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

Jewish Renewal
Chanukah Supplement

TIKKUN

EDITORIAL:
The Oppression of Singles

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1995 $6.00

After O.J. & the Farrakhan March



Is Healing Possible?

Michael Lerner
Cornel West

Lesbians
Daphne Merkin

Medicare
Senator Paul Wellstone

Therapy Revisited
Wendy Orange

Children's Welfare
Ruth Sidel

Memorials
Geoffrey Hartman

Tikkun in Beijing
Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Oslo II: Israel's Steps to Peace

A.B. Yehoshua David Newman
Yitzhak Frankenthal
Jessica Montell and Eitan Felner

0 306775 8 11 85879 64858

Noah's Daughter

Fanciful rabbinic expansions of the Genesis stories were still being made in the Middle Ages: answers to such questions by intelligent students as—"How was the Ark lighted? How were the animals fed? Was there a Phoenix board?"

Graves and Patai
Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis

Good questions,
I can answer them
(though you didn't ask me).
Most of the mythical beasts—
the griffin the Phoenix the dragon the centaur—
sailed behind us in a smaller boat.
It was built of imaginary boards
(Father's idea, of course).
The unicorn was tied in back, by its horn.
The sea serpent, naturally, floated underneath.

How were the animals fed?
By all of us—but mostly, Mother.
I see her in the tiny, sweaty kitchen
chopping up pieces of seaweed,
making soup out of salt water and discarded shells.
(Meat was forbidden, of course.)
A spider monkey hung by its tail over her improvised stove.
A large red parrot perched on her shoulder.
I sat on the floor, absorbed,
feeding seaweed scraps to the goat.

My mother spoke animal language.
Not all the dialects—just a few.
Leopard and llama were her specialties.
She could also hoot like an owl,
growl like a bear.
My father and brothers marched through the rooms
pretending they didn't hear.
Sometimes she hung over the deck.
The ocean spoke to her.
It was a violin a lost child a lover,
seductive. I knew what it was saying.

Once she leaned over too far, started to sway to its message.
I yelled and held down her ankles.
She said, "Go find her father.
Isn't it feeding time?"

How was the Ark lighted?
It wasn't. It was a dark, musky cave.
At night I'd crawl in on my mother's side of the bunk.
She'd sing songs to me in her throat.
I made her tell me stories:
"Someday we'll get back to land
and we'll have a little house
and you'll have a little room painted peach or apricot.
All the animals will be plush, and won't need feeding.
We'll make sugar cookies and cocoa and be like other people.
The ocean will be far away."

Beside us, Father snored.
She held me. Her heart beat along with the ocean's.
At these times,
the dark Ark felt safe.
At these times,
I wanted the forty days to go on forever.

Enid Dame

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 10 NUMBER 6

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Letters

POLITICS IS BROKEN

To the Editor:
Your endorsement of Bill Bradley's possible independent candidacy shows that you've finally awakened to the errors of your ways when you championed Clinton, mistaking his center-rightist proclivities for a progressive politics of meaning. But the dangers in your politics are highlighted by the fact that Susan Andersen seems to think she belongs to your movement. Twisting your compassionate politics around, she now argues that we must be compassionate rather than critical of those who totally betray our principles and manage, in the process, to lose all political credibility. She seems not to have gotten your point that the kind of realism she advocates (in her words, finding something to *like* in options that *exist*), now translates into advocating that progressives once again accept whatever candidate the Democrats put forward, even if that candidate, precisely because of his lack of principles, is a loser who is bringing down his entire party!

I'm charitable enough to realize that you don't agree with Andersen, and that you've been principled enough to acknowledge that Clinton's wild rush out of the political center and toward the Right has been a disaster, effectively preventing the liberals from organizing any serious response to the Republican offensive. But why don't you see that the politics of meaning, precisely because it encourages feel-good criteria for what makes political sense, puts you in the company of those who feel best when they can stay happily aligned with the Democratic Party, no matter how morally and intellectually bankrupt it becomes? Do you think you might convince some of your followers that caring about others, which you passionately advocate, doesn't necessarily mean giving others political support

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when what they are saying is at variance with what you believe? Or does that sound too unfeeling?

Harold Jacobowitz
Boston, Massachusetts

To the Editor:
I agree with your call for Bill Bradley to create an independent party in 1996 (September/October 1995). After reading the story and interview with Colin Powell in *Time*, I feel he could be another voice to add to the mix.

Like Powell, I'm a Vietnam veteran who was for the war when I first went over. I served on the attack carrier U.S.S. Hancock from 1966 to 1968. I became convinced the war was a waste of men and resources. After my discharge, I marched with angry anti-war demonstrators.

I learned in those demonstrations one very important lesson: No matter *who* finally runs in 1996, *we* who care about the rightward wave rolling over our country have to *stand up* and be counted. In recent years I had suffered from depression brought on by pressures in my job and personal life (the old "lack of meaning" thing). Now I'm back with old and new friends, protesting everything from a white cop killing a homeless Black man, to visits to the city by Senator Dole and Representative Gingrich. To *all* you TIKKUN readers, it's time to get off your ass and put on your old marching shoes, and "get back to where you once belonged."

Bill Steyert
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editor:
Jamin B. Raskin eloquently expresses what is wrong with "the politics of meaning." Government can best support family and community by helping provide more economic security n a more just and democratic society. The political Right has long manipulated the alienation and insecurity of Americans to raise fears and hatred of minorities and foreigners. The Left has strengthened these fears by fighting for what appear to be special privileges for minorities while ignoring the insecurities and difficulties of the majority of working people and members of the lower middle class in the country.

We must demand of President Clinton, as well as of other political leaders, not spiritually uplifting speeches, but broad goals for social change: guaranteed full employment, universal health care, quality education for the

HELP SINGLES MEET THEIR *BASHERT* (APPROPRIATE PARNER)

TIKKUN SINGLES

CHANUKAH RETREAT

December 22-25
Elat Chayyim
(the Jewish renewal retreat center near scenic Woodstock, New York)

Share a beautiful Shabbat celebration, Chanukah festivities, and discussions on themes related to Jewish renewal and politics of meaning, all in a lovely country setting. Plus, discuss ways to challenge the current individualist ethos that creates a marketplace and "fend for oneself" mentality in relationships. Read the editorial in this issue.

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*DOUBLE OCCUPANCY

(Please use this ad to announce the retreat at your synagogue and in your Jewish newspaper. And circulate the editorial about singles that starts on page 10 of this issue in your community, together with this announcement.)

What more will it take before you are willing to involve yourself in challenging Newt Gingrich and the Right?

IF YOU ARE READY NOW, HELP US LAUNCH A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR A POLITICS OF MEANING AT THE FIRST NATIONAL

Summit on Ethics and Meaning

April 14-16, 1996
Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Join in workshops, plenary sessions, and strategic planning. Plus: music, poetry, fiction, small group encounters, and opportunities to socialize with some of the most talented and thoughtful people in the U.S.

If you wait until we have a final, detailed program, you'll miss the reduced registration cost. So, trust us—register now. But, if you want to wait, we will have more information in the next issue of TIKKUN, or you can call our office after December 15 and we will send you a tentative program (212-864-4110).

REGISTRATION before January 10, 1996: $150. After January 10: $225 (includes Monday evening dinner and Tuesday lunch). STUDENT FEE: $85 with current student I.D. Take off from work to be there—it's worth it.

LODGING is not included in registration. Call the Omni Shoreham at 1-800-THE-OMNI and ask for the reduced rate for the conference.

IT'S NOT JUST FOR JEWS. This is the TIKKUN conference that will become a milestone in the 1990s—don't miss it!

youth of this country, and reform of the election process to make it more democratic. These may be old-fashioned ideals, but I believe that the presidential candidate who supports these goals and fights for them has a good chance of being elected. He or she will certainly have my vote.

Lewis Reisman
Harrington Park, New Jersey

To the Editor:
Judging from Jamin Raskin's critique of the politics of meaning, lefties just can't seem to get your fundamental point: Appealing to the traditional economic and rights-oriented programs just doesn't seem to move very many middle-income Americans. The Left keeps running the same flag up the flagpole and then is furious when no one salutes. They talk as though the problem is that the person pulling the flag up really didn't do his job correctly, or that the person who painted or weaved the flag didn't make the colors vivid enough. What they refuse to hear is that the flag itself just doesn't excite people, because it doesn't speak to their deepest issues. They call for full employment, health care, educational benefits, child care—and they imagine that everyone ought to respond. But they completely forget that people like Mondale, Dukakis, and Jesse Jackson were very clearly behind these programs, and that they couldn't generate the support needed to win.

What I particularly like about the politics of meaning is your willingness to ask yourselves why the Left keeps losing. No wonder the *Nation*, *Z*, *Mother Jones,* and the *Village Voice* have never printed a real story about your work. In a way, the politics of meaning is as threatening to the Left as it seems to be to the Right. So don't let Raskin or the other lefties stop you—you are saying something very important.

Judith Hoffman
New York, New York

[Editor's Note: Mr. Jacobowitz is wrong about his history and our present intentions. We do not advocate Bill Bradley for President, but only suggested that a third-party candidacy by Bradley would dramatically improve the national discourse. Similarly, we never supported Clinton for elective office, although we did suggest that if Clinton followed through on his promises, he could change the dominant discourse by challenging the ethos of selfishness. He didn't follow through on that promise, though in the realm of discourse he didn't need congressional approval or media sanction to use every public opportunity to present a politics of meaning perspective on America's problems. Instead, he abandoned that framework, desperately sought to show that he was "presidential" (by bringing in Reagan's communication expert David Gergen and distancing himself from any transformative vision), and then was surprised to find that his own supporters felt demobilized and unable to champion his presidency.

Mr. Steyert's call for people to become activists is welcome. For those wishing to do so, but who want to go beyond protesting: Register and bring others to the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington, D.C., Sunday, April 14-Tuesday, April 16. It's going to be a unique historical moment that you will always be sorry you missed—the founding moment of a movement for an ethically and spiritually based politics in America. Details on page 3.]

Psychedelic Closet

To the Editor:
Thank you, Stephen Mo Hanan, for your testimony, and TIKKUN for having the chutzpah to publish the article. I hope that we can open the conversation to the level of what makes for a holy use like the four cups of wine at the seder and Kiddush on Shabbat and what makes for drunken stupor or worse violence. Many talk these days about spirituality but most people, who do not have the solitude to nurture it by inner preparation or the guidance to employ the physical and chemical means in a way that raises awareness to the higher worlds.

In the 1960s *Commentary* symposium, "The Conditions of Jewish Belief," I wrote: "The most serious challenges to Judaism posed by modern thought and experience are to me game theory and psychedelic experience .... when I can undergo the deepest cosmic experience via some minuscule quantity of organic alkaloids or LSD, the whole validity of my ontological assertions is in doubt."

With ever-growing appreciation I remember Itzik Lodzer's article on Kabbalah and psychedelics in *The New Jews*. When you check the *tzitzit* of the people who are your writers and readers you will find that they are people of some experience who did more than not inhale. I am not advocating anything more that an open conversation on the issues of spirituality and all the means that might enhance it. And may it be with more light than heat. And maybe even a conference.

In the early 1970s, I offered the following midrash: When God saw that people turned to the medicine cabinet instead of to Him, God made Him(Her) self available in the form of drugs. Satan protested, "You make it too easy. I can't do my work anymore." God said, "I do what I need to do and you do what you need to do!" And Satan became the pusher.

Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:
I am really appalled that "Out of the Psychedelic Closet" was not only published in TIKKUN, but featured as the lead cover story. And right before the high holidays when we are supposed to take control of our lives and repent our sins.

In addition to the terrible harm they have caused, especially to teenagers, drugs send the following dismal messages to those who use them: You need drugs to:
- Experience great joy and fun
- Protect yourself from pain
- Cope with feelings—the ordinary and not-so-ordinary ups and downs of life
- Deal with intimate feelings when relating to family and friends
- Have true religious experiences

"Do drugs really do as much harm as the soul-killing social milieu from which they offer temporary, if illusory, escape?" asks the author. And I must respond that it is the illusory escape that does the damage, but there is also permanent damage in lives and families' hopes and dreams destroyed.

"Certainly drugs have a potential for danger, and can be misused. The same can be said of automobiles, television, and voyages of discovery," adds the author. Sure, and guns don't kill people.

The logic of pitting all that is wrong with recent American history (Vietnam, imperialism, insensitivity, the present political Right, Reagan, and Nixon) as everything bad, against the drug culture as all that is good is fatuous and immoral. I was against the war in Vietnam and am now against the political Right, but I am not part of the drug culture.

The more I read the article the more

I feel like the person trying to argue with a Holocaust denier. There is really no legitimate debate. Drugs are simply dangerous and life-threatening. What more is there to say?

Most of all, I resent the trotting out of the Jewish religion in the form of God, Ezekiel, and Isaiah to defend drugs. I don't think those two wonderful prophets needed any stimulant to castigate their contemporaries in strong, colorful language and images.

I am disappointed in TIKKUN, because otherwise September/October 1995 was a marvelous issue.

Eugene Hosansky
Briarwood, New York

To the Editor:
Stephen Mo Hanan's article on psychedelic drugs, appearing by chance right after Jerry Garcia's death, could begin an important public discussion. Most of the press coverage of Garcia's death only winked knowingly at the drug use by Grateful Dead audiences, while nodding sadly at the effects of Garcia's own heroin use.

The fact is that each Grateful Dead concert was able to give up to 60,000 people feelings of community and experiences that were wonderful, often religious. A substantial portion of the audience was using psychedelic drugs.

I say this as a participant who, in my forties, went to two or three Dead shows each year. I would guess that at least half of the audience, or 30,00 people, joined me in quietly taking mushrooms, LSD, mescaline, or ecstasy, while another 20,000 smoked marijuana before or during the show.

What does it mean that so many people, including many of the "responsible adults" like me that the Garcia obituaries extolled, were willing to violate laws for this experience? How does it affect our sense of government, and more important, that of young people at these concerts, to know that some people caught using or selling these drugs are in jail, and that our society devotes significant criminal justice resources to eliminating these experiences?

And how do we create a climate in which we can seriously discuss these drugs, a climate in which someone could write an article for TIKKUN and speak of their psychedelic experience isn the 1990s and not just in the 1960s, and a climate in which I would feel comfortable signing my real name?

Rosalie McFall
Houston, Texas

To the Editor:
At a time when thousands of our children are dropping out of school and into a culture of the streets that is pockmarked by drug abuse, addiction, and violent crime, it is insupportable to read that parents should tell their children that "there is a right time when drugs can be useful."

I must say that this article revolts me and calls into question the validity of your efforts to establish a Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. As a recent contributor and someone accused more than once of having too generous a heart, I will hold onto the hope that you were a victim of extraordinarily bad judgment.

Laurence Snider
Lambertville, New Jersey

To the Editor:
Hanan is absolutely and completely out of his head when he describes psychedelic drugs as liberating, mind-expanding, and safe. I wonder if he has really listened to some of the drivel written under the influence of such drugs. While stoned, the writer is under the delusion that he is producing a masterpiece. When sober, he is unable to decipher the meaning of his word salad. Nor has Hanan had to seek for a heartbeat in the bone broken body of a boy who dove out of a window because he was sure that he could fly.

I don't believe that the young are brought together to deal with social issues by having a smoke-in. It may very well have been this counterculture which has numbed the young from being true activists. There are terrible things going on in the decaying cities of our country. There are horrendous happenings in our Congress. Injustice and division is rampant around the world. But where is the outcry? We don't need drug-induced visions, but rather rational, humanistic concern and appropriate action based on minds not beclouded with drugs. And that doesn't mean that I am pushing or justifying alcohol or nicotine.

Leo Berman, M.D.
Westport, Connecticut

To the Editor:
I spent the first few days after the pro-psychedelics piece came out trying to defend TIKKUN to my friends by explaining that this isn't the first time that I've seen an article that probably is at variance with the opinion of the editor,

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WILLIAM MORROW

AT BOOKSTORES NATIONWIDE

who probably shares my view that Hanan was overly positive about the value of psychedelic experience, and failed to pay adequate attention to the negative consequences it had for some section of those who got psychologically hooked.

Then it suddenly hit me, "Why am I being so defensive about drugs? After all, I got something out of the experience myself."

Drugs did not save me and they did not radicalize me. But they were an important element in helping me to understand something about the experience of God that the mystics write about, and something about the truth in seeing the relationship between all beings. I had heard those words before, and could in some cold and detached way assent to them. But experiencing those truths had an important and positive impact. They made it harder for me to dismiss religious experience (though those experiences do not necessarily validate any particular religious claims about the nature of reality). And they made it harder for me to unconsciously forget what I knew about the fundamental value of every human being, though it would be far easier to live in America and devote all one's energies to making big bucks if I could forget. So, I didn't learn any new truths, but what I learned was how to experience the truths I knew in a much deeper way—and for that I remain grateful, even two decades after I stopped with psychedelia.

But once I remember what drugs gave me in a positive way, I find it hard to understand why I and so many others of my generation have been willing to allow the history to be rewritten by narrow-minded cultural conservatives who have spent so much energy trying to demonize the drug experience. It seems hard for me to believe that they feel threatened by people having spiritual or mystical experiences, or even that they want to deny the possibility of seeing the unity of all humanity (though, as TIKKUN has often pointed out, they do implicitly deny that constantly by demonizing various cultural or racial or religious minority groups). If I had to guess, I would say that it's more likely that the attack on drugs had become hysterical by the late 1970s because it fit in well with a larger attempt to discredit the revolutionary impulses of the 1960s. Writers in TIKKUN have been successful in convincing me that there has been a conscious and venal and, unfortunately, successful attempt to create a kind of mass amnesia about the liberatory experience of the 1960s. I know of people who were scared by the '60s, and scared not because they had taken too many drugs, but because it was too scary to imagine living a life in the presence of the possibility of real fundamental change in every area of their lives. I don't blame people for having that fear, but I do regret that they were so paralyzed by that fear that they were willing to misremember their own complex experience, allowing their drug experimentation to be transformed by the media from a sometimes useful expansion of consciousness into nothing but a childhood experiment in self-indulgence and a drowning in narcissistic pleasure. But then, I also acknowledge that for some that probably was all that happened, because the impact of drugs is naturally going to vary with the capacity of specific individuals to handle them.

Given the way drugs can have radically different impacts on different people, I might be far more willing than Hanan to see some form of social control. I could imagine, for example, a law that limited psychedelic drugs to people who were currently under the supervision of a physician, psychologist, social worker, theologian, philosopher, or clergy person, and that these people had to sign a permission slip asserting that in their professional judgment the person in question could handle the experience. I could even imagine requiring some such professional to sign a statement taking responsibility or liability for destructive behavior while the person was using the drug. If extended to alcohol and tobacco, such a regulation would make a great deal of sense to me. But what makes no sense to me is to act as though we are required to prove our "maturity," to deny what some of us know—that some people can have very valuable and positive experiences with psychedelics, and that there is no intrinsic moral reason why they should be denied those experiences.

It took a lot of courage for TIKKUN to make Hanan's piece the featured item on your cover. But it isn't the first time that TIKKUN has played this kind of courageous role, and it's one of many reasons why I'm really glad to donate money to your magazine.

Myron Shachar
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:
I read with profound sadness the article "Out of the Psychedelic Closet," by Stephen Mo Hanan" (September/October 1995). My precious son Joe, a delightful, funny kid, and at eighteen a mensch and a half, died in a fall from the window of his seventh-floor dorm room in Madison, Wisconsin, six years ago. He had taken LSD.

I can hear the objections from Mr. Hanan already: "A Reaganite sob-story. I said drugs have a potential for danger and can be misused. Automobiles kill people, too."

The plain fact is that consciousness-altering drugs are not sold only to intellectual giants to fuel their visions of a mankind happier without General Electric and Lemon Pledge; they are sold to our children, anxious to try everything once, and unmindful both of the drugs' effect on their judgment and of their own mortality.

If leaving such substances not only illegal but shameful deprives Mr. Hanan of his shortcut to socioeconomic insight and redemption, or at least of his ability to brag about it publicly, that's a trade I am willing to make; I would trade lots more of Mr. Hanan's celebration of "spontaneous Dionysian energy" to restore to a world that needs them the lives of Joey and the countless other kids lost to the pointless experimentation with alcohol and other drugs.

I am neither "clueless" nor a Puritan; I am a man with a cracked heart that will never heal, who harbors the hope that other families can be spared the endless, unremitting emptiness caused by such needless deaths.

Al Sicherman
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Stephen Mo Hanan responds:
The loss of a child is devastating. I wish that words of mine could restore your son; failing that, it is hard to know what I could say that would matter to you. Your grief is too evident to be dismissed as "a Reaganite sob-story," no matter how much I disagree with your conclusions.

The scorn you heap upon my viewpoint won't bring Joe back, either. I make no claim to be an intellectual giant. I'm just a guy who had an experience worth discussing. If Joe had died in a scuba accident, and I wrote an article stating that I had been spiritually awakened while diving (a not uncommon assertion), would you be so en-

raged? Would you accuse me of "bragging"? Would you wish to prohibit the activity? If, for only an instant, you could step beyond your anger, you might hear me saying that the proper use of diving equipment (as of the automobile) needs to be skillfully imparted by experts and regulated by a community. Psychedelics exist and arouse curiosity; years of repression have been unable to alter this fact. LSD was illegal and "shameful" when it contributed to your son's death. A healthier societal approach to the issue might have saved him. Forbidden fruit tends to get picked without supervision, though you may despise me for saying so. The irony of our exchange is that the very substances you so bitterly condemn opened my life to a transcendent reality whose presence has been an unqualified blessing, and whose absence allows you to believe in "a cracked heart that will never heal." It would be monstrous of me to belittle your sorrow, hypocritical to deny my own experience.

Demonizing drugs offers your rage a socially approved target, and locks in your grief, but I must dispute the claim that experimentation is pointless. For your "endless, unremitting emptiness" a remedy is available; not a chemical, but a state of awareness to which there are many paths. May you find one that dissolves rage, grief, and demons alike.

ISRAEL

To the Editor:
I must say that your editorial about the agony you faced in allowing your son to serve in the Israeli paratroopers puts a new light for me on your magazine's criticism of Israeli policy. I know this sounds a bit irrational, but even though I agree with many of the things you say about the stupidity and immorality of Israeli policy toward Palestinians, I had always somewhat discounted your views because they were coming from someone who wasn't facing the same risks as we who live here. Now I find quite the contrary—that even though you get none of the wonderful benefits of living in Israel, you are taking the most important and dangerous risk one can take, allowing your only son to serve in a combat unit.

Your readers may not know what it's like to send your son to the

(Continued on p. 98)

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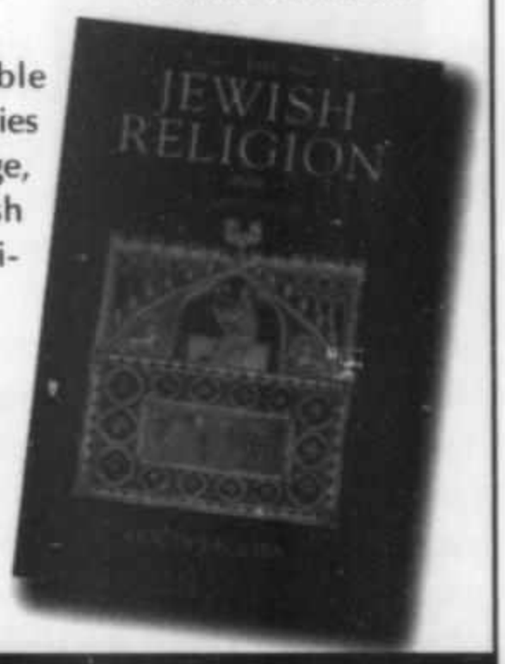


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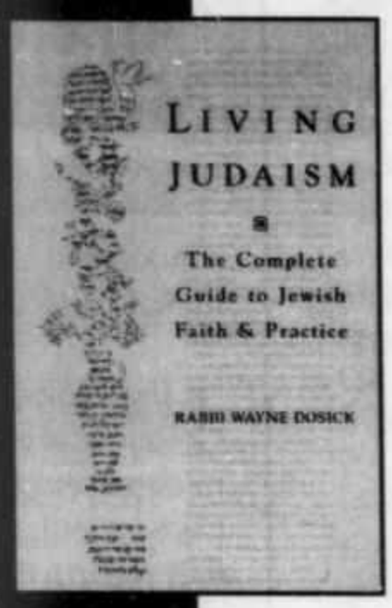


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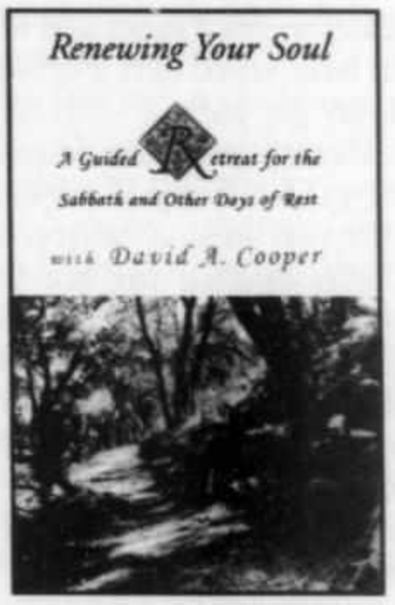
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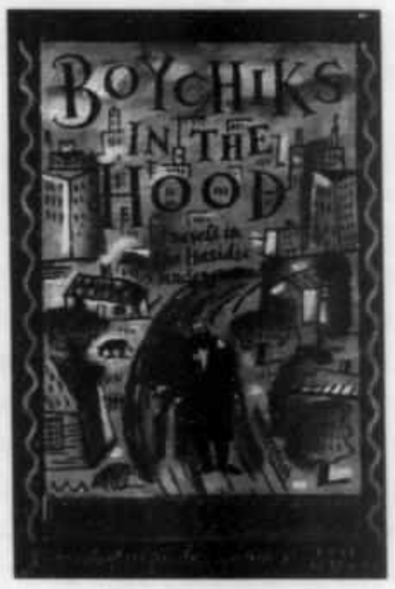
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EDITORIALS

The Oppression of Singles

Last summer at the Aleph Kallah (a summer conference of Jewish renewalists), I witnessed a beautiful ceremony. Singles who were seeking partners sat in a circle on the grass surrounded by a community of couples who showered blessings on the seekers. It was one of the few public acknowledgments I've seen that finding a partner ought not to be the private problem of individual singles.

It never used to be. Throughout most of human history, singles have been part of traditional communities that sought to introduce people and pair them for appropriate marriages. All too often, those marriages were arranged for economic reasons having little to do with the feelings of the couples involved. But not always. In Jewish communities, for example, there were coercively arranged marriages, but the Bible has more than one story of people connecting for loving reasons as well, and throughout Jewish history respect for individual choices, while at times limited by sexist arrangements and economic need, played a decisive role.

I don't want to mystify or romanticize traditional communities. People broke from those communities in large part because of coercive, sexist, and authoritarian elements within them, and this certainly extended to the way those communities interfered with individual freedoms. But I do want to insist that there was within them a recognition of responsibility to others, and that included a responsibility to help people find appropriate partners whenever possible.

But with the triumph of the free market, a new kind of freedom appeared: the freedom to "make it" on your own. One consequence of this new freedom has been the pervasive acceptance of a meritocratic fantasy: "You can make it if you really try," and the converse, "And if you don't, it's because there is something wrong with you."

The meritocratic fantasy has been very destructive in the economic sphere—convincing most people that they have no one to blame but themselves if they have jobs that give them little opportunity to serve the common good or to use their intelligence and creativity. Such a philosophy serves ruling elites, allowing them to justify their disproportionate wealth and power, but it makes most other people feel terrible about their lives.

Increasingly, the meritocratic fantasy has pervaded personal life as well, leading many people to blame themselves for whatever isn't working right in their relationships with others.

Yet never in history has it been more difficult for people to sustain loving relationships (to wit, the 50 percent divorce rate). A "market" consciousness pervades all human relationships, encouraging us to see other people in terms of what they can do to satisfy our needs. Instead of viewing other human beings as created in the image of God, deserving of caring and respect simply by virtue of this fact, we learn to see others instrumentally, as means to our own ends. We've learned to ask about any given relationship, "What can this person do to fill my needs?" as if that was the be-all and end-all of human interaction. But if our connection to other human beings is based solely on a calculation of utility, every relationship begins to feel very unstable. No matter how many words of love and caring have been exchanged, if people now believe that *everyone* in the society is thinking in these market terms about what they can get out of a relationship, they have good reason to suspect that, should their partner or friend find a better deal down the block or around the corner, they might give very serious thought to moving on.

I want to leave out of this discussion the issue of what it is that people might be seeking. Sometimes it might be a partner with more money or superficial charm. But other people might want something that is perfectly reasonable—for example, more empathy or more spiritual sensitivity. Leave aside the variety of things that people might be seeking, it nevertheless becomes clear that when people can no longer sustain societal values such as solidarity and commitment to others because they are fixed on getting the best possible deal for themselves, the result is a society in which no one can feel very safe.

And the lack of safety becomes self-perpetuating. Because you know that others are constantly looking for the best deal, you have a tremendous incentive to keep *your* eyes open. The result is that it has become very hard for people to create and sustain long-term loving and

committed relationships. The market consciousness enters into every particular relationship, making it less secure.

Moreover, most contemporary relationships are asked to take on a task that they never had before: to compensate for the meaninglessness that people expe-rience in their work and in the rest of their lives. In the past, relationships were embedded in larger communities of meaning and purpose. The relationship was not about itself, but about some larger shared goal. But today, with those communities of meaning in decline, people increasingly look to their primary sexual relationship to become a compensation for the meaninglessness surrounding them. Yet judged against such standards, very few relationships feel adequate.

And given that there is a marketplace in relationships, people increasingly are encouraged to move on to the next relationship rather than stay on and work things out. Indeed, a literal marketplace opens up—people advertise in singles columns, with no community responsibility to assist or to ensure truth in advertising.

Singles have accepted the marketplace notion of how they are supposed to meet. Essentially, it's up to them to make a connection. If it happens, great. If it doesn't happen, it's because of something inadequate in the person who remains single. And yet, there are virtually no social institutions dedicated to creating a safe, wholesome, spiritually and ethically grounded, psychologically sensitive place where people could meet.

As women have entered the work force, they, like men, find themselves under increasing pressure to extend their hours at work to prove their loyalty to the firm or to increase their availability to potential clients or customers. There are fewer and fewer hours available for private socializing, and few places to go where one might expect to find people who share common interests.

In the workplace, reasonable concerns about avoiding sexual harassment have led many people to feel that it would be inappropriate to turn a work relationship into a personal one, and the same ethos increasingly constrains people when they meet others in the course of their work, lest they create a situation in which co-workers, clients, or customers might feel that they are being inappropriately approached.

Yet, even in private life there is a pervasive awkwardness in the way people meet each other. Because everyone tends to accept the meritocratic framework, even the most sensitive couples act in a peculiar manner toward singles, feeling that they don't want to "embarrass" the singles by suggesting that they should meet particular people. Conversely, the deep hunger that many singles have to meet an appropriate partner has to be buried, lest others see it as "desperation" and interpret it as proof of how *undeserving* this person is.

The result is a widespread denial of the plight of singles, and a pervasive lack of responsibility toward singles on the part of the larger community. Couples rarely extend themselves to singles, often feeling too awkward to acknowledge to themselves or to the singles around them how hard it must be, how lonely it often must feel, for the singles in question.

Imagine how different it would be if at every public event, every religious service, every political meeting, even every movie or dance, the community sponsoring the event publicly acknowledged that there was a need to help people connect, and encouraged people in couples to meet singles, learn of their lives and interests, and help them meet others. Were that combined with a period specifically dedicated to urging singles to introduce themselves to one another, public life would begin to feel more secure to singles.

Similarly, if the community really took upon itself the task of connecting singles, and if families felt that it was a normal part of their social responsibilities to invite eligible singles to their homes, the lives of singles would be dramatically improved.

Central to this societal shift is the uprooting of the dominant meritocratic framework. Once we challenge the market consciousness about relationships, singles themselves will feel less self-conscious and less self-blaming about their singleness, and hence less reluctant to acknowledge their desire for connection to others.

Few people want to go so far as to talk about their desire for a relationship in public. They feel that doing so makes them subject to ridicule and to dismissal by others who will see them as pathetic. I've faced a version of this in the media, when, for example, some journalists have referred to my not wanting to remain single with gleeful derision, seizing upon this as proof that I must be motivated by some unsavory agenda. Because I believe it is politically important to challenge this attitude, I've persisted. Yet it is difficult for me to write these words.

The notion that it is somehow ridiculous or wildly vulnerable to be in this position is part of what makes people so embarrassed to discuss their desire to meet potential soul mates. They feel bad about themselves, feel that they have no right to impose on others, and hence must remain quiet about their pain.

The only way this can change is to explode the individualist mythology that underlies it. The community needs to take responsibility again for helping people meet. And equally important, it needs to engage in a

public and sustained campaign against the self-blaming that leads people to feel bad about themselves and assume individual responsibility for the consequences of what has in fact been a societal breakdown of social responsibility. It's only when this kind of ideology is defeated that people can act in a wholesome and morally centered way to help people connect.

Here we have yet another reason why our society needs a politics of meaning, that challenges the ethos of selfishness and materialism of the competitive market and urges us to build a new framework of relationships based on recognizing God within each of us. That perspective rejects the meritocratic framework, both in the economic and in the personal sphere. Once we recognize our responsibility to care for each other, every human relationship takes on a different kind of meaning. We no longer act as though relationships are a "personal" issue only, because we understand that what makes relationships work is not just the individual psychological makeup and talents of the people involved, but the larger context of caring, the larger framework of meaning and purpose, and the larger commitment to helping people work through relationships.

Yet building that politics of meaning requires lots of small steps. One such step would be for us as a community to talk about the issues raised in this editorial. You are encouraged to reproduce it, send it to friends and family, distribute it at your workplace and in your synagogue or church, your local movie theater or your next political meeting, and encourage people to discuss these issues. We hope to build a community of people who are sensitive to these issues, feel comfortable to discuss them in public, and who then proceed in their own lives to take much greater responsibility for helping the singles they know, while simultaneously publicly challenging the ideas that make singles feel alone and self-critical. We also hope that you'll encourage singles to come to events designed to help make these connections, including the singles weekend TIKKUN is sponsoring December 22-25 at Elat Chayyim, the Jewish renewal center in Woodstock, New York (see page 3 of this issue of the magazine). □

Sucking up to the Rich: The Name of the Game in the Jewish World

The October 5 cover of The *Jerusalem Report* featured a full-page photo of millionaires Yuli and Rutie Ofer, decked out in gold and diamonds, with the line, "Looks Who's Giving Now!" We were supposed to be intrigued that Israel, suddenly financially flush as it becomes a contender in the world capitalist market, has generated millionaires willing to give big bucks to philanthropy, just like Jews in the United States.

Those who grew up reading Jewish newspapers, whose concept of "news" was to focus on which local rich person was being honored or given a testimonial dinner by which Jewish fund-raising organization, would not be surprised at this direction for the *Report*. Though the *Report* was supposed to be an alternative to the ultra-Right *Jerusalem Post*, under the direction of Hirsch Goodman and former Menachem Begin publicist Ze'ev Chafets, it has become a public-relations rag for the rich and famous rather than a serious, insightful journalistic venture. Charles Bronfman, chairman of the *Jerusalem Report*'s board of directors and heir to the Seagram fortune, has attracted more liquor ads—six full pages of them in the October 5 issue—than intellectual coherence.

But isn't that how it always is in the organized Jewish community, some will argue? Torah values would suggest that we honor wisdom, social-justice activism, spiritual sensitivity, love and caring for others, and the ability to recognize God's spirit in other human beings and in the natural universe. But, with a few rare exceptions, Jews with these talents are honored by the organized Jewish community only if they happen to have political or economic power. Then, these donors and the hired guns they employ to run the institutions of the Jewish world sit around discussing Jewish continuity and wondering why they have trouble convincing young Jews to stay involved. Duh! □

After O.J. and the Farrakhan-led Million Man March: Is Healing Possible?

A dialogue between Michael Lerner and Cornel West

Lerner: Where are we in race relations after the O.J. Simpson acquittal and the Farrakhan-led Million Man March?

West: It's fairly clear that the gulf is quite deep between Black and white worlds and Black and Jewish worlds. Blacks and whites, Blacks and Jews, live in such different worlds and look at the world through such different lenses. This poses a huge challenge. We have to cultivate a much deeper understanding of the various perceptions from the different worlds.



A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Lerner: Why is the perception so different about O.J. Simpson?

West: In the Black world there is a deep belief that O.J. didn't do it. The lack of scars or bruises—how can someone kill somebody so brutally and mercilessly without some scars or bruises? When they took pictures of O.J.'s body, there were no bruises or scars. Just a little nick on his finger. One would think there would be some fighting back or injury to the assailant.

And then there is the profound distrust in the Black world of the police department, the criminal justice system. Nearly every Black man one knows has been abused by this criminal justice system in some way, whereas large numbers of whites tend to live in a world of denial when it comes to the systemic abuse of Blacks. It is outside their world and their experience, and that makes it hard to believe.

Lerner: Leaving aside for a moment the question of guilt, I do find it surprising that many people have difficulty understanding the way that police act to frame those whom they oppose. We had years of this during the anti-war movement, all well documented in the congressional hearings about the F.B.I.'s Cointelpro program. Since I personally was framed and sent to prison because of my role as a leader in organizing anti-war demonstrations, I found all that material much more believable. So for me it is much easier to understand how a whole group of police could get together to plant evidence or frame someone for their own reasons.

West: But many people thought at the time, "Lerner probably really did something illegal" because they find it so hard to believe that the police could treat people this way.

Lerner: Yes, I remember my own shock the first time I saw police throwing nonviolent demonstrators against walls and beating them up, while the demonstrators assumed a Gandhian, nonviolent, passive, unprovocative pose. Anybody who had those kinds of experiences could believe that the police would do such a thing.

But even so, in this case, we have a classic wife-abuser and a woman who had been so terrorized that she came to believe that her death was imminent from him. So isn't there denial going in the Black world about the reality of male abuse of women?

West: You have to distinguish between a wife-beater and a wife-killer. So we have something going on that is wrong and immoral. Some wife-beaters become wife-killers, but thank God they don't all become wife-killers.

Lerner: But Simpson's never denied killing her, some people say.

West: He said he was innocent from the first.

Lerner: What is your theory of what happened?

West: I don't have a theory, but I can speculate, as long as you understand that this is nothing but speculation.

This killing has many of the features of a typical merciless killing in the drug culture. So one just ponders what reasons one might have for killing her in this way. I've heard a rumor that O.J. and Nicole were both linked to some kind of drug activity. No one knows

what the actual motivation of a drug-related killing might be, what kinds of intrigues or jealousies or gangsterism lead to this kind of action. So again, let me emphasize that this is pure speculation.

But on this speculation, who knows? It may be that the district attorney's office didn't pursue this line of inquiry and hence never traced any of the potential leads that might have taken an investigation in this direction.

So the Simpsons might have both been in trouble with the drug culture. They could have owed money, they could have gotten into a fight with a drug dealer. Ron Goldman was just an innocent bystander, but who knows what relationship Nicole or O.J. might have had to the drug situation?

So someone in that drug culture sets out to kill Nicole, and Goldman is there so he is killed. And then O.J. may have showed up because he had a sense that something was coming down, and then realized he couldn't save her or couldn't help, and that perhaps his life was in danger, so he split the scene and may have even run for his life.

Lerner: So why didn't he call the police?

West: I don't know. On his account, he just found out that she was killed when he got to Chicago, so there is a discrepancy in this story too—that's why it is just speculation.

Lerner: But as opposed to this speculation, why not go with what many say is a more plausible account—namely, that he killed her? What about O.J. or the situation makes you reluctant to imagine that he killed her?

West: No scars, no bruises, no nicks. That strikes me as very odd. It would be interesting to know whether people who do such brutal stabbing have scars. Moreover, there is no weapon, no eyewitness.

Lerner: Somebody did it

West: And somebody ought to pay. But I don't think it is O.J.

Lerner: Some jurors said, "I think he did it, but I also had to obey the rules of reasonable doubt, and there was reasonable doubt." I can understand how they might have come to this position. The disgusting racism revealed by Detective Mark Fuhrman isn't an isolated incident, any more than the brutal beating of Rodney King by three Los Angeles policemen three years ago. Nor is this a problem confined to L.A. We have a surplus population in America, a population that can't find jobs because the jobs aren't there. If all of these people had the latest technological skills, there still wouldn't be jobs for most of them. And without jobs, they present a problem. They want food, they want clothing, they want shelter, they want a way to support those whom they love. And the society is unwilling or unable to provide that, so out of its own guilt it responds with anger, racism, repression, prisons, and, most pervasively, a police force that seeks to repress and intimidate.

Given the reality of racism as a pervasive aspect of American society and the way it has been permitted to flourish among the police, the discovery of specific racist intent on the part of Mark Fuhrman would reasonably raise questions about the integrity of the evidence in this case. I do not purport to know what this racist cop did or did not do, but I do think that it is not unreasonable, given the explicit statements he made about the way police plant evidence to frame Black clients, to believe that he would have planted evidence in this case.

Nor is it hard to imagine a motive for doing so. Fuming over the racist reputation that the police department had won through the national exposure of police brutality against Rodney King, L.A. police officers could easily be imagined to have been waiting for some opportunity to "vindicate" themselves. "Here we are, being scorned by the world for our alleged racism," some group of L.A. police might be imagined to have been thinking, "and meanwhile *we know* what it's really like out there on the streets of the inner cities. Every day we face danger and violence, and it often comes at us from unexpected sources, because no matter how well behaving some of these people seem to be on the sur-



PHOTO: BILL BIGGART/IMPACT VISUALS

face, you never know when one of them will turn out to be a violent type. If only there were a way to get people to understand that when we beat up these suspects, we do it because we know that all they understand is toughness. Just look at how these people treat each other, and the violence they use toward each other. If only we could find some way to show the public how even the best of these Blacks is really untrustworthy and quick to violence." By showing the world that some Black that everyone in the world perceived to be a "Mr. Nice Guy" was really a violent creep, these police could have imagined that they were actually serving the best interests of the society. Some subsection of those thinking this way might have been those who knew O.J. Simpson. On the one hand, because he was a "celebrity," they would have been deferential, even fawning. On the other hand, they knew that O.J. was a person whose public persona was wildly at odds with his reality as a wife-batterer. Some might have hoped for a day when this contradiction could be exposed, and O.J. shown to be "just another violent Black man" who would fit their racist vision of the world.

But that desire to frame a Black person could still have been totally consistent with Simpson actually being a murderer. We might have been facing a case in which evidence was planted to strengthen a case against someone who was in fact guilty, but who might have been positioned to get away with it. Realizing that, police might have been all the more infuriated and all the more ready to plant evidence. But when the jury was faced with the general condition of racism, the specific condition of a major handler of evidence being an overt racist, and the record of evidence mishandling by many others in the force (whether or not they were consciously conspiring with Fuhrman to frame Simpson), I can understand why some might have concluded that there was "reasonable doubt." If one is confined to this kind of narrow construal, the jury's behavior might be understandable. But, so too would be the outrage of so many Americans who believe, along with some juror members apparently, that here we have a murderer going free.

But you and other Blacks seem to have a stronger position than that there was a reasonable doubt—you think that he didn't do it. That's the part that I don't get fully. Why you feel that way.

If you believe that the police planted evidence, why not still allow that he probably killed her even though there was evidence being planted or tampered with?

West: That's a possibility. But I don't believe it. The D.A. overloaded things, perhaps, to be sure that they got someone.

Lerner: Acknowledging different perceptions, what do you think the likely impact of the trial is going to be on Black-white relations?

West: An exponential escalation of white anger and white rage. This might take the form of greater permission to hate. It might take the form of greater support for right-wing politics. It might take the form of contained contempt for Blacks.

Lerner: So this is a disaster.



West: It's bad news. What it does is allow negative feelings that were there already to emerge in public. I listened to talk radio the day of the verdict and the hate that spewed out was remarkable. To give one instance: I listened to a woman who had recently adopted a little girl who is half Black. She described her outrage at the verdict, then said that she and her husband had talked things over and decided that they should tell their daughter, who would be home from school in a few minutes, that one half of her is evil and one half is good, so that she should be aware to fight against her Black half. And the talk show host says, you are absolutely right.

There is a continuum of white anger and white rage—this crosses ideological lines in the white community, so that one might find white progressives feeling this kind of thing.

Lerner: Is it so hard to understand the rage of feminists who have been dedicating their energies to opposing male violence against women if now they feel that this verdict might encourage more violence?

West: I can definitely understand this. If you think Simpson's really guilty, you've got a wife-beater and a wife-killer. But if you think he is a wife-beater, not a wife-killer (and this is atrocious enough), you still have to make that distinction.

There is a real challenge for white feminists on two fronts. One, the relative silence about the life of Eunice Simpson, O.J.'s mother—in terms of the domestic vio-

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lence she has been through. She has been through some deep trials and tribulations. But there is no talk about her life. You have to talk about her experience of domestic violence. But feminists have not revealed much concern about this.

Second, we do have reports of Nicole hitting her maids, abusing them. But there is not a word about this from feminists. Male-on-female violence is much worse, but why don't people note this other form of violence and include that in our conception of domestic violence? Domestic violence cuts also across class, race, and gender lines.

Lerner: Yes, but the danger that many women face from male violence is still the major problem, and the Simpson case understandably makes many women feel all the more vulnerable. If there is rage, it is partly in response to that.

I also believe that there is a whole other dimension of rage that the Right has tapped into. There is a way in which this murder is a visible symbol of the denial of respect and sanctity of Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman, and a realization that this hurts everyone not only because it is deeply wrong, but also because so many people in this society feel that they too are daily disrespected and their sanctity denied. They live in a world of work which gives them no recognition except to the extent that they can accumulate wealth and power, and they live in a society so fixated on "taking care of number 1" that they often become the objects of other people's manipulation. I believe that the escalation of interest in crime, and the identification with the police, is not totally reducible to a covert expression of racism. There is also this other dimension, the dimension of people feeling that they are being emotionally and spiritually brutalized, that a crime of nonrecognition is being daily perpetrated against them, and though they can't quite identify where that crime is coming from, they know that they feel ripped off and diminished and not recognized for the holy and good part within them. It is this that leads them to identify with the victims of crime so intensely, to be outraged that the victims' needs are never addressed, and to see the police as their potential saviors who will redress the wrong that has been done to them. If the Left had a politics of meaning perspective, it would understand this dynamic and address it, because it would be able to understand more fully this level of human need, the need for recognition, the need to have one's life make sense and feel part of some framework of meaning and purpose, the need to have one's holiness recognized. If it did, it could then help people understand the ways that the competitive market and its ethos of selfishness is really a central culprit in how they are being ripped off. But since the Left and liberals and progressives don't understand the meaning issues, they can't understand why people identify with the police and love to see them nabbing the criminals. Many people attribute this identification to a covert racism, but then they have no way of understanding why so many Blacks like these same television shows and also identify with the police in the shows. From my perspective, some of the rage at the Simpson verdict is rage about the way people feel unprotected and vulnerable in this society, not just to narrowly defined crime, but also to the daily ways in which they are not being recognized and in which their humanity and sanctity is being denied and ripped off.

But from your perspective, Cornel, what should Blacks or their progressive supporters be doing or saying today in light of the reaction of whites?

West: We have to get in touch with our own anger and rage about the response of whites to the response of Blacks.

Lerner: But is there anything besides racism that you can imagine as a legitimate basis for white upset at the verdict?

West: Sure. There is rational disagreement about the verdict, and then people feel that justice was not done. That's perfectly plausible. A majority of whites really believe O.J. was guilty, and therefore justice wasn't done. That's not just racism.

Lerner: So, wouldn't it make sense to validate their reaction, even while disagreeing about the basis of it?

West: They fundamentally believe injustice was done, though I disagree with their interpretation of the evidence.

Lerner: But if that is the belief underlying their reaction, then why would we be justified in feeling rage at their reaction?

West: Because it was more than just reaction to the verdict. In the days immediately following the verdict, the media frequently aired claims that the Black jurors emote but don't think. Second, the media suggested that Black people's jubilation at the verdict had to do with their barbaric disposition and insensitivity or indifference to the fate of two white people. Both of those claims are profoundly racist claims.

Lerner: Is the second a racist claim? Wouldn't it be possible for a white person to imagine that Blacks were insensitive or indifferent to the fate of white people, and

yet to see that as a plausible response to a history of racism against Blacks. No Jew would be surprised to hear that Jews were not shedding lots of tears at the death of some wealthy German family at the hands of a German Jew.

West: But these are innocent people. They are white, but they can't be linked to any specific contribution to Black oppression.

Lerner: But if you get that, then isn't there some level of insensitivity to be cheering the freeing of O.J. without a corresponding sense of hurt and horror that this murder has taken place?

West: People had a year and three months to respond to the death itself with hurt and horror—and many Black people did respond that way in June 1994.

The jubilation had to do with the perception of some Blacks that another innocent Black man was about to be railroaded by a criminal justice system with which they have very bad experience, and then suddenly he had been saved from that.

Lerner: Is there any strategy for how to counter this anger in both communities?

West: The only alternative is to do more of the kind of dialogue that we are doing now. The alternative is lack of communication and that won't work. But communication may not have much of a result—and that's part of our predicament.

Lerner: Well, Jews may have some skepticism about the efficacy of communication, particularly in light of our experience with Farrakhan. As you'll recall, a year ago when you went to the NAACP Black Leadership Summit, you argued that you needed to be in that context to help broaden Farrakhan's perspective in a more universalistic and humanistic way, and specifically to challenge his anti-Semitism. But now, a year later, after all that dialogue, a week before his march he talked of Jewish "bloodsuckers," just as the week after his summit he had his newspaper reissue a statement about Jews killing Jesus. So isn't this one case where we can learn about the limits of rational dialogue?

West: Not all the fault falls on one side. Let's look at Farrakhan's language on two occasions. Farrakhan says bloodsuckers are all those who extract money from, but don't contribute to, the community. That includes Italians, Arabs, Jews, and on other occasions he has talked about Black businessmen as bloodsuckers too.

Lerner: But this is a wild distortion, because Jews *do* give back to the community. For example, as you and I have noted, Jews were the one group that voted for Democrats almost at the same level as Blacks in 1994, and that means they were rejecting Republican appeals to people in their economic bracket to reduce their tax burden by cutting social programs that are disproportionately aimed at the Black community. This is a solid way of sending financial support to the Black community through taxes.

West: Voting activity is different from economic activity. Farrakhan was talking about the way businessmen take money out of the community without contributing to it.

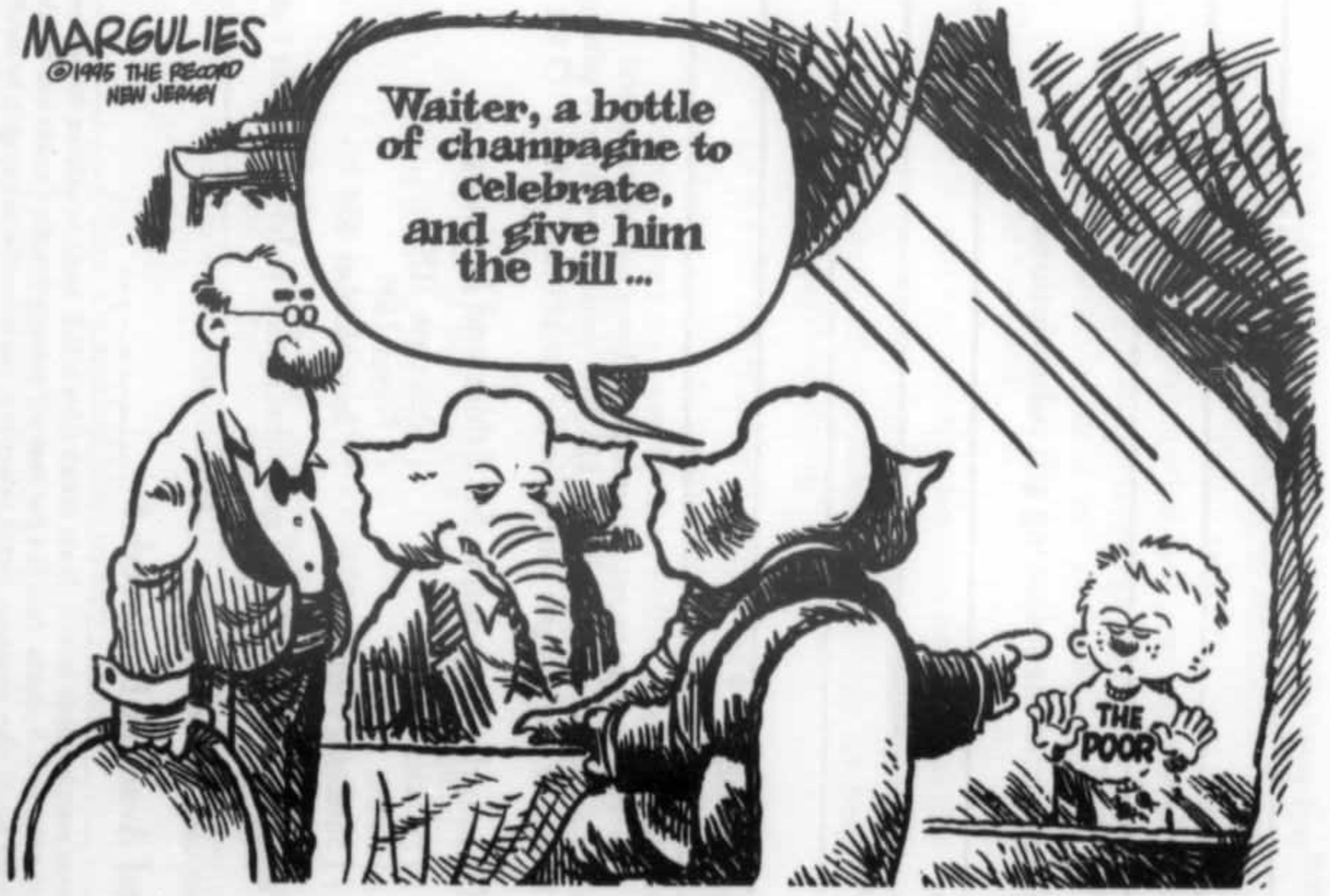
Lerner: Jews remained in the Black community as teachers, social workers, health care professionals ... and in those ways very directly gave back to the community.

West: True, and that is important. But in talking about the economic activity per se, we are talking about the way the capitalist system is structured so that there are entrepreneurial slots in which money is made and very little is seen to be given back to the community that supports those businesses. If he had not said Jews, but had said Koreans, Italians, Arabs, etc., there wouldn't be any big flap. Is it all right when he talks about these other groups, but when he talks about Jews the red light goes on? Wouldn't you think that when he includes these other groups, as he did in his recent statement, he is moving toward a systemic analysis of entrepreneurs in the Black community, no matter what color?

Lerner: The red light goes on because he has a history of attacking Jews. If his organization were putting out material talking about the Black role in slavery, or the Italian role in killing Jesus, or the role of Arabs in slavery...

West: There has been public acknowledgement of that role. True, though there has been a highlighting of the role of Jews, and I've been critical of that.

But you should also give attention to the quality of his speech at the Million Man March. This was his one chance to show off what he really thinks about the world, and in that speech there was no anti-Semitism. The speech represented a real advance. Instead of a blanket condemnation of whites, he distinguishes between whiteness and white supremacy; that frees white brothers and white sisters in such a way that they can fight against white supremacy. And he says "Black supremacy is repulsive to God." I see this as an attempt to move in a more universalistic and humanistic way,



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and that move should be publicly embraced.

Lerner: It seemed to me to be a tragic and telling reality that while calling for atonement on the part of other Black men, he was unable to publicly atone for his own anti-Semitism. This would have been the perfect moment to do that, and had he publicly repudiated anti-Semitism and urged his followers to do so also, he would have dramatically escalated his political credibility.

It was quite impressive for many of us to see Black men being willing to embrace the theme of atonement, just a few days after the Jewish day of atonement, Yom Kippur. Farrakhan was brilliant in connecting to that theme, because only a person with self-respect can publicly atone. So many Black men doing so was a powerful sign of their own dignity and sense of self-worth. And that broke a lot of public stereotypes. I congratulate the Black community and the Black men who participated in that act, and it certainly raised my hopefulness about the possibilities ahead.

Yet there is one aspect of the Jewish conception of atonement that was missing. In the Temple in ancient days, the high priest would lead the atonement by publicly confessing his sins. It is this recognition that even the most elevated amongst us is still deeply flawed that is central to the Jewish conception of atonement. Yet when Farrakhan calls for a national day of atonement, he is unable to atone for his most publicly recognizable sins. Had be been able to do so, he would have been teaching other Black men that one could really be self-critical without losing respect. From my perspective, the reason he couldn't do that was because he is so deeply anti-Semitic that this seems impossible to him. But from your perspective, why didn't he do that?

West: Hard to say. Remember in the early part of his speech where he says that all prophets have a defect in their character, and so do I? I think that part of the speech was a very abstract acknowledgement of the degree to which he has sinned. When he talked about Jewish pain and Black pain, and the fact that both communities have great pain—it would have been good if he could have said, "I used language that contributed to Jewish pain and Jews have used language that contributed to my pain." What he did say was that we've got to transcend the pain.

Lerner: But there's a fundamental inequality here. Jews didn't start out attacking Farrakhan. He searched us out and targeted us, and then Jews responded.

West: Well, from his perspective much of the antagonism started when Jews attacked Jesse Jackson for his "Hymietown" remark, as though they themselves didn't engage in similar demeaning language about Blacks. But whatever the history, there has been escalation on both sides that has contributed to the proliferation of misunderstanding and misperception on both sides. On Farrakhan's side you have the references to "the Jews" and monolithic characterizations of the Jewish community, associating Jews with Black pain inaccurately. On the Jewish side, you have direct analogies of Farrakhan with Hitler, also inaccurately.

Lerner: I don't see this as analogous, because attacking a particular leader is very different from attacking an entire people. It's only Farrakhan's megalomania that allows him to see these two as equivalent, because he thinks he is the embodiment of the Black people and anyone who attacks him attacks all Blacks.

Meanwhile, don't you see the way that Farrakhan provides whites with a reason to distance from the Black movement? Are you saying that you don't see the dangers in Farrakhan?



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West: I said in my *New York Times* [October 14 op-ed] piece explaining why I was participating in the Million Man March that I understood that for many whites Farrakhan was their worst nightmare.

Lerner: But then I'm told that you physically embraced him.

West: I physically embrace people whom I've spent quality time with across the board. No matter what color or gender or sexual orientation.

Lerner: This was in public and was seen as a public symbolic act.

West: Anyone I physically embrace in private I embrace in public too. And especially after a speech that showed such movement away from earlier xenophobic formulations. In that sense my dialogues with Farrakhan were

not in vain, at least as measured by that one speech, which was a very important speech actually.

Lerner: Doesn't it trouble you that this is someone who is perceived by many Jews as an anti-Semite, many women as a sexist, many gays as a homophobe, and that this is the man who now you and other progressive Blacks are associated with?

West: In dialogue with, to push, to challenge.

Lerner: But if the goal is to champion the needs of Blacks, particularly economically oppressed Blacks, and this man is seen by potential allies in this struggle as an overwhelming obstacle to their commitment to the cause, and you yourself acknowledge that these others are responding not totally irrationally but in response to concrete things that Farrakhan has said and not publicly repudiated, why don't you view him as an obstacle to your goals rather than as an ally?

West: When you are working on both fronts (Black operational unity on one front, and the other front is a progressive multiracial front that talks about white supremacy, male supremacy, corporate power, homophobia, and ecological abuse) at the same time, you will sometimes find yourself between a rock and a hard place. Because some in the Black united front will hit white supremacy but have other views with which you disagree, and those in the multiracial progressive movement may have conscious or unconscious racist sensibilities with which you disagree, but you must work in both to push them beyond where they are.

Lerner: Jewish progressives could have used that line of argument to build solidarity with Meir Kahane or Yitzhak Shamir. But we didn't.

West: But if all Jews felt that their backs were against the wall, and all Jews were going down together, then Kahane would have been part of that united front. You and Kahane would be together and might both end up in the same concentration camp.

Lerner: So you believe that the situation of oppression against Blacks is comparable and makes alliances with racists and anti-Semites plausible?

West: But there's no purity on any side. Even in the multiracial progressive movement you also have leftists who are racist and homophobic even as they fight against it.

Lerner: But if they fight against it, that's very different than if they espouse it. If Farrakhan were merely unconsciously anti-Semitic, then he would open himself to Jews who could help him deal with these issues.

West: That's what he called for in the speech. He has got to be able to sit down and understand how his language contributed to that.

Lerner: Jews have met with him in the past, and nothing changed.

West: As I understand that meeting, it ended up being a very defensive meeting. Something more is possible now. I've never given up on those in the progressive, liberal or even the conservative movement, pushing them beyond their white supremacist sensibilities, so I refuse to give up on Minister Louis Farrakhan or any other Black person because of his or her xenophobic sensibility. That is my way of being in the world.

Lerner: But what if the Black movement by aligning itself with Farrakhan actually has the consequence of weakening the white support that might have been there for reducing poverty and oppression?

West: Your question assumed that there was a strong multiracial movement focusing on overcoming Black suffering and that white withdrawal renders it nearly impotent. Whereas the fact is that we are all relatively feeble at this point so that a stronger Black operational unity and a stronger multiracial movement, despite its deep tensions and frictions, is both necessary and utopian at the moment.

We have Black politicians who are willing to sit down with Jesse Helms or Strom Thurmond but won't sit down with Farrakhan. So Black unity is very difficult to forge. In addition, we have progressives who are friendly with those of Negrophobic sensibilities at The *New Republic* while trashing efforts to build bridges. Hence, progressive movements are difficult to forge. Therefore, we must be willing to push, criticize, and not give up on any one of us.

Lerner: What do you think would emerge from a meeting between Jews and Farrakhan at this moment?

West: I would like to see on Farrakhan's part both clarification of what he has said and apology for any pain that he might have caused to the Jewish community.

Lerner: If he did that apology first, people would certainly be willing to meet with him.

West: Eut it has to be a two-way street, and whoever is

speaking for the Jewish community would have to acknowledge demonization and escalation of targeting. The result of such a dialogue would be lowering of the temperature and focusing on the issue of Black social misery and suffering and Jewish anxiety and sense of vulnerability. If we could reach that point, I think some of the air would be cleared and we would be forced to deal with the most formidable task, which is fighting the powerful right wing in the country, especially the big business and bank elite.

Lerner: There's a big question about whether such a meeting should be with Abe Foxman, chair of the Anti-Defamation League, and other members of the Jewish establishment, in which case the meeting would focus attention exclusively on anti-Semitism, or with Jewish progressives who would want to communicate a clear sense of commitment to ending Black suffering even as we insisted on Farrakhan publicly campaigning against Black anti-Semitism.

West: The dialogue should happen, either in two separate meetings or in one full meeting. I'd be open to both meetings.

Lerner: When I broached this in shul on Tuesday, I was suddenly surrounded by angry liberal Jews who were saying to me, "How could you possibly doubt what Farrakhan stands for now that he has repeated this "bloodsuckers" remark?" And my sister, in Los Angeles, when I mentioned being in discussions with other Jewish liberals and progressives on this topic this past week, said, go to the Yellow Pages and look up under "Get a backbone." In other words, such a move is perceived as an ultimate proof that one would not be willing to stand up for Jewish interests even when the other side is kicking us in the face. Yet your interpretation of recent events is very different.

West: I don't see you as sacrificing Jewish interests because you want to be in dialogue with someone who is causing Jewish pain. Black folk have been talking with white supremacists from the very beginning. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "I love Bull Connor." Why would being in dialogue be reneging on Jewish interests? That strikes me as short-sighted.



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Lerner: Well, I would have strongly disagreed with you last year, when I thought that meeting with Farrakhan would give him public credibility that he should not have had. I think your participation in that meeting, and the participation of the NAACP, helped elevate Farrakhan to the point where he could be in a position to call for the Million Man March. I'm less sure now only because he already has the public credibility after this march so that it's harder to say that meeting with him would give him much. But others say that his goal is simply to appear to have tried to meet with Jews, while being unwilling to stop his organization from continuing to promote anti-Semitic ideas. And this then plays into his game plan, which is to convince everyone that he is the key man in the Black world and that everyone who wishes to work with Blacks must go through him. In that case, meeting with him would achieve nothing for mutual reconciliation.

West: That assumes that he has no interest whatsoever in trying to move in a humane direction or be humane. That is your basic assumption. And that is the assumption I disagree with. If people believe that he is the embodiment of evil, then every move will be seen as a capitulation to evil. But if you believe that there is a possibility of movement then you engage. Some people will perceive me as being used, manipulated, naive, and so forth. But that is the way I proceed with anybody. Many Black folk have used this kind of reasoning against me in relationship to my connections with white folks and Jews, but I do what I think is right.

Lerner: If I saw a shred of evidence that this guy was willing to move away from anti-Semitism, I think I'd be very much more inclined to try to initiate some kind of meeting. The problem is, when a guy makes this "bloodsuckers" remark a week before his major march, it's got to be because he wants to be known in certain Black circles as an anti-Semite, where that has resonance. Farrakhan is not stupid and would certainly know that his remark would cause a furor. He wanted that.

West: In his mind, he wants to tell the truth as he sees it in relationship to entrepreneurial activity in the Black

community. What we need to challenge is the language in which his truth-telling takes place so that it is not anti-Semitic.

Lerner: But if I began to give public talks about the long history of Black murderers, and this became a central part of my dialogue, don't you think Black progressives would shun public association with me?

West: No, they would sit down with you and counsel you on how to speak the truth about Black criminal behavior without being xenophobic.

Lerner: I see Farrakhan as a tremendous threat to Blacks, because he espouses a pro-capitalist ideology and urges Blacks toward a politics that separates them from whites, and because he has been willing to use the kind of demeaning-of-others rhetoric that will deeply alienate Blacks' potential allies. So even though I agree that the allies haven't been that strong recently, I think that the reason for that has been the general failure of the Left to be able to articulate a vision of politics that speaks to the American majority, and that Farrakhan and what he represents will accelerate that inability to find common ground. So precisely because I care so much about the fate of African Americans, I'm deeply distressed when he emerges as a leading figure for the Black world.

West: I want to affirm your deep empathy for Black suffering. I've witnessed that throughout the years we've been dialoguing together. But what you've given is the worst possible scenario. There is another scenario: Farrakhan's high visibility could reinvigorate the King legacy and the democratic wing of the Black freedom movement precisely because of the tremendous sense of urgency that more people feel now. Precisely because Farrakhan generates such fear and anxiety among whites, the white hunger for multiracial progressive leadership and movements can become more pronounced.

Lerner: But from my perspective instead of matters going this route the Black world would have been far better served had Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Manning Marable and Michael Eric Dyson and Bell Hooks and Patricia Williams and other Black thinkers and leaders gotten together and formed an alternative leadership and been the ones to be calling for a Black march. And it's still not too late for you to create an organization that would have a more progressive bent than that which is represented by Farrakhan and the National Black Leadership Summit.

West: I give Farrakhan credit for calling the march. He sensed the degree of urgency. The challenge now is the degree to which others will now provide alternative leadership to Farrakhan, by building on the King legacy and King's vision of the direction for the Black community.

Lerner: I strongly disagree with your assessment of Farrakhan, but I do respect your thinking and agree with you that this kind of dialogue that we have been conducting is an important part of the process of healing to which we are both committed. From my perspective, it would be naive to believe that Farrakhan could be influenced or changed in a meeting with Jewish leaders. The only reason I could see for such a meeting would be if it could signal to many Blacks that there is a significant grouping of Jews who remain firmly committed to ending Black suffering. There is such a grouping—and it is a very large and significant section of the Jewish world. And I believe that now, when Blacks are facing escalating attack, it is our obligation to stand in solidarity and to do so publicly. Yet I would be reluctant to do anything in the process to strengthen the public credibility of someone like Farrakhan, whom I regard as destructive both to the best interests of the Black community and to the best interests of Jews, women, gays and lesbians, and many others. So this is tricky water to navigate, because at the same time I deeply respect you, Cornel, even though at times I continue to disagree with your stance.

I am encouraged by the way you speak about the issues. It makes me think that healing remains possible, though the events of the past few weeks have made things more difficult. But we are going to have to do lots more talking, and encourage lots more dialoguing between our communities. I still hope that we can find some foundation support for a national gathering of Jews and Blacks to explore these issues. And I'm hopeful that at our National Summit on Ethics and Meaning, in Washington, April 14-16, 1996, at which you and I and the Reverend James Forbes and Anna Deavere Smith will be speaking, will be an occasion to continue some of this discussion as well.

[Editor's Note: This dialogue will be reprinted in the paperback edition of Cornel West's and Michael Lerner's book, *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*, which will be published by Plume in February 1996. The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning has helped form Jewish/Black dialogue groups to discuss these issues, using the book as a jumping-off point. You are encouraged to try to do this in your community. Let us know how things progress and what problems you encounter.] □

A Closet of One's Own
On Not Becoming a Lesbian

Daphne Merkin



STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

Although I have preferred the company of my own sex to that of men for as far back as I can remember, I've never had a lesbian experience. I've never been close to a gay woman, either, though for a while I carried on a bantering friendship with a self-described "dyke" I met during a brief hospitalization for depression. This woman was great fun to be around; she was also very overweight and sported the kind of G.I. Joe haircut I associated with women who put their tongues in each other's mouths when they kissed instead of politely brushing the cheek. Toward the end of my hospital stay the two of us regularly signed up for passes to go out to dinner; usually we went for sushi in the next town over, but one evening we planned to have dinner at an elegant inn about an hour's drive away. On the afternoon of that evening, flowers were delivered to me; they were from my friend, and I suddenly realized that she might be reading more into our outings than I intended. That night at the inn, over candles and glistening tableware, I felt other people's glances on us. I wasn't sure whether it was because my companion was not only obese but given to an excessive style in general, or whether everyone suspected us of being lovers. I felt palpably uncomfortable, and as the evening wore on, our conversation grew ever more stiff. Over dessert I decided to confront the situation directly; I explained that I had greatly appreciated the flowers but was a bit taken aback by the sheer romanticism of her gesture. She understood what I meant, and the affair was over before it had begun.

I find it striking that I don't count any lesbians among my good friends, and even more surprising that over the years I've met only a handful of women who have openly acknowledged their gayness—as opposed to having this aspect of themselves bruited about as gossip or speculation. Even so, somewhere along the way, in spite of my limited exposure, I've sensed that gay women are drawn to me. I suppose it's because I lead with my brain—something most men still react to with undisguised alarm—and because I exude the sort of attentiveness toward other women that most women save for men.

Still, I have trouble to this day imagining what it would be like to have a woman's tongue in my mouth, much less in my more intimate parts. When I say I have trouble, I mean that I literally balk at the picture: my mind closes down, resists further exploration. Perhaps this makes me a card-carrying heterosexual; more likely, it signifies nothing more than that I am a culturally conditioned woman who has tailored her erotic fantasies to fit the expectations of her time and place.

I was twelve or thereabouts when I first came upon the word "lesbian" ascribed to some misfortunate female or other; it caught my eye, like a bright red ball tossed up into the air. I can't remember any longer whether it was used to describe a character in one of the novels I was ceaselessly burying myself in or if it was said of someone I knew in real life. I also can't recall what,

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Daphne Merkin is the author of Enchantment, *a novel, and is currently at work on a second novel,* The Discovery of Sex. *This essay will appear in* Surface Tension: Lesbian and Straight Women Write About Their Relationships, *edited by Meg Daly, Simon and Schuster, January 1996.*

exactly, I thought being a lesbian was all about. I knew it had to do with favoring the company of women over men, but beyond that I don't think I envisioned much of anything. What I do remember, clear as can be, is the ping of recognition that accompanied my discovery of the term: I immediately decided that this word—this dark and elusive *she* known as a "lesbian"—and I belonged together. I was, in fact, so convinced, and so terrified, of what I now deemed to be my linguistically determined fate that I immediately tried to eject it from my physical being. The thing to do, I decided, with a child's cruel instinct for exposure, was to hang my interior destiny out to air in the bracing atmosphere of the heterosexual world I inhabited: like a Sapphic Hester Prynne, I would wear my perverted identity emblazoned on my chest, the better to be cured of it.

I began by announcing to my senior counselor at the Orthodox Jewish summer camp I went to that I feared I wished to sleep next to my mother more than was ordinary. Just in case this innocent teenager in knee-knockers didn't get the message, I went on to spill the sordid beans: I feared, I said, that I was—and then I used the word aloud for the first time—a *lesbian*. Of course, what was really askew in my home life had less to do with any shameful libidinal yearnings toward my mother than with my wish to be closer to her than she allowed me to be. (As for my father, I had given up on him early on; he was as distant as the sky, and as impervious.) But I was a writerly young girl, and I wanted to keep my audience interested. To this end I leaped over the more obvious heartrending presentations of my childhood sorrows and landed on a sophisticated off-center version. Who would care if I was desperately homesick at camp for a mother I was desperately homesick for even when I was at home? Who would understand, even if I could have put it this way? I found it more acceptable to describe my longing for an unavailable mother as something tainted, even unnatural—as something wrong with *me*. The perception that there might be something wrong with my *parents* would come much later; in the meantime, I blamed myself for my mother's inadequacies. I particularly blamed myself for resenting the fact that she locked her bedroom door at night, so that even as a small child I had been unable to go in to her for reassurance or hugs when I woke up from a bad dream or couldn't fall asleep. (Not one to take such inaccessibility lightly, I developed full-blown insomnia by the age of eight, but that's another story.)

The counselor was a sweet and earnest type, with a more than ordinary commitment to the Judaic principles on which the camp was founded. She took my confession to heart and immediately called my mother. Her public persona always cooly in control, my mother reassured the concerned messenger that my sudden interest in lesbianism was undoubtedly based on something I'd been reading. And thus order was quickly restored: I learned how to wrap my hair around a juice can in order to make it as straight as a stick, and I continued to worry that my breasts were too big and my legs too thin whenever I took part in the endless dance- and song-fests the camp specialized in. Underneath it all I continued to pine for my mother, for her now-you-see-it, now-you-don't presence without which I floundered. Underneath it all, I felt bewildered by my bunkmates' consuming interest in the pimply, graceless boys on the other side of the camp, most of whom were idiots as far as I was concerned. What were boys to me and what was I to boys, I wondered, that I should give them the automatic edge over my girlfriends?

I wasn't completely immune to the opposite sex, however. That same summer I developed a crush on the camp's maintenance man. It helped that at an ancient nineteen or twenty, he was some years older than the boys my friends primped for, no longer a man-in-formation but a full-fledged man. His job, menial and smelly, also gave him a masculine glamour in my eyes, especially when compared with the goody-goody boys my own age who split their day between studying Torah and Talmud in the morning and swimming and playing tennis or baseball in the afternoon. Then, too, David F. was my idea of sexy—which is to say that he had a thin, withholding mouth and thereby suggested the essence of my mother's personality in male form. He gave me my first French kiss, or at least he tried; I screamed midway through it and scared him off. I told some of the other girls about it, and eventually my counselor heard about it. I was relieved when she came to me, full of concern about my disregard for the laws of *negiyah*, which limit physical contact between males and females who aren't married to one another. I was more than relieved, actually. I was triumphant that one identity had ousted the other: I had gone from being a potential lesbian to being a potential hussy, the genuine heterosexual article. Whatever lingering doubts I had were pushed aside. So what if I hadn't really liked the feel of David F.'s tongue, slimy and intrusive, inside my mouth? Would I have liked it any better if it had been the tongue of a girl?

I suppose somewhere along the way, however anxiety-ridden the issue of sexuality may be—as opposed to the greater chromosomal clarity of gender, of being born indisputably male or female—one reaches an intuitive decision, honors some impulses more than others. In the end, it may come down to no more than the inclination, in spite of some inner waf-

fling, to throw one's behavioral weight behind certain norms. In the years that have passed since my blurted confession of lesbianism to my camp counselor, I have married and become a mother. These are things I wanted to do, although marriage came much harder to me than motherhood. I still look upon all men with a degree of suspicion I do not generally feel toward women, and I still feel that even men with developed sensibilities tend to be more obtuse than most women. But there is the undeniable fact that men arouse me physically—*some* men, that is, men with subtle, slightly feminine turns of mind, although I have also been captivated by men who strut like the proverbial rooster and who are not the least bit interested in what I am thinking or feeling. Women, although they generally tend to irritate me less than men, do not, to the best of my self-awareness, sexually excite me. I have sometimes thought that, given my psychological makeup, it would be easier all around if they did.

As I have gotten older and observed the subject of lesbianism (as distinct from the issue of gay pride, which for the longest time translated into gay *male* pride) gain greater visibility, I note with curiosity that there still appears to be something innately dreary about the reflected image of gay women—a couple of singers (Melissa Etheridge, k.d. lang, and who knows about Madonna), a trendy bar scene, and a handful of glamorous "lipstick lesbians" notwithstanding. To feel this way is undoubtedly to date myself or to suggest some incriminating resistance on my part, for surely the lesbian image has been overhauled and polished to a flattering sheen since *The Children's Hour* was the operative cultural reference, with Shirley MacLaine in her Mamie Eisenhower bangs yearning silently for the boyishly lovely Audrey Hepburn.

So let me put it another way by saying that, even in the shadow of AIDS, men loving men has an authenticity—a quality of being on to something valid that the straight world has overlooked in all its heterosexual zeal—that women loving women doesn't have, at least for me. When I think of two men together, I have a sense of what they're about: the ineluctable force of it, the sidestepping of the many restrictive rules by which our thinking about sexually ordained behavior—what is allowably masculine or feminine—is governed. But when I think of two women together, I think of it as the default position; immediately there comes over me a feeling of the compensatory—of dildos and harnesses and other role-playing apparatus, mental as well as physical.

I have no doubt that somewhere in this assessment floats a sadder, more insidious piece of reality, having to do with the way women continue to be perceived by society at large and how we in turn assess one another.

GOD WAS NOT IN THE FIRE

THE SEARCH FOR A SPIRITUAL JUDAISM

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DANIEL GORDIS

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Contaminated by a cultural outlook that casts my own kind as somehow deficient or lesser than, I can see only that if straight women are not as powerful as straight men, gay women seem to be huddled together in some shabby third-class lounge. (Gay men, on the other hand, often appear to have invented a republic of their own, like that of ancient Greece, where women and straight men have ceased to be of any importance.) Some of this perception is based on the sense I have that the lesbian condition has not yet found a sufficiently compelling literary voice (there are exceptions, of course, like Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, but they are generally books in which the lesbian theme barely surfaces), whereas it often appears as though everybody who is anybody grew up gay, male, and gifted and then went on to write a memoir or a novel describing how it was to grow up gay, male, and gifted.

Not long ago, in compliance with a request from a man I was trying hard to please, I went in search of a dildo. This man had pronounced that every woman's "wardrobe," as he put it, should contain one, although when I asked around among my friends, not one professed to owning this crucial article. So I arranged to go with a friend, who had researched an article on women pornographers and thus was a fount of knowledge on such things, to a women's sex shop called Eve's Garden. My friend described the store as "lesbianish" and joked uneasily that the two of us would be taken for gay by virtue of frequenting it. The store is located on Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan, on the upper floor of an office building. When we got off the elevator and walked down a corridor to a door that could have been the door to anything—a dentist's office or a public relations firm—I remember thinking how like a woman it was to hide her erotic goods away from passersby, how unlike a man, who displays his sexual paraphernalia in the full light of day in a street-level boutique on Christopher Street.

Eve's Garden turned out to have a dingy, slightly sad atmosphere; it was a far cry from the bawdy, Rabelaisian emporium I had envisioned. There were sections of books and videos, with half of both these sections reserved for specifically lesbian themes, including a section on lesbian S&M. There were some cautious bondage-related devices for sale as well—a velvet eye mask, handcuffs, nipple clamps, and a leather-fringed paddle that looked as if it might be more useful for dusting than for inflicting pain. Most eye-catching, though, was the array of dildos and dildo-shaped vibrators in all colors and sizes, dildos so big they would make a man blush for his own endowment, cheap plastic ones and expensive latex ones.

I stood there and gaped, not knowing where to begin, other than with the conviction slowly forming in my mind that the problem of penetration—the wish to be filled by something hard and penislike and not female—would not go away, even for lesbians. Which realization brought in its wake another thought: Given that sex requires some antiphonal tension, and given, too, that sexual desire is partly a construction of the imagination, the suspension of disbelief that is required is far less when one of two men is asked to "play" a female—all he has to do is lie down and submit—than when one of two women must parody a man's role. Standing in Eve's Garden I picked up one dildo after another—smooth purple cones and flesh-toned striated ones, the more ambitious the level of emulation, the more expensive—and came back to the truth as it exists, inescapably, for me: *I wanted the real thing*.

The same friend who took me to Eve's Garden described a lesbian porn flick she had watched in which one woman performed oral sex on another woman's strapped-on dildo, said dildo having first been conscientiously fitted with a condom. This scenario suggests to me such a stupendous muddle of issues that I find it difficult to contemplate what it might hope to signify. Why, for instance, is safe sex—which I assume is being given its due with the condom—an issue between a woman and a rubber penis-substitute? What bothers me more is that I can't figure out who is supposed to be getting pleasure here, unless perhaps it's the dildo. And even if one were to grant that both women were getting pleasure out of their respective roles as fellatrix and fellated-upon, haven't we thereby worked our way back again to the tired conventions of heterosexuality and its Hegelian divisions of dominance and submission? And isn't the whole enterprise of lesbianism, or one of its salient departure points, meant to be a renegotiation of precisely such a reflexive division of power?

Just as the theater of a certain form of sadomasochistic encounter requires too many props for my erotic purposes, so does the proscenium of a certain form of lesbianism. But if the sight of two women playing at heterosexuality doesn't speak to me, the gentler, kinder lesbianism—*sans* dildos and full of mutual loving caresses—speaks to me even less. Perhaps it comes down to no more than that I myself am not democratic enough in matters of the libido to be able to conceive of the possibility of an erotic charge occurring in a situation in which two people lie together and neither of them has a penis. I can conceive of great emotional intimacy occurring in such a situation, but sexual arousal for me hinges on an intimated imbalance of power, on someone having something that I want and

(Continued on p. 93)

The GOP's Lethal Medicare Cure

Paul Wellstone

While Republicans claim that their proposed dramatic Medicare cuts would "save" an endangered program, a serious analysis of their proposal leaves one worried not only about the future of the Medicare program but of our entire health-care system. This is due largely to the fact that Republicans are viewing the Medicare program in isolation—treating it as just another line item on the budget, or source of revenue for a tax cut, instead of a key component of our health-care system. The ultimate irony is that changes to Medicare based only on budgetary concerns and not on the needs of real people could end up costing employers, seniors, and families—the people who ultimately pay all the bills—more than our current system.



The Republican proposal calls for a new "Medicare Choice" program to allow Medicare beneficiaries to enroll in a variety of managed-care arrangements, establish medical savings accounts, or remain in the traditional Medicare program. Republicans can posture about the importance of increasing choice, but unless Medicare payments are adequate to reimburse providers for care for the elderly, private plans and providers will not agree to contract with the program.

Real choice would mean that Medicare reimbursement would be adequate to allow seniors, regardless of their income, the opportunity to select a health coverage option—including various managed-care arrangements, provider networks, or private health plans—that meets federal consumer-protection and quality standards and provides a standardized set of comprehensive services. Real choice would *not* include arbitrary spending limits such as those the Republicans have proposed—such limits are designed to meet a budget target, not to empower health-care consumers. Real choice now and in the future means moving toward a program that rewards providers and managed-care arrangements in regions which are low-cost and efficient instead of penalizing them.

Waste, fraud, and abuse—estimated to account for up to 10 percent of health-care expenditures and billions of dollars in Medicare payments—must be the first target of any responsible plan to reduce Medicare expenditures. Yet the Republican proposal would open up significant new loopholes for abuse and increase the burden of proof for the government in civil and criminal cases. Under current law, "reasonable diligence" is required to ensure that claims are true and accurate. The Republican proposal would hold providers responsible for submitting false claims to Medicare only if they acted in "deliberate ignorance" or "reckless disregard" of the truth. The proposed higher threshold would threaten the government's ability to prosecute all but the most blatant kickback arrangements. Furthermore, the GOP spending bills cut by more than 10 percent the funds for fighting Medicare fraud and abuse.

In contrast to the Republicans' rhetoric, a real attack on waste, fraud, and abuse would mean greatly expanding abuse-fighting activities proven to save

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Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota) is a United States senator.

PHOTO: AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

money, strengthening penalties for committing fraud, cutting waste in Medicare payments by insisting on the use of state-of-the-art private-sector technologies, providing increased incentives to consumers and providers to expose Medicare abuses, and reducing excessive paperwork and duplicative forms.

The Republican proposal would cut $270 billion from Medicare by raising costs to seniors and making massive cuts in provider payments. This number—$270 billion—was chosen arbitrarily, in order to deliver on a Republican promise to cut taxes, primarily for the wealthy. Part B premiums and deductibles for all Medicare beneficiaries would double. Providers—especially hospitals —would be subject to drastic reductions in payments. These cuts would be especially difficult for rural and community hospitals, many of which are already struggling financially. In addition, teaching hospitals and hospitals that treat a disproportionate share of low-income and uninsured patients would be subject to additional reductions due to cuts in special payments they currently receive. Miscellaneous cuts that have so far escaped scrutiny because they do not produce big budget savings, such as the elimination over the entire seven-year period of cost adjustments for ambulance services, prosthetics and orthotics, ambulatory surgical centers, and durable medical equipment, could have a dramatic impact on the frail elderly and disabled.

Who will pay for these cuts in benefits and cuts to providers? Recent estimates show that, as a result of Republican proposals to cut federal health spending, close to $100 billion in costs would be shifted to private payers and reflected in higher private insurance premiums. These higher costs will inevitably increase the burdens on families already stretching to pay for their own insurance coverage while helping their parents and grandparents pay for care.

Real cost control would mean squeezing inefficiencies from our health-care system, while being sensitive to existing regional inequities in a manner that protects low-income beneficiaries and rural, public, and teaching hospitals. Real cost control would mean Congress getting to work on serious health-care reform for the long haul. Federal health-care spending is part of a larger problem that includes an increasing number of uninsured Americans, changing demographics, and medical inflation which outstrips general inflation.

Other countries have universal insurance, broader benefits, and a higher proportion of older people, but spend less than we do—in part because they view their health systems as treasured investments in a healthy society and not just as line items on a budget. The U.S. Congress should do the same. □

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Taking the Politics of Meaning into the Electoral Arena

One thing that people typically ask us about the politics of meaning is whether there is any concrete political action that they could take now to advance these ideas.

We've been somewhat cautious on this issue, because we believe that the most important action any of us could take at the moment is to absorb the ideas and let them become more deeply part of us. The frenetic race to "do something" has characterized liberal politics for the past fifty years, and inevitably gets caught in a circle of fundamental compromise that leads people to be more and more active on behalf of causes about which they are less and less certain. So, sometimes the most important thing one can do is think new thoughts and think them through thoroughly.

Nevertheless, one of the ways to think through these ideas is to try to take them into a variety of arenas and apply them. And that is exactly what some of the local chapters of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning have been doing.

Not surprisingly, the first center of activity for a politics of meaning has been in California. It is an important testing ground, not only because it is the most populous state, but because it was there that the Right won significant victories when it elected Ronald Reagan as governor and then subsequently when it passed Proposition 13 (the first legislative initiative aimed at reducing taxes by dramatically cutting government-supported social services).

In what follows, we present a few documents that have been used by politics of meaning organizers.

I.
The Ethics and Meaning Caucus of the California Democratic Party

The politics of meaning is not an attempt to reform the Democratic Party. In fact, like the women's movement, our movement transcends secular politics and aims for a far more fundamental transformation—it will not surprise us if eventually there are people articulating a politics of meaning in every political party. Nevertheless, it was natural for some members of our San Francisco chapter of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning to want to take these ideas into their own party, and while they did so *not* as representatives of our foundation, they were certainly inspired to do so by the discussions they attended at local chapter meetings.

The attempt to form a caucus is just a beginning—and the California Democratic Party has not yet agreed. But we are reproducing the text of a letter being circulated by Agar Jaicks, former county chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party Central Committee. We imagine that this text could be a model for others who might wish to start a caucus in their own area. And you could start such a caucus not only within your political party, but also in your local church or synagogue, your union, your professional association, or even at your workplace. Circulating your own revised version of the letter below might be a first step in this process.



Agar Jaicks
62 Woodland Ave.
San Francisco, California 94117
September 30, 1995
Dear Fellow Executive Committee Member:

I am lending my support to a group of thoughtful Democrats in their quest to establish an Ethics and Meaning Caucus. Too long have we allowed religious extremists to define morality and ethical conduct. A Democratic caucus devoted to the development of our own standards consistent with our ideology is long overdue. Please read the enclosed material and if you agree with me that there is a need for such a group, sign your name to the form that is included and return it to me in the small envelope. To bring the caucus request before the Rules Committee, we need thirty members of the executive committee to join the caucus. Appropriate by-laws and other requirements will follow. I'll be happy to answer questions at Del Coronado.

Agar Jaicks
DNC Member, California



Agar Jaicks's letter was accompanied by the following statement, which could be signed and returned to the state Democratic Central Committee:

THE ETHICS AND MEANING CAUCUS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Preamble

The undersigned request consideration by the California Democratic Party Central Committee to accept special group caucus status for the principles and strategies of "The Politics of Meaning," a nationwide movement initiated by Michael Lerner and Peter Gabel of TIKKUN magazine.

The bottom-line consciousness of our society is based on the notion that human beings are motivated only by material self-interest. The politics of meaning suggests a new bottom line: Let every social policy and practice, proposed legislation, and economic and political institution be judged as productive to the degree to which it tends to produce human beings who are idealistic and not cynical, caring and not selfish, and who are ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive and alive.

The Democratic Party has sought to be the party of compassion for others rather than the party of self-interest. But we have expressed this compassion almost exclusively in economic and legal terms. The great achievements of the New Deal in the 1930s—unemployment insurance, Social Security, the right to form labor unions, and the development of broad protections for the poor—were all aimed at rectifying our system's economic inequalities. The legislation of the Great Society in the 1960s proposed and passed by our party was aimed to expand legal rights—especially civil rights and voting rights—and to overcome the legacy of legalized segregation.

But we as a party have not addressed the importance of fostering a society in which human beings feel connected to each other. Our emphasis on economic redistribution and the expansion of legal rights, however crucial, has prevented us from focusing on human connection and the meaning of life itself, as if this were only to be achieved by each individual in his or her private life. Yet, the very operation of our highly individualistic, competitive, and market-oriented society leaves little time for the pursuit of human connectedness.

Recently, the American people has been subjected to fallacious appeals to xenophobic nationalism and narrowly defined "family values." This has been successful to the degree that it has seized upon people's longing for connection, purpose, and meaning. But the rhetoric of scapegoating cannot meet those needs. It serves only to promote a feeling of pseudo-community based on a fantasy of angry solidarity fueled by fear, intolerance, and materialism. This simply masks the needs for public policies that mitigate the selfish individualism manifested in our economic and social structures. The politics of demonization is no substitute for the process of civil deliberation.

There can be little doubt that there is currently a crisis of meaning in our society: Too many of our citizens live isolated lives disconnected from each other, alienated from any sense of higher purpose that ought to be associated with participation in the political process.

The Politics of Meaning Caucus of the Democratic Party proposes to address our society's unmet needs by directing the political process to correct the social, economic, and cultural causes of the isolation and alienation that so many Americans currently experience. We will do this in a number of ways, including diligently reviewing proposed legislation and other governmental actions to insure that they are inclusive of the needs of all segments of the greater community, proposing our own legislation that advances the satisfaction of these needs, and helping the party to exercise moral and communal leadership in the rebuilding of a civil society of caring and idealism.

While we are proud of our party's accomplishments in the economic and legal arenas over the last seventy years and do not abandon these efforts, we feel that the party must now address itself seriously to the psychological, social, and cultural needs that are indispensable to the creation of a humane and just world.

▲▼▲▼▲

I wish to join the Caucus of Ethics and Meaning

_____
Print Name

_____

_____
Sign Name, Assembly District,
California Central Committee
Democratic National Committee
Ethics and Meaning Caucus

▲▼▲▼▲

II
Introducing the Politics of Meaning in a Local Mayoralty Campaign

Roberta Achtenberg's 1995 campaign for mayor of San Francisco provided a unique opportunity for politics of meaning activists to apply our analysis to a particular political struggle. Achtenberg was an activist lawyer in San Francisco's lesbian community when she was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. She subsequently served as Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Clinton administration before returning to San Francisco to run for mayor in 1995. A participant in TIKKUN conferences and local activities, Achtenberg has always embodied a sensitivity to the meaning issues, so it was no surprise that some of our local activists would support her campaign, in which her

rivals were traditional Democrat Willie Brown and current mayor Frank Jordan, a conservative Democrat who used his office to "clean up" San Francisco by attempting to push the homeless out of town. Two members of San Francisco's politics of meaning community are supporting Willie Brown.

We present below selections from two campaign-related documents. They are instructive about what could be done within the context of "real politics" as narrowly defined by those who regard electoral politics as the primary locus of political activity.

The first document is a memo from politics of meaning activists to the Achtenberg campaign, suggesting how to frame issues with a politics of meaning orientation.

The second document is a letter sent out by three psychotherapists to their Bay Area colleagues, urging them to get involved in the mayoral campaign and using the opportunity to explain the politics of meaning.

Taken together, these documents show how one might take a politics of meaning orientation and introduce it into a local political campaign, using the campaign as an opportunity to instruct people in a new way of thinking about the crisis facing American society. Needless to say, TIKKUN does not endorse specific candidates or political parties, but we do encourage people who are already backing candidates to try to introduce politics of meaning themes. In the process, you could use the material we present here, even copying it when appropriate.

Document A
A Memo to the Achtenberg Campaign from Politics of Meaning Activists

Because Roberta Achtenberg is an exemplary leader capable of motivating those who work with her and for her to realize the values of public service, caring for others, and personal engagement, her campaign offers a perfect opportunity to articulate a politics of meaning perspective. The smart thing would be to build on these personal qualities by showing that she could develop social policies that would lead others to act from their highest selves, thus "infecting" the atmosphere of San Francisco with the very idealism that originally brought many people to live in this area in the first place.

But there is another tendency in some sectors of the campaign to see these personal qualities as liabilities that must be offset by position papers that seem narrowly technocratic and campaign statements that reassure the voter that Roberta is really a good, hard-nosed, "tough" administrator who knows how to run a complicated city. The assumption here is that what people really want is the old-fashioned, narrowly-construed competence, the competence to run a city in which everyone is narrowly pursuing their own self-interest.

Yet acceding to that line of thinking leads people back into the mind-deadening channels that make them more likely to vote for our opponents. So, from the standpoint of practical politics, it makes more sense to emphasize the visionary potentialities that Roberta could bring to our city. People are more likely to vote for her if they allow that part of themselves to be touched, and her actual job as mayor is more likely to succeed if she is seen as having a mandate to address the crisis of meaning that not only cripples our country but also makes cities so difficult to run (because many of our urban problems are merely the local manifestation of what Michael Lerner calls "the ethos of selfishness and materialism" that a Politics of Meaning is designed to counter).

So let's talk about some specific ways that these politics of meaning themes could be raised. We propose the following four:

1. City Workers Serving the Common Good

In San Francisco, like so many other major urban areas, there is a growing tension between the desire to hold down taxes so that middle-income people can continue to afford to live in city neighborhoods, on the one hand, and the desire of city workers to be paid a reasonable middle-income wage. These tensions were exacerbated in San Francisco in 1995 when the San Francisco *Examiner* published a series of stories criticizing city workers as overpaid and unproductive and painting San Francisco as hostage to the Service Employees International Union and other unions representing city workers. Some local politicians jumped on the bandwagon and called for the city to "take on" the unions and eliminate the right to strike.

Though San Francisco has had a long history of support for union struggles that sought to ensure the dignity and security of working people, most San Franciscans can't see much idealism in the apparent power of the city unions to pull down high salaries for impersonal bureaucrats who don't do very much (the perception, whether true or not). This sets the backdrop for Pete Wilson's characterizations of municipal employee unions as extortionists and his likely intent to run a campaign focused on breaking their power.

We believe many voters would respond favorably to a policy on city workers that treated city unions with respect but expected them to work as idealistic partners (rather than smug power-bases) in creating a culture of public service. The campaign could adopt as a model the "living contract" that Local 2 (of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers, the largest private union in the city) negotiated with almost all of the Class A hotels in San Francisco. That contract is based on the idea that it is

time for management and labor to overcome the us-them adversarial relationship that has characterized collective-bargaining agreements and work cooperatively in ongoing problem-solving groups, getting to know each other as human beings, and working more collaboratively in shaping management-worker relationships within each hotel. As part of the agreement, the hotels contribute to a fund to provide child-care and elder-care for their workers as well as domestic partner benefits and paid days off that are not sick-leave (the idea here being that workers' commitment to caring for others in their private lives is also a public concern).

This approach would reject the negative stereotyping of city workers that represents them as purely selfish and which then encourages them to be cynical (since they feel they get no recognition for the many times that they've made personal sacrifices to serve what they perceive to be the common good of the public they serve). Yet it would simultaneously encourage city employees to take a leadership role in communicating and carrying out the idealistic commitment to public service that led them into public sector work in the first place. Workers should be rewarded for taking actions that reflect this sense of public service, particularly those who innovate ways to do so (for example, an opportunity to represent San Francisco in a sister city and discuss the problems and issues facing the city—an interesting variation on one's daily work that today is available only to the top management of most city agencies). Imagine, for example, if city bus drivers were encouraged to take pride and responsibility for the appearance, promptness, and riding-environment of their buses. Think of how bell-ringing by cable-car drivers contributes to the culture of San Francisco. And imagine if workers in agencies serving the public were given permission to decorate drab corridors and office rooms with themes that represented their own visions for the city, or were encouraged to present to the public information on social problems that the city employees felt the public ought to know more about, or were encouraged to sponsor lunch-time concerts/plays/ skits/music that provided entertainment or engagement with the public and fellow workers.

None of this should be imposed on workers from above. Instead, the mayor should seek the active involvement of the unions themselves in designing the details of a program whose goal is to transform the way city workers understand their jobs, enhancing their sense of community service, while simultaneously transforming the negative image of city workers fostered by conservatives intent on downsizing city services and reducing their own tax burden.

2. Public Housing

The Mayor should seek to overcome the isolation and stigmatization directed at public housing residents and at the physical cares surrounding those projects. It is impossible to address the violence, drug-dealing and fear faced by people in the projects so long as the city allows them to be treated like leper colonies. One direction to pursue is to seek to convert the projects into limited equity co-ops which allow their tenants to build up limited equity that they can pass on to their children. This direction, written about by Harvard law professor Duncan Kennedy, encourages an intergenerational pride in individual units as well as common spaces.

Resident councils at the projects should be encouraged and challenged to work with the local housing authority to build up ties with surrounding neighborhood groups, churches, and merchants to promote the integration of the project into the surrounding community. For little cost, the city should provide small stipends and educational awards, including vocational education awards, for residents who beautify their own projects (via gardening, painting, etc.). This has already been tried quite successfully in one public housing project in San Francisco where residents worked cooperatively with National Service Corps volunteers to repaint the exterior of their project an attractive color chosen by the residents.

3. Seniors

The worst problem faced by seniors is the feeling of uselessness, of being discarded. So programs to provide service to seniors should be complemented by programs giving them the opportunity to give to the rest of us as elders. Zalman Schachter's work on eldering (reviewed elsewhere in this issue of TIKKUN) provides a model, as does some of the work by Barry Barkan in the Live Oak Project. Rather than just providing low-level clerical jobs in isolation at the library or at park and recreation facilities, seniors should be treated as elders and encouraged to tell the stories of their neighborhoods, perhaps through city-sponsored photojournalism projects and in other ways where their wisdom is valued by the community. On the other side of the intergenerational ledger, schools, churches, synagogues, and community-service projects should enable young people to visit and help care for Alzheimer's patients like my mother, shut-in elders, and others. This activity is incredibly humanizing for younger people and a source of joy to elders.

4. Small Businesses

While we challenge the ethos of selfishness fostered by the competitive market, we need to recognize that there are many small businesses which would love to give something to make the city a better place. It's a mistake for pro-

gressives to treat everyone in business as though they were nothing more than a source of taxation (*Bay Guardian* or *Village Voice* consciousness)—as if all businesses want is money and we, the progressives, are going to make them pay for services to people who don't have money and that's all we care about them.

Many small businesses today are run by progressive, idealistic people who would be thrilled to be asked by the Mayor to contribute idealistically to creating community. Instead, even the progressive small businesses are never asked to contribute anything but money—so that their only contact with government is when the government is passing some new feel or pushing them around in some way (and that experience creates the very cynicism and tilt toward self-interest that we then blame on the small businesses who are portrayed as motivated only by the single-minded profit motive).

These are some representative ways that the Achtenberg campaign might incorporate the spirit of the politics of meaning. With appropriate modifications, this kind of thinking could be done in other local and statewide campaigns and would contribute to a whole new way of doing politics in the U.S. And precisely because it breaks out of the boring, business-as-usual frame of so much of American politics, this approach to politics has the capacity to capture public attention and excitement and to yield a winning strategy in electoral terms.

Document B

PSYCHOTHERAPISTS FOR ACHTENBERG

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Do you remember what it was like to feel inspired by a political campaign? Do you remember what it was like to feel a spark of hope about social change and a sense of community with others who seemed to share that same spark?

Given the current dismal political climate, idealism is hard to remember and harder to feel. The easiest thing to feel is cynicism, resignation, and the desire to retreat from political involvement. And for good reason. In an atmosphere of right-wing rollbacks of social programs and entitlements, racially motivated attacks on affirmative action, higher and higher levels of social violence, an increasingly mean-spirited and selfish political discourse, a prurient and crassly commercialized media, and an apathetic electorate seemingly content to follow a conservative agenda, it seems almost foolish to feel hopeful or idealistic. Given our experience, it's almost rational to feel burned by politics, quietly resigned, or privately powerless. We may vote for liberal candidates or, at least, the "lesser evil," but mainly we tend our own gardens, looking toward careers, families, personal growth, and recreation for meaning and purpose.

There is another way. We want to suggest how to get excited about politics again, both in principle and in a concrete manner. The principle is what TIKKUN magazine, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and we call the politics of meaning, and we see important elements of it in the mayoral campaign of Roberta Achtenberg. We'd like to introduce both to you and invite your interest and support.

The politics of meaning says this: People in our society have frustrated needs for community, for recognition, and for a sense of efficacy, a sense that they can influence and shape the course of their lives. If a political movement is to be successful, it has to address these needs.

The right-wing has been successful because it has attempted to do just that. The Newt Gingriches, Rush Limbaughs, and Pat Robertsons of the world seem to be addressing the pain that people feel in a society that makes community, connection, and compassion so difficult. They, in effect, say: "No one cares about you, you're treated like a *thing* by government, you can't trust your neighbors anymore, our streets—formerly your community—aren't safe, your families are breaking down, you feel isolated, helpless, and can't rely any more on some promise of the good life." In this sense, right-wing ideologues are speaking empathetically to authentic feelings of frustration and alienation. But then they go on to say: "And the reason that you feel so disconnected and insecure and cheated is because the Blacks, the poor, the gays, the feminists, and the liberals are running the show and getting what is rightfully yours." Conservative demagogues speak to real feelings of psychological and social despair and anxiety, but instead of focusing on the real causes of this alienation, they find and blame all of the familiar scapegoats.

The politics of meaning is about the importance of taking seriously people's need for connection and meaning and the feelings of alienation and anxiety that result when these needs are frustrated. We have to validate these feelings and show how they arise from the breakdown of community, and from the selfishness, cynicism, and competitiveness of our society. Our message and platform has to appeal to people's underlying wish to be appreciated for who they are and to belong to a community that brings out their altruism and compassion—the best of people, in other words—rather than the worst. Of course, these sound like pie-in-the-sky abstractions, but the broad principles are really quite simple and concrete: People need to feel recognized, connected, and appreciated in their lives. This society frustrates these "meaning" needs, the right-wing tunes into this, and a progressive movement must do better if it is to ever overcome the apathy and cynicism that suffocates us today.

But how do we do this? How do we incorporate these lofty ideals into something real and practical "on the ground?" We think that Roberta Achtenberg's campaign

for Mayor of San Francisco is the right place to start. Roberta is running a campaign that is based on the idea that we need a new kind of politics that seeks to connect people to each other and to overcome the cynicism and alienation that people feel about the political process. She is developing a series of concrete policy proposals that will seek to embody the politics of meaning, to the extent that she can, in every area of her campaign—including deepening public education, increasing the sense of ownership of residents of public housing, enlivening the city's bureaucracy and fostering a sense of idealism in city workers, revitalizing the culture of San Francisco's neighborhoods, and increasing the participation of the city's young people in national and community service. She is committed to bringing the best of the spirit of the 1960s, which helped to shape her own politics, into city government, and to challenging the narrow view of liberal politics that defines political reality exclusively in terms of the expansion of economic benefits or legal rights....

[The original letter goes on to argue why Roberta Achtenberg does in fact manifest politics of meaning principles in her being and in some of her campaign themes. We think that this explanation of the politics of meaning might be adopted by our readers, perhaps best combined with a photocopy of the inside back cover of the magazine with its summary of the politics of meaning, and then sent to friends, or put in a letter to members of your professional association or your church, synagogue, or social-change organization.]

If you have your own ideas about how to take a politics of meaning perspective into electoral politics, send them to us and we will consider printing some of these proposals (nothing longer than 800 words will be considered, however). Conversely, if you have criticisms of the proposals presented here, or feel that they water-down the original vision too dramatically, write to us. The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning is in its infancy, and your ideas can help shape its direction.

Whatever else you do, be sure to come to the founding national gathering of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning—the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning, April 14-16, 1996 in Washington, D.C. Among the speakers will be Peter Gabel and Roberta Achtenberg. For information on how to register for the Summit, turn to page 33. □

I See My Father in the Afterlife

There's a cloud wraped around him
like a toga or swaddling—a uniform

that denotes the rank of a slave who barely
escaped hell. When he pares

his nails, here on earth it sleets.
When he curls his toes, the wind tramps its feet

through the trees. Tornadoes brew in his ear.
In hell, he could have joined friends. Here,

he must serve the ones he lied to
and stole from. He must smile

as he lowers trays of Turkish Delight.
He never sleeps, and what he eats tastes like

boredom. Sometimes, just for the sake
of his old meanness, he'll throw a rock

at one of them, he'll spit and curse.
But nothing hurts the heavenly ones,

who are mostly children. So he opens his anger
like the parasol holy men carry. Black, with razor

tips, it affords a split-second of shade when he falls
to the other place at the moment we unveil

the plaque with his life reduced to a dash
between dates, after we've kept him alive with kaddish

for a year, after we stood up for him
every Friday night. Then he will be with *satan,*

Hebrew for informer, just another crony
exchanging inside dope at the track. He'll hack his way

to the betting windows through tunnels of solid rock
while the tote board spins like eyes rolling back.

He'll hear the bell, watch the gate wheeled off
like a hearse stripped down to its chassis, and lift

his binoculars: in the infield instead of palms
and flamingos, a garden of flames.

And on the soft brown turf, print after print—
a stampede—but of course

no horses.

—Enid Shomer

—•—

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SESSIONS ON

- Is there anything that can stop liberals from blowing it again in 1996?
- What is "Meaning" and what does it have to do with "Politics"?
- How does the long-term change of ethical and spiritual values deal with the assault against African Americans and the poor?
- How do we counter the rip-off mentality that permeates American society and generates crime?
- If the planet is in an ecological crisis, are the needed spiritual changes too visionary to work now?
- Why is it so hard to sustain loving relationships and families? Is that just a personal issue, or should it be linked to the political world?
- Isn't it dangerous or potentially totalitarian to allow meaning and values questions to get into the realm of politics and government?
- Is a politics of meaning economically viable?
- Are values more than subjective choices?
- Have white men been given a bad and unfair rap by liberals and the Left?
- What kind of society nurtures the soul?
- Does God belong to the Right?
- How should we raise children? Did the permissiveness of the '60s lead to a high rate of divorce and children feeling emotionally abandoned? How do love and discipline and limit-setting coexist? How do we understand the violence directed at children?
- Have "rights" gotten out of hand?
- After O.J.: How should the legal system be restructured?
- Why has affirmative action lost support?
- How does the ethos of selfishness play out in our work and in our professions—and could that be changed?
- What are our visions of a spiritually and ethically sound society—and how does that differ from the one-dimensional liberalism and cultural radicalism of the past?

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Israeli Identity in a Time of Peace

Prospects and Perils

A.B. Yehoshua

Whether for good or for ill, the peace dawning between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab nations will have profound effects upon Israeli identity. The Arab-Israeli conflict, after all, has been the foundation upon which Israeli identity has been constructed for more than one hundred and twenty years. From the day that the first Jew set foot upon the Land of Israel he was confronted with a struggle for the legitimacy of his very existence in the old-new homeland.

The sense of fighting for survival has been the dominant reaffirming experience in the creation of a cohesive Israeli identity that transcends differences of opinion, custom, origin, and social class. To this very day, an act of terror generates a strong wave of solidarity among the strictly secular yuppie in Tel Aviv, the separatist Orthodox Jew in his ghetto in B'nai Brak or Mea She'arim, and the Oriental Jew in a neglected and remote development town. It is therefore not surprising, in a nation where ideological, political, cultural, and conceptual differences of opinion are so extreme, that, over a period of one hundred years rife with tempestuous and divisive events, only fifteen to twenty Jews were killed by fellow Jews for ideological or political motives. The explanation for this statistic is not the absence of zealots and radicals in Israel, nor an exceptionally high level of tolerance or other democratic virtues; it is simply that we have been united against an outside menace.

A few wise Arabs said many years ago that if, from the very beginning, the Arab countries had offered a modest peace to the Jews, they might have succeeded in undermining the Jewish state in a way that all the wars waged against Israel had not.

With the consolidation of peace, the external impetus for a cohesive Israeli identity will steadily erode. And because the Israeli Jew usually regards anti-Semitic incidents abroad not as threats to Jewish survival but as further justification for Zionism, even the venerable fear that has united Diaspora Jews for thousands of years will fail to provide the glue to hold Israeli society together.

Moreover, as a wartime mentality gives way to a peacetime consciousness, crucial components of Israeli identity that grew from the struggle for military security, such as the value placed upon immigration and settlement of the land of Israel, will also begin to disintegrate. Because pioneering the land and building new towns along the border or in deserted regions was always perceived as a vital means of fortifying and ensuring national security, settlement was elevated to a central priority, infusing Israeli identity with meaning and pride.

The glory has long since faded from the settlement movement, and the archetype of the *halutz*, the pioneer, once so central to Israeli identity, now has primarily historical significance. Indeed, the contemporary "settlement movement" has an extreme ideological cast, and, in the context of peace with our Arab neighbors, may come to be regarded as a subversive force, given the irredentist direction it has taken. It is also possible that in a country as small as Israel, further settling might lead to considerable opposition on the grounds that land and nature reserves are so scarce and vital. In the same way that the French are not troubled by the wide expanses of unsettled land along the border between France and Switzerland, so Israelis will stop considering unpopulated areas as a possible threat to security.

There is already evidence that another pillar of Israeli identity—the high value placed upon immigration and absorption of Diaspora Jews—is weakening. Earlier this year, the amazing results of a survey were published, indicating that an unprecedented, albeit slight, majority of Israelis opposed further immigration on the grounds that the country is incapable of additional absorption.

In the demographic rivalry between Jews and Arabs, immigration was always considered a basic priority, a countervailing force to the high Arab birthrate. And, conversely, emigration from Israel was always consid-

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A.B. Yehoshua was awarded the 1995 Israel Prize for literature. His newest novel, Open Heart, *will be published in the United States in May. He is a member of* TIKKUN*'s editorial board.*

ered a sin, with emigrants contemptuously labeled *yardim*—those who go down. But in peacetime, the need to contend demographically with the Arabs will cease to be a major priority.

A host of contending values, both good and bad, will be in competition to fill the void in Israeli identity created by the erosion and disappearance of these traditional ones. We are thus faced with the formidable task of creatively promoting new, positive values to replace those diminishing, outdated ones.

And the task is especially complex because those relatively ephemeral, historically rooted values such as the military struggle for survival, settlement, and immigration are linked in the Israeli imagination to the timeless, biblically rooted values we ought to strive to preserve, such as the moral significance of sacrifice and brotherhood, frugality, reclaiming and tilling the land, the desire to preserve equality and economic cooperation, aid to new immigrants, and tolerance toward people from different and foreign cultures. Paradoxically, the erosion of values that developed in a time of chronic antagonisms threatens to deprive Israeli identity of some of its foundational moral precepts, which in turn might lead to the aggravation of existing strains.


STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

The first strain and the deepest one that will increase with time, is the already existing rift between religious and secular Israelis. While religion and nationhood are inextricably bound in the Jewish worldview, the tension between these two has been characteristic of modern Jewish identity.

In its wandering through foreign territories and among foreign nations, the Jewish people's struggle over the nature of its identity was replaced with a more urgent struggle for the *legitimacy* of its very existence. This struggle for survival has united all Jews and helped serve to allay the other struggle, the more intrinsic and essential one—of the two identities wrestling for its soul. Yet it was not by accident that religious Jews rejected Zionism, for they felt that returning to the normative principles of a national identity would mean a return to the territory, language, and reality of a national and common existence, which would in turn minimize the need for the religious components of identity.

Because of the delicate parliamentary balance between the two major political parties in Israel, both have needed the support of the religious bloc and were therefore limited in the expression of their underlying secular agendas. With the cessation of the major ideological battle over "Greater Israel," the differences between these two parties will diminish and more closely resemble those of the Republicans and Democrats in the United States or the Tories and Labour in England. The energy now invested in the Palestinian issue will be shifted to the campaign for the consolidation of citizens' rights, civil marriages, and other liberties. Moreover, the increasing political participation of Israeli Arabs, together with the influx of Jews with a very tenuous connection to Jewish practice, will obscure the religious character of the state. In response to these secularizing forces—exacerbated by the relentless influence on Israeli consciousness of the electronic media's "CNN-style" world culture—the Orthodox factions will retreat even further into their self-imposed ghettos. To the ultra-Orthodox Jews, who already live in the State of Israel as if it were a foreign country, without a feeling of belonging, we might now add the disenchanted national religious Jews, defeated in their battle for a Greater Israel. Out of a sense of pro-

found disillusionment, these religious nationalists will abandon the fight to imprint their religious worldview on Israeli society and instead become increasingly isolated and radical in their opposition to the dominant social and political reality.

The second strain likely to worsen is that between Oriental and Western Jews. This is principally a cultural strain, but because it possesses social aspects as well, it could be fairly divisive. The dialogue (and I prefer this term to "conflict") between Western and Eastern culture in Israel is a tense one. Sometimes it is creative and fruitful, and at times it is bitter and hard. And with the advance of the peace process, the question that has been posed by our Arab neighbors will take on greater urgency for us as well as for them: Do you Jews see yourselves from a cultural perspective as a natural and organic part of the Middle East or do you feel, in effect, like exiles whose heart and spirit is continuously attracted to the West?

A peacetime Israel, no longer needing massive Jewish fund-raising and philanthropy, will leave scores of Diaspora Jews jobless and devoid of a potent source of their identity.

The Oriental Jews (those coming from Moslem countries) who arrived in Israel in the 1950s were subject to a threefold dislocation of consciousness. Like all Jews immigrating to Israel, they went from being a minority in exile to an independent and sovereign people in their homeland. Leaving behind a traditional and religious ethos, they now assumed a secular way of life and underwent the transformation from an Eastern patriarchal, post-feudal culture to a Western culture. The uprooting was traumatic and painful, especially since the culture they left behind was now associated with "the enemy." Moreover, while the Jews who were forced to leave Germany in the 1930s proudly held on to their cultural heritage despite Nazi atrocities, the Oriental Jews, both because of the political and social dominance of the Ashkenazi Jews and their own feelings of inferiority, developed a complex relationship with their heritage. They were torn between their attachment to this culture and the customs of their ancestors which had evolved within Islamic culture, and the need to renounce this loyalty and attempt to assimilate "Ashkenazi-Sabra" attributes.

Simmering for decades, the implicit and explicit indignation of Oriental Jews toward the cultural discrimination they have continuously experienced will probably rise to the surface of public discourse with the coming of peace. The opening of borders and the development of commercial and cultural relations with Arab countries is likely to relegitimate their ancestors' culture. And those many Oriental Jews who are nostalgic for this culture and wish to reappropriate it will be able to fulfill this yearning for the roots from which they were torn.

This Oriental renaissance, combined with the natural influx into Israel of Palestinian visitors, will change Israel into a country with a more saliently Oriental character. Conversely, for those inhabitants whose cultural and spiritual home is in New York, Los Angeles, or London, this infusion of Oriental flavor might evoke repulsion and alienation. Some of the Oriental Jews will now more forcefully demand reconstitution for the cultural discrimination of the past. And because the cultural gap between East and West is generally linked to class discrimination, this tension, in the absence of the unifying bond of security concerns, will deepen the social strains in Israel.

Yet another rift that might widen with the coming of peace is that between Israel and the Jews in the Diaspora. In recent years, we have witnessed a growing mutual emotional detachment between Israel and Jews of the Diaspora. While the causal factors contributing to this phenomenon are complex, it is connected to the decreasing significance of three emotional and conceptual forces which, for the last twenty to thirty years, have constituted the core of Jewish identity: the revelation and internalization of the Holocaust of European Jews; the campaign for the emigration of Russian Jews from their homeland; and the identification with and support of the State of Israel in its military, political, and economic struggles.

First, the subject of the Holocaust, long lying repressed in American Jewish consciousness, has, in the last twenty years, been so forcefully unleashed that for many American Jews it came to form the core of their Jewish identity. It seems to me that with the calming of this cathartic storm and the gradual withdrawal of survivors from the stage of life, the Holocaust will turn from a primary source of Jewish identity into a more academic, historical concern. Indeed, the completion of the construction of museums in memory of the Holo-

caust in numerous places in the United States and other countries perhaps already signals this development.

Second, primarily as a result of the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. and the opening of its gates, championing the release of Russian Jews has ceased being a means of Jewish mobilization and a source of Jewish significance.

And third, peace in Israel will deprive many Jews of the primary focus of their Jewish sentiment: political and financial support for their embattled and isolated little nation. A peacetime Israel, increasingly comfortable among the mideast nations and the rest of the international community, will no longer require massive Jewish fund-raising and philanthropy, leaving scores of Diaspora Jews not only jobless, but also devoid of a potent source of Jewish identity and involvement.

Ironically, an Israel more confident in itself, with allies and friends all over the world, will have less need to seek Jewish kinship and will feel more removed from Jews in the Diaspora. The debate within Israel over the definition of "Who is a Jew?" includes considerable Israeli skepticism and antagonism toward those Jews who define themselves as being Jewish although they may know nothing about Judaism and have few Jewish relatives. In this predicament, the feeling of Israeli solidarity and national affinity with other Jews will become more and more abstract, and because the Israeli will no longer *need* other Jews, the mutual and historic bond of a common destiny will lose a lot of its significance.

At this point, I imagine that some readers will be wondering: How is it possible that Yehoshua, a veteran fighter for the cause of peace, is drawing such a bleak picture of Israeli identity after the advent of peace? Isn't he just adding his share of gloom to this peace process which suffers, as it is, from too much pessimism? Instead of encouraging those that do the work of peace, he is disheartening them. To this I answer—God forbid. This peace, the thrust of which includes territorial compromises and recognition of the self-determination of the Palestinian people in exchange for a comprehensive peace accompanied by strict, non-territorial, security arrangements, is dear to me; I see no other way but this way. I stress these potential problems that may develop in a peacetime Israel because I believe it is time for those cultural and intellectual leaders who are constantly involved in analyzing and critiquing Israeli identity to begin to focus on a vision for the future, all the more so because we are at a crucial juncture: if we are prescient in confronting these problems, we can help Israel to spread new wings in a time of peace.

The new wings that I speak of which Israel must sprout are not dictated by economics but rather vested in a deeper understanding of the tensions in Israeli society and the land-mines along its path to peace. I will illustrate my approach with six possible strategies.

•Restoring within the left-wing and Labor Party camps a clear-cut plan of action for improving social justice and equality. The Israeli liberal sector and left-wing have devoted their best efforts for the last two decades to one overriding concern: the attainment of peace, the recognition of Palestinian self-determination, and the end of control over them. Those on the Left united for the sake of this cause, despite internal dissension over questions of economic and social policy. Over the course of the last twenty years, Israeli society, which originally could boast of minor socio-economical differences and a sound social constitution, has become a country whose social gaps are progressively widening. Because of corruption bred by the employment of cheap Palestinian labor and accelerated economic development generated by American financial support, inequality in our society is on the rise. In fact, today Israel can be found in fairly poor standing among western democratic countries on the issue of class polarization.

Israel was originally a country settled by Jews possessing a progressive national consciousness. These early settlers saw themselves as the pioneering vanguard of a nation, and they brought with them a social democratic vision that stressed such policies as universal health insurance, unemployment insurance, job tenure, and more. And because the leaders of the state were well aware that both rich and poor would eventually end up side by side in the tanks and trenches, they made sure that class differences remained minimal in order to preserve national solidarity and harmony.

Even in a time of peace, Israel cannot allow itself to create social stratification like that which characterizes American society. Thus, if the Left and Labor factions now devote the energy previously invested in the rights of Palestinian self-determination solely to such causes as homosexual rights or battered women—that is, to civil rights and issues of political correctness, to the neglect of economic equity and justice—the price will be a rising tide of internecine tension and hatred. In this new period of Israel's history, traditional left-wing Zionism, if it is to survive, must reassume its social democratic identity even at the expense of attenuating its liberal fervor.

•Renewing the alliance between secular and National Religious factions. Every attempt must be made to renew the traditional pact which for many years (up to the Six Day War in 1967) was one of the most important aspects of the Israeli political and spiritual center: The alliance between the Labor movement and the religious nationalists. For many years, the religious nationalists were located at the center of the political spectrum, more moderate than a significant part of the

Labor movement. For example, at the time of the conquest of Eastern Jerusalem and the Old City in the Six Day War, religious nationalist leaders proposed inviting the United Nations to administer the captured sites so that Israel would not get entangled in the problematic control of other religions' holy places.

In the last thirty years, these centrists, who once championed a progressive social agenda, have pushed themselves to the most nationalistic extreme. Most of the demonstrations against the government taking place today are organized by religious Jews wearing knitted skullcaps; they form the most powerful and cohesive ideological nucleus of Jewish settlers on the West Bank. And if there is fear of the eruption of a civil war in Israel regarding the Israeli land concessions called for in the Oslo II agreement, then the uprising against the government will come primarily from these circles.

On the other hand, the escalating hate and animosity among secular circles toward religion and religious Israelis has recently attained frightening proportions. My proposal, together with some friends in the peace camp, to leave an option for settlers who want to remain a Jewish minority in the future Palestinian state, was designed, apart from the principle of recognition of the Jewish right to live as a minority in a Palestinian state the same way Arabs do in Israel, to alleviate somewhat the painful dislocation of forced evacuation and the festering resentment it can breed.

The religious nationalists have always sought to be part of the Zionist endeavor. The initiative for rapprochement should come from the predominantly secular faction, which must restrain its secular-hedonistic appetite not only for the sake of national conciliation, but also to try to ingest religious viewpoints—they are necessary cultural nutrients for a healthy Israeli identity. After all, unlike many European countries, we do not possess a material cultural heritage in the form of castles, costumes, and cultural artifacts. Our castles are mostly texts and books, of an unmistakably religious nature. Thus secular Israel, although it seeks to liberate itself from religious political manipulation, nevertheless must address religiously rooted social and political issues unique to the Jewish State such as the character of the Sabbath and the holidays, as well as the assimilation of the foundations of ancient Hebrew law into the presently evolving judiciary constitution. If the secular sector of Israel seeks only to expand individual freedom and liberty, it will quickly find itself emulating the emptiest and shallowest attributes of American culture.

•Finding inclusive national methods for reappropriating our connection to the East. At the core of Zionism one can also find the theme of the spiritual and cultural return to the East. We have not come to the Land of Israel only because Europe hates us and spits us out, but rather we are returning to the East as to the "rock from whence we were hewn" in the hope of finding an old-new synthesis of our identity. Many of the early theorists and leaders of the Zionist movement saw in the liaison with the East an expression of the return to the ancient and true origins of Jewish nationality.

Years of relentless hostility, brutal terror, and war have swept away any remaining sentiments of Orientalist romanticism. But with peace in the wings, we must find an *inclusive national* approach that will commit Western as well as Oriental Jews to try to find a bond with the East. We are neither Eastern nor Western but rather Middle Eastern, and we must accord this regional identity with meaning and significance—all the more in a time when distances between countries are becoming so small. Regional identity still has meaning, if not for the sake of commerce and tourism then at least in the service of roots and identity.

•Forging a new alliance between the Jewish majority and the Arab-Israeli minority, coupled with a staunch insistence on preserving the state not only as the State of Jews but also the Jewish State. With the arrival of peace, Israeli Arabs will justifiably demand their full rights in Israeli society. But if, in the capacity as mediators between Israel and the Arab world, they advocate suppression of the Jewish identity of the state and demand to replace it with the American version, that is, a state for all citizens, we cannot accept this compromise of Israel's identity. Israel must remain a Jewish state both in its symbols and in its essence, while at the same time it must grant an accredited, cultural status to its Arab minority. Not a self-governed or territorial autonomy (for, the Arabs in Israel do not form a territorial minority such as the Basques in Spain or the Corsicans in France) but rather an exclusively cultural autonomy with representation in the political arena, and certainly full and equal civil rights. But, by absolutely no means should the complete assimilation of Israeli Arab citizens into the state bring about the diffusion of the identity of its Jewish inhabitants.

•Crafting a more rigorous definition of "Who is a Jew?" and stricter Laws of Return. Israel can be more demanding of those Jews who seek to become citizens. Seeing that it no longer is in need of their political support or economic philanthropy, Israel now has the right to expect of Jews who aspire to a more profound relationship with Israel in order to grant meaning and significance to their Jewishness, first and foremost, to renew their relationship with the Hebrew language.

We must also turn our attention to reforming the Law of Return. No longer should we confer automatic citizenship; we should initiate a trial period of several

years during which the new Jewish immigrant would be required to demonstrate his or her understanding of what it means to be an Israeli by means of, at least, learning the language and gaining a sound knowledge of Israeli laws and customs—similar to the measures other modern countries employ when granting citizenship. Undoubtedly, the Law of Return will continue to permit every Jew to exercise the right to settle in Israel. But that right should initially be probational.

•Fulfilling a vocation, in respect to the Third World, by establishing an education corps in cooperation with Jews of the Diaspora. In the 1920s, when Martin Buber approached and entreated his friend, the German Jewish philosopher Herman Cohen, to support the Zionist movement, the latter denied this request. "Do the Jews really want," Cohen replied in anger and dismay, "to abandon their great vocation among nations and attempt to be, simply, happy? Do the Jews really want to establish another Albania in the Middle East?"

It was not so many years later that the Jews, after being cast into the bottommost corridors of hell, understood that there was nothing at all wrong with the plea for a little happiness, and that inside the gas chambers there is no grandeur but only terror and horrifying humiliation. The homeless refugees who in vain wandered from country to country seeking refuge cried out in their despair: "Alas, if only we had an Albania!"

But the talk about the "mission" of the Jewish people among nations of the world and of our unique destiny, that is, about our need to be "a light unto the Gentiles" or "the Chosen People," continues to perplex us. And even after the establishment of the State of Israel, spiritual and political leaders continued to ask: "Shall we in fact content ourselves with just another ordinary state?" Even pragmatists, such as David Ben-Gurion, would time and again invoke our *sui generis* role in history. And Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, once offered the provocative comment that, "If Israel will be the same as all the other countries and nations, it will cease to exist in the next century."

Where does this need, this quest for a vocation, come from, to speak of being "Chosen" and of being "a light unto the nations?" The answer, I believe, can be found in the unique way in which religion and nationality are integrated in the Jewish nation. The universalistic quality of Judaism is a *provisional* universalism. Theoretically, it is accessible to every person but only on condition that this same person will renounce not only his former religious identity but also his national identity, and therefore, this universalism is partial and flawed. In order to compensate for its partiality and its shortcomings, the Jewish nation has taken on itself a mission in

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respect to the whole world, which to a certain degree, has been rejected by its intended recipients.

But the cost of this vocation, that was also courageously linked to the premise of our existence in the Diaspora, was a heavy price to pay. All the Einsteins and Freuds and other individuals of intellectual and spiritual genius that we nurtured from within did not earn us legitimacy in the eyes of the world. And after the Holocaust, we were willing to return the whole crop of Nobel Prizes we received in exchange for the resurrection of the million children we had lost. For we had become painfully aware of how crucial it was to surrender those delusions of "a nation unlike all other nations," the "model nation," or "Chosen People" in exchange for the security of settling down, like all other nations, in a territory of our own and becoming masters of our own destiny, which is the essence of normalcy in respect to the individual as well as the nation.

We ask to control our destiny and be held accountable for our actions, so that, from this aspect, we are the same as any other nation living in its own country and under its own sovereignty. But do we then relinquish our sense of "divine function" and our "calling" that has been guiding us for so long? And rejecting the one extreme that Herman Cohen so eloquently advocated, shall we now cross over to the opposite extreme which says: Let us now be solely preoccupied with ourselves?

To a certain extent, there is surely something healthy about the diminution of this rhetoric and adoption of a more sober view of our standards of morality. After a number of decades of political independence we have realized that the high morality which we took pride in when "in exile," was, to a certain degree, only theoretical. It could be found in books and in beautiful passages but not really in actions. We did not pioneer our own self-sufficient economy, we did not maintain an army, we did not control minorities, and we did not structure a welfare system.

Therefore, today, when it is necessary to provide concrete answers to thorny social and economic problems, we are being measured by our actions rather than our words, and in this position, the reckoning is a much harder one. But even if there is a blessing in discarding some of the old rhetoric and adapting our self-image more accurately to reality, in my opinion, we would impoverish our identity if we were to abandon our global role, especially if it is for the sake of sliding into a shallow national self-indulgence. Because we have learned from our individual as well as from our collective reality that *one who gives unto another only becomes stronger in his giving*.

What is the pragmatic role that Israel can adopt for itself and in relation to other nations? There is no novelty in saying that the gulf between the First World and the Second and Third Worlds is alarmingly and dangerously expanding in recent years. Never have such vast areas of Africa, Asia, and South America suffered so severely from economic, social, and environmental degradation. And worst of all is that the "First" world has already resigned itself to this decay. And because the rivalry between the two major powers has ended, there isn't even any political incentive left to woo these countries' support with assistance and financial aid. The tension between the haves and the have-nots is becoming more dangerous, and in an age where it is possible that nuclear and other unconventional weaponry fall into fanatic and vengeful hands, all of us might witness, in the not too distant future, a situation where the hungry will threaten the well-fed with catastrophe.

Through the course of history, Jews have proven themselves truly skillful at learning and educating. And despite secularization, the learned person and the scholar, the teacher and disciple, still occupy positions of distinction among Jews.

Israel can contribute knowledge and expertise to the Third World. It can form an "Education Corps" much like the United States' Peace Corps. This would not only be a calling for Israel but could be the basis for a collaboration with the rest of the Jewish nation. This encounter between Jew and Israeli in the service of the world's needy could spark a renewed sense of common purpose. And it might well appeal to the many Jews who have become alienated in recent years by what they perceive as Israel's selfishness, sanctimoniousness, and jingoistic nationalism.

We have the human and financial capital for this project. There is an enormous reservoir of unemployed Jewish intellectuals both in Israel and in Eastern Europe and the CIS (former Soviet Union). From the financial angle, the costs will be modest: the salaries of only a few thousand people who will be sent abroad for a few years to serve. This project can use monetary reserves currently intended for absorption and unemployment

(Continued on p. 94)

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Creating a Geography of Peace

Oslo II and the Discontinuity of Space

David Newman

With the September signing of the Oslo II agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, whatever traces of euphoria remained from the initial stage of the peace accords have given way to a grim reality: the road to peace between the two peoples has all the earmarks of a complicated, often bitter, divorce.

The long, tense negotiations which surrounded the preparation of the four-hundred-page Oslo II document and the accompanying maps were characterized by the participants' mutual lack of trust. Oslo II—a strange name for an agreement which was negotiated in the Red Sea coastal resort of Taba and signed in Washington, D.C.—is about two issues and the relationship between them. It concerns territory and the spaces and places within which we live. But it is also about demography and the rights of people to live with dignity and freedom within the groups with which they identify socially, religiously, and nationally. Because this attempt to find the balance between space and people, between territorial attachment and group belonging is so difficult to achieve to the ultimate satisfaction of both sides, it has produced a document which is equally unsatisfactory for the long-term interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Following the narrow ratification of the Oslo II agreement by the Israeli Knesset (sixty-one in favor, fifty-nine—including two members of the government—against), the morning newspapers published the autonomy maps. Even for a geographer, the initial impact was bafflement. The agreement provides for *demographic* separation within a single territory, rather than for territorial separation between the two peoples. In the 5,500 square kilometers of the West Bank, the agreement creates exclaves and enclaves; Zones "A," "B," and "C"; bypass roads and territorial corridors; joint policing; safe passage; and numerous other territorial oddities.

The map is divided into three kinds of areas. The first of these, "Zone A," includes all the major Palestinian towns that will be handed over to the Palestinian authorities. Starting in the north with the town of Jenin, the Israeli army will gradually withdraw from Tulkarem, Qalqiliyah, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and, finally, from most of Hebron. The latter town will be evacuated only after an expensive bypass road is constructed for the passage of the small settler population in Kiryat Arba and Hebron.

The second area, "Zone B," encompasses a wider space and includes all of the rural areas and refugee camps in which the Palestinians will be granted autonomy. Within these areas, an armed Palestinian police force will be responsible for law and order, but the overall security will remain the responsibility of the Israeli army. It is within these areas of "shared" responsibility that the potential for friction and misunderstanding will be the greatest. Under what situations will the Israeli army be allowed to conduct searches within Palestinian villages? And equally, under what circumstances will the Palestinian police feel justified in stopping and even arresting passing Israelis for mundane offenses such as speeding, without this being interpreted as a political action?

The remainder of the West Bank, approximately seventy percent of the region, includes those areas to remain under full Israeli control, including the Jewish settlements, the access roads, and the "security zones"—areas which will come up for discussion in the next round of negotiations.

In the name of security, Israel will retain control over the Jordan Valley. This is essentially a 1990s version of the 1967 Allon Plan, which argued for a strong Israeli military presence along the border with Jordan. Yet the problems with this division are manifest: This region contains the land the Palestinians need for agricultural development, and continued Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley virtually encases the West Bank within a wall of security fortifications, with no more than a narrow territorial corridor linking the Palestinian region, via Jericho, to Jordan and the rest of the Arab world.

David Newman teaches political geography at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheba, Israel. His study of the "green line" boundary between Israel and the West Bank has recently been published by the International Boundaries Research Unit in England.

The area of the West Bank, together with the Gaza Strip, would create a state no larger than Cyprus or Brunei, smaller than virtually every state in the United States. Allowing two antagonistic populations to continue to reside within this territory would be akin to creating a new Bosnia or a new Lebanon in a much smaller piece of territory. It is sufficiently problematic just to think about the difficulties involved in creating territorial links between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, traversing Israel proper, without having to envisage territorial corridors linking up disconnected parts of the West Bank itself. The Palestinian areas "A" and "B" are physically disconnected from each other, requiring "safe" passage from one to the other through Israeli controlled roads.

The Oslo II map's significance is painfully clear. Once again, Israel has tried to achieve a peace agreement, while attempting to retain control over most of the territory and all of the settlers. Concern with the rights of 120,000 settlers has superseded concern for the rights of more than two million Palestinians. The Rabin government has succumbed to its fear of the political consequences of having to remove militant Jewish settlers from their isolated enclaves in



Hebron and Elon Moreh. So the government has tried to placate them by drawing a map that leaves them under Israeli control, while at the same time relieving Israel of the responsibility of direct control over the large, and growing, Palestinian population.

But in trying to please everyone, the Israeli government has ended up pleasing no one. Instead of a coherent state, the Palestinians are left with disconnected nodes. While they will have achieved a high level of self-government, they will control little of the territory that would provide the necessary "breathing space" for economic activity and refugee resettlement. This is not mere rhetoric about "lebensraum," cloaking Palestinian expansionist intentions; Oslo II denies the Palestinians the minimal requirements for a state's survival and development.

For their part, the Israeli settlers fear for their own security under Oslo II and accuse the government of forsaking them. Refusing to acknowledge Palestinian control over any of the "Land of Israel," they have let it be known that they will defy the Palestinian police, whom they regard as armed terrorists, with armed resistance. Both the militant settlers and the Hamas terrorists seek to torpedo the achievements of the past two years. And because this agreement is so difficult to implement, it has created the situation on the ground which lends itself to renewed extremist violence.

Sitting in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, my thoughts turned to the settlers. Through the window of the synagogue, I was transfixed by the notice boards displaying large advertisements calling on those "who remain faithful to the Land of Israel" to demonstrate against the government's "betrayal" policies during the course of the Knesset debate over Oslo II. Many of my fellow worshipers on that solemn and contemplative day riled against the Israeli government in their prayers. They loudly proclaimed the words of the traditional that "evil governments (*memshelet zadon*) be eradicated from the face of the earth." Ironically, they now directed these words against their own government. This, unfortunately, was the only concrete meaning they derived from their prayers this year; they moved quickly over other sections of the traditional liturgy beseeching the divine being for a "*shnat shalom; shnat masa umatan*," a year of peace, a year of dialogue and discourse. For them, Oslo II is the final betrayal of the land by those who, in their worldview, are no longer fit to speak or make decisions on their behalf.

Despite the optimistic rhetoric, it is unfortunately not true that the implementation of the Oslo II accords is an irreversible process. The fact that there are now leaders on both sides who enter into dialogue and negotiation with each other is no longer sufficient. Two years ago this was a major achievement. But that spirit has not yet been diffused throughout the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, and Oslo II does nothing to change their mutual suspicion. The agreement compartmentalizes and divides, it causes each to continue to mistrust the "other," waiting for the "other" to break the terms of

the agreement. The complex nature of the agreement, destined to be no more than another "stage," another interim phase, lends itself to be broken by those who would only be too happy to see the end of the current political process of conciliation.

An Israeli decision to withdraw fully from most, if not all, of the West Bank, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, would be an irreversible step. But as long as Israel attempts to find a way of placating the settlers in Hebron and Elon Moreh, there is no way that we can completely separate ourselves. And for as long as Israelis remain interwoven among the Palestinian population centers, there is always the possibility that we will return as occupiers. The justifications will not be hard to find: The security of Israeli settlers is threatened; the Palestinian towns are the refuge for Hamas terrorist activity; the Palestinians are not keeping to their side of the agreement; and so on.

Those of us who support the peace process are left with a dilemma. On the one hand, we want to support the Rabin government's attempt to move toward a peaceful solution with our Palestinian neighbors, allowing both them and us to live our lives in mutual respect and without the existential fears which have accompanied us for the past fifty years. On the other hand, we are witness to a map that falls far short of any final arrangement, with which all are dissatisfied. The long periods of transition from limited autonomy to extended autonomy, from Jericho and Gaza alone to encompass all the urban centers, from Oslo I to Oslo II and to however many more Oslos are to follow, creates frustration. It allows time for the opponents of peace to find ways to torpedo the agreements.

Many of us argue that the government should have moved toward negotiating a "final arrangement" from the very outset. At the very least, the process required long-term strategic thinking about the ultimate objectives of this peace process with a view to building progressively toward the concrete realization of these objectives. If Rabin's ultimate objective is a Palestinian state, then he should publicly voice this position and begin the delimitation of maps and boundaries which will separate the two peoples. We've had enough of obscure semantics: What we mean by a "final arrangement" is the establishment of a separate Palestinian state.

Government ministers, such as Yossi Beilin, Yossi Sarid, and Uzi Baram, are beginning to come out of the closet with their recognition of the inevitability of such a solution. The more they say it, the more acceptable it will become within the political lexicon of the citizens of Israel. Until two years ago, few Israelis could envisage their own leaders shaking hands and negotiating with their Palestinian counterparts. But the familiarity of two years has bred acceptance. What was unthinkable has become the norm. The next norm must be to inculcate the concept of a Palestinian state among the Israeli populace.



The supporters of peace are also guilty. We do little publicly and actively to support the government in its quest for peace. We fail to counter the growing demonstrations of the right wing with pro-peace activism. We have left the field, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, vacant for the right-wing opponents of the peace process to spread their message of fear, hatred, and exclusivism. We rub our hands contentedly in the



JUDAISM, HUMAN VALUES, AND THE JEWISH STATE

YESHAYAHU LEIBOWITZ

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knowledge that "our" government is doing the work for us. And as we sit quietly by, we weaken the base of public support for the negotiators. The only message they hear is one of militant opposition by the settlers and their supporters. Unsuccessfully, they seek ways to placate the opposition, drawing incomprehensible maps that please nobody.

We must redefine what we mean when we talk about the "peace process." We tend to throw the term "peace" around quite freely without filling the term with some concrete meaning. We envisage the lion lying down with the lamb, the normalization of economic and social relations between the two peoples, the miraculous pushing aside of bitter memories of violence, warfare, bloodshed, and dispossession. We fooled ourselves that on the morning after the signing we would wake up to a new era, a world in which our physical security was ensured, in which we could get on with improving the social and moral quality of our lives instead of devoting our time, energy, and resources to improving our military and defensive posture. We didn't take account of the fact that to achieve something called "peace," we have to fight as fiercely as we do in war.

That fight includes recognition that we are not the only victims, that there are victims on the "other" side as well. Reaching an understanding that we too have created injustices, just as we have been the victims of injustice. And in accepting that "others" have the same rights to achieve independence and sovereignty.

As Jewish citizens of the sovereign State of Israel, we exude pride in our independence. We must recognize that the Palestinians aspire to the same feelings. At this early stage, "peace" still has little to do with whether we love or hate each other, whether we are reconciled to each other or continue to live a life of mutual mistrust. Peace is about healing, about achieving a solution in which neither side to the conflict feels inferior or subordinate to the other.

For the government to continue forward to what many of us hope will be the final stage of this difficult process, we, the supporters of peace, must become more active. Despite our criticism of the current agreement and its seeming unworkability, we must not give up the fight. We must push and cajole the government in continuing to move forward and do our utmost to ensure another victory for the forces of peace in the 1996 elections. The peace process is not yet irreversible. We must do our best to ensure that it is not reversed.

It seems portentous that this important agreement should have been completed just a few hours before the beginning of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, signed in Washington during the traditional ten days of *t'shuva* and introspection, and confirmed by the Knesset on the day after Yom Kippur. The period of contemplation is now behind us for another year. Many of us have prayed for a year of peace. It is now our responsibility to help transform this abstract longing into a concrete reality. □

Abraham

The old man rested
in the cool white shuttered room,
the bottles of pills from the hospital
near him on his night table.
Through the doctor had warned him,
though he had pain where the bandage was, still fresh,
he had to go.
And he went down the dark stairwell,
onto the street, burning with light
in the heat of the day.
The windows and stone ond brick walls had a red glow
of midsummer, like a flaming furnace—

And after buying all the groceries for his evening guests,
he sat on a bench in the middle of Broadway,
near the fresh red geraniums planted in some dry earth
and watched the pigeons perched in the shade of window ledges.

And the evening was coming, suddenly,
blue and calm and almost eternal, and he looked
at all the pedestrians on the sidewalks, hoping
they would come soon, so he could run to meet them,

the ones he waited for,

and something told him: look up to heaven now
and count the white windows
scattered like dim stars across the night,
if you are able to count them.

—Deborah Zerden

A Map for Peace

Yitzhak Frankenthal

I have been a member of Netivot Shalom for three years, since my son Arik urged me to join. As an Orthodox Jew, I always believed that Israelis needed to make peace with the Palestinians and to correct the mistakes that we had made in the past seven years during the Intifada. We have to understand that an Arab is a human being in exactly the same way that a Jew is a human being, and that we have to be sufficiently wise to understand that if the Palestinians have a national home, only then will there be the possibility of peace between us (although even then it will take years to build).

Arik was my first child. To my great sorrow, on July 7, 1994, he hitchhiked home from the army to Moshav Gimzu, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and was picked up by Hamas supporters, who shot him three times in the head, killing him. Two months later, the murderers were captured. Four of those involved were later killed in other incidents with the police. One remains in prison.

A day after the *shivah* (mourning period) for my son ended, I sent a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin asking him not to let these kinds of murderous acts deter him from the peace process. I pointed out that the murderers are people who oppose the peace process, and that we should not allow Hamas murderers to kill the hope for peace. A month later, people from Netivot Shalom, the organization of Orthodox religious peace activists in Israel, asked me to be the executive director. I was reluctant to enter the political arena, however, because politics is often ugly. People promise and don't deliver, and I didn't want to be part of that kind of community.

In December 1994, I was invited by Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to come to the Nobel Prize ceremony, where they and Yassir Arafat received the Peace Prize. It was there that I decided to accept the offer to become director of Netivot Shalom. In July, I had sold my industrial radiation detection business. Since I like to initiate and implement ideas, I decided to take a year or two off from my business career and work to accelerate the peace process.

Yitzhak Frankenthal is secretary of Netivot Shalom and Oz v'Shalom.

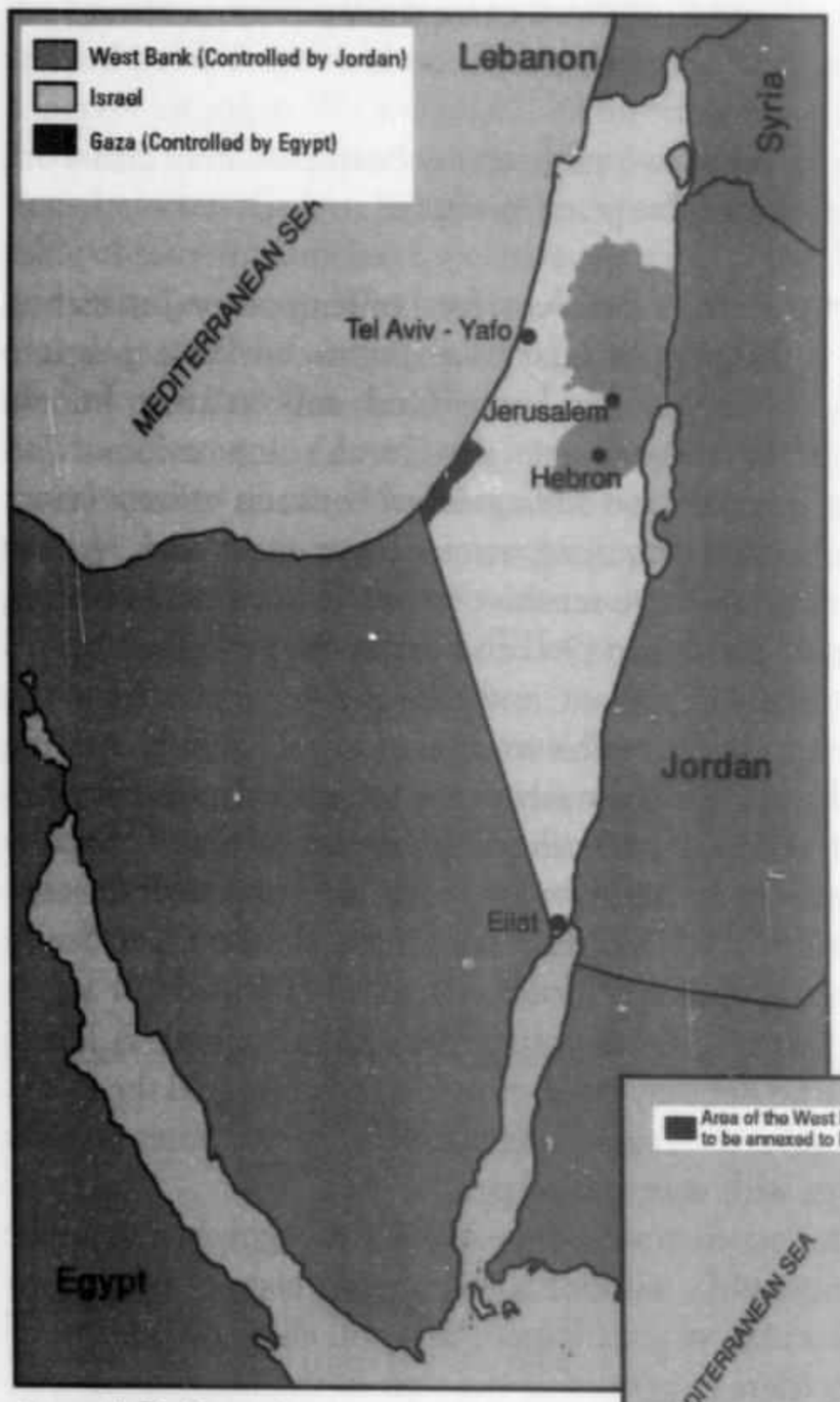
The main problem for contemporary Judaism is that people today have forgotten what it means to be a Jew—to serve God and to treat human beings in accord with the Torah's injunctions. Too often, people have distinguished between *mitzvot* (commandments) requiring us to serve God and *mitzvot* requiring us to be sensitive to our fellow human beings. Our obligations to God and to our fellow human beings are equally important, and each is complementary to the other. Translating this into politics, you can't be serving God and simultaneously trying to hold on to the Greater Land of Israel, because doing that would make it impossible for us to fulfill *mitzvot* such as "Thou shalt love the stranger," "Thou shalt not cheat the stranger," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you don't know how to treat others, you violate God's holiness. A Jew is one who not only believes in God who created the world and gave us Torah, but one who treats other human beings with care and respect.

Our peace movement explicitly recognizes that peace is impossible without a Palestinian state. We plan to issue a map of a settlement that will allow 80 percent of the settlers to remain in the part of the West Bank that will officially become part of Israel. If we annex about 6 or 7 percent of the West Bank and make that part of Israel, we solve the problem. Our plan gives the Palestinians a state, separates Israel and the Palestinians, provides economic support for the first ten years of their state, and allows Israel to maintain security along its borders with a demilitarized Palestinian state.

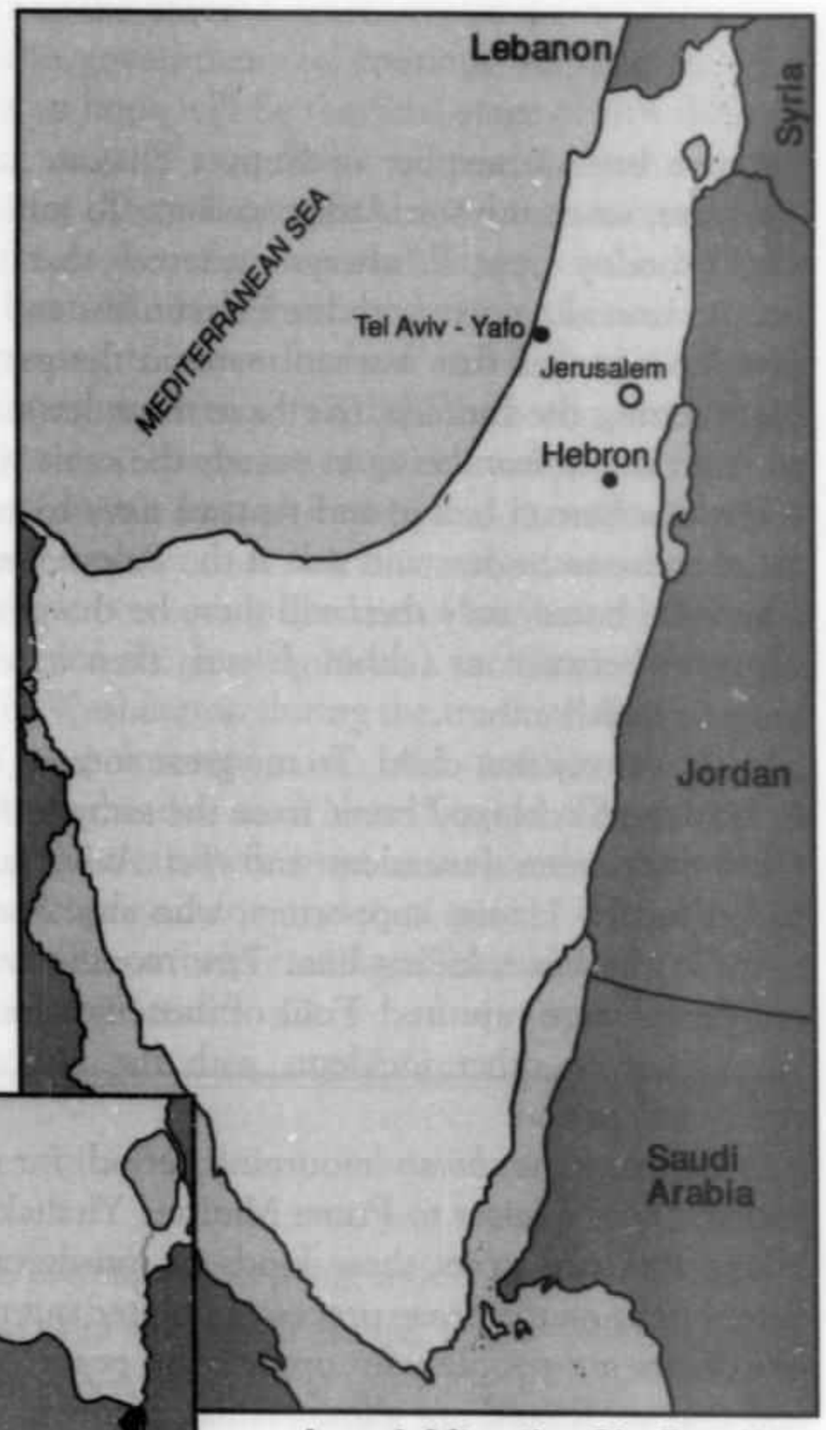
To those in Kiryat Arba and other settlements not included in the 80 percent of the settlers who would be part of Israel under our plan, we say the following: "If you want to be a citizen of a Palestinian state, you must learn to live there in peace. If not, come home. But if you are not willing to come home or to live in peace, our task is to forcibly evacuate you, just as Menachem Begin and Arik Sharon did in Yamit to those who would not accept the Likud's agreement with the Egyptians."

The Palestinians have to understand that this is a practical solution; it is one way we could convince the Israeli population to accept a Palestinian state. We will not succeed in building peace if it requires a civil war between Jews. I don't want such a war. But we could lose something far more important—the entire reality of a Jewish society built on Jewish values—if we let the settlers dictate to us the conditions for peace.

The reason Netivot Shalom is releasing this map is to build support for a compromise acceptable to the settlers, many of whom might agree if they were presented with a plan that did not require them to move. □



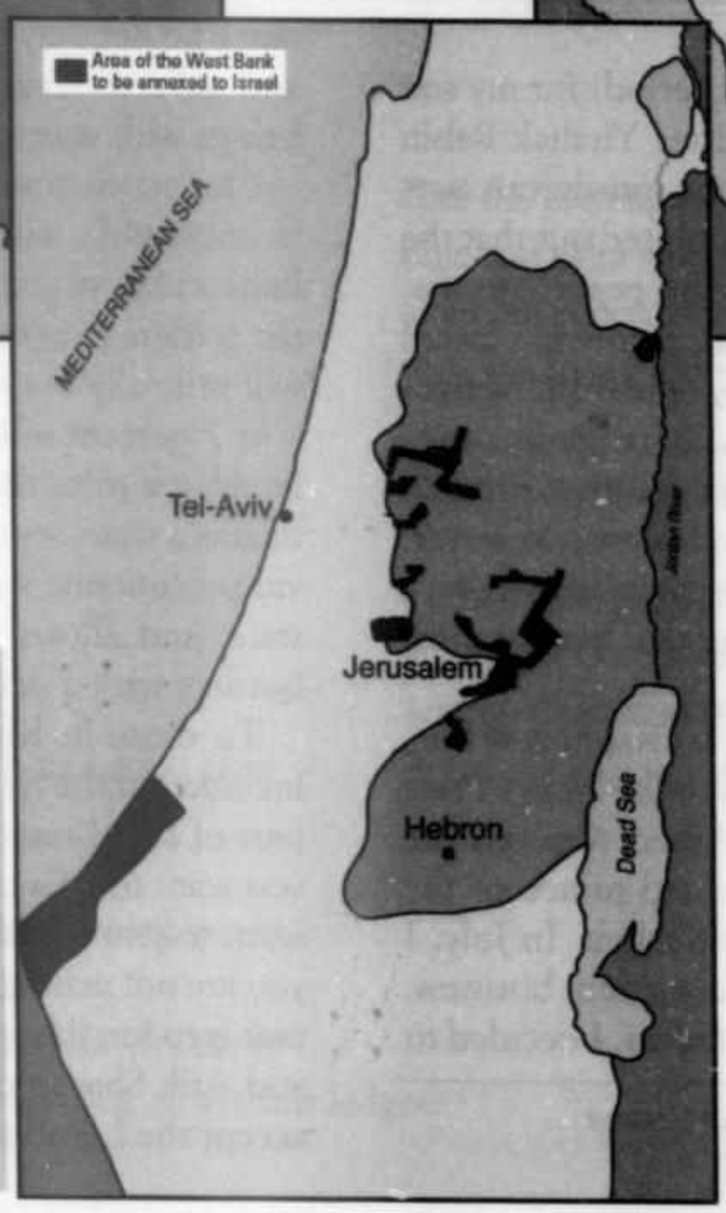
Israel Before the Six-Day War



Israel After the Six-Day War (Including occupied territories)

West Bank Settlements to be Annexed to Israel in the Oz v'Shalom-Netivot Shalom Proposal Include:

Alfei Menashe; Ariel; Ginot Shomron; Kdumim; Elkana; Givat Zeev; Atarot; Ramot; Ramot Eshkol; Beit El A & B; Maale Adumim; Ofra; Kever Rachel; Efrat; Beitar; Kfar Etzyon.



The Oz v'Shalom Peace Proposal

No Peace in Hebron

Eitan Felner and Jessica Montell

"It's not enough to be right; you have to be smart," read the slogan of a national road safety campaign in Israel a few years ago. Political commentators are still analyzing the 400-page "Oslo II" Accords, signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in September, yet one thing was clear even before the White House signing ceremony in late September: The portion of the agreement concerning the Jewish settlement in Hebron is neither right nor smart.

The indefatigable Yassir Arafat and Shimon Peres devoted sleepless nights and endless sessions to the issue of Hebron, the thorniest aspect of the negotiations. Since the first group of Israeli settlers headed by Rabbi Moshe Levinger illegally occupied the Park Hotel in Hebron in 1968 and declared the site to be a Jewish settlement, a climate of mutual suspicion and resentment has endured between Jews and Palestinians in the city. The presence of militant, confrontational Jewish settlers in the densely populated center of a large Palestinian city has resulted in constant friction between the two populations, fostering a cycle of hatred, enmity, and violence. By preserving the Jewish settlement in Hebron, Oslo II ensures that this vicious cycle will continue unabated, and Hebron will remain a thorn in the peace process.

In order to provide protection for the settlers, Oslo II stipulates that, unlike the other cities in the West Bank, Hebron will undergo only partial redeployment of Israeli military forces. This arrangement may indeed be necessary to protect the settlers, but experience shows that it can do so only at the expense of Hebron's Palestinian residents.

The Israeli security forces have consistently acted with vigor and often indiscriminate brutality in response to attacks on Israelis by militant Palestinians. In contrast, for more than twenty years, the Israeli security forces have made little or no effort to protect the lives, safety, and property of the Palestinian residents of Hebron from repeated attacks by settlers in the city.

This double standard enables settlers to continue their violent attacks against Palestinians with almost total impunity. Journalists and human rights organizations have documented numerous instances in which settlers open fire on Palestinian houses, sabotage vehicles, block roads, shatter windows, destroy crops, uproot trees, overturn stalls, and harass merchants in the city market. Many of these incidents were witnessed by members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), who did not intervene. In other instances, soldiers have joined settlers in acts of violence against Palestinians.

The experience of Fares Musa Abed el-Hafez Natsheh is typical both of settler violence and of official Israeli indifference to it. While driving to work one day, Natsheh's car was nearly forced into oncoming traffic by a car full of settlers. When he stopped his car at the glass factory he owns, the settler car stopped next to him:

> Four settlers, three armed with pistols and the fourth with a submachine gun, got out .... I asked them in Hebrew: "What happened?" One said to me, "Nothing," and punched me in my jaw. I got out of the car. Another approached me and hit me in the jaw with his pistol butt. I lost five teeth.

Fares Natsheh tried to escape into the factory, along with his children and his brother's children, who also witnessed the events. Three settlers followed and hit him several times in the face, then stood at the entrance of the factory with their weapons pointed at the family. His nephew hailed a passing army jeep, which stopped about thirty yards from the factory. The soldiers sat in the jeep, turned on their searchlight, and watched the incident. After about five minutes the settlers got into their car and drove away.

On three occasions, Natsheh attempted to file a complaint about this incident with the Civil Administration,

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Eitan Felner and Jessica Montell are, respectively, Deputy Director and Development Director of B'Tselem–The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. This article emerged from B'Tselem's recent report, "Impossible Co-existence: Human Rights in Hebron Since the Massacre at the Cave of the Patriarchs."



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

the Israeli authority responsible for all civil matters concerning Palestinians in the territories; each time he was turned away. Although the police are required by law to investigate all illegal acts, no investigation was conducted, even after the appearance of a lengthy article about the incident in the Jeruslaem newspaper *Kol Ha'Ir*.

The Dabuya neighborhood in the center of Hebron suffers perhaps the most severe consequences of lax law enforcement. For fifteen years, Palestinians in the neighborhood have endured attacks by settlers from the Beit Hadassah, Beit Shneerson, Beit Hason, and Beit Romena buildings. Palestinians who live near Beit Hadassah have been subjected to stone-throwing, harassment of customers, threats of violence, theft of property, dumping of garbage in their yards, and attacks by dogs. Neighborhood residents have lodged numerous complaints to the security forces and even an appeal to the Israeli High Court of Justice, all to no avail.

Samiha Najed A-Tamimi, a resident of Dabuya, told a field worker for B'Tselem, an Israeli human-rights organization, about a recent confrontation with settlers:

> A curfew was imposed on the city. We were without water so I sent my fifteen-year-old daughter to our neighbors to fill up a jug of water. Suddenly, I heard her scream. I went into the street and saw about fifteen settler girls dragging my daughter by her hair to the checkpoint at Beit Hadassah. My eldest daughter took a piece of rubber and beat one of the girls until we freed my daughter. The girls went to Beit Hadassah and brought adult settlers who began to pound on the door and throw stones and bottles at our house. My daughters and I began to scream. Our neighbor tried to come to my house to protect us, but the soldiers arrived and beat the two neighbors, claiming that they had violated the curfew. This continued for about two hours until Border Police removed the settlers and freed our two neighbors.

As these two incidents demonstrate, not only do soldiers not intervene to protect Palestinians from settler violence, following such attacks, the police and judicial system are loathe to hold the perpetrators accountable.

The massacre of twenty-nine Muslim worshipers at Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs in February 1994 called attention to the systematic failure of the Israeli authorities to protect Palestinians from settler violence throughout the West Bank and specifically in Hebron. In the wake of the massacre, the government established a commission of inquiry, headed by then-President of the Supreme Court Meir Shamgar. The Shamgar Commission sharply criticized the authorities' failure to enforce the law against settlers and called for the law to be enforced "with rigor, decisiveness and equality, against anyone who breaks it."

Yet even the Shamgar Commission's unequivocal recommendations did not succeed in generating either the will or the ability to protect Palestinians and enforce the law in Hebron. According to a report released by B'Tselem in September, discriminatory law enforcement and human-rights violations have continued and even worsened.

Immediately following the massacre, additional IDF troops were deployed in Hebron, including increased patrols along the streets, positioning of additional observation points on roofs of homes, and more, often violent, searches of residents' homes. This massive security presence has resulted in significantly higher fatalities; in the eighteen months following the massacre, security forces killed twenty-six Palestinians in Hebron, compared to eleven in the entire rest of the West Bank.

Less dramatic than the casualty figures, yet perhaps more insidious, is the massive disruption of daily life in

Chanukah

TIKKUN's guide to celebrating the world's first recorded national liberation struggle.

• The Ritual •

Each night of Chanukah we light candles, starting with the shamas (used to light the others) and one candle, and then adding one additional candle each night for a total of eight nights. The tradition is to sing, dance, and rejoice in our liberation and our freedom.

The traditional blessings over the candles:

ALL NIGHTS:

1. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu, lehadleek ner, shel chanukah.

(Blessed are you, the force that rules all of existence, who sanctifies us by giving us a way of life directed by holy commandments and commanded us to light the lights of Chanukah.)

2. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteynu, bayamim hahem, bazman hazeh.

(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who made possible miracles for our ancestors, in those days, and also makes the same possible for us in our own times.)

ADD ON THE FIRST NIGHT:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, shehechiyanu, Vekee-imanu, veheeg-iyanu, lazman hazeh.

(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who has kept us in life, made us flourish, and made it possible for us to reach this happy occasion.)

Next, tell the story and do the "Making It Real" exercise described below.

• The Story •

(The non-mythologized version you may never have heard)

When King Cyrus of Persia allowed the remnants of the ancient tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return from the exile imposed upon them by Babylonian conquerors in the seventh century before the common era (B.C.E.), they formed the kingdom of Judea. As part of the Persian Empire, and later as part of the empire of Alexander the Great, Judea had relative autonomy to shape its own internal religious life.

When Alexander died at the end of the fourth century B.C.E., his empire split into three rival factions, and Judea was caught between two of them: the Seleucids, centered in Syria, and the Ptolemies, centered in Egypt. For the next hundred and fifty years these two kingdoms warred and each sought to incorporate Judea as part of its empire.

Although the battle was largely military, there was an important ideological dimension. Alexander had introduced the Jews to Hellenistic Greek culture—its philosophy, its literature, and its impressive technology and power. Forcibly dragged into the larger Mediterranean world, many Jews could see that "the real world" was dominated by wealth and power. Some Jews, primarily those who lived in and around the larger cities, saw an opportunity to join this larger world by becoming merchants and traders, or by establishing political and economic relationships with others in the Hellenistic empire. It was apparent to these Jews that their tribal religion would have little meaning to those who had conquered the world. The religion of their fathers seemed irrelevant in a world reshaped by the "modern" realities of science; they were drawn by the allure of a society that worshiped the body and saw reality in terms of what could be tasted, touched, and directly experienced by the senses.

These Jewish Hellenizers saw no point in resisting Greek rule. Their goal was to live in peace with the powers that ran the world. They could benefit from the connection to the expanding trade of the Hellenistic world. On the other hand, the vast majority of the Jewish people were small, independent farmers, who lived on the land and brought its produce to Jerusalem three times each year to celebrate their hard won freedom from slavery, bore the brunt of the oppressive taxes imposed first by the Greeks, and then alternately, by Seleucids and Ptolemies. These Jews resented foreign rule and detested the city-dwelling elites who seemed to be culling favor with the Hellenistic conquerors, imitating their ways, abandoning the religion of the past, and becoming worshipers at the shrine of political and cultural "reality."

Judea's plight worsened considerably in the early part of the second century with the ascendence to the throne of the Seleucid Antiochus IV. Claiming that he wanted to "protect" Judea from the Ptolemies, Antiochus invaded Judea and marched toward Egypt, where his armies were defeated. He turned back to Judea, and attempted to impose Hellenistic culture by force. He ordered the Temple in Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Greek gods and forbade the practice of circumcision, Kashrut, and observance of the Sabbath.

To the already assimilated elites of the city...the new rules were insensitive, but did not constitute a major crisis. Perhaps Antiochus was a boor, but the culture he represented was "happening," while the Jewish religion he forbade was a remnant of the past.

Yet many of the people in the countryside, burdened by Seleucid taxes that expropriated more of their wealth, found the Hellenists' narcissistic fascination with their own power repugnant. The essence of their now-banned religion was its insistence that there was a single God governing the universe who made possible freedom from oppression. It was in the name of that God that they joined a rebellion against the Seleucids under the leadership of a country priest named Mattathais and his five sons (of whom Judah became the most famous, known as "the hammer" or Maccabee).

These Maccabees, as they came to be known, rejected the notion, shared by their contemporary Jewish establishment, that it would be pointless to fight, that

one would do best by appeasing the ruling class, learning their language and ways, and accepting their system of oppression. The Maccabees understood Judaism as teaching that "the spirit of the people was greater than the man's technology," or, in traditional Jewish terms, "not by power, and not by might, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

To fight against superior military force was totally illogical and unrealistic from the Hellenizers' standpoint. But the Maccabees rejected assessments of "realism" that derived from the framework imposed by the imperialists, and drew instead upon the Jewish religion and the stubborn spirit of a people who had come to believe that every human being was created in the divine image, hence had a right to be treated with respect and decency. These were people who could not submit to the rule of the imperialist, and whose religion taught them that they need not, because the central power of the universe was a power that rejected the reality of oppression. Their Torah told the tale of their origins in a slave rebellion against another imperialist power thought to be invincible—Egypt of the Pharaohs.

Armed with these stories, the Maccabees and their followers used guerrilla tactics to win the first national liberation struggle in recorded history. In 165 B.C.E. they retook Jerusalem, purified and rededicated the Temple (Chanukah means dedication), and rekindled the eternal light that was to glow therein. The fighting continued many years more, but eventually the Maccabees and their descendants (called Hashmona'im) set up an independent Jewish state.

Unfortunately, that state degenerated as the Hashmona'im tried to become a nation like all other nations, adopting the same perversions of state power that other nations adopted, and becoming "realistic" and hence spiritually and morally corrupt. (Some right-wing Zionists made Chanukah their central observance precisely because they thought Jews could only be secure if they became as ruthless and immoral as everyone else. They did not realize that the whole point is that the victory was made possible because the Jews would *not* accept the logic of everyone else, otherwise they could just assimilate into the Hellenistic world, as so many other peoples did.)

The Rabbis who shaped rabbinic Judaism, themselves depressed at the defeat of Jewish rebellions against Rome and, aware of the moral degeneration of the Hashmona'im, tried, by focusing on a story about a miracle of a pot of oil that kept the Chanukah lights burning for eight nights, to downplay Chanukah's importance and reframe it into a minor "religious" event. But the Jewish people intuitively recognized that something miraculous had happened. The miracle was this: A critical mass of people had come to recognize that there was a force in the world that made possible the transformation of what is to what ought to be (the force that we call God). This is what Torah is about and this is why the Jews have been witnesses to God's potential presence in the world. That recognition, when it takes hold of large numbers of people, becomes a manifestation of God's presence, and in that presence "the power of the people" suffused with divine energy becomes greater than all the technology and manipulations of the most sophisticated forms of oppression.

• Making It Real •

In the contemporary world, Jews have turned Chanukah into a Christmas clone, trying to give their children and each other gifts to approximate the gift-giving frenzy that has been particularly promoted by the capitalist market. While there's nothing wrong with gift giving (the kids in the TIKKUN community made the point that they also like this focus), it can become a substitute for confronting the holiday's rich spiritual message: what is does not define what can be. So don't get discouraged if the craziness and evil in the world seems overwhelming at times, because it can be changed through our activity as partners with God.

What follows is a spiritual exercise that you can try with your family as a way to give this message more immediacy in our lives.

Try these exercises and you will see how Chanukah can have a different focus than a mere fixation on who has received the best presents.

Each evening, pick a theme in which you allow yourself to imagine how things could if they were the way they ought to be. Then tell in detail what would have to happen in order for your vision to be made real, and how you might participate in some way in its actualization. Everyone in the family, TIKKUN discussion group, circle of friends, or any other group observing the ritual will share his or her answer.

For example, imagine changes in your:
a. world of work
b. relationship with your parents
c. Jewish community
d. your neighborhood and relationship with neighbors
e. society
f. American politics
g. social change movements
h. larger world.

Share your vision with others and listen, without criticizing, to theirs. Then rejoice and sing songs of celebration and of struggle (both Chanukah songs, and songs from other liberation struggles from around the world).

Please reproduce this and encourage friends to use it as a guide for constructing their own meaningful Chanukah observance. And urge them to subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, so that we get the support we need to continue to develop ideas for how to deepen Jewish observance. To subscribe: send $31 to TIKKUN, 255 West 100th St., Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10025. Written by Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN, in memory of his beloved mother, Beatrice I. Hirschman Lerner.

Hebron as a result of the settlers and soldiers. Palestinians wishing to travel from one end of the city to the other are confronted by a logistical nightmare. The main roads surrounding the city center, where the settlers live, are blocked off with concrete blocks, cement barrels, and concrete fences. Hebron is the only city in the West Bank with checkpoints inside the city. Curfews and closures—imposed more often in Hebron than in any other city in the West Bank—impose additional hardships on the residents, hinder commercial activity, and disrupt vital services such as hospitals and the fire department.

The Salaimeh family live on the main street of the Dabuya neighborhood, which has checkpoints at either end preventing the entrance of Palestinian cars. On the morning of June 2, 1995, Jamila Salaimeh went into labor, and had to walk about 250 meters to the Police Square checkpoint to get a car to the 'Alia Hospital, where she gave birth that day. The next day, Salaimeh was released from the hospital, which is located less than a kilometer from their home, and she, her husband Raigheb, and her newborn baby drove home. In order to reach their house by car, they drove a circuitous route of about twelve kilometers to the Tel Rumeida checkpoint, located one block from their house. The soldiers at the checkpoint prevented their entrance into the neighborhood. After protracted negotiations, the family traveled back along the circuitous route to the Police Square checkpoint, where they got out of the car and walked the rest of the way home.

The imposition of such restrictive measures falls exclusively on Palestinians. Only their cars are stopped at roadblocks and prevented from using certain roads; settlers pass through unimpeded. Curfews are imposed only on Palestinians regardless of the reason for the curfew; in response to an attack against a settler, a curfew is imposed on the Palestinians in the city in order to apprehend those responsible for the act. In response to an attack by a settler against a Palestinian, a curfew is also imposed solely on Palestinians, allegedly to prevent "disturbances of the peace" and to protect them from further settler attacks.

Thus the entire Palestinian population of Hebron is punished when an individual Palestinian attacks a Jew. Even more absurd, the entire Palestinian population is punished when a Jew attacks a Palestinian.

Violations of human rights result not just from the violent attacks of settlers and the indifference of the IDF. The settlers' very presence results in additional human rights violations, bureaucratic harassment, and personal indignities. The massive military presence is there to protect the settlers, as are the road closures, the curfews, the roadblocks, and the checkpoints. This creates an absurd moral and political reality in which a minority of 450 Jewish settlers dictates the lives of more than 120,000 Palestinians in the city. The tragic irony of the situation is that because of the settlement, only in Hebron—the city with the greatest restrictions on mobility and the highest fatalities—are Israeli soldiers to remain in the city under the Oslo II Accords.

Theoretically, it would be possible to redeploy IDF forces completely outside of Hebron and leave the settlement under Palestinian authority. But the long history of ongoing confrontations between Palestinians and settlers in Hebron and the opposition of both populations to this solution made it impossible. Ideally, once Hebron is free from occupation, Jews who genuinely want to live there as citizens and good neighbors should be able to do so. The current situation is not one of respectful neighbors in a democratic state, however, but of Israeli citizens who have violated international law in settling in occupied territory. Under these circumstances, co-existence in Hebron is an impossibility.

By preserving the Jewish settlement in Hebron, Oslo II ensures that the cycle of hatred, emnity, and violence will continue.

Only the dismantlement of the settlement and the complete withdrawal of IDF troops can prevent further violations of human rights. Several members of the Israeli cabinet have argued that the Hebron settlement is not in Israel's national interest; the large number of soldiers needed to protect the settlers in Hebron is an economic burden and diverts resources from genuine security needs. The Palestinians also clearly support the removal of the settlers from Hebron.

Given that both sides agree on the untenability of the Hebron settlement, why does Oslo II preserve it? For its part, the Israeli government was clearly guided by internal politics rather than diplomatic exigencies. The

Rabin government promised that it would not dismantle any settlements during the interim period set out in the original Oslo accords, and to do so before the next Israeli parliamentary elections, which will take place sometime next year, could be political suicide. The Palestinians, the weaker partner in the asymmetrical negotiations, probably thought that this was the best deal they could get.

Whatever the considerations, the compromise on Hebron is a non-solution, which will only perpetuate—and perhaps exacerbate—the cycle of violence. A handful of militant settlers in the heart of a large Palestinian city protected by Israeli soldiers constitutes a powder keg. The introduction of Palestinian policemen into this mixture only makes the situation more volatile. The Action Committee of the nearby Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, which is vocal in its opposition to the introduction of Palestinian police into Hebron under Oslo II, called on Israelis "not to obey terrorists in uniform, or Jewish police or soldiers working with them." This incendiary statement raises the specter of armed settlers who, when stopped by Palestinian police for traffic violations or any other matter, express their opposition with violence.

Under the terms of Oslo II, there can be no peace in Hebron. Settlers will continue and perhaps increase their assaults on Palestinians and their property. The violence is liable to spiral, enveloping Israeli soldiers, Palestinian police, and militants on both sides. Such violence cannot be contained within municipal borders; without peace in Hebron, there cannot be peace in Ramallah or in Tel Aviv. Israel and the Palestinian Authority failed to understand that an agreement that does not ensure the basic human dignity of all residents of Hebron threatens to undermine the entire peace process. Such an agreement is not only unjust, but also unwise. □

A Meditation at Middle Age

Sorry I'm late.
I was out the door, standing
in the hallway, keys in hand,
when it seemed I had forgotten something.
So I stepped inside
to look at my list
of what I had to do, and when, and where.
Then I forgot to leave.

Everyone—everyone—forgets more
as she gets older.
Absolutely everyone.
Its not a symptom of anything at all,
including whatsitsname,
the oldtimer's disease.

I'm fine as long as I—as
long as I—as long as—I'm
just fine. As long as I:
Write everything down
and remember where I wrote it down
and where my glasses are.

This is not a poem.
Poetry rises in the morning
of life, light out of chaos,
emotion recollected in tranquility.
(Who said that?) Recollection
is the key.

This is not an essay.
An essay moves from here
to there, the flight of an arrow
in the bright afternoon. It knows
where it began, where it is,
where it's going.

This is a meditation.
Meditation is circular, a moon
in the dusky sky; what we have—
—we hope—after the morning chaos
and the afternoon's forward motion,
before the second chaos of the night.

Sorry I'm late. I couldn't find
where I had written this down.

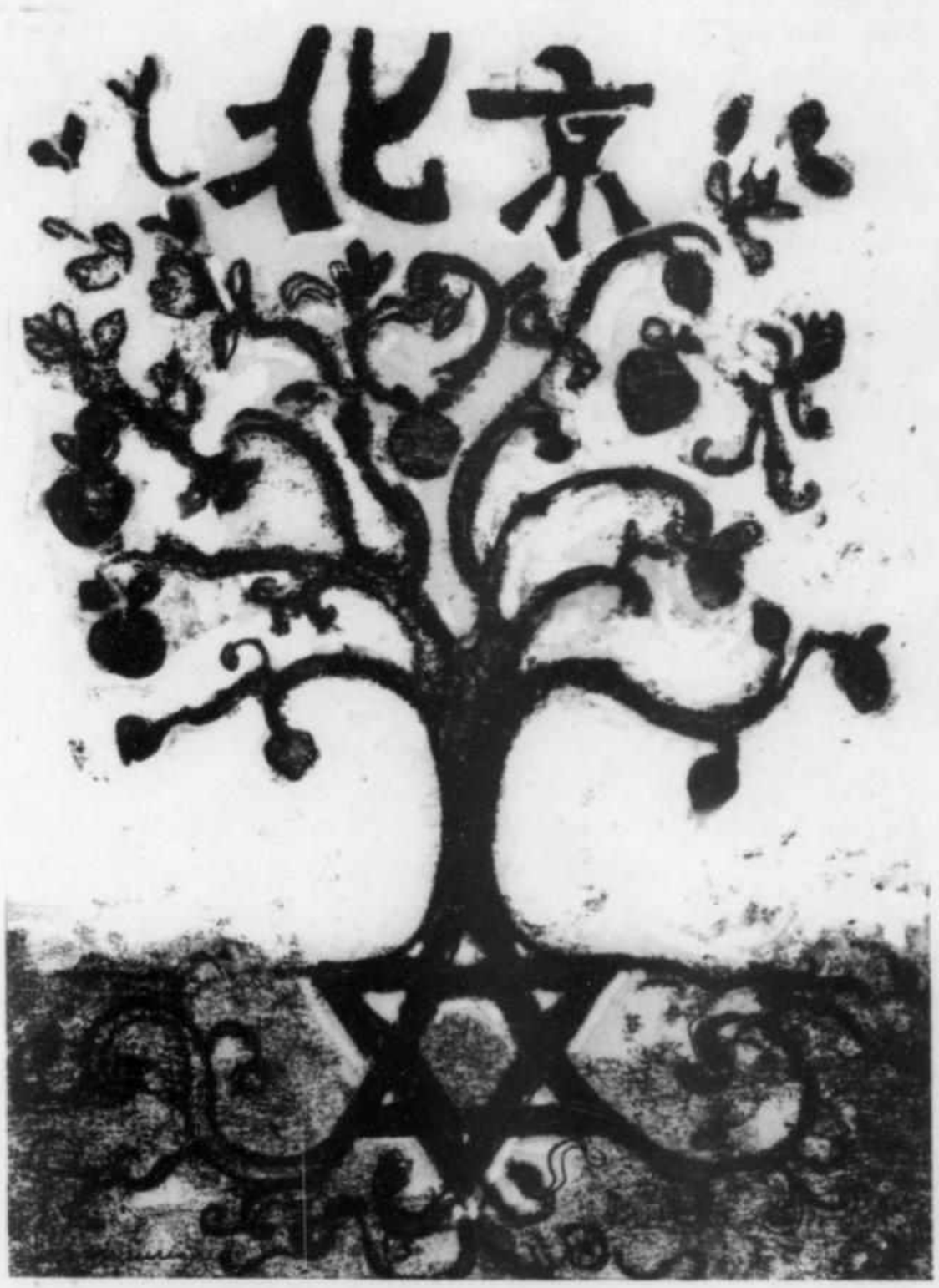
—Judith Mahoney Pasternak

Jewish Continuity in Beijing

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

If you're worried about Jewish continuity, go to Beijing, China, where two young women from the United States have been building Jewish life from scratch. With vigor and inventiveness and against all odds, Roberta Lipson and Elyse Silverberg are trying to solve the ultimate Chinese puzzle—how to create Jewish community in a place where there are almost no Jews, in a country largely tolerant of different belief systems but unexposed to overt expressions of religious diversity. They are piecing together a meaningful community out of memory and desire, industriousness and commitment, passion and will, which is virtually all they have.

They have no synagogue, no *bimah*, no holy ark, no eternal light, yet in the sixteen years they've lived in Beijing, they have been keeping the holidays in their homes and providing communal celebrations for transients and tourists. Their Jewish community has no president or board of directors, no men's club or sisterhood, but they recently hired a Hebrew teacher to educate their children, they've just begun holding weekly Shabbat services in a rented hall, and they now own a *sefer Torah* (donated by a couple who spent one Rosh Hashana with them). Their prayer books are photocopies and their services much abbreviated, but they welcome the Sabbath Queen with joy and reverence, with the Kiddush and "*L'cha dodi*," as well as with poetry by Hannah Ṣenesh and Marge Piercy—and when their children sing "*Shabbat Shalom*," the community becomes a congregation and the meeting room a consecrated space.



CYN MAURICE

The members of this community have no kosher food shops or butchers, but they get packages from abroad and on Friday nights, they often share a Shabbat meal. Last fall, during the Fourth World Conference on Women, I was among the visitors from the Jewish Caucus (there were one-hundred-twenty of us from eleven countries), who shared their sumptuous vegetarian Friday night dinner complete with wine and challah.

Roberta Lipson started it all back in 1980 when, as a single woman working in China and missing her family, she organized a Passover seder and twenty-five Jews showed up—a few residents like herself, but mostly transients hungry for *haroset* and

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Letty Cottin Pogrebin is the author of nine books including Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female And Jewish In America, *and the forthcoming* Getting Over Getting Older.

belonging. Intermittently through the years, Roberta has led services for Shabbat and the High Holy Days, combining Reform and Conservative traditions and happily sharing the spotlight with volunteer cantors. Now more stable, the community holds two seders each Passover; in 1995, the first night drew one-hundred-eighty participants, the second night, ninety.

These days, Roberta has another reason to care about Jewish continuity—she is very pregnant with her third child. Involved as she is in motherhood and community organizing, she is also a working professional with an impressive biography. A 1976 Brandeis University graduate with a degree in Chinese history, she subsequently earned a Columbia Business School diploma, and in 1979 came to China in search of a career that would combine both interests. After working briefly for a company that closed, she and Elyse Silverberg, another expatriate, started a firm that represents American, Israeli, and European companies in sales, marketing, and other dealings in China. Not only has the business flourished; the partners have become relatives as well. In 1989, Elyse's cousin, Ted Plafker, a freelance writer, came for a visit, fell in love, and never left. Ted and Roberta were married in 1991.

The Shabbat of my visit, their sons, Jonathan, four, and Daniel, three, are very much in evidence, scampering around with *kippot* on their blond heads, chattering in Chinese to their nanny and in English to the rest of us without so much as a pause between sentences. (I can't begin to convey the cognitive dissonance one feels hearing Jewish toddlers speak Chinese; suffice it to say the experience is humbling.) Like everyone's favorite camp counselor, Roberta is warmly greeted by arriving friends, among them Professor and Mrs. Zhao, an older Chinese couple who have been attending Jewish community events for the last five years. The professor traces his origins to tenth-century Kaifeng, where Jewish traders from India and the Middle East came through on the silk route, intermarried, yet kept their religious customs intact. Kaifeng's Jewish population peaked in the thirteenth century but by the end of the 1800s, only a handful could be found who still wore *kippot*, lit Shabbat candles, and observed *kashrut*. Today there is no one left. Nevertheless, Jewish tours still make pilgrimages to Kaifeng, Chinese citizens calling themselves Kaifeng Jews descend on the Israeli embassy demanding the right of return to Israel—and Professor and Mrs. Zhao come to services.

In the rest of China, there were about 15,000 Jews as recently as the 1930s, according to Wendy Wolfe Fine of the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University. Most were traders and entrepreneurs from the West, Sephardic Jews from Iraq and India, and refugees of the Russian pogroms and the Bolshevik Revolution. During the Nazi period, 18,000 Ashkenazis from Germany, Austria, and Poland found refuge in China, but nearly all the Jews emigrated after the communists took over in 1949. Roberta estimates that about thirty Jews lived in Beijing in the 1980s. Since January 1992 when Israel and China established diplomatic relations and Israel staffed its embassy, the number has increased to some fifty households.

Elyse Silverberg, a graduate of SUNY Albany, also arrived in 1979 when she came to study at Peking University. The following year, she went back to the States to marry a SUNY classmate, Michael Lee, a Chinese man with whom she returned to Beijing to live. In 1981, Elyse teamed up with Roberta when a Chinese friend told her, "There's another Jewish girl in Beijing; you ought to meet each other," and since then, besides being compatible colleagues, the two have been partners in community-building. Elyse—smart, smiling, and ebullient—maintains the Jewish mailing list, adding names referred to her by embassies, friends, and a thriving word-of-mouth network. Her fax number finds its way to travelers who plan to be in Beijing during Jewish holidays. She and Roberta and their families construct a *succah* together every year. About her husband's attitude toward her Judaism, Elyse says, "Michael is a passive, pleasant bystander." He respects her wish to provide a Jewish education to their son, Ari, who, on October 25, 1996, will become the Beijing Jewish community's first bar mitzvah boy.

When I meet this cherubic, articulate youngster, he is taking lessons four days a week from Ophira Levant, a native of Calgary, Alberta, the Hebrew teacher hired to shepherd this fledgling community toward Jewish literacy.

"I know three-and-a-half languages," says Ari, proudly. "English, Chinese, French, and I can read Hebrew."

"And he knows a little Yiddish," puts in his grandmother, Elaine Silverberg, who, after many visits, made a permanent move four years ago. Elaine calls herself "the resident Bubbe of Beijing" and seems to relish her role. When our Jewish Caucus troops in en masse from the conference, Elaine says, "I always love meeting Jewish women in Beijing but *this* is a windfall!"

Shortly after Elyse Silverberg first arrived in China, she received from her rabbi a package of Jewish ritual objects—a menorah, dreidl, Chanukah *gelt*. On the first night of Chanukah, she put the menorah in her window. The Chinese authorities asked her to remove it. "They were worried about my safety," she explains. "The PLO had an office here and the Chinese were afraid the menorah would attract trouble." When Elyse and

Roberta tried to place an ad in the *China Daily* to inform Jews of their seder, the newspaper rejected it. "They said they had sympathy for our holiday but they were more concerned for our safety."

I express my discomfort with this behavior, which mirrors the repressive bullying by Chinese authorities we saw at the women's conference. In response, Roberta and Elyse focus on how far China has progressed, not how far she has yet to go. "We feel quite fortunate to have the perspective of seeing first hand the changes of the last fifteen years," they write me in a letter. "We have seen the Chinese government go from being a totally autocratic communist society with 'human rights' issues as we know them being of very low priority, to seeing significant improvements toward a market-based socialist economy in which people begin to have freedom of expression in the marketplace and to a greater and greater extent in the press ... we have seen the situation in Beijing go from absolutely no foreign publications being allowed in the country, to the completely uncensored distribution of virtually all foreign news publications."

"The Jews I met in Beijing are very pro-Chinese," says Shirley Joseph, the head of our caucus, about her conversation with several local residents. "They were annoyed with Hillary Clinton for criticizing China in her human rights speech. They excused repressive government policies because of China's population problem. One of them told me, 'If you have three children, you handle them differently than if you have a dozen children.'"

I am reminded of those South African Jews who made excuses for white supremacy. Why nurture Jewish life in Johannesburg, Beijing, or anywhere else, I wonder, if you don't live the ethic of *tikkun olam*—if you don't commit yourself to the repair of the world, whatever world you happen to live in. Then again in China, given Tiananmen Square, that may be easier said than done. Roberta Lipson and Elyse Silverberg feel they are doing *tikkun* their way—by example: "Our company employs over 100 people [and] is run on a very democratic basis, with great respect for all colleagues, and everyone's voice and contribution is valued and respected. We conduct business ethically and ... our high-profile success story in China is an example to the thousands of people whose life our company touches every year, that success and corruption do not necessarily go together."

From their mouths to President Jiang Zemin's ears. □

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Memory's Touchstones

Geoffrey H. Hartman

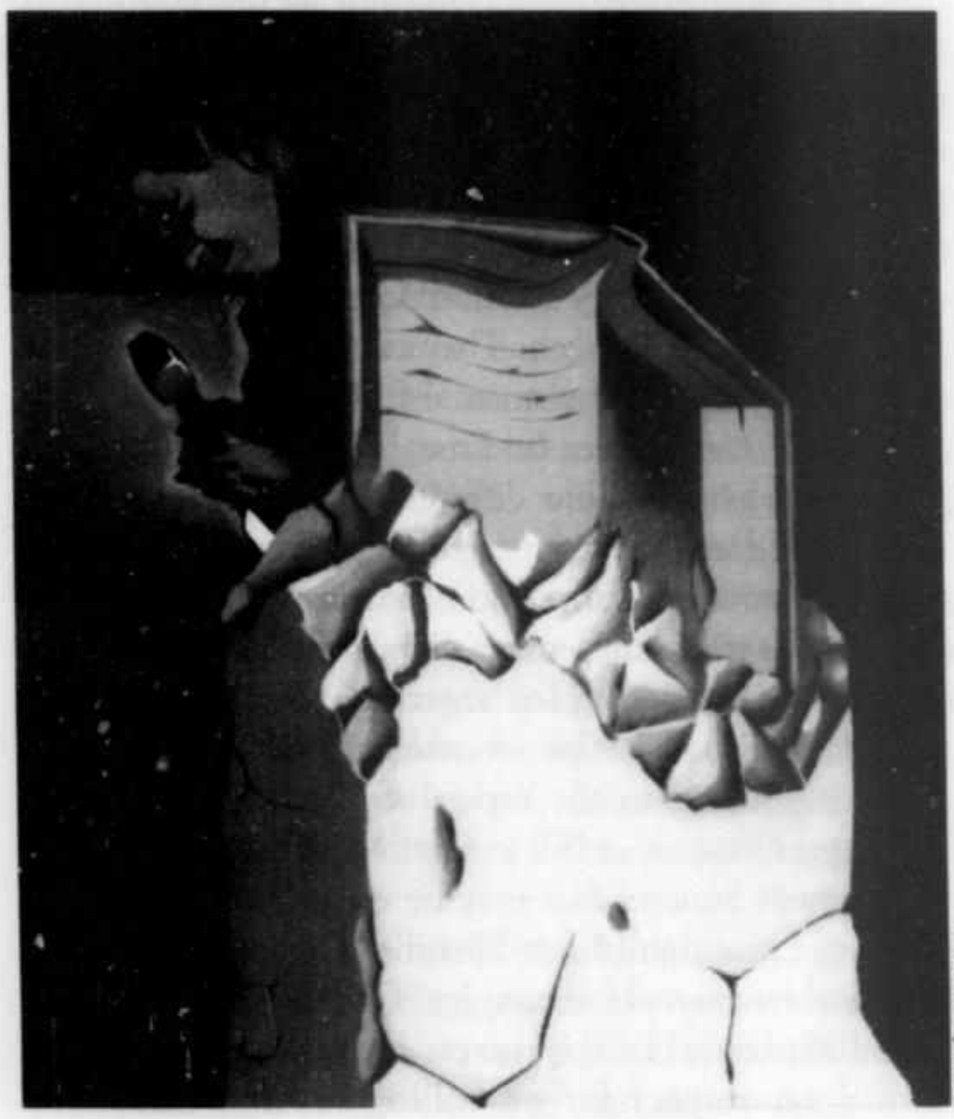
Whatever resolution will be found to the controversy over the proposed Berlin monument commemorating the murdered Jews of Europe, it is already clear that, in large-scale public efforts of this kind, the process itself is becoming as important as the outcome. A kind of virtual monument has already been built, the residue of all the planning, scheming, competing. Regardless of the result, it will carry for a long time marks of the original debate.

This may not be a bad thing at all. For while I personally enjoy looking at those strange stones which mildly disturb a crowded city landscape, suggesting like ancient tombs that the busy passerby should pause and reflect a little, it remains true, as Robert Musil pointed out, that these urban sculptures soon become invisible. Legends keep some of them interesting—or exile does. After the communist regime was toppled in Hungary, Budapest erected a sculpture garden at a safe distance from the city, to accommodate the gigantic statues and tableaux that used to tower over it. They dwell there, absurd, larger than life, in decent, self-supporting retirement (there is an admissions fee).

The future may not be easier on democratic monuments. The passage of time is cruel to memorial sculptures, whatever their politics. Yet a memory of the original public controversy may preserve interest in the final product, in the ingenious memorial which might never have been built because of conflict about its necessity or adequacy. A veil of words and discourses bestows meaning on constructions always relatively meaningless for the human eye, or it will make that meaning more enigmatic—like Christo swathing the Reichstag in white gauze.

Such considerations, of course, do not in any way release us from thinking about creating a responsible public memory through ambitious national memorials or other kinds of pedagogy.

My own preference is to strengthen public memory through literature and history, in the schools and universities. All the more so in Germany: readings, research, visits to the memorial sites and museums, listening to survivor testimony—these must be the principal means. Yet so much depends on the teachers, who themselves have not been formally trained to teach the Holocaust, or Jewish history, and often prefer to avoid an episode so devastating to Germany's national self-esteem. Even devoted and well-educated teachers find



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it a formidable task to transmit knowledge of the Holocaust to the young, who are very vulnerable to shock, and for whom bad teaching on these issues merely activates strong psychological defenses. Tokenism, the symbolic inclusion of a subject in the curriculum, or a sentimental emphasis on extant cultural relics from kiddush cups to cemeteries, results in a veneration of ruins that is no better than discharging guilt onto the financing of memorial cement.

To be truly effective, education must be both cognitive and emotional. This challenge is particularly

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daunting in regard to the Holocaust, and not in Germany alone. German youngsters should not be taught the historical and political facts differently because they are German. But they may have grandparents who were involved, and even in the future Germans may react more strongly than in countries that have a less direct responsibility for the infamous events under scrutiny. Surely the emotional charge, the *Betroffenheit*, will always be greater among them. They will need more time to reflect, to absorb what they have learned, to find a way of expressing what they feel. This is where a memorial can play its part, but only if its symbolism and ceremonies are integrated with research and continuous thought. Education's dual aim—to give an affective edge to intellectual recognition and to provide a creative outlet for the emotions—has relevance beyond the young, for any person, of any age, who cultivates a civic consciousness.

To be effective, a national memorial must create a place of assembly, as well as one of reflection, prayer, and personal emotion. Holocaust survivors too, and their children, should feel it is right to be part of such an assembly. In a reunified Germany, and particularly in Berlin, it is especially important to fortify this sense of community. If symbolism is justified, it is here, in this place—whatever reservations one may have about the design of the monument or its cost. The fact is that there is no memorial in the whole of Germany specifically recalling the deportation and murder of the Jews.

Neither the memory of the murdered Jews of Europe nor the memory of the other millions can be contained in a gigantic memorial slab.

No one, of course, can insure that a memory-place will be healing; many sites continue to stir up controversy. But that is not a sufficient objection to the construction of such sites. There should be no illusion that the existence of memorials will settle the restlessness and the remorse that are the outgrowths of the historical events being memorialized. Just as the evil during the Nazi regime was everywhere—Auschwitz was not in Auschwitz alone—so the education that intends to counter the possibility of its repetition must be everywhere.

The monument proposed for Berlin remembers the victims, but it also serves to acknowledge the near-mortal wound inflicted by Germany on itself. Jane Kramer wrote in a recent *New Yorker* article that the intensity of the quarrel over the Berlin Holocaust memorial, like so many others about memory, means that "Germans ... want to have suffered from themselves, the way everybody else suffered from them." Even as it seeks to detach itself from the crime by mourning and commemoration, the perpetrator nation finds no closure, and its own sense of victimization mounts. This is a continuing problem and a more acute objection than the contention that the monument presents Jews once again as objects of pity.

I consider debates on the shape of public memory healthy and potentially clarifying, but not if they wear everybody out. To put so much emphasis on one monument, to quarrel for so many years (the organization to promote this *lieu de mémoire* was founded in 1989, just before reunification) about location, funding, size, necessity, quality, is like trying a case in the media. The result is bound to give comfort to cynics, who see everything in terms of daily politics. Yet the lesson to be drawn from all the noise is simple: Neither the memory of the murdered Jews of Europe nor the memory of other millions can be contained in a gigantic memorial slab.

The Hitler era continues to burden us: We are in the midst of a wave of *second-generation witness*, in Germany as well as America. It is principally this generation that will establish how the collective memory of that era should be transmitted to the future. This development is all the more critical in Germany, because, with some exceptions, the implicated generation did not face what had happened. It is mainly the pressure of the younger group (though "young" includes those in their fifties and sixties) that sponsors this belated monument and formal act of conscience. Since Jewish memory in communist East Germany was suppressed or marginalized, the commemorative and educational task has become even greater since unification.

I do not want to preach or prescribe. Yet I hope that what I have said has a general bearing on collective memory as well as a special application to Germany. Public remembrance must be integrated with public education. Let us prefer, before all temples, the educated heart. That is the general principle. The publicity generated by the debate on the Berlin Holocaust memorial may either distract from the importance of studying the culture of the Jews in Germany and Europe, or it may refocus us on what still needs to be accomplished. If memorials direct the mind through the heart, then formal education, in the secondary schools and universities, directs the heart through the mind. □

RENE CARSON

The First Jew
Meditation on My Father

Peter Pitzele

There are two principal and differing schools of midrashic thought on the subject of Abram's departure from his father's house in Haran before he sets out to Canaan (Genesis 11:26-12:1). One school sees the son's departure as a repudiation of his father's idolatry; another as the continuation of a father's journey. As I have searched the story and searched my own relationship to my father, I find these perspectives inextricably linked inside of Abram and inside of me. In this essay I have always in the back of my mind that mythic son who cannot himself decide whether he is leaving his father or living out a part of his father's unrealized dream.

My evolving experience of becoming a Jew is, on the deepest level, enacted in me as a dialogue with my father. It is to my internalized father that I turn repeatedly to test my sense of what it means to me to be a Jew. It is as if he were the mirror in front of which I stand before I walk out into the world. Every now and then some new way of presenting myself to him presents itself to me, and in my mind, in actual conversation, or in my writing, I face him.

Recently, reading Leslie Fiedler's book of essays, *Fiedler on the Roof: Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity*, I found myself reflecting again on my father and myself as two Jews, opposing sides of the same strange coin. There was much in Fiedler's essay, "Meditation on Two Holocausts," that made me think of my dad—his passionate and life-long protest against all forms of clannishness, tribalism, and parochialism (which amounted at times to anti-Semitism); his abiding mistrust of the panaceas of religion; his desire as a self-made man to defy all the nomenclatures that might in any way put him in a place not of his own choosing; and his love of the modernist writers with all their embedded anti-Semitism. As a Jew, Fiedler was a product of his times, and in many ways my father was a Jew of those same times. Reading *Fiedler on the Roof*, I have had my father's personal and political culture and my complex inheritance of that culture much on my mind.

What struck me forcibly in reading Fiedler's "Meditation" was the tone of lament and resignation with which he concludes his essay. On the final page of the book he calls himself "the last Jew," acknowledging that he has passed on to his children none of even the small Jewish inheritance that had been passed on to him. With him, he realizes, will vanish whatever Jewishness had existed in his lineage, and its disappearance will be the result not of any external pressure (like that of the Hitler's genocide, which he calls the "first Holocaust"), but of his own choices neither to observe or preserve Judaism in his life or in his family (the second Holocaust).

I realized that my father, like Fiedler, had such an agenda with me. Far from any wistfulness, but rather with some self-congratulation, he might have been able to say that by the choices he made for my education and by the bequest of his convictions he had succeeded in culturing a son who was uninflected by Judaism.

Yet I have not turned out so. In my own eyes, quite the contrary, I feel myself to be the First Jew; I feel I have invented my own Judaism out of some need that my father never felt and, I believe, has never understood in me. Nor, to be honest, am I sure how well I myself understand this fabrication of my Jewishness. It is an indication of how far I have strayed from the trail he blazed for me that today it is a matter of some importance to me to declare in various places that I think of myself as a Jew—as much as I think of myself as an intellectual, or a writer, or a teacher, or even a father and husband.

For me it is not an exclusionary term; I can and at times still worship with Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. But I have added, here in the middle of my life and not without a sense of irony, the term "Jew" to my identity. By dint of labors inner and outer, I have some sense of belonging to a Jewish lineage. And I know that this sense of belonging, still gradually evolving for me,

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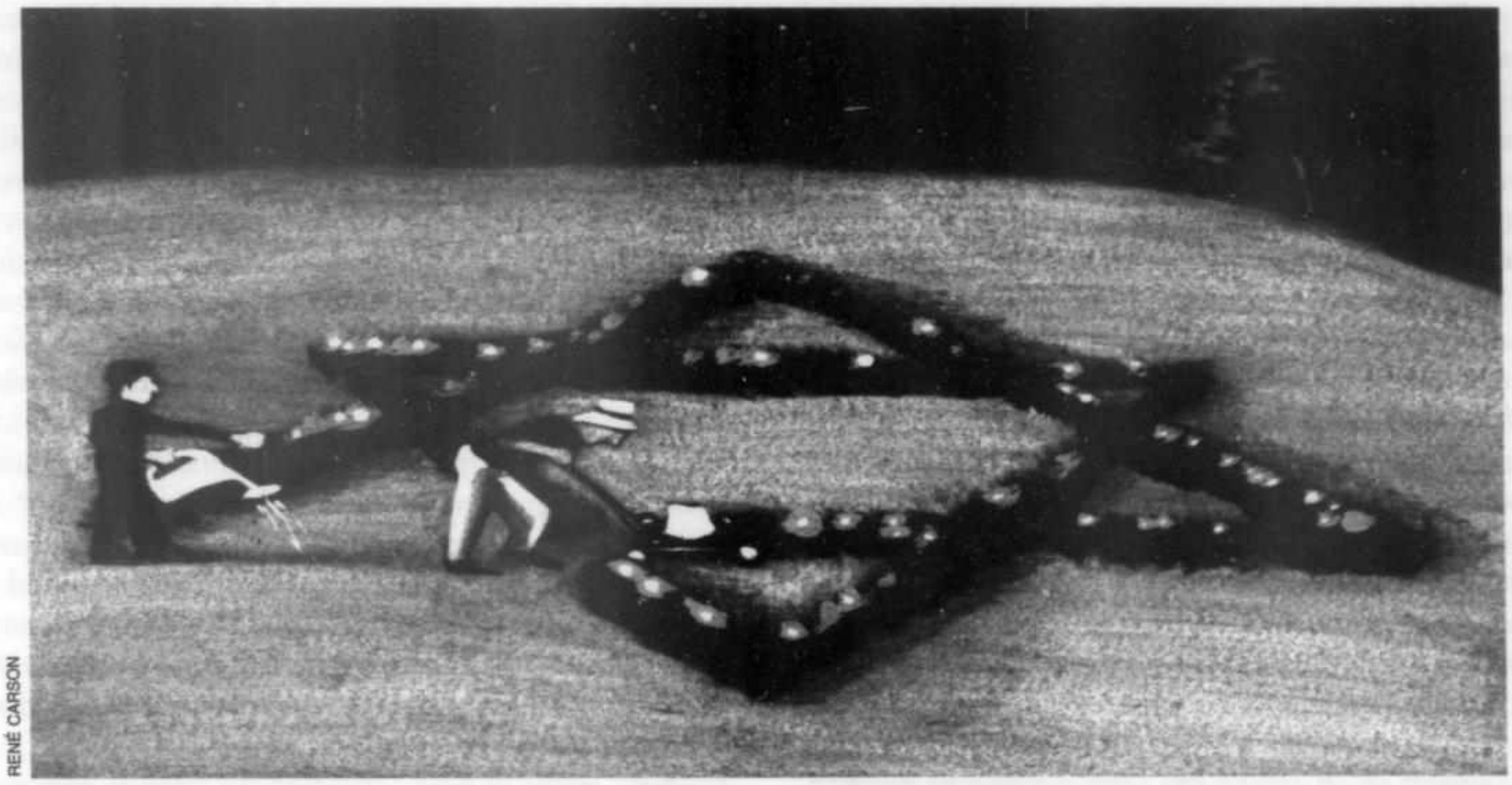
has puzzled and troubled my father, as if my Jewishness represented some failure in his education of my soul, as if some Jewish microbe, invisible and long-dormant, had slipped past his inoculations now to infect my middle age. My becoming a Jew, a kind of conversion it seems to both of us, threatens to divide us.

Because he loves me so much and so well, my father has never sought to argue with me about this emerging choice of mine, this latest aspect of my identity as a man, this role I play in the world as a sometimes-teacher of experiential midrash in a variety of Jewish settings, as a writer whose book on Genesis further forged my sense of myself as a Jew. But if he has not argued aloud with me, I have felt conveyed between the lines of our talk a single unspoken question: Why? In our intercourse I feel his baffled curiosity, his discomfort, his respect, his diffidence to ask that fundamental question. And so that question lives silently between us, and certainly inside of me.

There is much for me to say on this subject, but as my father enters his eighty-fourth year, I realize that I may not have much longer to say it, at least not to him. Though the answer to this Why? is not, I hope, the last thing I would address with him before he dies, I feel time and this subject ask some accounting of me. I even fancy that as death looms ever more real to him, the matters, if not the consolations, of religion may have a slightly greater importance to him. At any rate, in opening this account I know I do not so much seek his blessing—because I feel I have that and have had that for many years—as a kind of self-understanding that comes about best through my conversation with him. For he is my first and final interlocutor; long after he goes I shall be talking to him on paper and in my mind.

I realize that, more than any other aspect of my identity, my being Jewish seems at once the most indeterminate and the most inescapable "fact" about me. If I were Black or Hispanic, I might be able to say my color or ethnicity were inescapable, but I would not also say they are indeterminate. They would determine quite a lot, though not, to be sure, everything. And I believe that most white Christians cannot feel that either is true for them: being Christian determines nothing and is totally escapable; the issue of assimilation—the choice to assimilate—does not exist if you are a member of the majority culture. "Jewish," however, as an epithet of the self hovers in some middle distance, at once a religious, ethnic, and even now, after the founding of Israel, a national identity. It is a "fact" I cannot escape, but the meaning of which I have to wrest from those gentiles and Jews who might impose their stereotypic meanings on me.

A signal episode of that wresting process occurred when I was teaching at Brooklyn College in the 1970s.



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At the end of the day my homeward path crossed the campus and required me inevitably to run a kind of gantlet between bobbing, black-coated Hasidim who asked me repeatedly, "Are you Jewish? … Are you Jewish? … Are you Jewish?" Tight-lipped, unseeing (though not unmoved), I passed between their rows, refusing to acknowledge them by any sign, until on the very last day of the semester with summer ahead offering a reprieve from their harping, I turned on the final interrogator in the line, and—it seems to me from this distance in time—I veritably screamed into his scraggly beard a defiant and silencing three words: "In a sense!"

But the ordeal of that strait I walked through those spring afternoons had only made explicit a question that lurked in me all my life. "Are you Jewish?" was a question that rose to the surface when, at camp or in boarding school, someone called me a "kike"; or when the family of a Jewish girl I dated in college invited me for Passover; or when, by my very noninvolvement in Zionist concerns, I was questioned by those who were raising money or speaking out. At such times I realized that I could not entirely disown being Jewish as it seemed to me my father had.

In subsequent years, I recognized with increasing annoyance that my answer to the Hasidim only contained another question, one I was not ready to hear: If I am in a sense a Jew, then in what sense am I a Jew? When in my various searchings for identity, for spiritual connections, I had asked myself what, if anything, it meant to me to be Jewish, the answer, never quite "nothing," dissolved into a puzzled, vexed confusion. And I kept the answer the same: "In a sense." I was unwilling to go any further with it. I liked the vagueness, the indeterminate quality of that answer; it seemed to me a kind of freedom, and a sign of my pact with my father. If I could not ignore as completely as he seemed to have done the designation "Jew," then at least I might keep the meaning—and therefore the living out—of a Jewish identity in a haze.

Under my father's tutelage and by his example, I had made it a practice to avoid acts of self-definition of any sort, both those my culture might pin on me and those I felt I had worn long enough. All labels were to be evaded; they were only partial, meaning nothing really about the person I am. I sought amateur status, and with that status the freedom of the novice. Like Joyce's Stephen Daedalus, the only identity I wanted was the identity of an artist, but having, it seemed, neither the temperament nor the talent, I was left only with an artist's dissatisfactions with the labelings of the social world. So paradoxically it has been in my gradual attainment of an artist's life—the creation of my own peculiar blend of psychodrama and midrash, the writing of my book—that I have felt strong enough to venture into the wilderness of identity comprised by the term Jew and there to try to make sense of the Jew that I am and care to be.

Of late I am no longer satisfied with my old evasions. Freedom from definition has become a kind of emptiness, a dead end. My resistance to definition has come to seem jejune, something frightened and finally irresponsible. Though definitions restrict, they also shape; though they close off the imagined luxury of being anything you want to be, they also make possible a deepening of what you are. I can no longer live only in the rarefied climate of a post-modernism which insists that all definitions are fictive. I now know there is another kind of freedom, not the sort to be found outside but rather inside of definitions; this is the freedom that artists, in their quarrel with form, have always known.

This ability to construct myself as a Jew represents a certain acceptance of what the Jungians call the shadow. My father had placed Judaism in the shadows of his own life and of mine. Indeed, in the year I was born, 1941, Judaism was in a shadow so dark it reached into my crib and chilled me to the marrow. Growing up in the forties with the slaughter of European Jewry surfacing in stories and images around me, I found that distant nightmare made present and familiar in the evident scorn my father showed for Jews. To be a Jew was dangerous; it could get a person killed; it could incur a father's ridicule and disdain, even a kind of hate. I had seen his enmity for Jews in his words and actions. Afraid to be a Jew, I strove to become a member of the elite intellectual culture of Harvard, Oxford, and other such places I gravitated toward, always shoving the Jew in me into the shadows. In those careering days I searched out other Jews like me, the assimilated (though we were never quite to the manor born) who had adopted the framework of a Christianized culture and sought status within it.

If Jung is right that in part the work of our adult lives involves some kind of reclamation of the shadow, then that work for me has involved facing and embracing the shadowy Jew in myself. If the generative materials for middle age lie in mucking about in those places where shame has repressed energies and images that cry out for their rightful integration, then as an artist I have needed to go into the muck. If I have sought to find a way of living that is not too rankled by self-conflict and self-alienation, that search has asked me to accept with humor (but without scorn) those aspects of myself that archetypally belong to the Jew.

"Jew" seems to me a compendious term. It contains a million mirrors in which I may see myself reflected. I can see in it my competitiveness, my intensities, my sexuality, my spirituality, my loquacity, my remoteness, my nomadism, my tribalism, my loneliness. Writing my book on Genesis required me to own my Jewishness by discovering in the primal Jewish myths images that spoke to me about who I am.

Perhaps it is one of the inevitable lessons of middle age to learn of limits, to forgive those of others, to accept one's own. I cannot be Everyman; I cannot be No Man. In many ways I am coming home to myself, and that coming home is full of a certain humor and

(Continued on p. 95)

Money and Our Economic Life

Jerome M. Segal

If the United States is such an affluent society, why do so many people feel financially stretched to the limit? After all, median family income is 50 percent higher today than it was in 1963 when John Kenneth Galbraith wrote *The Affluent Society*, and it is double what it was in 1950.

One standard answer given by liberals to this apparent paradox of contemporary American life is that the American people are being manipulated by the economic system to develop new desires that have little to do with their fundamental humanity and a great deal to do with the degree to which they have succumbed to advertising and the mass media. If this is the problem, the proposed solutions often focus on reducing our wants, either collectively (by adopting new societal values) or individually (by learning how to live with less and like it).

This analysis contains some elements of truth, yet it misses a central reality of contemporary American life: It has become increasingly expensive to satisfy a common core of need.

Mainstream economics often misses this reality because it shuns the concept of needs, concentrating instead on wants, preferences, or utilities. When mainstream economists address the issue of the cost of meeting human needs, they frame the issue in terms of how much it costs to purchase a fixed basket of goods and services in areas such as food, energy, clothing, and housing, and then ask whether, after inflation has been taken into account, the cost of these items has risen. The problem with such an approach is that human needs cannot be reduced to a fixed basket of goods.

What it takes to satisfy our needs in areas such as housing, transportation, food, health care, clothing, and education depends on a variety of changing social conditions. To meet the same need may require a very different configuration of goods and services at one historical moment than it does at another.

In considering American life over much of the last century, what we find is that with changed, and often deteriorating, social conditions, needs that could previously be satisfied at relatively low levels of expenditure now can only be satisfied at higher levels of income. Our sense that we have to run just to stay in place is real, not primarily the result of an artificially constructed sense of necessity.

Let us consider the changing requirements in each of these areas.

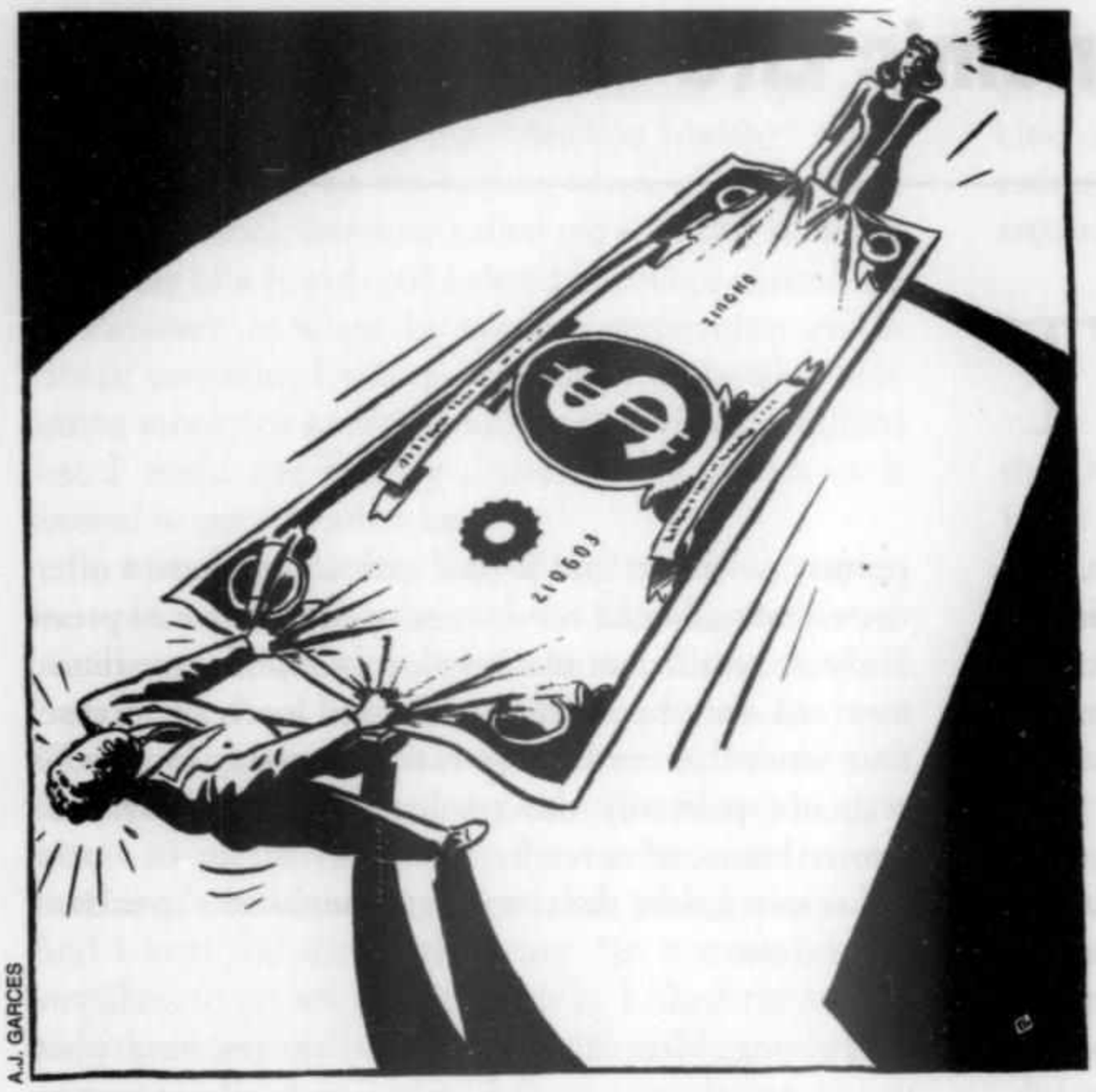
Housing. Most Americans today do not have what they have always needed: safe, minimally attractive housing, located a reasonable distance from work. Arguably, a smaller percentage of Americans now have such housing than did fifty years ago. Despite higher incomes, almost all Americans have had to settle for less. Many middle-class Americans commute vast distances in order to have comfortable, safe housing; others, in order not to live impossibly far from work, settle for questionably safe neighborhoods. For the well-to-do, conditions are livable. For those of limited means, conditions are often intolerable.

To whatever extent we satisfy our housing needs, it costs a lot more in real terms than it used to. In the Washington, D.C. area, for example, to find a moderately safe neighborhood with acceptable schools, you would have to live in a community where homes cost at least $175,000.

Americans care a great deal about housing. It is the single largest area of consumption, one to which people often commit more of their resources than they can easily afford. Median family income is roughly $43,000 a year, before taxes. If that family buys a $175,000 home, it places itself under considerable financial pressure. If it does not, it lives under daily pressure to earn more so that it might someday do so. Why should we be surprised that most Americans feel financially pressured about housing?

While any family can improve its situation through increased income, if we all had more money the primary impact would be to increase the bidding war for housing that satisfied our needs. The financial pressure would be

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just as intense, and overall need just as unsatisfied.

It is essentially a supply problem but not one that can be met through construction. We are paying the price of the loss of cities as livable spaces. The problems form the familiar litany of urban decay: unemployment, crime, deterioration of schools. Everyone flees or would like to flee. But none has escaped the higher costs. For those who could not get out, the costs are there in deteriorated conditions. For those who had the means to get out, the costs are there in higher prices and new necessities. They show up in household budgets for housing, transportation, and education.

Transportation. The flight of middle-class Americans to the suburbs and beyond has radically changed the nature of transportation needs for getting us from home to work, to school, to stores, and to our friends. Unlike safe housing, transportation needs are relatively well-satisfied, but the costs are steep.

Since the 1930s, the percentage of total consumption devoted to transportation has more than doubled for all income classes. Given that real per-capita consumer expenditures rose by over 300 percent in the same period, we have something in the neighborhood of a 600-percent rise in real terms in the amount that families are spending on transportation. There is good reason to think that nearly all of this represents an increase in the cost of meeting a stable need for transportation from home to work, schools, stores and communal activity, rather than the growth of luxury.

The shift to the suburbs, motivated in large part by the search for safe neighborhoods and decent public schools, has made the private automobile a necessity, and the emergence of the two-income family has tended to necessitate a second car. This trend has been reinforced by the relocation of stores outside of residential neighborhoods, often to malls five or ten miles away, and the shift of communal activities, especially for children, outside of their immediate neighborhoods.

In the early decades of the century, people had the same need for transportation that they have now, but they could and did satisfy this need quite well without the car. Today, in most parts of the country, a family without an automobile would be far more restricted in its activities than in times past. Thus, substantial higher real income is required to meet the core need for transportation.

Food. Although significant numbers of American families fail to satisfy their need for ample, nutritious food, for most Americans this need is reasonably well met. Moreover, the income necessary to satisfy this need does not appear to have increased in real terms over the decades. In fact, there has been a major decline in the percentage of consumer expenditures for food. Between 1935 and 1988-89, its share fell by half—from roughly one-third of household expenditures to only one-sixth. (At the turn of the century, almost 43 percent of the expenditures of urban wage earners went for food.)

In real terms, household expenditures for food increased only about 5 percent between 1935 and 1989. This suggests that in real terms there has been virtually no increase in the income required to satisfy the core food need, and possibly there has even been some decline.

The fact that most Americans today can meet their food needs with a historically small portion of household income reveals the extent of the chasm between the average family and those facing hunger. For most of human history and well into the twentieth century, hunger was only a step away. Today the social distance is vast.

Health Care. There has been a dramatic increase in health expenditures at the household level. Overall household expenditures for medical care and insurance rose by over 50 percent between 1970 and 1990. This increase emerged from several factors, including changes in technology which have brought about the development of more effective treatments; the aging of the population,

which has resulted in increased health-care needs; and rapid monetary inflation driven by the unique, sometimes rapacious, nature of the health-care industry.

What does not seem to be a major factor is inflation in our sense of necessity. If a patient has magnetic resonance imaging done to examine a possible tumor, it is not because he is seeking to keep up with the Joneses or because he has developed a taste for luxury. The costs of this procedure are meeting a need—a need for health, and thus a need for whatever can appreciably reduce the likelihood of dying of cancer. This is not to say that there has been no inflation in what constitutes necessity in health care; perhaps the increasing reliance on orthodontia is one example. But in the main, it seems unlikely that inflated standards have significantly driven up our income needs in this area. Moreover, even if there has been an expansion of "unnecessary" treatments and tests, the consumer is rarely in a position to evaluate their necessity if a doctor orders them. As far as the psychology of *consumption* is concerned, this is quite unlike feeling one just cannot do without the new gadget the Joneses just bought.

Clothing. Over the last ninety years, spending for clothing and related services has shown a marked decline as a percentage of consumer expenditures. From a high point of 17.6 percent in 1917-18, it declined to 10.3 percent in the early 1960s, and has fallen since then to between 5 and 6 percent. In real terms, per-capita spending for clothing fell between 1960 and 1988. Yet there is little basis for believing that clothing needs are less adequately met today than thirty years ago. Thus, it seems clear that in this area, at least, we have not seen any increase in the income needed to meet needs. Nor does there seem to have been any inflation in people's sense of how much money (in real terms) they "must have" for clothing.

This is interesting, because it is clothing above all else that seems most powerfully in the grip of changing fashions and desires shaped by advertising. If one expected to find a powerful escalator of inflated desires, an escalator that makes people constantly feel a need for more and better material goods, it would be in this area. But apparently no such escalation has occurred.

This data may seem surprising, given the news reports of teenagers killing each other over $200 sneakers, and the fact that very few people are casual about their choice of wardrobe. What the numbers suggest is that the fashion industry, while succeeding in frequently changing our sense of acceptable dress, has failed to get us to raise, or even maintain, the relative priority we give to clothing expenditures. And they also may reveal that the harmful social effects of advertising may outstrip the extent of its economic impact.

Education. Families seek and need safe and competent schooling for children. They want schooling that is effective in equipping their child to succeed in the socioeconomic competition. Parents see their responsibility, and a good part of their identity and fulfillment, as bound up with how successful their children will be.

When the disparity between socioeconomic winners and losers is very great, as it is in our society, the consequences of not receiving good schooling are enormous. In a society in which many aspire to a limited and perhaps declining number of successful jobs, it is true by definition that most will fail.

Given the fact that some private schools more adequately meet children's needs than do the inferior public schools, an increasing number of parents find that in order to provide a safe, competent, and success-oriented education, they need income sufficient to send their children to private schools.

There has been explosive growth in the amount of income needed for day care and pre-school. This is directly related to the entry of large numbers of women into the paid labor force—a clear example of the fact that a significant portion of higher incomes and higher consumption goes to fulfill needs that were previously filled by different social arrangements.

Day care typically costs of $120 per week, or roughly $6,000 a year, are familiar to middle-class parents. Before-tax median income for married-couple families with the wife in the labor force is about $50,000. Assuming annual expenditures of $42,000, the day-care bill for these families would constitute one-seventh of total expenditures. The $6,000 increase in needed income incurred by families who pay for day care can



also be put in perspective if we note that in constant 1990 dollars, median family income in the United States only rose $2,115 between 1970 and 1990.

Finally, higher education is a significant factor in the growth in the amount of income required to meet needs, in part because of an increase in the amount of schooling young people need in order to compete for employment. In addition, income needed has gone up because tuition costs are rising at a rate higher than the average rate of inflation. For example, between 1975 and 1990, the cost of one year's tuition in a private four-year college (in constant 1990 dollars) rose by $4,400.

The picture that emerges from even this cursory examination is that once we start thinking of economic life in terms of the human needs we bring to it, and the amount of money it takes to fulfill them, the image of affluence, even for the middle class, dissolves. Instead, we find a society in which long-standing, legitimate need is widely unmet, and which in some instances is more thoroughly unmet than in previous, less affluent generations.

While our need for food and clothing is today met with ever-smaller portions of our income, there are other major areas in which the cost of meeting needs has not only risen, but has risen considerably more rapidly than has income itself. Thus, it is no surprise that people should continue to find themselves hard-pressed even at income levels which, by conventional methods of analysis, are much higher than those of their parents' generation.

Why, after adjusting for inflation, do people require more money in order to meet legitimate needs? Putting the health sector and the introduction of effective but expensive technologies aside, the dominant factor is the breakdown of previous social systems within which needs were met. Urban public schools were safer so we didn't need private ones, or we didn't need to move to the suburbs. There was public transportation, or we lived closer to work, friends, and stores, so we could do without a car, and certainly didn't need two cars. With the collapse of public provision for meeting human needs, the burden has increasingly fallen on each individual household.

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Gaining control of the money dimension of ordinary life is not just a matter of individual frugality or cultural definitions of identity. It is also a matter of social and economic policy. In specific instances there may have been deliberate policies intended to promote consumption dependency—as when corporate interests pushed for the abandonment of public transportation systems to create a need for the automobile. But for the most part, the level of income it takes for a family to meet legitimate needs has not been the object of conscious policy. Rather, it has been the unintended result of multiple policies and processes, in some instances successes such as vast increases in farm productivity, in some instances failures such as the collapse of the urban environment.

What is needed is a new approach altogether. In assessing the performance of Third World economies, the inadequacy of focusing on aggregate levels of income is well known. Economies can also be judged by an alternative notion of efficiency—the extent to which aggregate income is utilized to meet basic needs, with success measured by the extent to which needs are addressed at low-income levels.

An analogous way of thinking is needed in our approach to the economic performance of rich countries. We need to rethink the bottom line. The economic realm must be placed within the larger context of what we deem to be "the good life." Part of what we should want from our economy is that over time it liberates us from the demands of economic life. It is not a fantasy to believe in a pattern of economic evolution in which households will increasingly be able to meet their core needs with, if not less income, then at least less work time, a world in which over time the economic sphere will play a smaller and smaller part in our lives.

The task of developing an agenda and a movement which will carry us in that direction is daunting, but more fundamental is simply getting clear on where we are and where we want to go. For good or ill, statistical measures such as growth rates in per-capita Gross National Product have tremendous power in shaping our public discourse. The need for alternatives is today widely recognized, but viable measures of what is really important in economic life have been in short supply.

In reorienting our thinking about what constitutes good economic performance, an index of need-required income (NRI) that measures what we have been considering in this article—annual changes in the real income required to meet legitimate economic needs—is both feasible and of far-reaching power. It tells us part of what we need to know about our socioeconomic life: Are we, as a society, making progress in reducing the extent to which having a decent life means running after that extra buck? □

Racism and Relativism

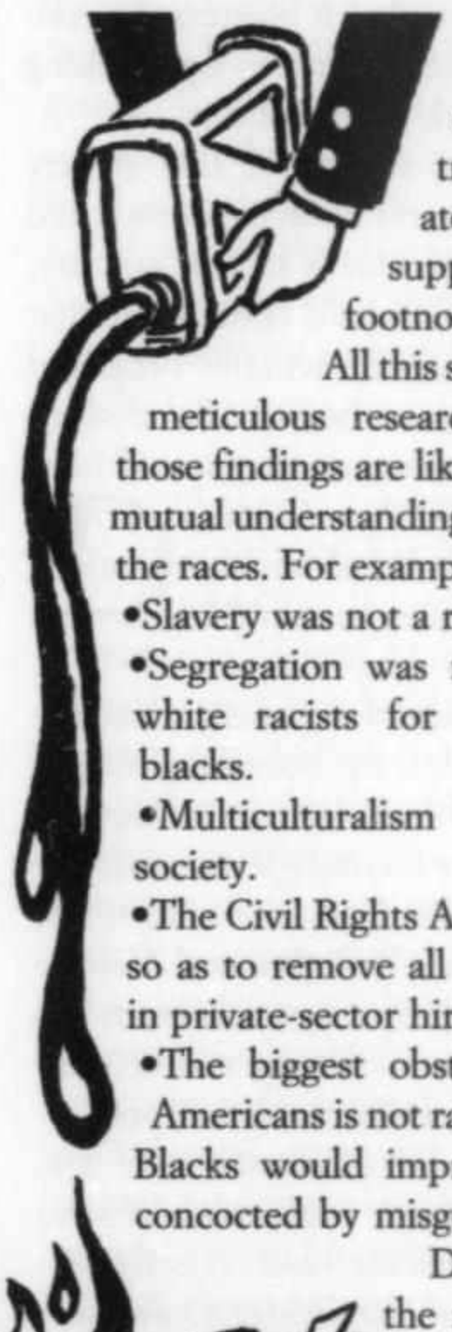
F. Allan Hanson

As Americans begin to put the tumultuous climax of the O. J. Simpson trial in perspective, what is emerging as deeply significant is not the verdict itself but the instant public reaction to it. Images of white America silent and aghast, while Black America erupted in cheers and danced in jubilation grow more vivid in the national consciousness as their meaning sinks in. The diametrically opposed responses, so spontaneous, so starkly etched in black and white, convey in a language of pure, unnuanced emotion that the racial rift runs deep and "the American dilemma" is no closer to resolution than when Gunnar Myrdal coined the term a half-century ago.

Reactions to the verdict have mercilessly thrust into the foreground an apprehension that few have been willing to articulate, hoping that several decades of a civil rights movement would make it go away: that racial divisions in American society are more fundamental than we would like to think, and that all the antidiscrimination legislation and affirmative-action programs have done little to close them. The trial and verdict may be merely representative of an uncomfortably wide range of things that Blacks and whites see differently, value differently, reason about differently, and judge differently.

If true, the challenge of overcoming the bane of race and learning to reason together, work together, and live together becomes, remains, our most pressing business.

A vision for how this business might be accomplished is put forward in Dinesh D'Souza's new book, *The End of Racism*. The tome has all the trappings of a work of thorough scholarship. It reviews racism historically and cross-culturally, and dispassionately presents arguments from all sides of the many debates that this highly controversial subject has generated. Its 556 pages of text are supported by no fewer than 2,198 footnotes.



All this seems designed to legitimate by meticulous research the book's findings. Yet those findings are likely to dismay people who seek mutual understanding and accommodation between the races. For example, D'Souza concludes:

- Slavery was not a racist institution.
- Segregation was not a system established by white racists for the purpose of oppressing blacks.
- Multiculturalism is unworkable in American society.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 should be amended so as to remove all restrictions on discrimination in private-sector hiring and housing.
- The biggest obstacle to progress by African Americans is not racism but antiracism. The lot of Blacks would improve if the antiracist policies concocted by misguided liberals were jettisoned.

D'Souza's vision boils down to the notion that the end of Black and white racism will come when everything culturally distinc-



SETH TOBOCMAN AND BARBARA LEE

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tive about African Americans dis-appears, and they behave like white folks.

The book's scholarly appearance is a facade. Although D'Souza trots out a great deal of data, he actually uses precious little of it to support his main conclusions. Some of them are handed down by fiat, others are derived from inconsistent reasoning, and still others emerge at the end of a trail of obfuscating legerdemain.

D'Souza's target audience consists of those whites who think that they are being held back by special treatment for minorities, who feel threatened by immigration of non-whites with different languages and customs, and who explicitly or implicitly harbor the belief that people of color are inferior. As with last year's Free Press blockbuster, *The Bell Curve*, the danger of *The End of Racism* is that it bolsters the confidence of these people in their opinions by cloaking them in the illusion of scholarly respectability.

If, for example, one wants to believe that slavery played no role in the development of race relations and the second-class citizenship of Blacks in this country, there is much comfort in D'Souza's contention that slavery, although an evil in itself, actually benefited African Americans in the long run because the descendants of slaves are better off here than they would have been in Africa, and because, "as a result of slavery, American blacks lost their ancestral tribal affiliations but gained a culture." As if those ancestral tribes were devoid of culture!

The book's most sustained line of argument is that the primary culprit behind racial ills is the liberal doctrine of cultural relativism, developed early in this century by anthropologists, particularly the German-Jewish founder of American anthropology, Franz Boas, and students of his such as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Melville Herskovits. D'Souza's contention is that relativism has contributed to the perpetuation of racism and severely impeded the cultural progress of African Americans.

D'Souza's is not the only attack on relativism of late. Other critiques have come from more authoritative sources, among them Ernest Gellner, until recently professor of social anthropology at Cambridge University. But, given the timing of its appearance and its relative accessibility to popular readers, D'Souza's assault is especially pernicious. At this moment, when the Simpson trial has catalyzed national anxiety about race, whites disenchanted by the verdict may be particularly vulnerable to D'Souza's message. It would be tragic if his misrepresentations were widely accepted, however, for cultural relativism has been and continues to be an important bulwark against cultural bigotry and racism, here and around the world.

More than anything else, cultural relativism stands for the rejection of ethnocentrism: the automatic, unexamined tendency to assume that the mores, customs, beliefs, and values prevailing in one's own culture are better than those found in other cultures. In D'Souza's partly accurate and partly distorted recounting of this school of thought, relativism is the point of view that all cultures are of equal value, are entitled to respect, and that the modes of thinking and valuing of one culture should not be imposed on any other culture. Having set up this definition of cultural relativism, D'Souza uses it to derive a set of dire and questionable consequences for race relations.

D'Souza's most preposterous argument is that relativism is responsible for contemporary racism, in both its Black and white varieties. The white racist reasons from a relativist set of assumptions, says D'Souza: Every culture is equally valuable and entitled to respect, including "white culture." Therefore, white people have as much reason to cherish their culture as anyone else. A thing of unique value, white culture merits protection against inroads from other cultures. Immigration, integration in neighborhoods and schools, and multiculturalism should be resolutely opposed as alien threats to white cultural distinctiveness. Replace the word "white" with "Black" in the foregoing sentences, and you have D'Souza's rendition of Black racism and the promotion of racial separation found in some versions of Afrocentrism and the teachings of the Black Muslims.

The claim that these forms of racism draw their inspiration from cultural relativism is outlandish. Racism in all its forms encourages an essentialist focus, valorization of one's own culture above all others. Nothing could be more opposed to cultural relativism, which encourages an open, expansive approach to all cultures.

D'Souza especially promotes the notion that far from improving the situation of African Americans, policies and laws against racist conduct and institutions have actually held them back. His progress toward this amazing conclusion begins with the observation that whenever liberals encounter a dysfunctional community—as, according to D'Souza, the African-American community manifestly is—their commitment to relativism prevents them from attributing any of the problems and failures to insufficient or maladaptive cultural institutions in that community. This cognitive dissonance stems, he claims, from the relativist view that cultures should be respected and that they must be judged in their own terms, never according to imported standards.

Relativist liberals, says D'Souza, are equally loathe to attribute Black failure to genetic inferiority. Having ruled out any explanation that appeals to Black biology

or culture, they have no recourse but to seek the cause of the problems that beset the Black community in conditions external to that community. They find it in white racism: the complex of attitudes, institutions, and practices that has systematically discriminated against African Americans throughout American history. Once the culprit has been identified, the solution is easy: Erect a battery of laws, rules, and regulations counteracting white racism.

But, D'Souza argues, the liberal strategy has failed. Laws and regulations have been enacted, white racism has been effectively emasculated, and all kinds of preferential programs for Black education and employment have been instituted. Yet, judging from levels of unemployment, welfare dependency, illegitimate birth rates, single-parent families, and rates of crime, violence, and incarceration, the situation in the Black community remains dismal.

D'Souza concludes that the real problem for African Americans lies precisely where the liberals' relativist blinders prevent them from looking: within the institutions of African-American culture. He recites a litany of Black cultural deficiencies: "excessive reliance on government, conspiratorial paranoia about racism, a resistance to academic achievement as 'acting white,' a celebration of the criminal and outlaw as authentically black, and the normalization of illegitimacy and dependency."

The solution, according to D'Souza, is for Blacks to recognize their cultural failings, to take responsibility for them and for themselves as individuals, to cure the "black pathologies" and "reestablish civilizational norms." Cultural relativism, supposedly Blacks' ally, is actually their worst enemy. It lulls them into believing that their problems are someone else's fault and their improvement is someone else's responsibility, when the only hope for improving their lot is to do it themselves.

This may sound like a rallying cry to the African-American community. But the phrasing of D'Souza's recommendations for what Blacks should do to improve themselves is more likely to infuriate them than to inspire them. He speaks in one place about the desirability of reinstating the ancient Greek distinction between civilization and barbarism, and in another about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s goal to "raise the ... civilizational level of the black population." It does not take an unusually astute reader to unearth D'Souza's insinuation that Blacks are less civilized—more barbaric—than whites, and that King shared that point of view.

On the last page of the book, in the mother of all his conclusions, D'Souza says, "What blacks need to do is to 'act white.'" Several pages earlier he lays the groundwork for this assertion:

> During the days of slavery and segregation Uncle Tom recognized the cultural superiority of his oppressor, even as he accommodated himself to the system of oppression .... In today's America, where the slavemasters and segregationists are gone and blacks enjoy the same legal status as whites .... the African American reformers who are derided as contemporary Uncle Toms are the true civilizational forces in the black community.

That is, in today's conditions of legal equality, the best way to raise the civilizational level of African Americans is for Black America to recognize the cultural superiority of white America. If D'Souza really wanted to convert African Americans to his way of thinking, he could not have made a worse choice of language. But his targeted audience is elsewhere. He speaks to ethnocentric and racist whites, who will find in these passages comforting collaboration of their belief that Blacks are less civilized than whites, and collusion in their wish that Blacks would just own up to their inferiority and adopt the deferential demeanor of Uncle Tom.

D'Souza's argument that relativist-inspired antiracism has impeded progress toward racial equality is not simply inflammatory and insulting to African Americans; it is intellectually untenable. It does not hold water even if one accepts his notions about relativism. In his view, a relativist would argue that evaluations of cultural institutions should be made only from within. But it does not follow that the outcome of all such internal judgments will be favorable. It is commonplace for communities, applying their own standards, to debate the morality or effectiveness of certain customs and institutions and ultimately to reject them. In American society, this has been the case with slavery, segregation, the restriction of voting rights to men, and the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages, among innumerable examples.

The sheer existence of high rates of crime, unemployment, and single-parent families in the African-American community does not mean that these phenomena are approved by the standards of African-American culture, or that Blacks make no attempts to correct them. Such varied Black communal institutions as the churches, the Nation of Islam, and civil rights organizations have mounted major efforts to address these problems. Furthermore, frank acknowledgement from both within and without the Black community that serious problems exist there does not justify D'Souza's attempt to let white racism off the hook as an

important cause of the American dilemma.

D'Souza distorts cultural relativism when he represents the relativist point of view as holding that the appropriateness or morality of what is done in any society should be judged by its own rather than imported standards. He's made an unwarranted extrapolation from the actual relativist proposition that cultures should be understood from within, "in their own terms." Yet D'Souza is not the only one to make this mistake. Many critics of relativism, and even a few of its supporters, have taken the doctrine to mean that anyone who is not a member of a given society should either approve all of the society's institutionalized behavior, or should refrain entirely from evaluating it.

The line of reasoning leading to this position falsely attributes to relativism the notion that it is not possible for an outsider to gain objective understanding of another culture: From this misunderstanding comes the familiar idea that you can't understand Blacks, or women, or gays, or Swedes, unless you are one yourself. If that is true, then none of us can really understand the customs and value judgments of other cultures, and therefore we are in no position to make any moral evaluation of them.

Yet people in other cultures, as in our own, disagree with each other about what is right and wrong, good and bad. So if we have decided to approve of whatever they say, with which ones do we agree? More fundamentally, the notion that "you've got to be one to know one" is hopelessly solipsistic: You can't understand Jews unless you are Jewish yourself. Pressing the same reasoning, if you are an Ashkenazic Jew you can't understand Sephardic Jews; if you are an Ashkenazic Jew from New York you can't understand Ashkenazic Jews from Amsterdam. The winnowing continues until, ultimately, you can't understand any human being other than yourself … and, because you were different in the past, even yourself only at the present moment.

The relativist doctrine that understanding should be internal does not mean that other cultures can be understood only by sharing the experience of people of those cultures. Instead, it posits the straightforward, non-mystifying recommendation that instead of weighing what people from other cultures do by the standards of our culture, we should determine what the values, organizational principles, and other guiding elements of their culture are and then account for the behavior we observe in those terms.

To be sure, we may understand those values and principles differently than members of the society under study, because their criteria of knowledge and understanding may differ from ours. This, however, implies no misunderstanding or distortion, but is a simple consequence of the fact that what constitutes understanding for anyone is inevitably governed by the epistemological standards according to which that person operates.

What does this entail for the evaluations or judgments we make of conduct in other cultures? When an individual among the Hua of Papua New Guinea died, the close relatives would eat the body. When an individual among the Dani of Irian Jaya died, mourning customs included cutting off finger joints of little girls with a stone axe. Relativism encourages us to learn the cultural values and principles governing these practices, and thereby understand why the Hua and the Dani regard them as necessary, appropriate, or good. But nothing in the relativist approach demands that we *approve* those practices or refrain from passing judgment on them. Any notion that we can or should shift our moral judgments to conform to the varying cultural standards we encounter is nonsense. If I mouth a judgment that is governed by other people's standards, it is still their judgment even if I am the one who articulates it. It can be mine only if I share those standards.

Cultural relativism, then, is a theory about the way we should acquire knowledge of cultural differences. It properly has no moral corollary at all. A relativist perspective might temper our moral evaluations, because understanding people's behavior in terms of their own standards may increase our tolerance for what they do. Then again, it may not. In my own case, knowing something about the governing rationale makes me more tolerant of Hua cannibalism, but it does not diminish my revulsion and disapproval of Dani finger amputation.

Cultural differences are also found within our own society, and they too can be usefully addressed from the perspective of relativism. Whether anyone played it intentionally or not, the "race card" was instrumental in the public drama that followed the brutal murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

It served as a rude reminder that a deep racial rift persists in this country and still defines important differences and inequities. But this need not entail the hopeless conclusion that we are so irretrievably divided into two (or more) societies that any effort toward mutual understanding is futile.

From the relativist point of view, no cultural differences are beyond understanding. No human beings who are willing to make the necessary (and often considerable) effort are beyond communicating. The real barriers are not cultural differences, but the racism and ethnocentrism that prevent people from wanting to understand and surmount them. □

In the Words of Leah

Carol Fox Prescott

Late one night last year, deep into a long-distance conversation with a friend about our complicated relationships with our siblings, we somehow came to the biblical story of Jacob, Leah, and her sister Rachel. Jacob, after laboring for seven years to win his beloved Rachel in marriage, is tricked by Rachel's father, Laban, who in the dark of night substitutes his older daughter, Leah, in the marriage bed. Bitterly disappointed, Jacob is told by Laban that he must work seven more years to earn Rachel as a bride. He does. But the deception taints the next generation: Joseph, Rachel's son and Jacob's favorite, becomes the object of jealousy and hatred on the part of Leah's sons, who toss Joseph into a pit, leaving him for dead.

This installment of the story eventually has a happy ending, as anyone who reads Genesis 37-50 will discover. But we learn virtually nothing of the story from Rachel's and Leah's perspectives; the biblical narrator is silent on the consequences for them of their father's trickery.

My friend said, flippantly, that he had never understood the story to mean anything but that, "you can't always get what you want when you want it." Reacting that this was a valid interpretation, but clearly the point of view of someone who identified only with Jacob, I responded that there must be more to the story than that. Apparently, for me, there was. When I awoke the next morning, I wrote what follows.



I knew when my sons left Joseph, their half-brother, to die in a pit, the relentless sun burning down on him as he begged them, first in jest because he did not believe they could embody so much hatred, and later in terror and aching loneliness as he watched them leave and waited for them to return to rescue him.

But they did not return. And I believed him dead. For so many years, I believed him dead. And though I was stunned by the act and frightened by the force of so much anger and jealousy, I recognized the hardness in their eyes, the eyes of my sons, and knew that it was I who had put it there.

I thought I had experienced the worst moment in my life years before when my father came to me in the night and confided his plan to replace my sister Rachel with me as the bride, in the great wedding my family was planning. Rachel had clearly been the true beloved of Jacob, our cousin, who had appeared, with no warning, one day out of the wilderness, coming into our lives and changing them forever.

My God, he was beautiful. Tired and worn from his journey, aching with his own pain because he had traveled far, leaving his own home, his father, whom he had revered and then betrayed, his brother, whom he had valued and then spit upon, and his mother, whom he had trusted, who had encouraged his own vile acts because she had recognized something in him that only had reality for him at odd moments in the night when he could not sleep.

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ART BY MAIRAV SOLOMON

His skin was smooth, browned by the desert sun. His limbs were long, his hands veined and muscular, still so delicate in his touch. His smile enveloped his whole body, but it was the light, clear and simple, that came from his eyes that made me stop when I saw him, barely able to breathe.

I saw them arrive together: Jacob, the stranger who turned out to be my cousin, and my baby sister who I loved as my own child, who I ached to be near and who kept me separate and distant with her smiles and her sweetness.

I saw immediately that they had recognized one another without ever having met before. That it was clearly God's love that had brought them to the well that day, that had given them those moments alone before she brought him to our tent, that had sealed our fates forever.

And I fell in love with them, with who they created together. I had to be around them. I had to warm myself in their light.

And so we lived for seven years. And when my father began to plan the wedding I was happy, because it was God's will that Rachel and Jacob should marry. I was content to go on living in their light, making whatever life I could for myself without them, but believing that my life, in reality, belonged to them.

And then my father, fearful of his family breaking up, frightened of his lands being divided, and drunk with his power over all of us, came to my tent in the dark of night and told me of his plan.

We would go through with the wedding festival. We would dance and play music and eat the exotic foods especially prepared by his wives and concubines and it would seem to all but us that the marriage of Rachel and Jacob, which had been true in the eyes of God since their meeting at the well, would now be true in the eyes of all the men, women, and children of our land.

But in the dark of night it would be me, not Rachel, who was brought to the marriage bed, anointed with all the proper oils, dressed in the softest silks and linens. My face veiled, my mouth mute. It would be me whose body yielded to the touch of his hands. It would be my heart beating beneath his chest as he softly entered me, expanding my very being, my body, my soul. Oh, God forgive me, I wanted that. I had ached for so long. And I convinced myself that I would somehow marry both

---

Yahrzeit

I light the candle in the glass
And let it burn
In memory of you
Who has never left my thoughts
Shy stuttering salesman
on your insurance beat
Carrying your thick black debit book
of white bungalows
Where your customers
The workers lived
When they weren't sweating
Near forges and blast furnaces
You always wore suit and tie
And a hat to cover your bald head
With the scar slashed into your skull
Showing how you almost died
From the operation when you first married
The woman whose image obsessed you
But who came to touch you less and less
So you stayed away and brooded
Until you found a woman who loved you
Even when your body began to fail
And then your mind
You laughed and laughed
As your life flashed before you
And you settled old scores in the dark
Now I light the candle in the glass
And let it burn
In memory of you
As I recite words
that invoke the living

—Gary Pacernick

of them and that we could live together, the three of us, as one. As God is one. And I willingly agreed to my father's plan.

I kept the fantasy with me until that moment when he actually did enter my tent—my cousin, my brother, my beloved. But when he looked at me I knew it was me he saw. Shorter, less delicate in bearing than my sister, there was no mistaking us. And I saw him receive me as a punishment, the one he knew he deserved and was now willing to take. I saw his eyes darken and cloud over. I saw the innocence of love fade. We exchanged no words; they were not necessary. We both knew what we were doing. And as he slowly and methodically removed my clothes, gently exploring my body, I recognized that he made love to me as his obligation to my father. He was always tender, he was always considerate of my pleasure in the sexual act, but I was not his beloved and I have lived with that every day of my life.

With the birth of each of our sons and our one beautiful daughter, I prayed that each would earn me his love, but the prayers were a fantasy because I knew where his love belonged.

There were times I convinced myself that it should have been me. After all, I was his first wife. I was able to bear many children, my sons worked hard increasing our wealth as they grew, longing for their father's love as much as I.

Oh Jacob, oh Israel, we longed for your love.

But it was the betrayal of my sister that began to sicken my soul. When I saw her in the morning, I saw that she had been held captive through the night in a tent far enough away from ours that we could not hear her screams. How could I explain to her that it was my love for both of them that had led me into Jacob's bed. Whatever trust there had been between us since we were children together died that day and was replaced by vengeance, jealousy, hatred, anger, and pain.

And now I saw that I had transferred these vicious feelings to my sons. I had taught them the momentary satisfaction of revenge and, in so doing, took away the light in their eyes and the warmth in their hearts.

And I have lived with this all these years.

When we found that Joseph was alive, when he brought us down to Egypt, when he forgave his brothers and took over the care of his father, I believe they found some peace. I pray they found some peace.

They treat me well. I live in a large house with many servants. I suppose I am forgiven too, but my sister is dead. She died somewhere in the wilderness without ever seeing her baby son. And though I am living out my life as the only wife of Jacob, my husband, I miss her. My God, I miss her every day. □

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ABY M. WARBURG



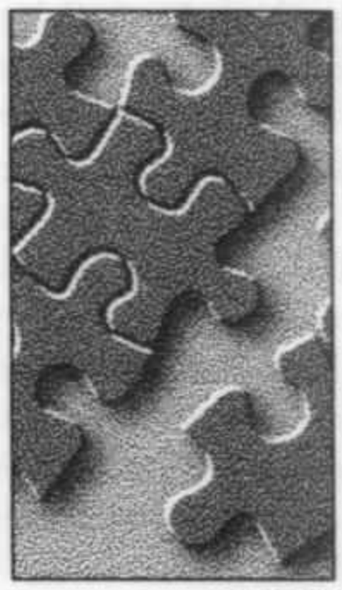
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FICTION

Leaves

Hershey Hoenig

Alex turned the key but the door would not budge. His wife had locked the door from the inside. He could hear the patter of her bare soles on the peacock-and-flower tile floor. He looked about the garden. It needed tending. Dried leaves littered the ground and dead branches hung low from the stunted fig tree. For a Russian immigrant, he lived the Jerusalem dream: private villa and garden surrounded by civil German Jews.

Alex waited for Natasha to let him in. He yanked aside the creepers that covered the street number of his snug, pink-stone Arab house, then washed his hands in the mouth of the lion fountain.

Natasha opened the door and nodded to him. She continued her conversation on the portable phone. Alex whisked by her and headed to the shower. His wife never liked the smell of his sweat.

The solar-heated water was hot, cheap, and an ardent masseuse. Tonight was his fortieth birthday and a lot of people were coming over to fete him. He bellowed a melancholy air about the sailor who left his wife on a distant shore.

Alex stepped out of the shower and, naked and content, headed to get a cold beer. Natasha was busy in the kitchen kneading *teftele*—balls of meat, rice, and onion—that she would later deep-fry in oil. She frowned on nudity and he disliked her greasy *teftele*. Somehow they managed to stay together.

She waved her sticky hands in his direction. "The graphic artist just delivered the cover of my new book."

Alex said, "Great. Where is it?"

"In the bedroom."

Alex took his beer and headed to the bedroom. The usual clutter in the room had been cleaned up and the cover of her new book lay on the dresser. The word "Out" lay across the nude body of an angel standing on his head. Alex's medical eye took note the angel was not circumcised. He rested his wet bottom on the queen-sized bed. He should have known. Natasha would not have bothered for him. It was to be less of a birthday party for him than for her new book.

Alex nursed his bottle. His wife wrote fiction and he wrote facts. He wrote about the doctor who cleaned dove droppings off the Western Wall; about the engineer who claimed he was the Messiah. In her novels, Natasha imagined the doctor jumping off the Wall, the Messiah dying a natural death. Her books sold; his articles didn't. Her activities procured for them goose-liver lunches in Turkey, kidney-pie suppers in London, and tenderloin breakfasts in New York. He had little reason to complain.

Alex got off the bed. He went into the kitchen, dipped his fingers into the bowl of fried meatballs and popped one into his mouth. "Excellent, really."

Natasha put down her spatula and pulled the bowl out of his reach.

"There won't be enough for my guests."

"Haven't had a bite all day."

"Then go out and buy yourself a falafel or something."

Alex went to the refrigerator and took out another beer.

"Do me a favor and don't start guzzling in the afternoon. Stay sober, if you can. By the way, Mutti just called. I invited him to come over tonight."

"Finally, I'll get to meet him." Alex used his teeth to pry the cap off the bottle and drank deeply. Mutti Aloni paid for all of it, the car, the rent, the vacations. Natasha had met Mutti at last fall's Chagall exhibition at the National Museum and Mutti had started to sponsor her writing projects.

Alex had read her *Out* manuscript, and was sure it was a factual description of her affair with Mutti. However, he did not challenge her. It would have been déclassé for him to do so; for truth posing as fiction is, for an intellectual like himself, to be treated only as fiction. He believed that Natasha knew that he knew about Mutti—but both of them played dumb. One day, though, he would have to tend to the undergrowths of their marriage.

Hershey Hoenig spends his time between Jerusalem and New York. He is currently working on a collection of short stories.

Natasha's current affair put little strain on the frayed ropes of their marriage; she was home every night to drink vodka and watch a video with him. It would bother him a lot if Natasha carried on with a younger, more handsome man—but Mutti, as much as he could tell from the photograph, was a soft-bodied man in his fifties whose bald pate, liquid eyes, thin lips, and ashen grey complexion made him look more like an extra for *Schindler's List* than the ruthless construction tycoon he was.

Natasha had been unfaithful in Russia, too, and bragged about it in her novels. Their friends there had known about her lovers for years; it had long ceased to be a topic of conversation for them, a source of embarrassment for him. But in Moscow, he got nothing out of it. Worse, he often came home to find that her lovers had devoured most of his sprats and plundered half his sauerkraut. Now he lived among capitalists—Mutti screwed his wife and Mutti had to pay. Because of this new twist of the lover paying the bills, the gossip resurrected itself—and Alex had to be more self-conscious as he juggled the balloon of honor and the hardball of survival.

He dressed and went into the kitchen. He looked at his wife. What sort of person read her meandering, overwrought, autobiographical novels? She looked back at him. Her large smoky eyes seemed to be marveling that he was the father of her two children. Most of all, he was the handy bookmark trailing the chapters of her life. He could see her mind editing the last paragraph she had written about her infidelities. Every time she looked at his large frame, at his freckled hands stuck in his frayed pockets—she could grab the next thread in her novel. He was her corkboard—pins sticking into scraps of paper did not hold her ideas as well as the pained look and crumpled habit of the man in her house. It was his failures, his incompetence, his passivity, his lack of anger that drove her to a frenzy of action—to write about the writhing of her body and soul. Let him go away and, in the arms of her lovers, she would shrivel like falafel in hot oil.

"I'm going out," he said to Natasha's back, framed by the window, shaded soft pastel red by the dust-filtered light.

Natasha tucked in the turquoise wings of the iron shutters. "Don't be late, as usual. That's why I bought you a watch. And while you're out, why don't you gather the leaves in front, like you said you would."



JULIE DELTON

"The dead leaves?"

"No, the ones still on the tree."

Alex went out of his house, looked down at the fallen leaves, walked past the red Audi in his driveway and headed up the block to the corner falafel stand. Falafel was the only oriental food he liked and he knew where the best was to be had. "Tsion's Falafel" was not one of them, but it would do in a pinch.

It irked him that, too often, he settled for less. Perhaps birthday means, if not a new birth, a wee metamorphosis. Some day, he'd pop out from under the leaves and spread his wings. Today, he'd eat his falafel, gather some dead leaves—and let a respectable lawn welcome his guests. Why give Natasha the chance to tell everyone she did it all, that he did nothing?

Alex looked down on Tsion's oriental face, shimmering in the well of bubbling oil. Intent on rescuing a drowning, wrinkled ball, Tsion seemed oblivious to the popping sounds his sweat drops made greeting the hot oil underneath. Alex stood back from the tiny explosions and waited. He looked at the dial of his gold Rolex watch. Its two hands hung down in an inverted victory sign: twenty minutes to four. Until his ball was saved, Tsion would continue to slowly rotate a long-handled wire spatula in the aluminum pot and, under a late afternoon August sun, let his customer's fair face ripen to pomegranate red.

Three years was time enough for Alex to swallow and regurgitate local norms. In Jerusalem, where a customer was little less suspect than an infidel desiring to violate local goods, a supplicant-customer had to beg to gain entrance to any gate of commerce. It therefore didn't upset Alex that three minutes had passed—and Tsion gave no sign of his readiness to serve.

The Rolex ticked off another minute. Hoping to make Tsion acknowledge him, Alex poured out a deep bass rendition of the "Volga Boatman." The stirring melody did not move Tsion, though. He hummed an Arabic tune and continued with his rescue mission.

Alex folded his hairy arms across his boxer's chest. When Tsion did decide to take notice of him, he'd have to break his teeth to say in Hebrew, "No burnt balls, please," and also, "Without hot sauce." Last time he ordered falafel, he hadn't said that, and ten minutes later had to dash to the head in a riotous bout of diarrhea. He wasn't going to let Tsion cheat him this time. He'd make sure the Moroccan stuffed five (and not four) falafel balls in his pita; he'd refuse to accept even one shriveled ball. Alex was feeling good about his resolve when Tsion looked up.

Stern-faced, Tsion held the ball in his thick fingers and offered it to Alex. "On the house."

Surprised by Tsion's generosity, Alex took the gift, blew on it to cool it off and said, "My first birthday gift."

He gingerly popped the whole, shriveled, brown ball into his mouth. The texture was gritty but supple, the taste sweet but not cloying.

Alex felt a light blow in the base of his spine. He swallowed hard—some chickpea paste clogged his windpipe—and he began to gag. The mangled falafel ball flew out of his mouth right back into Tsion's court, plonking down into its own hot womb. "Satan!" Alex cursed in Russian. Tsion raised the greasy spatula and swatted him full across the face.

Alex retreated from the stand. He knew who was responsible for this fiasco. Boris. A finger-jab in the back was Boris's way of greeting old friends—of making new enemies. Alex turned about to confront the pinched face of Boris, a fellow immigrant, whose hopes had also wilted under the tattered awnings of the Mideast bazaar.

"How are you?" Boris asked, in his ever-so-quiet, enraging voice.

Alex arced his arm as if he had to flit a fly out of his eyes and walked away. There was no point in trying to right the wrong, to apologize to Tsion, to blame Boris. It was foolhardy to try to cool the heat of Tsion's fury; to console a man when his dead still lay at his feet.

The hot sauce of his ulcer was burning his gut and he had to forego venting his anger—even one dash of it—against Boris. He had to keep his chin up, his bile down. He had to ignore Tsion's curses—clear above the clatter of loose-sandaled feet and the gearshift groans of speeding, braking cars: "Bolshevik! Your mother was a commie whore and … and your daughter can jump on my pole."

Boris stepped right in front of Alex. A coy smile played on his rubbery lips. "And your wife, how is she?"

Alex avoided Boris's dark eyes and fixed instead on a passing Ethiopian teenager in cork-heeled platform shoes; she was dressed in a short red cotton halter too tight for her ample breasts. Alex noticed that a bad job had been done on her exposed navel.

The Israeli doctors refused to give him a license. He had delivered more than three thousand babies in Russia and he had tied every umbilical cord properly, even artistically.

"We want people with experience with the latest techniques," the medical board had said. Alex didn't bother telling them that, together with his father, he had been delivering calves and ewes since he was six. Here, in his tribal homeland, they wouldn't let him touch a newborn baby.

Alex softly said to Boris, "Natasha is O.K. She's back from St. Petersburg."

"Talking up romantic porn, is she?"

"That and some other books."

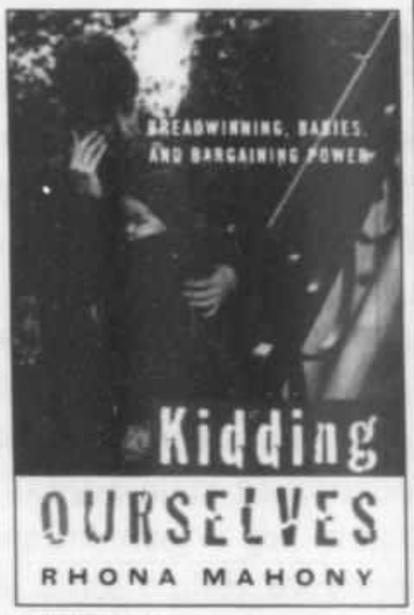
"Hey, you want to hear a joke?"

"Not really."

"It'll do you good to laugh: An Auschwitz survivor asks God to let him see the next world. The request is granted and the Jew is escorted by a Sabra angel in blue and white striped wings to an opulent hotel suite where he is served gefilte fish, chicken soup, and cholent washed down with sweet red wine. Overjoyed that this will be his next abode—his final, permanent address—he returns to earth a happy man. The Jew finally dies … even Holocaust survivors eventually do, you know … and when he comes to the next world, a sullen Yemenite angel scoots him off to a stifling fiberglass caravan in the middle of a desert—and treats him to warm water and burnt falafel. The survivor is aghast.

We are kidding ourselves:

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'But this is not what God promised me when I asked Him. This is not what my eyes had seen, my mouth had tasted. I've been cheated by God. I'll never trust anybody again. Never, never again.'

The angel scowls and says, 'Pilgrim, last time you came as a tourist, now you're just another slob immigrant.' Good joke, heh?"

Alex locked his big hands on Boris's elbow and gave him a somber look. "A year ago, you sported ponytail and earrings—now, a newborn Hasid, you dangle ropes of hair about your cheeks and twirl tassels of thread about your thighs. Make jokes about God and next year—"

"Lighten up, Alex. By us Hasids, it's better in God's eyes that I complain with a joke than complain with a complaint."

"We shouldn't complain, Boris. It's still better for us to squat in Jerusalem with a falafel in hand than stand and chew the cud on a Moscow breadline."

Alex decided to walk back home, take the car, and drive to the Old City, near Ecce Homo. The Christian Arabs there had the best falafel, using only virgin oil. He said nothing as Boris fell into step with him. Alex walked up his driveway, fished in his pocket and pulled out a set of car keys.

Boris looked up at the house. "Your new place?"

"Yes."

"Must be nice having a wife wait for you on ritzy Emek Repha'im, living as if the Messiah has already come … When the Messiah really comes, most people won't cry—and some people, like you, won't laugh."

"Yes."

Boris moved close to the Audi and plucked at the car's windshield wipers. "You want the rubber to crack in this heat? They stiffen up. Then they crack. Then they're useless. Then they're dangerous. Come the winter rains, you won't be able to see a soul in front of you. You want to kill somebody? Yourself?"

"I haven't the time."

Boris's mouth opened in feigned surprise. "Working real hard at your journalism gig?" He whipped the wipers back from the glass. "How about taking me for a little ride?"

Alex stared at Boris's two front gold teeth. When would he have the guts to pull Boris's skullcap off? To wring his straggly red beard? Alex inhaled deeply and let his anger slip away under the coattails of his exhaled breath. In his lifetime, he had met worse than Boris. In the Russian army, in Moscow med school, in the local *souks*. Boris wasn't such a bad guy.

If Boris did want to needle him, who was at fault? He could expect meanness from Boris, a Ph.D. quality control engineer who now worked as a packer for a chicken schnitzel factory. Schnitzel slabs came whisking down the conveyor belt—and Boris had to be quick to swipe each frozen, breaded breast and slap it into a "Holy City Chicken" bucket. A lunatic from the Hundred-Gates section of town, a kosher supervisor-cum-foreman, ran up and down the line chanting, "Breasts to the priests, thighs to the rabbis, hearts to the poor, gizzards to the rich, wings to the angels. Livers go to heaven and balls go to hell."

Little wonder that Boris's nerves were frayed. Weren't the Russians on Hosea Street still gossiping about Boris's wife Celia? It was clear, everybody was saying, why Boris spent most of his free time at the Western Wall praying for the Messiah to come.

Pity aside—the taste of the vomited fried ball was still too strong in his mouth—Alex was not going to offer his other cheek too quickly. "Sorry, Boris, I have to hurry to the supermarket and pick up dinner for Natasha and the children. Some Holy City Chicken maybe."

Boris scaled his voice into an even lower pitch. "I have to take care of my kid myself. Without a wife. Believe me, it's a lot better than keeping a whore around the house."

Alex bit his lip. Boris's gangly wife, a chambermaid at the Moriah hotel, was caught pulling her covers off for a wiry Arab poet. Boris did not forgive or forget. He played it by the book. Boris made sure he had photographs to prove it all; he almost throttled the poet, and then claimed the poet attacked him with a pipe. He threw his wife out into the street and had the police arrest the poet. He posted a black-bordered mourning notice in the Hebrew papers declaring his wife to be a harlot. The rabbinical court awarded Boris their little daughter; and Boris didn't have to pay Celia one shekel of alimony.

Boris's wife counterattacked. She disclosed to the court that her inner space, from swan neck to thick ankles, caged gentile chromosomes—nary a smidgen of Jew genes. If she was not Jewish, then her daughter was not Jewish; and a pious court must not allow the good Jew Boris to share living quarters with a nubile shiksa.

The rabbis quickly buried Celia's story. They decided she was indeed Jewish—therefore her offspring was Jewish—and they certainly weren't going to allow a

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Happy Holiday Season.

whore to raise an innocent daughter of Israel. In the end, Celia trekked back to Odessa with her wan Arab in tow.

Alex looked down at the carpet of leaves on the lawn and got into the car. The seat was sticky, the wheel scalded his hand. Again, he had forgotten to cover the windshield with a sunscreen. He opened the door, bent down, and picked up a dead leaf. His naked palm protected by the fig leaf, Alex turned the key. The engine sputtered and died. Alex began to sweat. He tried the key again and the car roared.

Pulling out of his driveway, Alex adjusted his rear-view mirror to see Boris chewing on the ends of his beard. With his big white knitted skullcap plastered down on his hasidic-hippie locks, Boris looked as Jewish as a Jew was supposed to be. Good for Boris. He had few problems adjusting to local mores: a little lie now and then—hitched up to light thievery here and there. Boris had two black goats of belief drag his life along: An unshakable faith in the coming of the Messiah and a solemn vow not to play anyone's chump. Like two sturdy rear-wheel shock springs, they served to cushion his journey on the potholed road linking the Kremlin to the Temple of Zion.

Perhaps on a vast, freezing Russian steppe, war and peace were poles apart, but in Jerusalem, people understood the two were only a stone's throw away.

The irony was that Celia, who looked Jewish, wasn't Jewish at all. If she could have proved she wasn't Jewish the rabbis would have sent her with her gentile daughter back to Russia—and Boris would now be choking on his beard, alone, without his daughter. Alex winced. He had slept with Celia, before and after the Arab. He knew her parents. Salt of the earth people. Her Armenian mother worked as a water engineer; her dead Tartar father had been a drunk sailor.

He went to the courthouse to testify Celia was telling the truth. But Boris chopped at him in front of the revolving door: "Don't waste your breath. I know the way those rabbis think. First they ask themselves: 'Why would a Jew marry an ugly shiksa?' Then they answer their own question: 'Ipso facto, if she's ugly and he married her anyway, she must, at least, be Jewish.' They'll believe me, not you … You're laughing? Then listen good. I hate being tough. Two years ago, I told them you're Jewish. But how would you like it if I enlightened them that Natasha—and your kids—are not?"

Natasha could be said to be Celia's spiritual twin. A dark-eyed gentile, Natasha looked tribal—the rabbis had signed her up as a Jew without even asking her one question. But they had earnestly flailed him (the blond husband) with the ritual fringes of suspicion. When he had come to register for his identity card—ten times, at least—they asked him if he was Jewish. They told him to prove it. He told them it was no one's business, except his wife's, to know whether he was circumcised or not. They kept on insisting he looked too Slavic.

Boris had come before the rabbis to vouch he was indeed a Jew.

Alex rubbed his stubble chin. He certainly did look like the classic Slav. Broad forehead, thin blond-white hair, brown oriental eyes set far apart, tall, broad peasant build. When he met other Jews, they would hook their noses into a question mark wondering if he was really one of them. Alex didn't care. The center of his life circle had been his mother, a hundred-percent Jew (the daughter of a renowned rabbi) who even kept some arcane Jewish customs; she often cooked chick-peas—boiling large vats of the round beans for a family come home with a newborn child, or for a family come home from burying its dead.

Alex looked again into the rear-view mirror; up the block, he could see Boris eating a falafel and talking to Tsion. They were probably prattling about him and his wife—but he owed Boris. At least, he should have invited him to the party.

When his eyes shifted back to the windshield, Alex could almost see the belly button of the pedestrian staring him in the face. Alex hit the brakes hard. His car came to a screeching halt a half-meter in front of the sashaying girl. She stuck her tongue out at him as the car jumped forward, nearly hitting her. She stalked on, ignoring the bang of colliding cars.

"Crap on you," the driver of the taxi behind him came out shouting. A cacophony of angry horns began. Alex got out to inspect the damage to the back of the

Audi. The right taillight was smashed, the fender dangled like a hangman's noose, and the exhaust pipe lay dead on the street. The tailgating cabby shook his forefinger in Alex's face and shouted in a hoarse voice, "I'm not going to pay you a damn agora! You hear me?"

Alex orchestrated his facial muscles into a blasé, condescending smile.

The cabby's eyes opened wide. He leaped on to the hood of the Audi and screamed at a metastasizing crowd, "This Russian wiseguy backs up into me and expects me to pay him."

A dark-skinned Yemenite teenager with a silver filigreed chain dangling from his nostril shouted to no one in particular, "I want the Absorption Ministry to give me an Audi too."

The cabby jumped up and down on the hood, trying to dent the steel. Failing, he jumped off the Audi and started to kick the front left tire. "Don't worry friends. I'm nobody's chump. I swear on my father's grave, on my mother's eyes … this Jew is not going to make that stinking Bolshevik rich."

The crowd jeered, coaxing Alex to counter the cabby's assault with a heavy broadside of his own. Alex did not oblige. He got back into his car and started the motor. He stretched his neck out of his side window, gave the cabby an up-yours finger and zoomed off, the curses of his sparking, street-scraping exhaust pipe following him home.

Alex laughed to himself. A finger for a finger fit the crowd's theological dispositions only too well. Praise the Lord (a finger also for the Pharisees in the Ministry of Interior) he had joined Jews for Jesus. Like himself, Jesus had been the perfect match of a peasant father and saintly mother, of coarseness and gentleness, of anger and forgiveness. To hell with the car. He could excuse the cabby, forgive Natasha, invite Boris to his party—and meet Mutti.

Alex parked the car in his driveway and walked toward the falafel stand. Boris was nowhere to be seen. He saw Tsion look at him—but Tsion hardly registered that he knew him.

Alex shrugged his shoulders. He wasn't going to buy a falafel from Tsion. He'd rather take a cab to the Old City and buy falafel from the Christians. Nor would he vex himself about his failure to catch Boris; that's the way the matzo crumbles. Israel had toughened him up, making him less sentimental about moral perfection, more prone to casting away the cross of guilt. In the City of David, it was easy to forgive those who transgressed against you—for few believed in true sainthood. So it was possible to insult a man at dusk and, come dawn, share a glass of mint tea with him. Who could keep grudges in all this heat? Perhaps, on a vast, freezing Russian steppe, war and peace were poles apart, but in Jerusalem, people understood the two were only a stone's throw away. Even for those who did believe in the possibility of perfection—for whom the act of forgiving was more of a problem—the local culture understood the nature of temptation—enough to tolerate even a saint living off a harlot.

A taxi cruised down the block, Alex waved for it to stop. He got into the front seat. "Where to, Mister?" The man's voice sounded hoarse.

Alex looked at the driver and gritted his teeth. It was the guy who had smashed his Audi. In Israel, there was no way to elude these embarrassments. Sooner or later he would bump into the guy who hit his car. Or meet the guy who screwed his wife. Alex gave the driver a blank look.

The driver stared back, pretending not to recognize Alex. He raised his voice, "I asked, Mister … Where to, Mister?"

"Falafel."

The driver slapped his forehead with the back of his hand. "Falafel? Falafel Street? And where, Mister, is that? In Odessa?"

"Near the Western Wall."

The driver pulled into the parking lot near the Dung Gate. Alex put his hand in his back pocket. His wallet

(Continued on p. 96)

PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES: Out of the Closet & Into the Laboratory

PSYCHEDELICS have been used for religious and healing purposes for thousands of years. In 1990, after psychedelic research had been suppressed for several decades, the Food and Drug Administration courageously placed science over drug-war politics and permitted researchers to cautiously reenter their laboratories. Unfortunately, funding for research into the beneficial uses of psychedelics has not been forthcoming from government, foundations or pharmaceutical companies.

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (**MAPS**) is a 501 (c) (3) corporation chartered in 1986 as a membership-based research and educational organization. MAPS assists scientists to design, obtain governmental approval for, fund, conduct and report on research into the healing potential of psychedelics and marijuana. Such uses may include psychotherapeutic research and treatment, treatment of addiction, pain relief, spiritual exploration, shamanic healing, psychic research, brain physiology research, and related scientific inquiries. Your financial support is needed to translate hard-won scientific freedom into new data. With collective action, we can help catalyze policy shifts that support the development of legal contexts for the use of psychedelics. MAPS members receive a quarterly newsletter and the satisfaction of knowing that their tax-deductible donations go to support the fragile renaissance of psychedelic research.

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Giving Voice to the Vulnerable

Ruth Sidel

Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation, by Jonathan Kozol, Crown Publishers, 1995, 276 pp. $23.

Over the past decade and a half, and particularly since the 1994 congressional elections, we have witnessed the systematic denigration, stereotyping, and stigmatizing of millions of poor women and their children. The demonizing of poor, single mothers has been an integral part of the most recent onslaught on the "safety net," meager and inadequate as it is, that has existed in the United States since the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935. Nearly 15 million recipients of Aid To Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) have been painted with one brush, deemed unworthy, the "undeserving" poor, and have been relegated to that area in society that is beyond the pale. In the words of Toni Morrison, they have been put "outdoors" which, she points out, is the "real terror of life."

Scapegoating the poor has become national policy during a time in which the gap between rich and poor has grown, according to the economist Paul Krugman, to "Great Gatsby" levels and millions of middle- and working-class Americans have lost significant wages, benefits, and status. As more and more workers are laid off and are unable to find comparable employment, as fear of crime escalates and frustration with social institutions such as education, health care, and law enforcement rises, both the elite who create and control social policy and the growing numbers of Americans who fear for their own and their children's future have found their objects of blame—poor mothers and their children. (See Mark Stern's "What We Talk about When We Talk about Welfare," TIKKUN, November/December 1994, and "The Politics of Triage," by Charles Derber, TIKKUN, May/June 1995.)

As the political tide has rapidly turned against the poor, rhetoric has escalated to previously unimagined levels of hyperbole. Mother-only families are said to be responsible for virtually all of the ills afflicting American society. They have been blamed for the "breakdown of the family," for the crime rate, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, illiteracy, homelessness, poor school performance, and the rending of the social fabric. Labeling them as dependent, lazy, and unwilling to work has been used indiscriminately to discredit an entire cohort of women without regard to their character, their specific work histories, or their daily lives.

As part of the effort to degrade unmarried mothers, some legislators and social policy analysts have referred to a "culture of illegitimacy" while others have equated "illegitimacy" with "promiscuity." As though the denigration of mothers weren't enough, still others specifically want to stigmatize children as well. David Boaz, executive vice president of the Cato Institute, for example, has called for resurrecting the term "bastard."

This denigration of welfare recipients is based in large part on dichotomous thinking that divides Americans, particularly women, into "good" and "bad;" "workers" and "idlers;" caring mothers and those who have been characterized by Charles Murray as "rotten mothers." As historian of religion Elaine Pagels points out in her recent book, *The Origin of Satan*, cultures throughout the world and over the span of recorded human history have divided people into "we" and "they," "human" and "non-human." The "we" is often correlated with the "human" while the "they" is envisaged as "nonhuman." In the United States, the dehumanizing of the poor has served to weaken, even to destroy the feelings of empathy on the part of the wider citizenry and thus has legitimized the imposition of increasingly harsh conditions under which poor people must live in this extraordinarily affluent society.

At this critical point in American social policymaking, Jonathan Kozol has presented an in-depth, intimate, searing portrait of some of the very individuals being discredited in state houses around the country, on the floor of Congress, and in the media—an unblinking look at the deplorable conditions under which they are forced to live.

In his book, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, Kozol brings us face to face with the daily lives and seemingly endless struggles of the people who live in Mott Haven, a desperately impoverished neighborhood in the infamous South Bronx.

Throughout his writing, particularly in his last two books, *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America* and *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Kozol has demonstrated the injustice of American inequality and the bankruptcy of significant elements of American social policy through detailed examinations of the lives, thoughts, and feelings of the poorest among us. He and the people who live and work in one of the most blighted areas of the South Bronx enable us to experience the unrelieved bitter cold of winter in all too many of the apartments and the oppressive heat of summer when families are too frightened of the ubiquitous violence even to open their windows. We enter unspeakably understaffed and often filthy hospitals in which critically ill pa-

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Ruth Sidel, professor of sociology at Hunter College, is the author of Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America. *Her most recent book is* Battling Bias: The Struggle for Identity and Community on College Campuses *(Penguin).*

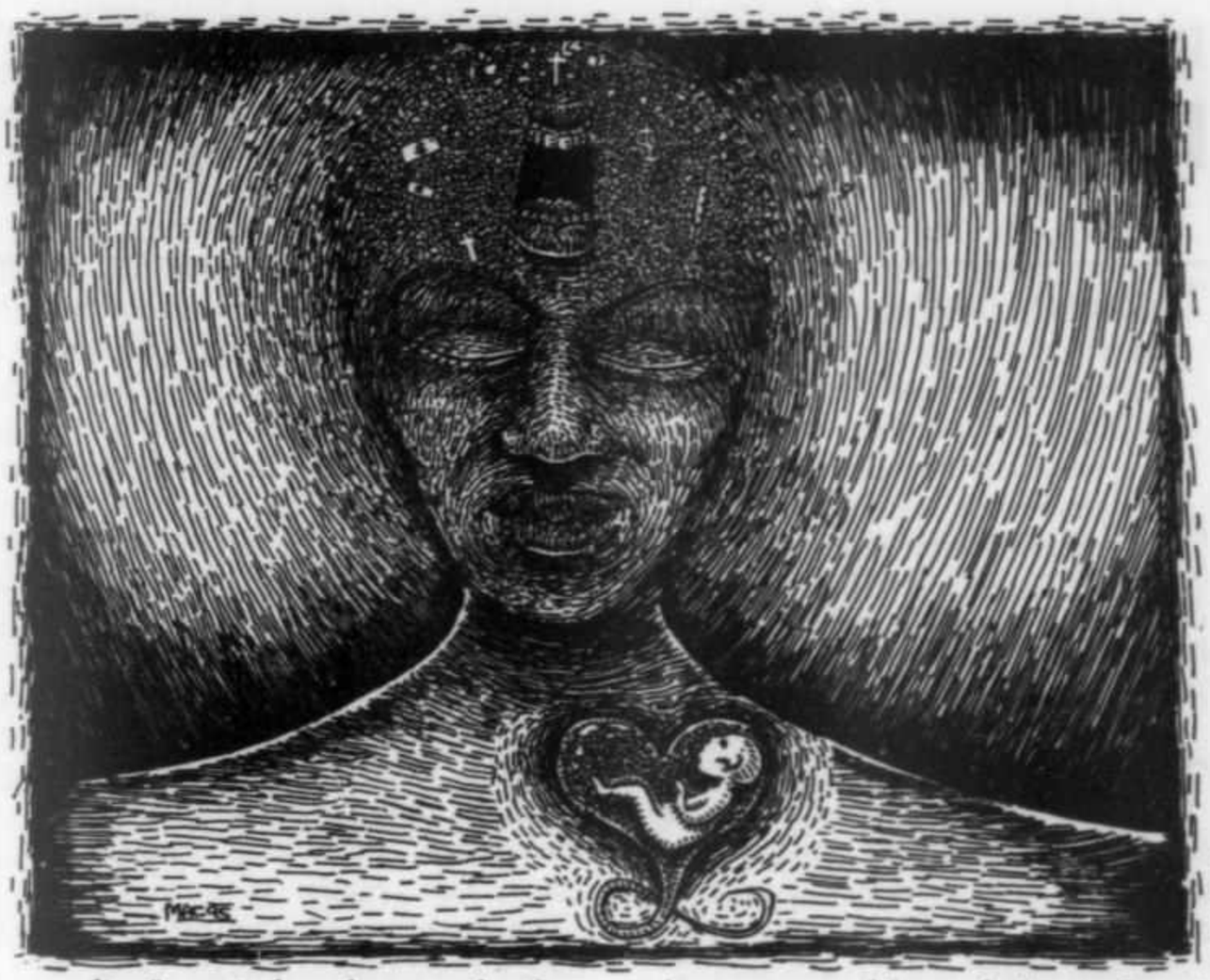
tients must wait in emergency rooms for days before gaining access to inpatient care; we experience day-to-day life in neighborhoods overrun by drugs and drug dealers, by the plague of AIDS, by hordes of voracious rats, and, above all, by profound depression and despair.

Kozol enables us to get to know some of the residents of Mott Haven. We meet Alice Washington, a wise and courageous mother of two in her late forties, separated from a husband who beat her and infected her with AIDS. We meet her son, David, a high school senior who cooks and cleans for his mother, worries about her, cares for her when she is particularly ill, and who during the course of the book, is admitted to college. We meet Anthony, a twelve-year-old child/philosopher who reads Edgar Allen Poe, regularly discusses literature and life with a local poet, and describes his neighborhood as "a place of pain."

Perhaps sixteen-year-old Maria describes most accurately and vividly what living in Mott Haven in the mid-1990s is doing to its residents:

> If you weave enough bad things into the fibers of a person's life—sickness and filth … a prison here, sewage there, drug dealers here, the homeless people over there, then give us the very worst schools anyone could think of, hospitals that keep you waiting for ten hours, police that don't show up when someone's dying … you can guess that life will not be very nice and children will not have much sense of being glad of who they are.

One of the lenses Kozol uses to focus on the ways in which people less than thirty minutes—but several worlds—away from one of the richest urban areas in the country cope with deprivation, fear, and hopelessness is the activity of the local churches and the experiences of their pastors. The Reverend Martha Overall of St. Ann's Church, for example, attempts to keep her church a "gentle place for children," while she wonders aloud how people who live on Park Avenue can lecture those who live in Mott Haven about "character" and "values." She suggests that it takes extraordinary "self-deceit" and "social blindness" for people who pump sewage and transport medical waste into the South Bronx to think they have the "moral



MAC MCGILL

standing" to judge the people they have "segregated and concealed."

What is particularly revealing about *Amazing Grace* is how little the residents of Mott Haven resemble the stereotypes repeatedly put forth by so many elected officials and social policy analysts. Alice Washington's grandchildren, a boy of five and a girl of six, provide an answer as they kneel beside their beds every night and say the following prayer:

> God bless Mommy. God bless Nanny.
>
> God, don't punish me because I'm Black.

What has made the scapegoating and stigmatizing of poor women widely acceptable is the perception that the vast majority of welfare recipients are African American. While Black families are indeed proportionately over-represented on the welfare rolls, there are, in reality, many more poor whites in the United States than poor Blacks. But the campaign against AFDC recipients has been the ultimate playing of the race card. Code language, from Ronald Reagan's "welfare queen" to the current focus on laziness, willful dependence on government, wanton sexuality, and illegitimacy, repeatedly evokes the specter of race. The combination of overt and covert racism, Americans' longstanding dislike and denigration of the poor, and the need to find someone to blame for the urgent problems, feelings of anxiety, rage, and fear that millions are experiencing today have resulted in the current war on the poor.

Amazing Grace reminds us of the reality and complexity of the lives of millions of poor Americans, of their struggle to survive against virtually insurmountable odds, and, most important, it reminds us that the residents of Mott Haven, like those in impoverished communities throughout the country, are not a breed apart, but human beings like the rest of us, with feelings and needs and hopes and dreams for their children. As human beings they are entitled to live and raise their families in a humane environment. They are entitled in this wealthy country to adequate shelter and food. They are entitled to accessible health care and education that will enable them to survive in the twenty-first century. They are entitled to jobs that pay wages above the poverty line.

While Kozol sees himself as a "social anthropologist" or "oral historian" rather than as a social-policy expert and therefore enables the people of Mott Haven to speak rather than offering explicit solutions himself, the fundamental message of *Amazing Grace* is that Mrs. Washington and David and Anthony and Maria and the millions like them are not only entitled to a decent life but are also entitled to dignity and respect. This message urgently needs to be heard today. □

BOOK REVIEWS

Prophet of Postmodern Aging

Thomas R. Cole

From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older, by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller. Warner Books, 1995. 303 pp. $21.95.

This has been a strange anniversary year for those of us paying attention to the care, public policy, scientific study, and experience of growing older. Americans (at least some Americans) celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of Social Security, the fiftieth anniversary of the Gerontological Society, and the thirtieth anniversary of Medicare. Yet these institutions are under siege or in turmoil, unsure of their future. Meanwhile, the modernist dream of curing mankind of the disease of old age is being challenged by a new emphasis on spirituality.

There is good news and bad news here. The bad news lies in the serious threat to the health and welfare of older Americans (especially women and minorities). In Washington, while military spending continues at Cold War levels, Republicans and conservative Democrats launch reckless attacks on Social Security, propose drastic Medicare reforms, and seek to end federal Medicaid entitlements. The odds favor compromise on protecting middle-class entitlements but further erosion of public provision for the most needy.

The good news? You won't see it in the headlines, but we are witnessing the gradual erosion of modern culture's strong temporal prejudices—that progress renders the past obsolete, that the new is better than the old, that youth is better than age. More and more people are grappling with Carl Jung's question about the meaning of aging: "A human being would certainly not grow to be seventy or eighty years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species," wrote Jung in his famous essay, "The Stages of Life" (1933). "The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning. ... Whoever carries over into the afternoon of life the law of the morning ... must pay for it with damage to his soul."



In the late twentieth-century Western world, old age is a season in search of its purposes. It is not always easy to discern this amid consumer capitalism's continued emphasis on youthfulness and our culture's manic pursuit of individual health as the *summum bonum* of life. But increasingly, writers, filmmakers, advocates, artists, scholars, and elders are telling us a story that modern science suppressed: Aging is not a problem to be solved but an experience, an opportunity for human ripening and completion.

A little over ten years ago, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi was approaching his sixtieth birthday, the age he would become an emeritus professor of Jewish mysticism at Temple University. Though he struggled to maintain his hectic schedule as a teacher and spiritual leader, Reb Zalman did not like what he saw in those exhausted, unguarded nighttime moments when he looked at himself in the mirror. "Feeling alone and vulnerable, I feared becoming a geriatric case ...." Looking ahead, Zalman saw nothing to inspire him—no good models, guides, codes of behavior, or social scripts "to shape and give meaning to my life."

Zalman Schachter was born in 1924 into a Hasidic community in Poland. When he was less than a year old, his family moved to Vienna, where he studied in a yeshiva and in a leftist Zionist high school. When the Nazis came to Vienna, sixteen-year-old Zalman fled to France, where he was interred in a camp for a year. In 1942, he came (by way of Marseilles, Casablanca, and the West Indies) to the United States to study at the Lubavitch yeshiva in Brooklyn, where he was ordained in 1947. He later earned a Master of Arts in the psychology of religion from Boston University and a Doctor of Letters from Hebrew Union College. Over the years he served as a congregational rabbi, a Hebrew school principal, a Hillel Foundation director, and a professor of religion and Jewish mysticism.

Beginning in the 1960s, Reb Zalman—who was a founder of the

Thomas R. Cole is the author of The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America *and editor, with Mary Winkler, of* The Oxford Book of Aging.

PHOTO: AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO

havurah movement—emerged as a unique, charismatic, and controversial figure in the countercultural Jewish renewal community. He organized his followers into a religious fellowship in Philadelphia known as P'nai Or, "faces of light," which has recently joined forces with the Shalom Center to form ALEPH, the Alliance for Jewish Renewal. His belief in the universality of spiritual truths has lead him to study with Sufi masters, Buddhist teachers, Native-American elders, Catholic monks, and humanistic and transpersonal psychologists. But none of these sources of wisdom dispelled the gloom that hung over his approaching old age.

To face this crisis directly, Reb Zalman took a forty-day retreat at the Lama Foundation, an ecumenical retreat center located near Taos, New Mexico, where he spent most of his time in solitude, "praying, meditating, writing, studying, taking long walks." Zalman was on a vision quest, a search for his life path and purpose. He emerged with a conviction that he had glimpsed a vision of elderhood, that his task was to help initiate others into this uncharted territory.

To prepare himself, Zalman plunged into the literatures of gerontology and life extension. He consulted consciousness researchers who were developing the potential of older adults.

"I studied my own eldering process, piecing together from my own quest the tools that lead to successful life completion." In 1987, he founded the Spiritual Eldering Institute, to sponsor nondenominational workshops aimed at providing people with the psychological and spiritual tools to become not merely old people but elders.

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, written with San Diego journalist and teacher Ron Miller, builds on the experiences of these workshops and tries to bring Zalman's message to a wider audience. Written in Zalman's voice, the book seeks to move away from a view of aging that focuses on decline and social irrelevance, toward a perspective stressing spiritual growth and social contribution. We are called to become elders in the service of our families, communities, and Mother Earth.

This is a bold vision. "With our longer life spans and the widespread availability of psychospiritual growth techniques, we can shape ourselves into the kind of elders we want to be, enjoying creative, deeply fulfilling lives." *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* contains many tools, exercises, and ideas developed in Spiritual Eldering workshops. Individuals are encouraged to review their lives, come to terms with their mortality, and begin to function as mentors, mediators, environmental mobilizers, and facilitators of others' growth.

From Age-ing to Sage-ing is a welcome alternative to the mainstream response to the postmodern life course, exemplified by Gail Sheehy's *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time*. Sheehy advises people to "customize" their life cycles as if they were changing exercise routines in a fitness club. "At the dawn of a new century," she writes, "it is the adult life cycle itself—stretching it, taming it, bringing it under control, making it yield its riches—that beckons us all, men and women alike."

In contrast, Reb Zalman and Ron Miller argue that mobilizing the forces of "eldering" against the forces of "aging" means facing the primordial terror and fear of death long enough to develop the gratitude and open-hearted acceptance that characterize elders. "The costly burden of repeatedly editing out the signals of our mortality weighs us down and leads to depression. Conscious aging, which hinges on accepting the reality of our death, paradoxically frees us and lightens our burdens."

Other people have called for a cultural transformation of aging, but Zalman Schachter-Shalomi is the first to develop a program to make it happen. In collaboration with the Omega Institute and the co-leadership of Ram Dass and a few humanistic gerontologists, Zalman has essentially founded a movement for "conscious aging." Older people are called upon to organize Elder Circles or Elder Councils, support groups to revitalize the role of elders and their involvement in public life. It is too soon to know whether "conscious aging" or spiritual eldering will grow beyond the New Age community. Nursing homes, retirement communities, elderhostel, retreat centers, elder councils, and mainstream congregations are all potential sites for these ideas to take root.

Spiritual eldering is particularly important for its emphasis on the moral obligations of older people. Today, as we witness the dismantling of the New Deal social legacy, it is amply clear that the moral status of the elderly cannot rest simply on their entitlements, or their roles as abstract bearers of rights or passive recipients of treatment. Thus Reb Zalman's conception of spiritual eldering may become an important force in helping to redefine the virtues and responsibilities of older people, whose place in the welfare state was justified by the assumption that they were among the "worthy poor." At the beginning of a new millennium marked by the huge cohort of aging baby boomers, the allocation of limited public resources across age groups may well be shaped by the ways that older people rise to the postmodern confrontation with Rabbi Hillel's ancient question: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?"

Reb Zalman's approach is not without flaws and potential pitfalls. As Rodger Kamenetz notes when describing him in his book, *The Jew in the Lotus*, Reb Zalman belongs to a "tradition of oral masters who are best appreciated in person, and who inspire others through their incredible flow of ideas, images, and illuminating tales." Wisdom teachers inevitably suffer when translated into print, and this book is no exception, despite Ron Miller's clear and forceful writing. Charismatic leaders whose creativity overflows the bounds of denominational and congregational life also face the problem of losing their home base, of becoming leaders without followers.

The specifically Jewish spirituality that permeates Reb Zalman's nondenominational workshops is largely bleached out of this book, which does not acknowledge the congregational, educational, and nursing-home work in aging currently being done in established Jewish institutions. *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* also paints too gloomy a picture of aging today, ignoring thousands of elders already doing exactly what Zalman recommends. For example, Studs Terkel's new book, *Coming of Age: the Story of Our Century by Those Who Lived It*, allows us to hear the voices of many such elders who are busy fighting the good fight to their last breath.

Reb Zalman's great contribution lies in developing a vision of spiritual eldering and a potentially transformative program for those heading into the "third age"—individuals aged roughly fifty to seventy-five. The book's primary weakness grows from its silence about intractable problems that be-

come pressing in the "fourth age" of life, such as Alzheimer's disease, frailty, and illnesses that require long-term care, as well as the policy issues that pertain to this phase of life, such as generational equity, euthanasia, and assisted suicide.

There are limits to what expanded awareness and spiritual growth can accomplish. Reb Zalman argues that we need to move beyond the depressing picture of physical decline depicted in Ecclesiastes 12:1-5. Yes and no. We do need to emphasize the wonderful possibilities of spiritual growth and well-being inherent in aging. But we cannot dismiss the haunting possibilities inscribed in Ecclesiastes 11:8:

> But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

Realism demands that we acknowledge both the "vanity" and the "piety" motifs that run through Ecclesiastes. We must each take—and keep taking—our own measure in the ongoing dialogue between the view that time sweeps aside all human pleasure and accomplishment, and the view that God has made everything beautiful in its own time.

From Age-ing to Sage-ing marks an important step in developing the soul-ripening and social potential in today's extended life cycle. But whether aging is a way to the darkness or to the light is not entirely a matter of cultural attitudes and personal choices. A change of cultural paradigms will not allow us to transcend the intractable realities of pain, sickness, loss, and poverty which inhere in the increasingly long journey from birth to death. We must be careful not to misuse spiritual eldering to deny these problems, or to undermine government's responsibility to protect the vulnerable. □

Trading Places

Stew Albert

Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist: An American Story, by Yossi Klein Halevi. Little, Brown and Company. 256 pages. $22.95.

While reading *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist*, journalist Yossi Klein Halevi's wildly evocative spiritual-political autobiography, I couldn't help thinking about myself. Klein writes about a Jewish world of which I knew next to nothing. It's a place that I imagined was totally alien, and with which, in the late 1960s, I once had a nasty run-in. That was the time that I helped guard an office of Black Panther-defending Jewish lawyers who, because of their anti-racist efforts, received a bomb threat from the Jewish Defense League. Yossi Klein lived in a violent right-wing world as different from my life as kosher is from *tref*.

I am an original surrealistic Yippie founder, Panther ally, Viet Cong symp. So how come Klein's old Kahanist "fascist" gang began reminding me a little of Jerry and Abbie? How did Klein and I—both rebellious blond Jews from Brooklyn—wind up on different sides of so many crucial issues and yet living out parallel lifestyles with similar crazy contours?

The difference between the Yossi Kahanist and Stew Yippie lies in how we interpreted the Holocaust. For Klein the Holocaust and its meaning came from the horse's mouth. His father survived the Holocaust by running away from his Transylvanian town and hiding in a four-foot-deep, six-foot-long, and eight-foot-wide hole with two other men for the length of the war. At night they went foraging for food and water. Every other Jew in town was rounded up and murdered. Klein's father survived by rebelling against powerlessness.

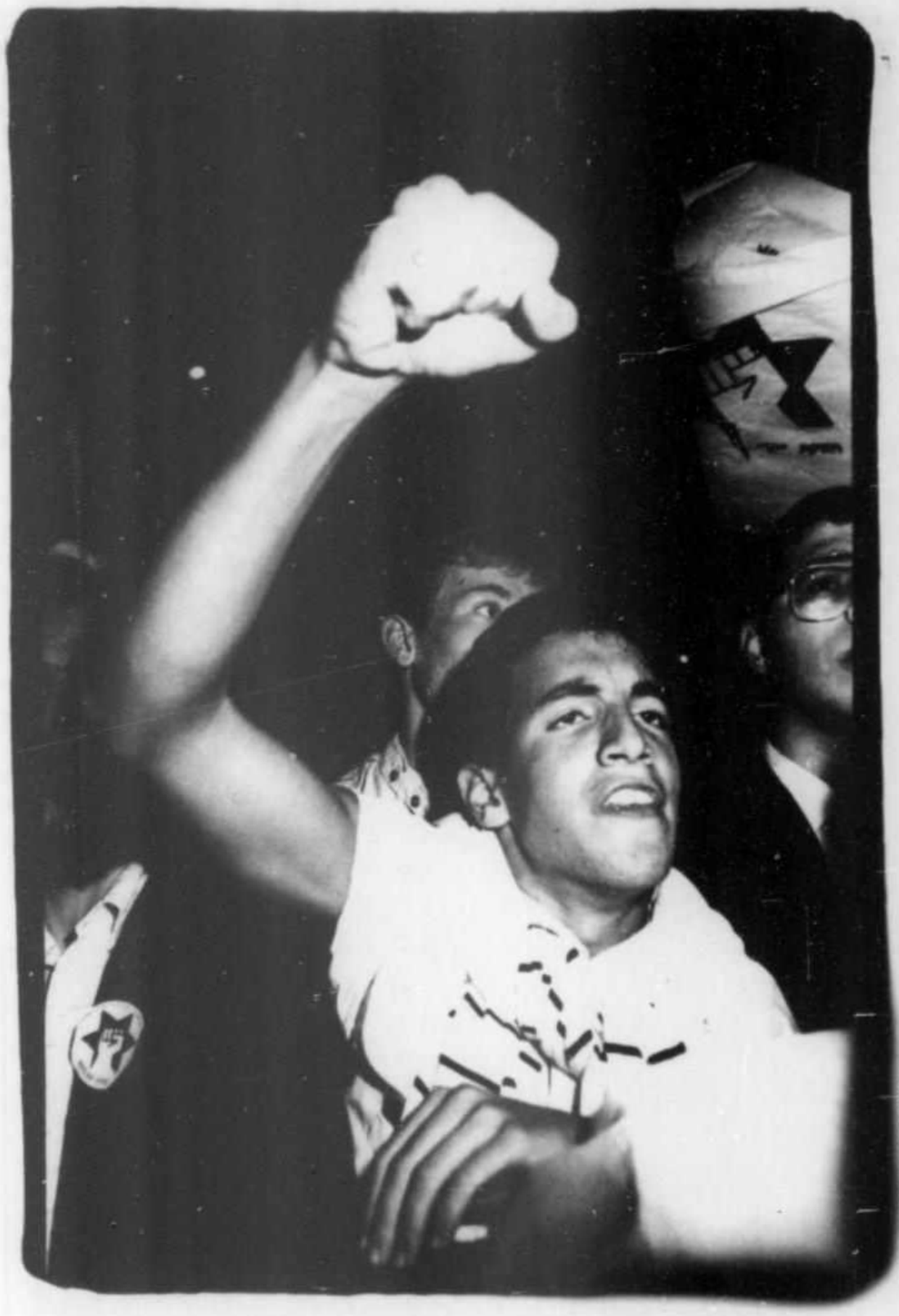
For Yossi's father, the Holocaust was the culmination of Jewish and gentile history. The gentiles hated the Jews and persecuted them. The Jews accepted the persecution and let the goyim get away with it. The Holocaust was the logical extension of two thousand years of sado-masochistic history. The elder Klein didn't know who made him angrier—the anti-Semites or the passive Jews, represented both by the hometown Satmar Hasids who told Transylvanian Jews to stay put and not anticipate the Messiah by escaping to Zionist Palestine and by the assimilated wealthy Jews of America who Yossi's father believed folded their hands across their hardened hearts and did nothing while their despised European brethren went up in smoke.

My American-born, lower-middle-class parents, on the other hand, said next to nothing about genocide. But here and there I did pick up frightening fragments of disaster. My Minsk-born grandmother would on occasion sit me down on her Sheepshead Bay Brooklyn porch and tell me about the bad *goyim*. "They would murder every Jew if they could get away with it. They have hearts of stone," she would tell the eager eight-year-old sitting next to her and then pick up her magnifying glass and go back to reading the *Jewish Morning Journal*.

My grandmother's hometown, Minsk, was a Nazi killing field and eventually, sometime before I had my bar mitzvah, I was shown photos of many relatives who "were asleep" because of Hitler. But for me, unlike Klein, the Holocaust was never imminent. It was something that happened in old Europe, revealing incredible human bestiality. It was a moral problem, a warning about

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Stew Albert was a founding Yippie and an editor of the Berkeley Tribe, *an underground newspaper. More recently he has been active in the Oregon chapter of New Jewish Agenda, Peace Now, and his Havurah Shalom congregation.*



OFER AZULAI/IMPACT VISUALS

the immense cruelties of which humans were capable. But we were living in America, and even my grandmother allowed that FDR "had a Jewish heart." In 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and my family acted as if having "our country" again somehow balanced the cosmic books between Jewish life and mass destruction.

Yossi Klein grew up a decade after me and in a much more Jewish-friendly America. As a kid I was actually beaten up by Irish punks on my way to the Young Israel of Bedford Bay Talmud Torah. I bought a set of barbells with my bar mitzvah money and soon evened the score. By the time of Yossi's childhood, gentiles were either losing interest in Jews altogether, or finding them exotic, fascinating, and desirable. Hardly a period that suggests genocide is on the horizon.

And yet Klein, along with his friends, many of whom were also children of survivors, and the editors of the *Jewish Weekly* newspaper, among them Rabbi Meir Kahane, truly believed that the goyim were on the brink of committing even more unspeakable crimes against the Jews, "and that we can't count on anybody but ourselves." How could Yossi so misread the signs? He did it by being an admirable and dutiful son. His father taught him that all the nations would always be against the Jews. There could be individual righteous gentiles; a Hungarian peasant had helped save the lives of the three Jews in the Transylvanian hole by bringing them food, risking his life to protect Jewish strangers. But the peasant was the exception who proved Klein's rule. As individuals, gentiles might be O.K., but when they gathered in groups, pogroms were their natural instinct. Improvement was impossible; a Jew could only trust a Jew, and given past weakness, even that was questionable. For Yossi Klein to think otherwise would have meant betraying his father and the martyred six million.

For me, the '60s offered a marvelous opportunity to rebel against my parents and their stultifyingly routinized middle-class Jewish life. In the search for meaning, I became a radical revolutionary, associating with Panthers and Weathermen, smoking dope, dropping acid, taking target practice, freaking out the establishment and dodging the FBI. I was even suspected of being involved in a few bombings.

Yossi sought to honor his father by taking up arms against the impending holocaust. And the elder Klein did, in part, (how jealous this makes me) support his son's rebellion. The father might have been shocked at the dope-smoking and rock 'n' roll that shaped Yossi's new lifestyle. And so am I. Who would have thought that these Orthodox Jews were, like my gang, getting high on acid and the Grateful Dead? The big difference between us was in our choice of comrades and enemies. I picked Blacks, Cubans, and Vietnamese as friends and American imperialism as my implacable foe. Holocaust was still on my agenda but I saw it happening to other people. Military genocide in Vietnam was a prelude to a Black holocaust in the United States.

Fighting against an imminent Jewish holocaust, Klein took on the whole gentile world but especially the Soviet government and the liberal Jewish establishment. For friends, he discovered a fascinating and mixed-bag assortment of marginal characters, including the terrorists of the Jewish Defense League (JDL) and their erratic, crazed guru Meir Kahane.

Yossi Klein dug Dylan and the Dead and at times even considered himself a "Yippie." The JDLers, while free and easy with their racist folk wisdom, occasionally thought of themselves as "doing for Jews what the Panthers do for Blacks," and being the "Jewish SDS."

Like the Weathermen, the Kahanists felt surrounded by overwhelming evil. The Weathermen used terror on behalf of the Third World; the JDL did its bombing for the liberation of Soviet Jewry and the protection of Israel. Both groups lived isolated, secretive lives filled with danger, paranoia, moral idealism, dark humor, media fame, warm comradeship, feelings of dread and power, and an intoxicating sense of great adventure. Say what you will about extremism, it was a lot more tasty than a kosher pizza in Boro Park, Brooklyn.

Somewhere in time, perhaps after the death of his father, when he was able to fall in love with a gentile whose ancestors came over on the Mayflower, Yossi Klein realized that American Jews weren't facing ovens, that Israel was a strong nation that could afford to negotiate from power with its enemies, and that the greatest problems confronting Jews were mostly those they shared with the rest of humanity.

If Klein thus came to think that Kahane had gone off his racist rocker, I realized that the once brave and brilliant Huey Newton had sacrificed his sanity to booze and cocaine addiction. Then again, the Vietnamese revolution was tangled up in bureaucracy and my longtime pal Jerry Rubin was engaged in the lucrative business of "networking." Ah Yossi, the times they were a-changing.

Today, Klein, like this writer and so many TIKKUN readers, is interested in the hippie hasidism known as Jewish Renewal. He no longer makes a religion or a God out of the Holocaust and revenge. At last his God is the hidden one of infinite possibility and transcendence. He lives in Israel and feels vaguely guilty about the excesses of the Israeli occupation.

If Yossi's post-'60s life has been about discovering "humanity," my morning-after has led me back into overt Jewishness and a greater sense of particularity. As Klein once did, I clip (or download) articles about the slightest offense to Jews and work with a mix of Jews and gentiles on monitoring the new Nazis and Christian Crusaders.

It seems, a bit, as if Yossi and I have traded places. Maybe the truth is that it's not only hard to be a Jew, it's awfully complicated. □



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Millennium Madness and Psychotherapy

Wendy Orange

We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy—and the World's Getting Worse by James Hillman and Michael Ventura. Harper Collins, 1993, paperback. 242 pp. $13.

For decades, James Hillman, a Jungian and archetypal psychologist on the cutting edge of his profession, has infused psychotherapy with a poetic perspective arguing, in dazzling essays, for a shift away from the ego toward a psychology of soul. Yet his work—such volumes as *The Myth of Analysis*, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, and *The Dream and the Underworld*—has had only slight effect on practitioners. Embraced by poets, artists, and intellectuals, he has been marginalized in the discipline.

In *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy—and the World's Getting Worse*, Hillman teams with Michael Ventura, a Los Angeles journalist, to investigate the chasm separating psychology from ecology and social action. Using street language, riffing like jazz musicians, moving away from academic discourse, they wake each other up to the blindness at the heart of psychotherapy, a profession whose theory and practice, they argue, deepens the dangerous schism between "self" and "world." They create a hot conversation that lights up new synapses on the edge of the mind, all from inside the "shipwreck," our world in extremis, littered with broken meanings.

On first reading this book, I was reluctant to follow Hillman out onto his latest limb—especially as he says himself: "I not only go out on a limb, I then cut it off." Yet who can disagree that the psychotherapy session is often a form of narcissism, treating our solitary souls as sick, focusing only on our own end of relationships, dreams, and fantasies, ignoring the reality not only of our intimate others, but of society as well. For it's not just the "self" or our relations that are in trouble—our *world* is having nightmares.

Psychology has paid lopsided attention to the agonies of the so-called private sphere at the expense of what's "public," refusing to connect our inner chaos and emotional extremes with the chaos and extremes in society. The talking cure, once a radical critique of the established order, has devolved into one of its main supports. As Hillman says, "There is a decline in political sense. No sensitivity to the real issues. Why are the intelligent people—at least among the white middle class—so passive now? Why? Because the sensitive, intelligent people are in therapy!"

The authors examine at what cost to society, culture, *and* our lives we ignore the communal shipwreck, while we work to get our individual "shit" together. "What if the shit is not yours to begin with, nor your parents', but George Bush's shit—and by that I mean a vast systematic denial of what truly matters to the heart and soul of us as citizens?" Hillman asks.

Ventura's journalistic concreteness anchors Hillman, whose genius resides in abstract language, synthesizing and re-framing everything he's read. These are not any two guys taking pot shots at a straight-laced profession. Each has spent much of his life in the consulting room: Hillman as the long-time clinical director of the Jungian Institute in Zurich; the forty-something Ventura as patient, in therapy, on and off, since age eleven. They well know that therapy is at times life-saving: "There is a place for the strength of character and subtlety of insight that the investigation of interiority produces. There are individual patients and individual therapists whose work, whose love, whose calling is clearly in this area," Hillman says. Turning to himself, Hillman continues:

> Imagine my predicament. I love therapy—and have come to hate it … therapy became more and more passive, boring, repetitive … propounding theories that carry no more weight than croissant crumbs and aren't even flaky … I can't bear the way [psychology] thinks and uses language."

Ventura adds: "We're not attacking therapy [but] trying to extend it, reveal its blind spots, begin the enormous task of redefining its premises." They aim for the "consulting room" to become a "cell of revolution": a place to see through the myths we live by—love, childhood, consciousness, progress, aging.

While their excitement is contagious, their intensity also hurts and excludes. Their vision of life includes constant wrestling with ontological insecurity, moving readers away from anything comforting, square, safe—embracing a psychology that rejects coping and values waking up at all costs. They fight mediocrity, throwing their lot in with the great force of soul that has culture, not science, at its center. As Hillman frames his project: "I want theories that blow the mind, as art can, not settle our minds."

What's left out, even as they talk *about* it, is our need for stable love and friendships, rest and repose inside whatever community we create, a space for seeing each other through rather than seeing through each other. "Michael" and "Jim," as we know them through their letters, create no such leisurely mood. Rather they share an elitism of the mind, their lives seemingly independent of constricting human commitments and—very subtle this—inhabiting a male privilege that runs through their talk, especially of sexuality.

Between the letters that form the body of the book, Hillman and Ven-

Wendy Orange, formerly a clinical psychologist, is completing a book about psychic contagions and synchronicities, work that owes a debt to James Hillman's archetypal psychology. A version of this essay was published in the September issue of the British magazine Resurgence.

tura meet in California and in New York, the tape recorder always running. Toward the end, in a New York apartment, a phone often rings. They screen calls, pick up for a male friend, who says: "Don't hide. I know you guys are there," joins them on the speaker phone, and is included in the book. Yet, they repeatedly ignore the calls of a woman whose apartment they're in, even as she pleads: "Michael, pick up if you're there."

As I read this section, I kept thinking, what does she want? She repeats: "Hey babe, It's me. Pick up if you're there," as the men rave on about language, society, passion while she—obviously Michael's lover—remains excluded. They won't take her "call." At that moment I was rudely awakened, no longer with them on the cutting edge, but identifying with that woman: cut out of the action. The authors apparently feel no empathy with primal needs, personified by the pleading caller—that plaintive side in each of us, who in urgent moments doesn't care about new ways of knowing or healing the world but wants love, connection, someone to "pick up" right now.

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Hillman: Every time we try to deal with our outrage over the freeway, our misery over the office … the lighting and crappy furniture, the crime in the streets, every time we try to deal with that by going to therapy … we deprive the political world.

Ventura: Aw, Jim, can't I grow *inside* all my life?

Hillman: Grow what? Corn? Tomatoes?

Does it speak to my personal discontinuity, or the richness of this text, that in re-reading *A Hundred Years* there were so many exchanges I didn't recall? Now more in extremis myself (my family, like many others, suddenly fractured) I found the book's cutting edge confirming, a high, not at all exclusionary.

Especially revelatory is Hillman's re-framing of developmental psychology. Instead of regarding childhood as explanatory of our adult lives, he articulates a view that gives a wider context for both. We're each born with our own peculiar genius, our "daimon," he argues, like an acorn slowly blossoming—that's fate working through us. The daimon often shows up in childhood as pathology. Examining the lives of the great, Hillman shows how "symptoms," genius, and destiny all mix together: " … a kind of preventive medicine, holding you back from a false route … limiting life to the only possibilities that are actually yours," Hillman says, summing up the childhood "pathologies" of Picasso, Dali, Churchill, Proust, Eugene O'Neill, Cézanne, Zola, Faulkner, etc. At the end of this section, "Life Lived Backwards," Hillman comments: "The puzzle in therapy is not how did I get this way, but what does my angel want with me?" shifting the entire therapeutic enterprise with this one turn of phrase from one of microscopic examinations of the past to the work of aligning with our given destiny.

Ventura's response, called "Little Demons, Little Daimons," is full of great "kid stories" drawn from his and his friends' childhood traumas, seen through the lens of Hillman's "acorn" or guiding angel. In his tales, complexes, wounds, and severe peculiarities signal fate rather than neurosis, painful perhaps, but not in need of correction. " … the goal isn't that the life heal, or become normal, or even cease its suffering, but that *the life become more itself …* " as Ventura puts it.

Life lived backwards is a little spooky, unhinging the way we traditionally see childhood. Maybe this generation filled with non-reading, hyperactive, or depressed kids reflects their daimons tuning into the next millennium, preparing for collective conditions they subliminally intuit. Perhaps their symptoms reveal the future, their "acorns" surrounded with violence and consumerism, inside a culture full of family and community dissolutions.

Conversation is one of the book's central themes, as well as its form. Hillman maintains that "Consciousness is really nothing more than maintaining conversation, and unconsciousness is really nothing more than letting things fall out of conversation, no longer talking about something—what Freud calls repression." He reminds us that conversation isn't easy; it is an art form. And Hillman is a master of this conversation-as-consciousness his book both praises and epitomizes: "Good conversation has an edge; it opens your eyes to something, quickens your ears. And good conversation reverberates: it keeps on talking in your mind later in the day; the next day, you find yourself still conversing with what was said." Such discourse yields courage, opening us to possibilities we would have missed, leading us toward artistic expression, the desire to act on the political stage rather than gaze passively.

Hillman has always been that rare depth psychologist who affirms us in our craziness, trying to move the "psyche" out of trapped individualism toward community. In *100 Years* he again shows what's wrong with psychotherapy's ideals—how that mindset induces us to aim for a "wholeness" that exists nowhere.

For years, Keats's words, "Call the world if you please the vale of soul-making; then you'll find out the uses of the world," formed Hillman's credo. In this book, he shifts away from the "uses of the world," leaping to a new vision: The soul as *in* the world. "Keats's phrase … actually neglects the world," Hillman realizes. "You go through the world for your own sake, making your own soul. But what about the world's soul? What about the suffering of its oceans and rivers, its air and its forests, the ugliness of its cities … ?"

With this move Hillman shows how we not only use and abuse nature, but inhabit a capitalistic psychology that encourages us to "own" problems yet shy away from social awareness, let alone social action.

Although Hillman's position bears apparent similarities to that of R.D. Laing and the radical psychiatry of the 1960s, their dissimilarities are more significant. Laing railed against the psychiatric establishment, shifting the focus off the myth of individual madness (the divided self) into the wider context of the family's and society's schizophregenic messages—an exciting move but not one that encompassed or spoke to the wider social ills, those that may not make us clinically crazy, but wound all of us daily, consciously or not. Psychopathology—however extended—was Laing's primary focus. Radical psychiatry was a short-lived movement, primarily a political analysis, situating the therapeutic enterprise in a larger class analysis of the culture, yet leaving out the nuances of the actual sessions, or the motives (often deep misery) that drew clients to therapy.

By contrast with both Laing and radical psychiatry, Hillman and Ventura have arrived at their conclusions from a very different route: When they say "the soul is *in* the world," they are speaking not only of psychiatric institutions and

politics, but also of ethics, ecology, and most especially aesthetics. They want to shift our focus toward seeing that once the soul is in the world, "out there" and "in here" connect ontologically, a view that's more animistic, more concerned with beauty than either Laing's or that of the radical psychiatrists.

Yet Hillman and Ventura are deeply political. They contend that we do violence to the "world soul" in therapy: When encouraged to use our social perceptions to flesh out private cosmologies, we rob the world of our passionate attention. Once we enter the therapy hour, the homeless people we shun or randomly toss coins on the way to our "sessions" become metaphors for our hidden life, referring to parents long dead, emblematic of personal traits needing "insight." The actual homeless man or woman gets lost in the psychotherapeutic shuffle, *exactly where he or she might best be uncovered, discovered, recovered.*

"What does that homeless guy bring to mind?" the therapist asks, and off we go, *not* connecting with society (*not* inside a "cell of revolution") but appropriating the mess in the world to clean up our personal mess.

Hillman and Ventura's shift from the personal toward the collective also differs from radical psychiatry, for these two men fully embraced depth psychology as the radical psychiatry movement never did. They married that work, spending decades inside both the theory and practice, inside thousands of sessions, whereas radical psychiatry only flirted with the repetitive soul-work of therapy, eager from the outset not to support bourgeois life in any form, suspecting without fully investigating exactly how therapy feeds narcissism. The resulting difference between *A Hundred Years* and the earlier radicals is the difference between understanding the character of a spouse you're about to divorce after decades vs. dismissing someone, however prescient or acute our perceptions, we've just met. The patience and passion Hillman and Ventura originally brought to the therapeutic hour is quite the opposite of the radical movement—which was in many ways always more a political view than a psychological one.

When Hillman and Ventura speak of the soul as in the world, their voices echo from deep "inside" psychotherapy; they are authorities on how environmental crises and political upheavals daily lose status inside the therapeutic hour, showing us the dire consequences of refusing the connection between "nature," "society," and "self"—organic connections that in other societies or times past were taken for granted.

They contend that the isolated "self" is a myth to be shaken—not to get off our personal obsessions but to include in them a passionate response to what's going on in categories usually relegated to the "political." Hillman explains, "I would define 'self' as the interiorization of community. And if you make that little move, then you're going to feel different about things … then boundaries between me and another would be much less sure. Your true self is a self *among*, not a self apart."

If "self" includes "community," then caring for others *as they live inside us* means that healing ourselves is inseparable from healing whatever small situation we inhabit. And that's just what psychotherapy's omnipresent, overburdened "inner child" cannot, will not, and does not handle. Hillman says, "The child archetype is by nature apolitical, has no connection to the political world …. Democracy depends on intensely active citizens, not children."

Hillman knows we are many, encased in the spirits of our ancestors; or, as Ventura stresses, telepathic, living inside constant psychic contagions. Not only are we continually resonating with others, we're fused also with the "things" of this world: our rooms, city streets, fluorescent lights, traffic jams, the homeless, dying animal species. Hillman says: "The world is getting worse. Ask the animals, ask the trees, ask the wind … " He ends this letter: "Once individualism dissolves its notion of self … there is no alone. I am never only myself, always out of myself, out of control. And I can never recover."

Community doesn't reside in grand utopian schemes, but *it's already alive in our nuanced moments, simply by reframing the small episodes that make up our days.*

The sickness of materialism is Ventura's forte; he's got strong connections to—at least one foot firmly planted in—the non-material world. This nugget from Ventura, reminiscent of Henry Miller's *Air Conditioned Nightmare,* or Michael Lerner's *Surplus Powerlessness*, says it all: "[we've] been subject to … the destruction of imagination (which we call education) the destruction of autonomy (which we call work) and the destruction of activity (which we call entertainment)." Our drug epidemic is simply a vast temptation to break out of deadening forms (white-bread malls, white-bread television, white-bread psychology, white bread academia)—all depriving us of a spiritual life. Drugs proliferate, to paraphrase Kafka's Hunger Artist, because nothing else tastes good.

And then there's love, that great personal redemption myth that grows in our minds as we shrink from the ugliness about us. On re-reading *A Hundred Years*, I found the authors' views on love not primarily sexist, but illuminating, especially that final section, "Pick up if You're There." That woman begging them to pick up: That's love, isn't it—full of missed calls, our lover or "significant other" elusive or out of reach, just when we most need to connect. What I first took as male arrogance I now see as illustrative of love itself, its treacheries. "Love is a very funny place to go for comfort," Ventura says. Hillman answers: "A *very* funny place to go for safety." I hear that pleading voice echo the love eluding so many of us—not only women but no doubt these men as well.

Locating soul in the world widens psychology, dissolves the split between the "personal" and the "political." Hillman and Ventura help us see how passionate attention to the world can join with and extend that nuanced sensitivity many of us have learned, after a century of psychotherapy, to bring to our seemingly private ordeals. As Jung wrote: "The world is hanging from a thin thread and that thread is the psyche … " □

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The Bad is a Throne for the Good

Lawrence Kushner

The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, The Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto, by Nehemia Polen. Jason Aronson, 1994, 208 pages. $30.

This is not a book about the Holocaust or Hasidism. Contrary to the subtitle, it is not even a book about the final writings of one of the *gedolim*, or great ones of our generation. *The Holy Fire* is primarily a manual on comprehending evil from within God. And that makes it an invaluable tool for anyone interested in Jewish spiritual renewal.

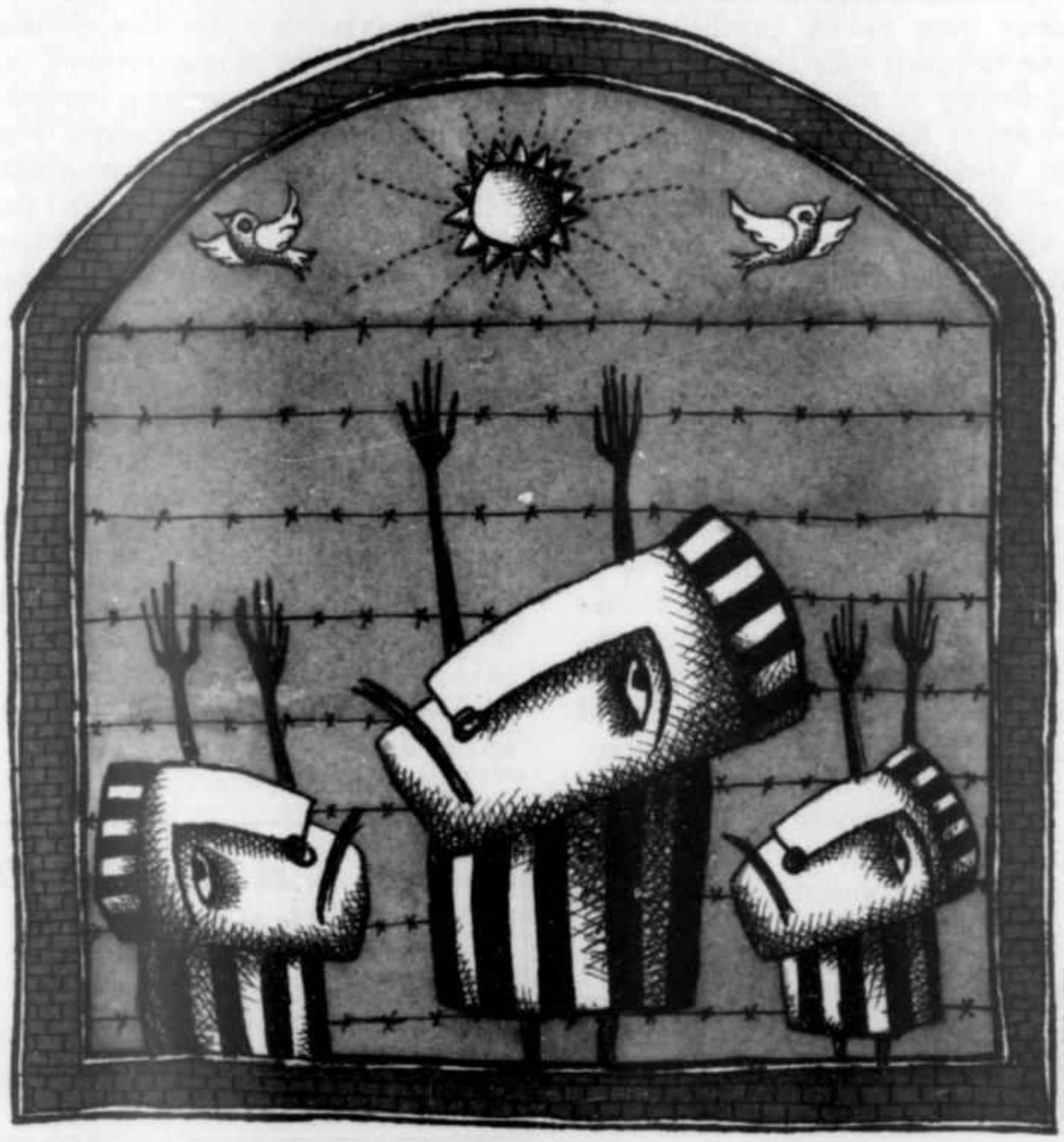
The Holy Fire began as a Ph.D. thesis under the direction of Elie Wiesel at Boston University. Like most such ventures, it still occasionally betrays its academic origins in syntax and attention to detail. But these are infrequent and the teachings of both Rabbi Shapira (and his disciple, Rabbi Polen) are so powerful and disturbing that the reader is quickly drawn into the inner workings of life and spiritual survival in the Warsaw Ghetto. Polen, himself trained with a classical Orthodox rabbinic education, understands that he is more than a historian or biographer. He intuits that through the life teaching of Rabbi Shapira, he can teach us of a long-lost way to understand what seems to be gratuitous evil.

Until now, the most common theological responses to the existence of radical evil as manifest in the Holocaust have been that God is dead (which, I guess, means that Hitler won), that suffering is punishment (which means that God is some kind of a cosmic Bogeyman and that the Deuteronomic theory of history prevails), or, most popular and perhaps most dangerous, that God is somehow constrained, inadequate, underachieving, limited, unable to prevail against the forces of evil (which means that God is less than God). Not much of a choice.

The second view is predicated on the notion that evil may or may not be real but that God is so mean or cruel (or evil—incinerating a million Jewish babies as a form of covenant pedagogy begs its own lesson) that it doesn't matter.

The first and third—the more popular ones—hold that evil has ontological reality *beyond the power of God*. The implication of both of these views is, in effect, that God is but one source of reality. There is another, non-divine, source, call it what you will—Satan, the devil, *sitra akhra* (the other side), the dark side of the force—it is not God, never was, never will be. And this world won't get better until God and His (sic) soldiers, humankind, do battle with evil and prevail.

The evil (one?) is inside us all, within entire nations, everywhere. Given this premise, in one form or another, dualism (a belief in two ultimate forces) is inescapable. We are all both spectators and players in a universal battle between the good god and the enemy, the evil force. And, while this formulation is obviously anti-Jewish, there are a lot of highly regarded Jews out there (including Isaac Luria with his ideas of *kelipot* or shards and much of contemprary Lubavitch Hasidism) who have come very close to embracing a dualistic worldview.



MAIRAV SOLOMON

Lawrence Kushner is rabbi at Congregation Beth El, Sudbury, Massachusetts. He is author of The Book of Words; God Was in This Place and I, i Did Not Know; Honey from the Rock; *and other books (Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont).*

Beyond these options—God is dead, Cosmic Bogeyman, Punch & Judy Show—there is another alternative. While not as widely known and certainly every bit as problematic, it has long been favored by classical Hasidism. In this acosmic model, God is not only everywhere, God is everything, the Source of all being and reality. Whatever is, is because God is in it and God is all there is. In the Yiddish, *Alles ist Gott*. The universe only looks real. And what strikes us as evil is in fact only a perverted, twisted expression of the divine, yearning to be redeemed and again unified with its Source. As Polen teaches:

> In the Hasidic view, no sector of reality can be excluded from the presence of God. From this perspective, evil is not viewed as an independent realm of autonomous power, but as a misaligned or unbalanced version of divine goodness, which can be raised up or sweetened by the consciousness of the individual who knows how to trace its source in the divine realm.

Does this solve the problem of evil? Not likely. But it does make at least as much sense as the more popular alternatives and has the decided advantage that at least it feels somehow spiritual. History may be just as rotten as ever but at least God is not dead, cruel, or a dweeb in need of our help.

But who can talk about evil? Certainly not upper-middle-class, suburban Reform rabbis who, happily like me, have led pretty soft lives. Probably not even urban, liberal Orthodox rabbis like Polen. But a Hasidic rebbe who lived and preached every *Shabbos* within the unspeakable hell of the Warsaw Ghetto, who witnessed the death of his family and his congregation—when a man like this speaks you've got to listen.

Unfortunately, Shapira's sermons and their idiom are densely woven classical tapestries of biblical, talmudic, and Hasidic allusions. That's where Nehemia Polen comes in. He has more than mastered the material; we have the feeling that the Piesetzner Rebbe and Rabbi Polen—even though they never met—have been keeping secret company, that the *neshama* of the former has taken residence in the latter.

Polen seems intent on gently but relentlessly guiding the reader through the real stakes in contemporary Jewish spirituality:

> The world simply is; it is the way it is supposed to be, the way it must be. As Rabbi Shapira put it, *she-keyvan she-kakh ha-Shem oseh, ken tzarikh li-hiyot* (Since God does thus, that is the way it is supposed to be). Such a vision is achieved by a surrender of every particle of autonomous ego, a total submergence of the self and the mind in the enveloping waters of divine being.

Professor Polen sets it all out before us. The titles of the final chapters—"The Transfiguration of Faith," "Divine Weeping," "Transmutation of Evil"—give us fair warning of what lies before us. We may be reasonably uncomfortable with belief in God after the Holocaust, but the fact that we are still compulsively drawn to it means that we are not dead yet.

The Holy Fire offers daring religious meaning from what was unearthed in the milk can, buried in the human ashes of the Warsaw Ghetto. Slapping our collective face, this book challenges us to re-view our own silly theologies from the vantage point of a giant. □

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Renaissance in Black and White

Linda Simon



A.J. GARCES

A Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s by Ann Douglas. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995. 606 pp. $27.50.

"What was the America that I left?" Gertrude Stein mused just before she was about to return in 1934 after a thirty-years' absence. "It was an America where as Mark Twain said ... he got up and washed and went to bed." But after a triumphant national tour, hailed as the Grand Dame of modernism, Stein had a more generous assessment of her native land. America, she concluded, "was the first country to enter into the twentieth century. She had her birthday of the twentieth century when the other countries were still all either in the nineteenth century or still further back in other centuries...." Her America, she said, "quite naturally produces the creators."

How America managed this enormous transformation is still an unresolved problem. In popular cultural mythology, American modernism was born in New York in the interlude between the Great War and the Great Depression, when scores of brilliant, often woozy, men and women fiercely enacted their individual rebellions against stuffy Victorianism. Certainly the period boasts a startling cast of characters: the Fitzgeralds, Hart Crane, John Dos Passos, Marianne Moore, Langston Hughes, James Thurber, Cole Porter, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, Carl Van Vechten, and Dorothy Parker and her drinking companions, to name just a few. The stories we have been told—straight up from F. Scott Fitzgerald or diluted by historical analyses—persuade us that all who were not cavorting in the fountain at the Plaza Hotel were writing great novels in Greenwich Village garrets. Like all true American heroes and heroines, their major project was lighting out for new territory.

Their declarations of independence are nowhere better summarized than in *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley's sprightly chronicle of his crowd. According to Cowley, the manifesto for the age contained eight ideas: The idea of salvation by the child (we call it "finding the child within"), self-expression, paganism, living for the moment, liberty, female equality, psychological adjustment (Freud was useful here), and changing place (to Europe, of course). This yearning to be free has had enduring appeal for later generations: We clutch the idea of revolution close to our hearts. Americans, we want to believe, are always ready for an errand into the wilderness.

But another critical notion, competing against those claimed by Cowley and his comrades, deflected modernists from their focus on self: the deeply held need for community, cohesion, consensus. In *A Terrible Honesty*, Ann Douglas leads us to reconsider the force of that desire by suggesting a more complex portrait of America in the Twenties: a nation beset by tension between independence and community, individual autonomy and social cohesiveness.

Douglas cannot help but celebrate the modernist attack on "Victorian pieties" and what she calls a suffocating "Titaness"—her target almost two decades ago in *The Feminization of American Culture*. As in her earlier book, Douglas is interested in power, gender, and self-fulfillment, and since these ideas enraptured the modernists, too, she finds them amiable companions. But Douglas also sets up, metaphorically, a kind of chemical reaction for cultural change. If we substitute the cryptic colon in her title with an arrow, we have on one side of the equation an unstable amalgam of men and women striving for authenticity, slashing at the umbilical cord to the past (this is Douglas's image) that threatens to strangle them. Add to this substance a catalyst known as the Harlem Renaissance, a movement whose aim was widespread assimilation of Blacks into white culture; let the mixture sit in a fertile context of ideas from Freud, William James, and Gertrude Stein; and we get the heady compound we call American modernism.

Linda Simon, director of the Writing Center at Harvard University, is at work on a biography of William James. She is editor of William James Remembered, *an anthology of memoirs, forthcoming in April 1996 from University of Nebraska Press.*

Freud has long been acknowledged as the patron saint of America in the twenties. "If our individual repressions can be removed—by confessing them to a Freudian psychologist—then we can adjust ourselves to any situation, and be happy in it," Cowley wrote, echoing the beliefs of many of his friends who plunged eagerly into psychoanalysis to rid themselves of the oppression of the matriarch—or of anything else. If psychoanalysis failed, as it often did, they turned to other forms of mind cure, including expatriation.

The moderns, however, needed to do more to liberate themselves than simply kill The Titaness. They searched for a philosophy that would justify their exultant self-consciousness. William James offered them pluralism. James emerged from a culture where Emerson and Thoreau were philosophical radicals, higher education was overseen by Unitarian ministers, and psychology was not yet a separate field of inquiry. He devoted his intellectual life to formulating a philosophy that responded to scientific discoveries, was rooted in concrete experience, and anticipated the indeterminacy and rapid change that characterized modern times. The twentieth century, bereft—happily, he thought—of the religious dogma that propped up nineteenth century culture—needed individuals who were flexible and open-minded.

But James's celebration of pluralistic vision was only part of his contribution to the mind of the Twenties. James was concerned as much with the practical consequences of an individual's actions as he was with options and autonomy. He wanted to create a philosophy that would be useful to his contemporaries as they went about their daily lives, confronting an increasingly complicated social and political context. He believed that educated, self-aware, and good-hearted men and women would and must make choices to create a moral world. If these choices did not reflect the dictates of one or another organized religion, so much the better. But if the choices proved anti-social, so much the worse. Here is James, speaking at the dedication of the Robert Gould Shaw memorial in Boston:

> The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders. And from these internal enemies civilization is always in need of being saved. The nation blest above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks.

This is the James whose *Pragmatism*, *Radical Empiricism*, and such essays as "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" and "What Makes a Life Significant?" helped shape political progressivism and, through John Dewey, educational reform in the 1920s. *Varieties of Religious Experience* and "The Will to Believe" may have defended individualism, but James's social philosophy called for community.

Among James's famous students, none was so flamboyantly a modernist as Gertrude Stein. Stein worked in James's psychology laboratory when she was a student at Radcliffe in the 1890s. Because she was interested in probing the "bottom nature" of herself and others, he suggested she study medicine. Her career at Johns Hopkins Medical School was only mediocre, however, and she dropped out before graduating. Once she settled in Paris, she had little contact with James: He wrote to her when a classmate of hers died prematurely; she sent him *Three Lives*, about which he commented generously, although there is no evidence that he actually read the book. Still, Stein called James her mentor and claimed to be deeply influenced by his energizing spirit and, as Walter Lippmann, another of James's students, put it, his willingness to "listen for truth from anybody."

Perhaps James's philosophy encouraged Stein to throw off her past to create a new identity: lesbian, expatriate, and literary iconoclast. But Stein, like many other modernists, had other interests besides literary rebellion and personal liberation. She devoted much intellectual energy to exploring her ambivalent feelings toward her native culture: first in the enormous *Making of Americans* and later in such books as *The Geographical History of America*, *Picasso*, and *Brewsie and Willie*. Although she lived most of her life in France, she claimed to be deeply and proudly an American. This identity, she felt, distinguished her from some of the young expatriate writers she met in Paris in the Twenties. When Stein repeated to Ernest Hemingway a French hotelier's remark that the men of the 1920s were "a lost generation," she meant that they lacked the sense of mission, communion, and identity shared by men who had fought in the Great War. Without their cultural umbilical cord, they were pitiably rootless.

The search for connection was nowhere more urgent than in Harlem, where Aframericans, as they called themselves—no hyphen accepted—yearned both for recognition of their singular talents as artists, and for a bonding with dominant, affluent white culture. Fortunately for Harlem, many white New Yorkers saw the advantage to themselves in forging this alliance. Jazzy, jivey, free-wheeling Black culture was irresistible for white moderns who wanted, Douglas says, "to seize the liberties of adventurous autonomy, creative and rigorous self-expression, sexual experimentation, and full exposure to ethnic and racial diversity." But Black culture offered more than titillating adventure. As America became a major player in the international arts scene, it needed to assert its own identity, to distinguish itself from its European heritage. The Black arts community suggested exciting possibilities for cultural redefinition.

Blacks were eager to cooperate. The New Negroes, as W. E. B. Du Bois understood, must be "American first and Negro second" if they wanted to achieve power and recognition. Politically astute, Du Bois—himself an admiring student of William James—and other university-educated Blacks joined to promote Black culture and the arts in a movement later dubbed the Harlem Renaissance. These reformers were dissatisfied with already-established efforts to raise the status of Blacks in America: well-meaning civil rights groups were ineffective; Marcus Garvey's "back to Africa movement" was offensive to those who aimed for extensive cultural integration. Leaders of the Harlem Renaissance passionately believed they could foster enormous changes for the whole Black community. "They were

sure the New Negro would lead a new life from then on in green pastures of tolerance created by Countee Cullen, Ethel Waters, Claude McKay, Duke Ellington, Bojangles, and Alain Locke," Langston Hughes commented sardonically.

Alain Locke, a former Rhodes scholar with a Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard, served as the movement's chief spokesman. Urbane and articulate, he easily elicited support from influential white artists and writers who identified with the Blacks' sense of marginality and helped them to publish, exhibit, and publicize their works. Suddenly the white community found itself reading Jean Toomer's *Cane*, seeing all-Black casts perform Eugene O'Neill plays at the Provincetown Playhouse, and invading Harlem in droves to listen to jazz singer M. Sissieretta Jones, the Harlem Hellfighters, or stride pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith. It was a time, said bibliophile Arthur A. Schomburg, when the American Negro found a way "to remake his past in order to make his future."

As a path to assimilation for Blacks, however, the Harlem Renaissance proved a disappointment. Although whites responded with frenzied enthusiasm in the twenties, their interest soon waned; Blacks found themselves alone in Harlem by the mid-1930s. It was no surprise to some Blacks: "I had a swell time while it lasted," Hughes wrote. " ... But I thought it wouldn't last long. For how could a large and enthusiastic number of people be crazy about Negroes forever." As a path to assimilation for disaffected whites, the movement was a success. Mongrelized America seemed liberated and enriched.

Although America sold itself to the world as a place where personal reinvention was a popular leisure activity, the modernist movement of the Twenties was not merely a sum of quirky, self-absorbed individuals. America's golden age of arts and letters emerged only partly from rebellion ("the straight lines on the map of the United States of America make wandering a mission," Stein once remarked). Modernists wanted a place to call home. As the great rebel leader F. Scott Fitzgerald put it: "France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter—it was the graves at Shiloh and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men, and the country boys dying in the Argonne for a phrase that was empty before their bodies withered. It was," he said wistfully, "a willingness of the heart." □

Sex with a Heart

David Smith Allyn

Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights, by Nadine Strossen. Scribner's, 1995. $22.

Last year I served as a counselor at Seeds of Peace, a summer camp for Arab and Israeli youth. We dealt with many issues relating to the conflict in the Middle East. I was prepared to confront most of these from the perspective of a workshop facilitator in an always potentially violent situation. One issue I did not expect to tackle was porn.

One afternoon, we took the kids—most of whom were teenagers—to a shopping mall. In a bookstore, I noticed three of the boys perusing *Playboy*. Sexual liberal that I am, I chose to ignore the situation. I spent much of my own adolescence thinking about sex or buying literary substitutions, so I was not about to be hypocritical. They purchased the magazine and brought it back to camp. When I entered our bunk that night, five boys were huddled around a playmate pictorial, which they poorly attempted to shield from me. *Playboy* brought these boys together in a way that weeks of coexistence workshops and baseball games could not. I told them there was no need to hide the magazine, but that women had rights, minds, and feelings, not just bodies. They giggled, and I left.

My little speech could hardly compete with the allure of the magazine. Not that it mattered. A fellow counselor learned of the situation and quickly confiscated the porn. Who needs moral suasion when censorship will do?

Feminists and leftists have been debating censorship and morality for the past decade. Nadine Strossen's *Defending Pornography* is a valuable contribution to that debate. Written clearly and confidently by the current president of the American Civil Liberties Union, *Defending Pornography* is a pointed response to Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and other advocates of censorship in the name of feminism. Nadine Strossen's subject is the recent history of feminism's unseemly exploitation of conservative political strategies. Strossen clearly demonstrates why a pro-censorship feminist position is intellectually and legally bankrupt, and she vividly documents how the efforts of groups such as Women Against Pornography over the last ten years have politically backfired.

Strossen shares with others in the anti-censorship camp a recognition that sexual equality depends upon sexual freedom. In 1982, anthropologist Carole Vance organized a conference at Barnard College with the theme "Toward a Politics of Sexuality." When feminists opposed to pornography and sado-masochism protested the gathering, American feminism was torn asunder. Vance later wrote, "Feminism must put forth a politics

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that resists deprivation and supports pleasure." She argued that feminism "must understand pleasure as life-affirming, empowering, desirous of human connection and the future, and not fear it as destructive, enfeebling, or corrupt ... Feminism must insist that women are sexual subjects, sexual actors, sexual agents ...."

What distinguishes Strossen from her intellectual predecessors is her historical hindsight. She cites numerous examples of the devastating effects of feminist censorship in the last ten years, all inspired by what Strossen cleverly labels "MacDworkinism." As with fast food, MacKinnon and Dworkin offer a solution to the abuse of women in which the output is quick and the cost seems minimal—but the results are terribly unhealthy.

Strossen begins her book with a long list of escapades on college campuses where students and faculty have used this crude version of feminism in order to silence others. At the University of New Hampshire, an English professor was suspended from teaching without pay for a year and required to submit to counseling (at his own expense) because some students were offended by his comparison of writing and seduction. At Penn State, a professor demanded that a female nude by Goya be banished from the campus because it objectified women; fearful of a lawsuit, the university complied. The centerpiece of the book is the now notorious 1992 Butler decision by the Canadian Supreme Court. The court upheld the right of the Canadian government to censor pornography, on grounds similar to those developed by Dworkin and MacKinnon. The decision has led primarily to the censorship of lesbian and gay materials. It has even resulted in the banning of Andrea Dworkin's own books, because of their graphic (if derogatory) descriptions of sadomasochistic sex.



Strossen is attempting to reclaim feminism from the hands of a moral minority. Like Vance, she believes that the suppression of ideas, words, and images is incompatible with both liberty and democracy. But lurking beneath Strossen's text are larger questions that she ignores. Do anti-censorship feminists offer a coherent sexual ethic? Do they leave open the possibility of intellectual critique? Or do they simply endorse a pragmatic libertarianism that demands equal toleration for any and all sexual practices and images? Strossen is undoubtedly correct to argue that the state ought not to enforce normative codes about sexual expression. But should we do away with sexual norms altogether?

Most liberals today would argue, as does Strossen, that when it comes to sexual behavior, the most important element is consent. If two individuals willingly perform a sexual act of any kind, their behavior is ethically sound.

There are two problems with this simple code. First, consent is often a murky notion. "No means no," campus educators tell students, but does yes always mean yes? What does it mean to consent to sex with one's boss or priest? Can a mature sixteen-year-old boy consent to sex with a thirty-five-year-old woman or with a thirty-five-year-old man? What about a sixteen-year-old girl? Can adults who live in a world of sexism, heterosexism, and real violence consent—not legally, but in full consciousness—to being gagged, whipped, humiliated, fisted, and tortured?

I have no desire to deny anyone the pleasures of sexual play. But I am nevertheless troubled by the doctrine of consent. My own first encounter with pornography occurred when I was five years old. I discovered a copy of *Hustler* in a bathroom. I remember the images vividly to this day. Regardless of whether or not the magazine had an impact on my sexual or psychological development, I never "consented" to finding the magazine itself.

The second problem with a single-minded emphasis on consent is that it assumes sexual desire is, primarily, a dangerous thing. Most Americans don't believe that children or their parents must consent to mandatory education or inoculation; we view these as positive goods for both the individual and society. Even in cases where there is no benefit to society, we overlook the matter of consent. We allow architects to build buildings—often depressing and ugly ones—without the agreement of those who will work in such buildings or pass by them daily. And we generally tolerate all sorts of unwanted intrusions on our privacy and autonomy: body odor, loud music, garish billboards, and corporate types gabbing on portable phones at the next table.

Yet when it comes to sex, we assume—perhaps rightly, perhaps not—that any non-consensual activity is bad. We take it for granted that exhibitionism is wrong and deserves to be punished, because it is unpleasant to be "flashed." We assume that if a man touches a woman's breast without her permission it is a greater violation of her person than if he touches her arm or shoulder. But why should being "flashed" be distinguished as criminal

ART BY CYN MAURICE

because it is sexual? Why should sex with an animal be considered worse than eating the animal for dinner?

Strossen recognizes the problem. She quotes the lesbian anthropologist and writer Gayle Rubin: "This culture always treats sex with suspicion ... Sex is presumed guilty until proven innocent." And she then draws an implicit distinction between sexual expression and sexual behavior. Sexual expression, she argues, should not require any sort of consent. If every individual were asked to consent to every form of speech, the very concept of free speech would be destroyed. You may not like pornographic images, you may even feel "violated" by them, but that's the price of liberty. Rape, however, is clearly wrong because it is a form of behavior.

The distinction, in practice, is not so easy to draw. While the free marketplace of sexual expression is a fine concept for adults, we have an obligation to protect young children from images whose psychological impact we cannot fully appreciate or predict. We do not, and perhaps cannot, know how photos of women bound and gagged, their nipples caught in clothespins, affect young minds. This is true whether the images are in a magazine or on a Women Against Pornography placard. Without full knowledge, we must assume the potential for damage is there and act accordingly.

Furthermore, Strossen's distinction between expression and behavior, though fundamental to our legal system, is not very helpful when it comes to personal and political ethics. Pornography is meant to stimulate, and stimulation usually leads to orgasm, either through masturbation or sexual contact. In one infamous case, a boy was found, with his pants down, in his bedroom hanging by a noose. A copy of *Hustler*, open to a detailed article on autoerotic asphyxiation, lay by his feet. The grieving parents lost their lawsuit against the magazine, but the victory for free speech was a rather hollow one.

A consent-based morality alone therefore is not sufficient for nurturing a just society. It tells us only which forms of activity are wrong, without giving any guidance about which are good.

In the 1960s and early 1970s a good many writers did articulate a positive vision of sexual liberty. Lonny Myers, a founder of the National Abortion Rights Action League, encouraged couples to experiment with extramarital sex (*Adultery and Other Private Matters*, 1974). Margo St. James, founder of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) encouraged prostitution. John Alan Lee, a professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, endorsed the commercialization of sexuality, "An honest and sensible society would arrange matters so that people who want to enjoy sex as a commodity could get it, comfortably and conveniently" (*Getting Sex*, 1978). Radical feminist writer Shulamith Firestone argued in her 1970 classic *The Dialectic of Sex*, that, in a truly liberated society, "Relations with children would include as much genital sex as the child was capable of—probably considerably more than we now believe—but because genital sex would no longer be the central focus of the relationship, lack of orgasm would not present a serious problem." In *WomanHating* (1974), a young author named Andrea Dworkin went beyond Firestone. She envisioned a sexual utopia in which pornography would be eradicated but incest and bestiality would be accepted as natural—beliefs she now calls "naive."

Today, these manifestos for "sexual liberation" seem hopelessly naive. They were so filled with a blind faith in new reproductive technologies like the Pill and with trust in the cleansing powers of unrepressed eroticism. The sexual enthusiasm of the period is reminiscent of the architectural enthusiasm of the 1920s and '30s. In an urban landscape dominated by acres of cement and forests of concrete skyscrapers, it is almost impossible to look back and understand the soaring aesthetic ambitions of Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. Likewise, in a world of apparently rampant sexual abuse and decaying porn theaters, it is difficult to appreciate the genuine excitement of an earlier era.

Recently, prominent intellectuals have forsaken sexual idealism altogether. Such writers as Michel Foucault, Camille Paglia, and Pat Califia (unofficial spokeswoman for lesbian sado-masochism) encourage us to adopt a Hobbesian pessimism about sexuality. Foucault deconstructed, brick by brick, the very notions of "repression," and "liberation"—intellectual pillars of the sexual revolution. In Foucault's world, the very act of discussing sex always leads to new forms of social control. Sexual discourse itself becomes a tyranny from which there is no escape. Paglia consigns us to her own tyranny of sexual realism. She posits a world in which gender differences are encoded in our very nature; efforts to detach male sexuality from aggression, and female sexuality from reproduction, are thus doomed from the start. The male desire to rape, Paglia would have us believe, is inevitable. For Califia, human sexuality is inescapably violent; pleasure and pain are intimately entwined. Together, the three writers create a gothic world of gagged hopes and unchained desire.

Strossen's liberal critique of censorship provides no alternative to such dystopic visions. Like Foucault, Paglia, and Califia, she leaves us only with a cold libertarianism. Admittedly, Strossen is concerned only with rights, but Americans are increasingly concerned with ideals like personal responsibility and self-respect. Only the Right seems to be speaking, loudly and consistently, to that need. Even people who mistrust the motives of the Christian Coalition and its ilk are listening. We on the Left cannot afford a lazy latitudinarianism that asks no more of individuals than that they refrain from violating the rights of others.

For the religious Right, certain sexual practices and forms of expression are *a priori* wrong, and individuals have no right to engage in them. But the real problem with sexual libertarianism is that it breeds a callous culture of self-centered individuals for whom physical pleasure is all.

Instead, we should cultivate a morality of concern and compassion. When two individuals have sex, it is not enough that both consent to the experience, or even that they assume whatever risks are involved. Each should take steps to minimize those dangers.

We live in a society in which, as in the movie *Kids*, some HIV-positive teenage boys have unprotected sex with teenage girls without remorse. Conservatives place the blame on premarital sex. Liberals point to the lack of available contraception. The real blame lies with the boy himself for not caring more about the impact of his actions on another human being. We may also question whether his parents and teachers tried to instill him with empathy and human feeling.

Two men have anonymous anal intercourse. The active partner is prepared to use a condom, but the passive partner makes no such demand. We are tempted to think that anonymity is

to blame. But anonymity, in the case of charitable donations, is more honorable than giving money to garner public approval. Anonymity can be either self-less or self-ish, and, so to speak, there's the rub. The active male has a moral obligation to protect his passive partner, even if he does not know the other's name.

What are the ethics of representing sexual violence? The pornographer does have the right to produce erotic materials, and the consumer has the right to purchase and possess them. But both parties have a moral obligation to reflect upon the possible implications of their actions. Because women are raped and abused every day, the pornographer has a moral—but not a legal—obligation to consider whether the world will benefit from another image of a woman being violated. Similarly, the consumer has a moral obligation to evaluate whether or not spending money on violent pornography is the best use of such money.

The woman who has sexual intercourse without contraception but does not want a child presents a different problem. Her behavior is legal, as is her option to have an abortion later. Nevertheless, she acts without concern for the interests and feelings of her partner, her parents, and herself. If she becomes pregnant and chooses to carry her child to term, perhaps putting her child up for adoption, then her amoral act has infinite consequences. If she chooses to have an abortion, she puts herself and, perhaps, her sexual partner through great emotional and moral strain. The pro-choice movement has unwittingly sent the message that contraception and abortion are ethically equivalent. While the former shows concern for the welfare of others, the latter forces a wrenching decision that inevitably affects everyone involved.

The fight for women's rights means opposing censorship in all of its various forms. As an ethical matter, however, it should also mean urging every individual to approach sexuality with respect and concern for the well-being of others. While we must avoid the kind of liberal didacticism that proves no match for the *Playboy* centerfold, feminists cannot escape the responsibility of promoting a positive sexual morality. In the absence of a normative alternative, the Right will likely succeed in prohibiting sexual acts and expression it deems unacceptable. The choice is clear: a liberal ethic of reason and compassion or a conservative victory of vice-squad values. □

A Closet of One's Own

(Continued from p. 24)

don't already possess. The idea of being penetrated by a man excites me, if only because penetration promises a resolution of sorts, even if it is merely a resolution of my distrust of men.

Which comes first in the evolution of lesbianism—the fear of men? The desire for women? Or is it something else that seals a lesbian's sexual fate, something that has less to do with emotional tugs and amorous inclinations than with a vision of oneself snug in the harbor of female love?

It seems to me that women, more than men, have always run the risk of having their sexual identity defined for them by others—*this* is how arousal happens, *this* is what an orgasm should feel like—if only because so much of what transpires with women goes on inside, away from direct observation. In Victorian times women were supposed to close their eyes and think of England, to suffer the ignominy of sex on behalf of their husbands and their country. In our own time, which is as intent on demystifying the notion of the taboo as earlier ages were on enshrining it, the touted delights of female masturbation have all but replaced the more interactive pleasures of copulation. (Perhaps because it has been acknowledged as a grungy compulsion all along, male masturbation has not been "discovered" as an erotic high point in quite the same way.)

The proscriptive, in other words, has ceded to the prescriptive—and women are still being told what an orgasm should feel like and how best to achieve one! In the flurry of excitement about the brave new world of masturbation we may have lost sight of the fact that a transgressive act does not in and of itself provide sexual gratification; sometimes it provides nothing more than a taste of the formerly forbidden. Achieving orgasm through masturbation, once viewed as the province of men and then as the poor sister of orgasm *à deux*, may no longer be something to hide under the covers about, but it is not the same as being touched, licked, made love to by another human being.

There is no easy solution, so far as I can see, to what I call "the penetration problem." A woman has a hole where a man has a dangling something—this penis, this odd-looking, mercurial dildo-made-flesh, made susceptible to the waning and waxing of its possessor's desire—that can become erect and fill the hole up, thereby relieving her of her separateness, if only temporarily. This is also why two men together (but not two women) seem, quite frankly, to have all the sexual equipment they need between them, at least for the purpose of solving the penetration problem. The theory of penis envy in its literal Freudian form—which has always struck me as misbegotten, in any case, since most women regard the penis less as an organ to be coveted than as one to be borrowed as needed—may have been correctly scoffed into the shadows by feminist psychoanalytic thinking, but one is still left with the dictates, and the limitations, of human anatomy.

Finally there is this: I have always been fascinated by women. I collect them the way some women collect men. As a breed, I rate them more highly than I do men, and at dinner parties I tend to talk to the female seated on my left rather than to the male on my right. (I've often thought that one of the problems besetting the women's movement is that too many of its leaders seem to want to empower women without much liking them. At a book party I attended for Alice Walker some years ago, Gloria Steinem stood talking to my then-husband—he is, I admit, an attractive man—without so much as acknowledging my presence next to him.) I have never learned how to flirt properly with men, but with women I am a practiced seductress. I like to study my women friends, to learn their habits and their secrets. They, in turn, have offered me the sort of sustaining affection and nurturance without which life would be more of a misery than it is. By contrast, I have rarely been other than passingly friendly with a man I am not sexually involved with.

But if it is true to say I love women, it is equally true to say that I don't know how or, more correctly, don't wish to translate this affection into sexual terms. There is, I suppose, the option of bisexuality, but I remain convinced that this is an option which works well in real life rarely, if at all. In contrast to the concept of androgyny, which has always seemed liberating, demanding no more than that one accept the existence of the boyish in the girl or the girlish in the boy, real bisexuality—as opposed to a young woman's flirting with lesbianism on the way to heterosexuality, or an older woman's retreating to lesbianism after a failed marriage—presupposes a flexibility and a greater tolerance of anxiety than most people have. I, at any rate, am surely not the one to give it a try. I'm sufficiently rattled when I wake up in a room not my own that the idea of waking up and not knowing on a given day whether the body beside me is male or female strikes me as a recipe for psychic disaster.

So there you have it, or at least you have what I've been able to make of my passion for women, this love that dares speak its name. Sometimes I find myself wondering whether all the interesting women I know are fooling themselves into loving men for the sheer personal challenge, and the social endorsement, of it, while each and every one of them is biding her time until she can figure out a better arrangement. Other times I wonder, had I been born into a more casually structured family or gone to college twenty years later, whether I would have tried to find out if a woman's tongue in my mouth tasted better first time around than a man's, or if a woman's fingers on my breasts could make my nipples stand up the way a man's fingers can. Meanwhile I make do with the painful strictures of being a woman who is not sure how much she likes men but who knows she needs them.

Is it a dare not taken, this bright red ball suspended in the air, forever uncaught? *Lesbian*: I still warm to the word, the slow-moving sound of it, that long first syllable—*lez*—ending on an enclosure, *bian*. What would it feel like to be a woman for whom it has never been a choice, never been anything but a conviction, sending her into the embrace of another woman, a woman with a body like hers, a synonym rather than an antonym? Have I chosen heterosexuality, with its impossible anxieties, or has it chosen me? Either way, it's the closet I'm stuck in. □

ISRAELI IDENTITY

(Continued from p. 40)

compensation which, in any case, would have been given to jobless professionals. Moreover, UNESCO and other international funds can be of assistance. And if, in addition, the Jews of the world agree to collaborate financially on this project, they will be able to recover something of the prestige they had in the eyes of other nations and perhaps improve their relations with those Third World communities in their own neighborhood and, for American Jews, among the Black community. Such an undertaking will transform the empty rhetoric of "light unto the nations" into something modest yet practical. And who knows, when Israel's Arab neighbors witness the beneficial outcomes of this Education Corps in the countries of Africa, South and Central America, and Asia, maybe they, too, will want to benefit from it, and in this fashion, the "gate to the Orient" will indeed take on new significance.

I have merely begun here to outline several strategies to help to imbue Israeli identity with new meaning in an era of peace. To this end, we should begin a national dialogue, calling upon the imagination and vision of all Israelis, in the spirit of John Sculley's words: "The best way to foresee the future is by creating it." □

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THE FIRST JEW

(Continued from p. 58)

resignation, as one comes home to one's body after one has tried, through workouts and yogas, to transform it into something it is not. This earthiness, this embodiment, is one of the gifts of being a Jew. And there are all those other things—neuroses about money, status, the yearning to belong, the idealism, the social conscience that forever pulls toward the deprived and the victimized—these are also the baggage of the Jew. They too can be embraced with humor and resignation. Though it is a false etymology to say that humor and humility come from the same earthy root, I think in the soul they do. So in answer to the question, "In *what* sense am I am Jew?," I move increasingly in the direction of saying in *every* sense. I am, to give it its most comprehensive (though somewhat high-culture term) a *narrative* Jew.

By that I mean that I am a man who is telling himself Jewish stories, composing a midrashic identity woven of my own imaginative appropriation of whatever I can know and learn of the Jewish tradition. I am exploring Jewish images—and, scandalous as this may sound to some, Christianity is one of those Jewish images, though one that has been forced into the shadows for the Jew. My work—making use of psychodrama to explore biblical texts—is the most embodied and passionate way I know to enact a narrative. These enactments are, I know full well, second-hand appropriations. But I believe all our relationships to myth are second-hand. The figures of the Bible are the only ones who live the myth, and of course that life is fictive, unreal, only in a book. All the rest of us, living after them and in the dimension of mortal time, play out our imitations, and all those imitations are a kind of mythic psychodrama, a role-play in which we try on and try out images that our culture gives us. There is, in the end, no absolute self which we discover or become; there is only a story we tell ourselves and whose plots thicken and whose implications we live out in our lives. This constructive venture of our making a self requires form. My own self-making process seeks a form that is both adaptive and structured, that is not rigid nor so diffuse as to seem formless.

At the same time I wish to feel that my story resonates with the themes and images of a greater story: I seek to forge the connections between the idiosyncratic and the homeosyncratic, for those connections must be there. "Jew" gives me a great collage of imagery and archetype from which to draw. It is, as I said above, a compendious category, by no means all-inclusive, but quite extensive. Within its breadth I can find the stories of myself as orthodox and heretic, as ecstatic Hasid and abandoned survivor. As a Jew I have all those brother stories to live out, my brotherhood with Ishmael on the one hand and with Jesus on the other; and there are all those sisters—Rachel, Leah, Dinah—to atone with.

Perhaps the most significant and difficult aspect of being a Jew for me has had to do, as I said at the beginning, with some sense of belonging. Until recently I belonged to nothing and belonged nowhere. And in some hardened way I was proud of this. Though I was an outsider everywhere, I felt the status of the outsider conferred its own privilege, if only the privilege of irony, detachment, inwardness, and complexity. In eschewing belonging I eschewed the simplicities of group-think. In fact it was the very nomadism of the patriarchal narratives, the wildness of the patriarchal God, that first attracted me to the book of Genesis. Here were my ancestors: the rootless sojourners who lived as strangers in strange lands, precariously dependent on their hide-and-seek God. My dear adolescent epiphanies which had never found a suitable theology were, I discovered, consonant with the revelations of Abraham; my entanglements with a father's legacy made me a brother to Isaac; my wrestlings with myself made me kin to Jacob. Yet by beginning to attach myself imaginatively to this lineage I began, quite unconsciously, to affiliate my *I* to a clan and then to a people. My own personal self, so jealous of its freedom, always bristling at any imposed definition, began to feel a deep, long-disregarded longing for the *we*.

Even now as I write this, I feel the old claustrophobia of the *we*. The loss of self, the loss of voice, that the *we* can lead to threatens me with its anonymity. In the *we* the solo self blurs and dissolves in plurality—the team member, the family member, the group member. Being a member of anything—*joining*—has always been anathema to me.

Here I find my father before me. Self-made man, he left the Chaldees of his Midwestern roots and climbed the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Yet for all his New York individualism, I see him now in his aging as a man without any society to which he belongs. He is a kind of valiant, defiant hermit whose reclusiveness is more a function of shyness, perhaps even of a partial misanthropy, than it is the drive of his personal will. He never joined anything, and I am his son. I can feel the pull of his example; I can imagine for myself a lonely age like his.

Yet it has not been out of a desire merely to protect myself from such a solitariness that I have made my Jewish pilgrimage, but because there is a part of being a man that I have not experienced. I have yet to know what it is like to feel the attachments and the quarrels of belonging. I have yet to know—and it feels to me like a part of the human inheritance—what it means to

acknowledge that I am not only and merely an *I* floating alone in a vast existential universe; I am also a *we*, a part of something, a nation, a people, a religious group, a tribe.

The call of this plurality is, in its own way, a call toward the earth, toward what is undifferentiated, soiled, stained, and mortal. In some ways letting myself be a Jew involves me, quite how I cannot tell, with death and with dying. Being a Jew has something to do with not being special (despite all those Jewish claims of specialness). Jews, as my father showed them to me, were slobs and vulgarians, loud, gaudy, nouveau. To identify myself as Jew means to identify with all of that. It means to say not only that such Jews are my kin, but to say that I, too, have in me the slob, the vulgarian, gaudy showman, the nouveau riche. What a relief, what a gas, what a blow to my self-importance to say I am a Jew! It is the final defeat of an inveterate illusion, the illusion of my specialness. It is the final erosion of my monarchy of one. I cannot say I embrace it, for the feel of it is palpable with ash and mud; it is in the end the clutch of mortality itself. I cannot yet embrace it, but I lower myself into it as into some warm, dangerous, healing ooze.

I said at the beginning I did not seek my father's blessing, having had it all these years. Yet in some way I think I do. As a narrative Jew in love with all the artifice and beauty of stories, I believe my father and I can find our common ground. But as a Jew of the shadow story, the Jew who is declassé, permanently in diaspora, always hungry, bent on making it, I wonder if this Jew, so easily ridiculed, can have his blessing also. To gain it would require my father to forgive and to bless himself.

As he ages, my father retreats from me. How deeply I want to maintain my connection with him. Perhaps now, as he is leaving me, more than ever I reach for that connection, *umbilicus paternus*. In the old myth, Abram—before he was Abraham—leaves his father Terah behind him when he goes forth in answer to a call to enter the land of Canaan. The scene of their leavetaking, the farewell of that father and that son, has often haunted me, and I have led many psychodramas based on its outlines. Perhaps this essay is really a speech to my father, my Terah, and a part of a leave-taking. On my side I have a sense of surviving him and going into a country—the future, the life of a Jew—which he cannot enter. Meanwhile, on his side he prepares to go to a country in which, perhaps, the future and all things Jewish fall away and are seen only as the accidents of mortality. There we may meet again and understand these matters more clearly than we can understand them now. This may then be a prologue rather than a coda. Who knows? □

LEAVES

(Continued from p. 75)

was not there. He felt something in his shirt pocket. It was a frayed business card that had somehow survived the soaks and spins of a punishing wash.

Alex flashed the card in the driver's sullen face. "I have only this, nothing else."

"No money?" The driver bared his tobacco-stained front teeth.

Alex smiled. "I'm sorry. I left everything—back on Emek Repha'im."

"My very dear sir, if you think you're going to make a chump out of me, forget it. Not me. I fought in four wars already. I lived in a tent for five years. I married four times, divorced three times, twice by the same woman." The driver picked up his radiophone. "In a minute, I'll have every cousin of mine who's a cop buzzing your fat tail."

"Here." Alex took off his Rolex and handed it to the driver. "You can buy a wife with it."

The driver dangled the watch in his hand. "A new wife? I'd like to get rid of the used one." He patted Alex on the shoulder.

"Sounds like you got problems with your wife too. That's what's wrong with you Ashkenazis. You can't handle the women. My wife— a drop of hot sauce from her—and I stuff a falafel down her big mouth."

"Give her the watch."

"To the wife? Mister, are you really such a donkey? For some ripe tomato full of fresh juice … maybe. But for the wife? I bring her pansies every Friday afternoon. A couple of tactical moves, you might say. A pansy a week cures the whine—that I never give her anything. So how can she possibly develop a birthday strategy to demand a week in Turkey—or a gold watch?"

"Give it to a lady friend."

"Listen pal, what's your name?"

"Alex."

"Listen good, Alex. That watch is too much even to give to some whore. A watch like that could get cramps from all the diamonds lying in its stomach."

"Enjoy it in good health."

"My health should be no concern of yours. And I got no more time to waste with you—or with some tax commando who tries to ambush me for not giving receipts. If I did not smell that you're a new Russian

ignorant, up to his nose in this shit country, I would have my suspicions about you. So here's a piece of paper, a pen that works—write down your phone number. I promise on my first wife's belly … she was the best of all of them. A Danish, mind you. I was in the Tivoli Gardens, in Copenhagen one spring. I used to sit on a park bench and throw rubber snakes at the feet of passing girls. Most used to jump in panic. But one crazy one married me. On her Christian belly I swear—that I give you back the watch when you pay me for the ride. I give you a receipt too."

"Keep it. It's yours. Not mine."

"You want me to wait? I take you back home after you finish praying. Kiss your mezuza, go into your home, kiss her lips hello, get your money, kiss her ass goodbye. Leave your house, kiss your mezuza again, give me my money—and I give you back your watch."

Alex touched the man on the shoulder. "Thanks, but it's not necessary. Keep the watch."

The driver put the watch between them on the dashboard. "I hold the watch for now. Here' s my number at home. You call me. I give it back to you when you pay me my money."

Alex smiled. "Let part of the watch cover the fare and take the rest of it—not as payment—as a gift."

"No way. My father used to say, 'He who hates gifts will live.' Sounds superstitious to you? Well, my father was absolutely right. Every time you get something for free, you have to pay with blood. Let me tell you: Most people are whores—and the Torah says you shouldn't live off whores. Like that government of ours: She gives me an apartment and then expects me to spend one month a year in the reserves, ready to get killed until I'm forty-eight. You want me to take your watch? Bet you tell the cops I stole it from you."

"You can trust me. I have nothing against you."

"Trust you? What's so special about you? I don't even trust my mother. And even if I trusted you, I told you gifts spook me. The last time I took gifts was when I was bar mitzvah. Four Swiss army pocket knives, a pair of house slippers, and three Bibles. And I gave away the Bibles and three of the knives. But this year, I feel like I had to finally pay for those knives and Bibles: For my son's bar mitzvah, for presents for my son's friends' bar mitzvahs. All the *pishers* get bar-mitzvahed in one year and I'm ready to line up at the soup kitchen. Thank you, but no gifts for me."

"If you want, I'll grab a witness and give you the watch. No strings—you won't have to worry."

"Alex, I sure do appreciate it. Customers—sitting right where you are sitting, talking to me just like you're talking—went and robbed, propositioned, insulted me. Right here in my own car. Would you believe it? You come along and are ready to give me a present. I could use it. I got one son, six daughters, and three wives to support. And my mother is still alive too. But like my father said—"

"Absolutely. When you get something for nothing, you become a nothing." Alex opened the car door. "You don't want it, I don't want it—then the garbage gets it."

"What a genius! You throw that Rolex away. Then, it belongs to nobody. I happen to find it. Understand me? Then it's my good luck. The only thing I must do—is thank God."

Alex lay the watch on the ground. Time seemed to jog in place as he watched the driver get out and pick it up.

The driver pulled out his wallet. "Take some cash—and don't say no. It's a long walk back."

"I'm not going back."

Alex took the money and got out of the cab. He picked up a black paper skullcap from the basket near the police barricades and pressed his body against the cool wall. He looked at the business card in his hand. "Alex Kaminsky, Doctor of Medicine, Thirteen Emek Repha'im Street, Jerusalem." He folded the card and stuffed it deep into a cleft between the ancient stones. The setting sun draped the Herodian stones in soft pink and cloaked the worshipers in dappled grey. If Boris showed before dark, Alex would tell him to go to the party in his stead. He'd walk over to Ecce Homo and get himself a hot falafel and a cold beer. He did not want more than that. □

Is there anything that can stop liberals from blowing it in 1996?

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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 7)

paratroopers, but I do. The constant fear, first of training accidents (which are disconcertingly frequent), then of being a constant target in the war zone in Lebanon or in the West Bank, usually dominates parents' lives. Here in Israel, there's some support for all this, but I can only imagine how much more difficult it must be to be one of the very few American Jewish leaders to have put your child at such risk and not have people around you who really understand what you are going through.

All the more difficult it must have been to keep silent when right-wing American Jews attacked you for not having the right to speak out against Israeli policy, when you must have known that it is precisely the irrationality of Likud's settlement policies and the craziness of the war in Lebanon and its aftermath, that is putting your son's life in danger. I'm sure it wouldn't be easy even if you agreed with the policies that led to the present situation, but when you disagree and still have such commitment to the Jewish enterprise as to allow your son to be in a combat unit, it must really drive you nuts to hear these right-wingers questioning your credibility!

As for me, I can only say, *kol hakavod*, all honor to you. We in Israel appreciate your courage and I personally feel much more respectful of TIKKUN. Now, I can not only agree with it, I can be proud of it!

Yishayahu Freeman
Tel Aviv, Israel

To the Editor:
True to your self-hating Jewish attitude that has shaped TIKKUN from the beginning, you now find that Oslo II isn't good enough to the Palestinians and criticize Rabin for not having given up Hebron as well. Luckily, your kind of Jewish renewal Jews are totally ineffective, even if statistically they represent the majority of Jews. The reason you and your Jewish renewalists don't matter is simple, and revealed in the appeal you make to your readers to give you financial support: The Jews who share your liberal attitudes don't really care that much about their Jewishness, so they are unwilling to put their money behind their ideals.

Not only that, but we in the traditional Right of the Jewish world are having babies at a rate far greater than your self-indulgent liberals who hate the mess and responsibility of raising big families. And we raise our children with a sense of responsibility, whereas you raise your children with the feeling that they should be able to follow their whims without any notion of loyalty to a community. No wonder, then, that you have to beg your liberal supporters for financial help—they just don't have any sense of commitment to a community, even the kind of community that you are trying to build that does represent their values! No wonder, then, that it's so easy for us to dismiss all these Jewish liberals—they don't have the courage of their convictions. Sure, you may have the numbers in a poll of American Jews, but you can't mobilize those numbers in any way because although people agree with you, they just don't care that much, whereas we on the Right, though we have a smaller constituency than you, have a constituency of people who are ready to fight for their beliefs, to build their lives around their beliefs, and hence are prepared to build the very community whose absence you often bemoan.

Raphael Cohen
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editor:
Yours is the most consistently honest, intelligent, and morally centered voice I hear about Israel. Your September/October editorial helped me understand why so many people I know who are supportive of peace think that Oslo II might backfire in Rabin's face.

I also appreciated your refutation of right-wing Rabbi Riskin. I knew something was off about his call for a referendum, but after living in Israel for so many years I've unconsciously come to accept the notion that the Palestinians aren't really here, so it took your editorial to wake me up and realize how absurd it would be to have a referendum on the West Bank without including the Palestinians themselves as part of those who would vote.

Hanoch Chemdati
Jerusalem, Israel

JEWISH MEN

To the Editor:
From a certain perspective, human institutions in general serve to conceal the illicit power of the few. In this

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"hermeneutics of suspicion," where naive people see responsibility, authority, and loyalty, those in the know see kowtowing to power. People imbued with this vision look up at the more powerful with resentment, and down at the less powerful with protective concern (or scorn). A dose of this suspicion indeed helps us see through cant. Too much of this suspicion impoverishes our view of society.

It seems to me that Judith Plaskow, in her article, "Sex and Yom Kippur" (TIKKUN, September/October 1995), shows rather too much of this suspicion. She looks at the stark passage in Leviticus 18 which prohibits various sexual connections, and condemns it for "protecting the honor of adult males," the "privilege of the powerful," rather than serving "to protect the young and the vulnerable." She proposes removing this passage as the Torah reading on Yom Kippur afternoon, replacing it with frank discussions in which "various groups within the Jewish community" would "try to create their own" sexual standards: "more person- centered," "focusing on the quality of relationships," and "attend[ing] to feelings." In this critique, Plaskow ignores considerations that seem obvious to me: First, it takes a combination of influences to teach men sexual restraint. I think we men learn sexual restraint from role models of responsible adult males, from our own stake in societal stability, and, often enough, from clear religious injunctions. It seems to me that men who do not benefit from any of these influences have a hard time learning sexual restraint.

Second, when the Bible forbids some sexual acts as offenses against "the nakedness of the fathers," it does not at all abandon the "young and the vulnerable." Rather, it grounds their protection in the obligations of men. Typical of Jewish Law, the passage speaks in terms of responsibilities, not of rights. A man ought not to have sex with his stepmother, for doing so reveals his father's nakedness, meaning, at least in part, that it demonstrates that his father could not protect her (18:8). Having sex with his own granddaughter reveals his own nakedness (18:10), his own failure to protect her. In our more egalitarian and atomized environment, Americans tend to believe that each person holds responsibility only for his or her own sexual behavior, and that the honor of the tribal elders has nothing to do with it. We Americans want to believe that disgraceful acts degrade only the perpetrators, and, where applicable, the victims, but never the society as a whole. We Americans want to believe that this consideration protects the powerless well enough. The passage in Leviticus hardly displays disregard for the powerless when it grounds their protection in the honor of the tribal elders. Plaskow would supplant the passage in Leviticus with an open discussion of our modern sexual opinions. Following her advice, we would apparently replace Leviticus' bright line between the forbidden and the permitted with observations about "the quality of the relationship." These would protect the defenseless and naive, though people have mighty desires, and almost infinite talent for self-deception. Plaskow correctly notes that the passage in Leviticus maintains silence about "a positive understanding of sexual delight." The passage does not seem concerned with how to do sex really well, which has become, I think, the central concern of American sexual morality.

It seems to me that there will always be a place for improving the quality of relationships, sexual and otherwise. There is also a time and a place for the theme of this reading, acknowledging the forbidden: Yom Kippur afternoon, in the crowded synagogue.

Eliezer Finkelman
Berkeley, California

Editor's Note

"Just Friends," by David L. Kirp and Elliot Marseille, which appeared in the September/October 1995 issue of TIKKUN, was based on a case study the authors did for The Communitarian Network, titled "Neighbors as Peacemakers: San Francisco's Community Boards."

To the Editor:
Howard Eilberg-Schwartz ("A Masculine Critique of a Father God," September/October 1995), rejects his own straw dog image of the biblical male God: distant, dominating and wounding. Instead, he offers a feminist-inspired father-God who's O.K. because He's accessible and nurturing.

Men may find a more mature masculine model in the God who is challenging, demanding, and uncompromising. He shows His love in the high standards He sets for Israel, displays anger when disappointed.

If this God seems unapproachable, it is the enigma of the father-son bond, the paradox of the talmudic injunction to draw your son in with one hand and push him away with the other. This complex relationship is a container for competition, anger, and ultimately, growth. Rather than feel wounded in the ordeal, we are strengthened.

We need not make apologies to feminism, as does the author, for seeking masculine values in our tradition. Even as we reach for egalitarianism, we can create a Judaism that celebrates our gender.

David Grupper
Brooklyn, New York

PUBLIC HEALTH

To the Editor:
In his extremely bitter article, ("Public Health: Practicing Without a Net," September/October 1995), Dr. Robert Levine condemns me and my fellow physcians who work in public hospitals as venal co-conspirators in a hopelessly inept public health care system.

I do not doubt the disturbing episodes that led to Dr. Levine's disillusionment. But the vast majority of full-time doctors in public hospitals are caring professionals and dedicated teachers. They accomplish much with little. The major problem with public hospitals is not that they attract incompetent or complaisant staff but that they are subject to political forces that hamper their capacity to do their job properly. They are denied both appropriate funding and the autonomy to use whatever resources they have in the best interests of their patients.

In the three public hospitals where I have worked, the staff physicians generally labored overtime to help their patients. Rather than accept the inequities of the system, many of us fight them and sometimes win.

Had Dr. Levine directed his outrage solely at the forces that lead to the use of public health-care facilities as political footballs and deny them the wherewithal to function optimally, I would agree with him completely. But I will not accept his across-the-board condemnation of those of us who presumably share his ideals but choose to continue to care for those sick people whom no other hospital wants and at

the same time strive to maintain a high standard of care for them. As Rabbi Tarfon said, "The task is not yours to complete, but neither are you free to abandon it." We are not saints; neither are we frauds or bureaucrats.

Donald Feinfeld, M.D.
Attending Physician,
Dept. of Medicine
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East Meadow, New York

Jews in Popular Culture

To the Editor:

Paul Buhle seems to recognize that officers were the "other" in "The Phil Silvers Show" ("The Hollywood Blacklist and the Jew," September/October 1995). But Buhle's suggestion that these officers were primarily "visiting martinets" misses the boat. Led by Paul Ford's wonderfully played blowhard Colonel Hall, they were confused, incompetent, and deluded about the power to which they thought they were entitled—and they were WASPs. Bilko and *all* the other enlisted personnel, on the other hand, were identifiably non-Protestant "ethnic" types: Catholics and Jews. And of course there was one Black man. A raft of mostly Jewish comic veterans, all obviously too old for their characters, played the hilarious stable of Jews, Italians, and Poles such as Ritzik, Barbella, and Sowicki, not to mention Fender, the perfect Jewish tailor, as the quartermaster.

Bilko's name, interestingly, plays on the quintessential stereotype of the Jew. "To bilk" means to cheat, and his name was intended as an elaboration of his scheming character. But there was a second, contrary resonance as well, in which the absurd pseudo-Ukrainian Bilko plays on the no less comically named Senator Bilbo, the notorious and corrupt Mississippi white supremacist who had died in 1947.

The substance of the show was always the "situation" these ethnics got into as they were running their deals and scams along not-so-clandestine substrata to official Army routine. The overt humor was the result of brilliant characterizations and great writing delivered by superb comedians, but a deeper joke was that the base's motor pool, that is to say the working-class ethnics, were really running the show. On this level, the program was not just about the self-perpetuating inefficiency of a Cold War military-industrial juggernaut, but a deeper allegory of class conflict.

The WASP officers, ostensibly the ruling class, did always have a sense of the subversive effects of Bilko's activities, and this may have been why Buhle identified them as martinets. Aware that they were not in control, they did worry about discipline—this was a ubiquitous source of the show's humor. They were absolutely right: They *had* lost control. It was at moments of realization of that loss that Colonel Hall would become dependent on Bilko, either literally for capital, when Bilko would have to give up that week's schemed profit, or figuratively to bail him out of trouble with his higher-ups. This overall configuration, in which the Jew, maneuvering between the privates and the generals as it were, supports and buffers the petty prince, is not new in Jewish history. What was perhaps new to American pop culture was a show about a counter-political economy, structured along class and ethnic lines, subsuming Army hierarchies. That was the truly subversive message to broadcast during (General) Eisenhower's administration.

R. A. Bobboy
San Diego, California

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What Is the Politics of Meaning?

The politics of meaning is both a new theoretical orientation and a strategy to change American society.

Theoretical Orientation

Liberals and progressives have focused on economic needs and individual rights—and have fought against corporate or governmental forces that deny each. A progressive politics of meaning supports the liberal agenda on these issues (including civil liberties, women's liberation, economic justice, choice, ecological sanity, etc.). Yet liberals have too narrow an understanding of human needs, often seeing us as creatures whose primary interest is in economic survival or individual freedom. But they've been unable to recognize the ethical, spiritual, and psychological needs that are equally central.

We see human beings as fundamentally in relationship to each other and needing each other's recognition and love. The healthy human being is not the one who can stand alone, but the one who can acknowledge his/her need for others and can recognize in every other the sanctity that makes them worthy of respect and caring.

Human beings have a need to transcend the materialism and selfishness and the manipulative consciousness that teaches them to see others primarily in terms of what they can get out of others. Most people have a hunger to move beyond the "looking out for number one" common sense of this society and to see their lives as connected to some higher ethical and spiritual meaning. Yet most people believe that this is unrealistic, that ethical and spiritual life can only be ideals for some future eras, and that in the meantime they must be "realistic" and live according to the dominant ethos of selfishness and cynicism.

But a world based on selfishness and cynicism produces a huge amount of psychic pain. The ethos of selfishness and cynicism plays itself out in a weakening of families, loving relationships, and friendships—because the more people internalize the cynical view that everyone is only out for themselves, the harder it becomes to trust anyone or to believe that they will really be there for you when you most need them, when you don't have so much to give back and can't make the relationship an "equal exchange" (in market terms). Nor can you trust corporations not to pollute the environment or others not to rob you on the streets or at home. As trust dissolves, fear increases.

Because liberals and the Left never really address this crisis of meaning, the Right has been able to position itself as the primary meaning-oriented political force in the society, bemoaning the ethical and spiritual decline and the crisis in families. Yet they are simultaneously the force that champions the very ethos of selfishness and materialism in the world of work, whose consequences lead to all this pain in personal life.

That's why we need a progressive politics of meaning.

Sound-Bite Version

The goal of a politics of meaning is to change the bottom line in American society, so that productivity or efficiency of corporations, legislation, or social practices is no longer measured solely by the degree to which they maximize wealth and power—but rather also by the degree to which they tend to maximize our capacities to sustain loving and caring relationships and to be ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive.

Strategy

Some people think that all of these meaning issues only have an impact on middle-income people, and that liberals and progressives should *first* solve the economic problems of the society and stop the cutbacks of the conservatives. We wish them luck. But we believe that they will be unable to do that until they've addressed the meaning crisis. The alliance needed between poor people and middle-income people can only be built if the pain of middle-income people is given equal attention to the pain faced by poor people. Up till now, the Left has tended to give the message to the American majority that they are being selfish and bad to worry about the collapse of their families, crime, etc., when the poor are suffering so much more. This has not been an effective strategy. We think the best way to serve the interests of the most oppressed is to take seriously the meaning crisis, and build a cross-class alliance on that basis.

Some New Age people talk about meaning issues too—but they tend to focus on changing their own heads. That's an important element—but it is unlikely to work for most people unless we build economic and political institutions that foster caring rather than selfishness and cynicism. In TIKKUN magazine we put forward specific programmatic ideas to show what this might look like concretely.

Ethics Summit

We will convene a national "Summit on Ethics and Meaning" to launch our national campaign for a politics of meaning. The Summit will take place April 14-16, 1996 at the Omni Shoreham in Washington, D.C. Please take time off from work and attend. It could be one of the most important experiences of your life! We've also created the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, and we are creating mini-summits in cities around the United States. If you want to be involved, come to the conference, join the Foundation, and help us create a movement that addresses the meaning issues. The current strategy debates about how to build the politics of meaning take place inside TIKKUN—so please subscribe. For more information, write: Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, c/o TIKKUN, 251 West 100 Street, New York, NY 10025 (212-864-4110).

Tikkun (tē-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

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