

37
13 Massapoag Lane
Sharon, Mass. 02067
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Dear Rabbi Lamm,

I want to commend to you Meyer Levin's new book, "The Obsession."

For a long time, the tastemaking literary media in the United States have been in the hands of Jewish critics who are uniformly assimilationist in attitude. In recent years their control has become increasingly all-inclusive. Their put-down of works having positive Jewish content is regular and systematic, and not governed by objective literary value. Disclosure of this situation, at least to the Jewish community, is a necessity. The facts that Levin brings to light are only the tip of a very nasty iceberg. But his book is a superb beginning, and the first to throw any light on this subject at all.

This is not hallucination or fantasy on Levin's part. It is quite real. When you have read the book I should like to send you further corroboration.

Members of the Jewish community have wondered for years why the "best" Jewish literary work in America is uniformly derisive in its attitude toward Judaism. The more sensitive may even wonder why even Tevye had to be given an assimilationist twist in the final scene of "Fiddler on the Roof", in which marriage to a goy supposedly heralds a new era of understanding.

Only last year I received a copy of a speech by the new chancellor of the Conservative seminary, in which he gave praise to all the very authors who are striving to consign Judaism to limbo. I can only assume that he did this out of innocence, in the assumption that the critical community is non-political.

We will not change this situation until the Jewish community itself acquires a greater level of sophistication. Today's critical cliques do in fact stem from a Marxist background going back some three decades, and every popular work is screened from an assimilationist viewpoint. It is not by chance that Herman Wouk is reviewed by Granville Hicks, a former member of the Communist Party, and consigned to the back pages.

Until we do become more sophisticated, the impact of Judaism on the American literary scene will be confined to bagels and jokes, despite the fact that we are exceedingly active in the world of books and that we claim to have a mission worth taking seriously.

I do hope you can look at this book as soon as possible. The put-down it will receive in the press is, of course, predictable.

Warmest regards,


Myron S. Kaufmann