

## Some Thoughts on the Current Camp Ger Saga

To all my brethren אנשי שלומינו שיחי,

Some of us have in the last few days received a "clarification letter" in the mail and others have read that letter online to which Rabbis Irenstien, Brody and Gottesman have affixed their names. The several-page letter is heavily detailed and is a litany of accusations against R' Duvid Mendel Berliner in the way he dealt with the representatives of the Chavivin girls camp. He is portrayed by the writers of the letter as a liar and a thief. The letter is a smear campaign aiming to sully the character of an individual without giving him a chance to defend himself.

The obvious problem with their letter is that it is inappropriate, especially for people that consider themselves leaders of a Chassidus, to resort to letter writing and electronic media publication to advance their claim against a person instead of going to a Bais Din and resolving the issues through a Din Torah. One is forbidden to besmirch someone else's name in public EVEN if they believe that they have valid complaints against him. Those that constantly advocate the learning of Shmiras Haloshon and Halacha should know basic Hilchos Loshon Hara by now. It is therefore pointless to argue on the allegations raised in the letter. They need to be brought before a Bais Din and dealt with there.

I do not know Mr. Berliner personally, but this I do know; in the span of ten years that I had my sons in camp and I was unfortunately not very on time with my payments, NOT ONCE did he hound me for the money that I owed. The most I heard from his office was a gentle and infrequent reminder from his secretary that I still have a balance. Other parents I am told have had similar experiences with him as well. Mr. Berliner also never solicited from the public for financial help with the camp. He shouldered the burden on his own. For many years Mr. Berliner has a business that is related to the financial industry. I have yet to hear a person that dealt with him challenge his integrity. This certainly does not sound to me like the money hungry individual I read about in the letter.

However, what begs to be answered the most is the following: Who gave the writers of the letter and their associates the right to foolishly throw hundreds of thousands of dollars of

public money and Bais Yaakov D'Gur money at Mr. Berliner, as they claim, just to make him happy and that there should be Shalom? That is absolutely ridiculous! And if they indeed did do that, then why exactly is that OUR problem? Why come to us now?

Since I and most of our Kehilla were not privy to the negotiations and agreements between the trio and Mr. Berliner, how can we be expected or even be allowed to take sides here anyway?

The writers of the letter portray themselves as ones that are very concerned about the welfare of our Kehilla. THIS IS NEWS TO US. Our Kehilla in America that has now for two years borne the brunt of their callousness, indifference, and malicious activities can only attest to the contrary. The major irreparable ruin they did to our Mosdos and community is known to all and need not be restated here.

That the trio came to NY in May 2018 for the purpose of listening to and trying to accommodate our Kehilla as they claim in their letter is patently false. Anyone who went up to speak, plead, or cry to them about how the Gezeiros were affecting them, found the Shlichim to be stone-hearted and unyielding. There were even meetings with our Mechanchim deep into the nights, where they begged and explained from a professional Mechanchim point of view why our boys CANNOT be in the blazing hot city during the summer with all the Pritzus, and why they must go to camp like all our Rebbe's wanted and like ALL Chassidus do. All they got from Irenstien and co. were petty arguments and blank looks. Let us not forget, Irenstien, Brody, and Gottesman are salary people. They are payed (very well) to enforce what they believe are the Rebbe's orders and to please him. Their job is not about accommodating anybody else. Actually, they themselves on occasion during their stay admitted that they are not here to change anything. They were just here to gauge the level of frustration of the people and to pretend that they are listening.

And who can forget the months of limbo they kept our Kehilla in before last summer when hundreds of families were not told what the plan for their boys will be. The parents asked and begged repeatedly, what does the Rebbe Shlita really want? Will there be eleven months Yeshiva? Will there be a Yadir day camp? Will there be a Camp Ger for boys as the Rebbe stated in Switzerland or not? Can a New Cheider boy be in the same Gerer camp as the Yagdil Torah boys or not? Are the boys starting in Elul or not?

Depending on all of the above, critical decisions had to quickly be made. Should we register our son in a different camp or not? Can we rent a bungalow for the entire summer or only for half? No answer was forthcoming from the trio to any of the above since none of this urgency was their problem. They had all the time in the world. This is but one example of the extent of the trios "great concern" for the wellbeing of our Kehilla.

Their "care" for our Kehilla was once again visible when during their stay they refrained from visiting Yeshiva Yagdil Torah and only went to the new Cheider. Weren't we entitled then to receive a lengthy letter as well explaining what precisely is so wrong with Yeshiva Yagdil Torah? Or are "clarification" letters reserved only for bashing Duvid Mendel Berliner because now the Shlichim are not getting their way?

Irinstitien, Brody, and Gottesman claim that they represent the majority of our Kehilla as far as the camp is concerned. That too is far from the truth. The majority of the older Yungeleit and more than half of the younger Yungeleit do not need or want a girls camp at the expense of our boys hanging around bored in the hot city. A small but noisy group of immature young Yungeleit (that grew up in the last twenty years) together with a few older ones that see here an opportunity to finally get some Kavod, are the main constituents of Irinstitien and co.

In an interesting phenomenon common only in the Ger of late, the main supporters of all the ridiculous Gezeiros in our Kehilla are precisely those individuals that do not send their boys or girls to our Gerer Mosdos and generally do not take Chasanim or Kallahs from our Mosdos either. In an honest and private moment, they have even been heard stating to close friends how glad they are that their children are not in the "crazy" Gerer Mosdos...

It is certainly easy to be a "Rebbens ah Chusid" when you live in Lakewood or Monsey (or Brooklyn) and your children do not attend Gerer Mosdos.

As is already well known the so called "Gerer" girls camp Chavivin is a total hoax. Eighty percent of the campers and staff are NON Gerers. It received the bulk of its enrollment from the advertisements it placed in the Binah magazine which targeted the general public. This is of course in direct defiance of the Rebbe's request. The Rebbe repeatedly told our Askonim that his whole reason for a girls camp is so that our girls will NOT be in a camp with other girls be they Chassidish or not! He said that he doesn't want our girls learning or comparing any Hanhogos from non-Gerer girls. The so called "Rebbe's Chassidim" have no problem fooling the Rebbe and telling him that they're making the girls camp that he wants. I guess only Mr. Berliner must meticulously adhere to the Rebbe's requests! Others are exempt.

After his return from Israel, Mr. Berliner offered Mr. Shlomo Chaim Rottenberg the use of the camp for the girls for the first four weeks as-per the Rebbes instructions. Mr. Rottenberg then told Mr. Berliner that he MUST now sign over the ownership of the camp to him as well. Acting responsibly, Mr. Berliner declined to do so.

Mr. Berliner and others seeing the strange insistence and unbearable pressure being put on him to transfer ownership, are sensing that there is more to it than a girls camp that these "new come lately Askonim" want here. What exactly they really have in mind is a matter of

speculation. Perhaps they just want to prevent the Yagdil Torah boys from going to the camp for the second half so as not to make the boys of the new Cheider feel deprived? Or simply to take revenge on Yeshiva Yagdil Torah for not allowing the new Cheider to take over their building? Perhaps they plan on selling the property to raise funds to purchase a building for the new Cheider? Perhaps they plan to rent it out to help repay the outrageous loans they took from Bais Yaakov D'Ger?

Whatever the reason may be, every sensible person would agree that one does not rush to sign over a Kehilla's property. Especially in the ever changing and volatile environment that is Ger today, one needs to be extremely cautious before doing something that may be irreversible. It is highly probable that in a year or two when the Rebbe loses his enthusiasm for a girls camp and disassociates himself from it (like so many other Gerer projects that were eventually discontinued), the property, should we now relinquish control over it, will be left in the hands of certain characters that will squander it away. Then ultimately, we will have no boys camp and no girls camp!

Mr. Berliner has told our Rav here in Brooklyn and to Rabonim in Eretz Yisroel that he does not need or want ownership of the camp. If trustworthy representatives of the silent and sane majority would come forward and request to take over the camp, he would hand it over to them in a heartbeat. He will NOT however give over this precious camp on his own volition to a bunch of new inexperienced activists with suspect ulterior motives that will cause our Kehilla to lose the camp for ever.

Raboisai! Common sense dictates at this time that we be patient and exercise caution before altering the status of the camp ownership.

For those that need a reminder how haste makes waste, In the not so distant past, we rushed with listening to A.B. Silberberg's "Ufeneh Grenetzin" and now we have no Yeshiva Gevoah. We also rushed to implement the "SELECTZIA" in our Bais Yaakov and today we have a very helpless broken school. We cannot afford to lose our camp Chas V'sholom as well.

May we merit once again shalom and stability in our Kehilla

A caring Shteebel member.