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Sunday, November 06, 2005

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

Several months ago we got together at your office to discuss Modern Orthodoxy and some related issues. This followed my epistolary request to meet you in person and your gracious offer for the same.

I wanted to follow up by saying thank you again and by sending you two items of interest. The first is a photo of the first page of the Rav's letter to the secretary at the Maimonides School. Seth Farber didn't have a photocopy of this page so I snapped a copy using my Palm device. The image isn't the best but it shows the date, the Rav's salutation and subject, and the early part of the text.

The second item is a photocopy of the piece from Hedge of Roses that I had commented on. My difficulty with the piece is twofold. Firstly, the piece says that the woman's sense of the holiness of time far exceeds that of a man. I don't know how such a thing can be known. But I also don't know why it is necessary to create a contest out of the matter. I should say that I do recognize the era in which this was written and the temptation to address the cries of feminism in such a manner – not that I agree with the approach.

Secondly, and most importantly, the piece suggests that the sole purpose of mitzvahs is to counter our deficiencies. Mitzvahs do function in part in this way (Rav Hirsch on Vayikra). But mitzvahs also engage a pre-existing kiddushah. We see this principle in Yevamos 5a where the Gemara discusses the presence of a special commandment obligating Cohanim to shave their heads if they are struck with leprosy. The Gemara says that the extra posuk is needed because Cohanim have extra kiddushah. We see in general that spiritual growth obligates a person in additional mitzvah related activities, not less. Indeed, the Zies Ra'anah (Magen Avraham) says that men are obligated in positive time-bound commandments because they have a *stronger* yetzer tov than do women (Commentary on Yalkut Shemoni, Shmuel 1:1).

The practical ramification of all this is twofold. Firstly, I find that a portrayal of mitzvahs as nothing other than a kind of therapy for the weak degrades them (and the Jewish people) and serves as a disincentive to avodah. Secondly, I find the argument that women are exempt from certain mitzvahs because of some superiority in women leads to a disrespect of men, no small issue in our era.

I hope this critique of mine does not appear to diminish at all my respect for your writings and many other accomplishments for which I stand in awe, to be frank. Rather, I'll assume from our conversation regarding a healthy relationship between respect, authority, and the pursuit of truth, that you would welcome the thoughts of one of your devoted readers.

Peace and many blessings for the coming year,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Yisrael Kashkin'.

Yisrael Kashkin