

C. Goldbaum

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Middx.

England.

11th November 1970.

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

May I start
by explaining that I had the
pleasure just a few short years
ago to hear you speak in London
and also I have read a
number of your articles in that
excellent magazine 'Tradition'.

I therefore address
myself to you in the hopes that you
will be answer the question that
I put to you.

It has become the
habit of a number of Synagogues

in London and its suburbs, we hold a 'dinner and dance' on the eve of the civil New Year. I should add that these synagogues are all of the orthodox type or shall we say of the traditional kind. In fact some of them are within the United Synagogues of which Dr Jakobovits is the ecclesiastical head.

These celebrations which includes dancing and good food - 100% kosher - are held either for the raising of funds for charity or else to help build synagogues or to provide further amenities for the children who attend the Talmud Torah attached to these synagogues. In all these cases I have had no doubts at all in my mind that the causes for which the funds

will go, are very considerable and deserve 100% support.

My complaints however are based upon several points.

1. It seems to me to be entirely wrong to pick a date for these functions which is clearly associated with Christianity. May I draw your attention to three references.

In 'The Columbia Encyclopaedia', Second Edition, 1950, New York, page 1393, it reads under the heading of 'New Year's Day' — 'In the Christian Church the Feast of the Circumcision occurs on that date'.

In 'Everyman's Encyclopaedia' 5th Edition, Volume N^o 9, page 119, it reads inter alia under the heading of 'New Year's Day' — 'The date is

observed as the Feast of the Circumcision (g.v).'

In Chambers Encyclopaedia, 1967, Volume N^o 9, pages 835/836, under the heading of 'New Year's Day' it reads - 'In the Roman catholic church New Year's day, being the feast of the Circumcision, is a holiday of obligation'.

With these points in mind it seems to me that inadvertently it may be thought we are celebrating the Brit Milah of Jesus Christ.

I also feel that with so many other days in the year such as Purim, Chanukah, Lag B'Omer, surely these organisations could get something going on days clearly associated with happy

Jewish associations and nurseries.

Also I feel that we are 'taking the Goyim' who use the civil New Year's Day for feasting and dancing etc.

Halachically I bring your attention to the two verses in Leviticus - 'Neither shall ye walk in their ordinances' and 'And ye shall not walk in the customs of the nations'.

The arguments put against me are various. Firstly its said that by refusing to purchase an attendance ticket I am refusing to support charity or the building of synagogues.

Secondly its said, that the very date is suspect, and is more likely to be pagan in origin rather

than Christian.

Thirdly it's held that because we use the civil calendar in our daily economic and social life, it's not really associating it with other religions etc. The calendar is to be regarded as 'civil' rather than 'Christian'. It has even been suggested that recognising the New Year's day is part of the dictum 'Dina Malchoosa Dina'.

I have not reached the position where I am not quite sure whether or not my objections are based upon sound ground, or I'm trying to be 'more pious than the pious of old'.

May I therefore with all due respect ask you to let me

2.

have your considered opinion on
this now prevalent social custom.

Also may I have your
permission to show your reply to
a few of my interested friends.

Sincerely yours,

C. Goldbaum.
