

24 St. Andrews Road,  
Parktown,  
JOHANNESBURG.  
13th. July, 1961

Rabbi N. Lamm,  
P.O. Box 307,  
Planetarium Station  
NEW YORK 24, N.Y.,  
U.S.A.

My dear Rabbi Lamm, "ו"

May I congratulate you most sincerely upon the outstanding sermon "Let Criticism be Welcome" which reached me recently together with the Jewish Center Bulletin. In view, however, of the title and subject of the sermon I am taking the liberty of offering a criticism of it and I am sure that you will accept it and be of those who are not only *לוי* but also *לוי*!

In the second paragraph of page 2 you write :-

"The freedom to criticize the government is what determines whether the government is a democracy or a dictatorship. The difference between a good democracy and a poor one is the extent to which the citizens avail themselves of this right. No nation, society, or people can live on a high moral plane if criticism is either absent or suppressed. That is why we American Jews should not consider it an act of treachery when one of us is critical of...."

Surely the obvious words which should have followed should have been "The government of the United States". A more peculiar non sequitur than that which you have given, it would be difficult to find. Surely it is not a criterion of democracy to be free to criticise the government of another country. Surely its essence is as you say that it lies in the freedom to criticise the government of the country of which one is a citizen.

I am writing this to you for two reasons. Firstly because I have never yet come across an American Rabbi, with the sole possible exception of the late Stephen Wise, who has ever raised his voice in criticism of the government of the United States, and there seems to be something almost Freudian in your unconscious substitution of the words State of Israel for one's own country. Secondly I have a feeling and I hope that it is correct, that the reason for your statement is that you are not feeling very happy yourself about the criticism of the State of Israel which you have felt yourself compelled to make recently.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

*L. Rabinowitz*  
L. RABINOWITZ  
CHIEF RABBI.