

ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

RABBI ISAAC ELCHANAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
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**An Open Letter to Dr. Norman Lamm by the Faculty of RIETS**

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

The controversy over the gay-lesbian groups in some of the graduate and professional schools of Yeshiva University has besmirched the name of our yeshiva and caused us untold embarrassment in addition to offending our most basic moral values as believing Jews. We have refrained from significant public comment heretofore because we hoped some way might be found to avoid further desecration of the good name of the yeshiva in these matters, but unfortunately that has not happened.

In an article you were commissioned to do for the *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook-1974* on "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality," you wrote:

Judaism does not accept the kind of thoroughgoing relativism used to justify the gay life as merely an alternate life-style...Under no circumstances can Judaism suffer homosexuality to become respectable...Clearly, while Judaism needs no defense or apology in regard to its esteem for neighborly love and compassion for the individual sufferer, it cannot possibly abide a wholesale dismissal of its most basic moral principles on the grounds that those subject to its judgments find them repressive....In remaining true to the sources of Jewish tradition, Jews are commanded to avoid the madness that seizes every society at various times and in many forms while yet retaining a moral composure and psychological equilibrium sufficient to exercise that combination of discipline and charity that is the hall -mark of Judaism.

We subscribe to these sentiments today as surely as you did then, and we are certain, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you do too. We are pleased to know that you reconfirm all you have written in the above article and that these remain your opinions today as well.

While we appreciate that legal restraints, and certain untoward consequences that may flow from any actions you may want to take to rectify this situation, impel you to refrain from any formal action, we feel compelled by our conscience and by our role as teachers of Torah to make our feelings and opinions known to the public at large and we ask you to explore every possible avenue to obviate this blemish.

Notwithstanding the fact that these gay-lesbian organizations attract very few people on campus and that the university gives them neither support nor recognition, we regard their very existence as distinct groups an offense against all that we and the institution stand for. We cannot accept, and indeed we unambiguously deplore, people gathering to proclaim their defiance of the Torah's injunction against homosexuality, part of the divine moral code that has guided Western society for three and a half millennia. What Judaism tells us is an abomination should find no welcome in our institution and, indeed, in any academic institution which retains even a minimum commitment to morality.

We wish it to be known, therefore, by our students and by the community at large, that we deplore and condemn the continued existence of these gay-lesbian groups at some of the graduate and professional schools of Yeshiva University. We bear no animus towards any individual as such, but we firmly reject the notion that responsible moral people should organize themselves around a principle of patent immoral behavior. Wherever Torah is taught and cherished as it has been throughout the ages, there the spirit of קדושה (holiness) must prevail, and a defiant homosexuality is antithetical to such an atmosphere.

May the Almighty grant healing wisdom to a world so very much in want of it, and may all mankind turn to Him in love and devotion. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord even as the waters cover the sea? (Isaiah 11:9).

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