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

TIKKUN

EDITORIALS:
The Budget Debate: How Much to Hurt the Poor
The Left's Attack on Meaning

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1996 $6.00

Looking toward the future

A.B. Yehoshua
Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi
Wendy Orange
David Biale
Arthur Green
Eric Yoffie
Jyl Lynn Felman
Alice Shalvi
Ze'ev Sternhell
Letty Cottin Pogrebin



After the assassination

Professionals' Morass
William M. Sullivan

Prager's Prancing
Stew Albert

Bad Medicine
Larry Amsel, M.D.

Journalists vs. Media
Jay Rosen

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The Fundamental Truth

The Christian right, Islamic Jihad,
the Jewish right bank settlers bringing
the Messiah down, the Japanese sects
who worship by bombing subways,
they all hate each other
but more they hate the mundane,
ordinary people who love living
more than dying in radiant glory,
who shuffle and sigh and bake bread.

They need a planet of their own,
perhaps even a barren moon
with artificial atmosphere,
where they will surely be nearer
to their gods and their fiercest
enemies, where they can kill
to their heart's peace
kill to the last standing man
and leave the rest of us be.

Not mystics to whom the holy
comes in the core of struggle
in a shimmer of blinding quiet,
not scholars haggling out the inner
meaning of gnarly ancient sentences.
No, the holy comes to these zealots
as a license to kill, for self doubt
and humility have dried like mud
under their marching feet.

They have far more in common
with each other, these braggarts
of hatred, the iron hearted
in whose ear a voice spoke
once and left them deaf.
Their faith is founded on death
of others, and everyone is other
to them, whose Torah is splattered
in letters of blood.

—Marge Piercy

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 11 NUMBER 1

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Book Editor
Michael Kazin

Fiction Editor
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Letters

LESBIANS

To the Editor:

Daphne Merkin ("A Closet of One's Own," November/December 1995) knows next to nothing about the real lives of lesbian and bisexual women, and is rehearsing a series of sometimes romantic but mostly distasteful cultural fantasies.

If lesbian, bisexual, and gay people have shown the larger culture anything, it is that sexuality is not about "holes" being filled with "dangling somethings." Human sexuality is about minds and imaginations; hearts and personalities; fingers, smooth skin, and bushy beards; silk stockings and walks in the forest. Our sexual preferences and familial constructions are complex and multi-faceted and cannot be contained in narrow pop biological determinist categories.

In regard to Merkin's ugly stereotype in which she imagines herself bisexual and unable to remember the gender of her partner the morning after, I can reassure her that I have never heard of a case in which bisexuality is the cause of amnesia.

Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman
Manhattan Beach, California

To the Editor:

When I was in school, lesbians were looked upon with some mystery and awe by straight women who were "oh-so-liberal" as to accept the phenomenon—even if not personally interested. Today, lesbianism or bisexuality are viewed as much more of a lifestyle choice than they were in previous decades. It is an option open to women that is currently explored without much fuss in many cases. The lesbians I know are no different than any other women, except that their romantic partners happen to be female. All of my lesbian friends and acquaintances are well-rounded, wonderful people who are not the slightest bit de-

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prived because they don't have access to the male penis.

Judy Nogg
Boulder, Colorado

To the Editor:

Merkin admits that her "mind closes down, resists further exploration" of the subject of lesbian sex because of her cultural conditioning. She notes that her feeling that lesbian sexuality is somehow "compensatory," lacking the "authenticity" of gay male sexuality, comes from a "cultural outlook that casts my own kind as somehow deficient or lesser than." News flash: We have all had this cultural conditioning. It's called sexism. If this were a feminist article, it would *analyze* these prejudices, instead of just transmitting them.

By reducing lesbian relationships to sexuality alone, Merkin fails to confront the spiritual aspect of these relationships. She is basically telling us that she likes women better than men, but she thinks she needs a man to have fun in bed. She views men as having "a penis to be borrowed as needed." Isn't this insulting to men as well as women? These aren't really new ideas, either. What would have been revolutionary would have been to publish a straight woman's musing on how her relationships with lesbians have made her rethink her relationships with women. Or with men for that matter—or to rethink *something*, instead of rehashing old biases.

Ruth Abrams
Somerville, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Let us imagine someone with Jewish grandparents, let's say, who was not brought up in a Jewish household. No doubt she would have some curiosity about what it was like to be a Jew, some misinformation, some smatterings of knowledge. Ordinarily, we would not consider these reasonable qualifications for writing an essay on not becoming Jewish. We also wouldn't be much interested in the airing of the various biases and prejudices through which the writer attempted to convince herself that there was really no reason to become a Jew. As Jews, we might be somewhat startled, perhaps even outraged, to discover that our experience was being guessed at or described by someone who had passed a synagogue on the street, looked in curiously perhaps for a quick peak, but had never entered a temple. Certainly, we would be astonished to find such a person claiming that, so far

New York Area Tikkun Events, 1996

All events are vegetarian potlucks. Bring a main-course vegetarian dish to feed ten people. You are welcome to bring friends—but they too must bring a main-course vegetarian dish, or pay $10/person. RSVP to 212/864-8253 for event locations and to confirm event times and dates.

Friday, January 19, 6:45 p.m.
Jewish Renewal Shabbat prayer, potluck, and Torah discussion. A wonderful way to experience the new and meaningful ways of worship introduced in *Jewish Renewal.*

Saturday, February 3, 7:00 p.m.
Salon: *The Budget, the Economy, and Meaning.* Preceded by potluck and Havdalah.

Friday, February 16, 6:45 p.m.
Shabbat prayer, potluck, and Torah discussion.

Saturday, March 2, 7:00 p.m.
Salon: Medicine and Meaning, led by Raphi Kelman, M.D. Preceded by potluck and Havdalah.

Friday, March 15, 6:45 p.m.
Shabbat prayer, potluck, and Torah discussion.

Tikkun Passover Events

Wednesday, April 3 and Thursday, April 4
Tikkun Passover Seders ($45/person; reservations must be made by March 18).
Wednesday thru Sunday, April 3-7
Tikkun Passover Retreat at Elat Chayyim. Call 1-800-398-2630 for registration and fee information after February 1.

The Tikkun Summit on Ethics and Meaning

Help us prepare:Volunteers needed all day and evening in our New York office—Thursday, April 11.
Sunday thru Tuesday, April 14-16 in Washington, D.C.
Summit on Ethics and Meaning: Don't miss this—or you'll regret it for years to come! Reservation information is on pages 11-13 of this issue of Tikkun.

Friday, April 26 and Friday May 17, 7:00 p.m.
Shabbat prayer, potluck, and Torah discussion.

Sunday, May 5, time to be announced.
Salon: Poetry and Fiction Reading.

Thursday, May 23, 10:30 p.m.
Tikkun Leyl Shavuot—Shavuot Torah study until 2:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 25, 10 a.m.
Shavuot prayer, followed by potluck picnic in Riverside Park.

as she was concerned, a Jewish world and culture were endlessly dreary or perhaps even did not really exist.

This is exactly what Daphne Merkin has done with respect to lesbian experience.

When Daphne Merkin writes about lesbians, we become rather peculiar creatures, about whom one can only wonder from a distance, a bit like the anti-Semite's Jew. Daphne Merkin takes it to be a great discovery that lesbians like sexual penetration. But she cannot imagine any part of a lesbian's body that dangles and is hard and can be used to penetrate another woman's body. Therefore, she imagines, lesbians are fated to haunt dreary sex shops in search of dildos. Hmmm.

Of course many lesbians enjoy penetration. And Daphne Merkin might be surprised to learn that lesbians don't need dildos to achieve it. Our bodies are amply provided with all the necessary equipment, if we care to use it.

Daphne Merkin, have you forgotten about hands and fingers? Or is the problem that you cannot imagine how women might use them when making love? Your article may be the only incontrovertible example of Freudian repression literature ever produced! As such, it is definitely worth reading. But when it comes to telling us anything about the lesbian experience itself, about its literature, customs, neighborhoods, stores, parties, orgies, fashions, music, bars, dance clubs, spiritual customs, friendships, passions, and other intimate exchanges—well, how could it tell us anything? Do you really not know that lesbian women have invented a republic of their own, a republic less public than that of gay men, but not therefore nonexistent?

So, I am puzzled. What was Daphne Merkin's purpose in writing this article? Even more to the point, what was TIKKUN's purpose in publishing it? Most of us have vague, half-formed attitudes about things we don't know much about, but usually that is not considered adequate reason for publishing essays on them.

Kim Chernin
Berkeley, California

To the Editor:

Did the editors of TIKKUN not see the homophobia and misogyny in Merkin's article? Did you willingly choose to alienate? Willingly choose to devalue the precious little time and space for views which move us toward repair, mutual support, and deepening understanding? Our struggle is lead also by lesbians. Giving public voice to weak underpinnings, thoughts stewing in the immaturity of an unexplored psyche, is irresponsible. Don't waste my time!

Tania Kravath
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I was glad to see TIKKUN breaking through the image of itself as a "politically correct" magazine that always prints predictable articles saying whatever "the movement" line is on anything. You once sent your readers a letter claiming that you personally disagree with 60 percent of the articles you choose for publication, but frankly, until you published Daphne Merkin, I couldn't see how you could possibly make the claim. Far too much of TIKKUN feels like an extension of the Women's Studies or Queer Studies party line. So it must have taken some courage to allow a piece that you clearly don't agree with.

I like much of what you are doing in TIKKUN, but why don't you try to do a bit more of the Merkin kind of piece and a bit less of proving that you are loyal feminists? From my standpoint, your readers are virtually all people who have already been exposed to the feminist and gay and lesbian positions, the pro-Black positions, and the litany of politically correct views. We already agree with most of them. Couldn't you lighten up, have more respect for us and our ability to make up our own minds (we are not about to fall prey to racist, sexist, or homophobic assumptions, otherwise we'd be reading some other magazine), and give us more of the kind of writing that Merkin does in this piece?

Jane Joseph
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I was shocked and surprised that TIKKUN would choose to print an article that perpetuates demeaning stereotypes of lesbians.

The idea that lesbian sex is either a "parody" of heterosexual sex with one woman "playing" the man, or is simply gentle caressing, is laughable. Lesbian sex is as diverse as the women who do it. It may include passion, caresses, power exchange, play, aggression, dildos, love, eroticism, and much more. As a lesbian who has been out for almost twenty years, I feel quite confident in saying that it is not about parodying straight people, any more than heterosexual sex is about parodying lesbians. It is about loving women. I have yet to meet a lesbian who considers penetration "a problem that won't go away," regardless of whether or not dildos or other sex toys are used. Just like Ms. Merkin, lesbians, too, want "the real thing," and it has nothing to do with men and their penises.

Laura Giges
Santa Cruz, California

To the Editor:

Congratulations on being the first progressive magazine to allow an honest discussion of lesbianism. For over two decades, lesbians have berated heterosexual women in the pages of liberal and Left magazines and in the cultural and political circles of the women's movement. Lesbians argued that heterosexual women were "male-identified," and thus less of "true feminists" than those women who had chosen to make love with other women. Ignoring the high rate of alcoholism and obesity in the lesbian community, two signs of people who are greatly disturbed (direction of causation here was not that they were first oppressed, and then became alcoholic, but that they were first disturbed, and lesbianism was one outlet while alcohol or overeating was another), lesbians insisted that it was heterosexual women who were disturbed and oppressed because they had fallen for men who would necessarily be less sensitive to them and their needs than women would be.

I remember those days well in which these lesbians turned the beautiful experience I was having in the women's movement into a nightmare. I had turned to the women's movement to escape the constant come-ons and sexual politics that seemed to characterize the male-dominated anti-war movement. So "imagine my surprise" to find that the women's movement, which at first promised a safe place to explore our most intimate issues, suddenly became filled with lesbian women who were as likely as men to proposition me, to make me feel that I was not being "politically correct" if I refused (the same garbage I had experienced from male activists in the Left), and to make me feel that my form of sexuality was somehow tainted and politically dirty. In fact, a famous article of the time by lesbian theorist Anne Koedt titled "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" managed to convince many

heterosexual women that their orgasms were heterosexual fantasies, and that the only "real" orgasm was the kind that a woman could give another woman. I believe it was this tyranny of the lesbians that decisively stopped the women's movement from becoming the major political force of late-twentieth-century America. Our analysis and insight was so powerful that it would have swept America and undermined patriarchy, until, in a fit of obsequiousness to lesbians and their insistence on the superiority of their form of sexuality, the women's movement stopped expanding its base. How could it reach into middle America if a central part of its message was to raise doubts about the validity of heterosexual sex?

In fact, now that I think of it, I believe that it was this dynamic that also undermined consciousness-raising groups, since the safety of those small groups was disrupted for many of us when we found ourselves having to defend our sexuality and to protect ourselves from unwanted advances by fellow group members. Yet these "c.r." groups were precisely what had been up till then our most successful organizing technique.

In this context, though coming too late for many of us, Daphne Merkin's piece is a useful corrective. I found some of Merkin's claims outrageous or silly. Still, I appreciated TIKKUN for printing it because Merkin puts into question the superiority that many lesbians assume (a superiority which is still prevalent in lesbian music, in some women's bookstores, and in the culture that flourishes around the lesbian world and which I still find difficult to take).

R. Chapman
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

I am angry with the rambling homophobia in Daphne Merkin's "A Closet of One's Own." Unlike most other TIKKUN articles, this essay contains little that relates to Jewish Renewal. While Jewish Renewal champions liberation and interpersonal responsibility, Ms. Merkin resigns herself as "a culturally conditioned woman who has tailored her erotic fantasies to fit the expectations of her time and place." In this fashion, she rationalizes her homophobia: attributing modern lesbianism to trendy bar scenes, noting that "gay women seem to be huddled together in some third-class lounge," and deciding that gay men appear to have dismissed women and straight men. Ms. Merkin's attempt to pigeonhole lesbians and gay men in defense of her poor self-image contradicts the moral principle of recognizing each person's worth.

Merkin's essay epitomizes an ethos of selfishness and cynicism that Jewish Renewal wishes to overcome. Perhaps Ms. Merkin has internalized society's negative views of lesbian and gay sexuality, condemning herself, hindering her exploration of sexuality, and impairing her self-esteem. While Ms. Merkin has the First Amendment right to express her ideas, I do not understand why a progressive forum such as TIKKUN chose to publish her spiritually bankrupt lamentation.

Jonathan Kessler
Chicago, Illinois

Daphne Merkin responds:

Oh my, oh my. I seem to have stepped on more than a few toes (and no, Kim Chernin, I haven't forgotten that women have hands and fingers as well as toes) by daring to air my speculations about the sexual road I have not taken—and about which I openly admit I harbor stereotyped images as a result of having chosen to live as a "straight" woman. I wish I could say that I found the largely negative response that has come in about my piece (with the thankful exception of a few independent-minded souls) enlightening or, at the very least, interesting, but sad to say, I find the tone of most of the letters either pious or splenetic and their content staggeringly blinkered and defensive.

I had somehow imagined that throwing words like "homophobia" and "Sexism" at someone else's thought process went out of fashion a few years ago, but I guess I have overrated the level of intellectual discourse that pertains these days in and out of magazines. The truth, of course, is that being part of a minority has never made anyone more lucid about the cultural powers-that-be or the problems with the status quo; as has become chillingly clear with the growth of political correctiness on campuses in the past decade, all too often a given minority is only a bunch of autocrats decked out in sheep's clothing, waiting their chance to gavel this or that wrong idea or group out of sight.

My piece had less to do with the issue of "access to the male penis," as one reader so infelicitously put it, or with "rehearsing a series of sometimes romantic but mostly distasteful cultural fantasies," as another opined (while then blithely going on to write vaporously of "smooth skin and bushy beards; silk stockings and walks in the forest") as it was an attempt—on a purely personal, undemographic, and highly impressionistic basis—to explore the chasm that seemed to me to continue to exist between gay and straight women. If anything, I thought I went out of my way to establish my own ostensible lack of conviction about heterosexuality and empathic comprehension about what might lead women to give up on men altogether—enough so, I should add, that the editor of the most visible book review in the country of the book in which my essay is included called me up to tell me that he thought I should expect a lot of "mash notes." Obviously, he didn't know the depth of defensiveness that exists within lesbian culture....

What I'd love to know is what mistaken assumptions—about everything from political engagement to personal style—have led to the closing of all these gates, to the ease with which lesbians seem to assume a position of disdainful superiority over benighted straight women like myself, "estranged from [her] own erotic core"? Does anyone really believe that the frothing rhetoric of lesbianism—asserting its inate spirituality and wonder and wholeness—is anything other than risible and infantile, no more worthy of serious adult attention than throwing sand in the playground? Hasn't anyone out there heard of E.M. Forster, he of "only connect" fame, who, although gay, didn't consider it presumptuous to try to envision the lives of either straight men or women?

Last, I would only add that I thought the cover-line given my piece ("Lesbians") which had been carefully and thoughtfully titled, "A Closet of One's Own: On Not Becoming a Lesbian," only added to the confusion and was misleading in a way that didn't serve my thoughts—even if it served TIKKUN's agenda. I'd be a more sanguine woman if I thought that fact truly explained the frothing rhetoric of the response, but somehow it strikes me as just a drop in an already overflowing bucket.

Editor responds:

TIKKUN has an editorial position which is unequivocally supportive of the rights of gays and lesbians to choose their own form of sexual expression. We do not believe that there is only one "natural" form of sexuality, but instead accept the accounts that argue that sexuality is inextricably linked to an eco-

could not be expected to favor Daphne Merkin's perceptions. Moreover, we have done our best to challenge the Right's attempts to delegitimate gay and lesbian lifestyles or sexual proclivities. We have been one of the most outspoken forces calling for a progressive Contract with American Families which explicitly acknowledges gay and lesbian families as an equally valuable family form. And I personally have flown to women's conferences around the country searching for more feminist writers (you are still invited), searching for more feminist poetry (our poetry editor Marge Piercy is very receptive), and particularly trying to convince lesbians and feminist writers to move beyond the writing ghetto to which they are often confined (writing about "women's issues" or about feelings) and beginning to position themselves in the pages of TIKKUN as innovators in the politics of meaning thinking that we are trying to apply in the areas of economics, social policy, and political analysis. The cost for taking this editorial position has been significant. Members of our editorial board have resigned through the years as we became more and more explicit about these issues. Institutions in the Jewish world that might have supported us instead distanced from us, fearful that the homophobia of their own members would lead them to replace organizational leaders who identified with TIKKUN's overt support of the gay and lesbian movements and of our insistence on challenging heterosexism.

At the same time, we have consistently sought to print articles from people with whom we editorially disagree. We have printed articles by conservative think-tank theorists, and we have printed articles by people who reject their Judaism, think that God doesn't exist, or think that prayer or other Jewish rituals are meaningless. We have printed the views of people who supported the Shamir government, people who hold ugly stereotypes of what Orthodox Jews are about, and people who think that TIKKUN is mistaken about the Democrats and that Clinton is the savior around whom we must rally. We tried desperately, though ultimately unsuccessfully, to get Jewish settlers or leaders of Modern Orthodoxy to write articles for this current issue of TIKKUN, precisely because we wanted to have adequately represented perspectives with which we disagree. We don't label articles with which we disagree in impor-

ABOLISH THE S.A.T.s?

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's "Abolish the S.A.T.s" is overwrought and betrays a lack of understanding of the nature of these exams, their significance and their purpose. They do not measure one's capacity to "think like a machine," for, indeed, machines don't think, nor can they parse sentences or solve more than the simplest verbal problems. The S.A.T.s measure, albeit imperfectly, a student's basic vocabulary, ability to read simple passages and extract their meaning, mastery of the basic principles of logical reasoning, and familiarity with concepts of mathematics and elementary mathematical problem-solving. Like any test given over and over, there are certain types of questions that are repeated and hence that can be prepared for, but this also tests a not unimportant ability to memorize facts and techniques. There is a lot in this world that requires technique, and we should expect that our students have developed some of it. The S.A.T.s have two parts: verbal and mathematical. Kids who like to read books, magazines, and newspapers, and think about what they read, generally do reasonably well on this part— without any "prep" course. Similarly, average students who don't cut class and do their math homework can do respectably on the mathematical part.

For gosh sakes, the S.A.T.s are taken only by students interested in going to college, and measure to what extent they have the basic skills for reading and computation that are needed to learn. You can't benefit from the works of the greatest humanistic philosopher if you can't read adequately. You can't become a loving public defender if you can't read critically. You can't be an effective doctor unless you have learned a minimal amount of mathematics and mathematical thinking. The S.A.T.s provide cutthroat competition only for the small handful of students vying for spots in the elite colleges. Nearly every college and university these days has a highly qualified faculty, and most students who want to go to college can gain admission somewhere. Gabel's description of test-takers as conditioned "like rats to believe that love and approval depend on the quick and correct public answering of magical questions" fits only the tiniest percentage of students I have encountered in thirty years of teaching. Furthermore, students who have certain learning disabilities or have extreme difficulty with time pressure can take the S.A.T.s untimed. In his zeal to demonize the S.A.T.s, Gabel gets himself so worked up he resorts to a really cheap shot: "thus it can only be 'right' to conclude that cold is to hot as life is to death as Nazis are to Jews..." This is his straw S.A.T. question. He certainly knows how to play to the galleries.

I do not believe that the S.A.T.s alone provide an adequate criterion for college admission. Contrary to what Gabel may think, neither do colleges themselves. For most colleges, S.A.T. scores and high-school academic record provide some sort of minimal cut-off. Below a certain level, students just aren't ready for college work. However, in addition, every college asks for a personal essay. Most years the topics are chosen so as to provide the student with an opportunity to show his or her personality and values. Colleges also value non-academic activities, especially those demonstrating community service. Gabel's blather about "language games" and "linguistic calculator" is in fact humbug. Students can prep for the S.A.T.s, but, by the same token, anyone can learn the calculus of some style, whether it be conservative dogma, liberalism, eduspeak, psychobabble or the "Politics of Experience." Gabel would like to see some sort of "Good Person" index to rate college applicants. Are they respectful of the humanity of their brethren and the "aspirations of human beings as a whole?" I imagine the Princeton Review or Stanley Kaplan could prep them on how to answer this as well. I'd just like to know if they can read and calculate.

Mark Bridger
Associate Professor, Mathematics
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel seems to believe, with the Beatles, that "All you need is love." Does he really believe that the technically demanding work of our society can be performed by anybody at all? Apparently he does, since he will tolerate no selection criteria because every such criterion is, by its very nature, elitist.

S.A.T. math scores are the single best predictors of academic success in technical fields. Selection made on the basis of these tests permits instruction to be delivered at a higher level to those who make the cut. I presume that Peter Gabel regards this as bad also, and that he would have instruction dumbed down to

tant respects, but if we did, they might often constitute more than half of a given issue of the magazine.

There are some people who feel that doing this is too risky, since in so doing we air views that might mislead, confuse, or even convince people of positions that we find mistaken or worse. We have consistently taken the opposite position. We believe that the clash of perspectives and attitudes in TIKKUN models the kind of community we want to see: one in which people feel free to experiment with ideas that others find offensive, a community in which there is a tilt away from the repressiveness that many people experienced in the communities of the past, which then drove them to choose the free market as their form of "liberation." There are dangers in this, of course, and one of them is that we will find different valued parts of our constituency finding themselves subject to attack, critique, or invidious innuendo. We don't support that form of speech, but we do allow it and give space for it. But we also give space for those who have a far more affirming and loving attitude. In the final analysis, we trust that our readers can make these distinctions on their own.

We are also very wary of the argument that says, "We are an oppressed group, so it is wrong to allow criticisms in public that feel demeaning to us." We faced this same form of argument by those who claimed that Jews are also an oppressed group, and that our criticism of Judaism, forms of Jewish life in the U.S., and Israeli policies and the practices of Israeli Jews toward Arabs was somehow a form of anti-Semitism. Having faced this kind of compulsory "political correctness" from the Jewish world, we are very reluctant to impose it when facing critiques of other groups as well.

On the other hand, it seems to me that in the process of publishing this article we caused some of our readers to have pain. For that, I am very sorry. To us within the protected community of TIKKUN, precisely because we are so clearly identified with support for the gay and lesbian movements, this discussion seemed "safe." But for some of our readers, perhaps less familiar with the history and commitments of this community of readers, reading Daphne Merkin's essay felt unsafe because they perceived this discussion as being "out there in the world" rather than as we perceive it—namely, "in here among friends." Given their perception, the article caused them to be fearful, hurt, or

enable everyone to get through.

If I need brain surgery, I want my surgeon to be selected for his mastery of surgical technique. I don't want a sympathetic bumbler who couldn't master the sciences that are the basis of the surgeon's craft. I also insist that my electrician, C.P.A., and every other technical professional to whom I entrust my well-being be qualified by selection and examination that excludes a significant fraction of the applicants.

Imposing Peter Gabel's non-criteria for educational opportunity on society will endanger us all. Communitarian thoughts are not enough. Who do we hug to keep that airplane we are on from falling out of the sky?

Were Gabel's ideas applied in society generally, the few who survive would be shivering around a smoky fire at the mouth of a cave and have no time for hugging at all. Civilization depends upon advanced technology; advanced technology depends upon special expertise; and conveying that special expertise depend upon selection of qualified students.

Barry Bunow, Ph.D.
Rockville, Maryland

Peter Gabel responds:

We live in a society in which journalists cannot experience the meaning of their own stories ("The Red Sox Win and A Fire in Dorchester! Back in a moment!"); in which corporate managers cannot experience the meaning of their own decisions (employing criteria of efficiency that destroy plant and animal life to make, say, copier paper); in which engineers and scientists are trained to calculate, irrespective of the meaning of their own calculations (laying railroad tracks to convey human beings to concentration camps); in which lawyers manipulate rules without experiencing the meaning of their own legal reasoning (the insanity of present-day Los Angeles, with its smog and its sprawl and its traffic jams, is the result of the neutral application of property and contract rules that treat land like a thing); in which the world may end without any of us realizing our responsibility for it because we never experienced the meaning of what we were doing.

My article, "Abolish the S.A.T.," was based on the fact that the S.A.T. equates merit with this very capacity to detach thought from meaning. A reading-comprehension passage on "Fig Trees in the Amazon" is presumed to be as good a measure of one's capacity to read as a passage from Buber's *I and Thou*—the only question is, "what is a good title for this paragraph?" Analogies treat the most banal aspects of reality as if they were "like" the most profound—thus cold is to hot as is life to death because they are both "opposites." Questions about the measurement of the physical world (so-called "math questions") are exactly like "Fig Trees in the Amazon": whether you can figure out when a train leaving Chicago at a certain speed will pass a train leaving New York at a different speed is presumed to be no different from whether you can employ the same or similar knowledge to save or improve human life or the environment. The only question is, can you apply the formula?—to anything.

Of course I am not saying that all you need is love to perform a surgical operation, or that pilots shouldn't be tested before they fly planes. I'm saying that we should stop equating one's merit to go to college with how well one can very rapidly answer standardized test questions that reward the very worst alienations of our society—the separation of mind from body, thought from feeling, and analytic skills from the capacity for empathy and ethical understanding which give moral direction to human existence. The point isn't that we should have some new kind of test, but that we should stop measuring each other with dehumanizing exams and realign education toward the fostering of wisdom, goodness, compassion, and healing a world that is lost to itself.

After my TIKKUN article was reprinted in the Chronicle of Higher Education, dozens of people contacted me to thank me for making them feel less stupid, less inadequate, less "lacking in merit." One mother, whose son was taking his S.A.T. for the second time the next day and had been frantically preparing by taking one of the many courses that have become a spin-off industry spawned by the exam, felt compelled to tell me almost apologetically about the community service her son performed in high school and what a good, caring, intelligent boy he was. It was only his initial S.A.T. score that first made him doubt himself and think perhaps he was destined for a lower track. My reply to her was the same as the response I would make to the professor of mathematics who so sarcastically dismisses my earlier article: The worse you do on these tests, the smarter you may be in the eyes of God.

EDITORIALS

The Budget: How Badly Do We Screw the Poor?

In December, shortly after I had received ordination as a rabbi, I was arrested along with sixty other clergy and religious leaders at a nonviolent protest that we staged at the Capitol. We were protesting the assault on the poor currently contemplated by both parties. While it is clear that the Republican budget was far more hurtful than the Democrats', we made it clear that we were not championing the Clinton budget either. From the standpoint of many of us who were arrested the real argument between congressional Republicans and the White House seems to boil down to, "How badly do we screw the poor?" not, "Do we have some other way to handle our budget deficit problem?"

The notion that President Clinton is finally fighting for principles is quite pathetic when one understands how far the President moved to the Right before drawing his line in the sand. President Clinton acceded to the Right's demands that the central "bottom line" for the budget should be the ability to have it balanced in seven years. His moment of "courage" has been restricted to arguing that the cuts in the budget proposed by the Republicans are too extreme, and that his lesser cuts, amounting to over a hundred billion dollars, are really "all" that is necessary.

Clinton could have avoided getting into this mess in the first place by simply and unequivocally stating that balancing the budget was a lesser priority for him than restraining globalization of the corporate economy. Positioning himself as a champion of U.S. jobs would have given him the political strength to resist budget cutters. But, whoops, globalization was precisely part of his plan, enacted with the overwhelming support of Gingrich and his folks through NAFTA and the various GATT agreements.

Giving corporations unlimited power to leave American communities and invest abroad in places where they could get cheaper labor and fewer restraints on pollution, failing to raise the issue of corporate responsibility to the communities devastated by corporate "downsizing" or plant closing, the Clinton administration's economic policies diminished Americans' sense that they could stand up to corporate power and encouraged the corporate rich and their allies in both parties in Congress to demand tax cuts for the wealthy and less spending on "entitlements" (a clever choice of words by conservatives when describing social programs for the poor and the aging, since it conjures up images of a greedy consumer who feels the right to endless goodies without any restraints, rather than images of those who actually get many of these benefits, people who are living at the edge and will be suffering should they be significantly cutback).

Equally troubling: The balanced budget demands were legitimated by Clinton from the outset of his administration. Why did he do this? You can tell the story one of two ways: either he is fundamentally conservative in fiscal matters, and shares the basic assumptions of the Right about the need to place budget cutting above all else, or he is a political maneuverer who thought that he would cut into right-wing support by adopting the Right's programs. So, in the first six months of his administration, it was Clinton, not the Right, who made budget balancing the central issue. And, as the 1994 elections demonstrated, when people are convinced by liberals that the fundamental assumptions of conservatives are really the correct assumptions, then they vote for the conservatives (they don't need a partial version when they can get the real McCoy). Or, they don't vote at all, because they see no one putting forward a morally coherent alternative to policies they suspect are immoral.

What does morality have to do with it? Everything. When Clinton finally decided to take a stand against cutting "too much" from the social-support network, he finally raised the moral issue. And the moment he did, his popularity soared, as we predicted it would all through his presidency if at any point he had taken a clear moral line. (And please don't tell us about health care, because as we've pointed out in the past, the Clinton health-care plan became a bureaucratic monstrosity rightly resisted by his own supporters precisely because the criterion for deciding its plans was not how to maximize caring, but how to allow the hospitals, insurance companies, and health-care providers to maximize their profits while extending benefits to the previously uncovered).

Though Clinton is being given kudos for finally taking a stand on the budget cuts, the reality is that the stand is within the context of arguing about how much to hurt the poor. We are glad he wants to hurt them less than the Republicans. But we are not happy that he played a central role in creating the circumstances that made this the central debate of 1995-96.

What could he do?

First, he could shift the focus of the debate by insisting that for every dollar cut from the budget for the poor, two

dollars be cut from welfare for the rich.

The Republicans are claiming that too big a portion of their children's inheritance will be spent on servicing the national debt. Well, fine, we have a solution. Abolish the part of the national debt owed to people with incomes of over $150,000 a year or who own more than $2 million of wealth. That would reduce debt considerably!

"You can't do that," the editorialists will scream. "That would be class warfare." Clinton could respond, "Class warfare? That's exactly what conservatives in both parties are waging against the poor. If they want to stop that, fine. If not, don't expect it to stay neatly contained. And, as a short-term matter, we could slash the Defense Department budget by half and still adequately fund our peacekeeping mission in Bosnia while protecting America from any conceivable military threat."

That such a response is inconceivable from the President is precisely the problem. Unless someone is willing to stand up to the Republicans on the principled issue and demand an end to the assault on the poor, the only struggle will be about how badly to hurt them.

Precisely the same argument attends the welfare debate. Clinton rejects the Republican version of welfare reform. But it was Clinton who created the circumstances in which he must now worry about his political vulnerability for rejecting welfare reform. It was Clinton who promised to "end welfare as we know it," while quietly adding that to do so would require an expansion of jobs and child-care benefits. Clinton knew what he was doing when he raised this issue in his campaign—he was trying to signal to the racists that he would escalate the assault on inner-city Blacks who are one of the major beneficiaries of welfare. It was no "mistake" that he didn't emphasize the "as we know it" clause and what he intended to do. Having created the expectation that welfare would be ended, he now finds himself in a politically difficult situation. But the reason is at least in part because he helped miseducate people at an earlier point.

But what can he do *now*?

Plenty. He could reverse his strategy of the previous three years and talk honestly to the country about the assault on the poor and why it is both immoral and not really in the interests of middle income taxpayers. He could talk to the middle class about their quite legitimate fears of unemployment through corporate downsizing, reminding them that as long as the corporations have as their bottom line the maximization of profits without regard to the human consequences of their actions, middle-income people have no guarantee that they themselves won't be among those who will be needing the benefits that today are being dismantled. He could talk about why our society needs to adopt a different bottom line, one that judged actions by their ethical, spiritual, and ecological consequences and their impact on our ability to sustain loving relationships. He needn't call it the politics of meaning—but that's what it could and should be.

If he spent the next several months visiting every corner of the country and sounding these themes about the dangers of unlimited corporate power, and linked that message to the need for a new bottom line that emphasized ethical, spiritual and caring concerns, Clinton could recoup much that he has lost. He would strengthen his political viability precisely because he would finally be understood to be articulating a coherent vision.

We have not given up on Bill Clinton. If he faced a popular outcry demanding a more aggressive attack on Republican budget assumptions, and clear statements from his constituents saying that they will refuse to support his reelection unless he develops a public campaign in the next few months focussed on the ethos of selfishness that underlies Republican budget-cutting, the President might once again find his most visionary voice. But when liberals and progressives prepare themselves to accept the logic of "lesser evil" electoral politics, affirming that even though they don't accept what Clinton is doing they will support his reelection as the lesser evil, they actu-

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Our Town

Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia

David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, and Larry A. Rosenthal

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—Carol M. Rose, Gordon Bradford Tweedy Professor of Law and Organization, Yale Law School

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ally undermine those people within the Clinton administration who call for a more principled stance. Faced only with pressure from his right, Clinton moves in that direction. It is precisely because we haven't given up on Clinton that we believe that the best way to influence him is to create a significant voice of people who are demanding a morally and spiritually based politics of meaning. That is precisely why the Summit on Ethics and Meaning which we've scheduled for Washington, D.C. April 14-16 has great potential significance. The Summit's primary aim, of course, is to launch a new movement that will bring together all those who recognize that the materialism, selfishness, economic reductionism, and technocratic consciousness that shapes the contemporary world must be replaced by a new ethically, spiritually, ecologically oriented world whose bottom line focuses on our ability to sustain loving and caring relationships. Yet the Summit may also have some important short-term consequences in American politics in 1996—both by challenging the Right's claim to be the force that cares about the ethical, spiritual, and family crises in America, and by showing the Clintonites that it is in their self-interest to stop allowing the Right to set the terms of the national debate. □

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LISA JANE DISCH

"A study of Hannah Arendt which pays particular attention to her 'storytelling,' which, while often noted, has never been analyzed. . . . Disch examines Arendt's writings on totalitarianism and their relationship to Arendt's identity as a German Jew."—*Jewish Book World*. $29.95

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Attacks from the Left

Alexander Cockburn, a columnist for The *Nation,* published vicious attacks on the politics of meaning in The *Los Angeles Times* on December 14, 1995 and The *Nation*, on December 25, 1995. Decrying what he sees as the "hot air" of calling for "institutions that tend toward the creation of loving and caring human beings," insisting that the only motive for the whole enterprise must be that Michael Lerner "hopes to recoup his glory days when Hillary Rodham Clinton informed him that his politics of meaning were indeed what a distraught world was searching for," Cockburn went on to repeat the Marxist reductionism that has led the Left to isolation and irrelevance. "Most people aren't looking for a paradigm shift in ethics and meaning," Cockburn insisted (without any reference to how he knows what most people *are* looking for). "They're looking for a secure job at wages sufficient to keep them and their families alive, on a diet other than Fritos and soda."

We heard these same words, almost verbatim, from one of Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis's speechwriters, just as we've heard it from one Marxist after another. What the Left never asks is, "If that *is* what people want, why haven't voters been responding to the liberal and social-democratic agenda of the Democrats and the labor movement that have promised to deliver precisely this?" Or, if the Left claims that liberals and the unions lost people's confidence by failing to deliver on these economic wants, why didn't people move further to the Left? It is precisely because people don't respond to the agenda that the Left continues to intone with religious intensity that we began our research some twenty years ago, doing what Cockburn and his ilk never dreamt of doing, namely actually talking to and listening to working Americans. It was from that research that we discovered that for many middle-income Americans, economics was not the only or even the most important issue in their lives.

If Cockburn bothered to read TIKKUN he would know that economic fears are hardly ignored by a politics of meaning. We are as acutely aware of the threats posed by globalization and economic downsizing as he. But given their surplus powerlessness and the triumph of an individualistic model of how to deal with their problems, too many Americans despair of collective solutions and hence are unable to stand together in sustained struggle to limit corporate power.

Leftists sometimes respond to our analysis by saying, "That's a function of economic conditions. When people are so worried about economic survival, they naturally tend to focus on their own immediate needs and hence can't join movements requiring social solidarity." But this

(Continued on page 84)

Very Tentative Agenda

Summit on Ethics and Meaning

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

Bracketed names indicate that the person listed has not yet confirmed participation in the Summit.

Sunday, April 14

MORNING:

A list of Christian religious services will be made available to conference participants.
A Jewish Renewal Sunday morning gathering and prayer session will be held.

AFTERNOON:

1:00-7:00 p.m. Registration

1:30 Introduction to the Major Themes
Peter Gabel

2:30-5:00 Afternoon Sessions
1. *A poetry and short-story reading touching themes of the Summit*
including Alan Shapiro, Yosef Komunyika, C.K. Williams, Elinor Wilner.

2. *What is Oppression?*—a play and workshop that presents the politics of meaning alternative to traditional economistic and reductionist accounts of oppression. Sharon Welch, Thandeyaka, and Rita Nakishima Brock.

3. *Students and the Politics of Meaning.* A gathering of graduate, professional school, and undergraduate students to explore the ways to build a politics of meaning movement on campuses and to address the ethical and spiritual issues faced on campuses.

4. *Social-Psychological Foundations:* Can there really be a society based on love and caring? What about the theories that assume that human beings are basically out only for themselves? Susan Andersen, NYU; Edward Deci, U. of Rochester; Nancy Cantor, Princeton; Mark Snyder, U of Minnesota; Peter Salovey, Director of Graduate Studies in Psychology, Yale.

5. *What kind of individual virtues and individual responsibility do we want to encourage?*
Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl

5:00-6:30 Telling Our Stories
1. Small group discussions in which participants will share with each other the ways that the ethos of selfishness and cynicism has hurt us in our personal lives and strategies that we've developed to cope with or transcend the pain or challenge the cynicism.

Or

2. Reports of successful organizing being done around the country by local organizers who have used ethical and spiritual themes in their work. Sharing our successes and strategies in organizing at the local level.

7:30 The Deprivation of Meaning in America:
Cornel West, Sharon Welch, Michael Lerner, Jim Wallis, Jim Hightower, Mary Edsall, Marianne Williamson.

10:00 Concert Pete Seeger

Monday, April 15

8:15-9:00 a.m. Support Groups

9:00-11:00 The Failure of Politics and the Hunger for Recognition and Mutual Connection
Peter Gabel and Michael Lerner

11:15 Larry Dossey Meaning is Healing

11:40 Presentation of Platform Planks and a Progressive Contract with American Families

12:45 Box Lunches and Presentations on how it is already happening: Reports from community organizations, religious communities with a progressive bent, social change movements, and.labor union organizing.

1:45-2:00 Michael Bader on Resistance to Meaning
Why people act out against meaning-oriented politics.

2:00 Simultaneous Workshops

1. *The Assault on African Americans and the Crisis of Meaning*
Rev. James Forbes, (Mark Ridley Thomas), Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (Hugh Price)

2. *God Does* not *Belong to the Right--So why are Right-wingers winning in the Religious World?*
Rebecca Parker, (Rev. Tony Campolo), Mathew Fox, Rev. Eugene Rivers, Mordechai Liebling, Harvey Cox.

3. *Moving the Labor Movement from Economism to Meaning*
(John Sweeney)

4. *Toward a new Philosophy of Politics*
Michael Sandel, Amitai Etzioni

5. *Public Journalism and Public Intellectuals*
William M. Sullivan

6. *Can Ecological Disaster be Averted?*
Paul Hawken

7. *Organizing Track:* How Organizers can take the Politics of Meaning into their Local Organizing

4:00 Simultaneous Workshops

1. *Is it all Pie in the Sky?*
The Economics of a Politics of Meaning.
David Korten, Robert Theobold, Paul Hawken

2. *The Fate of White Men*. In what ways have men been given a bad and unfair rap? Is there another way to speak to white men besides the way developed by hate-radio?
Mary Edsall, Jim Hightower

3. *What Kind of a Society Nurtures the Soul?*
James Hillman, Daniel Goleman

4. *Medicine and Meaning*
Larry Dossey, (Bernie Siegel)

5. *Reconstructing the Meaning of Politics*
Peter Gabel, Roberta Achtenberg, Congressman Bob Filner

6. *Discussion of the Platform—and its implementation in Local and Community Organizing* Michael Lerner et. al.

7. *Socially Responsible Business*
Ben Cohen and others

8. *Homophobia*. What accounts for homophobia in American life and how can it best be combatted? How can we separate it from the legitimate search for stronger families and deeper commitment to values?

6:00 Regional Meetings

7:00 Dinner with Speakers and Ethics Awards.
Jonathan Kozol, James Hillman, Mathew Fox, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and others

Late Night Music Program Follows

Tuesday April 16

8:15 a.m. Contact Groups

8:45-9:15 The Holocaust: A Politics of Meaning Analysis. Today is Yom Ha-Shoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day.

9:15-10:30 **Major Issues**

1. *How Should We Raise Children?*
(Robert Coles), Herbert Kohl, Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

2.*The Limits to a Politics of Inclusion and Some Versions of Multiculturalism.*

3. *Feminist Perspectives on a Politics of Meaning*
Marie Wilson, Sharon Welch.

4. *Violence and Ethical Irresponsibility in the Media.* How can television, movies (or maybe even the Internet) be used to promote ethical and spiritual sensitivity, to validate the "meaning needs" and to counter the ethos of cynicism, selfishness, and materialism that flourish in the contemporary world? Can this be done without falling into a simplistic optimism?
Danny Goldberg and Hollywood Cultural Shapers

5. *Visions of Work and Visions of Community*
Jerome Segal, Corinne McLaughlin, Marianne Williamson, representative from labor movement

6. *Aging and Sage-ing*
Thomas Cole

7. *Can the Politics of Meaning Help in the Short-Term struggle to Prevent Cutbacks?*
The tensions between long-term visions and short-term practical politics: need they be counterpoised?
Eric Yoffie, David Saperstein, (John Carr)

10:45 The Ethical Crisis in our Professions: How the Ethos of Selfishness Distorts our Work and Prevents us From Serving the Common Good
William Sullivan

11:00 Meetings by Professions or Types of Work.

12:45 Luncheon Topic of Speakers: Taking the Politics of Meaning into America

1. *The Progressive Pro-Families Agenda*

2. *Organizing a National Families Day, Fall 1996*

3. *How a Politics of Meaning Approach Could Impact on the Elections in 1996 and Beyond*

4. *A Vision of How the Politics of Meaning Could Eventually Shape American Politics* (Cecile Richards)

2:30-3:30 Next Steps: Workshops on how to build the campaign for a politics of meaning through the creation of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning

1. *Reappropriating July 4th and other national holidays* An ethics and meaning approach to national pride.

2. *Creation of neighborhood ethical support groups* (consciousness raising and local ethical action).

3. *Media watches to uncover and combat cynicism, materialism and the ontologizing of selfishness.* The creation of media advertising that would encourage an ethos of caring.

4. *Support groups within the professions.*

5. *Public intellectuals*—using the talents of intellectuals to serve the public interest.

6. *Policy institute*—to mobilize thinkers to develop the implications of this approach so that it can apply more effectively to public policy.

7. *Ethical impact reports*—the development of a national campaign to convince government and private -sector enterprises to issue a yearly report accounting for the impact of their activities on the ethical and spiritual climate of the society.

8. *Religious Renewal*—a group of people within the religious community committed to taking these ideas into that community

9. *Voices from the Right—and a Meaning-Oriented Response*

Paul Weyrich, Lawrence Chickering, Peter Gabel and Colin Greer

4:00-5:30 Summation of the Conference and Building Ethics Summits for the next Five Years: Toward a New Ethical and Spiritual Direction by the Year 2000
Music and celebration. Pete Seeger, Sy Kahn

Registration: Sliding Fee Scale Applies. Two nights at the Omni Shoreham: $260, plus $45 registration fee. If you don't stay at the Omni-Shoreham, registration sliding fee scale: Incomes under $20,000: $55. $20,000-$35,000: $75; $35,000-$50,000: $120; above $50,000: $185. One day only: 60% of the registration fee for your income bracket. Student with current student I.D.: $45. In addition, there are two meals we will eat together at extra cost: Dinner with speakers Monday night: $35. Lunch with speakers Tuesday: $20.

❑ Enclosed is my payment for **registration:**
(refer to sliding scale info.)
❑ check enclosed
❑ credit card info enclosed

I'm registering for
❑ Hotel and Registration ❑ Conference only
(amount for my income bracket) _____

PLUS: ❑ Monday Dinner ❑ Tuesday Lunch
(meals open only to conference registrants)

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Experts and Citizens: Rethinking Professionalism

William M. Sullivan

Something has gone wrong with the professions in the United States. Where law, medicine, and the other venerable "learned professions" once served as models of useful knowledge in service to the community, today's entrants to these fields find them beset by cynicism and disillusionment bred of a narrow commercialism. We no longer look to the successful lawyer or doctor for community leadership and public service. Today we worry whether their malpractice premiums are paid up.

The professions' recent record in national leadership is equally embarrassing. During several years of crucial debate over health care, the chief discernable contribution of the American Medical Association, the nation's most powerful professional organization, has been to wheel and deal to enhance its members' incomes. And as newer professions such as engineering, management, and journalism, nursing, and social work have come to the fore, they too appear unsure of their ethical vision. As the social and economic importance of professional work expands, the ethical vision within the professions appears to be contracting.

Many Americans think that there is something wrong with professionals as well. Not financially, of course. Quite the contrary. Professionals make up a large percentage of the fortunate fifth of the nation whose incomes have risen during the past decade, and the top earners among doctors, lawyers, and business executives have been doing even better than the average professional. But most of us, who have been watching our incomes stagnate and decline, now claim to see plenty of things wrong with our professional classes. From lawyer jokes to angry charges of "profscams" in the academy, to outrage at rising medical costs for declining services, professionals are finding their legitimacy threatened, their very professionalism trashed as a cloak for an arrogant ascendancy.

Everybody has good reason to worry about the state of the professions. Because professionals dominate many of the nation's most critical institutions, they play a major role in determining the fate of their fellow citizens. Whether we like it or not, we all depend upon professional competence and probity to get accurate understandings of events, to work and travel safely, to raise families, even to preserve physical and psychic health. How well professionals perform their functions is of serious, sometimes vital, concern to every American. That is why exposés of scientists who falsify crucial research data, or physicians who take financial kick-backs, or lawyers who violate conflict-of-interest codes—all of which now appear with alarming regularity—ignite public anger.

Along with the revelations of malfeasance has come the insidious erosion of morale in many fields. Teachers increasingly find their work unrewarding, doctors urge aspirants not to enter medicine, journalists find their judgment preempted by the conflicting pressures of profitable sensationalism and the constraints of libel law. The health of professionalism is a public concern, and its revival will only be possible when professionals recognize and reassert the public purposes and responsibilities at the core of their enterprise.

Today, the ethical foundation of professional life is at risk. "Professionalism," the competent and ethical application of expert knowledge, traditionally has lent integrity to professional life and made the privileges and status of professionals publicly acceptable. Professionalism is vital because professions can administer their own licensing and standards only so long as they maintain the public trust. So when Americans stop trusting professionals—when they begin to doubt the integrity of the entire field of law or question the reality of professionalism in medicine and a host of other fields—the consequence is a crisis of public confidence that cannot help but determine the future of professional work.

The many manifestations of this crisis flow from a common source. We all sense that both the general public and many professionals themselves have lost

William M. Sullivan is professor of philosophy at La Salle University in Philadelphia. He is the author, most recently, of Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in American Life.

can administer their own licensing and standards only so long as they maintain the public trust. So when Americans stop trusting professionals—when they begin to doubt the integrity of the entire field of law or question the reality of professionalism in medicine and a host of other fields—the consequence is a crisis of public confidence that cannot help but determine the future of professional work.

The many manifestations of this crisis flow from a common source. We all sense that both the general public and many professionals themselves have lost faith in the inherent value of what they do, beyond its immediate cash reward. Market values of unrestrained competition and profit-maximization have for some time been corrupting the professional conscience and eroding professional loyalties. The spread of the idea that the economic bottom line must determine what counts as good professional practice undermines professional self-respect even as it makes the ideals of service and public responsibility appear as mere options on a fixed menu of tough-minded self-interest. It is symptomatic of the demoralization of professional life, the decadence of professionalism.

So far, responses to these dismaying tendencies have been uncertain and ineffective. Driven by a chorus of public outrage and a plague of lawsuits, calls for "ethics" echo each other across the professions. With much fanfare, both the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association have mounted campaigns to enlist practitioners in more pro bono and community-service work—with dismal results. During the past decade, dozens of universities and professional schools have established programs and "centers" to promote more ethical practice in a variety of fields, but the effect of this focus on "ethics" is inconclusive.

These appeals to the professional conscience are not so much misguided as incomplete. What is missing is recognition of the public, indeed political, nature of the professions. Law, medicine, education, scientific research, teaching, management serve public, not simply individual values. At its core, professionalism promises that by contributing important services, individuals can make something of their talents and achieve a self-respecting place in society. The institutional vehicle for this ideal has been the publicly accountable occupational group: the bar, the health-care fields, or the academic, social service, and managerial organizations.

Breakdowns in professional integrity remind us painfully of our dependence upon the work of anonymous others. They reveal how large a stake we each have in seeing that professional functions are carried out effectively. External controls—either carrots or sticks alone—cannot renew professionalism. There is finally no substitute for the engaged commitment of the persons actually involved in providing the service.

Professionalism will not survive—and it certainly cannot be renewed—unless most practitioners understand that they are in business for the common welfare as well as their own, and that their work has value in relation to that common aim. That is why it is so important to rearticulate the nature and meaning of professionalism as a public value. Articulating a standard for genuine professionalism helps people recognize that the integrity of professional life depends upon mutual trust between experts and the public. Professionals can then see how economic self-interest and technical arrogance in the professions are undermining the quality of life for everyone. This recognition can set in motion the needed counterforces of civic energy.

To renew the vigor of professionalism will take public action. The demoralization among professionals will persist so long as the lay public distrusts the experts. Healing these frayed bonds of trust will require new forms of partnership. But they are unlikely to develop unless professionals and the lay public can understand and respond to each other. They need common ground, common standards to which to hold each other accountable, and even more, a sense of common interest and purpose. That is why a clearer understanding of the full dimensions of professionalism is essential.

Even amid all the skepticism about professional integrity, to judge a person or a performance "professional" means a good deal. The term evokes technical competence, plus the genuine dedication that enables individuals to rise above self-interest to do the job well. In fact, we expect professional work to embody a sense of calling. We trust doctors and clergy to be "on call," to put our welfare first. We collectively demand uncompensated service *pro bono publico* from doctors and lawyers. Even though professionals are allowed and expected to pursue economic success, this high sense of mission and public responsibility is what has traditionally defined professional work.

Yet these traditions have eroded and weakened. This is particularly true in a market society which increasingly prizes career flexibility or simply the smarts to grasp the main chance over vocational integrity. Professional skills, like others, are marketed. Thus, in practice, professionalism has to manage the conflict between market opportunities, which propel calculations of individual advantage, and the defining goals of the profession, which encourage its members toward responsibility for common values. The market puts pressures on

sionals are no longer the solo practitioners of popular image, but members of large bureaucratic organizations. The purposes of these organizations—their efforts to maintain their power and enhance their prestige—like the profit motive of the market, put a lot of destructive pressure on professional standards.

The advances of modern technology have also ratcheted up the tension between professional purposes and organizational imperatives such as competition and survival. Especially in the health professions, the aura of technological wizardry has redefined the healer. Less the caregiver of old and more the technician able to engineer health, the physician has become increasingly tied to the high-technology medical center, exchanging the old humble function of care for a less personal, if more effective, role as technician. At the extreme, the redefined physician in the medical center can succeed in a career defined almost entirely in terms of technical and economic success and nearly devoid of attention to the human meaning and moral ties which long gave healing its purpose and value.

In the face of this narrow conception of the professional as technician, it is especially critical to insist upon the broader moral horizon of professional responsibility. By encouraging the illusion that technology can somehow banish the vulnerability of the human condition, the technical deformation of professionalism subtly supports the conclusion that solace and care for the suffering and the unfortunate are obsolete values.

In fact, modern societies hold out to individuals many occupational choices and opportunities for personal satisfaction. Traditional ties and moral constraints have loosened, yet individual lives have become ever more intricately tied into unseen networks of interdependence, increasing the need for forethought and large-scale cooperation. This conjunction of developments provides both the exhilaration of personal freedom and an increasing burden of responsibility. Coherence and meaning in modern life are of necessity highly personal achievements and yet deeply dependent upon social relationships. Professionalism as an ideal articulates a way toward integrity in this complicated situation.

During the past decade, the Young Urban Professional lifestyle has come to exemplify the complexities of contemporary professional life. In the upper reaches of the occupational ladder among the best educated and most ambitious professionals, the allure of wealth and prestige, the pride of technical expertise, and vastly expanded opportunities for personal exploration maintain an uneasy coexistence. The conflicts of yuppie life illustrate in compressed form the clashing tendencies at work in American life as a whole.

The twin values of competence and adaptability drive professional work at its upper levels. Yet this cult of competence among young professionals engenders few lasting ties to employers, co-workers, clients, or organizations. In their outlook, status flows from hard work per se, with little corresponding sense of gratitude, few overarching loyalties, faint responsibility to others. Even when they have altruistic urges, entrants into these high-flying careers quickly discover that relentless pressure for more productivity greatly limits the possibility for more than token pro bono work or other civic involvements.

The very intensity of their work world, accentuated for many by the increasingly international scope of competition, focuses attention on staying viable, leaving little psychic energy for considering the long-term or larger significance of day-to-day decisions. All this encourages travelling light, morally as well as physically. The demands of managing a fast-paced career require incessant "networking" with similarly ambitious members of their aspiring class, but little attention to those outside the charmed circle of success.

While we look to the intimate realm of personal life to balance or at least relieve the demands and stresses of work, the race to live well can turn into an exhausting battle for psychic survival. Under this strain, relationships, including marriage and family, often become areas for great anxiety and severe disappointment.

Missing from this degenerating professionalism is any shared confidence in the public import of the work itself. Without this, there can be little honor in professional status. Without this, the effort to become one's own person through instrumental achievement cannot, for most, support satisfaction in practicing a profession over time. Shorn of the shared loyalty to public purposes that characterizes genuine professionalism, there can be no secure recognition for individual achievement, leaving individuals anxious, having to validate their self-worth through comparative ranking along an infinite scale of cleverness, wealth, and power.

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By contrast, an authentic professionalism provides an escape from this unhappy consciousness by focusing a person's energies toward engagement with the challenges of society's needs. This civic—as opposed to a purely technical or commercial—professionalism unfolds as part of a cooperative civic culture. The future of professionalism depends upon the ability of professionals and their associations to rediscover their connections with their fellow citizens and the place their expertise might occupy in enhancing this shared culture.

In a democratic society, professional legitimacy is always precarious because it rests upon a general balance between the kinds and degree of professional privilege and the public's perception that professional services contribute significantly to the public welfare. The integrity of professional life, in fact its future, is bound up with the health of the larger civic culture. And that in turn depends in significant part upon widespread recognition of the need to renew and support efforts at cooperation and partnership among mutually suspicious groups.

Fortunately, experiments are underway in a variety of professional fields to reverse the deformation of professionalism by connecting professional work in new ways to the needs of democratic life. In these experiments, professionals and their organizations serve as social partners, working with other groups of citizens to address important common problems more effectively.

Long a collaborative, integrative field, public health today is expanding its purview to include the areas of juvenile violence and social decay, not by taking over other fields so much as by developing new patterns of cooperation—with law enforcement through community policing, and with social work through community-based organizations for health education and prevention. The movement for civic journalism is expanding in its efforts to have journalists and the news print media recast their role beyond that of the detached observer toward partnership with government, business, education, and other major institutions in building civic culture. In a similar way, innovative planning efforts in several states have begun to bring professionals together with the business sector and citizens' groups to assume responsibility for enhancing their communities' collective resources over the long term.

As these examples suggest, professional renewal has begun to unleash creative energy, which now needs a sense of common purpose to focus and catalyze these nascent efforts. Professionalism, understood in its full, civic meaning, could provide that focus, as well as support and inspiration toward renewing civic cooperation. The benefits of such a strategy for professions and the society alike could be very great. Where civic cooperation is weak or sporadic, however, individuals and groups find it harder to accept self-restraint or to shoulder collective responsibilities. They fear that others will take advantage of them when they do so. Their public stance becomes wary and competitive, with a hard and calculating edge. This attitude makes democratic cooperation ever more difficult, reinforcing cynicism and weakening social trust still further. Everyone suffers from the lack of trust, but at the same time, everyone fears the risks necessary to reestablish cooperation. The irresponsible behavior of contemporary professionals who take all they can when they can has its source in this descending spiral of social entropy, even as it contributes to it.

Conversely, where levels of trust, self-restraint, and cooperativeness are high, where social interactions are perceived as equitable and mutually beneficial to all parties, professional organizations are more likely to behave as "good citizens," taking responsible leadership roles in civic life. In return the professions garner public support and often prestige.

The idea of civic professionalism also has implications for work beyond professionalized occupations. The ethic of professionalism addresses a central problem of modern life, the question of meaning in work. Meaning refers to the sense of value persons experience when they understand their own lives to be linked in a significant way with larger processes of intrinsic value. To discover meaning is to find a point to living by recognizing oneself as a participant in a worthwhile enterprise whose accomplishment calls out one's energies and whose purposes define and vindicate one's having lived.

To live with meaning is to have discovered the secret to fulfillment. In the modern world, the sources of meaning are plural, a significant advance over the narrow possibilities offered to most persons in traditional societies. This is in part the result of the extension of freedom to ever greater sectors of the population, enabling women, the young, and ethnic and racial minorities to begin defining their own lives.

Meaning does not stem from work alone, but from family life, friendship, knowledge, from national, global, cultural, religious, and philosophical concerns. In modern societies, however, work plays a key role in providing the means by which individuals can develop their capacities and express their individuality. Work offers solidarity through the pursuit of shared goals and values. In its broadest sense, then, professionalism is a civic virtue, an aspiration that can unite many individual lives in the common cause of realizing human meaning in modern work. □

The Propaganda of the Present
Reflections on Civic Identity in the Media Age

Jay Rosen

In his 1990 Nobel lecture, the Mexican poet Octavio Paz retrieves from memory his earliest encounter with the news. It was the moment he first began to suspect that the real present was bigger and wider than the one he inhabited as a child.

Paz begins by recalling his "old dilapidated house" in Mexico City where he spent most of his childhood, with its "jungle-like garden and a great room full of books." The garden ("a temple of vegetation") was the center of his childhood existence, the library his "enchanted cave."

Together, garden and library created a realm of "pure presence," in which time and space could be rearranged to fit his developing imagination. "The world was limitless, yet it was always within reach," Paz writes. "The beyond was here, all was here: a valley, a mountain, a distant country, the neighbor's patio." Picture books supplied images of distant lands and heroic battles, all vividly present to the imagining child:

> In the summer the green branches of the fig trees would sway like the sails of a caravel or pirate ship. High up on the mast, swept by the wind, I could make out islands and continents, lands that vanished as soon as they became tangible.

What Paz is describing is a child's understanding of "here" and "there," in which a neighbor's patio was distant enough to represent another land and a climb to the top of a tree gave a panoramic sense of the world. This happy illusion was broken one day during World War II when an older child showed Paz a photograph from a news magazine. Soldiers were seen marching along a broad avenue, most likely in New York. "They've returned from the war," Paz remembers being told.

This handful of words disturbed him greatly, for he now knew "that somewhere far away a war had ended." The war had taken place "in another place and in another time, not here and now." By upsetting the temporal and spatial contours of his childhood, the photograph, says Paz, refuted him. He felt "dislodged from the present," expelled from his garden.

Again and again it happened: Some item of news or a headline he noticed proved the existence of a wider—and now curiously absent—world. In his daily experience there was now a "beyond" that was beyond his garden's beyond, a distant scene more distant than his neighbor's patio. Paz gained the uncomfortable feeling that he did not inhabit the actual present, where the world was at war. "I accepted the inevitable," he writes. Through his "expulsion" from childhood at the hands of the news, he began his adult life, which he titles, "In search of the present."

In search of the present. Does this not describe all of us on the receiving end of the news? It does, but we are unaccustomed to thinking in such terms. The notion that the present has to be sought is counterintuitive. We dig for the past, strain to imagine the future. The present, by contrast, seems to be our default position, where the train of history deposits us each day. But this is an illusion, a fact revealed with astounding clarity on the day of the O.J. Simpson verdict.

Staring across what commentators instantly called the "divide," millions of Americans realized that they hadn't known where things had gotten between Blacks and whites. They had lost track of the present. Certainly I was one of them. Watching law students at Howard University erupt into cheers, I felt distinctly "dislodged," as Paz put it, forced to accept that whatever my sense of the current divisions was, it didn't include *this*—law students wild with delight at the release of a double murderer! Of course, that's merely how things looked on my side of the divide.

Note that "information"—news and talk about Simpson and race—had been pouring across that divide for months. I had read the papers, seen the polls, and kept abreast of the debate. But it took an actual event, the moment of the verdict, to give the present the form it needed to emerge publicly. It seems, then, that we can

Jay Rosen is media editor of TIKKUN *and director of the Project on Public Life and the Press at New York University.*

speak of the present as either present or absent; or, if this is too confusing, as well-formed, partially formed, or at times, unformed.

The Oklahoma City bombing and the Rabin assassination offer further illustrations of this principle. Both events illuminated in a flash what remained hidden in—or hidden by—our running awareness of political conflict. It's not that we hadn't known about the likes of Timothy McVeigh or Yigal Amir; it's that the polity hadn't lived its knowledge in a public enough manner to reveal where the present actually stood. And so events did the revelation for us. Even the legendary Shin Bet, specialists in uncovering the hidden present, couldn't accept the threat to the Israeli polity from Jews residing within it—despite intelligence reports warning of assassination plots. When people said they were "shocked but not surprised" by the Rabin killing, this is what they meant: They knew where things were headed, but to feel the force of what they knew returning as violence was, as it was calculated to be, a "shock"—the shock of recognition. Our reflex is to call such events "unbelievable," but they are at the same time fulfillments of what we somehow believed all along.

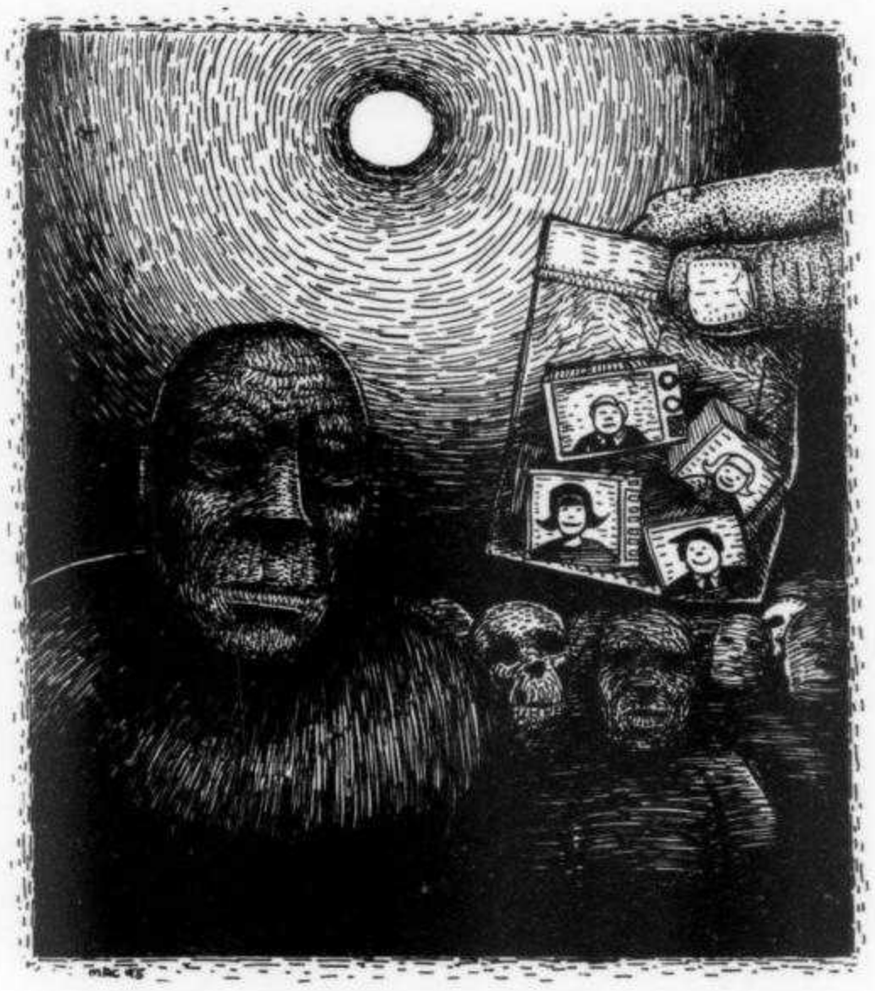
When the political present fails to achieve a public presence, the failure is everyone's. Living in "the time of the real present," as Paz wrote, is one part personal challenge, two parts cultural and political achievement. Formation of a public that can reside in the present is the business of a democratic culture and those who communicate to and through it. But far more is involved than the circulation of news, information, and political talk. There are also questions of will.

During the Vietnam War, Jonathan Schell wrote regular items for the "Notes and Comment" section of The *New Yorker*. About the siege at Khe San, which the U.S. military claimed was a vital post, Schell observed:

> Usually, one thinks of propaganda as a technique by which men in back rooms try to mould public opinion through giving out false information about things that have already happened. But in Vietnam the propagandists have gotten themselves into the planning stage of things, and it is not the reports of the events but the events themselves that are, in a sense, false.

The siege went on for weeks, and the Marines finally "won" with great loss of life. They then withdrew from Khe San, proving it had little significance in the first place.

The events themselves are false. This suggests that there's a propaganda of the present, which declares: "it's here," when actually it's somewhere else. In the Simpson case, the news was dominated by the courtroom maneuvers and celebrity players. Meanwhile (what disturbed Paz was precisely the discovery of a "meanwhile") the big story was gathering force: Blacks and whites had separated themselves into moral universes that simply did not connect. In the unformed present that exploded into view with the jury's verdict lay our real business as a multiracial country. But the propaganda of the present held: We were said to be "fascinated" by the trial, "addicted" to the television coverage, "obsessed" with Johnnie Cochran and Marcia



MAC MCGILL

Clark, O.J. Simpson and Nicole Brown. And at times, we were.

All of us, then, collude in the propaganda of the present; it is not the work of propagandists alone. We can even speak of a will to dwell in the present, which societies, no less than individuals, may exhibit in varying degrees. Where does this will come from? Certainly political leadership is involved, (did Ronald Reagan, watching movies alone in the White House, try to live in the present?) but so is political culture, our entire way of doing politics and talking about issues, which may support or inhibit any "search" for the present.

Complicating this search is the giant social complex we call the media, which oversees the attention economy by adjusting the supply of events to the vagaries of audience demand. What the media inflate beyond measure is not the present but the *moment*, the hype-able nowness of things, a low-cost ingredient of audience production. The moment, as I am using the

term, is the "image" of the present that is offered us by the media. For these purposes a baby trapped in a well is as important as an army trapped in Kuwait. We can "go live" to either event, and get the same jolt of currency, that dose of technologized nowness that CNN offers 'round the world and 'round the clock.

The inflation of the moment for commercial purposes is an essential element of the propaganda of the present, which tricks us into believing that what's now playing on the public screen reflects what's happening *beyond* it. But there's a beyond that is always beyond the media's beyond, and this is what the Howard students made clear (to me, at least) with their cheering.

The media inflate the moment—the hype-able nowness of things.

Here "journalism"—as distinct from the media—comes into play. We need journalists to do better than the media will, to go beyond what's playing on the public screen to what's screened *from* us by it. Theirs is the art of the "meanwhile." But the press has developed severe problems of its own. On the one hand, it is failing to connect with us in our capacity as citizens who may be "in search of the present." On the other hand, it connects too well with us in our pose as spectators, adrift in the media moment.

"Journalism, I remember it well," wrote A.M. Rosenthal of The *New York Times* in the aftermath of the Simpson trial. He was observing with evident disgust the capitulation of reporters, editors, and news producers before the audience-building power of the Simpson case. Rosenthal was right, of course. Not only were the proportions off (between January and September, 15 percent of all stories on the "NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw" dealt with Simpson) but the principle at work in the massive attention devoted to the trial was the media's, not journalism's.

Journalism is not the "news business." Although most journalists work for media companies, they do not work "at" media, so to speak. Journalism flourishes when it manages to define a separate sphere for itself, a space in which it can discover and report what is happening independent of political power, commercial interests, or the immediate demands of a button-pushing audience. If journalists are to assist us in our struggle toward the present, they need their own space in which to work.

The problem, however, is to get these relationships right, to define a proper boundary between journalism and politics, the press and the public. One feature of a well-defined boundary is the independence it secures for the journalist. But this is not the only issue, for independence can easily widen into isolation, a disconnect between the press and the rest of society that makes serious journalism all but impossible. When Howard Kurtz, press critic of The *Washington Post*, describes his "incestuous profession" as "increasingly self-absorbed," producing "newspapers aimed at other journalists," he is describing a kind of isolation that traps the press in a prism of its own perceptions.

Under these conditions, the sense of the present conveyed by the "serious" news differs so much from our own sense of what's serious *in life* that the journalist's reports begin to lose their authority. In May 1995 Kurtz reported: "The plain fact is that much of the American public has simply tuned out the news— that is, the kind of traditional news, heavily laden with politicians and official proceedings, routinely covered by the mainstream press. These people see journalists as messengers from another world."

This estrangement stems, in part, from the press's ingrained cynicism—its heavy use of a wearier-than-thou "attitude." Journalists tend to view politics as a parade of false facades, manufactured images, and calculated ploys designed for little more than temporary advantage. Or, in a slightly different image, they think of the field of politics as a war zone, in which the contestants try to inflict damage on each other.

The decision to view politics through a particular lens doesn't seem like a "decision" at all to most journalists. It appears instead as the very essence of reality. The journalist's experience of politics as a series of manipulations, evasions, and poll-driven ploys thus takes on the feel of an inevitable fact, the "nature" of things. The result is that the political drama is drained of meaning. It becomes a game of perceptions, in which the press is a privileged player—privileged because it can portray itself as mere observer, narrating the story for the rest of us.

But as this story becomes increasingly disconnected from lives other than the ones journalists lead, the press begins to seem "out of touch." Its portrait of the political world fails to register with those who, when they do turn their attention to public affairs, want it to be about common problems and proposed solutions (what the press rather glibly calls "substance"), rather than the president's current standing, a candidate's chances of

winning, the most recent poll, or the latest partisan attack.

Eager to be seen as the public's representatives, but locked in a pattern that isolates them from a public's deepest needs, journalists imagine that the most useful service they can perform is to strip away the facades of politicians who are trying to "appear" as one thing or another. This urge to unmask, which originates in a legitimate desire to offer a check on government power, has ballooned out of control because it now carries almost the entire burden of proving (to journalists, especially) that journalism is a responsible institution, serving democracy with courage and independence. Thus, the "tougher" political journalism gets—and toughness is its supreme value—the further it drifts from the truly difficult challenges facing citizens, elected officials, and the society as a whole.

Tom Rosenstiel, then a correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, spotted this pattern at work in the 1992 campaign. He writes of "an uncontrollable psychology of revelation—a search to unmask the facade of candidates," fed by cynical assumptions in the press. "Journalists didn't ask politicians basic questions about what they believed in because they doubted the sincerity of those positions anyway. So they probed instead to expose inconsistencies that confirmed their view."

Investigative reporter Robert Parry, formerly with the Associated Press and *Newsweek*, notes how that magazine's "Conventional Wisdom Watch," a weekly chart summarizing the up-or-down status of issues, candidates, ideas, and strategies, conveyed a contempt for those who fancied themselves leaders. Written in a "clever, often snotty tone," the chart's "snappy put-downs" encouraged a "growing derision toward politics" and "further cheapened the campaign debate" by showing how "last week's brilliant insight would be this week's campaign refuse."

Perhaps this is why a 1994 study by the Times Mirror Company found that 71 percent of Americans say the press now "gets in the way of society solving its problems." Journalists inclined to dismiss such findings—and there are many—see public resentment as the inevitable result of playing the unpopular watchdog role: "We in the press ask the tough questions, which people don't always appreciate," goes the reasoning. A less self-serving interpretation would recognize that there are many types of questions to ask, and many ways to search for political truth. The style of search that energizes the Washington press—the ritual of facade-stripping, the psychology of revelation—isn't one the rest of the country cares to join.

The reason is not that Americans prefer illusions to facts, rousing slogans to harsh realities. Most people know a campaign ploy when they hear one, and they don't need savvy journalists to realize that politicians sometimes say things to get elected or stay popular. The assumption that if it weren't for the facade-strippers, the facade would fool us all credits the public with zero political maturity. Meanwhile the elite press is showing zero political imagination, which is the real problem with this "incestuous profession."

People already sense that elected officials are not the answer to every social problem, that the Left-Right spectrum is disappearing as a meaningful yardstick, that "politics is broken," as Bill Bradley said in announcing his retirement from the U.S. Senate. In this climate, the intensity of the wrangling between journalists and officials (as between the major parties) seems to be so much bluster—although not all of it is bluster. Finally, the costs of professional cynicism have begun to hit home. Many are quite willing to adopt the "attitude" aimed at them by the press: There's no honor in politics, it's all a game, nothing changes but the players.

There's a truth beyond this attitude, and a popular yearning for it. The mania for Colin Powell was not, I think, for his blank-slate candidacy alone, but for a sense of possibility in national politics—remarkably strong, given the disappointments of the Clinton years. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* was having none of that: Before Powell announced he wouldn't run, the paper "exposed" the deeply irrelevant fact that Powell's wife was taking medication for depression. This is "toughness" unmoored from everything, and the kind of performance that makes journalists seem like creatures from another world. Many in the press were openly enthusiastic about a Powell candidacy, but they were also gearing up for the ritual of the facade-strip, as if they could imagine no other role. The *Inquirer* merely got the jump on them.

Journalists need to appreciate that their craft is founded on hope: the hope that we'll be willing to claim membership in the polity as it moves through time. To the degree that we are unwilling, the media can take over. Letterman and Leno do journalism, of a sort. They jeer at politics on our behalf: "Membership in *that*? You must be kidding." Journalism can never compete with popular culture in the puncturing of facades. It needs to send us on a deeper search, for a political identity we can share, despite our doubts and differences.

This was clear to Lincoln Steffens, the pioneering muckraker of the progressive era. He is best known for his exposés of municipal corruption, collected in his 1903 book, *The Shame of the Cities*. In the introduction, Steffens writes that the assembled articles were "done as journalism" and "are journalism

still." He continues: "They were written with a purpose, they were published serially with a purpose; and they are reprinted now together to further that same purpose—to sound for the civic pride of an apparently shameless citizenship." By "sounding for" the country's civic identity, (the image is of a search) Steffens hopes to call forth the "us" that still believes in self-government and a responsibility to the whole, a public still capable of genuine outrage. He writes:

> All our big boasting could not be empty vanity, nor our pious pretensions hollow sham … . Even in government we have given proofs of potential greatness, and our political failures are not complete; they are simply ridiculous. But they are ours. Not alone the triumphs and the statesmen, the defeats and the grafters also represent us, and just as truly. Why not see it so and say it?

This is journalism appealing to our identity as citizens, where the corruption of municipal governments, all the "defeats and the grafters" become "our" doing and "our" problem, rather than "theirs," or, indeed, no one's—merely the way things go. Steffens writes in order to call into existence a political public that will not tolerate the "shame of the cities." He is interested in formation, as much as information. And he understands the fragility of the undertaking, its dependence on a reservoir of "civic pride" that must in the end show itself. When he observes, "All our boasting could not be empty vanity," he means: "There would be no point in doing this if I assumed so," for that kind of cynicism leaves the journalist with nothing in us to appeal to. *The Shame of the Cities* seeks a relationship between reporter and reader in which the relevant identity—a citizenry with pride enough to care about corruption—is called forth. For only under these conditions can "journalism" can go forward.

In the media many things can go forward under many more conditions than the activation of citizenship. Wherever there is an information market to serve, a common appetite to exploit, an arresting personality to display, a cataclysmic event to hype, a bankable thrill to provide, or just a million eyeballs to rent, the media are in business. The audience, after all, is the product; time—the number of hours in the days available for audience-making—is the scarce commodity. "News" is attractive to the media for a simple reason: It is a relatively cheap method of audience production.

Actuality—the myriad things that happen in the world—is thus a convenient source of content for a media system that rapidly consumes story lines and personalities. From this angle, "real life" looks like an inexpensive fount of material when compared to the costs of producing media fare in, say, a film or recording studio. It is important to recall that before "tabloid television" became a commonplace term, the same genre was known as "reality programming." The term "reality" refers here not to the portrayal of actual conditions before us, but to the location where the plot lines and characters are dug up. The cops in "Cops" are real cops, rather than actors; ditto for the criminals. "Reality" performs as a content provider, which is exactly how the media see "journalism."

The Simpson trial illustrates well the nature of the media's interest in public events. Note that Simpson, who became a content provider par excellence, drew no salary for his starring role in the largest media spectacle ever. Compared to professional sports or Hollywood movies, the personnel costs for the Simpson spectacle were low. Similarly, the "sets" for his trial were produced for the media at taxpayer expense by a criminal justice system founded on earlier principles of equality and the rule of law. Events-as-material, reality as a content source with low overhead, is an outlook that has no patience with either the demands of justice, or "accuracy" in the journalistic sense. In media logic, accuracy is a matter of aiming for the right spot in the audience's imagination. What's "true" is your aim, if you hit it right. When media people observed that the Simpson trial "had everything," what they meant is that you could hardly aim wrong. As a button-pushing kit the case came complete: sex, race, murder, mystery, celebrity. The inflation of these themes was child's play; dealing with the aftermath was the hard task of the divided adults.

During the trial, many in the press were appalled by the capitulation of their own organizations to the Simpson spectacle. Others tried to strike an anti-elitist pose, ridiculing (in the name of the audience) the claim that Bosnia or the budget deficit deserved more attention than the "trial of the century." But they forgot something: For their work to matter, journalists need to address us as a public, not an audience. What predictably draws an audience and what legitimately concerns a public often differ, although it is fortunate when the two coincide. If this difference is erased, "journalism" devolves into another form of media fare, no different in kind from tabloid television, docudramas, the "true crime" genre in publishing, and other assorted uses of actuality-as-material. The cave-in to the Simpson case in newsrooms like NBC's thus marks the progress of media logic in overtaking the culture of journalism.

But that culture will remain weak and defenseless as long as the disconnect between journalists and their possible publics continues to widen. Producing "news-

papers aimed at other journalists," as Kurtz put it, is a form of professional suicide. So is the "attitude" that instructs people in the pointlessness of public life. But the press can change its attitude. The media may be a system that goes by itself, but if journalism is not a human art then it has no legitimate claim on our attention. It is precisely this claim—the authority to recall us to the present—that is undermined by journalism's corrosive irony on the one hand, the final message of which is "nothing matters," and its growing media mentality on the other, which pretends that what matters is whatever grabs our attention for the moment.

The conflict between "journalism" and "the media" is part of a larger tension between America's civic culture and our (equally American) consumer culture, between the nation understood as a republic of citizens and the nation understood as a vast marketplace of freely associating individuals. The same conflict runs right through my middle and yours, as we waver between engagement and withdrawal, the claims of the public world and the cultivation of private gardens, the encounter with strangers and the care of intimates.

There is no reason to think that this tension between public and private identities will remain in force in all settings. In states like California and Arizona, the rise of so-called "private communities"—subdivisions with gates and security guards to keep strangers out—is one attempt to resolve the tension between public and private, to actually live as if there were no public world. On a different plane, it is entirely possible that newsrooms where the public culture once held its own—even though the business was run for profit—will experience a gradual transformation into media environments where commercial values hold absolute supremacy. Indeed, many would argue that the major television networks underwent just such a transformation during the 1980s, and that other newsrooms are bound to follow suit, or already have.

We are in danger, then, of placing ourselves culturally in the position Octavio Paz occupied as a child. "The world was limitless, yet it was always within reach … the beyond was here, all was here." Is this not the propaganda message of the media complex? Paz was dwelling in the moment, which in his immaturity he had confused with the present. It was "news" that shattered this illusion, but also a willingness to stretch his mind and emotions toward a beyond that was beyond his garden's beyond, to propel himself "in search of the present."

Journalists are people we send on this search, hoping they'll return with reports that engage us where we live. We need them to edge further into the actual present than we're presently willing to go, and to "sound for the civic pride" of a country that still wants to face itself and its problems, that is still capable of crossing its great and deepening divides. This is a challenge to the journalist's imagination, but equally to ours. If we're to be dislodged without being dispirited, we'll have to do what Paz did: accept the inevitable as our passage to the possible. □

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Bad Medicine

Larry V. Amsel

As a physician, I have spent the last year watching the rapid evisceration of American medicine by a Republican-supported corporate takeover of health care. Given the rapid decline in the access to and quality of health care during that time, the American Medical Association (A.M.A.) should be fighting tooth and nail to reestablish patient care as the cornerstone of our health-care system. Instead, the A.M.A. has endorsed the Republican plan to reduce and essentially privatize Medicare and has entered into self-serving negotiations over the future of Medicaid, which is to be reduced to block grants to the states without national standards. The A.M.A.'s position will have terrible consequences for patients and physicians alike. It in no way represents my interests, to say nothing of my ideals.

The Republican bills for Medicare and Medicaid represent the final steps in an organized and ideologically driven plan to hand all of health care over to an exclusively profit-driven corporate system. What will soon become clear is that this corporate system in no way resembles a free market with built-in price and quality equilibriums. Instead we are getting a corporate oligopoly that robs patients of access to quality care and robs physicians of the ability to practice medicine based on autonomous professional standards. This is akin to having nationalized health care and immediately privatizing it. What we are left with is the worst of both worlds. We have neither the choice nor the quality that comes with a private fee-for-service system, nor have we the universality and security that comes with a national health-care program. No other industrialized country would tolerate so many uninsured, such limited patient choices, and such massive interference in clinical decision-making by a profit-oriented corporate health-care bureaucracy.

Instead of addressing this worsening health-care crisis from the perspective of the patients who are being denied quality health care, the A.M.A. has taken a narrowly self-interested view—focusing, unsuccessfully, on the protection of physicians' financial and authoritarian prerogatives. This attitude has long been a public-relations disaster—and is precisely why the A.M.A. has had so little real moral or practical authority during the health-care debate. In the current political environment, however, this approach has become truly dangerous for both doctors and patients. The only hope for reversing the current trends is a united front by physicians and patients demanding a system that promotes the best possible health care for the greatest number of patients. Instead, the A.M.A. has now abandoned the elderly and the poor to lower-quality health care in exchange for what amounts to a bowl of lentils.

Over the last year I was a fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University, studying the relationship of public opinion and media coverage on the health-care system. In my research I was struck by several interrelated issues. Most Americans are cynical about the medical profession, seeing it as greedy. They are angry at doctors for the lack of contact time and their poor communication habits. Physicians have continued to be insensitive to these problems, even as they've watched millions of their patients seek out alternative practitioners and pay out-of-pocket for unproven therapies, largely because these alternative practitioners are better at meeting patients' emotional needs. As a result of this lack of public trust, physicians played only a minor role in the health-care debate compared to the corporate representatives.

More important, most Americans were poorly informed during the health-care debate, and are confused about its outcome. Given the level of distortion during the debate, this comes as no surprise. The Republican rhetoric, corporate advertising, and A.M.A. public relations were misleading and confusing. Republicans such as Dole, Gingrich, and Elizabeth McCaughey were in perfect choral harmony with the insurance industry. Together they extolled the virtues of the existing health-care system, calling it the best in the world. They warned the public that if the Clinton

Larry V. Amsel, M.D., a practicing psychiatrist who teaches at the Columbia University School of Public Health, is also affiliated with The Hastings Center for Bioethics.

health-care reform bill passed, those who now had good coverage would: lose choices in health care; have the doctor-patient relationship interfered with by bureaucrats; have their care rationed and become subject to spending caps; be forced into undesirable managed-care organizations; see decreased funding for medical education and research; and find health care reduced to an assembly-line process.

The Republicans praised private-practice medicine and criticized managed care as the enemy of choice and quality. The anti-reform campaign of the corporate health giants was so grossly misleading that both an Annenberg Center study and a Kaiser Foundation study severely criticized them. The insurance industry ran the most expensive political ad campaign in U.S. history, which included the notorious "Harry and Louise" ads. These ads focused the national anxiety about losing choice in health care to a government bureaucracy, while the organizations running the ads were quickly consolidating their control of health care.

Meanwhile, Republican leaders, intent on cheating President Clinton out of any victory regardless of the cost to the American people, buttressed these ads with similar claims. Bob Dole in particular was remarkable in first claiming there was no health-care crisis and later focusing on the dangers of government interference in health care. Comparing these claims to his current policy tests even the most seasoned cynic.

But Dole was outdone by Elizabeth McCaughey, now the Lieutenant Governor of New York. In January 1994, McCaughey wrote an article for The *New Republic*, in which she savaged the Clinton health-care plan. She extolled the virtues of fee-for-service medicine and criticized managed care as the enemy of quality. If the Clinton health-care reform passed, she warned, "the government won't protect you from HMO abuses." Although most health-care experts say the article was absurdly uninformed about the realities of health care, it won McCaughey the admiration of then-GOP gubernatorial candidate George Pataki, who offered her the Lieutenant Governor spot on his ticket.

McCaughey's first task on the job was to devise a plan for moving New York Medicaid recipients into HMOs and managed-care plans. McCaughey's article subsequently won a National Magazine Award for best public-policy piece, demonstrating how little magazine editors and critics understood about the health-care debate. In an unprecedented reaction to a major journalism prize, The *New Republic* ran a piece regretting its publication of the article, citing its destructive effects on the health-care debate.

The Republicans' scare tactics worked: Many Americans decided they would rather keep the status quo even if it meant not extending health care to universal coverage.

What Americans got, however, was anything but the status quo. Quite the contrary, they've wound up with a revolution that makes the Clinton proposal seem modest in comparison, an organized plan to hand health care over to an exclusively for-profit system dominated by a few giant corporations. This plan was driven by a right-wing market ideology conveniently in complete harmony with an intense corporate lobbying effort. It has resulted in billions of dollars of windfall profit for the industry giants and an almost universal decline in the quality of health care.

Ironically, Americans also got all the disadvantages that Dole and company told them they would avoid if they rejected the administration's health-care reform. In particular:

Access. The number of uninsured has swelled by 2 million, in the last year alone, bringing the total to 41 million. For those who do have health insurance, managed-care corporations are making access to doctors, especially specialists, more difficult. Primary-care visits are held to seven minutes, and so many levels of approval are needed to see a specialist that some patients just don't bother. What we have is essentially rationing by inconvenience, or to give it the name preferred by the corporate health bureaucracy, "managed demand."

Choice. The Republicans have virtually eliminated health-care choice, that cornerstone of a free market. It is not a matter of having handed health care over to a teeming marketplace, as claimed, in which millions of buyers and sellers interact independently to create the invisible hand of fair pricing and quality. The real buyers, those who have to live with the health plans, have little or no say in the purchase. Over half of working people who get insurance at work have no choice of plans. Since plans now determine which doctors you can see, this double-whammy essentially removes choice, and therefore also removes the market forces that are supposed to maintain quality. And quality has fallen precipitously as demonstrated by the spate of news reports concerning managed-care abuses that have appeared in newspapers of all political bents. Remarkably, this generally accepted fact of managed-care abuse has not affected their profits precisely because the consumers have essentially lost any real choice in the matter.

Free Market. This "privatization" of American

health and well-being is unlike anything seen elsewhere in the world. By defeating all reasonably regulated health-reform proposals, the Republicans have handed health care over to an oligopoly of corporations, which negotiates with another oligopoly of large employers and dictates the terms, the quality, and the price of care. Thus citizens have been given little recourse to change things either through the political process or market forces.

By signaling to the avaricious health-care corporations that the government would not pass any health reform, the Republicans have given a green light to profit-driven health care with little regard for professional integrity or the needs of patients. In this privatization of health care, billions of dollars that used to go for clinical care are being diverted into corporate overhead, stockholders' dividends, and often obscenely high executive salaries and perks. One is reminded of the savings and loan deregulation adventure. When the dust settles, we will find ourselves with an industry scandal that will make the S&L debacle look like a candy store heist, to say nothing of its cost in lives and suffering. The handwriting is not only on the wall: It is on the front pages.

Doctor-Patient Relationship. Perhaps the most difficult thing for the public to accept in the Republican health-care revolution is the way physicians have been deprofessionalized and disempowered. People are so used to physicians having incredible amounts of power over their lives and their medical decisions that the general public has only gradually come to understand that professional medical opinion now takes a back seat to corporate prerogatives. To paraphrase, *Physicians can no longer protect their patients from the abuses of corporate health care.* Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey has recently presented a bill before Congress that requires health plans to pay for two days of hospitalization for women giving birth. Bradley explained that while he had often opposed government interference in health care, he has had to change his position as basic decision-making power has been taken away from the doctor-patient collaboration and moved into the boardroom. Now Bradley feels that government has no choice but to intercede—not in the financing of health care but in the protection of basic medical standards.

Moreover, physician contracts with many managed-care corporations include a gag rule that disallows physicians to say anything negative about the treatment a patient is receiving at the hands of the managed-care company, or to say anything of a negative nature about the company. This is such a gross violation of trust and confidentiality that in itself it represents the end of the inviolate bond that the ill expect from their clinicians. It is also a violation of the doctrine of informed consent, which states that a patient must be clearly informed about the treatment options and their relative risks and benefits. Anything done to a patient without fully informed consent constitutes battery under the law. Thus, current managed-care contracts would probably not withstand a legal challenge, but interestingly, none has yet been mounted.

Mental-Health Benefits. Nationwide, there has been a dismantling of hard-won mental health benefits. A society's level of civilization can best be measured by how it takes care of its most vulnerable members, the mentally ill. Hitler knew this when he began his mass extermination campaign by gassing the mentally ill with little resistance, although other groups were targeted. To judge by the way we now treat the mentally ill, we have a truly compassionless health-care system. Lengths of stay at psychiatric facilities for a major mental breakdown have been cut to one-fifth of what they were. Psychiatrists no longer have even the few days it takes to diagnose a breakdown properly. The minute someone is admitted, the managed-care company is on the phone demanding to know the diagnosis and why drug treatment wasn't begun immediately. Failure to collaborate with this phony parsimony can result in patients being denied hospital days.

In one typical case, a young woman admitted to a hospital was completely out of control, requiring days in a supervised "quiet room" before she could compose herself and stop being violent to herself and the staff. The managed-care representative let the hospital know that he believed that the staff had provoked the patient's response and that immediate discharge was the best course of action. There was absolutely no indication that this was the case, and this representative had no clinical or psychology training whatsoever.

Fortunately, the hospital took the position that the patient would be treated according to medical opinion, regardless of reimbursement. With appropriate care the patient did well and was able to be discharged to an outpatient facility in a reasonable period of time. More often than not, however, hospitals and psychiatrists simply have to go along with the corporate decisions. Every concession comes only after hours of physician time are spent wrangling and justifying every decision. Outpatient treatment has fared even worse, with denials of reimbursement for anything but a few sessions with the sickest patients. Recovering addicts in particular, a population which should get societal attention, have been denied all but a few visits to psychiatrists after detox, increasing the chances for relapse considerably.

The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran an exposé on managed care and mental health. Its major finding was

psychotropic medications, despite a great deal of evidence that many patients need both and that some patients do distinctly better with psychotherapy alone. Moreover, to save a few more dollars these companies are making it difficult for patients who need antidepressants to get the newer and much safer drugs.

Incentives. Under the old system, there were strong incentives to overtreat. Doctors benefited, hospitals benefited, and patients may have received too many tests and too much medical intervention. The country as a whole suffered from escalating costs and some counterbalance was needed. What we have gotten, however, is the opposite incentive which turns out to be far more perverse. Simply put, the health corporation makes money every time you don't get an X-ray, every time you don't get a specialty consultation, every time you don't get a drug prescription. Yet, these companies collect the same total health-care dollars per patient as the old indemnity plans did. The system is simply a public invitation for fraud and abuse and for making billions from the business of not supplying health care.

Republicans did more than turn a blind eye to the health-care crisis; they made defeating any legislation their central goal of the 1994 term, as William Kristol has proudly admitted. Moreover, they have actively supported the corporate takeover of health care with the most devious distortions in recent memory. While promising people the status quo, the Republicans instituted very unpopular changes in health care against which their own rhetoric had warned us.

To understand how truly onerous the GOP Medicare and Medicaid proposals and their support by the A.M.A. are, one must look back at the incredible damage that has been done to health care over this past year. The Republican Medicare and Medicaid plans would take that damage to a fatal level. The quality of American medicine as we have known it may simply cease to exist and, in a final irony, this will take place with fewer people, not more, having any coverage at all.

Where some progressive health-care reformers in the recent past have seen the Medicare program as the basis on which to build universal coverage and even, for some, national health care, the Republicans see the dismantling of Medicare and Medicaid as the final stage in their "privatization" of health care. As any physician or hospital executive will attest, these proposals would not only decrease the choice and quality of elderly care, they would devastate medical education, biomedical research, and public hospital care. They would lead to wholesale closing of our safety-net hospitals and significantly reduce jobs in direct clinical services.

The A.M.A. has no justification for backing these shameful plans. This is not the place to be making deals for legislation favorable to entrepreneurial physicians. It may be a good idea to allow physicians to set up their own managed practices; they might be better than what we have now. But supporting the Republican Medicare plan to win this concession is simply dead wrong.

Moreover, the other concessions that the A.M.A. is so proud to have won are actually, in the current environment, worthless to physicians and dangerous to patients. What good is anti-trust relief for physicians in a marketplace of highly capitalized giant health corporations? Does the A.M.A. really think that fee-for-service medicine will thrive under these proposals? What good is malpractice reform that will mostly be used by megacorporations to give shoddy care? Would there be any air bags in automobiles if the maximum lawsuit against automobile makers were $250,000, as now proposed for malpractice and injury from medical devices? What good are stable Medicare fees for doctors when most elderly will be forced into capitated systems anyway, just as is happening to everyone else? Do we really want to reduce laboratory regulations in this profit-driven market?

The only way that we can preserve decent health care in the United States is if physicians and consumer-advocacy groups work together on the political process, and if individuals use their economic power against the current abuses. Physicians should educate their patients about the restrictions under which they are now operating. All of us should find out how our health plan is run and ask as many questions as we do when buying a stereo. Employees should speak to their benefits representatives and have a voice in how their health-benefit dollars are spent. People should register their complaints with A.M.A., with their own physicians, and with their elected representatives. Politicians and political parties should be encouraged to make health care a central part of election campaigns.

For its part, the A.M.A. should withdraw its support for this charade and call for a re-opening of the health-care reform debate in the light of what we have learned over the last year. Instead, the A.M.A. boasts of its Capitol Hill victories on its Political Hotline (1-800-833-6354). Victories? A bill that cuts back Medicare is the wrong place for physicians to fight even their justified battles. The answers are clear. The A.M.A. has not only lost its soul; it has lost its mind. If it doesn't change, it should also lose its membership. □

FICTION

The Wha-Wha Blues

David Black

Frederick Binz—Binzy, the drummer in my father's old jazz band—visited my mother in the mental hospital on the first day of Passover.

He arrived about four in the afternoon, wearing a battered fedora—my mother called it his *Johnny Dollar* hat —a pale pink shirt with French cuffs held together by two inch paper clips, and an orange sports coat with lime-green pin-stripes making six-inch wide checks. In 1944, in the Catskills, the outfit would have been sharp.

The nurses said he brought an accordion and spent the first hour of his visit playing "Broadway, My Street."

I can imagine him, running through the old Clayton-Jackson-Durante routine he and my father did in our living room almost forty years before when he came to Springfield, putting on a heavy Brooklyn accent, pronouncing *joint*, *jernt* …

I ordered hamburger à la carte, but I got a little dubious about the meat when the waiter asked me if I wanted it win, place, or show … Stop the music, stop the music … Ah, Broadway … The sightseeing buses … old women sitting in them making believe they're customers. They're just decoys to draw trade … Broadway … It's a fake, it's a phony, but it's my street, the center of the world … Look who's coming down the street … Isn't he the well-dressed man. Tuxedo, high hat … He must be some big society fella … Wait a minute, his shirt's lighting up … He's advertising the Ice Palace, skating every night … Stop the music, stop the music …

While my father accompanied him on the cornet, Binzy rolled a hat down his arm, cocked his head to one side, and strode stiff-legged across the rug … *Stop the music …*

Binzy spent the night. I was thrilled by the stories of jazz clubs and vaudeville, excited to imagine my father on a bandstand in a white dinner jacket, sweating as he played songs like the ones Binzy asked him to do that night: "Angeline," "Hong Kong Blues," "Just a Simple Melody," "Ostrich Walk" …

Pulling my mother out of her chair, Binzy whirled her around the floor. My father looked down the length of his cornet at them.

My sister, Bea, grabbed my hand and dragged me onto the rug, jitterbugging around me in a parody of my mother and Binzy, wagging her finger in the air, tossing her hair, kicking her legs out to the side … I shuffled in place.

When my father started playing "The Wha-Wha Blues," my mother put the tips of her fingers against Binzy's chest, gently pushed him away, and, laughing, told him, "Enough."

"Ethel," Binzy begged.

My mother's face glistened, her eyes shone. Using one hand, she unclipped her earrings—plastic pearls the size of marbles—a dreamy gesture that embarrassed me. The gesture—I think now, remembering back—of a woman getting ready to make love.

Round-faced, whiskery, mouth red from sweet wine, Binzy looked like the Wyeth illustration of Friar Tuck in my copy of *Robin Hood*. I imagined him sneaking into Springfield to escape the Sheriff—which, in fact, he was doing. There was a warrant out for his arrest in Hartford, Connecticut, for kiting checks.

After dancing with my mother, Binzy pulled out a crisp linen handkerchief, blew his nose in it, and tossed it into a waste-basket. He bought them two, three dozen at a time, and threw them out once he used them. It was the mark of a gentleman, he explained. And he asked me to get him a fresh handkerchief from his suitcase.

I climbed to the third floor, the small room at the top of the attic stairs, which already had his smell: Bay rum and cigars.

In his suitcase, I found a magazine. By today's standards it would seem quaint. Picture spreads about nudist colonies and Polynesian dancers. One photo showed a naked girl in some Los Angeles version of Tahiti daintily climbing down rocks beside a waterfall. Her head was lowered, watching the path, I guess. One arm was extended for balance. She wore an orchid in her hair. I remember the flower in color, but I'm sure the picture was in black-and-white. One foot was in

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David Black is an award-winning journalist, novelist, screenwriter, and producer. "Wha-Wha Blues" is an excerpt from his novel, A Bobbeh Myseh: An Impossible Life.

front of the other. At her crotch was a wisp of shadow, her pubic hair. I stole the magazine and hid it in my room.

When I went downstairs to deliver the handkerchief, Binzy tipped me a dollar. A fortune!

"Binzy!" My mother tried to take it from me to give it back.

"What are you going to buy with it, kid?" Binzy asked.

Ten comic books or twenty Skybars, licorice whips or caps for my Hopalong Cassidy pistol, X-ray glasses, which, according to the ad in the back pages of *EC Comics*, let you see a woman's breasts through her sweater...

I told Binzy I'd never had a dollar before.

My father stopped playing. He put his cornet back in its box, snapped the latches, and stowed the box in the front hall closet.

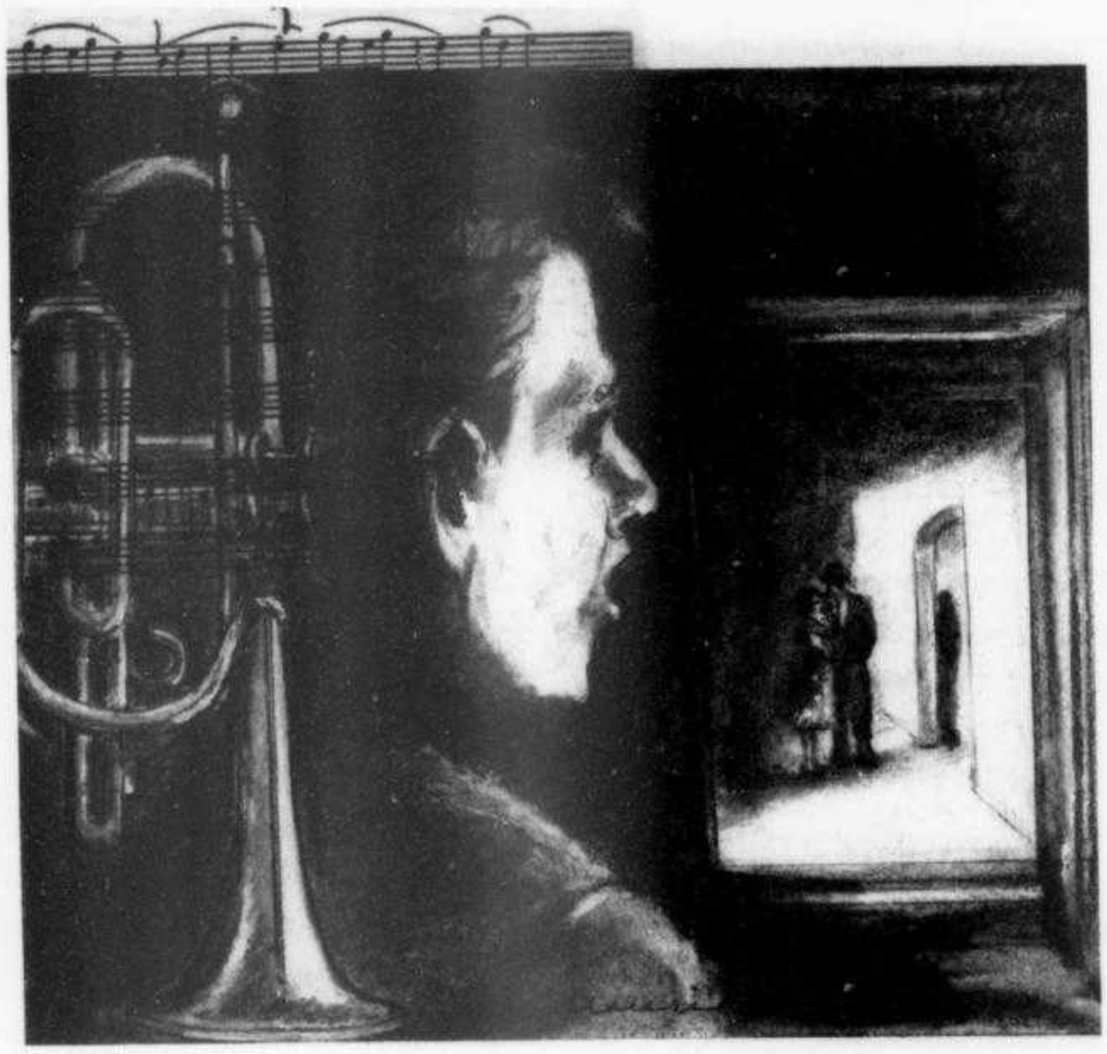
"I'm turning in," he said. Without waiting for anyone to answer, he climbed the stairs. Binzy and my mother exchanged a look which I did not understand.

"What's wrong with Daddy?" Bea asked.

"I didn't mean to embarrass him," Binzy told my mother.

"Look, he doesn't even get an allowance," my mother said. She was talking about me. "How could you know?"

"Things are that tight?" Binzy asked.



My mother started to cry. She didn't even sit down. There was something terrible about her standing in the middle of the room, her hands hanging helplessly at her sides, crying ...

"If I can help ... ?" Binzy started.

"Upstairs," my mother turned to Bea, to me. "Both of you."

As Bea and I climbed to the second floor, I asked why Mom was so sad.

"Don't be so stupid," Bea said.

She went into her room and closed the door.

I heard my father in the bathroom. He was standing at the sink, in his pale blue pajama bottoms, brushing his teeth. He glanced at me, his mouth all foamy, the toothbrush sticking out like a cigar.

"I love you, Dad," I said.

He stared at me for a long time. Then, taking the toothbrush from his mouth, but not wiping away the foam, he said, "When you're grown up, no matter what happens, don't ever, ever forget to brush before you go to bed."

Then, he closed the bathroom door.

Downstairs, I heard Mom locking up. Binzy was half-humming, half-singing, "The Wha-Wha Blues." Then, he stopped. There was a silence.

I stood at the top of the stairs and looked down into the front hall, where Binzy was kissing my mother ... A long kiss.

My mother coyly turned her head and raised one shoulder—birdlike—as Binzy started up the stairs. I stepped back, but not in time. Binzy saw me.

The bathroom door opened. My mother—now, she was humming, "The Wha-Wha Blues"—started up the stairs. Binzy reached the top and put his hand on my shoulder. My father came out of the bathroom—and looked at Binzy and me, standing there.

"You got a good boy here, Abe," Binzy said.

And he tightened his grip on my shoulder just enough to hurt.

The next morning, when I came down for breakfast, Binzy asked if I'd take his suitcase down to his car. As I was leaving the room, he said, "Do me a favor. Check and make sure I didn't leave anything behind."

When I slipped Binzy's magazine back into his suitcase, I put the dollar he'd given me in, too.

Binzy jumped into his car, hit the starter button, and put the car in gear, backing out of the driveway and our lives, with a roar.

Stop the music!

ART BY CYN MAURICE

By the time I arrived at the hospital, Binzy was no longer performing. He sat stroking my mother's hand. When I entered the room and introduced myself, he said, "You look like your father. Ethel, doesn't he look like Abe?"

My mother blinked at me with watery eyes. Her mouth was half open, and her tongue explored a cold sore on her lip.

"Do you know who I am?" I asked.

"You look just like my son," she said.

"I am your son," I said.

She looked at Binzy.

"Leo's here," she said.

"The year she met your father," Binzy said, "she was dating a gangster named Larry Ascot."

Larry Ascot, whose real name was Morris Rubin, ran the gambling action in Providence for the mob in New York, according to the few newspaper clips I dug up on him. The first clip, from The *Providence Journal*, no date, probably spring 1937, is sketchy. A mention that he had come to town to attend an opera benefit, *Otello*. The benefit coincided with some trouble at Narragansett Park, the race track. A jockey named Rabbit O'Dwyer was found drugged and tied to a chair in the stables with his eyelids cut off.

"That's okay," someone on the street told the cops. "After what he did, he's never going to get a wink of sleep anyway."

About a year later, The *New York Mirror* ran a photograph of Ascot. A tall man in a light-colored overcoat and opera scarf. His tie has a big knot that pushes up one wing of his shirt collar. He's grinning and pointing at the camera. Next to him is a man who stands no higher than his shoulder, wearing a coat that hangs to his ankles: Little Augie Neubetter, a *shtarke* from the Brownsville gang, who, along with Abe "Kid Twist" Reles, "Buggsy" Goldstein, and Harry "Pittsburgh Phil" Strauss, muscled in on the Brooklyn pinball racket controlled by the Shapiro brothers.

Neubetter was famous. In the early '30s, he'd walked up to a man in the lobby of the Half Moon Hotel in Coney Island and bitten off his nose. Neither Neubetter nor his victim ever explained why.

Two weeks after the item in The *Mirror*, Neubetter was found with his hat nailed to his head with a six-inch spike. One gang history explained that he had failed to take his hat off in the presence of a woman who'd been dating Ascot.

There's a six-year gap in the clips I was able to find. Monday, September 11, 1944. The *New York Daily News*. Page 1: *U.S. Big Guns Shell Reich*. Page 9: The Inquiring Fotographer asks "What is a woman's greatest problem in life?" Marion Coddington Davis, Bayside Drive, schoolgirl, age sixteen, says: "Getting a good education and being popular, but yet retaining a good reputation." Page 13: "Broadway" by Danton Walker reported that "Internal revenue experts are now on the trail of known racketeers and so-called 'labor executives' who have found a haven in Los Angeles." And: "Hats off to Phyllis Berlin, a popular Conover model, who has returned Larry Ascot's ring … " Page 20: "Barnman Charlie Sheehan is the victim of the mysterious fire that destroyed 16 thoroughbreds in Jay Howland's stable."

Two weeks later Phyllis Berlin and Jay Howland were photographed coming out of the review, *Good Girls Don't*. No one made the connection between the fire that destroyed Howland's stable and Howland dating Ascot's girl.

On Sunday, February 3, 1945, Bostonians could see a double bill —Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier in *Wuthering Heights* and Jack Benny in *Charley's Aunt*— at the Exeter. Deanna Durbin starred in her first Technicolor feature, *Can't Help Singing*. Symphony Hall was advertising Jose Iturbi. The Old Howard Burlesque was featuring Lili Dawn, Hap Hyatt, Gloria Love, and Lou Devine. And Larry Ascot escorted an unknown brunette beauty to the Colonial Theater, where Tallulah Bankhead was starring in Philip Barry's new play, *Foolish Notion*.

The unknown brunette beauty was my mother.

Stop the music!

"On the side, Ascot lent money to Brown undergrads," Binzy said, "rich kids who couldn't get an advance on their allowance. Kids who go in over their head, gambling, whoring, whatever. These kids, they thought they were swift, leaving school, owing Ascot. What's he going to do? Chase them to Cleveland, Chicago, New York and squeal to their daddies? Ascot didn't care. These kids grew up to be lawyers, judges, bankers … They owned, say, restaurants that maybe needed a new laundry service. Ascot was there with the suggestion they use his friend's. Or they became doctors. And maybe Ascot had an associate who knocked up a gal who needed an abortion. But your mother … All she saw was a guy in a white silk scarf."

Ascot lived in a suite at the Biltmore Hotel. He took my mother to the hotel's Bacchante Room, where the waitresses wore short translucent skirts, to the Lafayette on the Boston Post Road, and gin mills on the way to Pawtucket.

My grandfather, Sam, ran a grocery store. He'd be up at 4 a.m., getting ready to go to the markets to buy produce, fish, and meat, when Ascot's big yellow car would

drop my mother off at the house on Congress Avenue.

One morning in March, my grandfather appeared on the porch, a big man, as tall as Ascot, but broader, in suspenders and shirtsleeves with his derby on his head and holding a brimful glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice, which he carried out to the car.

Assuming the juice was for her, my mother reached for it, when my grandfather told her, "Go inside and wash your face."

My mother looked from her date to her father, went inside, and stood in the parlor, peeking out at the street through the curtains.

My grandfather handed the juice through the window to Ascot, who drank it without taking his eyes off my grandfather.

"You want Corn Flakes?" my grandfather said. "Matzo-brei?"

"I haven't had matzo-brei since I was a kid," Ascot said.

"Come," my grandfather said—according to Binzy.

Ascot got out of the car and followed my grandfather up the path to the house, two brawny men, squinting in the low early morning sun, a shtetl peasant and the son of a shtetl peasant, both a long way from the world that produced them. Ascot carried the now empty juice glass as carefully as my grandfather had carried the full glass. My mother fled into her bedroom—keeping the door cracked open.

"What happened?" I asked Binzy.

"They had matzo-brei," Binzy said.

My grandfather wasn't a religious man. He rarely went to Sabbath services, only occasionally to High Holy Day services. But, on weekdays, after going to the market, he went to a shul in the slums to help make up a minyan. At his urging, Ascot began going to services with him.

That spring, Ascot would drop my mother off around dawn, have breakfast with my grandfather, take a nap on the living room couch—while, thirty feet away, my mother lay sleepless in her bed, angry and puzzled. When my grandfather had finished marketing, he'd stop by the house and wake Ascot, who'd drive them to shul in his fancy car. After the service, Ascot dropped my grandfather at his store on Westminster Avenue, where my grandfather's brother Frank was already at work.

By late April, Ascot was hanging around the grocery store. His father had been a butcher: and my grandfather watched as Ascot, a bloody apron over his expensive shirt and suit pants, neatly trimmed the fat from a steak or chopped ribs.

At the end of the day, he'd help my grandfather scrub the butcher block with alcohol and light the sterilizing fire that burned with a glassy blue flame as they shared shots of schnapps.

Then, coats slung over their shoulders, they walked home, eating russet apples or slivers of Herkermer cheese.

The war, which made people reckless, was a bonanza for racing. In 1944, the seventeen states that allowed racing, reported total legal bets of $1,126,308,645. The illegal bets were probably double that. Former Supreme Court Judge James F. Byrnes, the head of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, had closed the racetracks on January 3, 1945. Ascot bet my grandfather the ban would be lifted before the beginning of June.

"I don't bet," my grandfather said. "On anything."

"Don't you want a little excitement in your life?" Ascot asked.

They were sitting at the kitchen table, eating Corn Flakes and drinking SweeTouchNee Tea.

My grandfather said, "Before I left home"—he meant Plissa, the town where he grew up in Lithuania—" I had enough excitement."

He stood up and, stripping off his shirt, showed the scars on his back, pale parallel stripes, where he'd been horsewhipped by Cossacks.

Without a word, Ascot stripped off *his* shirt, showing off a scar on *his* chest, where he'd been knifed in a brawl.

My grandfather pointed to a scar on his side, where, when he first came to Providence, another peddler had gashed him with a meat hook in a quarrel over turf.

Ascot unbuttoned his pants and showed a scar along his right thigh made by a rival gangster with a bottle of sulfuric acid.

My grandfather took a carving knife from a drawer and cut his left arm.

Ascot took the knife and cut *his* left arm.

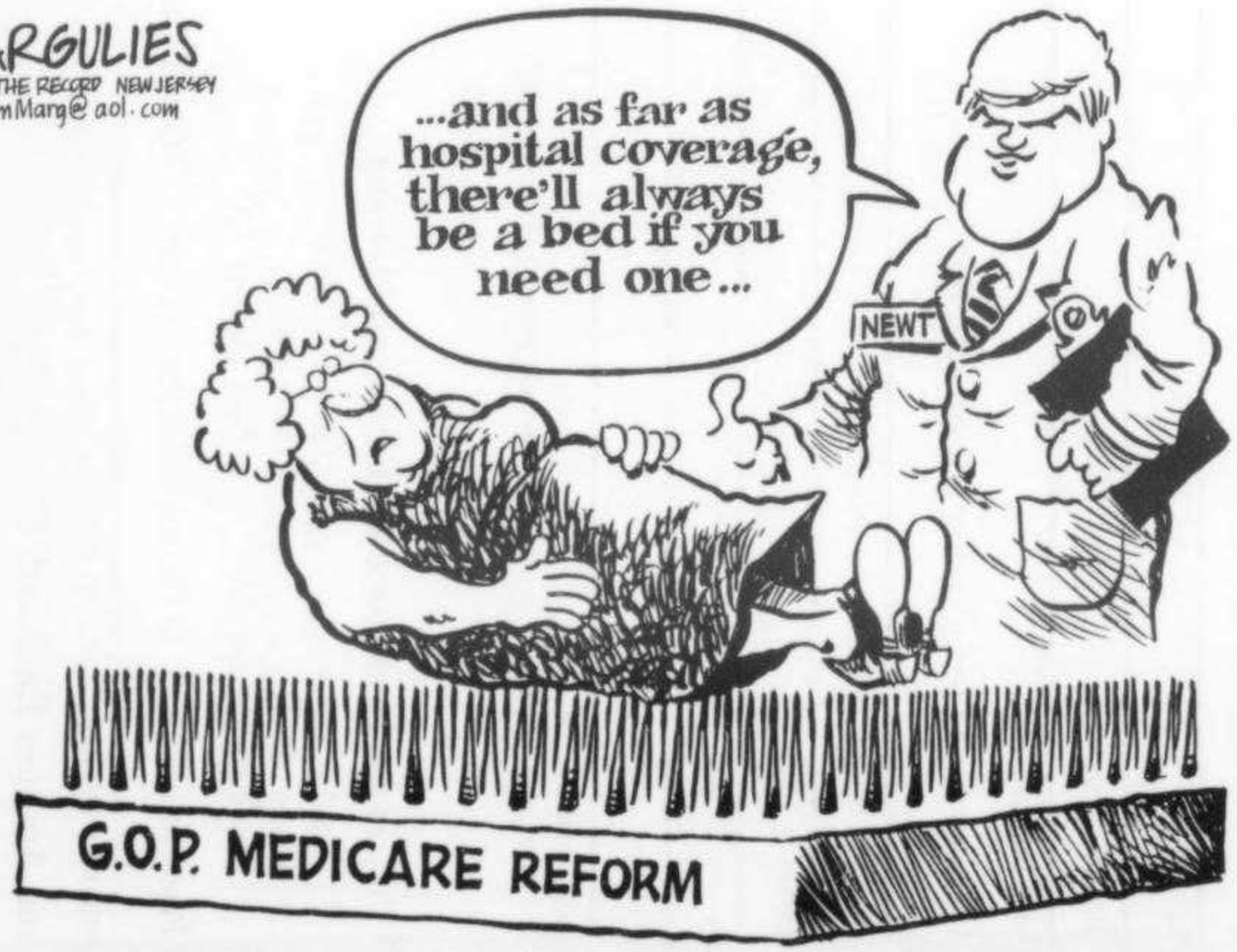
By the time my grandmother came into the kitchen half-an-hour later, both men, standing naked in the middle of the floor, were bleeding from half-a-dozen self-inflicted wounds.

That was the last time Ascot came to the house. My mother waited for him to call, to write; but he didn't.

She called his hotel and left messages, which he didn't answer. She went to the hotel and waited in the lobby, but she never saw him.

In May, when the ban on racing was lifted—as Ascot had predicted —my mother drove out to Narragansett

(Continued on p. 96)



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The Rabin Assassination



NADIA TODRES

Mourners light memorial candles for Yitzhak Rabin outside the Israeli Consulate in New York.

The Civil War Has Begun

Michael Lerner

The murder of Yitzhak Rabin was the symbolic opening of the civil war that will be the center of Jewish attention for years to come. That civil war is being fought to determine the nature of Jewish existence in the postmodern world. Yet the American Jewish Establishment, desperate to keep its fundraising mechanisms intact, has been frantically proclaiming "unity," hoping that their p.r. experts can convince potential donors not to notice that the war is on and that its first major event was the murder of the Israeli Prime Minister by a right-wing conspiracy. They will do their best to ignore those forces, both in Israel and the United States, that welcomed the death of Rabin and expressed hopes that with him the peace process itself would wither and the forces behind territorial compromise with the Palestinians would be confounded.

What makes this civil war particularly tragic is that both sides are terribly flawed. Neither of the primary contenders offers a vision of Jewish existence that is particularly appealing. Yet the third alternative, what we at TIKKUN have been calling Jewish Renewal, is in its infancy, and it remains to be seen whether the readers of TIKKUN, and others who find this alternative appealing, have within themselves the commitment and determination to make this third alternative a real historical option.

The Jewish Civil War

On the one hand, we have the dominantly secular Left within Israeli society today, represented by Shimon Peres and by some elements of the Labor/Meretz government (though there are elements within both parties that feel uneasy with the culture and philosophy that I am loosely identifying with these political parties). This trend wishes to see Israel become a state like all other states, distinguished only by its language and historical customs, but fundamentally thinking and acting in accord with the goals and guidelines of the international capitalist market. It envisions Israel's salvation coming from its ability to be "the Hong Kong of the Middle East," and to become a world-center of new technologies. It wants no restraints, ideological or political, on Israeli firms' abilities to compete in the rapidly changing international markets of finance and trade. Like America or other advanced capitalist societies, it professes an ethos of selfishness and materialism, it identifies intellectual sophistication with cynicism and scoffs at spirituality, and it revels in deconstructing and mocking its own history. Its rallying cry in the current civil war is the banner of individual rights and an end to the Occupation. And on both of these points, I am with it.



RUBEN BITTERMAN/IMPACT VISUALS

This trend's counterparts in the United States are those who wish to turn Judaism into an ethnic identity whose primary rallying point is a set of ill-defined holidays observed as a historical memory but without any contemporary spiritual meaning for the participants, and as a set of nostalgic memories of music, food, and stories of a time gone past when Jews were relatively powerless immigrants. Many of our federations, Jewish community centers, and even synagogues are populated by secular Jews of this sort. Among those over fifty, many are filled with guilt about their failure to have done more during the Holocaust or their failure to have made aliyah to the State of Israel, so they became supermilitant Zionists-in-absentia, or Jews who try to shove their Judaism down the throats of their children but meanwhile have nothing to offer more nourishing than gefilte fish and latkes, lox and bagels, and recurrent fears that the non-Jews will beat up on us again if we don't watch out.

On the other side, mostly identified with the political Right, is a coalition of ultra-nationalists and religious (mostly Orthodox) Jews who reject the allures of assimilation into the modern world. Correctly fearing the individualism and materialism that have corroded community and produced a plague of me-firstism among many Jews, they cling to a vision of salvation that revolves around either a secular ultra-nationalism and insensitivity to the fate of others that tends to valorize the nation and demand subordination of the individual to the needs of the community, or to a religious fundamentalism that demeans non-Jews, sees the Enlightenment as the enemy, and tends to pick up on those parts of the Torah tradition that hear God as a voice of anger, cruelty, and genocidal rage (wipe out the nations of Canaan, show no mercy, see their descendants as your enemy) rather than hearing God as the voice in Torah that urges compassion and caring (love your neighbor as yourself; love the stranger; justice, justice shalt thou pursue).

I have noted in the past that a growing number of these people have gravitated to what I call Settler Judaism, the version of Judaism that tended to see these genocidal passages in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and I Samuel as the guide to how to deal with non-Jews. While Settler Judaism played a positive role when Jews were powerless, because it helped us resist the tendency of oppressed groups to internalize the negative assessments of the dominant culture and instead encouraged us to fantasize our anger and ultimate retaliation against the cruel regimes that were hurting us, it has a totally different and destructive meaning in the late twentieth century, when Jews have considerable power both in the United States and in Israel. While not all settlers hold to Settler Judaism, a very large percentage of settlers and a disconcertingly large number of Orthodox Jews tend to view the world from that perspective, and they have many secular and non-settler friends, relatives, and allies who cling to it as well.

Moreover, the Israeli Right also draws support from Oriental or Sephardic Jews and from working-class and poorer Israelis. This class dynamic to the struggle is often obscured because the Labor Party was in its origins a socialist, pro-worker force in Israel. But in fact, as it moved to link the Israeli economy to international markets, sought privatization of the large socialist concerns, lessened its commitment to kibbutzim, and identified with the interests of a growing intellectual and technological elite, the Labor Party's base has shifted increasingly to represent the professional/managerial sectors of Israeli society. Meanwhile, those who are hurting economically have to ask themselves a difficult question: "If we are here in Israel rather than in the societies from which we came, or in America to which we might escape like more than a million other Israelis, what can justify our sacrifice?"



A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

At one point the answer to that question was clear: "We are here as part of a society with a shared goal of creating a distinctively Jewish state that embodies Jewish values and Jewish vision—and that is one thing you could never get in the Diaspora. So though you may be hurting financially, you are part of a larger enterprise that gives meaning to your hardships." But as liberals and Left circles seek to distance themselves from any transcendent religious or national vision beyond individual fulfillment, tolerance of difference, and pursuit of self-interest in the market, those who are not doing so well in the market turn to the Right's vision of community and national or religious purpose to give meaning to their pain: the most they can hope for, given that both Right and Left have little inclination to challenge the dominant economic elites of the society.

As Ze'ev Sternhell points out in an article in this issue, the transferring of power in the West Bank to the Palestinian majority, as implicitly envisioned in the Oslo Accords, is a symbolic watershed event that communicated to many right-wingers that the moment has arrived in which the dominant secular consciousness will totally dismantle the last vestiges of a society based on commitment to common purpose, shared ideals, and national unity.

Under such circumstances, and with such a vision of what is at stake, the right-wingers could not be expected to sit by passively while their vision of an Israel as "the beginning of the flourishing of our redemption" is being dismantled by secularists intent on transforming Israel into a culture that may have more in common with Japan or Los Angeles than with Torah. But the struggle is not simply about settlements. It involves the repudiation of an entire way of life. So, imagine that the plan of the religious peace movement, printed in the November/December 1995 issue of *TIKKUN*, is adopted by the Labor Party and accepted by Arafat. That plan would leave 80 percent of the settlers in place, while annexing to Israel 8 percent of the territory of the West Bank. The consequence would *not* be an end to the civil war. We could still expect acts of violence and armed struggle. The 20 percent of settlers who had to move back to the State of Israel would become the flash point for extending the violent struggle that began with the assassination of Rabin.

The civil war that has started will not be fought primarily in military struggles or in acts of violence. It will involve attempts to use political means, including dominating elections and acquiring power in political institutions. If one looks, for example, at the I.D.F., one sees a profound change in the composition of the elite combat units. Twenty years ago it was well known that these units were dominated by kibbutzniks. It was a badge of honor among the Left to have been a member of the Israeli paratroopers. Today, close to a third of the members of these units come from Orthodox *yeshivot*, most of them strong adherents of Settler Judaism. They cannot be counted on to violate the injunction of the 200 rabbis who issued a ruling in the summer of 1995 saying that any dismantling settlements was a violation of Jewish law. Indeed, as the assassin Amir shows, some of them may even use their military training to perpe-

trate acts of violence against the Left.

In the United States, Settler Judaism finds its strongest base of support in the Orthodox synagogues. Yet increasingly, one finds Jewish community centers, federations, independent day schools, and even Jewish establishment organizations peopled by Orthodox Jews who have strong ties to a nationalistic Right and to Settler Judaism. This new breed of professional sees him/herself as trying to stem the tide of secularism by bringing Jewish values into organizations that were heretofore drifting toward assimilation. Yet the version of Judaism that is brought in to stop this drift is a Judaism that communicates messages of Jewish superi-



A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

ority and exceptionalism and that self-fulfillingly assumes that the world is against us. It has been the leading voice in opposition to the peace process in Israel, supplying settlers with financial support, but, even more important, political and spiritual support.

In the aftermath of the assassination, some Orthodox leaders are backing away from statements that link them directly to incitement to violence. But they are not backing away from the underlying worldview.

Settler Judaism will continue to grow in its appeal to many decent people as long as the primary alternative is an aggressive secularism that seeks to normalize the position of Jews by buying into salvation through the capitalist market. Much as I support the attempts by the Meretz Party to rid Israel of the religious hold on what should be civil institutions (e.g., marriage and divorce or legal definitions of "Who is a Jew?"), and much as I wish to oppose patriarchal family arrangements and their legacy of violence toward women, nevertheless I find an Israel whose sole value is commitment to tolerance and individual rights to be an Israel with little to generate my loyalty or enthusiasm. We did not struggle for a hundred years only to recreate Miami Beach or Beverly Hills in the Middle East. From my standpoint, there ought to be a Jewish content to Israel; otherwise it would make more sense to encourage Israelis to resettle in Los Angeles and Houston.

The solution to this problem is to create a Jewish Renewal movement, both within Israel and the United States, that could provide a bridge between the two contending forces. In Israel, that movement would publicly challenge Settler Judaism—*not* in the name of a secularizing vision of Jewish normalization, but rather in the name of a specifically Torah-tradition-based view of God as the force in the universe that makes for the possibility of healing and transformation from that which is to that which ought to be. Jewish Renewal powerfully embraces Jewish feminism and supports the struggle against patriarchy and homophobia in the Jewish world. It rejects a Judaism that uses instruments of state power to impose itself.

The Jewish Renewal I envision would have its proponents putting their major energy into developing a Halakhah of *ve-ahavta le'rey-acha ka'mocha* (You shall love your neighbor as yourself) and of "*ve-ahavta la'ger*" (You shall love the stranger), vigorously insisting on respecting the holiness of every human being on the planet. Such a Judaism would relate to the world's ecological crisis from the standpoint of our responsibility to care for and tend the earth. It would challenge an international economy whose inequalities spur growth for many while leaving a significant minority in economic desperation, facing homelessness and starvation (not only in the Bronx, but also in India and the Philippines and large parts of Africa). And it would simultaneously challenge an Orthodox, religious life that is more focused on the number of prayers being said than on the spiritual experience, more concerned about the number of *mitzvot* than on their quality, more focused on external behavior than on helping people develop a relationship with God.

I've developed some of the details of what this renewal would look like in my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, so here I will merely suggest that such a Renewal Judaism would be able to appeal to secular Jews whose commitment to secularism is more a reaction to the bad experience they have had in patriarchal, spiritually deadening, ritualistically focused, intolerant, and unloving religious communities than it is on a deep sense of personal fulfillment made available to them by the capitalist market. Conversely, there will be some religious Jews who would be willing to leave the tight embrace of Orthodoxy were they to find an alternative Jewish

vision that was *not* merely a cover for individuals who were looking for an easy way out of communal responsibility or obligation to others, as many Orthodox Jews today perceive the major denominational alternatives. If there were a Jewish Renewal movement that really took its own ideals seriously, were willing to fight for them, and were willing to confront and publicly challenge the distortions in both the secular and the religious world, it would soon become the dominant alternative in Israel and a powerful force shaping all branches of Judaism in the Diaspora.

But, at the moment, the Jewish Renewal movement is in its infancy, and most of its practitioners are unwilling or unable to contend in the public arena for leadership of the Jewish world. Many of those who have been attracted to a Jewish Renewal consciousness are more interested in creating a corner of spiritual truth for themselves than in saving the larger Jewish community. Like many of their counterparts in various New Age movements, they feel perfectly fine about finding salvation for themselves. Riddled with the surplus powerlessness that afflicts most people in the modern world, they find it impossible to imagine themselves taking a leadership role in creating a new ethos for world Jewry. Instead, they build spiritually deep communities for themselves, imagining that they will change the Jewish world by example. Perhaps they are right. Perhaps in the long run it will be the creation of Jewish Renewal communities that will model a new kind of Jewish existence that will ultimately shape the Jewish future.

In the meantime, without this kind of religious alternative, the Jewish civil war, fought between secularists, assimilationists, and worshippers of the competitive market, on the one hand, and ultra-nationalists and religious messianists on the other, is likely to grow more intense in the coming decades. The nationalists and Orthodox will denounce their fellow Jews as betraying the Jewish people and will seek to bolster the boundaries between their own true faith and the sellout assimilationist orientation of everyone else. In response, most Israelis and many American Jews will grow more estranged from Judaism, imagining it to be precisely what the Right says it is—a peculiar blend of Settler Judaism, intolerance, demeaning of non-Jews, spiritual vacuity, and self-absorption. Yet the secularism that they will embrace will seem less specifically Jewish with each passing generation. And this secularist response to Settler Judaism will, in turn, give further proof to the ultra-nationalists and Orthodox that the spiritual wolf is at the door, and that they must take extreme measures to save Judaism.

In this climate, expect to see greater intolerance, greater mutual estrangement, and greater likelihood of violence. At the very least, expect that the civil war will continue to define the fundamental struggle and tensions facing the Jewish people for much of the remaining time we will be alive.

The False Unity Crowd

Into this morass charge the professional fund-raisers and leadership of the organized Jewish community in the United States. Their fund-raising instincts tell them that the Rabin assassination is a public relations disaster that might make it harder to convince upper-middle-class Jews that they should be sending their dollars to the Federations or to the array of Jewish Establishment organizations which, having lost their mass base among the American Jewish population, have recently depended for legitimation on being able to claim that they are the voice of the State of Israel in the United States (acting through "The Conference of Presidents of Major [sic] Jewish Organizations").

Their solution: Pretend that the murder represents the actions of a deranged individual and has no connection to any ongoing struggle inside the Jewish people, that the murder is safely behind us, and that now, in the aftermath of the murder, everyone is happily reconciled, committed to tolerance and mutual respect, and unlikely to continue to create the climate of violence that was evident in Israel for much of the past half year. Instead of civil war, which has momentarily flared into violence but which, in other forms, is likely to define the next several generations of life in the Jewish world, the fund-raisers want to project an image of peace, harmony, and unity.

But to imagine the unity they must delegitimate precisely those voices that articulate significant alternative visions of the future of the Jewish people. For that delegitimation to proceed, those perspectives must be made invisible or marginalized—not difficult for a Jewish Establishment which has been doing precisely this for the past several decades, in the process creating a Jewish communal life that sees disagreement and significant debate as "problems" to be "managed" rather than opportunities to enhance democratic participation. The result: the national gatherings of the fund-raisers, the religious and communal organizations, are usually free of significant debate or the contending of alternative visions. Not surprisingly, most people find these meetings unbelievably boring and stifling.

The crisis generated by the Rabin assassination led the organizers to outdo themselves in political bad taste. In reaction to a group of Jews who met after the assassination and talked about creating a huge public gathering in Madison Square Garden explicitly to endorse the peace process, organizations such as the Conference

of Presidents and NACRAC (the federation's national body dealing with Jewish communal relations) sought to transform it into a meaningless symbolic event that would offend no one. Their first move was to redefine the event from one committed to explicit support of the peace process to a formulation that Settler Jews would not find offensive: "support for the search for peace."

As some Orthodox rabbis explained privately, in their view the best way to achieve peace would be to strengthen and expand the settlement of the West Bank, so they could feel perfectly happy with this formulation. But even this did not satisfy those people in the Orthodox world who were the biggest opponents of the Labor government. Some demanded that Binyamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud, be invited to speak. Others spread the word that they could not be expected to bring their followers to the gathering unless politics was totally obliterated.

In response, the organizers reconceptualized the event as a bland memorial to Rabin. They explained their concern as a commitment to fill Madison Square Garden and hence give a powerful tribute to the slain prime minister. And, they argued, only the Orthodox have their communities so well organized that they could actually be sure to bring troops that would fill the Garden. Suggestions to ask Barbra Streisand to perform were dismissed, because the Orthodox would be offended to hear "the voice of a woman" (women singing in public supposedly would incite men to lascivious thoughts, and hence is prohibited by some interpretations of Halakhah).

Hello? Is anyone home up there in your heads? Barbra Streisand, along with Leah Rabin and Shimon Peres, could have filled the Garden many times over. So, although the fund-raisers explained their decision on the basis of fear that they would let Israel down if they didn't get the Orthodox into the Garden, a far more plausible explanation is that they had decided that unity was the highest goal, and if the cost of unity was to avoid everything that might possibly offend the Orthodox, they would do so gladly.

Some of these organizers were undoubtedly trapped by their own rhetoric into toning down the event. Some of them undoubtedly would have felt fine about a more explicit statement of support for the peace process. But not Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents and a firm devotee of the settlement policies of Yitzhak Shamir and the Likud. And not many of the other *machers* (big-shot Jewish rich and powerful) who had long been opponents of the peace process. For them, this alleged "pressure" to conform was merely an excuse to shape an event that would avoid giving any vindication to the peace politics which they detest.

The upshot is described elsewhere in this section by TIKKUN's executive editor Alice Chasan. Suffice it to say that the word "Palestinian" was uttered only once by Leah Rabin, and not at all by anyone else. A short video on the life of Yitzhak Rabin put together for the occasion managed to *not show* the handshake with Arafat. In short, the man who had been killed because of having taken risks to make peace with the Palestinians was now being memorialized in a way that would make this act of courage totally invisible.

We at TIKKUN had been very critical of Rabin in the days when, as Defense Minister, he had presided over the initial attempts by the government of Israel to repress the Intifada by force. His transformation from a man who relied on force or violence into a leader who could publicly sing the "*Shir le-Shalom*," the Song of Peace, was nothing short of miraculous. For those who are quick to write off others as hopelessly conservative or stuck in their old ways, Rabin's accomplishment should provide a stern warning that few people can be abandoned as too stuck in their old ways. It was this transformation, and the courage that he then showed in pursuing peace, that ought to be his memorial.

Instead, we experienced the second assassination of Rabin. The first assassination was of his body. The second, engineered by the American Jewish Establishment, was an assassination of the meaning of his life and the meaning of his death. Rather than using the occasion to mobilize American Jews to support the peace process, the event had become an occasion for the rich and famous to hobnob and proclaim a unity based on wishful thinking and imposed by their money.

The following week, Jewish newspapers gleefully reported (in the words of New York's largest Jewish newspaper, supported by the Federation crowd that had engineered the Garden fiasco) "Unity, After All." Everyone, we were told, had now come together under the banner of the unity proclaimed by the funders. In ludicrous self-parody of the very acts of squelching dissent that had driven so many young Jews far from the organized community, the powerful were now once again pretending that dissent did not exist. Privately, some expressed outrage when TIKKUN, in an act of independence that threatened to expose the whole drama, bought a small ad in The *New York Times* and urged people going to the Garden to "Stand Up For Peace," and went on to say that the "best memorial for Rabin" would be to end the Occupation and combat Settler Judaism. Apart from this ad, there was little public space available to those whose message was to give primacy to ending the Occupation, not to achieving unity with those who wished to expand the Occupation.

The drive for unity reflects the very division that has led to the contemporary civil war in the Jewish world.

Those who place unity above all else are saying that, in their view, the most important reality is the tie that they have with their fellow Jews. National solidarity is far more important than any other principle.

That's a position, not a methodological principle that transcends positions.

And there are other positions. Like that voiced by Leah Rabin in the days after the assassination when she said that she felt that she might have more in common with some Palestinians than with some Jews. Or, in the variant that we have articulated in TIKKUN, that our commitment to Jewish Renewal leads us to see the spirit of God in every other human being, and that testifying to God's presence in the world leads us to testify to the possibility of a world based on the unity of all peoples. We have more in common with those people of all faiths and peoples who can treat all other human beings as deserving of love, caring, support, and respect than we have in common with those people, including those Jews, who think that their particular part of the totality is all that counts and that others can be demeaned. So I don't seek the false unity that the Jewish Establishment tries to impose on us.

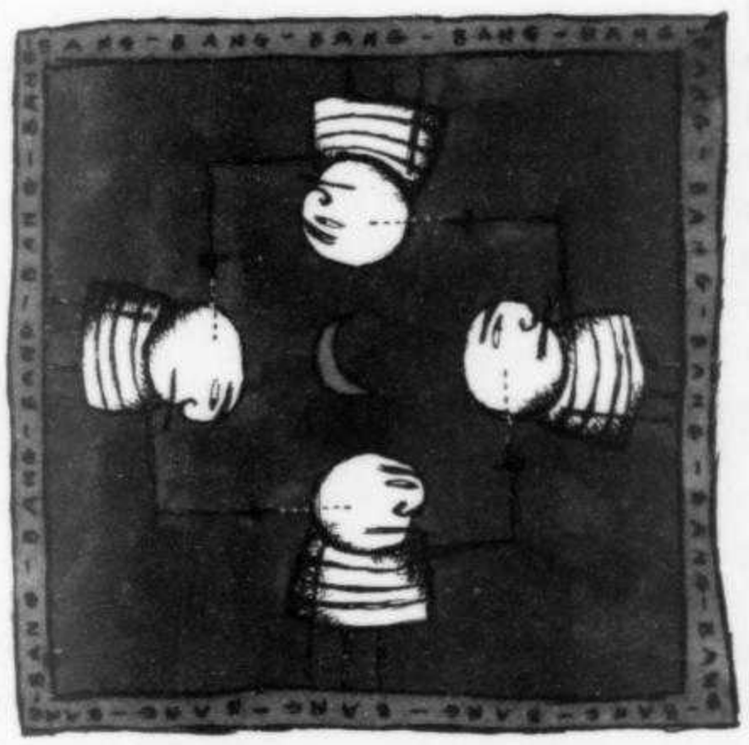
Yet I do seek to end the civil war. And in my view, the best way to do that is not to accommodate to all views, or pretend that there is no civil war going on, but instead to put forward and fight for a substantive view of Judaism that could combine the most legitimate in the secularist concerns with that which is most valuable in the concerns of the ultra-nationalists and Settler Jews. Our task is to build that kind of Jewish Renewal. Unless we do, the civil war will deepen in the years ahead. □

The Power of Tikkun



A. B. Yehoshua
Translated by Daphna Poskanzer

If someone were to ask me to explain on one foot the difference between the Left and the Right, this is how I would respond: The difference is in the belief, or in the ability to believe, that despite the natural and eternal powers that dominate us, those that are genetic and those that are geographic, above and beyond all of these, man and the collective not only have the ability to change, but have the desire for true *tikkun*. Herein lies the basic leftist orientation: the desire to change and the ability to transform oneself. While the right wing will talk about the need to be loyal to our forefathers, the commandment of generations, eternal fate which repeats itself, national mentality; the spiritual Left will talk of freedom from the past, re-examination of our origins, breaking of stereotypes. Zionism has always swung back and forth between Left and Right, between revolution and conservatism. At the beginning of the State of Israel, there was an explosion of radical revolutionary energies from those rebelling against their fathers and their traditions. Later, there was a tendency to try to balance the present with the past, to preserve our heritage so that we would not lose our way.



Yitzhak Rabin was born into the generation of revolutionary Zionists, and maybe precisely because he absorbed so much ideology in his youth, he was a little reticent, suspicious, and impatient with ideologues.

As a man who experienced the complicated and difficult reality of the founding years of the state, he was critical of the simplistic solutions of determined, well-meaning people.

Even when peace was far from a reality, people who believed in it did not lose hope in Rabin. The peace camp was sure that when Rabin saw a sign that peace was indeed a possibility, he would move toward it, since his fathers and teachers had instilled in him a deep

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.*

ART BY MAIRAV SALOMON

belief in the power of transformation, a desire and ability to change.

Three years ago when he commenced the difficult and enormous challenge of making peace with the Palestinians, the heart of the conflagration here for the last one-hundred-twenty years, Rabin wasn't equipped like Ben-Gurion on the one hand, or Menachem Begin on the other, with complex ideologies. He had to struggle with these tremendous questions that have entangled our existence, especially since the Six Day War, and which threatened to poison our existence here, without ideological scaffolding.

On seeing him fighting in the Knesset, in public debates, or groping for answers on television interviews, one often wished to offer him a helping hand, this agriculture school graduate, to provide him with a historical example, a suitable analogy, or the right passages from the Jewish texts.

Gradually it became clear that he had no use for intellectual flourishes. A stronger, truer force drove him, greater than any historical ideology, greater than correct or incorrect military or intelligence strategies.

All his wonderful talent as a soldier and statesman would not have been enough to facilitate the peace process the way he did in the last two years, had he not held the basic belief that not only you could transform yourself, but your enemy could also change and desire to change.

Goodbye, Friend: of all the wonderful sayings that we heard during the emotional and stormy *shiva* week, this is the one which has stuck. The word "friend" has taken the place of leader, or father, or commander. I think it is not by chance that the people have sensed that this reserved man, rigid and shy, saw himself not as a leader, all-knowing, but rather as an older friend who felt responsible for getting his comrades out of the circle of war to the horizon of peace. Thus, it is not by chance that he preferred to bring people or biographies of people to his peace speeches rather than spiritual, ideologically abstract references.

After his death, he has become an older friend for us. From now on we may address him with direct love and intimacy like a friend.

For you, Shimon Peres, he has become an older brother. I was profoundly moved when I heard you call him this at the grave side. The fact is that the peace process between twin nations for the same land was made by twin brothers, rivals. During the course of their work together, you and Rabin repaired your personal relationship, lending even greater moral strength to the peace process. Now you stand alone. The night of the murder I sensed for the first time in your words the shock of your aloneness.

It is not surprising that the key word when you addressed the cabinet was "partnership." Permit me to interpret: partnership meaning not just a good atmosphere or comradeship; rather, an internalized sense of responsibility for all aspects of leadership. Rabin and you came to create the peace together, not as friends but as brothers.

This is what has stopped Rabin's murder from becoming a political tragedy for the peace process.

That partnership is a gift to us by the late Prime Minister, amongst the many others that he left to us. We will guard them with our all. □



Remapping the Landscape

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi

The *shiva* is over. And the *shloshim*. After the countdown comes the trial, so now is the time for each of us to begin to write our own sentence ....

The signs of mourning have not been entirely erased by the rains and the routines of life in the aftermath: Hundreds of thousands of spent candles have left congealed wax on pavements, on rocks, on hedges. Dead flowers hang by limp stalks on lampposts and traffic lights. Fragments of poems and prayers cling to walls, *kvittlach* with petitions and pledges to the slain leader flutter in the wind, held down by wax or pinioned on the needles of pine trees or the spikes of iron fences.

The landscape did change: The rhetoric of hate disappeared for awhile. The bumper stickers with the inflammatory slogans vanished the night after the assassination, their only trace the rivulets of water drying in the morning sun under hundreds of newly scrubbed cars .... More peace doves flew in the month of mourning on rear wind-

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Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi is an associate professor of comparative literature at the Hebrew University and a peace activist. She is completing a book on exile and homecoming in the modern Jewish imagination.



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shields than had ever migrated through Israeli skies. The posters announcing activities against "*memshelet zadon*" ("reign of iniquity") and sporting pictures of Rabin in a kaffiyeh or S.S. uniform were scratched from the bulletin boards and walls. Replaced by huge posters of the same man with the words, "*oseh shalom bimromav*" (he who makes peace in the heavens....) and "*hashalom yikom et damo*" (peace will avenge his blood). Draped over the luminescent billboards at intersections advertising new products or coming attractions is a black-and-white announcement: "*bemoto tziva lanu et hashalom*" (in his death he bequeathed us peace). Every so often one still encounters a poster from "before" with "*Rabin rotzeah*" (Rabin is a murderer) incompletely covered by a poster announcing "*Rabin nirtzah*" (Rabin is murdered), forming an eloquent dialogue, a sort of ongoing op-ed in the public square.

These events take on melodramatic dimensions of a scale that only Steven Spielberg could have conceived (*pace*, Sophocles, Hollywood has overshadowed Athens, even in Jerusalem). Rabin's murder, as we are learning every day, had been inscribed into an unfolding pageant of imprecation, mystification, and holy war. And his death took place in a rare moment of ecstasy and gratification, against a choral backdrop of husky voices singing out of tune.... The most unlikely of martyrs, Yitzhak Rabin emerged, rather belatedly, as father to a country of self-proclaimed orphans. O Captain, my Captain, they kept intoning, as if Whitman had just won the Bialik Prize.

Oddly enough, one thought it was the "People of the Book" who had learned, the hard way, not to take their reading too seriously. Or maybe seriously but not too literally. Like the journey itself—a journey to an ever-deferred end. When the end would come, then it would be time to literalize the verses and the curses. It was the journey, then, that safeguarded the innocuousness, the inefficacy, of words for hundreds and thousands of years. "*L'halakha velo lema'aseh*" (A matter of theory, not practice), as the rabbis would have it. We are only engaged in an intellectual, hypothetical exercise, calling someone a "*moser*" (informer, turncoat) as long as we don't have the mechanism or the mandate to enforce the verdict. No one—including many of the rabbis who were preaching that Rabin and his ilk, in their willingness to give up any of the territory of Eretz Yisrael, were "*mosrim*" and "*rodfim*" and "*rozhim*," (traitors, attackers, murderers)—seemed to notice that the young people they were addressing had been raised on the *literalization* of the text.

Coming back to the land has meant, for the post-'67 generation, reclaiming the *concrete* dimension of the Jewish imagination. Baruch Goldstein read a *quite literal Megillat Esther* and went out on Purim to reenact, in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the Jewish tale of vengeance in "real time," against today's *goyim*—who just happened to be twenty-nine Moslems at prayer .... This past Yom Kippur, Kabbalistic curses written in Aramaic that constituted a contract on Rabin's head were distributed in mainstream synagogues in Jerusalem. (As columnist Lili Gallili wrote in *Ha'aretz* six weeks after the murder: foreign correspondents keep asking her how you say "*pulsa de mura*" in French.) During the weeks and months preceding his decision to kill the Prime Minister, Yigal Amir was hearing from authorities he trusted that Rabin was a "*moser*" and a "*rodef*" and he knew that such people must be stopped at all costs, even and up to taking their life. Since, as he was also taught at Bar Ilan and its "*Kolel*," Rabin's government was not even kosher, relying as it did on an Arab minority for its narrow majority in the Knesset, it was *incumbent* on all those who had the courage, to carry out the verdict.

These are people for whom the Book of Joshua is, quite simply, a guidebook to twentieth-century "Judea and Samaria." For whom Maimonides, quoted out of context (and where are the genius and flexibility of the rabbinic voices over the generations if not in quoting each other "out of context"?) and deciphered at the convenience of the interpreter (who is not engaging in "politics," God forbid, but in interpretation or translation of divine will), is the highest judge of the moral status and fate of a man who lives some eight hundred years later.

Through a pilgrimage to Jerusalem the likes of which the Holy City had never seen in its "3,000-year" history, the people of this country from every

walk of life, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, rich and poor, Hasid and Druze, and many many Arabs who came to pay homage to the dead Prime Minister began to cast out the hideous monster that has evolved from fundamentalist Judaism and xenophobic Zionism. If this country wanted a "referendum" on the peace process, this was it.

And it was not limited to Jerusalem. Folk too young to use the ballot voted with their feet and folk too old to use their feet were wheeled through the local shrines erected around the casket at the Knesset and then at the gravesite on Mt. Herzl, outside the Rabin home, and at the demonstration site in Tel Aviv, and on nearly every corner and crossroad in the country. In their very fragility, these little pedestrian shrines provide an alternate topography to the Tomb of Rachel and the Cave of Machpelah and all the other idolatrous sites of ancestor-worship that have replaced the unique mobility of our collective imagination.

At first, I must admit, it appeared to me that we were embracing a new form of empowered secularism. Back to the early days of the Zionist movement when territory was largely real estate to be purchased—or stolen—but not "reclaimed." But in letting go of the territorial mania it may be, it may just be, that we are finally beginning to reclaim something else that was hijacked from us. Even if the Aramaic words of the Kaddish were badly mispronounced by Rabin's son Yuval (which was, notwithstanding, a rather appropriate tribute to his father, who would surely have stumbled over the same words), the eulogies were in fact saturated with biblical images: "*Akedat Yitzhak*," Moses at the edge of the Promised Land, "*malakhei hasharet*," (the heavenly hosts), Yehuda Amichai's allusive verses. The Bible, on which generations of Israelis had been raised and then disenfranchised, has begun to reemerge as a new charter between the generations, along with the blood-stained "*shir le-shalom*" (Song of Peace) that was folded neatly in Rabin's pocket but proved a less adequate shield than a bullet-proof vest would have been. It is, nevertheless, something very local, very Israeli, something for the Zionists as well as the post-Zionists, the Jews and the Arabs, sons and daughters of Abraham, to share. There was a conspicuous absence, in the local T.V. coverage and in the official proceedings around the funeral, of American Jewish leaders. Some of them were here, we know, as we know that many of them were still smarting from the tongue-lashing to which they were subjected on Rabin's last visit to the United States.

Since the religion which is the only source of collective identity for the Jews in the Diaspora has been implicated in the most hideous crime that this people has ever known, the breach will not be repaired without major and daring acts of redefinition. We cannot, here or there, return Judaism to its pristine state as a religion of the Book, like a genie sent back into the bottle. Maybe there are some places in the world where a "nonpolitical" Judaism can be reconstructed, untainted by the structures of power and the horrors of a sawed-off pistol held by a man wearing a *kippah* (he did remove it during the murder ...). Some neo-Hasidic bubbles in protected places that look like Bratslav and have names like Westchester County or Brookline. Or as an intellectual and spiritual exercise that is safeguarded and contained within the confines of "The Text." But I rather doubt it. As one of the commentators said on television a few days after the assassination, "*sinat hehayyim hamithapeset leruhniut*" (hatred for life that masquerades as spirituality) is no longer tolerable among those for whom Judaism is still the wellspring of their consciousness and who must contend with its present contaminated condition.

There are endless discussions these days over the airwaves and in the print media about the rhetoric of hate which no one thought would spawn violent deeds. I am only surprised at the surprise. At the masses of people beating their breasts and saying that as of Saturday night, November 4, 1995, Israel became a different place. Of course it is different. Yitzhak Rabin is dead. But evidently most of the people in this country needed a major symbolic event to teach them what had been staring us in the face for a long time: that the poison was just waiting for the first public (=Jewish!!) victim. Emile Grunzweig, the graduate student in political science at the Hebrew University who, just days before his assassination at a Peace Now rally thirteen years ago, had submitted a seminar paper pleading for a public discourse with "words, not swords," knew it. We who had our lives threatened by the "Sicarians," who spent hours and hours at street-corner demonstrations over the past two decades being spat upon and cursed, told that it was a shame that the Nazis didn't get us and our families, that our mothers and our daughters were whores, knew it. All of us who watched in horror as the crowds in the demonstration of the "nationalist" camp chanted "*Rabin boged*" (Rabin is a traitor) and held up posters of our Prime Minister in Nazi uniform, knew it.

And of course the Palestinians knew it. They have been dying for years, but not being part of the "tribe," their deaths did not desecrate the communitarianism that drew strict boundaries between Us and Them and never allowed a true civil society to evolve in the Jewish State. Overnight, it is true, an intimacy seemed to reemerge within a community that had not lost its nostalgia for a Gemeinschaft in which everyone spoke

Yiddish or Judeo-Arabic or Ladino .... But if it is to succeed, this new solidarity cannot revert to some romantic and anti-democratic, ghettoized idea of "consensus," but to something that weaves this society together in a fabric that respects the different colors and textures and ages of our lives. And it is the young people who are demanding it: What has been released into the atmosphere besides the breathlessness of Rabin's generation, of adults weary of war, is the energy of youth who are claiming three-score-and-ten rather than self-sacrifice as their legacy.

After his death, Rabin became much larger than he ever was in life. Those who never forgave him for giving the order to "break bones" during the early months of the Intifada, and those who applauded him for it, cried along with those who registered his change of course from waging war to waging peace as an act of courage greater than any heroism in the battlefield. He became an icon not only of the peace process, but of the yearning for life that young people in this country never allowed themselves to express, even in the early pioneering days. A kind of repository of all the blessings that every individual wishes for himself or herself. What we see is not just hedonism, the desire for a "better life," however legitimate that might be. It is a challenge to one of the last remaining sacred cows of Zionism: "*tov lamut be-ad artzenu*" (It is good to die for our country"). Whether we believe what we will never know, that those were in fact Yosef Trumpeldor's last words, or whether, like Rabin, his last words (and testament) were: "*koev l, aval ze lo nora*" ("it hurts, but never mind...") may be the measure of the distance we have come as a country and as an aggregate of hurting and hurtful individuals .... □

The Golden Bowl Is Broken



Elisa Ben-Rafael and Joab B. Eilon

"The golden bowl is broken, but it was golden."
— F. Scott Fitzgerald

As the jostling mourners moved toward Yitzhak Rabin's burial site, Senator Ted Kennedy, carrying a small bag, was separated from the other American VIPs and left behind the security barrier. After quiet explanations, a sad and dignified Kennedy was finally able to make his way to the grave. The "suspicious" bag was filled with earth, collected from his older brothers' tombs at Arlington National Cemetery.

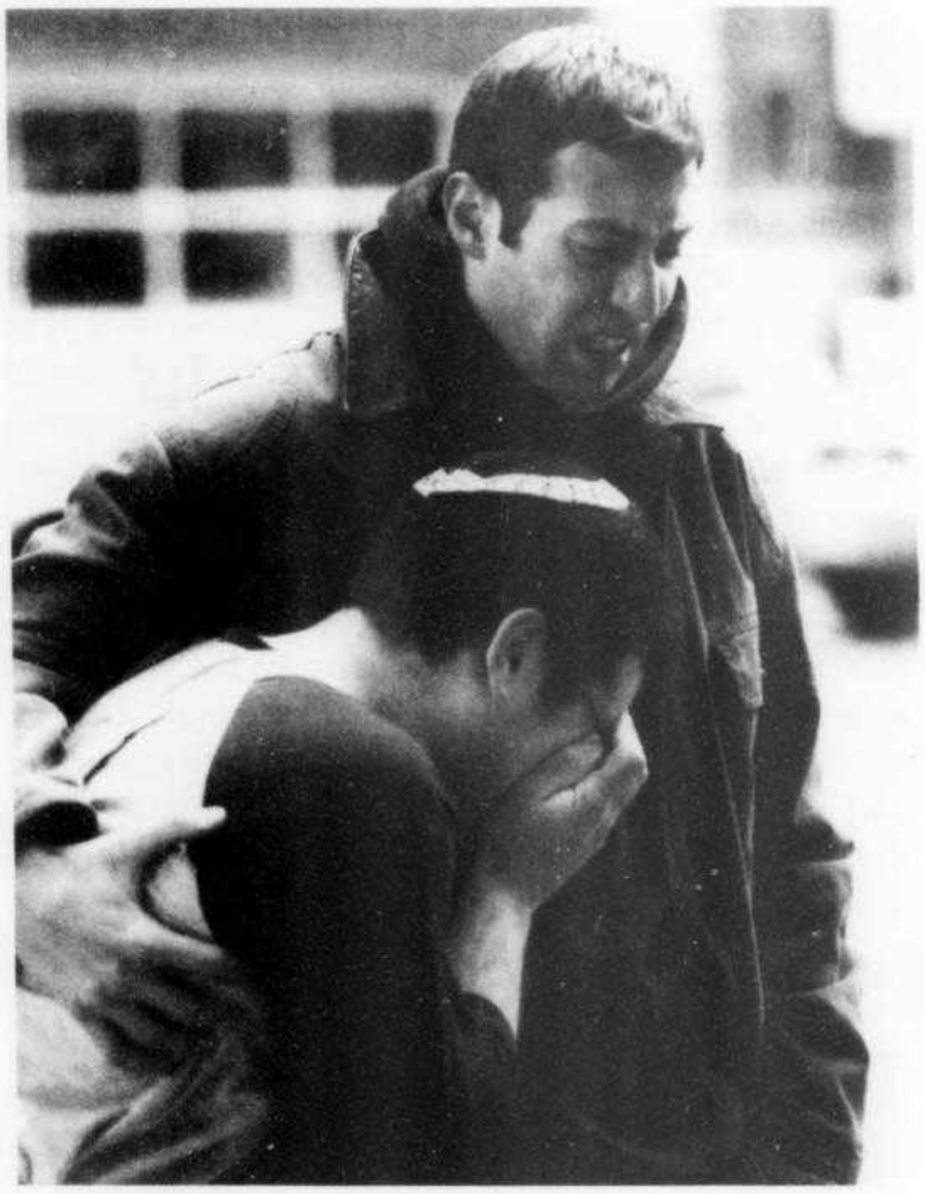
Watching Ted Kennedy pour out the earth from the Arlington graves onto the new grave on Mount Herzl, I remembered that I was six years old when my president, John F. Kennedy, was shot in Dallas. My daughter, Noa, was six years old when our prime minister was slain in Tel Aviv. Why does a mother have to witness her young daughter exposed to such cruel realities? Is this the world we are giving to our children?

Elisa Ben-Rafael, an Israeli civil servant, resides in Jerusalem with her children. Her late husband, David, was murdered in the terrorist bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992. The italicized text contains her personal remarks.

Joab Eilon is a former Israeli diplomat and civil servant. He currently lives in Jerusalem and is affiliated with the Israel Democracy Institute.

No, said the children of our country. "No to violence, yes to peace," they responded to us, echoing the refrain from the very rally at which Rabin was murdered. Much like the early "flower children" of the Sixties in America, feeling that the adults were not listening, Israel's young people took to the streets to find one another and grieve together for Rabin—the symbol of peace and hope for a better future which we all, but especially they, had lost.

In this most spontaneous and dramatic way, the kids illustrated to the adults that they would give us the better world we had failed to create for them. Their thousands of candles lit the site of the shooting, the grave side, and the prime minister's official residence, bearing silent witness to the unfailing hopefulness of youth. The depth of their reaction caught us all off guard. None of us expected that our pampered children, born in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, would engage in social or civic action. The young, usually so distant and cynical, who so docilely accepted the violent world we have given them, released their deepest emotions and displayed a solidarity rarely experienced in our society. Called to arms, whether or not they agree with the policies adults make for them, the young are the ones who invested all their hopes in Rabin's pledge and promise: "No to violence, Yes to



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peace," which he professed until minutes before he was murdered.

Before bed, my four-year-old son, Yonatan, spontaneously added Yitzhak Rabin's name to the good-night thought he sends to his late father in the Garden of Eden. At my children's request, I affixed stickers reading "Shalom, Chaver" *and simply* "Shalom" *to their beds.*

In contrast to the kids' behavior, most adults, who have become so used to shifting from car bombs, stabbings, and other acts of terror back to the daily routine, seemed to forget that this act did not fall within the "normal" range of violence. True, some who had previously been politically apathetic, have now begun to contribute time, energy, and resources for causes including support of the government, striving for national conciliation, creating ways for a real dialogue between polarized segments of the society, and determining what went wrong in our educational system. Others went into a state of extended mourning, soul- searching, and repentance. But many simply turned the page and continued as before.

Two days after the killing, places of entertainment reopened. Immediately after Rabin's *shiva*, the traditional first week and most intensive mourning time, respect for the deceased largely evaporated. Many on the political Left and center, in their pain, put the whole Right and the religious camp in one basket and accused them of collective responsibility for the assassination.

The right-wing nationalists and religious exhibited two reactions. Some of them went from a defensive stance against what they perceived as their wholesale demonization into a counterattack, going as far as to place responsibility for Rabin's death on Rabin himself and his followers. Others, perhaps in tacit recognition that they shared at least part of the responsibility, began calling for the very national unity which they had previously rejected.

Forgetfulness hit close to home—within the Labor Party itself. Seventeen days after the assassination, then-Acting Prime Minister Peres presented his candidates for ministerial positions to the Labor Party leadership. No portrait of Rabin was displayed on the stage, nor was an additional moment of silence in Rabin's memory requested.

During the next two weeks, everything turned political: Politicians attempted to win the hearts and minds of the candle kids, misused conciliatory vocabulary, and reverted to measuring state decisions not in terms of right or wrong, but in terms of political gain. In the name of bridging the gaps in the shaken society, the Labor Party courted the spiritual and political leaders of nationalistic and religious parties to broaden the government coalition, putting at risk fundamental issues such as rethinking the religious status quo and perhaps even the success of the peace process.

Politics engulfed even the candle kids, who have now been divided into opposing camps. Every Friday, across from the prime minister's residence, they hold counter-demonstrations: Labor Party Youth carry banners that read: "Peres, you are not alone," while the Likud Party Youth bear signs exclaiming, "We want another kind of peace."

On the last day of the *Shloshim*, which marks the end of the thirty-day mourning period prescribed by Jewish law, the nation shifted back into a state of mourning. Unlike Rabin's state funeral, this time the atmosphere at the grave-side ceremony on Mt. Herzl was that of a close family circle. President Ezer Weizman and his wife, Reuma, attended, as did Prime Minister Shimon Peres and other state officials. The recitation of Kaddish by Rabin's son was followed by *El Male Rachamim*, God, Full of Mercy, the prayer for the elevation of the soul.

The day ended with a state memorial ceremony at Binyanei Hauma, the international conference center in Jerusalem. A huge portrait of Rabin, in casual dress—the way Israelis prefer to remember this once-controversial leader who now has become a father figure for

so many—was soon illuminated by hundreds of mourners' candles.

Sunset in Jerusalem. Sunset traditionally separates *Minha,* the afternoon prayer, and *Maariv*, the evening prayer. Rabin's memorial ceremony omitted this ancient religious tradition. A moment of silence was followed by a musical version of Kaddish by Ernst Bloch, replacing the traditional praise to God. Rabin's letters to Leah were read aloud, revealing a sensitivity that no one but she knew he possessed, as he wrote about the death of his comrades: "It is the silence in which I remain alone."

Just over a month has passed since Rabin's murder. Under the Sabra toughness, behind the business-as-usual atmosphere, Israel remains a nation in shock, a people in crisis. "It can't be true, it's nothing but a bit of gossip in the dark," sang the popular Israeli singer Boaz Sharabi at the memorial service. This is what we all wanted to believe …

When I accompanied Prime Minister Rabin to Washington for the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the P.L.O. in September 1993, a correspondent asked me whether or not I would shake hands with Yasir Arafat. I quickly responded: "A hand offered in a handshake does not conceal a weapon and therefore it cannot harm me."

Yitzhak Rabin—warrior, diplomat, prime minister, and Nobel Peace Prize winner—knew this far better than any of us. □

Rabin is Dead
A Personal Reflection



Wendy Orange

It's now a month since Rabin's assassination. I've asked so many American Jews, "Where were you? What did you do? What did you feel when Rabin was killed?" To my surprise, I've heard many variations on my own experience—a combination of shock, the inability to fully grieve. The hour after I heard the news, I flew to Israel.

Cambridge

"One minute a man is alive...then he is dead." I'm studying this excised quote on the back of Paul Auster's book, *The Invention of Solitude*. It's 3:30 Saturday afternoon, November 4, 1995 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I'm bothered, yet curious, about this blurb. Why has someone cut the long opening paragraph to advertise the book? On the back of the jacket in bold print is this truncated phrase, stripped of all the words between. I flip back and forth from Auster's first page to the clipped phrases on the cover, wondering why the cut, absorbed in this minute detail when the phone rings. My friend Marge just heard on BBC news that, minutes ago, "Rabin was shot. They don't know if he'll live."

I'm alone in my study. The house is quiet; my dog Harry is asleep on the floor. I started howling—guttural sounds so loud, they seem to be coming from someone else. Harry looks up, stares at me, then slinks under a chair as Marge shouts: "Are you O.K.? Are you O.K.?"

On CNN, Rabin is not dead, and then he is. "One minute a man is alive … then he is dead."

The phone starts ringing, calls from all over the country and from Israel, as my daughter and visiting Israeli friends run in. Everyone is shouting, as we fall onto one bed, gazing at CNN in disbelief. Already Wolf Blitzer, the White House correspondent, is talking of political fallout. He seems lifeless, giving details without feeling. I know he lived in Jerusalem, worked for the *Jerusalem Post* for years, yet he's so matter-of-fact, so studiously devoid of emotion. Rabin is barely cold and the talk has already shifted into politics.

I've got to get to Israel, I think, no matter what. It's not my journalist's instinct, but horror and grief that drive me, the need to pay respects directly to a man I'd come to trust and admire.

I'd meant to get to the bank earlier. Now it's 4:45 as I race to Harvard Square, where students hang out—a typical late Saturday afternoon. The contrast between my frenzied state and my surroundings calls to mind a line from Auden: "how everything turns away quite leisurely from the disaster..."

Wendy Orange was TIKKUN*'s Mideast correspondent in Jerusalem during Rabin's administration. A collection of her essays about the peace process will be published in 1996.*

I see no emotional distress anywhere in these streets. Is no one here inside the immensity of this moment? Walking from the bank to my car I spot a middle-aged, well-dressed woman in black. She stands out from the kids milling everywhere.

"Are you Jewish?" I shout.

She looks horrified. "Certainly not!" she exclaims. "Why ask such a thing?"

"The Prime Minister of Israel was just assassinated, killed by a Jew," I say, staring at her, as if she'll change her mind. She stares back, offended. Needing solace from a Jew, a woman, a grown-up, "Certainly not!" echoes as I race home to pack.

El Al is completely booked, but a Boston-to-Zurich Swissair flight has one seat open—leaving in two hours. I pack as my daughter cries: "But, Mom, you promised you wouldn't work there anymore."

thought: On El Al there'd be something worse: terrible undercurrents, Left and Right split, secular and religious eyeing each other suspiciously—rabbis, *haredim*—not of one mind about Rabin's death. There'd be more overt paranoia and political frictions—what's been true for years, but somehow seemed negligible until Rabin's murder. Tonight anyone not in wild grief would seem suspect, I realize, as our jet is jolted by non-stop turbulence—rocking and trembling, sinking and rising over the Atlantic.

In the Zurich transit lounge, on CNN, Rabin's coffin is moving from Tel Aviv up toward Jerusalem. I, who rarely cry, can't stop—no sobs now, just tears. As I wait for the flight to Tel Aviv, a family arrives: a mother with a sweet round face, accompanied by two gorgeous, well-dressed daughters in their twenties. "I'm Israeli," she says.



STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

I lean down to her: "I hope when you grow up, Eliza, you will care about something as much as I care about this."

I'm sure she can't understand. But as I dash out the door she hands me a note: "I love you Mom," it says, with an amazingly accurate sketch of both of us and Harry, all three dwarfed under an Israeli flag, huge tears dripping from it.

At the business lounge on Swissair, to my surprise, everyone seems blasé. No onslaught of Jews. No journalists. No one to connect with in the midst of shock. One Swiss man, a cosmopolitan, world-weary type says: "What do you expect? It's the Middle East."

"Believe me," I reply. "This we did not expect."

The Swiss stewards on the plane are rigid about the tiniest details—so unlike the El Al crews. Swissair's reserve, German announcements, no comradery—this is not at all what I had in mind. But then the searing

I take her hand. "Isn't this awful? By a Jew," I say.

She seems strangely detached. "What can you do?" she says.

"But a Jew killing a Jewish prime minister! Did you ever imagine?"

"I'm a Palestinian Israeli," she says. "From Nazareth. Or I was. Now I'm an American, living in Los Angeles. The Israelis took away my passport. Now they want me back because Jews want to buy land I own, ten miles outside Jerusalem." She's soft, confused, claims she's not involved with "politics," though it's clear "politics" have defined her life. "Should we sell?" Wanda asks.

"They're probably settlers," I say.

"Yes, Jews from the settlements, working through an Arab middle-man, offering 50,000 dollars," Wanda explains. "What can I do? All I care about is my daughters."

The girls light up when they hear I'm a journalist, going to Rabin's funeral. They close in on me. "We have

a video camera. Could you take it with you? We could make copies, think how much money we'd get!"

I shoot them a horrified look, moving closer to the T.V.

Now I'm sitting next to a Jewish-American family returning from Israel. They've just heard the news. "We were *this* far from him," the bleached-blonde, sixty-something woman boasts in a Brooklyn accent. As if her proximity to Rabin is a trophy. "He was on the dais at our conference on Diaspora Jewry last week, not *this* far"—as she points to the space between us. "What a trip!" she continues, not missing a beat. "South Africa, Belgium, London, Israel—it's been a dream." Then she leans forward, motioning toward her husband, whispering hoarsely. "He made a fortune, he's a big philanthropist now, and the fuss, everywhere we go, you can't imagine the fuss!" she says proudly as, on the T.V., Rabin's coffin continues to move toward Jerusalem.

We who are going on to Tel Aviv are now shuttled in a special bus to check our bags. I'm surrounded by a group of elderly German tourists nervous about Israel's "unrest." "What bad luck!" one says.

Inside the tightly locked security shed I see only one Jew. His face is etched in misery: an archetypal Holocaust survivor, very old. I feel embarrassed as I look eagerly into his distracted face. He's in no relation to the immediate event, sitting completely mute, frozen inside old tragedies from which he's never recovered, seriously zoned out.

Business class is full of journalists, and others—mostly men—who look like politicians. There's an aristocratic Arab man walking the aisles, talking nonstop, immensely cheerful. I will never forget that trim middle-aged man, his handsome suit, perfect white smile and haircut. The one who can't stop joking, roving up and down the aisle the entire four-hour flight. I remember Woody Allen framing *Hannah and Her Sisters* like a novel, with chapter headings, each accompanied by Gershwin music. This little chapter, this tail-end flight from Zurich to Tel Aviv, this beginning of a week of mourning, I call: "The Arab businessman was far too cheerful."

But so too are the journalists. These newsmen and women from NBC in London seem anything but sad. On the contrary: They generate that happening energy journalists exude when a "good" story breaks—anything huge that instantly pumps adrenaline and excitement. Their loud chattering feels painful. Especially as it reminds me of my own excitement at the many peace stories I covered, so often with Rabin at center stage, a man we watched undergo a transformation as he became increasingly eloquent about "not ruling over another people," his moral stature growing before our eyes. Many of us in the peace camp took his transformation for granted. My only consolation is that I praised his speeches and courage in my reports, though not as often or forcefully as I experienced.

At Ben-Gurion airport, it's 7:00 p.m. Sunday, less than twenty-four hours since the announcement of Rabin's death. I get my bag and computer off the revolving ramp, steer my cart past customs, about to exit when I see a small room. It's where the clean-up staff at Ben-Gurion keeps equipment, changes in and out of uniform. It's so small I can't wheel my cart in, but the Israelis' Channel 1 is on, with Haim Yavin as anchor.

I'm drawn in, crying again, as are the three inside: two thin Sephardic men, one heavy-set woman with bright orange hair—all bleary-eyed. "Our last hour on duty," one guy says, in rudimentary English, better than my Hebrew. We're instantly connected by pain, as they gesture me to sit. Haim Yavin, clearly in shock himself, is openly talking through his feelings. On the screen, there are scenes of people screaming the previous night in Tel Aviv. Then we see Rabin's coffin, which has arrived at the Knesset. Next come interviews with Yigal Amir's neighbors in Herzliya. I've no desire to leave this room. After half an hour, I grab my cart and head for Jerusalem.

I arrive at Yehuda's. He's a third-generation Sabra, a painter. We hug as he shows me the canvas he was working on when the news broke. On old wood, it's a collage of the new Mideast; Israel is in clover green, with layers of thick dark gold paint covering each region with whom we've negotiated peace. Syria is clearly outlined, looking more expectant than vacant.

Yehuda and I walk up to the Knesset, two amidst the huge crowds. It's 3:00 a.m. There are hundreds of thousands of Israelis here in the middle of the soft, warm night. I had wondered on the plane how a country mourns. Now I see: Israelis in shock, their quiet astounding given the manic mood they usually generate. Hundreds of thousands; everyone inches forward in place. Not one loud sound. Not one push. No noise. Under an almost full moon, everyone is crying quietly. Exactly as Channel One showed, but so much more moving on the ground, on "*ha'aretz,*" the earth—yet also unearthly.

Kids of all ages light candle after candle, sing softly in circles, swaying to songs whose sounds rise in unusually soft November air, utterly unpretentious in T-shirts and jeans. Each kid is part of the whole, as if the country, despite all we know to the contrary, is one big kibbutz, as if we are all one family.

I remember one night, standing on a typically Israeli

non-line simply trying to get into a movie, being shoved so hard my back went out. Now it's so different. I can't believe the quiet, the calm. An old friend walks by: "The guards say almost a million have passed Rabin's body. I've been here since 9:00 a.m.," he tells us.

"That's a fifth of Israel's population," Yehuda muses, "and this is *before* the funeral." It's 4:00 a.m., and the Knesset crowds remain utterly patient, completely hushed, the result of nationwide shock. For a change, there are no right-wing militants. How used we'd gotten to their ubiquitous, mean-spirited protests. Now there's no hostility, just crying, even the soldiers guarding the site weep. The hush is not eerie like on Yom Kippur; the crowds lack their usual affectionate mood. It's as if we're all inside a huge embryo of pain, each alone together.

We pass Rabin's coffin. It's brightly lit, surrounded not only by hundreds of candles and bouquets, but awash with handwritten letters and farewell notes. In the almost full moon, as I approach Rabin's closed coffin, it seems his face is reflected on the lunar surface, his "half smile," his doggedly determined expression shining down on us. This impression is weird but comforting. It's not only my jetlag: Yehuda and others notice it as well.

We search for our car, climbing over construction sites, mounds of dirt and sand, lit only by moonlight. As if choreographed, there are no missteps in this ambiance. "Like walking on the moon," I say to Yehuda, who looks around. We seem like astronauts, moving through a foreign space, our bodies padded by invisible space suits of grief.

Jerusalem: After the Funeral

Leah Rabin speaks out the day after the funeral, declaring, "I have more in common with Arabs than with some Jews." Her words combine with images from the funeral day: King Hussein and Queen Noor crying, Hosni Mubarak and Egyptian officials walking in Jerusalem, Arafat and his wife Suha in Gaza, obviously shaken.

After the funeral there's a mythic energy afloat. Yet so much world attention eases the shock, as Arab dignitaries from countries who recently wouldn't allow the word "Israel" on their broadcasts wander the King David Hotel lobby. These friendships between Arabs and Jews, born from arduous round-the-clock negotiations, show the world this cross-ethnic solidarity is now reality. In three years, the often-derided peace process accomplished this amazing new geography of affinities. What's happened to many leaders can also happen for ordinary citizens in the years to come. Rabin, "the quintessential Israeli" as everyone calls him, meant this much to his former enemies, was loved because "he was authentic," as everyone says. He's left what was unimaginable a few years ago: a society no longer isolated, no longer surrounded on all sides by enemies. Amazing.

The powerful words and images following Rabin's death slip into the collective unconscious, which has been sliced open by the trauma. After the funeral, conversations break open on Israeli television, in every home, along the streets still streaked with mourners, on Mt. Herzl—the public words feeding the private talks, and vice versa. A condolence call by Arafat to Leah Rabin in her Tel Aviv apartment, where they sit side by side like grieving old friends, shows that the tenacious myth of Jewish solidarity versus Arab solidarity was buried along with Rabin.

This new force field across ethnic lines holds a mirror to Israelis: shows that friendships and, more important, *political identifications* are re-forming. The new divisions no longer pit Jew against Arab. Rather, on one side are those who are psychologically mobile, able to take risks, open to a "change of heart" (away from violence, toward co-existence). And on the other side: those stonily fixed, in the grip of fundamentalist mindsets, for whom land is more important than life.

The funeral was a wrenching affirmation for us who believe, with Peres, that this peace plan is the only way to go, though no one thinks it will be smooth sailing. But we who've been forming dialogue groups and friendships with Palestinians for years know Palestinians are not all Abu Nidal, just as Israelis now see they are not all Yigal Amir. Israelis are on the defensive, tainted by a terrorist, what so often the Palestinians have felt, asking that we don't view them as one with *their* killers.

Some Israelis have a palpable change of heart, exemplified in interviews with men from the most radical Golan kibbutz, who were filmed in the past saying they'll be moved out "only in their coffins." Now they say, "Whatever the government decides we will agree to: life is more important than land. We were being myopic, selfish." These Golan residents are now inside a new narrative, shifted by Rabin's death.

So too are many in Tel Aviv, especially among the young. A boy says: "I won't demonstrate with the Right, not ever again, I won't go near hate anymore."

A girl: "I was against this peace process. But then I was in Kiryat Arba when the news broke. [She's crying] I was shocked. They were happy. I realize it can happen again if we don't stop it. I went and lit candles today in the Square."

Another young man: "How could you ever have gone to those rallies?"

The girl: (defensive): "I didn't burn the effigies, I didn't do so much..."

T.V. cameras move from house to house in Tel Aviv. Another man in his twenties, a musician, says: "Part of me died with Rabin. I didn't sleep all night. I was for peace, but I didn't do much, now peace work will be the center of my life."

The cameras swing to Rabin's official residence, around the corner in Rahavia. We see weeping men and women, and the outpouring of kids still lighting candles, still singing. The newscaster says nothing, allows the scene to speak for itself. My friends shut off their television and we walk out into the scene we've just been watching. The emotional contagion is palpable. One woman looks at me and I catch her tears; someone walks away leaving his sadness for the next guy to embody. Inside and outside: a seamless flow.

And then there are those "Others," those so crazed by fantasies of "Arabs" that they'll kill their own prime minister and then *blame him*. That's the motif at a right-wing rally at Beit Agron two nights after the funeral, billed as a night of "soul-searching." And here they are: Those who directly or tacitly sanctioned the posters of Rabin in S.S. uniform, adorned in the kaffiyeh that's been Arafat's trademark.

They had demonstrated constantly, hurling insults outside Rabin's apartment house in Tel Aviv every Shabbat, building tent cities across from his official residence in Jerusalem. Day and night their rage was everywhere: on bumper stickers, on posters, hanging from banners flung from their apartment windows, ever-present and shrill. These screechingly visible manifestations of their hate have disappeared overnight, though unfortunately, the hate has not.

Yet none of us—academics and journalists who studied the settlers or described the raging rhetoric of Likud rallies, those who made careful documentaries about the Hebron settlers, the Shin Bet, who had live footage of Yigal Amir wildly stalking Rabin, armed—took the hate seriously enough. Despite all this concrete evidence: *They who called Rabin a traitor, an enemy of Israel, were not taken literally*. So hooked were many of us on the myth of Jewish solidarity, on the notion of the Palestinians as the only hotbed of terrorism, we missed the obvious: There are Jewish terrorists in our midst, who, much like their Hamas counterparts, claim to have a direct line to God. This small percentage of Jews who talked death still do—more veiled but unchanged, I see, as I enter the crowded auditorium for their rally.

The crowd includes many from inside the Green Line. We've learned already, on television and in the papers, that there was a silent fraternity inside Israel: bank managers, lawyers, army officers, school administrators, all living "normal" lives while giving support to the Kach movement: arms, money, and time, helping run the pirate radio Station Avitz 7, which broadcast hate.

Loudspeakers are set up in the large lobby at Beit Agron for the overflow crowds, as inside eight religious leaders take turns at the lectern: There's not much soul-searching in evidence here. All agree that trading land for peace will lead to disaster, except Rabbi Joel Bin Nun, who is shrieking, "Now is the time to see ways we were complicit in the murder. Now we must look at ourselves, and see how we created the environment for Rabin's assassination."

The group angrily shouts down Rabbi Bin Nun. Leaving the assembly and wandering the halls, I begin talking to a man with a *kippah*, multiple emotions (worry and sadness, agreement and disagreement) criss-crossing his face. He's crying, but searching for his "fix," i.e., his fixed position. This involves a complicated maze of ideas, in which any land for peace is seen as treason: Arabs cannot take Jewish land. He's no stereotype, not angry; his face isn't hard with hate, yet he's working overtime to consolidate his position, sensing as many of the settlers sense that they're on the wrong side of destiny, doomed to be marginalized.

"I'm very sorry Rabin is dead," he says, and seems to mean it. "But he committed a terrible crime. *He changed his mind.*"

Driving away from Beit Agron, I meditate on the fundamentalist mindset. I try to see where that fanatic lives in me and I find it easily: the certainty that won't be budged but only grows more tenacious when dispassionate facts are hurled at me. While I can inhabit *and* observe my own craziness, that's just what the fundamentalists can't do; they who seem to lack collective "observing ego."

Among the Arabs, there was no cheering at Rabin's death in Nablus, Ramallah, Jenin. The Palestinian in the street is sobered by the murder, out of fear if not sadness. Everywhere in the West Bank, what's expressed is immense relief the killer was not "an Arab." As many in Beit Sahur say during a dialogue group this week of *shiva*, had the killer been "Arab" that would have been "the end of the Palestinian people."

It's the Palestinian ex-terrorists who are saddened by Rabin's death. For they understand, better than many Israelis, what constitutes a real "change of heart." Many Palestinian leaders had their own conversion experience, the better to understand from the inside how Rabin-of-the-Intifada transformed into Rabin-of-the-peace-process.

Some Nablus Palestinian activists had gotten passes for the rally where Rabin was killed. They were there amidst the singing and the speeches, heard the shots, felt the shockwaves. So while Rabin is no hero in Gaza or the West Bank, these men and women feel Israeli pain. Many realize *for the first time* the extent to which Israel is divided, which makes them feel both more identified with Israelis and more worried about the very peace process that had evoked so much criticism, some valid, some petty.

In Beit Sahur it's Israelis who have to soothe and assure the Palestinians that in a democracy, peace cannot be killed through an assassination. Theocracy vs. democracy is a hot topic on both sides of the Green Line now. From the depth of Islam, from the depth of Judaism: The pull to theocratic fundamentalism is fueled by the same fears of westernization and of change, every extremist's common enemy. It is telling that a few minutes before Yigal Amir shot Rabin, he's reported to have said: "What's this society coming to?" as he watched the performance of hip, long-haired Aviv Geffen, a pop singer. Then Amir said: "Next they'll be bringing on that mutant, Dona International [a transvestite singer]." Five minutes later he murdered Rabin.

Seeing both Israelis and Palestinians become more accepting of the peace process, I recall a conversation from a year ago at a small breakfast for foreign press when Shimon Peres said: "We must shore up our alliances now. In ten years or so, Iran and Iraq will likely develop nuclear weapons. All these "details" between Israelis with the Palestinians that seem so huge now will look like tiny skirmishes."

It's this very spirit of building partnerships critical for Israel's future which Peres and Rabin set in motion that's now taking concrete form: Israeli troops moving out of the major cities in the West Bank, elections slated for January, "Palestine" slowly coming to life as the Palestinian citizens on the West Bank and in Gaza are feeling freer, less trapped. The settlers have far less latitude: more surveillance from their government, the Palestinian Police now armed and able to protect their own citizens. Into this shifting reality, the majority of Israelis are beginning to accept however reluctantly that Palestinians have rights to land they already live in.

After Rabin's murder, troop movements away from West Bank cities have proceeded ahead of schedule and with less fanfare. Mishaps in Jenin or scuffles in Nablus aren't magnified into riots or ambushes in the Israeli press. Most Israelis take as a fact of life that the West Bank will be primarily under Palestinian rule, while Palestinians have a new take on Israel, seeing clearly for once that Israel is not a people united under one mindset.

So ironically, precisely what Rabin was murdered for is being implemented without much scrutiny in these weeks when each society is so preoccupied with its own internal schisms that there's less room for obsession about the external "Other." Just what many of us have hoped for all along. Like those long-awaited shifts in our personal lives, what's momentous has happened so incrementally, it actuality goes almost noticed: "Two states for two peoples" has really begun.

Cambridge

Catching the echoes under the long shadow of Rabin's assassination, a hollow feeling arises, especially for those of us living far from the intense discussions going on in the news, in the streets, in the Knesset, in the West Bank, and mostly all over Israel now. Literal distance radically alters conversation. Far away, we're pushed out of the quick of things.

Our words here in the States seem terribly removed from the ongoing reality taking so many shades and shapes in Israel. The essential discourse that for these last four weeks has connected Jews the world over (even as it disconnected us in a way we never imagined possible)—remains red-hot and immediate there, while by contrast, here conversation seems pale.

Personally I feel much as I did after each of my parents died. For a long time after each death it was as if the umbrella of my universe had been slit open, allowing bursts of icy wind to rush in, a cold current that lowered the temperature in all the rest of my life. I've learned this coldness is what death leaves, especially the death of someone essential to the small world each of us holds most dear: the figures, images, and people who keep us intimate with life.

Oddly, Rabin was part of my essential inner cosmos because the peace process was my passion for the last few years, and he was so central to it. That's why I had such an overwhelming emotional response to his assassination. Living and working in Israel, I was blessed to participate in all he set in motion, able to see with my own eyes and make up my own mind about what was going on. I tended to the ups and downs directly, able to intuit what was going on behind each leap, each breakthrough, each danger or pitfall. Like us parents tuning into our kids, I felt the shifts "on the ground" in an unmediated way, intensely engaged with the many Israeli and Palestinian realities—often so at variance with the floating stereotypes we get from the media.

Now I see how much living there allowed me to know what I simply can't know from here, where immediacy shifts into abstraction.

So the cold numbness in the aftermath of Rabin's

murder, which works on each of us in its silent way, is heightened for me by seeing what distance does to knowing. For here in the States: Jewish or Arab, Muslim or Christian, at best we can only catch the echoes, since living in the Diaspora means living far from a world of meanings only those in the Mideast can directly access. To truly get a bead on what's going on, we need to be there. Real insight is given to those at *this* time, in *that* place. Especially those curious, courageous, and flexible enough to step into and through the various subcultures thriving or extinguishing, clashing and—most amazing—managing to co-exist this early morning in Jerusalem, midnight here in Cambridge. □

Before and After
Some Personal Reflections



Alice Shalvi

I was not in Israel when Rabin was assassinated. For two weeks prior to the murder I had been on a lecture tour in the United States and the United Kingdom. Only a few days earlier I had spoken on current social issues in Israel. In my talk, I maintained that we were faced with a potentially incendiary combination of deep political divisions and rifts, on the one hand, and an increasing legitimization of the use of physical violence, on the other. I ended that particular part of my speech with a by no means wholly rhetorical question that I related to the Cain and Abel story: "Shall we again see brother lift up hand against brother?" Well, we did.



To judge by the scenes of public grief and mourning that I saw on television, the weeping youngsters lighting candles, the throngs filing past the coffin as it lay in state, I expected to come home to a changed country and a different atmosphere, but what I in fact found—and what now, as I write these words five weeks after the assassination, still exists—is not quite the change of heart I anticipated.

During the thirty days of mourning, Rabin was lionized as never before, all his faults and flaws apparently ignored, though they could hardly have been forgotten by the many critics who recall innumerable episodes when he emerged as less than perfect.

Concurrently, there was much breast-beating and confession of sins of omission and commission; but they came primarily from what is commonly referred to as "the Left"—liberals and peace activists—and, more hesitantly, from a very few of the more moderate centrists, such as Zevulun Hammer, the head of the National Religious Party. The vast majority of the settlers, the heads of yeshivas who had openly vilified Rabin and, at least implicitly, suggested that he could legitimately be killed, the many immigrants speaking Hebrew with pronounced American accents as they vehemently maintained that "This is *our land*," even the smirking assassin sitting in the courtroom—all of these were like a flashback to the "days before ... "

The dichotomy within the land continues. Even as the *bien-pensants* continue to agonize over how to achieve "national unity," whatever that may mean, how to establish dialogue with people who neither think nor speak nor act as they themselves do, and with whom there can never be more than the most minimal common language or common ground, the extremism continues. Margalit Har-Shefi, suspected of having been privy to the crime before it was committed, was welcomed back to her settlement with singing and dancing and borne shoulder-high through its streets. The yeshiva students at what is purported to be Joseph's tomb in Shechem reviled the Israel Army district commander and his Palestinian counterpart who were inspecting the area, using the same terms—"traitor," "fascist," "Nazi"—that were hurled at Rabin.

I think with deep longing of the days before 1967, when we were a small nation in a small country, before the coarsening of the moral fiber that—almost inevitably—accompanied our transformation into an occupying power. I wonder whether we shall ever regain our lost innocence. □

Alice Shalvi served as principal of the Pelech Religious Experimental High School for Girls for fifteen years. Since 1984 she has been the founding chairwoman for the Israel Women's Network.

A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



Feeling Betrayed by the Tribe

Akiba Lerner

After the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, I've been finding it increasingly difficult to see myself embracing the whole of the Jewish people in the same tribal way and with the tribal consciousness that got me to volunteer to leave a pleasant life in California and enlist in a combat unit in the Israeli Army. Before I was willing to put my life on the line for all of Israel; now I feel confused, betrayed, and ashamed. Let me explain.

That fateful Saturday evening when Rabin was shot I was not with my paratrooper unit deep inside Lebanon. My mother had become very ill and I had just arrived to be with her in Ashland, Oregon. Surprising even to me, who had spent so much time in college reading feminist literature and trying to overcome my male conditioning, I found that one of the hardest parts of leaving my unit was having to turn over my gun. I had cleaned that thing hundreds of times. I knew each piece, each curve, I could put it back together blindfolded. During the few hours of sleep that I was allowed, I would place it underneath my head as a pillow so that no one could steal it (something that our commanders would try to do in order to test our alertness). On guard duty, sometimes way out in the middle of nowhere, I relied on that piece of metal to protect my life as well as the life of my sleeping friends. Unfortunately, it became a part of my discourse.

Even though I find guns to be pretty disgusting things and still firmly believe we'd probably all be better off without them, carrying a gun in a Jewish army became a very meaningful thing for me. More than the red beret or silver wings on my chest, carrying my M-16 everywhere I went meant I was a defender of the Jewish people. It made me a target for terrorist attacks. But it also created a bond between me and all the other Israelis around me. They knew I was in the Army to serve them and their needs. I could depend on them and they could depend on me, as they had counted on generations of young soldiers before me.

There was an interconnectedness that I felt while in the Army the likes of which I had never felt in the States. Like most college students in America, I had dismissed German Romantic conceptions of community or gemeinschaft as an unachievable fantasy; but in many ways I was experiencing it firsthand in the '90s while in the Israeli Army.

There were many tough times in the Army, but I also felt a warm feeling of comradeship and connectedness. I was more than just a soldier for Israel, I was a warrior for my tribe, my people. There was definitely something primal about it, something in my gut that felt ancient and very connecting to my people's history. In late October, as I left Israel to visit my mom, I felt optimistic about what was happening in Israel. For so long the Occupation had eclipsed the bright future Israel could achieve. But now the government was repudiating the notion of "Greater Israel" and had signed Oslo II, making territorial compromise a reality. Israel had reluctantly accepted a more morally sensitive understanding of what it means to share its land with another people.

My sense of comradeship and tribal connection was disrupted, however, by the gun of the right-wing religious fanatic who murdered Yitzhak Rabin. Like most people, I was in shock: How could this happen? How could a Jew do this? Isn't there a basic understanding among those who have tribal affiliations that the group is sacred, making murder the ultimate perversion? Especially our tribe which was almost eliminated in this century. In my shock and pain I've been searching for ways to make some sense of this whole thing. I had written my honors thesis at Berkeley on Jewish resistance to Roman imperialism. Any student of that history can tell you that Jew killing Jew is not something new.

In fact, throughout Israel's short history, Jew has killed Jew. So why the big surprise? Acknowledging this part of our history did very little to ease the pain or help to make sense of this act. I guess one of the hardest parts to come to terms with is that the assassin wasn't some fringe nut acting on his personal craziness. Amir, Rabin's assassin, was brought up and trained in the elite of Israel's army and learning institutions. Reading an article about Amir's life, what struck me as most interesting about this guy was how unremarkable his background was he seemed like any number of *mizrachi* guys in Israel, some of whom I had served with. In many ways, he was very normal and typical of extremely right-wing religious Jews. It is becoming painfully clear that

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Akiba Lerner recently completed his tour of duty with the paratroopers in the Israeli Army. He is currently a writer living in the United States.

he did not carry out the assassination on his own. It is also becoming clear that he was able to find religious justification and sanctioning for his mindset. From beating up Arabs while in the Golani Brigade to seeding religious justification for Rabin's assassination, he had never encountered a force within the Jewish religious Right that questioned his attitude or behavior. The tragedy with which we must come to grips is that his commanders, rabbis, and society as a whole played roles in encouraging his extremism and brutality.

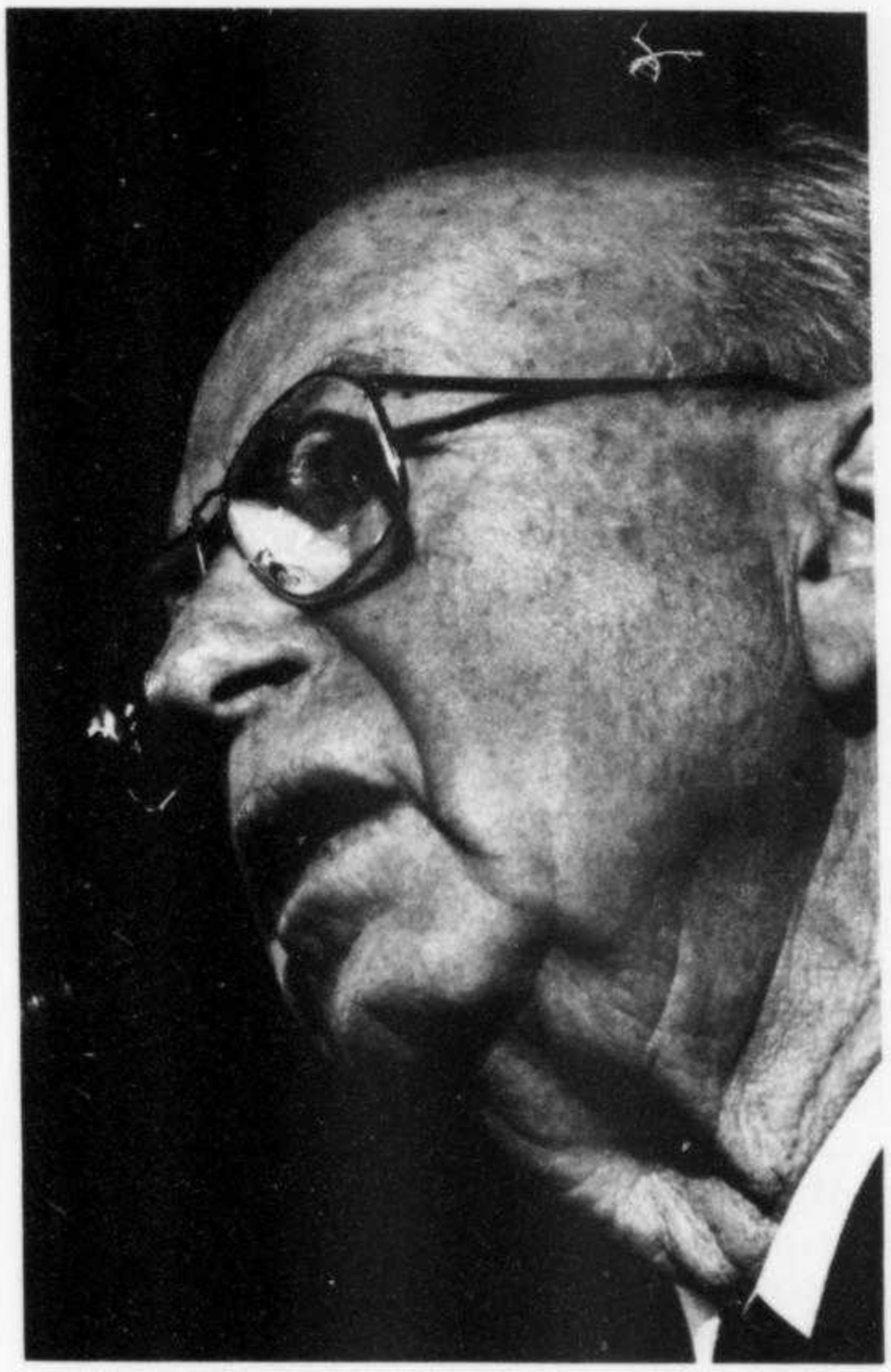
Like dogs lapping up their vomit, many rabbis and right-wingers are claiming they have been misunderstood, but any intelligent person can see that the assassin's act came out of a very entrenched ethos of religious extremism, intolerance, and violence all of which were fostered by the world of the religious Right which he inhabited.

But even with all that, Amir and his accomplices are still part of the tribe, right? I served with these people. I put my life on the line for their settlements. I was committed to making sure that, although I didn't believe in their ideals, they as fellow Jews would be safe.

Tribal affiliations sometimes allow us to experience the better sides of each other and of ourselves. Being part of a tribe can enable us to be more caring, giving, and sensitive than we normally are in huge mass society. It can allow us to be more forgiving or accepting of people who are radically different than us, as long as they partake in acknowledging a similar tribal bond.

But now, after the assassination, I feel ashamed that while in the Army I allowed my tribalism to take precedence over my commitment to Jewish values. Sometimes values that we learn from our tribal histories and wisdom demand that we confront our tribes, even at the expense of unity. In many ways ending the Occupation has become one such moment. Although tribal unity may have become shaken, it was more important for the overall survival of the tribe that we discontinue our immoral rule over another people.

Instead of actively confronting the immoral activities of my tribe, however, I shied away from my own prophetic tradition and decided it was more important to be a part of the forces for change from within. I served in the West Bank even though the Occupation violates the values I hold as a Jew. My rationale was that until a peace settlement could be established, Jews still needed to be protected there, and it is better to have soldiers who are sensitive to the plight of the Palestinians than those who are not. I also wanted to show right-wingers that even though I thought what they were doing was antithetical to Judaism, I wasn't going to let that get in the way of my tribal commitments. Good or bad, after the Holocaust it was more important that Jews be defended—even if they weren't following the ideals of Judaism that taught us to love thy neighbor and not oppress the stranger.



RUBEN BITTERMANN/IMPACT VISUALS

Looking back, I wonder if I could have served my people and the ideals of Judaism better had I refused to serve in the West Bank.

Part of this is what led me to sign up for the paratroopers.

I felt that everyone should give what they can.

In the Army my sense of tribalism became more acute. My unit became my family, friends, and tribe. I was willing to go to hell and back with these guys, and, if need be, die for them.

We seldom talked about politics because it might

interfere with our work. Sometimes in conversation one of the guy's views would come out like "you can't trust Arabs," or "Rabin is destroying the country," but for the most part our personal politics were put aside for more pressing issues like who was going to guard during the graveyard shift.

It wasn't until the middle of this past summer that I got a little taste of just how much political divisiveness was lingering underneath the service with my fellow "nice Jewish boys" as they say of the murderer Amir. The settlers in Efrat had decided to play "king of the hill" with the Israeli Army by sending small sorties out to neighboring hilltops around their settlement. As paratroopers, we were put on alert because we might be called in to deal with these unruly settlers. I found it somewhat ironic that here I was, all the way from America, to "defend my people" against those who would seek to destroy us, and our real opponents were a bunch of right-wing Jews, a lot of whom were from Brooklyn. Instead of focusing our attention on the defense of Israel against her hostile neighbors, our time, resources, and energy had to be directed toward Jews who thought they could recapture the glory of David's kingdom by occupying a few barren hills owned by some Arab peasants.

What really shocked me was not that these Jews, mostly of American heritage, had little respect for law and order in Israel but that some people in my paratrooper unit expressed doubts about their willingness carry out orders to dismantle the shantytowns the settlers of Efrat had created. As in any army, to disobey an order is very serious stuff. I do believe that soldiers who find their work to be morally objectionable should have the option to disobey without getting shot. Yet I never allowed my objections to being an occupier get in the way of my performance in the Army. When sent to some settlement surrounded by Arab villages, I was willing to put my life on the line so that resentful Palestinians wouldn't kill the Jews sleeping comfortably in expensive villas twenty yards from my post. I never once complained or expressed disapproval through my behavior or expressed moral contempt of our actions to my commanders.

I participated in being an occupier against my better moral intuition because I believed that I was part of a democracy that sometimes demanded sacrifices of moral conviction in order to preserve amongst the citizen body law, order, and security. Many of my friends and other left-wingers who had served before me in similar units shared the same belief that it was more important to abide by the general democratic will and not use one's army service for political agendas.

Many of us imagined that when it came time for the Right to compromise, they would show as much respect and restraint as we had shown carrying out the Occupation. But all summer long that was being proven false. In the streets of Israel, people were openly calling the government illegitimate, portraying Rabin in Nazi uniform, and suggesting insurrection. In the hills of Efrat, settlers led by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin were showing how little they cared about the well-being of the Israeli Army—they were out to make their point at all costs.

On reflection, I feel like a fool. As soon as rightists stop getting their way, they start scrambling to find halakhic justification for their subversiveness. Where is their sense of tribal commitment?

Equally upsetting to me was my realization that I had let so many things slide. I heard of the rabbis who were encouraging soldiers not to follow orders in furtherance of the peace process, or who explicitly called Rabin a "*rodef*," hence sanctioning his murder. But I let it slide. After all, our whole tradition is predicated on the preservation of multiple discourses, so why should I interfere with theirs?

Like many soul-searching Israelis, I look back ashamed at all the times I failed to confront right-wingers. Looking back, I now wonder if I could have served my people and the ideals of Judaism better had I refused to serve in the West Bank, or had put my energies into actively combating the right-wingers amongst my people. Even though I was outraged and sickened by the ferocity of the Right's rhetoric and actions, I was reluctant to take a firm stand against them.

When you are in a tribal setting, you have to earn your stripes (or, in my case, your "wings") before you can truly feel a part of and claim a voice within the tribal circles. Also, the horrible and devastating nature of recent Arab terrorist attacks made it hard to speak against what was in many circumstances righteous rage over what was happening. From my vantage point, it definitely looked as if the Palestinians were going to do more to dismantle the peace process than any half-wit Jew from Brooklyn or Kiryat Arba.

We had all become so accustomed to making excuses for or tolerating the extreme right wing, no one was really prepared for the Right to behave the way they claimed they would. The tribal thing blinded us all. I feel like I've been slapped in the face and made a fool of not just by Amir, but by the whole right wing, which allowed such extreme antidemocratic, inflammatory discourse to develop and flourish among its ranks. Whenever I allowed myself to get into arguments with right-wingers either in the Army or on the streets of Jerusalem, I would always console my outraged sensibilities that these people couldn't really mean what they

said, they were just speaking out of the pain of the recent bombings or out of the historical pain and paranoia of the Holocaust and our previous history as an ultra-oppressed people. For all my compassion for them, I was rewarded by their hatred of my position, and their murder of our elected leader.

Can I still have tribal relations with those who wish to pervert the very values and ethics upon which our tribalness is based? Lately in Israel there have been calls for unity, but how can there be unity if part of the tribe wants to change the emphases from being a light unto the nations to being like the worst of nations. How can there be tribal unity with those who are willing to take up arms against others within the tribe?

A lot of my tribalism died with Rabin. I find it very difficult to hold onto the notion that because of the Holocaust every Jew, good or bad, has the right to claim our tribal protection. If Jews wish to continue oppressing Palestinians, they can no longer expect me to defend them, either physically or intellectually.

I'm sick and tired of using the emotional scars of the Holocaust to explain why some Yemenite Israeli punk or some Brooklyn Jew feels he can go around with his Golani buddies and abuse Palestinians. This revolting behavior has been going on for far too long. It is widely known within Israeli society that certain units in the army, such as Golani, have a reputation for violence toward Arabs. But because the violence has been directed toward Arabs, these units' behavior has been widely accepted and even congratulated.

Once a society prescribes and condones a form of violence toward a designated "Other," it becomes very hard to control the resulting pathological forces. A few weeks ago, I talked to one of my friends from the paratroopers. He told me that a friend of his, who is in the Golani Brigade, reported that some of his officers were cheering when they found out that Rabin's assassin was one of their own.

One would hope that Jews would realize that an essential element of any moral and healthy tribalism must include respect and protection for the various forms of "otherness" that dwell among you. Some aspects of the Jewish tradition recognize the need for toleration and protection of the "stranger." The Bible warns us that when we dwell in our land, "do not oppress the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt." Unfortunately, after centuries of oppression culminating in the Holocaust, Jews have been far too willing to overlook that part of the tradition.

The desire never to feel the powerlessness and horror of the Holocaust again has led Jews to be tougher and less sensitive to the needs of others. As a result, Israel experienced the post-1967 surge of popularity for "settler Judaism," which sees itself as partaking in the spirit of Joshua instead of the prophets.

Yet this is not the only strand within Judaism. There are other Jews today who are building on the prophets and their message. In my own personal life, even though I strive for universal ideas, I find that the only meaningful way to work toward the benefit of all is by being deeply rooted in my particular history and people. A tribalism that doesn't reach for a universalism, however, will end up in a form of internecine cannibalism. As we've seen with the Israeli Right, and with Rabin's assassin, all the anger and energy that was put into denigrating the Other, the Palestinians, can be easily channeled toward those Jews who are perceived to be siding with the feared Other. Intolerance of others will eventually eat away at the very tribal core that our solidarity was supposed to protect.

Concern for the humanity of all peoples and respect for otherness aren't just some lofty universal ideals—they are part of good, pragmatic tribalism. There are two main reasons for this: As our world becomes smaller through technologies, and as problems with resources spill over national boundaries, it becomes impossible to hold onto the notion that one tribe or people will be able to save themselves at the expense of another. We are all in fundamental relationship with each other, whether we like it or not. The sooner we realize that, the better chance my tribe and other tribes have of surviving. The other reason why tribalism without a view toward some forms of universalism can lead to a type of cannibalism has to do with the psychodynamics that are set in motion through continual fear and denigration of "otherness." All the hate and fear that the Right has generated toward Palestinians is now slowly being directed toward the Left. If you believe in territorial compromise you become the demonized Other against whom the tribe must rally to protect itself. Soon the circles of who is "in" and who is "out" get smaller and smaller.

If I thought that the survival of the Jewish people demanded war, I would be more than willing to fight it, but luckily the challenge to my generation of fellow Israelis is the extent to which we can live in peace and tolerance. The only hope I have of passing along a viable form of tribalism to my children is if a Judaism can emerge that is both rooted in our people's particularistic history but also committed to universalistic values and respect for otherness. Perhaps it will be this transformed sense of Jewish destiny, mirrored in part in Rabin's dramatic transformation from a narrowly focused Israeli militarist to a man with a vision of peace, that could be the best memorial for our slain hero. □



Getting to the Garden

Alice Chasan

As in a dream, the highway was sunlit, empty. Who would set out on a punishing day like December 10, with a wind-chill factor of minus 17, unless they had to?

Gliding toward the New Jersey Turnpike on the painfully cold morning of the Madison Square Garden rally at the end of Yitzhak Rabin's *shloshim*, I owned the road—except for the other rally-goers. We moved in tandem: The chartered buses carrying the synagogue groups, the day-school kids, the Federation faithful. And the limos carrying the Jewish VIPS, who were headed to the same place as the ordinary Jews, but traveling there in style—with a difference. They were, after all, the *machers*, the ones who "make it happen" in the Jewish world. They go first class, the best that money can buy, set apart from the hoi polloi. They'd arrive at the Garden faster, more comfortably; they couldn't bother to take the trip with the ordinary Jews.

What a perfect metaphor for what was to follow.

That ride formed a fitting prelude to a gathering that embodied the best and the worst that the Jewish world has to offer. The movers and shakers came in force. The men in their expensive suits and power ties, the women in their jewels and furs—on a Sunday morning. And they did more than come, of course. They'd taken the original conception of this day—a rally to support the *peace process*—and reduced it to an incoherent mélange of memorial, musicale, and opportunity for the powerful to strut their stuff.

What happened? Why did the American Jewish leaders transmute a peace rally into a "day of unity"? The limo riders couldn't bring themselves even at this time, after all that has happened, to stand up for peace with the Palestinians.

Let's not offend the Orthodox, they argued; let's not rattle all those American Jews conditioned into suspicion of the peace process. Safer simply to memorialize Yitzhak Rabin; smarter to push aside the meaning of his handshake with Yasir Arafat. Better to fill that Garden than to take a strong, unequivocal stand for peace—otherwise, what a *shande* for the *goyim*, that we can't even fill the Garden!

How would the limo riders even know what ordinary Jews hope for, or fear? Safer for whom? Better to leave the American Jewish rank and file in the despair that comes with feeling powerless to move from darkness into light, from suspicion and hatred toward peace and reconciliation?

The best and the worst, indeed.

Thousands came. How many, I'm not sure, but they stood for a long time in the stinging winter wind to get in—and thousands were turned away—to cry, to sing "*Shir Le-Shalom*," to drink in the words and sight of Leah Rabin, the widow, so strong, so eerily like a Jewish version of the Jackie Kennedy we wanted Jackie Kennedy to be. To take comfort from the presence of the *chaver* of The *Chaver*, Shimon Peres, whose poetic words, while beautiful, did not convey the comfort of Rabin's stolid monotone.

But did we need the *machers*, with their puffed up self-importance, exuding that perpetual air of entitlement that any of us who have grown up in the organized American-Jewish world know so well, interposed with the likes of Leah Rabin and Shimon Peres? Somehow, we American Jews can't seem to grow out of that extended phase of communal insecurity that compels us to tout our rich as the sign of our having "made it." Even at a peace rally—a *peace rally*.

Well, it *should* have been a peace rally. Instead—so evocative of the political disjunctions of the Sixties—the event proceeded on two levels. The surface, dominant-culture message mixed a bland evocation of unity with the unobjectionable yet fuzzy recapitulation of Rabin's legendary role in the life of the State of Israel; beneath it, the potent codes of the peace movement, through song lyrics, through the metaphors both Mrs. Rabin and Peres employed. Many of the fur-coated crowd squirmed discontentedly as Aviv Geffen and David Broza sang, while for me the sounds and words cooked up images of peace and conjured what it must have felt like at that Tel Aviv rally, so thrilling in its validation of the forces of peace, right before Rabin was murdered. The oblique allusions to the passionate, pent-up drive for a higher vision, a more powerful reason for being, stirring under this carefully choreographed program, energized so many in the Garden. But the day's dominant message remained: Keep those transformative energies under wraps. They're unseemly, even dangerous.

Alice Chasan is the executive editor of TIKKUN.

Why do the supporters of peace abide being forced underground? Why do we tolerate our marginalization by the reactionary Jewish powers that be in America, when Yitzhak Rabin *was* the power, the *rosh memshalah*—the head of state—of Israel. He died for this peace process. Can't we have the courage to support it?

It should have been a peace rally. But the limo riders still hold sway among us. The rest of us must arrive by other means at where we're going. Let's hope that we can figure out how to get there—to peace, to a different way of coming together as a community. The limo riders have their map. It's time for the rest of us to draw our own. □

Who Are We?
An Orthodox Perspective



Steve Lipman

Two Kohanim, equal in status, were running to sacrifice a sheep in the Temple. One pulled out a knife and stabbed the other in the heart. The father of the wounded youth came and found him still in convulsions. He said, "May he be an atonement for you. My son is still in convulsions and the knife has not become ritually impure." His remark teaches that the cleanliness of vessels was more important to them than the spilling of blood.

—*Tractate Yoma*, 23a

We are all the homicidal Kohan. Yitzhak Rabin's assassination by a kippah-wearing, Torah-quoting product of Israel's most-respected Zionist *yeshivot* should have ushered in a period of unprecedented introspection and self-improvement, the harbinger of a twentieth-century Mussar movement, especially in the Orthodox community whence came Yigal Amir. On the whole, it hasn't. The cries of a few notable rabbis, among them Norman Lamm in the United States and Yehuda Amital in Israel, are drowned out by ringing silence.

On the day that Rabin was killed, I, a reporter for a weekly Jewish newspaper, happened to be in Borough Park, Brooklyn's sprawling Orthodox neighborhood. After havdalah, the end of Shabbat, I made the rounds of the pizza shops and drugstores along the area's commercial strip, on assignment from my editor, to sample local opinion. To my surprise, it was business as usual on 13th Avenue. No signs of mourning, or distress. The shops were full, the customers were shmoozing. No indication that a calamity for the Jewish people, the premeditated taking of a Jewish life, had occurred a few hours earlier.

Reactions? It's a tragedy when "any Jew" is killed, said many. Too bad that it was a Jew who killed Rabin, said some. A *shande*, a scandal, that "an Orthodox Jew" was the triggerman, said others. Those were the sympathetic voices. From a vocal minority, I heard this: "Good riddance!; It should have happened a year before!; Peres is next!"

Just a few anecdotes, you might say.

During the following weeks, while I was constantly on the verge of tears, my colleagues—thinking, pious folks, all of them— were making their usual jokes. Lighten up, they told me. A friend, a chasid, detected my subdued tone in a phone conversation. "What's wrong?" he asked. I told him. "You're a very sensitive person," he said.

A leader of Israel was killed, and I was "sensitive" to take it personally?

Just a few more anecdotes, you might say.

Maybe it's only New York. Admittedly, the *motzei Shabbos* crowd on 13th Avenue is not the neighborhood's intellectual elite. Undoubtedly, the teachers and preachers at the head of the Orthodox community sensed the frightening tenor of assassination. They spoke out against the senseless hatred, as they had before the three shots rang out in Tel Aviv. What Yigal Amir did was a tremendous "*chillul Ha-Shem*," an open desecration of God's name, they declared. But no call for a public fast day followed. I did not sense in their statements a sense of urgency—the outrage they express in matters of *kashrut* violation, for example.

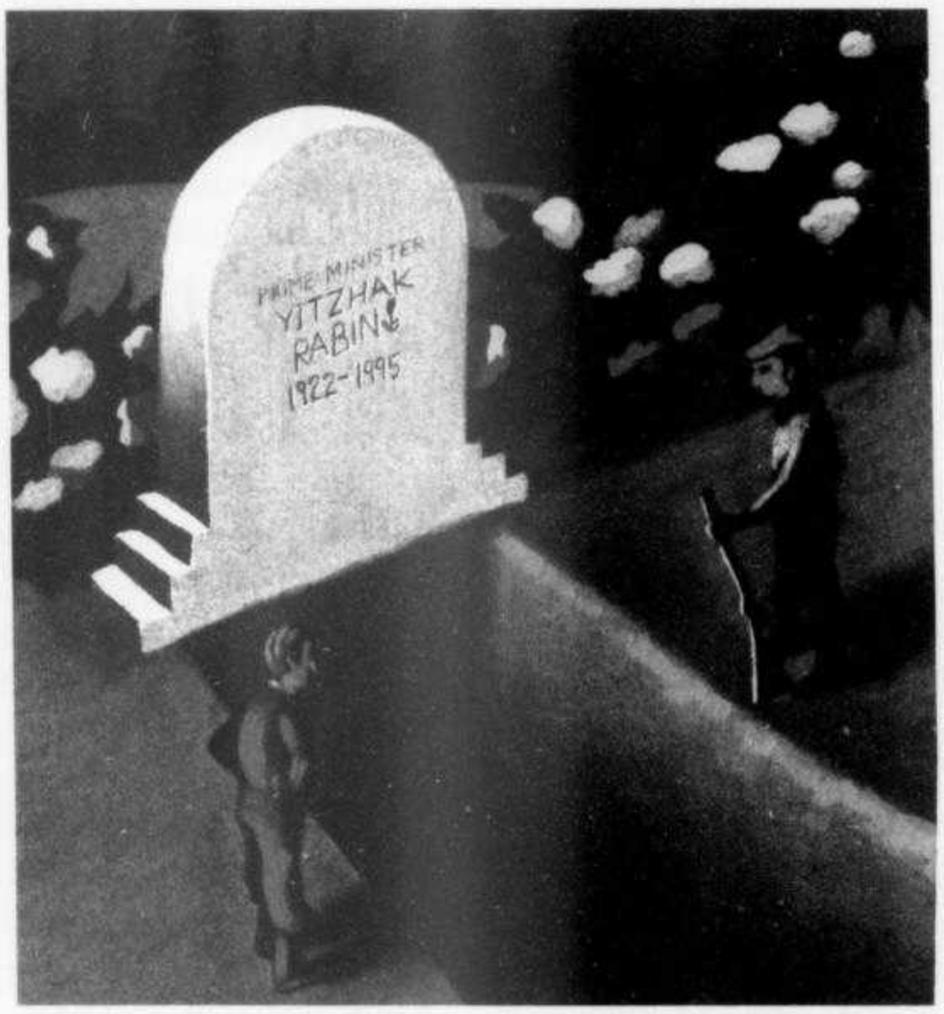
If I grant the Orthodox community's leaders the benefit of the doubt, I am left with another, larger concern. Even if they exhort their people about respectful relations with one's neighbors—non-Jews, non-Orthodox Jews, political opponents—who listens? Yigal Amir obviously didn't. Judaism demands that leaders be judged by the actions of their followers, just as a coach is ultimately eval-

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Steve Lipman, a staff reporter at The Jewish Week *in New York for twelve years, has studied at Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Monsey.*

uated by his players' win-loss record. Any coach with the record that my community posted in this disastrous season would be fired.

The Orthodox leadership problem is threefold. First, strident, simplistic voices are more apt to dominate than those that are accommodating or balanced. Second, there are too few leaders railing against hatred. Third, there is no discipline in the ranks; *amcha*, the masses, in too many areas fail to emulate the behavior of *knesset Yisroel*, the elite group of genuine spiritual leaders. This is not a blanket condemnation of thousands of well-meaning, mitzvah-practicing Orthodox Jews. But to protest that the community is a repository of unparalleled *chesed* and generosity—an absolutely true assertion—is a diversion, a disingenuous effort to deny the severity of the current crisis.



What gnaws at me is the collective indifference—not to mention the open rejoicing in some circles—that I observed and fear was indicative of more widespread sentiment. Jews live here in such numbers, in such emotional isolation from each other, that they feel no spirit of unity; one person's loss, one group's loss does not become another's. Maybe in smaller communities, in Buffalo—where I grew up—or Kansas City or Tampa, where numerical circumstances force us to work together and speak civilly across the ideological *mechitza*, Rabin's murder was received like a death in the family.

After the assassination, I made the pro forma reaction calls to spokesmen for Orthodox Judaism's major organizations. I waited for the mea culpas, for admissions that we, as a community, had strayed. I expected to hear Orthodox leaders demanding a sea change in the conditions, the hubris and smugness, that spawned a Jewish assassin. Instead, I saw a spectacle of finger-pointing and denial. Press releases declared each group's innocence; organizations proclaimed their adherents' moral superiority; rabbis under fire hid behind pious titles.

Beyond vague declarations of communal responsibility, I heard not a single admission of guilt. Territorial fealty prevailed: Members of *our* group, each spokesperson insisted, had never made hyperbolic statements about proponents of the peace process.

Our mouths are pure.

Our hands are clean.

It's not us.

It's *them*.

It's the—fill in the blank—Jews.

Yigal Amir is an extremist, an aberration, a mental case.

Nobody is guilty.

And Yitzhak Rabin isn't in a grave on Mount Herzl.

Judaism does not allow us to wash our hands so readily of responsibility. Leadership has the commandment of *egal arufa*, which the scholars of the Talmud discuss in the context of the murderous Kohan: If an unidentified body is found slain in a field, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer to "a rough valley," break its neck, wash their hands over the carcass and state "Our hands have not shed this blood [of the murder victim], neither have our eyes seen it." The leaders are obligated to perform this gruesome task as a tangible reminder that they may have failed to open their doors to the eventual victim. (According to some commentators, the perpetrator is the focus of this scenario; if he had found a proper welcome in the nearest community, perhaps he would not have committed murder.) Those with the mantle of leadership, who proclaim the Torah as their guide, demonstrate their leadership in a time of bloodshed by recognizing that a sin has occurred, by publicly addressing the possibility of their own responsibility, by performing an act that sends a message of contrition to the wider population.

As individuals, within the collectivity, we seek forgiveness on Yom Kippur: "We have become guilty … we have spoken slander … we have accused faultily … we have persecuted …. we …"

We are all Yigal Amir.

Even the best of us, who never raised voices in anger, who never harbored a venomous thought, bear a modicum of responsibility. That's the price for peoplehood.

And we are all Yitzhak Rabin.

Even if we didn't agree with his politics—and I frequently did not—we are all diminished by the way he died.

Rabin's assassination forces us to determine who we want to be. Just another ethnic group? Or *am kodesh*, a holy people?

ART BY RENÉ CARSON

Yigal Amir did not grow up in an ideological vacuum. Some rabbis and classmates shared his warped values. Though I do not mean to indict the entire *frum* world, I repeat: The *gedolim*, the great leaders of Israel, condemned murder, both before and after Yigal Amir violated the Sixth Commandment. But who listens?

We had a warning seventy years ago. The Chofetz Chaim, sainted leader of pre-Holocaust European Jewry and codifier of the laws of *loshon hara* (gossip), warned that one who slanders non-Jews, outsiders, will come to slander Jews, one's kinsmen.

One who devalues the life of non-Jews—"*Goyim*"; "*Schvartzes*"; "Arabs"—will …

The Chofetz Chaim's admonition has become a curse.

In creating labels that extol us while denigrating others, in defining ourselves by what we reject or oppose, we forget that, in the eyes of God and the world, we are all judged. Saints were exiled with sinners from the Holy Land 2,000 years ago; the pious were slaughtered in Nazi Europe.

We have become a nation of proof-texters, citing a Gemara or Rambam or Medrash when it fits our preconceived notions. When facts fail, we turn to logic, *pilpul*-ing our way out of Torah.

Asked by a Tel Aviv judge, "Have you ever heard of the Ten Commandments?" Yigal Amir retorted, "It's sad if that's your whole knowledge of the Torah." A knowledge of Talmudic intricacies enabled Yigal Amir to dismiss a prohibition that the whole world can recognize. A classmate of Amir said, "Everything for him was black and white, and he saw everything logically."

I was not surprised that Rabin's killer was a Jew. When I heard the bulletin, I made that assumption. Where God is absent, there are no boundaries.

Fearful of outside contamination, we automatically shun people and concepts we deem foreign. Unlike God, who looked at the world and "saw that it was good," we look at it and judge it bad. This tendency is merely frustrating when applied to ideas; the consequences are fatal when applied to people.

We have become a reflection of the outside world that we despise. We have adopted a simplistic, yes-or-no, friend-or-foe, litmus-test mentality that does not allow for moderation. Where is the middle ground? Individuals are either unblemished *tzaddikim* or unredeemable monsters. Public issues, such as religious pluralism—or the peace process—are either an unquestioned priority or total anathema. Following the lead of single-issue politics, we have become a single- mitzvah people.

Tzedakah, for the U.J.A. crowd.

Redeeming captives, for the Soviet Jewry activists.

Remembering Amalek, for the Holocaust memorializers.

Settling *Eretz Yisroel*, for the Zionists.

The Zionists, including, tragically, the religious ones, have elevated a concept over God; they have placed the value of land over the sanctity of people. They have made a religion out of the first Rashi, who explains that the Torah begins with a description of the world's creation in order to anticipate "the nations of the world" claiming that Israel obtained the Promised Land through theft: "The entire world belongs to the Holy One, Blessed Be He; He created it ... He took it from them and gave it to us."

In an atmosphere like this, is a Yigal Amir a surprise?

Every Orthodox Jew should reel from embarrassment. How many of us, if we didn't actively support the Yigal Amirs, can claim in good conscience that we didn't condone them, didn't apologize for them, didn't close our eyes to them? "Shaa" has replaced the "Shma" as the Jewish creed. Shhh, what will the *goyim* think. Shhh, he's one of us. Shhh, don't wash our dirty laundry in public.

If we don't police ourselves, the task falls to others for whom our welfare is not paramount.

I am no less guilty. Over the years, when I heard the vitriol in the Orthodox communities in Israel and in the United States, I shook my head but held my tongue. I found excuses for all sorts of misdeeds done by people posing as "religious." For a long time, I used destructive language to discredit the "*frei*," the "non-religious," the "*hilonim*," whose paths I considered inconsistent with a Torah life. Now, we are being painted with the same brush of intolerance that we used against "the Other."

Now, I am embarrassed to be identified as an Orthodox Jew. Not to *be* an Orthodox Jew, I stress, but to carry the burden of that label in a disgusted public these days. After fifteen years as part of "Torah-true Judaism," as we arrogate to call our practice, after exposure to the finest, most learned, most open- minded men and women that Orthodoxy has produced, my faith in the Jewish religion that Yigal Amir purportedly represented is not shaken one bit.



ART BY CYN MAURICE

But the faith I love is shamed by those who pervert its message.

I can't imagine a more beautiful, more purposeful way of life.

But …

If I weren't already a committed Orthodox Jew, if I saw photographs of *kippah*-wearing men under arrest for conspiracy in Rabin's killing, others for urinating on Rabin's grave; if I saw televised images of women in *tichels* applauding Yigal Amir's act; if I heard interviews with "rabbis" justifying the unjustifiable—would I consider joining the ranks of the *ba'alei teshuvah*?

Hardly.

The black eye that the Yigal Amirs gave Judaism may never fade. That legacy may outlast the killing of one man.

But it's Jews, not Judaism, who are on trial now. Jews who apparently don't share my chagrin. Jews who have forgotten the meaning of, or time for, shame. Jews who condone murder. Jews who disregard the commandment "Justice, justice thou shall pursue," that just ends demand just means. Jews who search their lettuce more thoroughly than they search their hearts. Jews who have extinguished our light to the nations.

In the climate of hate that took Rabin's life and darkens the Jewish world, there is enough blame for all to share. I have heard the invective against every Jewish group, by every Jewish group, in on-the-record interviews and in conversations over *Shabbos* meals.

But the Orthodox are deservedly our immediate concern. At least, it's mine. It's my community of choice. We abetted Yigal Amir. We believe we hold ourselves up to higher standards.

Of course, not all the post-assassination accusations of Orthodox fanaticism are true. But they ring true, making them harder to refute, allowing political parties and religious denominations to capitalize on our moment of defensiveness, to spread unsubstantiated calumnies and achieve Knesset victories.

It pains me to make these statements, especially in the pages of a publication that many in my circles will surely deem indifferent to our philosophy. I am prepared for criticism. But I am more pained by the thought of what may happen to us if nobody speaks out, if alternative perspectives to the haters are not offered to the non-Orthodox world.

When the question was asked in the Torah, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the answer was obvious.

Why am I scared? Because a nation that allows murder to take place unchallenged doesn't deserve God's protection anymore. Because we may fall as a congregation and a political nation. Because if Israel falls, we have no refuge and we are more vulnerable to anti-Semitic attacks in the Diaspora. Because we haven't learned our lessons.

As a believing Jew, I can't believe that it is ever too late. But it is *Neilah* time.

We can't withdraw. We must act. Only small steps can bring us back from the precipice. Don't listen to evil being said about other people, other Jews. Walk away. Speak out. State unequivocally that Yigal Amir and his ilk are not Orthodox— they're clearly not God-fearing, "religious" people. Talk, don't yell. Declare a personal *ta'anit dibur*, a fast of speaking. If we must speak of others, if we must engage in *loshon hara*, limit it to one of the Chofetz Chaim's forbidden categories: compliments. He wrote that even good that is spoken about someone might engender negative comments. Take that risk.

If we, People of the Book, *rachmanim b'nai rachmanim*, compassionate children of the compassionate, do not remember our own history, if we forget that the Temple fell within one generation of the Kohan stabbing another Kohan on its steps, then what are we?

And who are we? □



Religion, Zionism, and Religious Zionism

Ethan D. Bloch

As the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians moves forward, and the decision on the fate of the West Bank draws near, the religious Zionist movement—now virtually identified with the settlements—has found itself at the heart of the political debate in Israel. Though many in the peace camp prefer to view religious Zionists as "Other," the basic idea of religious Zionism has in fact implicitly been accepted by many mainstream Jews, even those who are not religiously observant, and those who do not support continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

The basis of religious Zionism is the view that con-

Ethan D. Bloch is associate professor of mathematics at Bard College, and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Education Fund for Israeli Civil Rights and Peace, affiliated with the Meretz coalition.

flates the modern state of Israel with biblical promises and sees the establishment of the state of Israel as a step in the redemptive process. The widespread implicit acceptance of this idea is seen in the use of the "Prayer for the State of Israel," versions of which are found in a number of commonly used prayer books, and which refer to Israel as "*reshit tzmichat ge'ulateinu*"—roughly, "the start of the flourishing of our redemption." For many secular Jews, who may never have heard of the Prayer for the State of Israel, support for Israel as part of the biblical prophecy has become something of a surrogate for religious observance, especially when it is part of the notion of Israel as the redemption after the Holocaust.

We need to rethink the relation of our religious beliefs and our support for Israel. Individual Jews should certainly use their religious values when making personal decisions about which political views to support, but should there be a formal, or ideological, connection between religion and state in Israel? I share the hope of many Jews, left and right, that the State of Israel should be imbued with Jewish values, and that it not become just another "normal" westernized state. But where should the Jewish values in Israel come from? And which Jewish values— the chauvinistic parts of our tradition, or the values taught by the prophets and the rabbis of the Talmud, who valued peace, who cared for all of Israel and non-Jews as well, and who argued against zealotry and unnecessary hatred?

The question is not whether Jews should mix their religion and politics when it comes to Israel, but how. For both the secular Jew and the ultra-Orthodox, there is no problem figuring out how to connect religious beliefs with Zionism—each group rejects one and supports the other. For those who both support Israel and engage in religious observance of any variety, the problem of mixing these two imperatives is real. I believe that the mix of religion and politics—the central tenet of religious Zionism—is unnecessary at best, and in fact is quite dangerous.

Perhaps a messianic view of Zionism was needed as motivation in the pre-1948 era. Today, its implicit acceptance unintentionally lends tacit credence to political violence in Israel. Surely the vast majority of religious Zionists, and more broadly those who view the modern state of Israel in religious terms, strongly oppose political violence. Moreover, there is a small, though significant, religious peace movement in Israel, Oz v'Shalom/Netivot Shalom, and newly appointed Israeli cabinet minister Rabbi Yehuda Amital of the Meimad Party has explicitly objected to the injection of Jewish law into politics.

But the very ideology of religious Zionism inherently prevents this separation of religion and politics, just as it has within it the possibility of taking the idea of divine inspiration to its logical extreme, as did Yigal Amir. It is no accident that religious Zionists, originally aligned with mainstream labor Zionism, have moved steadily rightward since the Six-Day War of 1967—which was viewed by some as a miracle.

If the foundation of the modern State of Israel is seen as the realization of a divine plan (which aims for Jewish control over all lands Jews once occupied), then there is little room to be concerned with Palestinian rights, not to mention rights for non-Orthodox Jews in Israel. When Israel is viewed as a step in the messianic process, then any compromise, no matter how pragmatic, is seen as a denigration of Jewish tradition (which considers the land of Israel to be both holy and promised to the Jews), and an obstruction to the coming of the Messiah.

It might be argued that the problem is not the mixing of religion and Zionism, but only the mixing of chauvinistic religious views with Zionism; that Judaism necessarily supports fair treatment of minorities living under Jewish rule, and thus an Israel viewed as part of the redemptive process could certainly treat all citizens fairly regardless of their religion. Though such an understanding of Judaism is theologically plausible, even if accepted it does not solve our political problem. While some Jews believe Judaism promotes democracy, others just as legitimately interpret Judaism as treating Jews preferentially.

When religious beliefs inform only personal decisions, a triumphalist vision of Judaism presents no problem. But when the power of the state is wed to religion, then coercive decisions will be determined by majority religious view, often to the detriment of the minority population. And even if moderate Jewish views were to prevail, the non-Jewish minorities in Israel do not share a religious vision of Israel, no matter how liberal. The late Israeli thinker Yeshayahu Leibowitz—strictly Orthodox, a lifelong Zionist, and a vociferous critic of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip—was right to suggest that not only does making Israel into a religiously identified state bode ill for the civil rights of Israeli Arabs, but it bodes equally ill for the Jewish religion, allowing the institutions of state to interfere in purely religious matters. Theologically, I have come to agree with the ultra-Orthodox that it is extraordinarily hubristic to believe that we can by our nationalistic activity bring about the messianic era; that we can be sure that the redemption is imminent; that we can on our own decide to reconquer the entire land of Israel; and, as some secular Zionists believe, that the existence of the modern State of Israel negates our need for the religious and cultural

aspects of Judaism created during 2,000 years in exile. Unfortunately, the ultra-Orthodox needlessly throw out the Zionist baby with the messianic bath water.

To resolve these problems, we need to get out of the messianic business altogether, and separate religion from Zionism. By so doing, we can focus on the real problem in Israel, which is the militant form of Zionism, not religious devotion; we can support Israel as a necessary component for the survival of the Jewish people, but we need not view the state of Israel as the ultimate proof of our religious connection to the land of Israel, as a negation of Diaspora Judaism, or as the negation of Palestinian claims to the land; we can allow right-wing religious Zionists, who are feeling very vulnerable as the peace process proceeds, to understand that those who disagree with their politics are not intending to threaten their religion.

Rejecting Zionism as an explicit step in the redemptive process does not deny the worth of either religious devotion or pragmatic Zionism—the Zionism of Herzl, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion, which stresses developing the State of Israel ("*Medinat Yisrael*")—as opposed to the biblically defined land of Israel ("*Eretz Yisrael*"). Having lived in Israel, I can attest that there is much to celebrate in the remarkable achievements of Israel and Israelis—providing refuge to Jews in need, reviving the Hebrew language, becoming a center of Jewish scholarship, and much more—with no need to invoke biblical prophesies.

We should support Israel as a *democratic*, not as a theologically sanctioned Jewish state. The positive values in the modern state of Israel should come from the strength of individual Jewish identity, as well as from progressive political organizing, but not from state coercion along religious lines. For the sake of practicality we need to take away some "meaning" from Zionism; we can more than take up that slack in our religious and cultural practice.

As a symbolic first step, we should stop using the Prayer for the State of Israel in its current form. And as we reduce our ideology, we should increase our dialogue with those in the Jewish community farthest from us politically, both secular right-wingers and religious Zionists. We should say: yes to religion, yes to Zionism, no to religious Zionism. □



Jews Don't Kill Jews

David Biale

"Jews don't kill Jews" was the shocked response of much of the Jewish world to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. This slogan certainly has its uses as a myth of Jewish morality aimed at bringing an increasingly polarized polity back to some measure of civility. But myths of this sort can blind as well as enlighten: Had the Israeli security services not believed that "Jews don't kill Jews," they might have been more alert to the threat of a Jewish assassin. More generally, faith in the superior morality of the Jewish people can act paradoxically to paralyze moral sensitivity. Thus, for example, a variant on the present slogan, that "Jews don't kill innocent Arabs," blinded many to the terrible moral dilemmas of the occupation.

A dose of history may be in order if the blindness that led to the Rabin assassination is not to be perpetuated. Jews do kill other Jews, and Jewish history bears ample witness to the fact. At the end of the Book of Kings, we are told that the Babylonians, having conquered Jerusalem, appointed a Judaean named Gedaliah as governor of those Judaeans who had not been exiled. A group of loyalists of the Davidic monarchy then assassinated Gedaliah and his followers, a murder that is commemorated in the Jewish calendar with the "Fast of Gedaliah." Centuries later, the rabbis commented that the Second Temple was destroyed because of "gratuitous hatred," and, in fact, the history of the time, as recorded by Josephus, contains much violence by Jews against Jews.

Once Jews lost political sovereignty, it is probable that intra-Jewish violence decreased, yet it was certainly not absent in the many centuries before the modern period. Jewish communities in Spain and Poland were reported to have executed Jews thought to be "informers" to gentile powers. In the nineteenth century, agents of the Russian Jewish communities, known as *khappers*, kidnapped Jewish children to meet the quotas for the Czar's army.

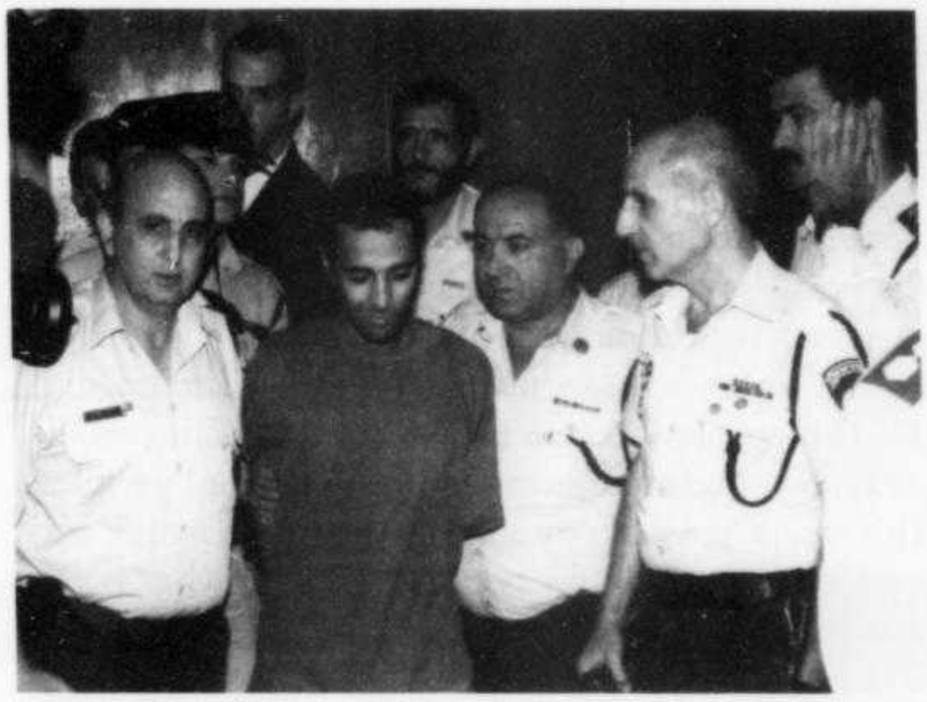
Yet, it was the emergence of modern Jewish politics at the end of the nineteenth century that created the conditions for violence by Jews against Jews. The conflict between the Bund and the Zionists was not only carried out on the plane of ideology, but also erupted in a number

David Biale is the director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and, a contributing editor of TIKKUN.

of instances into physical violence, including attempts at assassination. In Palestine itself, a number of assassinations of Jews reflected the political conflicts within the Zionist movement. The best-known case was, of course, the assassination of the socialist Zionist mayor of Tel Aviv, Chaim Arlosoroff, in 1933 by two assassins who, despite continuing controversy, appear to have been agents of the right-wing Revisionists. Less well-known is the assassination of Jacob de Haan, a rather bizarre Dutch Jew who, after many political and religious incarnations, wound up as an ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionist and was accused of collaborating with the Arabs. In 1924 he was murdered by gunmen acting on the orders of the Haganah.

In the 1940s, Yitzhak Shamir, the former Israeli prime minister, whose past as an anti-British terrorist is well known, was himself involved, either as the person giving the order or perhaps even as the triggerman, in the execution of a member of his own group thought to be unreliable. In the 1950s, Rudolf Kastner, who had been one of the leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community during the Holocaust, was assassinated in Israel after a libel trial in which he was exonerated from charges of collaboration with the Nazis. And, in 1983, a Peace Now member, Emile Grunzweig, was killed by a grenade tossed at peace demonstrators.

I am not trying to suggest that Jewish history is littered with political assassinations, nor am I passing judgment on any of these cases. One can certainly imagine situations in which assassinations might be justified. For example, Antek Zuckerman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, reveals in his memoirs that the Jewish underground killed many more Jewish collaborators than it did Germans. It is hard for anyone who was not there to condemn this deliberate decision by Jews to kill other Jews.



A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

But kill they did, and it is time we accept the fact that Jews are no more immune than other people to the urge to commit murder for reasons of principle. Recognition of this historical reality may be the necessary first step to a more reasoned political discourse. For, the claim that "Jews don't kill other Jews" is part and parcel of the same discourse of Jewish uniqueness that motivated the assassination itself.

Who can doubt that the theology of the "holiness of the Land of Israel" which drove Yigal Amir and his comrades-in-arms was rooted in the underlying belief in the "chosenness of the Jewish people?" But if the religious Right is guilty of developing these ideas to a violent extreme, is not the Left also complicit in fostering secular versions of Jewish uniqueness?

Perhaps a sober confrontation with the realities of Jewish history can begin to challenge the prevalence of this discourse in Jewish politics. Only when we accept ourselves as a normal people—and not "the chosen people"—can we begin to combat the violent messianism that has sprouted in our midst. □

From Remorse to Peace



Arthur Waskow

The path from the Hebron Massacre to the Rabin murder was only twenty months long. What begins with the hatred, subjugation, humiliation, and murder of Arabs ends with the murder of Jews. In our generation as in the generation of Abraham, the fates of the children of Hagar and the children of Sarah are inextricably intertwined. Each people is fated for suffering or blessing according to how each treats the other.

After the Hebron murders, there was a brief period of intense Jewish remorse, rethinking, and determination to make peace. But these fluid emotions were not given new shape through changes in political and religious patterns; so when the heat of the moment cooled, the situation refroze in the same old forms. This time, remorse must be consolidated into a major step forward for peace. We

Arthur Waskow is Pathfinder of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and author, most recently, of Down-to-Earth Judaism *and* Godwrestling—Round II.

must infuse a decent politics with religious seriousness, and infuse our traditional religious observances with the "political" learnings of our own lives.

Jewish leaders should now assert that God and Torah intend for the two families of Abraham to share the land, each governing itself in peace with the other, as a positive goal rather than a regrettable burden. We joyfully embrace the vision that in this small *eretz* (land) our two peoples become models for the sharing of the great unboundaried *eretz* (earth) by all the peoples. This has a political corollary: judging all Israeli and Jewish policy decisions not according to what is the least self-determination that can be granted the Palestinians under pressure, but what is the most that can be granted them without putting Israel in danger.

Hanukkah, when we learn that holy freedom comes "Not by might and not by power but by Your spirit, Breath of Life," could every year be observed with a large teach-in on the achievement of peace—held perhaps at a campus with international on-line, television, and radio hook-ups.

We could declare 12 Cheshvan (Rabin's *yahrzeit*) Yom Tzom Rabin—a day for a sunrise-to-sunset fast by all Jews in reflection and repentance concerning the dangers of political and religious violence, and invite Muslims and others to join in this as anti-terrorism day.

As wide a spectrum of rabbis as possible could join in a *takkanah*—a religious decree—that annuls any interpretation of Jewish law that permits the murder of any human being for the sake of advancing a political or religious vision or objective, and puts in *cherem* (excommunicates) any Jew who violates it. Such a *takkanah* is being circulated by Rabbi Michael Graetz of Israel (for information, send e-mail to: <masorti@shani.net>). We could put teeth in such a *takkanah* by investigating and ending all financial and intellectual support for terrorist and near-terrorist groups in Israel. □



The Assassination in Light of Jewish Religious Law

Raymond P. Scheindlin

Rabbinic law cannot legitimately be used to justify the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Rabbinic law includes stringent provisions for due process of law. Further, the rabbis smothered the death penalty with rules designed to limit its application. A court that imposed capital punishment once in seventy years was considered a destructive one. Witnesses in capital cases were admonished before testifying to be absolutely certain of their testimony, for "when a person destroys a single life, it is as if he destroys a whole world." Furthermore, no individual rabbi may pronounce the death sentence. No Jewish religious court today is empowered to impose the death penalty, for capital punishment was discontinued altogether forty years before the destruction of the second temple (i.e., c. A.D. 30).

Supposed halakhic justifications of the assassination fall back on two summary actions sanctioned by Jewish law. One is the rule of the "pursuer," under which a person pursuing a victim with clear murderous intent may be intercepted and killed by a bystander. This emergency rule may only be applied when the pursuer is threatening a particular individual when there is no time for judicial proceedings. A person whose religious behavior or political policy is disapproved of is explicitly excluded from the category of a "pursuer," even if his actions are contrary to Jewish law.

The other rule is that of the "informer," who loses the protection of law. The term "informers" applied originally to Jews who betrayed fellow Jews or their property to Roman authorities in order to receive a bounty; the rule reflects the position of Jews as a subject, rather than as a sovereign people. It cannot and was never intended to be applied to the reasoned actions of a Jewish head of state, who may very well sacrifice the welfare of an individual to the people as a whole.

It is not even clear that Jewish law can object to Israel's yielding sovereignty over part of its territory to non-Jews. Israel is a secular state.

Why do the religious extremists want to see secular Jewish sovereignty over any part of the Holy Land? In 1948, Jewish religious extremists were more consistent, arguing that there should be no Jewish state at all because a secular Jewish state was actually a desecration of the Holy Land.

The extremists who claim to justify the assassination in the name of the rabbinic tradition are not engaged in

Raymond P. Scheindlin is professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

legal reasoning; they are saying anything that comes into their heads, perverting a finely tuned legal system designed specifically to prevent such an act. Blinded to the rationality at the heart of rabbinic legal thought by nationalist fervor, they advocate an action that under Jewish religious law itself is nothing but murder. □

Border Crossings



Jyl Lynn Felman

I cannot stop looking. At The Photograph. On the front page of The *New York Times*, Friday, November 10, 1995. Right before Shabbat. Yasir Arafat is sitting *shiva* with Leah Rabin. At home in her Tel Aviv apartment. He is in the living room. Eating cookies. And reclining on the sofa as he holds in his hand a tiny, floral, porcelain cup of steaming mint tea. Chairman Arafat is paying his personal condolences to the wife of his long-sworn-enemy turned-colleague, conciliator, and comrade in peace, Yitzhak Rabin.

For the first time in my life, I am staring—astonished—at Arafat's balding head. Exposed without the protection of his imperative, perpetual cultural signifier, he leaves at home in Gaza the infamous black and white kaffiyeh. Literal-and-symbolic-emblem-of-an-occupied-Palestine. Ironically, out of respect for his now-deceased friend, the grieving widow, and the entire Jewish people, he leaves his head bare.

It's in the specificity of the image where my own history lies and is belied. In a single four-by-six-inch black and white photo I see the past and present narratives of all my blood brothers and sisters. This is a personal narrative. A humanness too raw for articulation. It is the story of ancient animosities commingled for centuries. Of vulnerabilities and mixed metaphors revealed in the unexpected juxtaposition of a historically transgressive image. Within this singular, previously unfathomable moment live the biographies of two distinct peoples who abandoned each other in the dry desert wind.



A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

What moves me finally beyond the numbness of the horrific, shameful, humiliating assassination is this: Leah Rabin's exquisite face filled with the signs of a complex mourning. Absent from her high, chiseled cheekbones is any hint of rouge. And her blue eyes, barely open, are devoid of all make-up. There is no thick black mascara, dark liner, or deep azure eye shadow highlighting her femininity.

She who is known for her haute couture sits slumped down in a chair drawn close to her visitor. And her thick black hair, usually pulled back, simply but stunningly coiffed, remains uncoiffed and parted crookedly on the left side, with small tufts of grey and white uncovered. The only shadow showing is of her grief, palpable and real like the unadorned head of the seventy-year-old man sitting in her living room with his legs spread wide apart and his own eyes heavy with the misery of the inconsolable.

Against all security advice and at great risk to his physical safety, Arafat has crossed the forbidden border into *Eretz Yisrael*. To offer whatever comfort is possible. In this surreal, Kafkaesque moment of existential fatigue that remains frozen forever in the still image of The Photograph.

It is the physical proximity of their chairs that makes me cry long into the night. It is in the very act of sitting so close together that the political is finally made personal. So that in the end, these previously "foreign dignitaries" become familiar to me and to each other. They become the intimate neighbors that they are. Filled with the knowledge of each other's many intricate faux pas. In the quiet solitude of shared grief, Yasir Arafat and Leah Rabin are the parents and grandparents that they always were but could never be.

What do they talk about?; I crave details. In what language do they share their sorrow? I do not take my

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Jyl Lynn Felman is the author of the short-story collection Hot Chicken Wings. *She teaches in the Women's Studies Program at Brandeis University and has work forthcoming in two new anthologies that will be published early in 1996,* Surface Tensions *(Simon & Schuster) and* Growing Up Jewish And Female *(Dutton).*

eyes away from the picture of these two aging, rebellious spirits. For it is in the microscopic intimacy of this particular minute that a macroscopic exchange of universal proportions occurs between former enemies.

Home is where it happens. A redemptive moment gives way as familiar alliances betray. While the old, unfamiliar, and unreliable affirm their allegiance after all. A postmodern biblical revelation, in which history is at once challenged by the image and redirected in a Tel Aviv living room. This is a *shiva* call to the entire Jewish people. And so the isolation of my beloved Israel is broken by a small human gesture.

This is not a photographic, photogenic opportunity. There is no posturing. Just the heavy sighs of profound loss filling up a room at dusk. Without any immediate or long-term political gain, the act of mourning turns into a spiritual sign of hostile loyalties overturned in the wilderness of an immeasurable heartache. Where what is mourned moves slowly, gently, almost imperceptibly (but out of sheer human necessity) beyond the death of a husband and visionary, past the assassination of a former soldier and prime minister to include a kaddish for decades of vileness and violence between next-door neighbors.

A private, particularized grieving is transformed into a new mourning prayer: a symbolic cleansing of a dehumanized past which included the subjugation of one self-determined people by another. And in the precise act of seeing the self in the "despised other," the possibility of forgiveness and acceptance is laid bare. The picture becomes the prayer. Capturing in an unfiltered lens the fears and hopes of nations and individuals. Transforming the hesitant, public handshake on the White House lawn two years ago into a private cup of mint tea. Sip after sip, history relaxes its very real antagonisms; the narrative is redressed. Where what is offered is the contradictory reality made real by the presence of two people together in the same room. Sentimentality is impossible. We are all the bereft withholding the possibility of wholeness for ourselves and each other. It is inevitable that the border would be crossed.

So what did they really talk about? Did they reminisce? Or was the silence face-to-face between them more than enough? I cannot stop looking. At The Photograph. Of Yasir Arafat, his head uncovered, sitting *shiva* with Leah Rabin, her hair uncoiffed. The collectivity of their grief, open and exposed. □



To Live as God's Image

Arthur Green

The tragic death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is the predictable (would that we had been paying attention!) outcome of a process that has been taking place in the Jewish people since 1967, an outcome of the prolonged and bitter occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Avraham Burg has rightly called Rabin the last victim of the Six Day War; he could also be called the last victim of the Intifada.

In the face of this horrible act it seems proper to say some clear and unequivocal things about two religious matters: the image of God and the holiness of the land. I want to emphasize that I have believed these things unwaveringly since 1967. I hereby apologize for not having said them sooner and louder.

The Jewish people has a single overwhelmingly important moral teaching to convey to humanity: that every human being is created in the image of God. This teaching, "the basic principle of Torah," is the key reason for our existence. Human dignity by virtue of the godliness within us is the gift and birthright of each person. That is our message, entirely simple but incredibly difficult both to teach (one can teach it only by example) and to learn.

Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say that the reason the Ten Commandments forbade graven images of God is not because God has no image. God indeed does have an image, that of every living human being. Your task is that of making God's image, but you do so with every fiber of your being, through every moment of your life. Nothing less is worthy of being called God's image.

It should go without saying (but it needs to be said in our day!) that this belief in the image of God is a universal ideal. Every person, with no distinction of race, nation, or gender, bears God's image in precisely the same degree. That is the whole point of this teaching. If one person can be viewed or treated as being less than the image of God, then all of us can, and eventually will. The belief that every person is made in God's image also stands in intentional tension within our tradition to the belief in the specialness of the people Israel and to the unique love we are supposed to have for fellow-Jews. It undercuts or counterbalances our own tenden-

Arthur Green is the Phillip Lown Professor of Jewish Thought at Brandeis University.

cies toward racism, especially reverse racism that dehumanizes our enemies who dehumanize us.

This essential teaching of our Torah is one in which we Jews have been most severely tested in our century, and from both sides of the fence. We have been the victims of the most brutalizing massacre in human memory. How can we be expected to say that the S.S. member or the concentration camp guard, including the ones who went home at night, loved their children, and listened to Beethoven, bore the divine image? Did Their deeds not take them out of the category of children of God? Was it not permitted, even a good deed, to kill him in the course of a camp uprising?

But what then shall we say regarding our people's situation in the Land of Israel? Are the murderers of our children—the killers of Munich and Ma'alot and all the rest—not also beyond the category of the image of God? It is tempting indeed to think of them as less than human. But then what about those who cheer them on, who cry for our blood? Are they too not in God's image? What about the women and children who took part in the Intifada, including acts of bloodshed? Are they too beyond the line? If so, just what is it that we are permitted to do to them? Torture? Collective punishment? "Disappearance" under cover of night?

Here we are forced to see the impossibility of making exceptions. *If one human is said not to bear God's image, then in the end none of us will.* There is a midrashic tradition that Moses our Teacher bore a soul that could have made him the worst of criminals, except that he transformed it by unceasing effort. The Nazi is to be detested for his deeds, his words, his ideas. But he remains a human being. We even have to recognize that the love he had for his children or for his music was real, is in fact no less real than the same qualities in you or me. That is part of what is so frightening in confronting this other. He is not a beast, but a man. If there are circumstances in which he should be killed—and I believe there were such circumstances—we do so with regret and with the awareness that by doing so we have lessened the divine image.

The same is true of Israel's enemies in the Arab world, who are surely not Nazis. The misidentification of Arabs—real enemies, to be sure, and sometimes very bloody ones—with Nazis has been a costly error. Partly because the European Sho'ah was so close to us, we let the fear of our enemies, the fear that lingered over from the Holocaust, overwhelm all our other values. And just as we are taught that good qualities follow upon one another, so too do the bad. Fear leads to hatred, hatred leads to superiority, superiority leads to despicable deeds, despicable deeds lead to corruption, and corruption leads to the destruction of God's image, in both the victim and the perpetrator.

In this case, too, there was need for war and sometimes for killing. But the death of each Arab lessens the divine image in the world just as much as the death of a Jew, not one drop less. If killing of enemies does have to take place until there is real peace, it has to exist without our allowing fear and hatred to corrupt and destroy us.

The Occupation and the Intifada led us into doing terrible, brutalizing, dehumanizing things. Yitzhak Rabin was part of this policy. By saying so, however, I do not mean to blame him for his own death. Rabin's greatness was his ability to change, to turn away from failed and corrupting policies and to choose to take risks in finding an alternative to them. That his death was a result of the old dehumanizing vision he had succeeded in leaving behind is a comment on the persistence of that view in a large sector of the Jewish people.

The period since the Six Day War has also forced us to think in hard and sometimes painful ways about our Zionism and the degree of religious meaning we allow it to have. What do we really mean by "holy land?" Holiness is a quality that belongs only to God. No other entity, not a person, not a nation, not a place or a day has holiness of its own accord. Classical Jewish theology would say that holiness is conferred only by God: God is the one who declares the tribe of Aaron, the Jewish people, or the Sabbath to be holy. The Land of Israel is never described as "the Holy Land" in the Bible. The city of Jerusalem is holy, God's mountain within it is holy, but the land as a whole is never called "holy" in Scripture. The usage is post-biblical, and probably more a Christian than a Jewish usage. Talmudic and halakhic sources do refer to the "first sanctification" of the land in Joshua's time and the "second sanctification" in the days of Ezra, seeming to mean that the land becomes holy only when Israel begins to live on it (not "conquer" or "own" it, since there was no conquest in the time of Ezra). Our prayer book speaks of the return to "our land" but not "the Holy Land."

God alone is holy, and each human being is charged with becoming holy, by realizing the values of oneness and harmony with all being in the way he or she lives. A people or society may be holy insofar as it creates forms of life that embody those values; in this way does the human community designate itself as a dwelling place for the divine presence. All other designations of "holiness" are instrumental: times, places, objects, persons that help the individual and society to realize divinity in their lives. The purpose of such holy times, places, and things is paradigmatic; the way we act toward them should exemplify for us how to act toward all times, places, objects. The way I treat my *tefillin*, my holy objects, handling them

gently, kissing them as I put them on and take them off, is to teach me how to treat things with holiness—all the things in the world around me. Shabbat is set off from other days to teach me a lesson that applies to them all. The way I greet Shabbat, with love and singing, is the way a day deserves to be greeted. Holy place has the same meaning: the way I treat this land, with all its special laws of planting and rest, with love and veneration, is the way I, and all people, should come to treat all land.

"Holy" does not mean "belonging to me and no other." The Holy Land is a place where we Jews have to be, where we have to be rooted to the land especially by having some farming communities, which help connect us collectively to that sense of place and even soil as potential conveyer of holiness to our consciousness.

Having lived for two thousand years as a people who sanctified time and only dreamed of space, the return to our land makes us more whole, more fully ourselves. But this return to our holy place comes together with a challenge. Others live on that land as well, others who also recognize the One God and see themselves as living a moral life. How will we live with them in that holy place? Surely there is no greater desecration of holy land than the needless shedding of blood upon it! Neither the violent conquest nor the expulsion of others can be the way to act in the presence of holiness, in the land "where the eyes of the Lord your God are upon it from the beginning to the end of the year." Only by our ability to share the land with others can we witness to its holiness in our day. If there is anything left in us of the holy people, that is to say, if we have anything to teach to others about what it means to live as God's image, it is perhaps just this. We have to face and pass this test. We have to be able to witness to Bosnians and to Serbs, to Tamils and to Sinhalese, to Blacks and whites, to Muslims and Hindus and to all other divided groups within the human family that there is a way to live with one another on God's green earth.

"This is how you live in holy land," we must teach. "You *share* it." □



Moral Lessons from an Assassination

Elliot N. Dorff

The first and most obvious lesson from this heinous deed is that Kierkegaard was resoundingly wrong: There is no teleological suspension of the ethical. However much we may trust in God's goodness, we may not use any divine commandment—little less any human interpretation of a divine commandment—to override the fundamental moral and Jewish values of human life and dignity. If God is heard to demand or even sanction a violation of those values, then God has been heard incorrectly.

Second, we learn that individuals may not trust their own individual moral judgment to wreak havoc on others. Nobody is omniscient like God. Communities may make mistakes, but communal judgment is the best we can do in discerning God's will, especially when people's lives are at stake. It was not for naught that Jewish law placed the right to declare war and peace in the hands of the government.

Third, we learn that linguistic flourishes like "Kill Rabin" are all too easily taken literally. "Sages, be careful of what you say, lest … the Name of Heaven be profaned" (Avot 1:11).

Fourth, we learn that isolating oneself into one small segment of the Jewish people and vilifying all others is mortally dangerous. Compartmentalization between Orthodox and secular Israelis—and between Orthodox Jews in this country and the rest of the Jewish community—simply cannot be tolerated.

By and large, the Orthodox have not joined boards of rabbis; they have refused to participate in communal educational, social, or even fund-raising events with non-Orthodox Jews (or even to enter into non-Orthodox synagogues for meetings); and they have generally shunned the Jewish Federation Council. We have learned that such isolation breeds misunderstanding, fear, and disdain—sometimes to the point of murder. Jews of various stripes may have their own institutions, but both in Israel and in the Diaspora all Jews must regularly participate in communal forums so that other Jews are not distant and dissolute strangers but "your neighbor" (*ra'ekha*), and so that mean or downright crazy ideas from any quarter can be countered before they have dangerous consequences. Pluralism is not only a nice idea; it is a value which must be acted upon repeatedly to insure the wisdom and the very safety of the Jewish community. □

Elliot N. Dorff is rector and professor of philosophy at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

Making the Memory a Blessing



Laurence J. Silberstein

Yitzhak Rabin unquestionably thought of himself as a loyal Zionist. It is ironic, therefore, that he did more than any other Israeli leader to create the conditions for an Israeli culture and society that some would call postzionist. Of course, this was only one of many ironies in Rabin's life, the life of one who was transformed from an embattled warrior to a determined, frequently lonely peacemaker. The first Sabra prime minister, he separated himself from the discourse that defined Israel in terms of the Shoah. No longer was the Jewish people to view itself as the victim, the persecuted.

The new Jewish vision was marked by the anticipation of peace and freedom rather than recurring images of violence and persecution, by hope rather than haunting specters of potential holocausts. International friendship and regional cooperation rather than unceasing suspicion and hostility was henceforth to shape Israel's relations to the community of nations. Although he referred to the pain and suffering of Israelis, he did so not to arouse the nation's anger or to foster chauvinism, but to declare his desire and intention to make that suffering a thing of the past by establishing a radically altered relationship with the people with whose fate that of the Israelis is intertwined, the Palestinians.

Here, too, Rabin did the unthinkable. He was the first Israeli Prime Minister to acknowledge the legitimate claims of the external other, the Palestinians. He seemed to sense that the Israeli Jew's identity was as much a product of the relationship with Palestinian Arabs as it was with Jews living in other lands. Through his words and his deeds, he proclaimed his readiness and willingness to attend to and respond to the voice of the Palestinian. Confirming the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalist aspirations, he knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly, helped to open the way to the fulfillment of their dream of a Palestinian state.

Ironically, it was in death that he was able to provide us with a foretaste of that new, postzionist reality. We watched King Hussein speaking from the depth of his being about his friend Yitzhak Rabin, pledging to continue his struggle for peace, and we watched Hosni Mubarak, however begrudgingly, pay his respects to an Israeli prime minister. As we watched and listened, we came to realize that the old boundaries were quickly becoming blurred; that the bonds, even the affection, between Israeli and Jordanian, between Jew and Arab, between prime minister and king were in many ways stronger than the bonds linking those Israelis who support the peace process to those who seek to subvert it. And who will ever forget the front-page picture of Yasir Arafat, whose very name remains an anathema to many Israelis, sitting in the Rabins' living room paying his respects to Leah Rabin while the leader of the opposition remained on the outside looking in? Shimon Peres, whose vision of a new Middle East is both older and probably more comprehensive than that of his late comrade, faces a daunting challenge. Notwithstanding Leah Rabin's perception that the country is experiencing an unprecedented process of coming together in support of peace, Ted Koppel's recent "Nightline" from Jerusalem was sufficient to persuade all but the most idealistic that, sadly, the divisions within Israeli society remain at least as deep as they were before the assassination. Amidst the accusations and counter-accusations, we feel how immense the void caused by Rabin's death really is. Israeli leaders on the Left as well as the Right have not yet succeeded in constructing the new discourse that is necessary for the realization of Rabin's vision.

In the words of the song he sang minutes before his death:

> The purest of prayers will not restore to us one whose flame has been extinguished …
>
> Bitter weeping will not revive him nor return him to us
>
> Hymns of praise will not work here.

Courage and commitment, words and deeds that his vision demanded; these alone can make of Yitzhak Rabin's memory a true blessing. □

Laurence J. Silberstein is the Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies at Lehigh University. He is author of Martin Buber's Social and Religious Thought, *co-editor of* The Other in Jewish Thought and History, *and is currently writing a book on postzionist discourse.*



Yitzhak Rabin: A Meditation

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Why is it that so many of us who did not always agree with Yitzhak Rabin are feeling his loss so deeply? This was a military man, a distant, tough, closed human being. This was the man who ordered that the Intifada be put down with might and force and, if necessary, with broken bones. This was the prime minister who promised to put an end to settlement-building in the West Bank yet permitted settlement expansion, and Jewish occupation of Arab homes, and government appropriation of Arab lands. This was not a hero of the Left, so why did losing him feel like a death in the family? Why are people like myself still obsessing about him and carrying within us an inchoate, bone-deep sorrow as unshakable as a low-grade fever?

At this writing, nearly a month after the assassination, I continue to devour every word about Rabin's life and legacy. Like a news junkie, I can't seem to get enough reminiscences, historical sidebars, and reaction stories. And like a drug cartel, the media is satisfying my addiction—ink flows, pundits opine, tube talk abounds from here to Sunday. It reminds me of the Knesset, where the speeches are endless because, as one Israeli friend put it, "Everything's been said but not everyone has said it."

By now, everything has been said about the Rabin tragedy, but the most frequently stated speculations about why we're hurting so badly seem to me to fall short of the mark. To wit:

- We've lost an irascible, curmudgeonly old uncle who was hard to love but made us feel safe.
- We've lost the quintessential *Sabra*—native-born, plain-spoken, war-weary, cautious, courageous—paradigm for the Israeli experience, mirror of the Israeli soul.
- We've lost our innocence, and now we have to face the depressing truth that Jews are just like everyone else.
- We've had to entertain the possibility that Israel may not, after all, be a light unto the nations.
- We're worried about Israel's 1996 elections and the future of the peace process.
- We're shocked by the failure of Israel's fabled security apparatus and Shin Bet intelligence, which makes us feel weak and exposed.
- We're having déjà vu all over again—JFK, RFK, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X—and we dread these all-too familiar feelings of disbelief and dislocation. Those too young to remember the 1960s now know collective bereavement for the first time.
- We're afraid of the volatile political and religious climate here and in Israel, the increasing divisiveness, the escalation of toxic speech, and the growing extremism of that portion of the religious Right that has, since the murder, been staunchly self-righteous, unrepentant, even celebratory. We worry about the possibility of chaos and contagion. Remember, Shimon Peres was on the hit list, too.

These reasons provide ample justification for communal concern, soul-searching, and rededication to the pursuit of peace, yet I would argue that none of them separately or together explains the personal devastation and grief that so many of us are feeling. As I try to understand my own obsession with this loss, an inchoate, immense, yet deceptively simple explanation presents itself: I am not just mourning Rabin, I am confronting the essence of human life—that *each person is absolutely, unequivocally irreplaceable.*

There was only one Yitzhak Rabin; there will never be another. It sounds obvious, tautological, inane. Yet, that core concept of individual irreplaceability is one of those givens that must be rearticulated and reaffirmed as the bedrock on which all our values rest. Each life is precious and unique. Rabin was sui generis, one of a kind, the result of millions of variables. No one else on earth could claim his particular combination of genes, gender, family background, military record, public service, or personal style. No one else stood at the nexus of happenstance and history with his temper and temperament, facing his particular decisions and choices. No one else carried Israel's angst in his voice and Israel's dead in his eyes. No one else could be nicknamed "Mr. Security," or could embody the political evolution of his nation as did this complex man who transformed himself from a warrior to a peacemaker with the world as his witness. No one else could have

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Letty Cottin Pogrebin is the author of eight books, most recently Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America. *Her memoir,* Getting Over Getting Older, *will be published in May.*

aroused this particular constellation of mourners, brought one-quarter of all Israelis to his casket to pay their respects, inspired Yasir Arafat to make a *shiva* call, sent 200,000 Israelis back to the square where he died, or elicited real tears from Henry Kissinger, profound expressions of affection and respect from world leaders as diverse as President Clinton and King Hussein, and palpable, heart-stopping love from a young woman who called him Grandpa.

People are not interchangeable. Mubarak is no Sadat. Johnson was no Kennedy. Jesse Jackson is no Martin Luther King, Jr. And by the same token, as much as one may admire Israel's acting prime minister (whose politics, in fact, I find more compatible), Shimon Peres is no Yitzhak Rabin. Peres is Peres, which means that he is not Rabin in ways that may prove problematic, just as he is not Rabin in ways that may prove salutary. The point is, we cannot send down to Central Casting for another Yitzhak Rabin. We can hold auditions and pick a successor, but no one else will ever play the part in the same way with the same strengths.

Perhaps we who mourn his loss with such deep regret and longing are mourning our inability to cherish what we have while we have it. Maybe our own vulnerability, our mortality, has been stirred by the evidence that even the richest, most unique, and most meaningful life can be cut down like a tree. Perhaps we are grieving for our dependence on people like Yitzhak Rabin, for the unavoidable realization that upon one person might rest the capacity to make and change history, or for the fact that the hopes and dreams of so many can be dashed by the death of one. Perhaps we are trying to absorb the awesome truth of the human condition—that everyone counts, none of us is replaceable, and therefore when just one life is snuffed out, a yawning vacuum is created, the earth shifts and the seismic disturbances affect us all. □

The Assassination



E.M. Broner

In history, all at once the past and present come together.

All June, the beginning of July of 1993, the desert sun beat down on those in vigil on Terra Sancta, Friday afternoons in Jerusalem.

We were the Women in Black, some of us in partial black—blouse or skirt, others, better prepared, in full mourning. The signs we held were black hands, lettered in white: "End the Occupation," in Hebrew, Arabic, English, and Russian.

If we did not arrive early enough to secure Terra Sancta and the relative safety of that island, we were forced to line up along a busy highway, opposite the Square, where the Likud and the Religious parties held sway. Approaching this row of women on the sidewalk, taxi drivers and bus drivers reacted to our signs by driving up on the curb after us. From the windows came gum, eggs, spittle upon our hair.

If we managed to secure Terra Sancta, the police would protect us from our noisy opposition, who shouted, "Women in Black Stab Israel in the Back." They would sing, *David, hamelech chai.* King David lived, but Rabin was a marked traitor.

Around the city, on all the squares, was a war of posters, apocalyptic warnings and threats on one side and solemn-faced Rabin, Labor, and Peace on the other.

I was optimistic. Twenty years before, 1975, when I was a visiting professor of English at Haifa University, I had a glimpse into a possible future. One of my older students, a Palestinian man from a nearby village, invited two of his professors and their families to dinner. He had made apricot wine from his heavily laden apricot trees. Chicken was plucked from his flock to be prepared for us. His young daughters, their hair done up in ribbons, giggled behind their mother. We looked down from the hilltop at the land below, fecund with vineyards and olive groves and thought that a borderless land gave the same view to all.

Election night of '93 we spent in Tel Aviv with relatives. When Labor was victorious, champagne bottles were opened. The froth spilled over our hosts, onto the couch, the rug.

Now, more than two years later, those people who circled the Women in Black at Terra Sancta have accomplished by violence what they could not by popular vote. They became their posters, their slogans. As they had warned us, they got their enemy.

I, in New York, listening to the terrible news, wondered where I had packed the black summer dress. □

E.M. Broner is author of The Telling, Ghost Stories, *and* A Weave of Women.



Charisma: The Virtual as Personal

Elazar Barkan

At his death, Rabin became everybody's virtual *chaver*.

My dad had his own Rabin—his field commander, a mostly mythical figure. Even years later when Rabin's part in the '48 refugee problem surfaced, Rabin himself remained a pure Ari Ben-Canaan, the handsome Paul Newman in *Exodus*. In 1982, when Rabin joined Ariel Sharon in Lebanon, my dad declined his last assignment in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Reserve which would have been to beautify the outrage to the world media. He stayed behind the Green Line. Sharon after all was a political enemy, an embarrassment, while Rabin was to carry on the hope.

My son first became aware of geopolitics as a five-year-old watching the IDF soldiers implementing Rabin's order to break Palestinian bones. It was a harsh introduction to ethics and realpolitik, confusing the question of "the good guy." In the immediate aftermath of Rabin's assassination, there were those among the IDF high command who mourned the passing of *Ha'Zaken* (the Elder) not for his foresight or sternness, but because in the continuous Lebanon war it was Rabin who supposedly restrained the "Young Turks."



Rabin, though, like Israel itself, like Ari Ben Canaan, was supposed to stay forever young. Instead he was instantaneously elevated to the company of other legendary *Zekenim*: Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister, and Itzhak Sade, the founder of the Palmach. All were men of action but are remembered instead for their leadership and vision. How are we to understand those whose actions matter less than their halo? Those whom history admires and historians criticize?

The historical disposition to maintain a critical distance dissolved as the world divided itself neatly into the fanatics and the mourners: Pariah states, together with Jewish and Moslem fundamentalists, on one side against the rest of us on the other side. In the gush of global emotions, the profusion of questions and unknowns, personal experience overwhelmed the multiplicity of political alienations.

Why did I, in an unexceptional and ordinary manner, feel Rabin's death as a personal loss? Why did my professional, historian's memory contradict so starkly my personal experience? Surfing the news, I resorted to that vague Weberian concept of charisma. A leadership that projects beyond institutional authority; an essentially religious concept which conveys the gift, the talent of a leader to establish a revered personal relationship with one's followers, generating a communal faith.

Rabin, though no miracle maker, projected an unquestioned commitment to the cause. As a secular pragmatist, his charisma often enveloped his critics and at times even his enemies. How did Rabin perform these wonders? Numerous biographical details may give us clues, but unlike God, charisma is not found in the details.

Charisma is not transferable. We know it when we see it. Beyond fears and projections about an impending instability in the Middle East, perhaps it was this unexplicated universal pursuit of the grail of charisma which led the world leaders to drop everything and convene on Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem. Even for a secular zealot, a nationalist who could barely stomach the political demands of pretending to cooperate with Orthodoxy, as Rabin was, this was quite an eschatological feat.

Rabin embodied that part of us which, as a community, strives to transcend daily political estrangement. During the emotional light years between the assassination and this publication, the Israeli press has intellectualized and deified Rabin as a martyr. As the raw sorrow heals, our more mundane self will prevail and *we will reminisce* for years to come about where *we were* when *we heard* "he" was shot. □

Elazar Barkan is the chair of the Cultural Studies Program at Claremont Graduate School.

PHOTO BY: A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

The Second Revolution



Ze'ev Sternhell
Translated by Daphna Poskanzer

Yitzhak Rabin's place in history was assured before his death in the square that now bears his name. His signature on the peace agreements with the Palestinians placed him among the short list of national leaders who have decisively moved the national enterprise forward.

Rabin did not pay with his life just by shaking the hand of Yasir Arafat. He was the victim of the stubborn resistance to the second revolution now sweeping over the Jewish people, forces that seek to undermine Israel's path to normalization and integration in world history.

There is truth in the right wing's assertion that it is the true guardian of the flame of traditional Zionism—Zionism in its purest form. The right wing has positioned itself as the only viable alternative to the huge changes taking place in Israel and the whole Jewish world: from a tribal, persecuted society to an open, confident one where liberal, Western values dominate.

Until recent years Zionism was made from the same fabric as the Right—even while there were powerful struggles going on between religious and secular, between socialists and all others. However serious the differences, all sides shared the basic belief that Zionism was a movement to save Jews from destruction by bringing them to Israel. All felt the need to conquer the land and settle in it: length, width, as far as their power could reach. All factions were united in recognizing that Zionism was a cultural revolution, unprecedented in the nation's history. No one in the Zionist movement dissented essentially from the premise that guided the founding fathers and came from the Bible: that the Jews have title to all of Israel. This was the basis of true partnership between the secular and the religious. On the Left, there was a thin veneer of secular life, but underneath that veneer was a fundamental commitment to preserving a certain Jewish identity.

The foundation for cultural identity was the force of reality: the struggle for independence, the establishment of the Jewish State. The National Religious stream and the various denominations of secularism all fought with the same tenacity against assimilation. All shared the sense of danger at losing Jewish identity and Jewish land.

The Jewish people, a united tribe, was committed to identifying with the pioneer soldier fighting for the land of Israel. Thus, at the end of the Six-Day War there was only a tactical disagreement between the followers of the "Greater Israel" and those who believed in territorial or functional compromise. Not one felt in doubt about the legitimacy of the conquest. Each based his or her position on our historical rights. Not one faction had doubts about our national identity; only a few thought that the Palestinian Arabs had the same right to the land.

Zionism didn't come into the world in order to fulfill human rights, or to carry the flag of equality between peoples, or to right social injustices. The main concern, legitimate and imperative, was to save Jews and to conquer the land. So long as Israel was in real danger, so long as the Arabs had not come to terms with its existence, there was no problem garnering wide national consensus.

The Israeli government took advantage of Arab aggression in June 1967 to finish the war of independence by occupying the West Bank. In this sense, there is a substantial basis for Gush Emunim's assertions that in their goals, the settler movement is closer to the original Zionism than the liberal secular nationalism that has developed in the last few years.

The secular Israeli who is open to and influenced by the West has developed a new, independent identity. This phenomenon is revolutionary, and the National Religious Zionists and the so-called secular extreme Right cannot stomach this new breed.

The extreme nationalist, secular in his/her lifestyle, lacking in all Jewish culture, needs Shabbat, needs the Jewish holidays of Israel, needs religious ritual, and the holy stones. They need all this as we all need air to breathe. They know nationality needs historical and mystical content, cultural and religious continuity. It's not that they want to save souls. It's rather that the pull to freedom, independence, to be master of one's own fate is anathema to the radical Right.

The liberalization process that is taking hold in Israel is truly a jump into the unknown. As long as the center

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Ze'ev Sternhell is professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This article appeared in Hebrew in the November 17 edition of Ha'Aretz.

of the Left stuck with the tribal nationalism of the founding fathers, they were the true partners of Rav Kook. But the moment the circle widened, when the Left began developing real liberal tendencies, there was an erosion of the shared foundational worldview. Once the individual is not just a soldier in the army of the national revolution (and hence responsible to its demands for discipline and unconditional loyalty), once westernized conceptions of individual rights and democratic safeguards and individual fulfillment take hold over the minds of many Israelis, the "package" is bound to come apart and the sense of collective identity begins to dissolve.

Today it is impossible to deny the danger that "peace" poses for those still loyal to original Zionism. Peace thus creates an organic, living schism, so far is it from the Zionism of "blood and land." Whoever wishes to retreat from the West Bank is seen as giving away not just land, but history, the abiding image of homeland. The feelings of the settlers and their followers are justified when they say that legitimate recognition of Palestinian demands means the "end of a period." As Israel comes closer to the traditions of the enlightened Western world, adopting values foreign to original Zionists—a culture essential to many on the Right is being eroded.

The Israeli writers, artists, and youth of our day are as far from the religious nationalist or the world of the rabbis as East is from West. The gap is widening between those who see that Arabs have equal rights and those who want to see Israeli society as a tribe that gave *itself* a state.

How fruitless are our attempts to understand the tormented soul of the settler, whose world has fallen in. Our preaching for unity and brotherhood comes from a basic lack of understanding of the problems that they pose, and involves a disregard for the worldview of the people of the territories. We need to understand that *they* think their way is the only way to bring the country together.

Cultural phenomena are inseparable from the political process and in some cases precede what happens politically. For years, the settler world has prepared for a struggle against the "Hellenization" of Israel. They don't plan to conquer Tel Aviv. They know their power cannot reach there. But they won't give up without a violent struggle on the territories they've established on the West Bank. In the eyes of the secular radical Right, the settler is seen as the one who carries a gun and is God-fearing. He's the "real new Jew," the true Israeli. The settling of the territories is the ultimate Zionism, the apogee of the old movement. Whoever gives up possession of the mountaintop (i.e., the secular Left) will fall down into the abyss.

In the eyes of these zealots, Rabin and Peres *were* enemies of the nation. They were unfaithful to our three-thousand-year history. For them, the day the first Oslo agreements were signed, the war between true Zionism and its enemies reached its decisive moment. From their point of view, Rabin's murder involved only a few people, because just a few have that kind of "courage": to kill a man in cold blood and not in an officially sanctioned battle.

We are naive when we preach to the settler world. And it is an illusion to think that the settler uprising has ended. These people feel like strangers in the Israel of today; they will fight for the territories in any way possible. Whoever thought that Rabin's murder would paralyze their preparations to continue their struggle disregards the determination and the passion of the radical Right. The murder is tragic, but it shows what many have refused until now to recognize: Israel has also created a *golem* (monster) in the image of the settler community.

The settlements are threatening our future, but like any colonization process, its end will come. The price we as a society will pay for that change, however, is not yet known. □



The Lord Is a Man of War?

Stephen Mo Hanan

Since Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, I've found myself weeping in the most unlikely places. At a performance of Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, when a mother whose son has been killed in the Troubles beseeches the Blessed Virgin to "Take away our hearts of stone, give us hearts of flesh," my tears instantly bridged the gulf from Dublin, 1922 to Tel Aviv, 1995. The ancient quarrel between hearts of stone and hearts of flesh has claimed one more notable victim. When will we learn? And what will we learn?

In confronting lethal hate vented as political violence, what is an appropriate response? How do we avoid demonizing the demonizers? I found myself searching

Stephen Mo Hanan is a regular contributor to TIKKUN.

Jewish history for precedents—not for the slaying of one Jew by another (the Bible has plenty of that), but for the rationale by which a nation of priests allows itself to spawn executioners. It cannot be that the people whose birth is retold at every Passover Seder inherited freedom merely to turn the hand of cruelty against one another. "Slaves were we to Pharaoh in Egypt," and despite three thousand Seders we still carry in our hearts the grudges of an oppressed culture, amplified by centuries of persecution, carved into a law the desperate among us mistake for God's. Judaism is hardly alone in projecting the urge to violence onto an image of Divine authority. In every corner of the planet, there is a war party and a peace party, each claiming justification by some sacred tradition or other. But we should know better. Few cultures (in the West, at least) can point, as Jews can, to a heroic tradition untethered to military exploit. The abiding victories of Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, and even Moses are not in battle; against Pharaoh's chariots our ancestors lifted no weapon but faith.

Moses' song dares to imagine that "all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away," but the Promised Land was not so cheaply attained. Forty years after Sinai the sixth commandment was put on hold while a terrible war of conquest shed bloodstreams that flow to this day alongside the milk and honey. Territorial intoxication has nothing to do with reverence; it is a projection onto real estate of the fearful aggrandizing of the human ego. When we learn what the Psalms are there to teach, that the Holy Land comprises all the earth (and all who dwell upon it) without boundary, the scars of history, festering in minds like Yigal Amir's, may at last dissolve in true messianic light. □

In Search of Hope

Arnold Eisen



One so wants to wrest a measure of hope from the murder of Israel's prime minister, as if Jews—even outside of Genesis, millennia after Jacob—can wrestle with the angels of their destiny and actually emerge with not only a wound but a blessing. I don't know if that will prove possible in this case. The extreme Right, temporarily quiet in the weeks following the assassination, cannot afford to be quiet for long. There is too much at stake. Lives as well as faiths and fortunes have been invested in the dream of Greater Israel. Good people too have staked all. Nor, on the other side, can the narrow majority supporting Oslo I and II—temporarily made larger and more resolute by the assassination—leap over the clear and present dangers of fear and terror, the strong and rational arguments against the current arrangements. These too will only grow in coming months, as the border of Israeli army patrols moves ever closer to Tel Aviv. Rabin shared those anxieties, had voiced those arguments. His death will not make either disappear.

And so—in search of hope—one focuses on the Israeli teenagers who unexpectedly poured into the streets to mourn Rabin, driven there perhaps (as Amos Oz speculated) by the fact that the Prime Minister represented the hope most dear to them—that they, unlike parents and older siblings, would be able to avoid the terrible costs of combat. One might say, without any smugness, that they have just come of age Jewishly. Thirteen is usually too young—even in Israel—for the lesson that the world has a habit of kicking hope in the stomach. Jews, armed with that knowledge, have long sung in minor key. Israelis in particular have characteristically been cautious with their joy—entering the noise and nonsense of Yom Ha-atzmaut only after the real grieving of Yom Ha-zikaron; frowning on naiveté, hostile to puffery.

Rabin kept his optimism a closely guarded secret—no small attraction to Israelis. Their teens will now better understand the hesitation of his handshake with Arafat, a function of ethos rather than politics. They will know why even "*Shir Le-Shalom*," at the rally in Tel Aviv, was sung in a minor key: an act of defiance, a sort of prayer.

My frail hope these days is for prayer of that sort, understood by the rabbis as a commitment begun with words and fulfilled, if at all, on the streets, not only by teens and not only in Israel. Those on my side of the peace debate will need to understand genuine fears about the peace even while pursuing it, to meet good arguments only with better ones, to share and express (rather than ridicule or dismiss) the love of the land of Israel. Religious Zionists like myself will also have to be more alert to (and vocal about) the absolute wrong of holding fast both to the Jewish State and to Judaism at the cost of even a little democracy. My own list of prayers for peace these days includes support for civil

Arnold Eisen is professor of Jewish Studies at Stanford University.

rights in Israel, promotion of a shared language between *hiloni* and *dati* here as well as there, condemnation without hesitation of those who profane the name of God by urging injustice in God's name. Many more American Jews will have to be brought to back the risks at a distance that Israelis are assuming near at hand.

The peace settlement will come, because it has to. The hope which prayer needs to shore up at present is that it will actually come speedily, in our day, for all concerned. As ever, there is much to do. □



Why We Weep

Eric Yoffie

When I learned of the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, I was stunned—simultaneously shattered, shamed, and exceedingly angry. As Amoz Oz suggested, it was as if the shots fired at Mr. Rabin had been fired at each and every one of us.

And why was I angry? In part, of course, because the peace process was endangered, but even more important, because I am a religious Jew, and the assassination had been an abominable *religious crime*.

A religious Jew knows that Torah unites and defines the Jewish people. But what does he do when Torah ceases to be a unifying factor in Jewish life and becomes instead an instrument of division and hatred? What does he do when Torah provides justification for murder?

The murder of Rabin was an act that defamed and desecrated Torah, and when this happens, we can only weep.

When tens of thousands of teenagers gathered in Tel Aviv to mourn the Prime Minister, they turned to Buddhism, Christianity, and rock-and-roll culture to find rituals to express their grief. They did not turn to Judaism. And why not? Journalists explained that these young Israelis *identified religious Judaism with fanaticism, extremism, and murder*. One can only weep.

The reaction of mainstream Orthodoxy was, with notable exceptions, mostly defensive and disappointing. We heard again and again: "We are all guilty and we all could have done more." But of course we are not all equally guilty. Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir emerged from the mainstream religious Right and from the great Orthodox universities of the United States and Israel. Only the halakhic authorities of the Orthodox world have influence there, and the simple truth is that they did not act vigilantly enough to cut out this spiritual cancer from their midst. Nonetheless, perhaps there is a modicum of encouragement to be found in the talk of introspection, self-examination, and renewed educational efforts among the young in the Orthodox world.

Our immediate tasks: combating apocalyptic fundamentalism and extremist messianism put forward in the name of Torah; explaining to those who do not yet understand that the worship of land as an absolute value is idolatry; and teaching Israelis—and Jews everywhere—that Torah's ways are ways of pleasantness and its paths are paths of peace. □

Rabbi Eric Yoffie is president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC).



The End of Illusion

Chaim Seidler-Feller

What follows is a measure of what I have learned in the aftermath of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

First, the belief that "Jews don't do things like this" appears to have been an expression of hollow conceit. And the anguish that many Jewish leaders have expressed over the shattering of this notion strikes me as a denial of reality. In point of fact, Jews do do things like this! Because, in the context of the pursuit of nationalist, political aims where power is a critical ingredient, all varieties of violent acts are to be expected. Nationalist Jews will tend to behave like all other nationalists. Yehuda Halevi, the twelfth-century

Chaim Seidler-Feller is Hillel rabbi and lecturer in sociology at UCLA. He is a member of Oz v'Shalom-Netivot Shalom, the religious peace movement.

Spanish philosopher, himself a proto-nationalist, was very aware of this stinging truth. With great craft and integrity he has the Khazar king gently rebuke the rabbi by proclaiming, "If you had power, you too would kill!" (*Kuzari*, I:114) Indeed, Jews do have power and they do kill—even each other.

Second, some remarkable rabbis have engaged in an unprecedented process of soul-searching which they have taken public. Yet they avoided confronting the messianic ideology that provided the underpinning for the heinous murder of the Prime Minister. This failure to extend their self-criticism can be explained by the fact that messianism, in this post-Six-Day-War era, has emerged as the sole justification for religious Zionism. To challenge the messianic interpretation would thus be tantamount to calling the entire enterprise into question.

But the events of the past few months culminating in the assassination compel us to reconsider the wisdom of advocating an ideology driven by messianic aspirations. More often than not, the pursuit of a utopian messianic vision has pushed believers beyond sober consideration of cause and effect into a realm where only ends matter and the violation of basic moral norms is held to be legitimate. Rabin became the enemy because, by agreeing to trade "holy" land—whose conquest was viewed as a critical step in the unfolding messianic drama—for peace, he was precluding the advent and obstructing the process. Consequently, he simply had to be removed.

The time has arrived for religious educators to accept Zionism for what it is: a reentry into history and a rejection of ahistorical, transcendent frameworks. The State of Israel is normal and holds out the promise of normalizing the Jewish religion by granting Jews the opportunity to gain fulfillment through the sanctity of this-worldly, everyday activities. Illusory and, ultimately, corrupting dreams of messianic perfection are no longer necessary.

Finally, while the reconstruction of religious thinking is essential, it is also clear that secular Zionism itself requires refashioning. The rift between secular and religious Israelis has developed into a chasm. No longer does there appear to be a basis for common discourse, and religious Jews have no reason to trust the motivations of their fellow Israelis. In fact, they relate to the peace process as if it were an expression of assimilationist disregard for Jewish values, since those who support the accords with the P.L.O. and Jordan demonstrate little concern for the historical significance of the land or the deeply felt emotional ties to it. Therefore, a reorientation of secular Israeli education that would lead to the integration of Zionism within the contours of Judaism is in order.

It's time for Zionism to come home; the revolution was successful, but it is in danger of losing its bearings. While forging a peace with Palestinians, it would also be appropriate to make peace with the Jewish tradition. An initial effort might follow a curricular course that would make the study of classical texts a centerpiece of all learning. In this non-coercive way, secular and religious Israelis might become aware of what they share and recover their ability to talk to and respect each other.

In sum, Yitzhak Rabin's murder imposes on us no less a task than the Zionization of Judaism and the Judaization of Zionism. That project would certainly be a worthy memorial. May his memory be for a blessing. □

Orthodoxy and the Assassination:

A Roundtable Discussion



We went to a wide variety of Orthodox leaders in Israel, the West Bank settlements, and the United States and invited them to discuss the role of Orthodoxy in creating the conditions that led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Without exception, those who had been involved in opposing governmental policies refused to participate in the discussion. We then turned to some of the most respected Orthodox leaders who support peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians and asked them for their best understanding. We are delighted at the outcome.

Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard *is Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL, the Center for Leadership and Learning.* **Zvi Ben Artzi** *is a pseudonym for a Jerusalem affiliate of the religious peace movement in Israel.* **Leah Shakdiel** *is a fellow at the School for Educational Leadership in Jerusalem.* **Daniel Boyarin** *teaches Talmud in the Near Eastern Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley, and is chair of the board of the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem.* **Veronika Cohen** *is a religious peace activist in Jerusalem who has been instrumental in creating dialogue groups between members of her Orthodox synagogue and Palestinians.*

Michael Lerner: As you know, we at Tikkun have for years been warning about the dangers of repressing Palestinians who wish to have national self-determination in the West Bank. Yet we've seen this repression as an inevitable concomitant of the Occupation itself, and hence have urged Israel to proceed quickly to disengage from the West Bank and create a demilitarized Palestinian state.

One of the major obstacles to moving in this direction has been the powerful influence in Israeli society of one particular strand of Judaism, which in my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, I call "Settler Judaism." Referring to those strands in Torah that heard God's voice as commanding that they settle the Land of Canaan and utterly wipe out the seven nations who inhabited the land, a classic call to genocide, Settler Judaism has the characteristics of cruelty and demeaning of others. It is no surprise that some Jews, leaving Egypt, would have heard God's voice in this way, because one of the most frequent tendencies of people who have been oppressed or have been victims of pain and cruelty is for them to pass on to others or act out on others the pain, oppression, and cruelty that was done to them.

In contrast, there is a Jewish Renewal voice of God in Torah, a voice that tells us that the chain of pain can be broken, and that when we enter into our land, we must not oppress the stranger, but instead remember that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. This compassionate voice of God in Torah represents a very different view about who God is and what our responsibility to God is all about.

Not all of those who live on the West Bank as settlers and not all Orthodox Jews have bought into Settler Judaism, but many have. And Settler Judaism also infects the consciousness of many Jews who are not religious at all.

It is this Settler Judaism that plays an important role in creating the preconditions for the violent climate in Israel that yielded the murder of Rabin and presents a continuing threat of civil war, should the government make additional territorial compromises with the Palestinians.

If we recognize how popular Settler Judaism has become in the Orthodox world and recognize how its tenets could encourage violence toward those who would dismantle settlements and make territorial compromise with Palestinians, then Orthodoxy becomes a bit more connected to the assassination.

How do you see it? If this account is incorrect, what is the connection between the violence toward those who want to make peace, the demeaning of non-Jews, which is prevalent in the Orthodox world, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy on the other?

Shakdiel: I'd distinguish between fundamentalist Judaism and radical Judaism, rather than Settler Judaism, because some settlers don't share the view you attribute to Settler Judaism. Fundamentalism is a simplistic reading of the texts and of reality, in which the complexities of the world are assimilated into a simplistic set of categories and assumptions. Some fundamentalists even



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argue that more complex readings of the Jewish tradition that emerged in the course of the past two thousand years were really only the product of a ghetto mentality, and that now our goal should be to connect more organically with our Torah and our land by letting go of the complexities of thinking that emerged in the Diaspora experience. The passion for this simplistic, organic way of thinking can be very dangerous.

Ben Artzi: Settler Judaism is an ambiguous term that plays on the genocidal fantasies of destroying the inhabitants of the land as represented in Torah and then seems to identify that with the Gush Emunim movement, and that is unfair to the Gush Emunim. I've never heard any one of them, even the most extreme of the settlers, talking about genocide. Although it's a pun, I'm not sure I like the pun, because it doesn't really do justice to the situation.

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin definitely emerged from a religious context and environment. It doesn't have to do with Orthodoxy as such, but with a specific kind of religious Zionism. I believe the sincerity of its leaders, who sound horrified at a product that they, nevertheless, produced. What bothers me most is this: How is it that a movement that started with the idea of cooperating with secular Zionism in building a common state has produced a member who assassinated the head of the state?

I see this as the outcome of a long process of growing sectarianism and a growing feeling of alienation that eventually leads people to see their own government as

the enemy. This grew out of a long process of overstating the importance of the land of Israel so that it becomes more important than life. There is a thin line between dying for something and killing for something. The murderer heard, "You have to die to not give up land," and transformed that into, "you have to kill to prevent giving up land." The fetishization of the land, so that everything can be sacrificed in order to hold it, is a central problem. And there is a deep disregard for the legitimacy of others, and deep skepticism about the legitimacy of seeking a pluralistic society. There is a significant part of the religious Zionist community that has not fully internalized democratic and pluralistic values.

Cohen: Apart from using the term "Settler Judaism" to describe what you are talking about, which I think is not the best way to label the group you want to talk about, I strongly agree with the rest of your analysis, Michael. I don't see the assassination as an aberration, but rather as an inevitable outcome of what has been going on for the past forty years, growing and gathering momentum. There is xenophobia and demeaning of the other which was horrible enough when we were in the



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exile, but it becomes extremely dangerous when we have the power of an army and ordinary citizens carrying firearms.

The assassination of Rabin is a direct outgrowth of the violence that has been perpetrated against the Palestinians. There has been almost no public expression of outrage, except in a limited way in the case of the massacre at Hebron by Goldstein a year ago, of the continuing acts of violence by settlers against Palestinian residents of the West Bank. As soon as you turn someone else into "the Other," they are not protected by the same rules as you apply to yourself. And "the Other" can become anybody who is not like me. I think the undertone of Ben Artzi and Shakdiel is that this is a strange aberration the origins of which we don't know. In my view, it came out of something that has been gathering momentum for a long time.

Shakdiel: I agree with you—I did not mean to imply that the passion for "organic Judiasm' is a sudden aberration.

Blanchard: The delegitimation of others does not begin with Orthodoxy. Most of the early Zionist movement delegitimated the Arab presence, with terms like "land without a people" to describe the country in which they were attempting to build a Jewish presence. The people who scared and pushed Arabs out of the country in 1948 were not Orthodox Jews. Zionism itself has an element that delegitimates the Other, which it inherited from nineteenth-century nationalism, though you are right, Michael, that there are a number of options within the Jewish religious heritage, one of which is strongly responsible for this tendency to delegitimate others. But Zionism took this tendency also from the westernized prejudice against "Orientals," which led many of them to delegitimate Sephardic Jews. The mix of territorialism and nationalism that Zionism represented as solution to what they called "the Jewish problem," has from the outset presented those elements. The really interesting question is how Orthodoxy stumbled into all this, leaving behind its relatively disempowering ideology from the Diaspora and managing to buy into this nationalistic and territorialist movement.

Of course, there are roots in the tradition for this. Like any topic under discussion by Jews, one could make a strong case on both sides: There *are* genocidal texts in the Torah. Those who build on those texts are a small percentage of the Orthodox world. Just last night when I was speaking, someone faulted me for not discussing the position that Palestinians were Amalek and should be destroyed (and there were Orthodox *poskim*, religious authorities—only a small number—who did say this). But there are alternative readings of the Torah within the Orthodox world that have led to a rejection of the nationalistic and territorialistic trends within the Jewish world.

In the United States, Orthodoxy is in an adolescent stage. We came out of an earlier stage in which we were apologetic and felt we had to please everybody. Now we are in a triumphalist stage in which we are asserting ourselves very strongly. Boundaries are very important to us, because we want to emphasize that we are different from everyone else—and we have found ourselves not only delegitimizing Palestinians and non-Jews but also non-Orthodox Jews. Adolescents can be very unpleasant, pushing others away and asserting their own identity. Mix that with nationalism and you've got a dangerous brew, in which national identity becomes the assertion of Me against Them. In this context, Orthodoxy often fails to see the value in any form of

pluralism in whatever issue is raised. So it's no surprise to me that Young Israel weighs in against the Madison Square Garden memorial to Rabin. Here we have the very organization that defined itself as trying to find a *modus vivendi* to live as Orthodox in America today seeking to define religious Judaism in the starkest possible terms, even if not yet becoming fundamentalist in the sense described by Leah Shakdiel.

There is no such thing as "Orthodox Judaism," but only a variety of social and religious phenomena, which for our purposes we label historical incarnations of "Orthodoxy." The particular version of Orthodoxy that predominates in the United States has been deeply affected by the Holocaust. For many Orthodox Jews, the effects of the Holocaust are not yet over. They are still fighting those battles and living within a reality in which the Holocaust defines many terms. They are both afraid of non-Jews and distrust them and everywhere see the possibility of returning to the gas chambers. When you have that kind of Holocaust focus, there is almost no room for concern about the well-being of non-Jews, so I'm not surprised to find them signing on to the worst possible interpretations of our religious tradition, even though they have other alternatives available to them from that tradition—they don't want those other alternatives. The reason you find 70-75 percent of Orthodox indicating in polls that they are opposed to all versions of the peace process comes from this consciousness.

It's not uncommon for social groups to go through a phase in which their main concern is to define who is in and who is out, and to define themselves in opposition to others.

Lerner: But is there something within Orthodoxy that leads the Orthodox to pick this particular way to define who is in and who is out? One could have, for example, looked at the Torah commandments to "love the stranger" and "pursue justice" and then defined "Torah-True Orthodoxy" as those who really take those commandments seriously, really manifest this kind of loving and commitment to justice seriously, using that as the defining element of who is in and who is out.

Blanchard: The Holocaust memories and the memory of the life experience of Eastern European Jews, brought to America, don't lead Jews in that direction. In that case, what you call Settler Judaism did function sometimes as compensation for real oppression. And Jews saw non-Jews as what they often were: hostile, difficult, and untrustworthy. If that is what is available to you as a cultural resource, as a meaning structure available to you when you construct your identity, and even though it's not a logical necessity that Orthodox Jews in contemporary America would pick that demeaning-of-others strand, it is the strand that is very available in the culture from which they have emerged. Many of these Jews are no more than one generation removed from Auschwitz, or are themselves Holocaust victims.

Boyarin: The imagery and ideology mobilized against Palestinians is a classic Zionist imagery and ideology, which has been retained more by the religious Zionist camp than by other camps within the Zionist movement. The idea that one does not abandon a Jewish settlement under any circumstances goes back to settler Zionism of the 1920s (e.g., the argument about whether to abandon the Northern settlement of Tel Hai, which even Jabotinsky advocated abandoning for the sake of the entire *Yeshuv*, but which the Labor Zionists insisted should never be rescinded because no Jewish settlement should ever be abandoned). It's no surprise that Orthodox Zionists raised in organizations like B'nai Akiva, studying this history and internalizing its norms, should suddenly feel abandoned and betrayed when the erstwhile secular representatives of that very Zionist ideology are now rejecting it. The problem lies at least as much, if not more, in fundamentalist representations of the Zionist movement as in Orthodoxy.

Some of my friends in Israel say, "Yes, but the only people actually killing people today are the Orthodox, so it must be that Orthodoxy is the relevant factor, not Zionism." But it's also the case that the only people doing this killing are religious *Zionists*. You don't find members of Neturei Karta, with all their violent rhetoric and their violent stone-throwing, engaged in acts of assassination or murder. While we engage in self-critique of the religious aspects of this phenomenon, we should not allow secular Zionist off the hook too easily. And the rhetoric of "Rabin is a traitor" came as much from secular right-wing Zionists as from the religious camp in the past years.

Shakdiel: I think the passion for organic Judaism is peculiar to the intersection between Zionism and Orthodoxy. While it is true that secular Zionism originated delegitimation of Palestinians, today important sections of secular Zionism have outgrown that way of relating to Palestinians, whereas most religious Zionists are not able to outgrow it. Once you combine the passion to have a complete Torah which is organically connected to the land with the promise of secular Zionism you get the present situation.

This distortion has historical roots. A few Generations ago, Rabbi Reines advocated Orthodoxy joining

the Zionist movement for pragmatic reasons—we have to go back to the land, but we don't build an ideology around that union of orthodoxy and zionism. At the same moment, he was challenged by Rav Kook, who argued for an organic Torah Zionism, which combined religion with nationalism. We need to question that passion for organic religious nationalism Just a note about the Holocaust and Jewish identity in Israel: A recent study by Dr. Yair Oron shows that the holocaust is the only common denominator of collective identity shared by all sections of Israeli society—the secular, the traditionalists, the national religious, and the ultra-orthodox. That is why it is manipulated by everyone.

Ben Artzi: We are lumping different things we don't like into this one event of the murder of Rabin. I don't think we can say that it is territorial nationalism, Zionism, the Bible, religion, Orthodoxy. It's like saying that the idea of social equality leads to Stalinism. We are generalizing too much. Here we have a very particular crime in a very particular moment, and I'm not sure that we gain in our understanding of that particular event to go back to the 1940s or going back to Abraham our Father. We are looking for some original sin.

I think it makes more sense for us to focus on the particular group of people in the contemporary scene who have come to see the State as their enemy, which is a new development, and which could lead to a civil war in Israel. This is a group of people who feel alienated and neglected by the State. There are many Israelis who don't care much about Palestinian rights who are *not* part of this group, and there are people who support the settlements who not part of this group, so I think we should focus more narrowly. So this is not about Zionism as such or about Orthodoxy as such. There are many very good religious Zionists who are against the abuse of Palestinian rights and against the murder of Rabin.

Lerner: In our pages it has been argued by some that the violence necessary on a daily basis to maintain the Occupation has a corrosive effect on the souls of those who participate in it, leading them to become more used to using violence as a way to deal with problems or frustrating circumstances. The resort to violence has been particularly frequent among settlers, as demonstrated by the reports of the Israeli human-rights organization B'Tselem (and reported in the September/October and November/December 1995 issues of TIKKUN).

Ben Artzi: I am against the Occupation and for a Palestinian state next to Israel. But even those who are involved in enforcing the Occupation have many different subgroups. There are some who wish to maintain the Occupation because it is necessary for Israeli security. There are some who believe that the Occupation is asserting an eternal right. There are so many nuances of position.

Boyarin: I'm somewhat troubled by what Zvi Ben Artzi says. There has been a consistent pattern of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, particularly around Hebron, and a condoning of the most violent actions of settlers. This is well documented. There is a way in which these settlers have been sent to do the work of the government, doing terrorization of the local population in ways that have been useful to the government though the government couldn't allow itself to be seen as doing this itself—thus "persuading" the Palestinians that they must agree to Oslo I and II, because otherwise look at the terrible settlers and what they will do to you otherwise. There has been a systematic condoning and cynical utilization of these violent elements among the settlers and among sectors of the I.D.F., particularly the Golani Brigade for the past several years, that grows out of the Zionist position. There is a certain sense in which today the chickens are coming home to roost. I'm astonished and appalled at people who are more horrified now than they were at the massacre of Palestinians at prayer by Goldstein in Hebron, not to mention those who have closed their eyes to the level of violence against the Palestinian population throughout the past many years.

Cohen: Yigal Amir, his brother, and others involved in the assassination of Rabin were also plotting to kill Palestinians. One wonders if they had killed Arabs first whether they would have been stopped.

Ben Artzi: The murderer saw Rabin as a *rodeph*, a pursuer or threat to the entire Jewish people. There are those who see those who engage in the peace process as pursuers of the Jewish people. I don't deny that there is a consistent use of violence against Palestinians, but I don't see that that was necessarily connected to Rabin's assassination. The particular group who were involved in plotting against Palestinians and against Rabin were influenced by a very perverse way of thinking about the land and about the rights of other people. I'm not sure that this way was imminent in Orthodoxy or Zionism. To blame this on Zionism is a mistake: The main force of traditional Zionism today is willing to split the land, to give Palestinians rights, to have a two-state solution. The main thing that is keeping other Zionists from buying this position is fear, whether rationally grounded or not. Fear of the purposes of the Palestinian

movement. I don't think it has to do with disregard for the Other, or of asserting an exclusive right to the land. I see among many Israelis a genuine desire to share the land. Leaving aside many settlers, most of those who don't want to share the land oppose sharing out of fear, and the fear has some grounds in a long history of war. The worst way of handling the fears is to blame some "original sin" in Zionism or Judaism.

Shakdiel: Hebrew University sociology professor Baruch Kimmerling argues that we have contending in Israel today two different definitions of society: one that focuses on us as a tribe, another that focuses on us as citizens in a contemporary democratic state. Those who define the collective in these latter terms may be more willing to make certain kinds of compromises with their Arab neighbors. But in the process they are also moving away from traditional Jewish definitions of the nature of their collective life together. But this direction horrifies a section of Israeli Jews who see the whole Torah as being marginalized, and the whole essence of their lives being threatened. As they watch the state move further and further away from Judaism (even from the secularized Zionist version of Judaism that prevailed in the early years of the State) they feel themselves as having less and less in common with the larger Israeli society. And this makes them feel all the more urgency of establishing the boundaries of their society. If we do not find civilized ways to have those have a discourse between two views of the nature of the collectivity we may end up with more violence.

Blanchard: I agree with Zvi Ben Artzi that we need a more nuanced account to understand the specific murder of Rabin, but that doesn't seem to me to require ignoring that the ideas that Amir held did not emerge from a vacuum. I'm not interested in finding "original" sin in the original Zionist project, nor am I interested in closing down that project.

But I do believe that it is important to note the tensions that have always been part of the Zionist enterprise. This is not a search for an "original sin." Zionism had a tension between universal and more tribal identities, and this is now being played out under the specific circumstances we are facing today.

Cohen: One small point. The Holocaust has been invoked in this discussion as an explanatory background to make sense of some people's willingness to revert to violence, discounting of others, or being afraid to trust non-Jews and make peace with them. But one must remember that many of us who are liberal or who support the peace process and oppose the Occupation have the same ancestry. Those who are fighting for justice for Palestinians are also Holocaust survivors.

Shakdiel: The very term "Torah Jew" should remind us of a certain kind of healthy uncertainty about how to live. We struggle with the texts to understand how to live because we *are not certain* of how to live on our own without this process of interaction with God and God's word as interpreted. The notion here is that we are part of a community of people trying together to understand, and that the people around us are as imperfect as we are, and hence we are struggling with a text that is supposed to be perfect. We need to preserve this notion of struggling with texts and our imperfection as interpreters, because without that notion people end up feeling that Torah gives them the license to be simplistic and have all the answers, to move ahead with a plan regardless of how other people are moving. This is what it really should mean to be a Torah Jew.

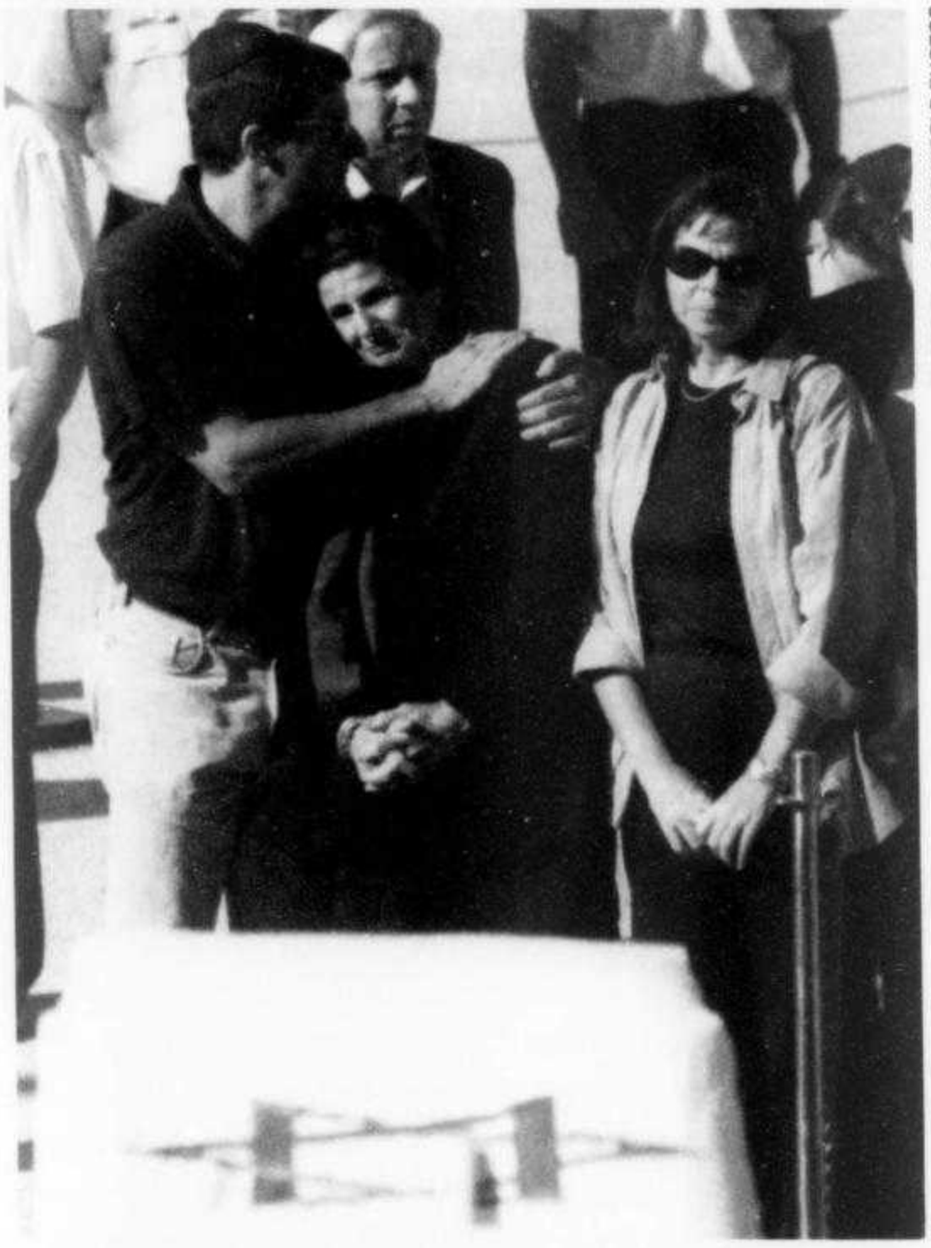


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Blanchard: So Leah is raising the important issue of what is available to us as resource to make it less likely that the kind of violence and demeaning of others will continue. I agree with her that education toward tolerance of ambiguity and complexity are central. I also believe in creating a dialogue with people who hold very different views than we do, including those who

hold notions of Settler Judaism.

Lerner: Many of them were invited to be part of this dialogue, and yet not a single one agreed to be part of it. The obstacle to dialogue rarely comes from the liberals in the Jewish world.

Blanchard: Still, it's important to reach out, to continue to validate that people who disagree with us are created in the image of God, and that being on the other side doesn't mean that they are fundamentally "other."

Boyarin: I feel very close to the conception of Judaism as tribal identity and want to preserve that sense of intimacy. Collective history, which is central to the beauty, pleasure, and joy of being Jewish. Retaining that possibility of tribal intimacy in the context of a species-wide solidarity is central to my project as a Jew and my critical project in intellectual life. I would feel lost in the world if in place of that all we had was a universalistic "rights of man" citizenry notion. But the combination of that kind of tribal intimacy with state power and territorialism is explosive, racist in its implications if not in its intentions, and will ultimately be productive of enormous and horrifying violence. It's not a question of original sin, but of clarifying certain structural realities. It seems to me that we have a choice between Judaism and historical Zionism. There are varieties of ideas about the State of Israel that one might want to call Zionist, which I might find myself in agreement with: e.g., if one wanted to talk of a bi-national secular state of Jews and Palestinians in the land of Palestine, and wanted to call that Zionism, then I'd be a Zionist. But historical Zionism, the combination of Jewishness and state power and territorialization, seems to be an explosive combination. It is not only the religious Right, but the secular right wing represented by Raful, Naomi Shemer, by Moledet, which has made common cause with the religious Right, because they share the commitment to the Zionist project.



"Judaism" can't be blamed, because there is no such thing as "Judaism." There is a collection of texts, and a historical process of reading those texts, and a community that realizes its socio-cultural and religious practice in different ways under different material conditions. We have to associate ourselves with those historical realizations that seem most positive and useful, while not pretending that the other readings of those texts were not also present. And we need to seek to create those kinds of material conditions which lead people to create the most peaceful and just kinds of lives. For me, the richest include the realization of tribal identity, historical identity, being rooted in a community, having the enormous pleasure and richness of studying the life of that tradition—that to me is one of the three pillars upon which I would predicate the good life.

Of course, I'd have to grant the same for "Zionism," that there is no such thing, except insofar as "Zionism" is a set of material processes that have been evolved in the past hundred years. It's important to remember that it was Yitzhak Rabin (z"l) who denied Yishayahu Leibowitz the Israel Prize. So if we are going to talk about where pluralism and tolerance are to be located, it seems to me that the secular forces in Israeli society are not noted for their openness of discourse, and this is just as true of the Israeli Left and the radical elements of the Left with which I associate.

Ben Artzi: I share with Danny the importance of tribal intimacy, but radically disagree with him about the role of attaining self-government and sovereignty. I believe that there has been a very positive role that Zionism played, which has led to a healthy normalization of the situation of Jews through the creation of sovereignty and self-government. Some of what Israel faces from those who oppose the peace process is the anger and vengefulness of people who are trapped in their own feelings of powerlessness. I think that Boyarin is underestimating the positive role of Zionism and believe that there is not enough healthy internalization of the Zionist project. That healthy internalization would help us see ourselves as equals to others in the world, secure enough to defend ourselves and build an environment in which our particularism can flourish in a secure way while struggling against the community that still lives by the myth of powerlessness.

I should also say that the kind of debate that Israelis are engaged in now about the future of the territories and peace cannot go on long without violence. Democracy, which is a procedure for the nonviolent settling of debates, can take the debate in which stakes are relatively low (the amount of taxation on the middle class or the like). But when each side thinks that the other side can destroy everything dear to them and that the policies of the other party will be the end of their secu-

PHOTO BY: A.P. WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

rity … we cannot have that kind of debate for a long time without the eruption of violence. The government needs to move quickly, to stop the interim process, and institute their final settlement plans quickly. The interim situation puts too many parties in doubt about their future and gives too many parties a stake in trying to undermine the process through violence.

We have to move quickly to implementing a permanent solution.

Blanchard: I agree that these issues have to be resolved quickly, and we need to try to minimize the amount of violence. The United States had a similar situation with segregation in the South. The law of the land resolved the issue in legal terms. Some communities responded to this by imposing desegregation through the use of power, busing children around, and forcing parents to accept desegregation. Other communities put enormous energy into trying to understand the home community, which favored desegregation, and to addressing its fears and concerns, and made the process of enforcing desegregation easier. This latter approach had much greater success in the long run. We are in a similar situation. If, God willing, the peace process leads to a final settlement with Palestinians, there are going to be a lot of dissatisfied settlers—not just a few people, but lots of people, whose way of looking at life has been delegitimated. If their needs are not addressed, after the resolution of the issue itself, then we will have the violence we saw in South Boston in the North and in places in the South that came along with legally enforced desegregation. If we take seriously the notion that people are created in the image of God, that requires us to treat settlers as created in the image of God.

So, on the one hand, we have to talk to settlers, making clear that they are not going to be able to retain their political vision of a unified land of Israel. On the other hand, an enormous amount of energy, money, and human concern has to be given to helping them come to grips with this reality and to prepare for the changes that will be necessary in their lives. You can't suppress these people with guns; you have to deal with them with compassion. So implementing the process requires using the best techniques of non-violent conflict resolution and plenty of time and money. But that would be better than using the paratroops.

Cohen: If the enormous amount of money being poured into roads to make easy access to the settlements were instead being used to help people resettle within the boundaries of Israel, that would drain many settlers from the territories. Many who might like to move back can't afford to do so. Meanwhile, the new roads that we are building are undermining whatever possibilities for peace we are dreaming about, cutting off Palestinian communities from each other and increasing the tensions.

Blanchard: We should also be appealing to the settlers' own highest values, redefining moving back to Israel so that we project that as the highest degree of idealism and religious commitment, a reflection of their own values rather than a capitulation to secular values. There may also be people who could decide to live in peace as a minority within a Palestinian state. Part of the negotiations with Palestinians should be about trying to convince Palestinians to help create circumstances in which people can live in peace with a Palestinian governmental authority. Jews have lived with Arabs before. □

EDITORIALS

(Continued from p. 10)

belies the entire history of the labor movement. In the past, it was precisely when economic conditions were threatening that solidarity was strongest. What has changed is not that economic conditions are more difficult today (indeed, is anyone seriously suggesting that things are as bad today for most Americans as they were in the 1930s?), but rather that people's understanding of their situation is different. And that's where a politics of meaning starts. Our challenge to an ethos of selfishness and materialism is not an alternative to economic struggles, but the necessary precondition for such struggles. The politics of meaning is a strategy that will recreate the social solidarity that the Left managed to undermine by its excessive focus on ethnic particularism and its intellectual narcissism.

We challenge The *Nation* to create a public debate anytime in March 1996 between Michael Lerner and Alexander Cockburn—and we will see who is full of "hot air."

A Challenge to Bennett

One of the calling cards of right-wing theorists recently has been their attempt to revive interest in traditional virtues. Yet their definition of traditional is strangely coincident with values that encourage the development of an individualist who will succeed in the competitive market. So it is a welcome relief to find Harper/Collins' recent publication of TIKKUN author Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl's *A Call to Character*, a fine compilation of stories, poems, plays, proverbs, and fables aimed at developing values that, in Marian Wright Edelman's words, "remind us to care about each other and not just ourselves." □

On the Limits of Critical Thinking

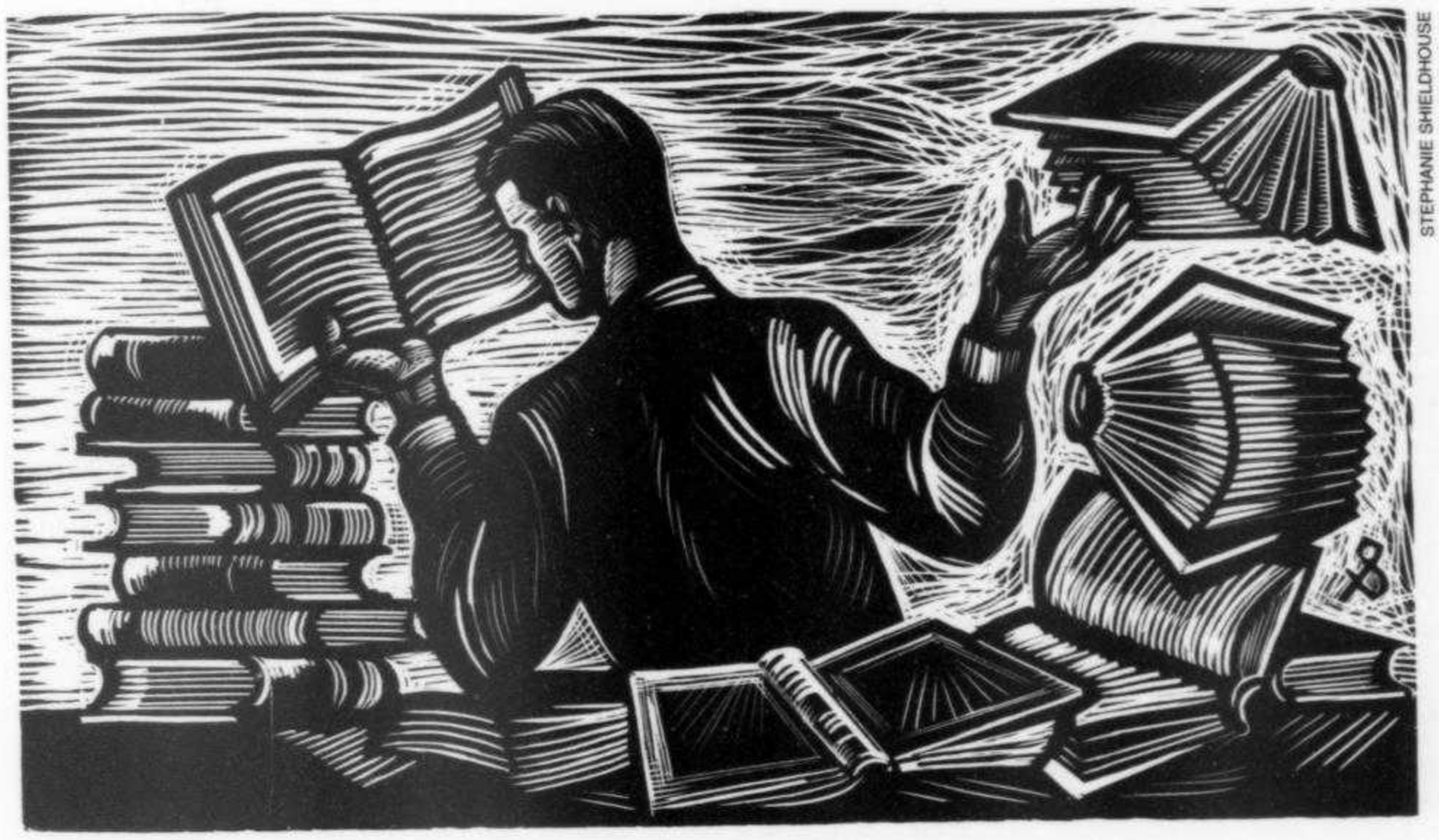
Michael S. Roth

Working with graduate students in the humanities, I have noticed a trait common to young scholars in a variety of fields: They are really good at being critical. For many students today, being smart *means* being critical. To find Kant's errors, Spivak's blind spots, or a young professor's failure to account for his own "positionality" is in our academic culture a mark of sophistication, a sign of one's capacity to participate in academic life as a full member of the tribe. While this is a common observation of many critics of academia, I find myself wondering both how this skill has developed out of our traditions, and how it has been absorbed into our culture. How have we come to prize this capacity for critical rejection?

This is not just an academic question. Many professionals think they have escaped academic culture when they leave the university to pursue careers in journalism, politics, law, or business. They can look back on their college or graduate school years with nostalgia, or, as is more often the case, with irony and condescension. But when we consider what they have taken with them, the capacity—and taste—for criticism looms large.

I do not want to minimize the importance of analytical acuity. After all, we want to be able to see through shoddy arguments and to avoid being hoodwinked by deceptive rhetoric. Critical acumen allows us to see that what looks like a coherent or compelling presentation might actually be an exercise in ideology, or the manipulation of the reader by sentimentality or prejudice. As students learn to unmask these practices, one hopes that they are better able to avoid using them in their own work; that they are better able to protect their own thinking from influences which are not based on rigorous empirical research or on reasonable theoretical speculation.

I fear, however, that as the goal of education has become the creation of a class of professional unmaskers,



STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

Michael S. Roth is director of European Studies at the Claremont Graduate School. His recent books include The Ironist's Cage: Trauma, Memory and the Construction of History *and* Psycho-Analysis as History: Negotiation and Freedom in Freud.

we have seriously limited our ability to make sense of the world. In overdeveloping the capacity to show how texts fail to accomplish what they set out to do, we may be depriving students of the capacity to learn as much as possible from what they read. In an academic culture in which being smart often means being a critical unmasker, our students may become too good at showing how things *don't* make sense. That very skill may diminish their capacity to find or create sense, meaning, and direction in the books they read and the world in which they live. Once outside the university, our students continue to make points by displaying the critical prowess for which they were rewarded in school. They wind up contributing to a cultural climate that has little tolerance for finding or making meaning, whose intellectuals and pundits delight in ever more sophisticated unmaskings.

I am not here joining the chorus of right-wing commentators who bemoan the latest crisis in the humanities, often associating any departure from great old books as a nihilistic impoverishment of the nation's soul. Nor am I accusing deconstruction, postmodernism, or some other newfangled approach to texts of failing to give our students the virtues that would make them effective capitalist competitors in the marketplace. Instead, I am asking that we recognize that some of the most powerful traditions in modern humanist pedagogy have fed into the contemporary stress on unmasking, resulting in criticism that aims only at de-meaning. Right-wing attacks on the so-called "radicalism" or "anti-humanism" of professors, and on the general insignificance of the liberal arts in our country are themselves the latest expression of this concentration on de-meaning. Both within and outside the university, the critical thinking of which the liberal arts have been so proud has become a powerful defense against learning from the past, making meaning in the present, and imagining a liveable future.

The problem of unmasking as a denial of meaning has been discussed since the modern version of critical thinking itself was formulated in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Jean-Jacques Rousseau already posed these issues about the dangers of Enlightenment's powers of demystification, even as he participated in the movement's radical criticism of the politics and culture of his time. Rousseau worried that the attempt to unmask the follies of common belief would leave people with nothing at all in which to believe; that the pulling apart and examination of morality, politics, and religion would leave people with only a lonely cynicism with which to confront the world.

In a workshop for dissertation writers in the humanities titled "The Modern and the Post-Modern," I began with Rousseau's questioning of the Enlightenment's unmasking powers. The students were at first very surprised to be starting with Rousseau—rather than with Paul de Man on Rousseau. They imagined he did not have access to the critical tools with which their own graduate education had been blessed. But they attacked the text with the tools they had been honing in school, and soon they were ready to uncover the philosopher's essentialism, his foundationalism, his, in a word, failure to write in the carefully guarded ways that their professors had apparently taught them was the professional norm.

The most obvious questions were in some ways the most difficult: Why had Rousseau written that way? Why not assume he could have asked himself questions at least as difficult as we were asking? What was he trying to teach his readers in writing as he did? My students were surprised; some of them seemed to think that I had asked them to take their shots at a moving target. But instead I had asked them to turn themselves as readers: to try to find the position from which they could learn from what they were reading. This request was in tension with the conventional practice of critical thinking that they had been taught in the good old Enlightenment tradition. After all, the conventional practice—which one can see in almost every question session following a public lecture—was to put themselves in a position to ask tough questions, to show a critical superiority to whatever it was they were examining.

In training our students in the techniques of critical thinking, we may be giving them reasons not to learn rather than techniques for learning. The confident capacity to refuse to learn from those with whom we disagree seems to have infected much of our cultural life: from politics to the press, from ghettoized multiculturalists to elitist universalists. But as teachers, we must find ways for our students to open themselves to the emotional and cognitive power of history and literature, since critical thinking is sterile without the capacity for empathy and comprehension.

One of the crucial tasks of higher education should be to help our students cultivate the willingness and ability to learn from material they might otherwise reject or ignore. Creating an academic culture that values the desire to learn from unexpected sources as much as it values the critical faculties to detect cant and illogic would be a crucial contribution to democratic life more generally.

We should not pass over critical thinking in favor of some form of humanities-appreciation, feel-good mode of learning. But if education is to help us make meaning and find direction in the world and not just to detach us from it, we must be not only critical thinkers but capable of questioning the limits of critical thinking. □

BOOK REVIEW

They Want the World, and They Want it Now

Zachary Karabell

Jihad vs. McWorld: How the Planet Is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together—and What This Means for Democracy, by Benjamin Barber. Times Books, 1995. 381 pp. $25.

Several years ago, Benjamin Barber, a professor at Rutgers University, wrote a stimulating essay in The *Atlantic* in which he posited two alternative metaphors for the future: Jihad and McWorld. He suggested there was a dialectical process at work, in which these apparently opposed forces actually stimulate each other, the anarchic pulls of McWorld modernity sparking a violently dogmatic form of identity politics.

Barber has now turned that essay into a book of the same title, and, fortunately, it maintains the same provocative quality. Yet, in extending and fleshing out the model, Barber adds a starry-eyed view of democracy that was essentially muted in the earlier version. He suggests that democracy and "civil society" are somehow the answer to the otherwise depressing conundrum of Jihad and McWorld. While he is convincing, and depressingly so, about the perils of both options, his solution is built on nostalgia and a poor grasp of history.

For Barber, Jihad connotes any attempt of religious and/or ethnic extremists "to recapture a world that existed prior to cosmopolitan capitalism and was defined by religious mysteries, hierarchical communities, spellbinding traditions, and historical metaphor." McWorld, on the other hand, represents the forces of global commerce and telecommunications that are not bound by the state and that respect no interests but the expansion of consumption. Yet, says Barber, "Jihad stands not so much in stark opposition as in subtle counterpoint to McWorld…It is Jihad via McWorld rather than Jihad versus McWorld." Jihad is transmitted and pursued by traditionalists who use all the devices of McWorld—television, radio, international banking, high-tech weapons, computers, and advertising—to promote their agenda.

The dialectic that Barber sets up is a persuasive one. It is an innovative spin on the frequent observation that ethnic cleansing is done by teenagers wearing Levis and drinking Coke, and that Hindu nationalists in India use sophisticated p.r. techniques and satellite dishes to further their causes. Barber concludes that both forces are eroding the nation-state and contributing to the breakup of civil society and democracy. McWorld knows no state boundaries. In the words of Gillette chairman Alfred Zeien, "I do not find foreign countries foreign." In a world of global commerce, there is only one meaningful nationality: We are all consumers. Jihad, for its part, rejects the modern nation-state and democracy in favor of exclusive identity politics based on the community rather than the individual.

Barber is at his best when discussing McWorld. His grand example, to which he frequently returns, is Rupert Murdoch. If consumerism is a text that must be spread before people abandon their inherited cultures for the homogenized culture of Coke, Stallone, and Levis, then Murdoch's international media empire is the premier producer.

In America alone, Murdoch owns Fox Television, Twentieth Century Fox Films, *TV Guide*, HarperCollins publishers, *New York* magazine, and The *New York Post*. He also has started the new conservative weekly, The *Standard*, edited by William Kristol. In addition, Murdoch owns or has controlling interests in Delphi Internet services, The *Times* of London, the British tabloid The *Sun*, the Asian satellite network Star TV, and British Sky TV. Finally, Murdoch controls a huge segment of the Australian print and visual media through his News Corporation.

Media conglomerates such as Murdoch's are the apex of McWorld. Without the pervasive effect of their diverse products, McWorld would face serious obstacles in its relentless assault on cultural distinctions. As Barber notes, in order to make a tea-consuming country like Indonesia into a nation of Coke drinkers, traditional culture has to be eroded, and mass communications do the deed.

Answerable to no one political authority, such corporate behemoths cannot be touched by the anti-trust laws of any nation, including the United States. That makes the prospects of McWorld all the more favorable and the prognosis for democracy all the less so. In Barber's view, when billions of consumers are offered a choice only amongst the commodities of several mega-companies, states get weaker and democratic decision-making withers.

Except, that is, when a state is bolstered by Jihad. Of course, as Barber points out, fundamentalists don't respect the state *per se*. They respect a particular identity that, as in Iran, may parallel the state, but, as in Bosnia, may also attack it. In the end, according to Barber, Jihad and McWorld together spell the doom of the independent, democratic nation-state and offer the grim choice of commercial chaos or brutal totalitarianism.

Barber's solution is local democracy nurtured by a vibrant civil society. He writes: "Civil society offers us a single civic identity that, belonging neither to the state bureaucrats nor private consumers but to citizens alone, recouples rights and responsibilities and allows us to take control of

Zachary Karabell is an associate at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.



SETH TOBOCMAN

our governments and our markets."

He concludes by proposing a world associative democracy along the lines of the American Articles of Confederation which bound the colonies in the decade before the Constitution was drafted. Such a loose federalism would ultimately prove unworkable, as the Articles did. But, in the interim, it would accustom nations to giving up some of their sovereignty for the common good. Then a more systematic and organized world-government might be established.

On the issue of McWorld alone, Barber is on strong ground. The very fact that we immediately understand the meaning of his neologism underscores its ubiquitous power. The problem for Barber is that McWorld is *so* strong that it overwhelms all countervailing forces. Jihad may put up a good fight, but even Barber admits that McWorld's capacity to "overpower parochialism" puts fundamentalists on the perpetual defensive. Thus, positing "civil society" as the sole remedy seems a bit like relying on the Lilliputians to keep Gulliver tied down for good.

In fact, it was "civil society" that begat McWorld in the first place. As described by Jürgen Habermas, Robert Putnam, and other contemporary thinkers, civil society developed gradually in Western Europe and the United States during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Communities that possessed local autonomy and in which fraternal organizations (such as church choirs) flourished could better respond to the spiritual and economic needs of their inhabitants.

These thinkers tent to romanticize civil society, emphasizing its positive qualities while glossing over its darker side. One should not forget that in such quasi-democratic communities extreme forms of exclusive, Jihad-like proclivities can be found. Early New England towns, for instance, were models of bigotry, religious exclusivity, and a moralism that brooked little compromise.

Still, such communities did combine to form a democratic polity, a nation-state known as the United States. Eventually, communal religious fervor was replaced by private observance and public obsession with wealth and power, similar to the British fusion of a limited state and laissez-faire capitalism. To invert Barber's metaphor, the history of American democracy is McWorld via Jihad. At the same time, the strains of Jihad present in early Euro-American communities still echo today among Pat Robertson and his ilk.

Thus, Barber's ideal society never existed and couldn't be reconstructed even if it had. Heraclitus was right—one can't step in the same spot of that river twice. One can't manufacture a civil society that would be composed of individuals free from McWorld. Any attempt, say, to take little children and raise them away from McWorld and Jihad in some remote corner of Canada would founder just as surely as did the utopian experiments of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier in the nineteenth century.

Are we then left with nothing but the doom of democracy in a future controlled by Murdoch and his heirs? Yes and no. The forces of McWorld are too strong to reverse, and the clash between it and Jihad make small-scale, tolerant democracy impossible.

Instead, the best hope probably lies within McWorld itself. As the new corporate order continues to grow, it will inevitably change. Barber's picture of a permanent McWorld behemoth reminds me of Western impressions of Japan a decade ago. Japan was imagined as a global island about to dominate the commerce of the entire world. But with success came pitfalls, and the Japanese are now in the long and slow process of adjusting to rising unemployment and terrorist acts by bands of the alienated and the messianic.

Of course, McWorld has greater assets than the Japanese alone, yet size will ultimately force adjustments. When a conglomerate becomes as multi-faceted as Murdoch's, it will inevitably reflect the complexity of its component parts. A multinational such as Coke, with a narrower portfolio of products, might maintain a narrow corporate culture for several generations. But communications conglomerates are subject to the same fissiparous forces that have undermined the nation-state. Workers in one conglomerate may learn that a competitor offers better benefits. How do they learn it? Most likely, the medium is the rival company's p.r. Thus, McWorld companies can become unwitting victims of McWorld's marketing talents.

One can already glimpse the sprouts of a kind of corporate civil society in which units, divisions, supervisors, and their workers create enclaves that fulfill some of the same tasks as did small towns of farmers and artisans. One model of this is the GM Saturn car plant in Tennessee. According to company advertising, the Saturn plant is a model of worker and consumer input. Even if the reality diverges markedly from the hype, the impact of the image remains. Other companies and other workers can observe the p.r. effort, take it to be true, and demand real changes that correspond to the ideal.

As McWorld becomes *the* world, it will surely take on cultural qualities that are now absent. Its threat to local control and liberties lies in its drive to homogenize, in the erasure of options and alternatives. But as McWorld eradicates the rich patina of cultural diversity, it also elevates awareness of its flaws by saturating the world with news and images of conflict. Right now, the perils of McWorld are most visible. Yet, in time, the new order, like its predecessors, will be transformed from the inside. □

BOOK REVIEW

Think Again

Stew Albert

Think a Second Time, by Dennis Prager. HarperCollins, 1995. 255 pp. $24.

The Jewish community continues to suffer from the loss of growing numbers of disaffected youth. In desperation, the directors of synagogues and community centers are looking for help from a circle of independent thinkers who address the spiritual and political issues that plague the modern world. Yet, scorning Jewish Renewal activist rabbis, story-tellers, artists, and musicians, the Jewish leaders instead prefer importing for "personal appearances" those pop-philosophers who sacralize the manners and morals of marketplace America.

What do we really expect? Socialist labor leaders maybe? Or 1960s-style civil rights and peace activists? I don't think so. The Jewish community is run by the rich. True, most of them want to do something good in the world, but as the Jewish communal crisis grows, their only source from which to draw a solution is their own acquisitive lifestyle. Naturally, the community leaders call upon glamorous personalities who, like themselves, have "made it," who tell us to look for moral corruption mostly among the poor, the Blacks, the gays, and pathetically sentimental middle-class liberals. On this lecture circuit, Dennis Prager is often in demand.

Prager's *Think a Second Time* offers a bigoted good-old-boy defense of the American white backlash. But it is not altogether typical of this genre, since Prager isn't a right-wing televangelist, but a pop-Jewish-theologian-cum-L.A.-talk-show-host who aims at the talmudic sanctification of his ruthless rage.

By means of books (he is the co-author of *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*), audio cassettes, a defunct national television show, his *Ultimate Issues Quarterly*, and speaking tours, Prager has built an impressive circle of influence for his conservative fulminations. Here in Portland, Oregon, a Prager appearance at the Jewish Community Center will draw a crowd, and not just from the Likud side of the street.

His approach covers most everything, ranging from surprisingly humane theories of child-rearing to an intelligent defense of non-Orthodox religiosity and somewhat interesting speculations on God's purpose. Yet he can then turn hideous, with a celebration of capital punishment and a pathetic apologia for describing God as a man. Prager offers some kernel of interest for almost any perplexed Jew.

Dennis Prager definitely knows how to draw customers into his tent. He sets them up with a compassionate acknowledgement of mutual suffering and a need for some higher purpose, presents his version of "ethical monotheism" as a rational solution, and then when the crowd is sufficiently softened, he springs his all consuming hatred of liberal and feminist ideas on his somewhat unsuspecting audience.

Even here he is selective. Since Portland Jews have been strong opponents of Christian Right-sponsored, anti-gay electoral initiatives, he stays off the subject. You'd have to watch his very late night T.V. show to hear his defense of

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Stew Albert is 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.*

INTERMARRIAGE—
the end of the Jewish community?

Exploding many of the myths about intermarriage and the intermarried, Ellen Jaffe McClain argues that recent changes in American society actually have the potential to make intermarriage less of a threat to American Jewry.

"The best account I know of what has gone wrong, but what can be made right, in American Judaism. She writes about love with love."
—*Rabbi Jacob Neusner*



"Informed and passionate. An honest testimony of the need to recognize the stranger in our midst."
—*Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis, author of* For Those Who Can't Believe

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Pat Robertson's homophobia. Instead he offers moderate audiences a treatise on the need not to offend gentiles by opposing prayer in the public schools. Besides, a moment of silence is a great way to foster moral development.

The big schtick centerpiece of Prager's theo-politics, argued with force and much repetition in *Think a Second Time*, is his contention that believing in the natural goodness of a human being is not only wrong but downright dangerous. He tells his readers that God created human beings as morally neutral beings with inclinations for good and evil. As a former camp counselor, the author assures us, he knows that there really are bad children. And after the Holocaust and Rwanda, how can anybody believe in humanity's natural goodness?

The notion that humans are naturally good is a wicked liberal secular idea that leads otherwise nice people into being sympathetic to the horrible Rodney King (whose behavior was so "immoral" he almost deserved, according to Prager, what happened to him) and believing that Blacks riot because they are denied any semblance of decent hope. If people are born good and act badly, liberals mistakenly believe, society must be at fault. Perhaps, some say, it has something to do with America's declining standard of living and the rise of grotesque economic inequality.

Dennis Prager knows better. He's sure that King and the L.A. rioters acted the way they did because of their individual immorality, which is due to the ill effects of liberal social programs and the absence of fathers who could teach them right from wrong, and finally because, at the liberals' behest, they were denied a moral education in the public schools. And, Prager would add, because until lately there hasn't been an electric chair around to keep them in line. "The difference between moral people and immoral people," he writes, is "not that moral people don't have rage; it is that moral people control their rage and immoral people don't."

And the same holds true for all Third-World anti-American rioters (although these days many are too hungry to riot), because the belief that the Third World is poor due to Western capitalism has "as much verifiable truth ... as there is to a belief in Neptune's effects on one's love life."

Arguing for capital punishment, Prager denigrates execution opponents, stating that, "The denial that people are the primary cause of evil...and that they must be fought might be the strongest denial mechanism operating in the world today." As for racism, yes there still is a bit of it about, but the American market economy has created more prosperity and opportunity than in any other time or place in human history, and besides, the Black patriot Clarence Thomas sits on the U.S. Supreme Court. But in case you think Dennis Prager isn't really fighting racism, you should know that he actively encourages whites and Blacks to have dinner together. It is a mark of the great progress made by American society that the "Negro" no longer has to settle for only being "taken to lunch."

What tortures me the most about Prager's worldview is that he pours his bitter wine into Jewish bottles. Name an issue and, with a few surprising exceptions (he believes first-trimester abortion should be legal, provided the woman is made to feel sufficiently guilty) and predictable variations (of course he doesn't agree with Robertson that all Jews are going to Hell), his program and the Christian Rights' are nearly identical. And yet he finds prooftexts in the Torah and Talmud to back up his meanest judgments.

I suppose one could let all this go with the usual "two Jews, three opinions" sort of reasoning, but reading Prager was so painful I found myself longing for the wonderfully just and compassionate Torah doctrine that sought to create a "nation of priests," so that a society might exist that did not oppress or corrupt its members or even its "strangers." That doctrine leaps off the Torah's scroll. It is a blueprint for a world where bosses are required to feed their workers before they can sit down at the table, and farmers must leave a corner of their fields for the hungry. In the Torah's world, bakers have to provide bread to the poor. See, Dennis—then no one has to steal it.

And I found myself also seeking the kindly talmudic sages who did everything they could to make the death penalty next to impossible. But in *Think a Second Time*, Prager haughtily dismisses their view as out of touch with contemporary America. Finally, I longed for the Baal Shem Tov's God who is so very good that everything God creates, including human beings, is naturally good—in fact, everything is good because God is in everything. Prager disagrees with this view, insisting that his infinite God can't fit into a finite world. Well Dennis, how dare you say what God can't do. If he wants to be in a tree, who are you to say no? I want Dennis Prager to face the fact that when racist police brutalized Rodney King, they were also stomping on the image of God.

How can educated upper-middle-class Jews consider Dennis Prager an acceptable centrist? It is a measure of how far to the Right the debate has gone in America and how shallow and degraded its discourse has become that Prager's trite rehashing of conservative truisms now appears to some Jews as political sophistication and spiritual truth. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Are You Now, Or Have You Ever Been, a Homosexual?

David L. Kirp

A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society, by Bruce Bawer. Simon & Schuster, 1994. 269 pages.
Winter's Light: Reflections of a Yankee Queer, by John Preston. University Press of New England, 1995. 175 pages.
Virtually Normal: An Argument about Homosexuality, by Andrew Sullivan. Knopf. 1995. 209 pages. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay & Lesbian Liberation*, by Urvashi Vaid. Anchor, 1995. 440 pages.

According to the conventional account, the gay rights movement was the work of a single night, June 28, 1969, when the patrons of a Greenwich Village bar, rousted once too often by the police, turned the tables on their oppressors. In fact, Stonewall represented a culmination, for gay America, of all the challenges to authority that characterized that era; it was a moment when the aspiration to assimilation was routed by a new and distinctive vision of gay liberation.

Yet Stonewall really settled nothing. Ever since that night, the competing ideals of mainstream acceptance and freedom for gays have been warring with one another. What do homosexuals want?, to paraphrase Freud's question, has gone unanswered and perhaps is unanswerable. The emergence of AIDS, a scant decade after the liberation tocsin was sounded, complicated the debate, making the stakes even higher.

Each of these books about gay life in contemporary America takes up the issue. To oversimplify, but usefully: Bruce Bawer and Andrew Sullivan fit on the assimilationist, Urvashi Vaid on the liberationist, side of the great divide. Theirs are ambitious texts, not shy about speaking about, and even for, gay America. John Preston relies instead on his own complicated life for source material. Writing about the universe in the proverbial grain of sand, he reports on a world at once messier and more recognizable, where one daily feels the pulls and tugs of social acceptance and personal liberty.

As a boy growing up on Long Island in the 1950s, I remember all too well the grainy newspaper photos of men holding their shirts over their faces to conceal their identities, being hauled away by police from the supposed gay haven of Cherry Grove to take their lumps at the hands of the law. Those graphic pictures contributed to my staying in the closet even before I knew the metaphor—palpably, sexual differentness spelled social death. Back then, gay groups called themselves homophile, lovers of sameness, not homosexual, and the leading gay organization was named the Mattachine Society, a reference to medieval masked revelers. Such labels were a fig leaf to foster the illusion of separation between homosexuals' public selves and their sexual selves, as well as a pragmatic strategy to protect themselves from the reach of the law. "Are You Now or Have You Ever Been a Homosexual?" was the title of a keynote speech at a Mattachine Society convention, a reference to the unceasing terror of official crackdowns.

How remarkable, then and how little remembered that in 1965, seventy lesbians

David L. Kirp, professor of public policy at the University of California-Berkeley, writes about a wide range of social issues. His most recent book, Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia, *co-authored with John Dwyer and Larry Rosenthal, has just been published by Rutgers University Press.*

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and gay men staged their own Washington march, carrying picket signs in front of the White House, risking their livelihoods, maybe their lives. Those brave demonstrators demanded not just an end to police-state harassment of homosexuals but equal rights. "Gay Is Good," their signs read: "15,000,000 Homosexual Americans Ask for Equality, Opportunity, Dignity."

Don't create avoidable provocations, don't give needless offense, choose your battles: That litany comes straight from the *Poor Richard's Almanac* of progressive politics. In 1965, the gay marchers made it a point to dress in banker's gray—like the activists who sat-in at segregated lunch counters, keeping their hair short and their blue jeans in the closet. But the self-styled radicals of that day had no interest in fitting in. They asked for nothing, demanded everything. Among the radical coterie there were always gay men and lesbians, pushing for women's liberation and Black power, chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!" In the presumptively straight world of the left, homosexuals were invisible, unwilling to confront the queer jokes and lesbian-baiting of the righteous.

The crowd that rioted at Stonewall was comprised neither of the picketing class nor the radical Left. It was a motley crew—hustlers, street kids, drag queens, and bikers—and the riot itself was as unplanned as a fire started by a spark carelessly tossed into the driest forest. But even if that particular evening in Greenwich Village had passed uneventfully, an event like Stonewall was inevitable, so broad and sharp was the line between official repression of homosexuality and nascent gay liberation.

In all the years since, the basic divisions within the gay and lesbian community have remained pretty well fixed. Specific issues have come and gone—gay teachers in public schools, gay bathhouses, an anti-hate-crimes law, homosexuals in the military. Since the early 1980s, AIDS has of course dwarfed all other concerns. But little has changed in disputes over what's to be done, and how. Gay conservatives prefer a quiet politics rooted in personal relationships and a limited role for government over campaigns for equality, while organizations like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, which have learned much from Blacks and other minorities, push broader rights-based agendas. Different still are the activists who would construct an in-your-face identity apart from and antagonistic to the mainstream.

Homosexual, gay, or queer: like Latino or Hispanic, Negro or Black or African-American, the choice of which term to use becomes a way to understand arguments about group identity. Concerning AIDS, the argument between transformation and assimilation has pitted ACT UP, which in its heyday practiced calculated outrages like the disruption of a mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, against organizations like the Human Rights Campaign Fund, which maneuver within the corridors of power. But there have been few attempts to envision a politics of community or a politics of meaning. Nor is it evident how sex and sexuality, so significant an aspect of what it means to be gay, fit into a transforming vision. In their very distinctive ways, the authors of the books under review are trying to fill this void.

Both Bruce Bawer's *A Place at the Table* and Andrew Sullivan's *Virtual Equality* are conservative in political philosophy and assimilationist in social aspiration. The pivotal difference is that while Bawer's politics begins with his feelings, Sullivan means to extend the bounds of social theory. Bawer's account of how gay life should be lived is as confessional a text as a buttoned-down Episcopalian who spent years writing for the gay-bashing *American Spectator* can manage. It's moving to read Bawer's tributes to his lover, written with the charming awkwardness and heedless enthusiasm of first romance. His willingness to show himself to less than full advantage, struggling with his own ambivalences about homosexuality, is the book's real strength.

At a newsstand, Bawer observes a teenager whom he takes to be in the throes of a sexual identity crisis furtively checking out the sex ads in a gay magazine. Porn and poppers don't represent all or even most of gay life, he wants to tell the adolescent; you don't have to be like that in order to be gay. Perhaps the teenager is more savvy than Bawer credits him with being, or perhaps this identity crisis stuff is pure projection. Still, the kernel of a concern remains—gay teenagers have few safe places to gather, few role models besides Boy George and Ru Paul. For gay men and lesbians who don't identify with the popular cultural images of homosexuality—and there are lots of them—*A Place at the Table* may be useful. In gently but persistently pushing against the closet door, it may just give them the courage to come to terms with who they really are.

While Bawer writes intelligently about the lives of people like himself, his views on policy and politics are blinkered. The narrative presumes that life behind the lavender picket fence is what almost every homosexual does, and should, want. His inability to learn from outright homophobia borders on obtuseness (how else can Bawer interpret the slurs that accompany a wedding invitation from supposedly close friends?).

Most critically, there's no appreciation of the fact that antidiscrimination laws can improve lives. Indeed, unless the law effectively protects homosexuals, the American minority most frequently singled out for violence, for a gay person to speak out can literally mean death. Like those conservatives who insist that gutting welfare will "liberate" its recipients, Bawer doesn't seem to understand what it means not to possess his economic and social advantages. He can't empathize with gays whose own tables are rougher and more barren.

Andrew Sullivan, The *New Republic*'s editor, proffers *Virtually Normal* as an account "of how we as a society deal with that small minority of us which is homosexual." Having tried once myself, in a book entitled *Gender Justice*, to produce a similar kind of analysis, I'm sympathetic to such ambitions. And, like Sullivan, I'm allergic to the old political categories. But despite the hosannas that greeted its publication—praise in The *New York Time* from a critic who hoped his lesbian daughter would turn out like Sullivan; a boosterish nod in The *Wall Street Journal* from Sullivan's Ph.D. adviser at Harvard—*Virtually Normal* is pretty thin gruel. Like many Oxbridge undergraduate essays, what's on offer is more clever and contentious than satisfying.

Sullivan relies on the old thesis-antithesis-synthesis form of argument beloved of political theorists. He constructs categories labeled prohibitionist, liberationist, conservative, and liberal, debunks them, then delivers his own alternative. He admits, however, that these are "artificial" labels, which don't refer to "any actual group of people, any political parties … or intellectual … salons." In the discussion of "prohibitionism," many pages are devoted to Catholic dogma over the millennia but almost no attention is paid to Protestant fundamentalists, whose thinking exerts a much more powerful influence on contemporary American politics. Michel Foucault is Sullivan's

"liberationist," despite the fact that he is not exactly a household name among the Queer Nation set, and Foucault is flogged for a determinist stance, an "airlessness," which caricatures his thinking.

Like other gay conservatives, Sullivan places great weight on the proposition that homosexuality is an essentially involuntary condition, like race or left-handedness, not a matter of real choice. But not only is the evidence unclear—it's also, and more vitally, wrong to treat biological destiny as the predicate for accepting homosexuals in society, since personal liberty shouldn't be made to rest on such flimsy foundations. Black leaders never argued that the "immutability" of their skin color entitled them to equal treatment. And the fact that religion is chosen doesn't justify religious bigotry. Why should sexual orientation be regarded differently?

Sullivan claims that liberals have historically insisted on a "neutral" role for the state, one that does not include "promoting understanding or compassion or tolerance, as opposed to toleration." But even John Stuart Mill, Sullivan's liberal *beau ideal*, was prepared to curtail one person's claim of liberty when it interfered with another's liberty. This is the precise intent of the antidiscrimination rules that Sullivan criticizes as illiberal.

Sullivan's critiques of impure reason are throat-clearing for the book's central contention that government should do no less, and no more, than to cease discriminating against homosexuals. That means placing same-sex marriage on an equal footing with traditional marriage and allowing openly gay men and lesbians into the military. It also means that employers and property-owners are free to hire and fire, rent and sell, on the basis of a person's sexual orientation.

Drawing such a bright line between the public and the private realms has a venerable pedigree but little contemporary utility. Employers and landowners, whose discriminatory behavior Sullivan would condone, don't constitute a law unto themselves. They're part of a political community that constrains their conduct in a host of ways. Decisions about what buildings can be built, for instance, aren't just a matter of private choice but a public concern as well—hence, zoning—and, for well over a century, the law has regulated land uses ranging from the storage of toxics to the aesthetics of one's own home.

Rules protecting racial minorities, women, and the handicapped against discrimination were adopted by a society that expected from government more than the minimalist protection of a night watchman—a society that believed government could intelligently distinguish between real claims of liberty and the maintenance of prejudices. These rules are under fire today, as is the entire liberal agenda, but *Virtually Normal* never makes it clear why sexual orientation deserves less protection from the state than, say, gender.

Maybe it's the entanglement of sexual desire in the claim for gay rights that explains why government should draw back. "The shame that attaches to homosexuality is also very different from that attached to race because it attacks the very heart of what makes a human being human: the ability to love and be loved." But if Sullivan is right about the ubiquity of shame and shaming, this is surely a reason for government to do more than simply tidy up its own house. Only someone like Sullivan, who has been able to make his sexual identity an aspect of his vocation, could contend straight-facedly that "ensuring the neutrality of the state" matters most.

By contrast, Urvashi Vaid possesses a well-honed sense of how privilege can mold one's view of homosexuality. In *Virtual Equality*, the former executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a lesbian and a woman of color, offers a gay political and social compendium for our times. Her analysis may jump-start the overdue conversation about what gays do, and should, aspire to: "Gays R Us" or "gay justice requires a broader social justice."

Vaid's account of gay rights is a tale of smoke and mirrors, an Oz-like story about the illusion of power. Time and again, a handful of activists with few resources have gone up against far wealthier and better-organized adversaries. It's sobering to realize there never has been much of an organized gay political movement. A series of marches on Washington have drawn upwards of a quarter of a million gays, produced shimmering parties, sparked a moment of good feeling—and led to nothing. The total membership of the biggest national gay organizations is well under 200,000 and their combined budgets total less than $20 million. By contrast, a single right-wing group, Focus on the Family, which sponsored the anti-gay initiative in Colorado, annually spends more than $60 million. And, within the gay movement, long knives are always reaching out to strike down those who dare to be leaders.

Vaid offers gay liberation, rather than the not-quite-equality of assimilation, as a way out of this cul de sac. Instead of promoting the idea that, outside the bedroom, gays are just the same as straights, she would use gay differentness as a fulcrum for changing society. Instead of pursuing a go-it-alone gay strategy, she envisions a grand alliance of the have-nots: women, racial minorities, immigrants, and the like. This "dream of a common movement" has been around since Stonewall. The controversies that Vaid describes—reform versus revolution, electoral campaigns versus street theatre, elitism versus mass movements—do have instructive parallels in other social movements.

Yet the road from here to there remains unmapped. A full-fledged gay movement of any sort is a nonstarter as long as many gays believe that invisibility equals safety. And those who pursue the idea of fairness aren't necessarily free from their own biases. Many gays regard issues like abortion, welfare, and immigration as not our problem, while many activists in the feminist and racial equality movements are unsympathetic to, sometimes phobic about, gay concerns. It's telling that Vaid herself, who earnestly strives to make connections across the boundaries of identity, was never able to set up a meeting with the executive director of the N.A.A.C.P.

Vaid was a key player in many of the events she describes, and, even as she urges gay civility, she's not above using her pen to skewer old antagonists. Yet her willingness to own up to shortcomings (the failure to muster letter-writing support for Clinton's proposed executive order on gays in the military) boosts her credibility.

Vaid left Washington believing that politicking inside the Beltway yields few gains without grassroots pressure. She's right to urge that attention be shifted away from the federal arena, where in the near future the news will mainly be terrible, and focus instead on what's happening locally. It makes sense to build a movement on the experience that gay men and women have had in recent years: fighting anti-gay propositions in Oregon and Colorado; battling against AIDS in ways that promote communities of caring and respect.

None of this neatly fits the ideologues' categories. Like the members of other reviled and marginalized groups, most homosexuals really desire both as-

similation *and* liberation. We want to be able to move freely in and out of the gilded gay ghettos, to maintain ties with our families while not having to conceal our identities, to pursue our careers without feeling obliged to stay closeted. The crowds at Gay Pride Day parades invariably cheer loudest not for the drag queens and motorcycle mavens but rather for gays marching with their children, and for people parading under the banner of P-FLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Real gay lives will always be more complicated than the labels "assimilation" and "liberation" suggest. It will always be more a matter of deeds than of terminology.

In *Winter's Light: Reflections of a Yankee Queer*, John Preston offers a portrait of what it means to live as a gay activist while remaining fully a citizen of the commons. Preston grew up in small town New England, and like many gay men, he escaped for a while to the fast lane life of the big cities. But in 1979, when the gay party was in its full swing, Preston moved back to New England and settled in Portland, Maine. *Winter's Light* is an account of the years that he lived there, until his death from AIDS in 1994.

Preston was not a countrified Bruce Bawer; in gay circles, he was best known as a prolific writer of pornography. And *Winter's Light* is no rhapsody about a gay paradise. Quite the contrary: Village elders in the Maine resort town of Ogunquit try to camouflage the town's lavender reputation; the president of the Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance is prohibited from speaking at Tolerance Day; a middle-aged gay man who wants only to be left alone is hounded to distraction, with tragic consequences.

Worst of all, three teenagers throw a young gay man named Charlie Howard off a bridge in Portland and watch him drown. "I was furious that my own right to be in this place, Maine, was challenged by Charlie Howard's murder," Preston writes. "I spoke with fury to any audience who would listen. I declared at a press conference that no matter what one thought about homosexuality, sexual identity didn't deserve a death sentence." The next day, the clerk at the local smoke shop, where gay-baiting jokes were the norm, shook his hand. "Some things have to be said, and you said them well." Yet even as Preston was voicing his righteous anger, he was mindful of the values of his adopted hometown. He came to that press conference dressed in L.L. Bean mufti secured for him by gay friends who wanted to make sure he'd fit in.

Winter's Light is rich in particulars. There's the story of Franny Peabody, the matriarch who became the soul of the AIDS work in Portland; a rueful tale about a minister who sought out Preston for an education about gay life and stayed for his own coming-out; and a rhapsody to the men in the barbershop where he hangs out. The book ends with a parable about a place Preston calls "Down East," a mythic community of love and friendship, and many gay men and lesbians will see their own dreams mirrored in this vision. For those of us anxious to get on with our own lives, who prefer living neither in the closet nor in the Castro, *Winter's Light* is our *Walden*. □

Wrestling with the Bible

Maeera Shreiber

The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions, by Alicia Suskin Ostriker, Rutgers University Press, 1994, 256 pages. $22.

Widely known for her landmark study, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry*, Alicia Suskin Ostriker has long been recognized both for her poetry and her scholarship as an important voice in American letters. Her passionate commitment to exploring the links between personal identity and political obligation has, most recently, led to a sustained inquiry into Jewish texts.

The Nakedness of The Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions represents Ostriker's most sustained effort to interrogate the Hebrew Bible from a feminist perspective. The book, which might best be described as a "revisionist midrash," reflects the influence of both Judaic and non-Judaic texts. Like H.D. in her epic "Helen In Egypt," Ostriker gives voice to quasi-historical female figures who have been largely silent. In the spirit of Susan Griffin's encyclopedic poem, *Woman and Nature*, Ostriker takes on a variety of personae, male as well as female: from Isaac to the Queen of Sheba. And in the spirit of Anne Sexton's *Transformations*, Ostriker adopts a heretical approach to culturally revered stories, using colloquial (and often comic) language to counter any charges of sentimentality to which she might be vulnerable.

As much as Ostriker's book owes to these secular texts, its inclusion of prose and verse reflects a special debt to the generic diversity of biblical narrative. One must note, however, that *The Fathers* cannot be described as "revisionary" in the sense of seeking to replace or correct the precursor text. Rather it constitutes an act of reading, or to use Ostriker's own central metaphor, an act of wrestling with the Hebrew Bible. In this respect, her work is aligned with the current trend in biblical scholarship that stresses the inherently fractured, discontinuous nature of scripture.

Divided into five parts, *The Nakedness of the Fathers* evokes the five books of Moses. But Ostriker departs from biblical chronology, gathering stories according to her own sense of their interrelated meanings. In the opening section, "Entering the Tents," Ostriker explores the attachment and ambivalence characteristic of her relationship to the Bible. Shuttling between personal

Maeera Shreiber teaches in the Department of English at the University of Southern California, and is currently writing a book on Jewish American poetry.

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memories and expository meditations, Ostriker asserts an indelible connection to Jewish tradition, even as she is enraged by the marginal position to which she, as a woman, has been assigned. From the outset Ostriker foregrounds her interest in the Bible as a text central to her sense of self. For this reason the section devoted to stories of origins, "As In Myth … " begins not with the creation of the world, but with the creation of humanity. "The Garden" playfully counters the traditional focus on exile and loss, proposing that the story of Eden be read as an account of the pleasures as well as the pains attendant upon the acquisition of identity—a process imaginatively staged as a consequence of the interplay between Divine Presence and Absence.

Although many poems are spoken by the lyric "I," *The Nakedness of the Fathers* is filled with other voices, including those of Abraham and Isaac. The latter is figured as a stand-up comic in a bittersweet portrait titled "Laughter." To those feminist readers who would question the attention paid to these patriarchs, Ostriker replies, "I *am* my fathers as much as I *am* my mothers" ("Back To the Garden"). In the sequence devoted to "The Wrestling of Jacob: Man of Touch," a retelling of the biblical narrative is intertwined with a contemporary story of the poet's own invention. The latter does not so much update the ancient text as interpret it. In the contemporary version of the tale, a mother is conspicuously excluded from the final agon between a young man and his father, who must wrestle to dissipate the cold silence engulfing them. The exclusion comments powerfully on the biblical account of Jacob at Peniel, where the maternal figure is altogether absent.

Ostriker's book concludes on a prophetic note with a section titled "The Return of the Mothers." The sequence owes something to the recent scholarship of such feminist theologians and biblical theorists as Judith Plaskow and Ilana Pardes, who seek to recover a long-repressed history of feminine representations of the godhead.

After a wrenching explication on the anger of Job's wife, which Ostriker claims has yet to be fully voiced, the work takes a sharp-witted turn with "Intensive Care." The scene is initially somber as we are presented with what seems to be a deathwatch at the bedside of God. But the mood quickly changes as two women reporters (named Olivia and Chloe in tribute to the would-be lovers in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*) speculate laughingly that the paternal deity isn't in danger of dying; he is only pregnant. The imagined transformation concludes with a suite of three prayers "To the Shekinah," sung in the future tense:

> We believe that you live
> Though you delay we believe that
> you will certainly come

And so, in the spirit of the redemptive Jeremiah, Alicia Ostriker tempts her auditors with songs of possibility. □

WHA-WHA BLUES

(Continued from p. 32)

Park and tried unsuccessfully to see him in his box. When she called to him, he ignored her.

Late in June, 1945, she tracked him down to a roadhouse, the Jug End—which, Binzy claimed, had been a Bundist youth hall before the war, Jug End, being a corruption of *Jungen*.

My mother stood in the doorway, as Ascot danced with a blond in a peach-colored satin dress to "Feet Draggin' Blues," the Harry James song, played by The Bostonians, my father's band.

"A dozen dames were watching Abe, all ga-ga," Binzy said.

While Binzy did some fancy stuff on the drums, my father conducted by waving his cornet and flirted with the girls crowding the bandstand.

When the song ended, my mother walked up to the band and, as Ascot watched, gave my surprised father, the hero of the moment, a kiss.

"That's how they met?" I asked Binzy.

"All your father had to know was that he had a chance to go out with a gangster's girl," Binzy said.

"But, by then, she wasn't,"I said.

"No," Binzy agreed, patting my mother's hand as she

dozed in the hospital bed.

Quietly, he started humming "The Wha-Wha Blues."

My mother opened her eyes, blinked at him, and said, "When you go, don't forget to turn out the lights."

Stop the music... □

Foundation for Ethics and Meaning: Regional Contacts

National Coordinator
Mark LeVine
212-864-4110

San Francisco
Rachel Levin
415-695-9299
prlevin@aol.com

Chicago, IL
Julie Stevens
708-827-4287
julies100@aol.com

Austin, TX
Geoffrey Rips
512-474-0811

Ann Arbor, MI
Heather MacKenzie
313-995-8481

Seattle, WA
Drorah Setel
206-328-7446

Portland, OR
Stew Albert
503-281-3664

Minneapolis, MN
Jackie Olenick
612-222-6168
olenick@winternet. com

Columbia, MO
Sharon Welch
314-442-6241

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

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TIKKUN invites you to attend the

National Summit on Ethics and Meaning

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

Americans hunger not just for good jobs and wages but for lives that transcend the individualism and selfishness of the competitive market—lives that connect them to a higher ethical and spiritual purpose and fulfill their deep hunger for meaning. Yet most people have come to believe that this is "unrealistic," so we settle for much less than we want while our frustrated hopes are too often manipulated by political demagogues and by religious and spiritual entrepreneurs. This conference will bring together some of America's most creative organizers, community activists, writers, poets, intellectuals, and politicians to build a new progressive social and political vision that moves beyond the narrow, outdated or punitive solutions currently offered by liberals and conservatives—and launch a campaign for a politics of meaning.

If you miss it, you'll spend years wishing you had been there. It's going to be a historic event.

Peter Gabel • Cornel West
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Jim Wallis • Mary Edsall
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Jonathan Kozol
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Cosponsored by Sojourner's (the magazine of progressive Christian Evangelicals), The Utne Reader, The Unitarian Universalist Association, Reconstructionist Movement in Judaism, and many other organizations.

More Information: FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING,
251 West 100th Street, New York, NY 10025
or call 212-864-4110 or look at page 11 of this issue of TIKKUN