

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT 06457HOWARD
NEEDLER

College of Letters

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Thursday 3rd March, 1983.

Dear David,

I have just read "The Response," and quite over the unconscionable time it took me to do that cannot dampen my enthusiasm for it. In your skilful evocation of the rabbinical "ambience" and application of it to questions of voice and text you remind me of Edmond Jabès.

Both the internal and external dynamics of the play seem to me admirably conceived and orchestrated — although I confess to finding the scribbles final barrage of questions rather too shrewd and insistent. The craving for "voice" seems to me profoundly characteristic, not only of the unexpressed inner logic of response literature, but of post-Mishnaic Jewish repentance generally. You no doubt are acquainted with the untranslatable Jewish par for the bat qol, the "daughter of a voice" through which the divine mind sometimes chooses to express itself to the world.

Reading your play made me realize that we have a shared interest in the "dialectic" of voice and silence. I am going to send you a copy of a recent essay of mine that I think displays some tangency to the concerns of "The Response."

The play gave me so much pleasure that I'd like to try the indulgence of keeping it a few days more, to see if Willa can find the time to read it too. But whether she can or not, I'll send it back to you next week. Thanks so much for letting me see it.
Regards to Susan.

Best wishes,

Howard Needler

P.S. I wasn't sure if your treatment of shorthand names (Lambert, Roshba, etc.) was meant to be ironic or not. But →

if it wasn't, you may not be aware that these names are simply acronyms. Thus Rambam arises from Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon; Rashi from Rabbi Shimon Yitzhaki. ~~Rashi~~ Rambam would not be possible as an acronym of Rabbi Solomon Ibn Adret, for example, or Rashba for Rabbi Shimon Bunam.

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