(te•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

EDITORIAL:
A Politics of Meaning Contract with American Families

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1995 $6.00

Bob Dylan: Reclaiming the '60s and the Meaning of the '90s

Nicholas Bromell



PLUS
Mario Van Peebles on the Black Panthers

Mothering and Holiness
Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

Jerusalem United?
Aaron Back & Eitan Felner

Embracing Halakha
Tikva Frymer-Kensky

Sexy Sanskrit
Curt Leviant

American Bombers
Gar Alperovitz

America's Death Penalty
Susan Blaustein

McNamara's Denial
Peter Dale Scott

Honickman's Secret Spices

At Millie Honickman's the pickles float in vinegar and garlic,
Beneath the pickles are the fish. Beneath the fish
is her old neighborhood peering out. Looking into the barrel

it's impossible to guess how many of her people there are.
Outside starlings perch on the ends of dogwood branches
like black candles and their songs are charms of complaint.

Long ago, she says, pickle barrels lined her street. Splines
of oak held in place by iron bands. Old men mixed secret spices
to the sound of Jack Melman's mando-cello orchestra. Old women

carried charms of complaint on their shoulders
like tamed starlings. Fish gleamed on shaved ice. In the street
Motl, Doodles and the other boys played punch ball

or Jonny-on-a-pony or stoop ball or ring-a-levio.
"Caw, caw, ring-a-levio," they would cry out, the others
hidden beneath car chassis like stray newspaper.

Over time the women were widowed and came to wear wool shawls
instead of charms of complaint. The boys moved out to the suburbs
with only a pidgin Yiddish. Everything that once was,

went back to the earth: splines of oak back to the trees,
iron bands back to the soil. Beneath the iron bands
are the widows' husbands, buried with fish eyes in their pockets

for seeing beneath soil, beneath vinegar, garlic, secret spices.
Millie Honickman says, those eyes now see a boat overhead
and it carries new people. They see a drift net

and this net is a world of passing cloud. Above
the floating pickles is the din of the elevated train.
Above the train more starlings, they wear wool shawls.

Paul DuBois Jacobs

TIKKUN

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Letters

Affirmative Action & Triage

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's article ("Affirmative Action and Racial Harmony," May/June 1995) was the first time I'd read anything sensible from the Left about the entire issue. Most of what I've heard from the Left have been charges of racism against anyone who dares think that affirmative action somehow doesn't fit what we were marching for in the '60s. So, what I've tended to do in response to this tactic is to keep my mouth shut in any gathering where this comes up, but meanwhile to eagerly wait for the opportunity to vote to dismantle affirmative action in California, and to show those Lefties that they can't control me. But the whole thing has made me far more angry at the Left than I've ever been.

Gabel's piece helped me see why. I had assumed that my antagonism to affirmative action must have been proof that I was getting more conservative as I got older. But what Gabel points out is that affirmative action has become something very different from what we were fighting for. We wanted a real transformation in the world, not just different faces in positions of power or privilege. What we got instead was an affirmative action program that was designed to advance one group into those positions of privilege. Now, sure, I understand and agree that if the system can't be changed, it's better to have the rewards in the system be fairly allocated, and that Blacks and women had been unfairly discriminated against. But frankly I don't really feel so much better now that my police department in Los Angeles has lots of Blacks in its ranks, or now that the Army has lots of women, or now that there are millionaire women corpo-

TIKKUN (Vol. 10, No. 4, ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly for $36 per year by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619-3002. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Oakland, CA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to TIKKUN, POB 460926, Escondido, CA. 92046. TIKKUN subscribers are members of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health.

Manuscript submission: Do not send letters of inquiry. Become familiar with the kinds of articles TIKKUN prints by becoming a subscriber and regular reader. Non-fiction and poetry: Send to our NY Editorial Office (PO Box 1778, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025; 212-864-4110. Internet e-mail: tikkun@panix.com). Book reviews: Send queries to Michael Kazin, Dept. of History, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016; 202-885-2415; e-mail: mkazin@american.edu. Fiction: Melvin Bukiet, 529 W. 113th, NY, NY 10025. Submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope, or they will not be considered or returned. Our evaluation process may take up to four months.

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Israel office: P.O. Box 10528, Jerusalem 91103; (02) 436 007.

Subscriptions can be placed by calling 1-800-846-8575 or mailing a check or Visa/Mastercard/ AMEX info to: TIKKUN Subscription Service, PO Box 460926, Escondido, CA 92046. $36 for 6 issues, $72 for 12 issues, $108 for 18 issues. Add $13 per year per sub for Canada and Mexico, $16 for all other countries. Subscriptions to TIKKUN are tax-deductible. Please pay for all orders in U.S. funds (including postal money orders) or with checks drawn from a U.S. bank only. Institutional subscriptions: $50 for 6 issues. Limited availability of back issues—call the toll-free number above.

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Articles appearing in TIKKUN have been indexed in *Political Science Abstract,* the *Alternative Press Index, Book Review Index, Index to Jewish Periodicals,* and *Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO);* in *Magazine Index, Magazine Index Plus,* and *Academic Index,* all available from Information Access Co., (800) 227-8431; and in the *Left Index*. 16 mm and 35 mm microfilm, 105 microfiche, and article copies are available from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Audiotaped back issues are available free of charge for blind or visually impaired people at the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc., (212) 889-2525.

U.S. newsstand and bookstore distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior St., Sandusky, OH 44870; (800) 221-3148.

rate executives—none of that has done much to make my life feel so much better, or has done much to make me think that we are on the way to eliminating racism or patriarchy. So I've been thinking that the Right might be right to say that it's time to eliminate those programs, that enough has been done to level the playing field, and that when all these groups continue to demand special entitlements that they are acting out their selfishness. And it wasn't that that I marched for in the '60s.

What I *did* march for was a world based on equality of respect—and I don't see that affirmative action is getting us anyplace close to that anymore. And it certainly isn't getting us anyplace close to challenge what Gabel describes as "the alienation that pervades American society ... the selfishness and individualism that is fostered by the competitive marketplace and that makes the creation of loving human relationships and cooperative human community so difficult."

Congratulations to TIKKUN for being the one place that seems to remember that *that* is what we were fighting for, and that is daring enough to say that it is by that criterion that programs should be evaluated, *including* left-wing programs.

I've waited in vain for other Lefty organizations (like DSA or NOW or NAACP) or Lefty magazines (like The *Nation*, Z, *Mother Jones*, or The *Progressive* to take up your analysis of this point, just as I've waited in vain for them to ever address the whole politics of meaning framework that you've developed. Once again, you deserve enormous credit for asking the one question that no one on the Left dares ask, "What is it that might be rational in the position of people who don't agree with us, or what rational needs underlie their position?" For that alone, you continue to win my respect and support.

Samuel Chaim Kaplan
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

One reason I've always distrusted TIKKUN is that I've always suspected that underneath all your fancy footwork about the politics of meaning there lurked a reactionary impulse—to pander to the racism and sexism of Americans. Now my fears have been vindicated. Peter Gabel's shameful attack on affirmative action under the guise of trying to defend it should fool

Interns for TIKKUN

FALL '95-JUNE '96

Interns perform a full range of editorial, publishing, and business tasks—depending on your interests. They help organize TIKKUN conferences—this year, the **Summit on Ethics and Meaning**, the **Jews and Blacks Healing Project**, and the **1996 Summer Retreat**. They work on building the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, developing TIKKUN's Young Leadership, and helping in the promotion of the magazine's ideas at public events. They proofread and read submissions.

TO APPLY: Write a self-revealing letter about what draws you to TIKKUN, plus a response to the editorial positions of the magazine or to Michael Lerner's *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*. Internships are unpaid, although some year-long interns have subsequently been hired by the magazine. An excellent first step into the world of publishing, an opportunity to make important contacts in the intellectual world.

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Repentance Workshop and Selichot Service

Led by Michael Lerner on Saturday night, September 16, 10 p.m.–1 a.m., Congregation Ansche Chesed, 251 W. 100, New York, N.Y. 10025.
RSVP: 864-8253.

American Politics Update

New York, September 17

A politics of meaning perspective—followed by a picnic

NY area TIKKUN subscribers and/or members of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning are invited to a discussion of the current political situation, led by Michael Lerner, followed by a potluck picnic. Call 212-864-8253 for details.

Michael Lerner's Speaking Schedule

July 3-11: Lerner will teach at Aleph's Jewish Renewal Kallah, Fort Collins, Colorado.
July 17-Sept 5: Lerner will teach and meet with authors, prospective authors, and those interested in building a Jewish Renewal movement in Israel. He will be based in Jerusalem and reachable through our Israel office (02-436-007 or 02-333-780).
Sept. 9-10: Omega Institute. A Jewish Renewal Weekend led by Michael Lerner at Omega, Rhinebeck, New York.
Sept. 16: Shabbat morning alternative service, Torah discussion, and potluck in NYC. RSVP for details. Call 212-864-4110.
Sept. 16, 10 P.M. Selichot Service, NYC. Place to be announced.
Sept. 19: Talk at St. Scholastica College, Duluth, Minnesota.
Sept. 20-21: Talk at U. of Missouri, Columbia.
Sept. 27: Colloquy with Yaron Ezrahi and other Israeli scholars, Jerusalem.

nobody. Here is TIKKUN running away from supporting the central progressive issue of our time.

Gabel's specific proposal for a class-based affirmative action shows me how little he understands the specific nature of racism or sexism in this society. Sure, those who are *most* oppressed are those who are not only women or African Americans, but those who are also poor. But Gabel has no recognition of the fact that racism and sexism are persistent realities for those of us African-Americans who "made it" out of the ghetto and now live in the suburbs and have middle-class jobs (often solely because affirmative action forced corporations to hire some token Blacks to keep up with the trend). Gabel has no idea of what it is like to be followed by a security guard when you enter a department store, or to live with the expectation that any moment you are likely to be stopped and searched on the street by police who find you suspicious because you are Black. Yet it is these kinds of experiences, and hundreds more like them, that contribute to Black youngsters' despair about ever getting out of the ghetto and ever finding security, even when their parents *have* gotten out of the ghetto. The internalization of this despair becomes a constant barrier, making it harder for Black teenagers to concentrate on their studies in school and harder for them to imagine a direct relationship between effort and reward. In short, you can't dismantle affirmative action until you've undermined the whole system of racism, without for sure having racist consequences.

Jeffrey Jefferson
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's brilliant proposal for a class-based affirmative action seems all the more powerful after reading Charles Derber's prediction about the direction of how ruling elites intend to deal with America's surplus populations ("The Politics of Triage," May/June 1995). For years I've heard screams of "genocide" from some extremists in the Black community, to a point where I simply stopped listening. (They were even calling birth control a form of "genocide," so who could take it seriously?) But what Derber describes as the assault on the poor, while not really genocide, comes closest to being a vicious and systematic assault as anything I've ever feared could actually happen in America.

I particularly appreciated Derber's way of showing that a politics of meaning could be linked to a class politics that focussed on economic issues. Till I read Derber I had thought that TIKKUN was asking me to choose between caring about people's economic well-being and caring about their spiritual life. Derber shows that the politics of meaning is an indispensable part of fighting against triage, but it is not sufficient without also speaking to the economic fears of the middle class.

But what troubled me was Derber's supposition that "communitarian politics" might be an answer. When I listen to Etzioni, I rarely hear any willingness to extend his communitarian principles to the point of making serious demands on the corporations or the state for "communal responsibility." I think he is too interested in keeping good standing with the conservatives, and that he feels far better preaching to the rest of us about moral education than to the corporation or to the conservatives about moral responsibility for the poor. Derber would be better off to stick to a politics of meaning world rather than one built around the communitarian movement that recently included Bill Bennett as one of its main speakers at its conference on moral education.

Mark Ramsey
Washington, D.C.

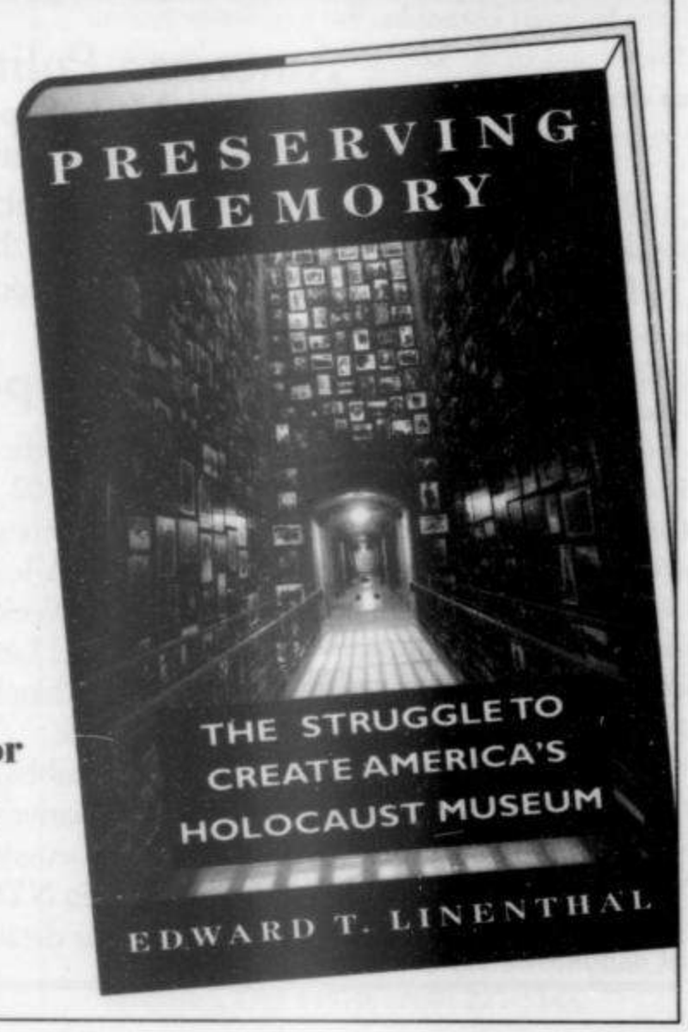
To the Editor:

Orchids to Jeremy Rifkin for his article in May/June 1995 ("Technology and Populism"). Technology aside, we need to lobby for a thirty-hour workweek. Not only would this be a method to create employment, but it would increase the quality of life of the workers whose work week would shrink and thus create more leisure. But alas, leisure is a dirty word to the American worker, and what does the worker care for the jobless? I work for the federal government, for an agency experiencing shrinking staff. Those left are joyous: We now have lots of overtime. The vast majority work a ten-hour day (maximum two hours overtime weekdays) and up to the maximum overtime allowable every Saturday. My coworkers are happy about this. They could care less about unemployment or job creation. Sad.

Ethel L. Murphy
Berkeley, California

The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum

"*Preserving Memory* is a masterpiece. It mesmerizes the reader. Those interested in the intersection between ethnic identity and the American political system will find this story revealing and enlightening."
—Deborah Lipstadt, author of *Denying the Holocaust*



IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM VIKING

The Black/Jewish Dialogue

To the Editor:

Although I agreed with much of what you said about Louis Farrakhan's absolutely outrageous canards on the "Fresh Air" interview by Terry Gross about *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin* that you co-authored with Cornel West, I disagreed with your basic attack.

Farrakhan harms Blacks far more than he harms Jews. For what he has said was that Jews, as a race, tend to be profiteers, bankers, have crucified Christ, and take advantage of Black people. And the clear conclusion of his assertions is that I, as a Jew, do these things and must bear a full measure of guilt for whatever any other Jew has done.

This, of course, is classical racism in its purest form—the application of supposed group characteristics to its individual members. The very same argument he makes for typing Jews is precisely that which has been the basis for racism against Blacks who stand to suffer a lot more from the relegitimation of this kind of reasoning.

Rather than engaging in a dialogue with him, Cornel West and other Black leaders must shun and avoid Farrakhan. For by not doing so, they accept his basic premise. Farrakhan is a racist pig who, ultimately, will do immeasurable harm to Black people.

Peter Rowe
Iselin, New Jersey

To the Editor:

You did a terrific job at Howard University in the face of an audience of African Americans who were challenging the need for any dialogue between Blacks and Jews, rather than responding to the actual dialogue in which you and Cornel West were actually engaged. But I fear that if many Jews watched the recording of that event as it was played on C-Span, they may be ready to throw in the towel on Black-Jewish dialogue.

During your session at Howard, the question was asked, "What's in it for the Blacks?" But if that is the way to think about the dialogue, then many Jews are going to ask, "Well, what's in it for the Jews?" Other than our moral compass, which cries for compassion, fairness and justice—not that that's not enough—but it may not be enough if our outstretched hand is rebuffed with insults and resentment.

If the vocal element in the audience at Howard are the only or loudest voices heard, meaningful dialogue will not find many supporters in the Jewish community. For myself? Well, even as a good Democrat and the child of civil rights marches, I found myself thinking, "well, screw them." I only hope I and others can confine our meaning of "them" to the radical element of the Black community that attacked you that day, and still seek dialogue and political alliances with the rest of the Black community. Keep up the good work!

Stephen R. Silberfarb
Washington, D.C.

Father's Day

To the Editor:

I somehow doubt that David James Fisher's piece "Father's Day" (May/June 1995) is in the spirit of Jewish ethics. The edict to "Honor thy father" is hardly served either by violating one's sick old father's privacy by telling readers about his incontinence or by proclaiming one's skepticism that this father's life is worth the money he had prudently set aside for his own care. As for the sheer brutality of referring to sick old people as "living corpses," would TIKKUN print an article describing AIDS patients this way, I wonder? Or is it only unfashionable groups like the old and ill that the TIKKUN community is ready to denigrate viciously and write off?

Felicia Ackerman
Professor of Philosophy
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

Israel

To the Editor:

Arthur Waskow contends that religious passions caused Goldstein to enter the Hebron mosque and kill Palestinians at prayer ("Out of the Tomb of Abraham," March/April 1995). I disagree. It was not the words of the Book of Esther that convinced Goldstein that the Arabs were Amalek, but the words and actions of Arabs themselves. Baruch Goldstein's life, and the life of his community, friends, and family, were threatened by Arab neighbors. As a doctor, Goldstein treated Jews whose injuries were caused by Arab knives, guns, and bombs.

I do not wish to blame the victims in the Hebron mosque. Goldstein's actions were a crime against all humanity. The Arabs are not Amalekites. Furthermore, the settlers of Goldstein's area have a reputation for being provocative.

It would be false, however, to hold both sides equally responsible for the current situation. The violence of Arab political culture is far more extreme than its Jewish counterpart. More Palestinians are killed by Palestinians than by Jews. The few Palestinian peace activists that exist are totally isolated, and are under constant threat of assassination. Nowhere in the Arab world is it safe for an Arab to publicly proclaim that "Jews are a decent people; we should live in peace with them." There is no Arab equivalent of Peace Now, or even the Labor Party.

The peace process is not possible unless we confront the problem of Arab extremism. I agree with Mr. Waskow's desire to support the peace process by reevaluating our religious traditions. I disagree with the implication that both sides are equally culpable because each asserts a nationalist vision based on religion. The situation is not the same for both sides. The Jews do not threaten the Arabs with extermination. Unless the peace process is grounded in reality, it will not succeed.

William Finn
Givatayim, Israel

Fiftieth Anniversary

To the Editor:

Your editorial on the fiftieth anniversary of the Holocaust came dangerously close to blaming the Jews for their own victimization. I know that it's fashionable these days to talk about "taking responsibility" and to argue that a culture of victimization is often disabling, but aren't you going further in relationship to the Jews then, for example, you would ever dare go in relationship to African Americans and slavery, in whose case you'd never dream of blaming the enslaved for what happened to them!

Reginald Ruthman
Los Angeles, California

Editor responds:

Victim groups often need to portray

(Continued on p. 79)

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

Affirming Neither Action Nor Vision

When the Supreme Court's *Adarand Constructors* decision in June drastically limited the use of race-based affirmative action in federal programs, it seemed to capture the mood of a majority of Americans and illumine the central contradiction of liberalism. When affirmative action seemed to be about creating a socially connected, racially just society, whites who now oppose it supported it. People are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of a cause that allows them to transcend self-interest and feel themselves part of a community of meaning and purpose. But they are *not* willing to make sacrifices if they suspect that what it's really about is advancing somebody else's private interests. "Why," they ask themselves, "should I sacrifice for the sake of these others, when I myself have not been adequately taken care of?"

Liberals continue to communicate the following implicit message: "The normal workings of the market are fair and its outcomes just. It rewards merit. It's only minorities and women who have not had fair opportunities. The rest of you deserve what you got." Yet most white people feel underrecognized and invalidated in the world of the competitive market. This message from liberals seems to say to whites, "You deserve the unfulfilling life you have, but meanwhile we intend to use the resources of government to take care of someone else who really deserves better care." Affirmative action grew out of a movement that seemed to transcend the market consciousness and to affirm a new idealism of social justice. But as social-justice movements seemed to devolve into movements based on special interests, reflecting hostility toward whites or toward men rather than a communal vision that would affirm everyone, right-wing hate-radio hosts succeeded in convincing people that their inability to achieve recognition in this society is a direct product of the degree to which minorities are privileged. And since liberals have been unable to see the pain of most whites, they imagine that the withdrawal of support from affirmative action reflects nothing but underlying racism or sexism.

A similar dynamic defeated health care last year. Americans were willing to pay higher taxes to achieve universal coverage in the context of a vision aimed at overcoming narrow self-interest and forging a society based on social justice. But the Clintons chose a bureaucratic monstrosity over a Canadian-style single-payer plan precisely because the Clintons had decided to build into their program the self-interest needs of health-insurance companies and hospital- and medical profiteers. It is retreat from any larger social-justice vision into a narrow tinkering with the market system that dooms liberal programs, because if we remain stuck within the context of market-generated self-interest, people are no longer willing to sacrifice their material self-interest in the form of higher taxes when they imagine that they are doing so to advance someone else's narrow self-interest. The only practical politics for liberals is to stop being so narrowly practical and return to a vision of communal meaning and purpose that challenges the normal operations of the marketplace and its ethos of selfishness and materialism, and recognizes the way that many white Americans are also victims of a system that underrecognizes and devalues most human beings regardless of race or sex. But don't hold your breath for the Clintons or other liberal leaders to re-embrace a politics of meaning.

Zionist Civility on Parade

Right-wing American Jews. who once labeled as traitors anyone who dared to publicly criticize Israeli treatment of Palestinians ("you don't live there or take the same risks, so you have no right to criticize the democratically elected government") have in recent months reverted to public charges that the Israeli government itself is dominated by traitors because of their pursuit of the peace process.

Violence was almost certain to follow. And that's exactly what happened at a fundraisers' breakfast the morning of the big Israel Day parade in New York in May. Shulamit Aloni, a minister in the Rabin government well known to TIKKUN readers for her courageous support of the Israeli peace process, was addressing a breakfast attended by what was supposedly a "pro-Israel" crowd, when one of the chairmen of the parade itself rushed the platform and physically assaulted Aloni. Aloni is pressing charges.

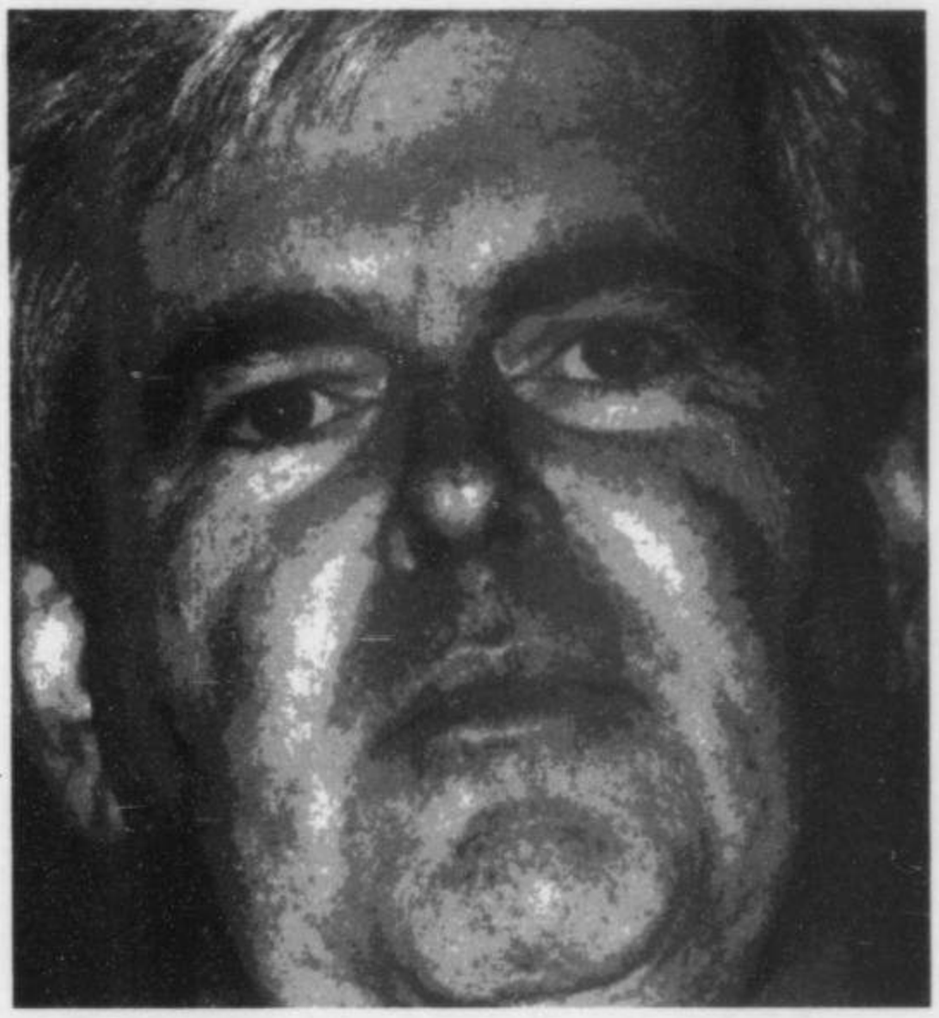
If it had been a peace activist assaulting a Likud gov-

ernment official, the mainstream Jewish media would have echoed with condemnations of this violence. Indeed, all one had to do was to attend a peace rally or sign a pro-peace statement for some people to lose their jobs during the Likud years. This magazine is still unable to gather support from supposedly apolitical Jewish institutions, because we are seen as "radical" for our support of the policies now held by the current Israeli government.

Nothing much has changed. In the face of the attack on Aloni, the Jewish media spent their energy decrying those who were pointing out that the Israeli Day parade, originally an occasion to express solidarity with Israel, had recently turned into a rallying place for right-wing forces hostile to the Israeli peace process. "Save the parade" rather than challenge the right-wing dominance of it has now become the rallying cry. Progressive Zionists are proposing an alternative: Let the youngsters march, but let the definition of the parade change so that it explicitly backs the peace process. A parade in support of peace and reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians is in order. Others, remembering the reactionary leadership of the parade and its refusal to allow members of a gay and lesbian synagogue to march, say that it's time to discontinue the parade entirely lest it further disgrace the Jewish community.

The Jewish Theological Seminary's Gingrich *Shandeh*

Newt Gingrich will be the featured speaker at the Jewish Theological Seminary's Louis Marshall Awards Dinner in December 1995. Last year the speaker was Elie Wiesel. The Seminary will be providing this platform for Gingrich at precisely the moment that the cuts in social supports for this nation's poor will be hitting New York City, most particularly inner-city African Americans. The juxtaposition of these two events is likely to be explosive. Some students and faculty at J.T.S. have protested privately, but Chancellor Ismar Schorsch privately defends his decision by claiming that conservative members of his board felt that because the Seminary had invited Vice President Albert Gore to speak at commencement services in May, it would now be appropriate to allow the highest office-holder among Republicans to speak as well. Protesters have pointed out that Gore articulates environmental values close to those of the Jewish tradition, while Gingrich's assault on the poor runs counter to Torah tradition, and that his choice of a historian of Congress who had opposed funding a Holocaust education program because it did not give adequate space to the pro-fascist position suggests that Gingrich may not be a totally reliable ally for the Jews. Yet in a climate in which many Orthodox Jews have enthusiastically embraced conservative political figures, some leaders of the Conservative movement seem to reason that they ought to respond to the desire of some big Jewish donors whose economic interests are temporarily well-served by the American Right. Conservative Judaism has never officially been connected to political conservatism, and some individuals within Conservative congregations are talking about withholding congregational funds for the Seminary or the United Synagogue until the Seminary withdraws the invitation and repudiates the kind of thinking that led to this choice. Others have called for Schorsch to resign, believing that a more principled leadership might actually do more to raise funds by giving the Seminary a greater likelihood of appealing to the younger Jews who may not forgive it for allowing itself to be identified with the most morally insensitive politicians of our time.



EDITORIAL

A Meaning-Oriented Contract with American Families

Why the Christian Coalition Isn't Pro-Family Enough

Michael Lerner

In May, Ralph Reed, the executive director of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, unveiled its Contract with the American Family, a surprisingly visionless document that failed to articulate any coherent theory of why American families are in trouble. The family crisis is too serious to be used merely as a Trojan horse to push through Congress a potpourri of unrelated conservative political programs, yet that seems to be the immoral game now being played by the Religious Right.

Let's start by acknowledging what liberals and progressives often miss: There really is a problem with family life in America. Many people are fearful that the family—the only societal institution that explicitly has the task of caring for people regardless of how successful they have been in the competitive market—is now in crisis.

In a society in which people have learned to see each other as objects, rather than as embodiments of the spirit of God, people increasingly come to feel that everyone is applying market criteria to personal life, always looking for "the best deal," always ready to abandon any given relationship if a better deal (someone more responsive, attractive, interesting, powerful, empathic, younger) suddenly becomes available. The more unsure people are about their "exchange value" on the market, the more they worry about the possibility that their own relationship will fall apart and they will be in a far more difficult position. Unlike the elegant lifestyle liberals who seem to have endless opportunities for new relationships and hence have seemingly little fear of divorce, many Americans feel that their lives would be much worse off if their marriage were to collapse. The freedom of endless opportunities for new relationships that liberals seem to celebrate actually feels to many of the "less elegant" set as endless opportunities for rejection, loneliness, and pain. No wonder they resonate to hate radio and its demeaning of these liberal lifestylers.

When the Christian Coalition speaks about families in crisis, Americans hear that someone is addressing their needs. They may not ever focus on the details of the Contract with the American Family, but they get the message that the Right cares about what is happening to them in their personal lives while the Left only cares about some constitutional principles protecting the rights of individuals to make choices that seem unavailable or remote from the actual lives of the American majority.

The Right points out that the family crisis in America is based on an excess of selfishness, and the Left's excessive focus on individual rights only plays into and strengthens people's desire to put their own individual needs above the needs of any community or any family to which they belong. This inability to commit to a "we," argue some right-wing theorists, forms the rotten core of liberal culture, contributing to the weakening of relationships in general, and to families in particular.

On this last point, the Right is at least partially correct. American society does suffer from an excessive individualism, a narcissistic focus on one's own needs and desires without regard to the needs and desires of others.

But the Right now makes a destructive and hateful move by suggesting that that ethos of selfishness has been caused by special interest groups (African Americans, feminists, gays and lesbians, Jews, immigrants, labor, etc.) using liberal big-government programs to pursue their own selfish needs. And so the Right proposes to dismantle government and put power back into the hands of the states and local governments (often implicitly reminding people of the good old days before the labor movement, the civil-rights movement, and the women's movement were able to use federal power to win rights and protections that they were powerless to win on the local level).

What the Right conveniently fails to notice is the powerful impact of the economic marketplace in fostering a materialistic and cynical worldview, rewarding as wise men those who have been most effective in making a buck, while insisting that sophistication is measured by the amount one can manipulate others for the sake of maximizing one's own wealth and power. It is a worldview that marginalizes love and ridicules spiritual and ethical concerns.

Yet family life is strongest when it is embedded in a

community of meaning (e.g., a religious, national, or political community) that reflects some higher ethical and spiritual purpose. Within such communities, relationships are often focused on how the family might contribute its energies to some higher good, and that higher good, while often connected to the economic survival of the community, usually involves some shared ethical or spiritual values.

When communities of meaning break down, or when they become little more than reflections of the materialistic and individualistic ethos of the market, individual relationships increasingly carry the burden of providing essential meaning. For many, the couple's happiness becomes the meaning of life.

Few individual relationships can fulfill that purpose, and this often leaves people feeling deeply dissatisfied with their families or other loving relationships. They imagine that others are getting their meaning needs met in such relationships and that it is only their own individual failures that have kept them from finding similar satisfaction in their own families.

The Religious Right has exploited this pervasive anxiety, correctly telling Americans that it is not their fault that their family life feels jeopardized, that the blame belongs instead to liberals and the allegedly selfish special interests (who are actually the groups who have been most trampled by the selfishness of a racist, sexist, and materialistic competitive market). Many Americans respond with gratitude toward the Right and anger toward these demonized groups.

The Left is unable to respond effectively to all this because the Left doesn't understand that the hunger for love and for meaning and purpose stems from legitimate needs that are being daily frustrated in American society. That's precisely why we need a politics of meaning that can speak to these same needs yet provide a progressive alternative to the Right's analysis.

From the standpoint of a politics of meaning, a society that rewards people for their selfishness should not be surprised that it faces a crisis in families.

A society that rewards people in the world of work for their ability to manipulate and control others should not be surprised that it has fostered a narcissistic personality incapable of sustaining long-term committed, loving relationships. A society that makes work unfulfilling and alienating, and promotes a meritocratic ideology that encourages people to blame themselves for having this kind of work, will produce people who feel too burned out, depressed, or angry to have a lot of energy for their families.

Any pro-families program that doesn't challenge the many ways that the world of work and the psychic impact of the competitive market have on undermining families is going to be more rhetoric than reality. To be seriously pro-families we must challenge the "bottom line" consciousness fostered by the market, with its privileging of money and power and its implicit message that "looking out for number one" is the goal of life and that caring about others is a concern only for the naive person.

The democratic Left has pointed out that families suffer when they don't have enough economic support, child-care, and health-care benefits. Yet we all know that the crisis in families is as likely to afflict people in affluent suburbs as people in the poverty-stricken inner cities. To the extent that they are unwilling to question how liberal culture might participate in the same excessive individualism and narcissism and materialism that is fostered by the market, liberals will never be in a position to seriously address the breakdown of loving relationships and families.

Moreover, liberals tend to think of "private life" as the sphere in which people ought to seek meaning. Their task is finished, they seem to believe, once they have guaranteed to each individual the opportunity to pursue his or her own path freed from any external imposition. But this picture neglects our deep need for others, and our need to be embedded in a larger framework of meaning and purpose.

The Right seems to be wiser when it notices that our individual lives cannot be complete when we live in a public world that is devoid of larger purpose and meaning. The technocratic and value-free version of public space that was created by the liberal state, complete with impersonal bureaucracies and an injunction to hide one's own real identity in public lest it offend those who are different, is correctly protested by the Right. Yet the Christian Coalition's solution would in effect reimpose Christianity on the public sphere—and that is no solution. Those of us who grew up in a world before Supreme Court decisions protected us from forced recitals of "The Lord's Prayer" and forced participation in Christmas pageants and schools dominated by Christian symbolism have no desire to return to that kind of a world, in which our identities had to be denied in order to be part of public space.

What we need, instead, is something new and complex: a public sphere that is meaning-friendly, but one that does not impose a particular system of meaning. How to build that is precisely one of the tasks we've set for ourselves in the creation of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. But we need a way to transform the values of the market, and to create a new bottom line in America, one that rewards institutions and individuals for ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity, one that refuses to grant the title "efficient" or "productive" to

institutions that tend to create narcissistic individuals incapable of sustaining loving relationships.

Because the Christian Coalition's Contract with America has almost nothing to do with challenging the ethos of selfishness and materialism, it would do little to alleviate the real crisis in family life. Some conservative theorists have interesting things to say about the breakdown of the family, but this document is lifeless, formalistic, narrow in conception, missing the energy that an underlying vision could bring. Here is a classic instance in which the Right merely uses the issue of family rather than seriously addressing it. It recycles some of the traditional conservative agenda and cynically claims that this will strengthen family.

The Right's Contract

If you look at the details of the Christian Coalition's Contract, its failure to live up to the Right's own best ideals becomes clear.

1. A constitutional amendment to allow people to celebrate their religion in public spaces. It is irrelevant to challenging the ethos of selfishness and materialism and will do little to strengthen families. Moreover, the kind of religion that would likely result from moves such as a moment of silence in schools, the reintroduction of Christmas, and other religious behavior into public space—like the kind of religiosity that flourished there before Supreme Court decisions barred it—would be a curiously lifeless form of public religion whose consequences would be to further the secularization process within religious forms. The fiery intensity of religious experience and the compassionate connection between human beings that is one of the best aspects of many religious communities would almost certainly be lost in most of these public-square religious observances. Far from making the society more religious, these observances are a disservice to God and undermine authentic spiritual life, replacing it with cheapened public showmanship.

2. Transfer of funding of the federal Department of Education to families and local school boards. The Christian Coalition endorses a U.S. Department of Education report that parental involvement in children's education results in higher student performance. But it then blames the lack of involvement on bureaucracies and administrative costs and federal restrictions. The claim is ludicrous on its face. Underlying the Right's concern is that federal standards have encouraged the development of curriculum that includes the experience of women, Blacks, and other minorities, as well as the placing of the U.S. experience in the context of world history. Yet understanding that America has been racist or sexist does little to undermine families. What liberals have failed to do is to help people understand that they need not feel personally critiqued when we acknowledge the reality of societal racism or sexism. A critique of sexism and racism need not imply a critique of the value of the lives of the majority of Americans—most of whom already feel critiqued enough simply by their failure to have "made it" in the economy, to have work that feels meaningful, or to have families in which they feel fully respected, recognized, and secure.

3. Legislation to enhance parents' choice of schools. There is much to be said for some form of school choice, if and only if it were class-weighted in ways that gave working people and the poor the same economic power to get high-quality schools that is now available to upper-middle-income people. If, for example, there was a sliding scale based on disposable income after the basic food, shelter, and clothing needs had been met, so that poor people might be given vouchers ten or fifteen times that of upper-middle-income people, we might have a fair system. But none of this would help alleviate the ethos of selfishness. The introduction of a marketplace in educational opportunities, while desirable for other reasons, would probably further erode the kinds of social solidarity that contribute to family support.

4. Enactment of a Parental Rights Act and defeat of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is the Right's attempt to protect the sanctity of individual family life from those who would scrutinize it with "external" standards, like concern about physical or sexual abuse. Our society has only recently begun to consider how widespread that abuse is. Rather than challenge the distortions in daily life that create a society with so many physical or sexual abusers, the Right effectively protects the abusers behind the screen of family privacy. From our standpoint, the Christian Coalition proposal represents the real threat to the needs of families and allies it with the sickest and morally most obnoxious realities of American society.

5. Family-Friendly Tax Relief. Under this rubric, the Christian Coalition calls for a series of measures that pro-family progressives also support: tax relief for families with children, eliminating the marriage penalty, and allowing homemakers to contribute up to $2,000 annually toward an IRA, thereby providing equitable treatment of spouses who work at home.

6. Freeing states to limit funds for abortions. While we at TIKKUN support abortion rights, we also understand some of the legitimate concerns raised by the Catholic Church and other anti-abortion activists (though we are also aware of the hypocrisy of many who care about life only until the fetus is born, then manage to lose concern when the child moves into poverty induced by current class-oriented economic and social arrangements). The

Right makes an important point when it questions the way liberals have defended abortion by placing the decision entirely in the realm of "individual choice," as though individual choices had no consequences for the rest of the society and as though we were accountable to no one but ourselves and our own desires. While we oppose the Right's attempt to legislate these issues, we do believe that liberals have too quickly reverted to a highly individualistic framework in defending abortion rights. Seeing ourselves as isolated monads possessing rights and entering into relationships with others through voluntary contracts—the exact model suggested by the theorists of capitalism—has contributed to the breakdown of loving relationships. So while we oppose the Right's paradoxical attempt to bring the state into personal life, and believe that choice needs to be protected (particularly from those who would coerce or bomb abortion clinics out of existence or penalize doctors who perform them), we also think that the liberal world should be crusading for voluntary restraints on abortion, creating an ethos which goes beyond the "it's nobody's business but the woman involved" and which sees abortion as a kind of tragedy which may be appropriate in some circumstances but which should be dealt with as a tragedy rather than as "business as usual." While rejecting the Right's attempt to impose state control, we also ought to seek to create an ethos in the society that mourns the too-frequent need for abortion, and see that as a reason to speed societal changes that would make those abortions less necessary. Most women are already deeply conflicted and in much psychic pain when they undergo abortions. The appropriate attitude is not to make them feel guiltier. But it would be appropriate for the rest of us to mourn each time such an abortion is performed, and to see it as a further impetus to work for change of a society that made this choice seem the most plausible one to the woman involved. This attitude of collective penance is very different from the judgmental and recriminatory attitude of the Religious Right but also from the laissez-faire attitude of many liberals.

7. Enactment of legislation to enhance contributions to private charities as a first step toward transforming the bureaucratic welfare state into a system of private and faith-based compassion. This is a valuable direction. Every citizen should be allowed to donate $200 of his or her federal tax obligation to any nonprofit with a total income of less than $20 million (this prevents these choices from being totally manipulated by the wealthiest institutions, who can buy television time to convince people to donate to them while making smaller community-based institutions invisible). But while it's a good idea, it will do little to undermine the larger ethos of selfishness or to support family life.

8. Restricting pornography. A good idea, though it should not be accomplished by big government legislation, but rather by market pressures. But even if we had no pornography, family life would still be in deep trouble.

9. Privatizing the arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Legal Services Corporation. This has absolutely nothing to do with families, and is opportunistically tacked on to the Contract.

10. Crime Victim Restitution. Funds given to states to build prisons should encourage work, study, and drug-testing requirements for prisoners in state correctional facilities, as well as requiring restitution to victims subsequent to release. Again, this has nothing to do with the problems facing families, though we support some of these notions.

A Meaning-Oriented Contract With American Families

We do not want government to be the vehicle for the pro-families agenda we propose, and when we talk about families we mean to include single-parent and homosexual families as well. Read our Meaning-Oriented Contract with American Families as a guide to what we need to accomplish in civil society, developed through grass-roots activities, not by the imposition of big government.

1. We promise the American people a campaign to reduce the total selfishness and materialism in society by popularizing a new "bottom line" in America that evaluates productivity of institutions by the degree to which they tend to produce human beings capable of sustaining loving and caring relationships and capable of ethical, spiritual, and ecological awareness and action. We demand of every corporation, governmental agency, and other major societal institutions that they produce a yearly "ethical impact report" that assesses the degree to which their activities, products, and mode of operation tend toward the creation of loving and caring relationships (and we insist that employees of these institutions, together with the public that receives the relevant goods or services, be participants in shaping this report without fear of management reprisals). We seek to publicly honor those who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual life of the community, and those who have dedicated their lives to caring for others.

2. Harnessing the technological advances of the computer-age, we advocate reducing the number of working hours for each individual to a thirty-hour work week, redistributing work so that everyone is employed, and

(Continued on inside back cover)

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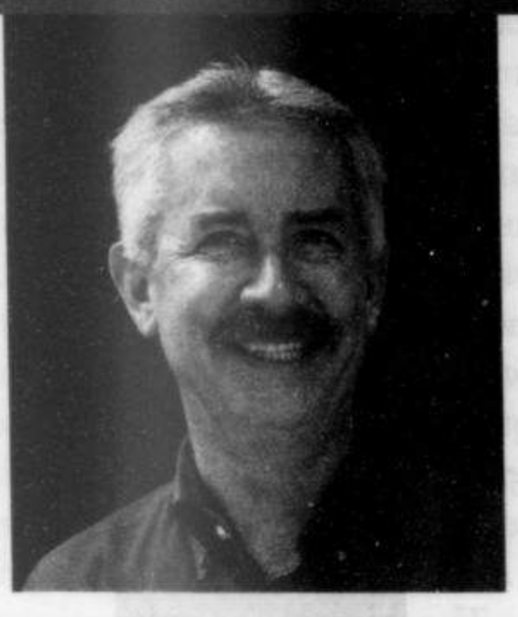
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Both Sides of Bob Dylan

Public Memory, the Sixties, and the Politics of Meaning

Nicholas Bromell

The "politics of meaning" is at first a speech act, a three-word phrase calling us to renew democracy by inventing a new language of politics. This language would enable us to better articulate people's changing rights and needs, and to give voice and shape to their inchoate desires; it would also link these new claims to older and more familiar ones for which we already possess a legitimated (though now outworn) political language.



RENÉ CARSON

The process of re-imagining what counts as a legitimate political statement, or even word, requires a deep faith in words themselves, in the power of renewed words to make possible new imaginings. It requires an even more strenuous hope, assailed from within by self-doubt and from every quarter by cynicism, that new imaginings can help make possible sustained political activity on behalf of justice. There is seldom an empirical warrant for this hope; only rarely can we trace a manifest chain of cause and effect from writer to readers to such political events as elections or legislation. The political efficacy of words—and of art, music, and all other cultural productions—is usually indirect, intricate, and invisible. For this reason, we will always have with us numerous critics who clamor for "specifics," who claim that actions speak louder than words, and who regard the search for a new political language as utopian. Perhaps the most potent of these critics is the one we each carry within us.

Given these impediments, it is not surprising that we have difficulty sustaining our belief that by talking about the meaning of politics we might realize political change. But the problem is intensified excruciatingly for anyone whose hopes were raised, and then seemingly dashed, by the political and social movements of the 1960s.

If the prevailing public memory of the '60s is to be believed, no other moment in history has so conclusively proved that cultural ferment produces negligible political consequences over the long run. If the public record is true, the '60s constitute a powerful moral fable about the futility of restructuring democracy by re-imagining political life and language. *We can change the world. Flower power. The personal is political. Make love not war.* In the age of Reagan and Gingrich, these phrases echo tormentingly.

As one '60s rock band after another sells the music of "the Revolution" for use in beer, boots, jeans and car commercials, the political devolution of the era feels unbearable. We respond with a reflexive gesture of demeaning—by shrinking further within the protective shell of ironic acquiescence. We adopt an attitude that makes hope and action impossible.

Thus, it seems that the politics of meaning has two good reasons to steer clear of the '60s. First, if public memory of the '60s is accurate, that moment in history proves the folly of hoping that a cultural reimagination of the scope and meaning of politics can produce sustainable political action. Second, today's most prevalent cultural memories of the '60s force one repeatedly to admit the naiveté of one's former hopes—an admission that takes the form of a worldly shrug, not a clenched fist.

To these historical and psychological reasons for the

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politics of meaning to avoid the '60s, we must add a third, purely pragmatic, consideration. Again and again, the political Right chooses to attack the politics of meaning by associating it with the construction of the '60s that prevails in public memory. For those concerned with the politics of meaning to write about the '60s, or to explore with an open spirit the complex and repressed meanings of that decade, would seem both irrelevant and unwise. Yet this is precisely what we need to do.

We must recover and recreate for ourselves the meanings of the '60s in order to break the cycle in which disappointed hope breeds a cynicism which in turn becomes the cause of deeper disappointment. The political and social movements of the '60s were a revolt against such cynicism. Their "failure" is not so much a testament to their inadequacy as an indication of the power with which the social and political elites of the 1980s and '90s have distorted and controlled the public record of the '60s. (See Edward P. Morgan on "Mass Media and the Sanitized Past," TIKKUN, September/October 1994.) Therefore, despite the many risks entailed, we must also recreate in public memory alternative understandings of the '60s which do justice to the complexity of that historical moment. These understandings will remind us of the moral ambiguities and perpetual open-endedness of history, which in turn will help us maintain and legitimate a belief in the possibility of a renewed democracy.

The Italian political activist and theoretician Antonio Gramsci once defined "crisis" as a condition in which "the old is dying and the new cannot be born"—an aphorism that seems perfectly to describe the plight in which liberalism, Left politics, and democracy find themselves today. The old alliances and compromises, the old ideologies and assumptions, don't work; new ones are needed and cannot be born. But perhaps the reason they cannot be born is that the relation between old and new, past and present, is not quite so clear and distinct as Gramsci's formula suggests. Perhaps the new cannot be born until it brings a part of the old back to life. Perhaps the new must acknowledge that it has a history, however embarrassing a history, before it can constitute itself in the present.

Some people will object that the movements of the 1960s provide an object lesson of what can go wrong when political discourse is contaminated with personal feeling. Others will argue that the "Sixties experience" was primarily a white, middle-class phenomenon and cannot possibly serve as a basis for a coalition politics in the 1990s. And still others will claim that any move to recover the '60s is mere "nostalgia" and "sentiment," an escape from, rather than an enrichment of, political will.

There is a measure of truth in each of these positions. But I do not think we should allow them to silence us. The aim, after all, is not to fix and freeze the meaning of that decade. It is not to promulgate one narrow view to the exclusion of others. And it is not to celebrate mindlessly what was certainly a confused and confusing historical moment. The aim is to begin a process of opening up the 1960s as something more than a caricature of itself. It is to create a space within which divergent recollections of the period can meet and recognize each other.

Shared memory does not mean one memory. It means being willing to bear witness with full awareness that one's witnessing is idiosyncratic and contingent, not representative and necessary. Indeed, it is principally in the act of bearing witness in order to create shared memory that one turns the "inner" realm inside-out and in so doing creates the public realm itself.

In what follows, I examine the phenomenon of Bob Dylan, partly for the obvious reason that Dylan was an important force in the '60s, but also because he stands in a tradition of American artists who have tried to forge a language that fuses the political desire for justice with the personal desire for self-fulfillment. This tradition extends at least as far back as Thomas Jefferson (epitomized in his decision to include "happiness" as a self-evident right), and it includes, among others, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Jacobs, Walt Whitman, and the blues idiom. To locate Dylan in this tradition is to see that the problems of American democracy have always included the problem of "meaning." The underlying struggle of American civic life has been to determine which kinds of meaning will surface and define the vocabulary of politics. And it is to see the 1960s not so much as a millennial apocalypse, or as an expression of the contradictions of late capitalism, but as a recommitment to the hope of integrating public politics with an individual's private search for meaning.

At the level of political theory, the most formidable obstacle in the way of a politics of meaning remains the ironclad distinction between public and private spheres. Although feminist historians and critics have demonstrated that this distinction does not inhere in the nature of things, but is a product of history and human will, many philosophers and political theorists continue to regard it as an absolute. They argue, in effect, that the word "politics" must have a restricted scope, referring only to the realm of public actions, debate, and institutions, not to the private, inner world of the individual, since we have no business judging the performance of political institutions by the desires of the inner life. And they believe that it is a mis-

take to export the vocabulary of personal feelings—words like "love" or "despair"—to the public realm of political discourse. In a roundtable discussion in these pages (TIKKUN, September/October 1993), for example, Harvard political scientist Michael Sandel categorically declared that "love is not a political term," and that its use in political discourse betrays a confusion of "the moral and ethical dimensions of politics with sentimental or psychotherapeutic dimensions."

Perhaps the most influential advocate of this view that public and private speak two languages is the philosopher Richard Rorty. In numerous articles, addresses, and books, Rorty has argued that there is no way to unify the public and private because there is no objective or universal set of principles (Truths with a capital "T") against which their sometimes competing claims can be measured. There is no "comprehensive, philosophical outlook" that would "let us hold self-creation and justice, private perfection and human solidarity, in a single vision .... The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange."

Consequently, Rorty's "liberal" who abhors human cruelty is also an "ironist," both because he acknowledges that the language of values through which he speaks in hopes of restricting cruelty is not universally accepted, and because he is conscious of an unbridgeable split in his being. The meaning he pursues for his own life can find neither expression nor encouragement in the politics he espouses. Irony is the pose of one who has settled for less than hope.

Conversely, what characterized the '60s more than anything else was its theatrical assault upon the public/private dichotomy, its insistence that "the personal is political." The political mind of the 1960s, whether male or female, Black or white, regarded the distinction between public and private as a calculated attempt by the "establishment" (itself a new and useful word) to enforce a separation between politics and people. The political mind of the '60s saw very clearly that the opening gambit in the struggle for power is to define (or redefine) what constitutes legitimate political language. For example, because the establishment recognized the legitimacy in political discourse only of such terms as "economic opportunity" and "national security," the case for equal access to quality education could not be made simply in its own terms (with education taken as an end-in-itself), but had to be framed as a logical corollary of the right to economic opportunity. Similarly, the case against the war in Vietnam could not be made in terms of humanity or even imperialism, but had to be articulated also in terms of national security.

Civil rights and antiwar activists recognized the need to play this game; they worked very hard to advance their causes within the terms of a political discourse that rigidly separated personal feelings (e.g., the anger and humiliation of discrimination) from public values. But if activists had employed only the old language, we would not have had the widespread cultural disturbance we know as "the Sixties." That disturbance was sparked and spread precisely by a creative discontent with the norms and forms of conventional political discourse.

Not only new words, but attitudes, gestures, and the expressivity of the human body were deployed in the effort to enlarge and enliven what people could communicate to each other about their political ideas and aspirations. The establishment's insistence on controlling public discourse backfired; the rules of usage were simply brushed aside. American culture rediscovered the possibility that people (not just gray-suited politicians and uniformed policemen) could inhabit the public sphere. When they did so, they brought their personal needs and feelings with them. Culture was politicized and politics was personalized.

Although no philosopher or political scientist, Bob Dylan is as concerned as Rorty or Sandel with the relation of private to public, of self to history, of imagination to politics. When I write "Bob Dylan," I do not mean that particular flesh-and-blood person; nor do I mean the sum total of his works. I mean the composite figure created when we put these two together with the act of listening to his songs. This Bob Dylan exists when the music is on and a person is in the room, listening.

What this Bob Dylan has to say about the renewal of democracy and the relation of the private to the public sphere cannot be read directly from his words. Nor does he bury a hidden message beneath, or within, the manifest meanings of his lyrics. Rather, his songs are best understood as a resource used by listeners to sort out their ideas about such matters. Dylan pushes forward certain moods, attitudes, stances, and his listeners have an opportunity to try them on for size.

Dylan consists of enigmas and puzzles within which both artist and audience dwell for a time, experiencing both the thrust of the need for meaning and the check of the impossibility of certitude. ("She knows there's no success like failure, and that failure's no success all.") The meanings of Bob Dylan (and, I believe, of all popular culture) are essentially latent, to be understood as potentialities rather than as determinants of meaning. They do not cause the listener to articulate certain propositions in the mind ("the relation between the public and private is such and such"), but they provoke

the listener to experience one or more such relations.

Bob Dylan might well recognize himself in Rorty's portrait of the liberal. Dylan seems to have been driven almost from the outset by a sharp and ever-intensifying vision of human suffering caused by human cruelty. Preoccupied with affairs in the public sphere, the songs on his first three albums, released between March 1962 and August 1963, call one to see and judge. There is a sickness in the state. There is a cancer at the heart of our democracy. Who killed Emmett Till? Who shut down the West Virginia coal mines and destroyed the communities that depended on them? This early Dylan makes clear that these problems of democracy are not "out there" somewhere, but next to us. His most affecting songs are astonishingly plain and piercing:

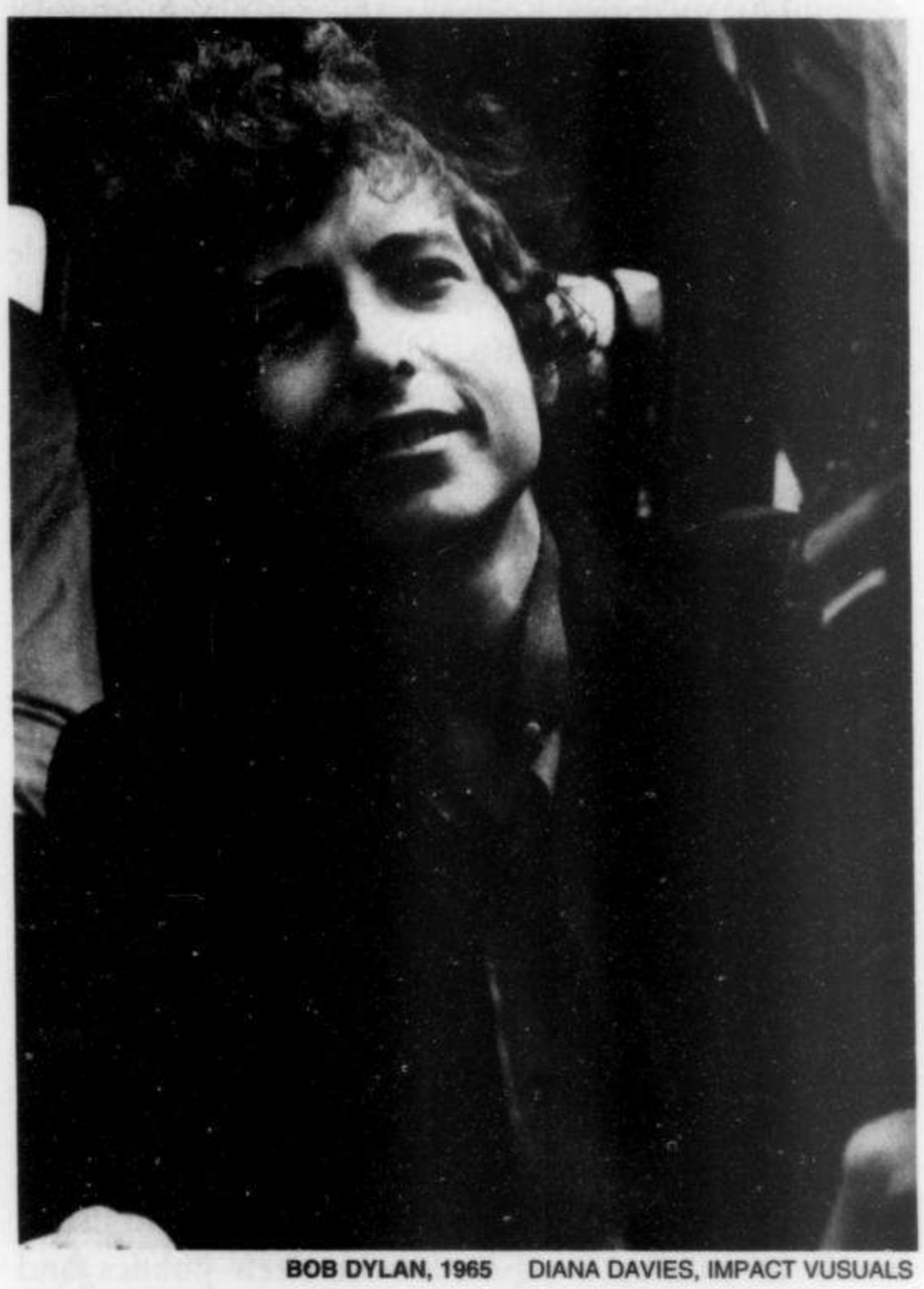
> Well, the crowd, they gathered one
> fine morn.
> At the man whose clothes 'n' shoes
> were torn.
> There on the sidewalk he did lay
> They stopped 'n' stared 'n' walked
> away.

Implicit in the experience of such songs is a gap between our momentary empathy and our general indifference, between the most fundamental promise of humanity (that we can be kind and treat each other with respect) and the actuality (that we often organize resources in order to cause each other suffering). The gap yawns wider and wider until at last Bob Dylan tumbles in and falls into the kaleidoscopic images, and visions, and dreams of his subsequent albums.

This descent is a journey into madness, a descent into himself, into the realm of what Rorty and others refer to as the "private" sphere. Yet in Dylan's case, that innermost unshared space of private "thought-dreams" (as Dylan calls them) is not so much sealed off from public view as it is an "other side" of the public sphere. (The title of the 1964 album that inaugurates this turn is *Another Side of Bob Dylan*.)

The Cuban missile crisis, the Birmingham church bombing, the escalating war in Vietnam—these and other powerful shocks in the public sphere precipitate the tumble into the private self that transforms Dylan from a Woody Guthrie-like folk singer into a Rimbaud-like shaman of surrealism. The private is not a refuge or an escape from the public. The private comes into the fullness of its being because the public has been taken with such full seriousness. The private is the full acknowledgment that human cruelty renders human life meaningless. The nightmare without is mirrored by, hinged to, a nightmare within.

Even when he has dropped as far as he can go into the labyrinth of self, Dylan does not completely leave behind the public world of protest. He takes it with him, continuing to write songs that are studded with images of cruelty and suffering. The difference is that these images have become de-narrativized. Instead of the anecdote told in "Man on the Street," or the brilliant satire of U. S. history in "With God on Our Side," or the story of "North Country Blues," we have collages of images in "Gates of Eden" (1965), "Desolation Row" (1965), "Visions of Johanna" (1966), and "All Along the Watchtower" (1968). He removes facts from the stories' structure in order to reveal them in their naked senselessness.



BOB DYLAN, 1965 DIANA DAVIES, IMPACT VUSUALS

But however chaotic and confused, Dylan's project of self-exploration and self-creation is inextricably linked to the public hope of social renewal. And how could it be otherwise? In the '60s, the coming-of-age of millions of Americans (male and female, and of all classes, races, and ethnicities) coincided with a sudden and shocking revelation of disrepair in the public sphere. Their crucial, adolescent years of self-creation occurred not within a swath of ennui, but bathed in relentless electronically delivered images of human cruelty.

In one philosophic tradition that goes back to Plato, the project of self-creation seems to take place over and against boredom, when the life of the self collides with

the deadness of the forms (linguistic, educational, vocational, religious) that are provided to it. By contrast, in the tradition from which Dylan sings—doubly rooted in Judaism and the blues—the project of self-creation occurs over and against cruelty. It is the inexplicable cruelty of humans that drives the self back into itself, where it experiences a "motorpsycho nightmare," not metaphysical relief.

Yet the more important inference to be drawn from the comparison of these traditions is not the difference between Bob Dylan and, say, Richard Rorty, but the similarity. Both offer their audiences companionship. They confirm that the agonizing problem of figuring out the meanings of and relations between self and society, private and public, me "in here" and everything else "out there" is a real problem, and one that has consequences. Rorty's companionship is extended through the language of philosophy; to a circle of readers he provides a place to dwell for a while, a canopy beneath which they can confront, rather than evade, the unease they are experiencing. Dylan's companionship is extended through song, and of course, as history would have it, the space he provided happened to be immense, with room in it for millions. No matter how deeply he plunged into the private side of the public, the songs he produced were public acts that created a public place, a culture.

Today, listening to the ceaseless barrage of attacks on the '60s, we shrug, knowing they are inaccurate. But embarrassment and fear should not stand in the way of creating an alternative public memory.

Crucial to the creation of this space was mystification. The indeterminacy of Dylan's songs makes them capacious. If he had remained forever on his first "side," singing straightforward songs of love and protest, he would not have given his audience the opportunity to experience the public as an aspect of the self, and the self as a dimension of the public.

Paradoxically, it is the incomprehensibility of his later songs that enables them to comprehend us. Intensely coded, idiosyncratic, and bizarre, his songs disdain to enter into a negotiated transaction with others. "Of war and peace the truth just twists/Its curfew gull just glides/Upon four-legged forest clouds/The cowboy angel rides." They simply turn the inside out, and thereby return the private to the public. They often do not make "sense"; instead, they make space.

Thus, it is pointless to attempt a systematic interpretation of Dylan's visionary songs; we cannot establish a direct correlation between what is "in" his songs and a reality "outside" of them. My way of hearing "Like a Rolling Stone" or "Visions of Johanna" cannot be shown to be more accurate than your way of hearing them; we cannot lay these transparencies over an authoritative original to see which of them matches it best. In the tradition of all great art, Dylan's songs endure because their meanings are multivalent.

Yet a Dylan-held-in-common does coalesce around a handful of moods and attitudes we find scattered through his many albums. There is, for example, a persistent distrust of wealth and a persistent fear of economic security. ("I'm helpless, like a rich man's child.") There is a pervasive misogyny that sometimes seems to allude to specific women in his life, or turns a general object of criticism into a woman, or conflates an aspect of himself or his audience with femaleness or womanhood. There is a comic sensibility akin to that of the French absurdist playwrights, as well as that of a trickster and mischief-maker who populates his songs with icons of popular culture and who can forge witticisms sharp as daggers ("You'd know what a drag it is to see you.")

But the core attitude, the most pervasive of them all, is a flirtation with death, a courtship of self-annihilation. Song after song seeks a willed extinguishing of every flicker of mental life: "Searching for my double, looking for/Complete evaporation to the core." It is as if he would like to achieve some bare minimum, some absolute poverty, an evisceration of self so thorough that only the self's wild visions endure: "And these visions of Johanna are now all that remain." The impulse is very like the tendency of American poets to pursue what Richard Poirier has called "the virtue of bareness," as if "with nothing to depend on, nothing to lean or rely on, the naked and true self can and will emerge." In "Like a Rolling Stone," a song that at once celebrates and mocks this enterprise, Dylan sings that "when you ain't got nothin', you got nothin' to lose, you're invisible, you got no secrets to conceal." He

writes on the liner notes to *Bringing It All Back Home* that "A poem is a naked person." Whether "lost in the rain in Juarez," or mailing postcards from Desolation Row, or putting bleachers out along Highway 61, Dylan again and again invites his audience to experience this self-annulling mood.

The appeal of this mood is complex. Teenagers often flirt with suicide. A self-willed bareness seems a fitting, logical response to the culture of material hedonism in which they come of age. In the act of self-annihilation, a teenager takes control of a destiny that might otherwise rest in the hands of those who will one day push the button. To all these reasons, I would add the seeming paradox that in direct proportion to one's discovery of the "infinitude of the private man," as Emerson put it, comes the desire to have that personal infinitude swallowed up by a larger one. The dizzying free-fall into the gulf of self can be arrested only by the discovery that the reverse weave of the abyss is the network of Being.

A politics that would reunite, or be adequate to, the conflicting demands of inner self and outer person, private self-creation and public responsibility, must be willing to experience this fall in all its terror. It must trace the light and the night. Only the terrifying plummet into the vision that life might have an end makes possible the energy to begin and sustain a political movement. A liberal politics—and by liberal I mean everyone who is motivated more by charity or love than fear—must be a tragic politics. It cannot endure for long by holding a steady, even course of compromise, comfort, and forgetting. A politics that touches the bottom of the abyss is by its nature unsettling and unpleasant. Meaning cannot be articulated until meaninglessness is fully experienced.

It is often remarked that the '60s were over before they had begun. They lasted nine years, at most, and long before the end of the era, its culture anticipated its own demise. One thinks of Don McClean's "American Pie" as the most self-conscious musical farewell to the '60s, but it was preceded by many others, including Neil Young's *After the Gold Rush* ("It's over.."), the Beatles' long bravura finale on *Abbey Road* ("And in the end..."), The Band's melancholy regret for a vanquished South, and, earliest of all, by numerous Dylan songs, including "My Back Pages," "Chimes of Freedom," and "Bob Dylan's Dream."

"My Back Pages": Somewhere in the United States, a cascade of disjointed images and broken grammar poured into a smoky dorm room on a winter afternoon in 1964. To some who listened carefully, the song might have meant that the loss of youth's idealism is not a mark of growing up, but of growing down, not of maturity, but of regression. "Ah, but I was so much older then,/I'm younger than that now." To those with more interest in irony and ambiguity, the lyrics might have suggested something quite different: that the idealist's first angry response to injustice is mistaken. That by trying to "rip down all hate" I may be promulgating another "half-racked prejudice," and that by simplistically seeing "life as black and white" I may be turning into my "enemy." Perhaps only by moving beyond conventional stories and clear oppositions ("Good and bad, I define these terms/Quite clear, no doubt, somehow") does one become truly oppositional, that is "younger" rather than "older." And, looking back from the postmodern cool of the 1990s, one hears an adumbration of Rorty's "liberal irony," a skepticism toward all claims that any truth can give us grounds and foundations for our beliefs:

> I dreamed
> Romantic facts of musketeers
> Foundationed deep somehow
> Ah, but I was so much older then,
> I'm younger than that now.

But if, as is more likely, one simply let the words and images flow through one's consciousness—"crimson flames," "corpse evangelists," "mongrel dogs," "confusion boats"—one might have heard the refrain as an enigma, like a Zen *koan*, to be absorbed and contemplated inwardly. If one dwelt within this paradox of becoming younger rather than older, and did not seek to decode or make sense of this riddle, one might have dwelt within a vision of time so confounding as to make memory itself untenable.

"Bob Dylan's Dream" (1963) and "Chimes of Freedom" (1964), too, are uncannily prescient about this problem of recreating cultural memory of the '60s. In "Dream," Dylan sings that he fell asleep "on a train goin' west" and had "a dream that made me sad/Concerning myself and the first few friends I had." The dream turns out to be a vision of the future, a future in which these friends lose touch with one another and lose the world they made, and held, in common:

> As easy it was to tell black from white
> It was all that easy to tell wrong from right.
> And our choices were few and the thought never hit
> That the one road we travelled would be shattered and split.

"Chimes of Freedom" even more richly weaves together the need for political will with the problem of cultural memory. Dylan and a friend (or friends) are surprised by a strange joy that comes in the form of a

powerful lightning and thunderstorm. "As majestic bells of bolts struck shadows in the sounds," these seemed to be "the chimes of freedom flashing." The synesthetic fusion of sound and sight allows them to see and empathize with numerous victims of injustice and unfairness, from "refugees on the unarmed road of flight" to the "mistreated, mateless mother," from the "mistitled prostitute" to the "countless confused, accused, misused, strung-out ones and worse."

Dylan's rendition of this vision in his own synesthetic medium of music and words makes it powerful enough, but he intensifies it further by introducing a note of premature loss, of anticipated nostalgia. In the final verse he reminds us, in case we had not noticed, that the events in the song are narrated in the past tense. He now "recalls" that vision, recalls how he and his companion were exhilarated, "starry-eyed and laughin'" as they "listened one last time" and "gazed with one last look,'/Spellbound and swallowed 'til the tolling ended." This mood of recollection is crucial because always the vision—this or any other vision—draws to a close with the knowledge of its own ephemerality, the foretaste of the dispersal itself. That foretaste was present in the mouth of anyone who lived, no matter how spellbound and swallowed, in the experience, or vision, of the '60s.

What does it mean to us, who look back from the farther shore of the 1990s, that these songs of the '60s anticipated the difficulty we encounter now as we try to recover a richer public memory of that decade? It is as if these songs' consciousness of the brevity of vision and of the futility of adolescence created a spirit who could fly forward through time and greet us when we arrived here. And it is also as if these songs managed to supersede their ephemerality and outmaneuver their futility by allowing us to experience twenty-five years ago what we experience now. It is as if we can begin to see these songs, and the '60s as a whole, not just as a moment that occurred once and was henceforth sealed off forever, but as a living legacy, as much a part of our present as anything we see and touch in this instant, now, which has just become a part of the past itself.

Twenty-five years of distortion and commodification have made the task of recovering this legacy seem pointless, even dangerous. More sadly, the loss of that culture has prompted many of those who experienced it to deny that it ever existed. In an act of willed forgetting, they brand all efforts to remember that culture as weak and self-indulgent, mere "nostalgia."

But the degradation of memory is mirrored in the degradation of the word "nostalgia" itself. Rightly used, it points to the crux of our problem and to the solution. "Nostos" is the journey home. "Algos" is pain. Fear of this pain—that we will return and find only a void—is what blocks remembering. The house will stand empty, the doors and windows vacantly staring into nothing. Or, at best, we will find that the once-potent symbols and sacred relics now lie inert in our hands, mocking our will to believe, consigning hope to the naiveté of youth. We have all seen that mythic television moment in which the teenager finds Dad's "love beads" or Mom's "granny dress" in a box in the attic. Such blushes and embarrassment! We join in the canned laughter because it is preferable to the pain.

But linger, for just a second, on the very idea of "love beads." Work past the ridiculous to the emotion and the wish—an ornament that speaks love, taking the private redemption of bourgeois loneliness and making it the public bond of political solidarity. Behind all these fears is the pain of death. Odysseus was offered a choice between immortality on Kalypso's isle, or a painful journey home to an aged wife, a grown-up son, and the certainty of death. He chose the latter. We who choose not to recover our own history have chosen to remain with Kalypso. We know, in our hearts, that a face-to-face encounter with the past forces upon us the fact of death. We cannot bear to look upon death because we have no way of making sense of it. This is why the politics of meaning must be fully cognizant of death and deeply involved in an effort to surpass, yet preserve, the past.

All this was foreknown by the culture of the '60s and by that meeting place of audience and artist I am calling "Bob Dylan."

Today, listening to the ceaseless barrage of attacks upon the '60s, we shrug, knowing that they are inaccurate. But is a shrug enough? Embarrassment and fear should not stand in the way of the creation of an alternative public memory. Certainly the '60s were not a period of unblemished glory. Taken in isolation, images of white freedom riders walking arm in arm with Black civil-rights activists, or of golden-haired flower children cavorting in the sun, are as untrue and probably as damaging as the more prevalent images of greasy-haired drug addicts and bomb-making anarchists. There are probably as many memories of the '60s, and of Bob Dylan, as there were people who experienced them. The point is not to forge one alternative vision but to rediscover this past as a source of many visions. It is not to recover what the '60s meant, but to recreate what they mean. □

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Panther

An Interview with Mario Van Peebles

Editorial Note: Last spring, Mario and Melvin Van Peebles's movie, Panther, was released and then quickly removed from mass distribution in American movie theaters. The movie sympathetically portrays the situation of urban Blacks that led to the creation and spread of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense under the leadership of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in the years 1966-1969.

The release of the movie was accompanied by a series of vitriolic attacks on the film and on the social-change movements of the 1960s. Some of the campaign against the movie was orchestrated by David Horowitz. Horowitz, an editor at Ramparts magazine in the late 1960s, became involved with a group of Oakland Panthers in the 1970s and believes that some of them were involved in a murder that shocked the entire community. He was justifiably angered when others on the Left, too quick to defend any and every activity that came from an oppressed community, refused to publicly confront and condemn these actions. But for reasons that have been viewed by some as opportunistic rather than principled, Horowitz took his quite legitimate anger at some Panthers and at moral double standards among some people on the Left as a justification for attacking any commitment to liberal or progressive vision.

In the 1980s, Horowitz reconstructed himself as a born-again Reaganite, vigorously attacking the Left, and became a central figure in a crusade to expose what he saw as left-wing tyranny exercised through "political correctness."

In a letter he sent to Todd Gitlin (a copy of which he sent to us at TIKKUN*), Horowitz refers to Gitlin's remarks about* Panther *in* USA Today*, and says, "I see you haven't relinquished your role as a shill for the criminal left." He goes on to say, "For twenty years I have had to undertake the personal risk involved in telling this story because cowards like yourself, who know better, refuse to take a clear moral and intellectual stand on this issue. I can't wait to read the review of Panther in* TIKKUN."

Well, we tried to oblige Horowitz, but our reviewer couldn't see the film before it got yanked from the theaters, in part because of the way the movie had been decried by the media. So instead we decided to talk to the film's director, Mario Van Peebles.

TIKKUN: What led you to make *Panther*?

Mario Van Peebles: My father, Melvin van Peebles, and my mother were both very active politically when I was a kid. The first time I was allowed to stay up late was to attend a demonstration. My father made a movie called *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* that portrayed a street hustler who began to move beyond the typical individualism of ghetto life and to think politically. Because the film showed the development of a consciousness that could combat the tendency toward drugs and violence in ghetto life, it was embraced by Huey Newton and the Panthers, who hoped that people would see it and be influenced. They helped make the film a success by pushing it in their newspaper. This gave me special access to the Panthers, so that when I made the film I was able to talk to people like David Hilliard and Elaine Brown in depth. My father started writing a book about the period some nine years ago, and when he read it to me I thought "this is really a film."

After we turned the material into a movie script, we went around to Hollywood studios and we kept on getting the same message: "You really need to make this more mainstream." But when pressed to explain what they meant, it turned out that they meant that there had to be a white person as one of the main heroes of the movie. "People knew about the destruction of the Indians for years," we were told, "but no one really cared about it until they got Kevin Kostner to star in *Dances With Wolves*. The civil-rights movement might have been led by Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King, Jr. but Americans didn't care to see a movie on that till *Mississippi Burning* tells the story from the standpoint of white FBI agents. So you've got to write this story in a way that gives focus to some big white stars, and then you can do your thing." One of the studio heads suggested that we make one of the leading Panthers a white man. Others suggested focusing on a Berkeley white person who would meet five young Black guys, teaches them to read and stand up for themselves, and then they become the Panthers!

TIKKUN: But that's not what happened!

Van Peebles: Exactly. But you know that when Hollywood tries to make a film portraying heavyweight



boxers like Tyson or Ali they end up making them look more like Stallone. What the Hollywood people told us was that a big white audience would find the picture easier to appreciate if they found a big white star in it. But we didn't go that route.

But to get back to why I made the movie. All I ever heard from the media about the Panthers was a story about scary Black guys with scary ideas and scary guns. You never heard about alliances with whites, like that forged between the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party. You never heard about the role the Panthers played in preventing a riot from happening in Oakland after the shooting of Martin Luther King, Jr., though most other American cities exploded in violence after that assassination. The Panthers actually opposed a riot as an ineffective method of protest. Yet the media portrayed them exclusively as a paramilitary anti-white group, though the Panthers continually insisted that they were not anti-white but anti-oppression, and made alliances with progressive whites.

TIKKUN: In that way, they were quite different from other Black nationalist groups at the time.

Van Peebles: Absolutely. And they were willing to lose Black support to stand against that kind of antiwhite Black nationalism. So they chose Charles Garry as their key lawyer to defend Newton. The Panthers over and over again insisted that "it's not a color issue." In fact, it was precisely that kind of sensitivity that made them so dangerous.

But the 1960s had a spirit that we rarely see today—much greater unity. Youth were thinking politically. I remember going to the Panhandle, the strip of green leading into Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, and there would be concerts at which one could hear Hendrix, Ronstadt, and Janis Joplin with Country Joe and the Fish and Santanna—that's Black, white, and Latino—and today you'd have to listen to three different radio stations to hear that kind of diversity.

So one of the reasons I made the movie was to show kids today that social change could be made by young people. When young people see movies like *Gandhi* or *JFK* there is an element of romanticization of these powerful people, and young people often feel a huge distance between their own lives and the lives of these social-change heroes. But the Panthers were flawed-up people from the streets, so it's easier to identify with them. Huey was twenty-one when he started the Panthers. This was a time when youth were politically active.

TIKKUN: Let's focus on some of the criticism of this movie.

Van Peebles: Every pseudo-historian got their opportunity to knock the movie. The *New York Times* critic said that the film ignored the role of important Panther



JASON LAURE, IMPACT VISUALS

women like Elaine Brown. But the time line of the movie was 1966 to 1969, and at that period the powerful women had not yet emerged into powerful roles. It's as if we did a movie on a specific battle in World War II and the movie critic then says that the movie is inaccurate because it didn't deal with another battle that took place later. This wasn't a twelve-hour documentary, it was a feature film.

The level of misinformation and historical ignorance on the part of the critics was incredible. We had a woman in *The Los Angeles Times* who criticized the movie because it didn't show Angela Davis as a Panther—but Angela Davis was *not* a Panther.

TIKKUN: The Panthers adopted Mao's phrase that power grows out of the barrel of a gun. They became media stars after they walked into the State Legislature carrying unloaded rifles. They often emphasized the gun as an instrument of self-defense. They gave the message that one could defend the Black community by fighting back militarily. So this made it rather easy for the media to portray them as threatening.

Van Peebles: I have to agree. It was good news and bad news. On the one hand, we have a Black community whose problems and whose daily oppression are never captured by the media, and now through the Panthers that attention and the plight of Blacks in the inner cities gets highlighted. The bad news is that the attention also goes to focussing on the gun.

TIKKUN: Getting attention in that way created a legitimation framework for the state to portray the Panthers as deeply threatening.

Van Peebles: You can't take their actions outside of the historical context. Blacks are already subjected to violent attacks by the police. The police didn't feel the need to wait for the Panthers to legitimate violent attacks on Blacks; it was and remains a fact of daily life for young people in the ghetto. Nor does white society attack only those Black leaders associated with violence. Martin Luther King, Jr., the leading advocate of nonviolence, was slain in this period. Blacks could see that it didn't matter whether they took the nonviolent route—when their challenge to the larger society looked like it might succeed in challenging the existing system of power, it was struck down with force and violence. King seemed to be saying, "Be more humane than your opponent and they'll have to recognize our humanity." But that didn't work. The Panthers recognized the reality and said, "Power will concede nothing without demand. Don't expect that if you try to be a good Negro, with light skin and straightened hair, that anything fundamental will change for you."

The Panthers called themselves the Black Panthers for Self-Defense. The reason they picked the panther as their symbol is that the panther is an animal that only fights in self-defense when it has been backed into a corner. It's not an offensive animal. But Newton recognized the problem with the image of the gun, and wanted to emphasize breakfast-for-children and other serve-the-people kind of programs.

My dad recognized the problematic nature of the use of guns when he put the following line into the movie: "If Black people have guns they'll probably shoot each other." And that is one of the key lines in the movie. The movie isn't just an indictment of the FBI—it's *also* of *us*, as Black people, for allowing some of the things that have happened to us to have happened. Nobody is forcing us to take drugs—it may be the FBI that gets them into the community, but it is *we* who actually decide to take them. So the movie is also an anti-drug message and an anti-gun message to Black young people, and this is where the FBI role is key to making the point, and the point is this: "If we don't grow the drugs and make the guns, how come there is so much of that stuff in our ghettoes. How do you suppose they get here?" My point is to try to convince people that they are playing into the hands of the power structure when they use guns and drugs.

TIKKUN: Part of the criticism of the movie is that it only sees Blacks as victims without acknowledging enough the internal pathologies in the Black community.

Van Peebles: I wonder what movie they saw. The drug dealer who is portrayed as the worst villain in the movie is Black. Good and bad does not fall along Black and white lines. There were 175 Black people on the FBI payroll. The guy who gave the FBI the floor plan in Fred Hampton's apartment so that they could enter and kill him was Black.

TIKKUN: Why didn't you have more critical distance about the use of guns? Why not have your movie reflect the danger inherent in the romance of violence, a danger that became clearer in later years when some Panthers actually engaged in violence, and a few in outright murder? These later destructive developments could be seen as an outgrowth of tendencies that were already present in the years you explore.

Van Peebles: The Black audience comes away from this movie with a much greater appreciation of the destructive impact of drugs and violence. African Americans see the irony of how the guns go from the hands of revolutionaries to drug-related gangsters, or that drugs that were once the mind expanders of the nineteen sixties would now become the vehicle for pacifying and medicating an entire generation. It's like the Boxer Rebellion when Britain flooded China with drugs to undermine rebellion.

And right on screen I showed the destructive nature

of violent acts when I depicted the way that Eldridge Cleaver creates a shootout and ends up having little Bobby Hutton killed, so that the price right there is shown on screen, so that everyone will get how destructive a path it is that Eldridge has chosen (and one that Bobby Seale explicitly opposes, and tells Eldridge that this is not what the Panthers should be about).

TIKKUN: Do you have any basis for your claim that the FBI explicitly and consciously was engaged in a conspiracy to flood the Black community with drugs?

Van Peebles: Earl Anthony, who was an FBI informant who had become a Black Panther, writes about it explicitly in his book, *Spitting in the Wind*, how he was given drugs by the FBI to distribute.

TIKKUN: On what level? To his friends? That's not what you claim when you talk about flooding an entire community.

Van Peebles: True, he just writes about it on a specific level.

TIKKUN: That the FBI might give to ten Panthers would be very different than talking about flooding all of Oakland, or even just a sector of Oakland like West Oakland, where they'd have to be bringing in enough for tens of thousands of people.

Van Peebles: In Elaine Brown's book, *A Taste of Power,* she describes visiting Newton in exile and talks about the drugs coming into the ghetto and how the police are staying out of it. She describes white guys in a Rolls Royce coming into the housing projects and dealing with kids from the project. The people she talked about in her book became the composite character of the drug dealer in another movie I did called *New Jack City.* But I didn't find some new evidence or a letter from the FBI saying that we flooded these communities across the board. My father talked of this in terms of a garden theory. Anyone who has ever gardened knows that you don't have to plant weeds. The potential for weeds is always there, so if you want weeds to grow all you have to do is not weed the garden. And that's what the police have done in the ghettoes of our major cities, starting with the Panthers in Oakland: They have not weeded the garden of the drug dealers.

I pointed this out to David Horowitz, one of the big critics of *Panther*, that if you go to a Black section of Los Angeles or to Harlem or to other major urban ghettoes, you can get a hit of crack or a gun easier than you can get a Cuban cigar. But, I pointed out, there are no poppy fields in these inner cities, and there are no gun-manufacturing plants. So whether or not you believe that there was ever an explicit meeting between the FBI and the drug kingpins or mafia, there was a willingness to let this activity go on, because the government has turned its back on some communities and not on others. You need only look at the aftermath of the bombing in Oklahoma to see how the government can go after people very quickly to stop and expose behavior they wish to stop. But there is no will to stop drug and guns importation to the American ghettoes. So when they want they can find the bombers, but they don't stop drug traders who stand out in the open streets dealing drugs because they don't have any desire to stop it. As a result, you can go into any major urban area and see the dealing being done in broad daylight.

TIKKUN: There is still a difference between the racist and disgusting proposition, "We don't care about Blacks so we will let them get screwed by not stopping them as they pursue *their* own pathologies by engaging in drugs and violence," and the position of your movie which suggests that the government was consciously creating the addiction to drugs and violence.

Van Peebles: I don't think that they are that different. I was a drug counselor in Harlem and I can tell you that when you put those kinds of drugs into the hands of eight-, nine-, or ten-year-olds, and get them addicted, you are not talking about "consenting adults." True, they don't have to take it … it's just there. But why is it there?

The *New York Times* reports that Manuel Noriega, a known drug trafficker, was on the federal payroll of the Drug Enforcement Agency and received $300,000 from them to stop the flow of drugs. That's like the wolf taking care of the sheep. Bush was head of the CIA. In 1992 they decided to bust Noriega for his drug dealing. But Noriega did not have a policy of shredding his documents like the CIA did. Noriega was willing to testify and shed light on how drugs get into America. But on the grounds of national security the U.S. government refused to allow him to testify. The *New York Times* reported that the government was concerned that his testimony would show that narcotics trafficking was done in conjunction with U.S. authorities.

This information is publicly available. But people don't ask the obvious question when these drugs then end up on the streets of the ghetto: "How the hell does this stuff get here?" We don't grow it in the ghettoes. You can't have it both ways, saying "Gee, this is just a Black problem, because Black people like taking drugs" but on the other hand, it couldn't get into the country without the active involvement of the government. And the Noriega affair is one of the few times where there is a possibility of exposing this direction. So what, exactly, was the "national security" interest that would be undermined by exploring what Noriega had to say?

You cannot logistically have this quantity of narcotics and firearms come into specific very geographically small areas of the country without the cooperation of the authorities.

TIKKUN: Why didn't they get more support within their own community?

Van Peebles: That presupposes that Blacks would be able to recognize their own best people. Does that happen necessarily in other communities? The Black community is not a monolithic community, just as the Jewish community is not. Just as there are people in your community who are scared of what TIKKUN represents, so there are people in the Black community whose interests were threatened by the Panthers and their program of social justice. There were even people in the Black community who opposed Dr. King.

But the responses to the Panthers and other progressives was not left to our community to decide for itself. In the 1970s, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, Congress held hearings on the FBI and revealed the COINTELPRO program of the FBI which aimed at the systematic disruption of various progressive organizations. One FBI document explicitly says that the FBI must "prevent the rise of a Black messiah, anyone who might unify or electrify Black people." This is the government saying that it wants to prevent the rise of *any* Black leader, not just the Panthers.

You seem to be saying, "They had guns so they created the climate in which they allowed themselves to be isolated and killed." But Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed also. It didn't really matter whether you held the peaceful means strategy or the "by any means necessary" strategy—whichever strategy didn't really matter. And we have not had an effective Black leader since then. Since then our whole community has been medicated, drugged.

It's ironic to hear people like David Horowitz complaining about the alleged glorification of violence in this movie. When Schwarzenegger does a movie full of violence, you don't hear complaints from Horowitz or other right-wingers. When there are movies about Blacks shooting each other up in the 'hood, nobody complains. They complain when there is a progressive political message attached.

TIKKUN: I was in a meeting with Bobby Seale and David Hilliard and other Panther leaders in preparation for the United Front Against Fascism conference in Oakland in 1969. There were a group of us from the Peace and Freedom Party and a group of Panther leaders, and we were discussing the problems that might arise and how to deal with them. Our attention focused on the possible participation of a socialist sect group that had frequently participated in other movement activities, often in a somewhat disruptive way. We wondered how to prevent them from disrupting our meeting. Suddenly, Bobby made the following comment: "Ah, just off them if they get out of hand." Now the word "off" had been used in Panther rhetoric to mean "kill," as in "off the pig." So I objected to Bobby, and told him that was ludicrous. He said back, "Well, I didn't mean kill them, I meant get rid of them, throw them out." I said back, "Bobby, if that's what you mean you should say so. Because you are the chairman of the party, and when you use language that loosely it can be misunderstood."

After the meeting, Tom Hayden angrily confronted me. "Michael," he told me, "you are a white person and you have no business speaking to the chairman of the Black Panther Party that way. We can't bring you to future gatherings with the Panthers, because if you challenge their leaders you will endanger our fragile relationship that we are building." I said to Tom, "That's no way to be a real ally. To be a real ally requires you confronting people when they do something self-destructive." By the way, I told the same thing to Horowitz years later when he became a sycophant to the Panthers in the 1970s, playing up to them and closing his eyes to some of the distortions and abuses amongst some of them that he would later attribute to all of them.

A short while after that Seale incident, Bobby was indicted in New Haven for allegedly ordering the execution of someone suspected of being an agent. I could easily imagine how his loose use of a rhetoric of violence may have played a role in that incident. And this happened in the period that your movie covered, so that aspect of Panther reality should have been confronted in the movie.

Van Peebles: I didn't try to make the Panthers into good guys or bad guys. What I tried to convey was a bunch of young people in the ghetto who tried to make a difference and what happened to them.

TIKKUN: What do you think young Black people should learn from your film?

Van Peebles: We did some market research in the Black community and many young Blacks came away from this film feeling much more sober, thinking about the danger of drugs and violence and how that could undermine just what our community needs. David Horowitz predicted the film would lead to violence and a bloodbath. But in fact there has been no violence connected to this film—there is a whole lot more violence connected to America's football games or to championship soccer tournaments in Europe.

TIKKUN: Why didn't this film get a better reception?

Van Peebles: Well, the film represented the Panthers in a more sympathetic way than some of the media would have wanted. And it was viciously attacked. David Horowitz and his operation took ads condemning the film and warning about its potentially destructive impact, not only in *Variety* and in the *Hollywood Reporter* and even on the Sony building's news circular around Time Square. He seemed to have more money

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Traveling with Children

Mothering and the Ethics of the Ordinary World

Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

Making Reservations: The Journey as Leavetaking

Here is the picture of the seeker on the spiritual path. A person walks alone, the way is difficult, the terrain dramatic. Without knowing the gender of the person depicted by the text, do we have any doubt that the seeker is male?

Here is the National Geographic T.V. special on world religions: In a distant mountain country, there is a month-long celebration. The film depicts a crowd praying and singing in celebration. Is it a surprise to us when the close-up shows us that the crowd lost in ecstatic contemplation is entirely male?

A Jewish example: Jacob on the road,
as understood by the Zohar.
Jacob descended to her,
went straight to her abode,
as it is said:
"and he set out for Haran."
He saw all the trappings of her house
and was saved from her.
"And a man wrestled with him. . . ." (Genesis 32:25)
Now he was saved and perfected,
raised to a perfect sphere and called Israel.
He attained a high rung, total perfection!
He became the central pillar. . . .

Such texts always leave me muttering about who is watching the four-year-olds near the water, who is bouncing the babies to sleep at the edges of the gathering, who is washing the plates after dinner, who is dying the cloth for the sacred raiment. The work that must support the quest is invisible. And the oldest construct in theology and philosophy is this very invisibility. Yet for women it is this work that frames the world and the critical struggle to find moral meaning, especially in light of the starkness of the absence of this feminist perspective in traditional text.

The spiritual quest is written as a quest away—a journey away from the ordinary to the sacred, away from the demands of the daily to the purity of the holy. Yet in the struggle to encounter what God wants of us, I must find meaning, holiness in this life. It cannot mean that God wants flight from what I can know as most holy—the birth and breath of my children.

Judaism has been criticized with extraordinary vigor for the lack of attention to the female voice in the text, and this critique is justified. The challenge, then, is to construct an ethics of ordinariness without sentimentality about the daily moral choices that are made by women and to reflect on the theology that is partner to such an ethics. In this construct the notions of ethics and spirituality are inseparable, neither possible without the light of the other.

We are drawn into the process of public discourse by the sensational acts at the outskirts of human community: the pregnancies by radical technology, the rescue of the particular child. Yet the daily acts of choice that thousands of women make, and see as choices of faith, are far more difficult. What would the shape of ethics or spirituality be if we focused on the ethics and theology of the moral gesture of raising children who are in our lives and through whom we carry the obligation to the past and the next generation?

This article began as a conversation with colleagues, feminist scholars of religion and ethics, about why we couldn't seem to get our articles in on time. It was all the interruption! The chicken pox! The field trip! And here we were, trying to write important things about The Good, each of us balancing the teaching and creation of theological reflection with the teaching and the creation of the babies and children who we mother. Usually, this second work is seen as that distraction that takes us from the rigor of the first. The parallel universe of the mundane is the messy, tangible, and embodied that surrounds all of our theory. Yet, on personal reflection, it turns out that it is the deep passion of mothering that enlivens our disparate faith journeys.

What is at stake in this argument is not the simple

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recognition that the work of the female role needs to be honored or seen, although this has been a key feminist insight. What is at stake, rather, is the claim that the paradigm of the faith journey as usually envisioned—a separate, singular quest for growing self-actualization—is just not the one that describes an accurate story of women's lives. The very notion of spirituality as other-worldliness, as taking place outside the home, understood as a leavetaking from family, as rooted in autonomous journey, is a different vision than the one that we carry in our daily lives. But there is a countervailing notion: that it is the bonds of obligation, found within the family, and within the ordinary, that generate the renewal of daily meaning. What morally matters can be precisely the necessity for daily practice—practice that our culture usually defines only as constraining.

The methodology of feminism insists on the honor and dignity of lived experience, and on the transparency, or self-awareness, of the act of teaching. The slogan that the personal is political is a way of saying that every aspect of one's life counts in the public arena, that every choice is a public, moral choice. So the alternatively lyric and difficult quality of our family commitments ought to inform our teaching, and in fact all of our work at the most basic level. Yet, (and simultaneously,) the imperative of feminism demands an attention to the liberation of the female self from the constraints of the female role and demands of us a radical rethinking of the nature of obligation and dependency.

Are these two ideological calls hopelessly at odds with one another? In what way is the ordinary choice to have children a feminist choice? An essential Jewish choice (and what kind of Jewish choice?) A generally expressed religious choice? What are we to make of the different ways we experience our obligations toward the dependent young in our families (perhaps chosen) and the dependent old (perhaps not chosen)? For my colleagues in religious ethics, how we know and how we teach the text of faith depends on how we apprehend this answer. And for each of us, how we think about spirituality and about the moral life will be constructed by the choices we make about these questions.

I do not mean to heroicize mothering uncritically: The family is complex, both liberatory and conservative. Chicken pox happens, and much, much worse. The ordinary difficult obligations, dependency, tragic loss, and tragic angers are often precisely what people want sacred refuge from. But I want to turn us back into the place of secular, mundane time, into regular and familiar moral choices. It is precisely in these smaller heroic acts that we need to construct an ethics of the larger public sphere.

Here then are notes toward such an ethics. They are draft notes, of course, because I have five children. I have stopped again and again in the very writing of this paper to nurse the baby, to fill my arms with her, to open to her. In the breathing darkness that follows her cry, I lay still, and think of the next thing to tell you.

Short Day Hikes: The Theology of the Interruption, the Ethics of Encounter

The value of interruption is extraordinarily difficult to discern. At academic conferences and religious events you can see the parents: They sit near the door. The liminality of the parental role offers a perspective that is rare: here, the narrative is interrupted by the necessity. Whatever it is that is so pressing in the world, of commerce, of the productive, of the marketplace, (and here I mean the production of ideas just as surely as Adam Smith meant pencils,) is interrupted by the call of the mundane. The structure of the workplace, the academy, even the feminist academy has not supported this aspect of the journey. It is hard to see the interrupted life as having anything but a negative impact on ones professional life, even my religious scholarship, however fulfilling it might be in one's faith quest.

My children become a sort of private pleasure, seen as an activity one does in one's free time. The notion that children are an idiosyncratic hobby is reified by the exclusion not only of children, but of all of the activities that surround childrearing, from real adult life—even or most especially at political or religious conferences, for example. I do not believe that children have to be biologically related to you. It is just rare, but not, of course, impossible for others to make such a commitment without the bounds of parentage, interestingly enough. One can choose to "have" or not "have" children in one's life as though one were dealing with any other commodity: Will what I get as benefit outweigh the burdens? Such is the template for the autonomous choice of all informed-consent relationships based on the contractual model, a business deal rather than a familial bond.

To reorganize our priorities theologically creates the possibility for social reorganization as well. Could we see the moral decision to mother as an ethical choice, the ordinary act as the faith commitment? Let me make clear that by this I mean something more complex and freighted than the usual equal-rights demand for shared housework, or child care, although Lord knows that simple act would be a perfectly achievable blessing. The ontological status of my life is constructed around the interruption, which is to say that the interruption creates a foundational pattern for the radical recognition

that the needs of the other compel immediate moral attention. Because this moment of encounter is so rarely available to us in the official religious canon, but such a commonplace in the actual world, to speak of it is to remember the power of the daily in ethical choice.

Check Your Guidebook: The Particularity of the Religious Tradition

Is such a claim Jewish? I have argued in these pages (See "Reading and Reading Ruth," TIKKUN, May/June 1995) that a moment of such radical recognition occurs in the Book of Ruth. One can find this encounter repeated in other critical biblical texts. I would argue that rabbinic texts construct and reflect a culture that is cognizant of this: Much of the religious honor given to the daily reflects a choice that we can claim as feminist. The attention to the details of the work of a human life, the concern with the work of childbearing, of reproduction remind us of a rabbinic regard that is a deliberate theological decision about power and importance.

To live an interrupted life means a recognition of the theological importance of the element of surprise. If nothing you are saying is sacred (i. e., uninterruptable), then it is the whole of the human life that becomes sacred, rather than isolate, special moments of the life. If the heroism, the nobility of the moment is interrupted, than the interruption becomes a comment on the text of the gesture itself.

The notion of the heroic is deconstructed, literally, by the call of the child. In form as well as content, the text of the Talmud attests to and mirrors this experience. The argumentative form, the conversation in the familiar replicates this aspect of conversational ethical encounter. Talmudic discourse and text allows the creation of a community of shared meaning, interrupted by the case and the casuistic reflection that both offers and comments on a model of the interrupted discourse for ethical reflection.

Overnights: the Meaning of Everlastingness

Life long commitments to one's children are often experienced as among the few life long relationships available in America. Parenting is an ethical stand, not to be ignored, a recognition that despite convenience, or feeling state, one is in a relationship that is permanent. To speak of this openly is a problematic discussion for feminism. For many, myself included, the

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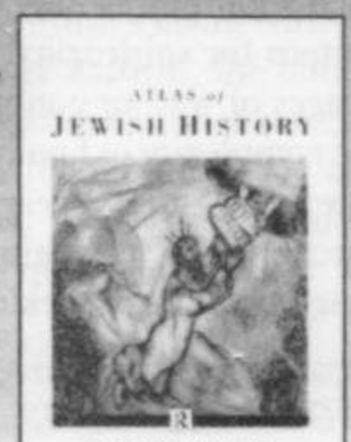
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ability to choose not to conceive children became historically linked with the feminist cause. The right to control reproduction for many women offered a moment in American history that was unbounded: a life directed not only toward liberty but liberated from historical compulsions and physical constraints.

The popular imagination has fixed on this image, and it certainly was a revolutionary change in the status of women. Yet, two decades later, it is still true that most American women (90 percent) have responsibility for a child, and now the popular press is filled with accounts of the problems with deferring the childbearing decision, the pain of yearning for the children we were yearning to avoid twenty-five years ago. It is now not so clear what constitutes liberation. But we have learned with the stories of our own lives that temporary choices have a way of becoming the immutable gravitational forces that shape us. We are learning it is not so easy to leave home. We will live with our own youth: our rebellion, our insights, our discoveries, as we age, as we are needed by others, and as we need others.

To speak of a theology of parenting is to speak of a theology of permanence. This is even truer in regard to parental responsibility, to daughtering, the inescapable commitment. To speak of an ethical construction based in the mirror of a biological bond is not to be collapsed into a sort of natural law ("learn modesty from the cat"). It is abundantly clear that the strongly pronatalist assumptions in Talmudic and prophetic texts are meant as liberatory and not as survivalist. In other words, the blessing of children is revealed by all that we learn from the texts to be central, in fact to be what frees us from the merely mortal, the limits of the inevitability of biology.

Hannah's quest for a son is seen as a spiritual act. The central drama of *Bereshit*, the Book of Genesis, is the drama of the promise of fecundity. The story of this drama is, of course, a mirror of the deep spiritual adventure of pregnancy and childbirth itself. To tell of such a journey as holy creates an alternative organizing pattern for spirituality: a language that is not based on images of war, or conquest, or singular remove, but on the complexity of family. The focus of the Torah on this enterprise—the yearning for pregnancy and parentage—is a tangible mark of the alternative language possible in seeking an ethics of the daily.

How To Pack: The Nature of Obligation and the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven

To live as a parent is to live burdened, carrying. In the backpack of the seeker is food enough for many. Let us return for a moment to the Jacob story. Despite the Zohar's portrayal of Jacob as alone, he is the most burdened of men. Traveling with family, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs course from place to place, traveling, as Christian theologian Bonnie C. Miller-McLemore points out, at the slow pace of children. Yet we do not have the story of the women the night of Jacob's struggle, there is no account of their journey to the Land, choosing husband over mother and father and home, how that wrestling might have renamed them, what it must have meant to them.

The Exodus journey itself, the central metaphor of the spiritual journey of the Jew, is undertaken amid the cries of children, the clouds of dust from the hooves of the animals, carrying everything you own on your back, carrying what your children need, holding the baby at Sinai (somebody has to). To be burdened is to live a commanded and obligational life. To be burdened, to have work and to understand that the details of how you do the work makes a difference in God's universe is the claim of the rabbinic system of the commanded life.

Hence the system of *mitzvot* is itself a critique of the notion of autonomy, if autonomy is understood as the possession of individual rights to a locale of utter freedom, to an individual sphere that is inviolate. In the place of this sort of autonomy, I have argued for a particular relationality, one in which the voice of the other is heard as one's own. This is the pattern of parenting that is available to us as an ethical choice if we understand the other as fundamental to one's social and spiritual survival.

To be born into the world free of all association except voluntarily chosen ones is the promise of the Enlightenment, but it is not reflective of the lived experience of women. For parents, primarily women in our culture, one is born into a complex web of obligation, promises, and commitments, and there is no easy escape from this that does not look like abandonment. Dependability, the ability to depend on the other, to see his or her cause as your cause—all of this is what is central to the ethical encounter.

Learning the Language of the Country

Revisioning the language of moral discourse is only possible when there is a moment that strips language from the usual syntactical frame. Nothing arranges this more totally than the deconstruction of the given by the project of the acquisition of language itself. Teaching a child to speak enlivens the construction of theology in this way, reorganizing sentence, form, and content. But even more important in a reconstruction of ethics is the teaching of right and wrong. As Selya Benahib, a philoso-

pher of the communicative school of ethics, remarks: The way one can think of ethics is as a conversation in which you explain to your six-year-old why it is that she cannot make an exception of herself. The language of an ethics of the daily is ordinary talk, a language that deconstructs the philosophical and theological texts themselves.

Common Mistakes All Travelers Make: Loss, Error, and Mortality

When my last child was born, it was weeks before I could comfortably bear to have another person hold her. It was, I explained to myself, as if they were holding a piece of my body, some internal organ, my heart, my liver, something that was flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone taken from my side, warm with my own heat, carried around outside my body. What is at stake is death, and the urgency of this recognition is both made sharper by childbirth and made curiously more comforting. When I die, this next one will live after. My death is as certain as her inexorable birth. Mortality itself becomes more vivid with childbirth and childrearing, and the passage of time not an abstraction, but as a linear progression with an inevitable end. The edges of stamina, the limits of reproduction all remind us of an embodied facticity. This is the large truth we flee from at great cost.

Thinking through the body and thinking through the text of one's life require an attention to the texture and the detail. Judaism, as I struggle to practice it, is a discourse of daily life, the ordinary heroics of mothering as the reference for my approach to any biblical narrative. (This is how I know the deep trouble of the Sarah story, the grief of Hagar, the panic of Rachel.)

In all my thinking about spirituality, I want to honor the blinding and ecstatic moment of the journey, the faith of pregnancy, the enormity of childbirth itself. Look here in any ordinary life: Just beneath the casual course of things lives the clearest print of the divine. To speak of the spiritual journey is to claim this, to mark this as ethics is to seize a larger stake still: parenting can be seen as a miracle as surely as the answer to the slave's call. To bear children, and then to walk on the way, bearing children, is to be asked and answered. It is the moment in the faith journey that is the most profoundly ethical, the oath that cannot be capricious, whose coming into being teaches both the merits and the gifts of the human life.

Keep a Record of your Trip

Looking for supportive depictions of such a journey is discouraging. The *Tanach* offers complex portrayals of Matriarchs, of course, and the few narratives have been reclaimed critically in many other contexts. In fact, the reconstructions of the female journey of faith act as a mirror for what it is we are thinking culturally about what women ought to be doing, and since what women in most historical contexts ought to be doing is childrearing, these texts are given back to us in terms of their normative take-home (literally) message.

There is a literature of assent that is interesting in this context, the classic of the genre being the *Tz-enah Ur-enah*, the Yiddish collection of midrash and homiletics intended to be read by women as a companion to the Torah reading in synagogue. Here we see the details as given to women to learn. My personal favorite involves the midrash that answers Esther's silence at a moment in the text. How come she doesn't know that her husband is planning to kill all her relatives? Esther is cleaning the house for Pesach, says the *Tz-enah Ur-enah*, so busily that she misses the edict against the Jews, which is why Mordecai has to come to tell her what to do.

The *Tz-enah Ur-enah* reads the silence of the text of women's gestures with a curious partisanship, finding in the unsaid moment of the biblical story the explanation of cryptic actions. When I studied the Book of Ruth, I noted how the *Tz-enah Ur-enah* read Naomi's silence toward Ruth into words by offering a midrash to put explanatory speech into her mouth. Naomi answers Ruth's prophetic promise on the road to Bethlehem with the mundane details of the ordinary life of a Jew.

I did not write about this when I wrote about the theology of the story, but now I think I might have missed the point. When I footnoted the midrash, which is to say myself silenced or bracketed out of the conversation the response of daily necessity, I too had left out of my theological description the conversation that the *Tz-enah Ur-enah* thought central. But an attention to Naomi is critical, not amusing. This is more than a funny story, removed from the splendid God-talk of Ruth's promise. Naomi replies to Ruth's claim with the realpolitik of the daily: the laws of kashrut, the obligation to the rules of the *chevra kadisha* (burial society). Death? Lodging? You love me? You'll follow me anywhere?, answers Naomi, and gives the tangible, embodied, ironically, freighted reply: Let me tell you the specifics. Carry this.

This midrashic literature is actually claiming something remarkable: that simple unassuming acts are not apologia but are consequential. I know that the *Tz-enah Ur-enah* was not written by a woman, and that the intent of such literature was to create an easy entrance into the complexities of the Torah, and that most of the homiletic moralisms are intended to show that the

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Iron John and Shrinking Violet

Sex Education in the Columns of The New York Times

Linda R. Hirshman

Every other week for the last several turbulent years in the lives of the sexes, The *New York Times* has published "Hers" and "About Men," he says/she says columns about gender. Since 1992, the columns have been fully engaged in the argument between the sexes in its peculiarly late-twentieth-century form: sexual sociobiology. Taking its place in the outpouring of recent writing ascribing immutable natural behaviors to each sex, every Sunday The *Times* presents its readers with the tales of Iron John or Shrinking Violet, the semi-fictional counterparts of the sociobiologists' predatory males and coy females.

Sociobiological theories about sexual and gender behavior, like similar theories about racial behavior, usually surface in times of conservative reaction against prior social change. Sociobiology is particularly effective, because it offers people not reasoned political argument, but an emotion-laden picture of the self. Sociobiologists offer women a self who is a weak hunter, coy and sly, seeking above all a protector for her children. They offer men a picture of themselves as strong hunters, aggressive and direct, seeking above all to spread their seed around. Sociobiology makes peace between its two genders by asserting that women naturally crave sexual relations with dominant males, a happy fit with male aggression.

The *New York Times* itself seems to be in a period of some fragmentation between its reason and its emotions these days. The editorial pages take a rather progressive stance on public issues other than gender, while culture, book reviews, and columns spread the retrograde message of sociobiology for the traditionally private world of gender relations. Following this pattern, the post-1992 "Hers" column could not be a greater contrast from its prior self. When "Hers" began to appear in the "Home" section of the daily *New York Times* in 1977, it was a brilliant exception to the media ignorance of things that matter to women. With pieces by Lois Gould, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, and Tamar Lewin, "Hers" was the coffee klatsch for feminists nationwide, creating an enlivening point of connection in the public world. When "About Men" surfaced in the Sunday Magazine, it seemed simply innocuous, since men had so few places to exchange news about private male matters like the proper way to fit a suit and why men tell jokes that women don't tell. But around 1992, the two columns began to change, and, since 1992, reading "Hers" and "About Men" for gender information every Sunday has been sort of like working in a nuclear plant: You don't know you've been poisoned until you start to glow in the dark.

The realization hit me on May 8, 1994, the day the Sunday "About Men" ran a column titled "Having It Both Ways," by "John Steinbreder, a Connecticut writer who recently went through a divorce." Steinbreder's column was overflowing with divorce stories of the urban legend type—a "friend" whose working wife tried to take his house, another "friend" whose wife quit a good job and asked for more child support.

Outside of the world "About Men," statistics show overwhelmingly that women's standard of living plummets after divorce while men's rises; a big reason for this inequality is that courts don't order and men don't pay adequate child support. But only grasping, hypocritical feminists populate the world of divorcing "About Men."

"About Men" touched bottom on gender lessons a couple of years ago, when it ran the story of Sebastian Junger, a Boston journalist who "punched a wall . . . after a month long difference of opinion with my girlfriend." ("Hitting the Wall," 8/16/92).

After having his broken finger reset, Junger canvassed his friends. "The common theme was that these men had stored up resentment or anger for years and then something . . . made them blow their tops. Given a healthy man's capacity to harm, it's interesting and perhaps admirable how many turned their anger on themselves."

Where was Junger's girlfriend while the macho journalist was breaking up the place, I wonder? Ask any woman how she would feel shut up in an apartment with a man angry enough to break his finger punching a wall. She probably would have figured out very

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quickly "how angry" he was. Chances are she would be cowering somewhere in a corner, crying for help. If she's lucky, she wouldn't be trying to shield a child from "how angry he was" as well. "About Men" readers and all the rest of the American public caught a horrible glimpse into the world of the wall-slammers when Nicole Brown Simpson dialed 911 a couple of years ago. Yet Junger presented the violence as normal. Patching up the guy, the (pretty) nurse says with an air of indulgence, "Fight with your girlfriend, huh?"

From its roots as a rare and valuable look at women making their way into the public world in the late twentieth century, "Hers" has devolved into a print version of the daytime T.V. talk shows. "Hers" women are losers, especially any woman who sticks her head out of the trench of sociobiological womanhood. In "Housebroken," (1/31/94), the total woman ("the truth was—minor career successes and feminist political correctness notwithstanding—I longed for nothing more than to be part of a happy family"), who "changed her name to his," has a momentary fit of independence, and, bingo! she's at the lawyer's office signing divorce papers.

In "My Mostly Companion" (6/13/93), a long-divorced forty-five-year-old meets an old b wfriend in a restaurant, to learn that he's remarried—an .o a woman young enough to produce a baby. "Don't feel bad," her daughter consoles her, "you'd just be drawing his bath." Only the geisha types stay married in "Hers" land.

In contrast to the lonely divorcees, the married women are domesticated nurturers, indeed. Proudly bearing their husbands' names ("Name Dropper" 5/2/93), they labor in the psychological and physical fields of the family, caring for their brain-damaged brothers ("Telling Jack," 1/9/94); their abusive, aged fathers ("A Slow Fade," 5/16/93); and, most of all, their children ("The Chosen One," 4/17/94; "Making Rachel Big," 5/29/94; "Risk Management," 4/3/94; and "Giant-Killers," 4/4/93).

Even where women survive and prevail, as in Susan Brison's wrenching "Survival Course," (3/21/93) about her rape and attempted murder, the story is stripped of its political content—the importance of women's activism to combat sexual violence. The *New York Times* took the complex political story Brison submitted to the *Magazine* and reduced it to another personal tale.

Across the male victims of divorces and the wall punchers, the name changers and the single mothers, it is the immutable code of sociobiology that unifies "Hers" and "About Men." In "Against Androgyny," (12/11/94) former Timesman Michael Norman made this immutability most plain. It was summer. The Normans had moved and renovated and were, not surprisingly, broke. They fought. Did any of these things cause them to fight? No. They fought because "she was a woman and I was a man." The About Man then goes on to bash the nurture school of childrearing, decry the betrayal of former barbarian Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was starring in a movie about a pregnant man, and ascribe the independence of Swedish women to the sexual failure of their men, raised without rigid sex roles to stimulate their glands.

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Even the women in "Hers" embrace the biology and destiny litany. Sarah Bird, a mother of sons, proudly reports that "My boy ... came hard-wired for weaponry. His first two-syllable word, right after momma, dadda and backhoe, was 'scabbard.'" ("The Q Gene," 5/1/94). Journalist Caitlin Bird Francke goes to El Salvador to visit the Amazon-like women of the Salvadoran guerrillas after the peace, supposedly hoping to find the feminist heroines of her feminist childhood ("Going Home," 3/7/93). Instead, she finds the woman warrior "seven months pregnant . . . having traded her fatigues for a maternity dress and her combat boots for Wallabees and baby blue socks." In a twinkling, the writer understands the sociobiology of female guerilla warriors: "women did not join the guerrillas because of their belief in Marx or Lenin." They fought "in hopes of a better life for their families." So much for Rosa Luxembourg and Emma Goldman.

Nature provides no escape. Menopausal Elizabeth Berg has "some interesting career plans that would come to a halt with a baby" ("Last Call," 10/3/93). Yet "A truth about me is that I always prefer the company

of children." No wonder, when she lost her menopause pregnancy, she felt too old and "profoundly sad."

Will she be profoundly sad for the thirty years of her likely remaining life span? Am I the only menopausal woman in the country who finally has time for regular exercise and political activism?

In the sixty-some columns since 1992, "Hers" has addressed women in the world of work only twice—unless you count the story of Tara Sonenshine, former "Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Communications for National Security Policy," who turned in her business card for one that reads "Tara Sonenshine, Mother." ("Barney and Bosnia," 1/29/95). Unable to balance her commitments to the United States and her obligation to bathe her son, she quit her job.

It wouldn't be so bad to read the Tara Sonenshine stories, if The *New York Times Magazine* also carried stories about the rest of us who have stuck it out. It's not like these soap operas are all the editors have to print. Most of us in the writing trades know someone who has submitted an essay to The *Times* that doesn't conform to the John and Violet stereotypes and failed to see it published. The "Hers" editors not long ago rejected feminist writer Letty Cottin Pogrebin's essay on "Take-Your-Daughters-to-Work Day," (it later appeared in *Ms.* magazine), and Pogrebin, a regular contributor to the old "Hers," has not appeared in "Hers" since.

Just when you think it can't get worse, it gets worse. As this article was going to press, "Hers" ran "When He Was Good" (5/21/95), a battered daughter's memoir. We meet her father:

> My mother jumps into my bed, pleading for my father to stop. He lunges for her, over me, and as he pulls her out of my bed she latches onto me. I pull away terrified, then ashamed; I feel like a coward. My sister is awake now. Sitting up in bed, she cries for me to do something. My mother cringes on the floor. I jump out of bed, drop down over her, yelling stopitstopitstopit. He is reaching around me, but suddenly I feel his hand at my throat, his fingers gripping.

Do the author, her mother, and sister run for the nearest shelter? Not in "Hers" land. "When He Was Good" is about the rewards of staying married to a batterer. "Forgiveness used to be a virtue," the writer continues. "The stuff saints were made of." There's only one problem: If you're going to be a saint, you have to die an untimely death.

At a time when brain is unquestionably prevailing over brawn in the workplace and when domestic violence is starting to be treated as the pathological felony it always was, the citizens of "Hers" land are leaving the White House for the bath house, and About Men are inveighing against women workers and bosses and boasting about hitting the wall.

Sometimes I think I'll trade my *New York Times Magazine* for a subscription to *Guns and Ammo*. At least the women-haters on the Right have the courage to confront women directly with their weapons. By trying to make women believe the stereotypes of John and Violet, the people at The *Times* ask us to take up the weapons of our own destruction and use them on ourselves. □

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The Battle for Jerusalem

Aaron Back and Eitan Felner

"The battle over Jerusalem has begun," Binyamin Ben Eliezer, Israeli Minister of Housing, announced in mid-May. As he spoke, the government was preparing to expropriate 133 acres of land in East Jerusalem for Jewish housing. By the end of the month, however, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was forced to cancel the decision—not because of the considerable pressure from the Palestinians and the international community, but to avoid the risk of losing a Knesset vote of confidence tabled by two small Left parties.

Rabin's apparent surprise at the international outcry over the original expropriation order is understandable only if viewed in the context of ongoing Israeli policy. Since 1967, successive Israeli governments have expropriated more than one-third of the land in East Jerusalem (6,000 acres), the majority of it undeveloped but Arab-owned. In a 1990 interview, Rabin commented on his Labor Party's role in this undertaking: "We have never talked about Jerusalem. We have just made a 'fait accompli'. It was we who built the suburbs [the annexed part] of Jerusalem. The Americans didn't say a word because we built these suburbs cleverly."

As Rabin's words reflect, the battle over Jerusalem actually began more than twenty-eight years ago. It has been waged and, in great part, won, through myriad planning decisions made far from the public eye. Since the de-facto annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 after the Six-Day War, one central goal has dictated Jerusalem urban planning policies for Jerusalem: the creation of a demographic and geographic reality that will preempt any future attempt to question Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

An examination of Jerusalem Municipality documents provides compelling evidence that successive Israeli governments—Labor and Likud alike—have pursued a policy of systematic and deliberate discrimination against the Palestinian population in matters relating to land, building, and planning in the city.

The battle for the future of Jerusalem has been a success on two fronts, reinforcing Israeli control through these biased urban policies while at the same time creating, both within Israel and abroad, an impression of enlightened development for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem.

Over the years, one individual has stood out as the undisputed general, both in the trenches of urban planning and on the high ground of public relations. Ask American Jews, or the average American for that matter, to name the person who has made the greatest contribution to co-existence between Jews and Palestinians in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, the answer would be the legendary Teddy Kollek, who served as the city's mayor from 1967 to 1993.

The picture of Kollek that emerges from the proceedings of Municipal Council meetings reveals a far less benevolent policymaker and sheds light on the various tactics—many of them less conspicuous than expropriation, but no less effective—which have been used to entrench Israeli domination in East Jerusalem. A master tactician, Kollek has left these policies and enabling mechanisms as a legacy to his right-wing successor, Ehud Olmert.

A look at Kollek's positions on many of the controversial issues about East Jerusalem during his tenure sheds light on the disparity between his liberal public image and his actual motivation. Take, for example, his stand on the expropriation of Palestinian lands and the massive construction of Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Although Palestinians constitute nearly a third of the city's population, more than 38,500 housing units for Jews have been constructed on expropriated land in East Jerusalem, without a single housing unit built on them for Palestinians.

Even as he facilitated this expropriation policy, Kollek often represented himself as its opponent. In the early 1980s, for example, the Interministerial Committee for the development of Jerusalem decided to expropriate some 1,000 acres of land between French Hill and

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Neve Ya'acov (now site of the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood). When subsequently criticized by a Likud city council member for his initial opposition, Kollek was, in his words, "forced" to explain his reasoning:

> [My] objection was based on a national consideration which in my opinion was probably more sophisticated than yours. To run and expropriate without knowing where you will also get the means to exploit it will only lead to stronger Arab building. Why do you force me to say this, it is not smart to say this, Why should we get into this argument—but those were the considerations, and you force me to answer you on this subject.

A cornerstone in Jerusalem planning decisions is what has euphemistically been termed the issue of "demographic balance" by municipal and national government officials. Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 added 69,000 Palestinians to the population of "Unified Jerusalem." As a result, the numerical relationship between the Palestinian and Jewish populations was significantly altered, with the Jewish share of the population subsequently falling from 97 percent of the total population to 74 percent.

In 1973, the Israeli government adopted the recommendation of the Interministerial Committee, which stated that an effort should be made to maintain the relative proportion of Jews and Arabs in the city as it was at the end of 1972—73.5 percent Jews, and 26.5 percent Palestinians. The objective was to overcome the natural rate of increase of the Palestinian population, which is a "demographic problem" in the lexicon of those involved with determining planning policy for the city.

To uphold this balance, the Israeli government has consistently tried to funnel Jews to Jerusalem. It was this objective which lay behind Kollek's objection to establishing suburban Jewish settlements outside the city's municipal boundaries, in what is today called "Greater Jerusalem." In a 1984 city council meeting, he explained his original opposition to the establishment of Ma'aleh Adumim, a now-sprawling settlement at the eastern entrance to the city:

> All told, there is no increase in the number of Jews in the metropolitan area by means of moving there [to the Jerusalem region, outside the city limits] ... I wish Ma'aleh Adumim only well. I think it was a mistake to establish it before we have filled Jerusalem. In another five years, we will fill Jerusalem and then we will go there. But in Jerusalem we took on ourselves as Jews a very difficult task, in that we received distant neighborhoods and had to connect them: Ramot, Neve Ya'acov, Gilo. It will take us years before we can swallow all that.

The eventual success of Kollek's efforts to create contiguous Jewish neighborhoods is reflected by the fact that for most Israelis, even those who place themselves on the Left, the Green Line that divided East from West Jerusalem has, over time, become blurred or nonexistent. The "distant neighborhoods" he cited a decade ago are now considered integral parts of West Jerusalem, even though they are Jewish neighborhoods built on East Jerusalem land annexed after 1967.

The demographic reality bears witness to the success of Kollek's settlement effort. By July 1993, a Jewish majority had been created in the city's eastern section, with 160,000 Jews as compared with 155,000 Palestinians living in Eastern Jerusalem.

Kollek took great pains to speak often about the necessity to address the needs of the Palestinian residents of the city with fairness. Thus, for example, in a 1988 municipal council meeting, Kollek offered this progressive vision:

> We shall continue to handle the complex problems that occur daily, which impair our ability to realize our goal of co-existence in the unified capital of Israel. We shall accomplish this goal by acting with patience and tolerance, and by providing good and equal services to all its citizens.

Despite the humanitarian ring of Kollek's words, the true intent of Jerusalem's planning decisions for Palestinians is provided by Amir Cheshin, the former adviser on Arab Affairs to Mayor Kollek: "The policies and building laws in East Jerusalem rest on a policy that calls for placing difficulties in the way of planning in the Arab sector. This is done to preserve the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in the city."

Cloaked in the bureaucratic language of urban planning, this official attitude has taken different forms. In some cases, Israeli officials consciously ignored the housing and neighborhood-development needs of the Palestinian residents. For example, a 1975 document of the Planning and Research Policy Section of the Jerusalem Municipality, titled "Neighborhoods for Rehabilitation in Jerusalem," stated:

> The memorandum relates to western Jerusalem only [the Jewish neighborhoods]. This, even though we know that if we use the same criteria that we have applied in the west [of the city], we will find that there are

many neighborhoods in East Jerusalem that deserve to be included in the group of 'neighborhoods for rehabilitation'. However, it would be a mistake to use the same socioeconomic criteria for East Jerusalem as are used in the west of the city. Owing to the absence of clear criteria for the eastern part of the city, it was decided not to include it in this memorandum.

In other cases, when Israeli government planners have advocated programs for improving the Palestinians' housing situation, policymakers have avoided their implementation, choosing to concentrate, instead, on construction programs for Jews. For example, in 1973, the Interministerial Committee recommended that the government should undertake a considerable building effort in Jerusalem's Arab sector. But they never provided a plan for making this housing a reality. Instead, their planning efforts went to the expansion of the Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.

Some twenty-two years have passed since the Interministerial Committee recommended building 10,000 housing units for the Palestinians within a decade. During that period, the Palestinian population has increased twofold, from 88,000 to more than 160,000. To date, no more than 5,700 apartments have been built.

Even when the planning authorities ostensibly turn their attention to the needs of the city's Palestinian population, they are not always guided by substantive considerations intended to meet them. In 1986, the municipality's Planning Policy Section published a document titled "Development for the Arab Sector." It defined projects for infrastructure (sewerage and drainage system, road network, etc.) and public institutions (educational, religious, sports, and leisure) for the Palestinian population. The planners based their prioritization for implementing the projects on criteria such as cost and feasibility. Another criterion in the document was the "degree of visibility":

> The development of the Arab sector has a "picture window" effect, and it was decided, therefore, that what will be seen by a large number of people (residents, tourists, etc.) is important and prominent and receives a grade of five and projects that have no impact are graded one.

The philosophy underlying these kinds of planning policies for Palestinians was unabashedly articulated by Kollek in a 1987 Municipal Council meeting:

> I don't want to give them a feeling of equality. I know we cannot give them a feeling of equality. But I want, here and there, where it doesn't cost us so much, and that is, after all, only a matter of some money or something, to give them a feeling

Options for Jerusalem's Future

Each of the three plans for the future of Jerusalem assumes a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict involving eventual Palestinian statehood, with Jerusalem as the capital of the two states. All of these models concentrate on the issue of sovereignty, which is the primary point of contention.

- **Divided Sovereignty** - Sovereignty would be divided between the State of Israel and the Palestinian state along clearly defined boundaries (most Palestinians would like it to be according to the June 4, 1967 borders). This model, which calls for the formal division of Jerusalem into two cities, is more acceptable to Palestinians than to Israelis. Palestinians who advocate this plan generally also support keeping the city physically intact, but they want to achieve political separation from Israel.
- **Split Sovereignty** - Sovereignty would be split according to the makeup of the neighborhoods, with Israel having sovereignty over all the Israeli neighborhoods, East and West, and Palestine having sovereignty over all Palestinian neighborhoods in the East. There could be one city council or two separate councils. In order to prevent the city from being split into two separate municipalities, this model calls for the creation and adoption of mutually limiting and reciprocal laws guaranteeing cooperation, joint planning, and continued territorial unification. This proposal also calls for the mutual relinquishment of separate sovereignties over the Old City, for which special arrangements would be made.
- **Joint Undivided Sovereignty** - This model calls for the highest degree of cooperation between the parties. Both sides would share sovereignty. The city would be managed by one municipal council. Provisions could be created for guaranteeing the fair representation of minority groups in the city council. Jerusalem would serve as the capital for two states, but would be one city.

Gershon Baskin (Israeli Director, Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information).

> that they can live here. If I do not give them this feeling, we will suffer.

Following the October 1990 Temple Mount massacre, in which twenty-one Palestinians were killed in a clash with Israeli security forces, a shaken Kollek indulged in greater public candor. In an interview given to the Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv*, he spoke about the considerations that had guided the municipality in developing the Palestinian neighborhoods:

> [Kollek]:We said things without meaning them, and we didn't carry them out, we said over and over that we would equalize the rights of the Arabs to the rights of the Jews in the city ... empty talk ... Both Levi Eshkol and Menachem Begin also promised them equal rights; both violated their promise ... Never have we given them a feeling of being equal before the law. They were and remain second- and third-class citizens.
>
> [Question:] And this is said by a mayor of Jerusalem who did so much for the city's Arabs, who built and paved roads and developed their quarters?
>
> [Kollek:] Nonsense! Fairy tales! The mayor nurtured nothing and built nothing. For Jewish Jerusalem I did something in the past 25 years. For East Jerusalem? Nothing! What did I do? Nothing. Sidewalks? Nothing. Cultural institutions? Not one. Yes, we installed a sewage system for them and improved the water supply. Do you know why? Do you think it was for their good, for their welfare? Forget it! There were some cases of cholera there, and the Jews were afraid that they would catch it, so we installed sewage and a water system against cholera...

The cumulative effect of these discriminatory policies on housing conditions within the Palestinian neighborhoods has been devastating. From 1967 to 1995, close to 65,000 housing units were built for Jews in Jerusalem while less than 9,000 housing units were built for Palestinian residents, who between these years constituted 25 to 28 percent of the total population. The estimated shortage of housing units among Palestinians currently exceeds 20,000 residential units. Close to 33 percent of Jerusalem's Palestinian population live in conditions of housing density of more than three persons per room, as opposed to only 2.4 percent among Jews.

In May, B'Tselem released a comprehensive report on the Israeli government's expropriation, planning, and building policies in East Jerusalem. What was most striking about the Israeli public's reaction to the report was the complacency toward Israel's consistent policies of discrimination and disregard of Palestinian housing needs. "Of course we discriminate against the Palestinian population. So what?" was the oft-heard response.

For instance, Jerusalem City Council member David Cassutto, one of the city's most renowned architects, wrote that the B'Tselem report was heavily biased, since it "focuses on the discrimination against the Palestinian population, and denies our fundamental needs as a people with rights to existence and survival which can be realized, first and foremost, by holding land and creating facts on the ground."

Given this perspective, it is no surprise that very few people within Israeli public life feel the need to talk about the city's future. Nonetheless, Jerusalem is on the agenda for the final status talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, to begin no later than 1996, and it is precisely now that Israelis must be challenged to consider the kind of solutions that could meet both Palestinian and Israeli needs.

Numerous proposals have been produced by public policy institutes outlining avenues for resolving the city's future fairly. (See sidebar.) But for the time being, these ideas gather dust on the shelves. The Israeli Left, perhaps awed by the power of the presumed consensus on Jerusalem, is mostly silent.

The timidity of those on the Left in proposing alternative visions also stems from a serious misreading of what the Israeli public is willing to accept. When Israelis say that "Unified Jerusalem" is non-negotiable, most mean that they oppose the physical division of the city. Physical unity, however, does not preclude flexibility over issues of sovereignty. A Gallup Israel poll, released in early June, shows that close to a majority of Israelis are willing to divide sovereignty within the city, with Israel maintaining sovereignty only over West Jerusalem and Jewish neighborhoods over the Green Line.

There is still time to begin advancing ideas containing the elements of a just resolution, which could then be negotiated on the political level. But if the silence continues regarding the blatant policy of discrimination within Jerusalem—building for Jews and choking Palestinian development—when the time comes to negotiate about Jerusalem, there may be very little left to talk about. □

Hiroshima at Fifty

Gar Alperovitz

With the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, and the opening of the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, we are likely to experience a far-ranging national discussion of the first and only decision to use atomic bombs against human targets. The tired cliché that the atomic bombings saved hundreds of thousands of lives still has currency among veterans groups, some conservative historians, a strident group of right-wing congressmen and important parts of the press. Just beneath the surface of public debate, however, something quite different is brewing. It may well explode into national consciousness as we reconsider Hiroshima.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

In recent years, modern research has quietly but dramatically altered our understanding of the decision to use the atomic bomb. The argument that the bombings were totally unnecessary is no longer simply marginalized as "revisionist." Consider this statement:

> Careful scholarly treatment of records and documents opened over the past few years has greatly enhanced our understanding of why the Truman administration used atomic weapons against Japan. Experts continue to disagree on some issues, but critical questions have been answered. The consensus among scholars is that the bomb was not needed to avoid an invasion of Japan and to end the war within a relatively short time. *It is clear that alternatives to the bomb existed and that Truman and his advisers knew it.* (Emphasis added.)

The writer, J. Samuel Walker, chief historian of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, makes this statement in the context of a "literature review" published in the scholarly journal *Diplomatic History*.

And here is Yale Professor Gaddis Smith on the bombings: "It has been demonstrated that the decision to bomb Japan was centrally connected to Truman's confrontational approach to the Soviet Union."

Even traditional defenders of Truman's decision, such as former National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, have shifted ground.

Bundy—who helped Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson write a now-classic article attacking postwar criticism of the bombing—now holds that the destruction of Nagasaki was totally unnecessary and that the rationale for the bombing of Hiroshima is "debateable." In a MacNeil-Lehrer interview on the fortieth anniversary, Bundy went so far as to observe that "there were opportunities for communication and warning available to the United States government which were not completely thought through by our government at that time." He continued:

> In July and early August 1945, the United States government knew three things that the Japanese government did not. One was that the bomb was coming into existence, had been successfully tested. One was that the United States government was prepared to allow the emperor to remain on his throne in Japan, and the third was that the Russians were coming into the war. And the question, it seems to me, that was not fully

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> studied, fully presented to President Truman, was whether warning of the bomb and assurance on the emperor could have combined in a fashion which would have produced Japanese surrender without the use of the bomb on a large city, with all of the human consequences that followed.

Ironically—and viewed in larger historical perspective—many experts have simply come around to the publicly stated views of many top World War II military leaders. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, for instance, reported this reaction when Secretary of War Stimson told him the atomic bomb would be used:

> During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as measure to save American lives.

Similarly, Admiral William D. Leahy, President Truman's chief of staff, was blunt in his subsequent assessment:

> The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender … The use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan … [I]n being the first to use it, we ... adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children ....

Leaving aside the stalwarts who still argue that the United States had no alternative, the real question being debated among the nation's best scholars is why the United States nevertheless chose to use the atomic bomb on Japan. Here there is greater disagreement. Some historians argue that the bomb's use was "inevitable" because of the inherited technological, bureaucratic, and/or military momentum created during the war. Others suggest that the enormous expenditure on the weapon's development impelled political leaders to use it. Still others have probed the intricacies of decision-making, analyzing the bureaucratic dynamics of the era. Finally, some scholars believe that President Truman feared political criticism if, instead of demanding "unconditional surrender," he agreed to Japan's plea that its emperor be spared (which, of course, he did after the bomb was used).

Perhaps the most interesting development in the scholarly understanding of the bombing is the growing acceptance of the once-controversial idea that diplomatic factors—especially the hope of strengthening the West's hand against the Soviet Union—played a role in the decision. In the first place, Secretary of State Byrnes and others hoped that the bomb might end the war before the Red Army—and Russian political influence—entered Manchuria. Beyond this, showing the weapon's power—as Byrnes put it—might make the Russians more "manageable." Writers still debate precisely how much weight to accord such factors, but many now agree that they were also involved to a significant degree.

What is important about all this is not simply the controversy over "history." Former Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara has recently reminded us in his book, *In Retrospect*, that even though he knew the Vietnam War was a lost cause, he did not attempt to alter the thrust of U.S. policy. Clearly, American leaders—and the very structure of our government—have permitted irresponsibility in cases involving hundreds of thousands of lives.

The World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings send ugly warnings of some of the dangers we face. With minimal controls safeguarding Russian plutonium, it is only a matter of time before terrorists up the ante. The Clinton administration's half measures with regard to reducing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, its plodding approach to disarmament, and its total failure to generate moral leadership constitute a fundamental abdication of responsibility.

New constitutional and other measures will ultimately be required to radically shift accountability in connection with nuclear weapons—and, too, to provide for greater openness. Lies have been endemic throughout the era; they range from the Hiroshima decision itself and the scale of the 'threat' we faced during the Cold War to the cover-up of wanton human experimentation with toxic radioactive materials.

The real question is whether we as a people can learn anything from history and alter the structures of decision-making before very large catastrophes occur. Where to begin is clear: To the extent we are silent, we, too, are complicit. Unless we open up a profound debate about the political realities of the nuclear age, all reform proposals will inevitably be tainted by our own failure to confront reality. The fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima is a good time to start. □

Beyond Silence

Edward Feld

In most of his work, the American theologian Arthur Cohen remained silent on the Holocaust. Writing on the history of twentieth-century Jewish thought and on American Jewish life, he did not even allude to the Holocaust, though he came of age in the post-war period. Finally, toward the end of his life, Cohen turned to the theological issues raised by the Holocaust, describing it as the black hole of history, a time that sucked up all thought, on the one hand because understanding is not possible, and on the other because it annihilates any attempt to create meaning. Cohen apparently had been unable to face the Holocaust and ultimately felt that it had negated his earlier work.

Lawrence L. Langer, writing in these pages, takes a position similar to Cohen's. ("No Cause for Celebration," TIKKUN, May/June 1995.) To ask what we can learn from the Holocaust, how our lives are transformed by it, is to allow for answers which are ultimately banal and, therefore, a desecration of those who were killed. Langer's hero, Primo Levi, argued that we could only tell one story now, a new Bible: the story of death.

What are our choices in the face of the Holocaust? Eli Wiesel suggests that anyone who would look directly into the maw of the Holocaust would go mad, and his early Holocaust novels are set in a world of madmen. Others suggest that, faced by the terror of the Holocaust, we remain silent; any verbalization is a distortion of what happened. In fact, some rabbinic leaders have suggested that the proper observance for Yom HaShoah is a day of silence.

To be sure, Langer is right that we can never really comprehend the Holocaust. Even those who were within it could not. When I was working on my book on Holocaust theology, reading survivors' accounts of their experience, I could never read for more than three hours. Then I would have to spend an equal amount of time to decompress. I who experienced it at a distance did not have the physical stamina for more than a brief period ofcontact with the Holocaust. How did those who went through it day after day survive? These survivors saw some other side of what it means to be human, looked at the Medusa head and came back to report it. We can never understand what they saw. How did the tens of thousands involved in the daily perpetration of evil go home to their wives, their husbands, their children, afterward? We can hardly understand the mentality of a serial killer; how do we comprehend a culture which placed serial killing at its center?

Langer is also right to be upset at the banal use of the Holocaust. Reviewing the television film, "Holocaust," for The *New York Times*, Wiesel argued—correctly, I believe—that we would be better off telling no tale of the Holocaust than having this broadcast.



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There is a certain rightness to all of these claims for silence, but there is also something missing. It was not incidental that Primo Levi ended his life in suicide—it is an almost inevitable outcome of his philosophic position. If the Holocaust destroys all meaning, then life is not possible, for humans are meaning-making beings.

We may not comprehend the Holocaust, but there are tales that we need to tell. We may not be able to find an answer to our questions about the Holocaust, but we need to respond to it. Because we are human, we need to ask how we establish meaning after the Holocaust. We need to tell a story—our story—if we are to remain human. And Jews did not remain silent after the Holocaust, but insisted on beginning a new tale.

The story we might tell begins with the reality that Nazism can grow out of the human condition—we are capable of creating a society which has death as its center, we are capable of negating the other. The urge to negate the other lurks at the center of the human spirit.

But evil is not the only story to be told. Hannah Arendt remarked that if only one human being had risked his or her life to save a Jew during World War II, that would be a sufficient story to tell after the Holocaust. But not only are there tens of thousands of such stories to be told; there is also the story of mutual help which was critical in all survivors' tales.

The writer Aharon Appelfeld has remarked, "Yet in the midst of this terrible home of tribulation there flashed a mysterious spark." Primo Levi told the story of his own survival in such terms and then chose to negate it: I believe that it was really due to Lorenzo that I am alive today; and not so much for his material aid, as for his having constantly reminded me by his presence, by his natural and plain manner of being good, that there still existed a just world outside our own, something and someone still pure and white, not corrupt, not savage, extraneous to hatred and terror; something difficult to define, a remote possibility of good, but for which it was worth surviving. Ultimately, then, Holocaust memorialization is about the choices that we as human beings face. It is about realizing who we are, what we are capable of, and about learning how we might behave so that we don't become Nazis and don't let Nazism triumph. Memorialization is about the establishment of meaning. That is the way Jewish memory has always functioned.

Langer would likely see the last paragraph I have written as part of the banalization of the Holocaust. The evil must speak and we must remain silent in its face. But the human story is much more complex. To give up on hope, to negate the possibility of transformation and the creation of meaning is to defend a culture of suicide. In its way it is the triumph of the Kingdom of Death.

The challenge for us is how to create out of that time not only a remembrance of death but also a deeper way of living. That has been the challenge of every Jewish commemoration of suffering: how to journey from suffering to redemption. □

Modernity's Inner Demons

Zygmunt Bauman

In the history of mankind, cruelty is not a novelty; neither is the mass cruelty of a genocide, not even of a genocide of the "us versus them" type, the cruelest of them all. The Holocaust's novelty was its "new and improved" us-versus-them genocide, made possible thanks to modern technology, modern organization of labor, modern concentration of coercive power, modern ambitions to make the world pure and flawless.

Much as the generals go on fighting the last victorious war, the victims go on sniffing out their latest persecutor and the signals of the latest persecution. This is the generals' and the victims' undoing, but not only their bad luck. Wars seldom repeat, and each suffering is unique, with its own shape and reason. Wars and persecutions hardly ever come from the quarters one would, judging by past experience, expect them to come from. This is why the cause of safety is not best helped by the voices of the generals and the victims alike.

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In the effigy of Jews and Gypsies, the "inner demons" of modernity were burned. These demons, like all other inner demons, were the gravest doubts and the most harrowing suspicions which the daily bustle tried hard, yet in vain, to suppress. In the case of modernity, bent on the establishment of the Kingdom of Reason, the demons were contingency, ambivalence, uncertainty, the chaos just an inch or two beneath the order—which the Jews and the Gypsies—the non-territorials among territorial nations, people "in" but not "of" any place they stayed—epitomized all too well.

In our "late modern" (Giddens), "reflexive modern" (Beck), "surmodern" (Balandier), or as I prefer, "postmodern" times, the inner demons have changed their spots. Universal, rock-hard order is our nightmare rather than our dream. Unencumbered freedom, deregulation, choice, and flexibility comprise the promise of our times. Our dreams are broader in space ("I need space") yet shorter in time ("I need it *now*"); that means rising speed. The inner demons born at the underside of this kind of dream are a suffocating doubt about whether happiness awaits at the end of the road, and the gnawing suspicion that we are less free in our choices and less flexible in remaking the choices made than we would need to think to live the way we do. As always, we need to exorcise the inner demons, to pinpoint their tangible incarnations, to burn them in effigy—so that instead of bearing sheepishly with the fate that we cannot fight, we do something real about the tasks we apparently can handle.

Since the inner demons changed their colors, a new kind of effigy is needed that better fits the new worries. To help us endure better the life most of us live and want more of, its alternatives—and alternatives are such people as get little in the distribution of freedom, choice, or flexibility—are to be eclipsed; those walking reminders of the limits to consumer revelry and the costs of deregulated free-for-all. The underclass; the class beyond classes—as with Jews and Gypsies in the previously dreamt-of order, there is no room for them in the order dreamt of now. So we want them out. According to Raoul Hilberg's logic of the genocide, people that are wished out need to be branded and separated, better still, deported, preferably securely confined, ideally in a high-security prison—and, of course, best of all to an electric chair.

Our inner demons are born of a liberal, not a totalitarian or proto-totalitarian, society. Hence the less spectacular and much less condensed nature of their exorcism-by-proxy. Does it mean it is less cruel, less inhuman? Each suffering is absolute, noncomparable, noncommunicable. How can one measure the amount of cruelty? And the self-consolation, "this has its reason," won't help much. As far as its perpetrators go, the Holocaust also "had its reasons," and one needed six million dead Jews and twenty million dead soldiers to deny those reasons their reasons. Nor will the rationale, "these are but the margins," help. The Jews and the Gypsies were also margins—those people with whom the contented majority refuses to live. □

Out on the Street

In Moscow,
I cross a wintry courtyard with a friend.
Small boys play in the snow.
I hear them cry,
"White hat! Jew!"
and a snowball hits my back.

"Don't worry,"
says my friend.
"They just meant it as an insult.
They couldn't possibly tell.
You don't look Jewish."

At home in New England,
I sit near my bedroom window.
From the street below
comes the shout, "*ike!"
The first letter is unclear;
I can't tell if it's "dyke" or "kike."

"In this neighborhood,"
says my friend,
"it's probably 'dyke.'
But don't worry.
They couldn't possibly tell.
It's just that you don't wear make-up."

Nina Judith Katz

Toward a Liberal Theory of Halakha

Tikva Frymer-Kensky

Among Jews today, the hunger for a spiritual life appears to be growing, judging by the number of Jews who are joining Bible study groups, coming to education days and summer institutes, singing with spirit and davening with devotion. But the vast majority of Jews, even religious Jews, ignore Halakha, the body of Jewish law. They understand Judaism to be a religion of action, but they mean moral behavior and social action rather than eating in restricted patterns or separating meat from milk.

Even the halakhic few, when asked why they observe halakhic strictures, often reply, "Because I am commanded to do so." The commandment comes from outside, external to the community and the self. Orthodox thinkers often go further and explain that there really would be no reason to separate milk and meat if we hadn't been commanded to do so. But, reply the non-Orthodox, *did* the Commander command?

The Jewish foundation myth establishes the legitimacy of halakhic demands:

> Once upon a time, 5751 years ago, God created the world. Later, God chose one people to bond with, the people of Israel. God rescued them from slavery so that they would become his and established a covenant with them at Sinai in which God expressed desires in the form of laws. Israel accepted this covenant. God's laws are eternal and unchanging and in order to ensure their applicability, God also revealed at Sinai the elaborations of these laws in the Oral Torah. The Sages who lived after the destruction of the second Temple applied these divine instructions to the written Torah and thereby constructed the rabbinic Halakha as the divinely ordained extension of the Sinaitic provisions. Rabbis have continued to study and codify these laws and to respond to questions about Halakha so that Jews would know the proper way to achieve the will of God and could rest assured that their obedience to this Halakha would fulfill God's will and bring blessings. In this way, we know God's wishes and are obligated to them.

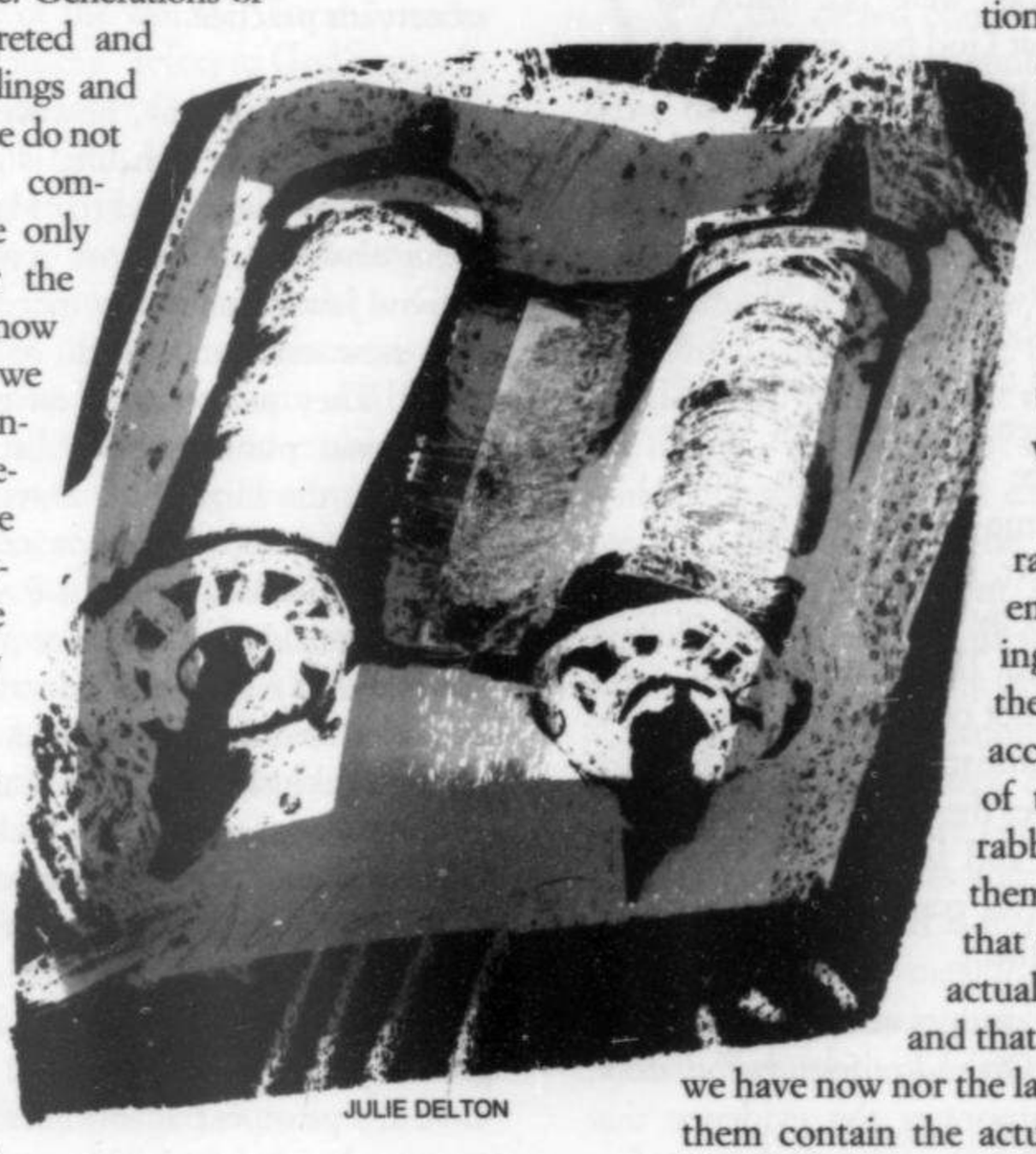
This narrative, with some variation, served Judaism well for many generations, until modernity brought the idea that such sacred stories had to be "true" or "false" at the same time that it brought many reasons to doubt their veracity. Modern consciousness has had a variety of effects on the forms of Jewish expression. Reform Judaism rejected both the historicity of the old story and the halakhic system that it undergirds. The early Reformers believed Halakha irrelevant to their modern world and set out to create a non-halakhic experience of Judaism based on the religion's eternal verities. The many varieties of Orthodox Judaism have taken an opposite path: They deny that modern scientific knowledge has any applicability to religion. Orthodox Jews may be modern people; indeed they can be ancient historians and natural scientists. But the Orthodox religion denies that knowledge learned from such disciplines has any relevance to Judaism's belief system and claims that the ancient story is literally true. It maintains divine authorship for both the written Torah and its rabbinic modifications and restates all the claims that this story makes upon behavior.

Thus, one path rejects the story and its Halakha; the other path keeps the story and its Halakha and rejects the relevance of modernism. A third path, Conservative Judaism, attempts to combine an openness to modern knowledge with a continued allegiance to Halakha. Conservative Judaism presents an updated, scholarship-based mirror-image modification of the story of Halakha:

> Once, a long time ago, certainly much more than 5751 years ago, God created the world. Later God maybe brought some people out of slavery who met up with other people who came to Sinai where something happened

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which the people interpreted as God speaking. The people wrote this revelation down as laws because that is how they understood it. Throughout the period of the First Temple and for much of the Second Temple, the Israelites contemplated, integrated, and reinterpreted these commands with the guidance of their priests and prophets. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sages refused additional revelations. In so doing, they turned the written text of the Torah into the font of all order and knowledge, and claimed the authority to read new meanings into the written text by the process of Midrash, and to decide legal matters in this way by majority rule. Generations of rabbis have interpreted and emended their readings and their laws. Today, we do not know the actual commands of God; we only know that neither the texts that we have now nor the laws that we base upon them contain the actual statements of our divine Commander. Nevertheless, we are obligated to obey them.



JULIE DELTON

This is a scientifically respectable story, utilizing the best information available from physics (especially the Big Bang Theory), and the most recent data and opinions from archaeology and biblical scholarship. It takes note of the radical nature of the Sages' activities and acknowledges the multitude of changes that have occurred in the Halakha in the 2,000 years since their time. Yet it contains one glaring flaw: The conclusion doesn't follow from the story, which provides no compelling rationale for obedience.

Thus, it is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of Conservative Jews have ceased to pay any attention to the Halakha. Many synagogue-going Conservative Jews are proud that Conservative Judaism is a religion that confronts all the issues of modernity and incorporates contemporary thought into its religious thinking. At the same time, they feel no need to know, much less obey, the halakhic system that the movement upholds. The halakhic few regret that there are so few "true" Conservative Jews, only members of conservative synagogues: *Amkhah* (the people) doesn't really understand.

But even the halakhic few cannot explain their allegiance to Halakha. Observant Conservative Jews observe the rules without being able to articulate a religious reason for doing so. They have neither been able to convince the majority to become interested in observance, nor, often, to connect their own halakhic observance with their spiritual lives.

Two more recent paths attempt to provide a resolution to this dilemma. Like Conservative Judaism, Reconstructionism (founded on the work of Mordecai M. Kaplan, himself a Conservative rabbi) synthesizes modern thinking with religious faith, and tells much the same modified modern foundation story as the Conservative movement, with a different ending:

> Generations of rabbis have constantly emended their readings and their laws, and the Jewish people have accepted the authority of the laws and of the rabbis who interpret them. Today, knowing that we do not know the actual commands of God and that neither the texts that we have now nor the laws that we base upon them contain the actual statements of our divine Commander, the Jewish people have refused to continue accepting this halakhic system. We now live in a post-halakhic age in which the language of obligation has no meaning.

This Reconstructionist version emphasizes that the Jewish people has always been the arbiter of Jewish practice, both in accepting Halakha and now in abandoning its strictures. Reconstructionism doesn't actively abrogate the Halakha; it instead observes that the Halakha has already been abrogated by the Jewish people.

Yet another interpretation comes from the new "Traditional" Judaism. This offshoot of the Conservative

Movement—known officially as the "Union of Traditional Judaism"—developed in reaction to what its members perceived to be the low level of observance among the Conservative laity, too precipitous a change in the direction of Halakha, the movement's advance toward gender egalitarianism, and the ordination of women rabbis and cantors. David Weiss Halivni, the Traditional movement's chief talmudic scholar, has reformulated the foundation myth of Halakha in a way that differentiates it from the other halakhic movements. He too accepts the centrality of the Sinaitic revelation, which he understands in the literal sense of the traditional story, but he continues in an original way, which we can paraphrase as follows:

> The people of Israel were not ready to observe the Torah that God had given them. The Bible records the many instances of apostasy and backsliding throughout the period of the First Temple. During this time they also did not care for the written Torah as well as they should have, and many errors and discrepancies entered the written text. As a result, the written text that we have now does not accurately represent the word of God. Therefore, during the time of Ezra, God revealed to him the true word. God did not change the written text, but revealed all the principles of exegesis by which the will of God could be discerned. These principles, the basis of Halakha, are not only divinely given, they bring us closer to the true meaning of the written Torah than does the text that we have before us. The rules and laws of the Oral Torah transmit the divine commands and we are obligated to obey them.

Halivni's story has three distinct advantages over the other versions. Unlike the Orthodox foundation story, it acknowledges and incorporates the evidence that scholarship provides of discrepancies and imperfections in the biblical text, and it recognizes the fact that the Halakha has changed throughout history. At the same time, like the Orthodox cosmogony, it maintains that we are obligated to observe the laws because they are divine commands. As a result, Halivni's foundation story provides a compelling theological reason for observing Rabbinic Halakha.

One negative consequence of this myth, however, is the veneration of the rabbinic system to the point of deification. Moreover, the movement draws a line of halakhic legitimacy at the point in the early 1970s when the contemporary move toward egalitarianism began, without explaining why past changes in halakhic understanding are deemed to have been in fulfillment of the word of God, while the contemporary move toward egalitarianism is not.

Orthodox and Traditional thinking provide a divine imperative for halakhic observance, but within a restrictive, exclusive system that discriminates both on the basis of gender and of sexual preference. The approaches of Reform, Conservatism, and Reconstructionism, in contrast, enable the tradition to expand in inclusive ways, yet either deny a role for Halakha in Jewish life (in the case of Reform or Reconstructionism) or do not provide a rationale for maintaining it (as in the case of Conservatism). It appears that contemporary Jews, then, have to choose between an inclusive liberal community and Halakha, between a modern progressive ideology and observant practice.

This dichotomy, however, seemingly inherent in modern Jewish life, is a false one. Not all Jews have abandoned the Halakha, nor is all Halakha being abandoned by those in the inclusive communities. Liberal Jews—including, increasingly, Reform Jews—in fact now embrace much of the Halakha governing ritual. They put *mezuzot* on their door frames, attend traditional public prayer, listen to the *shofar* (ram's horn) on the High Holy Days, marry under a *chuppah* (wedding canopy), wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl), light Sabbath candles, attend a Passover Seder. The problems of halakhic observance primarily arise when Jews are asked to respond in non-ritual ways, when they are expected to observe a Shabbat beyond lighting candles, saying Kiddush, and attending synagogue, when they are urged to extend the religious aspect of eating beyond having ceremonial meals.

Jews resonate to the ritual commandments in response to the traditional Sinai story, which is celebrated publicly in synagogue liturgy. This story is the great mythic event of Judaism. The rituals that respond to it are powerful agents in the maintenance of both community and faith. They embody the sacred story, which in turn hallows this ceremonial life, creating a powerful sense of community with Jews past and present and a holy imperative toward working for Jewish survival and welfare. Yet nothing in the story of the Sinaitic event impels Jews to non-ritual observance.

We often call Halakha "Jewish law," but the flouting or abrogation of Halakha carries no sanctions. No court or police enforces these rules. Rabbinic courts have depended on persuasion, moral authority, and informal social sanctions rather than on the imposition of penalties. And in the post-Holocaust era, few believe in supernatural sanctions,

neither in God's reward and punishment of the nation through history, nor in the judgment of the individual in an afterlife. Halakha exists today, in the Jewish Diaspora of the twentieth century, as rules without sanctions, strictures without consequences. The performance of a *mitzvah* (commandment) is its own reward.

The term Halakha, in fact, never really meant "law." The Akkadian language (of the Babylonians and Assyrians) has both the words *tertu,* Torah, and *alaktu,* Halakha. *Tertu* means instruction from God; *alaktu,* the path of the God. In the technical terminology of Mesopotamian divination, *tertu* often indicates divine instruction obtained by examination of liver omens; *alaktu,* the divine instruction obtained by the study of astrological signs. But this technical omen usage does not exhaust the meaning of the words: "Torah" means what the god teaches, "Halakha" refers to God's way. In Babylon, the attempt to discover God's way led to the science of determining it from the stars. In biblical Judaism, God's way *(derekh),* is revealed in the Torah. So too, in Rabbinic Judaism, the Halakha shows the way of God in the world and the way of the world to God.

The Halakha delineates the pattern of actions that defines community behavior. It situates us in our history (on the path from Sinai) and cosmos, and enables us to recognize each other as part of the same destiny. It is thus our *nomos,* the way we conceive alternative (ideal) reality and the bridge that links our reality to this vision. The community has a shared vision—standing with God at Sinai, being God's partners in the world—that requires a roadmap for reaching and attaining it. The Halakha provides the "map" to follow to approach that shared vision.

No body of law, secular or sacred, can succeed by coercion alone. An arbitrary collection of regulations has to be constantly backed by state violence and power. To succeed without terror, laws must be more or less in accord with a common communal vision. For this, they must have a narrative that both generates rules and makes sense of them. This narrative expresses the ideology and hopes of the people living under these rules and thus convinces most of them to comply most of the time. Enforcement by power is then needed only to a limited degree, one which a successful state can manage.

The need for a narrative to provide context and rationale for society's rules is even more imperative when the rules have no coercive power behind them, such as in the case of Halakha. In Orthodox circles, belonging to the community means accepting the rules as the condition of belonging. Where the community does not regard each rule as the literal word of God, people are accepted regardless of compliance with halakhic strictures. Sinai as myth and symbol does not supply a narrative context for observing behavioral strictures, and these rules have lost their claim on most Jews.

The result is that the ordinary aspects of life are outside the realm of the holy. Limiting Jewish observance to ritual actions means accepting the idea that non-ritual life contains no holiness and no awareness of God's presence or purpose. This means that people walk in God's arena only when they are involved in ritual or, at best, in religiously committed social action. Ordinary everyday life becomes totally secular, and the sense of holiness experienced in ritual does not carry over into ordinary existence. Many Jews have paid this price, and it is a very high one indeed, forfeiting the attempt to live constantly surrounded by God and holiness.

Weekend doses of spirituality and religion from the sacred communities to which we belong are often not enough to bring holiness and a sense of integration to daily activities. People do not always realize the root of the problem, but are often aware of a pervasive malaise, feelings of futility and anomie. When we (Jews and non-Jews) realize that something is lacking we may actively engage in a search for ultimate meaning in life and for spiritual values. We use daily spiritual practices to tune our consciousness to the divine—but we cannot spend the entire day praying and meditating. And we cannot spend the entire day feeding the hungry. The ultimate purpose of the Halakha is to infuse our daily biological and social activity with a sense of divinity, purpose, and community, so that we can truly live in the path of God.

Halakha cannot accomplish this purpose unless it has a compelling rationale. Among non-Orthodox Jews, where "because we are commanded" is not sufficient, the Halakha, which is supposed to sacralize and give meaning to life, itself is in need of a narrative that will sacralize and give meaning to it. Clearly, generating such a mythical underpinning must ultimately be communal. Nevertheless, I offer this beginning:

> Since forever, the Universe has been filled with God. Humans developed in awareness of this transcendent immanence. They responded to the Presence and sought to establish connections with it, as when Neanderthal people buried their dead with flowers. Humanity's vision of divinity raised living above mere subsistence, gave value and focus to human life and community. Surviving artifacts give us glimpses of their religious quest—not enough to inform us of the content of belief, but enough for us to know and acknowledge the process of faith and ritual. Written documents allow us to

> follow more closely our more recent ancestors' attempt to approach divinity. Sometimes their ways appear beautiful in our eyes, at other times ludicrous. But we must always acknowledge the fact of their faith.

This passage acknowledges the fact that human beings have sought God and expresses acceptance and appreciation for other paths and answers.

At Sinai, at the dawn of Israel, our people experienced God's presence as the determining factor of communal life. The people wrote this revelation down as laws because that is how they understood it. Throughout the period of the First Temple and for much of the Second Temple, the Israelites contemplated, integrated, and reinterpreted these commands with the guidance of their priests and prophets. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sages refused additional revelations. In so doing, they turned the written text of the Torah into the font of all order and knowledge, and claimed the authority to read new meanings into the written text by the process of Midrash, and to decide legal matters in this way by majority rule. Generations of rabbis have interpreted and emended their readings and their laws.

This passage incorporates the updated story of Sinai, acknowledging the centrality of this myth and of the legal tradition associated with it, and expressing the historical process of the development of Halakha.

We follow in the path of their vision, joining with them on the course that they set, entering their symbolic universe to pursue this path and complete the journey. In so doing, we continue our creation in the image of God. Our goal is that we find in ourselves the reflection and continuation of divinity in the life that we lead in the world and in community, that we—as a people—attempt to live up to the injunction to be a holy people, to the best of our understanding of what it takes to be holy.

This account contains an important meta-halakhic principle: to be a holy people. This is a principle to which the rules themselves must conform, one which governs the interpretation and adaption that forms the core of the halakhic process. Without such principles, law provides no way to evaluate itself. Furthermore, these principles help describe the alternate reality that the laws are designed to help reach.

> The journey to holiness and godliness is not only an individual journey. The human self, encased in its own ego, lacks the expansiveness of divinity. An individual soul that opens its boundaries to connect to God in mystical union has achieved only half its destiny. The self must find the keys to interlock with other selves, for it is above all collective humanity that contains God's image. Halakha is our way of acting in concert to reach God. It is our joint path on which we head for and help establish the divine order.

This passage expresses the centrality of peoplehood, of communal existence, in Jewish thinking. It incorporates three other essential elements in Jewish thought: the idea of humanity in the image of God, the sense of the divine order to come, and TIKKUN *olam*, working to repair the world so that it will constitute this divine order.

> Our task is easier because those who have come before us have indicated the way, and when we follow their way, we establish connections not only to each other in the present, but to all who have stood at Sinai and walked along this path. Halakha is our joint path with the generations of past and future Jews, allowing us to feel the presence of their religious yearnings in our present life. Establishing such connections across time and space is part of the enlarging of the self into the communal partner of God. Our religious duty is not only to follow the path. We must monitor and adjust the path so that it leads to holiness and the divine order. This is the purpose of halakhic process.

The vision of divine or perfect reality is unachievable because it strives for the impossible: a moment of perfection that lasts forever. But this perfection is nevertheless the ideal against which we measure our existence. We dream of it and also acknowledge its evanescence by "remembering": remembering the primal moment of the creation of the universe; remembering the fleeting instant in the Garden of Eden in which new humanity lived beyond time, social structure, or effort; remembering the eternal moment at Sinai before the partnership with God proved beyond us. Our path leads us to strive toward this perfection, each time experiencing the unity it entails and drawing strength to recreate it.

If we begin to sense that a particular rule points us in unholy ways and would lead us to a less than holy reality, then it not only can, it must be altered. Observing and submitting to the Halakha can bring many gifts, for it gives us not only discipline, but also a sense of belonging, even a feeling of righteousness: We have done what we were supposed to do. Orthodoxies, fundamentalisms, and literalisms are popular with so many people precisely because they provide the conviction that one's behavior is correct and that one is part of a group of right-living people.

But observing the rules is only a part of our duty; we

must do more than submit to our ancestors' vision of holiness. We must honor their vision by constantly revisioning the divine state, redefining the obligations that are demanded of us and reaffirming them in deed and word. We must not only remember the revelation of the past, we must look upon our own actions as paths to this eternal revelation and strive to have our acts bring us a sense of the Presence.

The Halakha, with its many emendations, interpreters, collectors, codifiers, judges, and commentators is sometimes referred to by the image of *yam ha-halakha*, the sea of Halakha. But a sea is large, and overwhelming, and allows people to flounder and get lost or drown. The proliferation of interpretation brings us to ever deeper waters, but we may lose sight of the other side. Halakha is more like a river, wide and deep, that is flowing between our past and our goal. When it meanders too much or gets wild or destructive, it is our job to keep it flowing toward the divine order, *malkhut shamayim*.

We have the tools to direct and refine the Halakhah, for the halakhic system has given us ample instruction of the ways to change, divert, abrogate, and amend our rules. Both the abundant empirical evidence of halakhic change and the sophisticated reasoning of halakhic thinkers from the Rabbis to our own current theoreticians gives us the charge and the means to fulfill this need of the Halakha.

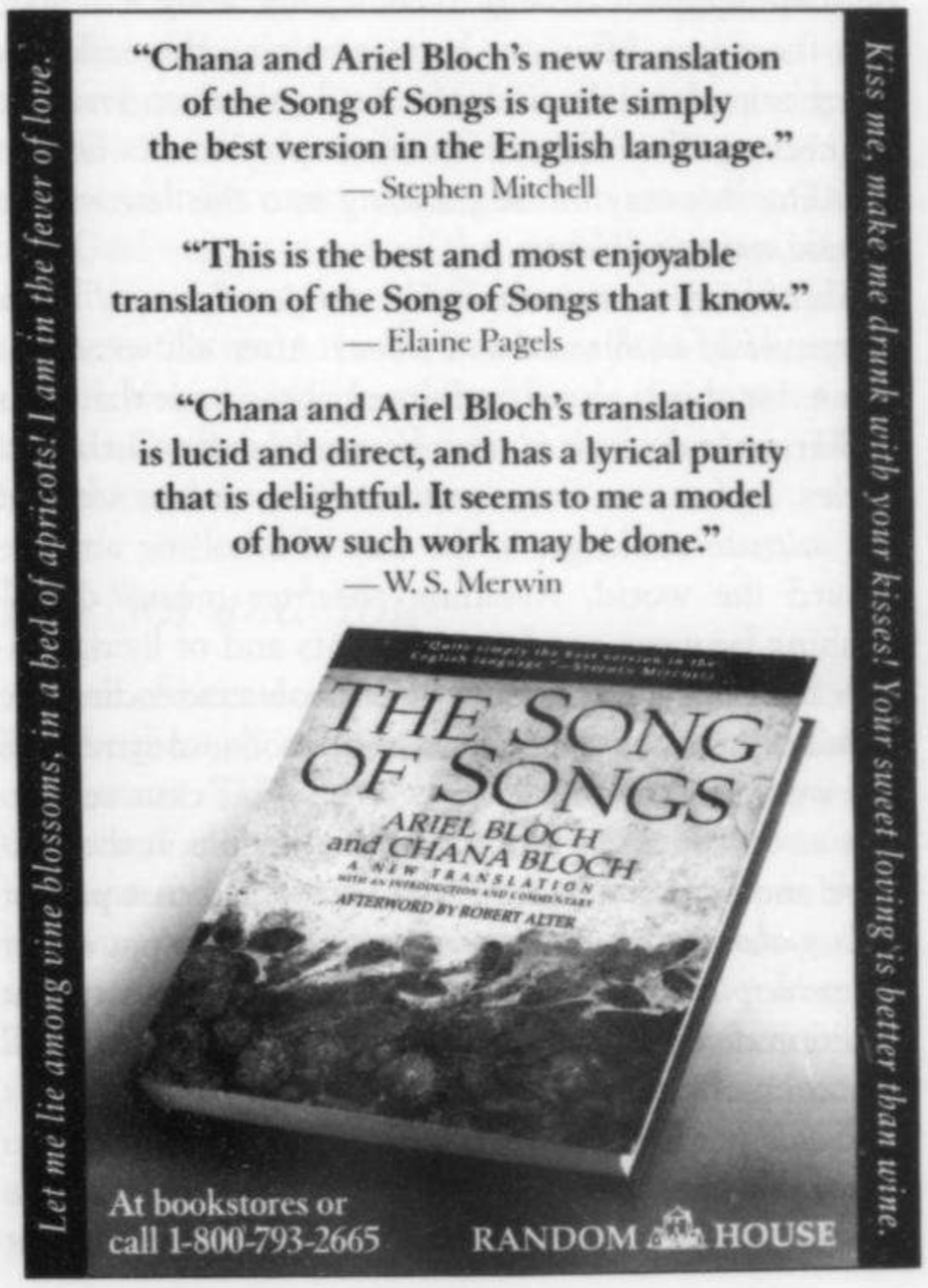
Much of the discussion of Halakha takes place in theoretical, mythical, and at times even mystical language. As is often the case with legal thought, halakhic discourse often becomes much clearer through the use of specific cases. Ever since the Geonic period (post sixth-century), cases have been presented in the form of questions and answers (known as responsa). Using this form, we can consider a few examples of what this mystical language might mean in practice and what the guidelines might be that should inform halakhic deliberation.

Does the Halakha accord everyone his/her full humanity? To deny people's full humanity is to remove them from divinity, and if we lessen the divine image of anyone, we diminish it in all of us. If we say a deaf-mute cannot testify, what are we saying about that person? If we say a woman cannot testify, what do we say about her? If a woman is anchored to someone (who has not given her a divorce), have we subordinated her humanity to his?

One of the moral imperatives of Halakha is to examine our rules in light of the need to have all humans be accepted in the image of God. When the road that incorporates past understanding would block our way to divinity instead of leading it there, then it must be changed. The Torah sets us on a path that we continue to travel, the Halakha defines the parameters of that path. We owe it to the Torah and the Halakha to make sure that we keep pointing in the divine direction.

Ancient Israel could not foresee everything. The Bible never transformed its own social structure. It doesn't abolish slavery, possibly because the biblical socio-economic system was not capable of surviving without slavery. When the Rabbis came to the decision that slavery was wrong, they abolished it. The domination of one person over another can never lead to God. Patriarchy is another form of domination, by males over females. Now that we have come to this realization, it is our religious duty to dismantle patriarchy. It is also our religious duty to dismantle heterosexism, racism, ageism, and maybe even speciesism, and ultimately forms of domination that we have not yet learned to identify. When we examine Halakha according to our best ethical understanding, we are not evaluating Torah by secular values. Our ethical principles are also a part of Torah.

Should milk be kept separate from meat? The separation of meat and milk, which is never explicit in the Hebrew Bible, has been part of the Jewish dietary regulations since (at least) the Rabbinic period. Should Jews observe it today? Here the most important ques-



tion is not, "why should a Jew keep milk separate from meat?" but rather, "why not?" We do not start with a blank slate. The path to divinity is a path of connectedness, a communal way that includes the living and those past. The path that we travel as a community connects our actions to all other Jews, past and present. That connection should not be broken lightly, for connectedness, the caring beyond the self, is part of the very essence of divinity and purpose of religion. Our path, our Halakha, should be as inclusive as it can be, neither excluding people from full community because of gender or sexual orientation, nor excluding the past simply because we cannot see the reason for its strictures. By keeping the separation between milk and meat, we walk the path that our ancestors began. There is no reason to declare them irrelevant and to constantly start our journey from square one. We alter our communal path only when it leads us in directions that we now perceive as unrighteous, that can no longer express our love for God and can no longer lead us to a reality that we perceive as better.

This principle leads to a presumption in favor of keeping traditions and traditional strictures unless they do harm. There is also a long Jewish tradition of searching for *ta'amey ha-mitzvot*, the reasons for the individual commandments. In the case of separating meat and milk, we can perhaps find one, for there may be some religious benefit to constantly being reminded that there is a difference between eating the milk of a living animal and the flesh of a dead animal, and not just connecting the two as "animal products." Understanding this may infuse meaning into this law so that people want to observe it.

Should we observe shaatnez, *the avoidance of fabric composed of both wool and linen*? After all, we might argue that this is also a traditional observance that does no harm. And yet, it is not observed in non-Orthodox circles. In fact, on closer examination, we can see that this *mitzvah* could get in the way of a holistic attitude toward the world. Avoiding *shaatnez* means distinguishing between products of plants and of living animals. Logically, this should also involve extending the prohibition to separate cotton and wool, and synthetics and wool, and synthetics and cotton. This casts separation as the single most important principle in the universe and prevents us from acknowledging that part of *tikkun olam* is the creation of unity. If we do not adopt the *principle* behind *shaatnez*, the it becomes a quaint tradition divorced from communal values, and few will choose to observe it.

Should kosher slaughter be abolished? There can be no doubt that kosher slaughter was once the most humane way to dispatch animals because it demands instant death. But that was true at a time when animals were slaughtered individually. Now, with factory conditions, animals frequently undergo lengthy periods of terror as they await their instantaneous death. Is this *tsa'ar ba'aley hayyim*, the causing of pain to living creatures? Does mass slaughtering render meat unkosher even when the actual killing is in the prescribed manner?

There are other similar questions raised by our modern methods of raising food. Eggs are mostly produced by chickens raised in batters in which overcrowding and overlighting create a condition of malaise in which hens lay more eggs. If this is *tsa'ar ba'aley hayyim*, then perhaps only eggs from free-range chickens should be kosher. Similarly, veal comes from calves that have been confined in tiny pens so that the muscles do not develop. Do such conditions for raising veal make meat unkosher?

An ever-increasing number of Jews say that *all* slaughter should be abolished, that we should *never* eat meat again. Agriculture has advanced to the point where we no longer need meat to survive. In fact, we can feed more people when we grow these nutrients than when we eat meat. And meat from domesticated animals may not be conducive to a healthy life. Even our ancestors, who ate meat, had a vision of a more peaceful grass-chomping world. We now have it within our power to get closer to that idyllic world. Perhaps this is the way we should go.

Does Halakha permit the death penalty? Should we communally, ritually, kill people? The written Torah says yes, perceiving the death penalty as essential to maintaining the cosmos. The talmudic rabbis say no, that courts should not sentence anyone to death. Later rabbis say yes again, urging that traitors be executed. What should we say today?

What about kiddushin *(the Jewish marriage ritual)*? Our ritual for marriage is based on the paradigm that the man brings the woman into his domain. Is this our vision of a holy marriage? Does one person acquire another and claim exclusive rights to her? Or do two people come together and reach toward each other to form a joint life and create a home and children in love and Torah? If mutuality is our ideal of marriage, perhaps our wedding ceremony should reflect this ideal and should teach in symbol the same lessons that we express in words. It may not be proper to act out in a ritual drama a concept of marriage which horrifies us when it is spelled out.

What about homosexuality? Are we sure that only a heterosexual pair-bonding is conducive to sanctity? The written Torah proscribes homosexual mating—but it also prescribes animal sacrifice. Are we certain that

(Continued on p. 77)

The Essential Kabbalah

Daniel C. Matt

Editor's Note: The following are selections from a new compilation of material from the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition that developed from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and prepared the philosophical foundations for Hasidism in the eighteenth century, and for Jewish Renewal in the late twentieth century. As opposed to those who believe that the essence of Judaism is the separation between holy and non-holy, Kabbalah stresses a very different conception of God. For those who like to dismiss Jewish Renewal as New Agey, or unduly influenced by Eastern sources, Kabbalah shows that the mystical tradition has roots in Judaism that are as authentic as the nineteenth-century rationalist versions of Judaism that have shaped much of contemporary Jewish theology.

Nonduality

The essence of divinity is found in every single thing—nothing but it exists. Since it causes every thing to be, no thing can live by anything else. It enlivens them; its existence exists in each existent.

Do not attribute duality to God. Let God be solely God. If you suppose that *Ein Sof* emanates until a certain point, and that from that point on is outside of it, you have dualized. God forbid! Realize, rather, that *Ein Sof* exists in each existent. Do not say, "This is a stone and not God." God forbid! Rather, all existence is God, and the stone is a thing pervaded by divinity.

Before anything emanated, there was only *Ein Sof*. *Ein Sof* was all that existed. Similarly, after it brought into being that which exists, there is nothing but it. You cannot find anything that exists apart from it. There is nothing that is not pervaded by the power of divinity. If there were, *Ein Sof* would be limited, subject to duality, God forbid! Rather, God is everything that exists, though everything that exists is not God. It is present in everything, and everything comes into being from it. Nothing is devoid of its divinity. Everything is within it; it is within everything and outside of everything. There is nothing but it.

God's Encampment

When you contemplate the Creator, realize that his encampment extends beyond, infinitely beyond, and so, too, in front of you and behind you, east and west, north and south, above and below, infinitely everywhere. Be aware that God fashioned everything and is within everything. There is nothing else.

The Chain of Being

God is unified oneness—one without two, inestimable. Genuine divine existence engenders the existence of all of creation. The sublime, inner essences secretly constitute a chain linking everything from the highest to the lowest, extending from the upper pool to the edge of the universe.

There is nothing—not even the tiniest thing—that is not fastened to the links of this chain. Everything is catenated in its mystery, caught in its oneness. God is one, God's secret is one, all the worlds below and above are all mysteriously one. Divine existence is indivisible.

The entire chain is one. Down to the last link, everything is linked with everything else; so divine essence is below as well as above, in heaven and on earth. There is nothing else.

Ein Sof *and You*

Each of us emerges from *Ein Sof* and is included in it. We live through its dissemination. It is the perpetuation of existence. The fact that we sustain ourselves on vegetation and animal life does not mean that we are nourished on something outside of it. This process is like a revolving wheel, first descending, then ascending. It is all one and the same, nothing is separate from it. Though life branches out further and further, everything is joined to *Ein Sof*, included and abiding in it.

Delve into this. Flashes of intuition will come and go, and you will discover a secret here. If you are deserving, you will understand the mystery of God on your own. □

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These passages are excerpted from The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism, *HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.*

ACTS OF GOD

Trout Fishing

Lawrence Kushner

A member of my congregation tells of how, a few weeks before his bar mitzvah, he went to the rabbi and confessed that he didn't think he could go through with the ceremony because he feared he didn't believe in God. The rabbi thought for a moment and asked kindly, "What makes you think it matters to God?"

You don't have to believe in psychoanalysis to have an unconscious either. Therapy just helps you discover how often this hidden dimension of your psyche influences your life. Something else is going on beneath the surface. Think of analysis as a kind of self-discipline that gradually weans you away from blaming so much on chance and instead gets you to acknowledge your own participation in life's unfolding. Whereas once you would have thought you misplaced your car keys "accidentally," preventing you from making an unpleasant trip, now you realize that it wasn't a coincidence at all. The whole business was the result of a "deliberate" (though unconscious) wish. In this way, you learn to take increasing measures of responsibility for the way your life is turning out. There's more to reality than meets the eye. There are forces at work which we cannot ordinarily see, which exert profound influence. Surely no one could know them all.

My own calendar is hopelessly complicated. Between teaching in Manhattan, lecturing in distant cities, and tending to the needs of a very active congregation, I consider myself lucky to find an afternoon off every few weeks. Nevertheless, I convince my eighty-one-year-old, widowed mother that she can afford a new car and that it would be beautiful if she gave the old clunker to my college-age son, then "allow" her to persuade me at the eleventh hour to fly to Detroit for a day and a half to help her close the deal. After all, never in her life has she bought a car alone. I feel virtuous, devoted. I even tell Karen, my wife, that my dad would want me to do this.

But it is not until I am on the plane that it dawns on me that my visit comes just a few days prior to the fifth anniversary of my father's death. Suddenly it is clear: I have unconsciously engineered the whole thing so that I can be with my mother, back in the land of my birth, during these days of memorial. We sit over breakfast at the delicatessen and marvel over the "coincidence" that has brought us together. But I know better. Despite myself, I have been arranging this trip for months.

The following weekend, Karen is in Florida visiting her parents and I am home alone with my youngest son. Between the school play, his busy social and athletic schedule, and my own work, it is rare that we should have such a window together. "Let's rent a movie," I say, "and just hang out."

He has just sprained his ankle twice and this reminds me of the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, I've been wanting him to see. The film is about two young British runners, one a Scot and the other a Jew, and their paths to the 1924 Olympic games. The opening scene shows the track team running along through the moist sand of a beach on a gray English morning. We are at once struck by their uniforms and shoes. Compared to contemporary, hi-tech athletic equipment, they seem almost primitive. I then surprise myself with an observation: "That's the way it was when Boompa used to train the Detroit Lions football team back in '35."

I choke back a cry; my eyes fill with tears. And it hits me again, this is the anniversary of his death. It is not an accident I chose this movie for this afternoon. My boy puts his hand around my shoulder and gives me a hug. "Yeah," he consoles, "those were the days."

In addition to being a sports trainer, my father was also a trout fisherman. I remember, as a boy of eight years old, driving with him up into northern Michigan to the little town of Lewiston where we "men" would rent a one-room cabin and fish for the weekend. It was two-hundred-twenty-two miles, the longest ride I ever took. I remember how he taught me to rub the unassembled ends of the fishing rod in my hair to lubricate them before putting the pieces together, and how we would "hide" the bottles of Coca-

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Cola beneath some rocks in the fast-running trout stream, to keep them cold for later. And I remember how once he caught three fish and I only caught one, and how, when he saw the disappointment in my eyes, he dropped one of his fish flapping slippery on the grass and said that whoever of us caught it first could put it into his creel and claim to my mother that we had caught it fair and square. But most of all, I remember the sunlight flooding through the tall grasses and watching him downstream.

That evening, some friends asked me to join them for a movie in the city. It was some kind of film about a history professor in Pittsburgh; I was grateful for the company. But when we arrived at the theater we were informed that the print had broken and that the eight o'clock show had been cancelled. After driving all this way and paying for parking, we were not about to go home without complaint. The manager turned out to be reasonable and (for a Saturday night) generous. Nine of the twelve other films in the complex were already sold out, two others had long lines. And that is how we accepted complimentary admission to *A River Runs Through It*.

It was a beautifully photographed story based on a memoir by the Chicago literary critic Norman Maclean, about his growing up in Montana, trout-fishing with his brother and his father, a Presbyterian minister. One of the last lines went something like, "All things flow together into one great unity; and a river runs through it."

Look, I understand about coincidence, and even what Jungians call synchronicity. But just suppose there is something going on in the universe which is to ordinary, everyday reality like our unconscious is to our daily lives? Softly but unmistakably guiding it. Pushing us here, pulling us there, tripping us up, guiding our steps, feeding us our lines. Most of the time we are simply unaware of it. Yet every now and then, on account of some apparent fluke, we are startled by the results of its presence, chastened by the forces it exerts on our own secret premeditation. We realize that we have been part of something with neither consciousness nor consent. It is so sweet and then it is gone.

You say, "I don't believe in God." And I respectfully ask, "What makes you think it matters to God?" □

Growing Up Haunted

When I enter through the hatch of memory
those claustrophobic chambers,
my adolescence in the booming fifties
of General Eisenhower, General Foods
and General Motors, I see our dreams
obsolescent mannequins in Dior frocks,
armored, prefabricated bodies;
and I see our nightmares, powerful
as a wine red sky and wall of fire.

Fear was the underside of every leaf
we turned, the knowledge that our
cousins, our other selves, had been
starved and butchered to ghosts.
The question every smoggy morning
presented like a covered dish:
why are you living and all those
mirror selves, sisters, gone
into smoke like stolen cigarettes.

I remember my grandmother's cry
when she learned the death of all she
remembered, girls she bathed with,
young men with whom she shyly
flirted, wooden shul where
her father rocked and prayed,
red haired aunt plucking the
balalaika, world of sun and snow
turned to shadows on a yellow page.

Assume no future you may not have
to fight for, to die for, muttered
ghosts gathered on the foot
of my bed each night. What you
carry in your blood is us,
the books we did not write,
music we could not make, a world
gone from gristle to smoke, only
as real now as words can make it.

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One-on-One in Carlisle, PA

Jay Neugeboren

"What I think we should do after we bring in our luggage," my son Eli said, "is to find a basketball court in town and play some hoops."

I sighed, pleaded exhaustion.

"Oh come on, Pop," Eli coaxed. "You can rest up later—"

I smiled, submitted.

Eli and I had set out early that morning from our home in Northampton, Massachusetts, bound for Athens, Ohio, where Eli would begin his freshman year at Ohio University. We had already driven 400 miles, yet even as we moved into a motel room on the outskirts of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, changed into shorts and sneakers, and got back into our car, I knew I was weary not so much from the miles we had driven, but from the prospect of the journey home, when I would be driving alone for two days across Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts—a 750-mile trip in which, my children grown and gone, I would have all the time I might ever want to rest up and to reflect on the beginning of what was going to be, for me, a new and solitary life.



A.J. GARCES

For nearly a decade I had been the single, full-time parent to my three children. Hundreds of times during these years, ordinary family life and responsibilities, and/or crises involving my children (suicide attempts, drug problems, emergency surgery), had me saying to myself, "Okay, Jay, today you're not going to be a writer—you're going to be a father. For the next few hours—or days, or weeks, or months—don't even *think* about getting any of your own work done … "

For a year or so before Eli left, I'd been intermittently depressed. Though I knew that the major sources of the depression were coming from within, there were, also, some worldly causes. At the start of Eli's senior year in high school, I'd completed a memoir, on which I'd worked for several years, about my brother Robert's life. Robert, now fifty years old, had been a mental patient for the previous thirty-two years, and, for the last two decades, I'd been his caretaker. During Eli's senior year of high school, the book had been rejected by more than two dozen publishers.

There were other setbacks and losses during these months: My mother's memory deteriorated rapidly, and I'd made emergency trips to Florida to care for her; the woman with whom I was planning marriage suddenly backed out; my son Aaron, in his freshman year of college, nearly lost an eye when a snowball drove a lens of his eyeglasses into the eye, an eye operated on five years before for detachments of the retina; Robert broke down in rather gruesome fashion on the night of Eli's high school graduation—the first time he'd ever done so in my home; and, my books out of print and my writing career in seeming eclipse, I found that I had, also, run out of money.

The situations with mother, brother, career, children,

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and finances, like others, were sometimes difficult and sad, but since when was I a stranger to sadness, difficulty, loss, or simple bad luck? Why the sudden despair and loss of resiliency? For most of my adult life the fact of rejection and the threat of insolvency were constants that had, if anything, usually served to inspire me. (I wrote eight unpublished books before my first published book; I logged 576 rejections before I sold my first short story, and more than 2,000 rejections before, at the age of twenty-seven, I sold my first novel.)

The only new element in my life, clearly, was the prospect of the life that lay in wait for me after Eli left home: I had become so habituated to having my children with me during the past twenty-four years—to our simple sharing of the infinite complexities of any hour or day of family life—that when friends asked what I expected I might do after my children were gone, I went blank.

I had, when first left alone as a single parent, feared we might somehow not be a family—didn't a real family have a father *and* a mother? But this fear had vanished quickly in the rush of daily life, and I had come, as before, to take enormous pleasure from the repeated chores and rituals that marked our time together, whether our family consisted of four, three, or two—all those mundane exchanges and mannerisms we'd come to take for granted: the way my daughter Miriam left a trail of her clothing and possessions throughout the house; the way my son Aaron, when entering the T.V. room, laden down with a large and carefully prepared snack, would announce, "I'm going to my home away from home—see ya!"; the way Eli, while I'd be making supper, would drape his arm over my shoulder, kiss me, and ask, "So what's for dinner, dear?"

I'd taken immense comfort from the daily and seasonal rhythms of family life—from its endless and magical mix of the predictable and the unpredictable—and in the months before Eli's departure I became depressed, in part, because I was realizing—*fearing*—that though two people could be a family, one could not.

But why did this depress me? Why did I despair of ever writing or being loved again? Wasn't the promise of being free from daily parental responsibilities—of having the time and space (actual, mental, emotional) in which to write all the books I'd dreamt my whole life long of writing—wasn't this cause for celebration?

The habit of parenting, and of parenting alone—of beginning and ending each day with my children—of thinking of them and of their needs, and of doing so without getting time off (and without having somebody to care for me)—of carrying around in my head and heart (and briefcase) endless and endlessly revised lists of things that needed to be done (along with things that didn't need to be done: of expending energy in deciding what *not* to tell a child, what *not* to do for a child, what *not* to ask a child about)—this was a habit I loved, in part, because it allowed me to believe—even in the most difficult of times, what I sometimes feared was not so: that I was, in fact, *useful* to others, and that because of this, my life mattered.

But if this habit had little to nourish it, who was I, and—especially since there seemed no longer any audience for my books and stories, and no way, through my writing, to give pleasure or to be useful to people beyond my family—what was my life good for, and what would there be of use or value in it, or in me?

I had settled on Carlisle as our stopping point for the first day's journey because I remembered that Jim Thorpe, one of my boyhood heroes, had gone to college there, at the Carlisle Indian School. While Eli and I cruised the streets of Carlisle, looking for a basketball court, I told him what I knew about Thorpe, and about the glory and sadness of Thorpe's life.

Thorpe, a Sac-Fox American Indian from Oklahoma, had been the greatest male athlete in American history—an All-American and pro football player, a Major League baseball player, a winner of Olympic gold medals in the decathlon and pentathlon, and a man who wound up, at the end of his life, as I recalled his story (and I recalled much of it via the movie in which Burt Lancaster played Thorpe), an alcoholic whose wife left him and whose son died—who wound up playing Indian chiefs in carnivals, playing for small-time football teams at ten dollars a game, and having his Olympic medals taken away from him because he once, before the Olympics, took fifteen dollars in expenses from a semi-pro baseball team.

Carlisle College, we discovered from our *AAA Triptik,* no longer existed. It had been an Indian School—the first non-reservation Indian school in the nation—for only thirty-nine years, from 1879 to 1918, and on its site now was The War College of the United States Army. I wanted to see the grounds, but Eli told me to pull to the curb. I did, and he called out to two young men, who told us there was a basketball court a few blocks away, in the direction we were heading.

"But you don't want to play there," one of the men said. He had a Spanish accent. He shrugged, then smiled. "I mean, it's all *Black* there—you know?"

But there was another set of courts at the other end of town, and he told us how to get there. We waved, made a U-turn, drove off, and soon found the courts. It was an especially hot and muggy late summer evening, the day before Labor Day. Eli and I shot around for a

while, and then Eli threw the ball to me and challenged me to a game of one-on-one.

Shortly after the last time we'd played, we had, at a Salvation Army thrift store, bought an ancient two-foot high silver-and-blue basketball trophy, and declared that this trophy, which we named The Neug Holiday Festival Award, would be given to the winner of an annual father-son game. Eli had never beaten me in a game of one-on-one, but since the last time we'd played he had shot up and he was, finally and to his everlasting joy, taller than me. He had also developed great leaping ability and, at five-foot-eight-and-a-half inches tall, could jump high enough to touch the rim. (At five-foot-seven inches tall, I could sometimes still touch the net.)

Eli gave me the ball, said we would play to seven, and dared me to go around him. I faked right, drove left, scored. I beamed. Eli laughed. I took the ball out again, missed a jump shot, and Eli got the rebound.

Our game lasted for about twenty minutes. After Eli tied the score at two-two, I backed off a bit on defense, challenging him to hit the long-range jumper, and he responded by sinking his next four out of five shots. He played tighter defense, making me force shots, and the one time I nearly got by him, my shoulder slammed into his mouth, drawing blood, so that, mid-air, as I was going up for my shot, I stopped dead, cradled the ball to my stomach with one hand, grabbed my son with the other, asked him if he were okay, told him to show me his tongue. He rubbed his jaw, spit a few times, told me he was fine, and seemed surprised when I told him it was his ball out, that I'd fouled him. "Are you *sure*—wasn't I moving with you?" he asked.

I scored once more, making the score six-three, and then Eli powered past me easily for a lay-up that won the game. We were both drenched with sweat, both smiling. We shook hands, I demanded a rematch, but not, I laughed, on this night … yet while we went back to shooting around, I found that happy as I was for him, I was also angry with myself for not having pressured him on defense, for not having played harder.

When I realized how upset I was to have lost, I laughed inwardly, as if at some other Jay, and with an ease I hadn't remembered feeling for months—amazed to realize I had actually been believing that at fifty-five years old I should still be defeating my eighteen-year-old son in a one-on-one game of basketball.

A short while later, I launched a long, high shot from a few feet beyond the three-point line that arced gracefully across the evening sky and dropped through the basket without touching the rim. Eli smiled gorgeously, and suggested we head back to the motel—that my shot was probably a good one to end on. He put his arm around me and we walked to the car, talking about this and that, and I found myself wondering how it was possible to ever feel alone and despairing when I had a son like Eli—no matter where he was—and when I was able, still, as I had for the previous hour or so, to take such easy pleasure from such a simple, ordinary moment in time.

Eli and I moved him into his dormitory in Athens late the next afternoon, then walked around the campus and the town, bought books and supplies, and ate supper. During these first days on campus he was, most of the time, his usual self: somewhat shy, moody, and reserved, but, as ever, playful, witty, thoughtful, and affectionate. And he was also, at times, irritable, impatient, angry, and surly in ways he had rarely been with me.

Gifted as Eli was at many things—art, music, sports, science—he had also been gifted, sometimes to a fault, at knowing how to please others (unlike his brother Aaron, who tested me constantly and ingeniously, Eli had worked hard most of his life at figuring out how *not* to get me upset or angry), and the fact that Eli was now snapping and snarling seemed wonderful. At last, I thought, on the way back to my motel, our second night in Athens—my good and ever-responsible son is finally unafraid to show forth his anger and frustration—and to do so without losing any of his essential sweetness.

When we sat down to dinner on the evening before I left Ohio, tears suddenly welled in his eyes. He tried to speak, but couldn't.

I looked at him questioningly, said nothing.

He shook his head sideways several times, as if to clear it—as if astonished by what was occurring to him—leaned toward me, and then, haltingly, he spoke:

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"I just realized that I'm not really prepared for you to leave me yet," he said.

I wept, on and off, most of the way through Ohio, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania. I talked to myself, shouted, sang, and let memories and feelings flood through me, over me, and from me. Though bile rose in my throat when I thought of how hard the past decade had been on my children—how could they ever make sense of the fact that their mother had left them and moved away?—and of how much harder this was on them than caring for them could ever be on me, the two days alone on the road, moving from one life to another, were happy and relaxed.

Alone in the car, I conjured up whole novels, stories, screenplays, and somewhere between Wheeling, West Virginia, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, I decided I would write about Eli's leavetaking, and about what I had, for years, resisted writing about: the somewhat anomalous life I'd been leading as a single man raising children by himself.

To have written about that life had always seemed, in prospect, distasteful: an invasion of privacy that could only wind up reeking of the kind of self-absorbed mawkishness wherein yet another man went into print bragging about having discovered his womanly nature (that he could be nurturing, warm, sensitive, caring, unafraid of intimacy) and/or his *manly*-womanly nature (that he could be these things while bonding rapturously with other men).

What my years of raising my children alone had done, I saw, was not to allow me to discover and/or cultivate my womanly, nurturing qualities—though, in passing, they may have done that too. Instead, I began to see, I had received a different and less happy gift: a glimpse into what most single mothers (according to the U. S. Census Bureau, the percent of single-parent families headed by women has stayed steady since 1970 at about 90 percent) experienced most of the time.

Though there were enormous joys and rewards in parenting, and in parenting alone, the joys and rewards, I now understood, could often be diminished by what I'd been feeling in the months before Eli left home. I discovered, that is, merely what many mothers, single or married, already knew but rarely spoke or wrote about—that the life of a woman, especially if the woman's life was defined in conventional terms (as the duty, above all, to bear children and to raise them, and to serve family, husband, and home faithfully), was often defined and permeated not only (or primarily) by the joys of motherhood, but by things less happy, noble, and ennobling: by feelings—often repressed and/or denied—of depression, isolation, powerlessness, exhaustion, fear, and rage.

Imagine, I said to myself, somewhere near Scranton, Pennsylvania, what your prospects and feelings would be at this point in your life were you not a fifty-five-year-old man who'd been raising children by himself, but a fifty-five-year-old *woman* who'd been raising children by herself. Imagine what your prospects and feelings would be if you were, say, a middle-aged woman who'd been abandoned by her husband, who had no savings, who was trying to put three children through college by yourself, who was living alone now and for the foreseeable future in a small town (with no relatives nearby), and who did not have the privileges and resources (education and skills) you had: who did not have a well-paying teaching job (with flexible hours); who did not have a career and calling she loved and to which she could return; who did not have excellent physical health; and who had not grown up with what the culture had given to me through all the years of my life: the sense of entitlement with which most American men of my generation had grown up.

My daughter Miriam, writing an essay for a women's studies course about me as "SuperMom," had, a year before, pointed to some obvious differences between me and single mothers: Not only was I admired for doing what women were *expected* to do—to put their childrens' needs, lives, and desires before their own, and to deny and/or spiritualize the pain and rage that might come with raising children—but I had, among other things, almost as a birthright, something women rarely had: the right, without fear of censure (or the acquisition of shame and guilt), to complain.

Raising children was good, hard, often wonderful work—but it was relentlessly fatiguing (and often infuriating) work, too, and its rewards resided, for the most part, and in the best of situations and times, literally and solely in the work itself. If it was such good work, why, single parents might ask, were they so tired, unappreciated, and frustrated so much of the time? And when would there be time for just them? And to whom, once the children were gone, other than to their children (*if* to their children), would their lives matter?

Friends had been warning me for months about something called empty-nest syndrome, but when I arrived home in Northampton, it wasn't there. I walked from room to room, smiling and weeping, and thinking, also, somewhat vainly: How could any house in which I lived, given the blessings and richness of my life, *ever* be empty?

There was, too, upon my return from Ohio, a letter waiting for me from Miriam. "Well," she wrote, "I realize that by the time you receive this letter you will be back home childless for the first time. Being the wild

and crazy bachelor that you are you probably will enjoy having some time to yourself, but I am sure it will be a bit strange to have the house so quiet." For two single-spaced, typewritten pages she told me how glad she was that the four of us were so close, and how glad she was that she and I got along so well. "I haven't said anything until now," her letter ended, "but I thought it might put a smile on your face to tell you now. Since I graduated I have felt really good about our relationship…. Enjoy the quiet, and think about it this way—grocery shopping will be the easiest job around!"

She was right, and not just about grocery shopping. Everything was easier. My days and nights seemed to stretch out forever, and, aside from my teaching and advising duties at the University of Massachusetts, there were few other responsibilities that had any temporal claims on me: I ate, wrote, read, and tended to chores according to my needs and my desires.

I was happier to be home, and alone in my home, than I had imagined possible, and previous concerns and worries—whether about my literary career, or finances, or my brother, or my mother—these seemed merely what they were: real conditions that would need attention. They neither depressed nor frightened.

But if I was feeling so easy and free now, why had I been so depressed only a few weeks before? How could I have believed that because my children would be living elsewhere, I would not still be a parent, or because my books were being rejected, I would not still be a writer? It was, clearly, the convergence of the two events—the imminence of Eli's leavetaking joined with the rejections of the book about my brother—that had brought on my brief moment of despair—but what seemed more significant than the despair was how brief its moment was, and how swift its disappearance.

The very source of my pain and fear had, yet again, become the source of hope and happiness: I had been depressed because I felt I was dying as a writer, a parent, and a man, and now I was feeling renewed because I believed that I was, in fact, very much alive as a writer, a parent, and a man, and it was the very fact and speed of this change that made me wonder if there hadn't been something suspect and vainglorious—some curious, indulgent, and quintessentially *male* form of pride—at the heart of my weariness, since, for all the bits of seemingly female chores, feelings, and responsibilities that had sometimes been mine through the years, the turning point in my recent crisis had occurred during a game of one-on-one basketball with my teenage son. Talk about male bonding! How much more male—more American male—could I be?

I had lived most of my life as an American man who believed in the values, feelings, and joys associated with competitive sports: the passion for winning at all costs; the camaraderie that came from teamwork; the passion for *fair play*—the faith that, in sports, one might be judged and rewarded not by the heresy of one's birth, but according to one's merits and deeds.

I had been taught, since boyhood, actually and by example, that in this Land of Opportunity, if an American man worked hard, played hard, and aimed high, there were *no* limits to what he might achieve. More than that, though, I was taught to believe that men were *entitled* to realize their ambitions, and this meant, for the most part, in the lower middle-class world in which I grew up, that they were entitled, too, to be served by the women around them—their mothers, wives, and daughters.

A man like me went to college to get his B. A., or B. S., I was told when a boy, and a woman went to college to get—and who did I know who did not laugh at the seeming joke?—her M-R-S. Only exceptional (or contrary) women did not buy into this worldview and, like exceptional human beings in any time and place, were able to make their way in the world despite the forces that elevated such a notion to the status of natural law.

In the world in which I grew up, the job of the man was to succeed in the world so that he could provide the means for the woman to stay at home, to keep house, and to raise the children, though in my own instance, there was an uncommon twist: My father was constantly failing in business and forever in debt, and my mother supported our family financially. My parents fought violently about this situation, and agreed, in their frustration and misery, on only one thing: that it was a tragedy that my father could not earn a living and that my mother was forced to work.

It was only in the last decade, while I was raising children alone (their mother left them, definitively, in 1986), that I found myself musing now and then on what a woman with desires and ambitions similar to mine might have mused on frequently: on all the books I might have written if I weren't forever responsible for the ordinary matter of any day of family life: getting the three children off to school (there were mornings when, by 7:45, I felt I'd already put in more than a full day's work), refereeing their fights, dealing with their tantrums and complaints, sharing their accomplishments and worries and silliness, scheduling their lessons, practices, visits with friends … being called at work, on, say, an unremarkable day, by the school nurse and told one of my children was complaining of an earache, then picking up the child from school and arranging for a doctor's appointment and going to the doctor and then trying to figure out how to take care of

this child and get a prescription filled when I also had to grade papers or had scheduled somebody to come and fix the leaking roof while also having to deal with the disappointment one of the other children might pour forth when I had to cancel a planned trip to buy clothing or art supplies with that child—and what if the (old, used) car broke down again, and I had to wait in the rain or snow to have it towed, and I didn't have time to stop, as planned, to pick up the groceries I needed for supper, and what if supper were late and one of the children, tired of waiting, made his or her own supper and then refused mine while complaining there was never enough of something—of anything—in the fridge or pantry, and what if there was a call from my brother about a crisis in his life that needed tending to, and/or if my sick child had to stay home from school for a few days, and if during this time I became aware of the fact that one of the other children's poor grades in school were caused by a substance-abuse problem, and if and if and if . . .

The persistence of such days had sometimes made me envious and bitter, not toward writers who had no spouses or children, but toward those male writers I knew whose wives, even in this age of seeming liberation, remained their worshiping handmaidens: who typed their manuscripts, and picked them up from work, and took care of the household, and kept the children at a quiet distance so that the fathers could get their work done.

If I had, even occasionally in my years as a single parent, been unable to accept the sensible charge I'd given to myself (that for a specified or unspecified time I should not even think of being a writer), in order not to put those things I loved most in the world—my children and my writing—into conflict, what, then, were women's lives like?

More than this: If—despite my job, my accomplishments, my good health, and the good health of my children—I had, on the eve of my youngest child's departure, felt that without him at home I was going to be a useless human being, what would a woman (or a single man without my resources), in a parallel situation, feel? If I had felt, irrationally, that the rejection of my writing, along with my ongoing status as a single parent, was somehow a *punishment* for the years of raising my children alone, what would a woman who had been only and mainly—and, even, happily—a mother feel when, after twenty or thirty years of raising children, she were suddenly alone?

If, moreover, one could not provide for one's children adequately because one did not have the wherewithal to do so—the time, energy, patience, skills, or money—one's frustration might easily be intensified by a sense of helplessness that was itself disabling in untold ways, and that would surely open to rage, or repression of rage. And if one repressed rage, where and how could one ever gain control of one's life—how could one *ever* not despair?

If a woman had no other life than the life that went with being a mother, and had not had the wherewithal to cultivate any identity aside from that of a mother, what, when the children were gone, would she do with her time? If she were not a mother, who was she and of what use or good was she to others? And if she were *only* a mother, of what good or use was she to herself?

If the prospect of having my youngest child go off to college during a stretch of literary bad weather had depressed me, what would a woman feel who lacked what my life as an American man had given me through more than half a century: the habit of believing and acting on the belief that I could have and do and be anything I wanted if I wanted it enough and worked hard enough to get it.

And what if the life of a single mother (or father) were less than middle-class and privileged? What of single parents raising children in families afflicted with the constant presence of illness, poverty, drugs, violence, abuse, crime, and near-starvation—in lives whose very air was hopelessness? How ever find will and courage in such circumstances.

If I'd had days any single parent has experienced—when the ordinary traffic of life makes you long to cry out for somebody else to take over, what would a life be like in which not only was there never anyone else available to take over, but the very idea of asking for somebody's help with one's children—or for somebody to take care of *you* while you were taking care of your children—would never, given your life, occur to you?

I'd lived most of my life endowed with the prerogatives that came with the accident of my birth as a boy, shortly before the Second World War, to a lower middle-class Jewish-American family. Because of the particularities of the family into which I was born, and because I'd been given, by the accidents of fate and the choices and sheer good luck of adult life, the life, for a while, of a single parent, I'd also, briefly, had intimations of what life might be like for a woman born into similar circumstances, and for any single parent whose condition was less blessed than mine.

I could, thus, begin to sense—to imagine—what would happen if, in small and large ways, knowingly or unknowingly, one were forever deferring one's own needs and desires—one's life—and I could sense, too, what the results of such deferrals and their accompanying resentments might be, and the ways in which the

(Continued on p. 78)

FICTION

Sanskrit Is Sexy Too, Helena Said

Curt Leviant

I had Walter Kleinsaltz to thank for introducing me to Helena. Kleinsaltz, my former Greek professor at Cotton Mather University, was also a renegade Reform rabbi. Sick of the rabbinate, he slid from Hebraism to Hellenism. He sidled back, however, on the High Holy Days, when a synagogue needed him for its overflow crowds. A few months after I'd had my last class with Kleinsaltz—it was the first day of Rosh Hashanah (for the Reform movement, the *only* day)—I bumped into him on the run in the South Shore, Mass. synagogue where I taught Jewish history. His black satin sacral robe ballooned behind him and there was a little feline smile on his generous, pink, almost effeminate lips. Kleinsaltz didn't believe in God. "But, thank God, neither does anyone else around here," he said. Hypocrisy for Kleinsaltz, like inconsistency for Emerson, was a hobgoblin of little minds.

Instead of shaking hands and wishing each other a good year, we spontaneously pressed our index fingers to our lips—a sign to keep mum. We'd caught each other moonlighting. As a graduate student on a $7,500 a year stipend, I was forbidden to work (a rule made by $100,000 a year deans); and he, as an untenured assistant professor—probably the oldest one on the Cotton Mather campus—he too was prohibited by university regulations from accepting outside employment. Only tenured faculty members were permitted to take on extra jobs.

"Where are you running?" I asked.

"I forgot my sermon," he panted. "I hope it's in the car."

Kleinsaltz was a bumbling teacher. He forgot his books, his notes, his facts. Menelaus came out Menelayer. He mixed up Oedipus and Odysseus. Once he referred to the Odyssey complex. Questioned, he said he meant the yearning for wanderlust. He probably got into Cotton Mather because he had known Professor Roman Ingelberg (the triple threat: Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek) in England, where both had settled after fleeing Nazi Germany.

Kleinsaltz was along in years, in his late forties, I'd say. Being an assistant professor at forty-eight or -nine was like being a busboy at forty. Even waiting was hopeless.

I invited Kleinsaltz to have lunch with me.

After the meal, he inspected my three small rooms and said, "Maybe it's time you settled down?" He leaned back into my overstuffed armchair. There was a mauve, winy glow on his cheeks.

"I didn't know you were a rabbi."

"Shh! Don't tell a soul! I graduated from a rabbinical seminary before I went into Greek. Let's have some more of that Tokay."

"Doesn't it bother you that Rabbi Kahn—my God, you're his fellow rabbi—didn't have the Jewish decency to invite you for a holiday meal at his house? How would he feel if the case had been reversed?"

"You mean if he were me and I were he?"

"Exactly. Wouldn't he feel rotten?" I asked.

"He'd feel terrible. I wouldn't have invited him either. Why should I invite an atheist to lunch? Would you?"

"Of course not!"

We both looked at each other in silence. We smiled. A look of understanding passed between us as if we'd been friends for years.

Kleinsaltz wagged a finger at me. "A man needs a helpmeet, says the Bible." He smiled, lips closed, a softly ironic grin. He ticked his head, slightly drunk. "How old are you, if I may ask?"

"Twenty-nine, almost twenty-eight."

"Really? You look twenty-five."

"It runs in the family. We all look twenty-five. My father, my mother, even my sister."

"How old is she?"

"Thirteen."

"If she looks like you, I'll wait for her. Twenty-nine? High time to marry. I married late too. At thirty-two."

The Herr Doctor Rabbiner Professor hiccupped. He covered his mouth, blushed. I uncorked another bottle of

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Carmel. Kleinsaltz filled his water glass and downed it like iced tea. By now his slightly pronounced Germanic accent became more pronounced. "There's a girl I'd like you to meet … Your name is Keller, isn't it?" He giggled into his palm. "I like to share. I'll arrange something soon." He pressed his index finger to his lip. "Discreetly."

I didn't think he'd remember, drunk as he was, but he kept his word. One evening the rabbi manqué called from Boston to invite me to a party. I told him I'd like to come but already had a date that evening.

"No matter, bring her along for me. That girl I want you to meet is going to be there."

We came to Kleinsaltz's Commonwealth Avenue apartment holding hands. Janie was tall, beautifully baby-faced, Chinese-eyed. She radiated simplicity, innocence. But seeing the three bearded professors—one had his fist raised like Demosthenes—at the far side of the oblong living room, her hand fell slack. What's Professor Ingelberg doing here? I wondered.

Kleinsaltz introduced me to his darkly homely wife, Liselotte, and to Mrs. Ingelberg. Then a subtly European glimmer lit his eyes. "And this is Helena Ingelberg."

Helena, looking rather bored, sat primly with a blue blazer over her well-filled white blouse, but I already felt the warmth she exuded. She had a strongly chiselled pretty face and radiated a dagger-eyed vitality. I'm going to make it with Ingelberg's daughter, I knew, and blessed my luck in having wined and dined Kleinsaltz. I blessed the whole karma of our coming together at the proper time.

"Pleased to meet you," Helena said in her tweedy English accent. She leaned forward, shook my hand quickly and lightly, avoiding even the suggestion of a touch. Then, facing Janie, she said: "And you too. What did you say your name was?" Her green eyes excoriated Janie with a razor glance, cutting down a rival.

"They call me Janie."

Janie looked uncomfortable. She hardly uttered a word. Who's gonna take this albatross home for me? I screamed. Janie grazed my lobe with her lips and whispered, "What are those men talking about over there? Are they singing?" I looked at the trio huddled close at the edge of three low-slung chairs, an all-male Greek chorus. These full professors full of classical Greek were having a grand old time in a repressed, muted way, like bishops, I suppose, at an ecumenical convention, larding their talk with double-entendre Septuagint quotes.

I lifted up a wave of Janie's black hair near her temple. It was moist and matted. "They're singing the *Bhagavad Gita*," I said loud enough for Helena to hear. "It's a classical Oedipal triumvirate trying to achieve cosmic yantra."



ANDREW RODMAN

"Will you stop shouting out your answers?" Janie whispered behind her hand. "Everyone is looking. You're embarrassing me. Why did you bring me to a professor's party? I feel so stupid here. Lord, I'm only a freshman."

"I thought that was a senior dance I picked you up at."

"I went anyway."

Helena rose and said, "Here, Walter, let me clear the table."

"Take me home," Janie whispered, her porcelain face pale. "What am I doing at a faculty party?" Then her eyes narrowed. "They don't sound like they're singing."

"Chanting. Not singing. It's *sprakh-shtimeh*. One is reciting the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit. The other, the fellow with the beard like a shovel, that's Helena's daddy, he's translating it into classical Greek. The short man is translating the Greek into Arabic. What they're doing is called *nekomeh*. An Arabic marketplace rite that goes back—let's see—to the middle of the seventh, some say early eighth century, when the Sicilian scholastics under idiotic Moorish hegemony would vie for idiosyncratic prizes for idiomatic symbiotic classical translation."

"I don't feel well," Janie said softly. She pursed her lips. Holding back tears? Good, I thought. Maybe the

ambulance will take you home. "I'm only sixteen," says she.

"What?" I roared.

Helena's mother and Mrs. Kleinsaltz gaped at me. Helena, who had just come back into the living room, also heard. For a moment, half a beat, perhaps a dactyl, the chanting broke off.

I took Janie to the kitchen part of the living/dining room.

"What?" I hissed. "I thought you were eighteen. You're making a first-class anapest of yourself. Here I take you to the only place in the world where classical fenugreek is spoken. Don't tell me you're only sixteen!"

"I made high school in two-and-a-half years." Her head started to tilt back. "Get me water! Quick!" Her eyes blazed in a fever. "You're mean and sly and nasty," Janie said. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-five. No. That's a lie. I'm thirty-nine."

"You look it." She clapped her hand to her mouth. "And I kissed you before. I want to rinse my mouth."

"*Nekomeh*. Sanskrit. Fez. Fawn. Fenugreek. Yantra."

"Why do you keep saying that?"

"I feel good. I like the rhythm. I like the people here. I'm having a grand time despite you."

"I never want to see you again. You're absolutely the meanest person I've ever met." And a red flush inundated her china teacup face like a tidal wave. "You're so old"—she blushed again—"and I'm only fifteen-and-a-half."

"You get younger by the minute. Soon we'll have to rent a stroller."

"Excuse me." She swept away, as if gathering her skirts like the heroine of a southern historical novel, and went up to Mrs. Kleinsaltz.

"Where's the ladies' room? I think I'm going to pass out."

"She's been drinking like a fish," Helena said.

"Oh, I have not. I've been sipping Seven-Up all evening."

Just then the men rose, signalling the end of the party. Now the women also stood. Helena too. I didn't realize how tall she was. I noticed her long, swaggly legs, her demure ass. She went to the dining room and looked at herself in the mirror.

"Quite a beautiful girl," she told the glass, addressing me.

"You sure are."

Helena turned from the mirror. She seized me with her strong green eyes. Ingelberg's two colleagues departed quickly. Then a long, loud flush rattled the thin walls.

Suddenly the Ingelbergs and the Kleinsaltzes, all four of them, began to speak at once. I stepped toward Helena, hoping that Janie would have a good long cry in the john.

"Do you go to school?" I asked.

"I'm at Harvard," she said in her lovely English music hall voice.

"Really?"

She waited a moment. "I'm a secretary."

The door was now open. Helena watched her father shaking hands with Kleinsaltz. Then he took Mrs. Kleinsaltz's arm and walked out with her.

"Roman!" Mrs. Ingelberg chided.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry," Ingelberg laughed, paunch quivering. "I took your wife by mistake."

"That's quite all right," Kleinsaltz consoled him. "Any time."

Professor Ingelberg walked over to me. He had fat rolls on the back of his neck that reminded me of an ogrook I had once seen in Alaska. He wiggled his brows at me and said, "Don't I know you from somewhere?"

"Yes. I'm Keller. I was your student in several Sanskrit courses."

"Oh, yes, of course. Rather bright fellow, Keller was." He seemed to muse off into the distance for a moment, then added, "What's Keller doing nowadays, do you know?"

"He's doing graduate work in your department."

"Good. Good," Ingelberg said. He pulled out a little notebook—his hefty belly was a barrier between us—and jotted down my name, address and phone number. In the swing of things, I did the same. I glanced over to Helena, who watched this game with amused skepticism.

Helena took a deep breath— I riveted my eyes on her expanding, rising chest—and tugged her blazer down.

"I work for the Botany Department," she said.

"I'll call you Monday morning."

When Janie came out, I loudly asked if anyone needed a lift.

"Actually," Ingelberg said, "I wanted to ring up a taxi."

Now Helena kissed Mrs. Kleinsaltz. She pressed up to Kleinsaltz too and kissed him. He emitted his weak, effeminate smile. "Good night, Walter," she said.

"I'll take you home," I told Ingelberg.

"Very good of you," said the professor.

Now everyone made his way out. I watched Helena walking down the hall. She had that self-sure stride that parted crowds and water. Kleinsaltz touched my elbow, pulled me aside. "Keller," he said softly, "as soon as I get my tenure, I'm going to marry her."

"Who?" Perhaps he had already proposed to Janie.

Kleinsaltz made a little swan out of his bent wrist and

closed fingertips and pointed down the hall. He was drunk again, the old lecher. "Her, her. Maybe even before. As soon as one becomes famous, God willing, one dumps one's wife."

We drove in silence: Janie and I in front, Helena and Ingelberg and his wife—no scarecrow either—in the back. How the two of them had managed to make a lanky, lovely-bodied girl like Helena was beyond my ken of genes. Janie, mad as hell, stared straight ahead. With an occasional comment, Helena tried to keep the silence from becoming too oppressive. My only fear was that Janie might ask Ingelberg what *nekomeh* meant ("revenge" in Yiddish), or if they really had been translating the *Bhagavad Gita*.

I brought the child to her dorm.

"You were talking to me," she whined, "but she's the only one you really came to see, isn't she? I'll bet the sparks are going to fly between you and that nasty girl."

From your mouth to God's ears, sweet prophet, I didn't say.

"Not at all. You're bright, but not bright enough. You're my date. I brought you into prestigious company the likes of which you'll never see again in your whole entire life. I taught you things you've never known and will never understand. I stood up for you when the going got rough. You tightened with primordial fear as soon as we stepped into the apartment. You couldn't cope. A rill of quivers, ending in a sudden preorgasmic stiffening, ran through your arm. You became pale. Your tongue cleaved to the roof of your mouth. Your eyes rolled..."

"Oh, they did not."

"Looking at your angelic countenance, I wondered how it would feel to rape a cherub. I tried to give you a good time and I brought you home. Now that's about as complete a cycle as one could wish for on a date with the exception of intercourse. Now, honest, didn't you have a good time?

"No ... Well, yes, it was kind of glittering for a while in a scary sort of way. Then you started making fun of me, just like you're doing now in that condescending sort of way," she said in a firm voice, looking me straight in the eye. "It showed me what you're really like. You put on the *front* of being a nice guy, but when the opportunity presents itself, you show your true colors."

"Kiss me, " I said. "That statement, despite the string of clichés, which you'll be cured of in second trimester freshman English, shows me you've matured out of babyhood. Bravo!"

"Please don't call me again. I'm ony fifteen. That is, I'll be fifteen next month. You're old enough to be my father."

"Let's have those luscious lips."

"No."

"Shut up. Grow up. Pucker up."

She leaned against the wall. Closed her eyes.

I brushed her baby lips lightly.

"Feh! Ovaltine. Embracing you is like hugging a wax statue. Kissing you is like kissing Nefertiti through a veil."

Her eyes were still closed as I started back toward the car where the Ingelbergs were waiting.

"You're the meanest, rottenest person I ever met in my whole life. I wish Helena takes *nekomeh* on you. We speak Yiddish at home."

Helena was already sitting in the front seat (her Jewish ma's urging), giving her parents' room in the back. As we drove along the Charles River, I followed her instructions out to one of the fancy Boston suburbs. I thought she'd at least hover by the door after her parents entered their stunning Tudor. But nothing doing. She left with ma and dad, their syncopted, profuse thanks hanging thick in the night air like sap from a tree. I wasn't even invited in for a glass of water.

On the way home, I thought about my career and my thoughts darkened. I'd given my best years to studying. Sanskrit, Sanskrit, Sanskrit rushed in like an execration. All my friends were driving Jaguars, going skiing to Vail, building empires. For a gloomy moment, I felt like a character in a Chekhov play, all alone in the cherry orchard dusk. The only bright light was Helena. But her presence was so distracting, I had to concentrate on Sanskrit to give me peace. I created a concentric bindu for myself and wound my thoughts around and around until I relaxed. Why did she haunt me so after one brief meeting? Because I knew no other girl who could make me forget Sanskrit.

When I phoned Helena at Harvard, I asked her to come with me to a Boston café two nights in a row.

"I haven't gone out with you once," was her cheeky response, "so why should I agree to going out twice?"

At that moment the British lilt in her voice tempted me even more.

"Twice is twice as good as once. Everyone knows that once is not enough. And, anyway, you ought to be flattered."

For a moment she said nothing. Then: "Have you known Walter long?"

"About two years."

"Do you think he's bright?"

"Very. And prolific in books and writings. At least

that's what he says."

Helena burst out laughing.

"Why're you laughing?"

"Speak no evil. Walter is a friend of ours. Like our Arabist friends would say, you don't stab your host in the back, especially if he introduces you to a good-looking guy." With that our phone conversation more or less ended—we compromised on one date the following evening.

The next day I ran to the Widener Library at Harvard, one of the few times I entered the place. Like Kleinsaltz, I loved learning too much to spoil it by reading. Never having read anything by him, I searched out Kleinsaltz's bibliography. Books indeed he had, writings too. His books consisted of two slim volumes that ancient writers had written and modern ones had translated and edited. For each book—when they had gone out of print and a new edition was needed to secure copyright—Kleinsaltz had provided a modest two-page preface which, in inverse proportion to its importance, he lengthily labeled a prolegomenon. And his writings consisted of one article, his two prefaces sort of clumsily crocheted together, in an obscure New Zealand journal that had ceased publication with the issue he'd contributed to.

At the café we sparred between capuccinos. Where was that sexual wavelength I could have sworn we'd be on? That want/want/want I'd seen the other day in her verdure eyes. Helena was cold. And maybe I was hostile because she'd only accepted one half of my kind offer.

But the mood changed somewhat when she asked me, peering over the rim of her coffee cup, "What do you plan to do with yourself?" "What can I do with Sanskrit?" I said, wondering if she was listening, or if like a magnet she was busy receiving stares from the other guys in the café. I leaned forward, said with more drama than I felt, "Teach it on Mondays and Wednesdays to Hindi children and then ask them if they say Krishna before they go to sleep?"

Helena smiled briefly at this little Jewish joke. She took another sip of tea and again peered over the cup at me. "Why'd you go into Sanskrit?"

"To save my life."

Helena put the cup down. Her head turned, following the members of the band leaving the stage. A flood of jealousy came over me. Then she remembered me. "What does that mean? Since when is Sanskrit a lifesaver?"

"To avoid Vietnam, I got a juicy National Defense Fellowship to study exotic Asian languages. Defense of America, yessiree!"

Helena released the brake of her amusement and now smiled full force. "Is that really how you got into Sanskrit? I can't tell now when you're fooling."

"Sure. Life above all. Keller is first in my book. To save him, I was willing to do anything, even study Sanskrit. Sanskrit is like Scotch or sex, after the first two or three times you get to love it."

"Is that really true?"

"Say it again."

"But why?"

"I like the mellifluous, titillating sound of your New Bond Street voice. I like its timbre, its vibrato. I like the way your vocal cords vibrate. That crisp, lilting English tickles me where it pleases most."

Her face lost its cool London fog. In its place three fingers of red, slowly invading her cheeks. "Is that really how you got into Sanskrit?" Helena said, her voice soft, not brittle. The girl's in love with me already, I thought.

"Really and truly."

"I don't believe a word of it. I'll bet you went into the field because of the girls. Sanskrit is sexy too," Helena said. "A very sexy subject. Surveys have shown that girl grad students are the loneliest and most willing."

"I see you read *Newsweek* too ... And how did your daddy get into Greek?"

Helena covered her laughing mouth with her fingers. "He took the ferry from Cyprus."

The non-sequitur floored me. I leaned back and laughed. And Helena, watching me, beamed.

"I like the sound of your voice too," Helena allowed.

When the folksinger appeared and began singing peace songs, I stretched my hand to take Helena's, but she slipped away in time. Then I thought I'd try an intellectual approach. Touch a girl's mind and you've touched her body.

"In peacetime," I quoted Herodotus, "children bury their parents. In war, this natural order is reversed and parents bury their children." I discussed the Vietnam war. I talked about *The Iliad, The Odyssey,* comparing translations. Helena's eyes glazed. Brazenly, the hussy did not even stifle her yawn.

"Please," she said. "It bores me. All my life I had that at home. I'm sorry, but I don't care to hear any of this ... You forget I didn't go to college."

I tried for her hand again.

"No, I don't want that."

Her second refusal sparked my stubbornness. Now it became a challenge, an adventure. An Everest.

I finished my coffee, but didn't know where to go. What to do next? Drinking is a coward's path and I adore the ratiocinative, contemplative method. That much I did get out of the Upanishads. A man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus. What now?

"Come," I said. "Let's go home. Enough." I didn't wait for her to say yes or no. I stood. She did too.

Outside, I seized her hand. She twisted away. But I caught fast, did not let go. Like a character in a folktale told by a sorcerer that the only way to overcome the witch's curse is to seize her. No matter how bitterly she pleads, do not dare let go or all will be lost. I grasped and for the life of me did not let go. I held her hand like a vise. The truth was I didn't want to let her go.

Helena struggled, but the struggle was no longer between us. It was going on somewhere in the distance. Now it was wrestling with an angel, a struggle for moral dominance, if you will. The eternal struggle between mandala and yantra. Who was going to win? Yet Helena didn't utter the predictable, let me go! The witch did not execrate, did not plead for mercy. Once she looked me in the eyes, part fire, part pleading, and like the hero of the folktale, I almost succumbed, almost let the better side of my nature, all compassion, all pity, predominate. But remembering the folktale, the truest of arts, how it reflects life, I did not let go. A neat game was going on down there, in our hands. A game totally independent. It was out of my hands, so to speak. And just when I sensed a sudden blaze of resistance, peaked adrenaline, her hand suddenly relaxed in mine. No longer anthracite, but soft, pliant, moist, fingers spread. A series of tense quivers ran through those fingers like shudders through a windowpane, as if the stored-up energy was spent. I was delirious with joy.

"Well," she said, "now I'm finished. I didn't want it to go this way. I just wanted to talk to you."

I could have said a lot of things. I could have laughed. I could have sworn her eyes filmed as I slowly loosened my grip.

Now she held my hand. We stood beside my car.

"Me. I think with my skin," Helena said.

I dropped her hand, held her face. The tremor went through her cheeks. The light in her green eyes softened.

"A woman is like a stringed instrument. Touch her. Play her. She must vibrate."

Her exact words. I wrote them down that night when I got home.

We sat in the car. Helena turned to me. I threw my arms around her and she, with a movement so quick I could not even catch my breath, began to kiss, passionately, like an unleashed tiger tiger burning bright, probing with tongue, fiercely kissing the edges of my lips, cheeks, forehead, throat and ears as if she'd known me for years. I slipped my hand around her waist and to my delight she put my other hand on her breast and whispered, "Hold me, hold me," as though speaking from another world, and then slipping her hands behind her back and undoing her bra, not stopping the litany, "Hold me hold me hold me," not stopping it until I was holding her luxurious springy breasts, mythic breasts one never sees or touches.

"Kiss my glabella," she said.

"Sure."

"That's not my glabella, silly. But mmm, mmm, go ahead. I like that too. The glabella is the spot between my eyebrows."

"Not in America it ain't."

"Come, let's go home," she said. A roseate glow brimmed on her roan electric cheeks.

I sat in the parlor courting the maid. Her fat, fruity daddy with the thrust-forward paunch and ballerina's frothy walk hovered nearby. I sensed his 220-lb. presence somewhere on the ground floor, for the slightest movement of his massive frame created a subtle wind. Then he settled down and began cracking what sounded like nuts. A comment, I knew, on my late stay. By malevolently cracking nutshells, the old mythicist was sending me symbolic signals as to whose nuts he'd really like to crack. Who knows what powers of ritualistic transference the old classicist assumed he possessed?

At first Helena pretended not to hear. So did I.

Still, I asked her, "What's that?"

"My father's studying. He's into mysticism ... or something like that ... Cracking nuts." Helena smiled

REMEMBER TO DREAM

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benignly, beaming that chartreuse glaze of her eyes into mine.

Just then the prof ceased his cracking. The silence became annoying. Where could the old codger be? Standing behind the cheap folding doors ready to spring in like a satyr at the first obscenity I susurrated into his daughter's pink, nubile ears? Or waiting until I unrolled the pantyhose from her lubricious thighs. Then I heard a light flick off, and noted the line of darkness at the bottom of the folding doors.

Relieved that he'd gone upstairs, I moved in for the kill. First a sip of wine for mock civility. I held her hand, felt the electric thrum of current moving through her muscles. I stretched out on the sofa next to her, my head nuzzling her breast, watching with pleasure how the excitement colored her London face.

One dreamt of these things as one walked out of cinemas; one dreamt of those few illusion-laden moments before fantasy has evanesced and the dull cloud of reality settles like an old homey skin about you. I remembered her lips were an analog to her accent: brisk, sharp-tasting. A foreign, saffron-colored spice.

"Take off the sweater," I whispered.

"No," she said. "Not with Daddy here."

Looking apologetic, she put her hand on her breast, languidly, like a figure in a medieval painting by whose gesture the artist seeks to catch the viewer's attention.

I heard something stirring. Footsteps.

Suddenly, the juice was turned off. Helena sprang up. The air in the room, wine-touched, now cooled.

"My father," she sighed, "wanders around."

Holding Helena's hand lightly, I wondered if it wouldn't be better to take her out to the car.

A flicker of cold crossed her eyes. She withdrew her hand. I shivered.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm worried about Walter."

"Walter. Walter. That's all I hear. I'm with you now."

Helena looked at me as though I weren't there. "If it weren't for Walter, you wouldn't be here."

"What's with Walter?" I said softly.

"It's a remark I heard my father say on the phone. He said 'Keinsaltz'—which means no salt—'has to get on his balls.'—Daddy never did master American idiom—'and publish more, or else he's going to be an assistant professor till the day he dies. His bibliography could be etched on a dwarf's thimble. I don't believe in publish or perish, I believe in publish or languish,' is what Daddy said. Poor Walter. Maybe I'll have to marry him."

"Marry him? He's married already. He's old enough to be your father."

"So is my father. Two of my four boyfriends are married ... I love married men."

"How come Walter fixed me up with you if he's so stuck on you?"

"He likes to share. So do I. If you had what I have, wouldn't you share?"

I didn't answer.

"Any questions?"

"Which way's the john?"

She told me.

I stepped out the plastic folding door into the hall. The nutcracking began again. I followed the sounds and saw an apparition. First, a monk dressed in a coarse brown cloak, cowl over shoulders, flitted by. Next I saw him sitting under a hanging lamp in an alcove, cowl over head, fixing his gaze at a row of opened walnuts lined up on index cards. Rooted in place, curious, awed, I was about to step back and tell Helena what I'd seen. Then the monk looked up and I saw it was her daddy.

"Excuse me, Professor, I hope..."

"Who are you?" Ingelberg took out his notepad, ready to take my name again as though I were some social equal who would be invited to a party or to deliver a paper (The *New York Times*, probably).

"Keller," I told him. "Am I disturbing you?"

"Of course nut," he chuckled, not at all discomfited by my seeing him in that odd masquerade. "You see, I don this unseemly garb to put myself in the medieval mode. I am doing research."

"So I heard. What sort?"

"Quite complicated. Kabbalistic in essence. I'm probing a verse from the Song of Songs: 'I have gone down into the nut garden.' The Song of Songs is a very erotic piece of work, don't you agree? And this verse has all sorts of sexual and kabbalistic implications ... See these walnuts? The membrane, the soft meat that represents the delicious within, the penetration into the hidden garden. Hello! Are you with me?" He rapped his knuckles on the desk, calling class—me—to attention and order.

I drooled. Had to contain, slurp back a yawp, a yelp of joy.

"I'm sorry. My mind was wandering. The Song of Songs. Sexual. Mystical."

"Interestingly enough, in medieval kabbalistic Hebrew, the same word is used for nutshell and the rejected, negative husk in man's character. And, curiously, the word of husk, *klipah*, also means wicked woman."

"What then is it you're trying to do?"

"To see what the phrase really means. I work alone," he said sadly. "No other colleague shares my passion for nuts."

"Not even Professor Kleinsaltz? His ardor for pecans is unmatched."

"*Kein saltz*," he muttered. "Utterly saltless. And you know what unsalted nuts taste like."

"Can't his research expertise be useful to you?"

"Kleinsaltz is a dear. I love him like a nephew. "And," his voice rose, "I resent graduate students bite-backing their teachers with ironic remarks like 'research expertise,' even though he *is* a proven journal-killer."

"I was not being ironical. And, anyway, as the Greek proverb has it: the truth does not backbite. Or in Sanskrit: fact has no evil tongue."

"Bravo! Well said! and all that. You would have a great future in Sanskrit. It is a pity you're not Jewish."

"But I am, sir."

"Well, then, it is a pity you are. Jews cannot possibly hold a Sanskrit chair."

"But you do."

"I don't. And it's not a chair. It is a three-legged stool, firmly buttressed by Greek and Arabic. So, you see, you can't possibly succeed in Sanskrit. Unless, of course, you marry my daughter."

"I'll join the queue."

"What do you mean?"

"There's several married men ahead of me. And I certainly won't jump in ahead of Walter Kleinsaltz."

Ingelberg chuckled. "Helena *is* popular. Everyone wants to marry her. Married men, divorced men, separated men."

"How about single men?"

"Fat chance. I guess there *is* no future for you in Sanskrit."

"Where's the bathroom, please?"

Ingelberg threw back the cowl. "Down the hall. First door on your right. Watch the shells on the sink, please, and lift the seat."

"Poor Daddy," Helena said when I came back. She had just finished sealing an envelope. "I'm afraid he's going absolutely nutty. Scholarship and all that sort of stuff has its place, I suppose, but when he got himself that monk's outfit, I realized he was hopeless ... Would you like to listen to some music?"

I wasn't in the mood for music.

"I think I'm going to be celibate for a while," she said, straightening her sweater and swooping her hands down her skirt with a motion of prim finality. "That should be fun too ... Come, don't you want to hear some records?" she said sweetly. "I've got some lovely Mozarts."

I seized her hands. "Come back in the car with me ..."

Helena stared straight ahead.

"How about next Saturday night?" I said against my will.

"Call me. If my boyfriend hasn't returned by then, we'll see." She jumped up, went to a table drawer. "Here, let me show you his picture."

"Not interested," I said.

As I left, she handed me the envelope. She made me promise not to open it until I got home. Of course, as soon as I rounded the corner, I stopped under a street lamp and read:

> If you're going to see Janie—and you should—it wouldn't be fair to me for you to be seeing her too, especially since I'm almost engaged, and Walter likes me, among others. What's more, your sarcasm and psychological manipulation of Janie shows me what you're liable to do to me, so although I like your body, your psyche frightens me.

I didn't read anymore of that rambling neurotic drivel. I had several choices. I could run back to the house, pound on the door and say, "You're dead wrong. Janie means nothing to me. And what's this all of a sudden about being engaged? And Walter? That's a big joke! Here, here's my body. I'm yours. My psyche I left in the glove compartment. It's a very small, harmless psyche, foldable like a map."

And to Herr Doktor Rabbiner Professor Walter Kleinsaltz: "What'd you do to me? Where's your morals, Rabbi? And who is she almost engaged to? Don't tell me it's you!"

And to Inbelberg: "Professor, I hate to interrupt your research, but you have a very sick, promiscuous daughter. She's dangling three or more guys at the same time, one of whom is your saltless Walter. And look to kin for *klipah*."

I drove off. The lamplight scudded over me like a shadow. It slid on the hood and bumped softly on the roof. All in vain. The emptiness of a Thucydian battlefield at dusk. Along the dark route home an occasional headlight starkly lit up the roadside bushes. I looked at myself in the rearview mirror. Ingelberg's husk. Janie's *nekomeh*, her wish come true. And a sharp, aching, nut-cracking pain in my loins. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

McNamara's Denials, and Ours

Peter Dale Scott

In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam, by Robert S. McNamara, with Brian VanDeMark, Times Books/Random House, 1995. xviii, 414 pp. $27.50.

The avowed purpose of former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's book, *In Retrospect,* is to help "leave the past behind," yet the experience of reading it has rekindled the old angers of ex-hawks and ex-doves. My own anger surprised me. I consider McNamara a decent man. I agree with his agenda, of learning from mistakes; and I value his admission of error, however belated. I have always given him credit for having prevented, at whatever cost, an even wider war that might well have become nuclear. Thus I cannot join those critics, such as David Halberstam, who merely vent their anger.

But neither can I join those others who consider that McNamara has now, in the words of Molly Ivins, "told the truth ... unsparingly." This is precisely what he has not done. Though he has been generous in admitting errors of policy judgment, above all errors of omission, he stubbornly refuses to recant crucial misstatements of fact with which he once misled the U.S. Congress and the American people. There is much truth in his large and often sane book, but it is most intriguing for its occasional deviousness, a symptom suggestive of a guilty conscience.

McNamara's bureaucratic style is one of the book's limitations. (The dead in Vietnam appear only as statistics; the one corpse in the book is that of Norman Morrison, who immolated himself thirty feet from McNamara's office.) The limits of his managerial perspective do not make the book unimportant, as David Halberstam has alleged. On the contrary, they make it a major document, albeit one we read for its symptoms as much as for its logic. One of the book's many ironies is its proclaimed intention to avoid self-exploration, or the war's effect on McNamara himself. This is precisely what he *has* given us. And what we see at times is a capacity for self-delusion and denial that is close to madness.

This pathology of self-delusion is common among bureaucrats; with respect to Vietnam, it is also the nation's. It was McNamara's fate in the 1960s to be pilloried by the Left as a technocratic murderer, and by the Right as an overweening incompetent. In the present outcry against the book, those judgments have resurfaced. The book serves as a smudged pane of glass, through which each side of a divided nation beholds the other. And each side blames the author for all those times that he agreed with the other.

McNamara's self-division — now hawk, now dove, struggling vainly to keep his doves and hawks on the same team—was and remains a microcosm of our still-divided nation. Not even our histories are yet in sync: The high-level deceptions that surrounded key events such as the second Tonkin Gulf incident have not yet been fully analyzed and understood. They are very much glossed over in this book. But then mainstream journalists and politicians, and even academic historians, have all avoided an ugly topic so likely to reopen old wounds.

The story of Vietnam thus has been largely left to sectarians, chiefly from the military. Over and over, they



RENÉ CARSON

Peter Dale Scott is a former Canadian diplomat and English professor. His latest prose book, Deep Politics and the Death of JFK, *contains a chapter on the shift in Vietnam policy after President Kennedy's assassination.*

tell us that the United States did not lose a war in Vietnam, but in Washington. The so-called political war could have been won conventionally; the so-called civil war was in fact no more than a simulation by Hanoi, which hoodwinked America's civilian leaders. These right-wing myths, launched by men like Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp (former commander-in-chief, Pacific), are still marketed in books well-thumbed by undergraduates. Their resentment at an alleged civilian betrayal has been transmitted to both insiders like Oliver North and outsiders like Timothy McVeigh. And the chief villains of such accounts, even more than in antiwar books like those of Noam Chomsky or myself, are Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert McNamara.

Understandably, McNamara is "sick at heart" at "the cynicism and even contempt with which so many people view our political institutions and leaders." His solution, a doomed one, is to tell us that the civilians he worked with were "outstanding," and the military, men of "fierce integrity ... motivated by a deep and noble desire to serve their country."

He depicts this team, however conflicted, as uninformed, not malevolent: "We made an error not of values and intentions but of judgment and capabilities." Time after time, the mistakes enumerated are errors of omission: failure to understand Asia, failure to centralize and coordinate, failure to evaluate and correct false information reaching the system. This last was often false, not because of self-serving deceit or dishonesty in the military ranks below him, but because of the "very inaccurate information" they in turn were receiving "from the South Vietnamese." Correct decisions would have been made, had there been more sophisticated insights and thoughtful analysis, input denied the government because of the McCarthy hysteria of the 1950s.

Most historians give a very different picture. They see McNamara and the two presidents he served as beset almost continuously by a military chafing at civilian restraints and plotting to undermine them—either unilaterally, or in alliance with hawks in Congress. Public skirmishes with firebrand members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (such as General Curtis LeMay, who wanted in 1961 to prepare for nuclear war) diminished after they were replaced by team players like General Wheeler. But the progress of the war in Vietnam so exacerbated old military resentments that the Joint Chiefs again united against McNamara, egged on partly by fear of revolt among the colonels below. Many of the war's pivotal escalations, according to this picture, were the product less of managerial "leadership" than of pursuing a line of least resistance; the targets were not just external foes but also domestic ones. And informed advice was available at all times; but the system only listened to the encouragements of yea-saying "experts."

McNamara explicitly disagrees with the consensual historical view that toward the end of his tenure, his influence had radically declined. To assure us of his commanders' "fierce integrity," and to rebut the uninformed view of them as "trigger-happy warmongers," he denounces as "disgraceful" the scene in "Oliver Stone's fanciful movie *JFK*" in which LBJ said, "Just get me elected, and then you can have your war." This scene may be disgraceful, but it is not fanciful; Stanley Karnow recounted it as fact in his book, *Vietnam: A History*, which makes it into McNamara's one-sided bibliography. And it is not just a story about the military, so much as about Lyndon Johnson, the president to whom McNamara remained blindly loyal until McNamara's departure from the administration in 1968.

By then, McNamara's "superb" team was subordinated to a president intimidated by hawkish opinion polls, polls exacerbated by the dissents of the hand-picked joint chiefs and those below them. But McNamara, now as then, affects almost total denial as to the extent the military and Johnson were plotting against what he took to be policy.

McNamara recalls, in a footnote, a Soviet protest that, despite his restrictive guidelines, one of their merchant ships (the *Turkestan*) had been hit by U.S. warplanes (on the eve of the 1967 six-day Israeli-Egyptian war, after the Moscow-Pentagon hotline had just been activated for the first time):

> Assured following an investigation by Adm. ... Sharp that the story lacked merit, I instructed my public affairs office to issue a scathing denial. Some weeks later [we] discovered that a flight of four U.S. aircraft had indeed struck the Soviet ship .... Two of the four pilots reported the story to their wing commander, a colonel, who then ordered the gun camera film destroyed and the after-action reports altered. The colonel was later court-martialed and fined. [Although McNamara does not tell us, the colonel's court-martial conviction was soon set aside.] To my knowledge, this was the only occasion during my seven years at the Defense Department that an outright lie by a military officer affected my understanding and explanation of an event."

Whose outright lie misled McNamara? An obscure colonel's? Or Admiral Sharp's, whose carefully drafted statement, aware of the flight-film issue, concluded "that no U.S. aircraft bombed or strafed the Soviet ship?" Elsewhere, McNamara denies that General Westmoreland "had consciously deceived him" (as CBS alleged in a program that led to a lengthy, inconclusive libel suit brought by Westmoreland against the network). But the book barely mentions Sharp, a much more likely culprit, even though he led the public revolt of the military in a 1967 congressional hearing and contributed to the myth of the second Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964 that provoked the first U.S. attack on North Vietnam.

Like Stanley Karnow, most civilian historians have concluded "with almost total certainty" that the alleged second attack on U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf in fact "never happened." McNamara, now almost alone, still maintains that the "second attack appears probable." It would have been truly painful for McNamara to admit otherwise. It was McNamara's unqualified assurances to Congress, not only in 1964 but again in 1968, that neutralized the opposition of senators like Wayne Morse and assured passage and continuation of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which LBJ used to fight a full-scale war.

McNamara still says that Morse was wrong on the details. But Morse was essentially right, and McNamara wrong to rebut him. (McNamara attacks Morse on a technical point, denying that the destroyers' simulated raids against the North Vietnamese coast were coordinated with real South Vietnamese raids.

Most historians back Morse.)

McNamara says nothing about his second rebuttal of Morse in a 1968 Senate hearing, when his case for a second Tonkin incident relied on evidence, long since discredited, to which he now adds nothing. McNamara spoke then of Admiral Sharp's assurance at 5:23 p.m. (after the destroyer's Captain Herrick had expressed doubts) that "the attack had occurred and that *all were satisfied* it had." But in fact Herrick was not satisfied at all. (McNamara's 1995 version of the same assurance minimizes the possible falsehood: "Sharp called ... and said no doubt now existed that an attack ... had been carried out.")

McNamara also relied on allegedly "unimpeachable" intercepts of enemy cable traffic; but since then, all the intercepts "proving" a second attack have been shown to be at best irrelevant. According to the latest official explanation, they referred to the first incident two days earlier and were only transmitted by coincidence in the midst of the second, just in time for LBJ to discuss the attack with congressional leaders. McNamara's book offers this revised interpretation of one intercepted message. But all eight "attack" intercepts, not just one, have been reassigned to the earlier date.

The second Tonkin Gulf incident appears to have been the product, not just of confusion, but also of repeated and culpable misrepresentation. But who were the arch-manipulators? McNamara? Sharp? Or the communications intelligence personnel responsible for the two-day delay of these crucial intercepts? We still do not know.

In this McNamara behaves in the book like someone who brings authorities to the scene of a crime, and yet cannot tell plainly what happened. He spends some pages rebutting the idea that the administration in Washington provoked the incident, or deliberately deceived Congress about it. In this way the issue of provocation and/or deceit by subordinates is conveniently sidestepped. He also laments that critics of escalation were not listened to more closely, belittling both the number of informed critics there were at the time, and his own key role in silencing them. Here much of the recent press debate about McNamara's alleged "silence" after 1967 has also falsified the real issue. McNamara may have been silent about his own doubts, but he was vociferous in neutralizing the doubts of Senators Fulbright and Morse.

Thus we must distinguish in McNamara's book between his errors of judgment, which he now admits, and his errors of fact (some of which look much like falsehoods), where he continues to cover up. Why is this? It would be kind to think that in 1964 (as in 1967, and again in 1968), McNamara naively believed in Sharp's misleading assurances; and to confess this error now would be to challenge his entire vision of himself as a rational leader of a decent but misinformed team, mistaken as to external realities.

A darker possibility is that McNamara was not deceived in 1964 by Sharp's false assurances, but chose for whatever political reason to go along with them anyway. This may have been the response of LBJ, the president to whom McNamara remained so loyal.

McNamara covers up other deceptions as well. Nowhere is he shiftier than in his misnarration of the transition from the Kennedy to the Johnson presidencies. Here the book, which wants to assure us "that Johnson's policy remained the same as Kennedy's," helps point, by its very evasions, to the exact places where it did not: Kennedy's withdrawal plan of October 1963, and its replacement by Johnson's escalation planning in November.

The implementation of Kennedy's plan to withdraw 1,000 advisers from Vietnam, authorized on October 5, 1963, was announced on November 20. McNamara assures us that all the members of his mission to Vietnam "had agreed to" this withdrawal plan, which was then supported on October 5 by a faction who "believed military progress had been good."

Both claims are misleading. One member of the mission (William Sullivan) had objected so threateningly to the withdrawal plan that it was temporarily deleted from the McNamara-Taylor mission report; only after McNamara saw the President on October 2 was the offensive language restored. And, although McNamara and Taylor had routinely reported "great progress" in the military campaign, neither they, nor anyone else at the meeting, believed this. Not progress, but Kennedy, dictated the withdrawal plan.

Like many Vietnam books, this one avoids telling us what happened to the withdrawal plan, which vanished with President Kennedy's murder. But McNamara is crucially misleading when he says that the first Johnson document

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on Vietnam policy, National Security Action Memorandum 273 of November 26, 1963, "approved planning for covert action against North Vietnam by CIA-supported *South Vietnamese forces*." This was the restricted draft policy recommendation (for "Government of Vietnam resources") prepared on November 21 for Kennedy's signature; but soon after Johnson's accession the next day, the restriction to South Vietnamese forces *was removed from* NSAM 273. The road to U.S. activities like the Tonkin Gulf incidents had been opened, one month before the "disgraceful" scene where Johnson said, "Just get me elected, and then you can have your war."

McNamara's motive in trying to smooth out history may well be to combat cynicism. He may be guilty of nothing worse than wanting to reassure us about our political system. But the result is the reverse. These evasions and misrepresentations make us continue to mistrust him and his establishment.

Thus McNamara remains trapped in myths that continue to be controversial. But which of us does not? The Left still talks as if the war could have been avoided by listening to the people (when it was the polls that propelled Johnson toward ever-greater escalations). The Right still talks as if the people were denied their rightful victory by McNamara and the elitist miscreants on the campuses (when in fact the U.S. goals were never achievable). Thus the nation staggers on in its division over elemental facts, tranquilized by alternative and mutually incompatible versions of history which no one has yet resolved. And the myths from lost wars are always dangerous to constitutional democracy, as the examples of Weimar and the French Fourth Republic should remind us.

McNamara's book, with its instructive misrepresentations, is a possible first step toward resolution. But we must lay open those remaining wounds he has left plastered over, if they are to be healed. □

Dead Wrong

Susan Blaustein

Among The Lowest of The Dead: The Culture of Death Row, by David Von Drehle. Times Books, 1995. 469 pp. $25.00.

Within hours of the Oklahoma City bombing, President Clinton assured Americans that the federal government would seek the death penalty for the perpetrators. "If this isn't an appropriate case for it, I don't think there would ever be one," the president intoned gravely, and most listeners seemed consoled.

Furious at the spread of violent crime from its long-tolerated inner-city venue to middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, many Americans view the death penalty as the only hope for excising evil from their midst. And politicians have outdone each other in sponsoring death penalty bills, vaunting the numbers of men they have sent to death row. In 1992, as governor of Arkansas and presidential candidate, Bill Clinton played the game like the toughest among 'em: eager to eclipse accusations of draft-dodging and womanizing, he flew home in the peak of primary season to preside over the execution of a retarded, brain-damaged killer—despite a 1986 Supreme Court prohibition on the execution of mentally disabled individuals.

Recently, states have marched in lockstep on the issue. Last year, Texas gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush successfully attacked his opponent, then-Governor Ann Richards, for being soft on crime, when in fact she oversaw more executions—fifty during her one term in office—than any governor in American history. On his second day in office, Gov. Bush backed a bill, now passed, that would halve the time allotted death-row inmates for their appeals. This March, another gubernatorial victor, New York's George Pataki, fulfilled a campaign promise when he signed into law a death penalty bill that ended the state's 18-year hiatus on capital punishment. In April, Connecticut toughened its death-penalty statute, dispensing with some of the careful constitutional protections built into the new New York law. The Kansas legislature is moving to expand its death penalty, passed only last year, and a bill to reinstate capital punishment is pending in Wisconsin as well.

The states are hardly alone in promoting this panacea to violent crime. Some sixty new federal death penalties were codified by the last Congress in its 1994 Crime Act, and the new Congress is moving to speed death row inmates toward execution by severely limiting their access to the federal courts.

Part of the death penalty's popularity stems from frustration with so-called life sentences from which convicted murderers have been granted early parole only to go out and murder a second time. Recent polls have shown that over 70 percent of Americans would opt for life sentences with no chance of parole over the death penalty, if they could only be sure that Polly Klass's killer and his ilk would never again be free to stalk suburban streets. But many others maintain that

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the death penalty is the only sure way for survivors and society to obtain finality, retribution, and to prevent the condemned from ever killing again.

What all these champions of capital punishment fail to acknowledge, as David Von Drehle makes clear in his gripping new book, *Among the Lowest of the Dead: The Culture of Death Row*, is that the death penalty, as presently administered in the United States, simply doesn't work. And it is unlikely to work any better, even in its many new and improved versions.

That the current death penalty is too costly, too slow, often arbitrarily imposed, and ineffective as a deterrent to violent crime can be seen most glaringly in California. During the past eighteen years, since its new death penalty law was enacted, the state has tried more than 1,000 capital cases, sent some 400 men to death row, spent roughly $90 million a year on their litigation and upkeep—all for the grand total of two executions. Other states have been more prolific: Texas has put ninety-three inmates to death since executions resumed there in 1982, accounting for more than a third of the nationwide total. But each execution is estimated to have cost the state $3.2 million, well over three times the cost of imprisoning a man for forty years. And with 400 men on Texas's death row, a convicted killer still has less than a one percent chance of being executed: hardly a forbidding deterrent to the few would-be murderers rational enough to calculate their odds before perpetrating their odious deeds.

In its landmark 1972 *Furman v. Georgia* decision, the Supreme Court declared the death penalty unconstitutional as then practiced, overturned some 600 death sentences, and called upon the states to legislate clearer standards and guidelines that would make its imposition fairer and less random. State legislatures hastily followed suit with new statutes—thirty-five were in place by 1976—but the legal quagmire was only beginning to take shape. On paper, most of the states' new death penalty statutes passed the high court's muster, but, in practice, their many bugs and ambiguities were seized upon by capital defenders in attempts to get their clients' verdicts overturned. Issues such as the fairness of the jury selection process, the clarity or bias of judges' instructions to juries, and how much and what mitigating evidence about a defendant a jury should be allowed to hear before sentencing him to death formed the basis of multiple appeals. In each death-penalty state, these claims, often bandied back and forth between federal and state court judges, quickly swamped the courts and ground the death penalty machinery to a virtual halt.

Von Drehle, formerly a reporter for the *Miami Herald*, concentrated his research on the state of Florida, where thirty-three men have been electrocuted since a new death-penalty statute became law in 1979. It is not simply juries of one's peers who have crowded Florida's dreary death row with 350 men; local judges ever wary about reelection have supplanted with death sentences a full quarter of the state's jury-awarded life sentences. But even these judges have not been able to stem the onslaught of litigation that has put years between most of these convicted murderers and the electric chair.

Von Drehle brilliantly details the confluence of factors that has crippled the implementation of Florida's death penalty. These range from common contaminants at trial, such as police and prosecutorial misconduct or incompetent defense counsel, to the frantic, predawn moments preceding an execution, when Supreme Court justices are rousted out of bed to weigh in on late-breaking defense claims of racial discrimination at trial or new evidence of actual innocence. At the end, the governor agonizes at his desk, attempting to balance heart-rending pleas for clemency against the number of death warrants he has recently signed, the race and circumstances of the inmate in question against those of others to whom he has granted clemency in the past, and the effect of all these things on his shot at re-election.

In one fine example, Von Drehle chronicles the appeals and 1979 execution of John Arthur Spenkelink, the first American to be executed against his will after the Supreme Court had signed off on the states' new, post-Furman death-penalty statutes. A white drifter from out of state who confessed to having shot his traveling companion to death in a motel room, Spenkelink seemed a good choice for Florida's first execution in fifteen years—particularly to liberal Governor Bob Graham, who, by sending a white man to the chair, was spared the reinforcing of Florida's embarrassingly tenacious image as a Southern racist state.

The saga of Spenkelink's protracted, heavily contested death affords Von Drehle the opportunity to detail the many aspects and ironies of death-penalty litigation. He also renders delicious portraits of the various characters involved in this struggle—from the sleep-deprived, chain-smoking, underpaid capital defenders, to their brilliant courtroom adversary Ray Marky (a dedicated prosecutor goaded on by a love of the law and an intense little-man complex), to Governor Graham who, after being dubbed "Governor Jello" in the press, signed four death warrants a month during his 1986 Senate race (which he won handily); to the defendant's simple, heartsick mother, Lois Spenkelink, who sat for hours at the gate of the governor's mansion, waiting in vain for either a meeting with him or a chance to make a "mother-to-mother appeal" to his wife; to unlikely death-row warden Dave Brierton, a gourmet cook and Chinese art connoisseur who bench presses a quarter ton, reads thanotologist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross to prepare himself for executions, and cries alone each New Year's Eve as Toscanini's rendition of the "Dies Irae" from Verdi's Requiem blasts from his living room stereo.

Von Drehle also replays for us Spenkelink's clemency hearing. We learn that the victim was a convicted felon who had robbed Spenkelink and forced him at gunpoint to play Russian roulette and to commit homosexual acts, suggesting that his murder, if not a clear act of self-defense, was at least no less justified than many other murders for which perpetrators had been sentenced far less severely.

Among the Lowest of the Dead includes a tight history of the death penalty in America. Von Drehle traces the means by which "decent folks'" objections to the ghoulish public spectacles once staged by county sheriffs led to the abandonment of these practices in favor of the centralized, by-the-book apparatus we know today. In recounting the Warren Court's unprecedented willingness to tread on states' toes by addressing such local matters as school segregation, poll taxes, and criminal defendants' right to counsel, Von Drehle provides a context for that Court's bold dismantling in Furman of state death-penalty statutes, which the federal courts had long treated with kid gloves.

Although his book is short on solutions, Von Drehle does recommend a

more "narrow death penalty—for distinct crimes like serial murder or political assassination" (or, the president and attorney general would add, terrorist acts like the Oklahoma City bombing). Restricting the use of the death penalty, which runs contrary to current trends, would greatly reduce the number of cases now gumming up the courts over murky ambiguities in state law—such as whether an accessory should be treated as severely as a triggerman, or whether it is more heinous to have bumped off a child or senior citizen than a middle-aged mother of four, business executive, or homeless person.

Von Drehle reveals how difficult it is, in case after case, for the courts to maintain absolute standards when doling out death sentences. In one striking instance, a Florida inmate was executed after having been denied a Supreme Court stay on grounds of insanity; a year later, another prisoner was granted a stay and later spared on an identical pleading, when the same Supreme Court ruled that killing the insane is unconstitutional! It is such judicial about-faces, the author suggests, that encourage capital defenders to raise the same issues—of due process, racial discrimination, the use of mitigating evidence in sentencing—over and over again in the courts, thereby exposing themselves to repeated denunciations of "endless delaying tactics" by politicians, state prosecutors, and judges. In the example above, a petition deemed "frivolous and ... an abuse" of the law by one federal judge became the law only months later, when the Supreme Court saw fit to adopt its reasoning.

This "judicial flip-flop," argues Von Drehle, "was not actually the fault of the courts; the modern death penalty was a labyrinthine legal edifice .... And it was built on sand; its theoretical foundation was the notion that degrees of evil, depravity and menace can be reliably distinguished and fixed into print by legislative draftsmen and consistently applied by judges of a thousand world views and temperaments.

"In reality," Von Drehle continues, "the nature of the criminal soul is the terrain of a Dostoevksy, a Dante, a Camus. It defies the grasp of legal definition as a blob of mercury defies a tweezers. Modern death-penalty laws try to get their arms around a cloud—a dark cloud, but nonetheless evanescent—and as a result, the laws are complicated and ornate but ultimately hollow; hollow in the sense that their language is utterly open to new and shifting interpretations."

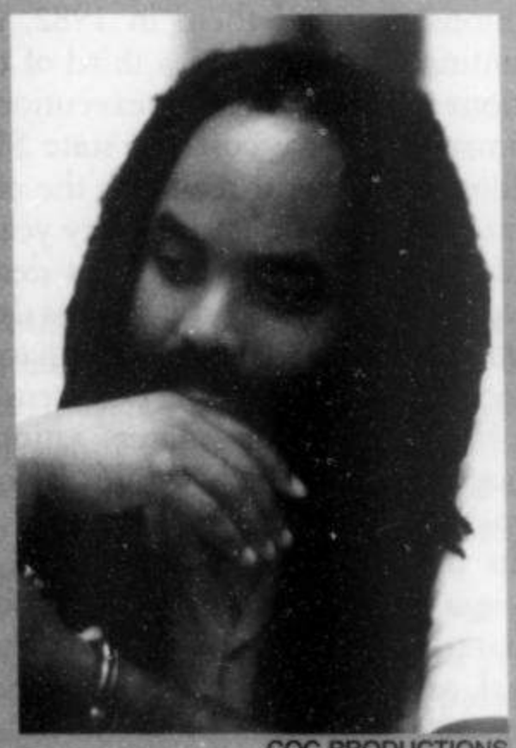
And the legal winds may be shifting again. Within the last year, the Rehnquist Court has issued five surprising, and unheralded, decisions that have strengthened the rights of capital defendants. The Court has: stiffened a prosecutor's burden in proving that his errors at trial could not have prejudiced the jury's verdict; eased an inmate's burden in proving prosecutorial misconduct and in getting belated evidence of his innocence heard in federal court; bolstered an inmate's right to counsel in mounting his appeals; and questioned whether executing someone after seventeen years on death row amounts to unconstitutionally "cruel and unusual punishment."

This apparent change in a court that before had routinely ruled against the interests of criminal defendants may be attributed to the recent fortification of the Court's left by President Clinton's two appointees, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer, and Bush appointee David H. Souter. But there is also a rising wave of dissatisfaction with the death penalty on the part of many district attorneys, police, and state corrections officials, who have spoken out in recent months against the conventional wisdom that equates speedier executions with a near-instant reduction in homicides. Von Drehle likens the current rage for the death penalty as a cure for violent crime to the Florida state prison's routine task of repainting death-row cells, where maintenance men simply slap another coat of enamel atop layers and layers of "old grime and rot."

Three thousand people now inhabit America's death rows, of whom fewer than forty are executed each year. It would take an execution a day for the next twenty-six years to wipe out the current backlog and keep pace with

(Continued on p. 76)

A Journalist's Death-Row Deadline



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Pennsylvania governor Thomas Ridge recently signed a death warrant for Philadelphia radio journalist and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal. Jamal had been an activist sympathetic to the cause of MOVE and other radical groups in Philadelphia, and many observers believe that it was his political associations that convinced a jury to convict him for allegedly murdering a police officer despite the weak evidentiary foundation of the case against him. He is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection on August 17.

We have no way of knowing whether Jamal is guilty or innocent. There are, however, convincing reasons to believe that Jamal deserves a new trial. Instead, because of the death penalty, Jamal may soon be dead before he is ever given a fair opportunity to establish his innocence. Government-sponsored murders of this sort undermine the credibility of the judicial system in the eyes of the most oppressed sectors of the society, and this makes more likely their willingness to resort to the very violence that the death penalty was supposed to discourage.

Concerned readers should call Governor Thomas Ridge at 717-788-1109, and call the Quixote Center at 301-699-0042 to find out about demonstrations in your area.

The Historical Jesus

Claudia Setzer

When Pope John Paul II made his historic visit to the Rome synagogue in 1986, he wore the crucifix that is part of his daily costume. Some Jews in the Israeli press complained about the inappropriateness of the cross in a ceremony intended to improve Jewish-Christian relations. What is a symbol to Christians of God's love for the world is for Jews a reminder of persecution. Jesus, like the crucifix on which he hangs, is a symbol in the classic sense of the word, an empty vessel we can fill with our own multiple meanings.

The images of Jesus throughout history are as varied as the people who have embraced him—the Son of God, the Divine Word by whom the world was created, the Passover sacrifice on behalf of the people, the Suffering Servant who takes on the sins of the world, the new High Priest, or more recently, Jesus the intellectual genius, the liberator of the oppressed, or the feminist. Each group and generation sees in Jesus a reflection of itself.

What is the connection between these personae and the historical Jesus, the flesh-and-blood preacher of ancient Israel executed by the Romans? Not much, scholars have often said. "There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus," said Albert Schweitzer, a key figure in the early "quest for the historical Jesus." Yet, as we approach the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new pursuit for information about the historical Jesus is energizing scholars and lay people alike.

Christians are sometimes puzzled and hurt by the allergic reaction of many Jews to Jesus—even to the mention of his name. But the allergy is not really to Jesus the person, about whom Jews (like everyone else), know very little, but to his appropriation by the church and the oppression of Jews in his name.

Yet Jews have also been fascinated by Jesus. When Jews began to think about their own history, they had to consider him as part of it. Sporadic references to Jesus in the Talmud are less than complimentary. The host of nineteenth-century scholars who investigated Jesus included the Jewish historians Heinrich Graetz and Abraham Geiger. The British Jew Claude Montefiore wrote a two-volume commentary on the Synoptic gospels in the early part of this century, and *What A Jew Thinks about Jesus*, published in 1935. The Lithuanian Jew Joseph Klausner wrote *Jesus of Nazareth* in Hebrew in 1922. Translated into several languages, it is still the best-known book on Jesus by a Jew and is quoted approvingly in John Meier's widely praised 1994 volume on Jesus. More recently, other Jews have written on Jesus, including Samuel Sandmel, Geza Vermes, Jacob Neusner, and Paula Fredriksen.

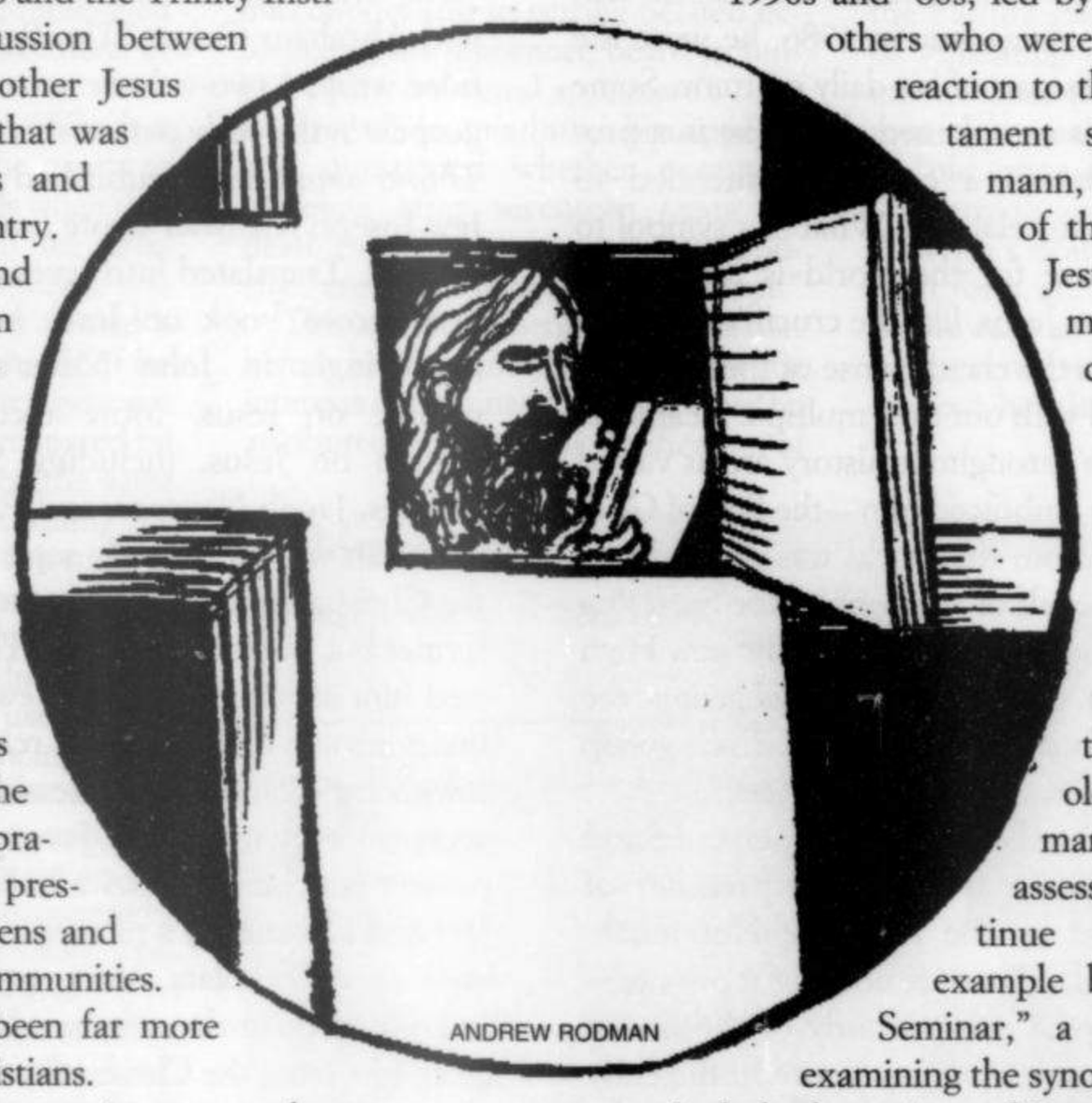
Jewish writers typically separated Jesus the Jew from the Christianity that incorporated him, approving of the former but disliking the latter. They have often characterized him as simply another Jewish holy man, unexceptional beyond his later public-relations image, or so unlike Jewish expectations of a Messiah as to make his lack of acceptance by most early Jews utterly unsurprising. The present generation draws a bold line between Jesus the Jew and Christianity's picture of him. Just as earlier generations of scholars often separated Jesus from his Judaism, present-day scholars, Jewish and Christian, distance him from the Christianity that claimed him.

The last few years have seen an explosion of books on the historical Jesus. A recent browse in my local seminary bookstore turned up seven books on Jesus published in 1994. The second volume of John Meier's trilogy on the historical Jesus, *A Marginal Jew*, more than 1,000 pages in length, was already sold out. Last year, two scholars, a Jew and a Christian, packed an auditorium at Fordham University with their topic, "the Jewishness of Jesus." The April 1995 issue of *Theology Today* is devoted to this scholarly debate.

Popular works, such as Barbara Thiering's fanciful *Jesus the Man* or A.N. Wilson's idiosyncratic *Jesus* drew much publicity, but had no impact on the scholarly world. A number of Wilson's innovations are commonplaces to scholars, and the speculative reconstructions Thiering and Wilson offer are not grounded in responsible methodology or common sense.

Claudia Setzer is assistant professor of Religious Studies at Manhattan College and the author of Jewish Responses to Early Christians.

But even the more sober works have found a popular audience. Meier's book, even with its copious footnotes, is a case in point. John Dominic Crossan recently published *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, a more popular and readable version of his densely-packed scholarly work, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, but the original itself sold more than 50,000 copies. Marcus Borg, in frequent demand as a lecturer, recently published a popular work, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, which stems from his scholarly work, *Jesus, A New Vision*. Last year, HarperCollins and the Trinity Institute sponsored a discussion between Borg, Crossan, and another Jesus scholar, Burton Mack, that was broadcast to churches and colleges across the country.


ANDREW RODMAN

Both the church and academia have gotten along successfully without the historical Jesus for centuries. The historical Jesus, the human being who walked the roads of ancient Israel, gathered disciples, and was executed by the Romans, is often contrasted with the "Christ of faith," a supra-historical figure whose presence in the world enlivens and nourishes Christian communities. The latter has always been far more important for most Christians.

Why is there so much attention now to the person of Jesus? Is it part of our interest in people's private stories, an impulse that multiplies talk shows and sells *People* magazine? Is it our need to humanize our heroes to make them more accessible? Is it part of the search for roots, and our desire to reclaim our pasts in a way that contributes meaning to our present? Is it simply part of humankind's enduring interest in religion, which takes many forms, but never really fades? The answer is probably a bit of each.

In fact, the current wave of books constitutes a *third* "quest for the historical Jesus." The first largely Protestant quest—from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century—breathed the air of the Enlightenment, presenting Jesus in utterly rational terms, explaining his miracles as natural phenomena, and depicting him as a teacher of timeless wisdom. It came to a close with Albert Schweitzer's book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, published in 1906. He concluded that the historical Jesus must be a "stranger and an enigma." The Jesus designed by nineteenth-century rationalists never had any existence. Furthermore, what little we could know about this Jesus was irrelevant to theology. "Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also," wrote Schweitzer, "This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery." The current generation of Jesus researchers have similarly bracketed questions of theology.

The second quest was centered in Germany in the 1950s and '60s, led by Ernst Käsemann and others who were influenced by and in reaction to the towering New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann, who argued that most of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life grew out of the mythos of the early church. These scholars argued that Christian theology could not be cut off from history and developed a set of criteria for deciding what is historical in the gospels. Although their existentialist theology now seems dated, many of their rules for assessing historicity continue to be utilized, for example by the current "Jesus Seminar," a group of scholars re-examining the synoptic traditions and particularly the sayings of Jesus. They have produced *The Five Gospels*, a work that evaluates the four canonical gospels and the non-canonical *Gospel of Thomas* for authentic sayings of Jesus.

Despite how often the question of recovering the Jesus of history has been declared hopeless, it has nevertheless generated a vast literature. What distinguishes the latest crop of Jesus scholars from their predecessors is that they understand Jesus within the context of Jews and Judaism in the first century. Whereas some scholars in the past may have talked about the "Jewish background" of the New Testament as if it were a mere backdrop to Christianity, or talked about "late Judaism" as if Judaism, on its last legs in the first century, was superseded by Christianity, no serious New Testament researcher today speaks of "the Jesus movement" or Jesus himself as outside the orbit of first-century Judaism.

Books that explore the Jewishness of Jesus include Geza Vermes's *Jesus the Jew*, *Jesus and the World of Judaism*, and *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* and E.P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* and *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. While every generation has produced scholars like George Foot Moore, who understood Jesus within the Judaism of his time, they were exceptional. Now they are the norm. Further, we have a more nuanced view of the variety of Judaisms in the first century and where Jesus and his followers might have fit in.

This generation also has access to more materials. The Dead Sea Scrolls, only recently available to a wide range of scholars, do not mention Jesus, but they do illuminate a brand of apocalyptic thought and expectation alive in the first century. The urgency of the impending apocalypse that John the Baptist and Jesus preached has been muted by 2,000 years of church history, but the Dead Sea Scrolls remind us that many expected the end of the world would be violent and imminent.

In addition to the information from the Qumran materials, recent archaeological finds correspond to details of the Gospel stories of Jesus. The skeleton of a crucified man was discovered in Israel on Giv'at ha Mivtar. His ankle bones were pierced and his legs broken, giving evidence of the nature of Roman crucifixion. In 1990, archaeologists discovered an ossuary containing the bones of Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest who interrogated Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and is mentioned in the Gospels of Luke and John.

The current scholars draw upon many disciplines, borrowing anthropological and sociological methods. For example, Crossan relies on some of the insights of anthropology to illumine agrarian peasant Mediterranean society. Richard Horsley and others use sociological data to understand Jesus as a radical political figure responding to economic and political persecution.

A number of different portraits of Jesus have emerged. Marcus Borg portrays Jesus as a religious ecstatic, a teacher of wisdom and a social prophet, focused on the present. "Jesus' relation to the Spirit was the source of everything that he was," Borg claims. Burton Mack describes Jesus as a Jewish Cynic, a popular sage who shocked people into understanding with his sharp and disturbing sayings. Like Borg, he sees Jesus as focused on the present state of the world, a dispenser of timeless truths. Crossan pictures him as a preacher of radical egalitarianism, addressing a peasant society suffering in political and economic straits, offering a message of healing: "You are healed healers, so take the kingdom to others, for I am not its patron and you are not its brokers. It is, was, and always will be available to any who want it."

An essential point of Crossan and others' thought is that Jesus was not preaching himself and his own aggrandizement, but preaching God's kingdom. E.P. Sanders agrees, but shifts the emphasis to the future. He sees Jesus as an eschatological prophet, a figure who prepared the people for the coming of God's kingdom, which God would bring in the future. John Meier combines present and future, suggesting Jesus is an eschatological teacher who sees God's kingly rule as already present, but not yet complete, in his ministry. God's plan to establish His rule over His people has yet to come to fullness.

As these scholars further hone their theories, certain issues dominate the emerging picture of the historical Jesus:

• Jesus preached the kingdom of God, not himself.

In some way God would act in history (or was now acting) to effect a change in society as they knew it. Whether this would be at some future time (Sanders) or already present in his ministry (Borg, Crossan, Mack) or as a dynamic drama in its first stage, so both present and future (Meier) Jesus preached God's power to effect a reversal of values and the emergence of a just society.

This kingdom is about God, not Jesus himself, and is on earth. It addresses two main concerns of peasants: bread and death. "They have too much of the second and too little of the first," quips Crossan.

• Jesus is a Jew, and the early "kingdom movement"—the expectation of God's earthly rule and Israel's liberation from foreign oppression—is not the founding of a religion called Christianity but a thoroughly Jewish phenomenon. Unfortunately, we know relatively little of the Judaism of the first century, and much of what we do know derives from the New Testament.

• The historical Jesus and the Jesus of the early church bear little resemblance to one another. Even more tenuous is the connection between the historical Jesus and later Christianity. Contemporary Jesus scholars seem to agree one can be a good Christian without knowing a bit about this Jesus of history. The flesh-and-blood Jesus in the late '20s of the first century gave way to the reconstructed and interpreted Jesus of the gospels in the '70s and '80s and was superseded by the "Christ of faith" of the later church. When believers speak of their faith in Jesus, it is this last figure to which they refer.

• The emphasis on Jesus' divinity has often eclipsed his humanity. Many church controversies focused on creedal issues, such as Jesus' relation to the Father. From the nineteenth century on, much scholarly debate has swirled around such supernatural elements of the Jesus story as the virgin birth and the resurrection. Sanders notes the recent surge of interest in "Mary's hymen and Jesus' corpse." Yet the human Jesus leaves hints of having been very human indeed: a colorful sort, more given to feasting than fasting and hanging around with disreputable types of which his family probably disapproved.

• John the Baptist exerted tremendous influence over Jesus and his message. While contemporary scholars would acknowledge that the relation with the Baptist is one of the most likely authentic pieces of the gospel traditions (since the evangelists seem a trifle embarrassed by it, they probably didn't invent it), Meier develops the idea that Jesus was probably part of the Baptist's early circle and his fiery apocalyptic theology was a constant in Jesus' own ministry. When Jesus left the circle of the Baptist to start his own ministry, he seems to have taken some of the Baptist's followers with him.

• Jesus' view of himself differed widely from the early church's. Whether he saw himself as the Messiah is debatable, but he almost certainly did not see himself as divine. As Bork puts it, "If one of Jesus' disciples had spoken of him with the words of the Nicene Creed, one can only imagine him saying, 'What?' Sanders poignantly remarks that Jesus may have died a disappointed man. The earliest gospel reports his final cry from the cross to be one of utter despair: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" Whether historical or not, we cannot be sure, but it points to the element of tragedy in his death.

• His followers, and even a non-believer like the Jewish historian Josephus, recall Jesus as a healer, exorcist, and miracle worker. Interestingly, his detractors neither call him a fraud, nor say the miracles were faked, but attribute his powers to Satan or demons.

• Except for a few of the women, the bulk of Jesus' followers abandoned him at the time of his death. Nor did his family seem to support him during his ministry. At one point (Mark 3:20-21), they think he is possessed.

• Remarkably, Jesus' death did not mark the end of his movement. His followers continued to believe in his message of God's Kingdom. "The juice was not turned off," remarks Crossan.

Other apocalyptic leaders have arisen throughout the course of Jewish history. Bar Kochba and Sabbatai Sevi, for example, drew significant numbers of loyal followers. But their apparent failures to bring their transformative vision to reality led to the end of their movements. When Jesus' followers, probably in hiding somewhere, heard he was dead, it did not spell the end of his group. Somehow, hope persisted and was transmuted into a force that changed history. Anyone who looks at maps of established churches in the late first, second, and third centuries cannot help but marvel at the rapid spread of Christianity. The persistence and extraordinary growth of Jesus' following after his death is the miracle on which to focus, claims Crossan, not the resurrection. Indeed, the transformation of some disappointed messianists into a dynamic movement is one of the fascinating stories of history.

When someone asked Franz Rosenzweig what Jews thought about Jesus, he answered simply, "They don't." But in regard to the historical Jesus, the same thing could be said about Christians. Whether Whitney

Death Penalty

(Continued from p. 72)

the current sentencing rate of 250 per year. But even if these men (no women have been executed under the post-Furman death penalty, further evidence that imposition of the ultimate punishment is regulated by factors other than the absolute horror of the crime) are killed by firing squad, hanging, or electrocution, rather than the invisible and supposedly "more humane" method of lethal injection, their grisly deaths are unlikely to make young offenders think twice before committing panicked murders in the course of robberies or drug transactions gone sour.

It would seem that only the politicians profit from a stepped-up machinery of death. They can sell a phony solution to a desperate electorate instead of making the case for real solutions—better early and secondary public education, genuine job creation, rehabilitation, and drug treatment programs—which cost far too much in money, time, thought, sweat, courage, and votes. Any such investment would take longer to bear fruit than an election cycle or two, whereas a couple of good executions guarantee headlines, tough-talking sound bites, and the popular illusion that something is being done.

Given our elected officials' myopia and cowardice, this *danse macabre* is unlikely to stop any time soon. For the foreseeable future, then, state courts will continue to herd men onto death row, where the average wait of almost eight years between conviction and execution will outlast most political careers. □

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If you agree with the politics of meaning approach outlined in TIKKUN (e.g., last issue in the article by Peter Gabel, this issue in the editorial on how to counter the Christian Coalition), join us in spreading the word. We've created the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, part think-tank, part educational/outreach pro-families organization; creating a national Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington, D.C. this coming spring; building the campaign for healing between Blacks and Jews; and challenging the ethos of materialism and selfishness in the media.

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Houston thanks Jesus as her Lord and personal savior at the Grammy Awards, or the Pope invokes his name in daily private prayer, it is the "Christ of faith" whose continuing and powerful presence makes a difference in people's lives. The charismatic preacher of first-century Palestine remains in the shadows.

Yet the movement of the historical Jesus to center stage is good news for Jews and Christians in their relations with each other. Effectively dislodged from the church, Jesus becomes more Jewish. Jews find it less threatening to think and talk about him. Graetz and Geiger understood Jesus as part of Jewish history. As contemporary Jews wrestle with their history, they ought to consider the question of Jesus' historical place in that story.

Most Jews back away from the Christ of the church, the crucified Lord, but do not mind claiming the Jesus of history, the preacher of ancient Palestine, as their own. With the burden of later Christian theology and organized Christianity removed, they can do this with some comfort. We may then move beyond old issues of Jewish pain and Christian guilt, finding points of intersection, even if not the same conclusions. □

A Liberal Theory of Halakha

(Continued from p. 48)

God is eternally against homosexuality? Perhaps this is another instance in which the path upon which our ancestors set out now leads in a direction that invalidates and hurts members of the community and that the path must be redirected to be more appropriate to our vision of ourselves and God.

Judaism should always be open to the idea that a particular guideline in the received Halakha should no longer be Halakha. Articulating the context of Halakha in our religious lives through a sacred narrative provides the compelling reasons for Halakha and the warrant for halakhic refinement. The vision of godliness and godly humanity, with its injunctions to be holy, to bring on the divine order, to establish peace and social justice, and to repair the world, must be the guiding principles of our path.

There is still a very hard question to be faced. We Jews stand as a community before Sinai and must choose and follow our path together. But how do you arrive at community decisions? The power to make these choices cannot reside with individuals who claim personal divine revelation. Long ago, the rabbis rejected the idea that God will continue to decide Torah by ongoing revelation, for "The Torah is not in heaven." The rabbis also rejected the power of caste and claimed that rabbinic learning rather than inheritance gave them the authority to adapt Halakha. Does the community still accept learning as a requisite to having a voice in decision-making, or is this another form of elitism? Contemporary scholarship takes a variety of forms. There are scholars who may hold Ph.D.s in Jewish law but are not rabbis. Should they have a voice equal to that of the rabbis? And what about scholars in non-Judaic specialties?

The answer may be that the whole people has the authority to make changes. Certainly, in talmudic times, the Rabbis would defer to the behavior of the people as a determinant of Halakha. Throughout the ages, when the rabbis have opposed popular determination, they have eventually had to give in to the people. But if the people's behavior is a vehicle of Torah, how do they decide? Is it by majority vote? Our experience with electoral decision-making has shown that votes often go to those who have the greatest powers of persuasion. We also know that money talks, and that the rich among us exert influence beyond their numbers. Public decision-making in contemporary society often involves demagoguery, communication through sound-bites, manipulation by marketing ploys, and electronic town-meetings. None of these techniques seems conducive to developing a holy people.

The difficulties of evolving a holy and Jewish way of making halakhic decisions are daunting. It is much easier to freeze Halakha at this moment, or to declare that only a privileged few—the local rabbi? The law committee? The assembly of rabbis?—have the right to interpret it. But this easier path has been rejected by the overwhelming majority, who no longer observe the received Halakha. It is also easier to declare that life should be lived without Halakha, but any community that claims a shared vision needs to provide guidelines for a shared communal life, or else abandon the idea that it is supposed to be working toward bringing its vision to reality. To fully accept *ol malkut shamayim*, the yoke of heaven, is to accept the difficult task of envisioning heaven and finding ways to live toward that goal. □

Jewish Renewal:
A Path to Healing and Transformation
by Michael Lerner

"Michael Lerner is America's preeminent liberal Jewish intellectual … *Jewish Renewal* is potentially one of the most important Jewish books of our time, an enduring contribution that could shape the Judaism of the 21st century."

—Michael Paley
Wexner Heritage Foundation

Traveling with Children

(Continued from p. 29)

Matriarchs were good Jewish wives. But I am suggesting here that we can reclaim such pacification texts themselves as locations for a feminist ethics that takes account of the ordinary: a risky choice methodologically. This is not some organizing tool (although it is critical to imagine a feminist theory that is politically useful and usefully accessible).

Gestures of the daily are prophetic, not because that is all that women have, although this may have been also true, but because theologically the moral gesture of the daily heroic act makes possible sacred acts in ordinary time and space. Why Naomi's response, or Esther's house cleaning are key moments of spirituality is the regard that such recognition affords us, the reader with the baby in her arms. It is the design, the warp and weave of the world that is honored, a recognition that the spiritual journey begins again each morning, like bed-making or breakfast, work that is undone by the simplest act of turning in the night, by our own new hunger, like the milk in my breast again, waiting for the baby's cry. □

One-on-One

(Continued from p. 58)

price paid for such deferred lives, for any parent, could never seem a fair one.

And there was something else. I had often—as in the writing of this essay—taken great pleasure in being able to say: "I'm a single parent raising three children by myself." When I said it, I knew, I had done so with a pride not unlike the pride I felt when talking about scoring a key basket, or winning a tennis match. Though I often regretted not having a spouse to help me raise my children (more for their sake than for mine), I knew, too, that I sometimes loved the fact of raising them myself as much as I loved raising them, that I loved not having to consult or confer with anyone else about them, and that—a determined, competitive American man to the bone—I loved, simply, being able (most of the time) to have things *my* way.

I may have lost to my son in a game of one-on-one, but his mother, by not having known her children, day by day, through the formative years of their lives, had surely wound up losing bigger. Although, for a dozen years, I had fought and won, mostly, for my children—to get them through while earning the trust and affection I hoped would be ours for the rest of our lives—I had, I knew, in the part of me that remained bitter and embattled against their mother, won for myself too, and this victory, despite its sad edge, had often been precious to me.

I was able, then, to return to Northampton without the fears that had, for a brief period, plagued me, not so much because I'd been in touch with my womanly nature, but because before, during, and after this might have occurred, I'd been quite deeply in touch with my life as a middle-class American man. I was, by virtue of this fact, well practiced at knowing how to accept any responsibilities that came my way, how to persist and to succeed and to win—for myself, as well as with and for my children—at most jobs to which I set my mind, heart, and will. □

Panther

(Continued from p. 24)

for his ads to denounce this movie than our distribution company had to advertise it. The media was anxious to "dis" the movie, given the right-wing mood swing at the moment in the country and the desire of the media to seem responsive to that mood.

But I'm not surprised at this. I'm not in business to make money. What America is seeing right now are light comedies. It's like the Depression era. People are not wanting to see *Grapes of Wrath*, they want something to cheer them up, and so I can't credit Horowitz with defeating this movie, because it's the nature of this period not to want to respond to this kind of serious movie that makes people rethink their world.

What was surprising was that usually when people take out an ad to critique a movie it is because they are feeling attacked. Asian Americans might take out an ad to critique a movie that has a negative portrayal of their community, or other ethnic groups might do that. But here was a white guy taking out an ad to say, "I don't like how you Blacks see yourselves." That's a real leap. And he talks about the killing of someone in 1974 by some people associated with the Panthers, but our movie ends in 1969.

USA Today interviewed David Hilliard and Elaine Brown, who liked the movie, and also Bobby Seale (who is making his own movie on the Panthers), and David Horowitz, who didn't like the movie, and then it only quoted the people who were negative. They put their negative assessment on the front page. But this wasn't the main problem. The main problem is that today Americans want to see light fare. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

themselves as totally innocent and having no responsibility for whatever led to their persecution. Insofar as they are faced with oppressors who pretend that the oppression is justified, I'll stand on the side of the "innocence" argument. But when the system of oppression has been defeated (e.g., Nazis no longer in power, or, in the case of African Americans, slavery abolished) and contemporary oppression no longer justified in similar terms, it becomes safe to turn back to history and no longer have to look at it primarily from the standpoint of righting historical injustices. In that light, one can look at Africa and notice that had Africans had a much more highly evolved sense of solidarity, they would not have sold each other into slavery or cooperated with the system of slavery imposed from the West. Slavers would have been significantly less successful in enslaving Africans had African tribes been able to overcome their rivalries and act with a greater degree of moral vision in organizing resistance to the foreigners. Higher levels of technology and instruments of murder gave the slavers an advantage, but the resistance could have been far more effective had there been a greater moral cohesion and sense of connection between various tribes of the African continent.

The triumph of fascism in Europe was not inevitable in the 1920s. The clash of imperial forces that led to World War I had left millions of young people dead, and the Versailles Treaty had imposed economic suffering on Germany that could not be solved within the framework of the free market. When Europeans returned to a "business as usual" consciousness in the Weimar Republic years, they ignored the plight of millions of people whose pain from World War I had never been addressed, and whose economic circumstances were dreadful. Moreover, the collapse of traditional support systems for those in pain, particularly those associated with the Church and with various regional and national communities, left many people feeling that their only hope was to return to a (largely romanticized) past in which there was a counterforce to the market and its liberal philosophy (that everyone should have the freedom to pursue their own private interests, and wherever they end up is no one's fault but their own). Most Jews, like most non-Jews in the society, were oblivious to the pain that suffused the people around them. The majority of Jews joined the majority of Europeans in collective amnesia about the meaning of World War I, ignored the simmering pain of millions of their compatriots, and instead immersed themselves in private pursuits aimed at bettering themselves financially and at building personal solutions to improve the lot of themselves and their families. Those who were able to look beyond personal solutions often were insensitive to the pain that was leading people toward nationalistic and fascistic parties, and instead concluded, in ways that were entirely syntonic with a long history of Jewish explanation of our suffering, that the non-Jews were simply showing their true evil colors when they responded to xenophobic nationalism. This led some of these Jews to join Zionist movements that placed all their energies in building a Jewish nation-state in Palestine, far away from these "crazy and evil *goyim*," thus removing from Europe people who might have played an important role in organizing the Jewish community in Europe in ways to counter the growth of the Nazis. It led other Jews to join the socialist and communist parties that had no understanding of what attracted people to the Right, but instead proposed economistic alternatives that never really addressed the pain and the fear of modernization that eventually led so many people to join the Right's politics. The few Jews like Wilhelm Reich who pleaded for the Left and for psychoanalysis to understand what was happening in the need structure of those attracted to the Right were universally demeaned and ignored.

My conclusion from this is not to blame the Blacks or the Jews as though these groups had caused the slavery or the Holocaust. Nothing the Jews or Africans did or did not do caused the Holocaust or caused slavery. And it is totally inaccurate, misleading and harmful to suggest that the Jews or Blacks caused the conditions that inevitably led to slavery or to Auschwitz. I don't believe that, and I think it to be false. But at the same time, we can see that both African Americans and Jews participated in the process that led to slavery and the Holocaust. One need not deny Jews' or Blacks' failures to protect our interests. At this historical moment, it makes more sense to recognize the complexity of history and the way that oppressors can simultaneously become oppressed and conversely.

"ANGELS IN AMERICA"

To the Editor:

With a concluding and conclusive question in her arresting analysis of the Jewish gay protagonist in Tony Kushner's "Angels in America" (May/June 1995), Jyl Lynn Felman puts it to us well: "Who are we, Jews, Gentiles, and heterosexuals who disassociate ourselves from Louise Ironson, as though his dilemma is not ours?"

Unless it is an occasion merely for despair, I do wonder if that dilemma is not a challenge more sobering than even Felman's sensitive ear notices.

The following is quoted in the review: "Louis: Rabbi, what does the Holy Writ say about someone who abandons someone he loves at a time of great need? … Maybe … sores and diseases really frighten him, maybe … he isn't so good with death.

"Rabbi: The Holy Scriptures have nothing to say about such a person."

So, let us recognize the dilemma as our own; take the rabbi at his word (are we not meant to?): was Louis—were we—not already abandoned at the Source? Have we not finally to look beyond Scripture in this truly post-biblical age?

Bruce Dahlberg
Dept. of Religion
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts

PULP FICTION

To the Editor:

Kudos to Donald Lazere for expressing what at least a few of us have been thinking ("*Pulp Fiction* as Degenerate Modernism," March/April 1995). I can assure him that he is not "the only leftist to be distressed" about *Pulp Fiction*, but there aren't too many of us around, it would seem.

Too many people have taken the view that the nihilism and brutality of that movie should not be taken seriously; it's all a goof, a "fun film," "entertainment." They're too "hip" to even consider that the film might be contributing to the pervasive amorality and spiritual emptiness of our society—even as their dismissiveness

reflects that same amorality.

Less that two years ago, in these very pages ("Cultural Elites, Closet Values," September/October 1993) I speculated that "the next 'hot' young filmmaker … will be encouraged to pour on the carnage and vulgarity in his work; (and) that, work will be championed by serious critics (and) do well at the box office." It's a shock to realize how completely my prediction has come true.

Philip Berroll
Brooklyn, New York

Ruth

To the Editor:

I first started reading TIKKUN after reading your book *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* and finding within it an interpretation of Torah that opened my eyes to a Judaism I hardly knew existed. Now, I've found in your magazine yet another moving reading of the Bible in Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman's account of the Book of Ruth. I hurriedly went out and read the book she was reviewing, but quickly came to the conclusion that what she had written in TIKKUN was far more profound than anything that the other scholars had contributed to the text. Zoloth-Dorfman hails "the Rutharian alternative of relation over self-actualization, the recognition that self-becoming is not possible in isolation from obligation." Frankly, I've never heard anyone in the progressive world talk in these terms, yet they correspond very much to my own experience as a mother who has had to make these choices over and over again. I always felt somewhat estranged from feminism because it seemed to be telling me that I was being anti-feminist if I chose relation over self-actualization. What Zoloth-Dorfman shows is a feminist politics of meaning that really does take relationship and loving and caring connection as the center of a worldview, and then critiques the world from that standpoint. After reading that, I not only got excited about TIKKUN's politics of meaning, I got excited about the Bible as well. Thank you for the book and thank you for TIKKUN and thank you for giving me back a Judaism I thought could never really be mine.

Marian Cohen
Chicago, Illinois

Internationalism?

To the Editor:

Kai Bird's review of my book *America's Mission* (March/April 1995) states that it does not object to the Eisenhower administration's intervention against constitutional government in Iran and Guatemala in 1953-54. To the contrary, I criticize these two CIA interventions stringently not only on the basis of principle but also for their practical negative impact on American interests in the form of the later Cuban and Iranian revolutions. For Bird to say that I believe that Arbenz "deserved what he got" in Guatemala or that intervention "was the right thing to do" in Iran is simply wrong. I was as clear as I knew how to be in the book that the intervention was wrong both in principle and from a national security perspective, and I repeat this judgment now lest someone is misled by a careless review of a morally sensitive point.

Tony Smith
Dept. of Political Science
Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

Internalized Anti-Semitism

To the Editor:

How can we be sure that psychological problems among Jews like insomnia, "underlying feelings of panic and insecurity," and being hypercritical, which Cheri Brown attributes to "internalized anti-Semitism" (March/April 1995) are due to our collective consciousness of oppression? How do we discern whether certain psychological problems are primarily due to our individual childhood socialization and family backgrounds or reflect our unconscious awareness of our endangered status as Jews?

Of course, most psychological problems reflect the intersection between culture and collective history and our individual psychological make-up; and family backgrounds. But when weighing and measuring the influence of different factors, how do we really know where one ends and the other begins?

Miri Skolnik
Medford, Massachusetts

The Buchenwald Report

edited by David A. Hackett

Foreword by Frederick A. Praeger

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EDITORIAL

(Continued from p. 11)

thus allowing working people to have more time and energy for family life. More time and energy for family life may not be sufficient, but it is absolutely necessary to strengthen families.

3.We support voluntary measures increasing employee participation in fundamental decisions in shaping the world of work, thus decreasing the stress that results from powerlessness at work. As workers have less stress to bring home, some of the stresses in family life will be reduced.

4. We support the creation of family-support networks in every community to provide voluntary frameworks of assistance for families dealing with the inevitable tensions in family life. We will create a family-support corps of volunteers in each neighborhood who are available to provide in-home supplemental care for children or the elderly. We will create Councils of Elders in each community and we will struggle to get every societal institution to learn from the accumulated wisdom of our communities' elders. To show that the society values caring activities, we will struggle for higher wages for child-care and health-care personnel, as well as for teachers, family therapists and educators, and others engaged in providing the infrastructure for a much wider framework of voluntary family supports.

5. We support the creation of television programs and networks aimed at providing children's entertainment that avoids excessive violence, rejects the manipulative use of sexuality common on television, challenges the ethos of selfishness and materialism, and focuses on developing ethical, ecological, and spiritual sensitivity.

6. While opposing the creation of any single framework of meaning or purpose, either by the government or in civil society, we encourage a diversity of communities of meaning, and encourage people to understand that their families are strengthened when they are part of these larger communities. Similarly, while people should be free to choose whatever form of family life they wish, we encourage the development of small and medium-sized ethically, spiritually, and/or ecologically oriented communities in which people are validated simply because they are created in the image of God, and without regard to their accomplishments in the marketplace. Such communities will be an important adjunct to family life.

7. We advocate one year of paid "family leave" to ensure that parents are given enough time to be with their children in the first year of life. We also support flexible work schedules so that parents can be home when their children return from school.

8. We advocate changes in school curricula so that every educational system teaches empathy, caring, individual responsibility, discipline, and respect for the experience of others. When parents visit schools to select where they will use the vouchers discussed above, schools must present them with full disclosure not only about the level of academic achievement of previous graduates, but also about the degree to which graduates have shown themselves to embody these values in subsequent years.

9. We seek a society that provides full employment, housing, health care, and child care, but that does so in ways that empower the individual family without the imposition of bureaucratic constraints or a particular lifestyle. So when we have government implementing programs, we want to see more done on the model of the Canadian single-payer plan, less on the model of the bureaucratic monstrosity that was proposed as the Clinton health-care plan.

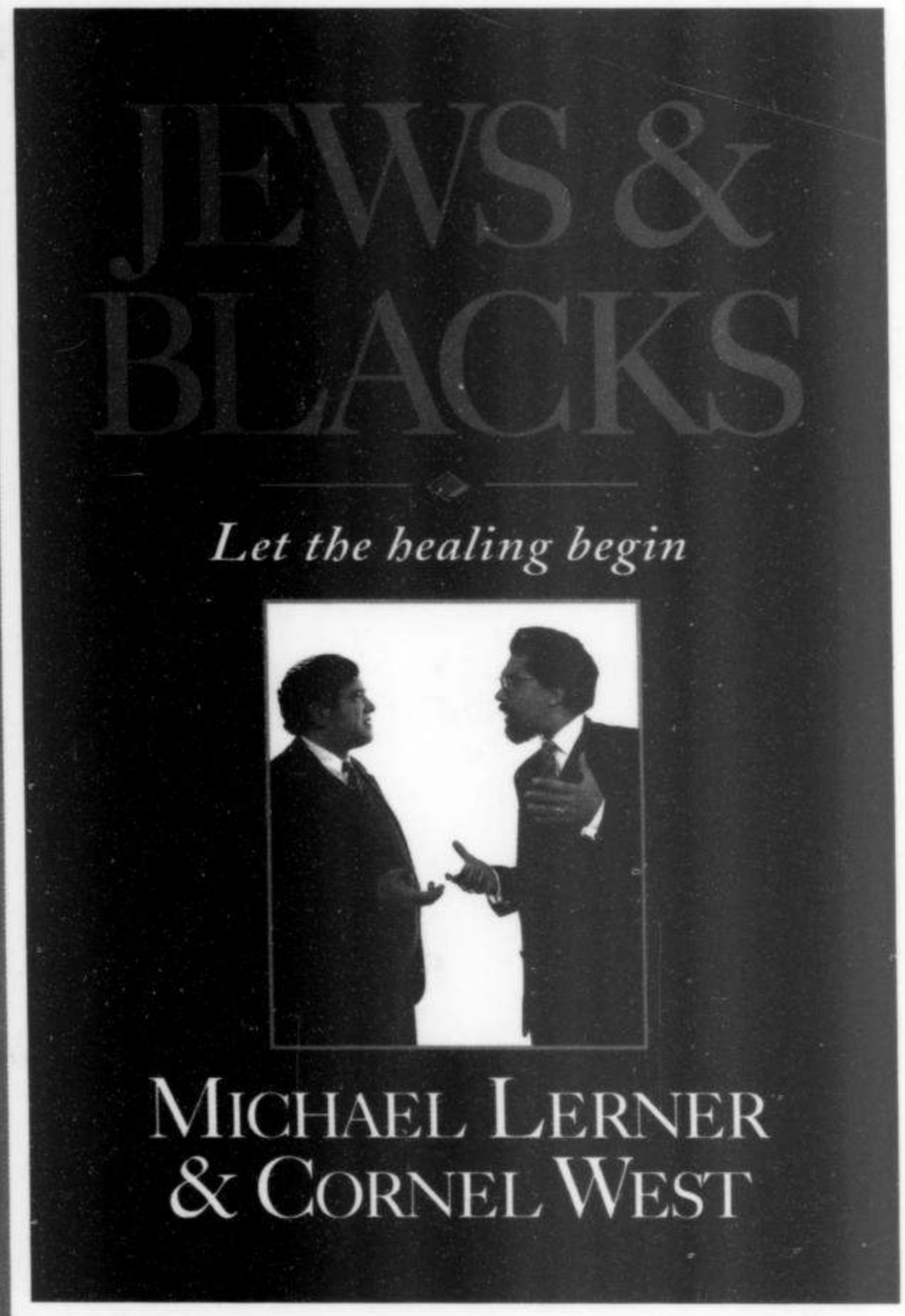
10. We support the creation of public events at which families meet to celebrate and honor as a community the hard work and energy that so many people put into building families, while simultaneously providing a public space (through workshops, small group discussions, educational forums, etc.) to explore the many remaining problems in family life. We will build ongoing public campaigns to improve the quality of family life by improving the total amount of loving and caring energy in the society, by honoring and rewarding those who are best at expressing love and caring in an ethical and spiritually centered way, and by challenging all those societal practices that undermine our ability to see and treat each other as fundamentally deserving of love and caring. And we will encourage people to spend less time in the pursuit of power and wealth, more time in responding to the grandeur of creation with awe, wonder, and radical amazement.

In the coming years, TIKKUN and the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning will be trying to create a progressive pro-families coalition to take this kind of pro-families agenda into the public arena. As a first step, we will feature these ideas at our national Summit on Ethics and Meaning in the spring of 1996, and we encourage you to create regional and local summits at which these ideas can be discussed. And we encourage you to challenge right-wing spokespeople who present themselves as "the pro-family force," and left-wing people who attack the Christian Coalition's Contract with the American Family while ignoring the underlying hunger for loving relationships that drives so many people into the arms of the Right's pro-family agenda. □

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תיקון

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