

September 18, 1961

Rabbi L. Rabinowitz
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My Dear Rabbi Rabinowitz:

Your manuscript on the problem of American Orthodox relations to the State of Israel finally arrived yesterday and I read it with great care.

Needless to say it is extremely well done and clearly points to a major problem in the whole ideological structure of American Orthodoxy. This problem has bothered me considerably, especially after my visit to Israel when I returned from India six months ago. I myself feel caught up in the ambivalence that seems to characterize the whole posture of traditional Judaism in the United States. It is something that cannot be likely dismissed. I think it requires very deep thought and profound analysis, and I suspect that the underlying motives are of a highly consequential nature. As a matter of fact, I am beginning to doubt whether there will be any "great debate" on this theme in our ranks. I fear that the problem is too deeply psychological in a collective sense to become the basis for a doctrinal dialogue which involves at least two clearly defined points of view.

Space does not permit me to elaborate on my preliminary thinking on this subject. I wish we had spent more time together when you were here on your last visit. However, I would like to offer this suggestion: the dilemma, to my mind, is caused in no small way by the modesty of the original Zionist aspirations. Zionism dreamt of a State and now we have it --- how after this fulfillment, are we still to entertain Zionism as a worthy goal?

ENDORSEMENT

I believe that if all of Zionism had been geared to the messianic visions of a Kalischer~~er~~ or Reines, visions which transcended the political and social and were informed by a mystic and eschatological impulse, then Zionism would still be a dynamic reality for committed Jews today. This, of course, is in addition to the sense of frustration and disappointment, which American Orthodoxy suffers, when contemplating the ^{se}circularism of the Non-Orthodox elements in Israel and their refusal of so much of the right wing to live in the modern world.

There is so much more to say on this score that I hesitate to write any more. I do hope that you will understand my hints sympathetically and I pray that before long we shall be together and be able to discuss this and other subjects in greater detail.

My fondest regards to Mrs. Rabinowitz and best wishes for a happy and healthy year, one in which all Israel will experience the complete redemption.

Sincerely yours,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

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