

Carney/4-12-88/to Dr. Lamm

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Dear Rabbi Lamm, *Carney*

Thank you for entrusting to me the advance copy of the booklet. I hope you will not infer from the paucity of criticism that my reading has been perfunctory. Most of the themes are, in fact, familiar from your earlier presentations. They, like the ideas that I had not previously heard from you, are impeccably articulated. Minor comments of an editorial nature--phrases that sound better than they read, asides that would best appear as footnotes--I have indicated in the margins of the MS.

One point of substance regarding our heshbon ha-nefesh: I think that you underestimate the extent to which the Right will allege, not without basis, a slackness in our midst with respect to everyday kiyyum ha-mitsvot, recitation of brakhot etc. (See, in this context, David Berger's comments in the Tradition symposium of 1981.) When I think of people to my Left, I think less of writers like Yitz Greenberg than of many baalei bayit whose lack of passion does not stop at discouraging their kids from becoming klei kodesh.

There is, of course, another side to this. Our community has also been willing to welcome the nominally Orthodox and semi-Orthodox into our schools and shuls. If we are compromised by the laxity noted above, it is because we do not make such people uncomfortable in our shuls, and because we do not check the tzitzit of every applicant to a day school. (I am informed that at least one prominent Yeshiva ketanna in Brooklyn declines the patronage of children one of whose parents graduated Yeshivah of Flatbush!)

A Rabbi I respect recently asked me whether I would not be happier if YU were more elitist religiously in its recruitment policy: that way I could be sure that our students all manifested the ideals I would want them to project. I explained that our outlook discouraged both rigid separation from the more ambiguously committed and the creation of an overly protective hothouse environment for those within our walls. Insofar as the Right is often prone to hold us responsible for the failings of such members and students, I think it is incumbent upon us to make clear our own approach on these matters.

Again I regret that I cannot justify your sending me the essay by finding something to be disagreeable about. I hope these limited comments, and the marginal notes, will be of assistance. I'm sure that the published version will have a healthy influence on our community and trust it will command the respect of those who differ from us.

Respectfully,
Carney
Shalom Carney

P.S. Would it be correct to say that we differ from the Right in our attitudes to women, their education, social horizons etc.?