

24. 12. 69.

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

I trust you are well. I have just come back from the I. U. J. F annual conference at Carmel College to which I went as a delegate for L.S.E. I learnt from one of the delegates, who is going to the W.U.J.S seminar in Helsinki, that you are also attending to give a lecture. I hope that it will stimulate creative discussion amongst the students, many of whom are not committed but greatly concerned with what Jewish identity really means & involves. ~~and~~ I personally feel that it is this type of student ^{who} has so much potential if one can only get across to them.

In connection with this theme I was told the other day that in Gateshead ^{Yeshiva} they tell their p'NIN that p'NIN? I'd they must avoid 2 things like the plague: 1) "and university." Both are "like dry rot" - once it sets in it is impossible to eradicate (sic). It seems that thought, whether it be religious or secular, is a danger to the faith. This attitude confirms what I felt instinctively during my Yeshiva days - that outside the confines of Theonomy, the Litvish Yeshiva world has nothing of value to say to the outside world. All they can do is make affirmations and declarations of faith and belief which on analysis demonstrate intellectual shallowness. Any objective observer must agree that they ^{have} made an important contribution to Orthodoxy, but they have failed abysmally in showing that 277 is aiming at NIN'E. All cultural/intellectual activities are taboo as are NIN'ON and philosophy. How can there be communication with the outside world with such a narrow ^{blinkered} approach?

Now to the topic of this letter. I hope you will be patient with my style. I do not take any particular stand but try to develop a train of thought, then reflect & discuss it as I go along. To be honest I haven't yet disentangled exactly how I feel. I hope you understand.

Freedom + Commitment.

We Jews are natural champions of justice and freedom. Having ^{really} suffered so much for so long, it is these values which we ^{cherish}

and appreciate.

But granted freedom from external foreign persecution, what national freedom do we want to allow within our own רָשׁוּעַ ? What would modern Jews, who have a commitment to רָשׁוּעַ living in a relatively free ^{western} world, like to believe?

I am sure we would like to believe in the integrity of man; that everyone has his individual task to perform in this world. Each man is an אִישׁ . The ideal is the well balanced personality which has developed to the best of his/her ability $\text{הַיָּשׁוּעַ הַיָּשׁוּעַ}$. The פְּסָקִים explains that פְּסָקִים is so called because the noun is linked to פְּסָקִים - which has a tremendous ^{מַשְׁפָּט} And lastly one should be true unto one's own self - to one's true Self.

However, what is the רָשׁוּעַ approach? It seems to me that רָשׁוּעַ initially ^{+ essentially} is a heteronomy. It lays down a comprehensive pattern of living. There is a good reason for this at the level of social law - without law, anarchy would prevail. A developed system of law and ethics based on a valid sanction of belief in God and His רָשׁוּעַ is much more likely to preserve the fabric of society. Even at this level the רָשׁוּעַ would like the heteronomous nature of the רָשׁוּעַ to be internalized and become more and more autonomous. The latter state, however, is never the true sanction for obedience.

But in one's relationship with God - which is a personal activity - why does the רָשׁוּעַ tell us so dogmatically what to do. Not all מִצְוֹת are ^{merely directly aimed} ~~directed~~ at moral perfection (as Hirsch seems to indicate), at the disciplining of the animal in man. Surely at the higher level מִצְוֹת are a means of expressing our true love for God, as a response. (The Ten at the end of דְּבָרֵינוּ) Especially פְּסָקִים are the greater expression of love for the אֱלֹהִים — פְּסָקִים מִצְוֹת פְּסָקִים

Yet we see that the רָשׁוּעַ forces a Jew to keep every מִצְוָה however personal it may be. The transgression of the slightest מִצְוָה is punished with מִיתָה . With מִצְוֹת the אִישׁ can use questionable forms of "persuasion" until a person "voluntarily" says $\text{אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה כְּכָל דְּבָרֵינוּ}$. Of course the idea is that all מִצְוֹת should be done

from 27K and potential punishments are really meant to be of a ~~detter~~ deterrent effect (27N was rarely carried out) But, without being presumptuous, is such a comprehensive Divine dictatorship necessary or advisable? At a deeper level life is meant to be a process of ^{not} learning, experiencing and becoming more and more free. ~~From~~ turns of base licentiousness but ^{similar to} what Jung calls individuation. The 27J approach seems to be inhibitory and averse to the maturation of an integrated personality.

Cardinal Heenan, the head of roman catholics in England, said recently that the greatest strength of the Catholic Church is its insistence on ~~obedience~~ authority, dogma and submission to it. Also E. Fromm in his 'Fear of Freedom' ~~suggests~~ discusses authoritarianism and although some of his observations are obvious oversimplifications and generalizations, makes the valid point that there is a certain psychological type who will find it very satisfying to submit to authority. E.g. the Germans love to ^{be} regimented. Surely the submission to 27J may be easier for a certain type of Jew but for others may be seen as a great obstacle + liable to stunt true development.

But, on reflection, need the 27J be viewed from this negative perspective? The regimen of 27J can be seen as stepping stones not stumbling blocks. One needs a discipline for eventual creativity and true freedom of expression. I know this from my own experience of playing the violin. Many years are spent mastering the techniques of fingering, bowing and reading music. When one actually plays a piece of music, however simple, one is literally obeying scores of rules: the exact notes, the scale, speed, type of bowing, intonation and pressure, accents vibrato and different variations of sound — all simultaneously. At a more advanced level there is the problem and challenge of interpretation and there is tremendous scope for different temperaments. E.g. Toscanini's interpretations are coloured by his Italian vivaciousness, while Klemperer is more Germanic and stolid. Yet both have exactly the same score. Throughout their lives the great musicians attempt to improve and deepen their interpretation of the old masters.

beautiful, send him
a warm feeling picture

Truly live in an age of $\rho(x) \propto x^2$. Koester labels it 'The Age of Longing', and Anden 'The Age of Confusion'. With mass mechanization and increasing aspiration for material affluence we tolerate and admire our status seekers, hidden persuaders, pyramid climbers and organization men. Even the social sciences are becoming dehumanized when they keep talking about social/economic engineering. Perhaps Torah discipline should be rammed down the throats of modern man to prevent him from committing physical and spiritual suicide and falling into the abyss of animal paganism.

Yet, if this is the situation of secular man, which is recognized by many responsible and serious thinkers, why does this not lead them into the arms of organized religion? A post-grad from Chicago at L.S.E. confided to me after Samuel Lewis' sermons (which have been extremely successful and each twice monthly sessions have lasted on average for about 3-4 hours as opposed to the planned 1 hour) "I admit that in the states Reform Judaism is decadent, ^{but} in my experience orthodoxy seems to me to be obsessively rigid — I don't know, to be honest, which is worse." There is an element of truth in this observation.

What is it that deep down worries me? I believe wholeheartedly in a commitment to NIJN 271p. Every ideology accepts that people are different and that there cannot be complete conformity in every thing. The solution is that there must be an uncompromising basic commitment to certain values — beyond that everyone must be allowed to develop in their own sweet way.

I have read enough about political theory not to accept that democracy is ~~not~~ the ideal system or the panacea to the humanity's ills. But I cannot work up any enthusiasm for a Theocracy. I would ~~be~~ prefer to live in England where there are accepted values and a person is left to develop his own potentialities. I would have some misgivings about submitting to politicians who claim a direct Divine sanction for everything they do. The root of my feelings is that ~~I~~ present day orthodox rabbis are suspect in my eyes. I don't think they are really concerned with the integrity of man's

freedom, but only with their narrow understanding of God's will. (Of course, this can be explained and justified on many grounds, but I don't wish to enter into polemics) They explain that a person is only free who occupies himself with the study of תורה which they interpret literally, with tremendous logic and argument, as only + exclusively as the study of the folios of Torah literature and good deeds. I doubt whether this is true or even practical. Surely פירוש חזקוני תורה means that man should, in whatever he does, try and hide within a spiritual dimension. For the Jew he has a particular Jewish way of חיים תורה and thus he does not remain earth-bound.

Let's face it 271 is a comprehensive ideology. Our rabbinical leaders are human not infallible supermen. If they had political power in a theocracy they would crush any slight aberration at any level, no doubt quoting chapters and verse. Admittedly, at present, this is an academic point. When the A'N comes perhaps everyone will be so nice and sweet and man will live in complete amity and serenity. Nevertheless, I think anyone who is deeply committed to a 271? 212pl must realize the implications of the 271 discipline. I feel I would be suffocated in a 271 state.

This aforementioned point was brought home to me when I read a letter in Tradition Winter '88 by a Jeffrey Silver in which he criticizes your article 'Faith + Doubt'. I know nothing about the writer but he seems to me to be very spiritually arrogant. Obviously he feels very secure because he displays a ^{width}~~breadth~~, if not depth, of learning and can quote the relevant passages in good, modern articulated English. He doesn't seem to realize that there are people who are more spiritually sensitive than himself; who have experienced the mental hell of the dark night of the soul⁺, who are terribly aware of man's existential crisis; who are extremely doubtful that things are all nice, bright and beautiful but predominantly evil + good. (Kierkegaard "The 'happy' man is not curious") This is initial human situation. One's task is, as J.B. Marion explains so poetically, in ~~being~~ ^{being} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~world~~ ^{world}. JNK is not something static

