

104 Irelandway Estate,
Paragon Road,
London E.9.
16.11.69.

Dear Rabbi Lamm, *RG/te*

I was eagerly awaiting your reply and hoped that for once a question of mine would be understood and answered with some depth. I was not disappointed by your prompt reply. You satisfied me completely with your usual articulate presentation. I am truly grateful. As you point out, this particular issue of integrating one's cultural activities into Avodas Hashem is not really fundamental to my basic religious quest.

I would like to mention that I am not the conductor of the L.S.E. orchestra. To have this position one must be able to play several instruments and have a deep knowledge of music, both theoretical and practical. I have a more humble position: as first violin I am consequently called the leader. This involves leading the string section if they get in trouble—they are meant to follow me if they sometimes get lost when, for example, they forget when to come in after a few bars rest. This keeps me on my toes throughout the performance of a work. For my efforts I get paid 15 shillings a rehearsal which happens to pay for my weekly bus fares!

As I said in my letter I get a tremendous kick out of playing and listening to music. Although I can listen for hours to Beethoven's later string quartets, especially the penultimate one in A. Minor, I am more spiritually moved by some of the *devekus nigunim* of the Chabad Chassidim. Even though they are badly reproduced on the records that Lubavitch have brought out, I can appreciate the penitus, the mystic yearning and spiritual longing that ~~expresses~~ especially characterises the 10 *nigunim* the Alte Rebbe composed. They penetrate into my very being. This is something my father, who is quite musically knowledgeable, can't see. I answer him that he does just not understand. I ~~like~~ look forward to the day when I can attend a *Verbrang* at 770 Eastern Parkway where the singing on festive occasions, so my Chabad friends tell me, is really spiritually inspiring and satisfying.

You say that I have experienced a spiritual adventure with seriousness. I hope you don't have the idea that I am morbidly introspective. This was true for a few years of my life, and in retrospect it was necessary to

motivate me to dig so much. Thank God after the necessary spiritual and mental excavations and laying of the basic foundations, this is a thing of the past. There ~~is~~ are times I set aside to be serious and to delve, but I like to think of myself of having a measure of joie de vivre. I enjoy college life. My academic studies are interesting and I have the opportunity to meet ^{with} and speak ^{to} with so many different types of people, which L.S.E. is particularly famous for. In fact, one of my best friends is a staunch Chinese socialist from Singapore, who was expelled from his native country for political agitation. We often have discussions on a variety of topics including politics and religion—they often get rather heated. I thrive on criticism and opposition—its such a stimulating experience!

I ~~where~~ ^{near} my cappel at college even as leader of the orchestra and am respected for it. I also associate myself with the Jewish society which is one of the biggest in England. Unfortunately, most of the ex-Yeshiva students shun it like the plague, as they do Jewish student affairs in general. This is understandable if not justifiable. It gives the not so committed student the impression that Orthodoxy looks down upon ^{him} as some form of spiritual leper. Since I started college, I have arranged a discussion group on Jewish philosophy to meet twice monthly ^{and} ~~had~~ Rabbi S. Lew of Lubavitch leads the discussion. The majority of the 20 students who have so far attended are not traditionally orientated, yet they have told me they are very taken with Smuel's approach. There is give and take on both sides. Smuel exudes warmth and is willing to enter a dialogue and has the ability to show that Tora has ^{and a} vitality and a profundity. He does not view the students with condescension nor does he come out with all the old platitudes. By his very ~~simple~~ ^{and a} ~~ple~~ he is making me more of a Lubavitcher every day! What a difference to the cold, phlegmatic arrogance of so many, but not all, of my acquaintances in the Litvishe Yeshiva world.

I receive the 'Jewish Observer' the American mouthpiece of the Aguda. I find it has sometimes some good ideas which I can utilise, although I don't particularly like its politics. Over the weekend I was perusing through the October '66 copy which included an article by a Rabbi Danziger on 'Modern Orthodoxy or Orthodox Modernism'. I was surprised to read that there is so much opposition to people like Dr. Berkovitz, Dr. Wyschogrod and Dr. Greenberg who he says are '....representative of a decided trend among certain orthodox intellectuals whose recent pronouncements about fundam-

tal Jewish concepts should not go unchallenged'. I greatly respect these orthodox thinkers and can't see what all the fuss is about. I was also interested to ^{read} learn that the approach of 'Tradition' and Yeshiva University is not the same as the modern interpretation of Torah im Derech Eretz which Rabbi Danziger claims to represent. It seems that he sees certain ^{Tradition} writers' spiritual and intellectual candour as not a source of strength but as dangerously leading to the borders of heresy. What ever next?

In England, we unfortunately do not have many creative orthodox thinkers. One exception that comes to mind is the rarely heard Rabbi D. Sasson ^{K"V"Te}. There are erudite Halakhists and of course orthodox scientists who seem to spend a lot of their time in justifying their existence or listening to boring lectures on science and religion, torah im derech eretz and the 'right' attitude to secular studies. There are few articulate enough to speak or write about the depths of spiritual existence and experience; how to show that Torah is a guide how to live within a spiritual dimension and that it is concerned with the human situation in all its ramifications; what Torah means in spiritual terms as opposed to its necessary and important physical manifestations-Halakah. Thus authentic Judaism is going by default. You can't impress thinking people with pious affirmations of faith, however true they may be. Louis Jacobs, perhaps, is one who can speak on an intellectual level about religion in depth. It's a shame that he is an official heretic because he has many interesting things to say and I am personally indebted to him for his gifted and erudite translations of some Chabad chassidus literature. If only he would not play about with Bible criticism (which for me is irrelevant to man's spiritual problems) and attempts to over-rationalise. He could play a more positive role in the Jewish community. I know several students who deeply respect him. Now, because of his position within the establishment, everything he says is treif. Orthodox Judaism, it seems, does not like non conformity at any level. This is understandable. I think it was Voltaire who said that liberty has no relevance to a city in a state of seige.

And now to the point. I have many many issues that I would like to write to you about. During term time I don't really have time to set down my thoughts and articulate the problems I have. So as not to increase your task in answering, I hope to do a lot of preparation so that you don't have to waste your precious time explaining the obvious.

I will therefore be writing my first letter sometime in DEcember. I hope you don't mind.

Your kind offer of assistance is a great honor & privilege for me. Very sincerely, Thinking you again, Michael Tabor