

12/14/61
RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

HYacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
7th of Teveth, 5722
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. Chaim Yakob Lipchitz
168 Warbarton Avenue
Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Thank you for your letter of December 10th. I particularly appreciate your candor, which indicates a ^{hope} closeness as well as a confidence, and at the same time enables me to reciprocate in kind. I therefore hope that you will not take amiss my pursuing the subject of our recent correspondence further, inasmuch as it is a matter of public ^{concern} and of the highest order. After all, Jews are characterized as a "stiff-necked" nation, which means that Jews have the gift of perseverance and tenacity. Moreover, I feel that some points may not have been adequately covered in my previous letters.

^{reference on the spot.} First, however, let me refer to the point which you make regarding the apparent discrepancy between the ban on "graven images," and the existence of the Cherubim, Lion, Ox, and other likenesses in the Beth Hamikdosh. Surely, if there had been any discrepancy, there would have been some ^{explanation}, since the commandment against graven images and likenesses, as well as the commandment to make the Cherubim on the cover of the Holy Ark, are to be found in the very same Book of Moses. Similarly, King Solomon, who built the Beth Hamikdosh and included the said likenesses, could not have overlooked the possibility of a discrepancy. Nor would the Jewish people have accepted it, while at the same time carrying on a fight to eliminate the influences of idolatry of their neighbors, a fight which they carried on for hundreds of years after the erection of the Beth Hamikdosh. I cannot go into the explanation of the apparent discrepancy which you question, since the explanation can be found in the authoritative commentaries who deal with it and adequately explain why the Cherubim, etc., did not constitute any kind of conflict with the commandment against graven images, etc.

The reason I brought up the point of Aelia Capitolina is because the Roman Empire knew well that the most deadly blow it could deal to the Jewish people was to convert Jerusalem into a Roman city of idols, hoping that what they could not achieve ^{even} by the destruction of the Beth Hamikdosh and the annihilation of hundreds of thousands of Jews, they could accomplish by this measure aimed at the very heart of Jewish belief and religion.

Needless to say, I fully agree with you that the Torah is not confined to a body of laws and statutes, but contains also spiritual enlightenment, etc. Indeed, as my father-in-law of saintly memory

often emphasized, the Torah embraces the whole life of the Jew, from the moment of his birth to his last breath, and it is called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life, in the sense that it is both a guide to the good life and also the source of life and expression of the living Jewish spirit. Within the framework of the Torah, therefore, there is ample room for such expression. As a matter of fact, which I believe we touched upon in our conversation, in the case of the majority of your works of art, there is no conflict with the Second Commandment, since they express symbolisms and ideas which are not incompatible with the Torah, and only a small proportion of your sculptures are subject to question in the light of the said Commandment.

The argument that the works of art represent a sublimity, etc., is irrelevant in this case. I can only illustrate this by a hypothetical case, such as if anyone would suggest to bring a Ballet into the Synagogue on the day of Yom Kippur, just before Neilah, on the ground that a Ballet is a source of sublime inspiration, etc. Whatever the merits of the argument, the "incongruity" is all too obvious. *For the same reason (and others) even symbolique sculptures have no place in Jerusalem, the only city called ירושלים - This is City.*

it their City and
I must apologize for repeating myself, but I cannot refrain from emphasizing again the fact that the Holy Land is universally recognized as Holy, even by non-Jews, and within the Holy Land, the City of Jerusalem is called the Holy City. Millions of Jews still regard the City as holy, and pray daily for the return of the Shechinah to Jerusalem. This means that all these Jews are intimately associated with Jerusalem and consider ^{at least} to have a personal stake in it. Therefore, how can any individual, regardless of his own personal feelings, completely disregard and hurt the feelings of millions of others, all the more, in a matter which is of such sanctity and of such vital concern ^{at least} to them? Obviously, the fact that the present government there endorses the project, does not in any way change the situation, for Jerusalem is the property of all Jews throughout the world, and no individual or group of individuals can impose their will upon others in a matter of such vital importance, regardless of the good intentions and motives.

your mother
Knowing you personally, and having met ^{at least} already in Druskany, I feel confident that you will not want to be a party to such an unholy assault on the most sacred principle of our religion. I cannot imagine that you should want to have a part in it, however remote, especially to permit yourself to be the very center of this whole thing, and allow the work of a lifetime, with which you are so intimately identified, to become the tool wherewith to inflict such a grievous wound in the most sensitive feelings of our people.

As we have recently celebrated Chanukah, I cannot by-pass the message of Chanukah, which has such a direct bearing on our subject matter.

Mr. Chaim Yakob Lipchitz

-3-

7th of Teveth, 5722

For Chanukah recalls not only a battle for political freedom and independence, but mainly a battle of cultures. The Greeks wanted to introduce their culture and way of life into the Holy Land, claiming that there was much beauty in their art and sports which should supersede all other considerations. The Jews, however, resisted this with their very lives, and now we can see that of the ancient Greek sculptures there are only remnants in museums and the like, while the Jews are still very much a living nation, and their values have retained their eternal aspect. Yet in those days there were a number of prominent individuals, even among the Jews, who argued in favor of the Greek ideas against those of ours. But the Chanukah lights that we kindle to this day, which illuminate the Jewish home, serve as a perennial reminder of the vital issues, and the message is still very timely.

I hope that you will reconsider your position in the light of the above, and may G-d grant you many happy and healthy years to serve the cause of traditional Judaism by using your Divinely given gifts to strengthen the eternal values of our people, in full harmony with the Torah, along the lines which we had occasion to discuss.

With kindest personal regards, and

With blessing

M. Schwartzson