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

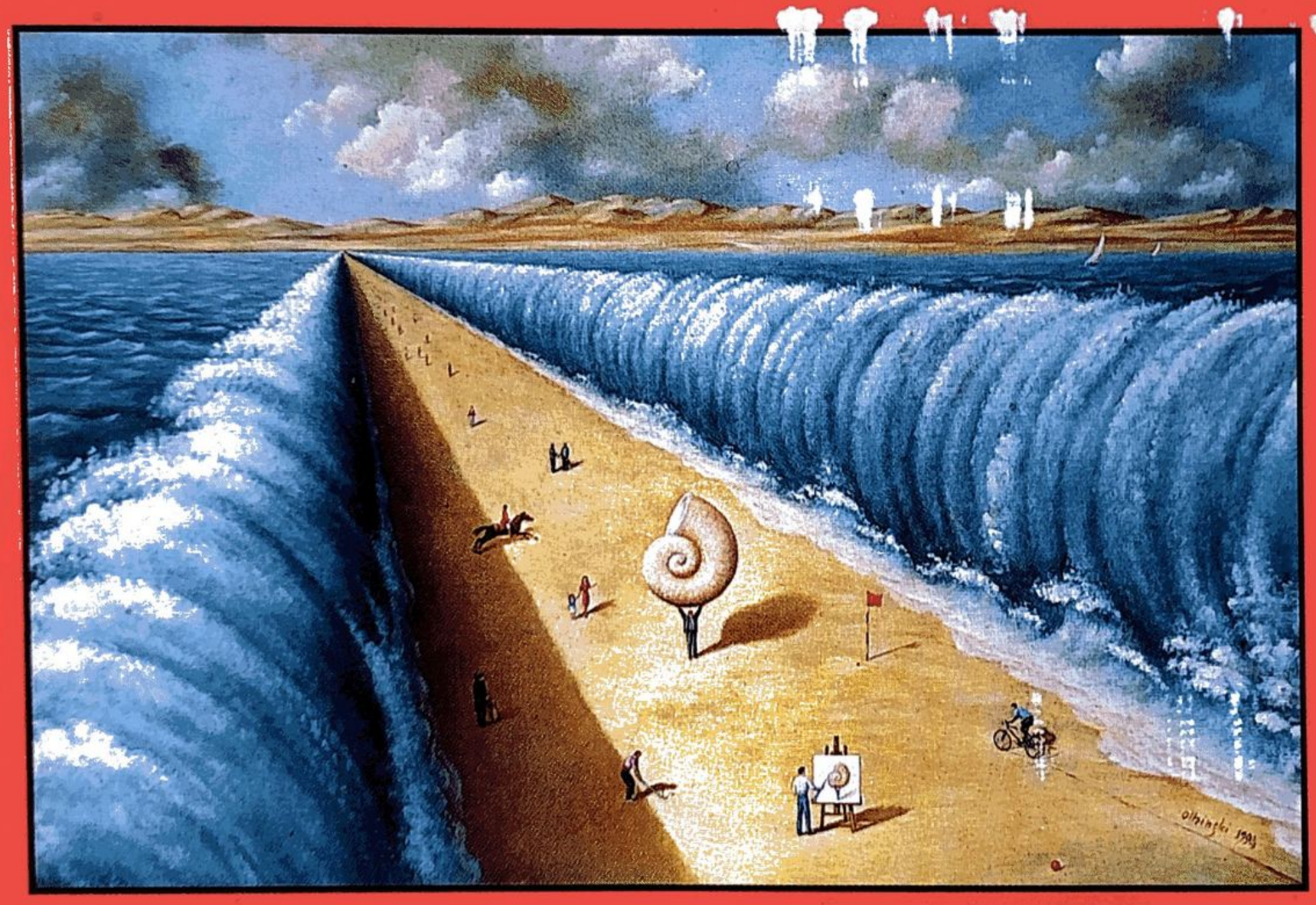
TIKKUN

Passover Haggadah Supplement: A Jewish Renewal Approach

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1996 $6.00

The Economics of Meaning

David C. Korten • Michael Lerner



Heschel, My Father

Susannah Heschel

Springsteen

Michael J. Bader

Bosnia Quagmire

Marla Stone

Lesbians and Homophobia

Meg Daly

Rebecca T. Alpert • Judith Plaskow

Forgiveness

Berel Lang

Forrest Church

Palestinian Democracy

Mark LeVine

PLUS

Micha Odenheimer on Israel's Ethiopian Jews

Jay Walljasper on Virtues

Ruth Shlossman on Empathy

Donald Lazere on Culture Wars

64858 03 0 30677 5 8

Dear Sadie or Maude

or maybe Amy. Amy's a name familiar
on this family's roster.
Certainly you were not a Constance
or a Mary, too suffered
too Christian for our genealogy.
I will call you Amy then: old-growth woman
I summon from our history's burning code,
great-great-aunt or mother of the grandmother
imprinted on my breath. I need you,

woman who married but loved a woman in shadows
or in the public bonding
that sometimes goes unnoticed, even now.
Ancestor who refused to give your life away
to any of the fashionable slaveries,
agent of your own desire.
Please don't stand there, profile
hard against flat light, hands at your sides.
Look at me. I need advice

about time, about how to distribute it evenly
across my secret store of hope.
And about the body: where it begins
and ends,
about my desert where images replace each other
faster than the speed of storms.
In this garage or attic
I dream of holding your picture in my hands.
The serious cameo, a clue

around the eyes, relaxed mouth, almost a smile.
I laugh aloud when I find
that copy of your favorite book
which is also mine,
powdery outline of a broken maple leaf
between the pages of your journal.
I have imagined you artist, or in a wilder conjure:
healer, outlaw, keeper of the name.
More likely you were poor, the oldest daughter

in a large family, inhabited a shtetl, thought
your time the loneliest, though beautiful.
Did you ever feel powerful
against our spliced biography
and common struggle to breathe?
No, you tell me—burrowing one incisor
into a salty bottom lip (I do this too)
—not when I lived. We were
long-houred women but we had our dreams,

loved our bodies as we loved our pain.
Now when we meet you say you have no idea
how my grandmother managed to store such bile
in the curve of her throat.
A long silence. And then:
It was the war, man's war you say,
heavy but breaking apart.
I had to turn my back and wait it out
but I was there, you brush a curl
of dark hair from a veined brow: I was
always there.

—Margaret Randall

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 11 NUMBER 2

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Letters

Oppression of Singles

To the Editor:

As a single person who does not want to remain single, I was touched and encouraged by your editorial ("The Opppression of Singles," November/December 1995). Thank you for exposing the sociopolitical roots of the isolation and self-blame faced by many people who long for a partner. In the absence of consistent contact with an intimate peer, single people are prone to (often painful) awareness of their very human need for other people. It is this need for contact and the attendant disappointment when it is not met which, I believe, lie at the root of "singlephobia."

But the need is only one side of the story. The other side is how one responds to a need one experiences, either in oneself or another. Just as God must answer the call of every earnest prayer, I suggest that every truly felt need creates an obligation. In a culture that worships the freedom of the individual, obligation is the kiss of death. But what if the need for others isn't a shameful secret? What if a compassionate response to another's need isn't the disease of co-dependence? What if the need/response cycle, acutely felt, is actually an exquisite human achievement, one which must be cherished and cultivated if we are to sustain any sort of hospitable life on this planet? Then the palpable desire a single person feels for loving, conscious, committed partnership is not to be feared or shunned. On the contrary, that desire, which propels us out of our isolation and toward each other, is to be celebrated as a beautiful, courageous, subversive act.

Laura Parker
San Francisco, California

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To the Editor:

Your editorial is part of the problem, not the solution.

Somewhere along the way, a "single" has come to be defined as "a person in need of a mate." A "singles event" has come to be one whose purpose is that of meeting a mate so that you can cease being a "single."

The underlying assumption is that a "single" is an incomplete half of a pair bond. Any community that would really "[take] upon itself the task of connecting singles" is one that I would stay away from, since it would be telling me that I, by myself, am incomplete and unacceptable.

William A. Baker
Bloomfield, New Jersey

Editor responds:

For many, many people, the choice to remain single is only a choice in the most narrow sense. Many of those who "choose" to be single make that choice *not* because they have decided that being single is really a better way to live, but only the best choice for them, given that the kinds of relationships that they would really like to have are not available to them. So many people I encounter, either in personal life, or in my practice as a psychotherapist, or in the counseling that I do as a rabbi, tell me that they wish they could find a partner who was not wildly narcissistic, sexist, domineering, angry at the opposite sex, incapable of deep joy and playfulness, or incapable of giving real love—but that in the absence of such an option, they have "chosen" to be single. The powerful impact of living in a society still dominated by an ethos of materialism, selfishness, and sexism has direct and terrible consequences for many human relationships, and it is in the context of these distortions that we talk about people "choosing to be single." For many people today, the "choice" to be single is a choice to escape the sexist and oppressive modes of relationships that are frequently presented to us as the available options (in which case, remaining single seems reasonable, but not a real choice because no really healthy relationship is available).

There are, of course, those whose fear of "needing" another is so strong that they have succeeded in drowning out all awareness of the way that those fears have been instilled in them through painful childhood experiences or through buying into contem-

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porary market-society notions of autonomy and the need to remain unencumbered by obligation to others.

In my view, human beings are fundamentally and essentially in relationship to each other, we are fundamentally interdependent, and the healthy human being is one who is able to acknowledge that need for others, affirm it, and see it not as a diminishment but as a fulfillment. While I do *not* hold that everyone who chooses to remain single must necessarily be neurotic or oppressed, I *do* believe that most of those who make these choices would not make them if they lived in a society that was more supportive of loving relationships and less likely to create so many narcissistic or otherwise wounded and deformed human beings.

Judaism

To the Editor:

I read several liberal magazines, but none of them "speaks" to me in the same way that TIKKUN does. It is almost as if I were reading my own feelings as I turn through the pages. I can even provide my own interpretation of God, as an inner sense of humanistic justice and benevolence, rather than some outer-directed sense of overwhelming power.

Unfortunately, I am unable to find a single synagogue or temple that resonates with any of this. Even Reform temples applaud the actions of Israel, whether or not they are humane or unjust. Add to that the ridiculously large membership fee of close to $1,500 a year, plus costs for sending the children to Hebrew school, and one can easily turn away, as we have.

I urge you to ask the organized religious community to share with you in opening themselves to liberal-minded people who believe that our country is headed toward inhumane cuts by a narrow-thinking, bigoted congressional leadership. Ask them to understand that a Jew can disagree with Israel's policies and still be accepted as a righteous person. Ask them to open their wallets as well, to support you and others who believe with you that there is another way. Maybe then the seats will fill with believers and changers, instead of accepters and stagnaters.

I would especially like to sit with my wife and youngest daughter, who is eight, in a true temple of hope, where our views are shared by more than a network of separate readers of a truly moving magazine.

Jules Lippman
Valley Cottage, New York

Israel and Rabin

To the Editor:

I was one of those who thought that your analysis of Settler Judaism, both in TIKKUN, and in your book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, was overblown and out of touch. After the murder of Rabin, I realized that your writing has been prophetic and I wish that Jews in Israel and the United States had listened to it more carefully. I thought you were exaggerating the threat of a culture of violence, and that there was possibly a touch of anti-Orthodoxy in your suggestion that there were people within the Orthodox community who really believed the things that the assassin Amir turned out to believe. I don't know how you knew all this so far in advance, but I do know that I'm sorry I didn't pay more careful attention.

Josh Cohen
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Unity among the Jewish nation is the guarantor of our national liberation—not the blind hatred we all too often see expressed by one Jew to another. There is no place for the blind hatred—which can culminate in violent, criminal acts like murder. God emphasizes this point many times throughout the Torah. But who cares to listen?

I thought we left fratricidal hatred back in the days of the War for Independence. In 1948, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion ordered Yitzhak Rabin, a young Haganah officer, to murder several Jews from the rival Irgun Zvai Le'umi (IZL) organization [editor's note: which organization was refusing to cease its terrorist activity against British and Palestinian civilians]. The IZL fighters refused to heed Haganah demands to hand over their arms and ammunition on a ship called the Altalena which was beached off the coat of Israel. Rabin executed Ben Gurion's order to shoot the IZL fighters (unloading their cargo from the Altalena) who at no time explicitly or implicitly threatened to harm Rabin.

Former Prime Minister and Defense Minister Rabin recently said, "... Enough of blood and tears." I will add, "Enough of blind hatred." Let's show more love toward one another. Jews living in Tel Aviv must love Jews living in Hebron, and vice versa.

All Jews are brothers and sisters who—for the better—are consigned to a common destiny, which we must all ensure will be full of unity and love among our great nation.

I grieve at the murder of Yitzhak Rabin. The Torah explicitly and unequivocally prohibits such criminal and murderous behavior. I cannot emphasize enough how un-Jewish, inhuman and wrong it is to murder another Jew, or human being for that matter.

Mordechai Pelta
San Francisco, California

CORRECTIONS

Due to a production error, some text was omitted from the Editor's response in the "Letters" section of the January/February 1996 issue. The last sentence on page 5 and the first sentence on page 6 should have read:

"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 economic/cultural/social/sexual/spiritual totality that exists at any given historical moment. Given this perspective, we could not be expected to favor Daphne Merkin's perceptions."

At the conclusion of the Editor's response, the final sentence should have read:

"Given their perception, the article caused them to be fearful, hurt, or angry. And for this I am truly sorry."

The name of an author, Mayer Schiller, appeared in the Table of Contents, although his article was not in the January/February issue. Rabbi Schiller's article, "We Are Not Alone in this World," appears on p. 59 of this issue.

The article, "Wrestling with the Bible," by Maeera Schreiber in the January/February issue contained some material from an earlier essay by the author that appeared in *Jewish American Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical and Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Ann R. Shapiro, published by Greenwood Press, an imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT.

To the Editor:

The basic message of "Orthodoxy and the Assassination: A Roundtable" (January/February 1996) is that Orthodox Judaism is not defined by what you call Settler Judaism. Zionism always had within it the component of binationalism, and the possibility always will exist for a peaceful Palestine and Israel voluntarily reuniting. Can we imagine such a state where Islamic law and Halakha (compatible in many ways) are both recognized to the extent compatible with a free society?

I have some questions, however, about your criticisms of Oslo II's plan for settlements to remain where they are and roads to be jointly policed by Palestinian and Israeli forces. If Palestinian and Israeli forces are jointly responsible for settler security, and that works to reduce violence and increase relative safety, wouldn't that be a more powerful message to settlers than a relatively "benign" but nevertheless forced resettlement of the settlers elsewhere in the Land? And should we, who would look with extreme horror at any forced resettlement of Arabs (Kach "Judaism"), insist that an Israeli government force a resettlement on the settlers?

David Lloyd ben Yaacov
Yehuda Klepper
White Plains, New York

To the Editor:

Please reconsider your reliance on the Torah as the basis for your beliefs. The messages of compassion and opposition to oppression that are in the text are far outweighed by contrary messages and are not realized in the Torah's story. There is no better proof of this than the stigmatization of the "other," i.e., descendants of Eve, Ham, Ishmael, and Esau, and the climax of the five books, which consists of the military conquest of Canaan and the extermination of its population. It is no accident that its editor, Ezra, was an outspoken advocate and practitioner of ethnic cleansing.

The God of the Torah is a tribal God who rules by fear. You would be better off relying on the Prophets, because they depict a universal God. However, the Prophets also depict Him as an authoritarian father figure. Even Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Amos at their best are hard to accept because of their arrogance in presuming to speak on behalf of God.

If you are really intent on using Biblical sources as the foundation for your ethical principles, I respectfully suggest that you look to Jonah, Ruth, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Job. They all express a far greater respect for human dignity and equality than the rest of the Bible.

Judaism cannot be renewed by relying on texts that are fundamentally authoritarian, ethnocentric, patriarchal, and undemocratic. It can be renewed, however, if you are willing to expand your vision to encompass the other books I referred to, as well as folklore from the Haggadah, midrash, and Yiddish literature. It is there that you will find the sources that convey the values you cherish.

Your ideas are inspirational, but become vitiated by your need to legitimize them by attaching them to Torah. You would be more honest if you realized that your vision of a just society and the Torah's vision are incompatible.

Bennett Muraskin
Parsippany, New Jersey

Editor responds:

Much of my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation,* is a detailed refutation of Mr. Muraskin's way of reading Torah.

To the Editor:

Arthur Green's response to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin ("To Live as God's Image," January/February 1996) was a pleasure to read. Professor Green shows that the way we perceive of God should directly impact how we treat each other. We must learn to treat each human being as if they embody a spark of the divine that can never and must never be extinguished.

To take Dr. Green's approach one step further: Just as we change others with our ideas and our actions, so too we change God with our ideas and our actions. When God stands ready to destroy the entire Jewish people, Pinhas "turns back God's anger." When God is angry, Moses stands in the breach and changes God's approach. Moses works through God's anger with God and God changes from being angry to being compassionate (Exodus Rabbah 1:7). God does change because of us and through us.

Because we are a warring people, we have a warring God. As much as we are created in the image of God, we create God in our image. Our failure

(Continued on p. 78)



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Lawrence Bush

Exodus 1—6:1

"'Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase. . .'"

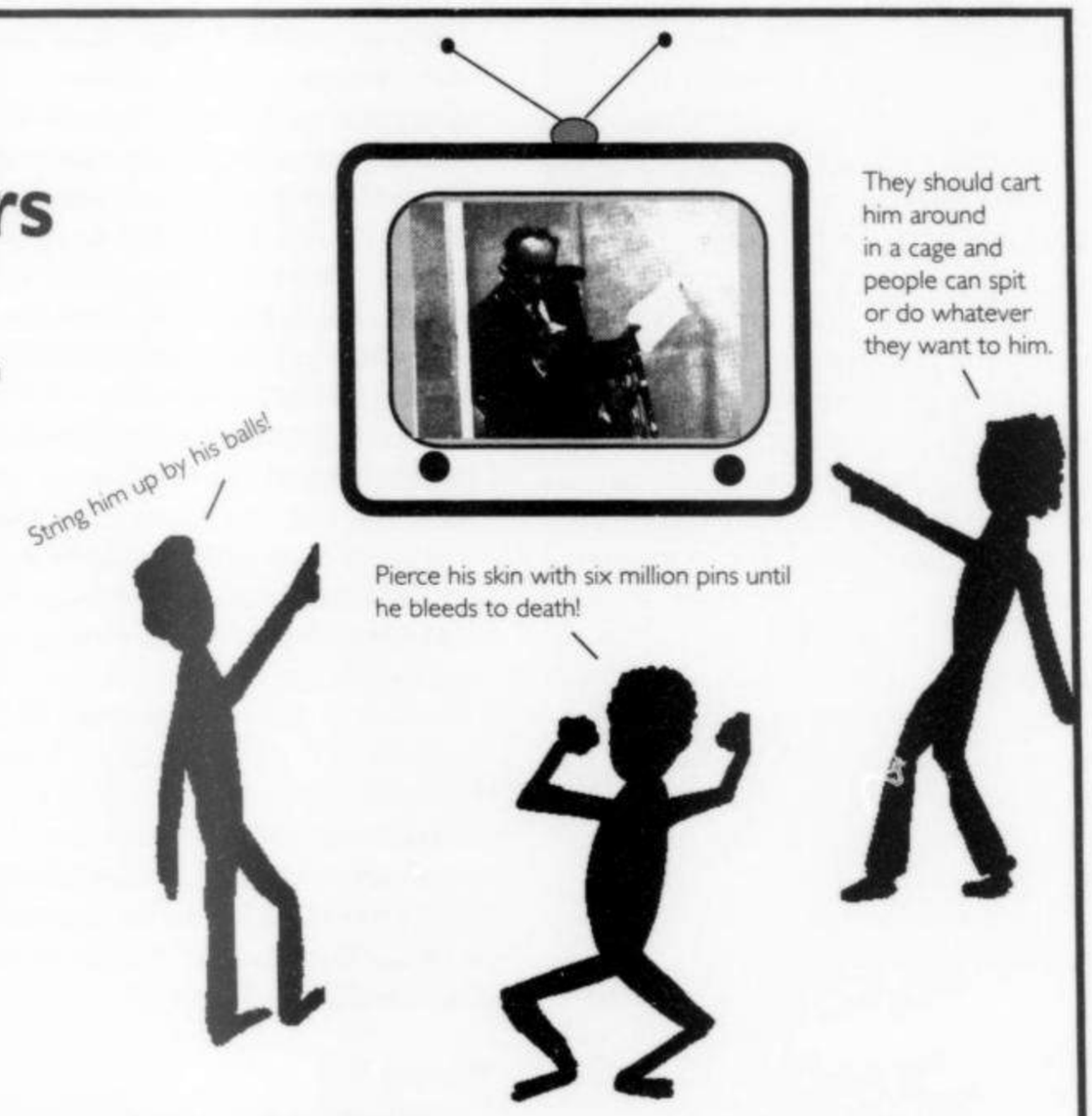
35,000 Robert Cantors

The first important thing I remember watching on television was the Eichmann trial in 1961.

At school we'd spend time thinking up ways for him to be tortured and executed.

There were about 30 kids in my 4th grade class. Most of them were Jewish — we lived in a Jewish neighborhood.

I remember there were two Lindas and two Davids in the class — but let's keep it simple and say there were 30 kids with 30 different names.



There'd have to be 35,000 of each of them — 35,000 Becky Silvers (real cute and sparkly), 35,000 Arnold Glicksteins (a klutz), 35,000 Sandi Meislers (snooty but I liked her), 35,000 Reba Wertheimers (a brain), 35,000 Robert Cantors (my best friend) — 35,000 of each of them, to come even close to the number of Jewish kids Adolf Eichmann sent to the gas chambers in three or four years.



And I knew that he never shed a tear, not even afterwards — because, like I told Robert, if the guy's heart had opened even a crack, he would've had to commit suicide!

Lawrence Bush edits *Reconstructionism Today.*
The cartoon will appear in the forthcoming *American Torah Toons* (Jason Aronson).

Free Associations

Stone's Nixon

Ever since Richard Nixon resigned from the presidency, a central ideological battle has been waged by the media and the corporate establishment aimed at convincing the tens of millions of people who participated in anti-war activity between 1965-1974 that their actions were fundamentally irrelevant at best, irresponsible adolescent foolishness at worst. Central to this misremembering of the '60s has been the attempt to obscure the legitimacy of moral outrage at the Vietnam war and at the consistent set of lies told the American people, first by Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Robert McNamara, and their Democratic Party supporters, then by Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Robert Dole, and their Republican Party supporters. Watergate is then portrayed not as a response to a powerful anti-war movement (for in crediting it with the kind of power that could lead to the toppling of a president, the culture would be validating the usefulness of protest, whereas its goal is to return people to the role of passive spectators and not shapers of history), but as a moment of excess and "tragic error," rather than as the extension of a vicious policy of repression that led the American government to physically assault, legally entrap, or kill many who protested its policies (including the editor of this magazine, who was jailed by Nixon for organizing antiwar demonstrations).

Oliver Stone weighs in on the side of the master narrative developed by journalists and pop historians at the time: that Nixon was a psychologically scarred and hence fatally flawed politician who was working out his own neuroses in politics, and thus undermined himself with Watergate. As a second explanatory hypothesis, Nixon is also portrayed as victim of "the system," portrayed here as an assemblage of gangsters and obscure right-wing militarists (and not as the military industrial complex whose continuing power guarantees that neither Clinton nor the Republicans would dare suggest cutting the military expenditures in order to balance the budget).

What the master narrative and Stone's added conspiracy theories obscure is the way Nixon represented the mainstream of corporate American interests as they perceived it at the time, that in order to pursue their goals of creating a world free from restraints on their ability to invest they were willing to kill tens of thousands of Vietnamese, and that Nixon was an eager instrument of these interests who ordered the invasion of Cambodia (creating the social havoc that would form the preconditions for later genocidal reactions) and prolonged the war, in the process ensuring the deaths of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese.

Conversely, Stone obscures the central role of the antiwar movement and its powerful impact in so frightening Nixon about the possibility that the American public would be convinced to stop the war that he was moved to engage in Watergate intrigues, lying, break-ins, and other illegal activities aimed at discrediting or undermining the protesters. Nixon's fears were realistic, and the American Right's claim that the antiwar movement undermined the war effort is essentially correct. But the media have told a different story, one that puts reporters who exposed Watergate at the center of the story about how Nixon got toppled, and that marginalizes the tens of millions of people who participated in other forms of antiwar struggle.

In lionizing themselves as the group who, precisely by being "above the battle" and impartially worrying about exposing the truth, managed to save the day, the media have found it convenient to portray the millions who were involved in a variety of trivializing ways (e.g., as engaged in youthful rebellion whose primary drive was not moral but oedipal, or as people who were simply interested in escaping the draft and other forms of social responsibility, or as part of a good-hearted "children's crusade" that had no lasting political impact). The impact of these messages has been to convince many of those who were engaged in various levels of anti-war activism or protest that their actions had little impact or lasting worth.

Nixon intended to pursue the war until he could ensure the permanent control of South Vietnam by anticommunist forces. Knowing that there was much popular support for de-escalation and disengagement from Vietnam, Nixon understood that he would have to pretend that he was seeking an honorable way out of Vietnam, though all the subsequent evidence indicates that he was actually unwilling to get out until he had achieved what would have been perceived by the North Vietnamese as an American victory. Normally, Americans leave foreign policy issues to

the policy elite, but the anti-war movement had become a powerful force, reaching into the heartland of American consciousness and stirring ordinary people to acts of resistance and rebellion against their government. Thus, the anti-war movement was seen as a threat to American interests that could legitimately be repressed. The spate of federal trials against local activists, the systematic use of the F.B.I. as infiltrators advocating violence (making the protesters appear to be irresponsible), the "dirty tricks," and the break-in into the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate were all part of Nixon's attempts to destroy or delegitimate his foes so that he would be able to pursue the war without serious obstacles.

Stone's movie, like most of his work, ignores the possibilities of ordinary people making history through collective action. He accepts the "great man" theory of history that fits so well with the individualism of American society and the megalomania that continues to flaw his potential importance as a filmmaker.

The Violence Returns

For a short while after the Rabin assassination, some Israelis fantasized that the momentary sanity and self-reflection that quieted all sides might continue, and that the struggles that had led to the murder would now subside.

It was wishful thinking.

The month of mourning had barely subsided when some settlers began to exhibit a new bumper sticker that brazenly proclaimed "Shalom Chaver II." "Shalom Chaver" had been President Clinton's statement saying farewell to a friend at Rabin's grave, and the new bumper sticker's "II" must be a warning that Peres is next. Indeed, Peres's family members reported subsequent death threats, and fear returned.

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu escalated the ugliness once again when he greeted the Labor Party's decision to go to elections in May with campaign rhetoric that claimed the goal of the Labor Party was to divide Jerusalem and give part of it away to the Arabs. Labor Party leaders responded by pointing out that they did not hold that position, and that asserting that they did was likely to lead to violence among those who believe that such a division would be a violation of God's will and God's law.

As if to underscore that being pro-peace ought not to preclude acts of violence, Peres himself seems to have ordered, and at very least condoned, the assassination of Hamas terrorist Yahya Ayyash by a booby-trapped telephone in Gaza last January. Ayyash could garner little sympathy among those of us who have consistently detested and condemned Arab terror. It remains to be seen whether the killing was ordered by Peres himself or by some sector of the Israeli Mossad more interested in validating their effectiveness after the blunders associated with their inability to stop the assassination of Rabin than in wondering about how best to serve the peace process. The timing of this act, following what might have been a new move toward peaceful reconciliation during Palestinian elections, was certain to provoke a response from the small percentage of Palestinians who oppose the peace process. Repudiated by the masses of Palestinians who ignored Hamas's call to boycott the elections, the terrorists now had the provocation they sought to "justify" a return to violence. And Israel, caught in a trap of its own making, felt forced to shut the borders between Israel and the Palestinean areas. The shutdown blocked access to Jerusalem's mosques at the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, depriving hundreds of thousands of Muslims of an opportunity to pray at their holy site and giving new reason for Palestinians to feel that they needed control of part of Jerusalem so that access to their holy sites would not continue to be in the hands of Israelis.

And so, on February 24 Israel fell victim to two deadly bomb attacks—disgusting acts of Arab terror that have always been the best hope of Likud and the Right. Instead of noticing that most Palestinians want nothing to do with these immoral terrorist acts, Israeli rightists talk of them as acts of the entire Palestinian people, and blame them on the peace process of the Labor government. Perhaps at this very moment, egged on by such rhetoric, yet another right-wing religious Jew is hatching more plans to save the Jewish people by killing Jewish leaders.

The unholy alliance between terrorists and Israeli rightists persists. If the Israeli Right wants to stop terror, it could show the terrorists that nothing would be accomplished by their actions—namely, by escalating the pace of the peace process, which the terrorists wish to undermine. Instead, the Right's calls for a slowing of that process provide precisely the incentive for future acts of violence that the Palestinian extremists are seeking. Meanwhile, Yasir Arafat immediately condemned the bombings, well aware that they were aimed as much against the Palestinian Authority as against his Israeli peace partners.

When Race Obscures Class

The Jewish proprietor of Freddy's, a Harlem clothing store, recently had his store burned by a protester who had been among the crowds of

(Continued on p. 67)

EDITORIAL

Buchanan, Meaning, and the Economy

by Michael Lerner



ERIC DRAPER / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

The way the media are analyzing Patrick Buchanan's popularity in the Republican presidential primary races, you'd think he was the first politician to speak out against the Clinton trade agreements that betrayed American workers to promote corporate interests, or against corporate downsizing and the globalization of capital.

The truth is that these same concerns were raised by Democratic Congressman (and at the time, Majority Leader) Dick Gephardt, by the AFL-CIO, and, in an even wider context that acknowledged the disastrous impact on the environment or on human rights, by Ralph Nader and various progressive social change organizations.

In fact, anti-corporate populism has been the staple of left-wing groups for decades, and it figures prominently in the thinking of the New Party, the Greens, and the editorial orientation of many left-leaning magazines. William Safire calls it "the New Socialism."

So, if people are responding primarily to an economic populist conception, if it's really "the economy, stupid," as so many theorists of the Left, center, and Right confidently assert, why does it take off only when articulated by Buchanan?

The Left's typical explanation for why people haven't responded to left-wing populism is that the media, dominated by corporations, have refused to give left-wing ideas an airing. Yet why should the media be so much more attentive to Buchanan, whose anti-corporate rhetoric is potentially as threatening? The truth is that the media have been doing their share of Buchanan-exposing, highlighting his long record of racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia. Buchanan is not the media's darling.

What the media and the Left ignore is that Buchanan got the response he did because he melds meaning-orientation with populism, and *that* is the ticket that gave him popular appeal. The pro-corporate candidates in both parties have been trying to figure out how to absorb the meaning-oriented elements of Buchananism without accepting his populism, and they will be trying to coopt the meaning dimension without aiding the economic populist dimension long after his candidacy has been laid to rest.

Of course, as we've long pointed out, the right-wing meaning-oriented politics correctly notes that many Americans are not given the recognition they deserve, but instead are forced to compete for recognition in a market-oriented society that denies ethical and spiritual values and gives people recognition only to the extent that they are successful at amassing wealth and power in the service of corporate interests. The resulting ethos of selfishness and materialism permeates the society, generating a rip-off consciousness that ripples through our lives, encourages crime or other forms of individual and collective irresponsibility, and manifests in a decline in ethical and spiritual values and a destablizing of loving relationships. That Buchanan and other rightists then go on to blame these problems on the selfishness of "the special interests" (often a code word for African Americans, gays and lesbians, feminists, the unions, Jews, and immigrants), allegedly aided in their selfishness by big-government liberals, is at once their pathology and the place where a progressive politics of meaning movement might enter the national debate. It is our contention, of course, that the roots of materialism and selfishness are in the daily dynamics of the competitive market, and not in the feeble attempts by those who have been the worst victims of the competitive market to rectify this history of past discrimination. Working out the details of that connection forms a central element of the politics of meaning I espouse.

Buchanan offers what those who are merely economic populists do not and cannot: an attempt to speak to the pain that fills most people's lives, a pain that is rooted in the frustration of their meaning needs.

Those human needs are described by contemporary psychoanalytic psychology in terms of mutual recognition (see, for example, the writings of Peter Gabel, Jessica Benjamin, or many of those who do work today in the latest versions of psychoanalytic object relations thought). I prefer a religious language. Human beings, I contend, are created in the image of God, and are partners with God in finishing creation through healing and repairing the world. This task of *tikkun* (the Hebrew word for healing and repair) requires that we recognize each other as filled with the God energy that suffuses the universe (the Bible puts it this way: "The whole world is filled with God's glory") and treat each other accordingly (in other words, with love, caring, respect, compassion, and gentleness).

The pain comes when that recognition is not forthcoming. In the past several hundred years we have built a mechanistic view of the universe, and increasingly shaped our society to treat human beings as though they were very clever machines whose sole value was in terms of their ability to maximize the wealth of the powerful. A mechanistic worldview sees human beings as fundamentally no different from the rest of a material world, and increasingly pushes spiritual and ethical concerns to the margins, and then out of public discourse. Based on an empiricist epistemology that assumes that all that can be real is that which can be validated through sense-experience that is publicly observable and repeatable (the paradigm of a materialist science), the dominant cultural assumptions dismiss ethics and spirituality as nonsense, and treat any attempt to talk about the subjective needs of human beings as nonverifiable and therefore meaningless psychobabble.

With this worldview in place, the dominant order is able to establish the terms of public debate. If you challenge those who control the money and power, you may be dubbed a communist, but at least you are in the discourse that is deemed meaningful. But if you challenge the realm where most people feel the most pain, namely, in the way that the established order makes people feel that their fundamental humanity is being denied, then you are out of the realm of acceptable discourse, and dismissed as speaking nonsense both by those who have power and by the denizens of the loyal opposition as well as by such publications as The *Nation*, *Z*, *Mother Jones*, and the gatekeepers of left-wing respectability.

Yet, despite all their attempts to make it invisible, it is out of the frustration of our meaning needs that much of the pain of the contemporary world arises. People need mutual recognition. We need to be recognized, cared for, and loved—first by our parents, then by our teachers and contemporaries, next by our adult partners, friends, and family—and recognized as beings who are intrinsically valuable, embodiments of spiritual and ethical value (or, in religious terms, as created in the image of God), and as freely creative beings who together can reshape the world in accord with our highest moral and spiritual vision.

Instead, we are faced with a world that systematically denies who we are. Eventually, we find ourselves stuck in a work world in which our worth is tied to how much money or power we are able to accumulate, either directly for ourselves or for those who control the institutions for which we work.

No wonder, then, that people hunger for communities of meaning and purpose in which they can be recognized and affirmed for who they are, not for what they achieve in the competitive market.

The tragedy is that liberals, progressives, and the Left, tied to a definition of reality that is narrowly mech-

anistic and materialistic, have given little attention to addressing this hunger for meaning. As a result, the meaning-oriented communities available to most Americans are right-wing in orientation, and often embody or espouse elements of racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia as part of their makeup. When, in desperate search for some kind of affirmation that they do not get from the market nor from the world of liberals, intellectuals, or what they perceive as the cultural elite, some Americans respond to those communities, the Left's dismissive characterization of them as sexist, racist, homophobic, or as "haters" infuriates these people, most of whom have been attracted to the Right not because of these distortions, but rather because the groups to which they respond seem to have some understanding of their need for recognition and some serious commitment to establishing, at least within group members, a sense of loyalty and mutual caring. So they feel entirely misunderstood and uncared for by the Left—and angered by its elitism and its hostility to their interests.

If you listen to these people more carefully—as I and my colleagues at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health did for ten years when I was a practicing psychotherapist—you will hear that their primary anger is not at gays or at Blacks, but at liberals who have misunderstood them, and at the technocratic system that values them entirely in instrumental terms (what they "do" for a living, how much they make, how successful they are), rather than recognizing or valuing them for who they are.

When people respond to nationalism or to a chauvinistic religious community, they are responding to those who are saying to them, "You are valuable to us not because of how much money you have or how successful you are or how brilliant you are, but solely because you are an American, German, Russian, Serb, Israeli, Arab, or because you are a Christian, Jew, Muslim, or (fill in the blank)." Similarly, when people respond to the pro-family rhetoric of the Right, at least part of the appeal is to the ideal of family as the place where you are loved and accepted no matter how badly you've screwed up in the rest of the world.

To the mechanistic consciousness, people are valued instrumentally for how well they can achieve some societally valued purpose. And the dominant value in American society is how well you've succeeded in accumulating wealth and power or how well you are regarded by those who have succeeded in these respects. In contrast, what the meaning-oriented communities do is provide recognition for people based on their value as an embodiment of God's spirit, or of some intrinsic quality that everyone has without having to accomplish something (e.g., their Americanness).

Patrick Buchanan, and many others on the Right—people who actually are racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, xenophobic—have learned how to manipulate these legitimate meaning needs. In a speech after his victory in the New Hampshire primary, Buchanan spoke of those who have no voice in American society, and listed among them both the people who are getting screwed by the corporations and the "unborn children" who are being aborted because of the liberals and their values.

Peter Gabel and I pointed out some seven years ago in these pages that part of the reason why opposition to abortion has been such an abiding theme for the meaning-oriented Right is that it speaks to many people's feelings that they are not being recognized. All the feelings of not being heard and not being seen in the larger society can be projected symbolically onto "the silent scream" of the defenseless fetus. It is because people feel that they are that fetus, that their lives too often feel as powerless as that, that they can identify so strongly with this perceived vulnerability. It is that feeling that accounts for the intellectual inconsistency in seeming to be "pro-life" before a child is born, yet so uninterested in supporting life (e.g., the life of a murderer sentenced to death) when that life is not perceived as vulnerable and hence not symbolically embodying one's own unrecognized needs. Whatever the complexities of the moral issues involved (and a politics of meaning perspective certainly must raise questions about the adequacy of a narrowly construed vision of individual choice as an adequate basis for opposing legal restrictions), the special emotional charge of this issue, and the reason it fits into Buchanan's campaign, is that people who fear that they may soon be thrown out of work by powerful economic forces feel as powerless, underrecognized, and undervalued as they imagine that fetus to be.

Still, isn't it the fear of job loss that, in the final analysis, is the center of people's concerns? Or the fact that median wages, when adjusted for inflation, are almost 9 percent less today than they were in 1979? Isn't this an economic bottom line, rather than a meaning-oriented one?

Not really. Because the meaning of these economic realities is what is central. The fact is that employment is far lower today than it has been in the past at times when people voted for liberals. The difference is not some economic fact, but how people understand the likelihood that others will stand with them and take care of them when they are faced with economic adver-

sity. It is precisely because of the meaning crisis that people no longer feel that they can count on one another—and it is no wonder, then, that they'd prefer to rely on some religious community where they can *feel* that other people really do care, than on governmental bodies from which they feel nothing but alienation and indifference.

Liberals and social democrats of the labor movement who designed the institutions of an expansive government often find themselves mystified by this response. "How can people not feel cared for?" they wonder. "After all, they have benefited from the G.I. Bill, mortgage guarantees, access to public education, and a wide variety of social services and entitlements that we on the Left provided for them? Why are they so unappreciative?" Here, for lack of space, I can only refer you to the more detailed discussion of the failure of liberalism and to the meaning-oriented analysis of economic issues that I develop in my forthcoming book, *The Politics of Meaning*. But the basic point is this: the liberals provided "objective caring" without ever worrying about "subjective caring" (how to make the people who are paying taxes *feel* that they are engaged in an act of generosity and the people who receive benefits *feel* that they are beneficiaries of the caring of the people around them in the larger society). And the reason that they didn't worry about subjective caring is because they never understood that the way people experience their world is just as important as their economic needs.

Or, to put it another way, there is no such thing as an economic need separate from the level of caring in a society. People have many more of their economic needs met today than in the Depression, yet they feel that they "can't afford" to take care of the poor. That is a product of the breakdown of caring relationships and the sense that nobody will be there for them when they are in need, so they have to watch out for themselves, and not allow what they have to be taken from them through high taxes. But this is an economic fact that is shaped by a meaning fact—the degree of social solidarity, itself an expression of how much people believe that they can count on being recognized and cared for by others.

In short, the fear of economic globalization and downsizing is shaped by our sense of the breakdown of solidarity, and hence our need to just look out for number one.

The focus of a politics of meaning, then, is not just about our inner lives. Our contention is that there can be no radical separation between worrying about our spiritual lives and worrying about the level of social justice and caring in the society. Both are equal reflections of the degree to which we take seriously the notion that human beings are created in the image of God. A politics of meaning does not lead one away from the struggle for social justice—it is, in fact, a more powerful way to bring people into that struggle than all the rhetoric of the liberals and the Left. Yet it transcends the old Left/Right rhetoric and challenges the fundamentals of a technocratic consciousness that denies the spiritual and ethical dimension of every human being. Precisely because it affirms who we really are and could be, it provides the basis for recognition and meaning that is so widely needed—and thus provides the most effective counter to the growing power of the Right in *both* parties (including the continuing slide to the Right among Democrats as Clinton and others buy into many of the fundamentals of conservative politics in order to position themselves opportunistically for the 1996 elections).

In contrast to traditional politics, we understand that developing an inner life, along with encouraging individual acts of kindness and caring, are all components of the struggle for healing the world. In the final analysis, the politics of meaning is aimed at transforming society, and that transformation may use traditional political means, but it will also have at its core a movement of people who are able to reassure each other that it's safe to trust one another once again. I hope that you will come to the Summit or try to create a regional Summit in your own area. I hope that you will read the forthcoming book and create a study group with friends to explore the ideas and deepen them. I hope that you will join the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning and become part of the organization that is advancing these ideas. But most of all, I hope that you will challenge the cynicism that surrounds us, interfere with those who tell you that it's just human nature to care only for yourself, and insist on the possibility of a new way of being. I'm sure that in the years ahead, as we get to know each other better, there will be plenty of times when we will be disappointed in our failures to fully embody an ethos of caring and compassion and gentleness. I know how often I fail in these respects. And yet, I am also hopeful that we can build a social movement that has compassion for the ways that we fail on these issues and gives us strength to try again. I hope you'll join me in this enterprise. □

Themes from this editorial are drawn from Michael Lerner's new book, The Politics of Meaning: Restoring Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism, *forthcoming in May 1996 from Addison-Wesley.*

Summit Agenda:

Sunday, April 14

Morning Religious Services

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

1:30 Plenary: Introduction to the Major Themes
Peter Gabel, Meg Riley, Michael Eric Dyson, Jim Wallis

2:30-5:00 Afternoon Sessions

1. *Poetry*
Alan Shapiro, Yosef Komunyakaa, C.K. Williams, Eleanor Wilner

2. *What is Oppression?*
Sharon Welch, Thandeka, Rita Nakashima Brock

3. *Students and the Politics of Meaning*

4. *Social-Psychological Foundations: Can there really be a society based on love and caring?*
Susan Andersen, Edward Deci, Nancy Cantor, Mark Snyder, Peter Salovey

5. *What Kind of Individual Virtues and Responsibility Do We Want to Encourage?*
Colin Greer, Herbert Kohl

6. *A Progressive Pro-Family Agenda*
Linda Nicholson, Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman, John D'Emilio

7. *Repressing the Ethical Dimension of Contemporary History*
Daniel Ellsberg, Meryl Zegarek

8. What Kind of Society Nurtures the Soul (Part I)?
Tom Hayden, Jyl Lynn Felman

9. Pat Buchanan and the Elections of 1996: A Meaning Oriented Analysis

5:00-6:30 Telling Our Stories
Small group discussions and participant sharing or Reports of success from local organizers using ethical and spiritual themes in their work

7:30 Plenary: The Deprivation of Meaning in America
Cornel West, Naomi Wolf, Michael Lerner, Jim Wallis, Jim Hightower, Michael Bader, Cherie Brown, Marianne Williamson, Torie Osborn

10:00 Concert Pete Seeger, Sy Kahn

Monday, April 15

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

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

11:15 Healing and Meaning
Larry Dossey

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

12:45 Box Lunches and Reports from the field Reports from community organizations, religious communities with a progressive bent, social change movements & labor unions

1:45-2:00 Resistance to Meaning
Michael Bader

2:00-4:00 Afternoon Sessions

1. *The Assault on African Americans and the Crisis of Meaning* James Forbes, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

2. *God Does Not Belong to the Right—so why are right-wingers winning in the religious world?*
Rebecca Parker, Matthew Fox, Michael Eric Dyson, Mordechai Liebling, Harvey Cox, Joan Chittister, Eric Yoffie, Jim Wallis

3. *Moving the Labor Movement from Economism to Meaning*
Dennis Rivera, Joe Uehlein

4. *Media Cynicism*

5. *Can Ecological Disaster be Averted?* Paul Hawken, Arthur Waskow, Paul Wapner

6. *Open Discussion of the Meaning-oriented Platform and the Family Covenant*

7. *Abortion: Whose Rights? Whose Meaning?*
Naomi Wolf

8. Healing the Emotional Barriers that Prevent Unity in Organizing
National Coalition Building Institute

4:00-6:00 Late Afternoon Sessions

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

2. *The Fate of White Men. In what ways have white men been given a bad rap? What media, other than hate radio, can reach white men?*
Mary Edsall, Jim Hightower

3. *What Kind of Society Nurtures the Soul (Part II)?*
James Hillman

4. *Medicine and Meaning*
Larry Dossey, Raphael Kellman

5. *Reconstructing the Meaning of Politics* Peter Gabel, Roberta Achtenberg, Jesse Jackson, Jr.

6. *How Can We Use a Meaning-oriented Perspective in Our Local Communities?*

7. *Socially Responsible Business*
Ben Cohen

8. *Homophobia*
9. *God Does Not Belong to the*

Right—2:00 p.m. discussion continued.

10. Law and Meaning

6:00 Regional Meetings

7:00 Dinner with Speakers and Presentation of Ethics Awards
James Hillman, Matthew Fox, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Joan Chittister

9:30 Spiritual Visionaries

10:30 Music Program

Tuesday April 16

8:15 a.m. Contact Groups

8:45-9:15 Commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day

9:15-10:30 Morning Sessions

1. How Should We Raise Children?
Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman, Herbert Kohl

2.*The Limits of a Politics of Inclusion*
3.Feminist Perspectives on a Politics of Meaning Marie Wilson, Sharon Welch, Urvashi Vaid

4.*Violence and Ethical Irresponsibility in the Media*
Danny Goldberg

5.*Visions of Work and Community*
Jerome Segal, Corinne McLaughlin, Marianne Williamson

6. *Aging and Sage-ing*
Thomas Cole

7. *The Politics of Meaning and the Legislative Battles of 1996?* David Saperstein, Meg Riley, (John Carr)

8. *Cultural Politics*
Don Lazere, Jyl Lynn Felman

9. *Toward a New Philosophy of Politics*
Michael Sandel, Charles Derber

10:45 Plenary: The Ethical Crisis in our Professions - How the ethos of selfishness distorts our work and prevents us from serving the common good
William Sullivan, Tony Campolo

11:00 Meetings by Professions

12:45 Luncheon Topics
Taking the Politics of Meaning into America ● *The Progressive Pro-Families Agenda* ● *Organizing National Families Day, Fall 1996* ● *How a Politics of Meaning Approach Could Impact Elections in 1996.*

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

Reappropriating July 4th and Other National Holidays ● *Creating Neighborhood Ethical Support Groups* ● *Establishing Media Watches to Combat Cynicism* ● *Contact Groups within Professions* ● *The Role of Public Intellectuals* ● *Developing a Policy Institute* ● *Ethical Impact Reports* ● *Religious Renewal* ● *Voices from the Right and a Meaning-Oriented Response*

4:00-5:30 Toward a New Ethical and Spiritual Direction by the Year 2000

Music and Celebration
Pete Seeger

Register for the Summit on Ethics and Meaning

NAME

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

DAY PHONE EVENING PHONE

$_____ CONFERENCE COST If you're staying at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, registration fee is $75. Without hotel, registration sliding fee scale applies: incomes under $20,000: $55; $20,000-35,000: $85; $35,000-50,000: $120; above $50,000: $185. One day only: 60% of registration fee. Students: $45.
$_____ Dinner with speakers Monday: $35.
$_____ Lunch with speakers Tuesday: $20.
$_____ Hotel Cost: Accommodations are at the Omni Shoreham Single: $142.75; Double: $168.25 (includes tax). Prices for multiple occupancy rooms are the double room rate plus $25 per extra. Maximum occupancy is four per room.
❑ I cannot attend, but please put me on the Foundation For Ethics and Meaning mailing list.
❑ Enclosed please find my donation to help continue this work.
❑ I'd like to order a subscription to TIKKUN for $31/year.

$_____ **TOTAL FEE ENCLOSED**

❑ **Check enclosed** (Make checks payable to the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning.)
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The Struggle for Men's Souls

Michael S. Kimmel



MAIRAV SALOMON

By now, the pundits have weighed in on the Million Man March, with the predictable celebrations of Black pride and the equally predictable denunciations of Louis Farrakhan's divisively racialist, anti-Semitic demagoguery. Few commentators, however, mentioned one of the march's primary themes: the need to begin to minister to a spiritual emptiness in Black men's lives, a gaping chasm of meaning, hope, and vision.

In this, the Million Man March finds important points of intersection with the nation's two other mass mobilizations of men—the Promise Keepers and the mythopoetic movement, best known through the works of poet Robert Bly. It is no surprise that all three are directly concerned with saving men's souls, albeit through decidedly different institutional channels. As many writers have described in the pages of this magazine, there is a yearning in Americans' hearts for something more than crass materialism, craven self-promotion, or the hollow solicitudes of the consumer culture. As a people, we are more spiritually restive, hungrier for a nourishment of the soul, than we have been in years.

Americans—women and men—yearn for a fuller, richer, more resonant life. Nearly two-fifths of us (38 percent) attended a religious service in the past week. Advice books counseling depth, soul, or New Age bromides cram the best-seller lists. Millions waited for hours to get a glimpse of the Pope on his recent visits to the Americas, both North and South. All over the globe, religion is experiencing a dramatic rise.

Yet the results of this global religious renaissance are decidedly mixed. For every salubrious ministration to an aching soul, there is a murderous gleam in some zealot's eye; for every healing circle, there is a *fatwa*; for every sermon counseling compassion, there is another preaching the abrogation of individual rights to control one's body or love whom one chooses. For every effort to inject spiritual values into policy debates about military spending or the environment, there is a religiously based party poised to ascend to political power. Spiritual healing can lead us to extend our own depth of soul, or to constrain someone else's.

The Million Man March (MMM), the Promise Keepers, and the mythopoetic men's movement try to do both, while ministering to America's spiritual longing. To be sure, they are very different moments on this spiritual spectrum. The MMM, for example, has yet to generate any organizational structure that can sustain its momentous, yet momentary appearance, while Promise Keepers rallies are highly replicable, and return men week after week to evangelical churches. The mythopoets, a more heterogeneous group, range from nature-worshipping pantheists to twelve-steppers, with a smattering of agnostics, Buddhists, and more mainstream Judeo-Christian believers. Yet each group, however ephemeral its appearance or diverse its membership, explicitly ministers to men's souls. And each does so in a way that is either atavistic, reactionary, or both. Not because of the people they include, but because of those they exclude.

The Promise Keepers, founded by former University

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of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney, is an evangelical Christian organization whose rallies have been filling stadiums around the country, especially in the Midwest and the South during the last year. At Promise Keeper events, men (virtually all of whom are white), "promise" to return to the home and assume their rightful place as the head of the household. They forswear alcohol, drugs, violence against women, and promise to be faithful husbands, capable and reliable breadwinners, and Christian gentlemen.

Mythopoetic men's retreats use a variety of spiritual props and initiation rituals freely adapted from Native-American and other pre-industrial cultures to allow men to retrieve their masculine essence, celebrate their inner warrior, and heal their wounds. The image of so many middle-aged chubby hubbies drumming and chanting in the woods prompted gleefully derisive dismissals from the mass media a few years ago. But these men seek the solace of other men to express their needs for lives of coherence and meaning. That they would look to become better nurturers and fathers in a weekend retreat away from their families may strike one as disingenuous; after all, nurturing is what women are trained to do, so it would seem logical to ask for their guidance rather than run away. (This is why I prefer "Ironing Johns" to Iron John.) But even if the path is errant, the journey is vital and real.

And now close to a million Black men have marched in Washington to express the deep grief and indescribable pain that is the toll of centuries of life in a racist society. More than that, they came to atone, to promise to become more responsible family men and community members, to return to their homes and their communities with a renewed sense of spiritual purpose. But their leaders exhorted them to take "our place" at the "head of families," to be the "maintainers" of women and children.

All three phenomena beg the same question: Why is this spiritual malaise experienced as distinctively masculine displacement? How is spiritual loss a masculine loss? And why should spiritual renewal imply reasserting male dominance?

At other times in American history, men have sought such homosocial spiritual redemption. At the turn of the century, the Reverend Billy Sunday trumpeted Muscular Christianity, a recharged masculinist Protestantism that reimagined Jesus as a brawny muscle-bound working man who fought fiercely for men's souls. Hundreds of thousands of men flocked to his revivalist tent to hear him preach. And this, just at the same time that nearly one in three American men had joined a fraternal order, there to experience masculine initiation via newly minted traditional ritual props.

These earlier movements faded because they misdiagnosed men's spiritual longings. So too, the Million Man March, the Promise Keepers, and the mythopoetic men's movement share a common flaw: They ground masculine spirituality in a politics of gender and sexual exclusion that disfigures the religious impulse, granting access to the Truth only to believers. At its most extreme, such exclusivity leads to the sanctimonious bloodletting of countless crusades and *jihads*.

Among the Promise Keepers, there is no tolerance for homosexuality or feminism; indeed, the bargain struck between the Christian husband and his wife would keep her out of the workplace and in the home with the children, where God had intended her to be all along. And many a weekend wildman has returned home only to exchange his deeply masculine roar for the whine of the men's rights claims of a new victimhood. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam would keep women in the home, subordinate subjects standing alongside the master of the household, waiting for him to "take up our responsibility," as Farrakhan put it. Neither Promise Keepers nor Farrakhan's minions prepare a place for gays and lesbians at the table of humanity.

These movements hear the spiritual longing in the hearts of men, but would take us down the wrong path. To minister to this religious hunger means to preach a politics of healing and forgiveness. An inclusive religious impulse promotes such healing through a vision of common humanity, encouraging compassion and love for others. And a truly democratic manhood would ground that ethical vision in a politics that embraces our differences within a context of racial and sexual equality and of gender justice. □

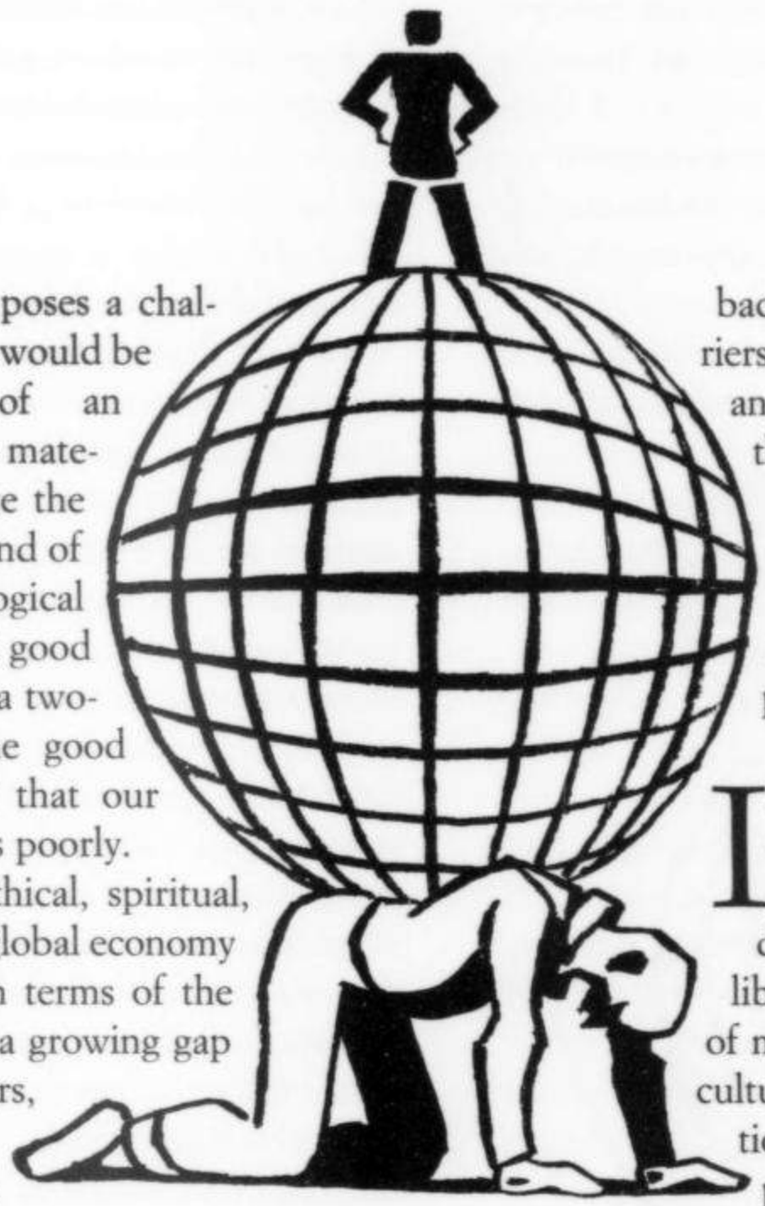
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Economies of Meaning

David C. Korten



The politics of meaning poses a challenging question: What would be the characteristics of an economy that both meets our material needs and serves to create the ethos of caring relationships and of ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity essential to life in a good society? If we take this to be a two-fold performance test of the good economy, then it is evident that our existing economy is serving us poorly.

There is little room for ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity in a global economy that defines success purely in terms of the financial bottom line, creates a growing gap between its winners and losers, and provides fabulous financial rewards to those willing to sacrifice long-term human and environmental interests for short-term financial gain.

Leading proponents of the new global economy such as Rosabeth Kanter, Harvard Business School professor and author of the business best-seller, *World Class*, counsel that in the global economy financial success belongs to those who are willing to sacrifice loyalty to community and nation in the pursuit of personal economic opportunity. The March 25, 1995 issue of *Fortune* advises young graduates to approach every job as though they are self-employed, because success will come to those who look out for number one, always using one's present job to open better opportunities with other employers.

It is abundantly clear: In the global free-market economy, caring, loyalty, and moderation are out. Individual self-interest, materialism, and opportunism are in.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Empire in 1989, countries nearly everywhere have joined in an uncritical embrace of market-driven economic growth based on deregulating markets, privatizing public assets, scaling back social programs, and removing barriers to the free international flow of goods and finance. Political parties from across the political spectrum have converged on a commitment to variations of this agenda, leaving those who question the underlying assumptions or the moral implications of this agenda with few political alternatives.

In spite of its claims to firm theoretical and empirical foundations, the neoliberal economic policy agenda is best described as an ideology of corporate libertarianism based on the perpetuation of myths deeply embedded in our political culture and an embrace of social dysfunction as the foundation of a perverse moral philosophy. It is useful to examine a few of the more central of these myths. For example:

• The myth that growth in aggregate economic output is a valid measure of human well-being and progress.

To the contrary, the indicators of aggregate economic output by which economic policy managers evaluate their performance tell us nothing about the social utility of that output. Expanded use of cigarettes and alcohol increases economic output both as a direct consequence of their consumption and because of the related increase in health-care needs. The need to clean up oil spills increases economic activity. Gun sales to minors generate economic activity. A divorce generates both lawyers fees and the need to buy or rent and outfit a new home, increasing real estate brokerage fees and retail sales. It is now well documented that in the United States and a number of other countries the quality of living of ordinary people has been declining as aggregate economic output increases.

• The myth that technology frees us from environmental restraints on economic growth.

While technology in some instances allows us to use ecosystem resources more efficiently, there is a strong historical relationship between growth in economic output and growing human demands on the earth's

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ART BY SETH TOBOCMAN

finite ecosystem. Furthermore, a five-fold increase in the world's economic output since 1950 has now pushed the human burden on the planet's regenerative systems, its soils, air, water, fisheries, and forestry systems beyond what the planet can sustain. Continuing to press for economic growth beyond the planet's sustainable limits accelerates the rate of breakdown of those systems, as we see so dramatically demonstrated in the case of many ocean fisheries, and intensifies the competition between rich and poor for the earth's remaining output of life-sustaining resources.

• The myth that an open and unregulated "free" market is the fairest and most efficient way to allocate

SETH TOBOCMAN



society's resources and is the foundation of human freedom and democratic citizen sovereignty.

Market economies are highly responsive to the wants of those who have money. They are blind to the needs of those who have no money. In contrast to political democracy, which is based on one person, one vote, economic democracy is about one dollar, one vote. Under conditions of relative economic equality, the market mechanism has an important role in the fair, efficient, and democratic allocation of resources. Under the conditions of extreme inequality that presently prevail, an unfettered market allocates resources in ways that are grossly unfair, inefficient, and undemocratic. Contrary to the rhetoric of ideologues from both Right and Left, markets are neither inherently good nor inherently bad. It is a question of the conditions under which a particular market functions.

• The myth that the only alternative to a free market economy is a state-planned, command economy.

Our own history is one of many sources of alternative examples. During the post-World War II period, in which a large and prosperous middle class was a defining feature of the Western industrial nations, the market functioned within a framework of rules set through a democratic public process. The institutions of government, market, and civil society functioned in a reasonable pluralistic balance. A combination of deregulation and globalization have freed the market and destroyed this balance, rapidly eroding the conditions on which efficient market function depends. For example, in the absence of government intervention, successful competitors gain ever greater monopolistic advantage through their accumulation of economic and political power. Now the competitive market economy is being steadily replaced by a centrally planned global economy managed by an ever more tightly integrated alliance of global corporations.

• The related myths that trade agreements are about trade, that open economic borders are universally beneficial, and that economic globalization is a consequence of immutable historical forces. The truth is that most trade agreements—such as NAFTA, GATT, and the European Maastricht Treaty—are really economic integration agreements intended to guarantee the rights of global corporations to move both goods and investments wherever they wish, free from public interference and accountability. Greater rights for global corporations inevitably mean fewer rights for ordinary citizens to set the rules by which their own local and national economies will function. The trend toward ever greater global economic integration is inevitable only so long as we allow the world's largest corporations to buy our politicians and write our laws.

• The myth that global corporations are benevolent institutions that, once freed from governmental interference, will provide local prosperity, jobs, and a clean environment for all.

In reality, the institution of the corporation was invented to concentrate control over economic resources while shielding those who hold the resulting power from personal accountability for the public consequences of its use. In a globalized, deregulated market, the only legal public accountability of corporate management in the use of their power is to a global financial market that has one incessant demand: Maximize short-term returns to shareholders. This puts enormous pressures on management to take advantage of every available opportunity to pass the costs of production onto the community by lowering wages and working conditions, obtaining government subsidies and tax breaks, and cutting corners on environmental protection. Gains are privatized to the benefit of the power-holders. Costs are socialized by passing them to those who have no political or economic voice.

These myths of our political culture are buttressed by a number of moral premises embedded in the corporate libertarian ideology that serves as the foundation for most neoliberal economic theory. These moral premises may be summarized as follows:

- People are by nature motivated primarily by greed.
- The drive to acquire material wealth is the highest expression of what it means to be human.
- The relentless pursuit of greed and acquisition leads to socially optimal outcomes.
- It is in the best interest of human societies to encourage, honor, and reward these values.

While most economists would not state these premises in such stark terms, this is the essence of the value assumptions underlying most contemporary market theory. Unfortunately, economic policies driven by these deeply flawed moral premises create a self-fulfilling prophecy by rewarding dysfunctional behaviors deeply detrimental to the healthy function of human societies, as we now see demonstrated all around us.

Our development models—and their underlying myths and values—are artifacts of the ideas and institutions of the industrial era. The corporation and the modern state have been cornerstones of that era, concentrating massive economic resources in a small number of centrally controlled institutions. They have brought the full power of capital-intensive technologies to bear in exploiting the world's natural and human resources so that a small minority of the world's people could consume far more than their rightful share of the world's real wealth.

Economic globalization has served to advance this exploitation of the earth's social and environmental systems beyond their limits of tolerance, by freeing errant corporations from restraints to their growth, their ability to monopolize ever larger markets, and the use of their economic power to win political concessions that allow them to pass on to the community ever more of the costs of their production. It has delinked corporations and financial markets from accountability to any public jurisdiction or interest, contributed to a massive concentration of financial power, and richly rewarded those who place the values of acquisition, competition, and self-interest ahead of values of simplicity, cooperation, and sharing.

We are not limited to choosing between markets or governments as the instruments of our exploitation. Nor is there need to eliminate markets, trade, private ownership, the state, or even the institution of the corporation. Rather, it is a matter of creating a new architecture for each of these institutions appropriate to the values we believe a good society should embody and nurture. This creative task belongs neither to corporations nor to states, which are incapable of questioning the assumptions on which the legitimacy of their present institutional form is based. It belongs to citizens—to the people whose interests and values the new architecture is intended to serve. It is people rather than corporations or other big-money interests that appropriately set the terms of the economic and political agenda.

Citizen groups throughout the world are already actively engaged in the experimental creation of economies of meaning aligned with life-affirming values. Powerful formative ideas are emerging from these initiatives. For example, millions of people in the voluntary simplicity movement are discovering that good living is more fulfilling than endless accumulation andonsumption. In a healthy society, a life of material sufficiency and social, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual abundance can readily be sustained in balance with the environment.

Others are learning that there are alternatives to a global economy that inherently fosters inequality andglobal competition among local people and communities. They are demonstrating such possibilities by building strong, self-reliant, local economies that root resource management and ownership in democratically governed communities and recognize that all people have an inherent right of access to a basic means of creating a livelihood. Such economies are an essential foundation of healthy societies able to engage in cooperative and caring exchanges with their neighbors.

These are lessons with profound implications for a politics of meaning. In large measure, societies express and sustain their cultural values through their choice of economic structures. The fact that our present economic system values and rewards greed, gluttony, and disregard for the needs of others didn't just happen. It is a consequence of conscious acts of choice—poorly informed though they may be. It is equally within our means to create a globalized system of localized economies that thrive on life-affirming values of sufficiency, caring, cooperation, and reverence for life. It is a matter of adequately informed collective political choice.

Yet our existing political formations, no matter where they are positioned on the traditional Left-Right spectrum, reveal no awareness of even the possibility of replacing an economy of meanness with economies of meaning. That is one of many compelling reasons why we need a new political movement in the United States that is not defined by traditional Left-Right values and agendas. The politics of meaning movement is engaging this task. I believe that building public awareness of the potential to create economies of meaning and putting forward a policy agenda that advances this outcome must receive high priority on the movement's agenda. □

Can You Teach Empathy?

Ruth Shlossman

I've heard some people dismiss as "wacky" the idea, put forth in the politics of meaning platform, that schools should teach empathy. Yet I'm a principal of a private Jewish day school for grades K-5 that has been implementing this allegedly wacky idea—and it works. Let me tell you about it.

Most private schools place an emphasis on academic performance to the exclusion of attention to a child's emotional or spiritual life. I've seen this educational approach create children I did not enjoy being around. In my own work, however, I have discovered that when children feel safe, accepted, and appreciated, they learn more. Thus, the choice is pretty clear: Would you rather have self-confident, intellectually lively, empathetic children, or competitive, conformist, uptight children? What good does it do to give children the intellectual skills they need to excel in the world, if they don't learn the importance of caring about those around them? By asking children to focus on how they treat others, we are giving them the tools to build a successful and happy life, filled with meaningful connections. Parents sometimes worry that they aren't fulfilling their roles properly unless they focus all their attention on ensuring that their children get the academic skills that will gain them admittance to the best schools, so that they can get into the best professional schools, so they can land the highest-paying jobs. They've been intimidated by the larger culture into feeling that they really aren't being good parents unless they have given their kids a headstart on this materialistic competitive track.

All the more so for parents who send their children to private schools. They come to our school, for example, because of our outstanding academic reputation. When they begin to notice a positive difference in the way their children start treating other people, they're delighted. But it isn't something they necessarily consider to be important until they see the results of an empathy-driven school manifest in their kids.

Our students assemble each morning for a Jewish religious service. Afterward, I occasionally talk about some issue involving us as a group, to make sure everyone is feeling included and appreciated. If I've observed a specific act of caring, I will tell all the students about it. If I know of a situation in which someone is having a hard time, I will bring it up with the students and ask them to reach out in a special way to that person. For instance, when we had a new student who barely spoke English enter our school, I asked the students to imagine what it might be like for them if they suddenly had been placed in school in Thailand or Nigeria or Italy, and what they might have hoped for in the way of kindness and support from fellow students and teachers in that situation. After a lively discussion of their fantasies and fears, I asked them to apply that to the new student attending our school. They got it.

Every Friday, I tell a story to the entire student body focusing on some aspect of caring. Storytelling is a powerful way to teach children significant values.

Don't imagine that having a school oriented toward empathy means that conflicts disappear. But we've trained the teachers to focus lots of attention on trying to resolve conflict among students. The most important rule of conflict resolution is to make sure that each student feels that her or his point has really been heard and understood. It often matters far more that they experience this sense of respect than that they win the "who was right?" contest.

The school devotes considerable time to service projects. We divide the students into mixed-age groups, each of which then votes on a service project for the next six weeks. In the past, one group made a quilt, raffled it, and donated the money to a homeless project. Another group prepared food for a soup kitchen. A third group made crafts to give to a children's cancer ward. Even before they start the project, the kids get an experience of real empowerment, because the faculty and staff allow the groups to decide the nature of their projects and how to implement them. They experience the satisfaction of activism—the power to make life better for others. That sense of their own value in the world is a major component in developing their own self-esteem.

We've instituted a "two-fer" rule about put-downs. Whenever a student puts another person down, the

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teacher or fellow-student can say, "Hey, that was a put-down." At that point, the perpetrator is required to make two complimentary statements—"put-ups"—about the person who was hurt. Recently, a child was hanging on a branch while climbing a tree, and the branch broke off, poking another child in the eye as it fell. Immediately, five students came to my office, extremely upset. They wanted restitution for the one who had been hurt and some consequences for the person who had hurt the tree. After I had heard their views about what had happened, I asked them what they thought ought to be the "consequence" they sought. They all agreed that the person who caused the incident had to give five "sincere and meaningful" put-ups to the student whose eye was hurt, and that he should also lose a portion of the next week's recess because of the tree being hurt. It took a few years to reach the point where it became part of the school's ethos that no one hurts someone else without having to make amends, but now that it has been put into practice, it's terrific.

We also encourage academic cooperation among the students. Our curriculum is skills-based and non-graded, so the students are not put in a situation of competing against each other. They are always assessed in terms of how successful they are in achieving their own potential, not in terms of how they compare with others. Because of the noncompetitive atmosphere, our students have no reason to want anything but success for their classmates. In this environment, students are always helping each other with their schoolwork. Since almost everybody is good at something, each student gets a chance to help somebody else out at some point, and that contributes to their self-esteem.

On a wall in our hallway is a mural of a huge "mitzvah" tree. Students can pin paper "leaves" onto the tree to acknowledge acts of lovingkindness from one student to another that they've witnessed. Every Friday, I ask the students to tell me about *mitzvot* they've seen happen in school. I write down these acts of kindness on leaves, and we hang them on the tree, as a reminder to the students of the goodness that surrounds them. If we hung up all the "A" papers, as some schools do, that is what students would focus on. By hanging up these mitzvah leaves, we are making clear what we value—acts of lovingkindness.

If students are playing a game and one kid pushes another, most schools let it slide. We don't. We stop what we are doing, no matter how much the children are absorbed in the activity, and we focus on the act of hurting. We talk about what happened, why, and how it felt to the person, how we could do it differently next time, and what the adequate restitution should be. In this way, we communicate that nothing is more important than how we treat one another.



IMPACT VISUALS/J. KIRK CONDYLES

And it works. We have noticed that if the outward focus is on caring for others, eventually the students begin to internalize the value and it begins to come genuinely from within them. This movement from outward motivation to inward motivation is an extremely rewarding experience for us as educators.

Our students bring the values they learn in our school with them into the rest of the world. When they go to a typical camp, for example, and experience cruelty among children, they speak out against it.

Many of the teachers, too, have taken to this philosophy quite easily, once they understand that it is all right to take the time out from teaching "content" to emphasize caring. In the last five years, I've instructed many teachers in the techniques that I've been using in my school. Most of the teachers I've met want to create a safe, loving environment, but they either don't know how or feel pressure from the school system to give priority to teaching particular content that will be measured by student success on standardized test scores.

It takes time for teachers to feel completely at ease with this new way of thinking and to embody it. It's all too easy for teachers to demean students, sometimes in subtle or joking ways. So we've told our students that they are allowed to let us know when what we've said humiliates or hurts them, and that our two-fer rule applies to us as well. In faculty meetings, I try to reframe all of our decisions and projects and goals in terms of how they will create empathy and caring for our students. And I ask teachers to share stories of their daily classroom experiences that demonstrate our successes.

It's essential yet very difficult to create an atmosphere among teachers in which they know that they don't have to be perfect to get the respect of their co-workers or the school administration. Traditionally, teachers are not encouraged to talk about their failures to reach students. I try to model the opposite approach

by sharing my difficulties, so the teachers see that it is acceptable to have problems. I let them know repeatedly that they don't need to pretend everything is always "fine."

It is also very important that the teachers have considerable autonomy in their classrooms and their curriculum. They, like our students, need to experience the power to make a difference.

Of course, all this sounds a bit more wonderful than it feels on a day-to-day basis. We are always making mistakes, slipping back into old patterns, wondering if the rest of the world is going to disparage us, and worrying about whether the values we're inculcating will stay with the kids once they get into a middle school that embodies different values. In anticipation of this transition, I teach fifth-grade students how to respond to the inevitable negative peer pressure they are going to face once they move on to the larger, far less supportive culture of the middle schools.

There are parents who think it is a disadvantage to be empathic and caring—they want their kids to be competitive and cutthroat. What these parents don't realize is that when children feel safe, cared about, and relaxed they will learn *more*, not less. Our children are able to grapple with higher-order thinking questions because they don't face the petty daily disturbances that arise in mainstream schools. We resolve conflicts as they come up, thereby reducing the children's distractions.

Living, working, and studying in an environment where everyone feels safe, loved, and affirmed is always a smart choice. Children and teachers learn more in this kind of environment and are more committed to the school. From my experience, it is actually easier to create a caring environment then a competitive one because it is the natural inclination of children to care about each other if they are encouraged to do so.

I started out teaching in a low-income area. My experience was that these children began to blossom once I was able to create a caring, safe environment for them. There's nothing intrinsically middle-class about the value of empathy. And if there were more empathy among the victims of this society, there would be less violence and more ability to reach out and build alliances that could create social change.

It's precisely because I've seen that empathy can be taught to anyone that I want a politics of meaning to succeed. I know that our educational institutions either reinforce or undermine our ability to care for one another. It doesn't take a whole lot of money or restructuring to change the "bottom line" of what is being rewarded in schools. Far from being utopian, a politics of meaning approach to education is practical and viable. Through the politics of meaning movement, I'm looking forward to finding other educators who have come to the same conclusions about how to transform our educational system through empathy, so that together we can lead our schools toward this understanding. □

The Midrash Says: This One Doesn't Count

the story of the allegedly first escaped egyptian slave as recorded from a dream of an anonymous rabbi

his tongue felt like sand on the roof of his mouth the sun glared harshly on the soft mounds of bleached Sahara and as far as the eye could see the wide and empty land was silent with lifelessness his walkingstick not magically endowed was now his sole support keeping him from drifting headdown into delirious sleep Elijah the Prophet ate beans and then fasted for forty days in the desert leaning on a dune he would occasionally cut himself with a stone blade and drink some of his own blood to quench his thirst this didn't occur to him the dry desert wind would seal the wound quickly 'i want to feast until i die' why did he escape there were plenty of lentils and fish and pickles and watermelon and onions in egypt all free for the slaves and he should have been proud working for the immortality of the godking his work would endure forever maybe it was because he had heard that in the entire history of egypt up to the 15th dynasty no slave had ever escaped if he were to be the first his story would attain immortality … he's dragging his feet now on the 4th day an empty waterjug hanging from his rope waistbelt he didn't know it but it's about another 300 parsangs from khartoum wild camels [the only ones there were back then] could make the distance in two days and his eyes opened and he had a vision a long table draped in brown sackcloth and on it were delicacies he had never dreamed of roasted crocodile meat candied elephant tusks barbecued spare lion ribs and plenty of pickled watermelon and his entire tribe was there together in a room lit by unusually bright stars and all the butlers looked like pharaoh faceless all the same fermented wine of every fruit in gourd beakers and huge gaily colored sand glasses the gluttonous reverie of serfdom after a few decades of dreaming of luxurious indigestion which he knew about upon hearing his taskmaster's explanation of his sour face there he was suddenly growing cold if he had been jewish he would have said 'l'chaim' and then all black when he told his story he heard the godking say in an echoed voice 'i told you so' but a few of his wishes were fulfilled nonetheless waking up in the moon light he saw a hole in the desert floor and thinking of lizards felt for a stone…

Menachem Kallus

Reciprocal Follies
No Truce in the Culture Wars

Donald Lazere

In the overheated rhetoric of the culture wars, leftists and conservatives alike often appear to be mimicking the very excesses they denounce in the opposing side. Without denying the Left's follies, however, I find something uniquely ludicrous in the conservative stance, as most recently exemplified in Lynne V. Cheney's modestly titled book, *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense—and What We Can Do About It* (Simon & Schuster).



A principal issue in the culture wars is the claim by academic and other leftists that what appears to be "objectivity" or "rationality" often masks the conservative biases of ruling-class elites and white, heterosexual males in general. Cheney and other conservatives twist this argument around to charge that neo-marxist and/or post-structuralist "tenured radicals" are nihilists who reject the validity of rationality or objective truth altogether and impose their own partisan, politically correct "truths" in the manner of Orwellian doublethink.

Few reputable leftists actually advocate the latter notions; the conservatives' alleged adversary is mostly a straw nihilist, fabricated to evade the issue of conservatives' false objectivity—the strong point of Left theory. Some leftists appear to come close enough to such notions, however, that they play into conservatives' hands, as the cultural Left has done in so many ways.

More important, the stance from which Cheney and other conservatives criticize the Left is itself a hoax, which amazingly they've perpetrated to date without having been laughed out of the political and journalistic arenas. Cheney and her allies—from the highbrow Irving Kristol, to the middlebrow Newt Gingrich, to the lowbrow Rush Limbaugh—purport to defend intellectual non-partisanship and scrupulousness against their suppression by cultural leftists, who in Cheney's words "discount...traditional standards of accuracy and evidence." The conservatives are fond of quoting Matthew Arnold, the Victorian poet and essayist who defined the function of cultural criticism as the disinterested effort "to see the object as in itself it really is."

The conservatives, however, fall into precisely the mode of Orwellian doublethink they attribute to leftists. They have convinced themselves that the defense of cultural non-partisanship is exclusively vested in *their own political party*, just as they would have us believe that all Republicans are living models of godliness and family values. As heads of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Department of Education, Cheney and William J. Bennett opposed the alleged orthodoxies of the cultural Left by dictating their own orthodoxies as an official government line and supporting imposition of a similar line by bureaucrats and academic administrators such as Boston University president John Silber.

Rather than forthrightly admitting that their assault on academic leftists, public broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts are partisan efforts to wipe out their political opponents, Cheney & Co. ask us to believe that such attacks are motivated by pristine commitment to Truth, Justice, and the American Way of Life. Ironically, this equivocation ends up confirming the validity of the leftist thesis that "nonpolitical" stances themselves tend to serve political purposes—the very thesis conservatives so furiously try to discredit.

Conservative leaders accuse leftists of politicizing all

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ART BY SETH TOBOCMAN

cultural issues, thereby polarizing society, yet in a bizarre pattern of codependency, conservative leaders provoke and exaggerate Left polarization for their own political advantage. They couldn't make headlines and solicit contributions without an Evil Empire against which to wage holy war, whether in the Kremlin or in college English departments. It's an old Republican ploy going back to Attorney General John Mitchell's strategy of provoking "positive polarization" between opponents of the Vietnam War and "the silent majority."

Behind the smoke screen of Arnoldian disinterestedness, Cheney's and her allies' style is the attack-and-smear mode the Republican Party perfected, from Nixon's dirty tricks team to Bush's Willy Horton ad and redbaiting about young Bill Clinton's Moscow trip. As Jason DeParle noted in the November 12, 1995 *New York Times Magazine* (one of the few acknowledgments of this obvious point to have appeared in the mainstream press), the Republican "attack machine" approaches scholarship as a continuation of dirty politics by other means.

Corporate-subsidized foundations and think tanks such as Olin, Heritage, Scaife, Bradley, and the American Enterprise Institute (where Cheney is now W. H. Brady, Jr., Distinguished Fellow) use the semblance of scholarly research to lend credibility to party-line propaganda. Cheney argues that conservative foundations are only trying to provide a counterweight to wealthier, liberal ones such as Ford, Rockefeller, Guggenheim, and MacArthur, which often fund Left cultural projects. These foundations, however, are not chartered to serve the special interests of either their corporate sponsors or the Democratic Party; the Progressive Policy Institute, in service to the Democratic Leadership Council, and far from a stronghold of the cultural Left, would be a closer analogy to the right-wing think tanks.

The "scholarship" of Distinguished Fellows like Cheney is most reminiscent of Communist Party cultural hacks in Stalin's era. Their m.o. includes singling out the most extreme fringes of the Left as typical, thereby evading honest consideration of its more reasonable representatives and arguments; assuming the worst motives in all leftists and never acknowledging instances of good faith on the Left, or of deviousness on the Right; recycling, without verification, second-hand reports about leftists' PC atrocities originating with conservative sources, without ever raising the possibility of the latter being biased or inaccurate, or of there being another side to the story; and finally, accusing leftists of doing all of the above against conservatives. To be sure, some leftists *do* all of the above, in addition to being self-righteously intolerant of anyone suspected of sexism, racism, classism, weightism, etc. Conservatives, however, have a corner on self-righteous crowing about their disinterestedness.

What is most grotesque about the Cheney crowd's evocation of Arnoldian disinterestedness is that in practice they seem utterly unable to "see the object as in itself it really is." Anyone with some first-hand knowledge of the actual skirmishes in the culture wars that Cheney writes about is dizzied by her unerring instinct to distort every case she discusses and by her brazen contempt for "traditional standards of accuracy and evidence." This is not to deny that her stories sometimes correspond to the facts—I would estimate they might about half of the time; it's just that she is so dishonest that it is impossible to judge, without further investigation, which stories are accurate and which aren't.

I speak from the experience of having been one of many Left scholars Cheney has mugged. In a 1992 N.E.H. report that formed the basis for her book, Cheney criticized an article of mine that appeared in the journal *College English* titled "Back to Basics: A Force for Oppression or Liberation?" In the piece, I proposed an evenhanded method for introducing Left viewpoints in argumentative writing courses, rhetorically balanced by conservative views. I unequivocally criticized dogmatic leftism while also arguing, against many Left theorists, that students need a grounding in Standard English and more-or-less traditional humanistic education as conditions for political literacy, empowering them to decide for themselves whether to support Left, conservative, or alternative views. Cheney wrenched one passage out of context to demonstrate that the article *advocated* dogmatic teaching. Three polite requests to Cheney from me and the editor of *College English* for a correction and dialogue on the issues went unanswered. And rather than using the occasion of the present book to acknowledge the error, she simply quotes a different passage from my article, similarly out of context.

Telling the Truth contains countless similar distortions. To illustrate Left feminists' alleged intolerance of disagreements with their views, Cheney discusses a 1989 article by Richard Levin in *PMLA* (*Publications of the Modern Language Association*) about feminist scholarship on Shakespeare:

> In response to Levin's article, twenty-four feminist professors wrote a communal letter to PMLA condemning him. They declared their irritation with his appeal to rationality—"An Enlightenment dream, long since turned to nightmare," they called it—and indicated that they were "disturbed" that such a person had made "a successful academic career."

The truth is rather more complex. In its entirety, the quoted passage in the letter reads:

Levin seems unaware that what passes for "rationality" in a particular historical moment is likely to look irrational from the perspective of another, that affirmations of shared attributes often mask oppression based on unexplored assumptions of hierarchical difference, that many dreadful thoughts and brutal deeds have compelled the assent of people fully convinced of their own rationality and the irrationality of a cultural other. The view that "science" and "rationality" can comprehend "complex factors in human development" without the messy intrusion of "gender and ideology" is an Enlightenment dream, long since turned to nightmare.

We are puzzled and disturbed that Richard Levin has made a successful academic career by using the reductive techniques of this essay to bring the same predictable charges indiscriminatly against all varieties of contemporary criticism.

What Cheney does here exemplifies how conservative polemicists approach every text written from a Left perspective with malice aforethought, calculating how to distort it. The letter's authors, like most other responsible revisionist scholars, are not rejecting rationality, but the dangers of false or overconfident claims to rationality. They are not disturbed by Levin's right to express his views, but by his reductionist method. Now, it might have been enlightening to hear Cheney's reasoned response to the letter-writers' ideas. But rather than making an even-handed, Arnoldian effort to consider their position and the sizeable body of scholarship substantiating it, Cheney crudely twists the letter into an example of the reductionism its writers are criticizing in Levin.

Another recent example of Cheney's irresponsibility is her misrepresentation of the draft for national standards in American and world history, grades 5-12, originally commissioned by Cheney herself as N.E.H. chair. In 1995, the U.S. Senate unanimously rejected the draft, produced by a distinguished panel of educators, after conservatives attacked it as an outrageous example of leftist political correctness.

In her book—as in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, in testimony before the House Interior Appropriations Committee, and in a *New York Times* letter to the editor—Cheney argued that, "The single most irresponsible part of the National Standards" is that "no mention is made of why American leaders decided to drop atomic bombs, about the casualties that they believed would have been suffered in an invasion of Japan, for example."

In fact, a suggested essay question on page 202 of the American history standards reads, "Construct a sound argument, debate, or position paper on the appropriateness of Truman's decision considering various factors such as: the Allied military position in the Pacific in 1945; estimated military and civilian casualties in a prolonged war …."

Among the ironies in the attacks on the history standards by Cheney and her kangaroo "Committee to Review National Standards" at the American Enterprise Institute is that the standards call for a level of factual knowledge, critical thinking, and writing ability that far exceeds the present norm in American secondary schools—in exactly the manner called for by Cheney in an excellent report she issued at N.E.H. titled "National Tests: What Other Countries Expect Their Students to Know."

Conservatives dropped their earlier support for national standards the minute Bill Clinton's election presented the possibility of standards with a liberal rather than conservative slant. Their savaging of the standards will probably help maintain the mediocrity and blandness of most of America's high schools.

Unfortunately, many Left educators have also opposed national standards out of excessive fear that

The Left Strikes Back

Recent books defending the cultural Left include *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics,* by Michael Bérubé (Verso); *Higher Education Under Fire*, edited by Bérubé and Cary Nelson (Routledge); *PC Wars,* edited by Jeffrey Williams (Routledge); *After Political Correctness: The Humanities and Society in the 1990s*, edited by Christopher Newfield and Ron Strickland (Westview); *Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of Academe*, by Lawrence C. Soley (South End); and *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, by Todd Gitlin (Metropolitan)—the latter being in a class by itself for Gitlin's characteristic richness of historical, political, and cultural analysis. Sara Diamond, who has written several articles (including one in the Newfield-Strickland collection) with some of the most effective refutations of conservative attacks on the cultural Left, unfortunately has included little of this material in her otherwise commendable *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (Guilford).

While it is not about the culture wars, *A Call to Character: A Family Treasury of Stories, Poems, Plays, Proverbs, and Fables to Guide the Development of Values for You and Your Children*, edited and with introductions by Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl (HarperCollins), provides a liberal, multicultural counterpart to William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*.

they would necessarily discriminate against minority cultures. But the history standards present an admirably multicultural model—the main reason conservatives trashed them. Here is yet another example of the way the reciprocal follies of the Right and Left impede clear consideration of our real cultural problems.

John Wilson's *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education* (Duke University Press) might be seen as the antidote to Cheney's book. Wilson is a graduate student at the University of Chicago and editor of the Teachers for a Democratic Culture newsletter, where more fully documented studies have appeared on several of the topics he devotes chapters to here: canon revision, women's studies, multiculturalism, affirmative action, and hate speech on campus.

Among several noteworthy books making counterstatements to the cultural Right in the past year or so, Wilson's presents the most systematic debunking of erroneous allegations by Cheney and other conservatives against cultural leftists, on a case-by-case basis. (See box, p. 25.) Wilson's clear writing, reasoning, and empirical support contrast refreshingly to many poststructuralist leftists, whose francophilic jargon and babbling about the indeterminacy of texts and evidence disable them from doing the kind of solid fact-finding needed to show that the conservatives are the nihilists, cynically twisting the truth to their political aims.

The position of Wilson and others of us in Teachers for a Democratic Culture is that there *are* many obnoxiously PC academic leftists who need to be strongly criticized, among other reasons because they make the entire Left a punching bag for the conservative attack machine. (And it must be said that there is far more criticism of one's own side in all of the recent books defending the Left than in any of the conservatives' books.) Wilson's most important contribution is his extensive evidence that for every actual or fabricated case of leftist political correctness, there is at least one case of conservative political correctness discriminating against leftists. It's an all-too-familiar story to the hundreds of Left teachers who have lost or failed to get jobs over the past thirty years because of their politics, but one ignored by the mainstream press, which has given so much space to charges of political correctness on the Left.

Yet in spite of his dutiful efforts to document real abuses by the left, Wilson strains credibility with his thesis that "there is simply no evidence that a politically correct crusade of students and administrators is trying to silence conservative views." A more judicious view, like that of Todd Gitlin in his recent book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, considers the humanities a contested site between the Left and Right, where leftists maintain one of their last outposts of relative strength within a massive nationwide and worldwide shift to the Right, a situation predictably leading to compensatory abuses of power by leftists within their insular realm.

Still, Wilson is a far more scrupulous researcher than Cheney or most of her conservative colleagues, and it would be nice to see them forced onto the defensive for a change against his charges of their misconduct. I suspect, however, that they will simply try to ignore his book, and that it will receive only a fraction of the attention in the media that Cheney's does. Nearly all the books defending the academic Left have been written by academics themselves rather than journalistic or political outsiders. Thus, they have been ghettoized in university presses or leftish publishers like Routledge and South End, which rarely get reviews or news coverage in the mainstream press.

It is probably unrealistic to hope for ultimate *glasnost* in the American culture wars. But as a proposal for at least partial détente, I hereby appeal to the conscience of Cheney and her allies to begin acting consistently with your own stated principles.

Back up your defenses of Judeo-Christian moral values by practicing some charity and humility: Admit faults on your own side and valid points on the other. Vow to be more scrupulous in verifying stories about leftist abuses, in applying Arnoldian impartiality about possible biases on the part of conservatives circulating such stories, and in conceding that in some cases, such as those documented by Wilson, conservatives also discriminate against leftists. Acknowledge that there are many of us cultural leftists who do criticize authenticated cases of political correctness and other follies in some sectors of the Left. Show willingness to engage in good-faith dialogue with those of us who express similar willingness to seek common ground with you in addressing the problems of American society, culture, and education. Affirm that if there is any one theme dominating the literary classics of Western civilization you champion, it is Socratic skepticism toward the kind of sanctimonious certitude you, your Republican allies in Congress, and the Christian Right are seeking to impose on this country. In short, abandon the hubris of believing that your side is uniquely endowed with the capacity for "telling the truth" and admit that, in Albert Camus's words, "There is a solidarity of all men in error and aberration." □

The staff of TIKKUN would like to wish our readers a very happy Passover.

Birth of a Nation, End of a Dream?

Mark LeVine

I first went to the Western Wall in Jerusalem soon after my father's death. It was too late to pray for his recovery. Instead, I placed a piece of paper inscribed with the words "peace between Jews and Arabs" between the stones—although I had no idea who I was entreating to grant such a seemingly inconceivable request.

In all the times I'd been back to Israel since that day, I never thought to place another petition in the Wall. In the meantime, the yearning for peace remained suspended—not defeated, yet no closer to realization. But standing at the Wall once again on the night of the Palestinian elections in January, I sensed that despite the continuing problems, peace might really be at hand.

Nevertheless, the reality of the peace taking shape left me less than euphoric. I puzzled over the emerging paradox within Zionism and contemporary Judaism: While the Palestinian nation is being born, the Zionist dream might be playing itself out, as the increasing materialism within Israeli society moves further and further from the ethos that motivated the Zionist enterprise during its foundational period.

The paradox was evident even on the flight to Israel. I talked with Hassan, an Israeli Arab who was moving back to Haifa after almost twenty years of living in the United States. Our intermittent conversation partner was a right-wing expatriate Israeli returning for a brief business trip. As Hassan talked about how the Palestinian elections were affecting his identity, the Israeli Jew interrupted: "In every other country in history, the stronger group wins. Yet now in Israel, I can't walk the streets of my own country and feel safe. The elections mean the end of Zionism."

From a progressive Zionist/Jewish perspective, it was easy to dismiss his xenophobic response. Yet his feeling that the creation of Palestine somehow signified the end of Zionism is a thought that has troubled me for some time. The academic debates about whether Israel has entered a "post"-Zionist phase have remained peripheral to the lived reality of most Israelis, because they have mainly dealt with Zionist history. The far more important post-Zionist debate about the future—about how Zionism and Israeli nationalism can be constructed in a post-Occupation era—has yet to begin in earnest.



MARK LEVINE

Arriving in Jerusalem, I went to my usual home away from home, the Jerusalem Hotel in East Jerusalem. My friend Ghidian was playing 'oud, or lute, as he did every Saturday night, and I wanted to connect with him and see if we—I play guitar—could make good on our promise made during my last trip to arrange some shows together this time around. I was in luck: He introduced me to a well-known expatriate Israeli folk singer/peace activist, Sarah Alexander, and a French journalist named Jean Dupre, both of whom became my constant companions during the next two weeks.

As the three of us traveled through what Israelis are grudgingly beginning to call "Palestine," it became increasingly clear how varied and complex were the feelings of Palestinians toward the election process. Certainly, most Palestinians were aware of the problems of the Oslo agreements, the election process, and Arafat himself. In fact, there was a sense among many that the political process was a sham; as one friend put it: "The elections are really more for foreigners; they're more excited than most of us, and why not? They paid for it."

Yet overshadowing the sober understanding of the limits of the electoral process was the palpable enthusiasm

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for its implications, especially among the younger generation. In Gaza, a whole village chipped in to buy a candidate a suit, while at night in East Jerusalem I ran into groups of teenagers surreptitiously plastering their candidate's posters on the city's walls. In Nablus, the family and supporters of one of the leading candidates in the Territories, 'Emad Ya'ish, took turns speaking to Jean and me not only of the end of the Occupation, which the elections represented, but, more interesting, of reconciliation with Israelis, on both a national and personal level. Hearing this in Nablus, one of the centers of hard-line resistance during the Intifada, was a reassuring counterpoint to the violence that had erupted there only days before.

During our nightly dinner/interview/gossip/jam sessions at the Jerusalem Hotel, which by election week had become the lively center of Jerusalem's night life, Sarah and a few Palestinians to whom we'd been talking during dinner were singing Arabic songs. After about an hour, the Palestinian who was the most vociferous opponent of the Oslo peace process and the elections turned to Sarah and said in Hebrew, "Sing in Hebrew, why not?" This put a huge smile on Sarah's face, one that didn't return until election night, when we got even louder applause from the mostly Arab audience after singing Hebrew peace songs.

While spending election morning at the East Jerusalem Post Office, I witnessed firsthand how "news" gets created. Contrary to most reports emanating from Salah El-Din Street, the Israeli soldiers didn't seem to intimidate the Palestinians to the extent that the media portrayed. Instead, most—especially the young campaign workers milling around outside—spoke of their happiness about the election, the importance of participating in the process with their fellow citizens. More than a few voters brought their children with them.

Yet it's understandable why everyone from the European Community monitors to Peace Now all concurred with Jimmy Carter's assessment that the large police presence was intended to intimidate East Jerusalem residents and keep turnout low. I found the historical resonance striking. Only two days earlier I had uncovered in the State Archives (where I was researching Arab-Jewish relations in pre-state Palestine) a confidential memo written in 1921 by then-Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill in which he admitted that, "in the interests of Zionist policy, all elective institutions have been refused to the Arabs." I believe that most Palestinians were determined not to hand Israel another victory, especially in East Jerusalem. And ironically, later in the day the police presence scared off a group of right-wing Jews intent on disrupting the voting.

The mood in Palestinian-controlled towns was much more jubilant. Sarah, Jean, and I went to the local polling station, where Sarah's photographs of her playing for Feisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, and Yasir Arafat carried far more weight in getting us inside than did Jean's and my Israeli press cards. Inside, we witnessed one of those scenes you always read about: a very old man, dressed in traditional Arab attire and needing a walker to move around, approached the entrance of the precinct. Two Palestinian policemen spotted him and literally carried him arm in arm to the voting booth. After surviving Turkish, British, Jordanian, and Israeli occupation, this elderly Palestinian finally voted, bringing tears to the eyes of many who witnessed the scene.

As the sun began to set and we headed back to Jerusalem from Ramallah, Israeli Radio announced that right-wing Jewish protests would be held at the Wall after Havdalah, the concluding service of the Sabbath. The turnout, however, was much lower than expected. But as we walked out of the plaza, several young right-wing religious kids were defiantly marching and singing "Am Yisrael Chai," a nationalist song which has been appropriated by the Right. As they chanted the now-ironically hate-filled words, an older Orthodox man came up and sternly admonished them: "*Heshbon hanefesh*[the Hebrew term for self-scrutiny]. Don't you know that it's only two months since Rabin was assassinated?" Already, bumper stickers were appearing bearing the words, "Shalom Chaver II," with their chilling implications for the Right's intent toward Peres.

The night ended on a much more positive note. My friend, Eylam, whose father had died in the battle for Jerusalem in 1967, and who rarely visited the Arab part of town during the Intifada, came to have dinner and see Sarah, and Ghidian, and me play. "This was really nice," he said, as we left the hotel. "I forgot how hospitable and welcoming Arabs are. I think I'll come back again with friends." Could it be, we wondered as we sat in a West Jerusalem cafe, that the elections were helping to unify Jerusalem in a way that thirty years of exclusive Israeli sovereignty could never accomplish?

As we talked about the potentially positive impact of the elections for the collective Israeli psyche, Eylam expressed his concern that peace might precipitate a crisis in Israeli and Zionist identity, a suspicion that my trip to Hebron a few days later confirmed. The atmosphere there was much more tense than elsewhere in the territories. And the Arab residents' constant, often hostile stares at Jean and me—the only westerners anywhere in sight—brought home the difference between the "liberated" areas and those still under Israeli rule. Moreover, the sight of the settlers living right in the middle of the town, unable to segregate themselves completely and requiring a massive army presence to protect them, underscores the importance of achieving

some kind of solution whereby the two communities could live in peace—not just separately, but together.

As we walked—quickly—through the *suk*, which had finally come back to life after standing empty throughout much of the Intifada, I thought about a letter from a Zionist official to the High Commissioner of Palestine, dated 1923, that I had found in the archives the previous day. It offered this prognosis: "If left alone the Jews can live at peace with the Arabs, their aims and ideals being identical." This was standard propaganda back then, never taken seriously by most Zionists, but now Israelis were going to have to convince the Palestinians in Hebron of just these intentions if they hoped to remain there on peaceful terms. But the words of the settlers, as much as the faces of the Palestinians, revealed how difficult that will be. Their obsessive Holocaust frame of reference and distorted appropriation of Zionist/Israeli history have convinced the settlers that they both must—and only have to—sit and wait, and ultimately Hebron and all of the Land of Israel will be theirs.

Yet the remarks of the Hebron settlers also revealed a great deal about the larger crisis confronting Zionism today. For them, as one of their spokesmen told me, "it is clear that Zionism has lost its religious context and relationship to the Holy Land, and once that's gone, when Peres openly declares that 'Zionism is economy,' then Zionism is no longer in touch with the land, settlement, sacrifice, and *aliyah*. When that happens, then Zionism has died." A taxi driver put it more succinctly as we joked about how cell-phones have replaced rifles as the symbol of Israeli machismo: "Look at what Zionism has become: It's all about money."

This pervasive anxiety over the materialistic nature of Zionism today reminded me of the anxiety felt by many Americans. And I would argue, just as in America, Israel too needs a politics of meaning if it is going to stand against the tide of economic and cultural globalization, Americanization, and consumerism sweeping through the country. Israelis need a vision of expanded possibility, that can give people a future, not just a past.

And here, perhaps, Israelis can learn from Palestinians. For when I asked people how they would resist being pulled into the market-driven, materialistic, and consumerist ethos that plagues American—and, increasingly, Israeli—society, many Palestinians, even those who weren't especially religious, replied that "Islam" will prevent that from happening. As one twenty-something Palestinian noted, as he described why he had moved back home from the States, "America is consumed with making money and working. Life here is better"—despite the fact that compared with the United States and Israel, Palestine is and will for the foreseeable future remain a very poor country.

Too many of us in the West dismiss the possibility of a positive role for Islam, the religion of most Palestinians. But in fact, as a result of their experiences under Western colonialism, Islamic thinkers have long been offering powerful analyses of the destructive effects of an unfettered market on the fabric of society. But unlike traditional socialist thinkers, these Islamic critics have recognized the need for society to be grounded in psychological and spiritual, as much as in economic, relationships. Within a pluralistic, democratic society, these critiques have the potential to serve as the basis for strategies to counteract a materialistic and overly individualistic ethos. Given the demise of socialist Zionism as a viable alternative to the market, all Israelis—secular and religious—would be well-advised to rediscover the equally powerful critique of modern consumer society at the heart of Judaism, its roots extending back to the prophets, if they hope to preserve a Zionist identity. Such a post-Zionist sensibility could also serve as a much-needed bridge between the increasingly estranged secular and religious communities.

The Palestinian election is but the most dramatic example of the many ways in which the peace process is transforming both Palestinian and Israeli identities. During the past hundred years of conflict, Palestinians had been forced to delineate their identity in terms of their struggles—first against Zionism, then against Jordanian and Israeli occupations. Now at least, there is a chance to dispel the feeling of powerlessness that for so long constricted Palestinian identity. Their voices will no longer be muffled; the wounds of statelessness, as the poet Mahmud Darwish once wrote, will no longer be on display every time they travel—they will finally have their own passports. As Leo Pinsker hoped 100 years ago for Europe's Jews, the Palestinians will no longer be a "ghost people."

But to have a passport, never mind a voice, you still need a state, and thus the trappings of statehood—borders, sovereignty—are viewed as central by almost all Palestinians. Statehood means that Israel can no longer confiscate their land, demolish their houses, and uproot their trees. It means, potentially, that they can choose their identity, both individually and communally. Yet the vastly more powerful Israeli state has been unable to serve—as David Ben-Gurion and the other leaders of the founding generation intended—as the creator, protector, and ultimate arbiter of a social space in which Israelis could choose their own, humanistic Zionist identity. The lesson for the Palestinians is clear: Only a strong and spiritually sensitive civil society can check the atomizing forces that billions of dollars in foreign investment will soon be unleashing in their midst.

On the Israeli side, the crisis of identity is epitomized by

(Continued on p. 79)

FICTION

Brezhnev's Daughter

Marilyn S. Oser



Brezhnev's daughter is soggy with grief and cheap wine. She sits in a heavy wooden kitchen chair, folded arms and stolid breasts resting their weight against the cracked, yellowing surface of a Formica table. Smeared with drink, bleared with pain, her face crumples into a beggarly smile. The maudlin tears she squeezed out moments ago are still wet on her cheeks.

Once, she says, she was beautiful and much sought after, always at the center of a circle of handsome men. Now, she has lost her teeth, and no one comes. I think it is metaphor until, simpering, she opens her lips upon wasted gums.

Anastasia, bright princess, fun-loving darling girl in your white muslin sailor dress, would you have ended the same?

Brezhnev's daughter fell in love with a circus performer, a gypsy in spangled tights who flirted each afternoon with death and disfigurement, dancing his swarthy, glittering way across the high wire, native son of an ad hoc country thrown together overnight with canvas and rope and a little cheap magic. The marriage lasted a week. The wanting is there in her eyes still, after forty years.

He hailed from the south, this dubious charmer—like my grandmother, though she had left Odessa probably years before the gypsy lover was ever born.

A young beauty in that seaside city, my grandmother barely notices the fuss they're making over the ship, the Potemkin. It is 1905 and she has a suitor, a young man with a large nose in an ill-fitting suit of greasy black gabardine, twirling a silver watch on a silver chain. He shows her his silver cigarette case with its views of St. Petersburg engraved into the top, outside and in, snapping it open, snapping it shut in his nervousness. This, and the watch, are all his treasure, but in Odessa, in that fateful year, they are enough.

This strutting gawk of a fellow who was to become my grandfather, if by some stroke of luck or magic he were still alive to witness the fall of the Soviet Union, he'd wink his good eye and say, "Told you they wouldn't last, those Bolsheviks." Or so I imagine, though more than likely he'd have sat in his aging, overstuffed chair in the corner of the living room, silently reading his paper, my grandmother, vain and foolish and still beautiful, still trying to vamp him while he went on reading his paper, paying no attention.

They had prospered in Russia, in the village near Kiev where my mother, their daughter, was born. I asked him once if he ever mourned their old life. "We are better off in America," he said tightly, turning away.

But I, a young child at mid-century, believed otherwise. I believed they had been Russian aristocrats. They told me they had been wealthy, the wealthiest in the village; that they had had to flee in the middle of the night, of a sudden, hugger-mugger, a hay wagon to Poland, the family silver buried "under darkness" in the yard. Identical stories were told by emigres in Paris, and for a long time I missed the key point that Jews were never of the Russian nobility.

Still, eighty officers had slept on the floor of my grandmother's dining room. Of which army, and whether they were occupying her house or had been invited there, I never knew. It was a big dining room to sleep eighty officers, that was the point. Officers were fat, not skinny like enlisted men. There had been a movie theatre, too, which I had somehow pictured in the basement, assuming the house had a basement and that the dining room floor wasn't a dirt floor—but who knows whether the theater was for commercial purposes or for private use, whether they sold tickets or invited the neighbors in for a viewing? What, I wonder now,

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ART BY STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

would they have been showing in the Ukraine in 1917?

The Russian Revolution was made for T.V. the year I turned sixteen. I watched it unfold, sitting with my grandmother in our den in Great Neck. Just me and this container of history in a place and time that makes the other seem impossible. She remembers it, yes. She nods, oh yes. What was it like, being there? She points to the T.V. "Just like they say there."

"Not in St. Petersburg. In your village. Did you know what was happening?"

She nods. "I was heavy." She rounds her arms in front of her abdomen. "With Misha."

"But what did you want to *happen*?"

"I only wanted my children should be safe."

We watch the commercials together. When the show comes back, announced with the dark outline of a horseman against a lurid background of flame, she tells me, "They were shelling us."

"Who were?"

"The Cossacks."

"The Cossacks were shelling your village?"

She nods.

"I thought the Cossacks rode horses and burned and pillaged and raped. I didn't think they had cannon."

"I guess you know better," she says. I try to find a trace of irony in her voice.

"No—please, go on. Tell me about the shelling."

"It was when Misha came. The shells were falling, we had to run away. There was barely time to cut the cord."

"Wait a minute," I say. "Didn't I see that in *Gone With the Wind*?"

"I suppose so," she says.

In Miami Beach one winter, my grandmother was taken ill, and who should turn up to nurse her but the selfsame nurse who tended my grandfather in Russia when he put out his eye to avoid the Army. Of all those Jewish men, practical pacifists, who gave up small pieces of themselves to save the rest of themselves from certain death, my grandfather seemed the strangest. I could manage to get my mind around the loss of a finger or a toe, but giving up an eye, even if only semi-voluntarily, placed this man in an area of existence too terrible to contemplate. Even when he teased me, smiling kindly, a spasm of dread constricted the pleasure of my heart, and I could never be sure where his teasing began or let off.

It was shortly before he died that Kruschev created a ruckus at the U.N. by pounding a table with his shoe. "Can you imagine such a clown being your leader?" I say. "I feel sorry for the Russians."

"People get what they deserve," he replies.

"The man looks like a warthog."

"A warthog is better than they deserve. Even Kerensky says so."

"Who's Kerensky?" Among all the vast profusion of uncles and cousins whose foreign names have American nicknames, I'm certain I've never met any Kerensky.

"Who's Kerensky?" he mocks, and it comes to me.

"THE Kerensky? You know *the* Kerensky?"

"Sure. He lives over on West End Avenue."

"You know Kerensky and you never told me?"

"Go over there and ring his doorbell. You'll know him, too."

"Are you kidding me?"

"Why should I kid you? A junior four he lives in. A couple of blocks from the IRT. I don't remember the floor, but you could ask the doorman."

"This is Alexander Kerensky we're talking about, right? The guy in the history books? The same one I did a report on in sixth grade."

He shrugs and rattles his newspaper. The interview is over.

"Wait a minute!" I yell. "How could he be living in a junior four on West End Avenue?"

My grandfather smiles. "Everybody has to live *some*where, *maidele*," he says.

That same winter the nurse came, my mother caught him on Lincoln Road walking hand in hand with a blonde. "Pop, what are you doing?" she said.

"I'm in love with this woman," he said.

"While Mom is sick in bed this is what you do?"

"It was an arranged marriage. We didn't know any better then."

"You can't go back on it now, Pop. You have a wife, children, a grandchild on the way."

She won the argument, of course, and he never saw the woman again. But years later, shortly before her own death, when she told me this story, she wept tears of remorse. "What would it have hurt for him to have a little happiness? I should never have let on that I saw him."

"Why did you?"

"It was the times," she explained. "We didn't know any better then."

Brezhnev's daughter sits at her ugly kitchen table, mourning her pearls and circuses. Once her admirers would have filled these rooms, overflowed into the hallway and down the stairs. Now no one will talk to her except the cameramen who have come to document the spent vodka bottles in her trash can. She is not too proud to make eyes at them, while all over Mother Russia the daughters of Gorbachev and Yeltsin sit at their kitchen tables in St. Petersburg, in Kazan, in Vladivostok: their mouths are young, their teeth are pearls, their suitors are legion. □

Bruce Springsteen, Tom Joad, and the Politics of Meaning

Michael J. Bader

Bruce Springsteen sings about connection. His songs tell stories about how people struggle to rise above the social and economic forces that trap them. They do so by reaching out to each other in love, friendship, and hope and by putting relationships above the dangerous and deadening pull of poverty, bureaucracy, and class or racial hatred. A rock and roll musician who has sold more than 10 million records, Springsteen brings to his writing and performing a sensibility that is unique in contemporary popular music—a blend of compassionate, class-conscious liberalism with an intuitive appreciation for the centrality of community and love in the struggle to become more fully human.

Springsteen's personal and creative response to the growing economic and psychological despair in our society points toward a politics of meaning. It is not a politics that he articulates explicitly, but conveys through the spirit of his music and songwriting. These "politics" are at once squarely in the populist tradition of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger and yet are also something more. For instance, in a song called "Galveston Bay," from his most recent album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad,* a redneck Vietnam veteran, Billy, vows to terrorize and kill a Vietnamese immigrant, Le, for competing with local fishermen and for taking what belongs to white "Americans." As we meet the two antagonists, Springsteen subtly emphasizes their similarities—former allies, loving fathers, industrious fisherman. At the last moment, Billy stays his hand, does not attack Le, and rejects racist terrorism. In the end we are led to see, as Billy himself does, that their commonality outweighs their "natural" antagonisms and competition.

In "On the Line," an Immigration and Naturalization Service marshall, Carl, spends his days in the quixotic and irrational task of chasing, apprehending, and repatriating Mexicans attempting illegally to cross the border into the United States. Carl is struck by the absurdity of his role in a revolving door driven by economic despair, but is only moved to resist it when he falls in love with a Mexican woman, Louisa, who asks for his help in getting her family across the very border that Carl is hired to protect. Torn between love and his loyalty to the system, Carl risks his life and job and chooses love. He smuggles Louisa across, only to have her leave him and disappear. The song ends with Carl quitting his job and looking for his lost love.

Other songs on *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, include stories about a homeless man's friendship with a mentor, a man who falls in love and foolishly robs a bank with his lover, and an ex-con torn between his new and old life. These songs are often tragic. They do not chronicle grand acts of political protest; many recount morally ambiguous love stories, sometimes with unhappy endings, and rarely offer explicitly "political" analyses. Springsteen tells stories about real people whose lives contain nuance and struggle, terrible damage and small acts of resistance, repair, and a longing for something more. His characters are not one-dimensional victims; they're not the innocent "oppressed." They make bad choices, take risks, resort to safe and familiar patterns, and reflect on it all.

Like all of us, the people who inhabit Springsteen's songs also secretly blame themselves for their status in life, even while maintaining a sharp awareness of the exploitative nature of the system. In "Youngstown," for instance, Springsteen describes the oppressive effects of the steel mills in Youngstown, Ohio, on the steel workers and their environment. The narrator knows that he is "sinking down" because of the rapacious greed of the mill owners ("once I made you rich enough, rich enough to forget my name"). Still, in the end, the narrator embraces his fate as deserved ("when I die I don't want no part of heaven, I would not do heaven's work well, I pray the devil comes and takes me, to stand in the fiery furnaces of hell"). While they are not working-class heroes, Springsteen's wounded protagonists aren't merely pawns in the game: They sometimes choose love over duty, display compassion and humanity, feel guilt, and get angry at injustice.

Although Springsteen occasionally writes as a political idealist ("wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place

Michael Bader is a psychoanalyst in San Francisco and a frequent contributor to TIKKUN.

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to stand or decent job or a helpin' hand, wherever somebody's struggling to be free .... look in their eyes, Mom, and you'll see me"), more often he writes about what Kim Chernin has called the "politics of the small." (See "The Politics of the Small," TIKKUN, September/October 1993) By this she meant the everyday gestures of compassion and recognition, the resistance to selfishness, and the attempt to embody a more loving way of being in one's everyday life. In the *Ghost of Tom Joad*, Springsteen expresses and embodies this kind of politics in the highly intimate and quiet portrayals of his characters' personal and moral struggles.

In person, Springsteen speaks frequently of the importance of community, of taking care of the ones we love, of responsibility, and of the necessity of creating islands of warmth and comfort in an increasingly cold world. In a recent concert in Berkeley, Springsteen paraphrased Tom Joad, the protagonist of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, and wondered if it made sense even to speak of individual souls, that perhaps it made more sense to speak of one collective soul. His beautiful song, "Across the Border," contains a messianic vision of the future in which "we'll leave behind, my dear ... the pain and sadness we found here," a time to "drink from God's blessed waters and eat the fruit from the vine ... somewhere across the border." He doesn't show us how to get there except through the small acts of courage, of humanity, of loyalty, and of love that are sprinkled throughout this album and his concerts.

The *Ghost of Tom Joad* represents the evolution of Springsteen's interests and values from the purely personal to the politically personal. His early albums often featured songs about the pathos and exuberance of personal freedom. Individuals broke loose of childhood and social constrictions (e.g., songs like "Born to Run," "Thunder Road," "Jungle Land"), took risks in love, and faced an unknown future. His social concerns soon became evident, often appearing as grim portraits of working-class life (e.g., "The River," "Factory," "Born in the U.S.A."), and culminating in the dark depictions of violence, despair, and an almost suicidal destructiveness in his solo album, *Nebraska*. Even so, voices of redemption could be heard. On *Nebraska*, Springsteen sings of a highway patrolman who helps his brother flee the scene of a crime because "a man turns his back on his family, well he just ain't no good." Still, it was not until the appearance of *Lucky Town*, and *Human Touch* in 1992 that Springsteen began to focus primarily on the centrality of the personal meaning derived from love and relationships with others. A new father, Springsteen began to celebrate the loving and tender sides of responsibility in his songs ("If as we're walking a hand should slip free, I'll wait for you, And should I fall behind, wait for me" or, singing of the birth of his first child, he says "well now on a summer night in a dusky room, Come a little piece of the Lord's undying light, Crying like he swallowed the fiery moon, In his mother's arms it was all the beauty I could take"). His focus is not on escaping from oppressive meanings but recognizing that the meaningful relationships that one has are what provide a port in the storm ("It's a sad man, my friend, who's livin' in his own skin / And can't stand the company ... Tonight I'm layin' in your arms carvin' lucky charms / Out of these hard luck bones").

In his latest work, Springsteen has returned to narratives that feature the stark social and economic conditions that have often threatened to dehumanize and terrorize his characters. Yet he has continued his emphasis on meaning. Bruce Springsteen—and his characters—hold out hope that we can "cross the border" and find a better world. □

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Bosnia's Untenable Peace

Marla Stone



IMPACT VISUALS/DOMINIQUE BARBESINO

Stari Most, the fifteenth-century Ottoman bridge, destroyed during Serb shelling of the city of Mostar.

"Ethnic cleansing," that most deadly of contemporary euphemisms, is the perpetrator's language. In practice, it is genocide—a plan, coordinated from above, to exterminate the Muslim population of Bosnia. Looked at up close, all the attempts at obfuscation, at calling the wars in Bosnia civil wars or tribal wars, evaporates into thin air. One glimpse at the decimated villages or besieged towns reveals the wars for what they were: genocidal wars to divide Bosnia-Hercegovina between the Serbs and the Croats, leaving the Bosnian Muslims (and the possibility of multi-ethnicity) dead or, at best, in ghettos.

Yet the American-brokered peace forged in Dayton, Ohio, denies these realities, instead overseeing partition and ethnic cleansing. U.S. leaders, as Ivo Banic writes, have "abandoned the substance of an integral, multinational Bosnia." The Dayton Peace Treaty, signed in Paris on December 14, 1995, legitimizes the fruits of genocide, rewards the aggressor, and leaves the victims prisoners of their enemies. Despite the facade of a "sovereign and integral" Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina, the peace treaty establishes an independent Serb Republic, the Republika Srpska, with veto power over all decisions of the nominal central government. The Muslim/Croat Federation, which now covers 51 percent of the territory, is a fiction of U.S. negotiator Richard Holbrooke, with little or no meaningful existence or viability. Both the Republika Srpska and Herceg-Bosna (the Croat parastate in Bosnia) are allowed "special relationships" with their respective co-nationalists.

The Dayton plan thus accepts and codifies the ethnically based, forced purges of populations. And the treaty's proviso that refugees will return to homes which they left via concentration camps, rape camps, or on pain of death is about as likely as Jewish rehabitation of the Pale of Settlement.

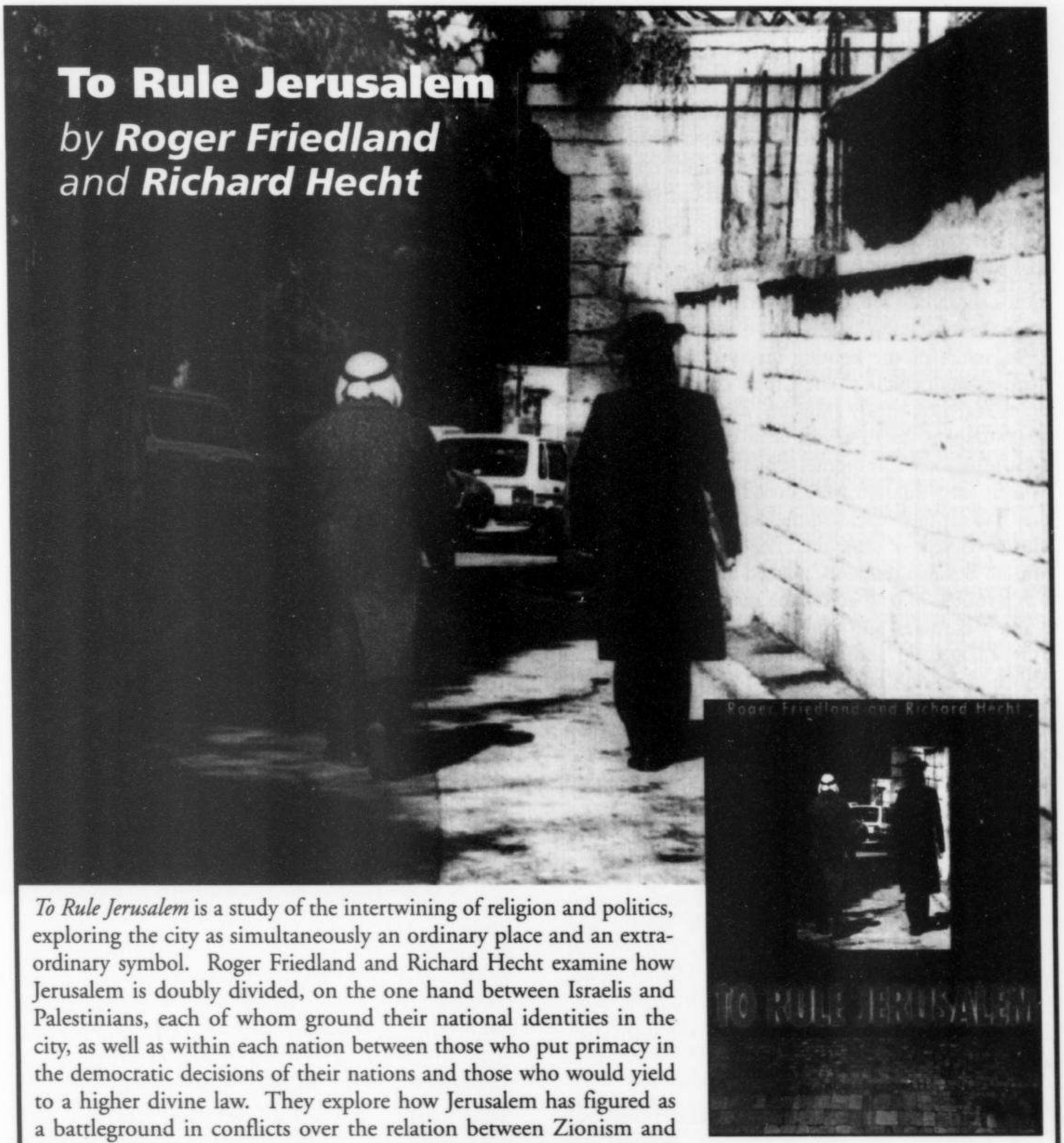
In Mostar, there was no celebrating over the signing of the Dayton Peace Treaty. Mostar remains a divided city living in an armed truce. The Dayton Peace Treaty and its provisions for reuniting the city seemed a cruel joke and a bizarre fantasy in this charred, bombed-out landscape. During my visit to that city, which began the day of the signing, I saw at best a feeling of relief on the devastated faces of Mostar's 120,000 residents. When asked, citizens on both sides of the bloody border claimed that they are neither happy nor unhappy about the peace, only glad that the killing that produced 2,500 deaths, 20,000 wounded, and 30,000 exiles among their townspeople has ended. For the Muslim Bosnians, forced by ethnic cleansing into East Mostar, it is a bitter and unjust peace that rewards the aggressors who drove them from their homes.

Mostar, in southwestern Bosnia, offers an uncompromising example of the conflict's genocidal intent. This broken city stands at the heart of the Muslim/Croat Federation, the American-brokered accommodation that theoretically represents a counterweight to the Republika Srpska, and is supposed to guarantee the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina. According to the Dayton Peace Treaty's annex on Mostar, this town—fratricidally divided through two wars and a year of siege—will be reunited, will have a single municipal government, will have freedom of movement

Marla Stone is assistant professor of history at Occidental College and a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome for the 1995/1996 academic year.

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and free elections, and will see the return of those expelled from their homes. One glance at the rubble and heavily patrolled internal border reveals the distance between Washington and Bosnia.

This city experienced a unique brutality in a war of unimaginable violence. Here "ethnic cleansing" took place, but after it stopped, the two sides remained in place to face each other. Mostar lived this war in all its visceral varieties. First, there were nine months of Serb shelling from the surrounding hills, against which the Muslim and Croat residents fought together. Then, after a six-month lull, the fratricidal bloodletting began again. In the Croat-Muslim War of May 1993 to March 1994, much of the fighting involved house-to-house, hand-to-hand combat. The Croats conducted door-to-door searches; many Muslim men (some estimate 10,000) spent up to a year in a concentration camp known as the Heliodrome, while other Muslim men, women, and children were bused in whatever clothes they had on their backs to the eastern, old-city part of Mostar. A year of siege then began, during which the Muslim Bosnian residents, pushed into the old city and a thin stretch of land across the river Neretva, suffered artillery barrages and constant shelling. The results were 2,000 dead and a murderous uprooting of the city's and region's population.

The "Boulevard," as the decimated, burned-out road that was the frontline throughout the siege is called, stands at the heart of the city as a cruel, bloody scar dividing the two sides. Ethnic cleansing has reduced this once jewel of a city to rubble. Sixty percent of the population no longer live in their original homes. The historic Ottoman and Austrian bridges, mosques, and monuments are gone, existing only as Bosnian memories of a cosmopolitan culture now lost. Where Stari Most, the fifteenth-century Ottoman bridge, once spanned the Neretva, there is now a United Nations-constructed footbridge. Myriad artillery holes in every standing wall in East Mostar testify to the uncontrollable violence of the siege.

A year and a half after the American-brokered cease-fire, the two sections of the city are defended by armed checkpoints—notwithstanding Dayton's promise of freedom of movement. Some shooting can still be heard on the Western Croatian side of the divide, as traumatized, trigger-happy soldiers wander the streets. Only in early December 1995, for the first time since May 1993, were women and children allowed to cross the city's internal border. Very few have the stomach to make the trip. Men under sixty years of age cannot cross for fear of reprisals on the Croatian side. This was a war of neighbor against neighbor, classmate against classmate; in many parts of the city one cannot take photographs, for fear that a killer might be recognized.

This is the face of the Muslim/Croat Federation upon which American diplomats have pinned so much of their hope for the success of the peace. Rather than a federation, Mostar belies a tense cold war. Here there are two separate cities, which belong to two separate states: Herceg-Bosna and Bosnia. On the Bosnian side, few intact buildings remain, few navigable streets, no telephones, and only intermittent electricity; the hospital consists of steel containers sent by Saudi Arabia. Over 22,000 people still depend upon humanitarian aid for food. In the west, on the Croatian side, where there was no siege, damage is localized to areas very close to the former frontline; bustling restaurants, cafes, shops, and signs of normal life abound.

The two sides of this "New Berlin" share almost no points of contact. There are separate currencies—in West Mostar, only the Croatian Kuna and the Deutsche Mark are valid and in East Mostar only the Bosnian Dinar and Deutsche Mark. On the Croatian side, one can find the *Guardian* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, but not the *Oslobodenje* of Sarajevo (even asking for it is risky). The city has three administrations: Bosnian, Croat, and European Union (EU). Members of the so-called federation only meet at European-Union-brokered meetings in the neutral territory of the EU headquarters, the Hotel Ero.

Today, Mostar is psychically as well as physically divided, with strikingly different moods prevailing on each side. Surprisingly, there is far more tension on the Western side. Since the cease-fire in March 1994, Croatian Mostar has been controlled by gangs who are still armed and demand protection money from shopkeepers—when this is not forthcoming, the shops are blown up. These gangs of demobilized soldiers frequently steal and hijack at gunpoint the vehicles of non-governmental organizations and the European Union. Many Croatian Bosnians appear satisfied with the division; as the mayor of West Mostar, Mijo Briakovic, articulated it, "The Muslims want brotherhood and living together; this was a Communist idea; now each side has its own schools, its own language and its own culture. It is better that way." The administration on this side of town obstructs and stalls attempts to implement reunification, as detailed in the new city constitution and the Dayton Accords.

In Bosnian Mostar, trauma, humiliation, and desire fill the air. The citizens grope for an understanding of what has happened, for an answer to why their neighbors set siege to them. At both the levels of city administration and the man on the street, they hold fast (like passengers on a sinking ship) to the dreams of multi-

ethnicity and of reuniting their city under a flag of pluralism. They insist on their Europeanness and urbanity. "We are European and cosmopolitan, and we believe that Mostar will one day be so again," said Rusmir Cisic, deputy mayor of Mostar. "My wife is Serbian and my daughter is Bosnian and she deserves a piece of sky here too," he sadly lamented. "America must know that we are European," he added wistfully.

Language also separates the two sides. For the Bosnians of Mostar, this was a war of fascist aggression against citizens willing to live peaceably together. They avoid ethnic terminology when discussing the conflict, depending instead on ideological terms such as "fascists," "nationalists," or "extremists." They refer to themselves as Bosnians or Bosniaks and are quick to point out that reports of growing Islamic fundamentalism are Serb propaganda. For Kustovic, a member of the Bosnian government of East Mostar, "It can never be a just peace because the fascists have been rewarded. The war is not over; we will fight again either politically or with guns. I can look from my office at my former home in West Mostar," he added, "but I can't go there."

The Croatians call their former neighbors simply the "Muslims," or the "Turks." One sees a surfeit of religious symbols and imagery in the West—crucifixes and rosaries adorn government offices and shops. One mixed-ethnicity family in the West posts rosaries and pictures of the Madonna in their front window as insurance against another sacking of the house. In contrast, in the East one finds only the secular national symbol—the blue and white flag with six *fleur di lis* of the Bosnian Republic.

From the smallest child to the World War II veteran, each Bosnian has a tale of survival and loss. Profound abandonment pervades each story, and again and again the dazed survivors ask, "How could this have happened to us?", "What did we do to deserve this?" There are stories of chance, such as the young man saved by his Croatian landlady, when she distracted the Croatian police who had come to carry him off to a concentration camp. He has not been able to cross over to thank her.

Strangely enough, the Bosnians continue to cling to the West—or, rather, the United States—as their saviors. A vague optimism (perhaps merely resignation) hangs in the air, if only because the shooting has stopped and water and electricity are on the return. "I dream of one day hearing mosque and church bells ring again in Mostar," mused Cisic. A deeply humiliated former university professor and partisan fighter tries to go on, thankful for international help, but shakes his head, saying, "We, not so long ago, were the ones who sent aid abroad, now we stand in line and beg for food."

Bosnian disgust with Europe is total and most Bosnians view the role of United Nations forces (UNPROFOR and the UNHCR) as little more than that of jailers. The United States has become, for many Bosnians, a last great hope. One former schoolteacher pleaded, "You Americans know the importance of multi-ethnicity. This should keep you on our side." While the mass-media coverage of the slaughter did little to stop the atrocities—so much for the notion that knowledge engenders action—it did bring the world's reaction into Bosnian living rooms. They know who supported them and who betrayed them, down to the last CNN detail. One young Bosnian, recently back from the front, explained that American rap music is today Bosnia's most popular music, because it depicts without duplicity the violence of modern life.

The wild card in this fratricidal struggle is the European Union. When the Bosnian/Croat Federation was formed in Washington in April 1993, acceptance of two years of European administration was part of the peace treaty. Since Mostar was the hot spot of the Muslim/Croat war, it was held that if some sort of federation could be pasted together here, a counterweight against the Serbs could be constructed and Bosnia might survive. The European Union arrived with a mandate to "elaborate and stabilize permanent agreements by the parties leading to a single, self-sustaining and multi-ethnic administration of the city." The administration, led by Hans Koshnick, a German, is working to reunify the city and to prevent the former frontline from becoming the border. They are launching projects to reknit the city's political and social fabric (from health projects to schools) and to preserve the city as a single legal entity. In line with this, they have established the goals of total freedom of movement, return of displaced citizens to their homes (regardless of location in the city), and democratic and free elections. Well funded, the European Union spent 60 million Deutsche Marks (DM) in 1994 and 150 million DM in 1995. Total freedom of movement was promised for January 10 and now has been postponed indefinitely due to a flare-up of violence between the warring parties. As of January 1996, only eight families had moved back to their homes in West Mostar. According to the EU report, "Mainly Croats opposed the first attempts to bring displaced people back to their homes."

The Dayton Accords call for postwar national elections within a year of the peace; in June 1996, Mostar is supposed to be the test case for democratic elections in Bosnia. Again, the gap between theory and practice is daunting; few believe elections are possible, given the lack of opposition political parties. The predominance of one-party governments means that in all likelihood the elections will simply reflect the existing nation-

alist/ethnic divisions. The parties that fought the war retain their power: Franjo Tudjman's HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) and Alija Izetbegovic's SDA (Party of Democratic Action), notwithstanding the obvious differences in character, represent the dominant choices on the respective sides. "The legal conditions for reunification and elections have been laid," noted Klaus Menscher, director of diplomatic affairs for the European Union in Mostar, "but obviously the conditions for free elections are missing. The leaders who fought the war must be replaced."

Besides the immediate problem of how to keep the sides from continuing to shoot at one another, a number of social pathologies have begun to surface. This war mobilized the entire able male population; most of Bosnia's young spent their youth in the trenches. The active fighting is over, leaving a generation of aimless young survivors. Many fear that four years of the most brutal war—with continual atrocities—have permanently crippled a generation. A portion of these youths have committed and seen horrendous acts of brutality; they have lost touch with civilian life (and reality) and want to keep fighting, looting, and raping. These traumatized veterans are a common sight in West Mostar, sitting in bars, smoking, and staring into space. Criminality, drugs, and gang violence are high among demobilized soldiers. Opportunities for work or study are scarce. "The young have to put down their arms and take up work," said Cisic of the East Mostar mayor's office. Before the war, 50,000 Mostarians were employed in industry, especially aluminum; today, the aluminum factory is a burnt-out shell.

The Croatian war criminals who authorized and committed the atrocities continue to live openly and frequently are seen drinking their cappuccinos in the headquarters of the European Union in Mostar. For the Bosnians, the presence of these men is a continual provocation and a reminder of their own precarious survival. Many Bosnians, some of whom have taken a sudden interest in the history of World War II, stress the War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague as the place to begin the healing. One Bosnian government official cited the Nuremberg Trials and the Marshall Plan as his favorite moments in recent European history. History has abandoned the Bosnians, but they mine it for hopeful fantasies against their desperation.

Given that many of the leaders indicted by the Hague remain unashamedly in visible positions of power (Radovan Karadizc and Ratko Mladic, to name only the most obvious), it seems unlikely that they will see justice. Yet, the EU is trying to use cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague as a precondition for reconstruction aid.

The current situation represents neither peace nor war. "It still all feels like a bad dream; if only I could wake up," explains Paulina, a young Croatian woman. "One night, I looked at the soldier in the abandoned building across the frontline," lamented one former Bosnian Army soldier, "and I thought, why is he here? We are under siege. There is shooting here; there is shooting at my house; I have nowhere to go. But, why is he here when he could go home? And then I looked again and realized that we had gone to school together."

President Clinton's desire for sleight of hand notwithstanding, the now "cleansed" Croatian portions of western Bosnia have no intention of federating with the Muslims and are linked to Croatia (the campaign posters of Tudjman which cover this Bosnian landscape testify to this worrisome truth).

The Dayton Treaty, with its cynical mortgaging of justice to a cessation of hostilities, is the international community's answer to the sieges of cities, and to the rape camps—atrocities against unarmed civilians which rank as crimes against humanity unseen in Europe since 1945. The treaty's overworked pages, maps, and annexes attempt to mask the utter failure of the West and the United Nations in the Balkans. The long-term price of the abandonment of Bosnia to genocide will be high.

From April 1992 on, the United States and Europe bowed and stalled in the face of hypernationalism and unilateral aggression. The anti-fascist, pluralist ideology that the United States and its post-World War II European allies claimed to embody proved a chimera when challenged: Every one of the Bosnian war dead (250,000), wounded, or exiled (approximately three million) reminds us of our own hypocrisy and the shallow roots and self-serving nature of "Western values." By abandoning Bosnians to self-immolation and now to partition and ghettoization, we have abandoned our better selves and proclaimed that our faith in the values that we claim to hold central and have written into international law are not worth the paper they are written on. The post-World War II conventions, the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the United Nations Charter—which guarantee the right of national self-defense and define crimes against humanity—fell prey to political self-interest.

More insistently than any other nation, the United States maintains its belief in and commitment to pluralism, multi-ethnicity, and human rights. We celebrated the end of the Cold War as a triumph of democratic values. Yet, when faced with defending those values, we wavered and hid. Early in the Bosnian wars, Vaclav Havel, president of the Czech Republic, spoke about the contradiction inherent in the West's claim to be a model of human rights and decency

during the Cold War and its failure of will in Bosnia. Much of American postwar identity was constructed around the notion that we had entered World War II to defeat totalitarianism and protect human and democratic rights. This self-image became our Cold War rallying cry as hatred of communism replaced that of fascism. "Never again" became the watchword not just of Jewish, but of American culture. We Americanized the Holocaust, locating a Holocaust museum at the heart of the nation's capital. Only last year, the Oscar, our highest popular-cultural award, went to *Schindler's List*, a film about the death camps. We told the world that we had a model—which we never ceased to export, whether it was wanted or not—of a diverse, pluralistic society rooted in civil liberties and civil rights.

The Dayton Accords are in keeping with the American and European approach to the Bosnian conflict: We constructed the bloodletting in Bosnia as someone else's tribal, religious, communal conflict, thus dissolving the need to locate responsibility. The West refused to choose sides, when making such a choice was the only moral step. Instead, we built our understanding of the conflict on a series of myths that the press, the American and European governments, and the United Nations embraced, despite all the evidence to the contrary. In this reading, it was a tribal/civil war; we wished a plague on all the houses and we had no interests, anyway. The Serbs, the Croats, and the Muslims were destined to massacre each other and intervention would only stall the inevitable. False narratives such as these served only to strengthen the hatemongers and turn bystanders into collaborators.

But in truth, the war was forged from the cynical manipulations of "post-communist" politicians as the political, economic, and social structures of Yugoslavia collapsed. As the historian Bernard Knox writes, "The tragedy is that it was all so unnecessary: A workable European state, composed of nations no more divided than the Scots, Irish, Welsh, and English were divided by theirs, has been destroyed forever, not by ancient hatreds but by the blind folly of its politicians." The Bosnian war was not inevitable, nor the expression of uncontrollable mass historical nationalist passions, nor an internal dispute among "warring factions." It started with unilateral aggression on the part of Bosnian Serbs supported by Serbia and the remnants of the Yugoslav National Army against the Bosnian Government (which today has twenty artillery pieces and forty tanks, compared to Bosnian Serb's 830 pieces of heavy artillery and 330 tanks). Further, the plurality of inter-ethnic marriages and of people who defined themselves as "Yugoslav" at the onset of the wars puts the lie to the "inevitability" argument.

The implications of the world's denial are both moral and material—an internationally recognized U.N. member state has been dismantled as the result of murderous aggression. Ethnic cleansing has produced 250,000 deaths, 50,000 rapes, and three million refugees. Above all, hypernationalism, xenophobia, and war upon an internal minority has been legitimized as a post-communist technique for reorganizing state and society. The international community, in both its United Nations and NATO guises, has assented to the notion of ethnically pure states and change of boundaries through force and wholesale displacement of populations.

Four years of spineless policy and a series of "peace plans" that rewarded the aggressor and partitioned the country have produced an immoral and unsustainable peace. The Bosnians will seek revenge in any way possible; the Serbs and the Croats have no incentive and little desire to follow the treaty's provisions or timetables. The Dayton Accords simultaneously acknowledge partition and call for a return of refugees: This reflects the same failure to take a clear position which has characterized the diplomatic efforts of the entire conflict. From the Vance-Owen Plan to the Contact Group proposal to the Dayton peace plan, partition in the guise of non-partition has emboldened the warmakers. This peace, which negotiates "neutrally" between perpetrator and victim of genocide alike, is an ex-post-facto green light for the authoritarian nationalist regimes in Zagreb and Belgrade. The politics of a militarist, integrationist national community have proven effective: Tudjman in Croatia and Milosevic in Belgrade continue to hold their regimes together through the mobilization of the politics of hate.

The Dayton peace treaty will only embolden extremist nationalist chauvinism. Nationalism and militarism serve the regimes in Belgrade and Zagreb with a legitimizing force which has successfully quelled dissent and uses expansionism to prevent change: in Croatia the resurrection of the symbols of its Ustashe past continue apace. In Croatian Bosnia, the only alternative to Tudjman's HDZ is an openly Ustashe party. Tudjman's response has been to cater to the fascist Right; he recently circulated photos of himself alongside Anton Pavelic, the Ustashe leader when Croatia was a Nazi puppet state. For many of the paramilitary bands operating with the Croatian Defense Forces in Bosnia, the Ustashe were and continue to be heroes and models.

The Dayton Accords have legitimized an ideology according to which people who a moment ago had been neighbors are now "dirt" that must be cleansed before the national community can be reconstructed. Serbian insistence upon driving Bosnians out of territories that

(Continued on p. 79)

The Freud Flap

Michael S. Roth

Over the last several years, the arts and humanities have been caught within a dangerous pincer movement: on the one hand, shrinking public support for scholarship and creative activity, on the other, growing public intolerance for expressions that transgress current cultural norms. The government has moved steadily from patron to policeman. As resources have diminished, artists, scholars, and museum officials have felt the pressure to offer materials presented in a way they hope will offend no one, thus preserving their chance at having a slice of a shrinking pie. In this atmosphere, even raising questions and generating uncertainty are viewed as dangerous activities.

This was the context in which I accepted an invitation to become the guest scholar-curator for a major exhibition on Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis at the Library of Congress. The Library has the richest collection of original Freud archival materials in the world, and plans to display its holdings in a context that illuminates Freud's impact on twentieth-century culture.

There is no consensus among scholars about whether this impact has been due to the intellectual merits of psychoanalysis, or to an enormous hoax that had been perpetuated by the founder and his followers. The advisory committee for the exhibit decided to use this lack of scholarly consensus as an important feature of the exhibition—to show that, from Freud's time to our own, his ideas have been subject to a variety of responses, including penetrating criticism, even while they had become part of the fabric of our cultural lives. From Bugs Bunny cartoons to contemporary feminism, from debates on epistemology to the Broadway stage, psychoanalysis is a common cultural currency. This is especially interesting because there is no agreement about whether any of its key concepts are true.

The exhibition plan envisions three sections: a brief biographical/historical introduction; "Individual Psychology" (theory and therapy); and "From Psyche to Civilization." Throughout, the exhibit emphasizes the ways in which Freud based his theories on a model of psychology and action in which conflict was a central component, and how the theories themselves have given rise to conflict among interpreters and critics. The concluding part of "From Psyche to Civilization," "Contested Legacies," examines the controversies that persist around psychoanalytic concepts and themes. Thus, the exhibition ends with questions, not endorsements or condemnations; it opens a variety of issues rather than closing them down by reaching for simple judgments about whether Freud was really a good man, or whether psychoanalysis is really a science.

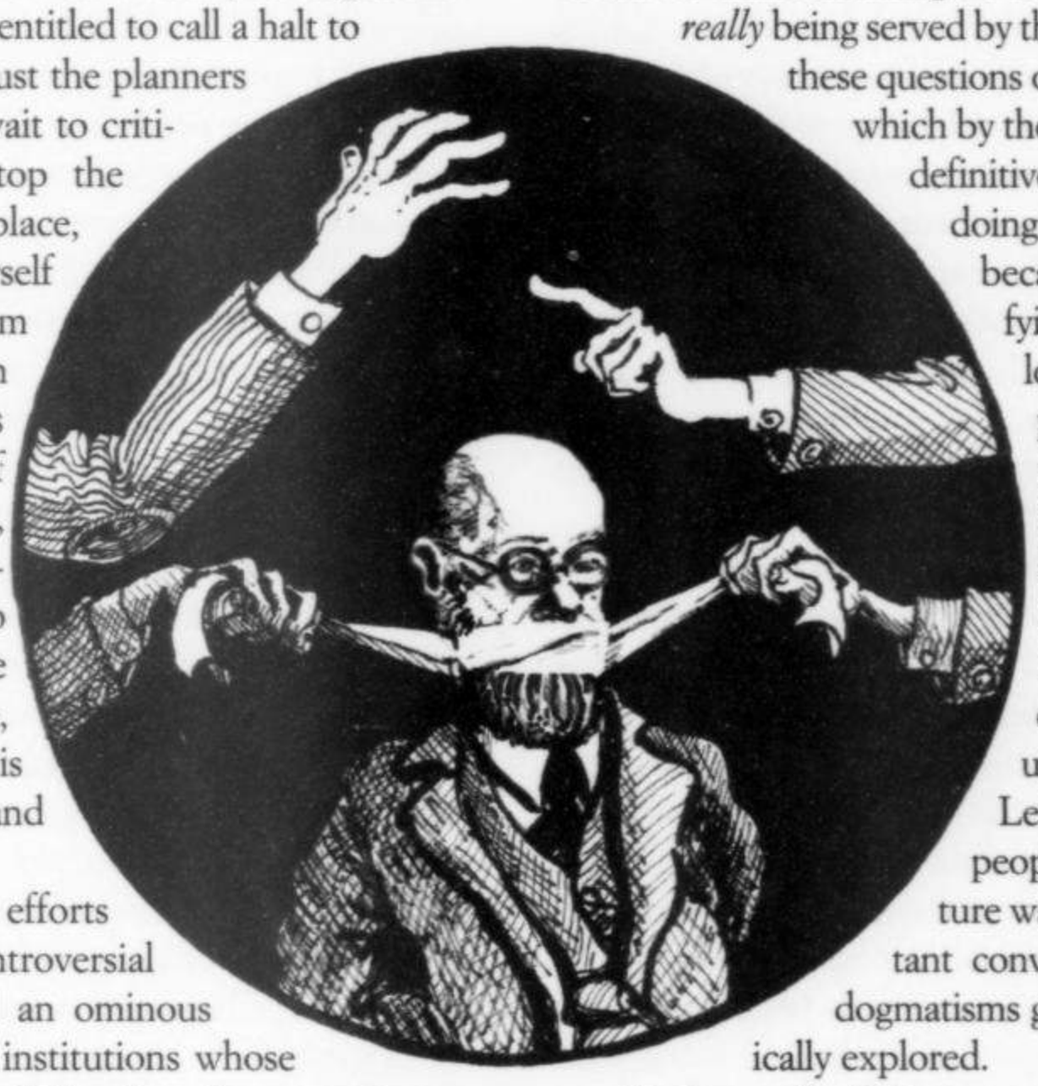
When a petition was circulated among many scholars expressing concern that the exhibit not present a one-sided, pro-psychoanalytic perspective, I wrote to all the signatories explaining the exhibit's rationale and soliciting input. The responses I received were very encouraging, with many scholars from different fields offering to contribute ideas. Unfortunately, this was less interesting to certain journalists than the notion of a battle among Freud scholars, with the Library of Congress (and me) in the middle.

The legitimate concerns expressed by the petition were soon overshadowed by the overheated rhetoric of two stars of Freud criticism, Frederick Crews and Peter Swales. "Scrap the whole exhibit," Crews said; the exhibit should be aborted, Swales insisted. Neither knew for sure, they admitted, what would be in the exhibit—how could they? But they felt justified in trying to stop it in any case, because they distrusted some of the people and institutions associated with its planning. In a letter to The *New York Times*, Crews made the nasty charge that the organizers and the writers of the catalogue were partisan and intellectually mediocre. In fact, the basis for the accusation was simply that the famously non-partisan and original Crews imagined that he would disagree with several of them. The insult was the more pathetic in the context of a writer positioning himself as the champion of scientific rationality exposing circular arguments.

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All this contention could have been channeled into a lively panel in the exhibition, but in our current cultural context, a minor attempt at censorship became a major issue. When the Library of Congress postponed the exhibit indefinitely, a press storm followed, reporting that the Library was running scared. Analogies with the Enola Gay fiasco at the Smithsonian were freely drawn. Rather than seizing this as an opportunity to draw attention to the importance of the Library's holdings and to its educative mission of opening important questions, some officials seemed to hope only that they would stop getting all this attention in the midst of the budget negotiations.

The efforts to replace criticism of exhibits, books, or performances with censorship before they see the light of day sends a very dangerous signal throughout the land. If you think that someone might paint a picture, write an article, or mount an exhibit with which you might disagree, then you should feel entitled to call a halt to that enterprise. If you distrust the planners of a cultural event, don't wait to criticize the final product; stop the event from ever taking place, and then congratulate yourself on protecting people from propaganda or corruption or falsehoods. The result is a very convenient form of self-righteous censorship, since there will be no cultural product out there to openly discuss. Deny the expression in the first place, the censors reason, since it is likely to produce debate and uncertainty.



Most important, these efforts to silence potentially controversial forms of expression send an ominous message to other cultural institutions whose missions include education. Education, they seem to suggest, should not offend, should not provoke. This is currently a popular perception among university officials anxious to show that their campuses are safe places where no one need fear that their ideas or self-conceptions will be challenged. In this climate, self-censorship runs rampant, and educational programs are reduced to a homogenized, flat collection of treasures, or feel-good stories about diverse cultural heritages. The result is an abdication by educators of their mandate: to make people think, and to give them something to think about. More often than not, thinking means a disruption of our expectations, the creation of disagreement. As Horkheimer said in 1951, we must teach students "to endure the tension with what exists," not create escape routes from this tension.

An exhibition on Freud became the occasion for this kind of censorship because it emphasized that psychoanalytic ideas developed out of and have often remained in "tension with what exists." Of course, psychoanalysis has always aroused controversy; its methods and practices *are* vulnerable to criticism on scientific, political, and moral grounds. This controversy will be at the core of the exhibit. As psychoanalysis has become less important as a vehicle for helping people conform to some notion of mental health, and more important as a tool for challenging the status quo, Freudian questioning (and not just psychoanalytic explanations) has aroused the wrath of progressives and conservatives alike. Why? Because this questioning aims to undermine confidence in the stories we tell ourselves to make meaning in our lives ("what desires are *really* being served by these stories?"), and because these questions often lead to interpretations which by their very nature can never be definitive, never be proven ("am I doing this because I love to or because I imagine I am satisfying somebody else?"). This leaves one in the difficult position of uncertainty, of tension, in relation to one's fundamental desires, and hence in relation to one's identity. Lately, we seem to have little tolerance in our culture for this kind of uncertainty, either on the Left or the Right. When people believe they are in a "culture war" rather than in an important conversation, then antagonistic dogmatisms get hardened instead of critically explored.

At the end of January, the Library of Congress decided to reaffirm its commitment to the direction of the exhibit and to plan for its opening in the fall of 1998. One can only hope that other cultural institutions will reaffirm their right, their obligation, to create programs that will challenge, question, and teach, even if they don't claim to provide answers. These programs should be subjected to rigorous criticism and thoughtful reaction. In this way, the public will have much to consider, enjoy, reject. If our institutions instead search out the routes of least resistance, aiming only to please (but not too much) and comfort, our public culture will only be the poorer for it, having little to think with and not much to think about. □

ART BY ANDREW RODMAN

The Holocaust and Two Views of Forgiveness

Berel Lang

Although thinkers from the Greeks on have written at length about the concept of justice and the rationale for punishment, they have largely ignored the topic—and moral relevance—of forgiveness. Partly in reaction to this omission, partly because of the extreme test of ethical concepts set by the Holocaust, I call attention to that conjunction, comparing two sharply different views of forgiveness that might be—*have been*—invoked in responses to the Holocaust.

This citing of the Holocaust may seem unlikely or even perverse: to look for features of forgiveness in responses to the Holocaust—an example, if ever there was one, of the unforgivable—must be strained at best. It might be more generally objected, in fact, that as "hard cases make bad law," we ought to examine ethical principles not in moral extremity but among the decisions of everyday life.

It seems to me, however, that a stronger argument can be made in the other direction, as extreme occasions bring to light ethical issues which may otherwise be less evident or not evident at all.

Let me begin the account of two views of forgiveness with someone else's story. In 1976, a small book with the innocent title of *The Sunflower* was published in the United States, in translation from the German and French. Surprisingly, its author was Simon Wiesenthal, already known as a "Nazi-hunter"—a Jewish survivor of the concentration camps who dedicated himself at the end of World War II to tracking down, exposing, and bringing to trial Nazi war criminals.

In the book, Wiesenthal recounts an episode from his wartime experience that epitomizes for him the character of the Nazi genocide against the Jews. At the time—late 1943—he was in a concentration camp in Lemberg, Poland. He one day found himself among a group of men assigned to haul boxes of medical waste from a German military hospital. A nun working as a nurse in the hospital approached him and told him to follow her. She led him into a darkened hospital room and left him standing there. He made out a heavily bandaged figure lying there on a bed; a weak voice beckoned him—and then began to tell its story.

Hans, an S.S. man, knew that he was dying. He had asked the nurse to bring to him one of the Jewish laborers, for he had on his conscience an atrocity that his unit had committed on the Russian front. After capturing a town there, he and members of the unit had herded a number of Jews into a house which was then locked (some of the Jews had been forced to carry cans of gasoline with them into the house); the soldiers then threw grenades into the house.

Tormented by this act, Hans wanted to ask forgiveness of a Jew before he died. Wiesenthal, who had been selected by chance, listened to Hans and reflected for a few moments. Then he left the hospital room in silence.

Wiesenthal's book does not end here. Indeed, the book is more about his rejection of Hans's plea for forgiveness than about Hans. Almost immediately after making his decision, Wiesenthal began to question it: He had rejected the last and so far as he could judge, the honest request of someone in great suffering—physical and spiritual.

Years later, still troubled, Wiesenthal sent a description of his encounter with Hans to some thirty writers and thinkers—theologians, members of the clergy, philosophers. He asked them what *they* would have done had they been in his place. Their responses to this question make up the second part of *The Sunflower.* Surely the question is one that every person might ask himself or herself.

I wish, however, not to review those responses but to look again at Wiesenthal's reaction; it is there that the "two views of forgiveness" and the differences between them emerge. Wiesenthal makes it clear that his refusal to grant forgiveness was not due to anger or to a desire for revenge, not even to the fact that Wiesenthal was at the time under the threat of death, with no reason to believe that he himself would survive the war. Wiesenthal emphasizes, furthermore, that he credited Hans's repentance as genuine; his was not a "deathbed conversion" or a wish for easy comfort. Nor was Wiesenthal's

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rebuff due to the character of Hans's act, to its enormity or to the genocide of which it was one small part.

The reason for Wiesenthal's reaction of silence was simpler than any of these. How could *he* forgive someone for harm that person had done to someone *else*? Isn't it only the injured person who may decide to grant or to withhold forgiveness? What weight would Wiesenthal's words have had even if he did tell Hans that he forgave him for his crime against *other* people, people who could not now speak for themselves?

Wiesenthal's reasoning on this point seems at once clear and compelling. But in moving to reflect further—stirred by Wiesenthal's own doubts—it has also struck me that a counterargument, *against* Wiesenthal's denial of Hans's request, may also be clear and plausible. And more troubling than the possibility of this alternative is the sense that there seems no systematic or conclusive way of deciding in favor of one or the other.

This is, in part, due to the fact that the second view of forgiveness, opposed to Wiesenthal's—one which he himself thinks of and asks about—confronts his own position on some of its own grounds. Should it not suffice for forgiveness that the person who does wrong fully acknowledges his responsibility and is willing to do what he can to make good on the wrong? Is it reasonable to require more than this? And if *that* is the crucial condition for being forgiven, then could not someone other than the person or group injured ascertain this and then grant forgiveness, especially when the person wronged cannot speak for himself? Cannot someone other than the person harmed serve as a judge here—perhaps even more fairly and disinterestedly than the victim?

Consider a related example which underscores the point, as when someone wronged is asked by the person responsible to forgive him—but refuses to do so. Here, Maimonides proposes, a *refusal* to grant forgiveness itself becomes a wrong—if indeed the request for forgiveness is made in good faith and about a forgivable wrong. (On Maimonides' formula, the wrongdoer repeats his plea for forgiveness three times before witnesses; after this he is forgiven even if the person wronged continues to reject his pleas. At that point, too, the latter is guilty of wrongdoing, of being "unforgiving." Here the community assumes the role of agency, granting forgiveness.)

My references to forgiveness so far have been to its human, not divine occasions; we are considering here Hans and Wiesenthal (and ourselves). Obviously, in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, God has the power to forgive anything a person or group does to other human beings, even when these are not direct wrongs done to or against God himself. With a few exceptions (e.g., when David "forgives" those of his followers who did not accompany him to the desert in II Samuel 19), explicit references to forgiveness in the Bible represent God acting in relation to humankind, not forgiveness among persons. But the capacity—and authority—for forgiveness may be quite different where only human beings are involved.

The implications of the second view of forgiveness in conflict with Wiesenthal's, however, extend beyond the one point of difference mentioned so far. It is evident that the possibility of granting forgiveness to Hans (by implication, to the Nazis generally) was for Wiesenthal tied to the fact that Hans *asked* for forgiveness: that in doing this, he admitted responsibility for wrongdoing. Without this acknowledgement, Wiesenthal would hardly have considered the possibility of forgiveness.

Is it indeed necessary that a wrong should be admitted and regretted—repented—in order to earn forgiveness? Does the person who harms someone else even have to be aware of that injury, let alone admit responsibility for it? Such questions are motivated by the first objection to Wiesenthal's view already mentioned. For if a third party can grant forgiveness on behalf of the victim, perhaps the wrongdoers may be detached still further from their acts—with forgiveness separated from any of their later actions, indeed even if the perpetrators remain unaware of the harm they have caused.

This feature of the second view attaches wrongdoing to the act, not to the agent. And if we follow this emphasis further, it evidently becomes possible to forgive the wrongdoer apart from *anything* the wrongdoer subsequently says or fails to say. And indeed certain familiar examples of forgiveness seem to follow just this pattern. We sometimes speak of forgiving people who have died and thus cannot ask for forgiveness; children are heard to say that they forgive parents for acts that the parents never recognized as wrongs, let alone apologized for; we may forgive loved ones just because of the value we attach to them (we might not even tell them that we had been injured by them).

It might be objected that often in these cases, we are responding not from moral considerations, but out of self-interest; we hope to clear our minds and feelings of anger or resentment because of their disturbing effects *on us*. But even if this is so, the forgiving is forgiving of someone else. However the act affects the person who does the forgiving, it also involves the person(s) forgiven, releasing or redeeming the wrongdoer as well.

To be sure, this expanded second view of forgiveness invites additional objections. To forgive wrongs when the person responsible for them has not acknowledged responsibility for them seems to give carte blanche to wrongdoing. If people can be forgiven without first

being held to account for their actions, what remains of *any* distinction between acts of wrong and right, evil and good? All conduct would have the same moral status—since wrongful acts can instantly and effortlessly be made good, forgiven. Ethical judgment itself seems here to be trivialized: There is little to judge—and there would be no point to judging whatever there is.

And then consider still another possibility—where forgiveness is extended to someone who does not *wish* to be forgiven, because s/he does not admit to having done something that requires it. Forgiveness itself here inflicts injury by denying someone else's freedom.

Notwithstanding these several objections, the strengths of the second view of forgiveness might yet balance or override them. Genuine regret or atonement surely ought to count—and the refusal to forgive where they are present seems to deny them due weight. What emerges here are two conceptions of forgiveness which not only differ but are incompatible: Wiesenthal's—in which forgiveness must be sought by the wrongdoer, with only the person or group harmed able to grant it; the second, in which forgiveness can be given without acknowledgment of wrongdoing or a request for forgiveness, and given by someone other than the person wronged.

These two views differ so fundamentally that I do not see any way to reconcile them or to find a third alternative: Their differences, moreover, are substantive, not semantic, certainly more than a quarrel over the meaning of "forgiveness." Do the two views and the evident conflict between them also represent two distinct ethical or religious traditions? I doubt that a clear distinction is possible even on these grounds—not because such comparisons must be invidious but because of disparate elements within the major traditions themselves that anticipate both views at once.

How, then, is one to choose between the two? Admittedly, there may be instances where the two positions overlap and thus entail the same conclusion. So, for example, to meet the requirements of the first view would assure forgiveness also on the second view (to forgive someone without acknowledgment of wrongdoing would surely require forgiveness when acknowledgment *is* made). At other times, however, there will be basic differences between the two views, where after all means of reconciliation have been exhausted, the two positions still result in disagreement about whether or not to grant forgiveness—as could well hold in Wiesenthal's refusal to forgive Hans. For if Wiesenthal was wrong in this response, it is not because Hans did not acknowledge responsibility or ask for forgiveness; he did both of these, and yet was not forgiven.

It is here that moral reasoning and religious vision reach a point where our choice between the two views outlined must be based rather on what one hopes from the future than on evidence from the past or from moral reasoning alone. At stake is the question of what kind of human relationships we envisage—beginning with our relation to ourselves: the moral character that we hope to realize in our consideration of other people.

For there is a network of other differences between the two views that extends well beyond the single issue of forgiveness: in the first (Wiesenthal's), as it stresses individual responsibility and moral discrimination—at the price of severity, of sometimes being *un*forgiving; of holding, in effect, that some acts are finally unforgivable and thus that the person who committed them must live—and die—with the responsibility for them undiminished. The second view, in contrast, emphasizes the value of clearing the moral slate, removing the sting of wrongdoing and resentment—at the cost of being too generous or easy in its requirements, perhaps of eschewing moral accountability altogether. The terms of the choice, then, seem clear—and unavoidable. At least they are unavoidable if we would maintain a place for forgiveness at all.

Important thinkers, with Nietzsche only the most emphatic among them, have represented forgiveness as harmful, even morally wrong—because it is psychologically damaging or because it hinders or skews justice. In the *Ethics,* Spinoza stated that "He who repents what he did is twice miserable"—taking this as a clue to the even greater misery of one who extends forgiveness.

Thus we still face the question of positive justification—of why forgiveness should be held a moral value at all. Forgiveness offers the possibility of renewing the relationship that the wrongdoing harmed. The value of this renewal will be obvious where there had previously been genuine friendship—but it holds also for acquaintances who had not been close friends and even, as members of a common humanity, for people not otherwise known to each other. The more basic goods to which forgiveness contributes, then, are the goods of love and friendship or, less intimately, of sociability.

In addition to such practical consequences, forgiveness also expresses a principle marking a rarely noted point of contact between ethics and religion. This is the recognition of a common finitude in both the person who asks forgiveness and the person granting it. From the perspective of the person who has harmed someone else, the acknowledgment of wrongdoing represents a confession of limitation: He or she has not only suffered finitude, they also now recognize it—an awareness that is an essential element of self-knowledge.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the person who forgives—despite the harm suffered—he or

she acknowledges that also *being* wronged does not entail an absolute judgment; that at least some wrongs are no less finite for the agent than for the victim, that at least certain wrongs can indeed be made good. The meaning or significance of wrongdoing, in other words, can be changed. The person who is at one time the victim of wrongdoing may also, at another time, be the agent or source of similar wrongs.

If, as experience constantly informs us, it is beyond our capacity never to be guilty of wrongdoing, then we also pretend to be better than we are if we forget the possibility of such failure even on occasions when we seem furthest from it; that is, when we are ourselves victims. This does not mean that forgiveness is *always* possible or always desirable; there may be times, as Simon Wiesenthal argues, when to forgive would be as wrong as it would be at other times not to forgive. What it does mean is that there is a domain that touches in important ways on human conduct and in which forgiveness remains an ideal—demonstrating by this as well the extremity and despair of acts for which forgiveness would be, quite simply, wrong.

It is possible to imagine a world from which forgiveness is absent. But that world, it seems, would have to be either more than human (one in which no wrongs are committed or suffered), or less than human—a world in which resentment and vengeance would not only have their day, but would continue to have it, day after day after day. Neither of these, as it happens, is the world we inhabit—the one because it is beyond our reach, the other because we would never wish it to be.

The issue, then, is not whether forgiveness should have a place in our life, but only what place it should have. And this confronts us with an uncomfortable but also unavoidable decision—exemplified in an extreme form as Wiesenthal faced Hans in Lemberg. What, he asks—and we ask ourselves in turn—is to be done?

That forgiveness ought to have a place in our moral universe, Wiesenthal gives no sign of doubting. Yet it is also clear that in the unavoidable choice between the two views of forgiveness, some people who would on one view have the benefit of forgiving or of being forgiven would be excluded on the other, required to live and die without it. And on Wiesenthal's judgment, this applied to Hans—not because of his wrongdoing as such, not because he was an S.S. man, certainly not because he was German, and not even, as we have seen, because Wiesenthal doubted the sincerity or depth of his remorse. It was because some acts are irretrievable by the human will alone; forgiveness cannot always intervene between or among human beings. For some acts, the agents continue to have responsibility for what they do beyond anything else they can do or wish.

By contrast, the second view of forgiveness sets no condition of acknowledging responsibility; as forgiveness may be granted by someone untouched by the initial wrongdoing, so also there seem to be no distinctions among acts to which forgiveness is extended. Nothing is humanly unforgivable in fact or in principle. And indeed, for any act, forgiveness may in the end be assumed; certainly, any request for forgiveness ensures that it will be granted.

My own inclination, between the two views, is to defend Wiesenthal's choice of silence and his rationale for that choice—thus, to deny Hans the forgiveness he sought. Not because I judge the second view to be "wrong" and Wiesenthal's "right," but because in the choice that *has* to be made in the face of these alternatives, we decide finally in terms of the future that our choice would bring with it.

The difference is large enough between the two views to make that choice clear. In imagining the life we may yet lead, we find in Wiesenthal's denial of Hans's request a future in which the actions of individuals or groups will be known beforehand to live on with them—except for those actions which by a combination of design and moral luck allow them at some point to be reversed. Forgiveness is in these terms a moral bonus—something that cannot be counted on, but that, by a combination of conscience and circumstance may, if we are both conscientious and fortunate in what we do, become part of the moral setting in which we act.

The alternative view is not rejected because it diminishes the drama of human agency (although it does this), but for a simpler and more fundamental reason. To forgive all is not only not to understand all, it is also to misunderstand something: about justice and the good, on one hand, and wrongdoing and evil, on the other. Such a blanket erasure of wrongdoing seems, in fact, to make the knowledge of good and evil irrelevant; leaving any judgment of them not only moot but arbitrary.

Most of us, I believe, can easily imagine this view of moral judgment as true. It is just that I cannot imagine it as true in the world we live in, in which the Holocaust remains now a historical fact and where genocide—intended evil, deliberate as any corporate act can be—remains for the future a constant "moral" possibility.

Rather than an *argument* against the second view of forgiveness, it is a portrait in which what first appears as a single and limited—but unavoidable—choice between two views of forgiveness reflects on the moral context as a whole. "Are we not always living the life we imagine?" Thoreau asked rhetorically—and so it is, more than at many other moments, when it is forgiveness that the moral imagination brings before us. □

Blood and Other Libels
Israel's Ethiopian Dilemma

Micha Odenheimer

On January 28, it became painfully clear that Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel—the only large (60,000 strong) group of Black African immigrants in Israel—are caught in a struggle to achieve equality, dignity, and strength within Israeli society. The violence that erupted at the demonstration that day was not just about an AIDS libel and dumped blood. It was also—perhaps mainly—about the community's desperate attempt to keep from falling headlong into the culture of poverty, which exists today on the margins of Israeli life. The outcome of this struggle will depend on whether Israel and the world Jewish community have the desire and the commitment to write a new chapter in the history of race relations.

The story of the Ethiopian Jews' return to Zion certainly seemed as if it had the potential to provide a strong contrast to the racial divides that plague countries such as the United States. Operation Solomon, in which 14,400 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel in one twenty-four-hour period in 1991, was greeted with euphoria and tears. "For the first time," one Israeli diplomat proclaimed, "Black Africans have been brought to the West not as slaves but as full and equal citizens." For a wide cross-section of Israeli society, the immigration of Ethiopian Jews evoked almost mythic associations connected to the rebirth of the Jewish State: the return of exiled tribes, the rescue of endangered communities, the unification of Jews who had been scattered to all corners of the globe. For Ethiopian Jews, too, the immigration was experienced as a homecoming. Elderly Ethiopians declared their satisfaction in the knowledge that they would die in the holy land; the motivation of young Ethiopian immigrants to defend Israel by joining elite combat units became legendary.



PHOTO BY EYAL WARSHAVSKY/AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

And yet despite the promising beginnings of the immigration, and the admiration for Ethiopian immigrants expressed by the majority of Israelis, Israeli society, as if guided by an invisible hand, is in danger of repeating patterns that would create a racial demarcation to poverty in Israel, with all the implications that this suggests. Within a few short years, a traditional, premodern community, with a strong and extended family structure and accompanying values, is sliding against its will into a culture of poverty associated with marginal groups throughout the Western world.

The Ethiopian Jews are the poorest ethnic group in Israel, including Israeli Arabs. The majority of Ethiopian immigrant families—an estimated 85 percent—live under the poverty line as defined by the Israeli government. Though Ethiopian immigrants make up only 1 percent of Israel's population, there are high concentrations of Ethiopians in distressed neighborhoods and development towns in locations all across Israel. Most disturbing, an educational crisis created by a combination of unfortunate circumstances and misguided policies has struck the youth of the Ethiopian community hard. The anger and despair that was expressed in the violent demonstration in January is felt most acutely by many of the very young people who should rightfully be the brightest hope for the community's future.

The accumulating pressure of being poor in a society increasingly obsessed with economic success would not alone have been enough to ignite the unprecedented violence that exploded at the demonstration. What fueled the near-universal bitter-

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ness among young Ethiopian immigrants, the sense of having been discriminated against because of the color of their skin, was the tolerance that the Israeli government has shown toward segregation. Over the past five years, at least half of all Ethiopian children have attended kindergarten in all-Black contexts. Millions of dollars that were budgeted expressly for the purpose of advancing Ethiopian children educationally were used by the schools to perpetuate segregated "absorption" classes, long after such classes were necessary—if they ever were.

The government of Israel turned a blind eye to this systematic segregation and misallocation of funds. Weak schools in poor neighborhoods were allowed to develop into "Ethiopian schools," where 50 percent of the student body or more were Ethiopian immigrants. According to recent revelations published in the daily newspaper *Maariv*, an estimated 1,000 Ethiopian elementary school students were sent to special education programs without any adequate form of testing—a decision that will close off any hopes of integration into the mainstream in the future. Most astonishing, social workers and absorption authorities removed virtually all Ethiopian students from community schools at the age of twelve and sent them to low-level vocational boarding schools.

The U.S. Jewish community footed the bill for this disturbing social engineering—at a cost of $5,000 per child. Programs to integrate high school-age students into academic high schools in their communities were never funded, although they could be run effectively at half the cost of the boarding-school programs. As a result, the majority of Ethiopian immigrants educated in Israel spend their teenage years in institutions that are 70 percent to 100 percent Black, institutions that offer almost no hope of providing the qualifications necessary to go on to higher education. The only native Israeli children in these schools come from a background of poverty, abuse, or neglect so severe that the welfare authorities deem it necessary to remove them from their homes. No wonder that a feeling of having been pushed to the margins of society by the color of one's skin is shared by many—perhaps a majority—of young Ethiopian Israelis.

The authority of Ethiopian immigrant parents, already challenged by the group's sudden massive exposure to 1990s Israel was broken by the government's policy of sending teenagers away from their homes starting at the age of twelve. And to compound the sense of despair in the Ethiopian community, over the past two years Youth Aliyah has begun to cut in half the number of new Ethiopian teenagers it is accepting into boarding schools, although there are no programs to integrate these teenagers into community high schools. Dozens of other Ethiopian teenagers have been expelled from Youth Aliyah villages for minor offenses, such as cigarette smoking, and have ended up on the street.

The drop-out rate for Ethiopian teenagers has increased disturbingly over the past two years, with a predictable corresponding rise in involvement in crime and drugs—phenomena virtually unknown among Jews in Ethiopia. Uri Tamiat, a young Ethiopian immigrant who runs an information center for Ethiopian youth in the new Tel Aviv bus station, says that he would classify at least half the population of Ethiopian immigrant teenagers as being in danger of dropping out of school—some of them simply because their parents don't have the money to pay the substantial costs associated with supposedly free public education in Israel.

Since the demonstration, Israeli absorption authorities have argued publicly that the State of Israel is investing "two to four times as much money in Ethiopians as in any other immigrants." But the money budgeted is often used, as in the case of the boarding schools and the segregated absorption classes, to the detriment of the immigrants. In many other cases, funds earmarked for Ethiopians are sent to municipal authorities and disappear into a black hole.

The rage expressed at the demonstration was a wake-up call for Israel and Jews the world over. What remains to be seen is whether the new awareness of the situation of Ethiopian immigrants will be translated into clear and decisive action. A comprehensive program to advance the young generation of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel must become a priority, both for Israeli policy and for American Jewish philanthropy. Headstart-type programs for preschoolers, after-school enrichment that will allow elementary school students to master the basic skills necessary to compete with native Israelis, and—most urgent—the integration of Ethiopian youth into mainstream high schools should be fully funded and implemented immediately. Programs that already exist, such as government-supported scholarships for Ethiopian students, should be expanded. Ethiopian immigrants must be given the message that it is Israel's desire and intention to bring their young generation fully into the mainstream of Israeli society

For Israel, the message of the demonstration was broader than the question of race. With peace apparently in sight, and the economy booming, the battle in Israel during the years to come will be over what kind of society we wish to become. The question of Ethiopian immigrant absorption is the first round in a struggle that Israel must not lose. It is a struggle, not for survival, but for the country's soul. □

Bringing Heaven Down to Earth

Susannah Heschel

To: President John F. Kennedy,
The White House, June 16, 1963

I look forward to privilege of being present at meeting tomorrow four p.m. Likelihood exists that Negro problem will be like the weather. Everybody talks about it but nobody does anything about it. Please demand of religious leaders personal involvement not just solemn declaration. We forfeit the right to worship God as long as we continue to humiliate Negroes. Church synagogue have failed. They must repent. Ask of religious leaders to call for national repentance and personal sacrifice. Let religious leaders donate one month's salary toward fund for Negro housing and education. I propose that you Mr. President declare state of moral emergency. A Marshall plan for aid to Negroes is becoming a necessity. The hour calls for moral grandeur and spiritual audacity.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

"Moral grandeur and spiritual audacity." I can't imagine a better phrase to describe my father's own work. Political and social problems were his major concern, and what gave his politics such strength was the religious insight he brought to bear on them. For him, politics and theology were always intertwined. After the civil rights march in Selma, he said, "I felt my legs were praying." Even as social protest was for him a religious experience, religion without indignation at political evils was also impossible: "To speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam is blasphemous," he wrote.

My father was a unique combination of a Hasidic voice of compassion and mercy, always seeing the goodness in other people, and a prophetic voice of justice, denouncing hypocrisy, self-centeredness, and indifference. My father wasn't interested in assigning blame or claiming victimhood, but as the Bible does, he showed us a vision of who we might become. His was a voice of inspiration, not argumentation, rooted in Jewish religious thought. What he once wrote of East European Jews applies to him as well: "Jewishness was not in the fruit but in the sap that stirred through the tissues of the tree. Bred in the silence of the soil, it ascended to the leaves to become eloquent in the fruit." So, too, Jewishness infused my father like the sap of a tree, and his eloquence was the fruit of his deep Jewish piety and learning.

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He came from a rebbe's family in Poland, from a Jewish civilization that was suddenly eradicated in the middle of his lifetime by the Germans, in whose universities he had studied and in whose language he had written about Jewish religious thought. Despite the horrors he experienced, the murder of his mother, sisters, friends, and relatives, the destruction of the world that had nourished him, his life continued to reflect the holy dimension he was able to evoke in his own original, unique words.

Words, he often wrote, are themselves sacred, God's own tool for creating the universe, and our tools for bringing holiness—or evil—into the world. He used to remind us that the Holocaust did not begin with the building of crematoria, and Hitler did not come to power with tanks and guns; it all began with uttering evil words, with defamation, with language and propaganda. Words create worlds, he used to tell me when I was a child, and they must be used very carefully. Some words, once having been uttered, gain eternity and can never be withdrawn. The Book of Proverbs reminds us, he wrote, that death and life are in the power of the tongue.

My father was born in Warsaw on January 11, 1907, the youngest child of Moshe Mordechai and Reizel (Perlow) Heschel. His mother and father were each descended from distinguished Hasidic rebbes, a family of nobility in the Jewish world. Nearly all of the great Hasidic leaders of Eastern Europe, those who inspired and led the pietistic revival that began in the eighteenth century, were among my father's ancestors. He cherished and revered them. I remember as a child how often he used to take small, fragile books from his shelf, Hasidic *seforim*, show them to me, read a little with me,

detach here

detach here

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל

TIKKUN

Passover Haggadah Supplement 1996

Ever since Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans, Jews have used the Seder as a time to grapple with the current realities in our world. The Haggadah functioned not primarily as a sacred text, but as an inspiration to address reality and to imagine how to change it. It is in this spirit that we encourage you to make any Seder you attend a lively and spirited occasion by attaching this Haggadah supplement to whatever text is being used. This supplement is intended to add controversy and liveliness to your Seder discussions. Let the Seder table be filled with ideas, debate, and visions of what could be—and when people tell you to be realistic, tell them that God is the force that makes it possible not to let existing reality constrain your visions, and that is an important part of what Pesach is all about. Don't allow people to turn Passover into little more than an interesting historical memory, when it is meant to be a contemporary commandment to seek liberation in this world. Only thus can we fulfill the Torah's obligation to view ourselves as though we personally had gone out of Egypt.

Kiddush

Before the Kiddush (the first blessing over the wine).

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who have kept alive the vision of freedom inherent in the Passover story. We proudly affirm that we are the descendants of slaves—the first group of slaves in recorded history ever to wage a successful rebellion against their slaveholders. Ours was the first historical national liberation struggle, and the prototype of many struggles that other nations would wage against those who oppressed them.

There are others who would have done their best to forget their humble past. Other peoples saw themselves as descendants of gods or of superhuman heroes. We are proud that our people held to a vision of itself as a slave people and has insisted on telling its story of liberation as the central founding event around which its culture was built.

Ruling classes have traditionally tried to convince their subjects that domination is inevitable, built into the very structure of the universe. The Jewish people's Torah, telling the story of our liberation struggle, has been a perpetual thorn in the side of these ruling classes. Not only was our very existence a proof that the world could be changed, but every Passover, and every Sabbath, we insisted on recounting the story and drawing the lesson: The way things are is not the way things have to be; the world can be radically altered. While ruling classes, slave owners, and bosses want no limits on how much they can exploit human labor, the Shabbat institutionalizes the first absolute limit. It is the prototypical worker's victory over the power of bosses. For twenty-four hours, the Jewish people declare that they are withdrawing from anything connected with labor—the activity of acting on and changing the material world. Getting and spending, using money, lighting fires, building, harvesting, and writing are forbidden. For twenty-four hours, we stop attempting to dominate and control the world, and instead celebrate its grandeur. Shabbat is the victory in our struggle for freedom, which allows us to rest and rejoice in this way.

The constant recounting of our quest for freedom has predisposed Jews throughout the ages to support the liberation struggles of other oppressed groups. While there have been Jews in every age who thought that they best served the interests of our people by currying favor with the powerful and allying with them, most Jews have rejected this strategy and instead have sought ways to ally themselves with the oppressed.

The tradition is to use the Seder to move from a discussion of the past to a discussion of the present—so that we too can embody the Jewish tradition of healing and repairing the world. Jews in Egypt did not only need spiritual transformation—they also needed liberation from physical bondage. Judaism has always insisted that spiritual and social transformation go together. *Tikkun,* the healing and repair and transformation that we seek, is not just a matter of politics, but of changing our inner lives, recognizing God in the world around us, in each other, and in ourselves. We need time to develop our inner spiritual lives. But *tikkun* is also about transforming the social world. And the Seder is not primarily a time for personal healing, but for world healing. So, like Jews of yore, we discuss concrete politics with all its complications and potential disagreements—recognizing that, as Jews, we cannot be satisfied with spiritual liberation that leaves the political and social inequalities of the world in place, the suffering of others unchanged. Far from being overly political, such discussions are the essence of taking Pesach seriously.

This year, as we look toward the presidential election, many Jews are troubled by the ascent to power of forces connected to the Christian Right and other reactionary forces in the United States. We are well aware that some of the movements whose agendas are now being given national prominence have close associations with anti-Semitic and racist forces in our society. The message of many of the candidates in the presidential race appeals to Americans' baser instincts: fear of immigrants, disengagement from our moral obligations in the world community, punitive attitudes toward the poor and homeless. Despite the embrace of the Right by some Jews, this political development could be very dangerous for our people.

Yet in the short run, it is not the danger to our own people but to those who are most economically and politically powerless that must concern us. The Right articulates a punitive and heartless approach to the needs of the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the unemployed, those without health care—those who need government protections from the selfishness and me-firstism of the competitive marketplace and from the willingness of corporations to exploit their workers and then discard them when they are no longer profitable. Although these right-wingers like to talk about the Bible or spiritual values, they actually

distort biblical values. They seem unaware of the biblical commands to love our neighbors, love the stranger, and actively pursue social justice. We are appalled at the racism, sexism, homophobia, and demeaning of others that accompanies some of these right-wing movements, and we cannot celebrate our own liberation without recommitting ourselves to the struggle for social justice.

We are aware, however, that one way to help the most oppressed is to try to understand and speak to the concerns of middle-income people who voted with the Right but who are not themselves deeply racist. Instead of dismissing these people as reactionary enemies, our task is to understand what draws some of these people to right-wing movements.

As market values permeate our society, every relationship is weakened, because people begin to relate to each other in terms of what they can get from each other. This instrumental attitude undermines our ability to see each other as created in the image of God. The result is a growing loneliness and mutual distrust, even in families and friendships. The ethos of selfishness suffuses our society—from the corporate executives who think it perfectly appropriate to exploit the resources of the planet for private gain to the criminals who would rob or mug us in our streets and neighborhoods.

No wonder, then, that people are deeply upset and willing to respond to those who understand that we are in the midst of an ethical and spiritual crisis. The Right responds by suggesting that its source lies in the selfishness of feminists, gays, African Americans, or immigrants—all of whom are supposedly selfishly pursuing their own needs without regard to the needs of the larger community, and counting on the liberal commitment to big-government as the way they get special benefits. We reject this kind of scapegoating. But we also sympathize with the plight of middle-income people who are rightfully resentful of the consequences of the ethos of selfishness in their own lives. Though we reject the way that their anger gets misdirected against the poor and against those who have been beneficiaries of government programs aimed at redressing past wrongs, we acknowledge that their upset cannot be dismissed. Our task is to find ways to deal with their distress, rather than allow right-wingers to misdirect that pain against others. It's not enough for us to merely give lip service to the poor—tonight we have to think about concrete strategies that can actually defend the powerless effectively. We are very aware that in today's climate, even political liberals who traditionally fought for public expenditures to provide some minimal benefits for the poor have begun to feel that their own political future requires that they accommodate not only to the dismantling of government programs but also to the undermining of the very idea that we have communal responsibility for each other.

This has been a troubling year in Israel. This Pesach we remember with sadness the murder of Prime Minister Rabin and the misuse of Jewish texts and Jewish theories to justify violence against those seeking peace. We are aware that there are sections of our holy texts that can be used to support attitudes that demean others and that provide chauvinists with apparent biblical sanction for insensitivity to the needs of non-Jews. It is all the more important that we support those who are seeking to build a Jewish renewal movement, in this country and in Israel, based on the equally valid strains of our tradition that have insisted that every human being is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with caring, respect, gentleness, and dignity. Because both chauvinists and renewalists can find adequate textual support for their respective positions, in the final analysis we are faced with a choice: Which parts of our tradition do we seek to build upon and which parts do we seek to downplay, reinterpret or reject? For those of us connected with the TIKKUN community, the choice is clear: We affirm those Jews throughout Jewish history who have heard God's voice as the voice of a compassionate and caring force that helps us overcome our tendencies toward irrational anger, distrust, or denial of the holiness of others. We do not deny that others within our tradition have heard God's voice in a different way—suffused with anger, chauvinism, and certainty that Jews are somehow better than others. We reject that vision of God.

We are proud that the State of Israel has not allowed itself to be intimidated by those who have resorted to violence to stop the process of peace, withdrawal from the occupied territories, and reconciliation with the Palestinian people. We know that Israel has difficult decisions ahead, and there will be other moments in which the peace forces face the threat of violence or intimidation. We understand in retrospect that far too many people were silent while a vociferous right-wing minority intimidated people by suggesting that they were self-hating Jews or not really loyal to their people if they supported the peace process and were willing to take risks for peace. We will not let that happen again. We commit ourselves to supporting the peace process and publicly giving aid to those in our own midst who are fighting the fight for peace and refusing to allow right-wing opponents of the process to dominate public discourse.

This year we commit ourselves to an active and conscious struggle against the alienation, fragmentation, and meaninglessness in American life. We seek change in American society, from an ethos of selfishness and cynicism to an ethos of caring and idealism. We intend to widen the circle of our caring, so that it encompasses the poor and the oppressed, not only in the United States but also in Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador, Eastern Europe, Africa, and wherever else there is human suffering. And we intend to support those forces in Israel that are committed to peace, religious and ethnic pluralism, and recognition of the spirit of God within non-Jews as well as fellow Jews.

Passover, then, is not just a celebration of our own freedom—it is a moment in which we rededicate ourselves to the struggles for peace, justice, equality, and meaningful lives for all peoples.

Bless the Vegetation of the Earth in Times of Ecological Crisis

Add to the section where we dip the parsley or greens of the earth in the salt water and say the blessing, "boray pree ha-adamah."

Our holiday of freedom is also a time to rejoice in the bountiful blessings of the Earth. The Earth pours forth its riches, allowing us and God's myriad creatures to flourish and enjoy the splendor of life. Each spring we witness the miracle of renewal as vegetation returns to the planet.

This Pesach we pause to reflect on the ways that we have failed to take adequate care of the Earth. The free market, in a relentless fury to amass profits without regard for ecological consequences, has generated tens of thousands of corporate ventures and products that have combined to do incalculable damage to the life-support systems of the planet. Willing to let corporate concerns for profit count more than the general interest, we have restricted our responses to ecological insensitivity.

Our biblical injunction to work and to exercise stewardship over the Earth has been degraded into a notion that the Earth is simply a resource for exploitation. If we construct a society in

which people are encouraged to look out for themselves and advance their own interests without regard for the consequences to others, an ecological crisis becomes almost inevitable.

As Jews, however, we recognize that our own fate is closely connected to the fate of others. The peasant in Brazil who has no other way to make a living but to cut down the rain forest, the Japanese fisherman who has no way to live but to deplete the sea, or the auto manufacturer who uses political clout to block funds for mass transit or for stricter environmental policies—all are acting rationally, given the logic of the competitive marketplace. Nevertheless, their actions have dire consequences for the rest of us. Our task is not to condemn these people, but to construct an economic and social system in which people no longer have to choose between their own best interests and the best interests of the environment. This is not a question solely of learning as individuals to be more ecologically aware—though this is also important—but also of transforming the social system that makes it possible for some people to profit on activities that destroy or endanger our planet.

We approach the Earth not only as our sustainer, vital to our survival, but also as a sacred place, worthy of our respect and awe. The Bible teaches us that the whole Earth is full of God's glory—that every part is alive, holy, and miraculous. Today, as we rededicate ourselves to saving the Earth from the ecological damage that has been done, we also rejoice in the Earth and thank God for its beauty and wonder.

Blessed are you, God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the Earth.

Drops from Our Cup of Joy

Before reciting the Ten Plagues.

It is traditional to spill a drop of wine from our cups as we recite each plague. Our cup of rejoicing cannot be full if our enemies are suffering. The Talmud recounts that when the heavenly angels sang songs of praise to God as the Egyptians were drowning in the Sea of Reeds, God reprimanded them for celebrating the suffering of his children the Egyptians.

Our people did not return to its ancient homeland with the intention of displacing or oppressing another people. The historical responsibility for the tragedy is two-sided; when we were refugees fleeing from the oppression of Christian Europe, the Palestinian leadership did all it could to block our return and refused to consider sharing the land. When the U.N. offered a two-state solution in 1947, Israel accepted and the Palestinians refused. Yet most Palestinians who fled were not involved in these decisions; they were peasant farmers with little knowledge of or involvement in the affairs that would eventually lead to displacement from their homes.

We are hopeful that Israel and the Palestinians will speed the pace of peacemaking and reconciliation, and remain proud of the courageous steps Israel has already taken. But we nevertheless cannot leave our cup of joy full as long as a million Palestinians live in refugee camps or under Israel military rule. Yet we also dip drops from our cup in sadness for the many Israelis who have lost their lives to violent attacks by those who wish to undermine the peace accord.

We are particularly saddened by the continued economic oppression and spiritual suffering of African Americans, and by the assault on the poor among them by a right-wing Congress. For many African Americans, life deteriorates as people and corporations move from our inner cities, leaving them without a tax-base or employment possibilities, as social services deteriorate in the face of a mean-spirited backlash that defunds local and state governments, and as despair and meaninglessness yield drug abuse, alcoholism, and a surge in acts of violence. Escalating repression while reducing economic resources, the white power structure in Congress acts as a modern-day Pharaoh. Black Muslim demagogues and other rappers of hate manipulate the growing despair of some African Americans in racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynist directions. We are furious at the anti-Semitism—and commit ourselves to fighting it wherever it rears its ugly head. But we also identify with the pain of those who have been subjected to systematic humiliation and discrimination. Less than a century ago, it was Jews who were being blamed for having a culture that produced the sloth and ugliness of Eastern European ghetto life. Remembering our own scapegoating, we reject all attempts to blame the long history of oppression of Blacks on a "culture of poverty." Instead, even as we actively demand that Blacks repudiate and marginalize all anti-Semitic forces within their own communities, we simultaneously affirm our solidarity with them, and spill a drop of wine from our cups for the suffering and continued oppression of African Americans.

In Every Generation

After reading "vihee she'amda" (that in every generation there have been those who rose up against us, but God ultimately saved us from their hands).

Why the Jews? Why should we have been the subject of persecution for thousands of years?

Was it perhaps our exclusiveness, our separateness, our insistence on being special—or some other aspect of our internal collective pathology? No!

To counter this, we affirm our Jewishness today. We have not been the cause of our oppression. We have been a very convenient tool for various ruling classes: a separable and recognizable minority that could be used as a scapegoat, a convenient target upon which to vent their hostility.

Jews have not been the only scapegoats to be used in this way. But in Western Europe they were the primary and most consistent scapegoat.

Our target status was largely responsible for our headlong rush into assimilation once that was legally possible. The Judaism that was abandoned, full of tears and suffering, was a Judaism whose sense of joy and inner confidence had been replaced by a narrow defensiveness—itself a response to external oppression. Even Hasidism, born as a protest against the joylessness of a rigidifying Eastern European Judaism, eventually lost much of its spontaneity and its earlier creativity, increasingly reproducing the dogmatic spirit it sought to replace. It is only now, decades after one-third of our people was wiped out, that we can begin to imagine reclaiming the more joyous and life-affirming aspects of our Jewish heritage.

Yet even here we are not free of the dynamics of world oppression. In class societies, virtually everyone is enmeshed in a web of oppression, in some respects by forces outside our control, in some respects by participating and benefiting from the oppression of others. Whether as tax collectors and small tavern owners in Eastern Europe, or as shopkeepers, government

bureaucrats, social workers, and teachers interacting with people in American ghettos, Jews are sometimes perceived as representatives of the established order in their dealings with other oppressed groups. In the process, and quite unfairly, anti-Semitism is regenerated. It is understandable why we Jews would become angry at the groups who participate in these dynamics—the peasants in Eastern Europe or some African Americans in the U.S. We wish that they would understand that we too are victims, yet it's understandable why they may see us otherwise.

Similarly, when people point to the relative material prosperity of Jews compared to other ethnic groups in the United States and use this as a reason to claim that Jewish oppression is a matter of the past, they fail to understand the history of that oppression. Jews were doing well from a material standpoint in prewar Germany as well. Anti-Semitism, like sexism, cannot be reduced to an economic category—there are other unique forms of oppression besides material deprivation. Jews who sympathize with the oppression of every other group but who have little understanding or knowledge of the history of their own people may be engaged in a massive denial of reality. This denial is sometimes inspired by internalized anti-Semitism and the resulting need to convince oneself and one's non-Jewish friends that Jewishness "really isn't very important," and that it's "really just an interesting historical relic of the past."

There is no easy way out, no way for one people to make a separate peace with a world of oppressors or assimilate successfully and without moral compromise into that world. Our own liberation and our own mental health require the liberation of all, and the end of all oppression.

Halleluya

Egypt is *mitzrayim,* the strait place, the place of constraint and tightness. Tonight we seek to liberate ourselves from the ways that we keep ourselves tied up in psychological, spiritual, and intellectual knots, preventing us from being in touch with our own God-space within. Each of us is created in the image of that God, and each of us has the task of liberating ourselves from the inner Pharaohs that keep us from being in touch with the God within and the God in each other human being.

But many of us feel uncomfortable with God language, no longer sure we can believe in a God who is represented as a powerful patriarch or some judgmental, angry, or even loving parent sitting above us in Heaven and periodically choosing to interfere in human affairs. Jewish renewal today involves rejecting concepts of God that make no sense to us in order to give us space to discover the God that can be real to us. We should not make an idol of older conceptions of God, nor should we accept the idea that we are atheists if we cannot accept patriarchal or hierarchical conceptions of divinity. Our task today is to open ourselves to the awe, wonder, and radical amazement of the universe, and to the accumulated wisdom that we can discern from studying Jewish texts. In that process, we can find our own connection to God. Understanding that all language about God is necessarily misleading, we will reject language that makes little sense to us and find language that comes closer to speaking about our experience. [Pause here and share with each other some of your thinking about God.]

But our task is not to speak of God, but to speak to God. And for that, the ancient words still resonate, and so we sing and say *Hallelu-Yah,* praise to you, Yah, the breath and spirit of the universe, the force that makes possible the transformation of the world from that which is to that which ought to be, the power that liberated us from Egypt.

Pour Out Thy Wrath

After the meal, before opening the door for Elijah and before saying "Shefokh Chamatkha."

Tonight we remember our six million sisters and brothers who perished at the hands of the Nazis and at the hands of hundreds of thousands of anti-Semites—many of them Germans, Poles, Croatians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians, Hungarians, Austrians—who assisted those Nazis throughout Europe. We remember also the Jewish martyrs throughout the generations—oppressed, beaten, raped, and murdered by European Christians. And we remember tonight with pride the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the tens of thousands of Jews who resisted, fought back, joined Partisan units, or engaged in acts of armed violence against the oppressors.

It is not fashionable to speak about these atrocities—particularly since some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate human rights violations against Palestinians—as though they were still fighting the Nazis, as though shooting rock-throwing children could somehow compensate for our own failure to have taken up arms soon enough against the Nazi oppressors. Others use the violence done to us as an excuse to be insensitive to the violence done to others—as though our pain was the only pain—or to legitimate a general "goyim-bashing" attitude based on a total distrust of non-Jews. But though the memories of past oppression are sometimes misused to support insensitivity to others, it is still right for us to talk about our pain, what was done to us, how unspeakable, how outrageous. So tonight we recall in pain and in anger what was done to us.

To get beyond the pain, we must first be allowed to express our anger. Permitting ourselves to articulate our anger, rather than trying to bury it or forget it or minimize it, is the only way that we can get beyond it. So, tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history, about the Holocaust, and about the ways that the American government and peoples around the world failed to respond to our cries and our suffering. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God. It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out *"Shefokh Chamatkha ha'goyim aher lo yeda'ukha"*—pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings. [This might be an appropriate place to pause for discussion.]

Yet, even as we speak our anger, we pause also to thank the peoples of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union who united fifty years ago to defeat the Nazis. We celebrate their victory and the liberation that they brought to the remnants of our people. Tonight we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on Earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday

Written by Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN. Please copy this Haggadah supplement, use it, and encourage its readers to subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, in which the themes developed here are debated, refined, and developed into a Judaism for the contemporary age.

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If the kind of Judaism being exemplified here makes sense to you, read Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* (Putnam, 1994), to learn more about Judaism understood in these terms and to deepen your familiarity with the spiritual dimensions that are only barely touched in this supplement.

and tell me with awe about the great-grandfathers who had written them. This is your inheritance, he would say. Far from feeling burdened by the greatness of his heritage, he felt gratitude, humbleness, and reverence for his ancestors: "I was very fortunate," he told an interviewer, "in having lived as a child and as a young boy in an environment where there were many people I could revere, people concerned with problems of inner life, of spirituality and integrity. People who have shown great compassion and understanding for other people."

Already as a small child, my father was accorded the princely honors given the families of Hasidic rebbes: Adults would rise when he entered the room, recognizing that he was a special person. He would be lifted onto a table to deliver *drushas*, learned discussions of Hebrew texts. He was considered an *illui*, a genius. His world was one of intense piety and religious observance, and he felt grateful, as he described much later, that he grew up surrounded by people of spiritual nobility. As the baby of the family, he was loved and fussed over by his older sisters, Sarah, Dvora Miriam, Esther Sima, and Gittel, and his brother, Jacob. He was teased and coddled the way youngest children of large families are. He was only three years old when his oldest sister, Sarah, married their first cousin, the Kapitshinitzer rebbe, and he remembered being at the wedding, running around excitedly among the adults. Even as a small child he took his religious obligations very seriously. He seemed amused and embarrassed when he told me that when he was sent, as a five-year-old, on an errand to a female neighbor, he would ask that the object he was borrowing be placed on a table—in ultra-Orthodox custom, a man should not give or receive from a woman's hand.

His was a large extended family. His mother was the twin sister of the Novominsker rebbe, Alter Israel Simon Perlow, who lived in Warsaw, and there were many cousins, nieces, and nephews. The family's first tragedy came in 1916, when my father was nine years old and his father died during an influenza epidemic. It was devastating for the family. Shortly before I turned nine, I developed a fear that the same thing might happen to me. I asked him, over and over, how he could survive such a terrible thing. He used to say, in a way that was so sad for me to hear, that he just wished that he could talk to his father once again, just once more, even for one hour.

As a teenager, my father began publishing his first articles, short studies, in Hebrew, of Talmudic literature, which appeared in a Warsaw rabbinical publication, *Sha'are Torah*, in 1922 and 1923. When he grew older, he began to read secular books, in addition to his Talmud studies. He said his mother worried, not hearing him chant Gemara while he studied, knowing



Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. march in Selma, Alabama.

that he was reading what he should not. Finally, with the approval of his family, he decided to go to Vilna to study at a gymnasium. There he completed his examinations on June 24, 1927, at the Mathematical-Natural Science Gymnasium. He also became involved with a Yiddish poetry group, Jung Vilna, and published, as his first book, a volume of Yiddish poems, *Der Shem Hamefoyrosh: Mentsch*, written during his years in Vilna, and published in Warsaw in 1933, dedicated to his father's memory. The poems were greeted warmly in the worlds of Yiddish and Hebrew *belles lettres*; they brought my father to the attention of, among others, Chaim Nachman Bialik, who wrote to him from Israel with an enthusiastic letter of congratulations.

After Vilna, in 1927, my father went to study in Berlin, to participate in what he felt was the great center of European intellectual and cultural life. He enrolled at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums and at the Friedrich Wilhelm Universität, today Humboldt University. On April 29, 1929, he passed examinations in German language and literature, Latin, mathematics, German history, and geography, given to foreign students by the University of Berlin, and became a matriculated student. He studied philosophy as his main concentration at the university, with secondary work in art history and semitic philology. At the Hochschule, he gained training

in the modern scientific study of Jewish texts and history. His teachers there included some of the great names of German-Jewish scholarship: Chanoch Albeck, Ismar Elbogen, Julius Guttmann, and Leo Baeck. Down the street from the Hochschule was the Orthodox rabbinical seminary, founded by Esriel Hildesheimer. The theological differences between the two seminaries could not have been greater, and it is amusing that they were located at either end of "Artillerie" street. While most of the students and faculty at the two seminaries did not interact, my father was one of the few able to move easily between the two institutions, sustaining friendships and respect at both. Unfortunately, there was no contact between my father—nor any of the other Jewish students—and the residents of the Protestant seminary residence hall, located next door to the Hochschule.

In December 1929, my father passed examinations at the Hochschule in Hebrew language, Bible and Talmud, midrash, liturgy, philosophy of religion, Jewish history and literature, and in May 1930, he was awarded a prize by the Hochschule for a paper on "Visions in the Bible." He was also appointed an instructor, lecturing on Talmudic exegesis to the more advanced students. On July 16, 1934, he passed his oral examinations and was granted a rabbinical degree by the Hochschule, with a graduating thesis on "Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Halakha."

My father's dissertation, titled, *Das prophetische Bewußtsein* (Prophetic Consciousness), was submitted in December, 1932. Published as *Die Prophetie* in 1935, it got highly favorable notice in popular and academic journals, Christian and Jewish, in Germany and in other countries. *The Philosophical Review*, published in the United States, said that the book "may well be regarded as one of the most important contributions to the general philosophy of religion that the last few years have produced."

The positive response to the book inside Germany itself is remarkable in light of the growing calls by many Protestants in the Third Reich for eradicating the Old Testament from the Christian canon. To prove their devotion to Nazism, some Christians had called for a purging of everything Jewish, and even declared Jesus an Aryan whose goal was the elimination of Judaism from the face of the earth. As a Jewish book, the Old Testament had no place in Christian scriptures, they argued. If the Nazis wanted a *Judenrein* Germany, they would create a *Judenrein* Christianity, and they believed that being a true follower of Jesus meant being an anti-Semite.

While such attacks against the Old Testament and against the Jewishness of Jesus had already arisen in Germany during the nineteenth century, they grew in intensity during the late 1920s and '30s with the rise of the so-called German Christian movement, a pro-Nazi group of Protestants that included bishops, pastors, professors of theology, as well as lay people. It quickly became a powerful force within the churches. Many years later, in his 1965 inaugural address at Union Theological Seminary, my father reminded his audience that the Nazis attacked Christianity as well as Judaism, and he called for both communities to unite against the threat:

> Nazism has suffered a defeat, but the process of eliminating the Bible from the consciousness of the western world goes on. It is on the issue of saving the radiance of the Hebrew Bible in the minds of man that Jews and Christians are called upon to work together. None of us can do it alone. Both of us must realize that in our age anti-Semitism is anti-Christianity and that anti-Christianity is anti-Semitism.

After completing his university studies, my father continued to live in Berlin. He taught at the Hochschule, as well as at the Jüdisches Lehrhaus in Berlin, and he served as reader and editor of a series of books, "*Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart*," for the Erich Reiss publishing house. He witnessed Hitler's accession to power on January 30, 1933, followed by the burning of the Reichstag in March, as well as the book burning in April, in a large open square in the middle of the University of Berlin. His disgust at what he witnessed was expressed in an anonymously published Yiddish poem, "A Day of Hatred," which he published in a Warsaw newspaper. My father told me the chilling story of the evening he attended a concert in Berlin and Hitler suddenly arrived. Everyone present had to rise. As soon as possible, my father left the hall.

He used to describe the abandonment he felt from Christian colleagues, who did not speak up on behalf of the Jews. I can imagine how he must have felt, having completed a book on the prophets, to witness Protestant and Catholic professors of Old Testament debating whether the Christian canon should consist only of the New Testament. Even some who spoke up on behalf of the Old Testament defended their position by arguing that the Old Testament was not really a Jewish book; Judaism, they said, was a degenerate, post-biblical phenomenon. Still, my father received help, as did many others, from the anti-Nazi Quaker community in Frankfurt am Main, whose leader, Rudolf Schlosser, became his friend. My father delivered a powerful lecture, "The Meaning of This Hour," to the Quakers of Frankfurt in February 1938 on the responsibility of religious leaders in Nazi Germany. Schlosser and his colleagues, in turn, were very helpful to my father, writing letters of character reference to the American Consulate in support of his visa application.

Throughout the 1930s, my father tried to secure a position outside Germany. He sent letters, and copies of

his publications, to colleagues throughout Europe and the United States, seeking help. He had published several scholarly essays on aspects of medieval Jewish philosophy, as well as books on Maimonides (also published in French translation in 1936) and Abravanel (published in Polish translation in 1937), and some shorter essays in the popular press. All were well received.

The offer to write a book on Maimonides came to him as a surprise. In 1935, he had visited Erich Reiss, owner of a publishing house in Berlin, to recommend the work of a friend. Reiss was so impressed by my father that he asked him to write a book on Maimonides, whose jubilee year was being celebrated, and within two weeks of feverish work, the manuscript was completed. My father was just twenty-eight years old.

The biography presents the historical and political context in which Maimonides lived, together with a remarkably clear summary of his thought, but it also tries to understand his personal conflicts and struggles and how they are reflected in his thought. What emerges is a complex, sensitive human being, in sharp contrast with the somewhat austere figure presented in other studies. For my father, the central issue was not how to reconcile Maimonides' philosophical and halakhic writings, or solving the extent of his rationalist, Aristotelian interpretations of Judaism, but evoking his inner, spiritual life. He shows, for example, the devastating impact of his brother's sudden death on Maimonides' reconsideration of the problem of evil, and concludes, "Maimonides never lost his faith in the just and meaningful working of the universe. His experience did not turn him against God but, to all appearances, against himself." The book also raises the question of Maimonides' own efforts to attain prophetic inspiration, a controversial topic he discusses in far greater detail in a Hebrew essay published in 1945. Ultimately, the biography is a spiritual as well as an intellectual portrayal that broadens the image of Maimonides from a strictly rationalist philosopher to someone with profound spiritual concerns as well.

In November 1936, Martin Buber asked my father if he would be willing to become the director of the Mittelstelle für jüdische Erwachsenenbildung in Frankfurt, and after some exchange of letters, my father accepted the offer when the two men met in Berlin on January 22, 1937, just after my father's thirtieth birthday.

Soon after arriving in Frankfurt, my father completed his short biography of Isaac Abravanel, the distinguished Jewish philosopher who lived during the period of the expulsions from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century. The book was published as part of the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Abravanel's birth, in Lisbon in 1437. Aware of the parallels between those experiences and the situation of the Jews in Nazi Germany, my father conceived the work as a book of comfort for his fellow European Jews.

He concluded by pointing out that the Jewish expulsion from Iberia was followed by the conquest of the New World, which took place without their participation. "Had the Jews remained in the Iberian peninsula, they would have certainly participated in the actions of the Conquistadors. When the Conquistadors arrived in Haiti, there were 1,100,000 inhabitants; twenty years later there were only 1,000 remaining."

His desire to comfort the German Jews was accompanied by some chastisement. In a brief but extraordinary article, "*Die Marranen von Heute*," published in the newspaper of the Berlin Jewish community in September 1936, my father described the German Jews as inverted Marranos. Unlike the baptized Jews of Spain, who were Christian on the outside and Jewish on the inside, the German Jews today, he wrote, are Jewish on the outside but not on the inside. Persecuted for being Jewish, they are ignorant of Judaism and its spiritual riches, so that their inner lives are empty.

My father's contacts with the Christian communities of Germany were mixed. Many of his professors were Christian, and his books were generally well received by them. But he was also appalled by the lack of action on the part of Christian leaders on behalf of the Jews. He used to tell me about a Jesuit librarian who said he could not speak out against the Nazi treatment of the Jews for fear that the Nazis would close down the library. Given such attitudes, my father's later writings on the imperative for religious people to speak out against social injustice reveal a personal dimension. At first hand he knew Christians who were anti-Semitic; later he wrote that religion cannot coexist with racism: "Racism is satanism, unmitigated evil .... You cannot worship God and at the same time look at man as if he were a horse."

My father's time in Germany ceased abruptly. At the end of October 1938, Jews living in Germany but holding Polish passports were suddenly arrested and deported. He had rented a room in the large home of a Jewish family named Adler in a tiny, quiet residential section of Frankfurt. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, the Gestapo arrived and gave him one hour to pack two suitcases. He quickly gathered his manuscripts and books and then carried two very heavy suitcases through the streets of Frankfurt to police headquarters, where he was held overnight in a tiny cell. The next morning he was put on a train packed with deported Jews. He told me he had to stand for the duration of a three-day journey to Poland. Denied entry into Poland, the Jews were held at the border in miserable conditions, many remaining for months. The local Poles in the area refused

to give the Jews food. My father was fortunate: His family soon secured his release, and he joined them in Warsaw. For the next ten months he lectured on Jewish philosophy and Bible at Warsaw's Institute for Jewish Studies.

He struggled to find a way out of Europe, and at the last moment, just six weeks before the German invasion of Poland, he succeeded in leaving Warsaw for London. My father escaped thanks to Julian Morgenstern, the president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, who had been trying for several years to secure visas from the American State Department to bring Jewish scholars out of Europe.

When the Nazis invaded Poland, my father's sister Esther was killed in a bombing. His mother and sister Gittel had to leave their apartment, and their circumstances became very difficult. They sent postcards to my father, in which they worried lovingly about his well-being and begged for news of his safety. "Each day that we receive a letter from you," Gittel wrote, "is a holiday for us." Both were ultimately murdered, his mother in Warsaw, Gittel most probably in Treblinka. Another sister, Devorah, who was married and living in Vienna, was eventually deported to Theresienstadt on October 2, 1942, and from there sent to Auschwitz, where she was murdered upon her arrival, on May 16, 1944.

My father never returned to Germany, nor to Austria, nor to Poland. He once wrote, "If I should go to Poland or Germany, every stone, every tree would remind me of contempt, hatred, murder, of children killed, of mothers burned alive, of human beings asphyxiated."

After receiving his American visa, my father arrived in New York City in March 1940. He stayed at first with members of his family. His oldest sister, Sarah, and her husband, the Kapitshinitzer rebbe, and most of their children had already arrived from Vienna, and there were also other cousins from Warsaw.

Soon after arriving, my father took a position at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. His position was not professor, but instructor. He was given a room in the student dormitory, where he also kept his own food, since the cafeteria was not kosher. The students were a disappointment to him as well, because their background in Jewish texts was much weaker than that of his students at the Berlin seminary.

The years in Cincinnati were lonely. My father struggled constantly to bring his mother and sister from Warsaw and to save other friends, colleagues, and relatives who remained stranded in Europe. They wrote to him, begging for help. He was frustrated with the American Jewish community, which he felt did not recognize the emergency. The news from Europe became worse and worse. He continued to receive mail from his mother and sisters, and he tried unsuccessfully to secure visas; he learned of their murder while he was in Cincinnati. Within his immediate family, the only survivors were those who fled before the war began: his brother, Jacob, who left Vienna for London with his wife, Susie, and daughter, Thena, in 1939, and his sister, Sarah, and her husband and their children, who left Vienna in February 1939 for New York.

It was in Cincinnati that my father first met my mother, Sylvia Straus, at a dinner party at the home of Professor and Mrs. Jacob Marcus. My mother, a concert pianist, had come to Cincinnati from her hometown, Cleveland, to study with Severin Eisenberger. That evening she was asked to play the piano, and my father fell in love with her. Shortly thereafter he attended her concert at the Cincinnati music conservatory and took her out to celebrate. Within a few months, my father was offered a position at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, the seat of the Conservative movement. After hearing her play, Arthur Rubenstein urged my mother to study with the pianist Eduard Steuermann, who also lived in New York. My parents were married on December 10, 1946, in Los Angeles, where my mother's parents had moved several years earlier.

It is striking that my father did not undertake major theological work until after his marriage. During the early years of their marriage, my father completed his most important books, masterpieces of religious thought that seemed to pour out of him: *Man is not Alone* (1951); *The Sabbath* (1951); *God in Search of Man*(1952); *Man's Quest for God* (1954). At the same time, he was able to give voice to his mourning for the destruction of his family and the world of East European Jews. He was asked to speak on East European Jewish life in 1946 at the YIVO, the Institute for Jewish Scientific Research in New York, where he delivered an elegy in Yiddish so moving that the audience, composed mainly of secular Yiddish writers, spontaneously stood up at the end of the speech and said *Kaddish*, the Jewish memorial prayer for the dead. That speech was later expanded and published in English as *The Earth Is the Lord's.*

In many ways, my father's evocation of East European Jews was a description of his own personality. He writes of the sheer joy of being Jewish, the vitality, the love of learning, and also the tenderness, the gentleness, the sincerity and deep trust of other people that characterized East European Jews—and himself. His panegyric to Polish Jews is striking in comparison to the way they were usually portrayed in the work of modern historians, particularly those of Germany, who tended to view their Polish compatriots as an embarrassment for their lack of assimilation and for their mystical piety. By

contrast, these German historians held up the cosmopolitan Sephardic Jews of Spain as models of Jews who were intellectually and culturally assimilated. My father's purpose was to depict the spirituality of the East European Jews, their inner life, a precious religious civilization that was wiped out by the Nazis. He also wrote several important scholarly articles on early Hasidism, the pietist movement of Eastern Europe that began during the eighteenth century, and he received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1954 to write a planned biography of the movement's founder, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. At the end of his life, he wrote two books on Hasidism, a two-volume Yiddish study of Menachem Mendl of Kotzk, a famed nineteenth-century Hasidic master, and *A Passion for Truth*, a comparison of the Kotzker and Sören Kierkegaard. For my father, Hasidism was an extraordinary moment in Jewish spiritual history: "Then came Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov and brought heaven down to earth .... In the days of Moses, Israel had a revelation of God, in the days of the Baal Shem, God had a revelation of Israel. Suddenly, there was revealed a holiness in Jewish life that had accumulated in the course of many generations."

How could the spirituality of Hasidism, the holiness of East European Jewish life, now utterly destroyed, be expressed in the language of post-war America? Just as his doctoral dissertation had challenged the interpretive categories of modern biblical scholarship, his first English articles were radical challenges to the conventional categories used by scholars of religion to interpret religious experience. His articles of the 1940s begin by contending that conventional categories used to understand piety, prayer, and holiness are reductionist and inappropriate. Instead of understanding piety on its own terms, for example, scholars too often reduce it to a psychological phenomenon, or criticize it as irrational and counterproductive. He used to say in his lectures, "just as you cannot study philosophy through praying, you cannot study prayer through philosophizing." In *Man Is Not Alone* he wrote, "Evaluating faith in terms of reason is like trying to understand love as a syllogism and beauty as an algebraic equation." Instead, he argued that piety is a phenomenon that must be described on its own terms, as an attitude, a way of thinking in which the pious person feels God to be always close and present: "Awareness of God is as close to him as the throbbing of his own heart, often deep and calm, but at times overwhelming, intoxicating, setting the soul afire." Piety gives rise to reverence, which sees the "dignity of every human being" and "the spiritual value which even inanimate things inalienably possess." Exploitation and domination are utterly foreign to genuine piety, and possession of things leads only to

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loneliness. Instead, the pious person's "affinity with God is his persistent aspiration to go beyond himself," to be devoted to goals and tasks and ideals. For the pious person, destiny means not simply to accomplish, but to contribute. "In aiding a creature, he is helping the Creator. In succoring the poor, he is taking care of something that concerns God. In admiring the good, he is revering the Spirit of God."

Ultimately religion is not based on our awareness of God but on God's interest in us. In prayer, for example, we seek not to make God visible but to make ourselves visible to God. That gentle upheaval of the relationship is central to my father's theology. It is not we who search to understand God; it is God who is in search of us. Even more, it is God who is in need of us: "To be is to stand for, and what human beings stand for is the great mystery of being God's partner. God is in need of human beings."

God's need of us, what my father calls "divine pathos," is the central pillar of his theology and what makes it distinctive among Jewish thinkers. Yet it is not idiosyncratic; my father bases his understanding of divine pathos on a long, deep tradition within Judaism, most prominent in Kabbalistic and Hasidic writings, but also found in the heart of rabbinic Judaism. Indeed, his three-volume study of rabbinic theology, published in Hebrew as *Torah min Ha-Shamayim b'Espakloriah shel Ha-Dorot* (Revelation in the Mirror of the Generations) demonstrates that concepts thought by scholars to have originated with classical Kabbalah in the Middle Ages began to be articulated in antiquity by the rabbis who shaped halakhic Judaism.

My father first met Martin Luther King, Jr., in January 1963 and began his long involvement in the civil rights movement. They met at a Chicago conference on religion and race sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews and became good friends as well as colleagues. Writing, lecturing, and demonstrating on behalf of civil rights, my father was an effective figure. When the police blocked the entrance to F.B.I. headquarters in Manhattan, it was he who gained entry to present a petition protesting police brutality against civil rights demonstrators in Alabama.

When my father joined the famous Selma march in 1965, he was welcomed as one of the leaders into the front row of marchers, with Dr. King, Ralph Bunche, and Ralph Abernathy. In an unpublished memoir he wrote upon returning from Selma, my father describes the extreme hostility he encountered from whites in Alabama, from the moment he arrived at the airport, and the kindness he was shown by Dr. King's assistants, particularly the Reverend Andrew Young, who watched over him during the march with great concern. Just before the march began, a service was held in a small chapel, where my father read Psalm 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?", and Dr. King gave a sermon describing three typologies among the children of Israel in the wilderness. For my father, Dr. King's emphasis on the exodus, rather than on Jesus, as a model for the movement was important, and he invited Dr. King and his family to join us at our Passover Seder. Dr. King's assassination in April 1968 came just before Passover; we had expected him to spend the holiday with us.

For my father, the march was a religious moment; he wrote in his memoir, "I thought of my having walked with Hasidic rabbis on various occasions. I felt a sense of the Holy in what I was doing. Dr. King expressed several times to me his appreciation. He said, 'I cannot tell you how much your presence means to us. You cannot imagine how often Reverend Vivian and I speak about you.' Dr. King said to me that this was the greatest day in his life and the most important Civil Rights demonstration." With sadness, my father adds, "I felt again what I have been thinking about for years—that Jewish religious institutions have again missed a great opportunity, namely, to interpret a Civil Rights movement in terms of Judaism. The vast number of Jews participating actively in it are totally unaware of what the movement means in terms of the prophetic traditions."

About six months after the Selma march, my father, together with John Bennett and Richard Neuhaus, founded what became one of the strongest organizations opposed to the war in Vietnam, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. Over and over, in speeches at universities, synagogues, and anti-war rallies, he denounced the murder of innocent people in Southeast Asia and proclaimed, "In a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." However difficult it may be to stop the war today, he said, it will be even more difficult tomorrow; the killing must end now.

The crimes committed in Vietnam were subversive to our values, and also to our religious lives, he insisted. Someone may commit a crime now and teach mathematics an hour later. But when we pray, all we have done in our lives enters our prayers. As he had articulated in his early essays in the 1940s, the purpose of prayer is not petitionary. We do not pray in order to be saved, my father used to stress, we pray so that we might be worthy of being saved. Prayer should not focus on our wishes, but is a moment in which God's intentions are reflected in us. If we are created in the image of God, each human being should be a reminder of God's presence. If we engage in acts of violence and murder, we are desecrating the divine likeness.

The anguish my father felt over the war in Vietnam was relentless; I often found him in the middle of the night, unable to sleep. The tension grew worse in the spring of 1967, as hostile Arab countries threatened Israel with a military build-up and U.N. troops withdrew from their peace-keeping positions. Israel's extraordinary military success in the Six-Day War was a great relief, and my father flew there immediately. The trip inspired his magnificent evocation of the land of Israel's religious significance to Judaism, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*.

Zionism for my father was not solely a political issue, and he was critical of much of Zionist theory for its single-minded political and secular emphases. Neither statehood nor cultural nationalism, he argued, could substitute for Judaism's religious teachings. He presented these views in the United States and in Israel, often at Zionist conventions, where he warned that simply living in the State of Israel was no panacea for resolving issues of Jewish identity.

My father and mother and I made our first trip to Israel in the summer of 1957. The establishment of the State seemed like a miracle, and my father used to speak about it to me with a tone of wonder.

His reputation as a theologian of significance within the Christian community began with a glowing review by Reinhold Niebuhr of *Man Is Not Alone* in 1951. Abraham Heschel, Niebuhr wrote, was "one of the treasures of mind and spirit by which the persecutions, unloosed in Europe, inadvertently enriched our American culture .... It is a safe guess that he will become a commanding and authoritative voice not only in the Jewish community but in the religious life of America." What a contrast between the German Protestant theologians of the 1930s, debating whether the Old Testament should be eliminated from the Christian canon, and Reinhold Niebuhr's positive view of Hebrew scripture and of Judaism! This led to further contacts and ultimately into a close friendship. They were neighbors and often took walks together. Niebuhr's praise and the friendship that developed between them was profoundly important to my father; for him they were hopeful signs of new kind of relationship between Jews and Christians. Niebuhr himself asked my father to deliver the eulogy at his funeral, which he did. Niebuhr, he used to say, understood his work better than anyone else. With all the differences in their beliefs, both had similar understandings of the role of a theologian—not simply philosophical discussion, but political activism—and they shared a deep love of the Hebrew Bible.

My father's most important achievement in Christian-Jewish relations came in his involvement with the Second Vatican Council during the mid-1960s. At the invitation of the American Jewish Committee, my father traveled to Rome, where he formed a friendship with Cardinal Bea, who directed the composition of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican's pronouncement concerning relations with non-Catholic religions. He met with Pope Paul VI on several occasions, as well as with Cardinal Willebrands of Holland, and he took a strong stand during the moments when it seemed the Council was weakening its declaration concerning the Jews.

In 1971, my father traveled through Italy on a lecture tour, accompanied by my mother. A private audience with Pope Paul VI was arranged for them in Rome on March 17. Describing the visit afterward in a private memoir, my father said how pleased he was that the Pope had seen his writings as a help to Catholics to strengthen their faith:



Susannah and Abraham Joshua Heschel

> When the Pope saw me he smiled joyously, with a radiant face, shook my hand cordially with both his hands—he did so several times during the audience. He opened the conversation by telling me that he is reading my books, that my books are very spiritual and very beautiful, and that Catholics should read my books. He expressed his blessing that I may continue to write more books. He then added that he knows of the great impact my books are having upon young people, which he particularly appreciates.

"Isn't it a burden to have a famous father?" people often ask me. But just imagine what kind of a father Abraham Heschel would be. I was only vaguely aware of my father's fame when I was growing up; as a father, he was wonderful, ever warm and loving and affectionate. I knew I could confide in him and always



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receive a sensitive and understanding response. I was free to interrupt him at any moment; he was never annoyed, but always looked up from his writing with a big smile of delight and exclaimed, "Susie!" as though we hadn't seen each other in ages. He loved being a father, playing games with me and my friends, even making up games for my birthday parties. American popular culture was utterly foreign to our home. My father had no idea of sports, popular music, movies, or T.V. I remember as a child teasing him, saying that he should Americanize himself, become "the sporty type," wear brown sport jackets instead of gray or blue suits, and learn to play golf.

Walking with my father was not a matter of reaching a destination but of creating a private time to talk. He would stop every few feet and discuss a point, then go a little farther. He loved to take walks on Sabbath afternoons, in Riverside Park across from our apartment building. When I was a little girl, he was always delighted to play games to keep me amused, and even corralled his colleagues to join us in "Simon Says" or "Red Light, Green Light." And when I grew tired from the walk, he would put me on his shoulders and carry me.

From my youngest years I was aware of discrimination against women, particularly in religious circles, and complained about it to my father. He always agreed with me, supporting me when I wanted a Bat Mitzvah and an *aliyah* for my sixteenth birthday, and agreeing that aspects of Jewish observance that were unfair to women had to be changed. He even suggested that I apply to the rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary, confident that one day women would be accepted there as students.

My father's book on the Sabbath, one of the most popular of his writings, evokes the spirit he created with my mother in our home, in which the Sabbath was both peacefully quiet and filled with celebration. The book beautifully describes the rabbinic, Kabbalistic, and Hasidic understandings of the Sabbath experience; together, my parents brought the text to life.

It was on a Sabbath that my father died. We were planning to go to the synagogue together on the morning of Saturday, December 23, 1972, but he never awakened. In Jewish tradition it is considered a sign of great piety to merit a peaceful death in one's sleep, even more so to die on the Sabbath. Such a death is called a kiss from God.

Most of the world that my father knew no longer exists. He was, as he wrote, "a brand plucked from the fire of Europe," and he became God's gift to us. The soil of Jewish piety in which he was bred was destroyed, but through him that world did not vanish. Like the Baal Shem Tov, he brought heaven down to earth, and in his writings we have a revelation of the holiness of Jewish life. □

Radical Reverence: A Fulcrum Against Fanaticism

Edward K. Kaplan

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, and the justification of this outrage by some Jews, threatens the integrity of Judaism as a source of morality. As the Jewish world tries to cope with the fact that some "religious" Jews perceive their devotion to the Land of Israel as an imperative to murder, we may find some guidance in Abraham Joshua Heschel's spiritually radical interpretation of rabbinic Judaism.

Drawing on classical Jewish sources (particularly *Berakhot* 43b) to establish the primacy given in the tradition to the sanctity of each and every human being, Heschel insisted that attacking a person's inward dignity presents an even graver violation than physical death. In "Religion and Race," he wrote: "The law demands: one should rather be killed than commit murder. Piety demands: one should rather commit suicide than offend a person publicly. It is better, the Talmud insists, to throw oneself into a burning furnace than to humiliate a human being publicly."

I believe that Heschel's radical approach to religious morality, which affirms the absolute dignity of every human being, can be an antidote to the shrinking of biblical faith into ideology and dogma characteristic of some segments of the contemporary Jewish world. A dynamic "piety" of the sort Heschel prescribed can help alleviate the cultural wars now raging within our fragmented communities. Piety (*hasidut*), in Heschel's terms, includes both a prayerful intimacy with the Divine and a fervent sense of human responsibility, emulating the "God of pathos" evoked by the Hebrew prophets. When approached in this way, Jewish observance—study of Torah, prayer, and the quest for purity of heart—can bring light to the practical difficulties of achieving justice and peace with security between Israel, the Palestinian people, and their neighbors.

Religion is a powerful force, either sublime or perverse. Even those who deem themselves "observant" Jews—such as the American-born assassin of Hebron and the Israeli fanatic who killed Rabin—are capable of interpreting their vision of Greater Israel as God's call to massacre other children of Abraham, Jew or Muslim. And the non-observant among us wonder how Jews who cherish Torah can slaughter devout Muslims at prayer or murder the Prime Minister of Israel.

How can we penetrate the minds of these "righteous" criminals? We tend to consider such ideological fanatics to be "fundamentalists," people who take certain statements in the Bible for literal truth, while ignoring the text's complexity and plurality of interpretations. It is easy to lift proof texts from holy books, Jewish, Muslim, or Christian, to provide support for dangerous political movements. The religious Zionists, out of whose community Rabin's assassin came, embrace a literal interpretation of God's territorial promises in the Bible. But the problem is not the Bible or any sacred text per se. Rather, it is the ease with which leaders and followers join "revealed dogma" with totalitarian politics, relegating opponents to demonic or subhuman status.

But while dogmatic interpretations can sanction violence, they do not propagate actions. Anger, hatred, and fear, not ideology as such, motivate fanatics and drive their programs. Extremist thinking is defensive, an acting out of rage that one's idealized world—for instance, the subsidized settlements of "Greater Israel"—may be dismantled.

Heschel's conception of Judaism may ripen religious emotions stronger than the hatred that fires zealots. What he calls "depth theology" considers the consciousness of prayer and intuitions of divine presence to be distinct from, and prior to, statements of belief or dogma. The first step is to view social struggles from the vantage point of humanity's preciousness to God. For Heschel, the energy of Judaism does not derive from Torah principles alone, but from a person's encounter with the mystery of existence, with God, with "the meaning beyond the mystery."

Heschel's "radical amazement"—awe and wonder at the very fact of human existence—provides the link between religion and a compassionate ethics. This intuition of God's presence both in and beyond the world can act as a fulcrum to remove layers of callousness from fanatical minds. This intimation of a transcendent God might undermine extremists' closed systems.

Intense hatred is not unusual in biblical experience

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(Psalm 139: "I shall hate [the enemy] with a perfect hate"). And yet the Bible repeatedly asserts the sacred value of each human being as an image of God. How, then, can we surpass the abstract principle, the slogan?

Fear, ethnic hatred, or even the thrust toward martyrdom can be counterbalanced by a "sacred humanism," which is both spiritual and ethical. Heschel's guideline is concrete: "To meet a human being is an opportunity to sense the image of God, the presence of God." Heschel considers God and humankind to be inextricably intertwined.

But what are the realistic possibilities of acting upon this precept? Given the banalities and horrors of contemporary existence, human sanctity is an unconvincing doctrine. Only those closest to us—friends, family, children, people we admire—are possible candidates for holiness. Yet Heschel reveres all people; he does not segregate moral value from piety.

Race relations in the United States provide a sobering parallel to the present process of negotiation with Israel's Arab citizens and neighbors—and now between Jew and Jew. The very humanity of all "adversaries" is at stake. Again, Heschel goes to the core: the absolute value of each and every human being. He defines all such conflicts as a religious emergency, stating in "Religion and Race," "Racial or religious bigotry must be recognized for what it is: Satanism, blasphemy."

In the 1960s, Heschel stood out as the most prominent traditional Jew—recognizable with skullcap and beard in photos, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr.—who proclaimed a prophetic imperative. His witness to the sufferings of Blacks in a segregated racist society is particularly poignant viewed from our decade, when distrust, anger, and indifference between African Americans and Jews have become commonplace.

The internecine battles of contemporary Judaism, as well, cannot be resolved on a secular level alone. It is unlikely that debate about "facts" will change extremist goals, justified by tactical "directives" from God. People who choose to die, or murder people, for a cause, do not deliberate rationally—or even theologically. Quite the contrary: They think and act out of the most primal emotions, energized as much by contempt for the Other as by perceived love of the Jewish people. These passions can be subdued only by equally powerful, but life-affirming passions.

A deeply felt awe before each and every individual as an image of the Divine might stop angry or vulnerable people from hurting others in God's name. But how can we move from precept to an almost instinctual reverence at the sight of any mortal face? The spiritual and political crisis of the Vietnam War years inspired Heschel to define a meeting ground for people of all faiths. He recognized that the established religions would be powerless to effect real social change if they did not subordinate their dogmas to the defense of the universal preciousness of human life. In his 1965 inaugural address as a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary, he explains:

> I suggest that the most significant basis for meeting of men of different religious traditions is the level of fear and trembling, of humility and contrition, where our individual moments of faith are mere waves in the endless ocean of mankind's reaching out for God, where all formulations and articulations appear as understatements, where our souls are swept away by the awareness of the urgency of answering God's commandment, while stripped of pretension and conceit we sense the tragic insufficiency of human faith.

Today we need that sense for "the tragic insufficiency of human faith" in order to break down authoritarian religion. One spiritual emotion can be particularly effective: "Fear of God" (*yirat Elohim*) evokes our frailty as we stand naked before the Creator. An impulse to be cruel may be countered by terror of the Almighty, which, like radical amazement, places self-interest into a higher, prophetic light. When we commit even a misdemeanor, we know that other people or civil law enforcement representatives may see us. When we contemplate a crime against the Holy, only God notices. We become truly autonomous morally when we internalize a sense that, as Heschel's theology of divine pathos puts it, God cares what we do.

What might be called "radical reverence" fulfills the ethical potential of piety. Radical reverence connects secular ethics and religious awe, a pledge to the holy dimension of existence, leading us to protect human freedom. Its emotional impact, not just the idea, leads to action. Our task will be to help those driven by fanaticism to welcome a certainty that, while God's last word is beyond full understanding, the human image of the Divine remains near.

The murder of Yitzhak Rabin—the most recent event of Jewish self-destruction—again places the people Israel before Sinai. Are we capable of welcoming the Holy and nurturing radical reverence for all peoples?

Radical reverence can unite individuals of all attitudes who continue to debate ideology and tactics while preserving Judaism's sacred foundation. Holiness surpasses our words, our ideas, not as an ethical slogan but as a visceral affirmation that can overwhelm anger, hatred, and the passion to destroy. This remains our responsibility: rising to the standards God has defined. □

We Are Not Alone in the World

Mayer Schiller

Orthodox Jews believe their faith to be objectively true. To us the Torah is not merely metaphor or symbol, nor of questionable authorship. It is literally God's spoken word. Accordingly, *mitzvot* and *halakhot* (commandments and laws) are not results of time-and-place contingencies, but are eternally binding upon the entirety of the Jewish people.

Having established this objective metaphysic as his doctrinal bedrock, the Orthodox thinker is forced to confront the reality of a humanity which rejects it. Where do non-Jews or Jews who deny these truths (whether consciously or not) fit in the Orthodox worldview?

These are not merely academic questions, for they impact upon the Israel-Palestinian confrontation, as well as upon the currently acrimonious relations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews throughout the world and especially in Israel. The controversies swirling around the peace process and Yitzhak Rabin's murder are only the latest reminders of these agonizing divisions.

One further area deserving of attention by Torah Jewry is that of disagreement in our own ranks. Although the Torah is God's revealed will, nonetheless, it does not yield clear perspectives on all individual, communal, and national matters. Hence, we frequently reach conclusions in life that, although informed by Torah, are also based upon our own intuition, logic, counsel of friends and rabbis, etc. These conclusions are not Torah itself, but rather applied Torah. How authoritative are our Torah-imbued decisions, and what should be our approach to those who differ with us about them?

Beyond the elementary demands of ethical monotheism embodied in the "seven commandments of the sons of Noah," the Torah is largely silent on the subject of a Gentile's task in this world. How should a Gentile view his religion, nation, race, culture, or ethnicity? How does God view Gentile enthusiasms for all or some of the above? By what standard does He judge the individual and communal loyalties of Spanish Catholics, Afrikaner Calvinists, Tibetan Buddhists, or Palestinian Muslims? To adequately answer these vexing questions would require a lengthy exploration of the Torah texts relevant to Gentiles, primarily those that focus on the parameters between monotheism and idol worship. It would seem a logical and fair working hypothesis, however, that the Lord is pleased with Gentiles if they are oriented toward Him and uphold the natural law ("seven commandments").

Accordingly, we are taught that a pious and ethical Gentile will find favor in God's eyes and merit "a share in the world to come." Piety in the larger sense of the term extends to the sense of bonding which we all feel to our own people and their physical place in the world. The materialist will see this as the result of biological impulses, but to the believer the love and loyalty we experience for kinfolk and the soil of our ancestors is yet another of the tender blessings that a loving Creator has bestowed upon us.

Yet human traits that are virtues when properly embraced are often perverted. Loyalty to one's own can become a hatred for the other. Love for one's place leads to conflict with others who claim it. Ideally, mutual respect can yield a compromise of sorts which allows all concerned to see their dreams partially fulfilled. In reality, history is full of instances in which wisdom and a spirit of charity did not prevail; instead, victory went to the stronger side.

It is this seemingly intractable human tendency toward aggression and deceit that daunts those who desire a more humane world. We must respect the other while keeping our own guard up. Sadly, it is the first part of this equation—the granting of humanity to the Gentile either as an individual or as a people—that is often lacking in Orthodox circles. Suffering from a kind of moral blindness, we find it difficult to see the non-Jew as anything more than a bit player in our own drama.

The Palestinians are people both individually and as a community. This must serve as our starting point in dealing with them. Whether this means that the P.L.O. is a suitable peace partner, or the West Bank is a security necessity I don't know, but surely it will have much impact upon our approach. Similarly,

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our approach to Gentile people elsewhere in the world should be governed by our recognition of their peoplehood. It is simply unfair to advocate public policies solely on the basis of "what's good for the Jews" while disregarding the well-being of Gentiles, either as individuals, nations, ethnicities, or races. We need not ignore Jewish self-interest, but it must be balanced against the just claims of those among whom we dwell.

But what about Jews who have strayed from Torah? In an era that values "pluralism," the Orthodox Jew labors under a heavy burden. He cannot, in the manner of those who reject Orthodoxy, speak of multiple truths or forever-open questions. To the Orthodox Jew, Judaism has never and will never have "denominations." The teachings of Torah, no matter how much they are at odds with the cultural "elites," are not subject to debate. Sinaitic revelation and all that it implies is axiomatic. We are pledged to its truth with a fervor that even surpasses the liberal's dogmatic belief in democracy, pluralism, human rights, or tolerance.

Hence, from an objective perspective, Orthodoxy, or—as we would much rather call it—Judaism sees non-Orthodox Jews as errant. Yet, God does not judge us solely by objective standards. In His infinite kindness He views each of us against the backdrop of our particular circumstances. This is the wonder of what we might describe as God's subjective charity. This charity values not only the objective good a man performs—all the giving and caring and sacrifice and suffering—but extends at times to actions of dubious objective metaphysical status. For the not-yet-observant Jew, every drop of Jewish practice and identification that he has is beloved by God. Conceivably, the sacrifice and passion brought to an act whose sole value is due to God's subjective charity achieves a greater ontic status than a properly performed deed. The Hasidic tradition in particular is replete with tales and teachings of this sort, but there are earlier sources as well.

Imbued with this sense, Orthodox Jews can approach the non-Orthodox without abandoning their basic, absolute assumptions, while still granting the non-Orthodox metaphysical value. This understanding should enable Orthodox Jews to view other Jews—from prime ministers to their next-door neighbors—not merely with charitable love, but with respect as well.

Finally, there is the matter of disagreements in the area of "applied Torah." When the Torah is silent on an issue, we are deprived of the only guarantee of certitude. Hence, although in those instances we may base our views upon Torah sources and their spirit, we are forever doomed to educated speculation at best. Awareness that we have no "right" answer should yield a temperate tone when dealing with one's opponent. In Israel, this awareness should produce a softening of tone in the peace-process debate.

Nonetheless, those areas of life that are left without clear-cut Torah guidance at times involve life-and-death issues about which it is difficult to remain dispassionate. If, for example, one regards the peace process as either endangering or protecting lives, how can this be expressed without a sense of urgency and a strong condemnation of the opposition? It is well and good to call for a tempering of rhetoric, but how is the rhetorician who views the other as dangerous and immoral to speak softly?

First, we must grant our opponents legitimacy of intent. Jews involved in the peace-process debate are all motivated by a desire to do what is right. This acknowledgement by all concerned may help preserve our feelings of kinship.

Second, we must concede that passion is a natural ingredient of those who confront communal questions with moral commitment. While our passion must be circumscribed by decency and sanity, it cannot and must not be eliminated.

Orthodox Jews believe—as do all people not "committed" to a totally relativistic rendering of reality—that certain truths are absolute. To deny this and present the Torah as "one opinion" is to falsify our ancestral faith. The very nature of humankind's God-given dignity and the Creator's great love for all, however, demand that we rethink our evaluation of and response to the "other." By approaching all people with understanding, empathy, respect and, perhaps, even love, we can begin to realize the universal implications of God's descent upon Sinai millennia ago. □

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"A Closet of One's Own: On Not Becoming a Lesbian," by Daphne Merkin, in the November/December 1995 issue of TIKKUN, *provoked an outpouring of reaction and a huge volume of mail, much of it from lesbians offended by Merkin's perspective and angered by* TIKKUN*'s decision to publish the article. In the ongoing debate about Merkin's essay,* TIKKUN *presents three articles which represent a variety of responses to the original piece.*

Coming Out of the Closet as Politically Correct

Rebecca T. Alpert

Well, I admit it. I spend a fair amount of time and effort trying my best to be politically correct. I have never, for example, during a polite conversation, asked a heterosexual to explain to me about her activities in the bedroom, although they might seem exotic to me. And it's been years since I've told a joke that begins, "a priest, a rabbi, and a minister ...."

I have come under a fair amount of criticism for this behavior, and become the butt of many jokes in society these days. But I can't for the life of me figure out why, since I believe that what some deride as "political correctness" is really only a caricatured description of what I always defined as common decency; a variation on the Levitical precept that what is hateful to you, you should not do to others.

But these days, common decency seems to be out of style, replaced by the passionate desire to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, no matter what the consequences to the listener. Like they do on those T.V. talk shows. And sometimes the results are tragic, as when a heterosexual man who learned on air on "The Jenny Jones Show" that he was the object of a gay man's affections shot his admirer.

From my perspective, this kind of "let it all hang out and damn the consequences" type of honesty is not a good thing. First, inflicting pain is wrong. We Jews do not value suffering. When someone tells me that what I've said about them is hurtful, my impulse is to stop saying it. Nor do I really want to know all the lurid and evil thoughts that lurk in the minds of those who don't respect me.

Second, there is no great value to saying everything you think. Free speech is a complex ideal. It should be thoughtful and bold, not hateful and undisciplined. And honesty is not a virtue when it causes pain. My mother taught me about the moral value of occasionally telling small lies. (We used to call them "white lies.") Being PC, I don't use the phrase anymore, since it must be tiring for people of color to have white stand perpetually for all that is good. Besides, the English language is versatile; finding linguistic substitutes is half the fun of being politically correct. Not telling everything all the time, when your goal is to avoid hurting another person, is in fact a virtue. Learning when and when not to speak and what and what not to say is a value in itself.

You might conclude from my position on the virtues of silence that we were better off when gay men and lesbians never discussed our sexuality. Why do we get to be honest and our critics do not? Yet I do not accept this conclusion; it would be like suggesting that American Jews return to a time when assimilation was a primary value in our community, when we hid being Jewish. Honesty is appropriate when people talk about their own lives. Honesty is not appreciated when its goal is to suppress or trivialize a group to which you do not belong. Argue with me about what I think, but don't call me names or question my right to talk about my group's culture in public while you're doing it.

I came out as a lesbian in the progressive Jewish community when being PC was fashionable. And I came all the way out, as publicly as possible. I am politically involved in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community; my name and face are often in the news, and I write and teach on lesbian subjects in the Jewish world as well. It's a great strategy to avoid being wounded by others. I've never had my feelings hurt. I do not have to endure the silly questions and nasty remarks; no one would make them to my face, afraid of being politically incorrect. It's delightful to know that many people are afraid to say things that might offend me.

But when I came out as a lesbian, I also left the cocoon of progressive Jewish life. Inadvertently, I came out as a

Rebecca T. Alpert, a Reconstructionist rabbi, is co-director of the Women's Studies Program at Temple University. Her book, Bread on the Seder Plate: Lesbians and the Transformation of Jewish Tradition, *is forthcoming from Columbia University Press.*

Jew in a less politically correct environment, a college campus. Contrary to right-wing rhetoric, students really do say whatever they think. Now when I teach women's studies classes, I do not come out as a lesbian; it is too dangerous. But I do come out as a Jew, and in this environment, I find out what young people are thinking. And what they are thinking, and saying, is mighty frightening.

One day, when teaching about the imperative within traditional Jewish life of charitable giving, or *tzedakah*, a student raised her hand and posed the following question: "How can you say that Jews give money as a religious precept? We all know how stingy Jews are." Now you might say that it was good that she said that; otherwise, how could I have had the opportunity to teach her to think differently? There is a point to that argument, to be sure. If we don't hear others' hateful and stereotypic notions, how can we combat them?

But I wonder if it was worth the price. Because her words were out there for others to hear, along with my words to combat them. And while several students challenged her anti-Semitism in the discussion, others spilled more poison into the conversation. Which words changed whose minds? I'm not sure. I do know that teaching that class had a profound effect on me, and the hurtful memories stayed with me. I wonder if this student even remembers the exchange.

Lest I appear totally righteous and capture only your pity for those of us who find ourselves victimized by those who mock political correctness, let me tell you about what happens to me when I'm in the position of having my own foot in my mouth; of not living up to my own standards of decency. I hope my strategies will prove instructive and useful.

Before I came out as a lesbian, I was indeed homophobic. That is to say, I experienced a sense of loathing at particular behaviors of my lesbian friends. These behaviors were not sexual ones; for many years before coming out I had erotic interests and sexual relations with girls and women. But the idea of a lesbian wedding, or lesbian friends having a baby, or even using the word "lesbian" to describe an identity made me very uncomfortable. In this case, my solution to my dilemma was to try it myself, and I must tell you it worked quite well.

While this suggestion may amuse you, let me remind you that Orthodox Jews suggest it frequently for their way of life. Just keep kosher for a few weeks, they say, and you'll see what joy it provides. I've tried that, too, by the way, with less success. But I believe the effort was crucial to my ability to sympathize with Jews whose existential choices differ from mine. Experimentation is important in our lives, if only to define better who we are and how we want to live. You never do know if you haven't tried. I am a great believer in the rabbinic injunction not to judge others until you've stood in their place. It helps temper one's righteousness a great deal, along with expanding one's horizons.

This strategy is not always possible or appropriate. I should not take on African-American cultural behavior in order to deal with my racism, for example. But that doesn't mean I can't learn as much as I can about other communities. While I can't stand in their place, it is important to me to listen to their perceptions about what their place feels and looks like and to respect their desires to name themselves.

That does not mean asking them to teach me. It was from African-American women that I learned that it is not up to them to educate white people. And, of course, I know that myself. While I may teach Judaism in a classroom or provide conversion lessons for those who are interested, I get really tired of answering questions like, "What is Reconstructionism?", when I sense that the people who are asking me have no real commitment to understanding beyond this conversational sound bite. I'd much prefer that they read the book on Reconstructionism I wrote, which requires that they spend some time thinking about the subject. Now I just commend it to people when they ask. And reading really is a good way to learn about other cultures. It opens up new awareness and allows you to see the multiplicity of a culture, rather than making one person be its representative for you. When you know something, or even a lot, about someone's culture and identity, it makes it easier to get to know them. And even to ask questions or say things that, if you are politically correct, you are at first afraid to ask.

So having done all that sort of work—reading, observing, living in a multicultural environment—I think I know a lot now about African-American culture. Enough to teach a race and gender course, for example. While I know I don't know everything, I know how to find out. Another rabbinic saying suggests we learn most from our students, and this semester that was the case. One of the class assignments was to write about their daily experiences, noticing the way race and gender work in their lives. At this working-class university, several students wait tables for a living. Several of the white students shared the same anecdote about Black customers leaving bad tips. Now how was I going to counter that stereotype? I never even heard it before. And being the PC type that I am, I just assumed it was slanderous. They probably say that about Jews too, after all.

During this time I was reading Bebe Moore Campbell's novel, *Brothers and Sisters.* The protagonist, Esther Jackson, is an African-American woman banker. Out to lunch one day with her white colleague, Mallory Post, Jackson notices that the waiter hands the bill to Mallory and talks only to her. What kind of tip would I leave if I had been ignored like that? So, screwing up my courage

and with my newfound knowledge, I asked an African-American friend about this. She said, yeah, many Blacks *are* lousy tippers. Some of it is the service, but some of it is a cultural thing. They see tipping not as something matter-of-fact, but as something that you earn with very good service (something blacks rarely receive).

The point of all this is that things that seem simple or exotic or alien or nasty about other cultures often are not. They are only different, can be explained logically, and deserve respect. So for me cultural relativism is O.K., but ethical relativism is not. I believe that people should not hurt other's feelings, and if they do they should take responsibility to educate themselves about why what they said was hurtful, admit their mistakes, and yes, apologize. And the people who were hurt might find it easier to forgive. □

A Positive Image

Meg Daly

The first time I fantasized about having sex with a woman was my sophomore year in college. Maria was a lesbian, African American, and a musician who more than stood out on our mostly white, pseudo-progressive liberal arts campus. She was known to lift her shirt while walking to class, revealing her bare breasts, and pronounce, "If men can do it, why can't we?" I'd reserved a little corner of my mind for her, into which I would crawl late at night and imagine kissing her, our bodies pressed together. To me, coming from a conservative, white, rural background, she was everything I wanted to be: brave, irreverent, sexy, independent. It was four years before I would actually say to myself, "I am a lesbian." When I came out, I was saying to the world that not only did I want to have sex and primary relationships with women, but also that I aspired to being a certain kind of woman, the kind of independent woman I had lusted after, someone who spoke her mind and did not live by society's rules.

Having been out now for several years, I am curious about the recently hyped chic-ness of lesbians, and the general titillation about homosexuality and bisexuality that pervades our media. Suddenly, it's hip to think, talk, look, and even be lesbian. Being gay is a cause célèbre. If you read The *Village Voice*'s "Women-to-Women" personals, you'll find half of them penned by "bi-curious" females. There's a sort of "try it, you might like it" sentiment floating around. And apparently women are trying it and liking it, just not always owning up to it.

In Sara Nelson's article in the February 1996 issue of *Glamour*, she interviews several straight women who have had lesbian affairs, but continue to identify as heterosexual. These women apparently want lesbian sex without the lesbian image. Many straight women are genuinely intrigued by the thought of exploring eroticism between women. Just because their fantasies don't lead to coming out doesn't discount the power of imagining or enacting erotic ties with other women. But it's important to differentiate between exploration and exploitation. Many lesbians feel exploited by straight women's romance with our sexual practices, angry that some women think they can play around for a night but never do any soul-searching. Many lesbians find it to be a form of heterosexual privilege for a straight woman to avoid claiming a sexual orientation.

I recently received a letter from an acquaintance, a straight woman, who reviewed my book, *Surface Tension: Love, Sex and Politics Between Lesbians and Straight Women*. In the letter, she expressed her difficulty writing the review. Apparently she liked the book, but ultimately questioned "the enduring concepts of lesbianism." I have not yet read the review, and so I'm not sure exactly what she means. I'm extremely intrigued! I rarely think about lesbianism as a set of concepts, much less an "ism."

The terms "lesbian" and "lesbianism" became popular in the late nineteenth century, used by sexologists to describe women whom they thought to be "sexual inverts" (men trapped in women's bodies who actively sought sexual relationships with other women). Is this the enduring concept that my reviewer alludes to? Or is the concept of lesbianism confusing for some heterosexual people today because the *content* of our relationships is largely missing in popular media? Recently, Candace Gingrich (the openly gay half-sister of Newt) made a cameo appearance as a minister officiating at the wedding of two lesbian characters on the sitcom

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"Friends." David Dunlap commented in The *New York Times* that Ms. Gingrich "was not heard to say, 'You may kiss the bride.' To either one." As a friend of mine put it, "It's like they wanted the lesbian image without the lesbian content." The marriage without the kiss. The lovers without the sex toys, the fingers, the fists. Harkens back to the days of "romantic friendship," before the sexologists, when it was socially sanctioned for women to form deep bonds and even live together for months on end. Sex between women was apparently inconceivable, and thus such friendships were not threatening to the male-dominated social order.

No wonder there is so much confusion about the concept of lesbianism. Lesbianism has been misconstrued as a political movement, or a style, or a fad, or an "alternative lifestyle." While we may be political and/or stylish, lesbians do not choose the double oppression of being gay and female. Earning less money than men and being subject to discrimination and violence due to our gender and sexual orientation is not glamorous. Being a lesbian is more than getting down with your good friend on the dance floor, or that sexy Guess ad in a magazine. Lesbians are more than what we wear. Our commitment ceremonies are not conducted to make our love more palatable to straight America, but rather to seal our bonds and give each other strength in a difficult world.

One paradox of our society is that each new step toward understanding and equality, while truly felt and explored by some, is squandered on billboards somewhere else. Just as some women are deepening their understanding of erotic bonds, so too are those bonds plasticized through advertisements, movies, and fashion.

Lesbians have been a source of intrigue for straight people much longer than since 1993, when k.d. lang appeared on the cover of *New York* magazine's "lesbian chic" issue. The porn industry has exploited sex between women for decades. Lesbian vampire movies abound, confirming deep-rooted fears about women's sexuality unleashed. Lesbian chic has come to mean good-looking androgyny, femme fatale, or Martha Stewart wholesomeness—in other words, still looking like a woman.

So what does a woman look like? For all these recent "positive" images of lesbians, straight America nevertheless is still scared of butch lesbians, or lesbians with "bad" hair, or lesbians who look like boys, or lesbians not wearing bras. It's not some of my past lovers you see on the cover of *Newsweek*. You see women who look like me—I can pass for straight or femme. (To make it worse, I wear almost exclusively Gap and J. Crew clothing!) How I look is safe. How several of my girlfriends look isn't always so safe—they get asked to leave the women's bathroom, they get called "Sir" by store clerks, they get spit on when a passerby realizes they are women.

I have this propensity for dating women who are mistaken for men. Let me clarify that: I have a propensity for dating women who are *perceived* to be men by *some* people. Something about androgynous women drives me wild. Funny thing is, I never seem to have any problem identifying androgynous-looking women as women. Call it gay-dar, call it hormones, call it being "in the life." Call it just having my eyes open.

Last year, I dated a self-identified butch woman I'll call Amy. Amy was also a large woman, and her presence was difficult to miss in any situation—something I admired and was attracted to. We both worked at a progressive company that champions the work of women and gay people. When I told my male coworkers about my new fling, they were visibly disappointed. My straight male friends didn't think she was my "type." Come to think of it, some of my lesbian friends were a bit surprised as well.

Maybe it was our class difference. Amy came from a working-class background, I am more middle class. Maybe it was her leather vest, or the heavy key chain at her waist. Maybe some of my friends were scared to imagine what Amy was doing with me late at night.

We were two of four lesbians in the office. Our romance did not last more than a month, but it certainly caused a stir. Everyone loved Amy. She's wonderfully gregarious and a true team player. Yet when she went on to date the ex-girlfriend of one of the men in the office, his boss intervened. The insinuation was that Amy stole a man's girlfriend. Apparently this big, butch lesbian had stepped just a bit too far out of progressive line.

In her article in the November/December 1995 issue of TIKKUN (also published in my anthology), Daphne Merkin ruminates about dildos. She just doesn't get it, why lesbians want to use these things. It seems to me that the crux of the issue surrounding acceptable images/portrayals of lesbians can be located in all this fuss about dildos. Merkin, like many other straight women, imagines lesbian sex in a certain light, sans dildo, sans penetration. Power dynamics and sexual tension within a relationship, however, have nothing to do with penetration. The dildo does not symbolize domination, nor is the ideal of lesbian love to erase power struggles. Lesbians are not children, not good little girls. Lesbians are full adult human beings who have their fair share of power struggles and baggage to muddle through, just like the rest of the world. And yes, some of us use dildos. Because it feels good. Simple as that.

But in straight imagination the dildo often represents

what is most frightening about lesbians—a woman taking on a male role. Because men are supposedly full of sexual prowess, and women are expected either to be recipients or teases, how then can two women have really active, wild sex? By acting like men? It's too difficult for many straight people to remove the heterosexual lens to understand lesbian sex.

The dildo is not a substitution for a penis, or male anything. A woman who uses a dildo is not a sexual invert. Maybe she wants to have a little fun. Maybe she even does sometimes wish she had a penis. I can guarantee you that women who imagine having a penis do not fall into any category of looks or dress or attitude or sexual orientation. Who of any of us, straight or gay, male or female, has *never* imagined what it feels like to have the genitals of the opposite sex?

Lesbian-created images of ourselves, our codes of sexy behavior and dress continue to be scarce within the larger society. Straight people often have antiquated notions about lesbian sexual practices, thinking that since there isn't a man present we just like to kiss and cuddle. I'm being very honest when I say my first reason for making love with a woman is *not* the softness of her skin. I feel erotically drawn to my girlfriend because of her strength, her tenacity, her wisdom, and her creativity. And yes, I'm also attracted to her body. The lesbians I know embody a way of being in the world that I find exemplary—women becoming fully themselves, making their own way, and creating their own images, concepts, art, literature, television programs, movies, journalism, and ceremonies. Look for us, we're not as invisible (nor as safe and pretty) as we're made out to be. □

Progressive Homophobia

Judith Plaskow

It feels impossible to write a column for TIKKUN without responding to the publication of Daphne Merkin's profoundly offensive and problematic essay, "A Closet of One's Own." Seeing the word "Lesbians" on the cover of the November/December 1995 issue, I immediately opened the magazine and turned to her article, only to be slapped in the face by the very first paragraph. Merkin's invocation of stereotypes, her prurient interest in lesbian sexual practices, and her acknowledged lack of acquaintance with any real lesbians immediately made clear that the piece was falsely advertised. The cover might better have read, "On Not Becoming a Lesbian" (her subtitle) or "Homophobia Unbound."

Merkin's article is difficult to reply to because her voyeuristic perspective seems to demand in exchange a level of sexual self-disclosure that would only invite further voyeurism. The perfectly legitimate and even interesting statement, *I* feel more emotionally connected to women but am sexually attracted to men, becomes in her hands, *lesbian* sex is missing something; *lesbian* relationships are dreary and inauthentic.



CYN MAURICE

If one begins from an understanding of female sexual experience as "all [one] has to do is lie down and submit," or seeks out men, even while distrusting them, in order to solve "the penetration problem," it might be difficult to imagine two women experiencing sexual pleasure together as part of a total relationship. But this is because Merkin consistently tries to press lesbianism into a heterosexual framework rather than to understand it on its own terms.

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Thus, her claim that sex requires an "antiphonal tension" that lesbian relationships lack presents as a fact of human nature what is actually a tenet of the cultural construction of heterosexuality. We are certainly socialized to believe that we are each incomplete without another of the "opposite" sex, that we cannot find delight in like meeting like. But do we really know that similarity is antithetical to desire, or that a complex balance of difference and sameness is not—at least for some people—the best aphrodisiac?

Moreover, insofar as difference and tension are important elements in sexual pleasure, human beings differ from one another in a great many ways. Variations in temperament, character, outlook, and worldview, in levels of energy and intensity, do not break down according to gender. There are many things that two people can desire and receive from each other, apart from a penis or a place to put it in. The unexamined assumption that women and men are each other's complements and opposites may actually short-circuit the exploration of the range of human differences, just as it may disguise basic similarity.

Lesbian (and gay) relationships provide a space for playing with many sorts of difference in contexts where difference is not marked in advance by dominance and subordination. It is just as silly to generalize about what is "missing" from lesbian sex on the basis of extrapolations from a sex shop and a pornographic movie as it would be to construct one's understanding of heterosexuality on the same foundations. Lesbian sex is not a doomed imitation of heterosexuality—and neither is sex all that lesbian relationships are about.

Merkin's speculations about the emotionally impenetrable experience of the lesbian "other" remind me of the day my eight-year-old son came home and asked if I knew what "Frenching" was. "It's when two people put their tongues in each other's mouths," he said, demonstrating quite nicely with the sleeves of his sweatshirt. "Yuk," he added, "disgusting." Just as I laughingly assured my son that he probably would come to enjoy "Frenching" some day, so part of me wants to say to Merkin, "Try it, you'll like it." Or, in the immortal words of singer and songwriter Alix Dobkin, "Every woman can be a les-bi-an."

I am concerned, however, not just about the shallowness of Merkin's self-revealing fantasies about lesbian sexuality, but also about TIKKUN's decision to publish her piece. Imagine an Israeli who admittedly knew no Palestinians, writing an article speculating on their family life, or a white who knew no Black people, writing on Black sexuality. It is virtually inconceivable that TIKKUN would have printed their work. So what was the substance of Merkin's argument that made it worthy of publication? Why are lesbians different? What's debatable and what isn't? What issues get counted as bottom line in defining a progressive commitment and perspective?

Curious about how TIKKUN has negotiated these questions in practice over time, I went through the last five years of the magazine and noticed something very interesting. In line with Michael Lerner's founding statement that TIKKUN would publish a "broad diversity of perspectives within the liberal and progressive communities," TIKKUN has, on most issues, encouraged debate within the parameters of a progressive consensus. In covering Israeli politics and U.S. domestic policy, for example, it has fostered lively disagreement about many issues, but—either because they have not been invited or because they refuse to write for TIKKUN—representatives of the settlers' movement or defenders of biological justifications for racism have not been included as part of the conversation.

In the case of homosexuality, however, the boundaries have been drawn differently. Thus a roundtable on sexuality in September/October 1993 included Reuven Kimelman, who strongly supported the primacy of the heterosexual family, arguing that the sanctification of loving homosexual relationships "will end up legitimating loving adulterous or pedophiliac relationships as well." In 1994, Kimelman was again given space to spout his reactionary, homophobic (and insultingly anti-male) views in response to the pseudonymous Yaakov Levado's piece on being Orthodox and gay. Then in the November/December 1995 issue, TIKKUN published Merkin's offensive meditations on why not to be a lesbian. The result is that, despite an editorial policy strongly supportive of gay rights, TIKKUN has allowed the very legitimacy and authenticity of homosexuality to become an issue in its pages. Presumably, these "dissenting" voices have made it into TIKKUN because they reflect the fears and divisions the issue of homosexuality evokes in the otherwise progressive Jewish community. The impact of these views is magnified, however, by the fact that TIKKUN has not made it a priority to solicit and foster debate on the wide range of interesting and important questions surrounding gay and lesbian identity and rights that might be discussed *within* a liberal or progressive framework. Let me mention just a few of these: gays vs. queers, or the strategic debate over "normalizing" gays and lesbians vs. highlighting the radical edge of the movement; the lesbian and gay baby boom and its implications for Jewish understandings of family; the relationship of gay Jewish institutions to the larger Jewish community (e.g., the exclusion of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, New

York's lesbian and gay synagogue, from the Israel Day Parade); the growth in anti-gay and lesbian violence; the emergence of gay and lesbian spiritualities; the flowering of gay and lesbian culture; the reality and rhetoric of AIDS, its treatment in the mainstream media, its impact on the Jewish community, its lessons for political organizing. The scanty, or, in many cases, complete lack of attention TIKKUN has given these issues made the heading "Lesbians" on the November/December cover doubly offensive. It led readers to expect that, at last, TIKKUN was publishing a piece on lesbian lives, when, instead, inside they found a series of slurs on lesbian sexuality and relationships.

TIKKUN's failure to address many of the substantive issues affecting lesbians and gay men has important implications that go beyond the impoverishment of the magazine's richness and range. The Right has made opposition to homosexuality a key plank in its "pro-family" platform and turned gays and lesbians into central symbols of the dissolution of the family and the breakdown of moral values. Any serious attempt to counter the Right must therefore analyze this rhetoric both as mask and substitute for other social and political issues and as a specific and pernicious incitement to hate. Moreover, the role of homosexuality in right-wing rhetoric makes it an important test case of TIKKUN's repeated argument that the Right ought not to have a monopoly on issues of family, and that, within the context of a progressive political agenda, it is possible to talk about family in new ways. The fact that TIKKUN has not seized the opportunities to put forward an expanded version of family provided by public debate about domestic partnership laws, lesbian and gay parenting and foster parenting, and Hawaii's impending legalization of gay marriage raises questions about whether its political vision is as inclusive as it claims.

Both Daphne Merkin and TIKKUN have a great deal to gain, then, from serious conversation with lesbians and gay men. Merkin might learn to take responsibility for her own sexual feelings and attitudes rather than projecting them onto a socially vulnerable other. And TIKKUN might discover a whole new area of interesting and lively conversation, at the same time demonstrating its commitment to foster debate within a progressive framework. □

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

(Continued from p. 8)

people demonstrating for weeks outside the store, protesting plans to expand the store in such a way that a popular neighboring record shop would have been evicted. Some of the demonstrators hurled anti-Semitic remarks at the Jews who lease or own this and other stores on 125th Street in the heart of the country's largest Black neighborhood. In response, the media were full of stories seeking to portray this disgusting act of terror, which resulted in the deaths of eight people, as another in the long list of episodes that exacerbate Black/Jewish tensions.

One might imagine this as the classic "Jewish bloodsucker," taking the profits he makes from the building he leased from a Black church and using them to build his Jewish community in Brooklyn. What, after all, is anti-Semitic or irrational about the community demanding that the stores that function in their neighborhood be responsive to that community's needs? If the community had a long history of good relations with the Black-owned record store, is it really irrational for them to protest the planned expansion, which would have deprived them of their freedom to buy from that record store?

But interpreting the behavior of these store proprietors as somehow acting as Jews is a distortion stemming from "the socialism of fools." Here we have a classic instance of people having legitimate grievances about the operations of the capitalist market and its principle of allowing the owner of money to make all the decisions without regard to the consequences for the community from which he derives his profits. Yet instead of framing the issue in this way, the ultra-nationalist protesters, drawing upon the distorted rhetoric recently popularized by Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, had allowed themselves to be dragged into anti-Semitic garbage that instantly allows the larger media to ignore their cause and to focus on their outrageous racism. Once legitimate grievances get channeled into anti-Semitism, the grievances will never be addressed, and the protesters lose all credibility.

Isn't it time somebody talked about the social responsibility of small shopkeepers? There are very many Jewish businessmen who are extremely sensitive to the communities in which they operate. Perhaps we need to learn from their example and generate a code of business ethics that could be used as a guide for our business people.

Yet doing that becomes extremely difficult at a moment when anti-Semites are talking about "Jewish bloodsuckers." The point that must be made repeatedly is that when there is economic bloodsucking done by Jews, it is not being done *because* they are Jews. They operate according to the very same principles that lead our largest non-Jewish corporations to do all they can to screw working people and the environment: the ethos of selfishness and materialism that shapes American society. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Book on Virtues

Jay Walljasper

A Call to Character: A Family Treasury, Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl, editors. HarperCollins, 1995. 456 pp. $25.

In an odd twist of the zeitgeist, it appears that storytelling may wind up as one of the issues of the 1996 presidential campaign. Not the tales traditionally told by the fireside or in the children's room of your public library, but the stories thrust upon us and our families by entertainment conglomerates like Time-Warner-Turner.

Bill Clinton made the topic a centerpiece of his State of the Union message this year, with proposals for ratings on television shows, the installation of "V-chips" in televisions to let parents control programming, and a media summit to find ways to improve children's television. Republican presidential hopeful Bob Dole first raised the issue in a speech last year, lambasting movie, television, and music moguls for polluting the minds of young Americans with a steady shower of violence and sex. At that time, the liberal camp responded with predictable fretting about censorship and the First Amendment, but it was only half-hearted. Quietly, when no one was looking, many progressives nodded their heads in agreement—although adding soulless materialism to the list of Hollywood's sins, and making an exception for sex if it wasn't shown to children under seventeen.

Dole's criticism struck an immediate chord across the political spectrum of the American public (the same people who fill the coffers of entertainment corporations by watching trash T.V. and purchasing all those movie tickets and CDs), which explains the


MAIRAV SALOMON

prominence Clinton gave this problem in his January speech. Democrats, and especially Bill Clinton, are so closely linked with entertainment industry money that White House strategists are also sure to dust off Second Lady Tipper Gore, who took an outspoken stand a few years back against sex in pop music. Overhearing Prince's ode to a girl masturbating in a hotel lobby, "Darling Nikki," Tipper grew worried about what sort of stories her kids were being exposed to on the radio and their boom boxes. She founded the Parents' Music Resource Center, which was instrumental in getting parental warning stickers attached to the shrink wrap on controversial CDs and cassettes.

The Republicans won't be able to crow too loudly at Clinton's links with the smut and gore purveyors of Hollywood since it turns out that Dole, who in many decades of political life had never previously met a powerful corporation he didn't like, sought and accepted large campaign donations from the same media giants he so ungraciously blamed for America's diminishing morality. The Christian Coalition and other right-wing lobbies are sure to keep the issue before the public, and I don't think we as progressives should let go of the topic either.

Clinton's initiatives, while worth considering, only touch the surface of the real problem of how children learn values and perceive the world through the lens of the media. For a deeper perspective on the problem, he should open a recent book that sheds new light on the question of family values. Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl get to the heart of the matter when they write, in the introduction of *A Call to Character*—their excellent new anthology of stories, folktales, poems, proverbs, and other gems of wisdom for today's families—that "many families don't find the time to sit down and read and talk with children, especially as they grow away from bedtime stories and the first few years of school. Too often TV commands the attentions of children and parents, and threatens to overwhelm their imaginations."

Kohl, winner of the National Book Award for children's literature and author of numerous books on education, and Greer, an author on education who now heads the New World Foundation and writes on social issues for *Parade* magazine, know the power of a good story. And they understand in a way that Bob Dole and Bill Clinton miss that the real issue is not simply the content of pop culture but who it is that tells the stories in our society. As the Scottish patriot Andrew Fletcher once said: "If one were permitted to make all the ballads, one need not care who should make the laws of a nation."

Gratuitous gunplay and nihilistic presentations of sex should concern us as citizens and parents, but they are part of a broader problem: the consol-

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idation of power and decision-making in the hands of just a few corporate chiefs for whom profit is the only thing that matters. Sex and violence sell, and so long as every aspect of our culture is held hostage to the mercy of the market, that is what our kids will learn from pop culture, along with instruction in how to worship wealth, consumer goods, technology, physical attractiveness, bare-knuckled ambition, raw power, self-indulgence, and greed. Rather than compliantly accept corporate control of our culture and then rage against what it inevitably produces, Greer and Kohl show us how to take back the role of storyteller and moral teacher from the media corporations—and provide a treasury of tales with which to get started. (The newly formed Cultural Environment Movement is also addressing this issue from a progressive perspective. Contact them at Box 31847, Philadelphia, PA 19104.)

We probably can't insulate kids from the unsavory excesses of American pop culture (and maybe wouldn't want to), but we can make sure that they know about other sources of values. If millions of American school kids absorbed the wisdom and decency of the stories in *A Call to Character*, the way kids a century ago learned lessons from *McGuffey's Reader*, then we'd begin to see changes in the economic and social conditions that spawn the vicious, amoral entertainment Bob Dole and Bill Clinton rail against.

A Call to Character is an antidote to the commercial culture's unending promotion of soulless self-interest as the American way, and better yet, it's a tonic that inspires youngsters to think for themselves about those human qualities that enrich everyone's lives. Each section of the book contains a dozen or so splendidly chosen selections illustrating a key value such as courage, self-discipline, loyalty, compassion, fairness, and responsibility. But it's not stern lecturing about staying on the straight-and-narrow; other chapters explore creativity, playfulness, balance, idealism, and love.

All the stories, expertly chosen and edited to be read to and discussed with pre-adolescents, evoke the subtlety and complexity of these topics. Brief introductions to the selections help frame the ideas and frequently point out the contradictions, challenges, broader contexts, and many facets of the material.

The stories themselves are a delight—Wilbur the pig's display of courage in *Charlotte's Web*, Frederick Douglass's thoughts on integrity, Albert Einstein's view of idealism, the Wizard of Oz and James Fenimore Cooper on empathy, Aesop and Ishmael Reed exploring adaptability, Alice Walker and Jane Austen depicting honesty, as well as Garrison Keillor, Lao Tzu, an Ojibway prayer, and Jewish sages celebrating compassion.

Please don't think of this as a book only for kids who need something more than Arnold Schwarzenegger and gangsta rap to guide them on the difficult passage from fourth grade to adulthood. You're never too old to unplug from the glitzy narratives of pop culture or up-to-the-minute harshness of the news for a few minutes and immerse yourself into the magic of these messages. A fifteenth-century Japanese folktale's two-page lesson on creativity has stayed with me longer and offered more insight and inspiration than most of the articles and short stories I've read recently, the videos I've rented, or the lyrics I've heard. My wife Julie, a community organizer, turned to *A Call to Character* for help in setting the tone for an important meeting in Pine Island, Minnesota, and found Francisco X. Alarcon's poem, "Promised Land," to read aloud at the event.

This treasury was conceived as a progressive answer to valuesmonger William Bennett's best-selling *Book of Virtues*—which attempted to corner the market on ethics and morals for the Right. It succeeds admirably at this, widening the notion of virtue to include a recognition of the importance of community, diversity, social justice, love, creativity, and the natural world. At the same time it serves as a wise reminder to progressives, who sometimes get all wrapped up in details of the latest activist cause or social theory, about the enduring worth of traditional values that have always guided those who would make the world a better place.

As Psalm 15, translated by Stephen Mitchell in *A Call to Character*, says:

Lord, who can be trusted with power,
and who may act in your place?
Those with a passion for justice,
who speak the truth from their hearts;
who have let go of selfish interests
and grown beyond their own lives;
who see the wretched as their family
and the poor as their flesh and blood.
They alone are impartial
and worthy of the people's trust.
Their compassion lights up the whole earth,
and their kindness endures forever. □

Gordon's Choice

Joan Baum

Sacrifice of Isaac, by Neil Gordon. Random House, 1995. 304 pp. $22.

No way would Stephen Spielberg likely film Neil Gordon's *Sacrifice of Isaac*—despite the invitation implicit in the novel's exotic camera sweep of Jerusalem in winter rain, Paris in the spring, Italy glorious in summer, and points sinister and sensual along a quest trail that drives characters south "into the always strengthening sun" to discover—uncover—their inheritance of the Holocaust. Gordon, who dismisses Spielberg's *Schindler's List* as a movie of "terrible moral simplicity," seeing "a more profound lesson" in the Holocaust, crafts a fascinating night journey that takes issue with zealots who would use this most heinous of horrors to justify man's ways to God. Publication of the novel could not have been better timed, arriving as it did on the half-century memorialization of the opening of the camps and on the eve of the give-back of West Bank territory. But such is the literary manner of the book's provocation that it also testifies to the power of art to advance the liberal imagination in ways that even the most fervent of essays often do not.

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Sacrifice of Isaac is a controversial book, an intensely felt first novel with a passion for peace and coexistence that will surely offend many on the religious and political right. It is also fine fiction, a clever, fast-paced international chase tale in the tradition of John Le Carré and Graham Greene, so compelling that the profundity at the heart of the matter is almost obscured. Only a political innocent, however, would ask why this dazzling, daring thriller is not better known, or why chances of its garnering a fat movie option are pretty slim. Ambiguity and ambivalence tend not to travel well off the page.

Besides, Gordon goes where most Hollywood angels fear to tread. War is Hell all right, as brilliantly shown in Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*— films of crushing beauty, safe in time. But *Sacrifice of Isaac* is made of riskier stuff. It is of the moment, a *cri de coeur* for rapprochement as renewal. Yet, it is no more didactic than the Old Testament, where stories originating in blood and trial resonate in subtle and mysterious ways, inviting rich and multilayered commentary. As in Camus's *The Stranger*, *Sacrifice of Isaac* plays out the descent into self against the heat of the day.

Like its biblical source in Genesis 22, which Gordon has called "a thriller at the most basic level," *Sacrifice of Isaac* might try one's faith. Perhaps it should, especially as it foreshadows the killing of Yitzhak Rabin—"a crime of biblical size," as Frank Rich put it in The *New York Times*. As has become painfully obvious, ideology can drug fanatics into acts of violence. Unpleasant facts, of course, are more readily acknowledged in "the other." In bringing terrible realities home, *Sacrifice of Isaac* may be said to anticipate the Rabin assassination by dramatizing the inevitability under certain conditions of political murder. Gordon says he expects to be both "understood and misunderstood—at the same time," in all probability an expectation devoutly to be met.

The book makes two difficult—perhaps disturbing—claims on a reader's conscience: 1) drawing on a view advanced by Camus (by way of the historian Raul Hilberg), Gordon suggests that all governments, all citizens during the War, Axis and Allied powers alike, contained "perpetrators, victims, and bystanders"—a historical perspective that will surely antagonize survivors; 2) accepting completely that "Jews were the prime object of the Nazi policy of genocide," *Sacrifice of Isaac* nonetheless argues that, fifty years later, this enormity should not, must not, become a cultivated memory that excuses or justifies extreme acts to redeem the promise of the promised land, a position that will strike many as heretical and obscene. Gordon diverges from *Shoah* (which he saw three times): Victims can become executioners and leave a dubious legacy. It is the children's voices that are heard in this tale, the cries of the post-war second generation.

That *Sacrifice of Isaac* successfully insinuates moral and psychological matters into a breathless suspense tale suggests that Gordon understands that seduction may be a surer means than confrontation to a desired end. To give the plot, however, is to give the plot away. Suffice it to say there is love and death in *Sacrifice of Isaac*, intrigue in at least five languages, and lore aplenty touching on art, archaeology, food, forgery (with a vengeance), the black market, forensics, travel, history, literature, philosophy, Lacanian psychoanalysis, biblical theory. Everybody smokes, drinks, inhales.

The story is told as a recollection that begins with the central character, Luke Benami, an Israeli-American living in New York, who receives a call that his father has just died. Luke, a translator, is moonlighting from his job at the U.N., doing French subtitles for James Joyce's *The Dead*. His father was the famous Israeli general Yossef Benami—statesman, professor, author, and Zionist war hero who devised the (still) secret Italian Passage by which hundreds of Jews were smuggled out of Vienna to Palestine in 1942. It seems the general has left half his estate to his disgraced older son Danni, who deserted from the Golan during the Yom Kippur War. Now Danni reportedly wants to sell his share, containing a fabulous art collection (thus killing the old man twice). After the state funeral, Luke takes a sudden detour to Paris, where a family friend says Danni was last seen. The arrival precipitates an extraordinary series of events involving mistaken identity, murder, blackmail, a stunning family secret, and mystery that darkens as it deepens.

The brothers have not spoken in years. Danni's desertion broke up the Benami marriage, and the mother, a psychoanalyst, who had spent four years in

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Tikkun March 96

Dachau, fled to New York with her younger son to keep him out of war. When Luke left for Israel in 1982, choosing to fulfill his army obligation, his mother killed herself. But long before her suicide, she and the general had quarreled bitterly over his most famous book, *Sacrifice and Symbolism*, an international bestseller. As the narrative unfolds, Luke, back in Israel, wonders why General Benami ("son of my people"—a name that proves terribly ironic), would have reinherited the exiled son. In an almost throwaway line, the family lawyer says, "*motek*—sweetheart—your father, all his life he went to the mountain, but only he knows what he heard." Indeed, *Sacrifice of Isaac* is suggestive of myths and archetypes: the prophet on the mountain, hostility between fathers and sons, the testing of faith, the claims of land, the force of guilt—its binding on generations, its significance in the building of the State.

Given its politics, it's surprising that the novel has not come in for harsh rebuke. Instead of provoking debate, *Sacrifice of Isaac* seems to have confounded many critics. Rumors abound that Gordon equates the Intifada with the Holocaust—not so—though a major character does express a sense of fraternity with Palestinians. The title also might give pause, for Gordon adopts the popular Christian term "sacrifice" to describe the testing of Abraham, when in fact the word used in Genesis, *Akedah*, translates as "binding." Moreover, Danni—a boy like other boys set to dreadful tasks by his elders, occupying refugee camps, rounding up Arab teenagers—not only is an army deserter without remorse or regret—he has become, in exile, a much-admired and successful criminal. Then there is the matter of love—Israeli men and non-Jewish women (is it mere coincidence that there seem to be no women reviewers of this book?) Nevertheless, *Sacrifice of Isaac* has received a generally good press, animadversions being directed for the most part not at its politics but at plot contrivance and particularly at point of view.

And therein lies a telling irony—what critics do not or will not see. For all its melodramatic excitement, *Sacrifice of Isaac* is at once a subtler and a rougher statement about postwar Israel than the critics have acknowledged. The subtlety comes from point of view, the harshness from explicit statement by the central character.

Praising *Sacrifice of Isaac* as a splendid literary thriller but faulting Gordon for using a relatively minor character as narrator, the critics would unwittingly sacrifice the book's subversive intent. In fact, says Gordon, point of view "made the story possible." Natalie Hoestermann, the teller of the tale, is the daughter of a former mid-level Nazi bureaucrat in the Austrian Department of Jewish Emigration. "This is what Luke told me," she says, in the book's opening line, but critics say she knows too much, given her slight presence and passive role. Only one reviewer, the novelist Leonard Kriegel, has expressed an unease that the author surely sought to effect: Gordon's choice to end the novel with an expression of brotherhood—in German.

Natalie may be peripheral to the main action, but she is hardly insignificant. Her speech bears the slight affect of translation—lest we forget her heritage. Her character, a literary conceit established in a highly stylized prologue, defines the book as a dialogue between a German woman and an Israeli man. Discounting her role is somewhat akin to bypassing Marlowe in *Heart of Darkness*, Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, or the "I" in Shelley's sonnet, "Ozymandias," a thrice-removed raconteur who tells of a sculpted ruin in the desert that silently testifies to pharaonic cruelty. It is precisely the "bystander"—the person who stands outside time or place—who is critical to the record—and the redemption—of history. "I just don't believe that the Holocaust was ever about 'them and us,' you know?," says Luke. "It was always about *us*, all of *us*."

Conversation perhaps still too explosive for life is thus realized in fiction. Gordon would restore—through literature—the "great Israeli tolerance for dissent" threatened by Kahane Chai and other right-wing extremists. The German point of view not only gives the author distance from his passions but is calculated to prompt debate. "Everyone is guilty," says the charming con artist Peter Chevejon, Danni's business partner in crime, a perspective that both widens the net and diminishes the significance of the capture.

What price heroism? Suspicions about the general's Italian Passage slowly emerge, dark secrets teased out by intuition and detective work. Danni's library is, surprisingly, filled with Judaica, treatises on the Holocaust and the war, his father's works, his mother's. Luke reads hungrily. Meanwhile, sinister figures lurk in shadows, lunge, disappear. The past seems to be in conspiracy with the present. Art imitates life imitates art. Luke's quest takes him to the Uffizi Gallery to confront Caravaggio's "Sacrifice of Isaac." The painting is reproduced on the paperback of his father's book, *Sacrifice and Symbolism*, and a clever jacket designer at Random House has continued Gordon's recursive game: five small squares of the Caravaggio sit like puzzle pieces on the cover of *Sacrifice of Isaac*—the head of Abraham, the knife poised near flesh, a ram's head, the head of Isaac in dead-eyed terror, the arm and finger of the angel. Readers may shudder to remember the etymology of the word "holocaust"—burnt offering. What did Abraham know and when did he know it?

Themes of fathers and of fatherland come together. Politics is no more purely political than politically pure. Yossef Benami's destiny was set long before the war, when at the age of sixteen he ran away to Palestine, repelled by the passivity of Viennese Jews to anti-Semitism and rejecting his own father's assimilationism. The patriotic and the patriarchal merged. The general honed his heroism to a hard edge, moving away from his wife, for whom nothing could mitigate or ennoble suffering. To Yossef Benami, the substitution of a symbolic ram for human sacrifice in the Genesis story signaled the beginning of Western civilization. To Judi Benami, his wife, the story dramatized the displacement of the impulse to kill, whose denial only guaranteed its reenactment. The epigraph to this second section of the novel, from the poet Kenneth Patchen, is telling. So is the year—1941: "The question is not: do we believe in God? But rather: does God believe in us? And the answer is: only an unbeliever could have created our image of God; and only a false God could be satisfied with it."

What price country? Luke tells Peter, his brother's co-conspirator, that Benami would not accept his sons' refusal to buy into the "heavy Holocaust indoctrination" of wanting to die for Israel; that the general could not grasp that he and his sons "did not live under the same threat, under the same necessity." He never got it, Luke says: "We *did* understand, only we weren't having it." The sharpest arrow is then released: "To excuse a police state because of the

Final Solution is bullshit; the precise opposite should be happening."

It seems incredible that critics have given no hint of this savage diction. Gordon has been artful, containing (in all senses) an inflammatory section in the midst of suspenseful action. Fiction frees authors to say anything. Here, in narrative at second remove—Natalie recounting what Peter said, Peter recounting his conversation with Luke—Gordon delivers an indictment of the Israeli Occupation and of what he sees as the dubious moral imperative behind it. "Ever seen the Gaza Beach Internment Camp? Or Ketsiot? Or Far'ah?" Luke asks. "Ever seen the border guards in East Jerusalem? Or West Bank fundamentalists—the Kahane Chai types? Then you get this shit about Germans and Nazis, fuck that." From this point on, the expletives increase. "You show a Star of David and a swastika in Jericho, no one'll notice the difference, and that's a travesty, a travesty of what the Holocaust means." It is not the Holocaust that is in dispute, says Gordon, but our "proper reaction" to it. There is indeed a proper reaction, and "it should inform every fucking minute of our lives. Every minute. But it's not self-righteousness—not even righteousness at all." It's compassion—depending on your interpretation of the binding of Isaac, of course.

In his review, Leonard Kriegel referred to Benami's terrible secret from the past as a Gordian knot that Luke—and, by extension, the Jews—must cut. The reference is apt but requires explication. A Gordian knot is an intricate problem, not solvable on its own terms. The knot on Gordius's chariot, tying yoke to pole, is of such complexity—its ends hidden from view—that he who would be the future ruler of Asia—Alexander the Great— severs it with his sword. If knots could be undone and (hidden) strands detected, future knots might be prevented. But, of course, there is never world enough, and time—time's wingèd chariot is always at our back. Compensation for the Holocaust? There is none. The Holocaust haunts Jews as no other event in history. Only the insensitive would allow the word generic application.

The assassin Yigal Amir might have said he was doing God's work (itself a dubious explanation), but the extremist words flung at Rabin prior to the assassination came from the Holocaust. The "peace process" is, for some, synonymous with betrayal, and code for an abhorred Rabin-Peres peace plan. Betrayal of what? Of God's mandate? Of man's passion to redress man's inhumanity to man, 1939-1945? Everyone is sincere, but who—or what—is authentic?

Those angered by Gordon's cutting of the knot that binds the historical past to the political present, the Holocaust to the future of Israel, will be tempted to label him politically correct—and worse. But the value-added tax that Gordon puts on literature as criticism of life places him squarely in a liberal tradition discredited by P.C. No deconstructing relativist, Gordon takes an absolute stand on the uniqueness of the Holocaust. His quarrel is with its subversion to suspect messianic purpose. His book should not be sacrificed on the altar of critical cowardice. The medium is indeed the message: Israel has been—and will remain—the thinking person's adventure. □

Reading Genesis

Daniel Boyarin

Genesis:The Beginning of Desire, by Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg. Jewish Publication Society, 1995, 456 pp., $35.

One version of the commonplace that there are seventy faces to Torah has it that each face is revealed in a different generation. If that be so, then it might fairly be said that the face for our generation is the literary, not as a reduction of the text from its status as Holy Writ or even revelation—the "Bible as Literature" paradigm—but for what literary analysis can reveal of meaning and structure that is left unread, using other modes of interpretation. The literary methods have, moreover, providentially provided a "postmodernist" answer to "modernist" historical/critical methods that fragmented the text and left it nonexistent except as a window to other, reconstructed prior texts (the documentary hypothesis) or reconstructed histories. Just as methods drawn from the Arabic grammatical tradition or early modern rhetoric once informed Jewish Bible interpretation, now tools of analysis of the New Critics, the New Historicists, feminists, and psychoanalysts aid those who search the Scripture for meaning(s).

In the last decade or so, Aviva Zornberg has established herself in Jerusalem and—through teaching tours—beyond as the premier contemporary teacher of Torah (Bible) through literary analysis. Although a written text could never live up to the magic of her *shiurim* (teaching), we are nevertheless privileged to see the publication of the first volume of her interpretive work.

It is perhaps characteristic of our postmodern moment that where once scholars, critics, and interpreters strove above all to divine order within apparent disorder, reading disorderly texts as the signs and remnants of orderly ones (source criticism) or as the verbal icons of ambiguity (new criticism), we now, in Zornberg's words, seek "to detect the intimations of disorder within order, instability within stability, the tensions evoked by questions about human life and the search for God that the midrash expresses to such ambiguous effect." Somehow, disorder in our texts, even in our sacred ones, has become a source of

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great comfort to us, as if it somehow validated and made bearable the disorder in the world around us.

The univocal modernist Bible has become a forbidding one; its meanings are clear, so it bespeaks to us oppressions, social and intellectual, dogmatism and doctrines that we, no longer in any simple sense of the word, can "believe." Zornberg's literary, postmodern reading of the Torah restores it as unfinished, unclear, deeply engaging in its mysteriousness, not forbidding at all. Thus, for instance, rather than reading the Esau/Jacob narrative as the working out of a divinely ordained destiny for the Jewish people, basing herself on midrash and classical Jewish commentaries, Zornberg creates for us an exquisite meditation on power and powerlessness, one in which the imperfections of Jacob and the attractions of Esau are ever-present. Instead of the reductions of both scholarship and homily, her discourse reproduces the ambiguities and mysteries of the text itself. The Bible is transformed in her hands to a great work of literature, not because it is "beautiful," but because of the expressive manner in which its multiple layers of meaning are disclosed.

Zornberg's work is accordingly a good guidebook for a postmodern religious quest. And it is, perhaps, ultimately this characteristic, in addition to the sheer creativity and brilliance of her teaching of Torah, that has made her the mentor that she is.

Let me conclude this brief account of a superb book by giving one example of how Zornberg's reading "works." With reference to the verse that states, "Isaac loved Esau, because game was in his mouth" (Gen. 25:28), Zornberg comments:

> The Zohar makes the most challenging comment, undercutting our vague assumption that this love is a case of "attraction of opposites," that the blind recluse needs the lusty, outdoors energy of Esau to nourish some inward hunger. On the contrary, the Zohar claims, "Everyone loves his own kind—one who is similar to himself." What Isaac loves in Esau is precisely the hunter, the alienated "disintegrated consciousness" of one for whom all the "noble" privileges and promises of life have dissolved in blood.
>
> Isaac recognizes the fury evoked by animal life: the desire to extirpate what has no proper existence. In his own case, existential helplessness led to withdrawal, to a rigid respect for the priorities and structures of the given world. To Isaac, the spectacle of Esau's despair turned to destructiveness suggests a passion for truth, an intolerance for palliatives, a kind of tortured authenticity. To Isaac, Esau is the analytical mind, obsessed with the unreality of existence. A figure of Byronic melancholy, Esau appeals to his father's heart: this is a son who deeply needs blessing from a father who, despite all external differences, intuits the rhythm of his despair.
>
> The paradoxical similarity of Isaac and Esau is indicated by the notation of "the field." Isaac is first encountered by Rebecca, "meditating in the field toward evening" (24:63). "Meditating" translates the word *la-suah,* for which many translations are offered, ranging from "walking among the shrubbery" (*sihim*) to "praying." The more mystical understandings of the phrase include in their palette the melancholy coloring of "toward evening," and the midrashic decodings of "the field" as referring to Mount Moriah, the site of the *Akedah.*
>
> What emerges from such a subtle layering of meaning is a portrait of Isaac imprinted with the deep death-knowledge of his Binding, face turned toward the dying of the light, darkly narrating his story to God. The field in which Isaac walks he transforms into the language of prayer. The field of Esau's darkness, however, is a field of silence; the tension of ambush, the release of bloodshed provides the illusion of a vital heartbeat in emptiness. Isaac's love for Esau is a knowing love that seeks to bless—that is, to animate and populate—that emptiness. (p.163)

This is, I submit, a rich and beautiful translation of the somewhat alien expression of both Bible and midrash into a language that we can read, and, in the next sentence, we find Isaac interpreted through a comparison to Walter Benjamin's essay on Baudelaire as wanderer. This is not a book to be read but to be studied, slowly, week by week, as each of the Torah's portions is encountered, a modern midrash in its own right. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Richard Ford and The Fall of America

Mark Shechner

Independence Day, by Richard Ford. Alfred A. Knopf. 451 pp. $24.

If we are in fact living through one of the great flowerings of American social fiction, as I believe we are, is it not strange that we are hard-pressed to single out those novels that sum up the era or to anoint one or two signature writers as *our* laureates? Consider this representative list of the social novelists who are currently out there and more or less actively writing. In no particular order, they are: Dorothy Allison, Barbara Kingsolver, Madison Smartt Bell, William Kennedy, Louise Erdrich, Toni Morrison, E. Annie Proulx, Tim O'Brien, Bobbie Ann Mason, Jayne Ann Phillips, Richard Ford, Robert Olin Butler, Thomas McGuane, Amy Tan, Russell Banks, Robert Stone, Richard Russo, Louis Begley, Jane Smiley, Richard Price, Tom Wolfe, Norman Rush, John Edgar Wideman, Charles Johnson, Leslie Marmon Silko, and James Welch.

And yet, who among these or among the previous generation of writers could be thought the defining writer of our day, the Twain, the Melville, the Dreiser, the Hemingway? Philip Roth? John Updike? Tom Wolfe? The Nobel Laureates, Saul Bellow and Toni Morrison? I would be hesitant to say so, though maybe such a foreshortening of statures is only the normal distortion of perspective that prevents us from seeing greatness plain when it is so close at hand. But, for the moment, it does seem we are not quite in a golden age of fiction. I don't think it unreasonable, however, to take this for a silver age, with gifted and ambitious writers in abundance and a body of work that, collectively, will hold its head up with that of any era, including the American Renaissance, or the spasm of modernism that gripped literature just after World War I, or the age of Bellow-Styron-Mailer-Baldwin-Capote, which is now ending.

In short supply is the great tragic theme. Tragedies on the epic scale—the Russian, the Jewish, the Polish, the Rwandan scale—haven't befallen the United States since the Civil War. If there is any note we find it unnatural to strike, it is the note of utter ruin and, with it, the pity and terror that come from knowing how easily we slip into savagery. This absence of a single national tragedy has undoubtedly sharpened the profile of minority writers, African-American and Native-American in particular, whose tragic histories remain livid in memory and inscribed in the ongoing crises in their cultures. Such writers seem paradoxically to be privileged with catastrophic histories, much as, two generations ago, Jewish writers once appeared to be privileged by the Holocaust. Toni Morrison is not the most writerly author in America, but it was not for her mastery of the formal tools of fiction that she was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1993. It was in recognition of her stubborn engagement with slavery, one of the black chapters in American history. When her novel *Beloved* was published in 1987, there may have been a dozen other novels to stand alongside it in terms of writing alone, but scarcely any touched similar bottom in the nightmare of history.

But what, we may ask, are other writers doing for bedrock while the African- and Native-Americans are exhuming their histories? Are all others consigned to the minor leagues of the merely individual or purely anecdotal, being connected to no major horror save those they can work up by research—as Madison Smartt Bell has just done with *All Souls' Rising*, his novel of the slave rebellion in Haiti-or conjure up out of the collective unconscious, where Dracula, Freddie, and velociraptor are alive and well, and evil is just greasepaint and spirit gum and film noir lighting?

I would suggest that all American writers share a certain bad news in common, news bad enough to be the great subject of our time: the decline and fall of America, and if it is not always there as a theme, it seems to be everywhere as a gray nimbus of foreboding. One sees writers either captive to the temper of decline or trying to tame it into material. It's not easy: Our particular mode of decline lacks all tragic grandeur, and characters tend to fade rather than crack. "Not with a bang," our motto might be, "or even a whimper, but with a slow leak, like a tire going flatter each day."

When we first heard from Richard Ford in the 1970s, he was a "minimalist" writer and an epigone of Raymond Carver, who was then fiction's resident prophet of the slow leak, the bottoming out whose sole consolation was that there were still bottoms to go beneath today's bottom. Some of the most memorable literary images to come out of the 1970s were from Carver, whose slender vignettes of life at the end of the road or the bottle were personalized enough to be case histories and yet representative enough to be symbols. His lives of quiet desperation seemed like reports back from a battlefront that was just around the corner, if not seated in the living room. And that was the 70s, before things got really bad. Minimalism remained in vogue for about two decades, leaving behind habits of compression and concision, a fashionable understatement, a bleak meticulousness of form, and a vision of Americans as a diminished people: tight-lipped and closed-minded, trudging wearily toward defeat or stricken entirely, short on self-reflection and self-esteem, drained of *elan vital* before they can even start.

Ford made his debut as an evangelist of this entropy, of shabby and disreputable lives out in the boondocks of Mississippi, the interstates of Wyoming, the motels of Montana. Ford's characters and their misfor-

Mark Shechner is professor of English at SUNY, Buffalo. He is currently working on a book on the revival of nativism in American fiction.

tunes appeared to arise out of a documentary inclination: to deliver the news about America's white underclass, whose lives of drift and grift, petty hustling and honky-tonk heartbreak are sometimes lamented, often raised to glory in country music. These lives were marginal; they were sad, and they were all around us. Ford's first novels, *A Piece of My Heart* (1976) and *The Ultimate Good Luck* (1981), read like stretched-out Carver stories, laconic tales of fruitless endeavor, infused with the spirit of bad luck and trouble, in which a man might try vainly to rescue an ex-girlfriend's brother from a Mexican prison (*The Ultimate Good Luck*) or get shot for running around with another man's wife (*A Piece of My Heart*) and pretty much get what he bargained for. Those informal ethnographies of nowhere-in-particular were not major novels so much as early studio work. Not until the publication of Ford's collection, *Rock Springs and Other Stories* (1987), was the bleak singularity of his low-rent vision fully in evidence.

In the *Rock Springs* stories, Ford documented the misfortunes of petty criminals on the run in stolen sedans; of wives walking out in the dead of night and of husbands turning up armed and impotent; of ex-boyfriends on the way to prison and the new boyfriends who drove them there; of runaway teenage girls who removed their clothes for small favors. Husbands stepped out on their wives as easily as they stepped out for a beer, and women drew down their pants to display the tattoos on their buttocks. Now and then one man would kill another. Life was always in transit; the rented room was home, and lovers were grateful to make it through the night. And while this was clearly "material," gotten the way material always is, by careful attention and research, Ford seemed to know these people. His stories felt authentic, experienced from within, whether they were so or not. It was also apparent that Ford was not just recycled Carver. He lacked Carver's spit-shined surfaces and obsession with whittling life down to HO-gauge, a scale that seemed equal to its capacities. Ford's style was more limber and his plots more ragged and improvisational, as if he, like his characters, were making them up as he went along. There was more larceny and nastiness in his characters; what the bar and detox center were to Carver, the prison was to Ford.



MAC MCGILL

Nowhere, however, in those early novels and stories did Ford attempt to blame the state of his characters on the state of the union. Ford people were candidates for Prozac or rehab or Montana's Deer Lodge prison, not for the scrap heap of history. They were losers, not a defeated social class. Low lives and mean destinies were just the fate of some people, and when, at the end of *A Piece of My Heart*, Robard Hewes is shot for being where he shouldn't be, well, that's his hard luck. These failures added up to "just low-life, some coldness in us all, some helplessness that causes us to misunderstand life when it is pure and plain, makes our existence seem like a border between two nothings, and makes us no more or less than animals who meet on the road—watchful, unforgiving, without patience or desire" (from the story, "Great Falls").

And yet, even as Ford was perfecting this style of scrupulous meanness, he was preparing to shed it, not unlike Carver, who, in his late stories conceded that some American lives really did have second acts. In *The Sportswriter* in 1986, the year before *Rock Springs*, Ford was trying out a new voice: more upscale, more robust, more self-aware.

The Sportswriter was a break with the Ford monotone, an effort at a fully chromatic social novel, for which Carver seemed less the spiritual godfather than Updike. If "born to lose" was no longer the theme music, then it was "bewitched, bourgeois, and bewildered." Much in *The Sportswriter* and its sequel, *Independence Day*, could have been trucked in from Updike country, the small-town, mid-Atlantic world in which to be alive is to be pressed to the wall. We have the distress flares arising from behind white picket fences; the heartsore pitchmen hawking their wares in the land of the pitch and the home of the deal—Toyotas by Updike's Harry Angstrom, real estate by Ford's Frank Bascombe (in *Independence Day*)—fathers in a funk and sons on the attack; egos on the line and libidos on the loose.

Frank Bascombe, brought back as a real-estate salesman in *Independence Day* during the bear market of 1988, is a typical Ford depressive who doesn't know where his next high time is coming from. A fiction writer manqué and one-time sportswriter, he has left dreams, careers, and a family back down the line somewhere. But he is a suburbanite with a home and a white-collar job; he has a girlfriend and a head blithering with speculations, and he has plenty of company: an entire economy that is getting gang tackled by the bear market. His low spirits now look to be representative; his "I" has overtones of "we." *Independence Day* is pointedly a "decline of America" novel, not just a book of declining Americans.

If Ford's earlier books annotated the underside of the American Dream, *Independence Day* records an American Dream that is nothing but underside. *Independence Day* picks up Bascombe six years after *The Sports-*

writer. At forty-four, he has entered his Existence Period, an interlude of "not letting whether it is or whether it isn't worry you—as loony as that might be." The ex-wife is remarried and gone off to Connecticut, and son Paul is in hot water. At fifteen, he has taken to barking like a dog, in memoriam to a dead pet; he has been arrested for stealing condoms from a drugstore, and he has just assaulted mom's new husband. His mother is eager to get Paul off her hands for a while, and Frank is planning to whisk him away for the July Fourth weekend, taking in as many sports halls of fame in a forty-eight-hour period as possible, meaning the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. This is a basic father-son bonding rite and a setup for a fall.

The sound track to this personal crisis is big-league violence, as one of Bascombe's fellow realtors is raped and stabbed in a condo she was preparing to show; a double killing takes place at a suburban motel where Bascombe stops for a night, and Bascombe himself has been assaulted on the street by boys on mini-bikes. Though integral to the portrait of America in crisis, such mayhem is only background, as an alloy of economic collapse and middle-class spiritual distress occupies the foreground. "Falling property values now ride through the trees like an odorless, colorless mist settling through the still air where all breathe it in, all sense it...." Ford has taken low spirits out of the general ether and plugged them into the Dow-Jones, as if to say that Frank Bascombe, unlike past Fordians, suffers from COLID, Cost of Living Index Disorder.

Independence Day is a thematic grab bag, in which economics, sex, aging, property, day-to-day coping, and a metaphysics of life-on-the-back-burner scurry across the computer screen like fractal shapes just this side of chaos. Central to the economic theme is property: There are either bum properties or bum prospects or bum tenants, and a real-estate agent is reduced to spending his days as a cheerful pitchman for properties he can't move to people he can't bear. Indeed, in a painful side drama, Bascombe buys two rental properties in a middle-class Black neighborhood, only to discover that one is unrentable while rent on the other is uncollectible, as he is confronted at the door by a militant tenant carrying a gun.

This story remains unresolved, as Ford, sensible about his own limitations, walks away from a plot that can only lead him into cliché or bad faith. Ford doesn't know Black people well enough to allow them their own profiles and particularities. He does know whites and how they behave in their desperate moments, and what he does with Joe and Phyllis Markham, prospective buyers who run him in circles, is beyond anything Ford could have permitted himself with Black characters.

The Markhams are 1960s flotsam washed up on the shore of the 1980s, after years of kayaking around in their own private Sargasso Sea and winding up as prosperous craftworkers in Vermont. Now, looking for a place to go cautiously upscale and secure decent schooling for their daughter, the Markhams have zoned in on Haddam, New Jersey, and found their way to Bascombe. Joe Markham is a salty-talking "little bullet-eyed, short-armed, hairy-backed Bob Hoskins type" while Phyllis is a "plump, copper-haired, slightly bulgy-eyed housewife" with eyes for her realtor. And because their own lives are in shambles, all that is behind the scenes bubbles over onto the house hunt, as the Markhams pour their guts all over Bascombe. Joe Markham says, "'I didn't want to wake up one morning....and be a fifty-five-year-old asshole with a bandanna and a goddamn earring and nothing to talk about but how Vermont's all fucked up since a lot of people just like me showed up to ruin it'."

Fascinated by this self-salesmanship and desperate to keep up a smiling front and get his commission, Bascombe shows the Markhams fifty-six properties, in a series of encounters that take up some eighty pages of the novel, even after Joe Markham confesses the truth: "'The reason we haven't bought a house in four months is that I don't *want* to goddamned buy one. And the reason for that is that I don't want to get trapped in some shitty life I'll never get out of except by dying.'" The Markhams, with their tantrums and moon howls, their cabin fever and Vermont heebie-jeebies, bring an anarchic fizz into the book. They are upstagers and limelight hogs, who highlight a problem in the book that Ford is helpless to solve: the Bascombe problem.

Frank Bascombe departs from the Ford monotype in his running interior monologue that boils over with real-estate lore, rueful thoughts on divorce and its aftershocks, and a metaphysics of low emotional voltage. His mind is like a terminal moraine left by a receding glacier. Otherwise, he is standard Ford issue: a cold shower of a man whose capacity for unpleasantness is in no way compensated by the stream of consciousness that seems to know everything, even as he speaks in banalities. Telling readers everything we ever wanted to know about housing stock, from "Second Empires and bracket villas ... with cupolas and belvederes" to mullioned windows and crown moldings, he is a robot of glibness to the Markhams, an automaton of denial to the girlfriend, and a Polonius of confused manifestos to his own son. When his ex-wife reveals her most lasting recollection of the marriage, that "'you were never entirely there,'" she confirms the reader's suspicion: that Bascombe's "existence period" is really a chronic case of anesthesia. Puzzled by his own failure to be thrilled by his girlfriend, Bascombe muses, "'Possibly this is one more version of "disappearing into your life," the way career telephone company bigwigs, overdutiful parents, and owners of wholesale computer companies are said to do and never know it. You simply reach a point at which everything looks the same but nothing matters much. There's no evidence you're dead, but you act that way.'" And here he is after all—the familiar emotional vagrant of Ford's earlier writing, only smarter and more clued-in to himself.

Is this not depression: The world fills you up as your spirit, your will, your elan, are emptied out? Bascombe seems at times an idiot savant of moldings, fanlights, columns, and flutings; he takes on the consistency of what is around him, as though he were a vacuum to be filled by the minutiae of his profession. One is hard-put to know whether this reflects a defect in Ford's ability to give backbone to a character, or a shrewd insight into the depressed spirit in a consumer economy.

Meanwhile, the careening plot, which finds Bascombe taking his son to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, where the boy gets beaned by a pitching machine, becomes secondary to Bascombe's state of mind, being a product of that state of mind. What happens takes a back seat to what *is*, in this case the pursuit of happiness in a world designed to disappoint, where your job is to ward off entropy and not let things get worse

than they are. "'*A market economy, so I've learned*,'" thinks Bascombe, "'*is not even remotely premised on anybody getting what he wants. The premise is that you're presented with what you might've thought you didn't want, but what's available, whereupon you give in and start finding ways to feel good about it and yourself*" (italics mine). Bascombe takes his own lesson to heart, cutting back on expectations and going with the sluggish flow.

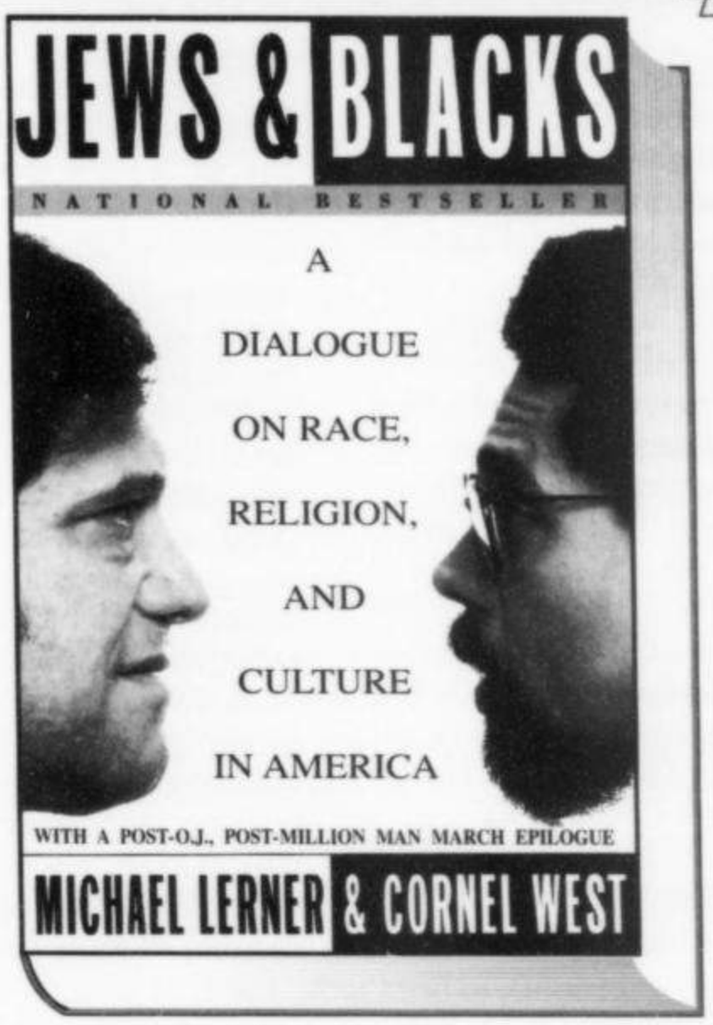
But the psychology of this suburbia of the spirit goes beyond scaling back expectations; it demands a downsizing of the self, in anticipation of humiliations to come: in sales, in housing, in love, in marriage, in parenting. And there is murder out on the street to remind you that you are blessed to be simply divorced, dissatisfied, and alive. You hunker down and practice the shrug of disappointment suffered in advance. Life is elsewhere.

The end of the novel is not crucial, since all endings have the same moral value once your destiny is out of your hands—when "conditions" rule. It is good news for Frank Bascombe that Paul will survive his beaning and not lose his vision, and that the ex-wife, Anne, relents a tad and forgives Frank his derelictions. The girlfriend is on hold, and the Markhams will rent Bascombe's own unrentable house. Not the worst of all possible endings, which is as much as we dare hope for.

Still, life is elsewhere. If that was the subtext of Ford's earlier fiction, now it is the mantra. Where *Independence Day* departs from its predecessors is not in any more vigorous scrabbling after life, but in a more poignant awareness of its passing, an opening of the passive and awestruck mind to the spectacle from which it stands apart. Existence periods, interludes of no gain and no loss, are now tolerable because in downsizing America, just treading water puts you distinctly ahead of the game. That would make of Frank Bascombe a hero for a time of less equals more and *Independence Day* the great novel of stasis, raising damage control to a battle hymn and turning a depressed and passive man into a soldier of keeping total ruin at bay. □

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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

as a generation to treat our fellow human beings with humanity forces us to reevaluate our relationship with God as well.

Our charge must be to search ourselves to find the best that is within us. Then we must highlight those characteristics as the attributes that we find in God. When we long for the loyalty of a close friend, we will find a God who is ever loyal. When we hope for the empathy that can only come from an involved partner, we will find a God who understands and who shares our journey. When we are inspired by great creativity, we will find our Creator. When we can create a society that is merciful, caring and loving then we will have created a God that is merciful, caring and loving as well. As the ability to change is within each of us, so too it is within God and that is the aspect that is most divine of all.

Rabbi Jay M.Stein
Highland Park, Illinois

To the Editor:

I felt very encouraged by the number of Orthodox Jews participating in TIKKUN'S roundtable on the Rabin assassination who seemed morally sensitive and alive. I could tell from your editorial comments that you wished there had been more. But for me, someone who has almost automatically associated "Orthodox" with "intolerant" or "chauvinistic" or "militaristic," it has been an eye-opener to read statements from Orthodox Jews which seem to reflect the same nuanced struggles with moral issues that many of us in other branches of Judaism face. Someone recently told me that TIKKUN has the reputation of being too radical for most people in the Jewish establishment, and I had to laugh, because you seem to me to be doing the kind of work in highlighting voices of moral sensitivity in all branches of Judaism that is precisely what the Jewish establishment ought to be valuing most.

Warren Olnitz
Boston, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Your collection of articles about the Rabin assassination is more than worth the price of a year's subscription to TIKKUN. I don't always get a chance to read everything in the magazine, but I hungrily read these articles, painfully aware of how quickly the whole issue has faded from public consciousness even though it still gnaws at my heart. I found the range of responses, the styles of engagement with the issues, and the depth of insight of many of your writers quite striking. I was particularly moved by Akiba Lerner's experiences facing the situation from the standpoint of the conflicts that arose for him in the Israeli army, Steve Lipman's grappling with what it meant to him as an Orthodox Jew, and Ze'ev Sternhell's important insights about why peace often seems like giving up everything about Zionism to some Israelis.

Norma Doberman
Austin, Texas

AFTER O.J. AND THE FARRAKHAN MARCH

To the Editor:

At one point in your recent dialogue with Cornel West (November/December 1995), West states, "On the Jewish side, you have direct analogies of Farrakhan with Hitler, also inaccurate." I am not Jewish, but I reply, "Yes and No."

In the 1920s, when the young NAACP sought to extend civil rights for Blacks, the Black nationalists were in opposition. The leading Black nationalist organization of that era, the Universal Negro Improvement Association was headed by Marcus Garvey. Not only did Garvey revile the NAACP's W.E.B. DuBois as a mulatto, and insufficiently black, but Garvey colluded with the KKK! And why not? Garvey later contended that he and the UNIA were the first fascists. One might debate whether they were the first.

Today's leading black nationalist organization, the Nation of Islam (NOI), views whites as devils. The NOI opposed the civil rights movement and the civil rights March on Washington of 1963, at which the Reverend King delivered his famous speech. Malcolm X traveled to Washington that day, not to speak of unity, not to march, but to denounce the "farce on Washington." And in the early 1960s, when Malcolm was still a member of the Nation of Islam, when he traveled to the South, it was not to partake in civil rights protest, but to make secret deals with the Klan. Furthermore, at a major NOI gathering in Chicago's International Ampitheater in 1962, Elijah Mohammad had George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party, address 12,000 of his followers at this Black Muslim conclave.

The sociology, Black Studies, and other academic departments have covered up and distorted much recent history, and the media have repeated their distortions. They often assert that Blacks cannot be racists. How absurd! Not only can Blacks be racists, they can be and [some] are fascists. And there is a long tradition of Black fascism in this country, one that the politically correct refuse to see.

Some endorse the march because of its message, its noble aims, its unifying symbolism. How foolish! A march whose chief sponsor is America's leading fascist and racist is a march that must be condemned.

If Farrakhan cannot be compared completely to Hitler, it is only because Farrakhan has not yet come to power in a nation state. But his philosophy and his aims are clear to those willing to open their eyes to see.

Hugh Murray
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

P.S. I was arrested in the first sit-in in my native New Orleans, taught Afro-American history at a Black university, and am the author of *Civil Rights History-Writing and Anti-Communism: A Critique.*

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Birth of a Nation

(Continued from p. 29)

the oft-heard desire of most Israelis to be "normal." As one young woman put it, "Sometimes people get tired of worrying about survival, and want to become normal, to worry about their jobs and kids, to just be able to walk down the street without experiencing an existential crisis." Yet, as she also pointed out, "the country, specifically Jerusalem, is changing. The Tower Records, McDonald's, and all of those stores, it's a symbol of something." That "something" is the inherent tension between the assimilationist and utopian tendencies within Zionism, between the desire to be a "nation like all the nations" and the historical obligation of chosenness that implanted within Zionism the ability to move beyond its original sins and ultimately share the Land of Israel with the Palestinians.

Here we see the post-Zionist struggle over the future. On the one side, as Michael Lerner has described in his book, *Jewish Renewal*, is a redemptive and liberating vision of Zionism and Israel, which, whether secular or religious, can articulate a successful critique of the ever-encroaching world market and consumer culture. On the other is a materialistic, technocratic post-Zionism that ultimately falls into the anti-Semitic fiction that Zionism, and thus Judaism, can be based on money. From a Jewish perspective, the best thing about freeing the Palestinians from Israeli domination might be that it removes any excuse to postpone engaging in this long-overdue debate. Perhaps in watching—or, even better, helping—the Palestinians build their new country, Israelis could renew the spirit and idealism that motivated their forebears to immigrate to and build Israel.

This isn't as farfetched as it sounds. In fact, the Haftarah, the prophetic reading for Shabbat/Election Day, dealt with God's vow to Moses to free the people of Israel and to establish a new covenant with them in the land of their ancestors. Ultimately, as Ezekiel prophesied, when God finally gathers the people of Israel back together from their Diaspora, "they shall settle on their own soil ... and they shall dwell on it in security," a dream shared equally by Palestinians.

Back in New York, on the anniversary of my father's death, I spoke with Eylam's mother about a letter his father wrote to her the day before he was killed. In it, he described the question marks that seemed to hover over his comrades' graves. He said that he was prepared to join them if it meant it would be the last war. I imagine the same vision motivated Rabin to pursue peace. Could it be that the birth of Palestine will begin to erase those question marks—which now hover over Rabin's grave as well—and will help bring Israel the security Jews have sought for centuries? In large part it depends on what kind of Israel, what kind of Zionism, is reborn with it. But one thing is certain: Israelis and Palestinians have never needed each other more than they do now. □

Bosnia's Untenable Peace

(Continued from p. 39)

they want for themselves is eerily reminiscent of the Nazi idea of creating a Germany *judenrein*—that there is a group polluting the nation which must be purged. Thus, the health of one national group requires the abolition of another.

Furthermore, the Dayton Accords tacitly validate the idea of racial citizenship rather than political citizenship. Bosnia has been dismembered because the Serbs and Croats maintain that they can exist only in an "ethnically cleansed" society. The peace now being implemented by NATO sanctions the notion that ethnically pure states can and should exist.

Yet, the idea of the ethnically pure nation is a permanent provocation to war. If the message of the Bosnian war is that ethnic boundaries are viable, and wars for ethnic and communal purity will go unpunished, then the next decades will be the decades of ethnic wars, from the former Soviet republics to the Indian sub-continent. New ethnic violence already brews in other parts of the former Yugoslavia: Forces inside Serbia demand the expulsion of the Hungarians, Croatians, and Albanians within their borders. The tense truce in Bosnia leaves Kosovo and Macedonia as precarious as ever, and the possibility of a larger Balkan war bringing in Albania, Greece, and Bulgaria remains.

The humiliation and deep cynicism of Bosnians is a hint of the price we will pay for enforcing an immoral peace. One look at the faces of the residents of East Mostar is a forewarning of a post-Cold-War world of ethnic and tribal violence of horrendous proportions. In this bold test of contemporary "Western values," we have treated victim and aggressor alike, denied the right of self-defense to the defenseless, betrayed innocent victims of slaughter, left war criminals unpunished, and abandoned justice to politics. Ethnic cleansing and our silence in its face have made us all dirtier. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Forgive Them Their Trespasses?

Forrest Church

An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics, by Donald W. Shriver, Jr. Oxford University Press, 1995, 284 pp. $27.50.

George Huntston Williams, Hollis Professor of Divinity Emeritus at Harvard, once summed up human history in these words: "Choose your enemies carefully, for you will become like them." Whenever we hate bigots, or fight fire with fire, when we employ secrecy to contravert deception or, in struggling against evil, seek noble ends through treacherous means, we eventually mirror our enemies' moral countenance.

For those of us who aspire—for our own sake—to break this self-destructive pattern, Donald W. Shriver, Jr. has written a compelling and insightful study of forgiveness in politics. *An Ethic for Enemies* suggests that people can, with effort, rise above the temptation to vengeance. To do so not only enhances our own spiritual posture, but such acts—especially collective acts of forgiveness—also redeem history itself.

Shriver, past president of Union Theological Seminary and a leading Christian ethicist, has written several well-regarded books (*Rich Man, Poor Man*; *Ethical Issues in American Economic Life*) that extend Union's historical commitment to the social gospel into such fields as business ethics, professional social responsibility, and labor and management relations. *An Ethic for Enemies* is by far Shriver's most ambitious book, its compass international, its historical scope ranging from the Peloponnesian Wars until the present day. Happily, it is also his finest.

In many ways, this is more a political treatise than a theological one. Shriver points out that although forgiveness figures profoundly as a leitmotif in the Christian gospels, over the course of church history the concept receives negligible institutional embodiment. With pointed, illuminating exegesis, Shriver offers a telling indictment of Christian "neighborliness," both throughout history and as evidenced today. Jesus summed up the law in two commandments: love to God and love to neighbor. Shriver points out that when people break the latter commandment, they simultaneously subvert the commandment to love God. He traces this problem to an individualistic rather than a corporate understanding of forgiveness.

The privatization of forgiveness in Christian thought precluded the development of an ethic of forgiveness that might have extended the redemptive impact of Jesus' teachings to society at large. Here Shriver has much to offer. If salvation remains for most Christians an individual quest, to Shriver redemption is clearly a corporate enterprise. He argues persuasively that without an ethic of forgiveness that enterprise is doomed to fail.

Hannah Arendt suggested that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures respectively offer "promise" and "forgiveness" as emblems of potential transformation when weighing such questions as "How do societies get over the evils in their pasts, and how do they change for the better?" Addressing Arendt's argument, Shriver diverges from it in two respects. First, he suggests that it is "historically dubious to claim, with her, that Jesus 'discovered' the horizontal indispensability of forgiveness in human society." The rabbinic tradition often illuminates the interconnectedness of human and divine forgiveness; the rituals of Yom Kippur do the same. Second, Shriver argues that any attempt to free an ethic of forgiveness from its religious moorings in order to establish a purely secular ethic is misguided. Emphasizing the interrelatedness of dynamic, respectful pluralism with an ability to forgive one's enemies, Shriver writes that "Among all the institutions in American society, … none is freer to contribute to the weaving of a new tapestry of intercultural affirmation than the churches, the synagogues, and the mosques of the land."

Shriver devotes much of his attention to post-war America, especially our relations with Japan and Germany, and to race relations within our country. These sections are strengthened by the historical and religious foundation he builds in his early chapters. Convincingly arguing that the development of an ethic of forgiveness is more crucial now than ever before, Shriver points out (quoting Walter Wink) that "more people have been killed in war in our century than in all the preceding five thousand years combined." This, combined with the impact of the global village on each of its constituent communities, adds real urgency to his thesis.

Shriver may be more a self-critical Christian idealist than a hard-headed Christian realist, but in an interdependent age, when discrete backyards no longer exist, in certain ways the old idealism that he reanimates becomes the new realism. As Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "Unless we all hang together, we will all hang separately." This is truer today than ever before.

An Ethic for Enemies is not easy reading, and sometimes one loses the path of its argument in a forest of detail. Neither fact should daunt the prospective reader. In this fine book, Donald Shriver contributes an important chapter to the best modern thinking about our prospects for mutual survival and redemption. □

Forrest Church, minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, is author of God and Other Famous Liberals *and the forthcoming* Life Lines.

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 regional 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 (212-665-1597).

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.

Cornel West
Author, *Race Matters*

Harvey Cox
Harvard Divinity School

Naomi Wolf
Author, *The Beauty Myth*

John Sweeney
President, AFL-CIO

Jesse Jackson, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Chair, African-American Studies, Harvard University

James Hillman
Jungian psychoanalyst

Sharon Welch
Feminist theologian

Jim Wallis
Editor, *Sojourners*

Sister Joan Chittister
Roman Catholic human rights activist

Mary Edsall
Co-author, *Chain Reaction*

Torie Osborne
Former chair, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Dennis Rivera
President, local 1199, Health and Hospital Workers Union

Paul Hawken
Environmental economist

Jim Hightower
Radio host

Larry Dossey, M.D.
Author, *Meaning and Medicine*

Daniel Ellsberg
The Pentagon Papers

Peter Gabel
President, New College of California

Roberta Achtenberg
Former Asst. Secy., HUD

Matthew Fox
Author, *Creation Spirituality*

Rita Nakashima Brock
Feminist theologian

Rebecca Parker
Dean, Starr King Divinity School

Michael Lerner
Editor, TIKKUN magazine

Tom Hayden
California State Senate

Pete Seeger
Singer/songwriter

Danny Goldberg
CEO, Mercury Records

Michael Eric Dyson
Author, *Making Malcolm*

Alan Shapiro
Poet

Yosef Komunyakaa
Poet

Eleanor Wilner
Poet

Cosponsored by *Sojourners* (the magazine of progressive Christian Evangelicals), *Utne Reader*, The Unitarian Universalist Association, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, and many other organizations.

For registration and program information, contact: The Learning Alliance
324 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012
Phone: 212-226-7171 Fax: 212-274-8712

To contact the FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING, call 212-665-1596.
Summit Agenda is on page 13 of this issue of TIKKUN.