

SLOAN-KETTERING INSTITUTE *for* CANCER RESEARCH

DONALD S. WALKER LABORATORY, 145 BOSTON POST RD., RYE, N.Y.

OWENS 8-1100



March 22, 1967

Rabbi Norman Lamm
Department of Jewish Philosophy
Yeshiva University
Amsterdam Ave. and W. 186th St.
New York, New York 10033

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

First I would like to congratulate you on your excellent presentation of your talk dealing with "The Nature of Man.....," as given last night at Albert Einstein.

I am an alumnus of Yeshiva College (class of '58) but unfortunately have not had the opportunity to take your Jewish Philosophy course. There were some questions that I should have liked to have raised in reference to your talk but, due to the nature of the audience, felt that an honest and complete answer might have been offensive to non-Jews present. I would therefore like to present these same questions in this letter. If it is possible and not too much trouble for you I would appreciate it if I could receive a reply or, if you would prefer, speak to you personally concerning these matters. I have been confronted by these and similar questions by Gentiles I work with or with whom I am friendly and have had to give them an answer which was non-offensive to them but yet within the framework of orthodox Judaism. However, irrespective of any answer I give to them I am genuinely interested in these matters for my own understanding.

In your talk you mentioned the *ענין* of the *אדם* in reference to the creation of *אדם הראשון* and then also stressed that all men, regardless of race or creed are equal in the eyes of Judaism. You also mentioned that a person who saves the life of another person is considered as if he had saved the lives of the entire world. In reference to both of these examples is it not so that a Jew, having the duty of being a *חכם*, is considered above the non-Jew and that the second example applies to *היהודי*? As such too, what is the traditional Jewish attitude towards a Christian who does believe in *אלוהים* but of course with modifications which we find unacceptable? As has been said by a great Rav the Gentile cannot be put in the same category as the pagan who worshipped his idols. Please do not misunderstand me - I am not placing them on the same level as that of the Jew. I fully realize that this cannot be done.

One last question deals with one other point you made and which has great bearing on an incident which took place at Einstein. I was told about this by the faculty member involved and I explained the Jewish view to her but found that she could not accept it. This deals with the autopsy issue. Without going into great detail the essence of what happened was that an orthodox student refused to dissect a cadaver until he was given absolute assurance that the body was not that of a Jewish person. He pointed out that *אדם* a Jew is not allowed to have an autopsy performed on him except under very special circumstances. After being given reasons why he should believe that the person was not Jewish, which he did not accept, he pointed to a negro body and asked that he be allowed to dissect that cadaver. This infuriated the teacher and caused her to make the statement that apparently if a person is not Jewish that person (or the body of that person) need not be respected and may be cut up. However, if that person is Jewish then this may not be done. It bothered her that apparently Jewish law differentiated

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between people on the basis of their being Jewish or not and did not respect the fact that they are all the same (as human beings). She also stressed the point of just how could one be certain that a person, when alive, did not wish to not have his body dissected after death, irregardless of his religious beliefs.

I do not ask these questions of you in an air of lack of respect for yiddishkeit but rather because I am interested in understanding the *מ'ן* and as an orthodox Jew feel it is my duty and obligation to do so.

As I mentioned earlier in my letter if I could impose upon you for a reply I would greatly appreciate it. I may be reached at the address listed on the letterhead until March 31. After that date I may be reached at the following address:

Department of Pharmacology
University of Pennsylvania
School of Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

I am sorry that I cannot give you a home address instead but as I am changing jobs and do not have a permanent address as of yet I can only be reached at business. Many thanks for your kind considerations.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert A. Friedman

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