

COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I have read with great pleasure in the Fall, 1976 issue of *TRADITION* Rabbi Dr. Marc D. Angel's article "Thoughts About Early American Jewry" (Vol. 16, Number 2). It is a sympathetic appraisal of our Western Sephardic customs and traditions, filled with interesting facts concerning the unwavering attachment to Orthodoxy of the ancient *Kahal Kadosh* Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in the City of New York.

May I point out, however, in connection with the study of the names of Sephardic congregations (p. 19), that the name *Shaar Hashamayim* was not only that of the London Spanish and Portuguese congregation but was shared by the *Kahal Kadosh* of Kingston, Jamaica which during the 17th and part of the 18th centuries was more important in terms of numbers and wealth than its London counterpart. Moreover, the name Mikveh Israel, which is mentioned as belonging to our sister congregations in Philadelphia and in Savannah, is derived in both cases from the fam-

ous Mikveh Israel Congregation of Willemstad, Curaçao.

Finally, in connection with Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes listed as co-founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York in 1887, then an Orthodox institution (p. 22), it was not mentioned that in 1902 the J.T.S. forsook Orthodoxy and that the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, also founded by Dr. Mendes, at its third convention under the latter's presidency, repudiated the authority of graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary as rabbis (cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, column 902). Dr. Mendes broke his connection with the J.T.S. and became a professor at the R. Isaac Elhanan Theological Seminary which took the place of the J.T.S. in the training of "cultured, English-speaking, Orthodox religious leaders."

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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

In your Fall 1976 issue (v. 16, No. 2, p. 110) in the review by

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Warren Zev Harvey of Gerald J. Blidstein's book, *Honor Thy Father and Mother*, there occurs a statement which calls for clarification. Your reviewer quotes Professor Blidstein as stating in his book that his request to see the manuscript of Rabbi Elijah Capsali's *Me'ah She'arim*, which is at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was refused, and he expresses his amazement at the Seminary's refusal to allow a well-known scholar to consult the manuscript.

I would like to refer to the correspondence on this matter between Professor Blidstein and myself. In 1971 Professor Blidstein requested "a photocopy of the entire manuscript" of Capsali's *Me'ah She'arim*. In my reply to him I wrote that we will not be able to send him a photocopy of the manuscript because of the fact that it is being prepared for publication by a mem-

ber of the Seminary faculty. At about the same time a well-known scholar in Israel turned to us with the same request. My reply to him was exactly the same as the one to Professor Blidstein. The Israeli scholar turned to us again and stated that he needed the photocopy for background research only, and he committed himself not to publish it. At this point we immediately dispatched to Israel a photocopy of the manuscript with the understanding that the Israeli scholar would not infringe on the right of the member of the faculty to whom permission to publish the manuscript had been granted previously. We regret that because of a lack of communication Professor Blidstein could not utilize the Capsali manuscript for his important study.

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