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Editor

THE JEWISH PRESS
2427 Surf Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

I have just completed a re-reading of Mr. Arnold Fine's column in the April 23rd issue of THE JEWISH PRESS in which he records his impressions of daily life in the State of Israel. George Bernard Shaw once said that, "It is easier to be critical than correct." This piece is an apt illustration of that comment.

Now, Mr. Fine's considered impressions after his visit to Israel are harmless enough when only he admires mini-skirted hostesses or food that reminds him of Moskowitz and Lupowitz (sic) or the old Arab quarter in Jerusalem that, miracle of miracles, reminds him of a James Bond movie. It is even harmless when Mr. Fine's sensitivities are offended by the rudeness of an assortment of Israeli characters that include one cab driver, two Hassidim and three nurses. Indeed, the whole business would be entirely harmless if only because it comes across as gossip dignified by newsprint. I have no fear that the Israelis will recoil in horror from Mr. Fine's broadsides.

Why then do I take the trouble to comment in response to this article? Simply this - Mr. Fine has slandered one of the finest hospitals Jews have ever had and has denigrated an Orthodox institution which has consistently brought glory to Yiddishkeit. He entered the doors of Shaare Zedek Hospital and all he saw were filth and horror - and sickness! - and nurses that did not pay him the emergency attention that he needed in order to have a blood test for his child. Mr. Fine's unsophisticated insight, his superficial understanding of the workings of a hospital, his ignorance of Israeli medical care, have led him to malign something which is magnificent, and to stab with a pen that which is called "The hospital with a heart."

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I know this to be true because I had a somewhat more frightening experience than Mr. Fine, when as an apparent heart victim the ambulance carried me in the middle of the night to the old, wrinkled mother-arms of Shaare Zedek. I lived in Shaare Zedek Hospital for two weeks. A team of eight doctors visited me day and night. The nurses were paragons of personal care and concern. The floors were washed twice daily. The attention a patient received at Shaare Zedek is equal, if not better, than that which one can receive at some magnificent, spanking new hospitals. And it is Orthodox - blissfully Orthodox.

Mr. Fine's repetitious line that all he saw was "filth and rudeness" leads me to believe that he was in such a hysterical state that he saw only blackness. In any case, does not even the most spotless home become upset and disheveled at times of great stress?

Further, even if Mr. Fine's description were true, would he not better have been advised to write directly to the hospital instead of venting his spleen in jaundiced journalism? And even if these statements were true, and Mr. Fine was simply compelled by an inner vindictive force to pen this gossip in THE JEWISH PRESS, would it not have been decent of him to conclude with a suggestion that we send more funds to the American Committee for Shaare Zedek to help build its projected new hospital?

This whole dismal piece raises in my mind the specter not of the "Ugly American" but of the "Ugly Jew," who expects people to cater to him because he is an American - or worse, because he is an Orthodox Jew. In his clumsy effort to be cute Mr. Fine has succeeded only in being coarse.

Very sincerely,

MAURICE LAMM

Rabbi, Hebrew Institute of University Heights

Director of Chaplain Personnel
Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy
National Jewish Welfare Board