

As an attendee of the recent EJF conference held in Washington, DC, I consider it my responsibility to share the following information with any concerned party.

EJF's Washington-based conference's clarion call was implementing "universal standards of *geirus*." The conference, however, focused on three distinct topics: first, the *halachik* imperative of converting the non-Jewish spouse (and resulting children) in intermarried couples; second, the *machshava* behind converting non-Jewish people who nonetheless are termed *zera yisrael*; and lastly, excluding certain groups of people from serving as *dayanim*. It is this last point that is a source of extreme personal distress.

I would like to note, in clear terms, that Rabbi Nachum Eisenstein said words to the following effect, from the podium, during the Tuesday, November 6, 2007 afternoon session of the EJF conference:

Rav Elyashiv holds that any person who believes the world to be older than 5768 years is *kofer b'ikur*, and as such, is *pasul l'dayanus*. Therefore, a *ger* who underwent conversion through a *beis din* on which such a person served as a *dayan* remains non-Jewish. The conversion is invalid even *b'dieved*.

Let me repeat that these words were made before a large audience of rabbis and *gedolei Torah*. Stunned, I privately asked Rabbi Eisenstein if he realized that this *psak* would, in effect, exclude the modern orthodox rabbinate from the conversion process. He answered affirmatively, adding that Rav Elyashiv held this *psak* to be "*pashut*."

Similarly, the previous day (Monday), Rabbi Leib Tropper mentioned, also from the podium, that Rav Chaim Kanievsky was asked if it is *mutar* to convert a person who is *mikabel ol malchus shamayim* but is unwilling to believe that the world is only 5768 years old. Rav Kanievsky answered that it is in fact *assur* to convert such a person. Rabbi Tropper also made seemingly hateful remarks, saying: how ridiculous would it be for a person wearing non-*Yeshivish* clothes and/or wearing cologne to serve as a *dayan*!? More troubling yet, during the same speech, Rabbi Tropper made remarks to the following effect:

EJF's goal is to connect a would-be *ger* to a universally accepted *beis din*. A universally accepted *beis din* could not, by definition, include *dayanim* who believe the world to be older than 5768 years.

I would be remiss not to mention that these remarks were said boldly, publicly and to an audience of over one hundred *chashuvim*. There was no visible protest amongst the assembled. I am afraid that the reasonable observer is forced to conclude that the *gedolei roshei yeshivos* who were assembled for this conference likely concur with these statements: the conference's organizers, Rabbis Eisenstein and Tropper, made no effort to hide or disguise their remarks or their intent.

Also at the conference, distinguished members of the Washington-area rabbinate were denigrated and maligned, but the details of those attacks are beyond the scope of this letter.