddish is called a "schnorer"? Even to be a schnorer from Jewish money is a shame, but to be one from non-Jewish money is already a disgrace, a profanation of G-d's name. Observe what our Sages wrote: "Those who eat 'something else' are disqualified as witnesses" (Sanhedrin 26b). Generally speaking, in the Talmud 'something else' [davar acher] connotes pork. Here, however, Tosafot proves that it should not be interpreted that way (d.h. Ochlei). Rather, Rashi explains that here it is referring to "People who accept charity from non-Jews, this being a profanation of G-d's Name for the sake of monetary gain. Such people are classed as 'rasha dechamas' – avaricious evildoers." If we were a poor country it would be one thing. I would yet understand this enthusiasm. I wouldn't justify one's being an "avaricious evildoer", but I would understand it. Yet we are a wealthy country, amongst the wealthiest on earth, and all of this money is a tiny percentage of the national budget. And for the sake of this you

degrade yourself? Shame on you! And the worst is that it is non-Jewish money. Let me explain. The Evangelical Protestant missionary institutions try to infiltrate anywhere they can by whatever means possible. Now they have found the golden pathway – financial support. The sums they contribute are for them nothing. They just make a big impression on us and arouse our craving for more. In the United States there are fifty million Fundamentalists. If every one of them contributes ten dollars every year, you’ve got half a billion dollars right there, which looks like an enormous sum.

Financial support is their present method of slowly infiltrating us. It doesn’t happen all at once. Not everyone who accepts their money immediately becomes a Christian. Yet their influence involves a seepage process that can spread over years. Those people are very patient and gradually they make inroads.

When a simple Jew hears the word “Christianity”, he is filled with abhorrence. He immediately thinks of the blood of millions of Jews tortured to death by the Christians. He recalls the Inquisition. He remembers everything. Therefore, he will never want to listen to them.

Faced with that, what do we find in the internal memos of those organizations that hunt souls? “We have to break down the barriers between ourselves and the Jews. We have to rehabilitate their trust, which has been totally destroyed. We have to operate slowly and patiently. We have to show that we are friendly, and who is friendlier than He that distributes money to those who crave money?!”

They use data to infiltrate every community. For example, in order to penetrate the Ultra-Orthodox they dress up like the Ultra-Orthodox and keep tabs on their poor. If someone falls ill or passes away, they come to visit, help out, provide money, offer an encouraging word – without a single word about Christianity, obviously. They come again and again until a connection is formed. They talk from the heart. When they see that the time is ripe, they say, seemingly as a side comment, “Certainly Christianity is something bad, but Yeshu the Christian was all-in-all a good person.” In the first stage, that one sentence is enough. Later on comes another sentence, and then another sentence, via the slow-seepage approach.

In one place, a missionary dressed as a Lubavitcher gave some Chabad women a series of lectures on Tanach in a style that was totally Chabad. The series went on for two years

without one word about Christianity, until one day he mentioned that “That Man” wasn’t so bad.

Everywhere there are missionaries sporting knitted yarmulkes. The missionary’s son learns in a yeshiva high school, and he is a little missionary. His daughter studies at a girls’ Torah high school, and she is as well. They’re all very nice. They don’t give themselves away. The main thing is to slowly build a connection, to foster trust.

That is their approach. We know them and we know exactly how they operate. There’s a story about a man who picked up a hitchhiker, an officer, a lieutenant colonel, with a knitted yarmulke, who lived in Gush Katif. Certainly, all the elements of a fine person. They conversed at length, yet that same lieutenant colonel let slip a comment about “That Man”. Since the driver was personally involved in combating missionaries, he immediately sensed who this was and he reported it to the army. The army investigated and threw him out, because they don’t want missionaries there. The officer turned to the Supreme Court, but lost in court. The army has enough headaches without that. That’s their secret. They wait until we say, “All in all, the Christians are fine people. They give us money. We doff our hats!” That’s how they break down the barriers. Sometime later, we say, “Maybe we’ll meet with them. Maybe we’ll talk with them.”

Dear friend, you are no expert in the strategies employed by the Christians. Were the donor an individual Christian, there would be room to deliberate from a halachic standpoint on whether one could accept his gift. At the same time, it is no great honor to be a schnorer, as noted above. If, however, the donor is a Christian organization, then under no circumstances is one allowed to accept even one cent! It’s true that if you, as a private individual, accept their gift, one can hope that you won’t be influenced towards Christianity. Yet we are talking about the public agenda of the Jewish nation, that it is forbidden for us to develop a dependency on them. Here is a terrible case in point. Unfortunately, there are tens of thousands of Christian missionaries working in Israel. Already a number of times a new Knesset law has been recommended: “One is not allowed to persuade someone to convert. Jews cannot persuade Christians or Muslims, Christians cannot persuade Jews or Muslims, etc.” Yet this law fails every time, because those same Christian organizations that support Eretz Yisrael and distribute funds to the settlements and to the poor threatened, “If you enact this law we will cease our financial support. We will also consider ceasing our political support.” Money demands something in exchange. It ensnares you. Don’t mistakenly say, “They’re Christians, not missionaries.” Every Evangelist Protestant is a

missionary, even if he hides it. Also, we haven't learned Greek, so we don't realize that the word "evangelist" means "missionary". At all the pro-Israel Christian marches and demonstrations, the Christian Lovers of Israel walk hand-in-hand with the missionaries. It turns out that because of the money that you receive, Jews become Christians! For the missionaries, hundreds of millions are a pittance, but to us it looks like a lot. To refuse to accept millions is a temptation that you can, indeed withstand. Yet once you start to accept it, it's hard to stop.

About twenty-six years ago, such a Christian approached me, declaring that he greatly loved my yeshiva, because we were building the Temple. I told him that we're not building the Temple. "But you want to build it, right?" "Certainly we long to build it," I replied. "And what are you doing on that score?" he asked. I answered, "We learn Torah and strive to improve our character." "Great! Very good!" he said. "We are fifty million fundamentalist Christians in the U.S.A. Every one of them will give one dollar a year, and you will have fifty million dollars a year, and that will be our contribution towards building the Temple." And what did I answer to his generous offer? "No!" Since, then, I reckon that I have lost out on a billion three hundred million dollars. No big deal. Small change. There's a settlement in Judea and Samaria that received a million dollars from them. Now, in that settlement there's a Christian worship service in their Town Council building! A prayer service of Christian missionaries and Jews for J. – right there in the Town Council building! Nowhere is it written that the one was in exchange for the other, but that is precisely the result. Let's not be naïve. How fortunate you are, through G-d's grace, to have been born in Eretz Yisrael, such that you don't know what Christians are, how they operate and how sophisticated they are. You should bone up on your history. By the way, there are two other types of Christians. First, there are liberal Protestants. They are against the State of Israel, because we, allegedly, committed an injustice against the Arabs. Second, there are Catholics, who presently are not engaged in missionizing. Yet, they, too are against the State of Israel, because they think that they are the true Israel, and it was they who were supposed to have established the State. Yet presently we are talking about the Fundamentalist Protestants who love the State of Israel and who are associated with the missionaries. The common denominator is that we suffer fusillades from all of them, and not just today but throughout history. Let us be strong and courageous. Let us not accept from them even a penny. Let us not run awry after their dollar crusade.