

End Of An Era, Or A New Beginning?

Yeshiva University President Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm Ponders The Future

Editor's Note: Next summer, YU President Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm will officially retire from his post, but will still be directly involved in the educational process at the world renowned institution. Below is a biographical sketch of the erudite scholar. Next week, *Jewish Press* editor Steve K. Walz will unveil a fascinating multi-part interview with Rabbi Dr. Lamm.



Rabbi Norman Lamm

Dr. Norman Lamm, elected president of Yeshiva University in August 1976, 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.

A Tradition Nurtured In America

Dr. Norman Lamm has brought to the presidency the vigor of Jewish tradition nurtured on American soil. Born in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, N.Y., 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 his skills learned in the laboratory when, as a student, he 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 the bachelor of arts degree *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 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 on 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 and was affiliated with the Center since 1958.

He was also the rabbi of Congregation Kodimoh in Springfield, Massachusetts, from 1945-58, and assistant to the Rabbi at New York City's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in 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 efforts at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, where he was visiting professor of Judaic Studies in 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 edition appeared.

His latest book, *The Religious Thought Of Hasidism: Test 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* was published in 1990. The volume is a provocative meditation on the University's cornerstones of learning, providing overviews of such giant Jewish thinkers as Moses Maimonides, Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Abraham Isaac Kook, and then elaborates his own views based upon an extrapolation of Hasidic concepts.

In 1998 he 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.

Dr. Lamm was presented with the 1991 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, *Halakhah 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 which 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 contempo-

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rary 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 a Jewish ethic of leisure. A second revised edition appeared in 1986.

In his first book, *A Hedge of Roses: Jewish Insights into Marriage and Married Life* (1966), he calls for a return to the traditional rules regarding marital intimacy as a means for reversing the trend toward an increasing number of failed marriages. Since 1966, it has been published in seven editions, three in the U.S.A. and one in England, and translated into Hebrew (2 editions), Russian and Portuguese. Dr. Lamm is also co-editor of *The Leo Jung Jubilee Volume* (1962), *A Treasury Of Tradition* (1967), and *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 associate editor of *Hadarom*, a journal of Jewish Law.

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 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 evidenced 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 1986, 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 moderating force in Jewish tradition by urging on the previous branches of Judaism a code of civility and mutual respect which does not entail a compromise of principles.

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.

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Ida Pearl & Paul - add script book 6 weeks to my children Tzibby & Hannee done