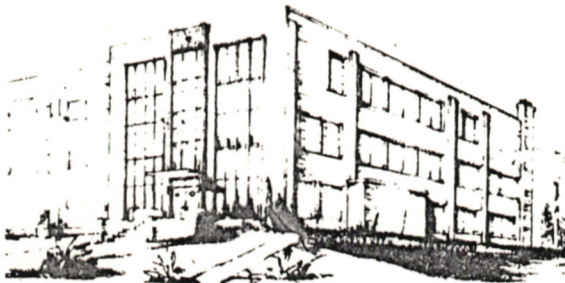


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Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, President
Yeshiva University
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Dear Norman:

Please forgive the delay in responding to your communication to me with reference to the address you delivered at the Fifth Avenue synagogue. I had been out of the country and so had you. I trust it is not too late to make the following comments.

I cannot disagree with you in the substance of your thinking and I certainly share many of the sentiments expressed.

I do, however, find two points which I feel I must make. First and most importantly, I think that by using the adjective "Centrist" we are giving the impression that we are not as committed to Torah in the same manner and with the same enthusiasm as those who are perceived to be to the right of us. I emphatically deny that this is so. There may be various approaches to the ultimate goal of Torah living but it is as legitimate as the next. In my recent Sermon at the OU Retreat I made that point very emphatically. By referring to the name "Centrist" we are giving the impression that we are less committed and less worthy, which we are not. I grant you that I have no suitable appellation for what we stand for but I do feel that we are giving the impression. If, for example, someone maintains we need not drink *hal' 2sn* exclusively because there are *q'm' 7* then I can certainly accept it, as indeed I do. If, however, someone will say I do not use *hal' 2sn* because I am "Centrist" then we already are putting ourselves on the lower level of observance. In other words, if what we do is within the framework of halacha then we cannot be left of Centrist, right of Centrist or Centrist and it would make little difference. What I do feel very strongly is that by giving ourselves such a name we are creating the impression that we are only "Centrist".

The second point with which I would disagree refers to your description of Conservative and Reform Rabbis as being valid religious

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leaders though not legitimate. To the plain ordinary folk such a distinction I believe does not carry much meaning. In fact I do not believe that we ought to say that they are valid. If we mean to imply that in a realistic way and from a pragmatic standpoint they are perceived by their congregations as their Spiritual Leaders then we ought to find some way in which to say so without ascribing to them any validity at all. From my perception they are not valid at all, even though I meet with them, talk with them and sometimes agree with them in certain areas of Jewish life especially as described by the Rav in his well known guidelines.

Other than that I believe you have expressed my feelings beautifully, adequately and I hope you will not be unduly disturbed by some of the attacks directed at you which recently appeared in certain columns of the Anglo-Jewish press.

With kindest regards,

Most sincerely,



Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld

FS:ph