

26 December 1968

Menahem:

Last night I listened with shock and disbelief as Ruth told me of your phonecall from Tel-Aviv that afternoon and your suggestion that you would reverse your decision to resettle in Israel by returning here to resume publication of TMO somehow or other. My instant reaction was that you were mad, or a monster, or both. After a sleepless night, I have decided that you are quite sane and that an explanation for your seemingly irrational and capricious actions of the last months must lie elsewhere.

The prospects for continuing TMO are no longer the same as they were when you concluded some three weeks ago that it was a practical and material impossibility to publish even one more issue. The prospects are now far worse. Your establishment has been dispersed, at considerable labor and cost. The printer has not been paid what you owe him and will surely not extend you further credit. There has been a public announcement at a dinner of American friends of Israel of the demise of TMO. Your wife, your daughter, and even your dog have been uprooted and replanted, physically and/or emotionally. Numerous people have gone to considerable pains and expense to ease your departure for a new home or to express their affection and good wishes in farewell celebrations. And after only 24 hours in Israel, without any change in the circumstances which dictated this upheaval, without any trial of the new home or any search for the new challenge, you lightly and blandly suggest reversing and undoing what has been done.

I had mixed feelings when you left to resettle in Israel twelve days ago. I had a sense of loss, mitigated by adjustment to the series of temporary losses of your presence during your several voyages to Israel since June. I also had a sense of liberation, from the shared anxieties and problems of your situation during the last half-year, which threw a burden of worry and even some anguish on your behalf on those close and devoted to you. You are a most forceful personality and you tend to draw bystanders into a maelstrom with you--to create a gravitational field and draw satellites into orbit around you. One must be careful not to be too much consumed, in your private or your professional crises. An atmosphere is created, almost a coercive atmosphere, in which one does not wish to fail you or disappoint you, for one owes so much respect to your strict and incorruptible morality, your scrupulousness, your self-sacrifice. Or so it seemed to me.

Your great romantic agony of recent months, in someone less imposing I would have called a cheap, vulgar, stereotyped self-indulgence by a middle-aged husband whose wife didn't understand him. Your openness about the affair, your insistence on full disclosure, in someone else I would have regarded as sadistic and selfish beyond words, merely the achievement of self-satisfaction and a false sense of honor and honesty at the price of Ruth's terror, grief, humiliation, and agony. Your extravagance--your monetary extravagance--in making repeated trips to Israel, and transatlantic phonecalls to your lady and all the other expenses attendant upon your private preoccupations, in someone else I would have regarded as an outrage and betrayal of those who responded in good faith to your financial appeals, who made sacrifices for the sake of TMO on the assumption that you would demand the same sacrifices from yourself as from them.



In the summer of 1967, my total cash assets came to ten thousand dollars. When you found yourself in a financial crisis, when I heard you almost suicidal with despair, I gave you four thousand dollars, almost half of my total money. If, little more than a year later, it was truly impossible to continue TMO, very well, my money was still for a good cause. But if it was possible to continue TMO and you abandoned it, then I feel cheated of that money, and subsequent smaller sums, and of the effort I made late at night after long hard hours at the office to type numerous letters returning manuscripts to your contributors, and of the labor of lifting and carrying five heavy cartons of your books which now stand around my bedroom. I feel cheated and outraged by the arrogance with which you commandeered effort and coaxed money out of those who trusted and respected you, so that you could indulge yourself in marital and editorial capriciousness and vacillation, in arrogant disregard for the rights, the peace of mind, the welfare, and the sacrifice of others. And I have no trust and no respect for you any longer.

You are right about one thing--that there is an Eichmann in everyone, and that everyone must be on guard against the Eichmann in him. But one can be an Eichmann without the trappings of the real Eichmann, and there are ways to destroy people other than the gas chamber, the club, and the whip. If you do not see the cruelty and the torture you have inflicted on Ruth in the last months, under the guise of sweet reason and conscientious honesty, nothing I say will make you see it.

You have a genius for destroying the love of those who love you. You have also a genius for finding yourself blameless, and for assigning to others all blame and all deficiencies, under all varieties of circumstances, even when you and you alone have made every decision which moved you into disaster. You have managed to lose TMO, and to place your marriage into utmost danger, and to jeopardize your entire future. Only when you face to the full your own responsibility for the situation you have created, only when you cease sapping others of their strength and their rights, only when you become self-supporting in every sense, will you find a way out of your dilemma.