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

TIKKUN

Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch
Interview with
Akiba Lerner & Mark LeVine

Chanukah Supplement

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996 $6.00

NETANYAHU'S FOLLY

Martin J. Gidron

David Newman



Yaron Ezrahi

Ilene R. Prusher

Eileen Flanagan
Is Love Scarce?

Michael Lerner
Clinton's Victory

Frank Ackerman
Rites of Recycling

Carole B. Balin
Feminism and Messianism

Senator Paul Simon
Balanced Budget Liberal

PLUS

Meaning Notes

Joe Uehlein on Labor's Need for Meaning
James Hillman on Beauty and Transformation
Svi Shapiro on a Progressive's Private School Dilemma

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What Were You Doing?

for Yitzhak Rabin

1.
Autumn tastes like despair.
Mailbox tongue hangs down stupidly:
raped woman breadbox in a robbed house.
Sun burns gold clouds turn into beige smoke.
Who needs all that blueness
when it's so cold down here?

2.
What were you doing when you heard the news that time?
I was in Creative Writing class
Gothic building Teacher's College somewhere near Baltimore.
At first they said "shot"—"The President's shot"—not "killed."
"How terrible!"—but a sting of indecent thrill
entered my blood like a chemical.
How exciting to have the day all shot to pieces!
How anarchic to see expectancies turned on their backs!
Of course he'll recover. Of course it will end as it should.
And then two students came late in a solemn rush.
They sat with their friend. They whispered, "He's dead."
The teacher kept talking of metaphor.
The class turned to stone.

What were you doing when you heard the news this time?
I was in my kitchen making coffee.
We were going to have pumpkin bread and blueberry preserves
bought at the farmer's stand.
Inside, green tomatoes ranged on a counter to ripen.
Outside, a blaze of bronze.
We were talking of Kit, our black cat,
who needs his second rabies shot.
We should bring him in to the vet's over Christmas vacation.

3.
Not much news here in upstate New York,
though we keep jiggling that button.
The "hip" station plays "juke box faves," accepts requests.
Uplifting NPR offers Garrison Keillor
and folk songs (not Israeli).
The rest is rock or mellow-voiced Christian ministers.
Why don't they cancel all programs?
Create an all-night talk show?
Don't we all have a lot to talk about.
I call the local synagogue three towns away.
The line is busy.

4.
Today I'd like to be in Jerusalem
or New York City
in a community of mourners.
These still hills yield too small a response.
But we make do. We find a candle
gift of the house's last owner elegant in bent gilt holder
red as the Merlot we bought in Accord
a town a bit down the road.
It is our evening guest. It scatters drops of wax like bright blood.
It keeps falling into our bowl of Brussels sprouts
putting itself out.
I set it right; you re-light.
Its sides feel like melting skin.

—Enid Dame

When the news inserted itself into the room,
I screamed, "A Jew! A Jew did this? Impossible! I hope he dies."
My violence astonished me.
It filled up the room and swallowed the news.
You kept fiddling with the dial,
as if looking for a station with a better message.
Tears hung in your eyes.
You said nothing.

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 11 NUMBER 6

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Letters

NADER'S CANDIDACY

To the Editor:

The editorial dismissal of Ralph Nader's campaign "because Nader is incapable of manifesting any sign of that hopefulness, joy, and spirit of love and caring that might signal a real human being beneath all that stultifying economic and political rhetoric" does TIKKUN no credit.

Translated, this statement really means only that you find his personal style abhorrent, and your readers need therefore pay no attention to him or his program. The politics of meaning, I believe, requires separating personal tastes from political judgments and demands that TIKKUN also "distinguish between a clever put-down and a sophisticated argument for a position."

My congratulations, on the other hand, to Dan Hamburg for soldiering bravely on for Nader through a sandstorm of useless abstractions and politically correct pundit-babble.

John Gorman
N. Miami, Florida

Editor Responds:

It's precisely because we agree with so much of his critique of American political and economic institutions that we invited a Nader representative to participate in our roundtable. The big disappointment is that Nader and his party are unable to link their important insights to a politics that speaks to the hunger for love, caring, and ethical/spiritual reality that is systematically frustrated in American society. Without those links, a progressive politics will remain marginal at best, despite the obvious truths of its critique. A Jesse Jackson-type can sometimes cover up this intellectual deficit by seeming to embody in his own being an awareness of the need for human connection and recognition. But Nader's emotional deadness forces people

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to immediately confront the lack in his political vision, conjures up images of a legalistic leftie, and hence undermines the very hope that is necessary for anyone to begin to take seriously the possibility of confronting corporate America's elites of wealth and power.

Gaia

To the Editor:

Bradley Shavit Artson's article "Happy Birthday, World" (September/October 1996) focuses on humanity's relationship with the planet, a spiritual issue that is critical to the politics of meaning movement.

I do not agree with Rabbi Artson's interpretation that Gaia theory dictates "that we are merely subservient to Gaia, that nature is morally superior to the needs of humanity."

Gaia, in my view, is not superior to humanity, nor is humanity dominant over Gaia. The two are interdependent. Human consciousness has evolved out of Gaia's desire to know itself, the macrocosm becoming self-aware through the microcosm. I believe Gaia wants and needs us to grow in consciousness in order to bring about a planetary apotheosis, a paradigm shift of cosmic proportions.

But if, by our continued destruction of the biosphere, we fail in our destiny, then Gaia will extinguish us. I thank Rabbi Artson for his thoughtful article, but I hope he will reconsider his assessment of the Gaia view.

Gregory Fillar
Chicago, Illinois

Lesser-Evil Politics?

To the Editor:

Your decade-long commitment to progressive social change in the U.S. has made me a consistent reader for the same ten years.

Except, how did you come to espouse in your September/October 1996 issue that the election of Bill Clinton would be the lesser of two evils? We should seek the good of two goods. Can't you and I be against the lesser evil and the greater evil? What kind of a society are you advocating that we build—a lesser-evil society? We must advocate a good society or a better society or a great society "to mend, repair, and transform the world." TIKKUN should con-

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tinue to speak the "bitter truth" and not this "lesser evil" language of commentary and compromise.

Thomas Ludwig
Moorhead, Minnesota

Editor Responds:

We went a long way to try to make clear that there were divisions among TIKKUN editors on the issue of Clinton's reelection. We never endorse any candidate, and we were very much split on the issue of lesser-evilism. There was, in fact, a serious critique of lesser-evilism being articulated in our September/October issue, though there were other perspectives as well.

To the Editor:

I am an African-American university professor. I have watched "caring and sensitivity" eaten away as if consumed by an aberrant, cancerous rogue cell. I make daily, perhaps futile, attempts to explain to young university students why a frontal assault on affirmative action, a noticeable rise in xenophobia, and the widespread loss of civility in our public discourse all reflect our current "age of cynicism and selfishness."

You are 100 percent correct that President Clinton should reassert his values through an "ethical impact report." Your editorial on "Clinton's Moral Backbone Problem and the Fate of the Democrats" (July/August 1996) is frighteningly accurate and insightful, and has made me very sad.

Sandy Garcia
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

FREUD

To the Editor:

Michael Roth's "The Freud Flap" (March/April 1996) and the subsequent exchange between Roth and Frederick Crews (July/August, 1996) miss the point. Freud is not a thinker who can be understood through criteria Crews wants to apply (testable hypotheses, research protocols, measurement). Rather, his work is akin to someone like Plato or Augustine in the ancient world, or Hegel or Nietzsche in the nineteenth century. He summed up a whole epoch's self-reflection concerning the nature of the human soul. The Library of Congress needs a broad historical and philosophical approach to psychoanalysis; this is exactly what Crews seeks to prevent.

Crews and Swales do deserve a place at the centenary, but it is a truly tiny one. Along with Freud's work, the Library of Congress should be discussing lines of critical engagement including disagreements in such areas as the study of mythology and religion (Jung, Niebuhr); critical theory (Marcuse, Adorno); literary criticism (Trilling, Empson, Burke); anthropology (Sapir); sociology (Parsons); political history (Namier); liberalism (Rieff, Lasch); feminism (Chodorow, Irigaray); philosophy and gay studies (Butler); interpretation and hermeneutics (Ricoeur, Derrida); race (Fanon, Haba); politics (Lippman); biography (Strachey); art (Breton, Ernst), etc. The place of Freud in modern Jewish history should itself be a major point of discussion. My point isn't that Freud was influential but rather that there are a thousand points of view from which we should be hearing, in place of the one screechy piece of animus that we are hearing.

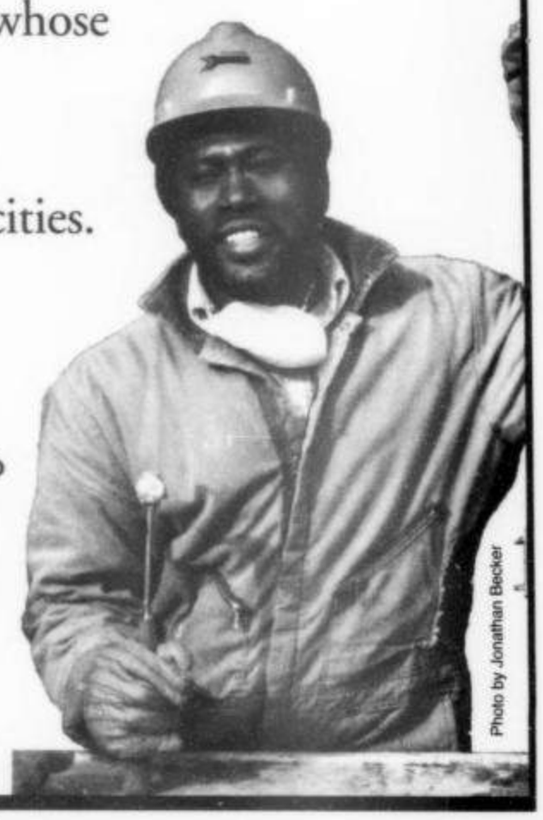
This is not to say that Freud should not be subjected to scientific criticism. He situated his work in relation to the science of his time, especially evolutionary biology and neurophysiology. It goes without saying that much of this science is obsolete. New discoveries in such areas as the theory of the emotions, artificial language, or gestalt psychology do lead us to modify or reject aspect of Freud's thought—witness the vast rethinking that the concept of gender implied. But the collapse of particular formulations should not lead to the rejection of a whole way of thinking—for Freud or other thinkers whose thought remains alive, for example, Marx, Weber, or Durkheim.

Finally, I should say why the centenary matters. It's not a matter of Freud's reputation, which is doing just fine. But we are speaking here of one of our major points of historical reference, a crucial source of the modern self. As with the 1960s, the French Revolution, and the bombing of Hiroshima, this history is being politicized by a partisan faction. We debase ourselves by compromising with it.

Eli Zaretsky
Department of History
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri

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Twelve Points of Unity

To the Editor:

Outside feminist circles, I rarely see feminism embraced as a positive social force or welcome agent of change. Therefore, I deeply appreciated your crediting the "second wave of feminism" with being an important source for the building of a politics of meaning (July/August 1996). Indeed, this appears to indicate a coming-of-age for feminism: its integration into a larger political and spiritual agenda of transformation and its pertinence to issues beyond women's rights.

And for those who may be wondering where exactly a feminist orientation is realized in your "Twelve Points of Unity," here is where I found it:

Point 1: Regard for ecological concerns and the development of an ethos of caring, idealism, and spiritual solidarity.

Point 2: Transformation of economic and political institutions and awareness of our responsibility to future generations.

Point 3: The need for loving connection with others and the recognition of each person as precious and valuable.

Point 4: Awareness of all kinds of oppression, including and beyond economic and political oppression.

Point 5: The need to struggle against a society that valorizes selfishness and fosters narcissistic personality traits and a commitment to struggle against sexism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and class oppression.

Point 7: A progressive pro-family orientation, including non-traditional family forms and appreciation of the interdependence of all human beings.

Point 9: The role of consciousness-raising in furthering the process of making change happen.

Point 10: Encouragement of individuals to take more action and give greater public visibility to the most caring and loving parts of ourselves.

Point 11: The rejection of the technocratic framework that tends to see everything, including people and the planet, as "resources" that are to be judged valuable to the extent that they can produce something for somebody.

Once again, *yasher koach* on giving feminist theory and insight its due!

Rabbi Lenore Bohm
Encinitas, California

To the Editor:

It is particularly poignant to read Marian Wright Edelman's plea for children in your July/August issue in light of the disastrous role she has unintentionally played in the past few years. Edelman was one of the major legitimators for the liberal world of the increasingly conservative policies of the Clinton administration. And it was that administration which managed to accomplish what no conservative presidency ever could—the dismantling of a federal commitment to welfare, in itself the single most powerful blow against children in fifty years. Her husband had to acknowledge this when he quietly resigned in protest after Clinton signed the welfare dismantling legislation.

Yet only two months before, Edelman had managed to co-opt and declaw the growing anger about Clinton's anti-children position. She had organized a national demonstration to support children, but then had insisted that it have no political demands. Given this, the very politicians who sought to dismantle welfare could jump on her bandwagon, identify as pro-children, and then do everything possible to hurt children of the poor. Edelman made a classic opportunist choice: in order to ensure that her march would be large and that she would be positioned as the unchallenged champion of children, she adopted a gutless politics that helped advance the charade that allowed Clinton to position himself as pro-children yet anti-welfare. The Democrats would complete that charade at their national convention by cheering the idea that "it takes a village" (to raise a child), happily ignoring the way their own candidate had just burned down part of the village.

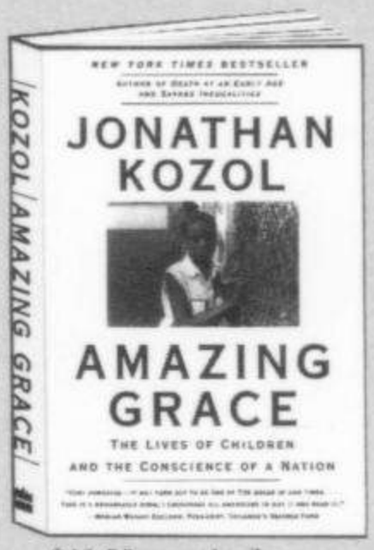
Don't you think you ought to be ashamed for having awarded Marian Wright Edelman an Ethics award at your Summit on Ethics and Meaning, in light of subsequent events?

Margo Katz
Washington, D.C.

Editor Responds:

No. Marian Wright Edelman was betrayed by the Clintons, but history is not yet over, and she may well use her righteous indignation to mobilize people to pressure a second Clinton administration to be more principled than it had been in the last two years of Clinton's first term. We are still proud of her.

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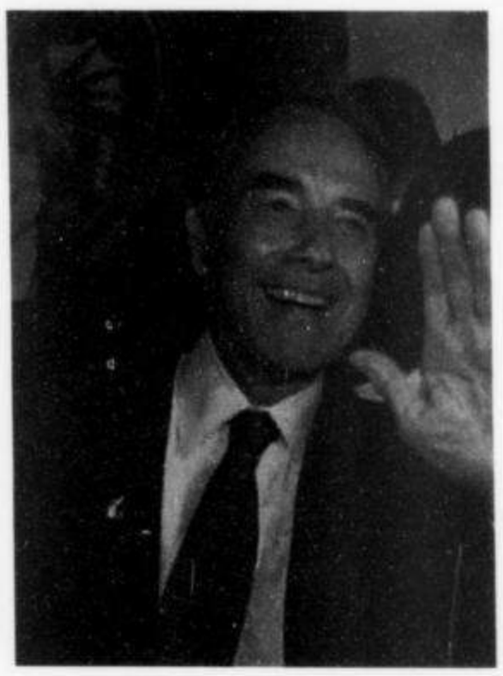
EDITORIALS

Clinton's Victory

Underneath everything else, Bill and Hillary Clinton are fundamentally decent people who share many of the progressive and caring values that helped shape the social-change atmosphere of the 1960s and early 1970s. Yet their second term could be just as bad as their first, because the Clintons, like most members of our generation, don't have a clue about how to actualize those values, or how to constitute a new political dialogue that could help us start the process of building a more loving and caring society. Millions of liberals have lost confidence in their own liberalism. While they feel little attraction to the Right and were somewhat sickened by Clinton's most extreme attempts to play to conservative assumptions (e.g., in his signing of the welfare bill, or his willingness to prohibit gay marriages), they are equally unsure of how to build a world that they would believe in. For that reason, they've been willing to vote "lesser evilism" and hope that somehow Clinton will be free to be more expressive of his true political philosophy, now that he no longer faces reelection.

Unfortunately, the Clintons don't have a vision of how to create a society consistent with their own highest values. Nor do they have the moral courage to question the dominant assumptions of a society based on selfishness and materialism—particularly when doing so might lead them into conflict with the powerful investment and financial communities that backed their reelection, not to mention the ridicule they would engender from the media so deeply cynical that they alternate between dismissing spiritual and religious values as right-wing reaction or New Age psychobabble.

Looking at the world from the Clintons' perspective, on their left, they face old-time, unreconstructed liberals, who imagine that reelection will free Clinton to return to big-government programs, while on their right, they face a fierce conservative crowd for whom government is only useful if it is pouring monies into the military-industrial or anti-crime industries, but otherwise ought to be shrunk to the barest politically possible minimum.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

What remains invisible to the Clintons, and to most of our generation, is how to transcend this morass of morally bankrupt political alternatives. Without a clear moral compass, the Clintons will continue to swing from Left to Right, imagining that they are being pragmatic wielders of power. Yet these swings continue to have a demoralizing impact on their constituents, leading many to be further discouraged about the possibility of achieving anything important through politics or collective action.

The Clintons don't realize that their supposed pragmatism has deepened people's cynicism and despair. Clinton voters were frequently "lesser-evil" voters, whose despair about politics almost overpowered their willingness to go to the polls. Clintonian politics has generated a deepening alienation from public life and thus contributes, albeit unintentionally, to the central goal of conservative politics: to discredit the public arena. In this important sense, Clinton's second term may end up serving the ends of the Republicans whom they defeated electorally.

In that regard, the election may really have been a Republican victory. Not, of course, if you measure success by who gets in to office. But frequently in America, that's not really the most important issue.

More important is the question of whose ideas have gained primacy and are shaping policy-making as well as the actions and consciousness of the American people. The cynicism about the 1996 elections—reflected most powerfully in the fact that millions of people voted not for what they believed in, but for the lesser evil among candidates none of whom spoke to their hearts—is precisely what guarantees the victory of the conservative approach to politics.

In 1952 and 1956, Dwight Eisenhower was President, but the Democrats won. Eisenhower was a Republican who confirmed the victory of the New Deal. Until then, It might have always been possible that all the policies of the New Deal could be reversed by a Republican. But Eisenhower did not dismantle the New Deal—he extended it. And the Democrats won.

In 1964, Lyndon Johnson was elected by a landslide, but the Republicans won—at least, half won. For decades, they had been trying to focus the country away from social programs and economic justice and toward the communist menace. The Republicans could never have had the popular support to create the war in Vietnam. But they had succeeded in creating enough anti-communist frenzy

in the country so that a Texas "moderate" Democrat like L.B.J. could take the next step and wildly escalate the struggle in Southeast Asia to save the world from the Reds.

And in 1996, the Republicans may have won yet again.

The central goal of the Republicans, the party that explicitly endorses the ideology and worldview of America's corporate elite (and which, in turn, according to The *New York Times* in October 1996, still receives the support of the vast majority of the corporate elite) has been to discredit the political realm and its public sector and to recredit the private sector. Corporate power has been threatened by the emergence of movements (ecological, feminist, and even a rejuvenated labor movement) that seek to use democratic means to impose constraints on corporate irresponsibility and immoral practices. The response for the past two decades has been an increasingly explicit assault on the very notion of public life, and a powerful push toward reprivatization and the abandonment of hope.

For America's corporate elite, the emergency began in the late 1960s when a whole generation of young people, the largest generational cohort ever, began to turn sour on the values of selfishness and materialism that underlie and provide legitimation for the unequal distribution of wealth and power in this society. The best and the brightest were no longer choosing careers in business or engineering, but were flocking to the social sciences and the humanities, demanding that their lives have ethical meaning, and questioning the inequalities of race, sex and class that had provided the bulwark for America's elites of wealth and power.

American elites felt threatened. Some favored Nixon-style repression. Others ensured that the media would engage in a sustained campaign to misrepresent and misremember what the struggles were all about, trivializing the highest ideals and recasting the period as nothing but generational rebellion or solely self-indulgent narcissism (a characterization that could ring partly true, since that was in fact *part*, though not all, of the story). Still others began to fund the New Right—at the time, a loose assemblage of think-tanks and modest political action groups whose unifying theme was their understanding that the Republicans needed to build an ideological assault that might counter the growing power of the liberatory culture of the Left.

It would be a romanticization to claim that the counterculture or the political change movements of the '60s fully embodied a meaning-oriented ethos. Individualism, selfishness, and materialism are very deeply rooted in American society, and so it should not surprise us that those who began to question or challenge those values would nevertheless, in complex and sometimes unconscious ways, still reflect the very societal ethos that they sought to transcend. Yet even with all the internal contradictions, the "doing your own thing," and the many moments of personal irresponsibility, careerism, and hedonistic self-indulgence, the generation of the '60s and '70s was flirting with powerfully subversive ideas and aspirations whose logic could, and already was, leading them to challenge the marketplace.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Luckily for America's corporate elites, there were many people who did not inhale the intoxicating aromas of liberation and meaning. There were even people as close to the social movements as Bill Clinton who never quite got it, who were busily engaged in developing their own careers while their brothers and sisters were out in the streets fighting racism, sexism, and the war in Vietnam.

Though many of these people were attracted to the more visionary elements of the '60s (including the implicit challenge to materialist values and the consumerist ethos), they were never confident enough in themselves or in the other people they met in the movement (many of whom shared the neuroses, pathologies and distortions that they were critiquing in others) to feel that they could really take the transformative ideas seriously. Torn between the part of them that yearned for a different kind of world, and the powerful internalized superego voices of the dominant reality into which they had been socialized ("nothing can really be different, and all this talk of a new world is just poppycock that covers other people's desire to take advantage of you"), many of these people opted for a narrower vision of liberation that seemed more consistent with the self-interest values with which they had grown up. They gravitated to the most narrow interpretation of '60s politics, so that for them, the movement was about "fairness," about giving equal access or opportunity to the competitive market to women, Blacks, or gays. Too unsure of themselves to believe that they could actually build a new world based on love and caring, many of these people translated countercultural calls for liberation into little more than an opportunity to indulge in drugs or sex or rock music, wear their hair long, their skirts short, their jeans ragged—and to bring all this along as they began to take the places of their parents in the corporations and positions of societal power. The central value was still "making it," and "meaning" was the way you gave your personal lifestyle-stamp to the ascent to power and wealth.

Even so, there were enough people raising fundamental questions about which values should be "bottom line" in

America that corporate elites were deeply troubled. Ecological consciousness, demands for a world based on loving and caring, the growing questioning of hierarchical social arrangements, the questioning of the values of consumption—all these posed real threats to the ability of corporations to maximize their own profits. Ecological constraints, increasing taxes, growing disaffection with the military-industrial complex, increased calls for regulation and corporate social responsibility terrified sectors of the ruling elites.

The most subversive aspect of what had taken place in the 1960s was *not* the widespread acceptance of some particular political program, but rather the recrediting of the notion that there could be a communal "we" that would look at the world together and decide how it ought to be, and then proceed to struggle for such a world. Even if those struggles were temporarily focused "only" on stopping the war in Vietnam or opposing racist and sexist practices, it was not hard to see how they might soon be addressing the very fundamentals of the competitive market.

There was no conspiracy and there was no single organization or mastermind, but gradually, through the 1970s, the conservative movement began to reshape itself as a movement whose primary goals were to reprivatize people's perceptions and concerns, and to undermine the belief that anything significant could be achieved in the public sphere.

Ironically, what made the conservative counter-offensive so successful were the pathological consequences of the very marketplace that they sought to defend. By the mid-1960s, the American economy was creating more and more jobs that required people to learn how to manipulate and control others, to shape their consciousness, and to sell either their products or, in the case of independent professionals and an increasing number of people climbing the corporate ladder, themselves. These people were being rewarded for developing narcissistic and manipulative personalities. As more women entered the world of work, this societally rewarded narcissism that had previously been a male preserve began to spread, and the ethos of selfishness and materialism became an even larger part of American reality than it had been before.

While some imagined that the entrance of women into powerful positions in corporations or professions would humanize the world of work, what happened more frequently was that women began to be socialized to the "bottom line" consciousness of the economy and its "looking out for number one" common sense. The result was a further weakening of family ties (*not* because women were working, but because the values of the marketplace, already distorting male consciousness, now were seeping through both genders, replacing the traditional and unfair obligation that had been placed on women and families in the past to be a counter to the dominant market selfishness).

The women's movement admirably tried to counter this market-induced narcissism, rightly supporting women to leave oppressive relationships and to have equal market opportunities, but it has never been strong enough to fully counter the subversive impact of the market. Hence, we have suffered a growing ethical and spiritual crisis, a decline in commitment to values that might offset the growing me-firstism, and a resulting escalation in divorce, crime, and materialistic self-indulgence—all of which provided fodder for a conservative counteroffensive.

Faced with difficulty sustaining friendships and loving relationships, many Americans in the 1970s began to look to some framework of meaning to deal with the escalation of narcissism and divorce that surrounded them. Some turned to right-wing religious communities that were loudly critiquing the culture of narcissism. The alternative, both in the Left and in the liberal religious world, was a set of values that seemed to privilege individualism and to equate "liberation" with "doing your own thing" and "going for whatever feels good regardless of the consequences for others." Or so it appeared, in any event, to a population whose exposure to the Left was shaped more by the mass media's distortions and put downs than by any serious personal experience.

The Left could never counter this image, in part because there were many on the Left who felt that any talk of values was necessarily reactionary, merely a cover for reestablishing the very values that Leftists opposed, in part because of a deep elitism among many liberals that led them to assume that Americans who were raising values questions or turning back toward religious communities could only be doing so out of racism, sexism, homophobia, or stupidity. With such an attitude, the Left gave carte blanche to the Right to make huge advances in the political arena.

The brilliance of the New Right was its ability to link the societal crisis of values with the interests of corporate elites in deregulation, lowering taxes, and discrediting the notion that government or people working together could build a better world than the unfettered activities of the corporate economy. If people were experiencing pain in their private lives, the New Right argued, the problem was that they had paid too much attention to the hopes of finding fulfillment through constructing a new political and social world. After all, the Right argued, the '60s had not yet succeeded in creating a less alienating reality, because doing so was a utopian fantasy (and utopian fantasies, notably in the Soviet Union and other left-wing societies, had already led to the murder of millions). Indeed, the Right argued, the public world created by the '60s radicals had been dominated by liberal, self-indulgent values that were now invading our private lives, causing family breakup and emotional insecurity.

Worried about the liberal desire to tax the wealthy, the New Right argued that the best solution would be to cut taxes, defund government, and thus eliminate the powerful narcissistic forces that were using government to undermine our personal lives. These themes were easily linked to a growing resentment of some about the way that government was being used by liberals to rectify the historical legacies of racism and sexism, a resentment that intensified among white men in the face of economic insecurities (generated, ironically, by a wave of mergers and the globalization of capital that the Right fiercely defended).

For a decade, the Right pounded away at these themes, and eventually came to power in the 1980s with the Reagan revolution. But although Reagan further popularized many of the Right's themes, his presidency was counterbalanced by the lingering halo effects of the 1960s, manifested in a Democratic Congress unwilling to totally defund the public arena or to legitimate the Republican ideology, yet incapable of articulating a different vision that would embrace the hope and transformative possibilities of the 1960s.

It took the presidency of Bill Clinton for the Right to win its fullest victory. Clinton, to be sure, is no right-winger. He is a pragmatic centrist. But since he did not understand the crisis of meaning in people's lives, he had no way to understand why so many Americans were open to the Right. Wishing to retain power, Clinton concluded that his only option was to reposition himself further toward the politics of the Right, and represent himself as the more humane face of conservative politics.

Clinton, and to an increasing extent the Democratic Party that he has helped shape, would implement the conservative vision without buying into its most extreme sexist and racist assumptions, and with a greater sensitivity to those who would be most hurt as the public sector contracted. It is conservatism with a heart.

Thus, the Clinton years have seen the deepening internalization of the Right's perspective on politics in virtually every corner of American life. The media have been the promulgators of this view, blasting away at any remaining shards of idealism, breathlessly proclaiming cynicism as the highest intellectual virtue, rejoicing in their ability to expose the tawdriness of public life.

Clinton played an important role in deepening the cynicism by promising us an administration that rejected the selfishness and me-firstism of the Reagan/Bush years, then putting forward a series of programs that actually embodied and extended that selfishness, while systematically abandoning his own constituencies and the promises he had made in search of popularity.

Even when he sought to address moral issues, he was unwilling to shape his policies on the basis of a moral vision. His health-care plan, the one priority that might have embodied a different societal ethos, was a bureaucratic monstrosity whose worst flaws flowed directly from Clinton's insistence on promoting the interests of the insurance industry and health-care profiteers. Even in retrospect, when asked to defend his health-care plan by Bob Dole during the October T.V. debate during the 1996 presidential campaign, Clinton found himself unable to stand up for the idea that we need to take care of our families and one another when we get sick.

The Clinton years have helped shape a deep political demobilization. Listen to Clinton's nominating speech in Chicago and you get his vision of the highest good: a society in which everyone can get the training necessary to compete equally for a job, and the retraining so that when people are forced out of jobs by capital seeking to raise its profitability or reduce its ecological accountability by moving to another country, they can get a new one. Clinton made the "it's the economy, stupid" line his own this election, even inviting voters to support Dole if they thought things were not better economically than they had been before.

But if the highest good that government can serve is to be a handmaiden to an expanding economy, with the corresponding message that the most important social good is how well you are doing economically, then why should anyone waste his time on politics when we are more likely to advance our economic well-being through devoting our time and energies to the competitive market? This is the fulfillment of the Reagan years, *not* their transcendence. And so we have the cynical dismantling of any national responsibility for the welfare of the poor—an act of moral abandonment that no Republican administration would have dared.

The demobilization of our hopes and the dismantling of public life goes hand in hand. The much-touted "reinventing of government" that was Al Gore's province in the past four years has meant little more than a systematic downsizing of government programs.

We have expressed deep reservations about the way that liberal programs, including welfare, have functioned. Yet, the underlying message for Clinton was not: "Let's reconstitute government in ways that actually involve communities in taking care of each other." Rather, it was an accommodation to the Republican theme of the less government and the lower taxes the better. The powerful message underlying this: "There is no longer a 'we' that constitutes a national community that takes responsibility for the poor. From now on, this is to be handled by local groupings, because there is no longer the will to shared national purpose on any issue other than a strong national defense and an economy well-suited to the needs of the powerful corporations."

The liberal reaction to all this will likely be cries of betrayal, once it becomes clear to all those who imagined

that once Clinton got reelected he would suddenly emerge as a closet liberal. Their solution will be to demand an extension of the welfare state and a refusal to acknowledge that some of the criticisms of big government liberalism were well founded. Faced with this alternative, Clinton's second term is likely to be a series of wafflings from one direction to another.

Yet there are, within the Clinton administration and among those who supported him, many people who wish for something very different. But they don't have a clue about how to get there.

All the more reason why a politics of meaning movement could be very important in the coming years, simultaneously challenging the Clintonites and providing them with a vision that is an alternative both to the Right and to those liberals who will be yelling at Clinton to recreate the old liberal world. It is precisely through a politics of meaning framework that we can begin to ask the relevant questions: How do we create a civil society shaped by our desire to be loving and caring rather than by our fear that we will be taken advantage of unless we maximize our own individual money and power? How do we use government as an instrument to engage people in communal activity rather than as the (inevitably inadequate) substitute for a loving community? How do we provide incentives for people to be more loving and caring instead of only giving people incentives to be more selfish and materialistic? How do we build a public world that makes it safe for people to respond to each other and to the grandeur of the universe with a sense of awe and wonder and amazement, rather than solely with a technocratic, goal-directed, and manipulative consciousness? How do we build a world that supports rather than undermines families and loving commitments? How do we build a society that honors rather than demeans our spiritual and religious life? How do we create a sense of responsibility to others that is not punitive and coercive, but rather liberates our actual desire for mutual connection and recognition? How do we provide inclusion in the material benefits of the marketplace without seeming to suggest, as Clinton often does, that the highest good is material well-being, and that the primary way of evaluating a policy is how much it increases wealth?

These are the issues that are at the center of a politics of meaning, but they are made increasingly irrelevant when people have given up on any "we" and returned to the cynicism and isolation of private life. Our goal is to create a public sphere in which people are deeply engaged with each other, involved in acts of caring, mutual recognition, and solidarity. Unless these concerns become embodied in a social movement powerful enough to show the Clintonites that the real alternatives are not with traditional liberalism or with privatizing conservatism, but with a new kind of communal vision that explicitly commits to a spiritual sensibility, the Clinton years could well become a major triumph for conservative ideology brought to us by well-meaning progressives.

Creating a movement that rejects lesser-evilism and feels comfortable in asserting a vision of a morally and spiritually sensitive world has been the task of TIKKUN since its inception. It's all the more necessary now. When all the hoopla of the inauguration is over, the first hundred days have achieved a few liberal advances, and America falls back into the conservative politics upon which Clinton relied to win his electoral victory, we will still be building that alternative vision. Join us.

Bill Moyers's Genesis

Bill Moyers has made an important contribution to American public life with the airing of his new television series on the Book of Genesis.

For several decades we have witnessed the growth of a religious Right that claimed to base itself on a commitment to the Bible. Yet few of these people have actually bothered to struggle with the text itself in the hopes of finding God's voice within it. Instead, they have appropriated the Bible when they could find quotes to fit their pre-existing (often xenophobic, sexist, or homophobic) political agenda.

The Moyers series shows us the complexity of the text. A group of thoughtful people read the same lines, but they come away with remarkably diverse interpretations. And that is the point: There is not one answer to "what the Bible says," but myriad possible readings.

Moyers would have done better had he included Orthodox Torah scholars such as Tsvi Blanchard or Daniel Landes, and Jewish renewalists such as Arthur Waskow and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. The series reflects too little of the prophetic voice that TIKKUN champions. But these are minor quibbles. The main point is that Moyers's work deserves wide attention and celebration.

The best way to honor it, however, is not merely to watch the show, but to copy it in daily life. Invite people in your community to join you in a weekly study group of the Torah. Read it together, at your own pace. Don't worry if you've gotten "the right interpretation," because no such thing exists. Rather, find your own way and listen for God's voice as you hear it in the text. Allow yourself to argue with God (following Abraham's example). And also allow yourself to celebrate the beauty, wisdom, complexity, and wonder of this text. In doing so, you'll understand why so many of us still feel that it remains one of the best ways available to encounter God. □

SPECIAL FOCUS—NETANYAHU'S TUNNEL VISION

After Hebron: The Peace Process is Still Dead

In this special section, we present a number of voices from Israel reflecting on the way that the murder of Yitzhak Rabin one year ago decisively undermined the peace process, just as it was intended to do. We mourn the loss of Rabin and the loss of peace.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the agreement to withdraw some troops from Hebron represented the restarting of a peace process? More likely, it represents the last move forward, and a tiny one at that.

The Hebron accord leaves in place a small settlement of 500 militant, right-wing Jews whose primary reason for moving to Hebron was to reassert Israel's rights to the entire "Land of Israel" as defined in the Bible.

Jews have a right to settle anyplace in the world, so they have a right to settle in Hebron as well. But that right can be severely compromised if the reason why Jews are there is to displace their neighbors, and their behavior is provocative and hostile. That's the case with many of the settlers in Hebron. No wonder, then, that their "security" is a matter of concern, since they are likely to continue to provoke hostility and reprisals.

Yitzhak Rabin understood Oslo II as a temporary measure to get him through the 1996 elections, after which he intended to make more substantive moves toward Palestinian self-rule. But for Netanyahu, the concessions of Oslo II were not incremental steps toward peace: They represent the totality of what he is willing to give up. Netanyahu represents a significant section of the population (though not the majority) of Israelis who believe that it would be a terrible mistake to make significant territorial compromises to achieve reconciliation and peace with the Palestinians. He opposes Palestinian national self-determination. He opened the archaeological tunnel in Jerusalem in September *not* to attract tourists, but precisely, as he himself unqualifiedly repeated, to reassert Israeli control over all of Jerusalem, an issue that the Oslo accords had promised to resolve through negotiations rather than by unilateral action.

Netanyahu's strategy is to accept Oslo II, while making a big fuss about what a remarkable compromise he has made and how much it reflects his openness to the peace process—hence, the need to portray himself as agonizing over the "concession" (namely, living up to Oslo II). Once Oslo II is implemented, Netanyahu will follow the strategy outlined by his Likud predecessor, former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir: endless negotiations leading nowhere (Shamir boasted after leaving office that he planned to keep the Madrid negotiations going for ten years with no results), while tightening Israeli control over the West Bank and expanding existing settlements. It is a cynical game aimed at retaining control while allowing Netanyahu to pose as a reasonable moderate.

There are two possible weaknesses in Netanyahu's plan. First, though Netanyahu believes that he could easily crush any renewed Palestinian armed resistance, he may be underestimating the level of anger that his plan may generate. True enough, there are many Palestinians who would accept anything and are simply weary of the struggle. But there are many more who are so frustrated with the dashed hopes for peace and reconciliation that they may be willing to engage in violent confrontations even when they have no hope of winning. The costs to the Israeli army may be heavier than many Israelis are willing to pay for continuing the occupation.

Second, the United States might exert some public pressure. That, in turn, might make Israel a less favorable business climate for potential investors, thus undercutting Netanyahu's dream of building a successful capitalist economy. The Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress (once a liberal force), and the Conference of Presidents of Major (sic) American Jewish Organizations have all done their best to portray American Jews as standing solidly behind Netanyahu. But right-wing Jews are going to have a harder time intimidating the majority of American Jews who really want a peace accord to be implemented, because after four years of critiquing the Labor government from afar, they can't rely on arguments like "Jews who live in the United States have no business telling Israel what its policy should be."

In the foreseeable future, the occupation continues, with its heavy burdens and restrictions on the Palestinian people, and its constant potential to explode into violence against Israelis. No wonder, then, that so many of us miss Yitzhak Rabin and mourn the loss of the one leader who seemed capable of fostering a lasting peace.

—The Editors

The Uses of Forgetting

Israel One Year After the Rabin Assassination

Martin J. Gidron

People are always shouting they want to create a better future. It's not true. The future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past. They are fighting for access to the laboratories where photographs are retouched and biographies and histories rewritten.

-Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

Israel at the end of 1996 is in the grip of a self-imposed amnesia about the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It has sometimes seemed as if an organized conspiracy of forgetting had to be at work, as when the Labor Party carefully avoided mentioning its slain leader in its unsuccessful re-election campaign; when President Ezer Weizman managed not to speak of the assassination at the opening of the new Knesset, even by implication; when the newspapers buried accounts of the various criminal trials of the assassin and his co-conspirators; or when the new government rejected the idea of a national day of mourning on the anniversary of the first-ever assassination of a leader of the modern State of Israel. It was little wonder, with all these cues from those who are supposed to be the leaders of Israeli society, that a poll conducted just before Rosh Hashanah by Israeli television found that the public ranked the Rabin assassination as only the second most important event of the preceding year, behind the elections.

But what is really going on is even more dangerous, and much harder to grasp, than an organized conspiracy. On one level, arguably, Israel is suffering from memory overload. Events follow one another with numbing speed in Israel, and the Jewish people, which has been bound together since its beginning by the commandment to remember, has committed itself to recalling everything. Surely no people in human history has ever set itself the task of commemorating so much—from the wars of the ancient Israelites, to the persecutions of the Middle Ages, to the Holocaust and the victims of modern Israel's wars and terrorist attacks.

In the years since the Rabin-Arafat handshake, the collective burden has been further swelled by dozens of victims of suicide bombings. Minds and hearts have been deadened by so much sorrow, and what is perhaps more significant, we have no conceptual framework within which to grieve for Jews murdered by other Jews.

But there seems to be more to this amnesia. It was both obvious and universally agreed that the assassination of an Israeli prime minister by a Jewish fanatic posed a mortal danger to the very existence of the country, in a way that none of the Arab-Israeli wars ever had. Thus, the obsessive avoidance of the subject over the past year bespeaks a desire, or rather a multiplicity of overlapping desires, to repress a threatening subject. And there is a lot to repress.

The nation, or at least its official representatives, has been all too ready to hand out pardons to Jews accused of terrorist attacks, so long as they were directed against Arabs. The very term "Jewish underground," applied to the Jewish terrorists of the 1980s, was a mark of approbation, in a country that remembers with reverence the pre-state Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi movements, not to mention the resistance to the Nazis. At most, then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, himself a veteran of the ultra-violent Lehi, termed the new Jewish murderers "boys who made a mistake." Then-President Chaim Herzog pardoned several of them.

We reaped the first harvest of this tolerance for bloodshed in the Cave of Machpelah massacre. While Israelis shrank back in horror from the bizarre spectacle of the families of Palestinian suicide bombers celebrating their gruesome deaths, history will record that the first suicide terrorist following the Israel-P.L.O. Declaration of Principles in September 1993 was Baruch Goldstein. It will also have to note that the Israeli government and security services did not crack down hard enough on those who supported and cheered the doctor's massacre, and that his fans were permitted to erect a lavish monument in his honor. Once again, the les-

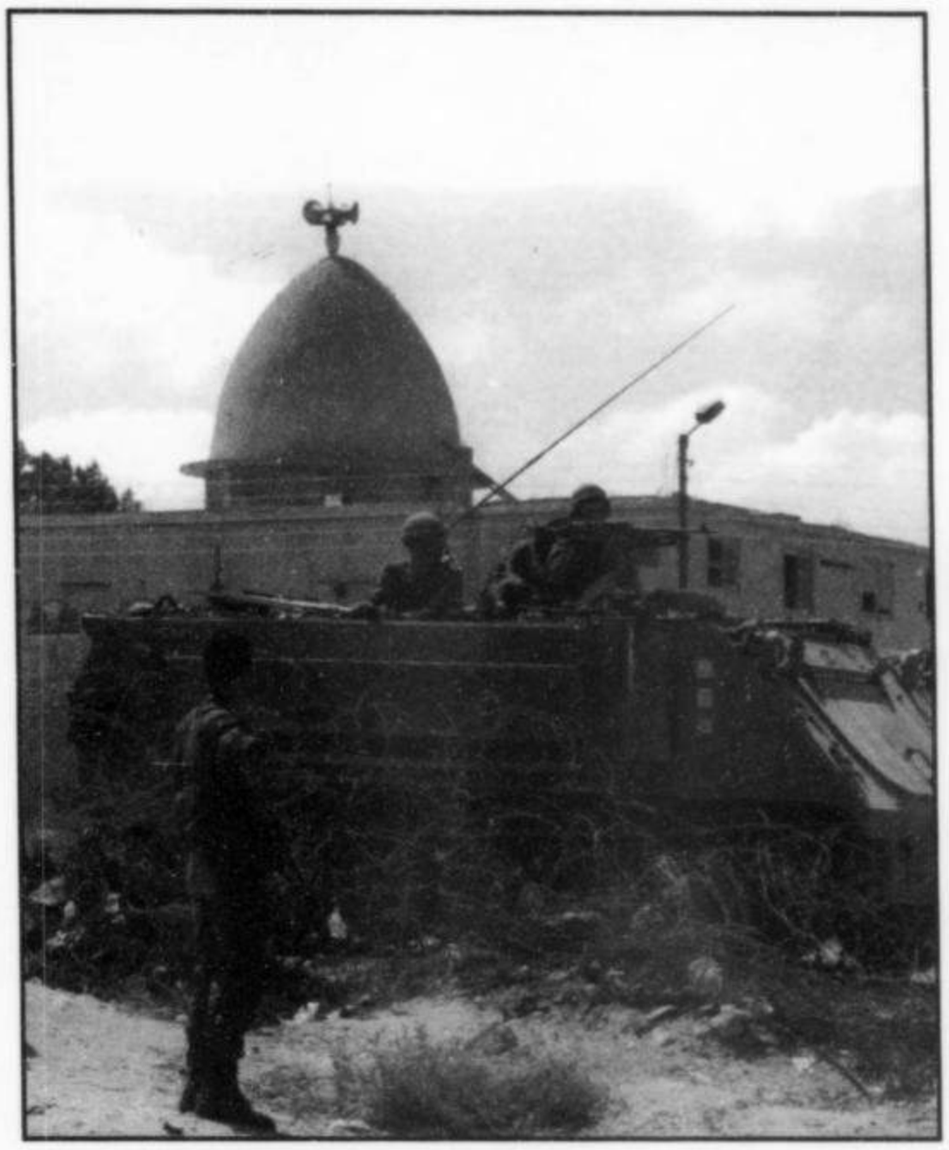
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Martin J. Gidron is an American-born journalist living in Tel Aviv. His article, "Bullets, Bombs, Ballots," appeared in the July/August 1996 issue of TIKKUN.

son had not been learned: There is no such thing as a permissible murder, and allowing murder to go unpunished must lead to further bloodshed.

As time went on and the Palestinian terrorists matched and topped Baruch Goldstein's blood-spattered "martyrdom," the political dialogue in Israel grew increasingly nasty. While Rabin's government pursued peace, the political Right reached a state of desperation, as the vision of a "Greater Land of Israel" seemed to move out of reach. Many of Likud's supposedly responsible leaders—Benjamin Netanyahu foremost among them—made a tacit pact with the further fringes of the messianic-nationalist movement. The radicals' posters depicted Rabin wearing Yasir Arafat's *keffiyah*, or Arafat removing a mask with Shimon Peres's face on it, or, most unforgivable of all, Rabin in an S.S. uniform.

Such images may not have been endorsed by Netanyahu and company, but they were a logical outgrowth of the standard right-wing rhetoric that Rabin and Peres were trying to appease Israel's implacable foes, just like British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain tried to appease Hitler; that the Oslo Accords were like the Munich Pact; and that Israel was withdrawing to "Auschwitz borders" that would bring about another Holocaust. Netanyahu's renunciations of the wilder charges, of the chants of "Rabin is a traitor" and "Rabin is a murderer" were feeble, late, half-hearted, and made with the sole intention of allowing him to present himself as a responsible leader.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

By October 1995, people were talking openly about the possibility of a political assassination. Yigal Amir's act must have been one of the best-predicted events in history, but when it actually happened, the shock and fear were indescribable. As Milan Kundera has written in another context, the nation saw "its own death at close range. Not as an accomplished fact, not as the inevitable future, but as a perfectly concrete possibility."

In the first days of numbing fury and grief, as Jerusalem filled with world leaders and multitudes of ordinary Israelis, we understood that we had become "a nation like all others" in a way the early Zionists had never anticipated. If the fulfillment of Zionism was to have come when the first Jewish policeman arrested the first Jewish prostitute, then what level of normalcy had we reached in the first assassination of a Jewish prime minister by a Jewish murderer?

In the weeks that followed, it was tempting to explain what was going on by calling to mind another November. The impact of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination on Israel was inevitably but mistakenly compared to the impact of John F. Kennedy's assassination on America. It can now be seen just how misleading this comparison was. The assassination of J.F.K. was terrifying to Americans because of its evident meaninglessness. That a cipher could strike down the President of the United States was a fact too frightening to contemplate, and so conspiracy theories became a national obsession. At the same time, the assassination became a focal point for memory, as people struggled to impose personal and collective meaning on what seemed to be a senseless tragedy.

But if the Kennedy assassination was terrifyingly devoid of meaning, the Rabin assassination was terrifyingly replete with it. By late last year, the unity and self-discipline of Israeli society seemed in danger of breaking down irreparably, with mobs in the streets calling for the removal of the elected government "in fire and blood." And from that maelstrom emerged a perfectly cool and rational assassin with a manifesto that could have been copied from any one of a dozen "mainstream" politicians. Suddenly, civil war, which had been the subject of idle chit-chat by newspaper columnists and talk-show hosts, seemed to be a real possibility.

The reaction of the political establishment was to avoid the issues rather than discuss them openly, since any further discussion might destroy the fabric of society. Instead, people took refuge in clichés about tolerance. That is one reason why, in the election campaign that followed Rabin's murder, both Labor and Likud deliberately avoided addressing the issues. That included the Rabin assassination, which had become an inseparable

part of the controversy, so that it, too, had to be shoved into the closet. Both major parties "moderated" their messages to the extent that their television commercials turned into the same sort of empty blather that dominates American political campaigns. It was only understood later that this trend benefited Netanyahu, who was able thereby to shed his extremist image while retaining extremist votes. But this only worked because Netanyahu's far-right allies had already cleared the stage of opposition.

In the days following the assassination, the messianic nationalists who had now found their home in the National Religious Party went on the offensive. Their much-touted "soul-searching" was not the collective act of repentance that Jews are supposed to engage in on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but its exact opposite. The soul-searching was an ingenious ruse, under cover of which the messianic nationalists launched an all-out attack on their supposed persecutors. A few instances of reported hostility toward Orthodox men and women were skillfully parlayed into a full-scale pogrom. We were told that a "blood libel" was being levied against the "the entire nationalist camp," which consisted of "at least half the population"—phrases heard everywhere at that time.

The government, which made a few timid moves to prosecute those who openly praised the assassination,

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was charged with suppression of free speech by the same people who have made a career out of silencing critics of the occupation of the West Bank. Picking up on this theme, Netanyahu accused his critics of carrying out a McCarthyist persecution. In short, the right's pre-assassination tactics of intimidation were carried on under another, more clever guise.

The authorities let themselves be cowed to the extent that two rabbis who were suspected of giving Amir the go-ahead to assassinate Rabin under a twisted interpretation of Jewish religious law were released after a cursory interrogation. Given that the criminal investigation itself was stymied, there was obviously no way that the broader questions of political and social responsibility, which the official Shamgar Commission pointed to but admitted were beyond its scope, were going to be addressed. Having succeeded in deflecting public outrage before it could be directed against them, the leaders of the so-called mainstream Right kept the political initiative from then on in the months leading up to the election.

The Right's vested interest in making the public forget about the Rabin assassination was clear. It is less clear why supporters of the peace process have participated in the collective silence. It was suggested that, to avoid a backlash by Orthodox voters, the Left ought not to provoke them by bringing up the painful fact that the assassin was a religious fanatic who had simply carried the messianic-nationalist ideal to extremes. It was hinted that it would be safer not to mention the assassination at all, lest somebody take offense.

This line of reasoning is so flimsy, though, that it cannot have been the whole reason for the Left's deliberate avoidance of the subject. In fact, the Left had good reason to shun the self-examination that a prolonged focus on the assassination would have entailed. There would have had to be a reevaluation of the whole vexed question of the West Bank and the Jewish settlements which Yigal Amir was claiming to defend, and that would have brought up the part that the Labor Party, including Rabin and Peres, had played in allowing the settlement movement to go forward in the 1970s. The Labor Party had acquiesced to the settlers' claim to represent the authentic embodiment of Zionist pioneering spirit, and when it finally changed its mind, its leaders had neither the courage, nor the honesty, nor finally the will to confront the settlers and explain their mistake.

And finally, any really honest discussion would have had to wind up examining what kind of country Israel is to be, after all. If the messianic-nationalist vision is untenable and morally bankrupt, at least it exists. Having abandoned socialism, Labor and Meretz have no vision of what Israel should be, except for Peres's dreams of a

Middle Eastern Common Market, which do not seem to most Israelis to be worth all the blood and tears that have been shed in the building of the Jewish State.

But if the various factions that dominate Israeli political life had reason to sweep all these issues under the carpet, what about the nation as a whole? How can it be that scarcely six months after one million people—one-fifth of the entire population of Israel—filed past Rabin's bier in Jerusalem, that same populace put Rabin's sworn political opponents in power? Once again, the J.F.K. comparison is misleading. The best analogy is not America after the J.F.K. assassination, but the frightened and divided America of 1968 that turned to Nixon and his promise to "bring us together again," a slogan that Netanyahu echoed almost word for word. It was clear that the 55 percent of Jewish Israelis who voted for Netanyahu were afraid of something, but it was not so obvious what they feared.

It was not just a question of the suicide bombers, or of Arafat's ragtag army on the doorstep, or of a future unimaginably different from the past, though all these fears and more surely played a role. It was the dark forces inside Israeli society that people could not face up to—forces which the arguments surrounding the peace process had brought into the open. Perhaps many felt in their hearts that stalling or putting an end to the painful process of exchanging land for peace would end the controversy, and the genie would return to its bottle. Once more, Israelis would be unified, under a benevolent government dispensing security and Jewish values. In other words, by voting in a right-wing government, we would complete the job of pulling a thick blanket of forgetting up around our heads. Needless to say, it isn't working.

All along, there have been those who murmured that "Rabin brought it on himself." There was a minor flurry in August when Israeli television discovered a "Yigal Amir fan club" of teenage girls at an Orthodox high school, who had compiled scrapbooks about and written letters to their hero. It was pointed out that this phenomenon was only the tip of the iceberg; in certain yeshiva circles, songbooks praising Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir were circulating freely. But the messianic Right immediately began screaming about blood libels again, and the discussion was put on ice.

That is, until threats were made on the life of Aharon Barak, the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, following the court's injunction against the Shabbat closing of a street in Jerusalem. Ultra-Orthodox leaders, who had attacked Barak and helped incite weekly riots in honor of Shabbat, proved that they were adept students of Israeli democracy by immediately denouncing attempts to deny their freedom of speech.

Now that Netanyahu's rejectionist policies have had the predictable effect of enraging the entire Arab world and goading Arafat into launching armed attacks against Israel, doing irreparable harm to the fragile thrust that had started to grow between Israelis and Palestinians, it would be all too easy once again to table discussion of the self-destructive elements in Israeli society in favor of the much more satisfying pastime of mutual recrimination. As the Middle East teeters on the brink of a crisis the outcome of which none can foresee, the chorus of we-told-you-so is heard throughout the land. The Right has the satisfaction of seeing its self-fulfilling prophesies realized, and the Left, which slept soundly while the storm gathered, can congratulate itself that its worst nightmares seem to be coming true. But while everybody's attention is elsewhere, the followers and admirers of Yigal Amir are arming themselves for the final showdown. There can be no doubt that the new Jewish terrorists are readying their weapons for attacks on both Arabs and Jews while we deliberately avert our gaze.

The elements within Israeli society that would tear us apart have clearly understood our self-imposed silence and amnesia as acquiescence in their actions. Somewhere deep down we carry the knowledge that we have done ourselves in before, and that it can happen again. There

(Continued on p. 75)

Alan Shapiro

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Assassinating the Message of Peace

David Newman

Nothing epitomizes the effects of the Rabin assassination on the peace process better than the terrible events of September. It seemed to many of us that we had returned to a new intifada, only this time, one with live ammunition in place of the bottles and stones of old. An irredentist philosophy that draws on religion for its nationalist fervor, now supported by the intransigence of the right-wing Netanyahu government, has yet again gotten the upper hand in the internal Israeli debate over peace and security. While the Palestinians were not blameless for the recent violence in the West Bank and Gaza, the government's policies served as a catalyst for the renewed frustration and the consequent blood-letting.

It is all too easy to apportion blame for the calamities of the past year. It is the other who is guilty—the national religious for their distortions of Jewish teachings; the new government for its attempts to reverse the Rabin-Peres policies and their return to a politics of denial; the Palestinians for "daring" to use their newly found self-expression to demand even more.

But we in the peace camp in Israel cannot escape our own guilt. We, too, have contributed to the forgetfulness, because we have *not* done enough to advance the cause of peace, to use the Rabin assassination to highlight the inherent dangers of national and religious irredentism. Following the immediate outpouring of emotions after the Rabin assassination, a mixture of anger and sorrow, those of us on the left of the Israeli political spectrum returned to our ivory towers and our e-mail discussion lists. We ceded the political arena to our opponents. We have not been active enough in demonstrating *for* peace and against the vociferous opposition of the anti-peace forces.

During last spring's election campaign, the peace camp reverted to a defensive role. We did not want to be accused of manipulating the assassination of a national leader for partisan political gain. We agreed to play down the Rabin assassination, not to make it a central plank in the battle for minds and votes, a battle, which as it has turned out in the past three months, was a battle for the very soul and future of Israel.

We allowed the intolerance of the Chabad movement and their racist "Jews only" slogans to influence the outcome of the election, while our own universal message of equal rights for all was portrayed as being anti-Jewish, pro-Arab, not sufficiently patriotic. And because so much of the left wing is alienated from anything which even remotely attests to Jewish spirituality and tradition, the pro-peace camp is often at a loss to provide the counter-arguments. The language and the semantics of the discourse are so completely different that it is always easier to dismiss the politico-religious arguments as belonging to another world and, as such, simply irrelevant to our own discourse—one to be ignored rather than combated.

Perhaps even most surprising, we have done little since the election of Netanyahu to form an effective opposition, to let the government know that at least half of the citizenry oppose its policies as much as the right wing opposed the policies of Rabin and Peres. We have not done our bit to try and move the government toward the center, rather than out to the right, where it has consistently headed during the past five months. Even following the resumption of deadly violence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in September, during the emergency summit convened by President Clinton, the right wing, pro-Netanyahu forces drew more people to their rally in Jerusalem than did the pro-peace forces to their gathering in Tel Aviv. Like the anti-Lebanon war demonstration over a decade ago, the peace rally should have attracted hundreds of thousands of participants concerned that the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue was in imminent danger of collapse, yet it managed to rouse the active participation of only 20,000 people. It remains to be seen whether the awakening of the peace movement in the light of recent events will be a sustained and ongoing campaign, or whether peace "activists" will once again sink back into lethargy as the immediate scenes of violence recede into the subconscious.

David Newman is professor of political geography and the director of the Humphrey Institute for Social Research at Ben Gurion University in Israel. He is a religious peace activist.

The battle for peace requires a deep ideological confrontation between groups holding two sharply contrasting world views. The vast majority of the pro-peace camp are secular—people for whom Judaism and Jewish values have little, if any, meaning. In recent years, many of these secular Israelis have become increasingly alienated from anything remotely attesting to Jewish culture, partly because of the aggressive and coercive behavior of the Orthodox establishment, coupled with the lack of any form of alternative Jewish expression within the "Jewish" state.

For their part, the anti-peace, pro-Greater Israel forces, notably the Gush Emunim settlers and the National Religious political movement, draw their inspiration from their own version of Jewish religious teachings. They perceive their cause as divinely ordained and, as such, furthering the redemptive process and the coming of their messiah. To this end, they have brought nearly 150,000 settlers to the West Bank. It is religious fervor which explains their fanatical commitment to their objectives and their relentless opposition to the Rabin and Peres governments. Their constant spewing of venom at the Labor government helped create the fertile soil for the most evil of acts, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a Jewish murderer wearing a *kippah*—an external, and too often superficial, symbol of Orthodox observance.

One would have thought that it would not be too difficult to mobilize support against a philosophy that values the graves and bones of the dead over the sanctity and dignity of the living. A philosophy that views the sanctity of life as belonging to the exclusive "in" group and relates to the "other" as an object, a thing which can be discarded at will, should be easy to challenge. There are so many aspects of an alternative peace narrative that should be highlighted, but which remain hidden: The value of human life (*adam*) over the false god of territory (*adamah*); the moral and social breakup of a society whose attention is constantly focused on war and conflict and whose children know about weapons and army ranks before they can even read; the lack of tolerance for the "other," both Palestinian and fellow Jew. But the message is not being heard.

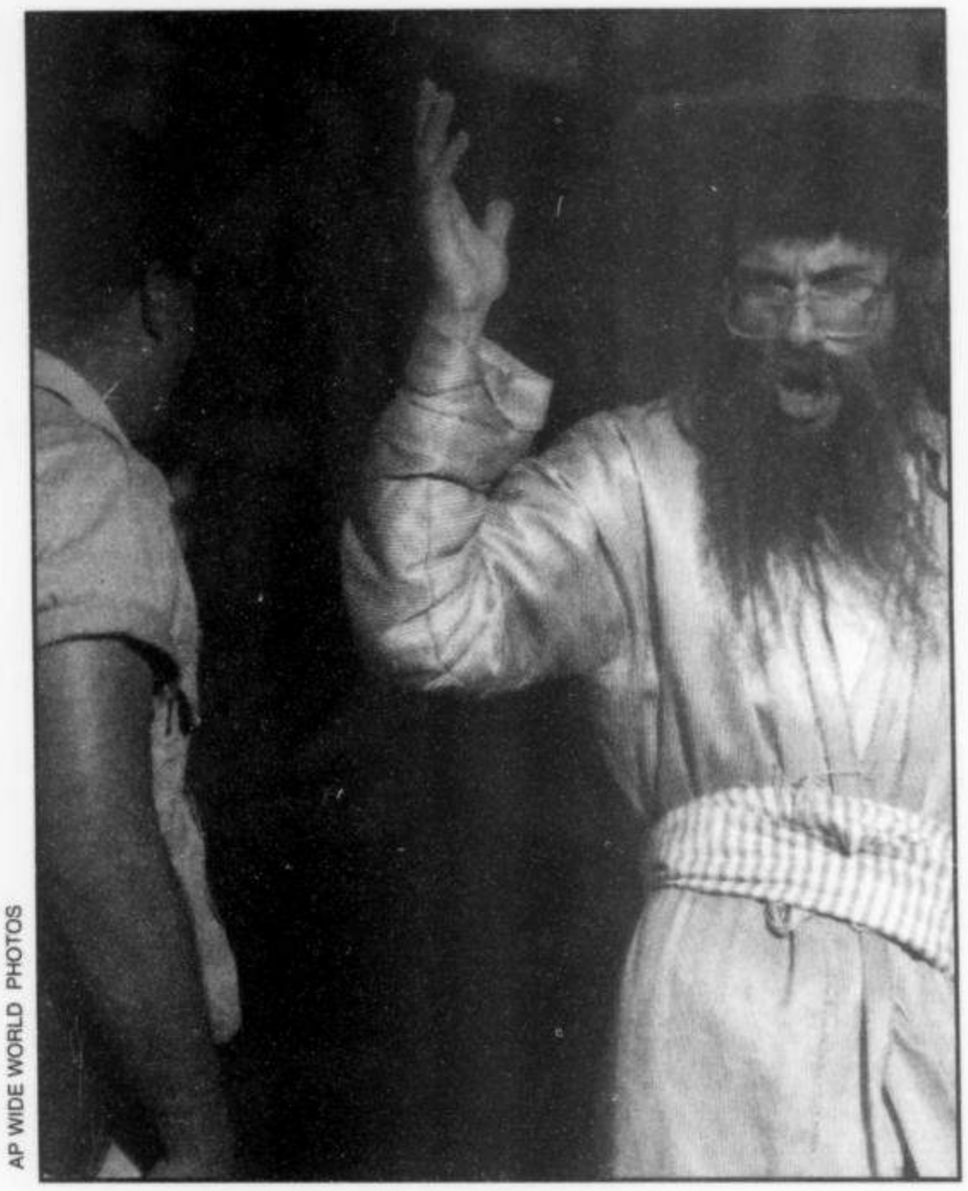
In the battle for minds, the religious Right often accuses the secular Left of being prepared to give up territory for peace simply because the secular Left is divorced from its roots. If leftists, so the argument continues, are prepared to give up the historic rights of Jews to reside in Shechem (Nablus) and Hebron, the homes of the Jewish forefathers, then clearly they would be equally prepared to give up on Tel Aviv and Haifa, which has little, if any, historical significance. After all, the Right argues, what right do we as a Jewish collective have to reside in this part of the world, in a Middle East—so culturally different from our middle-class European way of life—without a historic and\or religious justification? What, the Right continues, is Zionism all about if not the return to the historic homeland? We could have accepted Uganda or Birobidjan, but the Zionist forefathers (secular, they hasten to add) were only prepared to come to Palestine. Without this historic/religious justification, we would be no more than simply another European colonial movement.

It is an ideological challenge, one which the Left seems unable to answer. We, they respond, were born here. We are Israeli citizens by virtue of the place of our birth, just as Jews in America or England are American and English citizens respectively. That is all there is to it. Why should we seek any deeper meaning or socio-spatial identity? We are here because we are here, and we want to make peace with the Palestinians and our Arab neighbors because it is preferable to living in a state of conflict, fear, and threat for the rest of our lives.

At this point, the peace argument falters. Why, indeed, do we have a right to a Jewish homeland in Palestine? The second- and third-generation secular Israelis are no different from the third-generation French in North Africa, or the fifth-generation British in India and a host of other colonial movements. Post-colonialism brought an end to their residence within these territories, leaving them feeling alienated and betrayed. Pushed out of North Africa and India respectively, they emigrated to their motherlands, France and England, countries they never knew and never felt at home in. Part of the answer must derive from the national and religious history of the Jewish people. A Left that is too narrowly focused and only discusses individual freedom and rights doesn't have the vocabulary with which to respond to the national and historical sentiments of the Right.

The Israeli peace message is a pragmatic rather than ideological one. It does not deal with real spiritual issues, such as those of social justice. The dual messages of peace and social justice are inherently linked with each other, yet, for most Israelis, peace is perceived as being a pragmatic issue which concerns the demarcation of boundaries and the size of the military. They see social justice as something relevant only to Israelis, focused on preventing starvation or homelessness, but stopping short of questioning the growing socio-economic gaps between the rich and poor, the exploitation of cheap labor, be it Palestinian, Rumanian, or Filipino, or of suggesting that there must also be social justice for the Palestinians.

On the contrary, Israeli peace leaders see the cre-



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ation of Palestinian autonomous areas as a means by which the responsibility for social justice for the Palestinians can be shed. Labor leaders promised that the peace accords would result in Palestinians being responsible for their own welfare, their own employment, and their own housing. Labor forgot that real social justice derives from the granting of equal political rights, so that people can also hold their heads up. They conveniently forgot that the sealing of the territories in the name of the god of security has created a situation in which Palestinians are denied the basic human right of finding employment and of being able to provide food for their family and dependents.

The peace argument requires a spiritual—not necessarily religious—basis if it is to motivate and to inspire. Peace must be linked to the desire to preserve human life, to avoid all forms of oppression and bloodshed, to create a better society, one that stresses egalitarianism and equality. In the Israeli context, it means creating true integration of Arabs and Jews, *Mizrachim* and *Ashkenazim*—a real national unity, not the artificial one that has been cemented together during the past fifty years by the lowest possible denominator, the external threat. It is this threat which is being exploited again by the Netanyahu government in an effort to wallpaper over the many issues that divide Israeli society from within.

In contemporary Israeli society, peace and religion are perceived as being contrasting and confronting philosophies. Why should this be the case? While the exclusive teachings of religion have often been the cause for war and violence throughout the world, peace movements have equally drawn on the universal and spiritual teachings of religion to promote causes of nonviolence, the love of one's neighbor, the sanctity of human life, and the abomination of taking the life or the rights of the "other." At the very least, we would expect a powerful alternative message to rise up from the very depths of Jewish teachings and tradition as a means of competing for ideological hegemony. Judaism's strong commitment to the notion that *every* human being is created in the image of God and its insistence on judging a society by how well it treats the "stranger" and the ethnic minority could provide a firm foundation for a religious response to the challenge of the Right. Few are the nations of the world for whom the contemporary significance of having been "slaves in Egypt," of knowing the evils of oppression and the denial of social and political rights, can have as much meaning.

Three organizations in Israel have tried to promote peace from a religious perspective, but none has been successful in disseminating that message to a wide audience. The Meimad movement, headed by Rabbi Amital (who served briefly as a minister in the Peres cabinet following the Rabin assassination), has itself moved from center-left to center-right in recent years. The social composition of this movement is not vastly different from that of Gush Emunim and the West Bank settlers. But they do not accept the primacy of the Greater Land of Israel ideology. Created as an ideological movement in the late 1980s, they failed to gain sufficient votes for even a single member of the Knesset in the 1988 elections.

The movement was reincarnated some years later in an attempt to disseminate an alternative religious message to the national religious population but did not run as a political party in either the 1992 or 1996 elections. It openly supported the Rabin government in its attempts to make peace, at the same time arguing for a centrist policy which would also take the needs of the West Bank settlers into account in the final negotiations. Today, Meimad is perceived as being no more than a moderate alternative to the National Religious Party, occupying the centrist positions which were once occupied by the party as a whole, before its adoption of hard-line territorial policies during the 1970s.

Slightly more radical is the Netivot Shalom peace movement. The movement was created by a small group of religious students who objected to the Israeli military incursions in Lebanon during the early 1980s. Netivot Shalom combined forces with the existing religious peace movement, Oz VeShalom, which was com-

posed of a small group of religious academics and had come into being as a religious alternative to Gush Emunim during the 1970s. Netivot Shalom does not see itself as competing for votes within the national religious world. It openly voices pro-peace slogans, criticizes the anti-peace messages of the national religious clerics, and takes part in joint Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, a form of activity which is normally denied national religious youth as part of the political socialization and brainwashing they are subject to in their "educational" institutions.

The movement's ideologues reject the overriding importance attached to territory within contemporary Orthodox teachings, preferring to emphasize the notion of "*batzelem elohim nivra ha adam,*" that humankind—all of it, not just Jews—was created equally in the image of a divine being. The *succot shalom* (peace succot), an annual event in the Netivot Shalom calendar, is attended by a handful of the faithful, but they are shunned by their Orthodox brothers and sisters to whom they try to reach out.

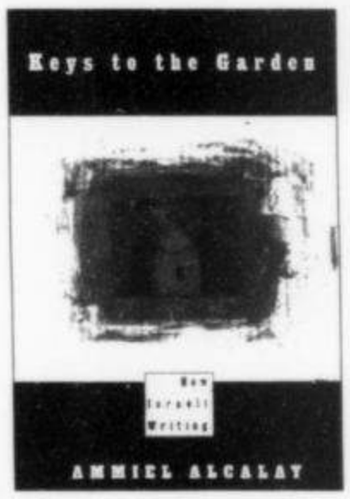
Finally, there is the Rabbis for Human Rights organization, a movement that was set up to monitor human-rights violations. Unlike both Meimad and Netivot Shalom, the Rabbis for Human Rights is not just an Orthodox movement; it is composed of spiritual leaders from the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox worlds—a unique form of religious cooperation within a highly polarized Israel. Their sweatshirt carries that most basic of Jewish teachings: "That which is hateful to you, do not do to others." The organization often intervenes on behalf of Palestinian families who have been adversely affected by Israeli government or military administration decisions and takes part in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Nevertheless, its impact on the wider Israeli society is even more limited than that of either Meimad or Netivot Shalom. Unlike the other two movements, this group has not openly tried to challenge the irredentist hegemony of the national religious message, but instead has concentrated on promoting human rights as an essentially spiritual and universal teaching.

These groups appeal to a small intellectual, academic, and/or rabbinic elite of middle-class, white, Ashkenazi members of the establishment. With the exception of the Rabbis for Human Rights, they address the religious population, offering them an alternative message to that which is heard continually in the schools, *yeshivot*, and other Orthodox institutions. But within these institutions, they are rebuffed, perceived as being tainted with alien influences, such as academic training or a Western background.

The religious peace organizations have been equally shunned by the larger secular peace movement as nothing more than a curiosity. Their frame of reference is incomprehensible to the secular proponents of peace. It is completely irrelevant to the secular society whether specific Jewish biblical or rabbinic texts and interpretations forbid or allow the giving up of territory. They may be happy to have a prominent member of one of the religious peace organizations on their public platforms—if only as an external symbol of wider acceptance of the peace message. But they don't fully understand the potential impact of a religious peace movement. Peace rallies and solidarity visits to Palestinian towns invariably take place on the Sabbath, when Orthodox adherents of the peace message do not travel.

Most peace activists automatically identify religion as being anti-peace and exclusive, while they believe that their own secularism and universalism are prerequisites to an authentic pro-peace position. A *kippah*-wearing person attending a pro-peace rally often feels out of place, conscious of others' suspicious glances, in much the same way as anyone with a pro-peace sticker attending a religious ceremony feels, and is often consciously made to feel, out of place. How symbolic it was that the murderer, Yigal Amir, removed the kippah from his head before attending the peace rally at which he committed his abomination. Without this identifier,

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he was able to melt into the crowd.

It is time for the religious peace movements to stop trying to gain acceptance solely within the national religious community. Their attention should be turned to other sectors of the population, which are also interested in hearing an alternative religious message. Over half of the country's Jewish population are *mizrahim* (Jews from Arab countries) who, while not fundamentalist, have a strong attachment to, and belief in, religious tradition. Much of the *mizrahi* community remains socially and economically disadvantaged, residing in the development towns to which they were consigned by the Ashkenazi establishment during the 1950s. They are rarely brought face-to-face with the realities of their chronic economic disadvantage: that continued warfare and conflict, the expansion of middle-class West Bank settlements, and the construction of large bypass roads have been at their expense.

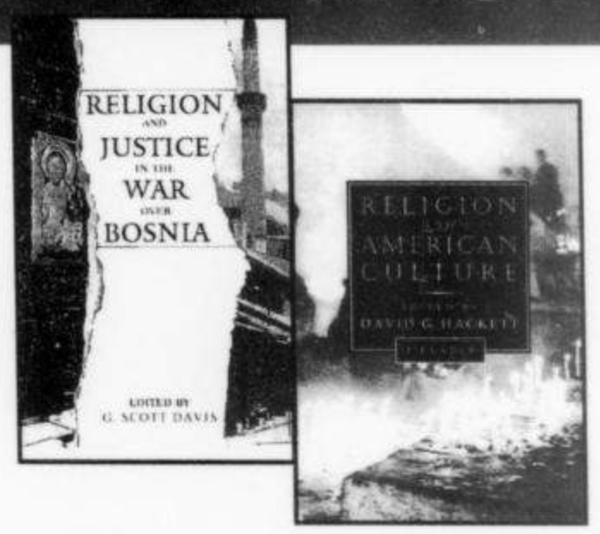
If the Labor Party seems unable to reach out to the *Mizrahim*—partly because the *Mizrahim* still perceive Labor as the hated establishment, but probably mostly because Labor's Zionist discourse is secular and European in origin—then it is here that the religious peace movements should redirect their attentions. A religious peace movement could speak to these "traditional" but not fanatic Israelis, many of whom voted for Netanyahu *not* because of his stand on the peace process, but because they feel uncomfortable with the intolerant anti-religious sentiments that pervade the culture of some of the personalities connected to the peace movement.

In the Jewish calendar, the day following Rosh Hashanah traditionally is commemorated as one of the six fast days in the annual calendar. The day, known as the "Fast of Gedaliah," is one of the lesser-known observances of the yearly cycle. The day commemorates the reputed murder of the last Jewish governor of Israel by fellow Jews, prior to the Babylonian exile. The Rabbis later associated the cause and effect of this assassination of a Jew by his own people with the ultimate punishment, that of exile. The historical facts are questionable, but not the message: The hatred for one's fellow man/woman desecrates human life.

This year, the religious peace movements in Israel commemorated the Day of Gedaliah by holding a prayer meeting at the site of the Rabin assassination in Tel Aviv. The assassination of Gedaliah is associated with the end of sovereignty and national independence. If radical change is not forthcoming, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin will result in the end of a peace process, which would have done more than anything since the establishment of the State in 1948 to bolster national independence. Resting not only on the military

(Continued on p. 66)

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Netanyahu's Prospects
Excerpts from a Conversation with Yaron Ezrahi

Observing the conduct of Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu doesn't give one any idea of a policy or a strategy that guides the current government in facing the challenge of the peace process. His operational code is improvisation in the context of a general aversion to the peace process. Yet, he knows that a resumption of widespread violence and significant casualties on both sides could threaten his government. If the Palestinians lose hope, the kind of violence that could erupt here would undermine the stability of Israeli civilian life. The conflict is not between regular armies across known borders; it can easily erupt into a people's war, because of the nature of the demographic interpenetration between the two populations.

Israelis might easily perceive any resumption of full-scale hostilities with the Palestinians as a preventable war. In Israel's recent history, we have three examples of leaders who were charged with considerable responsibility for preventable wars, and all of them were in one way or another destroyed by merciless public criticism—Golda Meir (the Yom Kippur war), Menachem Begin (the Lebanese tragedy), and Yitzhak Shamir (the intifada). The course of the Lebanese war was affected by problems of morale in some units of the Israeli army. During the first weeks of the intifada, the Likud wanted to define the struggle as a live war with live ammunition, but the army objected and won. The question today is whether the Prime Minister can depend on Israel's people's army to fight a preventable war that would be rooted in a combination of gross miscalculation, incompetent decision-making, and ideology irrelevant to security and defense.

A Palestinian state seems to be extremely probable in the long run—the process set up by Rabin, Peres, and Bailin intended this state to emerge in the context of exchanges between Israel and the Palestinians based on trust, written agreements, and a peaceful diplomatic process. Netanyahu has disrupted this dynamic. If the damage is not corrected soon, the Palestinian state that will come into existence through blood and fire will be a much less peaceful, cooperative neighbor than if it emerges as it was going to under Peres and Rabin.

Bailin and Peres almost convinced the P.L.O. that allowing a large number of the settlements to stay would free Israel to make major concessions that would allow for the emergence of a Palestinian state in the rest of the territories. But under Netanyahu, who is against any form of Palestinian independence, the settlements will become the battlegrounds of the conflict. Ironically, the settlers stand to lose the gains that they might have had under the equivocal policies of Rabin and Peres.

The Likud, the Israeli Right, and its supporters around the world do not have a pragmatic conception of military force. For them, there is nothing that expresses the resurrection of the Jews from the humiliation of the Holocaust more than an armed Israeli soldier. Ideologizing and mystifying the Israeli army, they are more inclined to use force not solely to protect Israeli strategic interests, but to enhance Jewish pride.

There is a struggle in Israel and world Jewry between those who see military power as an enormously costly measure of last resort and regard Israel's strength as a condition which allows Israel to make compromises to improve its national interest, and those who believe that Jewish power is an instrument of first resort in the realization of maximalistic national Jewish goals. Netanyahu came from the second school. He sees the world as basically anti-Semitic and hostile to Jews.

The Israeli press fosters the impression that a large part of the American Jewish community supports Netanyahu's belligerency. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the A.D.L., for example, do not distinguish between helping Israel and helping its controversial prime minister. I am concerned that the silence of the majority of American Jews, who support the peace process, helps create a distorted image in Israel of American Jewish opinion.

In the long run, the peace process is unstoppable. A war between us and the Palestinians is like a boxing match between Siamese twins. Every time you hit your rival, it hurts you, too. You are inseparable.

Even the violence that erupts here can lead only to more negotiations and substantive moves that will eventually solve the problem. If Israelis have learned something in fifty years of embattled existence, it is that decisive military victories over your neighbors do not pay off in the long run. □

Yaron Ezrahi is professor of political science at the Hebrew University. His Book, Rubber Bullets, *is forthcoming in January 1997.*

Black-Hat Vigilantes

Ilene R. Prusher

"*Shabbes*! *Shabbes*!"

I looked up from my rollerblading glide up Ben-Zvi Boulevard to see who was yelling loud enough for me to hear him above The Cranberries playing on my Walkman. "*Shabbes*! *Shabbes*!"

High on the roof of an eight-story building, a *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) young man berated me to mend my errant ways. Glad to see he had no stones to throw with his words, I shook my head and pressed on along Ben-Zvi, which is more of a travel artery than a neighborhood street, and where light traffic flows steadily every Saturday. That may change, if the Shabbes Screamer and his thousands of allies have their way.

I love Shabbat in Jerusalem—the peace, the slow pace, the melodies that drift from home to home on a summer evening when the balcony doors are open. And after a harried work week, going out for a rollerblade is my rest, my way of enjoying the Sabbath. But *my* way of enjoying anything Jewish seems to be increasingly irrelevant in Jerusalem, where more than half of the schoolchildren are in ultra-Orthodox schools and their *haredi* parents have seized more real power than ever before in Israel's history. The coalition of hard-line nationalist and religious Right parties Benjamin Netanyahu pieced together upon his election victory in May not only gave the ultra-Orthodox much more control than is commensurate with their numbers, but emboldened zealots to impose their will freely on the majority.

Teaming up with fundamentalists who think they have a corner on absolute truth helped Netanyahu pave the way to a government that has taken a totally uncompromising approach with the Palestinians and expected them to respond acquiescently. The quick, violent unraveling of the peace process in September was hastened by Orthodox coalition partners who argued that complying with the agreement to redeploy Israeli troops from Hebron would leave the city's 500 Jewish settlers open to attack by the 120,000 Palestinians. More protection for the settlers was one of the controversial demands for changes in the Oslo accords forced on Netanyahu by his ultra-religious ministers.

To be fair, Netanyahu's government is hardly pioneering in its deal-making with the religious Right. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, bowed to the demands of the Orthodox in order to hold his coalition together. Viewing them as the guardians of the faith, he agreed to let them establish an Orthodox monopoly over religious affairs that still exists.

Close to half a century later, however, the men in black want more than just money for their schools and control over womb-to-tomb Jewish rituals. They want major roads to close on Shabbat, women to dress conservatively, and halakha (religious law) in general to prevail over civil liberties. It is only Netanyahu's luck that he has become the first-ever directly elected prime minister. A choice that some Israelis deemed wise at the time has proven to have factionalized, not consolidated, an already divisive political spectrum, giving an easier platform to the fringes.

In the face of a growing vigilantism of the *haredim*, Netanyahu has remained virtually silent. So have the bulk of religious Israelis, who do not spend their Shabbat throwing stones and plotting ways to compel all of Israel to comply with halakha. Many secularists and pluralists fear that the *haredim* want to turn Israel into a Jewish Iran.

On the face of it, comparison to Iran seems preposterous and ironic. Yet, there are already threads of prototheocracy emerging in Jerusalem. In the three months after Netanyahu wrested power from his Labor Party predecessor Shimon Peres, more than two dozen "immodestly dressed" Israeli women were attacked or had their car windows smashed by Orthodox men acting as self-appointed morality police like the *mutawain* that roam Saudi Arabia. Many of the assaults took place near the Ministry of Education and Culture, which borders Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim neighborhood.

Jerusalem's *mutawain* have taken to harassing women in some cases because they were sleeveless, and in at least one case because a woman's below-the-knee skirt was deemed too provocative. Such stories reminded me of the tales of an Iranian acquaintance who was spat on by Teheran fun-

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damentalists for not covering her head in the days of the then-nascent Islamic revolution. Most of the victims of the Jerusalem attacks were spat on, in addition to being pushed about, beaten, and called whores.

All of which makes me glad that I'm quite fast on my rollerblades. But not relieved: My Shabbat skates through town have carefully avoided Bar-Ilan Street. The major Jerusalem road that cuts through religious neighborhoods emerged as the battleground this summer in the jihad to keep the Sabbath holy.

Protesters turned out en masse each Saturday to stone the cars driven by secularists of the left-wing Meretz Party, who demanded the right to drive without being forced into long detours. In scenes reminiscent of the Palestinian intifada against Israeli occupation, ultra-Orthodox protesters burned tires and trash cans and clashed with police.

Growing civil strife convinced more responsible leaders to call for non-violent protest. And the matter seemed to be resolved, at least temporarily, when Israel's Supreme Court ruled that Bar-Ilan would remain open on Shabbat, until a committee could study the matter further. Then came the death threats against Chief Justice Aharon Barak.

It started with incitement in Orthodox newspapers, which ran headlines like "The Target—Barak" and stories branding him a "dangerous enemy" of Judaism. Then came the phone threats. "You will rot next to Rabin's grave, then you'll understand," said one. The threats, on the heels of a scandal about Orthodox teenage girls forming a "Yigal Amir Fan Club," raised the possibility that Rabin's assassination did not just tarnish the myth that Jew does not kill Jew—they destroyed the notion altogether.

Barak was put under round-the-clock security protection, for this time the threats are being taken seriously. He has become Public Enemy No. 1 among the Orthodox—not just over Bar-Ilan, but for his interpretation of the Basic Law, the closest thing Israel has to a Bill of Rights. Though it asserts Israel's role as both a Jewish and democratic state, the Basic Law has been interpreted to include freedoms and tolerance that do not seem to register on the *haredi* radar screen. The major rulings that lie ahead for the Supreme Court give Barak reason to fear that the extreme Right may prefer that he not be around for the decisions. On the docket is a case brought by the Reform and Conservative movements challenging the state's refusal to recognize anything but Orthodox conversions to Judaism.

I would be delighted to see the high court break the Orthodox oligarchy on religious affairs. As my fiancé prepares for conversion under Conservative auspices, the option of being legally married here would be a warmer welcome to the faith. But the cultural war being ignited here affects more than just Jews from around the world. And it does more than polarize Israeli society, where many secular Jews have grown to despise the Orthodox influence so much that they avoid going to Jerusalem. It affects Israel's deteriorating relations with the Palestinians and with its own Israeli-Arab citizens. To them, the absolute political sway of the religious Right's leaders on their followers is no different from Ralph Reed's or Pat Buchanan's as seen by America's ethnic political Left. Mohammed Zeidan, an Israeli-Arab human-rights activist and Hebrew University graduate, explained what that means to people in his hometown of Nazareth. "These ultra-religious groups see us as not a part of the Jewish people, so we are not part of Israel as far as they're concerned," he said. "Even the Jewish community is divided—it's twenty or thirty different communities. If they don't accept each other as citizens, it makes me think that it will be two hundred times harder for them to accept me."

The only alternative to Netanyahu's dependence on the religious bloc, twenty-three Knesset seats strong, would be a national unity government. But linking up with Labor would require that he relinquish some of his power and accept their demands for immediate implementation of the Oslo accords. Showing little willingness thus far to go that route, he has let the Orthodox do as they will.

That will is not a mystery to me. The first time I spent Shabbat at an ultra-Orthodox house, I had a new understanding about how precious a preserve the Sabbath is for the religious.

Some elements of the religious community think that their right to respite at home easily translates into an inalienable right to a total Shabbat in the public domain, too. Indeed, the question raises a complex web of issues over whether the *haredim* have a legitimate right to request the private use of a public space at certain times. If organizers of a parade can ask to close a road, why can't they?

The difference is that the *haredim* aren't making requests, they are lobbing stones and death threats. It is hard to understand how the very act of throwing stones or holding a protest does not break the Shabbat. To Jews, shouldn't the priority of *pikuach nefesh*—to preserve life even if it means breaking the Sabbath—mean that cars should be free to drive down a main road in case of urgent situations? The ultra-Orthodox say that they are taking advantage of their legitimate right to be political players by promising their swing vote to whichever party would offer them an attractive platform. But can they demand rights as an Israeli minority on some issues, while imposing their will on a resistant majority on so many others?

Many of the early Zionists had dreams of an Israel that would be "a nation like other nations." The late peacemaker Yitzhak Rabin was on a mission to dismantle a fading Jewish notion "that the whole world is against us," coupled with Peres's efforts to convince Israelis that an economically rewarding peace would allow Israel to join its neighbors and become a normal part of the region. Neighbors like Iran and Saudi Arabia were not what they had in mind. □

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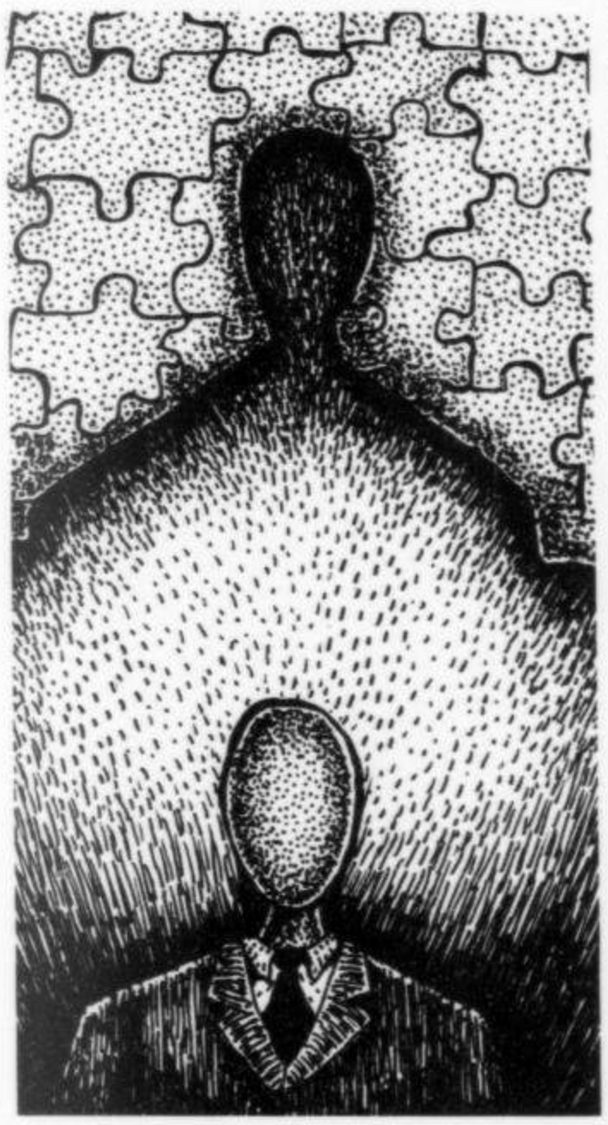
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Democracy in the American Jewish Community
A Proposal for Change

Irving Litvag

Here in the world's foremost bastion of democracy is the American Jewish community, populated by some of the world's foremost adherents of democracy as a way of life. It is thus powerfully ironic that virtually all the organizations that make up the American Jewish community continue to operate today, as they have for many decades, in a flagrantly undemocratic manner.

Many of these organizations find themselves in a precipitous decline—losing members, influence, and relevance at an alarming rate. Many variables contribute to this decline, but a primary causal factor is the alienation of hundreds of thousands of American Jews who care deeply about Judaism and the fate of the Jewish people yet are sickened by the elitism of the organized Jewish community. They have turned away from the constant worship of material wealth, and the leaders' disregard for the opinions and feelings of the Jewish community's middle-class and working-class members.



Most young American Jews today are utterly apathetic about the American Jewish community; they perceive organized Jewish life in the United States as predicated almost entirely on fund-raising and money. Some of them cling to Judaism through *havurot*, *Rosh Hodesh* circles, and other groups, but will have nothing to do with the official, mainstream Jewish organizations that have dominated Jewish life in the United States for many decades.

American Jewish organizations ranging from national bodies to local community federations and agencies down to the smallest synagogues have long operated according to the same undemocratic pattern. Professional staff leaders—executive vice presidents, executive directors, congregational rabbis, federation directors—effectively control these bodies with the tacit cooperation of the organization's nominal leadership, carefully selected officers who usually are chosen from among the group's wealthiest members. In contrast, the general membership—the Jewish community at large—has virtually no voice in the policies and operations of the organizations.

This undemocratic—really anti-democratic—governing process has been in place in the American Jewish community ever since the formal organization of American Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unquestionably, it has been successful as a method of raising funds from wealthy Jews. During the Holocaust and the difficult early decades of Israel's history, the organizations of the American Jewish community functioned magnificently: a giant conveyer belt sending money where it was needed in the world to assist Jews in any way possible. But times and the needs of American Jews have changed. And, despite the undeniable efficacy of these fund-raising mechanisms, a monumental price has been paid for the decades of elitism. American Jews are falling away in great numbers. Only a revolutionary transformation in the governance of the American Jewish community can possibly stanch the flow.

The extent to which the nominal leadership of the organized American Jewish community is dominated by the wealthy was clearly illustrated in a 1991 poll sponsored by the Wilstein Institute of the University of Judaism. This survey of "American Jewish leaders" was designed to elicit their opinions on policies of Israel's Likud government. But the poll

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Irving Litvag is a writer and public relations executive whose career has included several years on the staff of a major Jewish community organization.

ART BY MAC MCGILL

proved to be extremely interesting for its financial profile of the leadership.

The survey included 205 of the 339 individuals who were then presidents of local Jewish federations and/or were members of the board of the national Council of Jewish Federations.

Those surveyed, according to the study, had *a median annual income of $200,000*. About 45 percent of the respondents contributed at least $25,000 annually to their local Jewish Federation campaigns; 75 percent gave more than $10,000 each year; and the average annual contribution was $20,000.

Although some wealthy men and women are superbly qualified to lead American Jewish organizations, it has been obvious for the last century that such qualifications play a much less important role in their selection as leaders than does their potential or actual largesse.

While historically there has been periodic protest over the lack of democracy in American Jewish life, those dissenting voices typically have been ignored by Jewish lay and professional leaders. In a recent historical survey of American Jewish self-governance, H.R. Diner wrote:

> ... some criticized the idea of community by philanthropy in part because it seemed to violate other American political norms. [Mordecai] Kaplan and his followers harshly criticized the federation leaders. He charged that *such a form of community organization was inherently undemocratic and dissonant with American political culture*. It put all the authority of the community in the hands of a small group of wealthy givers, essentially disenfranchising the masses of Jews in any community, many of whom in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s came from the ranks of the 'takers'. Control of the community agenda, Kaplan and others charged, should not belong to those who controlled its purse strings but instead ought to be based on 'the consent of the governed'. They complained that the vast majority of Jews, the masses of middle- and lower-middle class workers and small business people in any community had no voice in the only functioning city-wide Jewish institution. (emphasis added)

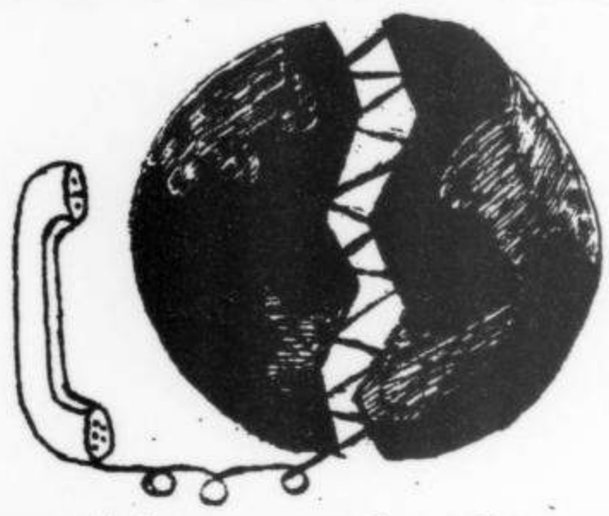
Of all the national Jewish organizations in the United States, I am aware of only one—B'nai B'rith—which operates today with a modicum of democracy, conducting its presidential elections with two competing candidates. In most B'nai B'rith presidential elections, the candidates put forth platforms and offer the organization's members a democratic, if rather limited, choice.

The true wielders of power in much of American Jewish life and the primary conductors of its undemocratic governance pattern are the Jewish professionals—the men and women who make up the professional staffs of our religious, fund-raising, social planning, welfare, and defense organizations.

Most Jewish professionals are dedicated to Judaism, its survival, and its well-being. The majority of them are intelligent, well-educated, sincere, hard-working, and committed. They do not become wealthy from Jewish professional careers; they are led to this work and sustained in it by their dedication. But in spite of (and perhaps, sometimes, because of) these qualities, they have opted to turn their backs on democratic principles, which they support in American society in general and to run their organizations as closely held oligarchies.

The motives for maintaining these oligarchies are, in part, defensive. The Jewish professionals seek job security by choosing lay leaders who can be guided, persuaded, and sometimes controlled. For almost every professional leader of a Jewish organization (not excluding congregational rabbis), a major factor in his/her job security is the financial health of the organization. That means that fund-raising absorbs a

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tremendous amount of time and energy. A truism of professional fund-raisers holds that 90 percent of the dollars are given by 10 percent of the donors. Thus, most professionals believe that their personal futures depend on the active involvement of the wealthiest individuals among their organization's members.

And so, using the compliant by-laws of their organizations, the professionals make sure that most top leadership positions go to the wealthiest members. And when these lay leaders are ready to pass the scepter, it's easily transferred to their sons and daughters, opinions of the rank-and-file membership to the contrary notwithstanding.

For example, when the Jewish Federation in a large midwestern city established a "Young Leadership Development Program," it announced with much fanfare that the program (open by invitation only) would select the best and brightest young people in the local Jewish community to be trained for future leadership roles. Not surprisingly, all the men and women invited to participate in the first few training classes were young members of the community's wealthiest families.

When I protested to the Federation's executive director that no real effort had been made to find the most talented young Jewish people, but only the richest, he shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Yes, but this is what we have to do in order to insure our fund-raising in the years to come."

The motives of the professionals also are, in part, altruistic. Most Jewish professionals regard the general Jewish community with affection; they worry about its future, they work hard to meet its needs. But they sincerely believe that they know far better than the rank-and-file what is in the interest of their specific organization and its constituency. And, with the cooperation of malleable people of wealth whom they select to fill the organization's leadership positions, the professionals move their groups in the directions they deem best.

Ask yourself: does your local Jewish Federation provide advance publicity for the meetings of its board of directors and invite the general Federation membership to attend? Are all the actions of the board made known to the total membership every month through the Federation newspaper or newsletter, or through other means of communication? In my community, meetings of the Federation board and key Federation committees are never publicized. Actions taken at such meetings are seldom promulgated publicly, except for the customary announcement of the annual fund-raising goal. Is your community different?

It is long past time for American Jews to rise up and take back the organizations that rightfully belong to them. They need to say to the Jewish professional leaders who have jealously guarded their decision-making role: "These are our organizations. You are our valued co-workers. But our organizations are not your property. We hire you to carry out our policies, not to make policies for us. From now on, we shall choose our own leadership in free, open elections. We are counting on you to work with that leadership in harmony and with continued dedication."

How can democracy be restored to American Jewish organizations? The first step is simple and important: to eliminate forever—in every Jewish organization, large and small, national and local—that ubiquitous enemy of democracy, the nominating committee and its accompanying "slate." By-laws and constitutions must be amended to provide for open nominations for officer positions and board memberships. Each nominee will have equal status in the election; there will be no official imprimatur given to candidates favored by the previous leadership and their professional allies.

Obviously, political wheeling and dealing will continue to exist. There is nothing to prevent incumbent leaders from making known which candidates they favor to succeed them. But the playing field will be level. No longer will there be an official slate with preordained winners. Free, contested elections will mean that candidates seeking support will have to run on their positions on major issues of the day, through written platforms, meetings, debates, and other vehicles of democratic expression.

Elections should be conducted by secret, written ballot with every member of the organization eligible to vote. Local organizations such as federations and synagogues can conduct voting by mailed ballots or by setting up polling places at the organization's building or offices.

In addition to revamping the electoral process, what other steps might be taken to democratize the Jewish community? Some people in the TIKKUN community have suggested the following ideas:

•Require that each Jewish Federation newspaper give space to dissenting positions on major Jewish issues, as well as to opposing candidates for office in major Jewish organizations.

•Each Jewish community should elect a Congress of American Jews to speak for the community on political issues. Every Jew, affiliated or not, could vote in the elections for this Congress and every candidate with at least minimal support (e.g., one hundred signatures on a petition) would receive community election funds to insure that minority views be heard without dependence

(Continued on p.76)

Deficits Do Matter

Paul Simon

Frank Riessman's article, "The Balanced Budget Myth" (TIKKUN, May/June 1996), attempts to solidify support for a myth that too many in the liberal/progressive camp have believed—that deficits don't matter. The embrace of this myth harms the economy now and will cost it much more in the future. While I applaud Riessman's advocacy of a jobs program—I have introduced legislation for a W.P.A.-type program—he seeks to build it on a fiscal house of cards.

By using a selective statistical base, he assumes that balancing a budget brings recessions, so he advocates a job strategy. To get there, he says we should accept more inflation and more deficits. His goal is the right one; his means of achieving it will do great damage to the nation. He conveniently ignores the 1993 tax increase that President Clinton courageously proposed as a mechanism to bring down the deficit. It has resulted in a drop in interest rates and the creation of a significant percentage of the 10 million new jobs of which the President rightfully boasts. Prior to the 1993 tax change, President Clinton suggested a $17-billion jobs-creation program—in a $6-trillion economy—and even a Democratic Congress did not buy it, because most economists said that it would have almost no impact. President Clinton told me later that the deficit-reduction program created many times more jobs than the $17-billion proposal would have. A more comprehensive jobs program is needed, *together with balancing the budget*.

The idea of a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget is not new. Thomas Jefferson first suggested it. He advocated a rigid prohibition against federal government borrowing. The proposal before Congress that would require a 60-percent vote of both houses to create deficits is more flexible and more realistic.

There are times when deficits are wise, but they should be infrequent. We soon will celebrate thirty years in a row of deficits. Jefferson said that one generation should no more be willing to pay the debts of a preceding generation than those of another nation. Professor Laurence Tribe of Harvard, the lead witness *against* the amendment three years ago, testified: "Despite the misgivings I expressed … a decade ago, I no longer think that a balanced budget amendment is, at the … conceptual level, an ill-suited kind of provision to include in the Constitution. The Jeffersonian notion that today's populace should not be able to burden future generations with excessive debt does seem to be the kind of fundamental value that is worthy of enshrinement in the Constitution. In a sense, it represents a structural protection for the rights of our children and grandchildren."

Another witness, former Senator Paul Tsongas, put it well: "If you ask yourself why are these deficits always voted for, the answer is very simple … there are a lot of votes in deficit spending. There are no votes in fiscal discipline. What you have here is a sad case of pursuit of self as opposed to pursuit of what is in the national interest. The balanced budget amendment is simply a recognition of that human behavior."

The recent congressional debates on the balanced budget amendment and on balancing the budget have been fierce. As a Democrat, I would like to respond to the common arguments raised against the balanced budget amendment in particular, and against balancing the budget in general.

First, opponents of the balanced budget amendment and of balancing the budget argue that balancing the budget will hurt programs for poor people.

Another liberal myth is that deficits help poor people. What poor people need are advocates, not deficits. I voted against the terrible welfare bill President Clinton signed before the election. My voting record on behalf of the nation's impoverished is as strong as anyone's in the Senate. Why are we giving the Pentagon $11 billion more than they requested while cutting back on food stamps? Why are candidates trying to outdo one another in talking about tax breaks while we hamper education and do virtually nothing about health-care needs? Because of our campaign-finance system, which skews democracy to favor the

Paul Simon, the senior senator of Illinois, has been the chief Democratic sponsor of the balanced budget amendment.

more fortunate—but also because so many who should be advocating for the poor are audibly silent. And that silence is bad news for our most vulnerable, whether the budget is in balance or in deficit.

I recently read that President John F. Kennedy was stunned to find that he had to designate $9 billion for Fiscal Year 1963 as the gross interest expenditure. For Fiscal Year 1996, the latest estimate is that it will be $344 billion, eleven times what we spend on education, twenty-two times what we spend for foreign economic assistance, and roughly twice what we spend on our basic poverty programs. The biggest welfare program we have, by far, is welfare for the rich who collect interest on our bonds, and increasingly, these are the wealthy beyond our borders.

We have increased the nation's debt from less than $1 trillion when Ronald Reagan became President to more than $5 trillion today. Under the theory that deficits are good for poor people, the nation's least-well-off should be smothered with largesse. If we had had a constitutional amendment in place in 1980, the interest payment today would be substantially less than one-fifth the $344 billion for this year, because all econometrics models show that interest rates today would be appreciably lower, and because of greater investment in the industrial sector and housing caused by lower interest rates. The nation's economy would be much stronger.

If we were paying $50 billion for interest instead of $344 billion, would the poor be better off? Marginally, but only marginally. There would be fewer people on welfare and fewer unemployed, but unless there are people like the prophet Amos, who speak up for the poor, they will continue to be neglected under any scenario. Here is a challenge for the much-too-silent religious community that spoke with such eloquence and passion during the civil-rights struggle. The poor need your eloquence and passion today!

A second argument against the balanced budget amendment is that requiring a balanced budget will remove the federal government's flexibility to respond to recessions. Most economists believe that government response to recessions is much too slow, that generally, implementation of our answers comes after the recession has turned around. The widely respected economist, Fred Bergsten, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Jimmy Carter, believes that we need quick responses. He argues that we should plan small surpluses each year, which can be used quickly under a formula to be agreed upon between Congress and the President. Bergsten has moved from being an opponent of a balanced-budget amendment to being a strong supporter. With few exceptions, congressional responses to recessions, such as extending unemployment compensation, have passed with more than the sixty-vote margin the constitutional amendment would require.

I support President Clinton's reelection, but he is wrong in asserting that the era of "big government" has ended. The question should not be whether government is big or small, but whether it is good. I join the American public in believing we should have health-care coverage for all of us, for example, and that will require a larger government. But we should do it on a pay-as-you-go basis. I should not ask my grandchildren and their grandchildren to pay for my health care.

A third argument raised against the balanced budget amendment is that Congress does not need to amend the Constitution to balance the budget. Both political parties are on record for a balanced budget by the year 2002. But interestingly, both political parties leave the tough medicine to achieve it to the year 2001. Michael Lerner will grow green hair before it happens without a constitutional amendment. But just to make sure it won't happen, both parties have followed their New Year's fiscal diet resolution with a call for a great big dessert called a tax cut. Like most New Year's resolutions, it is not completely meaningless, because it helps for a short period, but its life span is limited.

When Franklin Roosevelt proposed measures to get us out of the Great Depression in a period when we needed deficits, many Republicans shouted that we should balance the budget instead. Democrats got in the habit of defending deficits when they were needed, and we have had a hard time breaking the habit when they are not needed.

Michael Kinsley had an excellent column in The *New Republic* several years ago explaining why liberals should support the constitutional amendment. Representatives Joseph Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) have had solid statements along the same line, as have Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), but there have not been enough progressive Democratic voices. The public perception of Republicans is that they are too mean-spirited, too harsh on our neediest citizens; the perception about Democrats is that too often we are fiscally irresponsible. There is some truth to both perceptions.

A fourth argument against balancing the budget is that "We owe the money we spend to ourselves." Today, no one knows precisely how much of our debt is now held beyond our borders. But a reasonable guess is 26 percent, the hidden holdings. That causes several problems. First, what we spend in interest to those who hold Treasury notes is more than twice what we spend for foreign economic assistance to the less fortunate. In other words, because of our debt, our foreign aid is pri-

marily to the wealthy of the world, not the poor. Second, this debt to others makes us less independent. If the Simon family owes too much debt, we lose some of our independence, and the same is true for a nation.

When people suggest that we should get tougher on certain countries on trade, they ignore a simple reality: It is difficult to get tough with your banker. I served in the House when an arms sale to the Saudis came before us, and I remember the Treasury official who lobbied me on its behalf, explaining that the transaction was important because the Saudis might stop buying our Treasury notes if it did not go through.

A few years ago, the United States was the world's biggest creditor nation by a huge margin; now, it is the world's greatest debtor by a huge margin. We are the only major country to go from creditor to debtor status in peacetime. In his book, *Day of Reckoning*, Benjamin Friedman of Harvard writes:

> World power and influence have historically accrued to creditor nations. People simply do not regard their workers, their tenants and their debtors in the same light as their employers, their landlords and their creditors. Over time the respect, and even deference, that America had earned as the world banker will gradually shift to the new creditor countries that are able to supply resources where we cannot, and America's influence over nations and events will ebb.

A fifth argument against balancing the budget is that Congress will be forced to raise taxes in order to eliminate the deficit. A balanced-budget amendment *would* force us to raise taxes—and we should. Another of the many myths about government is that Americans are overtaxed. The equity in our tax structure is not all it should be, but of the nations of Western Europe and Japan, Australia and New Zealand, when you include the industrial compact in Japan, only Turkey has a lower total tax burden as a percentage of income. We have the lowest tax on a gallon of gas of any nation outside of Saudi Arabia. Paying $4.50 per gallon in Europe is common, most of it taxes. Our cigarette taxes are extremely low. Most of the other industrial nations have a value-added tax; we have none. The list goes on.

Yes, a balanced-budget amendment would force us to face our revenue needs, and we should do that, but without such an amendment, political considerations cause office-seekers to avoid telling people the truth. Pandering seems to be the road to political success. A few, like Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, have been forthright about this, but most people elected to public office talk about this quietly, not for public consumption. My own experience is that the public appreciates candor. That is also Senator Hollings's experience.

When I explain to a conservative Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club the need for a W.P.A.-type program to guarantee job opportunities for people of limited skill who need training and a transition into the private sector job market, they nod their heads in agreement. When I say to them that ultimately we are not likely to let people starve and that we will pay them either for doing nothing or doing something, but it will take a small increase in taxes to invest in a jobs program, they are ready to buy it. When I talk to an audience about an increase of one or two percent in the income tax to pay for health care for the nation, audiences overwhelmingly favor it.

It should be noted that while U.S. taxes are lower than almost all industrial nations, there is more hostility over taxes toward our government than from those paying higher taxes in other countries. The reason? Part of it is that, with the exception of Israel, none of the other countries spend as high a percentage of their tax money on interest and defense as we do. These are nonvisible items for most people. In other nations, people see their government helping them with social supports such as health care. We should use our money for health care, rather than interest. But that requires balancing our budget. Unfortunately, we need a constitutional amendment to give us the backbone to do it.

A sixth argument, raised by opponents of the balanced budget amendment, is that Social Security would be adversely affected. To the contrary, Social Security would be affected in two beneficial ways. First, it will be protected. The course we are on—toward monetizing the debt and the runaway inflation that goes with it—would dramatically reduce the value of family savings and the Social Security trust funds. That is why Robert Myers, chief actuary for Social Security for twenty-one years, says that a balanced budget constitutional amendment is essential to preserve Social Security.

Second, everything has to be on the table for possible savings. We face serious long-term Social Security problems, not as dire as most young people believe, but serious enough that the sooner they are addressed, the better. A constitutional amendment would force us to face this reality.

A seventh argument against balancing the budget is that we are not really harming ourselves with deficit spending. While economists don't agree on much, there is one thing they all acknowledge: The biggest reason for the trade deficit is the budget deficit. Studies vary from 37 percent to 55 percent on the trade deficit being

(Continued on p.74)

FICTION

Spaces in the New Year

Delsa Winer

Seven o'clock New Year's Eve, a Volvo station wagon—mud-splattered almost to the point of invisibility—pulls into Carole's driveway. A stocky man in a ski parka jumps out and opens the tailgate. "I'm Phil Eastman," he says to Carole at the front door, as the large dog and kids scramble into the entryway. "I'm grateful to you for doing this."

"I didn't have any plans. It'll be fun."

Until a few hours ago, Carole did have plans with Reale (pronounced Ree-al), her lover. This is the first New Year's Eve since her divorce, and they'd planned to be watching television and see the ball dropped on Times Square. While she was still living with Allen, Reale used to ring twice at midnight. Allen, a cardiologist, would fumble the phone off the hook, listen to the dead silence, and curse. By then they'd stopped being invited to parties. By then they seemed to have been quarantined, as if highly infectious. As if their foundering marriage, with its smell of decay and hints of scuttling children, were reason for every friend they had to abandon them.



The dog disappears. The boy and girl drop their sleeping bags and canvas sacks on the slate, and stare around. From the entry level, the kids look down at the angled panels of the sleeping atrium and up one story through the living space, hung with huge and assaulting modern installations.

Phil Eastman introduces them: "These are the twins, Toby and Shirley. The boy is Shirley. They're seven."

Toby is taller than her brother, dark-haired and composed. Her wary smile reveals two permanent giant front teeth. Shirley's sprung upper lip exposes a wide space. His hair color is rust, skin pallid. Nothing alike, neither speaks. Once their father leaves, Carole asks the twins to take off their boots. She hangs their jackets in the closet; the short, stiff sleeves sticking out look haunted by the ghosts of her own children when they were small.

Carole leading, they wind up the open spiral to the loft. Up there in unbounded darkness it is snowing in the skylight; the twins' raised faces swim in silvery moonshine. Then Carole steps on the dimmer switch, and a Frank Stella painting springs from the wall beyond the railing; projecting complexity, unrest and control; it is Carole's most valuable possession. Some years ago she re-designed her life around it.

Now she would like to ask either the boy or girl to help spread the sheets on the futon, but she has already confused their androgynous names. After she makes the bed, the boy tests the mattress, bouncing; he comments to his sister, "This house is the closest to a mansion I've ever been in. What do you think it cost?" His sister guesses five-hundred thousand. Indifferent to Carole, they banter like actors in a sit-com. Carole is thinking that five-hundred thousand is less than the restoration cost, five years ago; and since then she has been living in space, on levels: levels of pain and pleasure. She had abandoned the symbols that once carried people safely from cradle to grave for what she thought of as voyage of self-discovery.

The girl twin says the bed is too narrow for them both, and she'll sleep on the floor.

"It's queen-sized," her brother insists.

Delsa Winer writes and lives in Lincoln, Massachusetts. She has four children. No twins.

ART BY CYN MAURICE

"It isn't," the other child says. "Dad's is queen sized in Conway, and it's much bigger."

"Is that a summer house?" Carole breaks in.

They look at her, seem surprised that she's still around; the boy says, "It was his piece of the settlement. My mother got the Lexington house. "Toby," he asks his sister, "what's that lake called again?"

"Chocuorua."

"Oh, I know where that is," Carole says. "We used to go up there when the kids were little." After a silence, "What's his name?" she asks of the dog.

The large yellow dog is pacing in a circle, bumping Carole's leg with each circuit. When she reaches down to pat him, he leaps to the side, skids. Toby says, "Metroliner." And Carole thinks, *Oh-oh, one more name I won't remember.* "He doesn't like strangers," Toby warns, as she sets up housekeeping, removing the contents of her canvas backpack.

"Would you guys like to get into your p.j.s?"

Shirley studies the dials and windows on his watch, and says it's too early. From his pack, he takes out a machine gun. He places a small target with a floating red dot under the railing against the open edge of the loft. Lying on his stomach, Shirley aims and shoots. There is a whoosh and a moment later an electronic beep, indicating, Carole supposes, a hit. Nothing she can see has passed from gun to target. Stepping out of range, Carole expresses wonder every time the beep sounds. Meanwhile, Toby is dragging down one of the heavy black medical volumes left behind by Allen. Bent forward with her hair parted down the back of her neck, she begins by sounding out du-od-inal ul-cer. Carole interrupts to question them about their bed time—she's had no advance briefing. She didn't find out she was baby-sitting until late that afternoon:

"Mom, I know this is an imposition," her daughter Lisa had said on the phone, "so feel free to say no if you want to."

"To what?"

"Are you doing anything special tonight?"

Carole glanced at the clock, it was 6:10. She'd picked up the phone thinking—hoping it might be Reale calling from the airport to say he'd changed his mind. "Not that I know of."

"What happened with Reale?" Lisa cross-examined sharply. Lisa, now a lawyer, married to a lawyer, is a paradigm of professionalism and undilute yuppiedom. She makes no bones about the fact that she and Steve disapprove of Carole's indefensible, pricey life-style. They disapprove of the group of artists Carole represents, the people who buy the art, the outlandish prices paid, and the art they pay it for. Above the fireplace in Lisa and Steve's condo is a print of Winslow Homer's "Prout's Neck."

"Reale had an opening," Carole told her daughter, even-voiced. "He couldn't stay."

"Well that's your business," Lisa said after a pause, implying that if Carole had any respect for herself she'd swiftly end her unsatisfactory relationship. "I called to ask you a favor. Okay?"

"Of course. Anything."

As soon as she had picked up the phone, and heard, "Hello mom," Carole had recognized an urgency that tightened her stomach with dread. It recalled to her the time Lisa called asking to be picked up at the Greyhound Bus Depot. It was one in the morning on a below-freezing night in January. Two weeks before that, Carole had received a cryptic request for eight hundred dollars, to which she responded immediately, as if were a blackmail threat. *P.S.* Lisa had written on the bottom of the post card, *School's fantastic*! *I got asked to pledge.* And then the next week, sobbing on the pay phone, she told Carole that she'd quit Syracuse, felt suicidal and—"before the dime runs out, I'm pregnant."

There was no one to turn to—not to either man. Reale was immersed in a corporate commission that required living in New York. His being away when she was in a crisis situation with Lisa made Carole realize that a relationship is not a marriage. And love, no matter how passionate, is not an emotion unconditional enough to base demands on, demands that insist on sacrifice. Watery as it was, her relationship with Allen contained more actual glue. And by the time Reale returned to his town house in Back Bay that spring, Lisa had had an abortion and three months in a psychiatric care facility. She had returned to school, another school. And Carole, asking no one's sanction, filed for divorce.

Shirley shuffles back from the bathroom in washed-out pajamas; printed across his narrow chest is a picture of a turtle wearing a helmet. The boy has a frail, asexual body with the disproportionately large head, Carole notices, of a child in the fourteenth-century Flemish school.

Carole's gallery is on Newbury Street, in Boston; but she is frequently in New York, where she sells and acquires art. Her children have observed that the more money she makes, the more disdainful of money she becomes. When Carole married a doctor, in the Sixties, and eleven months later gave birth to her first child, she'd spun smoothly into orbit—intending, presumably, to circle indefinitely. Not until age thirty-seven, when she felt completely out of fuel, did she look around to see what was spinning past.

Toby (Carole has to think a moment before she thinks of her name) wears a shortie nightgown. There is something

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Reflections of a Trade Unionist on the Politics of Meaning

Joe Uehlein

As I listened to Cornel West talk about the difference in the economic indices from 1968 to the present (unemployment up, poverty up, wages down, living standards down) I thought about an important factor in our economic health during the 1950s and '60s: We had a strong labor movement. At the high-water mark in 1958, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 52.4 percent of all manufacturing workers were covered by a union contract. Think about that! We drove wages in entire industries, and therefore in the entire economy.

But that's history. We'll never again drive wages in manufacturing industries unless we are able to organize and bargain on a global basis, because that's where the economy went—global. And we won't be able to drive wages in the growing service and professional sectors unless we can organize on a massive basis.

Yes, there are great signs of hope for the labor movement today. We're on a roll with aggressive new leadership in John Sweeney, Richard Trumka, and Linda Chavez-Thompson. We're becoming more aggressive as a movement and broadening our scope. I believe our revival has started.

Three new leaders at headquarters in Washington, D.C. don't make for a new and different movement. But these three leaders offer us a historic opportunity for change. Many of us who supported the Sweeney, Trumka, Chavez-Thompson ticket feel that their election may represent our last chance to rebuild the movement—a movement vital to remaking the Democratic Party. This is an opportunity for all union members and friends of labor, because we now have a chance to make a difference.

We in the labor movement share both the vision and values of the politics of meaning movement. We want an America that honors working people, respects the work they do, rewards them for that work, and restores the



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spirit of community and solidarity so essential to remaking our society. We believe that the market-based ethos of greed undermines solidarity and that a politics of meaning—an ethos based on love and caring—builds and sustains solidarity.

Why is it that corporations can lay off thousands, destroying lives and communities, and the stock market goes up? What does this tell us about our society? People should not be cast aside like disposable parts after the last drop of energy has been wrung from them. The Catholic Bishops reminded us recently that the economy exists for the human person, not the other way around. Let's get it straight—and a politics of meaning can help us do that.

On this point, let me ask you to think about the uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, and the riots in South Central Los Angeles. A common thread connected those revolts: Both represented groups of people who were not part of the economic machine; so, these people were considered to be without value by the power structure. We, as a labor movement, need to reach out aggressively to those disenfranchised from the economic system, even though our members are part of that system.

For people to lead decent lives with lasting commitments to families and neighbors, they need security—secure jobs with decent standards of living. If people are going to give their families the time and care they need, and reach out across barriers of class, color, and culture, then we must raise living standards. I would suggest to you that there is one way to do this—strengthen the labor movement.

Yes, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. is an economic institution. You've heard our president John Sweeney say that "America Needs A Raise." He's been saying that ever since he got elected, and recently we succeeded in raising the minimum wage in this country—a great achievement, but we won't stop there.

We are also fighting for the principal that there is dignity in all work, and there must be dignity and security for all workers.

I've heard Michael Lerner say that in building and realizing a politics of meaning, every institution must be reconfigured. I think about this a lot in terms of the labor movement, and I realize that in working for a politics of meaning we have to start in our own institutions. Labor is perceived as a narrow special interest, and unfortunately our movement has fed that perception too many times in recent decades. Through the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, we became administrators of contracts—we handle grievances and negotiate collective-bargaining agreements. Too many members became detached from the movement and began to view us as they would their insurance company, or, worse yet, as they would the lawn care company that comes once a month, does its thing, and makes the grass grow a little better.

Unfortunately, due to the changing economy, our ability to negotiate better wages has been hampered. We must change what we are about as an institution. We just heard Peter Gabel describe a contract in San Francisco for hotel workers that included elder care and child care. There are more examples like this around the movement.

It's only our lack of imagination that keeps us from realizing significant change. Those who seek to preserve the status quo would repress imagination, because imagination brings change—it's the natural order of things. Our lack of imagination in the labor movement holds us back in terms of redefining who we are as a movement and redefining what can be negotiated. There are, under the law, mandatory subjects of bargaining—like wages, hours, and working conditions—but there is no limit to permissible subjects. A company and a union—a group of workers—can negotiate anything.

Why can't we negotiate occupational stress groups—paid for by the company and organized by the union? Why can't we negotiate family support networks—paid for by the company and organized by the union? And if the company won't agree, we should do it as a movement—pay for it ourselves. We need to change the way we meet the needs of our members. We can train union stewards to lead these new efforts.

Right now in Baltimore, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees is organizing low-wage workers across industry lines in coalition with church groups in the city—they have a coalition called BUILD: Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development. They recently fought for and won a "living wage" for all who do work for the city via privatization—former city work that has been contracted out.

Yes, America needs a raise—but we can even expand this bottom line and broaden our horizons so that a raise is not defined only in economic terms, but in terms that address spiritual, family, and community needs, love and caring. Unions as community centers can go a long way toward building real solidarity. We can change the way we run union meetings so they are based less on parliamentary procedure and bureaucratic process and deal more with the real needs of members.

We must break the vision of unions as external agencies. In today's economy, and with unions in decline, the economic argument alone won't work; it must be broadened. Think about the homeless—we assume homelessness to be about economics, and that is part of it, but it is really more a mirror of our society and culture—our ethos. But please

don't misunderstand me: I'm not advocating the abandonment of our movement's economic mission—I'm calling for significantly broadening that mission to include the kind of things that will help change the ethos of society from one of greed to one of caring, and we start in our own back yard.

We cannot sustain solidarity in a market-based/greed-oriented society. We must create a compassionate union culture that addresses the spiritual, community, family, love and caring needs of our members.

We must change how we view work. We can't, as a movement of working people, simply address the issues in the contract—process the grievances and then step back and not view the work environment and work process as integral to the health and well-being of the worker.

What I'm suggesting is that we examine the poetry of work. Work is as much a part of our lives as family and church, synagogue and mosque. Whether we do it with mindfulness and art, or with unmitigated unconsciousness, work affects in a fundamental way who we are individually and collectively. Work spaces are often lacking imagination, so workers are left with a purely secularized and spirit-less feeling—workers become alienated; and the union culture tends to feed this alienation. As a movement of workers we can change this dynamic. We need to allow more power to the imagination in everything we do.

We in the labor movement often complain that our school systems do not teach children about the labor movement. And they don't. But there's a lot our school systems don't teach that they should. Educators and some politicians like to talk about more school days, more math and science, computers, technology, exams, tests, certification; but don't address imagination, love and caring, compassion, and soul.

Art can be a powerful vehicle for teaching about imagination, soul, love, and caring. But we all know that in our school systems funding for the arts is routinely cut before athletics. Even in our federal budget, arts funding suffers while we build more destructive machinery. Our school systems prepare children to become the best adults possible, but not in the ancient Greek sense of virtue and wisdom, and not in terms of how to sustain loving relationships or imagine new and better ways to live as a people, but simply as efficient parts of an economic machine. This is wrong and perverse and undermines our ability to improve our society and culture.

As an artist, a musician, I could give a whole different speech on the role of art as a vehicle for improving everything else that we do, but that would take too much time. It is, however, critically important. Think about it: Children draw and paint every day and display their art work in our homes, on our refrigerator doors, expanding their imagination and intuition, learning more about who they are. But adults frequently abandon this free-flowing creativity as they focus on the "serious" business of life. The point of art is not simply to express ourselves, but to create an external, concrete form in which what we are about—our soul—can be evoked. Art can help expand imagination and intuition—prerequisites to creating a society based on love and caring.

We rely too much on intellectual interpretation and not enough on intuition. Maybe we should teach children more about mythology. By reading mythology, we learn to think deeply and imagistically. Our world is made up of facts, information, and scientific explanations. Mythological thinking doesn't look for literal causes, but rather more insightful imagining.

Why is it that we can build ever more efficient cars; but marriage is becoming impossible to sustain? Why is that we can explore outer space; but have little imagination about living in peace and in sustaining our own planet? The hierarchy of values of our current ethos is backwards, and if we don't change it soon, there won't be time left. Humankind's age-old search for meaning in life has taken on a new urgency.

One hundred-three years ago, Sam Gompers, the first president of the A.F.L. spoke in this great city of Chicago—almost to the day—on August 28, 1893. The following is a quote that has been abused over the years by simplifying it and saying that all that labor wants is "more"—painting us as a greedy special interest. Here's what Brother Gompers really said:

> What does labor want?
>
> It wants the earth and the fullness thereof. There is nothing too precious; there is nothing too beautiful, too lofty, too ennobling, unless it is within the scope and comprehension of labor's aspirations and wants.
>
> We want more school houses, and less jails;
>
> More books and less arsenals;
>
> More learning and less vice;
>
> More constant work, and less greed;
>
> More justice and less revenge.
>
> In fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better nature, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright.

I think Sam Gompers was espousing a politics of meaning—as important today as it was then. We should search for no less. □

Moment by Moment

Rick Ulfik

Are you and I doomed to live in a world surrounded by people who don't care if we survive?

Don't get me wrong. I love people. But ever since I was a child, I've had the feeling that I was different from everyone else—an outsider looking in. My early all-consuming interest in science fiction reinforced this outsider's perspective on life that could be from a million miles away or a million years from now.

As an adult, the ability to step back from it all, to see the "big picture," has been more than helpful. It's given me a way of looking at human needs and behavior that, I believe, reveals how we will inevitably live together in the near future.

After watching a news report about the horrors in Bosnia or about the latest group of people or wildlife to suffer the decimation of their rain-forest home, a friend of mine has, on occasion, said something like, "Look at what people do to each other. Look what they do to animals. Why do you want to save them? They're not worth it!" My friend is alluding to my recent efforts to help launch the campaign for a politics of meaning at The National Summit on Ethics and Meaning, which took place in Washington, D.C., this past April. The issues my friend's question raises—both personal and public—have become part of my recent inquiry into how fundamental aspects of the human psyche affect our collective behavior, which in turn affects the quality of our daily lives.

There are many people filled with greed and intolerance who cause much suffering in the world. Among some of their victims, acts of anger and violence have become ways of surviving. And worse, much of the rest of humankind has resigned itself to accepting some level of discomfort as the norm. In the United States, for example, many of our citizens have not only discarded their own meaningful or artistic goals (because they are not "commercial" enough to provide a living), but they even tolerate economic and psychological instability in their families as a result of factors like corporate downsizing and relocation, budget cuts in health and other social services, crime, violence, high divorce rates, and so on. Many people believe these conditions to be unfortunate but inevitable side-effects of contemporary life. For them, the idea that a society could be based on *taking care of each other* seems unrealistic, unattainable, and for some, perhaps not even desirable, since civic "caring" connotes, for them, an infringement on their privacy and autonomy.

We are, nevertheless, already practicing civic caring when we re-cycle, obey laws, and so on. But our society bases its system of financial rewards primarily on how well employees generate capital, not on the degree to which they and their employers benefit society—a significant difference.

For me, a society based on caring is not only worth thinking about; I know it's going to happen. How can I watch the news or walk the streets of New York City and feel that way? Just give me a *moment*...

...hope, grief, joy, passion, fear, anger, happiness, hate, numbness, love...

Once in a while, I have a profound *moment* of perspective—an epiphany perhaps—when someone's action and expression of emotion becomes, for me, a metaphor for the entire human species. In other words, that person is doing what makes him or her human. Over time, these experiences have helped me to realize that all emotion reflects our desire for, and expectation of, connection to others.

I think this need for connection to others has its origins in the period prior to our birth and for some time afterward, when our entire existence is in relation to, and dependent on, another person. The fact that we survive this period of extreme dependence leaves in us an indelible memory—and a deep longing to be taken care of again, whether we are aware of it or not. Psychologists tell us that as we grow older, this need drives us to seek a loving partner who we unconsciously hope will take care of us as we were taken care of at birth. Similarly, our early connections with our parents and caretakers comprise the source of our adult impulse to form bonds with family, friends,

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Rick Ulfik is a composer, musician, and writer. He is currently co-writing and co-producing a film concerning environmental and moral issues.

people we work with, our community, and religious, ethnic, or national groups. Some people also feel a connection with their pets and other animals, forests, the great outdoors, the earth itself, the Universe, and God.

The other side of the desire to be cared for is the sense of fulfillment one experiences when contributing to someone else's well-being, which eventually emerges in most people. For me, this impulse developed when, as a teenager, I saw my mother struggling to make ends meet after my father's death. As a result, I started working and helping her financially. I felt the satisfaction of giving back, which, for many people, adds meaning and purpose to their lives, whether it's to a loved one or to their community.

People's feelings and expectations of caring may, however, be curtailed by work situations that reward stepping on or over other people to get ahead, or when people are underappreciated by a society that discriminates against their perceived "group." Then, to some extent, their desire to give back to society is diminished as cynicism sets in.

No matter what their attitude about civic caring, most people can't help witnessing simple daily examples of how the needs and expectations of connection to others are either reinforced or impeded. In either case, I believe, people instinctively feel that the basic building block of our society is this connection. Recently, on the subway, a woman accidentally spilled out the entire contents of her bag (papers, Walkman, tapes, many odds and ends) just as the door opened at her stop. Instantly, three or four strangers scooped up the items and handed them to her, allowing her to step off the train with all her belongings intact. She smiled and thanked them through the closing doors.

The opposite type of situation, in which inconsiderate or neglectful actions lead to rude, angry, or even violent responses, results, I believe, from a breakdown of this expectation of connection.

...sorrow, fear, resignation, humiliation, horror, shame, resentment...

During *moments* when I see people in pain, from Rwanda to the homeless beggars on our streets, or others unfulfilled in their jobs and lives, and even when I see people who inflict pain on others or just ignore those in pain, I see the human race engaged in a deep psychic struggle. People want to care for, or to be cared for by, others. But we are often compelled to suppress those feelings when life seems to teach us that we shouldn't trust others, that we must protect ourselves. Thus many of us dismiss the possibility of connection we experienced in our early years.

Some of us, however, are ready to begin reversing those cynical tendencies. That realization has given me my most positive *moments.*

...trepidation, wonder, jubilation, fulfillment, excitement, joy, anticipation...

At the Washington Ethics Summit, when the 1,800 attendees in the Omni Hotel's Regency Ballroom acknowledged all humanity's fundamental caring needs and agreed that we must derive economic, social, and political *policy* based on those needs, I knew that the months spent organizing the gathering had been worthwhile. In fact, public forums of this type are essential to making a caring society possible. Groups such as The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, which organized the conference, are drawing the blueprints to build such a society.

As a species, we apparently started with that kind of social organization. Anthropologists and other scientists now feel that it was only because our earliest human ancestors formed rudimentary communities, whose "bottom line" was taking care of each other, that they were able to survive the harsh conditions of the time, and begin increasing their brain size and thinking capacities.

As confidence in our ability to control our environment has grown, I think humankind has lost sight of the connection between the well-being and survival of each of our members, and our collective survival. Our sense of mastery over the elements has given many individuals the feeling that they don't need others to survive; however, considering the immense economic, environmental, and social forces that threaten our well-being in the short term, and our very survival in the near future, we must relearn the value of collective caring. Since our problems are now on a much larger scale, so too must be our collective solutions.

At the Summit, we were asked to imagine living in such a society, in which productivity is measured by the extent to which we create and sustain people and institutions whose practices contribute to our collective well-being and survival—in essence, one based on *taking care of each other.*

Is such a society inevitable? On one hand, we have numerous cynics, as well as those who capitalize on the fears and insecurities of others, those who seek to protect one group at the expense of another, or who have publicly given up any feeling that a society based on loving and caring is possible. But even *they*, at some point in their lives, wanted and expected such a society. Collectively, as we get closer to being truly self-supportive, there will be fewer life experiences which cause people like them to build protective barriers around their instinctive feelings.

Most others, I think, want a caring society, or at least would go along with it, even if, at this moment, they don't think it's possible. And the calls to create such a society

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Aesthetics and Politics

James Hillman

We all know a lot about protests, marches, voting rights, and equal opportunity and affirmative action. We also know a lot about how to get involved, and that involvement usually leads, after a few months or many years, to burn-out, disgruntled bitterness. Something psychological is missing. Yet we all know a lot about therapy, about self-development, growth, empowerment, self-esteem, and that this also leads, after a while, to burn-out, or at least disenchantment.

It seems not to connect enough to the real gripes, the real injustices, and the real impoverishment and victimization experienced in the political arena. So how put politics and therapy together? How achieve psychological activism? And what is a psychological activist?

I want to answer the question today with this proposal, and I call it the "aesthetic response."

The ethical response, you know. Injustice, oppression, corruption—we see it and react against it. What do the strikers say on their placards and sandwich boards? "Unfair"—unfair to workers; to women; to minorities. But do they ever say, "Ugly"? Do we ever protest and go on strike because of the insulting, repulsive, and just plain ugly places of our work? Of our malls and strips? Of hospital buildings and government decor? Of the materials we handle, the lights we submit to, the "workstations" we are confined within, the lecture halls that we must endure? Yet these aesthetic oppressions affect our bodily feeling, our emotional well-being, and we must ward ourselves from their influence—the despair they produce, and the exhaustion. Ugly environments cause us to repress our reactions and repression is exhausting—that's one of the first old ideas of Freud, that repression takes up a lot of energy.

We deny our aesthetic responses by closing down our senses, our perceptions, and we anesthetize ourselves—with loud music in the ears, with Advil and Xanax, with sleeping pills and caffeine and Prozac, with alcohol with ice cubes before every meal so that we've already anesthetized our tongues since we don't know what we're eating anymore, and high sugar and high salt. Who can get through a day with senses fully awake and responsive? Too much overload of too much junk input. Too much ugliness.

Our aesthetic responses come as outrage, as repulsion, as insult, if not assault. A heightened irritability; sudden moments of irrepressible rage—at the post office; being held on the phone; waiting in line; stuck in traffic; with the shoddy thing you bought. And the rage comes up like mad.

Psychotherapy does not take these aesthetic frustrations into account. Example: I'm a patient, and I'm on my way to my therapist in Boston. I drive some fifty miles to get there on the Turnpike. I'm in my modest little Hyundai, and the great eighteen-wheelers pull out and thunder by. Dense traffic, potholes, jagged metal obstacles, road kill—by the time I've got a parking place and walk in for my session, I'm a wreck. "Tell me about it," says the therapist. I start in with the threat, the noise, the fumes, the ugliness, the chaos, and the fear—he says, "What's it remind you of?" And soon we leave the highway, leave the trucks, leave the actuality, and find the nervous anxiety to be within me. My relation with my father, represented by the big trucks. And my frail ego, thin-skinned and fragile, represented by my Hyundai. Maybe truck drivers have bigger dicks. Trucks are not disempowered. My low self-esteem, my falling so easily into victimization—and I am being analyzed. And analyzing myself, and finding all those problems in me.

All the problems of the outer world, and what has actually made me upset, could be the beginning of a political action about toll roads and long-distance trucking, and food contracts of supermarkets with California growers, and oppressed migrant labor at the expense of local suppliers, of graft and speed limits—all this is nipped in the bud by the internalization of the emotions to *my* inner problems.

Fear recognizes danger—fear is a mode of perception. If you didn't have fear, you wouldn't be able to get

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James Hillman is an archetypal psychologist whose most recent book, The Soul's Code: Character, Calling, and Fate, *is published by Random House.*

through a day. It keeps you on the curb when the traffic's going by. Now it has become anxiety, translated, internalized—and anxiety is a condition, by definition, without object, a wholly internal state. All mine, and therefore all my fault. And in fact, if it *is* fear, it becomes phobic, and then it's in the DSM.

Other emotions that report directly to us about the state of the world are also internalized by therapy and made "mine." And of course some of this is necessary. For instance, I'm deeply affected by the increasing destruction of the natural habitats. Each day, I see images on television of forests burning, land ripped open, animals vanishing, rivers polluted. This is all registered by my soul, and even more things than I see are in pain and dying in the soul of the world. I am affected unconsciously as well. Of course I am in mourning for the land and water and my fellow beings. If this were not felt, I would be so defended and so in denial, so anesthetized, I would be insane. Yet this condition of mourning and grieving going on in my soul, this level of continual sadness is a reflection of what is going on in the world and becomes internalized and called "depression," a state altogether in me—my serotonin levels, my personal history, my problem.

And the drug industry, to which we do not say "no," and government health agencies, and insurance companies are in general agreement: You must become even more anesthetized. Take Prozac: Depression is a disease and weakens the economy. It is announced that way; there are statistics about how many workdays are lost because of depression and how much that costs.

In our book, *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse,* Michael Ventura and I challenged these notions in therapy. This neglect of the world, and the sabotaging of political consciousness by therapeutic theory. I'm not attacking individual therapists, who are in the front lines trying to mop up after the huge destruction left by the Reagan-Bush twelve years, and what came before that.

I want to emphasize that the way the world gets to us is through sense perception—what the Greeks called "aethesis," from which comes our word aesthetics. And that by suppression of our aesthetic responses, we leave the world to itself and isolate ourselves from its plight. And no amount of relating and community-building will restore us to the world, and restore the world, unless we trust our aesthetic responses.

Therapy says "connect, only connect." I'm saying sense, see, notice, react, only react.

It's time to put some solid stuffing into this word "aesthetic." Especially since it is usually employed to mean only aesthetic—pretty, decorative, and quite free of moral and ethical value. But I intend to redefine this word "aesthetic," connect it with ethics, and finally, to connect aesthetics more profoundly with the cosmos itself.

First, about aesthetic judgments—how can we trust them? Isn't beauty in the eye of the beholder? Merely a matter of taste? This is the subjective view, and it has been held for many, many years by many eminent people, including the philosopher David Hume, who maintained that since there are such differences of opinion, it becomes a matter of taste. The arbiter, then, is the one who has the best taste, says Hume, the educated taste. In our culture, that would be the gallery owner, the critic, the museum director, the expert. Eventually, the auctioneer at Sotheby's. So that in our day, the subjective view boils down to money.

Opposed to this subjective view is the objective view of beauty. As with most everything else in our Cartesian world, it's either objective or subjective—that's all the choice we ever get. The objectivists hold that there are definite formal properties of a painting, a musical score, an architectural plan, a poem, such as rhythm, balance, scale, proportion, complexity, unity, finish, and so on. And these are recognizable, inherent in the thing judged and combined to make the thing pleasing, so that we call it beautiful. Santayana defined beauty as pleasure attributed to an object.

Now I'm not either a subjectivist, saying it's just personal taste, nor an objectivist, saying it's inherent in the form. In between is something more psychologically instinctual, which is the soul's reaction. I think we have an immediate sense of attraction to things; all people have it—a delight in them. They seduce us and they repel us. It is how we read the world—how our animal nose and ears and eyes read the world. Cultural norms and habits may sway us this way or that, but beneath these social criteria is the instinct—the aesthetic response itself which makes selections and draws back from ugliness as Plotinus wrote 1,700 years ago; the ugly makes us withdraw, shrink into ourselves, turn away.

This is what we do all day long, assaulted by environmental ugliness. What do therapists meet in the consulting room? Precisely those souls who have shrunken into themselves, turned away, withdrawn. We call them narcissistic now, and schizoid, and unrelated—but could they not be suffering from a surfeit of ugliness? Therefore, my statement that aesthetic response is political action; let me carry this forward in another way.

The individual citizen is less stupid than we like to believe and are told to believe by opinion polls, with their simplistic questions that make people seem stupider than they are. Even if our ability to articulate complexities, or to remember historical information, or

discriminate the relevant from the dross is limited, our emotions have an intelligence in them. Emotions like fear keep us from being hit by a car; emotions like pity reach toward the other in need; emotions like silent, stubborn truculence recognize being used and being shoved around. So we have all sorts of emotions every day—of outrage, of anger, and insult and revulsion—about the sensate world we must participate in. I say *must* participate in; you can't walk away from the shoddy materials used to build your condo, the cheap switches installed in your lamp, the design of the cafeteria or the hospital waiting room. You must participate in this oppression.

One of the oldest Western ideas was that the soul was the form of the body, that is the form of things presents their soul in a material way. Living among ugly things makes for ugliness of soul as a consequence. How many of the problems therapy has to deal with—the rage in households, the hatred in the workplace, the frustration in families and the draining depressions truly come out of the woodwork, out of the closets, out of the materials and designs we live with. I believe that many of the problems that sap the economy—absenteeism, slow-downs, addictions, sexual harassment, careless quality control, nagging underperformance, ill health, resentful lawsuits—are architectural problems, not psychological problems.

The toxicity of the chemicals and air systems we read about, we know about. But I'm talking about the soulless forms and the visible ugliness. We already know about sick buildings, but do we understand the sick psyche of the building? And there's no escape. A building is thrown up on the street corner that blocks the sun, causes vicious down-drafts, invades the perspective, places the pedestrian against a giant wall as if for an execution. This building, a public nuisance, stands there on a street corner anonymous, unsigned—you don't know who its contractor was, or its architect, hardly its owner. No accountability for that building. If *I* made too much noise, or took off all my clothes on a street corner, I'd be arrested as a public nuisance. But the building stands for decades, making even more psychic noise and displaying even more in-your-face insult.

Can there be ethics without aesthetics? By phrasing their relation in this way, I'm going back to Western thought before the Christian era. In the Greek world, the good and the beautiful were tied immediately together in one word, "calagathon." The beauty of the world was the smile of the gods, hence the gods were believed to be smiling, which showed their beauty and their goodness. Hence, too, the idealized forms of classical sculpture, which presented virtue as well as beauty. Christianity made it very clear that goodness and beauty were to be separated—to separate this world from the next world. If there is beauty, then the best kind—and our Puritan reformers made and still make a great point of this—is internal beauty, moral beauty. Not the beauty of outward show. Ethics not only coopted beauty, but repressed it. This was one of the many ways that Christianism could get rid of Aphrodite and other pagan goddesses.

Much later, religious thinkers such as Kierkegaard placed aesthetics lower down in value than ethics. One progressed morally, through aesthetics to more profound values of a moral nature. Nietzsche's work makes an even stronger separation: He shows the bloody, the horrible underside of Greek beauty, the evils and destructions that accompanied it.

As well, we can see that many good things can be ugly—look at Socrates, the ugliest of men and the most virtuous. Look at Pandora and Eve, so beautiful, yet all the troubles and sins started with them. The Nazis murdered, and played Mozart. Clearly, ethics and aesthetics can be separated.

By now, in Western history, aesthetics and ethics occupy separate compartments in our minds, just as they occupy separate compartments in our universities. But Plato and his brilliant followers down through the ages, including the great Romantic poets like Keats, insisted the two belong together. If ethical virtue does not show in the way a life is lived, then how claim that it is good? How judge unless there is visible presentation? The question of their relation often comes down to the practical versus the ideal. Many philosophers consider beauty useless, and therefore opposite to the practical. Whereas I've been arguing that it is the most useful and practical. For any practice that is not at the same time idealistic, that does not have a further vision, that does not attempt to realize in practice some image of beauty, loses its practical goodness.

You don't just fix a car to fix it, but to restore it to its best functioning, to its ideal image. Burnout comes when practice does not have a vision, and you don't really know what ideal you're putting daily into practice. Or burnout can come when you have a vision that cannot reach into practice. Ethics is the realm of practice, aesthetics the realm of sensate images. Therefore good ideas in tiresome language, dense pages of dense

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The Staff of Tikkun wishes all our readers a very happy holiday season

Is Love Scarce?

Eileen Flanagan

"You will always have plenty of love," said Sharon. "That was the message people most needed to hear." Sharon had led a week-long workshop on spirituality, and in the final session participants had been invited to share the message they wished they had received as children. Most messages boiled down to the promise that love would be plentiful rather than scarce.

I understand the desire for such assurance. Although I have been confidently unconventional in my work life, trusting the motto, "Do what you love, the money will follow," I've been less trusting in my love life. I've often feared that if I didn't run after love, it would never find me. An important part of my spiritual growth has been acknowledging this anxiety and learning to trust love's abundance.



STEPHANIE SHIELDHOUSE

Three years ago, while browsing through Borders Books, I discovered an entire section of books on how to catch a husband: *How to Marry the Man of Your Choice*; *How to Get Married in a Year or Less*; and *How to Marry the Rich*, to name just a few. I was thirty-one, never married, with my mother hinting that she hoped she'd live to see her grandchildren. Although I had enjoyed my single twenties, I had begun longing for a committed partnership, and these books hit a nerve. The manipulative tactics they recommended challenged me to examine my behavior in relationships and the assumptions I held about love.

The assumption that love is a commodity subject to scarcity is central to the courtship manuals. With a largely female audience, these how-to books emphasize the dearth of marriageable men and the need for women to compete for partners. The book *Beating the Odds* compares it to the supply-and-demand dynamics of the workplace: "Men, who are in 'demand,' tend to behave like employers .... Women, who are in 'supply,' tend to feel victimized and put upon by the small number of potential male partners who seem to be available."

The courtship manuals urge us to use aggressive sales tactics to succeed in this competitive market. *Haven't You Been Single Long Enough?* asks, "What is an advertiser's objective? To persuade and motivate someone to choose his product or service." *The Rules: Time-tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right* offers a raft of sales gimmicks: "Get a nose job; color gray hair; grow your hair long," the book suggests. "Be quiet and mysterious, act ladylike, cross your legs and smile. Don't talk so much." The implication is that we can't expect to be loved for

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who we really are. A stubby nose, baggy sweatshirt, or loud laugh might drive potential mates into the arms of our more "ladylike" competitors.

One might think that a market where men are in such demand would at least make single men feel loved and appreciated, but the opposite is true. Even if they do have a statistical advantage over women, men too are objectified by the market approach to courtship—after all, women are buying as well as selling. *Glamour* magazine compares "Shopping for a Man" to buying a refrigerator ("How many can you reasonably expect to need?"). *Searching for Courtship: The Smart Woman's Guide to Finding a Good Husband* compares browsing a singles bar to scanning the cases of a jewelry store. Hillary Rich, author of *Get Married Now!*, tells the participants of her singles seminars: "We're going to make a list of what you're looking for. You might say, 'That's like shopping for a car or an apartment.' Well, it is."

When romance is seen as a competitive market, there is little room for intimacy and trust, no safe place to let down one's guard and reveal one's true self. Yet several books compare dating to competing on the job market. *What Really Works With Men* tells women to think like a manager and treat men like prospective employees. "Once a man makes it through your interview process," the book states, "you'll be able to tell if he is the right man by considering his acceptability as breeding stock."

According to this view, marriage is no more sacred than a business arrangement. If a more profitable deal comes along, we can break the old contract and sign a new one. Contrast this attitude with the old-fashioned vow to love "for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health." A shrewd manager would never accept such conditions. Her business contract would include an escape clause in the event of poverty, sickness, or other unforeseen difficulties.

In the market approach to courtship, the central questions are "What do I want?" and "How can I get it?" The question, "What can I give?" is only asked to evaluate my bargaining position, to list the assets I can use as bait to attract a lover. This approach misses the essence of real love: the joy of caring about another's well-being and happiness. It is the unselfishness of love which expands and fulfills us and challenges us to grow. It is a sad irony that the courtship manuals promote narcissism in the name of love, steering their readers away from the real wonder of loving.

Moving past the consumer model of love requires a fundamental shift in our approach to life. Such a shift was articulated by Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst and profound social thinker. In *To Have or To Be*, Fromm described *having* and *being* as two alternative ways of living. In the having mode, we try to make ourselves feel secure through possession. We are worth what we have: manicured lawn, beautiful children, advanced degree, executive office. In the being mode, what we have is unimportant. What we are is all that counts.

If we live in the having mode, as much of our culture does, we will try to grab love, to make it ours. We will think of it as something we must pursue when we don't have it and hold onto when we do. But Fromm asserted that love is not a thing that can be possessed: "In reality, there exists only the *act of loving*. To love is a productive activity…." It is a process, self-renewing and self-increasing. True love, therefore, does not mean possessing another's affections, and it cannot exist when our primary concern is *receiving* love. Rather, as Fromm defined it, "Love is the active concern for the life and growth of that which we love."

This definition clarifies the difference between loving and trying to acquire love. Getting a nose job or coloring our hair won't make us loving. These tactics are aimed at making someone love or desire us. They do not show an active concern for the life and growth of the other. Loving another means giving—not as a means to receiving, but for the other's sake. It may mean encouraging his decision to quit work and go back to school even though it will strain our finances. It may mean supporting her hunger for more solitude rather than forcing the closeness we desire. It may even mean letting our beloved say good-bye if that is what will foster her life and growth. Loving means giving when it is hard to give, not just when it is easy or convenient.

Loving does not require saying "yes" to everything our beloved asks. Sometimes the most loving action is saying "no" even though it risks another's anger. Loving doesn't mean always agreeing; it means being honest and respectful about disagreements. Becoming a doormat for another person does not foster his growth, and it does little to foster our own. Loving ourselves, nurturing our own development, is part of being a loving person.

Sometimes we deny our painful emotions, believing this to be loving. We pretend not to mind when he spends every date describing the villainy of his ex-wife. We smile as we suffer through her son's first violin recital. We act cheerful as we clean up after a party for his friends. The ideal of cheerful servitude is another false image of love, one particularly ingrained in women. Yet this behavior is often just another manipulation strategy. If we clean up the beer bottles to win his approval and affection, we are not being truly loving. We are merely trying to get him to love us—advertising generosity as we attempt to make a deal. This is very different from cleaning the party mess

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An Environmental Ritual for Our Times

Frank Ackerman

I'll begin with a confession: I worked for ten years at an environmental research group in Boston. Not only did we study recycling, we also had our own in-house paper recycling program. There was plenty of paper to recycle: In the course of our research, we were constantly receiving, reviewing, and creating documents; after their short useful life was ended, we had to remove most of this paper to make room for the next project. Like most of the staff, I kept a recycling bin close to my desk.

For many years, our recycling program accepted only white office paper. Fax paper, colored paper, glossy advertising, and other types of paper had to be thrown out. From time to time we received elaborate reports with colored-paper inserts or chapter dividers between the white-paper text sections. When I was done with such reports, I usually removed the staples or tore apart the binding, separated and discarded the colored pages, and recycled the remaining white paper. But one day, rushing to meet a deadline on an important project I was managing, I tossed an entire small publication, printed on mixed colors of paper, into the trash.

Minutes later, as luck would have it, a friend who was working on the same project came into my office. Almost immediately, she spotted the publication I had just thrown out, scowled, and pulled it out of my trash can. "I thought you *believed* in recycling," she said sadly, as she began ripping out the colored pages so that the remaining white pages could be recovered.

Like my co-worker and me, millions of people do believe in recycling and act on that belief on a regular basis. "In the first week in November 1992, more adults took part in recycling than voted," says Jerry Powell, editor of *Resource Recycling* magazine. The same will undoubtedly be true in November 1996. Recycling, according to Powell, is "more popular than democracy."

Both the extent of recycling and the speed of its expansion are remarkable. By 1994 there were more than 7,200 curbside recycling collection programs in the United States, serving more than 40 percent of the population; virtually all of these programs were less than six years old. In addition to curbside collection, materials are also recovered through countless drop-off centers, commercial and office programs, and other channels. One study estimated that 21 percent of all municipal solid waste was recycled or composted in 1992, up from 10 percent just seven years earlier.

Why do we recycle? Rarely is there a monetary reward. In most towns, no one pays you to put out your recyclables at the curb. Our office recycling program did not pay us for the documents we saved from the trash can. We do it because we consider it worthwhile to reduce the need for landfilling, or to save energy and materials. In short, we recycle because we believe it is the right thing to do, because it is good for the environment.

In an era of cutbacks and conservatism, recycling is an impressively pure and widespread form of altruism, a commitment to the greater good. In one sense, such altruistic public behavior seems out of step with the 1990s, as individualistic, selfish voices have increasingly shaped the contemporary discussion of economic policy. But it is a mistake to regard recycling solely as an economic policy. The commitment to recycling actually echoes another trend of the times, as moralism and professions of faith have become more and more prominent in social and political debate.

Recycling as Religion

Suppose that we view recycling as akin to a religious practice, an organized expression of widely held ecological values. The language and symbolism of recycling support this view. Like the routinized ritual observances that characterize most religions, curbside recycling provides the opportunity for the weekly offering and collection. After collection there is the modern miracle of transubstantiation, as old packages and papers come to life again. In states that have deposits on

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beverage containers, it is common to speak of the process of redemption.

The image of recycling as religion pervades the news media. "Boston has been slow among cities and towns," said the Boston *Globe*, "to get religion on curbside recycling, but starting this morning the administration is pursuing its new trash program with all the zeal of a convert." A *Wall Street Journal* article, titled "Curbside Recycling Comforts the Soul, But Benefits Are Scant," observed that recycling "makes people feel good. For many, a little trash sorting has become a form of penance to acknowledge that the values of our high-consumption society don't always nurture the soul."

Those who do get religion, the true believers, often display intense commitment to a higher objective, even at the cost of considerable personal effort. I know someone who drives back and forth across the Bay Area in California to find recycling centers that accept small quantities of hard-to-recycle household goods. The environmental damage she does by driving so far almost certainly exceeds the good she does by recycling a little more. I've heard more than one story of domestic conflict, in households that already recycle all the big, easy things, about the urgency of reusing or recycling a few additional items. Often, when people hear that I am studying recycling, they ask my permission to throw out one or another marginally reusable or recyclable product. I am not alone, it seems, in wanting to confess my sins in this area.

Recycling as religion arises from shared values; its public rituals reaffirm those values. But the ecological beliefs that form the basis for this behavior are complex and many-faceted. What accounts for the emphasis on recycling in particular? Despite studying it professionally for several years, I find it hard to argue that waste management is our most urgent environmental problem. At most, it is one among many issues that clamor for our attention. Other problems pose more serious threats to our well-being than the disposal of solid waste.

What distinguishes recycling is not its importance, but rather the ease with which individuals can participate, and the visibility of actions taken to promote the common good. You may care passionately about the threat of global warming or the destruction of the rain forests—but you can't have an immediate, perceptible effect on these problems. When a 1990 Gallup poll asked people what they had done in connection with environmental problems, 80 to 85 percent answered that they or their households had participated in various facets of recycling; a majority of respondents had taken no other significant action.

If Recycling Is the Answer, What Is the Question?

The years of the most rapid growth in recycling—the early 1990s—were also the years in which the most popular justification for recycling vanished. In all but the most densely populated parts of the country, it became clear that there was no immediate landfill crisis. The false alarm in the 1980s was due, in part, to a simple error: Data on landfills are sparse, and many early accounts merely compared the numbers of landfills closing and opening each year, without considering their size. Since huge numbers of small landfills are closing, while small numbers of huge ones are opening, there have even been increases in disposal capacity in some states.

Nor, unfortunately, does recycling reliably save money for municipalities—that is, it does not always reduce total waste-management costs compared to the alternative of throwing everything in the trash. In my forthcoming book, *Why Do We Recycle? Markets, Values, and Public Policies*, I estimate that an average curbside recycling program reduced municipal costs by $5 per household in 1995, when material prices were unusually high, and increased costs by $21 per household in 1993, when prices were low. Thus the average program seems to fluctuate from year to year between a small municipal cost increase and an even smaller municipal cost savings.

Despite these limitations, which are noisily pointed out by conservative critics of recycling, large and growing numbers of people continue to act as if they think that recycling is worthwhile. In response, should we try to persuade people that enthusiasm for recycling is a mistake, that it is time to go home and learn to love garbage disposal? Or should we look beyond the trash can for a more complex picture of the motivations for continued recycling, even in the absence of a crisis?

The issues of garbage and recycling have become part of contemporary culture, and even appear in recent fiction. In the novel *Closing Time*, Joseph Heller's sequel to *Catch-22*, the aging and somewhat hypochondriacal John Yossarian attempts to convince his doctors that, despite the lack of visible evidence, he is actually desperately ill. Yossarian's mind wanders freely from personal to social ills, among which garbage is quite prominent: "Another oil tanker had broken up. There was radiation. Garbage. Pesticides, toxic waste, and free enterprise." Later, Yossarian yearns to persuade another doctor that the universe is unreliable and depressing, since "there were holes in the ozone, they were running out of room for the disposal of garbage,

burn the garbage and you contaminate the air, they were running out of air."

Taken literally, Yossarian's seemingly global grievances reveal the local origins of the book. The novel is set, to the extent that it occurs in any recognizable locale, in New York City; Joseph Heller lives on Long Island. These are among the areas where the landfill crisis remains most acute (or will be, when the city's huge Fresh Kills landfill closes), and where incineration, as an alternative to landfilling, has been most actively and controversially promoted. In a story written from, or about, another part of the country, Yossarian would have a different list of complaints.

On a deeper level, Yossarian's plight is an appropriate image even for non-New Yorkers. He is sure that something is wrong, and that garbage is somehow involved. He is unsure whether it is an individual physical malady or a social or environmental malaise. He is desperately and unsuccessfully seeking the advice of experts in diagnosing the problem. Outside the hospital, Milo Minderbinder, the endlessly entrepreneurial quartermaster of *Catch-22*, is still prospering in the marketplace by knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. Although Yossarian goes to work for Minderbinder's vast enterprise, he is never quite satisfied, always looking for something more mysterious and meaningful in life.

The Ethics of Sufficiency and the Dignity of the Future

There is nothing mysterious about the meaning and value of recycling, even in the absence of a landfill crisis or an immediate opportunity for profit. Waste disposal is not the whole story; a stronger case for recycling rests on its benefits in resource use and manufacturing. The products we buy and discard are made by industry, and the process of manufacturing most goods has far greater environmental impacts—for example, much greater toxic emissions—than disposal of the same things in modern landfills. Recycling is good for the environment because making almost anything out of recycled material causes lower industrial emissions than making the same thing out of virgin material. Using less stuff in the first place is even better for the environment than recycling.

Recycling and waste reduction also minimize the use of irreplaceable natural resources. Paper, in theory, can be made from trees grown on sustainable, carefully managed tree plantations; so far, this possibility has escaped the attention of much of the forest-products industry. Metals cannot be grown; burying them in landfills reduces the useable supply of metals for posterity. Plastics, interestingly enough, could be made on a sustainable basis from renewable materials derived from plants, but so far this possibility has escaped the attention of everyone but a few scientists. Plastics today continue to be made from nonrenewable fossil fuels.

The widespread commitment to recycling rests in no small part on the belief that we must conserve materials for future generations. And this belief, in turn, suggests a broader set of questions about our relationship to material accumulation in the present. The endless pursuit of more consumer goods and services is neither ecologically sustainable nor personally satisfying. While it is important to recognize that a majority of the world's population, and a sizable minority within the developed countries, suffer real material deprivation, it is equally important to see that the majority of us in the richer countries already have enough. This does not mean that we have solved all our economic problems. Almost all of us are to varying degrees "deprived" of economic security, meaningful work, creative leisure, public services, and a healthy environment—but to raise such issues is already to leave the paradigm of private consumption behind. Most of us are not deprived of food, shelter, fashionable clothing, or consumer electronics. Indeed, seeking to satiate social deprivations through individual consumption keeps us on a treadmill of rising expenditure but stagnant satisfaction.

To create a sustainable future, it will be necessary to act on the understanding that there is such a thing as "enough," and that many of our remaining needs must be addressed through social change rather than private spending. Growth of incomes and consumption will remain desirable for those who are really poor; meanwhile, the increasing numbers who are not poor will need to develop an appreciation of sufficiency in private consumption. Although it is hard to see how to get there from here, arriving at stability in levels of consumption could be a liberating experience.

A life of moderation, avoiding the extremes of either obsessive competition and accumulation on the one hand, or material deprivation on the other, could provide the freedom to pursue social goals and personal self-development, as Jerome M. Segal argued recently in these pages (see "The Politics of Simplicity," TIKKUN, July/August 1996). Surely the good life entails the development of many human capabilities, including an awareness of and connection to our social and environmental context. The urge to recycle may be viewed as evidence of that extended connection, a statement of responsiveness and responsibility toward one's surroundings.

(Continued on p. 74)

An Interview With Adam Yauch

Akiba Lerner and Mark LeVine

LeVine - Adam, you are mostly known for your involvement in the rap group the Beastie Boys, but in recent years you've also been focusing your energies on freeing Tibet from Chinese domination. Would you tell us a little bit about what's going on in the Free Tibet movement and in particular, tell us more about the Tibetan Freedom Concert you orchestrated this past summer?

Yauch - Many people were involved in organizing the concert; its primary purpose was to raise awareness about Tibet, the Chinese occupation and human-rights abuses there, but we were also trying to raise awareness about human-rights abuses within China itself. Both the Tibetans and the Chinese people share the same problem: the repressive Chinese regime. So the concert was also to support the Chinese democracy movement. But its main purpose was to help people realize how much we as individuals, even in the West, are constantly influencing these situations on the governmental, corporate, and personal levels.

For example, every time we go shopping, we are casting a vote for or against human rights. If we purchase Chinese-made products, there is a good chance they may have been made by forced prison labor. These prisoners are usually guilty of exercising what in America are considered their basic human rights—freedom of speech or freedom of religion. We must think about this when we spend our money.

The concert was promoting an ongoing boycott of all goods marked "Made In China." The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has endorsed this boycott, along with 130 other organizations.

The cornerstone of the problem is that our corporations are lobbying our government to separate human-rights issues from trade. These multinational corporations are motivated by greed. The case of South Africa proves that financial sanctions do have an effect on human rights.

LeVine - Talk to us about the plight of Tibet.

Yauch - The Chinese invaded and overtook Tibet in 1950, taking complete control in 1959, when the Dalai Lama, the country's spiritual and political leader, fled into exile. Approximately 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed as a direct result of the occupation. They have no freedom of speech or of religion. China is giving financial incentives to Chinese citizens to move into Tibet. This ongoing population transfer has overwhelmed the Tibetan people, making them a minority in their own country. The Dalai Lama lives in India, where he leads their government in exile in a nonviolent struggle for freedom.

I think that the nonviolent aspect of their struggle is the most significant thing about it. The contrast between the hatred that is projected by the Chinese authorities and the compassion sent back by Tibetans is like night and day. If a change does not come in the next few years, there may be little to save. The Chinese government is carrying out its genocide rapidly.

A. Lerner - Can you describe the personal transformation involved in going from writing a song like "Fight For Your Right to Party" [the first Beastie Boys hit] to fighting for freedom in Tibet, and how it relates to your personal quest for meaning?

LeVine - It seems so easy for people who go into the music business to lose their soul, not to find it. So how is it you became more spiritual?

Yauch - In some ways I was lucky enough to get to live out some of those fantasies that rest in our collective subconscious in the West—that is, that happiness flows from having a lot of money or attention or fame. I guess that I got to live that out for a minute and then realized how empty it ultimately was. I mean, of course it was fun. I had a blast, but there's no end. You don't ever ar-

Adam Yauch was born in 1964 in Brooklyn, New York. He plays in a band called the Beastie Boys, started in 1981. Mark LeVine is a professional guitarist who has worked with artists ranging from Mick Jagger and Dr. John to Israeli folksinger Sata Alexander. He teaches religion at Hunter College. Akiba Lerner, a graduate of UC Berkeley, has served in the Israeli paratroopers and is currently a writer living in the United States.

rive at that point that it feels like you're at peace or complete. If you pursue those things, you slowly become more and more unhappy. There's no actual time when you've gotten enough materially and you say, "Ah, all right. I'm satisfied."

Recently, I became Buddhist, but I studied Buddhism for a number of years before I chose to do that. During that time, I tried to live by Buddhist principles, and learned a lot from that experience. But I think what is most important is being kind to others. That is true spirituality; that is the core of all major religions.

LeVine - How do people in the music business react when you come to them with something that's spiritual? The last album that you did had something reminiscent of Carlos Santana, who radiates a kind of spirituality, or John McLaughlin way back when they first got into eastern spirituality. Have you been able to detect that maybe at least a small part of your fans have followed you on your spiritual growth, that they've grown with you?

Yauch - Maybe some of them, but there's probably also a lot of younger people that are just getting into our music now for the first time. But a lot of people who were into the old stuff probably look at the newer stuff and think, "What are these guys giving me?" But let me ask you guys a question. How much do you know about Kabbalah [a Jewish mystical tradition]? Does Kabbalah go into subjects like reincarnation or karma?

LeVine - The funny thing is that in meetings between the Dalai Lama and Jewish leaders, one of the strongest points of conversation was around the idea of karma and reincarnation and how Judaism has very similar concepts. It's not called "karma," but *gilgul*—the idea that a person or soul would be reborn more than once in order to complete its journey back into what the Kabbalah calls the *ein sof*, or the "limitless," that is, returning to God. You could be born many times in many different forms of existence, from being an angel to being an animal, until you reach the level where you don't have to be born again. It's very close to the Buddhist teachings on karma and reincarnation.

A. Lerner - In the Torah, God warns the Jews that his love for them will last for generations, but if they turn against God's love, the repercussions will also be felt for generations. It is also possible to look at the Israelites' wanderings in the desert as a kind of karmic cycle, in which the Jews had to rid themselves of a certain entrenched slave mentality before being able to establish themselves in their land. But also central to Judaism is the notion that the cycle can be stopped or broken. Judaism has never accepted that pain and suffering are a necessary component to the universe, although our history seems to prove otherwise. Many of the stories in the Bible are about people who seem to be stuck in certain karmic cycles, but are able to break out of them. So there are similarities with karma; but like all things in Judaism, there are also tendencies toward opposite understandings of the interrelation between fate and agency.

Yauch - I believe that spirituality does not necessarily have to be traditional or "religious"; that's a big part of the way I look at it. I look at spirituality as higher levels of consciousness. It's just continually raising your level of awareness to see how what you do affects other people, and how what they do affects you. It's about becoming more aware of why we perceive everything the way we do, and how our perceptions create our reality. It's better understanding what brings us happiness and what brings us suffering. Many people think of spirituality as being a far-off, intangible thing that you have to go to the mountains and meditate in order to find, and sometimes that can be a really limiting concept of what spirituality actually is.

LeVine - Do you ever find when you're working in the hip-hop world that being Jewish is an issue?

Yauch - Most of the time, not really. People who are around hip-hop don't really notice that. I think maybe they notice that we're white more than Jewish.

A. Lerner - It's interesting to hear how the cultural perceptions differ from the reality, because I remember when you guys were first starting to hit it big, there were rumblings that the Beastie Boys represented yet another moment in a long history of Jews exploiting Blackness—in this case the deeply entrenched rhymes and rhythms of African-American culture—for your own personal aggrandizement.

I remember in the mid-Eighties when rap was first starting to hit, many whites were initially attracted and repelled by its erotic rhythms and overwhelming energy, but also felt frightened by its urban African-American expression. Some would argue that the Beastie Boys played an essential role in allowing whites to groove to rhythms that previously felt forbidden. But in playing this role there were accusations that a certain co-optation of an Afro-American discourse had taken place. I know that the Beastie Boys now are not only fully accepted in the hip-hop world but that you guys help set the standard and provide the cutting edge for the

groove. But at the beginning, did any of these dynamics affect you or was it mostly media hype?

Yauch - When our first hip-hop records came out, there weren't really any other white kids out rhyming. This was before *Licensed to Ill*, when some twelve-inch singles came out. It's possible that there might have been other white kids who rhymed at block parties or whatever, but if so, it was a rare occurrence and they weren't making records. So, when we started making hip-hop records, it hit first in the Black community before it did at all with the white kids. Most white kids outside of New York had never heard of hip-hop. At the time, a lot of people, having just heard the music, thought we were Black. When people finally met us and saw that we were white, they were surprised, not that we sounded Black, but just because it was out of left field to have somebody rhyming who was white. It wasn't until later when *Licensed to Ill* came out and "Fight For Your Right to Party" that it started to flip to a white audience.

The first hip-hop twelve-inches were around '84 or '85. And then toward the end of 1986, the album came out. At the time, a lot of hip-hop lyrics spoke about unity between the races. There was little or no racial tension in hip-hop.

It wasn't until "Fight For Your Right to Party" came out that we started acting like drunken fools. At that point, our image shifted in a different direction, maybe turning off the kids that were strictly into hip-hop. It started off as a goof on that college mentality, but then we ended up personifying it.

A. Lerner - In many ways, your identity and your versatility with regard to first the hip-hop world and then later the struggle for a free Tibet seems to come out of being positioned within a Diaspora identity. I don't think it's purely an accident that three Jewish guys were able to succeed in grooving with a traditionally African-American discourse of celebration and resistance—rap—and at the same time have been able to become, within the counterculture, a spokesman for the Diaspora community of Tibetan exiles. Traditionally, Jews have been described as having a wandering, borderless, homeless quality which can never be fully inscribed within a particular national community except for perhaps modern Israel. This has been a cause for much anxiety for non-Jews and Jews alike, because it creates an identity that can't be readily located within standard notions of national or racial identities. This ambiguity has allowed Jews to produce a unique identity in the Diaspora. Because we partake in shaping the society in which we exist, but are also not locked in, we have had a certain versatility.

Perhaps this Diaspora aspect has allowed you to play a unique role in not only being accepted in both Diaspora communities, but also in setting the agenda and playing a leadership role. The same Diaspora positioning that allowed a bunch of white guys from New York to become cutting-edge in the world of hip-hop also created the sensitivity and ability to then connect with the deeper rhythms of the Tibetan freedom cause.

LeVine - I know I've felt this way as a musician who happens to be Jewish but plays Black music—when I used to play with blues musicians or doing hip-hop—and then also meeting other people, like Palestinians, who are themselves diasporized. Is there something similar in your feeling, being in the world of hip-hop, some kind of similar energy and what music serves in terms of healing the wounds of being Black in America? And then just working with Tibet, is there something that goes between both situations whether it's doing music with one or working politically or spiritually with the other?

Yauch - I never really noticed that. I don't know. It's interesting though. I know sometimes that Tibetans look to the Jews as a good example of how to preserve a diasporized culture. But personally, I don't really feel like an outsider in someone else's society. I feel more like a New Yorker than one who has been diasporized. I feel at home here. The great thing about New York City is that it is made up of all types of people—all cultures, races, and religions co-existing. Mike and Adam and I are of Jewish descent, but were not raised religiously. I didn't even notice that all three of us were Jewish until magazines started writing about it. Some were excited about us being Jewish, like the *Village Voice*, and others, especially the English press, were very anti-Semitic. I felt surprised by both. As far as I was concerned, we were just some friends making some music together. What does being Jewish have to do with that?

Well, since I've gotten older, I've come to feel that some of the Judaism came through to me by way of osmosis. Maybe things like my mother saying, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And basic principles of respect. But going back to what you were saying about diasporism, I feel that much of that, for us as Jews, is just a frame of mind. Jews have been diasporized for so long that we should feel at home anywhere. The more we visualize ourselves as outsiders, as downtrodden, as oppressed, the more we will help to perpetuate that and create it for the future. If we think of ourselves as outsiders, we will project ourselves that way and people will see us that way. We are not any

Chanukah

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

• The Ritual •

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

The traditional blessings over the candles:

ALL NIGHTS:

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

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

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

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

ADD ON THE FIRST NIGHT:

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

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

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

• The Story •

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately, that state degenerated as the Hashmona'im tried to become a nation like all other nations, adopting the same perversions of state power that other nations adopted, and becoming "realistic" and hence spiritually and morally corrupt.

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

Some right-wing Zionists today, believing in military power as the primary way to create security for Israel, have turned might into their god. They believe they are being "realistic" to think that peace and reconciliation are impossible, and that Jewish survival depends on strength. Yet this way of thinking is Hellenism—the validation of that which is and the inability to commit to that which ought to be. We affirm a different vision of strength. Our survival and the survival of the entire planet, depend on our ability to create a world of love and caring, a world of peace and justice, a world in which every human being is treated as an embodiment of the spirit of God. The possibility of building such a world was precisely what Hellenism denied, and precisely what we affirm when we take God seriously.

• Making It Real •

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

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

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

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

For example, imagine changes in your:

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

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

Please reproduce this and encourage friends to use it as a guide for constructing their own meaningful Chanukah observance. And urge them to subscribe to TIKKUN magazine (send $31 to TIKKUN, P.O. Box 460926, Escondido, CA 92046.) Written by Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN, in memory of his beloved mother.

better than anyone else or any less than anyone else. To imagine either is to create our own suffering. We are just human beings trying to find happiness, as are all human beings.

A. Lerner - I'm sure your last comments will raise some eyebrows among those in the multiculturist camp who would claim that holding onto our identities as oppressed peoples is an essential element for genuine understanding and authentic co-existence. In fact, some would claim that their experience as a subjugated people is central to their self-understanding and identity. There are various reasons why people become invested in their people's subjugated histories, but the main one is because it gives some understanding of their current positioning in society. For example, I as a Jew, or as a woman, or as an African American continue to hold onto my history of oppression first, because it defines some of who I am and helps explain my social location, and second, because it helps to explain current situations of oppression that come out of historical memory but are experienced as reality. Seeing oneself as not fully accepted by society or as downtrodden usually is because there is a reality that creates these situations. So to the Jews who dwell on the Holocaust or construct an identity around their historical pariah statues you would say, "Get off that trip." Or to the African Americans who still feel the scars of slavery you would say forget it and move on?

Yauch - I'm not saying forget about it. I'm saying remember it, forgive, and don't focus on it in a negative way. If it empowers you somehow in some positive way, if you can look at it and say "My people have been oppressed" or "are being oppressed" as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did, and then do something positive with that, then that can be a great thing. But there are a huge number of us who make our lives a living hell by focusing on it in a negative way. If we see our people as downtrodden and alienated and combine that with negative emotions like hatred or depression, we will actually be reinforcing that situation. If we project ourselves that way in public it, in effect, makes others treat us that way. We need to remember histories of pain so that we can learn something from them and then get beyond them. The best way to do this is through forgiveness; forgiving ourselves for our own involvement, forgiving others for their involvement, and then in that way making sure that it doesn't happen again. Many people's fear is that if we forgive it will happen again, but in truth, through forgiveness we can do much more to make sure that it doesn't happen again. Forgiveness gives us a much more positive understanding of ourselves, which then allows us to see more clearly. That clarity will ensure that it doesn't happen again. If we stay angry or upset, we'll lose our clarity of mind and it is more likely to happen again.

A. Lerner - I agree with you that forgiveness is an important attribute for any healing process and eventual transcendence of the scars left historically or personally, but what about the claim that a reason for harping on historical experiences of degradation is because the pain and oppression still persists, maybe in a different form or to a different degree, but nonetheless it is still there. I refuse to believe that the oppression of African Americans is only because they project an attitude onto others, or that anti-Semitism continues because Jews talk too much about the Holocaust.

Yauch - I don't think it is solely because of the oppressed peoples' mentality. It is perpetuated through the momentum of collective consciousness. That is, thought processes that have been going on within the oppressors as well as the oppressed. But the way to change that begins within ourselves. Forgiveness and compassion will lead to that healing. Anger and fear will perpetuate it. The healing must begin within ourselves. If we change the way we perceive ourselves and the way we perceive our oppressors, then they too will begin to change.

A. Lerner - But there are people who are going to look down on you no matter how you behave. Again, oppression isn't simply a projection by the oppressed. Although we may all take part on different levels in our collective and personal subjugation, quiescence, and denigration, the oppression still rests in the hands of the perpetrators. The Tibetans may participate on some levels in their persecution but still the Chinese are the main force behind oppression in Tibet.

Yauch - I guess that's one of the main reasons I'm so involved with the Tibetan struggle. Because the way they perceive themselves is their whole basis for trying to change their situation. They are just being open and honest about what is happening and hoping that the rest of the world will see that and help. It is like a test of whether non-violence and compassion can prevail over brutal oppression.

A. Lerner - Getting back to our earlier discussion about trying to get people involved in freeing Tibet, one issue that we who are involved in the politics of meaning see as crucial for any liberatory movement is to address the issue of cynicism. The politics-of-meaning analysis of

cynicism is that we are all caught in a tension between wanting to go with our highest ideals of what we think should happen in society and feeling that if we really try to go with those ideals we will be taken for a fool, a dreamer, a silly idealist who, according to other self-proclaimed pragmatists, isn't really dealing with reality and will hence become lost in the rat race of taking care of personal selves regardless of the consequences. Being at the Tibetan Freedom Concert with more than 100,000 other people, mostly from my generation, was a very powerful experience. But what also struck me when I talked and listened to some of the other people in the audience was just how much the dynamic of cynicism had its grip on people's attitudes about what was possible in regard to Tibet. I would guess that the cynicism that some of those kids were expressing wasn't just about Tibet but was also tied into how much they thought changing the status quo was possible. I think the concert did a lot of good to turn kids onto social justice issues like freeing Tibet, but I think a lot of kids tuned out when the music wasn't playing. This was in part because their cynicism over being able to participate in real change was too deeply entrenched.

Yauch - In terms of going for one's highest ideals or holding back, I look at it like a chess game. We must just feel out when it is appopriate to make what move. Expressing an idea that makes sense one minute, may not the next. I think most cynicism is based on fear of how we will be perceived if we look into something like spirituality, or into any serious issue. People are afraid of being judged by their friends. But when we talk about cynicism we tend to look at it as an external factor, something outside of ourselves, someone else's cynicism, instead of seeing it as our own cynicism about cynicism.

The way to look at cynicism is how it exists in ourselves, because cynicism, in the context we are talking about, is really just our own insecurity. Sometimes you just have to be strong and stand up in the face of cynicism and speak out for what is right. And chances are if people stand up, eventually others will respect them for their integrity and join them.

A. Lerner - Some religious systems maintain that there are cycles of oppression or pain that are essential to the structure of how things are in the world. A secularized version of this form of ontologized cynicism is manifested in society through notions that either certain biological groups are destined to dominate, or that suffering is essential to progress.

Yauch - In Buddhist belief, which is also the way I perceive things, everything is constantly changing, nothing is fixed, every molecule is in the process of evolving, every bit of consciousness, everything physical, mental, emotional, is evolving. Who I am is constantly changing and evolving, because of our interactions. Just being here having this conversation has already changed who I am and who you are. This understanding helps break out of the cynical mind frame, because it reminds us not to accept the current conditions of things as eternally fixed.

A. Lerner - There seem to be a lot of similarities between what you are describing and the notion of God discussed in Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal.* Similar to the concept of continual evolution we have in the Jewish tradition the story in which Moses asks God before going back to Egypt by what name he is being sent to demand freedom. To which God responds with "Tell them that 'I will be, whom I will be' sent you"—essentially, tell Pharaoh that the God of possibility has sent you. So maybe these two conceptions, one based in Buddhism, the other in Judaism, can provide the best theological approach for combating cynicism.

One of the issues that you hope to raise in people's consciousness through the concert and through your work for a free Tibet is the need to protest China's human rights abuses by not consuming its products. Recently, we've witnessed China's Most Favored Nation trade status renewed, which attests to the strength of corporate America's demand that once again, human rights should be subordinated to economic prosperity and greed. This ethos of selfishness and greed on behalf of corporations isn't unique to their attitudes toward Tibet. If we look at the devastation of many communities in America due to either downsizing or jobs being shipped overseas, or to the huge impending ecological crises that are already starting to have a devastating effect on our planet, it becomes apparent that whether the issue is freeing Tibet or having clean air, greed is going to be one of the biggest obstacles to rectifying either of these tragedies. So if the struggle for Tibet is about confrontation through compassion, transformation through higher consciousness, why not tackle head-on the destructive behavior of corporations? Why not put on a concert to address the selfishness and greed that traps people in a cynical spiral, which then allows them to turn their backs on human-rights abuses and ecological devastation?

Yauch - Well, I feel we should be careful not to demonize all corporations. A corporation is a collection of human beings, which is really just a consolidation or reflection of the greed we all have. I belive that the main

problem facing humanity is greed. It goes to every level, it's where our collective consciousness is at in the so-called modern world. We can point to the corporations and say they are acting from greed but they are just a manifestation of what's going on for almost all of us on different levels. Let's look at ourselves and see how we not only participate in that greed by buying from the corporations, but also look at how we perpetuate it. We've got to look at how we need to wear this week's Nike Jordans and not last week's. How many pairs of shoes and sneakers do we have in the closet? It's our selfish egos that fuel the greed of the corporations, which in turn support human-rights violations. Let's look within ourselves and see how we affect this on a daily basis.

A. Lerner - What you are saying is similar in many ways to one of the politics of meaning's tenets, which tries to focus on the ways in which greed and cynicism adversely affect everyone at all levels of society. This is not to be exculpatory. Some people, like some corporations, do play a disproportionally more destructive role than the rest of us, yet the ethos of greed and cynicism is something that we all live with and are all affected by. Therefore, it is important to try to change the bottom line in society rather than just focusing on villainizing a few. The truth is that nobody is safe when human rights are abused or the environment is polluted. It's important to educate people to acknowledge the ways we are all interconnected and therefore we all are in constant need of partnership with one another in order to survive.

LeVine - Strategically, how does the Dalai Lama think he can actually get autonomy or earn some sort of freedom or end the oppression for Tibet? What is his thinking, from what you know about how he can get the Chinese to stop oppressing and destroying his people?

Yauch - I think right now a big part of what he is doing is raising people's awareness. Once someone starts learning about the situation, and that the Tibetans' approach is nonviolent and that there's genocide going on, this horrible destruction of Tibetan culture and Tibetan people and the depth of their culture, they see how terrifying what's going on there is. I think his idea is to appeal to people's hearts. When more people become aware of it, they can begin to help in different ways. Depending on what we do and who we know, there are different things that each of us can do to help. One thing that the Dalai Lama has said when people have asked him how can you not be angry at the Chinese, how can you not be enraged when you see your people being tortured by them, when you hear stories of nuns being raped with cattle prods and Tibetan women undergoing sterilizations and abortions against their will (there's a truck driving around doing forced abortions and sterilizations on women all over Tibet). But his response was that he actually feels more compassion for the Chinese soldiers that are doing this than he does even for his own people who are getting tortured, because what he sees is his own people coming out of a cycle of karma, paying it off so to speak, and being done with it, whereas the soldiers are just entering into a very heavy cycle of karma.

A. Lerner - When you bring up the issue of karma, it makes me think about how Tibet used to be a warrior culture. With this history in mind, wouldn't karma dictate that possibly the Tibetans are experiencing this current form of oppression because of their warrior past? If we keep to the traditional understanding of karma, isn't it necessary for the Tibetans to be going through this period of repression? And therefore, to play devil's advocate, if this is their karma that must be worked out through Chinese domination, why should we interfere? Couldn't our actions be perceived as westerners once again claiming a higher ground and sticking their noses into issues they don't understand and shouldn't be involved with?

Yauch - Maybe this is something the Tibetans have to go through. I don't know what the Dalai Lama's position is on this, but I would say that I believe that there is collective karma; just like there is collective consciousness, there is collective karma. So I believe there is some karma that the Tibetan people are working out. But that's not to say that just because someone is working out their karma that we should just leave them alone to their suffering. We are obligated as fellow human beings to help. And in fact, by not doing so when we are able to, we will just create bad karma for ourselves.

A. Lerner - Under karma logic, could it be conceivable that by stopping the karmic cycle that the Tibetans are now in, we could in fact bring onto ourselves bad karma through our interference?

Yauch - No, it's really all about our own intention (which, in Buddhism, is called *bodhicitta*). If your intention is to help somebody else out, it can only bring you positive karma. It's not the actions themselves that mean anything; the actions are symbolic, it's the intentions behind them. If you intend to be mean to someone, but to everyone else it appears that you are actually nice, because your motivation was not pure, you will still have that bad karma to deal with in yourself. Karma is not

some outside force waiting to punish you, it's feelings within ourselves which we then generate into our reality. Imagine you and I are walking down the street. I see an open manhole cover in front of you, but you don't see it because you are talking to me. If I purposely don't tell you, and I let you fall and get hurt, then I'll feel guilty and responsible. On the other hand, if I stop you, and it turns out that it was karma you needed to work out, you will find some other way, on your own, perhaps slipping in the bathtub.

I believe we are here on this earth to learn that we are interdependent. To learn that what brings us lasting happiness is helping each other. The way I see it, we are all interconnected, and therefore by not helping the Tibetans it will ultimately reflect on us. Once we become incarnate in this world our actions, or lack thereof, affect it, and we are all thereby responsible.

A. Lerner - Let's go back for a minute to the discussion about recognition and respect and how someone in your position can help others to get away from a materialistic and manipulative ethos.

Yauch - Well, perhaps just by seeing other people that way, it begins to open them up to that level of interaction. That's what I was talking about when I spoke about being around the Dalai Lama. His perspective seems very clear to me. I believe his motivation is to help everything collectively. Any time I've been with him discussing what can be done to help the Tibetan people, he immediately brings into it what can be done to help the Chinese people and even the people from the Chinese government—what can be done to help even them, his oppressors. He cited the leaders of China, the ones who are destroying his people as being his teachers, because they have given him a chance to be compassionate even in the face of such extreme conditions. In meditation, he visualizes taking on their negativity, like hatred or anger, and sending them something positive he's acquired. Just being around someone like that makes you feel this overwhelming feeling of wanting to help, and to be positive.

LeVine - Can you explain for someone who doesn't know, what is meant by meditation or visualization?

Yauch - By visualization I mean taking a time where you're not focused on outside stimuli, where you unplug the phone and switch off the radio and don't answer the door and don't focus on any of your outside senses, and just visualize a situation in your head, for example, sending positivity to the Chinese authorities and taking away some of the negativity they're dealing with. It's like prayer, but rather than sending it to God, you're working it out within yourself.

LeVine - So, similar to a politics of meaning, the Dalai Lama feels that a necessary ingredient to the transformation in a society, be it Chinese, Tibetan, or American, is going to be a politics in which we realize that we're all in pain here, we are all crippled by a system that doesn't respect our spiritual and ethical needs. The Dalai Lama tries to embrace the energy of the Chinese people and also see them as hurt by the whole process. Instead of seeing the occupation of Tibet as just going one way, he sees it as a system that affects both peoples and is degrading to what's good in both peoples.

Yauch - Yeah; we have been trained to think of everything in terms of "us" and "them." We must remember that at the most basic level we're all human beings. To separate our "enemies" as those others whom we have to get rid of is a twisted idea. When I was on tour in Israel, I met young Jewish kids who were fifteen or sixteen years old, who were saying that they can't wait to get into the army and kill Palestinians. They were excited about going and murdering people, and to me that's just completely crazy. I mean, basically, it's easy to look at people and demonize them and see the Nazis, the Chinese, the Palestinians, whomever, as non-human, or to look at them as these distant, evil people who have nothing to do with us. But in many ways, they're just like we are.

In the case of the Nazis, the Germans were a poor, repressed people. They were fed a lot of misinformation and were dealing with a lot of anger, and the anger got expressed in a really crazy way toward whomever was the "other" of that society. It happened that that "other" was us. But I mean any people, even Jews, could take a wrong turn. Everyone is capable of insane acts. We must constantly keep close tabs on what we are doing and who we are becoming. And we must forgive those who have erred, just as we would hope they would forgive us. If we use violence to achieve our freedom, perhaps we will become the same as our enemies.

A. Lerner - We must always be careful not to use atrocities from the past to abuse the innocent of the present. Though justice must be served, it's important that the method is not one that approximates that of our oppressors and enemies. This is in part my fear of what is currently happening in Israel and in many of the Diaspora Jewish communities around the world. We've become so fatigued by the twentieth century, with its fires of exterminations, wars for survival, and terror on our streets that it's blinded us to seeing the ways in which

we are participating in another people's persecution. Our pain, anger, and mistrust makes taking the more morally sensitive path all the scarier.

Right before Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated, Israeli society was beginning to open up, but now it's returned to its siege mentality. It's too bad that we didn't have a figure like the Dalai Lama when we were emerging from the ashes of Europe, who could have helped influence our process to re-establish ourselves in our ancient homeland with an ideology of compassion. While the enormity of the atrocities committed against us put compassion far from our consciousness, it could have helped our own healing and possibly helped us to deal with the Palestinian problem better than we did.

The challenge to the Tibetan people will be if they will be able to continue with an ideology of compassion once their homeland is returned. Like the Palestinians who represent the population that was established by the Islamic invasions, so too many ethnic Chinese have moved into Tibet and now see it as part of the national heritage. If power is ever returned to the Tibetan people, it remains to be seen whether they will be able to exercise the same restraint and compassion preached in Buddhism toward the ethnic Chinese.

It's great to see someone of your stature in the hip-hop world out there fighting for healing of the world. I hope that your example will inspire others in the music industry, and fans of your music, to focus more of their attention on the ills plaguing this planet. What's particularly exciting is that you take a politics of meaning perspective, insisting on the centrality of values and spiritual sensitivity, integrating this with your commitment to fight for human rights in Tibet, and challenging the greed and cynicism we find in so much of our society and our personal lives. □

Is Love Scarce?

(Continued from p. 42)

out of a simple desire to give, without any sense of martyrdom or proving our worth. The same action can be manipulative or loving, depending on our inner motivation. For this reason, learning to recognize our real and usually mixed motivations is an important part of learning to love. Our behavior often stems from unconscious fears and desires, and the difficult process of drawing these to the surface can help us see when we are being loving and when we are being manipulative. I recall times when I've showered men with affection and kindness, listening attentively to their troubles, sending sweet notes. I was not desperate to get married. I just wanted adoration and I hoped they would give it to me if I was sweet, generous, and entertaining enough. Discovering the courtship manuals and their manipulative tactics helped me realize that some of my own behavior was spurred not by love but by my fear that love was scarce.

I began to wonder how I could admit that I wanted to share my life with someone without becoming a husband-hunter. The answer that emerged rested on reconnecting to the Divine, which I believe is the source of all real loving. Instead of focusing on how I could make a man love me, I began to focus on becoming a more loving person. This actually made it easier to develop a loving partnership. Ironically, I became engaged and married while writing a book critiquing the market approach to love. A remarkable number of the women I interviewed for the book shared similar stories, often meeting their partners after they had given up looking.

It is a paradox that life becomes easier once we stop trying so hard. When we are afraid of stumbling during a speech, that is exactly what we do. Fear of insomnia keeps us up at night. Anxiety about standardized tests makes it harder to answer the questions. This is especially true of loving. When we fear that we will never find love, we focus on our own need, a condition that makes it harder to be loving toward others. Acknowledging this fear and learning to move through it makes it much easier to connect to another.

Clearly, not everyone who stops looking for a partner will suddenly find one. Relationships are far too mysterious to conform to such a formula. But I do believe that a shift in attitude, from fear to trust, takes us out of the scarcity model and lets us see the abundant potential for loving in our lives. Love can only be scarce when we think of it as a noun, something that can be found, possessed, or lost. When we think of love as a verb, love is as plentiful as we make it, whether we are single or partnered.

In a society where everything is seen as scarce, from jobs to health care, affirming love's abundance is positively subversive. By rejecting the market approach to courtship, we assert that some things cannot be bought or sold—a message our culture needs now more than ever. By refusing to see ourselves and others as a list of qualities on a shopping list, we also challenge the other ways our society objectifies people. And by seeking to create love rather than consume it, we chip away at the individualism of our culture one relationship at a time. In its place, we can build a world where children grow up believing that they will always have plenty of love. □

Dreaming of Michaela

Todd Pitock

All along we had been unable to discover the baby's sex, and since we were only three days from the due date, we decided to wait for the surprise.

"Don't tell us," I said.

The technician smiled cheerfully and promised she wouldn't.

As it turned out, everyone had a hard time telling us. The radiologist didn't want to; he came in and glanced at the monitor. I asked if something was wrong. He left the room.

"I'm frightened," Toni said.

"Whatever it is," I said, "we'll deal with it." Soon I also started pressing my palms together. "Tell the radiologist I want to speak with him," I told the technician.

She went out, leaving on the ultrasound video monitor. But my eyes could never pick up the details on the milky screen; I couldn't tell a head from a heart, and I didn't try. We just sat in icy silence—I no longer believed in the reassuring words I said to Toni—until the technician returned some time later. "He'll see you alone."

"I don't want to be the one to tell you this," he said.

Toni had walked in behind me. She screamed and held on to me, clawing at my back as if she were trying to keep from slipping down a rocky slope.

Outside it was a cool, rainy November afternoon. We walked holding each other under an umbrella. "I can't believe this is happening," Toni said. "I just can't believe this."

At the midwife's office, I made two phone calls. I managed to speak in a whisper to my father-in-law. He could not grasp what I was telling him. "What?" he said. "But how? I've never heard of that ...." What more could I tell him? I called my mother, but at the sound of her voice I had to bend at the waist to try and catch my breath.

Toni and I agreed to get it over with as soon as possible. At first, stunned and horrified, she wanted "this dead thing" out of her body. Fortunately—as we would learn when we'd met others whose babies had died in similar circumstances—the hospital could not take us that night. We had to wait until the morning.

At home, I phoned an Orthodox rabbi at a synagogue I'd attended on several Friday nights. He did not know us; we had just moved to the Philadelphia area six weeks earlier. I had grown up across town, but had been gone for eight years and Toni was new here. We were strangers to the community. "There's nothing to do," he said. "In Jewish law, a child who does not live for thirty-one days is not mourned."

"We shouldn't sit *shiva*?"

"No. My advice is, let the hospital take the baby away. You don't have to give it a name. Here's the name of a funeral home. I'm sure they're listed in the book. Explain the situation and they can make arrangements to pick up the body from the hospital."

"Not even a funeral?"

"It's not necessary. They'll bury it. Don't look at it. Be strong for your wife."

That evening at about seven, we took over-the-counter tranquilizers and climbed into bed. We spoke softly, as though we were sharing a secret. "How," Toni asked, "am I going to deliver this baby and come home alone?"

In the morning, I tried to do a deal with God. I offered money to a worthy institution. I pictured everyone laughing off the scare after the radiology department discovered that the heart monitor was turned off.

We went to the hospital at about seven. The maternity ward was like any other hospital ward, cool and antiseptic. At the front desk, deserted so early in the morning, we saw immediately that we were expected. On the bulletin board, our names were posted in red magic marker; other names were written in blue. After a few minutes someone came to admit us.

It was not a bad room. Soft yellow light. A bed. An armchair with thick cushions. A window looking out

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onto trees, a parking lot, and a quiet street without pedestrians. Everything brown and gray and desolate. Toni put on a gown and lay down to wait. She was hooked up to an I.V., which dripped a labor-inducing drug into her hand. She refused painkillers.

I begged her to take them. "Why make this worse than it has to be?" I said. I was afraid. What would a dead infant look like? I half-expected a monster. For some reason, I feared that it would be decomposed—though biologically this would be impossible in the circumstances. "Take an epidural," I said. "Please, Toni, take something."

"This is all I'm going to have," she said. "I want to feel it."

She lay on her side, and as each wave of labor pain washed over her, she'd squeeze my fingers with one hand and hold the steel support on the side of the bed with the other. "I want to feel it," she'd say, her eyes shut, tears dropping one at a time onto the pillow.

Every so often I would go into the bathroom and sink onto the floor, biting a towel.

Sometimes we spoke of other things. The midwife and the nurse, Amy and Linda, were professional and did as much as two strangers could. This was Amy's first stillbirth delivery; it was Linda's specialty—I don't know if there is a name for it. Eventually we'd sink back into staring and silence, and then, of course, I would wind up back in the bathroom. I'd come out, and Amy would pat my back. Sometimes she, too, would have to leave the room. "If this is too much," Toni said to me at one point, "you can go."

I do not think she really expected me to leave, and I did not want to.

It did not turn out to be a long labor. Toni dilated quickly and gave birth at 12:59 p.m. A resident stood in for the obstetrician, who did not arrive in time. The resident's voice was as cheerful as the technician's the day before. "Here's the baby!" he said. For a fraction of a moment I thought maybe it was alive, that God had accepted my offer. "Yeah, the cord is wrapped twice around the ankle. That's pretty snug. Yeah, here we are." Whenever I'd heard of umbilical cord accidents, I thought of the neck, of strangulation. It did not occur to me that anything that cut off the supply of blood and oxygen would be deadly.

They swathed the baby in sheets. My hope was gone. I could not look.

"Do you want to know the sex?" someone asked.

"Yes," Toni said.

"It's a girl."

That had always been our guess. "I'm going to have two girls," I'd say. "I always knew I'd have two girls. This one is a girl." I had convinced Toni I was right. "Just to spite us," she said after we decided on a girl's name but could not agree on a boy's, "it's going to be a boy." "Nope," I said with a swagger in my voice, "it's a girl. I'm telling you."

"Do you want to hold her?" Linda asked Toni.

"Yes."

I fell back into a chair and stood up and sat down, as if whether to sit or to stand, or how to sit and how to stand, were very important. The indecision was over whether to see her. I still feared she'd be a monster. I did not want to see a dead baby. But I wanted to see my child. Toni pulled back the baby blanket and examined her tiny fingers. "She has long arms and thin wrists," Linda said. "Just like her mommy. And a long neck. She's a beautiful baby."

I looked. Besides her lipstick-red lips and the rouge staining her cheeks and chin, she was almost perfect. Six pounds six ounces. Twenty-one inches long. Her tiny fingers lay across her belly. A darkness formed like a shadow under her nails.

"Did you pick out a name?" Linda asked.

I shook my head.

"Yes, Todd," Toni said pleadingly. "We did. We did."

And then I was nodding, and I spoke her name: *Michaela*.

"Oooh," Linda crooned gently, "that's so pretty."

I reached out and held her. Now she was a reality for me, an individual outside the kicks and lurches I'd felt in my wife's then-bulbous belly. She looked like our firstborn, Elyse, the mouth slightly wider, the nose a little longer. We could see our features in her face, too, which reminded us that she was of us. I held her for only a minute, possibly less, yet the impression of her weight in my arms would stay with me, as would the regret of not kissing her and of not inhaling the scent of her baby flesh and the wispy baby hair.

I gave her back to Toni and I slipped into the tautest knot of grief. It seemed to cut off the circulation; a physical numbness spread through my feet and hands. I could feel nothing except the acidic burn of tears. I blinked and kneeled on the cold tile floor and scrawled words on the torn page of a telephone message pad. I wanted to record what had happened.

They took Michaela away. A few minutes later they brought her back. Toni wanted to hold her one more time. "I can't," I said to her. "I can't. We have to say goodbye. Please say goodbye now. Please. It's torture for me."

She handed Michaela to the nurse, who took her little lifeless body into a nook across the room and pulled closed a curtain.

We drove home.

Toni, of course, was going through a physiological process. "My body doesn't know she's dead," she'd say. She held packs of ice to her engorged breasts. Her empty belly shrank down to its normal size, and whereas a month earlier she'd wanted her body back, her thinness felt like failure to her. My eyes and mouth burned. I broke out in a rash of acne.

Michaela had died on a Tuesday. We buried her the Friday after Thanksgiving. The rabbi was wrong about the necessity of a funeral. The living need, for their own sake, to honor the dead, and even if neither civil not Jewish law acknowledged Michaela, we had experienced her physical existence for forty weeks. It was a small gathering. My mother put a bunch of white lilies on the plain pine casket.

The grave was the length of my leg and the width of my outstretched arm.

We did not formally sit *shiva*. We found no prayers, we did not have a spiritual leader, and the Jews we knew were not knowledgeable or observant. Toni and I would sit and stare, or read when we could concentrate. One of the things I read was the Second Book of Samuel, which recounts King David's hardships as a father. He, too, tried to do a deal with God over a newborn. He fasted, but the stricken baby, who is not named, died.

The early expressions of sympathy were adequate. Some were even touching. My neighbor, who I'd met twice, helped me pick out two trees and instructed me how to dig the holes and prepare the ground. People sent cards or phoned.

But grief is lonely, and later it became evident that because of the unusual nature of a death like this—no one had experience of the baby's physical existence besides us—some people gave small measure to what we were going through. "At least," went one phrase, "you didn't have time to know her. It would have been worse if it had happened later." "It's not like Toni's infertile, after all. You can have another." "It was God's will. You have to trust in God."

How does one respond? That I would have bargained ten years of my life just to have heard her cry and known whether she had my blue or Toni's brown eyes? And why compare with words like "better" or "worse"? Pain is a thing unto itself, not relative to other things. If one person breaks a leg in two places and another breaks an arm in one, we can say the leg is a "worse" injury. But does that relieve the pain in the other person's arm? Toni's fertility was irrelevant. Do you replace one life with another?

And God's will? How did they know? Suppose it *was* God's will—is that consolation? Suppose it's also God's will that a person is paralyzed in a car accident. That does not seem to me to make it less tragic.

These were the most common remarks, not the stupidest. We met a woman whose premature baby lived three weeks and died in her arms. "Your body knew best," someone told her. Another woman heard this from her father-in-law: "At least it wasn't a boy. Then you would have really been devastated." And another: "I know how you feel. I remember when my cat died." When I repeated these remarks, some people tried to explain: "Well, you know what they meant. Their hearts were in the right place." And then something in me would sink, as if I escaped a fire for a flood.

For men there is another problem. Some people do not realize they have shared in the experience. Again there is the comparison. "It's worse for a woman," people said.

Suddenly, I am aware of how frequently images of babies appear. They are the angle on war stories, consumer stories, car and tire advertisements. The newspaper carries stories of abandoned babies, abused babies, and of course, the joyful stories of births in elevators and cabs which I now find hard to read. Movies that have nothing to do with babies suddenly spring a few clips of childbirth on you.

Supermarkets, malls, and afternoon lunches become things to avoid. But even if you stay home all the time, the baby trade comes to get you. Companies marketing formula and photography and all sorts of products track you down in a hurry. "Congratulations!" said one postcard offering something or other. Another friend of ours, whose son died six days before Michaela, kept getting discount offers to photograph her new baby. She did not want to explain the situation to a stranger, but the same telephone marketing person kept calling back. "My baby died," our friend said finally. The woman on the other end hung up.

Medical bills arrived. The doctor who did not arrive in time for the delivery and the hospital where we'd stayed for seven hours put out a palm and a fist for almost $6,000. A pathologist charged $300 for "standard tests" that we hadn't authorized. His office would not give results, however. Medical protocol required me to get those from the obstetrician I hadn't met and who didn't return my phone calls. The pathologist's billing manager did. She kept referring to Michaela as a "fetal demise." She did not understand why that offended me, and since she saw my questions as indications that I was a deadbeat, she saw no need to dignify my complaints by changing her medically educated terminology. "You'll still have to pay," she kept repeating.

The two most spiritual moments in life are birth and death. For me, those have been the times when I have felt the presence of another world.

Yet, despite my faith, my religion in effect denied that anything had happened. I wrote this in a letter to the rabbi who had not come to see us nor called to ask how we were. He did not respond.

I looked up sources on infant death in Judaism. The rabbi was correct, though it happens that various commentators contradict one another. In one place, a rabbi says the child is "viable" at thirty-one days (a rather dubious stance at that stage in technological history). Yet, on the day of birth, a boy is accorded the status of a groom, which itself has the status of a king. And if the boy dies before eight days, he is still to be circumcised. Girls are not mentioned, but notwithstanding its patriarchal roots, Judaism traditionally accords females a higher spiritual status than males.

While the stillborn's life isn't recognized, the rabbis decided that miscarriage beyond five months' gestation requires interment. Another rabbi explained: "There was a time when women expected this to happen to them at least once. To have allowed grieving when it was such a common occurrence would have disrupted the community." I imagine the same argument could be applied to disallow mourning for war dead. But debate is unsatisfying.

The non-Orthodox have tried to come up with more adequate responses. I spoke with a Conservative rabbi who lost twin boys, one at birth and then, three months later, a sudden infant death. It happened fourteen years ago. He had written a special *yizkhor* for them—the Yom Kippur *yizkhor* meditation on children speaks only of those who lived—but he was more resigned at this stage. He said something to the effect that since we couldn't turn away from our Jewishness, we had to try to come to terms with it. But we hadn't thought of turning away; we felt we'd been turned away.

One night, Toni looked out into the garden and saw a nimbus on a branch. She blinked and approached and it didn't move. "I think I'm going crazy," she said.

There were days when she'd fall heavily on both knees and shriek. "*Why why why why*!" And a pause. And another "*Why*!" This time only one, but carrying the note, filling up the house.

The bereaved unreasonably expect the world to stop. It doesn't. The phone would ring. An editor. Or family. Or bills. Or news that someone else we knew was pregnant or just had a baby something. Six pounds ten ounces. A hard labor. "Can I call back later?" I'd say.

The darkness would lift for an hour or a day or a week, and then it would descend. For almost seven months Toni wended through the fury and then the fatigue of despondence. Her arms felt the weight of emptiness and she was obsessed with getting pregnant. When her perspective would return, she'd understand that a subsequent pregnancy would not cure, just as the beginning of one story does not change the ending of a previous one.

The healing happened slowly and unevenly. Sometimes there would be progress and then we'd slip back. The clinical prescriptions for the grief process and the psychology books we found about death were sterile. In the safety of our home, crying was good, and sometimes, outside the home, it couldn't be helped.

We found a support group. Some couples had experienced first-trimester miscarriages. Some had chosen to abort babies with severe defects. Some had lost premature babies and had to make the decision to turn off life-support systems. Some couples became closer. Other relationships were shattered by blame and sorrow. It usually helped to talk, for here we felt understood.

Few people die of grief. You don't get over it; you learn to accommodate it. We resumed the functions of daily life. Eventually we accepted that nothing would fill this hollow in our lives. There was no bright side, nothing redeeming. The idea that our "child is in heaven" would not make us miss her less. This was negative space, and as in paintings, negative space forms part of a full picture. For Toni and me, there was, and is, a sense of release simply in acknowledging a tragic reality.

At tables set for four, I look at the unoccupied chair and it becomes visibly empty for a moment; then I resume eating and I do not feel depressed. Michaela is part of our conversations. We often speak of her without intense pain. Elyse sometimes greets her picture on my study desk. Elyse is a playful little girl, and it is strange how equal and opposite emotions, like life and death, can co-exist.

When we do not think of Michaela consciously, she comes to us in our dreams. The dreams shift, but the theme of wishfulness recurs. These are mine: Now I'm holding a child in each arm. Now Michaela is waddling uncertainly in diapers. Now the girls are playing together.

Here is a dream-image of a little girl. A four-year-old. She is dressed up in a skirt and a top and her black hair is pulled back into a ponytail. We are in my backyard. She is running to me with her arms open and laughter in her voice. "Daddy!" she's calling. I reach down to scoop her up. I am happy. Here my dream ends.

I open my eyes. Elyse has gotten into bed with us and it is morning. I am filled with a deep but serene sadness that will fade in the expanse of the day ahead of me. □

Truth or Consequences
A Brief Response to Bruce Robbins

Alan Sokal

Rather than belabor *Social Text*'s lapses in falling for my parody, I'd like to address some of the larger intellectual and political issues raised by Bruce Robbins in these pages ("Anatomy of a Hoax," TIKKUN, September/October 1996).

On many issues Robbins and I are in agreement. Science and technology are legitimate, indeed crucial, subjects of public critique and democratic debate. The funding of scientific research by private corporations poses grave dangers to scientific objectivity. (To make this argument, however, one must first believe in objectivity as a goal; postmodernists and relativists don't.) Finally, cultural questions are as important as economic ones—sometimes more so.

But Robbins goes astray when he attempts to defend—albeit half-heartedly—the postmodernist/poststructuralist subversion of conventional notions of truth. "Is it in the interests of women, African Americans, and other super-exploited people," Robbins asks, "to insist that truth and identity are social constructions? Yes and no," he asserts. "No, you can't talk about exploitation without respect for empirical evidence"—exactly my point. "But yes," Robbins continues, "truth can be another source of oppression." Come again?

How can *truth* oppress anyone?

The existing social arrangements may indeed be oppressive, but how can telling the truth about them make things worse? "It was not so long ago," Robbins explains, "that scientists gave their full authority to explanations of why women and African Americans … were inherently inferior." But *that* isn't truth—it's ideology posing as truth, and objective science demonstrates its falsity.

This error is repeated throughout Robbins's essay: He systematically confuses truth with *claims* of truth, fact with *assertions* of fact, and knowledge with *pretensions* to knowledge. These elisions underlie much of the sloppy thinking about "social construction" that is prevalent nowadays in the academy, and it's something that progressives ought to resist. Sure, let's show which economic, political, and ideological interests are served by our opponents' accounts of "reality"; but first let's demonstrate, by marshaling evidence and logic, why those accounts are objectively *false* (or in some cases true but incomplete).

"Those of us who do cultural politics sometimes act," Robbins candidly admits, "as if ... truth were always and everywhere a weapon of the right." That's an astoundingly self-defeating attitude for an avowed leftist. If truth were on the side of the Right, shouldn't we all—at least the honest ones among us—become right-wingers? For my own part, I'm a leftist and a feminist *because* of evidence and logic (combined with elementary ethics), not in spite of it.

Ellen Willis, writing in The *Village Voice*, has eloquently criticized those know-nothing Lefties who are impatient with theoretical social analysis. "We need to know a lot," Robbins correctly observes, "and a lot of what we need to know is cultural." But Robbins then misrepresents my assertion that "theorizing about 'the social construction of reality' won't help us find an effective treatment for AIDS or devise strategies for preventing global warming," by quoting only the second half of the sentence. My objection is not to cultural analysis *per se*, but only to a social-constructivist and anti-realist philosophy run amok.

Robbins concludes by asserting that "what is really expressed" by critics of cultural studies' excesses is "a longing for the days when women were back in the kitchen and it was respectable to joke about faggots." I don't know where he dreamed up that one, but it's sure news to me—as it must be to Ruth Rosen, Katha Pollitt, Noretta Koertge, Barbara Epstein, and the dozens of other feminist critics of postmodernism. For the sake of the American Left, it behooves us not to evade the real issues. □

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A Parent's Dilemma
Public vs. Jewish Education

Svi Shapiro

The time for decision always seemed to be far off. It would be six years from the beginning of kindergarten before my daughter would complete her elementary schooling—a seemingly endless period of time during which I would surely find the clarity of thinking to decide on the future course of her education. Yet fifth grade at B'nai Shalom Day School had arrived far more rapidly than I wanted. I would now have to seriously confront my own commitments to public education, and to Jewish education—to say nothing of my ambivalence about private schooling and the privileges of class, the rootlessness of a postmodern America, and the comforts of parochial communities.

For leftist academics, there is always the danger of allowing the particularities of one person's life to become lost in the much grander narratives of moral, ideological, and political considerations. This is, after all, a decision about where my eleven-year-old daughter Sarah is to spend her sixth grade. Nor, as I have reminded myself many times, can I hold her needs hostage to my own heavily worked concerns about the course of social justice and identity in this country.

We live in Greensboro, North Carolina. This is not New York or Philadelphia. The Jewish community (well established and comfortable as it is) exists as a very small island in an overwhelmingly dominant Christian milieu. This is what is sometimes referred to as the New South—middle class, moderately conservative. Greensboro is a city of several colleges and universities; we recycle garbage; our mayor is a woman and an environmentalist. Despite a notorious 1979 shoot-out involving the Ku Klux Klan, this is not Klan country.

To grow up Jewish here is certainly a minority experience. But it is far from the culturally marginalizing and politely silent experience I had growing up Jewish in England in the 1950s. Here, Jewish holidays are visibly and positively commented on in the local media, the television stations wish their viewers a happy Chanukah, and the downtown Christmas decorations are referred to as the "Festival of Lights." Even our supermarkets consult with our Conservative rabbi on Jewish dietary laws and culinary tastes.

The Jewish day school my daughter attends is a quite beautiful institution. Its enrollment is about 190 students—fairly remarkable in a city of about 1,200 Jewish families. Recently celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, the school provides a warm, very *haimish* Jewish environment, where holidays and Shabbat are richly celebrated, and the Hebrew language ubiquitous. Its religiosity is traditional though non-dogmatic, and it affirms the notions of *tikkun olam*. While I find the pedagogy too conventional, my daughter has found the place to be nurturant and loving. She has, for the most part, found delight in being there—a place where schooling has sustained her, not opposed her life.

What was at stake in my choice of Sarah's schooling was no abstract pedagogic exercise. I want my daughter's heart and soul to be shaped and nurtured by a *Yiddishkeyt* that would ensure her allegiance to a Jewish identity. As spiritually or historically compelling as this might be, I make no claim that this is not, at root, a selfish act. Such an education would ensure my continuing ability to recognize my own self in my daughter's being—the natural, if not entirely laudable, desire of most parents. Until now, my decision has been richly repaid; she has indeed absorbed not only some of the knowledge and culture of Jewish life, but more significantly its texture and feel. She senses its importance and its uniqueness. The joys and significance of this belong not only to the private sphere of family life, but also for her to the sphere of communal participation. Jewish life exists not merely in home or synagogue, but richly and vibrantly in the everyday, Monday-through-Friday world from which, for most of us, it is abstracted.

The mobilization of support for a politics that eviscerates public institutions is bound up with the widely felt hostility in modern societies toward the state, with all of its impersonality, inefficiency, and

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waste. It is precisely this perception that has fueled the relentless drive of the Right to gut almost everything that has the word "public" in it.

At the heart of this assault is an ideology that lionizes the marketplace and scorns society's attempts to ameliorate social injustice. In this view, the marketplace and market forces are regarded as the only legitimate means to allocate resources and to assign economic or cultural values. The resultant push for smaller government and a balanced budget has the effect of drastically reducing the scope and scale of the social safety net. It means ever more drastic cutbacks in society's supports to the elderly, children, the unemployed, the poor, and the sick.

So, our culture continues to foster self-interest and a lack of concern for the common good. Where the marketplace alone is to be arbiter of economic investment and social values, attempts are made to eliminate or reduce publicly financed education and culture. Prisons become one of the few areas of public investment. And where public policy collides with the imperatives of the market, as in environmental and consumer regulation, then the latter need be scaled back if not eradicated.

The political discourse that has sought to achieve these ends is not without its own conflicts and contradictions. It is clear, for example, that many people subscribe to the notion of smaller, less wasteful government, but also support a state that lessens the hazards and dangers of the free market. In this sense the state is, paradoxically, both the focus of much popular anger and repository of much of our needs and aspirations as a community. It irks us with its demands and intrusiveness, but it also instantiates our collective responsibilities and obligations. For all of its flaws, the state embodies some notion of a shared purpose; its ultimate client purports to be the public good, not simply the desirous ego.

The irony is that those conservatives who have often been the loudest in their condemnation of the decline of community and an ethic of responsibility have pursued a politics that has sought to allow the standards and ethics of the market to exert ever more freedom and dominance in our social, economic, and cultural lives. In working to ensure a world in which private interests and profits are less and less hindered by broad public responsibilities, and where the public arena is endlessly demeaned and savagely attacked, these free-marketeers have helped create a society that more and more resembles a predatory jungle. The violence of the Oklahoma bombing and the shut-down of the federal government, with its callous layoffs of workers and undelivered unemployment checks, are the most recent visible evidence of a discourse which has effectively trashed the public domain.

Sadly, it is often only when cuts in services and benefits are directly felt that individuals become more critical of what is happening on a broader level. Until then, the politics of racism and division succeed in legitimating the Right's social policies. A bunker mentality spreads, which calls for a social ethic of each for him or herself; individualism, separateness and isolation frame our disposition toward the rest of the world. All of this has been given added impetus by corporate behavior in the 1980s and '90s, replete with lay-offs, downsizing, closings, and relocations. It is a world that mocks any notions of obligation or commitment to workers, consumers, or community. Nothing really counts except the hunt for immediate profitability. Public accountability is a barrier to be subverted by whatever means necessary.

Yet in spite of all of this, there is still a deep hunger for communal life and the public good in America. Despite the shift to the Right, large majorities continue to affirm the importance of protecting our environment, maintaining investments in public libraries and cultural resources, and ensuring the availability of health care. Sometimes it becomes crystallized in ways that seem narrow or even repressive (protecting "our" flag). Yet behind these can be heard a cry for a society in which our collective concerns, not just our private interests, are honored, and where there is a strong sense of the public good instantiated in our civic world and in our social institutions.

Perhaps nowhere has this struggle been more focused than around the institutions of public education. Indeed, all of our societal schizophrenia around questions of public and private, marketplace and equity, democracy and capitalism, are in evidence there. In its most ideal rendering, public schooling represents a space where all of our children may be educated; a place where the rights of citizenship take precedence over the privileges or disadvantages of social and economic life. Understood in this way, public education becomes a crucial element in the making of a democratic civil society. It is an indispensable site for the nurturing of a new generation in those attitudes and values that ensure the possibility of meaningful democratic life.

Public school brings together in one setting children who, regardless of their class, race, gender or ethnicity, may acquire the capacity for critical intelligence, the sense of community, and the cultural literacy that are requisites for democracy. As many political commentators have pointed out, the current crisis of democracy in the United States is closely related to the decline of meaningful public spaces where citizens can engage in a thoughtful and critical consideration of our society's

pressing issues and concerns. In a world where commercial malls and presidential debates simulate real public interaction and involvement, there is a growing urgency to preserve those places where notions of equity, community, citizenship, and the public good still have validity.

Sadly, the reality of public schools has always been a long way from its democratic promise. The fundamental ideal of a place where the offspring of all citizens might meet and come together as a community has always been upset by the harsh realities of privilege, inequity, and racism. The historic struggles to eradicate the effects of a racially segregated system of public education are well known. Less obvious have been the continuing pernicious effects of class and race in maintaining schools vastly different in their resources, funding, expectations of students, and educational climate. Jonathan Kozol, among others, vividly documented the horrendous conditions that beset schools in poor and underfunded districts, producing debilitating and demoralizing third-world environments for kids in many of this nation's cities.

This public sphere mirrors the increasing polarization of wealth and opportunity found in the wider society. Urban schools with their violence, high drop-out rates, low achievement, and poor morale exist as altogether different institutions from those in suburban areas that function as conduits to good colleges and economic well-being.

Far from equalizing opportunities for diverse groups of students, education typically reinforces the already existing advantages and disadvantages found in the larger culture. The bitter irony of the process is that it occurs under the apparently well-meaning rhetoric of educational theories that promise to teach to the intellectual and emotional differences among students. Yet, in practice, the effect is usually to rationalize racism and classism. The ubiquitous grouping and tracking of students becomes little more than a way of affirming the "cultural capital" of some individuals and invalidating that of others. It takes only a cursory look at many schools to see how education dignifies the knowledge and experiences of some young people and silences and marginalizes that of others.

Typically, schooling represents a process of mindless absorption of knowledge separated from any notion of existential or social meaning. Successful learning comes to be seen as a regurgitation of bits and pieces of knowledge abstracted from a context that might provide them with relevance to the lives, hopes, interests and dreams of kids' lives. And the "hidden curriculum" of schooling is such that the emphasis on achievement, individual success and competition undermines efforts to build communities of respect and care. Indeed, where the latter are taken seriously, they must confront the contradictions not only of school culture but that of the larger social milieu. The daily grind of public school life with its boredom, alienation and bureaucratic regimentation are the resonant features of contemporary, adolescent popular culture.

In my struggle to decide the fate of my fifth-grade daughter, I am mindful of the desperate need to sustain the promise of public life in this country. The withdrawal of the middle class from public institutions is the certain vehicle for their demoralization and decline. Not only in this country but in other places such as the United Kingdom, the turn toward more individualistic lifestyles and privatized institutions, promoted by conservative governments, has turned the public space into one of neglect and decay. Whether in health care, housing, or in education, the story is one of double standards—where publicly provided institutions or systems are synonymous with the poor, and where standards are increasingly inferior as compared to those found in the private domain.

In wrestling with whether to send my daughter to a public school, I feel compelled to weigh my own moral responsibility as to whether I am to be part of the flight from our public world into the safety and privileges of a private institution. A commitment to progressive politics would seem to demand commitment to those public institutions where we may share, to some degree, our lives with those who inhabit economic, cultural or racial worlds quite different from our own.

Among all these concerns, one is of particular significance to me. How do we reconcile a commitment to public education with the need to recognize and affirm cultural, religious, or other differences? For many on the Left, this validation of difference has been central to the contemporary struggle to deepen the meaning of democratic life. It has been seen as a critical feature of democracy in a "postmodern" world. The struggle to recognize the multiplicity of voices and the diversity of histories and experiences of those who inhabit our nation and world has been a key focus of progressive educators.

And there has been increasing recognition of the ways that education has for so long denied the contributions and presence of many kinds of people. Whether because of class or race or ethnicity or gender or religion or nationality, it has become clear just how much we have ignored or invalidated the knowledge and traditions of others—those who fall outside the constructed norms of the culture. As educators, we have come to see how this process demeans and silences our students as the classroom becomes a place that is quite foreign to

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their homes, neighborhood, or communities.

In this regard, the emergence of a "multicultural" awareness in our schools is an important and liberating phenomenon. It is certainly a mark of progress that children are being taught to question the notion that "Columbus discovered America" with all its ethnocentric and racist assumptions about civilization; or that history, social studies, and English are beginning to be taught in more expansive and inclusive ways. Even where there are good-faith efforts, multiculturalism too often becomes trivialized—a matter of food, fiestas, and dressing up. It offers a very superficial appreciation indeed of what difference has meant to communities often denigrated or despised by those in the mainstream of society. Whatever its limitations, these efforts represent real cracks in the wall of cultural assumptions that have confronted generations of young people, shutting out or silencing those whose language, history, beliefs, and culture have been made to seem peripheral to the society.

Yet even where difference is valued and the plural nature of cultures in America is celebrated, the texture of the particular cultures recognized by our public schools is likely to be "thin." For my daughter, no multicultural environment can offer the judaically rich, evocative and full experience that would be available to her in a Jewish day school. Only in that environment does Jewishness become a form of life that colors moral expression, joyful celebration, the moments of soulful reflection and sadness, and the days and seasons of the calendar. Jewishness becomes more than an abstract focus of intellectual discussion: the living vehicle through which my daughter can construct her identity and articulate her ethical and spiritual commitments.

Such a voice is a matter of both the heart and the mind, and only a pedagogic environment that is flooded with the resonance of Jewish memory and experience can nurture it. Nor is a deep sense of value about Jewish life easily available outside of a context which integrates it into a community's daily practice—one that draws in some way from the moral and spiritual meanings of our people's historical wisdom. The "thick" texture of Jewish life—the pervasive sounds of Hebrew, the smell of challah, the *niggunim* and Israeli songs, the benching after meals—are the resources upon which are built an identity that contains an enduring commitment to Jewish life and continuity.

The intensity of this experience, however, holds the potential danger of nurturing parochial or arrogant attitudes. Such schooling may produce a *shtetl* consciousness that shuns or disparages anything foreign—one that later fuels the intolerance of "*goyim*-bashing," or

the self-righteousness that underlays so much of the American-Jewish support for chauvinistic, right-wing Israeli politics.

While at B'nai Shalom, much hard work goes toward developing a sense of social responsibility and celebrating the values of human community and global connectedness, the school my daughter attends is nevertheless a sheltered, limited community that is separated from much that other children must confront and deal with in their lives. Certainly its ambiance is too competitive, oriented to the goals of individual success and achievements. Its selectivity as a Jewish and predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class institution ensures that it is the kind of secure and cohesive community so appealing to parents. Yet in this sense it also provides a powerful, if disturbing, answer to some of the dilemmas of a postmodern world.

In their observations of postmodern society, there is a surprising convergence among both left- and right-wing critics. At the center is the belief that the world we have entered is one in which barriers—spatial, moral, political, intellectual, and aesthetic—have collapsed. Even the boundaries of gender appear permeable in an age in which sexual borders are easily crossed and labile. Our age is one of unfixity, uncertainty, and flux.

There is much to celebrate in all of this. The unfixing of boundaries, verities, and distinctions has given us the promise of a world that is more fluid, open, and free. Yet there is a price to pay—one, I believe, that has traumatic consequences for the young. And in this the conservative critique finds a powerful resonance in the anguish of many parents, by no means all of whom can be dismissed as simply and predictably right wing.

It is quite clear that the desire for discipline and structure in the raising of the young now hits a powerful chord across a wide range of parents. This desire emanates from the increasing recognition of a world in which a moral and spiritual homelessness is the prevailing sensibility. More and more there is the sense of being uprooted from the stabilities of place, family, and normative communities. The postmodern world is one in which individuals increasingly feel as if they are in exile—existentially and morally adrift in a world that constantly disrupts and dissolves any sense of situatedness in an enduring web of meaning and community. Indeed, far from acknowledging the pain of so much alienation, we are urged by Madison Avenue as well as the hipper cultural critics to enjoy the tumultuous ride.

In ways that distort the broad concern for the disintegration of ethical life and the erosion of the sense of social responsibility, talk of tradition, values, and discipline is mistakenly understood as only a discourse of the Right. Yet a world in which all that is solid melts—moral commitment, identity, community, social connection—is a matter that confronts all of us. And nowhere is this more painfully so than in regard to the upbringing of our own children. Daily, all of us, especially parents, are forced to confront the fall-out from the postmodern condition—the self-destructiveness of adolescent suicide, drugs, alcoholism and compulsive dieting, widespread depression and generalized rage, and a cynical detachment from social institutions. However manipulative or distorting, conservative discourse succeeds because it speaks to the widespread anguish of an older generation.

In this context of disintegration, rootlessness, and the culture of images, Jewish schooling offers a sense of possibility not easily found elsewhere. Here there is the hope of nurturing an identity grounded in the Jewish people's long history—a history rich with the struggles for a world of justice and freedom. Here, too, is the real possibility of transmitting what it means to be a "stranger in the land"—developing personalities empathic to the pain of exclusion and human indignity.

Jewish 'memory' roots us in a temporal community of unbelievable human tragedies, celebrations, suffering, courage, and the will for physical and spiritual survival. And such history makes powerful claims on the living—an insistence on the vision of *tikkun olam*; to act as if we ourselves had experienced the bondage of Egypt. Far from the Disney World theme park of historical images, Jewish pedagogy can offer a deep sense of historic and communal identification. Such identification is one of connectedness to an enduring moral and spiritual vision.

The religious sensibility forged in this history is one that continually demands that we create and recognize boundaries—distinctions within our world between ways of living that express the sacred and those that are profane. Judaism is a religion of everyday life that constantly seeks to make sacred the so-called ordinary, taken-for-granted acts of daily existence. Those of us who grew up in Orthodox homes know the rigidity and frequently stultifying nature of halakhic Judaism. Yet, at the same time, one can find here a powerful rejoinder to the dehumanization and degradation of our common world—one that insists that we seek to make holy human life and behavior, as well as the whole environment that makes life possible.

Certainly Judaism, like all religions, can become dogmatic and reified; a series of mindless rituals and practices. Yet I have reason to believe that B'nai Shalom offers my daughter the beginning of a deeper set of meanings that points to the limits and boundaries that structure our relationship to the world as one of re-

spect, consciousness of the needs of others, and responsibility toward them. In this school's Judaism there is, too, a sense of celebration and festivity—one that seeks to teach the young something about experiencing lives of joy, wonder and appreciation. It is, I believe, in this synthesis of social responsibility and joyful mindfulness that we can find the beginnings of a meaningful response to the rampant cynicism and nihilism of our culture.

It is true that the school offers an environment that is only very cautiously questioning or critical of the injustices of our world. And I am concerned lest it limit the importance of developing the critical mind and spirit—the lifeblood of a democratic culture. But beyond the need for our young to be educated to enable them to challenge their world, there is a need for the sense of hope and possibility that the world can be changed and transformed. And this, I believe, happens best in an environment where we feel a deeply shared, and inspiring, sense of connected fate. For Jews, there is our long history of struggle in a harsh world of brutality and oppression, and the will to maintain our hope for a better world.

Without this communal rootedness and affirmation of a way of life there is, I think, little emotional capacity to act in the world—at least not where acting means trying to transform the moral character of our lives and the political shape of our society. There is only disconnected apathy and cynicism—the world of the young so well reflected in the recent popular movies, *Slacker* and *Clueless*.

The Right is correct to argue that without an internalized discipline the self becomes passive, unable to act in the world. Yet the discipline that empowers is not that of the obedient drone but the structure that comes from participation and responsibility in the life of a meaningful and enduring community.

These are not easy times. Such communities are not easy to find. All of us must somehow find the capacity for commitment in a world where all beliefs seem uncertain, visions uncertain, and social relations fragile or broken. Yet the need to find a place in which our commitments are shared and our identities confirmed is the necessary ground of our being as moral agents in the world.

Let me be clear that my real interest is not in what is referred to today as "Jewish continuity." The continuation of a set of practices and rituals is of no particular significance to me. The ultimate value of Jewish education is not found in my daughter's capacity to read or speak Hebrew, or her knowledge of Judaica, but in whether she will become a human being deeply concerned for the worth and dignity of all the lives that share our world. My hope is that her Jewish education will be powerful vehicle for developing such a way of being. The particular here, I hope, will provide a gateway to the universal.

Yet I worry that my desire for this education will also boost the arguments of those who favor "school choice." These are often no more than thinly veiled attempts to promote educational policies that are elitist, racially separatist, or religiously fundamentalist, and have little to do with creating a more compassionate or respectful civic culture. As I wrestle with my daughter's future, I feel the strong and inescapable claims of the particular in a world that more and more demands a recognition of our universal connectedness and responsibilities. □

In October, the Israeli newspaper, Yediot Ahronot, *published this letter in Hebrew. We have reprinted it here as a supplement to our Israel section. Responses and contributions can be sent to P.O.B. #8081, Jerusalem 91080. It was signed by more than 200 women.*

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

We, religious women and mothers, whose children have served, are serving and will serve in the future, in the Israel Defense Forces, turn to you as Prime Minister and as a father of children.

Our mothers, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah are symbols of motherhood, sacrifice and the sanctity of life for us. They possess a deep significance for us, much more than the stones which rest on their graves. We prefer to weep over the graves of our mothers from a distance rather than light a candle over the grave of a soldier who was killed defending these gravesites.

"Greater is peace, because the Torah was only given as a means of making peace in the world."
(Rambam - Maimonides)

Honorable Prime Minister, Do not lend your hand to any actions which will allow the State of Israel to be remembered as just one more link in the long chain of warfare of the zealots. For us, the past is part of a continuous process which has religious and historic significance, but our commitment is to the future.

PLEASE ADVANCE THE PEACE PROCESS, FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN.

Feminism and Messianism

Carole B. Balin

The ways in which Jews envision the Messiah are as varied as the far-flung places from which Jews will putatively stream forth once the Messiah arrives. Compare, for example, the following two illustrations of the Messiah culled from Jewish tradition. A fifteenth-century Haggadah of Munich depicts the Messiah as a man riding atop a white donkey being led into Jerusalem by Elijah the prophet. In contrast, Rabbi Azriel of thirteenth-century Spain characterizes the Messiah not as a physical being at all, but as a spiritualized force representing the perfection of the ten *sefirot*, which, according to the mystics, are the spheres that constitute the universe. Radically disparate images such as these show that Judaism puts forth no single, unified concept of messianism. Rather, Jewish messianism consists of any number of different expressions, each sharing a messianic consciousness—that is, a utopian yearning to transform the imperfect present into an ideal future.

Jewish feminism, too, has a messianic consciousness. Striving to bring about an ideal future, it forms a part of the whole of Jewish messianism. Its unique voice declares judgment on the patriarchy of the present and insists upon its eradication and displacement. It calls for a new age in which differences between the sexes will not only be recognized but valued equally. Notably, Jewish feminists conceive of the new age as something utterly new. They do not expect the perfect future to be a return to a "golden era" of Judaism, for, as the historical record attests, no period in the Jewish past was "golden" as far as Jewish women's experience is concerned.

Therefore, Jewish feminism is nourished by hope for a fresh future; its messianic consciousness seems to encompass a wholly utopian vision. But, as the noted Jewish historian Gershom Scholem has pointed out, any manifestation of Jewish messianism requires a combination of utopian and restorative tendencies. After all, Jewish messianism has been customarily understood as a belief in the certainty that God will restore the people Israel to greatness through a redeemer. The restorative tendency of messianism is directed backward to an ideal past; it is conditioned solely by history and memory. Its hope is to re-establish an original state of things.

What "original state of things" might Jewish feminists resurrect to create their ideal future? Can Jewish feminism be legitimately incorporated into the "canon" of Jewish messianism? Here the work of the archeologist Carol Meyers is instructive. Combining literary analysis and archeological evidence, Meyers has reassessed how Israelite society—as depicted in the Hebrew Bible—developed. She found that war, famine, and plague intensified the role women played in domestic affairs. Prior to the calamities—during the earliest stages of Israel's formation—it appears that women's and men's roles were less stratified and more equally valued. When the crises passed, however, the restriction of women to the domestic sphere had become so deeply ingrained in Israelite society that it endured and ultimately became the basis for women's inferiority and subordination.

In order to create their ideal future, Jewish feminists might resurrect the "original state of things," as reconstructed by Meyers and others reclaiming the historical experience of Jewish women. In so doing, Jewish feminism can take its deserved place in the ever-fluctuating "canon" of Jewish messianism. In light of Scholem's definition, Jewish feminism is but one thread in the Jewish messianic fabric, projecting a singular messianic vision of a perfect future to be woven into the whole.

Besides lending its ideal vision of the future to Jewish messianism, Jewish feminism articulates a worldview that undergirds messianism, particularly liberal forms of messianism. Liberal messianism is distinguished from the traditional view of messianism—which views God alone as the catalyst for Redemption and thereby regards human actions as illegitimate attempts to force Redemption—by two essential features. First, liberal messianism recognizes that natural law, chance, and human initiative, as well as God's saving power, play a role in the onset of Redemption. Second, liberal messianism acknowledges that the process of Re-

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demption is gradual, rendering stages in the messianic process valuable in their own right.

Jewish feminism reinforces the two features of liberal messianism, for Jewish feminism ascribes supreme significance to relational modes of thought and action. Jewish feminism seeks a world of connection and relationship rather than one of dualism, division, and hierarchy. Since boundary-making often places women in the role of the Other, feminists are understandably reluctant to affirm separation as valuable in human life. They attempt to shift the focus from seeing significance in what is separate or different or absolute to perceiving significance in what is related or alike or partial. This bolsters the two distinguishing features of liberal messianism.

The first feature of liberal messianism is an interconnected universe typified by the ongoing covenantal relationship between the Divine and humankind. Jewish feminists, such as Marcia Falk, teach that authentic monotheism does not mean belief in a God who is "other than the world" but rather One who, as the Source of the flow of all life, is partnered with that which was created. Drorah Setel has pointed out as well that feminists' relational concerns are bound up with the concept of *tikkun olam*, which calls human beings to the task of reunifying a fragmented creation. Their ideas dovetail with liberal messianism, which affirms the unity in the world as illustrated by the redemptive process being carried out by God and human beings alike.

The second feature of liberal messianism, an appreciation of the partial and fragmented, as represented by a gradual unfolding of Redemption, is underscored by the feminist aversion to absolutes. Seeking significance precisely in the partial and fragmented, Jewish feminism recognizes that the still incomplete can gradually move toward perfection. So it goes that that which is not yet fully messianic is imbued with significance. Jewish feminism, where remarkable manifestations of human potentiality are appreciated and where the hope for improvement is never abandoned, expresses a worldview that liberal messianists can and ought to embrace wholeheartedly. For Jewish feminism provides liberal messianism with a theoretical construct that undergirds its persuasive message.

When we speak of messianism, we address deep issues that confront all Jews. The figure of the Messiah—whether straddled upon a white donkey or amorphously assembled from the *sefirot*—conveys the shared view of a particular society. Critical aspects of the Jewish people's self-conception emerge out of its collective messianic ideas, including a vision of the end of history and the role it is meant to play in that end. Acknowledging Jewish feminism—both as a strand of messianism and as a tool for providing an infrastructure to the whole of liberal messianism—is a step toward redefining our history and community in ways that fully acknowledge the female experience—and leads us, perhaps, that much closer to the messianic era. □

ASSASSINATING THE MESSAGE OF PEACE

(Continued from p. 20)

might of the State in providing a safe haven for the persecuted, but on the moral might of a State which recognizes that enjoying the benefits of self-determination is linked up with the recognition of those same rights for others, in this case the Palestinians, this would indeed be authentic independence.

Not only should the fast day not be ignored by the political and religious establishment—the day should be renamed. Few of the present generation know the significance of *Tzom Gedaliah* (the Fast Day of Gedaliah). Many more would understand the contemporary significance of *Tzom Rabin*. The Rabin assassination has raised questions concerning the very core of our societal fabric, of which the peace process is just one. This is the challenge that Yigal Amir, albeit unknowingly, has set us. Judging by the events of one year, we have not yet responded to that challenge, and for as long as we fail to respond we leave the assassin, rather than the assassinated, the victor. □

For the latest on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, visit the following web sites:

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REVIEWS

Al Jolson in Black and White

Paul Buhle and Edward Portnoy

Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot, by Michael Rogin. University of California Press, 1996, 333 pp. $25.

Not many years ago, journalists and self-made scholars, along with ghost writers for the stars, filled the small market for movie books. And any used bookstore habitué knows how greatly appreciated were such occasional gems as Parker Tyler's *Hollywood Hallucination* and Richard Schickel's *The Disney Version.*

But these days, it seems every American devotee of the two late Jacques—Lacan and Derrida—has something complicated to say about film. Many of the books bear interesting theses, fresher, at least, than the hardcover reruns of auteurist pieces by icons like Pauline Kael. Apart from being excessively hard to read, however, the new studies also share some very large faults: Smitten with theory, their authors don't seem to have bothered to watch all that many films, seriously delved into archives, or gotten in touch with the artists and technicians eager to tell their own ("inside") stories.

Michael Rogin is a distinguished political scientist known for his dissection of right-wing rhetoric and his dissing of that noted Indian-killer Andrew Jackson. Several years ago, Rogin wrote an extremely thoughtful essay about the racial themes in four movies central to pre-World War II American cinema: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), the most expensive film-production to date; *Birth Of A Nation* (1915), the classic racist treatment of Southern Reconstruction; *The Jazz Singer* (1927), which broke existing box office records and set the stage for the "talkies"; and, finally, *Gone With The Wind* (1939), the pioneering Technicolor smash which again made millions in a tribute to wronged former slaveowners. Rogin showed effectively how melting-pot "Americanization" submerged ethnicity beneath a monochrome "white" identity, making African-American culture the raw material for their collective fears and aspirations.

The deeper theory that accompanied Rogin's examination of the film narratives was a bit shaky, depending heavily upon Freudian claims such as the displacement of women in American popular culture by implicitly homoerotic non-white males. Rogin concluded that Al Jolson's blackface in *The Jazz Singer* was *the* metaphor governing the Jewish presentation of African-American culture. Never more obviously did an oppressed group make itself over and join the mainstream by refashioning a patently racist spectacle so close to the historical heart of American traditions.

No doubt about it: Some Jews did use the minstrel tradition to popularize and interpret their own heroic upward mobility via entertainment. In the process, not only had historic white/Black relations been hopelessly sentimentalized into long afternoons watching the Robert E. Lee glide by, but music suited for radio commercials hijacked jazz and then displaced it in many venues. Jewish-American culture, to the degree that it accepted these versions of America's heritage, had bought into the system so thoroughly that no amount of subsequent liberal benevolence was likely to reverse the harm. The New Deal and the democratic ambience of the World War II years, followed by Cold War prosperity, at once established the shame of racial inequality (largely thanks to the Left's insistence), and also accelerated the destruction of Black rural life while promoting a massive suburbanization which devastated the newly integrated cities.

This argument makes a good deal of sense. Unfortunately, Rogin stumbles repeatedly in his effort to universalize the thesis—moving, with little narrative coherence, from a study of minstrelsy's successors and the Jewish role therein to a theory of movies in general, Jews and Blacks in general, and the big picture of race in civilization. In making grand claims, he betrays how little he knows about the history of Jews in popular culture.

Rogin insists, for example, that European Jews, unlike Blacks, cleaved to the state for protection against Gentiles and sought assimilation through the avenues of high culture. He thus neglects both the great wave of cultural *Yiddishkeyt* and its political counterpart, the Bund, which together sought something entirely different from either adaptation or gradual reform. He also ignores the very essence of the Yiddishist vernacular sensibility, which gave immigrant Jews a leg up on American popular culture, including the uses (and commercial misuses) of African-American cultural idioms from Irving Berlin's Tin Pan Alley to *The Color Purple.*

In fact, Rogin barely touches on the dense landscape of entertainment and Jewish assimilation in America and Europe. Jewish actors and musicians had been performing for non-Jewish European audiences since the Middle Ages; the theater was the place where Jews could don masks and grasp the possibility of entering Gentile society. This history renders the use of blackface a mere detail, albeit a highly interesting one, in the larger history of Jewish assimilation.

Take the specific Jewish background of *The Jazz Singer.* The cantorial-theatrical connection of the film derived from a famed theatrical plot in Yiddish theater: of the *Vilner Balabesl*—"Little Master of the House" of Vilna—and its protagonist Yoel Dovid Levensteyn-

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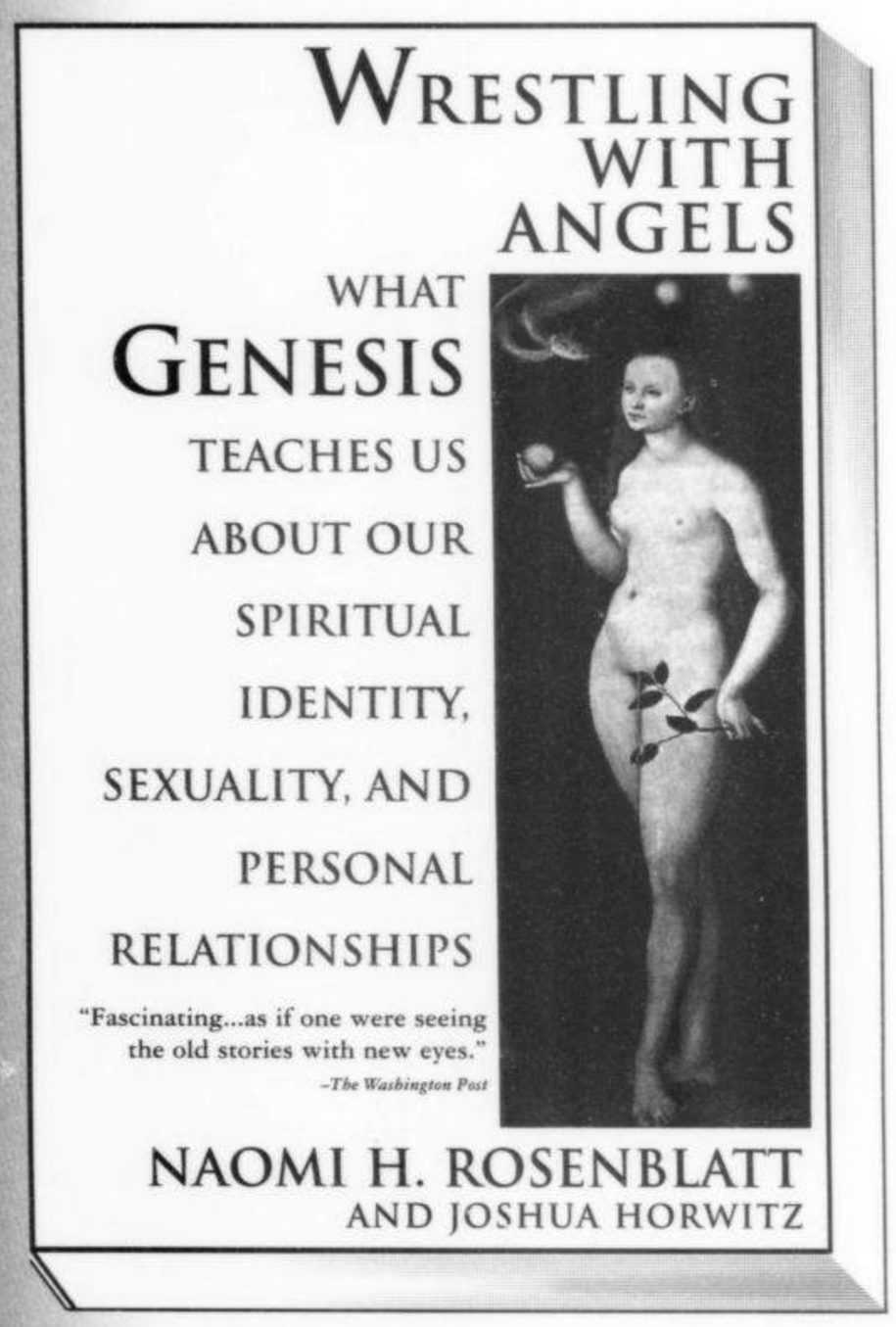
Paul Buhle and Edward Portnoy are collaborating on Guide to Jewish Films on Video.

Strashunsky (Jolson, that is to say, Yoelson, literally inherited the role). Son of Vilna's chief cantor and a musical child prodigy, Yoel's singing ability soon made him a famous figure in the ghetto and beyond. Seduced to leave Vilna and Judaism behind for the Warsaw Opera and Countess Paskewicz, he later recanted, wandered in deep despair, lost his ability to sing, and returned to Vilna to die. On beginning the prayer of contrition, his voice returned and Jews gathered to hear him.

By vivid contrast, the Jolson version has protagonist Jack Robin accepted into show biz without having to put on blackface at all. Not until the end of the film does he, already a Broadway star, daub on the burnt cork. Earlier, clean-shaven of Jewish earlocks, he can be seen adopting "whiteface," i.e., speech and actions totally removed from Jewish culture. Dancing about, snapping his fingers, he looks like a giant puppet, which is essentially what he is: the ideal poster boy for the assimilationist visions of his bosses, an image of American Jewishness with its native culture erased and its spiritual remnants reduced to empty ritual. This hidden story does more to explain the fecklessness of Robin's burlesque blackness than all the Jewish psychological turmoil imaginable.

Rogin has missed other details of crucial significance. Wandering as he does almost constantly from subject to subject, he contrasts the shabby Hollywood treatment of African-American themes with the Yiddish press, which "almost from the moment of its inception" proceeded "to protest the denial of equality to African Americans." Evidence? He offers a literary memoir about the 1920s, nearly forty years after the Yiddish socialist dailies first saw light. Elsewhere, he points to an early project of Yiddish newspaper translation, urged by Abraham Cahan, of an American magazine essay on "Black Cannibalism." Contradiction? Rogin hasn't gathered that Jewish socialists of the reform or moderate variety often supported Empire—notably the Spanish-American War—as a means of bringing civilization to purported backward peoples. But even moderates began to take sympathetic note of racial victimization within the United States during the World War I era, when Black protest movements and heightened fears for European Jewry combined to create strength-

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ened sympathies. It is the interactive or shared element which has the decisive impact upon Jewish filmmakers decades later, as Black actors begin to shed their minstrel roles at last.

Finally, Rogin arrives at the transition era of the 1940s. He lambastes Carl Foreman's anti-racist war film, *Home of the Brave* (1949), as cinematic proof of critic Leslie Fiedler's hypothesis linking Black homosexuality and white literary heroes as the essence of the interracial encounter in popular art (evidence: essay and film "appeared at the same time"). He also suggests, recklessly extending the same hypothesis, that Fiedler was the "uncredited screenwriter" of *Paris Blues*, the 1961 feature directed by Martin Ritt, a blacklist victim whose pathbreaking anti-racist features include *No Down Payment* (1957), *Edge of the City* (1957), *Conrack* (1974), and *Sounder* (1972).

Ritt, a former college football player and ace track handicapper who interacted routinely with Blacks, would turn in his grave to imagine his cinematic achievements attributed to an overblown litcrit. And former carnival barker Foreman would probably recognize in Rogin's jibes just another version of the old communist hard-liners' charge against interracial movies as insufficiently didactic. Left-wing Jewish intellectuals made these films drawing as far as they could from their own experience. But in truth, the Hollywood Left made the films that were possible at the time of their production. Given the opportunity, they were entirely prepared (and urgently desired) to do a hundred times better.

To take cognizance of such subtleties requires a more finely tuned sense of history. There was a lively give-and-take between entertainers and entertainment entrepreneurs, with plenty of Jews and Blacks in the former category and Jews (as well as white Gentiles) in the latter. One also needs to pay closer attention to the hidden history of Left-written popular films—by our count, more than seven hundred—and to the mass of films available to viewers that are haunted with crypto-Jewish imagery.

Aged veterans of the Hollywood Left testify that, until the late 1940s, only musicals and certain films with an anti-fascist theme allowed African Americans anything but a condescending servant role. Within these sharp limits, such films as *Stormy Weather* (1943), and *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), and a handful of odd features like *Underworld Story* (1950) and Edgar Ulmer's underbudgeted Harlem gem, *Moon Over Harlem* (1942) (all written by left-wing Jews and their allies) stand up as portents for better times. Dozens of other contemporary films ignored by Rogin need to be reexamined precisely because of their Jewish/Black content, or their anti-racist treatment of the tangled lives of whites, Mexican-Americans, and Indians.

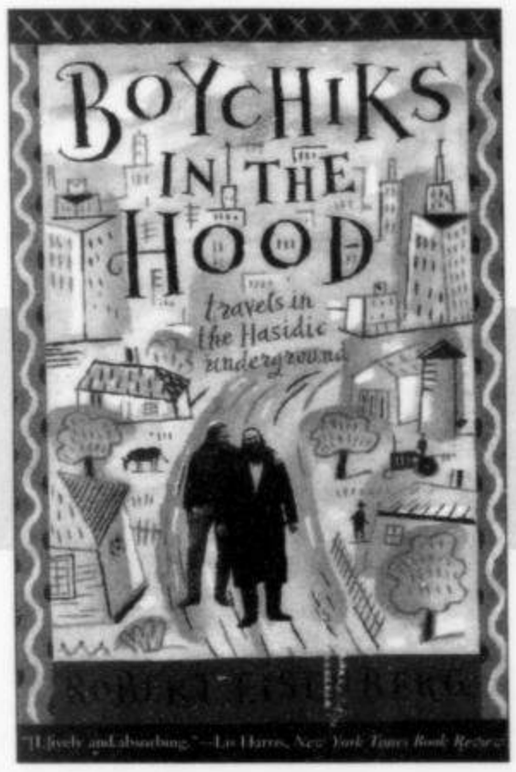
Not much got better, in race terms, for decades to come. Carleton Moss, the scriptwriter for Frank Capra's documentary, *The Negro Soldier* (1943), recalls a studio approaching him a few years later to write a script featuring a tragic mixed-race marriage. What would be tragic about it, he responded. That was the end of his brief career in non-documentaries. Scriptwriter Bernie Gordon similarly recalls trying to get a Black cabdriver character into an early 1950s "B" film and being turned down flat: No matter how realistic, it wouldn't play in the South, the execs told him. Multiplied a thousand times over, this is the most significant "absence" of all.

The 1940s film that Rogin spends his most vigorous effort attacking for its limitations, *Body and Soul* (1948), sets up prizefighter Ben (played by real-life blacklist victim Canada Lee) as the Black martyr, just as Rogin claims. He dies as a result of fighting back against the bosses, so that his friend Charley (John Garfield) will see the light. Short of making Ben the film's real hero—an unmistakable red flag in the Cold War political climate—the death makes Ben the dramatic hinge upon which the film reaches a narrative conclusion. Rogin rains more credible criticism upon *Home of the Brave*, where Black soldier Mossie (said to have been named for Carlton Moss) is overcome by guilt for his apparent elation at seeing a deeply racist fellow-soldier perish. The Army psychologist, played by future blacklistee Jeff Corey, helps him to get past his own racial antagonism.

But if racial suffering has to be redeemed in this limited fashion and in this time, it is surely a thousand times better than being unredeemed. To Rogin, a filmmaker like Michael Roemer, director of *Nothing but a Man* (1964), is a rare figure indeed, in his repudiation of minstrelsy and racial stereotyping. The kindest thing to say is: Rogin is mistaken. Of racial stereotypes in films, many remain (and so do stereo-

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BOYCHIKS IN THE HOOD
BY ROBERT EISENBERG

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typical treatments of Jews, although by no means so circumscribed). But there is lots else to see. *Blackface, White Noise* does not really help us to see it.

Sadly, Rogin has also missed the biggest point of all, one buried deeply in *The Jazz Singer*. The blackface, whatever its damaging effects upon the images of African Americans in popular entertainment, was only one of the methods used to conceal a yiddishe *ponim* (face). In making themselves more palatable in the Gentile world, success-hungry Jews undermined the Jewish capacity to see non-whites as sufferers like themselves, hungering for a redemption which no degree of upward mobility could gratify. But ask Richard Dreyfuss, Barbra Streisand, Mandy Patinkin, Barry Levinson, Judd Hirsch, or a thousand others in all wings of entertainment. That precious element is still not gone—not by a long shot. □

It Takes a Public

Casey Blake

The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism, by Wendy Steiner. University of Chicago Press, 1995. $24.95. 263 pp.

The liberal arts are clearly in trouble. Financial pressures and declining working conditions abound. Begging for money for postage or computer repairs takes its toll; so does scrambling for enrollments, teaching additional courses to poorly prepared students, or looking for a job. And rapid improvement is unlikely for either schools, universities, or museums: The country's bipartisan commitment to fiscal conservatism has seen to that.

At the same time, internal battles over affirmative action or the literary canon erode whatever solidarity might otherwise remain among those who have opted for the teaching, criticism, and exhibition of cultures. Under fire from conservatives as a "cultural elite" and from taxpayers anxious about financial security, those whom leftists once called "cultural workers" have lost the ability to convince their fellow citizens and, sometimes, even themselves that what they do is valuable.

The conservative offensive has caught many cultural professionals by surprise, in large part, because it represents a significant departure from the Right's traditional mode of polemic. After all, conservatives and neo-conservatives initially responded to the New Left's challenge in the 1960s by defending the humanistic functions of the university; then, they spent much of the 1970s and 1980s trying to "reclaim the culture" and resurrect "standards" at the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. Current declarations by William Bennett and others of their loyalty to the "traditional values" of ordinary people mask a lucrative retreat to a parallel network of privately funded think tanks, publications, and foundations. Meanwhile, once-proud universities, public endowments, and museums are left to their own devices in the merciless marketplace.

The assault leaves liberals and leftists reeling. They are correctly suspicious of demands for cultural productions that would meet with approval from a homogeneous community of "normal Americans." But they are also fearful that Bennett and his allies are right when they claim to represent the values of the majority. Surely, the old formalist claims to professional expertise will not do. Witness the infamous obscenity trial of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, whose curators testified to the compositional integrity of Robert Mapplethorpe's disturbing erotic photographs. As art critics argued that Mapplethorpe's self-portrait with a whip inserted in his anus was noteworthy for its classicism, and that a scene of gay men "fisting" showed the photographer's preference for an extremely central image, the icy aestheticism that had reigned in liberal-modernist quarters after World War II was exposed as morally absurd and intellectually bankrupt. Critics on the Left are still fumbling for a replacement. "So where do we turn," asks critic Hommi Babba plaintively, "we who see the limits of liberalism and fear the absolutist demands of fundamentalism?"

Wendy Steiner cites Babba's diagnosis of the left's cultural dilemma in her book, *The Scandal of Pleasure*. What she offers is a brief for liberal culture after liberalism, a call-to-arms for intellectuals whose aesthetic commitments coexist uneasily with a deep-seated political pessimism and distrust of other Americans. Steiner seeks to mark off a space for artistic innovation and tolerance from the naive literalism of her fellow citizens.

In the past, critics like Steiner would have invoked formalist or objectivist criteria to distinguish art and criticism as "scientific" practices. But now she suggests that "liberal experts" can best serve the cause of art by admitting that their interpretations are grounded in a "primal yawp of pleasure" that motivates all artistic activity. "We might indulge in a little aesthetic bliss," she hazards, "secure in the belief that whatever similarities art may have to reality will not determine either us or that reality, and whatever pleasures it provides will hurt no one." Her book is an elegant and lucid testament to the power of the artistic imagination. But it is also an example of how contemporary liberals have privatized aesthetic and moral issues and, in the process, given up hope for a broader public culture.

At first glance, *The Scandal of Pleasure* appears to be a contribution to the literature on the culture wars written from the liberal center, much like Robert Hughes's book, *The Culture of Complaint*, or a plea for reconciliation, reminiscent of the works of sociologist James Davidson Hunter. She waves aside the tautological argument that provocative creators like

Casey Blake is director of the American Studies program at Indiana University. He is currently writing a book on the politics of public art in postwar America.

Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano are legitimate artists because their work is displayed in art museums. Her eloquent case for Mapplethorpe's self-portraits and Sally Mann's erotic photographs of children rests on her own unsettling response of pleasure, curiosity, and moral horror when confronted with works that deliberately mix classicism and eroticism, childlike innocence and adult knowing. Steiner's criticism is humanistic in the best sense of the word, appealing to her fellow inquirers to "add their reactions to the pot" as we try to make sense of challenging works of art.

Like Lionel Trilling half a century ago, Steiner writes with quiet, tactful passion on behalf of an aesthetics of complexity, ambiguity, and moral seriousness. There have been some changes to make Trilling's position "adequate to the times we live in"—the post-colonial migrant has edged out the cosmopolitan intellectual as culture hero; postmodern pastiche occupies the aesthetic space once held by modernist textual difficulty; and Toni Morrison succeeds Jane Austen as an exemplar of hard-won moral insight. But Steiner echoes Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* in reclaiming art as a realm of "virtual reality" that confronts individual complacency and political clichés. She offers her book as a gift to her fellow humanists at a moment of flagging morale, vindicating a "middle way" between philistines on both Right and Left.

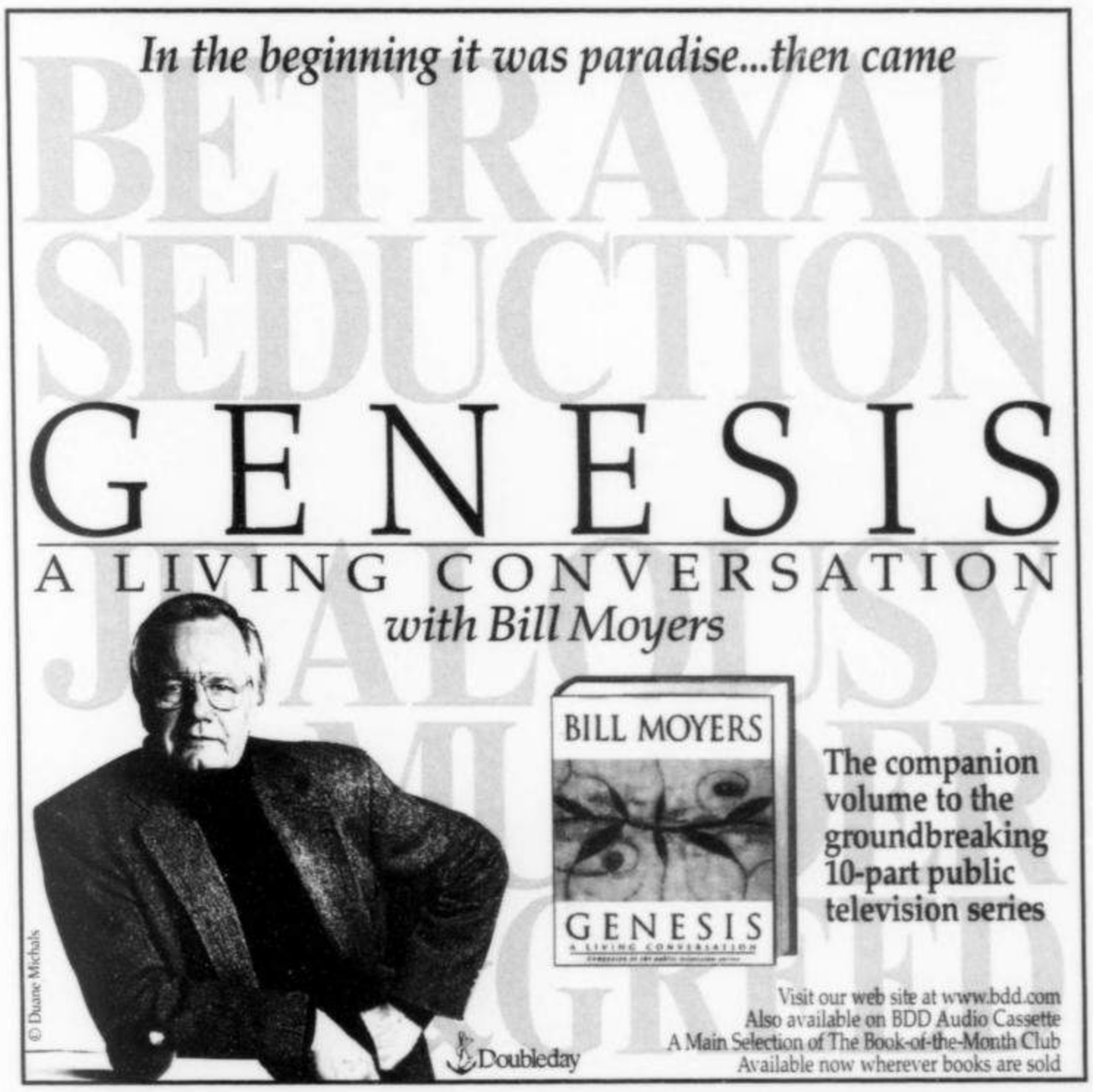
Steiner is at odds with conservative fundamentalists and earnest left-wingers alike who, in her view, regard art and literature as clear windows onto social reality and value criticism solely as an instrument of power. She joins Mapplethorpe and Andy Warhol in admiring creations that evoke erotic, parodic, and spiritual impulses otherwise absent in the landscape of everyday life. Steiner writes, "To engage with an artwork's connection to ideologies—benign or hurtful—and still feel the work's brilliant virtuality: this is aesthetic experience at its fullest. It is this paradox that experts spend their lives exploring, and that they should be equipped to defend."

Unfortunately, while an argument for "the subjectivity of aesthetic response" may boost the morale of her fellow professors, it will never convince other kinds of Americans to rally to the cause of culture. For Steiner, the pleasures of great artworks are always individual ones—perhaps shared in conversation at the museum coffee bar or the graduate seminar, but individual pleasures nonetheless. Steiner is not really interested in addressing an inquiring public. Nowhere does her plea for the aesthetic imagination include any acknowledgment of a collective or public role for the arts.

Such an omission may not matter if, like Steiner, one imagines art as an intimate encounter between the photographer and his or her lone viewer. But it poses a glaring weakness for a social art like architecture or public sculpture or for an institution like a state university or local history museum. What's required in these cases is an argument for culture as a public good that contributes to the lives we live together as citizens.

Steiner is not silent when it comes to the aesthetic and moral views of "the public," but, on this subject, she abandons the nuance and empirical grounding of her discussion of artists and intellectuals. Steiner simply assumes that the public's views are self-evident. "In the popular view," she writes condescendingly, "architects should concentrate on building pleasant buildings" and "professors should devote themselves to making us appreciate and understand beautiful artworks." How does she know this?

Steiner makes no attempt to understand the sources of the popular anger toward academics and cultural administrators. "This book has surveyed the battleground of contemporary culture," she concludes, "a landscape littered with the remains of vilified artworks and discredited orthodoxies, where a resentful and uncomprehending public faces off against experts whose ranks and spirits are broken." The critic never pauses to inquire why the public might feel so alienated. That the crisis of liberal culture is bound up with the collapse of popular support for liberal politics, that antagonism toward upper-middle-class tastes reveals less an ignorant attack on today's avant-garde than a pervasive anger at undemocratic institutions and the growing economic divide between the upper middle class and its social inferiors, that the Right has hijacked this anger and put it to use for its own purposes—such matters seem not to occur to Steiner. Apparently, cultural outsiders do not require the sustained, sympathetic engagement she demands for the likes of Mapplethorpe, Serrano, and Salman Rushdie.



Like so many other commentators on the culture wars, Steiner rounds up the usual suspects—Pat Buchanan, Andrea Dworkin, Dinesh D'Souza, Stanley Fish, etc.—and assumes she has plumbed the depths of contemporary discourse. As the culture-wars loop replays endlessly in lecture halls and television studios, the vast majority of the population is left outside, faces pressed to the glass or turned away—as journalists, professors, and politicians speak in their name. Steiner's brand of liberalism may buoy the spirits of her team in that insular debate, but academics should not be surprised if members of the "uncomprehending public" keep their distance from people who can't be bothered to ask for their opinion. The defense of liberal culture as nothing more than a protected realm of private pleasures threatens to degenerate into special pleading for liberal academics and their class privileges.

Once, the artistic imagination did seek engagement with ordinary Americans. In the first half of this century, Whitmanian impulses inspired two generations of writers and artists. From the Greenwich Village "Little Renaissance" before World War I came both the Armory Show exhibition of modernist art and the Paterson strike pageant, in which immigrant factory workers dramatized their conflict with employers. During the New Deal, the W.P.A. paid muralists to paint post office walls, and folklorists and documentary photographers and writers flourished. Liberals of Trilling's generation accused these projects of being contaminated by Stalinism and corrupted by an easy moralism that drained the art of aesthetic boldness and moral bite. Here, too, Steiner remains Trilling's heir when she dismisses politically motivated art and ignores contemporary experiments in performance and public art that deliberately seek to create opportunities for dialogue and aesthetic collaboration between artists and other Americans. The Whitmanian strain in American culture lives on in the work of muralist Judy Baca, activist artists Suzanne Lacy and Mierle Ukerles, performance artist Anna Deveare Smith, the "Culture in Action" public arts projects in Chicago, and in countless other public interventions.

Granted, not all this art is successful, and some of it betrays the reductionist approach to aesthetics that Steiner brilliantly skewers. But, at their best, the artists involved are groping for a new public place for the arts and a redefinition of the artist's role as citizen. Above all, they approach their audiences in a spirit of humility and genuine curiosity—one that academic critics, curators, and other cultural professionals would do well to emulate as we dig in for the long haul. □

Rites and Wrongs

David Biale

Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism, by Lawrence A. Hoffman. University of Chicago Press, 1996. 256 pp. $16.95.

The last decade has witnessed a surprisingly persistent debate in the field of Jewish Studies—as well as American-Jewish culture in general—over the meaning of and justification for circumcision. Following a philosophical tradition going back to Philo and Maimonides, some see circumcision as a symbol of the subordination of the body's sexual drive to higher spiritual goals, while others decry it as an assault on the defenseless infant. Some consider it a vestige of patriarchal snatching of male children away from the mothers who had just given them birth. Others respond by seeing it as a symbol of the feminizing of Jewish men, representing a cultural alternative to the phallocentrism of the Western traditions. And still others look at it anthropologically, making cross-cultural structural comparisons of the rite as a bodily practice. Without taking a stand on which, if any, of these approaches is "right," it is interesting to speculate on why the debate exists at all.

In Hellenistic times and, again, in nineteenth-century Europe, it certainly made sense for Jews to worry about circumcision, since it was a bodily sign that distinguished them from their non-Jewish neighbors (a peculiar sign of difference, to be sure, since it is found on precisely that part of the body that Jews are forbidden to display in public). But in contemporary America, despite medical advice to the contrary and some decline in the practice, the vast majority of male children, Jewish and non-Jewish, continue to be circumcised. For the first time since the biblical period, when lack of circumcision was cause for notice (of all ancient Israel's neighbors only the Philistines are called "uncircumcised"), male Jews now live in a culture in which at least their genitals do not set them apart.

As Lawrence Hoffman notes in this fine study, one might think that circumcision, as the only remnant of the ancient sacrifices (although one never explicitly mentioned as such), would be the first rite to be jettisoned by those throwing off traditional practices. Yet, regardless of other indifference to Jewish tradition, the vast majority of American Jews, including followers of Reform and secular Jews, persist in circumcising their sons out of a conscious sense of Jewish identification. The opposition to circumcision in the Jewish world today, no matter how vocal, continues to be a tiny minority, often exhibiting the characteristics of a fringe sect.

The relatively recent attention to circumcision must have something to do not with actual changes in Jewish practice, but with a certain anxiety about the meaning of Jewish traditions in the modern world. Many Jews want to insist that Judaism is a this-worldly religion that affirms the body. Circumcision is certainly the quintessential ritual of the body, but how can cutting

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the body be considered an affirmation of it? And, in an era characterized by a heightened consciousness of past exclusion of women in Jewish religious practice, doesn't the desire for an egalitarian Judaism run squarely into the gender discrimination inherent in this particular ritual? Certainly, no one would propose instituting a similar bodily cutting for women; in fact, the recent attention to female genital mutilation raises the uncomfortable question of whether male circumcision shouldn't also be considered a form of mutilation. Jews are, then, caught between continued visceral adherence to circumcision and a host of questions about the practice.

Hoffman is quite right in refusing to dodge this anxiety without taking a polemical position at the outset. His richly textured argument follows the Jewish practice of circumcision from its roots in the biblical nexus between fertility and covenant through its meaning in rabbinic liturgy to the way the ritual evolved in medieval Judaism. Following the original work of Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, Hoffman brings to bear anthropology as a way of interpreting the material. Like Eilberg-Schwartz, he sees the priests in the Bible as responsible for making circumcision a sign of covenant, which it had not been in earlier biblical sources. The priests were concerned with questions of fertility and lineage, especially male lineages, and circumcision served as the symbol of God's blessing of pure male inheritance.

The book focuses on rabbinic literature, particularly the liturgy the rabbis developed at a relatively late date (around the second century) for performing circumcision. Hoffman concludes that the rabbis built upon the earlier priestly materials to construct a "ceremonial celebration of the obligation that binds men to each other in rabbinic culture." Although his study had its origins in a course on the Jewish life-cycle, Hoffman came to the conclusion that rabbinic Judaism does not in fact have rituals of life-cycle, but rather ritualizations of male status. Indeed, in a geonic text (from the period immediately after the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud), the circumcision ritual included a ceremony of adolescent boys washing their hands in a mixture of the blood and water. In this way, the rite, which in other cultures typically marks puberty, came to have puberty associations for Jews as well.

While the Bible doesn't emphasize the blood generated in the circumcision rite, the rabbis saw the blood of circumcision as having special redemptive power, which Hoffman believes meant this-worldly salvation, such as from ill health or bad fortune. The belief in the redemptive potency of blood immediately suggests Christian theology, and Hoffman argues fruitfully that the rabbis' understanding of circumcision may have developed in the same cultural context as the rise of Christianity. Circumcision was, then, a rabbinic ritual with redemptive power for male Jews, marking their status as members of the covenant.

The fact that no similar ceremonies exist for women, either at birth or later in life, suggests that women only have access to the covenant through men; they are not covenantal Jews in their own right. The covenant is between men and God because men are assumed by the rabbis to represent the principle of control, while women represent lack of control. This distinction is symbolized by the different rabbinic valuation placed on male and female blood: The redemptive blood of circumcision is blood released in a controlled way, as opposed to the defiling blood of menstruation, which cannot be controlled. For the rabbis, men represent the control inherent in culture, women the lack of control inherent in nature.

If the rabbis were overwhelmingly male-oriented, this does not mean that circumcision in popular or public culture always meant what the "official" culture took it to mean. In fact, women often played central roles in the circumcision rituals in the rabbinic period and up to the High Middle Ages. In some cases, the mother actually held the child on her knees during the ceremony, a role later supplanted by the *sandak*, a person who fulfills a function similar to the Christian godfather.

Despite the rabbis' view of the ritual, women might have given it other meanings, perhaps more closely connected to their own experience as mothers. It is this counter-tradition which perhaps opens the door to a contemporary re-visioning of circumcision. If "official" Jewish culture gave it a patriarchal interpretation and eventually excluded women entirely from the ritual, the fact that women may have at one time understood circumcision differently might make it possible to invest it with new meanings today by fashioning new liturgies and parallel covenantal ceremonies for female children.

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In his epilogue on circumcision in contemporary American culture, Hoffman relates that although he finished his study in 1987, he nearly erased it from his computer and then took almost a decade to publish it. He freely admits that this delay reflects his own ambivalence about his conclusions: What he found supports the most devastating feminist criticisms of the rabbinic tradition, yet like so many others, he cannot bring himself to reject circumcision altogether. His ambivalence may, in fact, be more relevant to most of his readers than either a polemical defense or critique of circumcision, for the most interesting mystery is why the desire to perform circumcision remains stronger than all the arguments against it. Religions famously abhor vacuums of uncertainty, but the contradictions and ambivalences over circumcision are perhaps more indicative of the dynamic nature of modern Judaism than are the dogmas of extremists.

Hoffman's ambivalence seems to me more vital and intellectually honest than either a polemical defense or critique of circumcision. The most intriguing question that arises out of this debate is why the desire to perpetuate ritual circumcision remains stronger than all the rational arguments against it. Why is it that a secular Jew like myself, who regards most of the commandments of Judaism as antiquated and lacking compelling force, could hardly imagine not having his son circumcised? The answer, I believe, is that the motivation for circumcision somehow resides beyond religion, in the even more primal realm of collective memory. Despite its oddity as a sign of difference placed on an "invisible" site of the body, circumcision stands for the Jews' primordial struggle to define themselves and to resist the attempts of others to efface that definition. As such, it touches on the deepest recesses of identity. Yet, because Jewish identity in the modern world can only be conflicted and contested, circumcision also awakens the most profound ambivalences about what it means to be a Jew. □

An Environmental Ritual

(Continued from p. 45)

Participation in recycling is, in addition to its more literal purposes, a ritual of environmental belief. It is all the more valuable for being one of the few rituals that is shared widely throughout an increasingly fragmented society. Rituals at worst become empty forms, at best renew our dedication to a much greater common purpose; recycling as ritual of environmental commitment is no different in this regard.

A narrow, market-oriented critique of recycling is being heard with increasing frequency. The Milo Minderbinders of the world have concluded that recycling cannot make an immediate profit, and are ready to abandon it and move on. Yet the fundamental reason to reject the free-market critique is that neither the motivation for recycling nor the environmental benefits it provides can be measured in dollars and cents. As the philosopher Mark Sagoff has observed, the things we value most, such as love, religion, and preservation of our natural and cultural heritage, have a dignity rather than a price. Recycling is one small but valuable step toward a more dignified future. □

Deficits Do Matter

(Continued from p. 30)

caused by our fiscal folly. The budget deficit has caused the export of millions of jobs.

The bipartisan Concord Coalition economic study concludes that the deficits of the last twenty years are costing the average American family $15,500 in lost annual income. The General Accounting Office study says that the gain in income for families, if the budget is balanced, will be 26 percent annually at the end of an eighteen-year period. These are not small numbers, even if you were to cut them in half.

It is interesting to note that if the United States were a member of the European Union, which soon hopes to launch the Euro currency, we would be ineligible for participation because of our huge debt relative to national income.

Adam Smith wrote about it in 1776 in his *Wealth of Nations*: "When national debts have once been accumulated to a certain degree, there is scarce … a single instance of their having been fairly and completely paid. The liberation of the public revenue … has always been brought about by a bankruptcy … of the denomination of the coin."

As more and more debt is piled up, the servicing of the debt becomes a greater and greater problem, and eventually the printing presses start rolling with more and more money. Economists call it monetizing the debt. Long-term projections make it clear that we are headed in that direction unless we alter our path. That brings with it economic chaos and frequently political chaos.

I am leaving the Senate in January, and I suppose I could just wash my hands of the whole thing, suggesting that I have done my duty. But I cannot wash my hands of my grandchildren and their future: I write this for them. □

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THE USES OF FORGETTING

(Continued from p. 15)

is the obscure Fast of Gedaliah, which falls during the Ten Days of Repentance and commemorates a Babylonian-appointed Jewish governor of Judea who was assassinated by a fellow Jew.

The rabbinical saying that "baseless hatred" was responsible for the fall of the Second Temple is better known, but its true meaning is not. The antidote is not the "baseless love" that some people are preaching, which consists of little more than platitudes about the need for unity, tolerance, and mutual understanding. This sort of "unity" is designed to play into the hands of those who have no use for tolerance, or for democracy and its compromises.

It was not lack of tolerance that was the downfall of the Jewish people in the first and second centuries, but the unchecked growth of fanatical apocalypticism. A minority of religious and political extremists known to history as the Zealots brought on the disastrous Great Revolt against Rome. A similarly cocksure minority caused the near-extinction of the Jewish community in Palestine in the Bar-Kochba rebellion sixty years later. The creation of a Jewish state in modern times has brought out this latent strain of apocalypticism, and once again we have in our midst Jewish fanatics who are possessed of dangerous illusions about the will of God and the extent of Jewish power. If the sane majority fails to confront them, we will suffer the same fate as our ancestors.

But no such catharsis is possible as long as we live in a state of deliberate denial and forgetting. "Is it true that a nation cannot cross a desert of organized forgetting?" Milan Kundera once asked about his homeland. If anyone should realize this, it is the Jews of Israel: A nation that turns its back on its past is a nation that has forfeited its future. □

MOMENT BY MOMENT

(Continued from p. 37)

come from many sectors of our population:

•Ecologists show us the interconnectedness of habitats and species worldwide. They remind us that careful, local eco-practices actually benefit people around the world.

•The teachings of many religious and spiritual groups already include ethical frameworks for a caring world. As other forces emphasize the importance of working toward this kind of civilization, many religious and spiritual communities are offering their support.

•Community groups around the world are starting to recognize that many of their problems are generated by economic globalization, as the quest for greater profits leads many major corporations to deplete the resources of, and sometimes pull out of, local communities, without regard to the resulting destructive social, environmental, and economic effects. These groups are helping to make people aware that the values of the competitive marketplace, as they exist now, are not necessarily beneficial to society.

•Women's groups worldwide see not only patriarchal and racial intolerance, but war, poverty, overpopulation, environmental pollution, and the lack of adequate health care as contributing factors to the undermining of families. Their influence is an integral part of building a caring world.

•Human-rights groups focus our attention on the clearest violations of the idea that each person deserves to be respected and valued, no matter what his or her ethnic, religious, economic, national, or other group.

•Organizations, such as the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, that combine the ideas of all these groups, are going beyond the quest for economic and other rights for specific sectors of the population. They understand that only by addressing *all* people's core caring needs (not just their material deprivation) can the sources of poverty, pain, and conflict be minimized.

The more these ideas become part of our collective consciousness, the more you and I will be able to have *moments* that enrich our lives.

...lightness, security, contentment, happiness, awe, love, trust, wonder... □

AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

(Continued from p. 40)

prose—a charge I often make against TIKKUN itself—does not awaken the vision. You need sensate images, rich language, aesthetic sensitivity. Moral suasion touches guilt, but not the deeper desire for loveliness and grace. Ethics without aesthetics will not hold us for long. We get earnest, driven, obstinate, and eventually ugly.

I'm suggesting that all our ethical concerns for justice and fairness, for decency, require as well an aesthetic vision, such as images of the biblical and classical ideals of Jerusalem, the city on the hill, Zion, the restoration of the Temple, the image of Athens and its

Acropolis, the cities of the Renaissance like Florence and Venice, images of Paradise, of Eden. America itself was such a vision of harmonious beauty—the Peaceable Kingdom. Those great aesthetic images are behind the American Dream.

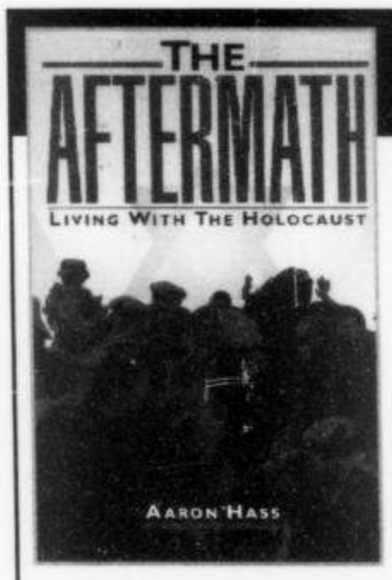
A tyrant may build beautiful oases and pleasure domes; beauty is no guarantee against tyranny. Aesthetics does not replace the ethical. But aesthetics must give ethics sensate images that direct our longings toward ideals, a vision to contemplate, and seduce it toward it.

How does your own particular aesthetic response connect with the cosmos? To begin with, *kosmos* is originally an aesthetic term; it does not mean vast and empty outer space through which cosmonauts senselessly fly at great cost. It meant the right placement of things, fittingly, becomingly, nicely. *Kosmos* was used especially of women with respect to their embellishments. And this meaning continues in our word " cosmetics," which owing to our disparagement of the aesthetic, we see only as superficial, as in "cosmetic surgery." As makeup, false front. Whereas *cosmos* means that all things are on display, show themselves, and are presented to the senses which respond to them with feelings of like and dislike, approval and disapproval, and with a varied and differentiated judgment of their value. Thus your aesthetic responses are cosmological, not merely personal. They are signs that you are here and taking part in the entire world order, which is from the beginning set out as a pleasing aesthetic display. The world is first of all an aesthetic phenomenon—this is so hard to realize—before it is mathematical, logical, or theological. So the most basic reaction to being in the world is aesthetic. That word, *aisthesis*, goes back to a root that means "I breathe in," like sucking in the breath when struck by beauty or horror. Our aesthetic responses are inherently related to the actual world and to the primary way that we take part in it. To suppress these responses is to cop out of the political, that is, out of the common, shared world.

My final point is that ethics alone is not enough to make a change in the world. Alone, ethics without aesthetics doesn't hold. For instance, the environment: We're not motivated to fight for it simply because we ought to. Of course we are ethically responsible for our patterns of consumption, and we are guilty because of consumerism. Nor are we motivated solely by high principles of Gaia, and deep ecology, and future generations, making amends, atoning, sacrificing. The motivation must come from *below* the superego, from the id of desire. We must first be moved by beauty. For then, love is aroused. When you love something, then you want it near, not to be harmed. Then you are a little blind to its faults and risks—no question of cost-effectiveness, of balance sheets, of worth assessment.

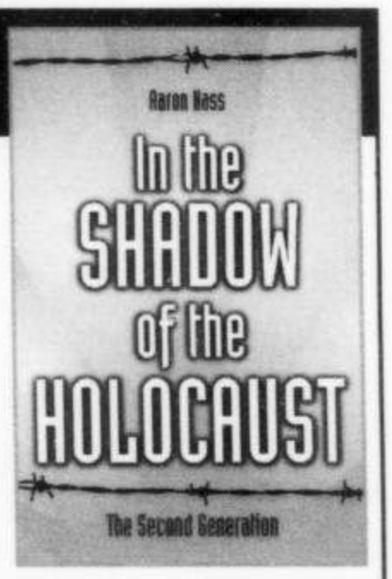
What evokes love? As has been said in many places in many ages and felt by any one of us, it's beauty. An aesthetic perception draws forth our ethical care. First awaken aesthesis, breathe in the beauty of the cosmos—the meticulous crawl of an insect, the heave of the frosted earth as winter yields its grip, observe the composite complexity of an ordinary stone, the eddies in the sand as the tide recedes, or hear the early morning bird call. Beauty astounds and pulls the heart's focus toward the object, out of ourselves, out of this human-centered insanity, toward wanting to keep the cosmos there for another spring and another morning. This is the ecological emotion, and it is aesthetic and political at once. □

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DEMOCRACY

(Continued from p. 27)

on personal financial resources.

•Create a process for recall if a specified number of people who have voted for the leadership sign a petition asking for recall.

•Pay elected leaders for their participation, in order to promote the increased involvement of middle- and working-class men and women in leadership roles.

•Choose executives of Jewish federations and community centers through democratic elections.

•Set up substantive requirements for holding Jewish leadership positions, such as requiring several hours of Jewish study each week.

I don't necessarily agree with each of these proposals (in some cases, I support the objective but question the practicality of the specific strategy), but all point us in the right direction: the democratization of the Jewish community, opening its leadership to all. Each of the proposals is worthy of discussion and consideration.

What would be the effect of this infusion of democracy and democratic process into American Jewish life? The professionals and others vehemently opposed to any change in the status quo undoubtedly will *geschrai* doom: "The wealthy will stop contributing if they no longer automatically receive the leadership posts. They will drop out and our income stream will dry up."

This could happen. But I have enough faith in the Jewish commitment of our wealthiest American Jews to believe that it won't. Wealthy Americans may not control the decisions of our political parties, but they provide plentiful financial support to them. (And, yes, they wield much behind-the-scenes influence, which no doubt also would hold true in democratically run Jewish organizations.)

"It would bring chaos. They'll elect some poorly qualified novices as the presidents of our organizations and we, the professionals, will be left to pick up the pieces."

This is always a danger. But the same danger exists in American political life and it seldom comes to fruition. It's a risk that goes with democracy. In a democratic system, the people will occasionally go wrong or be led astray, but most of their decisions will be wise and good ones.

Is there a shortage of qualified, committed Jewish leaders who can bring dynamism and fresh ideas to the American Jewish community? Would the democracy that I propose quickly expose such a shortage? I think the leaders are out there now, and Jewish movements for spiritual and educational renewal are already helping to develop new leaders among us. They must, however, be given the chance to lead. To disqualify them for lack of great wealth, or to have them shackled by professionals who "know better" would keep us in the same undemocratic morass in which we have been stuck for decades.

American Jews must apply their belief in democracy as a governing system to their own community. If we truly believe in democracy, why do we not apply it to our own Jewish organizations? Let us open American Jewish life to the fresh air of democracy. Let us empty the guarded rooms, populated by small groups of self-appointed, self-perpetuating leaders, and throw open the doors to everyone. The fate of the American Jewish community may well depend on our willingness to do so. □

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Spaces in the New Year

(Continued from p. 32)

alarmingly sexual about the child's shapely bare legs and narrow feet with red polished toe nails. Carole has an impulse to ask who is older, even by minutes. She wonders if girls still turn in their early natural lead and enter adulthood unformed, like salamanders. Her own late metamorphosis had shocked everyone. Not bored by marriage or motherhood, but by herself, she seemed to slip unaware into a new skin that she can never again wiggle out of.

The dog, whose name eludes her, lies on his side occasionally twitching. Carole steps over him on the way to the kitchen. When she comes back with the wooden board of brie, Canadian cheddar, and Carr's table water wafers, prepared earlier for Reale and herself, the dog wakes up and shakes.

"Don't give Metro any," Toby cautions. She is perched on the edge of the Breuer chair, almond-eyed and elegant with a haughty-necked Modigliani head. Unusual in a seven-year-old, Carole thinks, setting the tray on the bed. But of course it's been years since she has seen a seven-year-old. Her youngest, Bruce, is now twenty-two. A graduate of M.I.T. with a degree in biochemistry, he grows hay in Buda, Texas. Debbie, twenty-six, with an M.F.A. in poetry and half a Ph.D. in psychology, is waiting tables in Cambridge. But Carole actually supports this kind of career derailing; her children have noted that their mother seems partial to impractical decisions, jobs that don't make money, trashed tradition. With a taste for crudeness no one ever suspected, least of all Carole, she bought Julian Schnabel before his violence became celebrated. "Why can't Metro have people food?" she asks Toby.

"Our mother's very strict," Toby says, "because Jim Bean died of congestive heart failure, and she blames that on the high-fat diet my father fed him."

"Jim Bean was a golden," Shirley says. "He was my sister Trish's dog." Sitting down with his papery legs folded under, he helps himself to a cracker. Before Carole has a chance to ask where Trish is this New Year's Eve, he volunteers, "Dad's strict too. Like we're not allowed to disturb him and Holly before nine on weekend mornings."

Holly, Lisa's best friend in high school, was first in the crowd to be married and first divorced. Three months ago she married again, Phil Eastman—Phil's divorce had become final the week before the wedding. Lisa, in describing the ceremony, said, "We were all crying like it was a funeral." When Carole asked why, Lisa said, "Phil looks like Barney Frank. He got married in a gray suit. Oddly, Carole had understood what she meant. As if it were the kiss of death, she asked, "Does he part his hair?"

"Promise you'll say no if you don't want to do this," Lisa had said sternly on the phone, late afternoon. Carole is familiar with the double bind: Lisa would demand what she wanted, while insisting on Carole's right to refuse. Carole hoped it was money.

"Phil Eastman, Holly's husband, just called," Lisa went on to say. "Holly's gone into labor. She's having intermittent contractions. Phil wanted to bring the twins over here. I told him we were going to a neighborhood party, and if it turned out he needed us, we'd come home immediately. Phil started to yell that I had promised Holly we'd be back-up for the twins; and if Holly had to go in a hurry, he couldn't start transporting two seven-year-olds and a dog in the middle—"

"There's generally a very long labor with the first."

"I know, Mom," Lisa said patiently. "But it's sixteen years since Phil's first baby, and he's hyper. I'm asking you, if you don't have other plans, could you take the twins?"

As yet, Carole's mind seemed unable to make the connection between Phil Eastman's imminent baby and herself. "How about Holly's mother?"

"Holly is not talking to her mother," Lisa said. "Holly is having a big fight with her mother. This is the first grandchild, and Miriam is throwing a New Year's Eve party for thirty people. She won't call it off and she won't take the twins. The bitch is incredibly selfish. Holly hates her."

Carole will never forget how her children hated her. How they individually fell apart, as if to punish her for falling in love. But that hadn't stopped her, and now their mother's hushed-up indiscretion had apparently become part of their colorful family lore—something to boast of. They did all survive, Carole has to occasionally remind herself. Even Allen (who had seemed at the time the most blameless and worst injured) got married again. To a far better doctor's wife, Carole admits without prejudice. I did him a favor.

It had occurred to her then to ask Lisa, "Well, what about the twins' mother? Can't she sit?"

"Janice is at the Cape for New Year's," Lisa told Carole. "Look at it this way, Mom. Her husband impregnated a younger woman, Holly, then left to marry her. How would you feel? Why should Janet buy into that crap and baby-sit when she's got other plans?"

"But they're *her* children!"

"My sister Trish went skiing," Shirley informs Carole, "which is what I'm going to do when I get older. "Once I went water skiing." On the bed, he assumes the flexed-kneed, arms-extended pose. "You know how the waves stand up on both sides of the—?"

"Wake," Toby fills in.

"This nut was going to cut right across the ropes. Oh-oh, I said to myself, this is it. And like my knees started to shake. But Dick yells out a swear and the last minute the guy swerves—"

"You know what Dick yelled?" Toby interrogates

Carole, wise-eyed. Carole shakes her head. The girl twin lowers her lids. "Dick called him a certain opening that people have on their tushes." Toby's eyes boldly meet Carole's. "It begins with an 'a'. And sometimes Dick says another word," she adds, "that is also a swear. Beginning with 'f.'"

"You get it?" Shirley checks.

"I think so," says Carole. "Who's Dick?"

"My mother's boyfriend," they say together.

A new year is beginning, and Carole is certainly more "with it" than when she had put her engagement ring in hock and bought a Roy Lichtenstein. At the same time, she committed adultery and added the 'e' to Carol. She ceased being the doctor's wife; her mirror had been deceiving her, she discovered. The woman inside needed to be differently represented. Carole severely clipped the smooth, blondish hair, let it go dark. An arresting face with rather startled eyes emerged. The waifishly thin body could confidently carry high-priced Italian clothing. Allen had objected at first, saying that her pale eyes and white skin belonged to a blond. But when she started using black kohl her eyes evidently looked more icy than pale, and he stopped complaining.

Reale had immediately approved. After the transformation was complete, he told Carole that she looked Miesian, and that he'd no idea, until she'd stripped away the walls and exposed the bare struts, how much Venetian palazzo was concealed behind that disciplined surface. She had needed only repair and refurbishing, he said, to convert her into a pleasure palace.

That's the way Reale talks. He is a designer of spaces, six years younger than Carole. Intense, handsome, very sure of what he likes. Allen had hired his architectural firm, Intraspace, to remodel their ranch house. In the summer and fall the rooms fell apart, and a year later there had appeared, as if fallen from outer space an angular, three-story living structure resembling, some said, an upended space ship. Allen never quite got used to sleeping in the metal-clad cylinder below ground, which had a view of the sky through the roof. For two years, every morning Carole had watched him walk into the closet where the bathroom had been, to pee.

At the airport, Reale collects his soft leather carry-on from the security conveyor. He is tall and light-boned, with subtly shaggy hair and an austere, clean-shaven face. His fitted overcoat of a camel color shapes to the breadth of his shoulders and back.

Now he stands looking out the waiting-room window at the frozen, moonlit ground. Men in buckets sail above the fish-shape of the jetliner, spraying de-icing chemicals from hoses. The white ground foams orange. Reale feels uneasy. Why can't he put aside the image he sees in the glass? The wavy outline of a piquant face that could be a child's. Through some trick of light, the eyes look as if they're burning.

She'll get over it, he thinks, giving himself a shake. She's gotten over it already, he asserts silently; every project has its limitations. So now, instead of dwelling on what he doesn't want to see, Reale conjures in the blank shining pane the picture of Carole's face squeezed tight in ecstasy, ecstasy that so removes her from earth for the moments it lasts, it is like a transfiguration. Reale is moved to feel that he has sometimes done this for her. Why had she later spoiled it? he asks himself. Showing him something she knew she ought to conceal, something not part of their bargain.

They'd been sitting at the round glass dining table sharing an *apres sex* omelet they'd made of peppers, mushrooms, and cheddar. One of Reale's hands cupped Carole's smooth warm thigh, exposed in the parting of her robe. An orange winter sun glowed in the clerestory windows, admitting bands of light that splayed fan-like across the walls resulting, Reale was thinking, in the balance of shelter and release, solidity and void. The airy quality of the house was offset by a reassuring sense of its being secure in space. Reale could tell by the movement of shadow that it must be past four o'clock. Getting up, he fetched the bottle of Dom Perignon he'd put in the refrigerator.

"Let's not open it yet," Carole stopped him. "Let's save it for midnight."

Reale leaned above her upturned face. "I have to go, I've a plane to catch for Milan."

She seemed not to understand. "Tomorrow?"

Reale shook his head. "I wish I could delay it. But there's a press party New Year's Day."

"Can't somebody else—?"

"I'm afraid not, darling. It'll be a bore—bankers and politicians and socialites. You know the group. I absolutely abhor that aspect of my work."

It's true! he swears to himself at the airport. It was *he* who needed consoling. It was *his* disappointment as much as hers. "Don't be sad," he'd said then. "What's important is the day we've had. There's too much sentiment attached to New Year's Eve, don't you think?" The cork shot out with barely any pop. He poured and sat down, wondering if the danger of her crying had passed. Raising his glass, he said, "Let's toast to the rest of our lives."

He had almost said, "loving each other for the rest of our lives." He had almost said, 'spending New Years together for the rest of our lives'. To spare her any more misery, Reale had almost said things he wasn't sure of. But their first and only obligation to each other, they'd long ago resolved, was honesty.

He touched his glass to hers. It was then he saw that

she was frightened. Something unspoken, unacknowledged—unrealized perhaps until that moment, had occurred to her. Her blue eyes suddenly looked terribly strained; the lids and sockets had become wine-colored.

Seeing him looking at her, Carole smiled. "To the rest of our lives."

Half-way down the ramp to the plane, Reale has an unaccountable urge to turn around. It comes to him that what he had seen in Carole's eyes was defenselessness, as if she'd visualized herself at the doorway to the rest of her life, and she didn't want to step through. Taking his first-class seat, Reale readjusts the angle of his vision. No, she's not defenseless, he thinks. Carole had seen that she couldn't stay in the same place. She had looked at what was out there and stepped forward as she'd done before; she'd fallen free. Settling back, Reale closes his eyes, wondering if the time had come to break off. While the structure is still sound, while the damage can be borne. Carole is a survivor, that's what he loves in her.

At eleven-thirty, the twins are watching a rerun of "Leave it to Beaver." The potato chips and the onion dip are gone; they left the popcorn. Carole clears the food and says goodnight. Leaning over to kiss them, she feels reluctant to seem too emotional, and instead kisses air.

From bed, three levels below, she can hear the predictable rhythms of dialogue and instantaneous bursts of canned laughter. Her memory also seems to be wending down and settles on the peaceful sight of her own children sitting on the den floor—when there were rooms in this house, and when, day after day, none of them ever questioned their safety in the glow of the flickering black and white Zenith. There had seemed then an endless security. Life was like a whole bolt of cloth unfolding.

Tonight's episode, she makes out, has Beaver and Wally bickering over whether Wally ought to confess to borrowing a necktie of their father's. "You took it without asking?" Carole hears Beaver whine. "He'll never know it's gone," says Wally. "He has another one." Laughter. Carole wonders how the twins can possibly make sense of it. Yet, in what seems now another lifetime, these same concerns appeared to her to mirror reality. Has reality changed or her conception of it? Carole's in the process of deciding when she sees the figure in the archway of her room, dwarfed in the faint grid of light. Carole sits up and touches a button on the night table. The black swinging rod with its tiny brushed aluminum shade casts a cone of white. "What is it, Shirley?"

"We can't sleep," he says.

Behind him, a taller shadow says, "We're hungry."

Upstairs, Carole opens the refrigerator door. "An English muffin?" Both heads shake. "I could make you an omelet," she offers in a unwilling voice. "If you're hungry enough."

"I never eat eggs," Toby tells her.

"Me neither."

They look troubled and shy; it doesn't seem to be food they're hungry for. "Are you nervous," Carole asks, "about Holly's baby?"

"No," Toby says,

"Yeah," Shirley says: together.

Then Shirley says, "I hope it will be a boy," and Toby says, "I don't care what it is, as long as it's healthy."

"You do so care," Shirley reminds his sister. "You told me you wanted a girl."

"I don't care now."

"Neither do I."

Without offering any more choices, Carole puts three glasses of milk, the box of Ritz crackers, and the peanut butter and jelly jars on a tray, and starts up to the loft. Behind her, the twins rattle the silverware.

Here, the television set is playing, the volume at a murmur. Times Square looks like a scene inside a glass paperweight. The camera pans over the bundled bodies. Leaping up on the futon, Shirley tugs the cord to raise the high window blind. Half the dark sky becomes available to their gaze. It is very black and quiet with a full moon. No stars. An airplane cruising overhead, wing tips flashing, passes from view.

Toby complains, "Why'd you raise the blind, Shirley? I want to sleep late."

Shirley says, "Like this we'll be able to see Dad when he comes to get us."

Toby seems content with that, and she joins Shirley, sitting beside him on the mattress sprinkled with light. Carole steps up, too. She settles in line, legs crossed like the other two, and sets the tray down in front of them. The dog curls up. Carole unscrews the jars and puts a swipe of peanut butter and a daub of grape jelly on a Ritz, and hands it to Toby, then she fixes two more for Shirley and herself. The twins munch slowly, their bodies silver-washed. In Times Square, the camera is moving away from the crowd, and the upturned faces get smaller and smaller, until they are little rounds of some unidentifiable species, looking up, pointing.

And watching them, Carole thinks of the brave souls who have walked outside a space capsule, tumbling about, lighter than air. What happens to them, she wonders, if those in charge lose track? What if the risk-takers have gone on a dangerous mission trusting in rescue, and they become untethered? What if they are never sent for?

The ball falls, and instinctively, Carole edges closer to the kids. □

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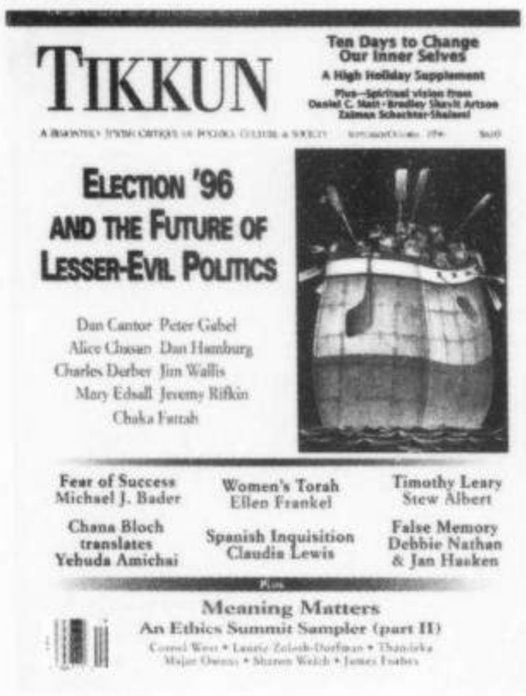
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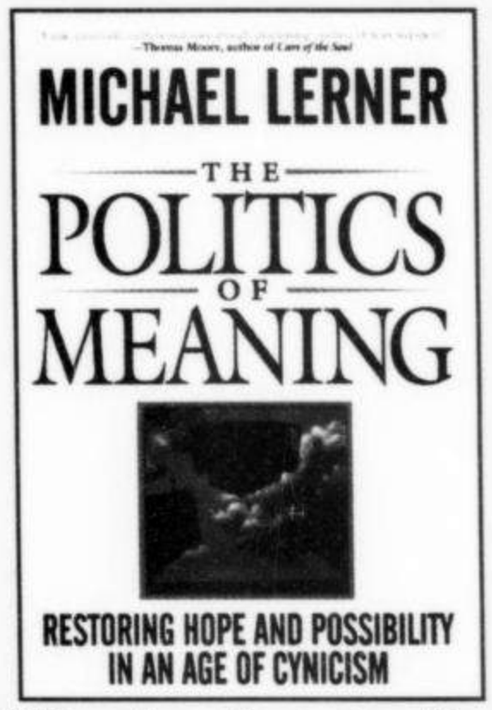
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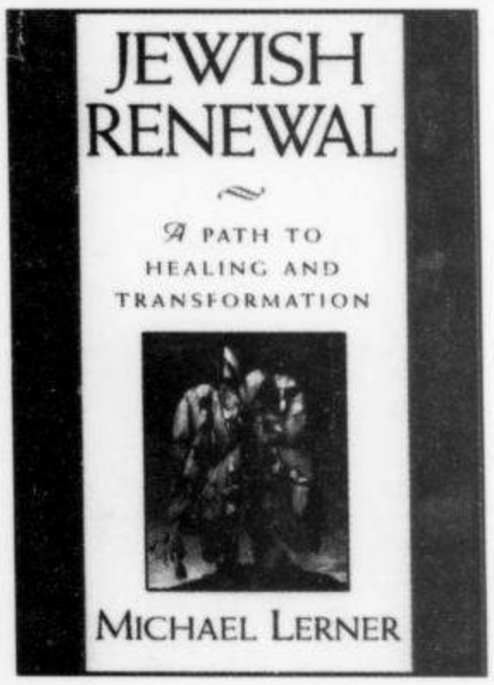
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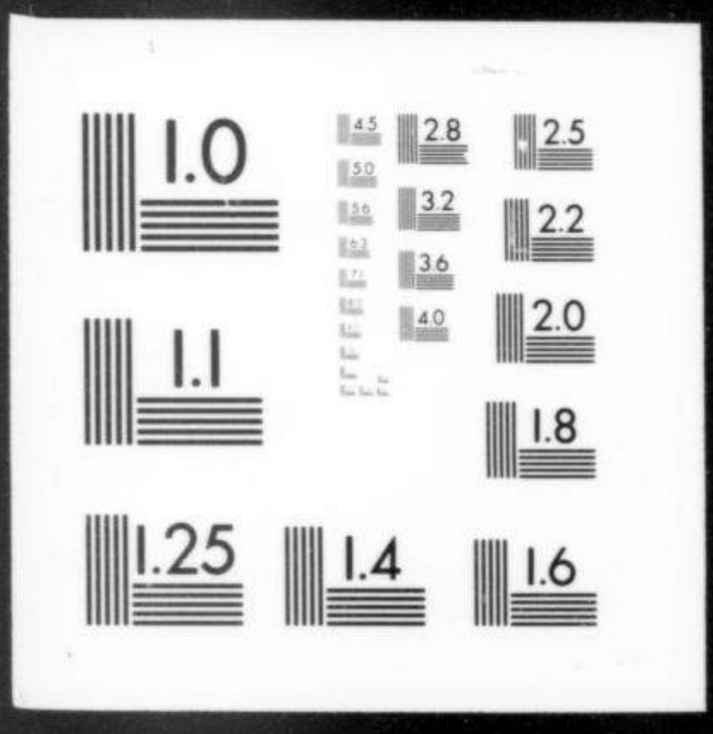
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