

November 10, 1969

Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky
Torah Umesorah
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Joe:

I am writing to you about a matter which you mentioned to me casually a week or so ago, and about which I am also writing to leaders of other major Orthodox organizations.

I think the time has come for all of us to stand up and be counted in the matter of Shaare Zedek.

I am not referring to the actual controversy concerning [REDACTED]. I myself happen to be a supporter and admirer of his. However, I can understand that honorable men can have a point of view different from my own, much as I might disagree with them.

What I am concerned about is the degradation of this controversy into the ugliest kind of polemics that our community -- often bedevilled by disruptive disputes -- has suffered in a long, long time.

While Orthodox organizations, who frequently express themselves on issues remote from immediate Torah concerns, have remained thunderously silent, three distinguished Orthodox Jews have suffered scandalous humiliation and insult because of their support of Shaare Zedek and [REDACTED]. I think you will agree that Max Stern, Ludwig Jesselson, and Charles Bendheim are three of the most philanthropic Jews in Orthodox Jewry throughout the world. There is not a single worthy Jewish cause that has not benefited from their munificence. Without them, Shaare Zedek Hospital would probably not survive, let alone expand. Because of the [REDACTED] controversy, groups of unscrupulous hotheads, from various circles, have

been picketing their offices at odd times and distributing scurrilous literature with their pictures printed on these sheets. The Chillul Hashem has been enormous, as you can well understand. Non-Orthodox Jews who have witnessed these spectacles have not been attracted by them to an appreciation of Torah and piety. Non-Jews have formed their obvious impressions of Jews as a whole.

What are such leading Orthodox laymen to think when, after decades of personal labor and financial contribution to Torah causes, not one single national Orthodox organization has come to their defense, at the very least in denouncing these hotheads and deploring their ugly methods?

I most sincerely believe that the time is long past when we can ignore these disgraceful events and remain silent in our comfortable shells. Now is the time for all of us, no matter what our view of the substantive issues, to take a public stand on an issue which, to my mind, is clear and unequivocal. There is absolutely no justification for the shameful insults to which they have been subjected. I have not heard one responsible person, on either side of the Shaare Zedek controversy, who justifies these ignominious demonstrations and the disgraceful literature that emanates, usually from Boston. How then dare we remain silent? It simply will no longer do to dismiss them privately as irresponsible madmen while keeping our peace publicly. There comes a point when silence implies consent.

We have a moral obligation to discharge, both to the individuals being attacked, and to our own consciences, and it must be done immediately.

I therefore most urgently implore you to meet with the heads of other Orthodox organizations and together issue a public dissociation from and denunciation of these treacherous people who have been defaming the three people involved.

I am writing similar letters to the following, and asking them, as I am asking you, to secure the consent of their governing bodies to issue a public announcement as mentioned above:

Rabbi Zev Segal - Rabbinical Council of America.
Rabbi Harold Saperstein - National Council of Young Israel
Richard Mandelbaum - Yavneh
Dr. Theodore Fink - Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists
Rabbi Herschel Shachter - Religious Zionists of America
Rabbi Morris Sherer - Agudath Israel of America
Rabbi Pinchas M. Teitz - Union of Orthodox Rabbis
Rabbi Bernard Weinberger - Rabbinical Alliance of America
Rabbi Joseph Karasick - Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations

I believe it would be best for all these groups to act concurrently, and I respectfully request that you let me know when you can meet together with the above so that we may together draw up an appropriate statement.

Sincerely yours,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

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