

Ben Gallob

Sept. 12 1973

statement to Jewish Telegraphic Agency from Rabbi Norman Lamm

I am opposed to the ruling on woman as members of a minyan on both Halachic and non-Halachic grounds. I see nothing wrong and everything commendable with women accepting on themselves additional observances which are Halachically obligatory only upon men. However, such voluntary assumption of responsibilities does not transform the act into one of Halachic obligation. Therefore a woman who prays with a minyan every day is certainly praiseworthy but since her act lacks the quality of obligation, she cannot be counted as part of a minyan. To maintain that this in some way bespeaks a patronizing attitude to women is to raise a false issue. Of course there are problems but this is not one of them and certainly not the most important one. Insofar as extra-Halachic reasons are concerned, it is for the good of the Jewish community, the Jewish family and especially Jewish women that the fundamental patriarchal structure of Jewish society be maintained and continued. This does by no means imply that we are unalterably opposed to an enhanced role for women in society in general and in the Jewish community in particular but I am not quite ready to abandon a form of social and familial structure reflected in the Halacha which has stood us in good stead for 3500 years because of the pressure of cultural fashions.

###