



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

DR. NORMAN LAMM

Chancellor, Yeshiva University

Dr. Norman Lamm served as president of Yeshiva University from August 1976 to June 2003, after which he was elected as chancellor. He has brought to the office a sensitivity to the University's strengths and needs gained as a former student and faculty member and as a parent and distinguished alumnus whose leadership and scholarship have earned him a position of prominence in the Jewish community.

A rabbi, philosopher, teacher and author, Dr. Lamm's wide scope of scholarship and interests range from religious philosophy to the areas of human rights and the seeking of solutions to modern problems in the light of Talmudic Law.

The first American-born president of Yeshiva University, Dr. Lamm succeeded Dr. Samuel Belkin (1943–1975) and Dr. Bernard Revel (1915–1940).

Yeshiva University, in New York City, is America's oldest and largest university under Jewish auspices, tracing its origins to 1886. An independent institution chartered by the State of New York, it is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and by specialized professional agencies, and offers programs leading to bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees for 6,600 men and women. As of fall 2008 it had a \$576 million budget for its extensive teaching programs and maintains a network of affiliates, issues publications, conducts a widespread program of research and community service efforts, and has a museum. Under its admissions policy, there is no discrimination in regard to sex, religion, age race, color, or national origin. Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus is in Manhattan's Washington Heights, and the University maintains three other major centers in Manhattan and the Bronx, along with affiliated campuses in Los Angeles and Jerusalem.

A Tradition Nurtured in America

Dr. Norman Lamm, both as president and as chancellor, has brought to his office the vigor of Jewish tradition nurtured on American soil. Born in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn on December 19, 1927, the son of Samuel and Pearl Baumol Lamm, he received his elementary and high school education at Yeshiva and Mesivta Torah Vodaath.

To further his Judaic scholarship and expand his own horizons through a liberal arts education, he entered Yeshiva College, the liberal arts unit of Yeshiva University, in 1945, majoring in chemistry. The Israeli War of Independence in 1948 was to test the skills he learned in the laboratory when, as a student, Dr. Lamm was asked to work on a secret munitions project for the struggling state. The project was headed by Dr. Ernst D. Bergmann, who was later to become head of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission. In 1949, Dr. Lamm was awarded a Bachelor of Arts summa cum laude from Yeshiva College and was class valedictorian.

Upon graduation, Dr. Lamm continued his scientific studies at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn while maintaining his Jewish studies at Yeshiva. He was ordained as a rabbi at the University's affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1951 and earned a Ph.D. in Jewish philosophy at the University's Bernard Revel Graduate School in 1966.

While at Yeshiva University he studied under two scholarly giants, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Dr. Samuel Belkin. Under their guidance, Dr. Lamm was able to focus more clearly his interests and aspirations. And it was Dr. Belkin who convinced him to choose the rabbinate rather than science as his career.

In the Pulpit

Prior to his election as President of Yeshiva University, Dr. Lamm was spiritual leader of The Jewish Center in Manhattan since 1958.

He was also the rabbi of Congregation Kodimoh in Springfield, MA, 1954–58, and assistant to the rabbi at New York City's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, 1951–52.

Alumnus Joins the University Faculty

Dr. Lamm was appointed to the faculty of Yeshiva University in 1959, serving first as an instructor of philosophy. Rising through the ranks, in June 1966 he was appointed Erna and Jakob Michael Professor of Jewish Philosophy, a University appointment. His teaching career was augmented by his lectures at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, where he was visiting professor of Judaic studies, 1974–75.

Acclaimed Author

Dr. Lamm has gained wide recognition for his writings and discourses on interpretations of Jewish philosophy and law in relation to problems involving science, technology, and philosophy in today's society. A man of faith who has written sensitively on doubt, he has published extensively on Talmudic law, in particular in comparison with American constitutional law.

His major work, *Torah Lishmah* (1972), deals with the religious philosophy of the Mitnaggedim, opponents of the Hasidim in 18th- and 19th-century Europe. In 1989 an updated English version edition appeared.

Turning to the other side of the historic polemic, his 1999 book, *The Religious Thought of Hadsidism: Text and Commentary*, presents a selection and exposition of the writings of the masters of the early Hasidic movement, and charts their central ideas in their ideational context. This volume won the coveted 1999 National Jewish Book Award in Jewish Thought.

His *Torah Umadda*, published in 1990, is in many ways the ideological Bible at Yeshiva University. The volume is a provocative meditation on the University's cornerstone: the integration of Torah learning and secular knowledge. Dr. Lamm explores the value of Western culture in the context of classical Jewish thought, providing overviews of such giant Jewish thinkers as Moses Maimonides, Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Abraham Isaac Kook, and then elaborates on his own views based upon an extrapolation of Hasidic concepts.

In 1998 Dr. Lamm published his ninth book, *The Shema*, in which he explores the relationship between spirituality and law in Judaism, drawing on a wide range of traditional sources as well as on his own reflections on the Torah's ringing declaration of monotheism.

His most recent work, in two volumes, is *Seventy Faces: Articles of Faith*, published in 2001. It consists of 60 of his many popular essays and addresses divided into 10 chapters, such as Faith, Modern Orthodoxy, Education, Zionism and Israel, and the Holocaust.

In 1991, Dr. Lamm was presented with the Rabbi Y.L. HaKohen Memorial Award for Torah Research and Literature, in a ceremony at Mosad Harav Kook in Jerusalem, for his book in Hebrew, *Halakhot ve'Halikhot* (Jewish Law and the Legacy of Judaism: Essays and Inquiries in Jewish Law). The book, published in 1990, is a series of analyses of various Halakhic themes, with special attention to those that resonate with Kabbalistic, Hasidic, or philosophic patterns.

Another of his many works, *The Royal Reach: Discourses on the Jewish Tradition and the World Today* (1970), deals with a variety of themes, offering Jewish viewpoints on such issues as violence, law and order, space exploration, and parent-child relationships in the contemporary world. His book, *Faith and Doubt* (1971), deals with such subjects as religious doubt, privacy in law and theology, the moral revolution, the religious implications of life on other planets, ecology in law and theology, and the Jewish ethic of leisure. A second, revised edition appeared in 1986, and a third augmented edition in 2008.

In his first book, *A Hedge of Roses: Jewish Insights into Marriage and Married Life* (1966), he calls for a return to traditional rules regarding marital sex as a means for reversing the trend towards an increasing number of failed

marriages. Since 1966, it has been published in seven editions, three in the U.S. and one in England, and translated into Hebrew (two editions), Russian and Portuguese. Dr. Lamm is also co-editor of *The Leo Jung Jubilee Volume* (1962), *A Treasury of Tradition* (1967), *The Jubilee Volume in Honor of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Hebrew 1984). *The Good Society: Jewish Ethics in Action* (1974), spells out the moral teachings of the Jewish tradition in the areas of the individual, the family, and society. He has published a number of articles in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, and his pieces have appeared in a variety of Hebrew and English journals, both scholarly and popular, throughout the world. "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality" appeared in the 1974 *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook*. Dr. Lamm was the founder and first editor of *Tradition*, and he has contributed articles to it at various times during the past 30 years. He was also associated editor of *Hadarom*, a journal of Jewish law.

In recent years he has published extensively on "pure Halakhah" (Jewish law) in such journals as *Hapardes* and *Torah She'be'al Peh*. Most of these articles originated as the annual Halakhic lectures (*Sheur Kelali*) delivered every spring before the entire Talmudic community at Yeshiva University—faculty, students, and alumni.

The Library of Jewish Law and Ethics, edited by Dr. Lamm since 1974, encompasses a series of works concerning contemporary ethical and Halakhic problems. Eighteen volumes have appeared to date. More recently he has become editor of *Studies and Sources in Kabbalah, Hasidism, and Jewish Thought*, published by KTAV Publishing Co. in conjunction with Yeshiva University Press.

Jewish Law and Jurisprudence

Dr. Lamm's writings have been quoted in landmark decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. In the 1966 "Miranda" decision regarding police interrogation of detained persons, Chief Justice Earl Warren, in delivering the opinion of the Court, referred to Dr. Lamm's "The Fifth Amendment and its Equivalent in the Halakha," published in *Decalogue* magazine. The same work was referred to in another landmark decision by the Supreme Court, delivered by Justice William O. Douglas who, in 1967, quoted sections of the article concerning constitutional guarantees against self-incrimination.

In 1967, Dr. Lamm was invited to testify before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on the right of privacy from the point of view of Jewish law. His testimony, and his article, "The Fourth Amendment and its Equivalent in the Halakha," from *Judaism* magazine, were published in the *Congressional Record*.

Dr. Lamm's close association with the law was again evidence at a University convocation in May 1977 in honor of his inauguration as president. At the event, the University awarded honorary doctoral degrees to the Chief Justices of three nations: Warren E. Burger, U.S.; Bora Laskin, Canada; and Joel Sussman, Israel. The event drew international attention.

A Traveler and Lecturer

Dr. Lamm has traveled over much of the globe, lecturing in nine countries on five continents. In 1961, he spent a month in India and Pakistan on a special religious mission to the ancient Jewish communities there. In 1964, he toured South Africa for one month, lecturing on behalf of Jewish education. He also made trips to Australia and New Zealand in 1973, spending five weeks lecturing to the Jewish communities of those nations. He has participated in various colloquia and conferences throughout the world.

At the University, he occasionally gives courses in Talmud and Jewish philosophy and thought.

In his position as president of Yeshiva University, Dr. Lamm has addressed himself to contemporary issues within the framework of Jewish tradition. In July of 1986, speaking before 1,000 alumni in Jerusalem, Dr. Lamm condemned religious extremism and called for moderation in a historic speech titled "Do Not Let the Center Collapse." In September of 1985, at the University's Centennial Convocation, the president said that a "modern university can and should foster a moral climate that elicits respect for the human spirit, for honor, for law, for the pursuit of knowledge and love of learning, for the human capacity for self-transcendence." An adapted version of Dr. Lamm's remarks was published on the October 14 Op-Ed page of *The New York Times*. That piece, "A moral Mission for Colleges," stirred discussion around the nation as religious and educational leaders pondered Dr. Lamm's views.

Dr. Lamm assumed the role of a moderating force in Jewish tradition by urging on the various branches of Judaism a code of civility and mutual respect that does not entail a compromise of principles.

Within the Community

Considered the "Father of Modern Orthodoxy" in America, Rabbi Lamm was founder of the Orthodox Forum, an international think tank of outstanding Modern Orthodox thinkers. The Forum publishes its proceedings in an annual volume; some 18 such volumes have been published to date. At the same time, he founded the Orthodox Caucus, a group of Rabbis and lay leaders to help solve the practical problems faced by the Modern orthodox community.

In honor of his 80th birthday the university founded the Lamm Legacy – which, among other things: placed on the Web the over 800 sermons he preached during his 25 years in the rabbinate.

As a community leader, Dr. Lamm is active in many educational, religious, and humanitarian endeavors. He was a director of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; a trustee-at-large of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York; a member of the Halakhah Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America; a charter member of the Board of Governors of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists; a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Zionist Youth Foundation; former chairman of the New York Conference on Soviet Jewry; and former chairman of the Board of Education of the Manhattan Day School. He is former chairman of the Advisory Board of Yavneh (National Religious Jewish Students Association), and a member of the Advisory Council of the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Publication Society of America. In 1978, he was elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Friends of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. In May 1988, he was appointed by Governor Mario Cuomo of New York to be a member of the five-member State Ethics Commission, which is charged with monitoring compliance with the state's ethics laws.

In November 1978, he was appointed by President Carter to the President's Commission on the Holocaust, to advise on an appropriate memorial in the U.S. to the memory of the six million Jews killed during the Nazi era. In 1976, Dr. Lamm became chairman of a public committee which successfully fought the extradition of Eliah-Ephraim Jhirad, former Judge Advocate General of the Indian Navy. Jhirad, an ardent Zionist and anti-Communist, was being sought by the Indian government for alleged misappropriation of funds, and it was widely believed he was the victim of political persecution.

Honors and Awards

Dr. Lamm received the Abramowitz-Zeitlin Award for Religious Literature in Jerusalem in 1972. The same year was designated an "Outstanding Educator of the Year" in the U.S.

He was awarded the honorary Doctor of Hebrew letters degree by Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois, in 1977.

In 1999, he received an honorary doctorate from Gratz College in Philadelphia

In May 2009 he was awarded a Honorary Degree by Israel's Bar Ilan University.

In 1979, he received the Katz Prize for the application of Halakhah to modern life. The ceremony took place in President Chaim Herzog's home in Jerusalem, and was attended by Israel's chief rabbis.

At the 1986 annual meeting of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), Dr. Lamm was awarded the Corning Glass Works Higher Education Leadership Award.

In December 2000, Dr. Lamm was awarded the 12th Jerusalem Prize for Communal and Spiritual Leadership. He was cited for his advancement of Torah Umadda and groundbreaking guidance of generations of Orthodox Jewry in America.

A Man of Action

Upon assuming the presidency, Dr. Lamm took on the monumental task of reexamining the institution's total operation to explore the future of the University. In one of his first acts as president, he established the Presidential Planning Commission, an eight-member board of distinguished educators from outside the University, overseeing a number of task forces in the various disciplines, with committees consisting of representatives from the University's academic and service units. Dr. Lamm has brought a new cadre of administrators to the institution, effected a consolidation of University resources, and has sought to unify various inter-related programs and services.

During Dr. Lamm's tenure as president, the University was part of a dispute that resulted in one of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decisions. In 1980, the Court upheld a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit that faculty members at Yeshiva University are managerial personnel under the National Labor Relations Act and thus are not able to engage in collective bargaining. The case, *National Labor Relations Board vs. Yeshiva University*, was the first involving collective bargaining in higher education to reach the Supreme Court, and the Court's decision set a precedent in such cases.

Dr. Lamm led Yeshiva University during a period of troubled finances that threatened its very existence. On June 14, 1980, a debt-restructuring plan went into effect—a plan in which Yeshiva University was called upon to pay \$35 million by February 2, 1982. Dr. Lamm organized a special campaign to raise the necessary \$35 million. Although most observers thought that such a drive surely would not succeed, the money was paid on time. On February 2, Dr. Lamm presented a check for \$35 million to David I. Eyles, chairman of Chemical Bank's Credit Policy Committee. The historic presentation was viewed by New York Governor Hugh Carey, the Hon. Herbert Tenzer, chairman of the University's Board of Trustees, and many other friends of the University. After making the presentation, Dr. Lamm said: "The private sector must know that it is absolutely indispensable to the survival of higher education. Government must learn very quickly that it has pushed universities as far as it can, and that, if its policy of reduction continues, no private or corporate philanthropy will be able to save higher education as we know it or ever put Humpty Dumpty together again."

On the day that the \$35 million debt was paid, Dr. Lamm also unveiled a six-point plan to help ensure financial stability and expand and intensify the academic offerings of the University.

After that historic day, the leaders of the Century Campaign moved on to seek \$65 million more by the University's 100th birthday in 1986. This \$100 million drive was successfully concluded at the Centennial Hanukkah Dinner on December 14, 1986.

In recent years, Dr. Lamm has initiated the *Torah Umadda* program, including an annual publication, the *Torah Umadda Journal*, enhancing the understanding of and sensitivity to the University's unique mission, thus lending greater coherence to the institution as a whole. As an important step in enhancing academic excellence in the undergraduate schools, he founded two Honors Programs, one at Yeshiva College and one at Stern College for Woman.

From 1990 to 1992 he founded two organizations dedicated to the enhancement of Modern Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Forum is a think tank that convenes illustrious scholars from around the world to explore themes relevant to contemporary life. Eighteen volumes have been published so far (2008). The Orthodox Caucus, an action-oriented group, is composed of leading laymen, rabbis, educators, and scholars to promote the moral, spiritual, and legal welfare of the Jewish community.

Among his academic achievements for the University was the founding of four additional *kollelim* including a *Kollel Chaverim*, a course of graduate Talmudic studies for advanced students who do not intend to pursue studies leading to formal ordination as Rabbis; upon graduating, they receive the Chaver title.

Dr. Lamm was invested as president before some 3,000 persons at the Wilf Campus on November 7, 1976, in a colorful ceremony that included a number of outstanding academicians and government officials.

He presided at his first commencement June 8, 1977, standing, as it were, in the same place where he had received his bachelor's degree nearly 30 years earlier. In 2001 he informed the trustees of his desire to step aside from the presidency, and the board invited him to stay on as chancellor. The change of office took place in June 2003, with the election of Richard M. Joel as president. Chancellor Lamm presented the medallion to President Joel at the latter's investiture in September 2003.

Dr. Lamm was married on February 23, 1954, to the former Mindella Mehler. They have four children: Mrs. Chaye (David) Warburg; Dr. Joshua, married to the former Rebecca Stern; Shalom, married to the former Tina Senders; and Mrs. Sara (Mark) Dratch, and 17 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

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