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Rabbi Lamm
please answer this
JL

Rabbinical Council of America
New York 11, N.Y.

Sir:

I have obtained from you a reprint from the Spring 1959 issue of "Tradition." The reprinted article is entitled "Separate Pews in the Synagogue." Having read it carefully, I have some questions. On page 159 I quote you saying ".... In congregations maintaining separate seating, it is usual to hear the worshippers worshipping, each addressing God at his own rate and his own intonation and with his whole individual being. Do we ordinarily hear such davening at the Temple? Is the mechanical reading in unison and the slightly bored responsive reading and the deadly silent - meditations - is this davening." First of all, I would like to say I generally agree with your defense of mechitzah by using harshness. In the few sentences I quoted there are some matters I disagree with. First of all, in Orthodox synagogues a worshipper usually cannot pray at his own speed but is greatly speed up by the very fast moving cantor. Second, I think in Reform and Conservative congregations, where people (some) do not understand and read Hebrew, I think it is very useful to have responsive and unison readings where everyone can understand and participate. Thirdly, and last, isn't it in the Halakhot that one is supposed to say the Amidah ("silent ^{meditation} ~~meditation~~") to himself as Hannah did it in the book of ICHME (first book + first chapter)? Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,
Carl Hoffman