

December 6th, 1961.

Rabbi Norman Lamm
Jewish Center
131 West 86th Street
New York 24, New York

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

As usual, my husband and I were very much interested in your sermon last Saturday morning. We feel always stimulated by your messages, except that we sense a certain aversion to Zionism every time you touch on the subject of Israel.

Motivated by your call to the worshippers to speak up when they feel a wrong has been done, I am encouraged to take the liberty of commenting on your remarks in synagogue last Saturday morning.

In the course of your sermon you criticized Ben-Gurion for choosing to spend his vacation to "meditate" in a Burmese Monastery. You implied that thereby he was betraying his own religion and setting a bad example for his fellow Jews.

I am afraid the facts as presented were rather misleading because they were not given in the right perspective. This is especially unfortunate, as many of your congregants may not be au courant with the events leading to Mr. Ben-Gurion's action. You undoubtedly know that the coming sessions of the United Nations will deal with the Arab refugee problem and that these will be trying days for Israel, which will be subjected to a heavy barrage of attacks from all sides. You are also certainly aware that Israel has few, if any, friends. Mr. U-Nu, who is a personal good friend of Mr. Ben Gurion, is perhaps the only true friend Israel now has. He has invited Israel's Prime Minister to be his guest, and as he has chosen to become a priest, his invitation was naturally extended to his Monastery. The present Acting Secretary-General, Mr. U-Thant, is, as you know, a Burmese, and Mr. U-Nu, though withdrawn to his Monastery, still has great influence on the representatives of his country and has earned the respect of many neutral countries.

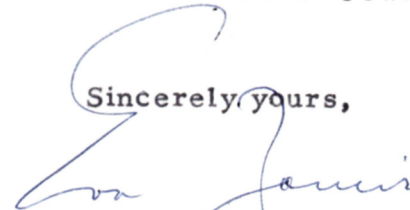
While the real reasons prompting Mr. Ben-Gurion's acceptance of the invitation to Burma would not, of course, be stated publicly, it seems obvious that he is not going for the purpose of "meditating" or alienating his G'd, but rather in the interests of his people, trying to plead their cause. He is not an observant Jew and will certainly not become a religious Buddhist. And referring to your comparison with President Kennedy, there is no doubt that if America

was in danger and he felt that a visit to the President at Yeshiva University could help avert a war, he would certainly not hesitate to go there.

When you developed your theme of "speaking up" bemoaning our "unheard voice" at the time of the Hitler atrocities against our fellow Jews and all humanity, my husband and I felt sure that you were about to let your voice be heard on the recent arrest of Jewish religious leaders in Russia. I must admit that we were quite shocked to witness instead this ill timed and unjustified criticism of a man - even though we may disagree with his religious and political outlooks - who is probably the most sincere, idealistic, and devoted Jewish leader alive today and who has only Israel's well being at heart.

I remember having learned that our Torah teaches us never to judge a person unless we have been in his place. Though I wholeheartedly approve of the preaching of "Mussar", I feel that in these troubled times we must strive not to breed unnecessary hatred in our own midst, but endeavor to encourage harmony and better understanding by underlining, rendering more beautiful, and thus arousing enthusiasm for, the positive values in our rich Jewish heritage.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mrs. Michel Zamir", written over the typed name.

Mrs. Michel Zamir