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TIKKUN

SEXUAL PASSION - MICHAEL BADER

WHY THE LEFT FAILED - PETER GABEL

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1998 $6.00



Israel AT Fifty

A Compassionately Critical Analysis

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AHARON APPELFELD
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CRIMINAL JUSTICE
David Dolinko & Fleet Maull

PASSOVER SUPPLEMENT
Karen van Hoek & David Biale

EVANGELICAL WOMEN
Marie Griffith

ZEN OF EATING
Ronna Kabatznick

STREET RETREATS
Bernie Glassman

PETE HAMILL
Interview with Jack Newfield

PLUS: Clinton, Sex & the Decline of Public Space
Latin America's Rural Poor

The Jewish Time Bomb

On my desk there's a stone with AMEN carved on it, one survivor fragment
of the thousands upon thousands of bits of broken tombstones
in Jewish graveyards. I know all these broken bits
now fill the great Jewish time bomb
along with the other fragments and shrapnel, broken Tablets of the Law
broken altars broken crosses rusty crucifixion nails
broken houseware and holyware and broken bones
eyeglasses shoes prostheses false teeth
and empty tin cans of lethal poison. All these
fill the Jewish time bomb till the End of Days.
And though I know all about these, and all about the End of Days,
this stone on my desk gives me peace.
It is the touchstone no one touches, more philosophical
than any philosopher's stone, broken stone from a broken tomb
more whole than any wholeness,
a stone of witness to what has always been
and what will always be, a stone of amen and love.
Amen, amen, and may it come to pass.

—Yehuda Amichai
translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 13 NUMBER 2



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Letters to the Editor

Promise Keepers

To the Editor:

That TIKKUN would choose to give even a drop of credence or support to the Promise Keepers is outrageous. To say, as does the November/December editorial, "Most men who have been attracted to the Promise Keepers and other right-wing-connected Evangelical movements have not come into that context because of the politics, but because of their own hunger for meaning and community," assumes too much about the motivation of those who join and gives this reactionary movement a benefit of the doubt which it most definitely does not deserve. It additionally suggests that it is possible to separate the politics of the Promise Keepers from the kind of community it offers and seems to excuse its members' participation based on assumptions about their motivation for joining.

Perhaps its members' interest does stem from a hunger for community and meaning, or perhaps they're attracted to the homophobia and sexism its leaders espouse. Or perhaps they join to validate their own lack of respect for all religions not Christian.

Either way, attempting to divorce the organization's intolerance and narrow-minded politics from the kind of community and meaning it strives to create is a mistake, as is assuming that those who join the Promise Keepers make this distinction. Even if the Promise Keepers do make this separation, their denial about the reality of the organization they have joined certainly does not excuse them from taking responsibility for their participation in a homophobic, sexist, intolerant organization. And the rest of us would best be served by reading their actions as a sad statement about the low

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regard in which justice is held in contemporary America and by working to fill that void of ignorance through education about the importance of living in accordance with the principles of justice. Would TIKKUN also excuse those who, in the name and need of community, join a country club that bars certain groups of people from its membership? It is critical to acknowledge that the injustice this group perpetuates defines precisely the kind of community it is able to create. Nothing about the Promise Keepers deserves our honor.

WENDY SURINSKY
St. Louis, MO

Editor Responds:

TIKKUN was started by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health after years of working with middle income working people, many of them people who had previously been part of the liberal or progressive world but who were, in the 1980s, moving to the Right. What we discovered after in-depth group work with thousands of these very decent human beings is that they were not seeking homophobic or sexist politics, but a spiritual community that understood the absence of meaning in their lives and sought to address it. Our research finds further support in the work of Marie Griffith in this issue (p. 18).

Jewish Literary Revival

To the Editor:

As the Editor of *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, I am writing to compliment you on the direction TIKKUN has



gone in reflecting the new literary revival in American Jewish writing. ("The Jewish Literary Revival," Nov./Dec. 1997). The new direction and the new commitment to literature and to fiction is both a reflection of what is happening and, in your symposium, a portent of the ongoing conversation of Jewish and American literature and life. Henry Roth and Bernard Malamud are gone, Saul Bellow and Phillip Roth are still with us, and still writing. At the same time, just as



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Cahan and Yezierska and Henry Roth, *et al*, commented on "life as it is" (the economic and the political and the social dimensions) in their fiction, so the new writers—Goodman, Goldstein, Bukiet, Rosenbaum, Joseph Skibell, etc.—are commenting in their way on the past, the legacy of that past, and the quality of life today in its many manifestations.

Many thanks for the excellent issue. I look forward to much more of the same in the future.

DANIEL WALDEN
Professor, American Studies
Penn State U.
University Park, PA

To the Editor:

Your list of Jewish novelists (Nov./Dec., 1997) focusing on Jewish themes doesn't go far enough. If you were going to undertake such a list, it should have been done more thoroughly. A lot of us don't live within blocks of Ansche Chesed [Editor's note: a synagogue in New York where TIKKUN was housed from 1992–1996]. Among those you left out were me (*The One Star Jew* and *Red Love* aren't Jewish novels?), Jay Neugeboren, Stephen Dixon, Daniel Menaker, Johanna Kaplan, Norman Kotker, and Thomas Beller—and God knows who else I too am unwittingly leaving out.

DAVID EVANIER
Los Angeles, CA

Tests for Tots

To the Editor:

Prof. Svi Shapiro, in "Public School Reform: The Mismeasure of Education" (January/February, 1998) shows that SAT scores are proportional to the students' family income—the poorer the family, the poorer the average score.

He opposes tests, apparently because they expose the poorer grades of most poor children, who are often minority. Instead, he proposes that "real education encourages students in the search for the unpredictable or the unexpected"—which is gibberish until the student is solidly competent in the three R's.

By the third grade, students should be required to meet certain standards in reading, writing, and arithmetic—particularly reading. We must realize that failing students by the third grade who are simply let slide to higher grades will get more and more behind, and by junior high and high school often become intractably failing.



For unachieving students, the parents must be contacted, at first by the teacher, or if that is not possible, by a PTA volunteer or by neighborhood outreach employees of the school. The parents must be enlisted to help their under achieving child. If that is not possible, the child must be given additional tutoring of homework, etc. after school.

LEE MARSH
Berkeley, CA

To the Editor:

Svi Shapiro never once backs up his hypotheses with hard data. Significant data exists supporting the age-old adage—discovery comes to the *prepared mind*. Research done by Bloom *et al.*, which my own research corroborates, informs that the prepared mind is one that has accumulated a large database; that all *successful* problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and acts of creativity require such a database. Furthermore, research evidence informs that those who have acquired a large database are more apt to be the kind of caring, just, and democratically-inclined people that Mr. Shapiro advocates. Even history tells us that it was those with a large database, i.e. the so-called "intellectual elite," who were in the forefront of all major revolutions initiated to improve the lot of mankind.

That students need a valid and reliable testing process to determine what skills have been acquired is axiomatic. That they need exposure to standardized national or state tests is problematical, but not for the reasons Mr. Shapiro suggests. Pushed with the expectation of raising standards, the history of standardized testing, part of the schooling scene since the beginning of this century, indicates that they have never served that goal. While the new tests are in different form, they will probably do no better.

LILLIAN ROSENBERG HURWITZ
Franklin, MI

To The Editor:

American society IS suffering from a lack of technical proficiency. Students need to learn many technical things to exist in, and contribute to, our very technological society. They need to learn the skills of mathematics and communicating (both speaking well and writing well). And they need to learn historical facts to properly handle the many decisions they will have to make in this democratic society. And, most importantly, a knowledge of literature, music, and art will fill out their lives and make them better people.

Sure, schools should be teaching empathy, cooperation, etc., but standards don't imply competition; in fact, one of the best teaching methods is to have groups of kids work together in solving problems. Standards are NOT being imposed upon us by corporate America. The National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences, neither "tools" for corporations, worked for years to develop, and are advocates of, national standards in mathematics and in science. In fact, I don't know a single scientist who thinks standards would not help the educational process.

ANDREW M. SESSLER
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory
Berkeley, CA

To the Editor:

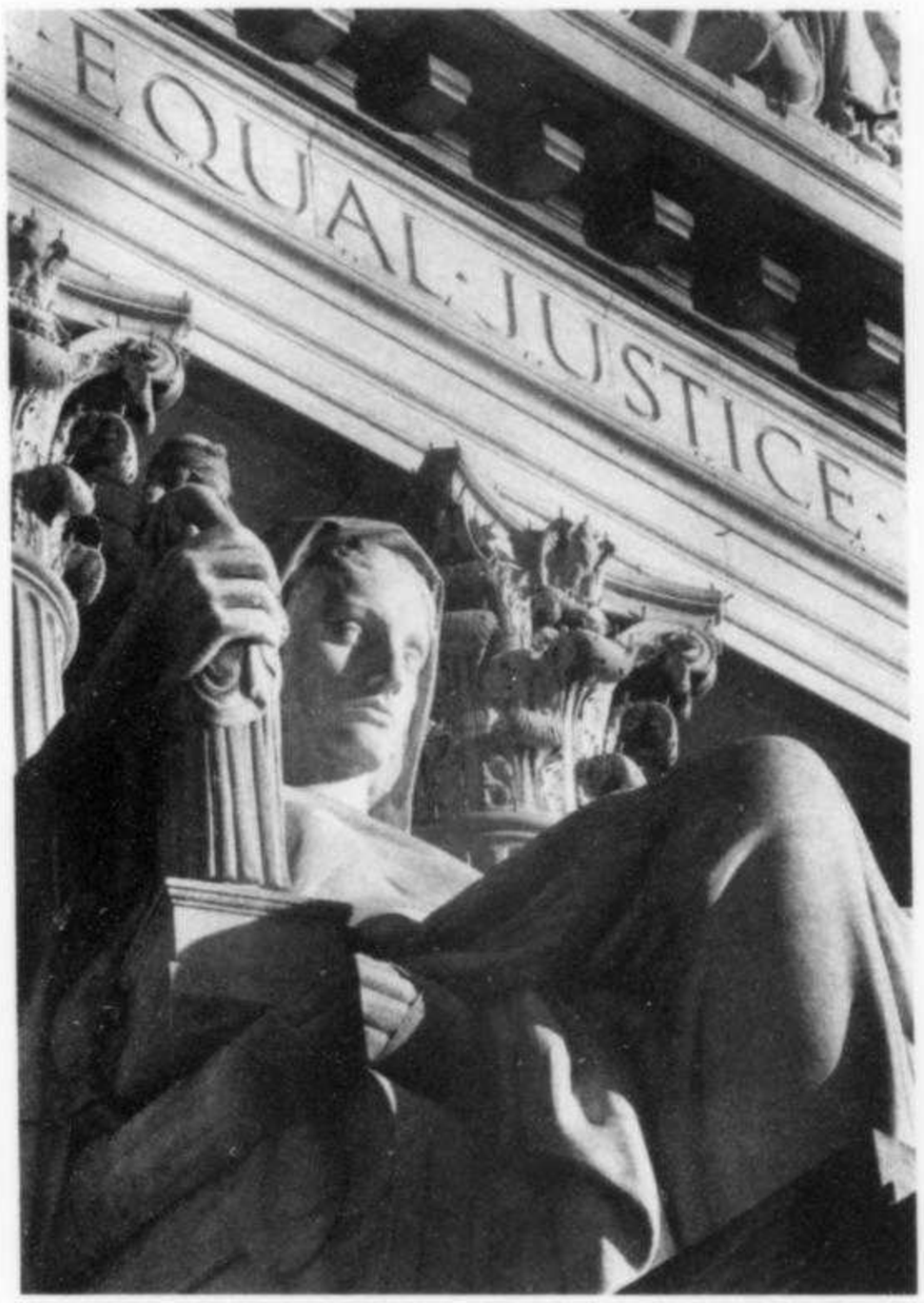
In one of the most incendiary and original critiques of the school reform movement to come along in recent memory, Svi Shapiro brings to the surface the bankruptcy of our public discourse on education as well as the policies that flow from this discourse. In doing so, he not only illuminates our understanding of educational decay, but of the fundamental degradation and dehumanization that plagues our society as a whole.

Rather than encouraging students to think holistically about a problem, our emphasis on standardized measures of student achievement forces students to compartmentalize information—further eroding an already tenuous commitment to the integration of knowledge that was once the hallmark of a liberal education. If school reform advocates are really serious about educational renewal, then they need to reverse course in their race to quantify and empirically measure every aspect of student achievement and teacher performance.

DAVID DATELLE
Washington DC

Publisher's Notes

Danny Goldberg



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Readers of TIKKUN may have noticed quite a few articles about prisons and drug crimes in the last few issues. What does this issue have to do with "the politics of meaning," or with TIKKUN's stated goal to combine progressive politics with spirituality? How does an ongoing series of pieces about crime and punishment relate to Michael Lerner's long-held mission "to transform the bottom line of American society" away from being exclusively defined by money and profit toward a society defined by morality?

Concern with those in prisons is part of many religious traditions. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often imagined in his speeches a man, wealthy and accomplished in his earthly life, arriving at the gates of heaven and being told by God: "I was hungry and you fed me not, I was naked and you clothed me not, and I was in prison and you visited me not." It is clear, as one studies the context of these references, that Dr. King was not merely referring to those imprisoned for civil disobedience in the civil-rights struggle, but was demanding compassion for everyone in prison.

One need not be a legal aid lawyer or a minister, however, to sense that there is something deeply and sickeningly immoral about the rapidly escalating number of young people serving long sentences for nonviolent drug crimes. Contemporary drug laws have disproportionately affected young male African Americans, and have criminalized hundreds of thousands of young people from all segments of society for "crimes" identical to those committed a generation earlier by millions of "baby-boomers" including, I dare say, the majority of readers of and writers for TIKKUN, as well as many middle-aged doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, CEOs, and, of course, leading political figures—Clinton, Gore, and Gingrich have all admitted to "experimenting" with drugs in their ever more distant youth.

Yet the drug issue causes squeamishness among many progressives. A generation of liberal activists were traumatized by the 1988 presidential campaign, which featured Michael Dukakis' bloodless opposition to capital punishment and his inexplicable prison furlough program that made Willie Horton a household name. Many progressives worry that a focus on the unfairness of drug policy will somehow feed the perception that only conservatives are truly sensitive to victims of crime.

Many baby-boomers or those close to them have had more than enough of the sickening banality of coke raps, the depressing vagueness and unproductiveness of potheads, the pathetic and ugly temper of bad drunks, or the often irreversible tragedy of ODs. Virtually every spiritual path discourages drug or alcohol intoxication. I have personally been involved with anti-drug work for more than a decade, helping to create anti-drug TV spots for MTV, and raising money for drug treatment in my own business and for the general society. Additionally, many aging hippies in their forties and fifties now have teenage kids and are understandably terrified of the dangers of drug abuse, especially in a time when drugs like crack are worse than the romanticized hallucinogens of the Sixties, and the economy less pliable for stoners who stray too far off the free market path.

Even among committed economic liberals, a focus on prisons or drug laws is often viewed as flaky. With a stagnant middle class, a poverty class with devastating problems and very few ways out, and a scarcity of progressive political energy for all of the above, why invest energy in the "cause" of the most irresponsible—even if they are being treated a little unfairly?

First of all, I believe this is a karmic issue for baby-boomers. Most of us did not "experiment" with drugs when we were younger in some scientific or religious search

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Danny Goldberg is Chairman and CEO of the Mercury Records Group. Since 1997 he and his father, Victor Goldberg, have been publishers of TIKKUN.

for truth. We got high for exactly the same reasons young people before and after us did—to get over our inhibitions and to facilitate dating. Many people arrived at progressive politics in the context of an adolescent deconstruction of materialistic values that included drug use. Even if drug or alcohol abuse were purely hedonistic, most of us outgrew these tendencies and were able to mature without having been treated as criminals.

Yet, perversely, baby-boomers are at the peak of their power during a time when the government's treatment of drug offenders has never been more harsh. According to a recent article by Ethan Nadelman in *Foreign Affairs*, "on any given day in 1980, approximately 50,000 people were behind bars for violating drug laws. By 1997, the number had increased eight-fold to 400,000." Again from Nadelman: "In 1991, marijuana arrests by state and local police were 283,700. In 1996, 641,642 people were arrested for marijuana, 85 percent for possession, not for sale of the drug."

Unprecedentedly, there are hundreds of thousands of people behind bars, subject to rape and brutality and separation from their families, who committed no other crime than getting high. Even for crimes like drug dealing, the racial and class disparities are remarkable. The organization Families Against Mandatory Minimums points to the case of TV and movie star Tim Allen, who was arrested in October of 1978 in Michigan with more than 650 grams of cocaine. Because he was able to get a lawyer and turn in another drug dealer, he got two-and-a-half years in prison and went on to an incredibly successful career. The same month Allen was arrested, JeDonna Young, then a twenty-five-year-old mother and drug addict, became one of the 205 persons serving a life sentence in Michigan, with no possibility of parole, for the exact same offense. She was a low level drug addict who couldn't afford a good lawyer and didn't know any big dealers she could turn in, so she fell prey to the "mandatory life sentence" in Michigan's law. Mindy Brass is also serving life in prison in Michigan. An admitted former cocaine user, she gave 3,000 dollars to a dealer who threatened her. Mindy lived in California but the dealer went to Michigan to score, and when arrested with cocaine, fingered Mindy. Mindy's thirteen-year-old daughter has been in a foster home for five years. Mindy has congestive heart failure and has been turned down for a heart transplant because she is serving a life sentence. Yes, it's wrong for mothers to use cocaine, but isn't this punishment medieval?

As the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative Maxine Waters pointed out in TIKKUN that sentencing disparity for cocaine is immoral and discriminatory. Five hundred grams of powdered cocaine, the form preferred by the white middle class, is required to get the same five-year mandatory minimum sentence as five grams of crack cocaine, virtually the same drug in the form commonly used by poor blacks. This is unconscionable. It is outrageous and yet it goes on. And beyond a few policy wonks, baby-boomers hazily recalling their all night binges seem to feel not a twinge to do anything about it.

While we were able to learn our lessons through hangovers, the opprobrium of loved ones, or therapy and AA meetings, today hundreds of thousands of young people who have done exactly what we did are subject to brutal imprisonment which, in most cases, scars them for life.

I know the father of a teenager who has had drug problems and got therapy to help him. I pointed out to him that under current drug laws his own son could easily have had his life ruined. "He was never arrested," said the father. Since when is "not getting caught" a moral argument? Especially when the likelihood of getting caught is so dependent on race and class? In 1968, when I was seventeen, I was arrested in Oakland for a variety of drug charges. Only because my father (now co-publisher with me of TIKKUN) could afford an expensive lawyer was I released into my parents' custody, and after a year of non-criminal behavior, my "record" was wiped out. If I were poor and black and caught with the same stuff in Alameda County today, I doubt I would survive the consequences.

There are hundreds of thousands of people behind bars who committed no other crime than getting high.

What is it with baby-boomers? Is there some collective self-hatred that causes us to tacitly or explicitly support such a draconian set of laws inflicted on young people who are doing exactly what most of us got away with? Are these policies somehow linked to the economic disappointment of baby-boomers, who on average are not as able to have economic security as their parents? Do we as a generation think that if we hadn't gotten stoned as much, we'd all own more real estate?

Most political issues are theoretical. We frame an opinion on welfare or campaign finance, and find out later whether or not our opinion had morally preferable results. In the case of imprisonment for drug laws, we know for sure that none of us who overdid our youth would be a better person today if we had served time in jail. If fewer kids whose only crime is getting high had to spend time in jail, and if more got the same chance to grow up that so many aging hippies got, this would be a more moral country.

As the Fleet Maull piece in this issue makes clear, many of the people in jail are us—without the luck. Amidst the grandiose goal of a new theory to guide our politics, amidst a dizzying array of serious issues, amidst our efforts at spiritual as well as material self-improvement, cannot we put on our lists of serious concerns the plight of those for whom we must honestly say, "There but for the grace of God go I?" ❑



EDITORIAL

Clinton, Sex & the Decline of Public Space

Rabbi Michael Lerner

How did it happen that a society that once had its public life focused on questions of how to best achieve a world that reflects principles of social justice, peace, and tolerance should now have its main focus be diverted to sexual scandal? How is it that this sexual scandal becomes so pervasive that only an attack on Iraq can shift our attention to something larger? And why does the President become more popular as the focus on his sexuality deepens?

Here are some of the relevant factors.

Fostering Betrayal

Where are the true principled conservatives now that the country needs them? Where is the conservative movement denouncing the techniques of Ken Starr as he proceeds to do what conservatives used to fear most in "big government," namely its invasion of personal life?

Starr is recreating here what Joseph Stalin did in Russia and what Joseph McCarthy almost succeeded in doing in the 1950s: making personal betrayal the centerpiece of public life. Starr's behavior in encouraging one person to tape another's private conversations, or calling family members to a grand jury, is far more than disgusting—it is seriously scary in its model for what may be a growing police state of the future. This is not about someone stealing atomic secrets or someone organizing to overthrow the government. The betrayals are about personal life (albeit played out in the White House), not about government policy.

If, for a short while, President Clinton's popularity has increased as the Starr chamber got going, at least part of the reason is that the American people have a gut feeling of antagonism to returning to an era of mutual betrayals. Most of us don't want to live in that kind of a world. It's one of the reasons many Americans distrusted the Left at its most zealous, when people were denouncing each other for not being anti-racist enough, anti-sexist enough, anti-ego enough.

The Crushing of Sexual Energy and Spontaneity

This sense that every aspect of our lives should be the subject of intense public scrutiny was experienced by the American public as totalitarian and scary. That was the down side of "the personal is the political," the way that that seemed to imply that whatever we did in our personal lives was to be judged by the public. The women's movement made a powerful advance in our sense of moral responsibility for each other when it insisted that the physical abuse of women and children in private homes was not a private issue, that women and children had the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and that it was the job of the rest of us to provide support for those women or children who were subjected to this kind of abuse. Similarly, feminists helped us understand that a woman who was dependent on a man for economic security or advancement in the workplace or for grades at a university could not be said to be "freely choosing" when sexually approached by men in this power position.

Yet this became, at times, a slippery slope, so that every interaction in personal life became subject to intense scrutiny and judging, with a consequent decline in the spontaneity and joyousness of sexual connection between men and women (recently bemoaned by a new wave of feminist writers like TIKKUN's contributing editor Naomi Wolf). The over-zealousness of political correctness contributed to the current moment in two particular ways.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

First, the notion that "the personal is political" was misused by the Right to legitimate the use of state power to coerce people into a patriarchal family model. It is partly in rebellion against this form of piety that people momentarily rallied around Clinton, unwilling to let the Right set standards for personal life (even though many of us reject the implied moral relativism and acceptance of adultery that this reaction seems to embody).

Second, the failure to preserve some personal realm from public scrutiny creates the possibility for endless cynicism about anyone who seeks to change the status quo. When we look deeply at each other's lives, we do not have difficulty in finding areas of moral weakness, deep psychological flaws, and moments of hypocrisy in which each of us has betrayed our own highest ideals. A cynical media, committed to preserving the status quo, can convince us that we have no right to try to change things, since virtually anyone who comes forward with a change agenda can be "revealed" to be deeply flawed.

The Decline of Public Space

Ever since corporate elites understood the real threat to their system manifested by the social, political and ecological movements of the 1960s and early1970s, there has been a powerful move to discredit all political life. The corporately-dominated media has played its part in three ways: by seeing its goal as the unveiling of the flaws of every political leader, generating cynicism about the moral health of those who sought change; by misrepresenting the Sixties as little more than a youthful fling of exuberant self-indulgence, fostering a misremembering about what had actually been accomplished when people acted together politically; and by eliminating serious public discussion and replacing it with sound-byte news, "analysis" programs like Crossfire that substitute the one-sentence put-down for deep thought, and with television programming dominated by sex-oriented talk shows and scandal-driven "news magazine" shows.

Meanwhile, the wealthy poured hundreds of millions of dollars into electoral campaigns to those in both parties who supported the central corporate aim: to downsize government so that it would not have the resources or capacity to regulate or inhibit corporate behavior. Not surprisingly, as the ideological differences between the parties decreased, even the best journalists found little to report about beyond the personal foibles of the candidates. Predictably, public interest in politics declined, in part because little of substance was being discussed, in part because most individuals felt powerless to effect political realities as the candidates became increasingly responsive to their large donors.

Yet none of this would have been possible without our own loss of confidence in the possibility of love and mutual recognition, in the possibility that we could count on each other to be there for us when we are in need, or in the possibility that we could work together. Absent this hopefulness, politics becomes boring—a struggle between elites for who gets what part of the pie, in other words, a continuation of the ethos of the market by other means.

As hopefulness is replaced by cynicism, public space declines and we get the politics of theater and circus. Whether that circus takes the form of sexual titillation or whether it takes the form of television-staged "clean" wars like that which Clinton prepared for Iraq, the common core is a decline in public space and communal discourse. The attention to the Clinton sex scandal is a manifestation of this much deeper perversity that demeans American life. ❑

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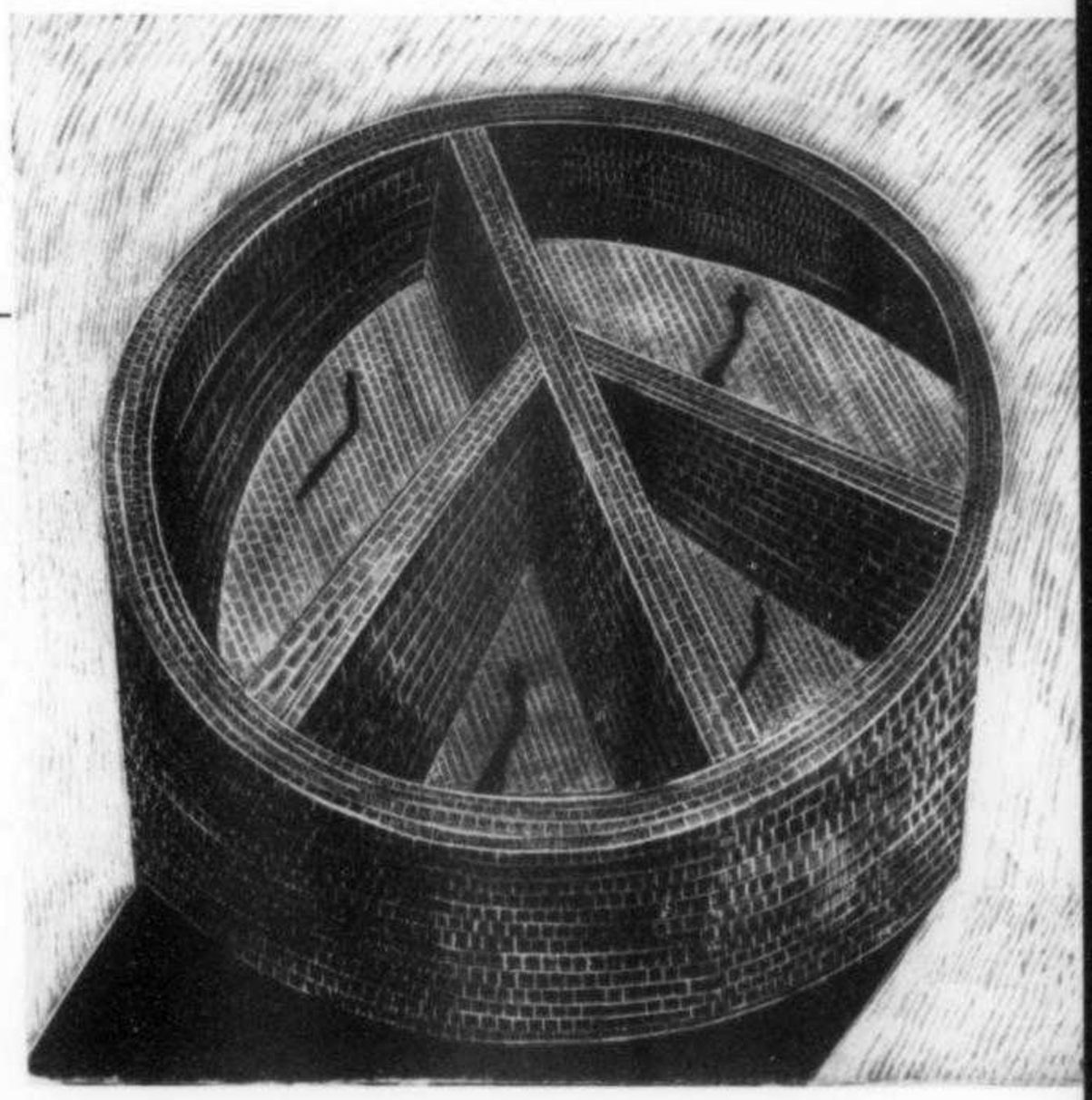
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How the Left Was Lost



Peter Gabel

Written December 31, 1997

As I sigh in the New Year tonight, adrift with millions of my generation around the world who cannot reconcile their memories of the heightened sense of social connection and moral purpose that emerged from the Sixties with the seemingly endless existential social/political desert to which we have been deported in our mid-lives, I think of Thomas Hardy's famous poem "The Darkling Thrush," written on December 31, 1899. On that profound evening, he looked back upon "the century's corpse outleant," a gray landscape strewn with unfulfilled utopian dreams and the reality of such death, pain, and sorrow that he found himself despairing and incapable of passion or optimism. Suddenly a thrush, impervious to Hardy's solemn presence, began to chirp the most beautiful and hopeful song, momentarily shocking Hardy out of his dismal reflections and forcing him to recognize that this ever-present life-force, erupting through the thrush's song, inherently reaffirmed "some blessed Hope" in the universe more powerful than the entropy and failure to which Hardy had been bearing witness.

Though no thrush appears on my horizon tonight, perhaps one will make an appearance two years from now, at the end of this century, if we can create the hopeful social space for him or her to occupy. We can do so by coming to understand how social space has gradually closed around us over the last thirty years, leaving millions of us invisible to each other with our shared but privately experienced secret—that we saw the promised land, we stepped right into it with a sense of great collective discovery that we could indeed "break on through to the other side," and yet we have somehow found ourselves alone at Walmart's at the age of fifty.

Of course, many, many of us continue to try to connect the dots every day, to somehow manifest those earlier revelations about the transcendental unity of all being and our potential transparency to each other as loving, mutually affirming beings in whatever good works we continue to do. But it is good and important to face the dark side—that we gradually ebbed away from each other into reciprocal solitude and invisibility, without really grasping how or why it happened.

So on this bleak New Years' Eve, when in spite of all the Times Square hoopla there is so little basis for anticipating the transfiguration that this night so frantically tries to promise, let me try to say what happened, to explain how we lost each other without ever leaving each other's physical presence.

The cultural revolution of the Sixties emerged as an outbreak of mutual recognition and intersubjective discovery, an upsurge of social connectedness that—stimulated by compelling social forces from the Vietnam war to the civil rights movement to rock 'n roll—seemed to ricochet all over this country and across the world in a very brief period of historical time. Certainly, a central precipitating event was the increasingly evident irrationality of the slaughter in Southeast Asia, coupled with a military draft that provided an entire generation and their families with no exit, with no alternative but to try to come to terms with what was happening and to participate in it or to refuse to do so.

But the dawning understanding that emerged in part from this forced encounter with the war was much more comprehensive than anything related to the legitimacy of the war alone. That dawning understanding was that the war was but a horrible manifestation of an insane world, in which we were all trapped in some weird, alienated system of hierarchical roles and collective fantasies that was *unreal.* Supported by the felt authenticity of the civil rights move-

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ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

ment, by the transcendental insights gained from LSD, and by the emergent joy of the counter-culture as an opener of a new social space co-existing with and challenging the artificiality and posturing and seeming unreality of the official culture, we began to "recognize" each other in a new and self-evidently more real way. The collectively-felt intimation of a radically more real, more transparent, and more loving way of experiencing and affirming each other both revealed, with a sense of profound awe and also amazed laughter, the unreality that was being broken through and also caused this awareness to spread like wildfire, as it touched and liberated in each person their latent desire and longing for precisely this kind of breakthrough recognition and connection.

But this movement encountered a terrible problem that it did not understand, that it was actually in denial of. That problem was that the opening-up that fueled both the movement's connectedness and its accompanying insight into the false role-performances that constituted the official social facade was taking place within human beings who had been conditioned for centuries to repress their longing for this connectedness and insight and to believe that the social facade was as real as it claimed to be. This inevitably meant that the hyper-excitement generated by the sudden spread of that desire-realizing breakthrough was fragile, underlain by the legacy of doubt and mistrust that had shaped the formation of our historical personality structures. The opening-up required a vulnerability to the other that offered a great relief from the system of self-protective, artificial roles that had sealed us in our collective isolation. But it also triggered an unconscious fear of being so "out there," so transparent to the other, that it created the risk of a uniquely painful humiliation—the rejection by the other of our extended, unguarded soul. Since we had grown up in a social world that insisted the alienated facade was real, none of us had developed the experiential foundation to enable us to deeply trust that the other would remain out there with us, affirming the reality of our heightened state of reciprocal awareness and connection.

Let me try to say what happened ... how we lost each other without ever leaving each other's physical presence.

This doubt and its destructive effects began to be felt in every Left meeting that I was a part of, a phenomenon that exists still although there are, of course, very few such meetings today. And it always happened the same way, in thousands of spontaneously emerging counter-culture organizations and in the large public meetings that took place almost every night during that time.

The process was as follows: A small group of people would take a leadership role in organizing a political meeting. A large number of people would be drawn to the meeting because of the excitement of being part of the movement, but most of those people would be checking things out with hopeful openness that they could somehow be part of the fusing group while also unconsciously doubting that this fusion, this new reciprocity, could actually be sustained. This collective doubt underlying the collective excitement and hope would be intuitively and unconsciously grasped by a small group of "crazies," who actually (again unconsciously) despised the intimations of openness and hope. These people, so endemic to the Left, were actually unconsciously addicted to conventional authority—they saw the spreading openness and hope as threatening them with seduction and humiliation, and so they sought to destroy the flowering of the group by enacting their authority-dependent victimized rage against the leaders. This they accomplished by opportunistically seizing upon the tentativeness and doubt present in the group as the group's Achilles Heel and then flooding the public space with violent criticisms of the organizers and accusations that the group was illegitimately constituted.

Often—almost always—these "crazies" were lefter-than-thou, purporting to be the most radical, the most militant, the most authentically committed to the group's political goal. Their attacks usually took the form of, "Who gave this group the right to set the agenda?' or "I want to know why there are so few people of color in the room?" or "Before we even get to these issues, we have to recognize the centrality of U.S. Imperialism and the fact that some people in this room are still benefitting from it." But their deeper motive was to use their supposed political purity to destroy the movement's transformative potential by capitalizing on the group's own vulnerability and uncertainty as the basis for traumatizing the social space. In instance after instance, from local political groupings in American cities to small radical organizations across the country to the many efforts to create a new national political party in the United States to the dynamics within the Maoist collectives in Western Europe or the dynamics within SDS chapters at colleges and universities, the process was the same.

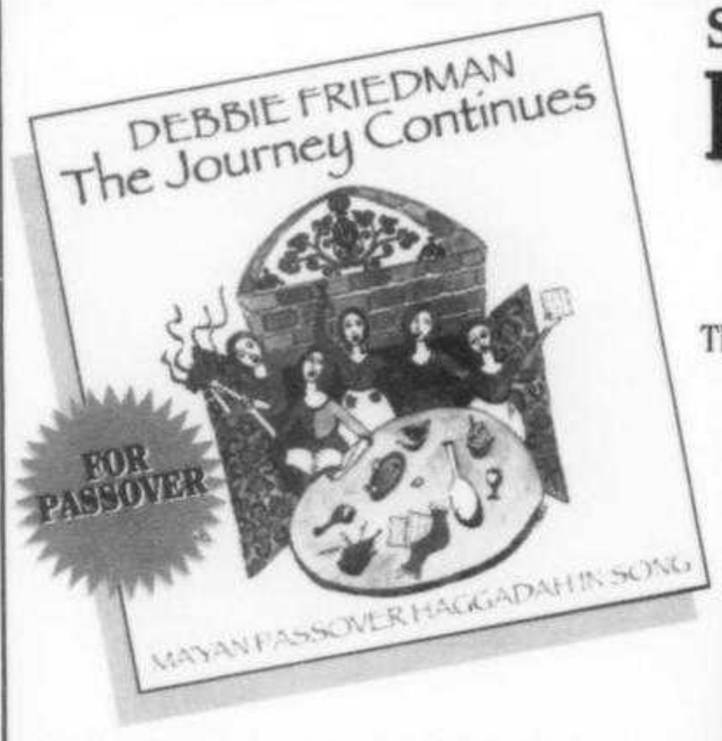
And the result was that fewer and fewer "normal" people would come back to future meetings because the evident lack of safety reinforced their existing doubts. This ultimately left the initial organizers with a greater and greater percentage of the crazies, leading ultimately to the dissolution of each group and, eventually, to the sixties as a whole.

The analysis I am offering here is not meant as a bitter attack on the destroyers of a beautiful and potentially transformative historical moment. It is rather meant to show how the residual doubt that all of us inevitably felt about the

safety of a radical new openness to each other manifested itself in group processes. Had we understood all this, and had we found the way to build up our confidence that our extension of ourselves toward each other would be met with affirmation by others in a safe environment, the "crazies" would have been marginalized and many of them would have quickly given up and left. Their power then, and their continuing presence in the Left, derives from the fact that we haven't yet figured out how to constitute and confirm a confidence within the group as a whole that a safe path from our existing alienated identities to a more communal and more loving and caring society is possible.

Finally, of course, it is necessary to remember that those who always rejected the aspirations of the movement and sought to shore up the alienation of the status quo were astutely playing on the same undercurrent of doubt that the destroyers within the Left were exploiting. As millions of hopeful but tentative people drawn to the movement were turned off by the movement dynamics themselves, their doubt about the possibility of success was reinforced by the fact that they could not see the movement's truly hopeful meaning reflected back to them through the media. The Sixties generation was gradually transformed back into the politically neutral "baby boom" generation; the meaning of the Sixties was increasingly cast as a "troubled time" when everyone did drugs and acted out destructively in the name of a well-meaning but immature idealism; few if any of the successful efforts to extend the transformative efforts begun in the Sixties were reported in the news. And so the millions of us that we were ebbed away from each other, increasingly invisible, increasingly finding the old isolating culture re-enveloping us and leaving us with our shared secret of disappointment.

But to end on a positive note in this new year 1998, it remains remarkable and hopeful that the Sixties lasted as long as they did and permanently changed so many human beings for the better in spite of the forces within us that undermined its most radical transformative aspirations. It is a testament to the power of our desire for genuine mutual recognition and social connection as an unconquerable longing built into our very social being that its temporary containment today can hardly produce an ounce of cultural vitality. In spite of the great cynical "No!" that really seems to enclose today's social universe, the energy of this desire pulses outward toward the other, and makes an appeal to the other, in every human interaction. I hope that our current efforts to build a deep link between spirituality and politics—through the politics of meaning and other related efforts—will provide the next steps in helping us to heal the doubts and fears that have thus far limited our capacity to realize this most basic longing of our common humanity. ❑



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ON THE COUCH

You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling

The Meaning of Sexual Boredom

Michael Bader

Rodney Dangerfield once joked: "Last time I tried to make love to my wife nothing was happening, so I said to her, 'What's the matter? You can't think of anybody either?'" This bit alludes to the problem of sexual boredom in intimate relationships. In reality, it's not funny. Self-help books, women's magazines, and TV talk shows frequently offer us advice on how to restore passion to a relationship. Does familiarity breed erotic boredom? If so, why? Why does it often seem true that as a couple becomes more intimate and interdependent, their sex life suffers? How can we understand the oft-repeated complaint that marriage produces ennui in the bedroom?

Sexual excitement is highly sensitive to a wide array of psychological, relational, and social needs and tensions. One of the roads to intimacy, and sometimes a major defense against it, sexual arousal and engagement is exquisitely sensitive to stress and conflict. On the one hand, sexual arousal and pleasure can be used to restore identity, assuage a wound, circumvent or resolve a conflict, or re-establish an intimate connection. On the other hand, it can be the first thing to "go" as a consequence of fatigue, depression, anxiety, loss, anger, worry, or guilt.

The bedroom is also a hothouse for social tensions. Men, struggling to preserve a fragile masculinity, and making use of their greater economic and social power, may leave their families for younger women. Women, shouldering the inequities of their gender roles and responsibilities, often extinguish their own desire and desirability. The pressures of the marketplace and economic rat race infiltrate families and relationships, making playfulness and pleasure increasingly hard-won achievements. Social alienation clearly casts its shadows into the most intimate area of human experience.

Notwithstanding the importance of the wider social context, we also need to understand the private vicissitudes and psychodynamics of the problem to do justice to the intimate personal aspects of our sexual experience. In my clinical work as a psychoanalyst, for instance, I have been impressed with the central roles of guilt and worry in the etiology of sexual boredom. Certain conscious and, more often, unconscious fantasies about a partner's interior life can lead to guilt-based worries that we will hurt that partner if we get too aroused, or our identifications with a partner negate arousal to begin with. Both processes are incompatible with sexual excitement. If one is unconsciously worried about damaging one's partner or about becoming *like* a partner who seems damaged already, one can't "let go" with excitement. The whole complex of guilt and worry is like a cold shower. But what are we worried and guilty about exactly? What identifications are being made and how can they be



ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

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dangerous? Why do these problems get worse with familiarity and intimacy? And where do they come from?

I believe that on the private and intrapsychic level, the problem stems from our families of origin. Most families have their share of *tsouris*. When parents are grim, unhappy, or dissatisfied with their lives, it dampens their children's natural exuberance. Children not only identify with unhappy parents, internalizing their moods and temperament, but come to feel responsible, worried, and guilty about their caretakers, and develop unconscious beliefs that they're not supposed to be optimistic and happy themselves. Such children grow up feeling guilty about being more happy, more successful in love and work, more sexually gratified, and more optimistic about having good things in life, than their parents.

Since children are still primarily raised by their mothers, these conflicts are often most poignant in relation to her. For instance, if your mother experienced herself as a victim or martyr, or was depressed and devalued herself, or was self-doubting or masochistic, you'd have hard time kicking up your heels and feeling confident or exuberant. It would be difficult to feel robust if your mother was fragile, to be spontaneous if she was controlled, to be carefree if she was worried, to feel *joie de vivre* if her life was without pleasure. Her trials and tribulations might not have been her fault and she may have loved you deeply. But the essential reality is that it's hard for us as children and as adults to feel deeply entitled to be happier and more successful than our parents; to do so is to hurt them or leave them behind. We'll feel selfish.

Often a woman fears that her male partner will feel threatened by the full expression of her female sexuality. Often a man fears that his female partner is fragile.

This set of conflicts rears its head in the bedroom. Maximum sexual excitement and freedom involves a "letting go" of restraints, a sense that we can be uninhibited and even a bit out of control without worrying about the consequences. And, as much as the intensity of sexual passion is enhanced by intimacy, it paradoxically also requires a certain lack of consideration for the welfare of the other. In other words, we need to be able to take the other for granted in some sense, and assume that he or she will be okay if we yield self-control and allow our excitement to mount and become ecstatic. It is in the nature of desire to want to aggressively and ecstatically collide with the other at the same time that it wants to recognize and satisfy the other.

This doesn't mean that it's not exciting to use one's empathy to make the other happy. Arousing one's partner is a turn-on to most people for several reasons: First, making your partner happy satisfies a natural human longing; second, it's exciting to identify with someone who's aroused; third, the other's arousal is intrinsically affirming; and, finally, his or her excitement is a powerful reassurance that he or she is happy and not threatened, weak or fragile. Problems arise when a natural wish to excite the other becomes a worry, or when a natural wish to not be concerned about the other's pleasure is forbidden. This trait of selfishness in sexual arousal is frowned on by the Left and Right alike. And, yet, without it, and without the dialectic between selfishness and intimacy, sexual excitement is impossible.

Therefore, in order to get excited, we have to assume that the other can take on the full force of our excitement without being hurt or overwhelmed, that the selfish and aggressive dimension of our sexual desire will not damage its object. In many cases of sexual inhibition, the opposite is true. Again, in my clinical experience, many people worry, often unconsciously, that his or her partner will feel used, abused, devalued, threatened, or overwhelmed by his or her sexual energy or fantasies. Often a woman fears that her male partner will feel threatened by the full expression of her female sexuality, that he'll feel emasculated or narcissistically injured, or that he needs her to feel weak or passive. Often a man fears that his female partner is fragile, that she feels sexually inferior, or that she's defensively brittle about being objectified. These are extremely common fantasies that reflect dynamics I've also found to be present in gay couples.

In each of these cases, a person's worry and guilt about a partner leads to an inhibition of sexual interest, curiosity, and expressiveness. Compounding the problem is a natural tendency to identify with one's sexual partner. The more I know my partner, the more I *imagine* that we share our inner states. If my partner is perceived as damaged, inhibited, threatened, or otherwise unhappy, the tendency to merge makes the possibility of sexual spontaneity unlikely. And it is the perception of the other's flaws, and not their actual flaws, that is crucial. Sometimes, we mis-read or misunderstand our partners radically. But our *beliefs* often dominate reality. Just as it's hard to be happy in an unhappy family, so is it difficult to be sexually free and vigorous in a close connection to someone whom we perceive is not. No one wants to dance on someone else's grave. And if we feel guilty about wanting to do so, there's no better (neurotic) solution than deadening ourselves in sympathy. The result is sexual boredom.

When a relationship is new, a lover can idealize a partner; these idealized qualities usually include strength, happiness, and sexuality. In this context, the lover doesn't have to worry about or feel guilty about the partner because the partner is experienced as different than the parents, and

thus able to enjoy the full force of the lover's excitement rather than feel hurt by or excluded from it. For new lovers, identifications tend to be with the other's strengths, and one's partner's separateness is reassuring. Thus, a new lover feels that he or she can be selfish, and this adds to the excitement. However, as lovers get to know each other better, they also see each other's faults, flaws, weaknesses, and human frailties, and the sense of separateness decreases. This opens the door to a number of processes which threaten sexual desire:



As lovers get to know each other better, they also see each other's faults.

- the person transfers feelings and experiences connected to a parent onto the partner who increasingly seems like a reincarnation of that parent, a parent whom the child experienced as needy, weak, or devalued;
- the partner's real or imagined weaknesses and problems raise the specter of hurt or betrayal as a result of "irresponsibly" pursuing one's selfish sexual aims, just as one might have felt guilt over pursuing one's own needs rather than meeting the needs of a parent; and
- the experience of the other's weaknesses or negative moods—usually exaggerated under the pressure of one's own childhood projections—opens the door to the kind of empathy and identification with an unhappy loved one which negates any sexual liveliness.

So, sexual vitality can be threatened by familiarity because feeling responsible for and worried about a partner's interior life, now perceived or experienced in more complexity, makes a sense of uninhibited sexual abandon impossible.

This approach helps us understand the psychological dimension of a wide range of cultural observations. Both men and women fetishize youth, particularly in women, because it negates the prevailing representations of devalued women in our culture. Further, a young woman, unblemished by age or the tribulations of life, is someone about whom a man need not worry, for whom he need not feel responsible. In addition to its appeal to men, unblemished youth is appealing to women because it's an antidote to internal feelings of shame. (The reverse fantasy is seen in the recent movie *The Full Monty,* in which loser men, beaten down and shamed by life, are redeemed and become heroes to themselves and their women.) The oft-noted sexual fantasy among women in which they are swept away by a "bad" or "rough" man is similarly related to a woman's fantasied need for a strong and ruthless man about whom she needn't worry and with whom she can completely "let go" without inhibition. Finally, many elements of fashion and fashion advertising make use of sadomasochistic or dominatrix imagery to appeal to this same need of many consumers to either be someone who's hard and confident, or to be (sexually) connected with such a person—guilt-free. If the other person takes what she or he wants, so can you.

The social meanings of these psychodynamic processes are complex and can only be hinted at here. The fact that so many people struggle against internal representations of unhappy parents, particularly mothers, raises the question to begin with of why so many women experience the kind of deep frustration and dissatisfaction that becomes problematic for their children. The answer must involve structures of patriarchy, imbalances of power, the relative absence of nurturing and healthy fathers, and the absence of communities of meaning. Certainly the kind of anxieties I'm describing are exacerbated and exploited by the capitalist marketplace which inundates us with idealized images of youth and fantasies of invulnerability and narcissistic perfection.

The personal and social dimensions of sexual inhibition interact in a seamless web of causation. Alienated social relations create unhappy or distressed people who become anxious and frustrated parents who interact with helpless and dependent children in ways that shape their characters such that conflicts involving guilt, worry, and identification regularly arise and threaten the full and easy play of erotic desire. These childrens' relationships thus become enervated and they become vulnerable to the exploitation of the consumer marketplace and to depression and other psychological symptoms that are then passed on to the next generation. And all of this seems normal and "natural" because an essential aspect of the kinds of psychological processes I'm describing is that they feel like facts of human nature, fate, or biology.

In reality, these processes are changeable. A social order that made for happier and less stressed-out families would help, of course. Those aspects of a feminist agenda that promote happier and more empowered women might help. On a more personal, psychological level, individual and couples therapy can help. People can be helped to uncover the unconscious beliefs underlying the guilt, worry, and identifications generating sexual boredom, expose these beliefs to the light of day, and change them. Distortions and misunderstandings can be corrected, new learning and experimentation encouraged, and communication improved. The factors that contribute to boredom are deeply embedded in our culture and psyches and need to be liberated at both levels. By doing so, we might be able to get our parents out of the damn bedroom and start having more fun. ❑

POLITICS

Learning from Latin America's Rural Poor



James Petras

As I was preparing to travel to Brazil for a peasant conference, several friends dropped by the house. Former activists in the 1960s and 1970s who had grown disillusioned with what they called "Third Worldist Politics," they spoke of revolutions which had failed or worse—those that had succeeded and turned sour, "authoritarian Stalinism with a crooked nose." One acquaintance who was still active asked me why I was going to Latin America when there were severe problems in the United States. As he ran down the litany of declining wages, lack of medical coverage, and the dissolution of welfare for the poor, I questioned the purpose of my trip. Was this my escape from a frustrating sense of political impotence in the United States? Wasn't it more important to stay put and work out an alternative to the free market agenda of Clinton-Gingrich?

After ten days of discussions and exchanges with peasant leaders from practically all the countries in Latin America, however, I was able to see a very profound linkage between what was happening in the countryside in Latin America and our political dilemmas in the U.S. Despite the dissimilarities between the poor here and there (as my friends said, "we're talking about the working poor in advanced computerized capitalism with a globalized face, not peasant Indians in the jungles of Chiapas"), some of the conditions are similar. Globalized capitalism in the era of NAFTA has not only decimated industries in working towns across the U.S., but, to take just one example, it has left 85 percent of the rural Mexican labor force in poverty. Yet, the hopelessness, passivity, crime, drugs and delinquency often associated with poverty in the U.S. is in flagrant contrast to the confidence, militancy, and solidarity I witnessed among the poorest of the poor peasants in Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and elsewhere. Why was it that the rural poor in Latin America, who were living under deteriorating socio-economic conditions and more repressive political conditions, were organizing for successful struggles, while the declining middle class and marginalized ghetto residents in the U.S. were atomized and suffering in silence?

Several key issues emerged. For one, in Latin America peasants are not segregated from each other into single-issue organizations. Strikingly, many of the peasant movements *combine* gender/ethnic and class politics, unifying socio-economic and cultural struggles rather than fragmenting "cultural issues" from "economic issues." At the recent Second Latin American Congress of Rural Organizations (Congreso Latinoamericano de Organizaciones del Campo, CLOC), over 40 percent of the delegates were peasant women, mostly in their twenties to early thirties. This was an extraordinary change: at the previous CLOC meeting three years earlier less than 10 percent of the delegates were women. But this change was not merely "symbolic"; the program was designed by mutual agreement of both the men and women to "treat the issue of gender in a transversal manner." What this meant was that every workshop was instructed to discuss the specific gender impacts of the topics under discussion, from occupation movements in Brazil to the repression of coca farmers in Bolivia. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of the women present rejected the idea of "classless feminism" in favor of a perspective that linked gender equality with class struggle. While the women supported women's caucuses and autonomous meetings, they also were strongly committed to building class-based peasant organizations with their compañeros.

The new militancy of peasant women emerges in many local struggles. One can see the link between gender and class struggle in the story of this female member of the Cochabamba peasant movement, a movement largely of coca farmers struggling against the US-directed eradication campaign: "This year they have already assassinated several of our members and one of our leaders. We have resisted and will continue to resist. I am supporting my elderly mother and my only son on my four acres. We negotiated a

PHOTOGRAPH BY TEUN VOETEN / IMPACT VISUALS

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pact with the government: in exchange for the eradication of 7,000 acres of coca production, the government promised to finance alternative economic activity, including a factory to employ the displaced farmers. We have reduced coca production by 3,000 acres but they have not even started to build the factory. They have tricked us again. Now they are threatening to send the military to massacre us and to eradicate all our sacred lands and to leave us in misery. I want to learn how to use a gun, because I want to be able to be part of the armed resistance when the Army invades." Mother, daughter, peasant leader, potential guerrilla.

This woman's story also points to another of the key factors explaining the rising influence of peasant movements—their autonomy and independence from established electoral parties (the equivalent of our Democrats and Republicans). Emerging from grass-roots organizing, peasant movements engage in direct action around immediate demands: land occupations, takeovers of local city halls, general strikes. At the same time, however, these organizations have succeeded because they also insist on embracing a national agenda. They are able to demonstrate the power of collective action and to highlight the importance of autonomous class politics on a national stage.

In Colombia, for example, the peasant-based guerrilla army, the Popular Army of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, has extended its influence to close to half the rural municipalities in the country. While not, strictly speaking, a peasant movement since almost a third of its recruits come from the town and cities, many of its programmatic demands are rural-centered: land reform, human rights in the countryside, the unionization of farm workers, etc. With close to 15,000 mostly peasant combatants, it is probably the most potent guerrilla army in the Third World today and is gaining strength. One indication is the fact that the US Defense Department has dropped the fiction that its multi-million dollar aid program is directed toward fighting narcotics-traffickers. It has publicly endorsed the shipment of arms to fight peasant insurgency.

Americans are perhaps most familiar with the Zapatista movement in Mexico, which has once again opened the question of Indian rights, land reform, and more fundamentally the whole question of NAFTA—free market policies promoted by Clinton and Zedillo. Without the Zapatista uprising in 1994, the signing and implementation of NAFTA would have passed as an elite ceremonial event. Since implementation of NAFTA began, over one million peasants have been ruined and tens of millions of salaried employees have had their incomes cut by half. The demands and critique of the Zapatistas resonate throughout the country.

The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil provides a third good example of the way peasants have worked through their own organizations to liberate themselves. The MST has settled over 150,000 families, representing almost a million people, and has pushed land-reform to the center of political debate. One indicator of its success is found in recent polls in Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city, which indicate that over 75 percent of the population support land distribution favoring landless workers.

When eighteen landless peasants peacefully blocking Brazilian highways were butchered by the military police under orders from the Governor, the MST organized a march on the capital and were joined by over 100,000 people, including trade unionists and urban slum dwellers. President Cardoso, who had denounced the MST in the days leading up to the march as an "anachronistic movement" fighting outdated battles (like land-reform), was forced, when faced with the mass protests, to invite one of the leaders to the Presidential Palace. The MST refused (as a demonstration that there is no single leader) and likewise declined Cardoso's offer to sign an agreement suspending their land occupations in exchange for the government settling some 49,000 families camped on contested terrain. As Joao Pedro Stedile, an MST leader, told me later, "it is necessary to negotiate but never at the price of demobilizing the movement. Otherwise you have nothing to negotiate in the future." This capacity to turn tactical defeats into strategic advantages, to continue the struggle even after horrendous massacres, and to respond positively to the eruption of peasants—particularly women—pressing for militant action, are indications of the tremendous resiliency and creativity of these new movements.

The MST is also putting together a systematic effort to transcend the bounds of their status as a "minority population"—only 30 percent of the labor force in Brazil is rural. They have begun to organize the giant *favelas* or slum settlements that surround Sao Paulo, Rio, and other major cities. The MST is not merely focusing on immediate demands for land titles and infrastructure (lights, water, paved roads, public transport, etc.), but on political education through leadership training schools and the development of an anti-capitalist perspective based on an understanding of the exploitative nature of financial and real estate capital. They hope to avoid the previous pattern where local leaders who led a courageous struggle then got themselves elected to the City Council and subsequently built electoral machines based on clientilistic politics. Instead, they see their urban organizing project as part of a national struggle. To that end, they have formulated a program called "Project Brazil" which is based on a reversal of all the major free market counter-reforms: the re-nationalization of basic industries (petroleum, telecommunications, etc.), and the socialization of strategic elements of the economy, including banking and foreign trade and an integral agrarian reform, which would limit cheap exports and promote linkages between cooperatives and industrial food processing plants.

In Bolivia, Columbia, Paraguay, Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, peasant movements like Brazil's MST are demonstrating that they do not fit the stereotype of local,

traditional, illiterates struggling for "land to the tiller." Most of the peasant and Indian delegates that I met during a six-month trip to eight Latin American countries are educated (both self-taught and have at least six years of formal schooling), aware of national and international issues, and in dialogue with national and international political and social movements. They know that land distribution policies can only succeed with credit, technical assistance and protected markets, and they recognize that political alliances with urban classes and organizations are necessary in order to transform their societies. The general strikes that rocked Ecuador in February 1997, Brazil in June 1996, and Bolivia in December 1996, for example, were based on peasant-Indian trade union alliances. What is crucial and significant about these coalitions, however, is that the peasant organizations share leadership—they are neither subordinated "masses" nor the "shock troops" of urban elites, but equal and influential partners in a joint struggle against neo-liberal regimes.

Peasant movements are not only making alliances across classes but across traditional ethnic and cultural barriers. There is a profound difference between the peasant militants and the public figures that the Western mass media presents as "Indian spokes-people." For example, members of the Bolivian peasant-Indian movement speak disparagingly of the so-called "Quechua-speaking vice-president" who talks to the Indians but works for rich foreigners. The Guatemalans are very critical of Rigoberta Menchu for her embrace of symbolic "Mayan" cultural changes divorced from larger political-economic and human rights issues. These movements are not falling victim to the new imperial-promoted "cultural identity" politics designed to divide and co-opt leaders in order to undercut their demands for land rights. Instead, peasant-Indian movements are acutely aware of the need to combine ethnic and class struggles, cultural and socio-economic demands.

The new peasant movements also have been deeply influenced by the social doctrines of the Church. Popular religiosity, the fusion of biblical lessons with religious values, has had a direct effect in stimulating the new generation of peasant leaders, along with Marxism, traditional communitarian values, and modern feminist and nationalist ideas. The organizational discipline, personal integrity and moral commitment that infuses much of the movement comes from their earlier religious background, even as many of the militants have taken their distance from the conservative Church hierarchy and the Vatican. That same religious background contributes to the striking élan of the movement, and the spirit of self-sacrifice evident in the high-risk, low material reward that goes with being a peasant leader in Guatemala or Paraguay.

Most of the leaders of these movements are between twenty and thirty years old. They have not passed through the sectarian leftist wars of the Sixties or Seventies (few, if any, are ex-Trotskyists, Maoists or Communists). Their support, for example, of the Cuban Revolution is not based in its slogans but in its resistance to U.S. intervention and its progressive agrarian reform. Instead of taking "doctrinal clues" from Fidel Castro, they incorporate Castro or Che Guevara's ideas into their own particular national and social struggle. They neither repudiate nor iconize the pantheon of past revolutionaries.

Indeed, while most of the peasant movements agree on certain overarching themes such as the struggle for gender equality and the struggle against neo-liberalism and U.S. imperialism, specific national conditions predominate over any effort to formulate an internationalist perspective. For example, one of the slogans at the CLOC conference was "agrarian reform, anti-imperialism and socialism," yet the representatives of the Guatemalan organization told me that it was impossible to raise any of those issues in a public way in Guatemala. One young Guatemalan peasant woman told of the murder of eighty peasants in an adjoining village during the "scorched war policies" of the Eighties, and how that massacre has inhibited the raising of issues like land reform as a national banner. "There are many land occupations today, and we support them," she said, "but if we launched a national campaign the parties and politicians of the Right would threaten to return to the past. As it is, we have lost nine peasant leaders just this year—murdered in the course of organizing peasant struggles. Another leader told me that because "the mass terror and the continual operation of paramilitary death squads still weigh heavily on the peasants, the highest priority is to create an umbrella organization for the dozen or so peasant organizations that have emerged in recent years. We have to temper our activity as to not endanger the precarious and very limited political space we occupy."

Peasant movements are not only making alliances across classes but across traditional ethnic and cultural barriers.

That political space has particularly been endangered by the U.S. It is clear that Washington's strategy, beginning with Reagan and Bush and continuing with Clinton has been to support state terrorism of peasants in order to change the parameters of political debate: in Guatemala, for example, anyone who raised the issues of socialism, anti-imperialism or agrarian reform was murdered, along with their family, neighbors and most of the rest of the community. Close to 150,000 peasants, mostly Indians, were assassinated. Once the "lesson" was imparted, a peace accord was signed granting legality to the Indian and peasant organization with the explicit proviso that they operate in the

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RELIGION

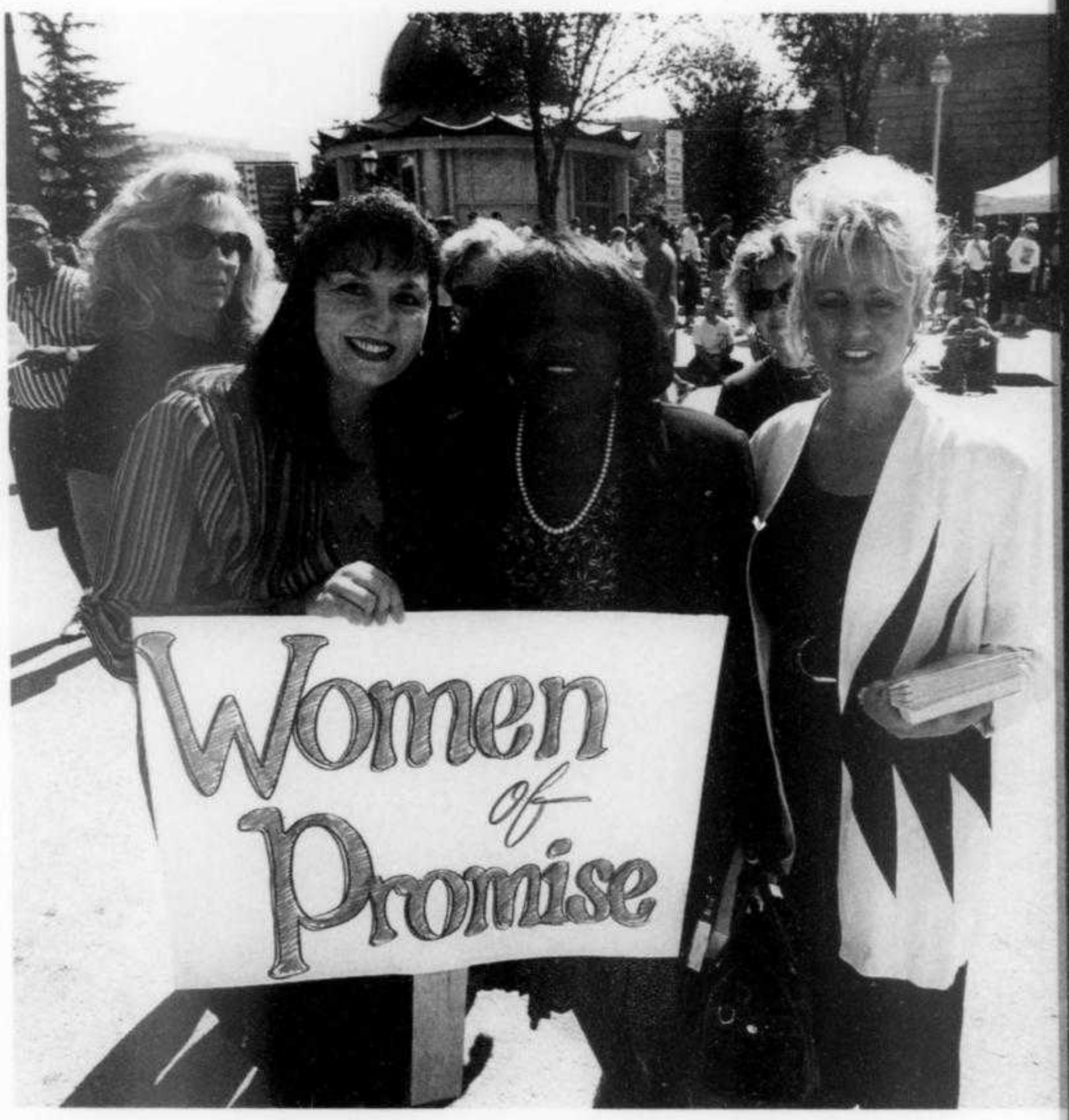
Revising Our Assessment of Evangelical Women's Groups

R. Marie Griffith

Spirituality, it seems, is rallying potent energy in the public square. From the Million Man March in October 1995 to the Promise Keepers' revival on the Washington Mall and—probably the largest of all, with official estimates of up to a million participants—the Million Woman March in Philadelphia this past fall, America has witnessed a series of massive national gatherings whose central, shared message is one of healing and renewal. Focusing on both the spiritual and societal dimensions of this message, all three meetings highlighted the themes of repentance, individual responsibility for collective social crises, and restoring broken relationships.

But the Million Woman March was actually something quite different from the two men's events, if only because African American women perceive that they have rather less to atone for than do men of any race. Hence, though "repentance" was listed as the first of three main themes of the event (followed by "resurrection" and "restoration"), the speeches and subsequent commentary focused more on empowerment than repentance, more on self-esteem and black female unity than on absolution or atonement. Whereas the men in both prior gatherings were repeatedly admonished for their past failings and weakness, the women were roundly celebrated for their courage and strength and urged to honor both themselves and their sisters with renewed, vigorous passion.

In this sense, the Million Woman March more closely resembled explicitly Christian women's gatherings that have been taking place over several decades than it did the more recent spate of men's assemblies. Few of these grass-roots evangelical groups for women—such as Praise Keepers, Promise Reapers, Chosen Women, Heritage Keepers, Suitable Helpers, Women of Faith, and Women's Aglow Fellowship—have received much more than scattered articles in local newspapers. Yet Chosen Women attracted 30,000 participants to its Rose Bowl celebratory prayer meeting last May, and Women of Faith is expected to draw 300,000 women to its twenty-nine scheduled "Joyful Journey" conventions next year. Meanwhile, Debbie Henley, co-founder of Praise Keepers, has openly compared her group to the Promise Keepers, confidently noting that "Women's ministries are always bigger than the men's. This will be bigger than the men's." Combined, several hundred thousand participants from a wide range of racial and eth-



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CARLSON

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nic backgrounds attend evangelical women's conferences, seminars, and local meetings such as these, with thousands more joining all-female Christian diet groups, Bible studies, and local prayer circles in their own churches.

My first encounter with this world of evangelical women came in 1993, when I began studying Women's Aglow Fellowship, a professedly nonpolitical devotional group that emerged in the 1960s and is still going strong throughout America and abroad. Like its younger Christian counterparts now sweeping the country, Aglow is sustained by national and international conference events; however, the heart of the group's activity occurs in monthly local meetings, where women get together for worship, biblical exhortation, and, most importantly, prayer. The first Aglow retreat I attended left me astonished. It was here that I heard for the first of many times an evangelical Christian woman speak publicly and in graphic terms about her own sexual abuse, here that I first witnessed hundreds of women mourn aloud their own lost childhood and beseech prayer from others who claimed similarly wrenching experiences. My pretenses to scholarly detachment were shaken by my immediate observations of such pain—I listened with wonder as two elderly women sitting near me at the back of the room told one another about their own experiences of sexual abuse, then held each other like mothers cradling their children.

I thought, then and many times afterward, of the cultural stereotypes commonly depicting conservative Christian women as meek followers of the men who run their churches, as puppets duped by the leaders of the religious right, or, more threateningly, as militant antifeminists in the tradition of Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye; in this context, such images seemed ludicrous. Rather, it appeared far truer to think of these women as survivors in the therapeutic sense of the word, as women who love and nurture one another and, in the noted phrase of feminist theologian Nelle Morton, "hear each other to speech." Few people could view the emotion, the travail, and the call to empowerment I saw in women's evangelical meetings without being profoundly moved. The poignancy of these prayers, their sorrow and their transformative power, drew me in.

Such moments begin to demonstrate that feminists have more in common with conservative religious women than either group, or most outsiders, might presume. Just as the Promise Keepers have been obviously and profoundly influenced by feminism—the ideals of relational intimacy, marital partnership, and male responsibility clearly owe much to the second wave of the women's movement—so too have Aglow and other evangelical women's groups. This influence is palpably manifest in the resolutely egalitarian strands of thought that flow beneath and alongside the rhetoric of female submission to male authority and, far more often than not, submerge it. As time spent with any one of these evangelical groups will show, these threads regularly co-exist in women's religious speech and are woven into elaborate, kaleidoscopic patterns of activity and expectation in their everyday lives. Indeed, contemporary religious affirmations of "submission" may say more about male fantasies of power (particularly among men who may have little access to social power elsewhere) and female collusion in such fantasies than about most domestic realities. Without in any way diminishing the horrific situation of those women trapped in abusive forms of submissiveness, it seems safe to say that a great many avowals of wifely submission are far more symbolic than real. And the vast majority of both the men and their wives seem quite well aware of—and content with—that fact.

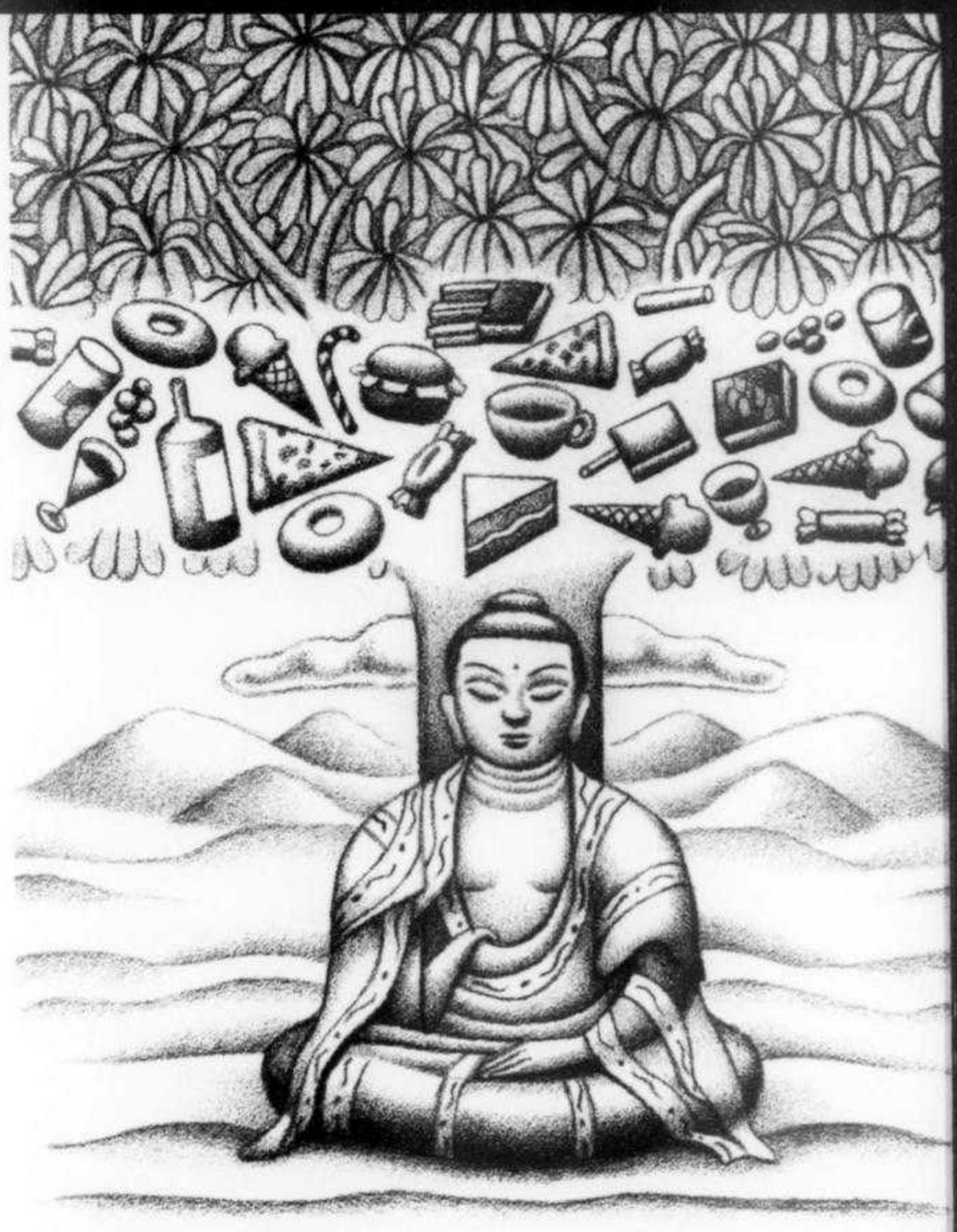
It seems safe to say that a great many avowals of wifely submission are far more symbolic than real.

Few commentators on contemporary religion and politics seem overly cognizant of feminism's significant impact on the vast numbers of evangelical women in the U.S. today. Liberal feminist ire toward the language of female submission and toward the "stealth male-supremacist" Promise Keepers (as Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, has labeled the group) have prevented feminists from hearing the language of egalitarianism that so strongly inflects evangelical Christianity's diction, and that religious women—when they have finally been allowed to speak for themselves—forcefully affirm. As the fiery LaRae Kemp, a physician and wife of a Promise Keeper, proclaimed on ABC's *This Morning* the day after the Washington rally, "Anyone who knows me knows that I am NOT submissive!" Her temporarily baffled debate rival, NOW vice president Elizabeth Toledo, declined to respond with the obvious point that Kemp's declaration, and her husband's apparent support of it, owes as much or more—perhaps *much* more—to modern feminism as to the ever ambiguous gender messages of the Bible. It's too bad that this kind of exchange will probably not persuade critics to celebrate the fact that many conservative Christians now take feminist tenets about equality for granted and take care to justify their lives to the rest of the world on those grounds. Instead, all too many feminists will likely continue to slight these women's own accounts, as if those speaking remain hoodwinked victims of false consciousness.

But evangelical women's groups serve a variety of purposes that outsiders would do well to recognize, purposes that link them not only to feminists but to religious practitioners of a more progressive orientation. One of the most

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THE Zen OF Eating



Ronna Kabatznick, Ph.D.

> *And I discovered that profound truth, so difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, tranquilizing and sublime, which is not to be gained by mere reasoning, and is visible only to the wise.* —The Buddha

The key to healthy eating is learning how to change your state of mind. What you eat or don't eat is not nearly as important. That's "the Zen of eating" in a nutshell. It is an invitation to transform the emotional hungers that create eating problems into spiritual nourishment that creates inner peace. This kind of nourishment comes from connecting to your deepest longings and most passionate desires with wisdom and compassion.

The Zen of eating is based on the teachings of the Buddha, also called *The Great Physician and Healer.* Although the Buddha isn't known as an authority on eating problems, his expertise on hungers of the heart and disorders of desire is unsurpassed. These emotional hungers are the cause of many severe problems, including alcohol and drug addictions. And like these other addictions, eating problems express both the depth and range of suffering that occurs when emotional needs are ignored and physical needs are indulged. When we focus on the fleeting pleasures that come from indulging the senses, other aspects of ourselves become deprived. The Buddha's aim was to find a way to nourish those parts of ourselves that are capable of experiencing lasting satisfaction.

The Buddha defined suffering as a ravenous appetite to find peace and security in places where it can't be found. In the context of eating, this peace and security might be sought through what you weigh, what you look like, how you cook, or what restaurants you eat in. His plan to address this ravenous appetite and to offer peace of mind and heart is known as The Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths

The essence of the Four Noble Truths and its application to your eating problems is this: Food for the body is necessary, of course. But it is eaten one day and eliminated the next, whereas food for the heart lasts forever. In fact, you can think of the Four Noble Truths as recipes for nourishing the heart because that's exactly what they are. They address the various kinds and levels of spiritual food that are capable of providing a sense of fullness that no amount of food can ever match. The nourishing aspects of this kind of food aren't always obvious and they contradict what many of us consider common knowledge. For instance, restraining from pleasure is more nourishing than pursuing it; generosity is more nourishing than self-indulgence; letting go of the things you love is more nourishing than grasping them.

The Four Noble Truths identify the problem, offer a diagnosis, state the outcome, and lay out the treatment plan to end suffering. Unlike traditional weight loss plans that focus on what you can take in, this plan focuses on what you can give away. It emphasizes the deep and lasting emotional satisfaction that comes from being generous, expressing gratitude, and finding special meaning and purpose in what you eat. Eating becomes a doorway to many penetrating insights that reveal the interconnectedness of all liv-

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Adapted from the book, The Zen of Eating: Ancient Answers to Modern Weight Problems, *published in March 1998 by Perigree Books, a division of Pengiun Putnam Inc. Ronna Kabatznick, Ph.D., is a psychologist and author living in Berkeley, CA.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY AMY HILL

ing things, and how your emotional hunger helps heal everyone else's as well. Just as Isaac Newton explained physical motion in three simple laws, the Buddha explains our nature in four simple principles.

Here's a brief summary of the Four Noble Truths and how they relate to eating problems:

1. *There is suffering* (the problem). The First Noble Truth recognizes that life is fundamentally unsatisfying because it is fragile. Nothing lasts. What you weigh or what you eat cannot provide lasting nourishment because they are always changing.

2. *The cause of suffering is attachment to desire* (the diagnosis). The Second Noble Truth recognizes the cause of suffering as the misguided tendency to grasp pleasure and to reject pain. But the more you grasp (or reject), the more you suffer and feel hungry. Emotional hunger grows deeper and more painful the more you struggle against it.

3. *Suffering ends by letting go of attachments to desire* (the prognosis). The Third Noble Truth recognizes that freedom from suffering is possible. It is attained by letting go of attachments to desire, which bind you to the futile habit of seeking nourishment where it cannot be found. What provides the fullness you hunger for is not grasping at what's pleasant or rejecting what isn't, but staying present with whatever is going on.

4. *The Noble Eightfold Path outlines how to let go of attachments, and so end suffering* (the treatment plan). The Fourth Noble Truth contains the recipes for emotional nourishment that offer lasting satisfaction. The skills and qualities you learn on this path are the food for the heart that the Buddha was referring to when he said that this type of food lasts forever.

The nourishment that comes from being kind to yourself and to others is the kind of food that stays with you. Unlike physical nourishment that comes and goes no matter how many times you feel full, the fullness that comes from facing difficulties head-on creates a secure foundation of confidence and self-respect that money can't buy and physical food can't give. Qualities such as personal integrity, kindness, and honesty are priceless and can only be found within your own heart. The Eightfold Path shows the various ways to access and manifest these qualities in your everyday life, no matter what you are doing or how you are feeling.

The Middle Way

Nobody handed the Buddha the Four Noble Truths. He discovered them for himself, just as you and I must do for ourselves. Although his life was unique in many ways, he suffered and wanted lasting happiness just like every other human being.

Unlike you and me, the Buddha did not bounce back and forth between the extremes of indulgence (overeating) and deprivation (restricted eating). He realized that either extreme was a painful and unproductive path. Yes, he did have some glorious moments, but they didn't completely dispel his desire for lasting peace and security. You've probably had your share of blissful moments too (great food, great sex, vacations, etc.). But when it's over, it's over, and you find that the same old empty feeling is still there.

Instead of looking anywhere else, the Buddha decided to follow the "Middle Way," to stay focused in the present moment instead of looking for extreme solutions outside himself. He turned his attention inward and mindfully examined what was going on in his own body and mind.

The Buddha sat down under a bodhi tree. He resolved not to get up until he found freedom from the hunger that seeks satisfaction where it cannot be found. During the night "armies" of desire, lust, pleasure, pain, aggression, fear, temptation, frustration, hatred and doubt tried to divert him, but he was unmoved. The longer he sat, the stronger and more demanding these forces became.

Imagine sitting under a tree tantalized by your favorite sights, tastes, smells and sounds, and then viciously attacked by what you most hate and find unspeakably repulsive. Imagine sitting there hour after hour, having resolved not to get up until you are absolutely certain you have discovered the key to happiness. That's exactly what the Buddha did on the evening of his enlightenment.

From the outside, the Buddha's response to these forces was unremarkable. He just sat there. But what he did on the inside was extraordinary. He focused his attention on what

Ways to Become Mindful of Right Aspiration:

1. What food symbols and traditions are important to you? How can you integrate them in how you cook, shop and eat so that you feel more connected to and inspired by these experiences?

2. Learn more about the culture, history and origins of food and food traditions.
- What is halva and where does it come from?
- Do watermelons really come in yellow and white as well as pink and seedless?
- Where and when was broccoli first grown?
- What food customs do religious Greeks or Norwegians follow?
- What is the history of rhubarb?

3. Make a commitment to saying grace and/or dedicating merit at every meal, for one month. Notice what impact this practice has on your relationship toward food and its meaning in your life.

4. Volunteer in a local soup kitchen or food give-away program. Feed the hungry programs usually operate both throughout the week and on weekends, so finding the right fit with your schedule may be easier than you think.

was going on, but he did not react to it. Sometimes the forces of desire became so strong that the Buddha had to touch the ground, as his witness and support. No matter what appeared—from the most heavenly to the most demonic—he just sat there quietly and observed. He neither grasped at the delights nor rejected the repulsive. He watched them follow their natural cycle of arising and passing away without interfering with them. What he realized was as simple as it was profound. When he didn't grasp at pleasure or push away pain, he saw that his assailants were powerless. And so these forces were defeated.

By looking deeply within himself, the Buddha freed his mind from the tyranny of desire. This same freedom is available to you when you look within. What the Buddha saw and learned on that night is just as available to you and me as it was to him. He found the nourishment he was looking for, but it took both effort and honesty. There were many things he had to face and learn about before he reached enlightenment and found freedom from suffering.

He realized the lifetimes of misery that had been created because of a basic misperception: that pleasure can last and pain can be avoided. We hurt ourselves and others over and over again by grasping at experiences that change, such as our bodies and our relationships. Some suffering is inevitable because loss and change are built in to every life, but a lot of suffering is optional. It is created by our resistance to the present moment and the fact that whatever it is, it is destined to change, whether we like or not. In fact, there's nothing to like or dislike. When you look closely at each moment, you find that opposites like pleasure and pain, and even weight gain and weight loss have both advantages and drawbacks.

When you lose weight, you may feel happy for a while, but then worry sets in. You think "What if I can't keep the weight off?" or "What if I regain it all back, or even more?" And if you gain weight, you may be upset for awhile, but then a feeling of optimism may pop up. You think "Maybe I can lose weight and feel better about myself." Weight gain and weight loss both contain elements of happiness and unhappiness, so there's no point in clinging to one and rejecting the other. They are contained within each other. When you do realize this truth based on your own experience, you can receive nourishment from any moment, regardless of its content.

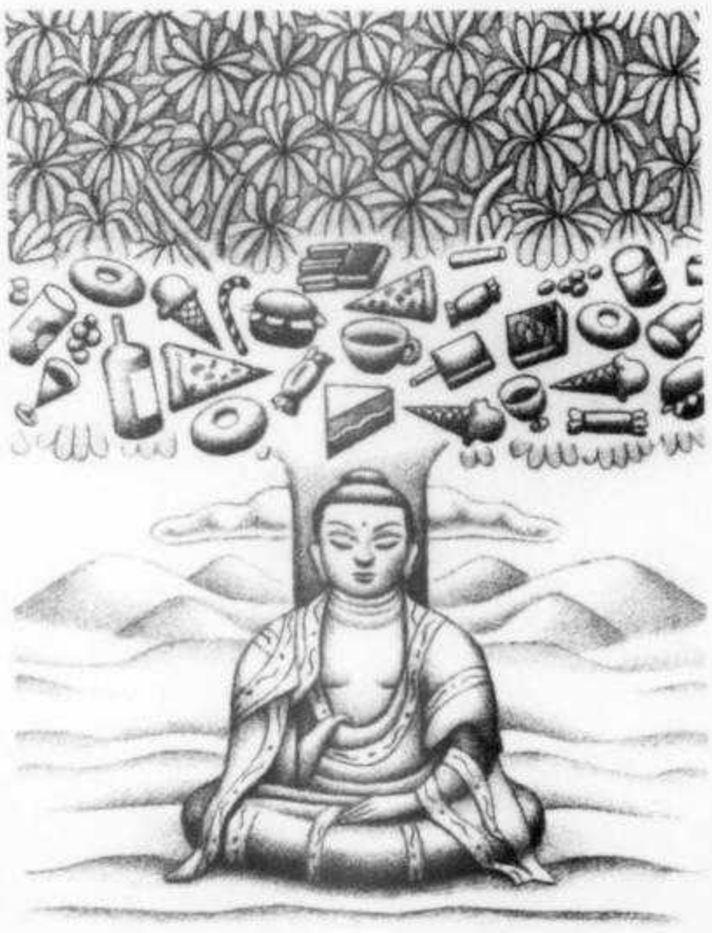
The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path teach you how to make peace with the challenges and changes that are always present. They explain how to let go of the infatuation with pleasure and the fear of pain so you can enjoy food, your body and your life situation, whatever that may be now, knowing that it will eventually change. When you apply these instructions and suggestions mindfully, you learn to accept the truth of each moment graciously, without struggle. That's how you find nourishment in the places where it can be found. This is your challenge and practice, pure and simple.

Indulgence, Restriction and the Middle Way

The Buddha compared the Middle Way that you learn from applying the Four Noble Truths to a log floating down a river. On one bank is indulgence, and on the other is deprivation. As the log flows down the river, it passes both extremes. If it gets stuck on either extreme, the log sinks or rots. But when the log follows the Middle Path, it floats down the river and reaches the ocean of freedom.

Most people struggling with eating issues are stuck on the bank of either indulgence or restriction. On the bank of indulgence, 58 million people in this country are defined as "obese," and that number is growing. One in three Americans weighs 20% more than his or her ideal body weight. On the bank of restriction, 60 million people are trying to lose weight. Although there are plenty of "get thin quick" solutions, statistics show that people are gaining more weight and losing less.

Both extremes involve a lot of suffering. Overweight people are at an increased risk for diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, gout and some forms of cancer. Those stuck on the bank of deprivation to the point of anorexia or bulimia risk disturbing their digestive and elimination systems, and even the possibility of death by starvation. There is tremendous emotional suffering taking place at both extremes. People feel like worthless failures, unable to overcome their struggle with managing their appetites or relentless feelings of deprivation. Keep in mind, the Buddha never said "The end of suffering is easy." He did say, "The end of suffering is possible."



Disorder of Desire

Like you, I've spent many years trying to free myself from the extremes of deprivation and indulgence. My obsessions with both overeating and under eating helped distract me from feeling painful emotional wounds. I could have spent the rest of my life examining the relationship between my eating habits and my childhood—there was certainly enough to look at. But the past didn't necessar-

ily bear any relationship to what I was eating in the present. When it came to wanting a cheese omelette with french fries, self-examination didn't help much. Like Oscar Wilde, I could "resist anything but temptation." I managed to stay at a reasonable weight, but the struggle was so unpleasant it hardly seemed worth it.

My preoccupation with food eventually became a career. For nine years I helped develop the psychological aspects of the Weight Watchers food plan. My job was to develop techniques and strategies to help overweight people learn self-awareness and self-acceptance as they lost weight.

I scoured the scientific literature searching for clues to the mystery of obesity and why so many proposed solutions have eluded so many intelligent people. Scientists can learn how to duplicate life through cloning; politicians have helped end decades of racial persecution in South Africa. Religious leaders have begun a peace process in the Middle East; astronomers have found signs of life on Mars. Why can't anyone figure out how to help people maintain a healthy weight?

I also spoke with many amazing people, ones who had overcome life-threatening illnesses and unspeakable tragedies while going to school, managing careers, raising children, and running households. Yet when it came to their weight, they were powerless. What accounts for this disparity? Why were they able to endure tremendous sacrifices in their lives but not able to pass up a candy bar? How could they could give up bread at Passover, alcohol at Lent, or fast all day during Ramadan, but be unable to resist fattening foods?

The Four Noble Truths help us see the answers to these questions: *overeating is a disorder of desire*. Eating problems are the result of not understanding the futility of attachment to desire in a world that is constantly changing. Freedom from eating problems comes from changing your relationship to desire and learning how to make peace with whatever is present. This requires a willingness to explore alternative forms of nourishment that are capable of offering the inner satisfaction that's eluded you for so long.

The Soup Kitchen

One key aspect of the Eightfold Path (Right Action) stresses the importance of generosity. The Buddha said, "If you knew what I do about the power of giving, you wouldn't let a single meal go by without taking the opportunity to give."

So between business trips and helping patients struggle with the burden of abundance, I discovered how emotionally nourishing it was to offer time and resources to a local soup kitchen. At this church meeting hall free food was provided for between 150 and 200 people. Among them were families who ran out of food stamps and single parents with small children. They gathered for a free hot meal, possibly their only one of the day.

At the soup kitchen food is a source of delight, not a source of misery. People rarely complain. There are no menus so there are no choices. It's "take it or leave it." No one turns down food because it is "too fattening" or sends it back to the kitchen because it wasn't prepared the "right" way.

Everyone at the soup kitchen receives the same simple meal. Most consist of canned pork and beans or spaghetti and meatballs. Processed turkey loaf with instant mashed potatoes is a special treat. There's a special feeling of community among those who give and those who receive. For a few moments in the day, people who are normally perceived as outcasts experience a sense of dignity and worthiness that comes from being well fed and treated with kindness. At the same time, people who have the luxury of abundance have the opportunity to help others, and share their resources in ways that bring substantial nourishment to both groups.

Dieters Feed the Hungry

I often left the soup kitchen feeling full and exhilarated. My enthusiasm about the nourishment that comes from helping others led me to start an organization called Dieters Feed the Hungry. The idea was to encourage people struggling with eating problems to expand the ways in which they nourish themselves by practicing generosity and feeding hungry people. I put a small ad in the local newspaper and the program took off. I matched volunteers, their skills and interests to various soup kitchens and food give away programs. Some people made casseroles for a battered women's shelters, some people donated eggs to a breakfast program for homeless men, and others served food or washed dishes in local soup kitchens.

Just as the organization was taking off and gaining momentum, a firestorm ripped through the Oakland, California hills, and burned down nearly 3,000 houses including my house and office. Everything was destroyed: the Dieters Feed the Hungry mailing list, volunteer and resource lists, our correspondence, and plans for new projects were burnt to ashes (in addition to everything I owned, except for the shirt on my back).

Although Dieters Feed the Hungry is no longer operating, many volunteers have continued to donate their time and resources to the soup kitchens and food give away programs they made a commitment to many years ago. They continue to receive a kind of lasting nourishment from giving to others that they can't find in anything they eat.

It's my hope the insights and changes that come from applying the Four Noble Truth and practicing generosity help transform your emotional hunger into lasting nourishment. I also hope that you will share your physical and emotional resources with hungry people so everyone gets fed and feels nourished, on every level.

The "desire crisis" that hurts millions of people and helps almost no one can be transformed. But you're the only one who can make this work. ❑

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Pete Hamill

Jack Newfield



Pete Hamill, 62, is one of the leading journalists of his generation. He's been editor of both the New York Post *and the* New York Daily News. *He has written three novels, several screenplays and Grammy award-winning liner notes for Bob Dylan's* Blood on the Tracks. *His memoir,* A Drinking Life, *was a best seller, and his most recent novel,* Snow in August, *will soon be made into a movie. He grew up in Brooklyn, and now lives in lower Manhattan. He and Jack Newfield have been colleagues and friends for thirty-five years.*

NEWFIELD: What's happened to tabloid journalism between 1965, when you started doing a column for the *New York Post*, to today? Because it was once drama and emotion, and now somehow it's become sex and gossip.

HAMILL: There's a disjunction between the people putting out the tabloids today and the people reading them, a disjunction based on education, class, in some cases, even nationality. The Fleet Street formula has been tried here, and it's basically not worked, in my opinion. It doesn't make for profitable newspapers, to start with, and it doesn't make for memorable newspapers, except in the left-handed way that you remember some outrageous headline.

The fixation on celebrities, which has a kind of nose-pressed-to-the-glass quality to it, has debased the papers to some extent. The notion now is that any banal thing done by a celebrity is of interest and that celebrities are defined according to what a press agent decides is the best strategy. Like Donald Trump, for example—whoever heard of a builder becoming a celebrity?

NEWFIELD: Did you do any surveys when you were editor of the *New York Daily News* about who people are actually interested in?

HAMILL: The paper did its first readers' poll in a long time, trying to find out what readers were looking for. The number one issue with the readers of the *Daily News* was education, for obvious reasons. The *Daily News* probably has more readers with kids in the public school system than the other two New York papers combined. The second most important issue was the environment. And when I say important, it means 75 percent of the readers rated education number one. A few points behind that, the environment, which is shocking to me … until you read the fine print a little bit. They're not talking about the Sierra Club's idea of environment, or whether we should save the whales or Yellowstone or something. They're concerned with how people live in the city. Can you get asthma from living in the Bronx? Is it safe to drink your tap water? What's air pollution doing to your kids? That kind of notion of the environment, how we live in a city.

Gossip was down at about 30 percent. Only eight percent of the readers bought the paper on the basis of what was on page one. So the fixation over the great page ones doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference, compared to consistent, steady coverage of the school system. At the time we took the poll, we had one reporter covering the school system.

NEWFIELD: And a million and one kids.

HAMILL: More than a million kids. It's like having one reporter cover Denver. So we had to increase that right away. You have to understand that when you cover an education system, you're covering both policy and practice. But the notion that people were more interested in Madonna's dress than they were in why their kids can't read is preposterous.

NEWFIELD: So tabloids, you're saying, are predicated on a false premise.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK POST

Jack Newfield is the author of six books and a columnist for the New York Post. *He is currently completing a three-hour documentary film on Robert Kennedy that will be aired on the Discovery Network in June of 1998.*

HAMILL: To me, news is a verb. Princess Di sells her clothes at Christie's, or wherever: the verb in that is not enough to sustain massive coverage. Princess Di gets killed in a car crash: you're absolutely justified to tell that story as best you can, and to have with it a sense of context. That's what's missing from a lot of this. One of the things that should distinguish newspapers from television is context; we should be providing context for what this raw material is on television. And one of the things that context has is memory.

I saw one young reporter on television at the time of the Princess Di thing talking about how this was one of the great tragedies of the millennium. And I thought, Jeez, maybe she means the Millennium Hotel down by the World Trade Center or something. To think that this car crash is the equal of the Black Death, the Holocaust, Stalin's gulags, Pol Pot, Bosnia, tuberculosis, polio and all is preposterous. It means there's no context based on memory or understanding of the world. And I don't think it's beyond the focus of tabloids to provide some of that memory. They must. They must certainly know the story of their own city. Because newspapers are not edited for a class, they're edited for a community.

NEWFIELD: Is this part of the same phenomenon that you wrote about in a famous 1994 piece in *Esquire* called "Endgame," where you talked of the decline in the products of popular culture … films, literature—a lowering of standards?

HAMILL: The intelligence of the people is there, and it's making its decisions every day by *not buying* the newspaper. You know, if there was this great mass audience of stupid people and you put out stupid papers for stupid people, you'd be selling five million a day. The audience is not that stupid.

In New York, immigrants might not have a mastery of English, but their kids do. And if you don't get those kids … right now, for example, Stuyvesant High School is 50 percent Asian. Thirty years ago it would have been 50 percent Jewish. Those Asian kids are not going to read stupid papers on their way to Stuyvesant High School. If they pick up the tabloid papers and they both have stories about Ivana Trump or something, they'll pass. They'll go to *The New York Times*. *The Times* becomes the paper of upward mobility, of rising expectations.

NEWFIELD: So you're saying the decision-makers in the media are underestimating the intelligence of the audience.

HAMILL: Yes, because of the gulf between them and the audience. They don't know who the audience is, because they're not of that audience, and they have made no attempt to find out who they are. Instead of going out and riding around on subway trains the way Captain Patterson did in the great day of the *Daily News*, they order up focus groups. They order up demographic studies. They listen to other people instead of going out and finding out for themselves.

NEWFIELD: And what power does the audience have to raise the standards of what they're being sold?

HAMILL: Well, they're doing that now by refusal. If people turn out junk … it's like the American auto industry ten years ago. Sales began to drop and drop and drop because the product was dreadful. In comparison to what the Japanese were then making, and to some extent the Germans, the quality for the price was just not there. And people didn't buy. One result of that was Detroit rose to the occasion and made an effort to increase the quality of the automobiles.

In newspapers in particular, if you trivialize your product, if you make it dumber, if you fill it up with a lot of brainless gossip that's half-believable, the advertiser understands that if the readers don't believe the newspaper, they're not going to believe the advertising. So as a commercial proposition, it really makes no sense. You don't even get big circulation gains with this stuff. If anything, newspapers like that are either static or falling.

NEWFIELD: Do you think New York is coming back? Are immigrants contributing to this renaissance?

HAMILL: Oh, it is back. I think there are three or four factors. One, obviously, is Giuliani, because at the heart of the matter, the way you deal with crime is essential to the way the city functions. You can't have an economy in which people are afraid to get out of the house and go to Macy's and buy stuff. You have to have a city in which the sense of menace is not completely erased, but it is at least lifted and allows people to use the great things of the city. What good is the Metropolitan Museum is you're afraid to get in the subway train to go and visit it? I think Giuliani's also extremely lucky that the general economy is good. He's lucky also because the crack plague has faded.

Given all those things, I think the other uncountable thing—unprovable to some extent—is the immigrants. I think the immigrants have added new social cement to the city. They're buying houses, cheap houses, and fixing them up. Making something out of them. Driving roots into the community. They've gone from that phase that all immigrant groups go through—the Jews, the Irish, the Italians—where you come and you work for somebody else, initially. Then you work for yourself, then someone works for you. There are a lot of immigrants now in the third stage where other people work for them, certainly among the Asians. They're also mastering English. They're following the traditional three steps. First you learn enough English to be polite and get paid. Then you and your kids talk in the old country language plus some English, and then the kids in the next stage don't know any of the old country language. It's following the same pattern. It doesn't appear to be as quick as the last one, because the immigration wave is continuing.

NEWFIELD: Do you think the same thing is true for Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago?

HAMILL: No, no, because Los Angeles has no tradition of dealing with immigrants, so they see immigrants as a

problem. We see immigrants as an opportunity and as part of our tradition. That's how we all got here. We know what it's like.

NEWFIELD: You think there's more of a work ethic among some of the newer immigrants, and more of an entrepreneurial tradition?

HAMILL: Yes, yes. And to some extent, they're also free of history. They come here not to despair. They come here with a sense of optimism. They bring that, and that drives them. They have a work ethic. Because where they came from, there were not government programs that said, "Hey, you can sit on the stoop for the rest of your life." The Cubans came to Miami and began to surpass the African Americans who were already living in Miami. If that begins to happen here, we have a potentially big problem.

NEWFIELD: Isn't that part of the envy of the Koreans that the African Americans feel, which was demonstrated, to some degree, in the grocery boycott in Brooklyn a few years ago? There is a feeling among some blacks that Koreans and other Asian groups are about to leapfrog over them on the economic ladder?



Pete Hamill and his wife, Fukiko

HAMILL: Yeah, and that situation is not solved by passively standing on the sidelines and complaining about it. That's only solved by opening your own grocery store. That's the only way to do it. What I'm hoping is that the example of these immigrants will inspire a whole generation of African Americans to say, "Hey, here comes a guy who can't speak English. He's got *bupkus* in his suitcase and it's tied together with a rope, and in five years he's got a grocery store. How'd he do that?" The way he did it is obvious. It's right in front of you. He works fourteen hours a day. He sleeps in the back of the store. He forces his kid to do his homework. That's a great example.

When I was a kid in Brooklyn, when you were a kid in Brooklyn, I would say that 97 percent of the candy stores were owned by Jews, the way that 97 percent of them now seem to be owned by guys from India or Pakistan. They lived in the back of the stores. They worked all day. They were up at six and they closed the store at ten at night. And they did it so their kids wouldn't have to run candy stores. And the kids went to CCNY, and they went on to a lot of places. And there are no Jewish candy stores anywhere that I know of in New York anymore, because they succeeded. What they set out to do took place. Because the deal in America, which every immigrant was ever taught, which I was taught as a kid, was you can be anything in this country if you work for it.

NEWFIELD: That brings us to your novel, *Snow in August*, which is now in paperback. You've said that you wrote the book almost as a thank you to Jewish culture, because it taught you three things that you want to pass along. Moral intelligence, irony, and tenacity.

HAMILL: I think those things are evident. They're sometimes forgotten. But for those of us who grew up after the war, as I did, in the late summer of 1945, we saw the first films from Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen and these horrors. And we asked the unanswerable questions: How could this happen? Why didn't anybody stop this? Those questions have occurred to millions of people, Jewish and non-Jewish. To have seen that, and then to have witnessed the kind of city that evolved right after the war—it became, on one level, one of the greatest Jewish cities that has ever existed in terms of the high culture, the intellectual life, the triumph of City College. Triumphs in the law, triumphs, eventually, in politics.

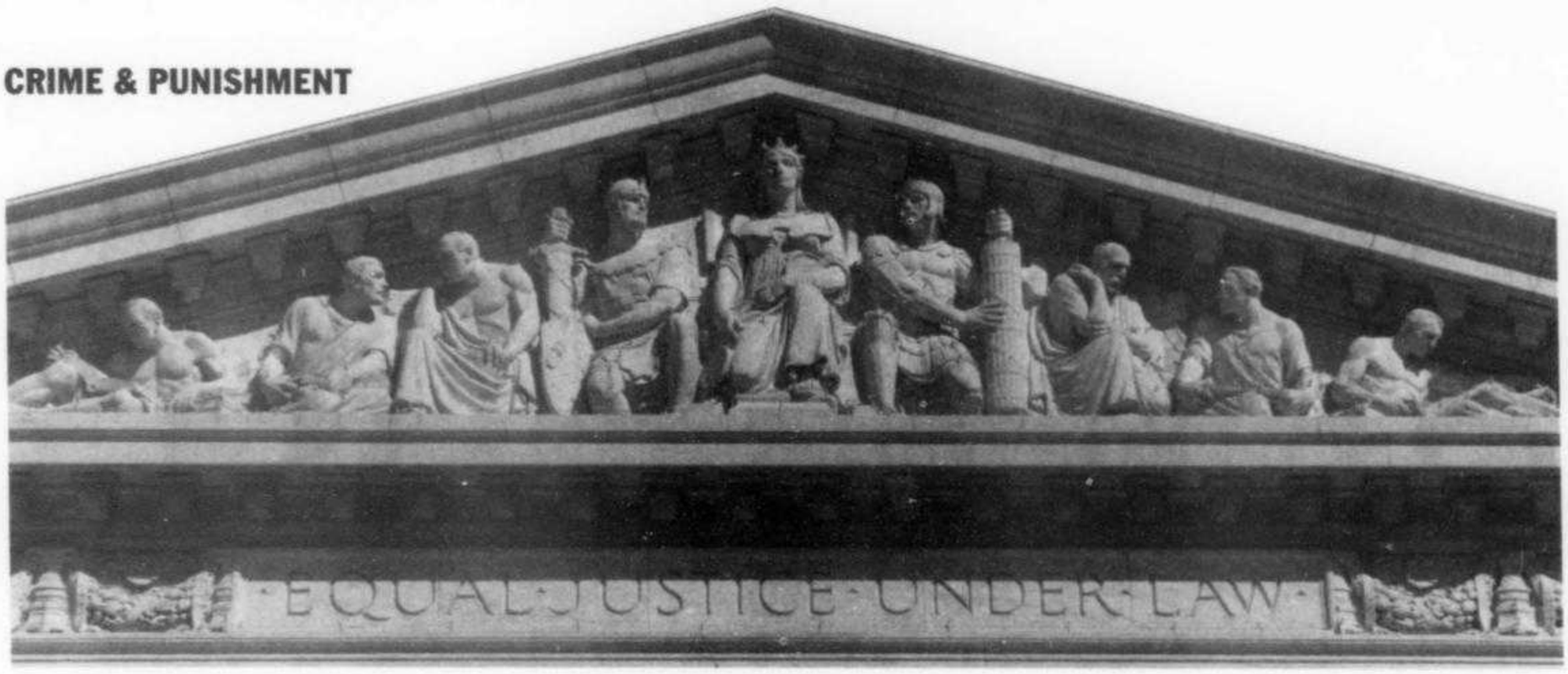
To have seen that was to have witnessed what I hope is one of the underlying things in the book, which is the lesson of tenacity and survival accompanied by joy. To be able to say, "You can kill us, you can isolate us, you can keep us out of your goddamn country clubs. You can create quotas for our kids in your medical schools. You can do all those things. We will survive and we will dance."

And part of the joy was the joy of learning. The joy of acquiring wisdom and acquiring the history of the human race, which meant that the libraries weren't for the Jews, they were for all of us. You know, libraries are for everybody. The libraries are not isolated and ghettoized. Nobody can tell me that black kids should go and only read Richard Wright. Bullshit. Shakespeare belongs to every African American kid in this country. You know, just as Garcia Marquez belongs to every Asian kid, and Charlie Parker and Billie Holliday belong to me. Nobody's going to tell me I can't read Ralph Ellison or Albert Murray. That's preposterous!

All culture is multicultural, and American culture in particular is multicultural in the true sense of that word. Not monocultural. Not African literature for African Americans. Ridiculous! Whoever heard of putting anyone in a straitjacket like that. So there was that. There was the survival and tenacity.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBIN GRAUBARD / NEW YORK POST



CRIME & PUNISHMENT REVISITED

These articles by David Dolinko and Fleet Maull continue an ongoing investigation into the prison system begun with our special Crime & Punishment section in the 1997 Nov/Dec issue of TIKKUN.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS OF MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

David Dolinko

In January 1992, Johnny Patillo was arrested for trying to send a package containing 681 grams of crack cocaine from Los Angeles to Dallas. Patillo, a twenty-seven-year-old African American, subsequently pleaded guilty. He had a college education, a steady job, and no prior criminal record. Patillo said that desperation over mounting debts had driven him to accept $500 from a neighbor for sending what he knew was a drug-laden package, though he hadn't known which drug or how much was involved. His punishment: ten years in a federal prison, without possibility of parole.

Federal District Judge J. Spencer Letts, who imposed that sentence, believed that it was wildly excessive. Patillo had a spotless prior record and committed a nonviolent, low level drug offense, yet would serve more time than many rapists and armed robbers. Judge Letts—a Republican appointed by Ronald Reagan—candidly acknowledged having postponed sentencing several times while vainly seeking some way to avoid this "barbaric" sentence. But he could not avoid it, because Congress had made the ten-year sentence the *mandatory minimum* punishment for anyone convicted of trafficking in more than fifty grams of crack.

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David Dolinko is a Professor of Law at the UCLA School of Law who has written on the philosophical presuppositions of criminal law.

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK REINHARD / IMPACT VISUALS

RUMBLINGS FROM THE INSIDE

Fleet Maull

Just the other day at mail call, which immediately follows the 4:00 PM "standing bedside count," I received a very kind letter from Ms. Carol Evans, a social worker at an inner city New Orleans hospice. She thanked me for the prison hospice literature and training materials I'd sent to help her organization establish an inmate-staffed hospice volunteer program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. She also expressed her gratitude for the critical on-site support they'd received from the staff of the National Prison Hospice Association (NPHA), an organization I founded in 1991 based on my experience as a volunteer caregiver in the pioneering inmate-staffed hospice program here at the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. I founded NPHA to promote this highly successful approach to the care of dying prisoners throughout the country and to provide exactly this kind of direct assistance to start-up programs.

It's difficult for me to express the deep gratitude and satisfaction I felt in reading Ms. Evans' letter. Daily prison fare consists of experiences of quite the opposite sort. Day in and day out, the prison environment communicates one

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Fleet Maull is a novice monk in the Tibetan Buddhist Kagyu tradition and was ordained in the Zen Peacemaker Order in 1997. He is currently serving a twenty-five-year prison sentence on drug "kingpin" charges. His earliest possible release date is 1999.



RUMBLINGS FROM THE INSIDE *(continued from page 27)*

thing to prisoners—shame. It's built into the wake-ups, the body counts, our prison jobs, the mainline stampedes to the mess hall and the body searches upon leaving, the periodic room shakedowns and urine drops for drug testing, and the "bend over and spread 'em" full body searches coming and going from the visiting room. There are continual messages built into the system, and consciously and unconsciously reinforced by staff and prisoners alike, to remind us that we are second class human beings at best.

Buried under a mountain of guilt, shame, and demonization heaped upon us from day one of our arrest onward by prosecutors, judges, jailers, the media, politicians, correctional staff, and society, we have a very difficult time making contact with the appropriate and genuine feelings of guilt and remorse we need to acknowledge in order to begin a process of change and healing. Instead we tend to project our shame and self-hatred outward in the form of anger, bitterness, and hostility toward the system and its representatives.

Bo Lozoff, author of *We're All Doing Time* and co-founder of the Human Kindness Foundation, argues that the problem with both the rehabilitation and punishment models between which the pendulum of social policy and politics has swung over the years is that both make the prisoner the sole focus of attention, thus reinforcing the already strong narcissistic character traits which brought most of us to prison in the first place. Those favoring rehabilitation have made the prisoner the focal point of various psychodynamic, cognitive, and behavior modification treatment strategies, in effect turning prisoners into clients or patients. The punishment model does essentially the same thing, except in this case the treatment combines callous, lock-em-up warehousing with continual reinforcement of prisoners' self-hatred: "You're no good, you're a criminal, an animal, a thug," which leads to: "I'm no good, I'm a criminal, I'm an animal, a thug."

Neither approach encourages, much less empowers, prisoners to take responsibility for what they've done, for making amends, or for changing their future. Lozoff suggests that we should take the seemingly radical approach of treating prisoners with kindness, decency, and respect while empowering them to take responsibility for changing their own lives through work, education and service. He calls on prisoners to begin treating each other and the staff with this same respect, and to take responsibility for transforming themselves and their world, in and out of prison.

Recently, a magically transformative three-day training program called *Beyond Release* was brought into the prison by two staff psychologists and Athanor, Inc., an organization based in Prescott, Arizona. Participants were ethnically African-, Asian-, European-, Hispanic- and Native-American; held agnostic, Hindu, Muslim, Protestant, and universalist religious views and affiliations; and ranged in age from twenty-one to sixty-eight. And with all that diversity we were somehow able to come together in community and to overcome an unwritten but deeply entrenched prison code of survival which tells us we should trust no one, tell our business to no one, never let anyone see our fear or vulnerability, and stick with our own kind, our homeboys. Within the challenging but safe context established by our trainers, we found ourselves opening up to each other with few barriers or boundaries other than the firmly agreed-upon ground rules of mutual respect, confidentiality and non-violence.

I've been blessed with opportunities to explore a great variety of very beneficial psycho-spiritual technologies for growth and healing, before and since coming to prison; but I'd never before been with such a diverse and vital group of men able to communicate on such an intense level of raw, open vulnerability and genuine caring for one another. It was a revelation of what could be. Inspired by this taste of authentic being and genuine relationship, many of the men, including myself, got on the phone during the days immediately following the training and made long-awaited amends with parents, spouses and children. Many of us made amends and repaired relationships with prison staff and fellow prisoners as well; and at our weekly follow-up group meetings, some shared the positive experiences they were now having through applying the principles we'd learned in training: to communicate honestly and openly from the heart and to accept complete and total responsibility for our own lives and behaviors.

The hospice program has been another beacon of hope, helping us to transform our lives by getting out of ourselves and focusing instead on the needs of others. Started in 1987 by a wheelchair-bound paraplegic prisoner, a chaplain, and a psychologist, this first-of-its-kind inmate-staffed hospice volunteer program has now ministered to the needs of over 325 terminally ill patients and become a national model for other prison hospices starting up all over the country. In these programs, a select group of volunteers is recruited who, after completing a thorough course of hospice training, will be ready to offer companionship, practical assistance, non-medical bedside care, and emotional and spiritual support to their fellow prisoners living with terminal illnesses and facing an otherwise bleak death in a tough penitentiary. The hospices generally provide ongoing education, training, and logistical support to the physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and correctional staff who will supervise the inmate volunteers.

The hospice program has meant not only that prison patients have not had to die a lonely, bleak death devoid of the caring presence of another human being, but that scores of volunteers and patients alike have had the opportunity to move beyond the resentment, blame, and justification game to confront the real issues of their lives and the real consequences of their past. Death has become the great teacher, guiding us to discover the basic goodness inherent in ourselves and others and the compassion which flows naturally from an open heart. ❑



MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES *(continued from page 27)*

A mandatory minimum statute requires anyone convicted of the crime it covers to receive at least the prescribed term of imprisonment if the criteria specified in the statute are met, no matter what other factors are present in the case. (In theory, death could be the prescribed mandatory penalty, but contemporary Supreme Court decisions have essentially held all mandatory death-sentence statutes unconstitutional.) The criteria that trigger the mandatory sentence may be features of the crime (like the amount of drugs sold), of the criminal (like prior convictions), or of the victim (like the age of a person to whom drugs are sold). These statutes are not new in American law: Congress, for example, adopted its first mandatory minimum statute (aimed at piracy) in 1790. But mandatory minimums were relatively rare until recent years. Their enormous importance in the federal system today stems from the "War on Drugs" of the Reagan era. Of some sixty-odd federal mandatory minimum statutes, a mere four account for more than 90 percent of the federal cases where mandatory sentences are imposed: those dealing with the manufacture and distribution, possession, and importation of illegal drugs, and a statute mandating extra terms of imprisonment for the use of a gun in committing a drug offense or a crime of violence.

States, too, have shown increasing fondness for mandatory minimum statutes in recent years, beginning with Nelson Rockefeller's anti-drug law in New York in 1973 and spreading during the following ten years to fourty-nine of the fifty states. In recent years "three strikes" statutes, mandating life imprisonment for repeat offenders, have been adopted in more than a quarter of the states.

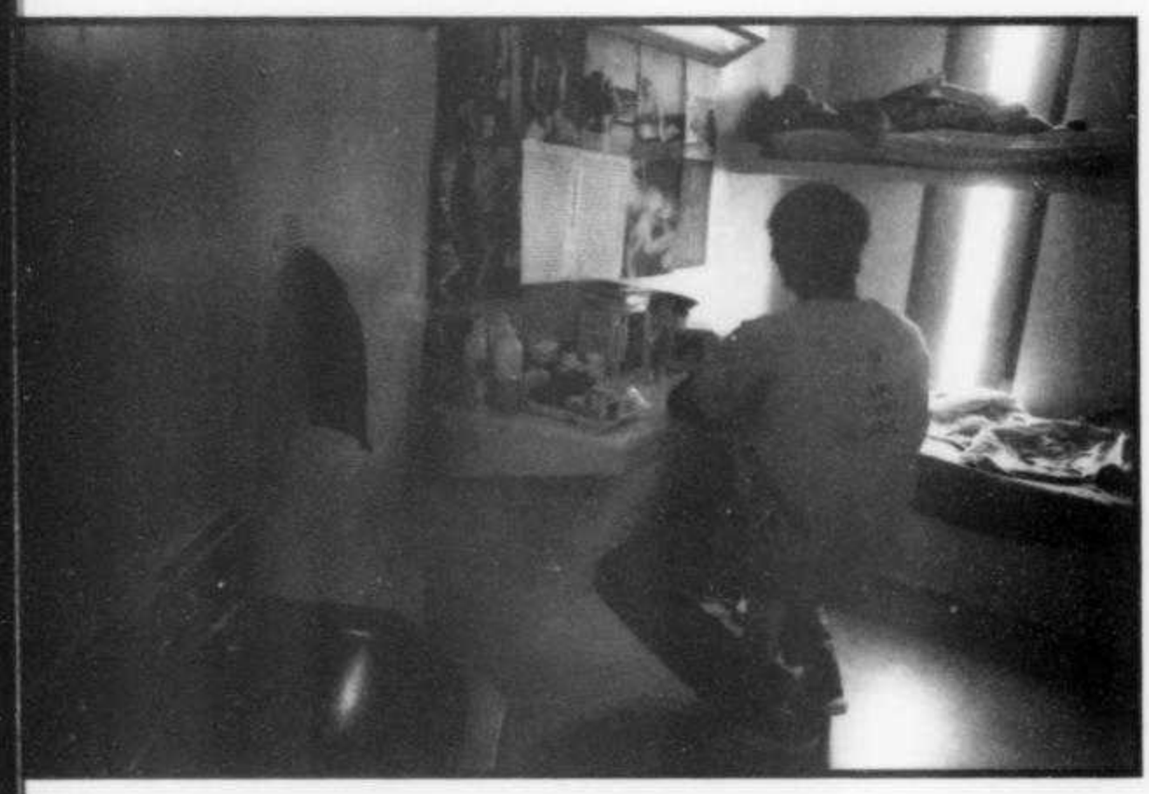
The principal moral problem posed by a mandatory minimum statute is the one that Johnny Patillo's case illustrates: the judge must impose a predetermined sentence for the crime in question, ignoring *any features* of the defendant's character, history, and circumstances that might call for a lesser punishment. As Judge Letts put it, it would make no difference to Patillo's sentence if the day before his crime he "had rescued fifteen children from a burning building, or had won the Congressional Medal of Honor while defending his country." To adopt such a statute seems like an act of hubris—a declaration that we are certain, in advance, that anyone who commits the offense it covers *must* deserve the harsh sentence the statute mandates, regardless of any mitigating factors or extenuating circumstances in an individual case. Alternatively, the statute could be seen as a declaration that there are overriding reasons why anyone who commits the specified offense should be given the mandatory sentence even if it *does* exceed what he or she deserves.

This problem of "rigidity," as I will call it, must infect any mandatory minimum statute. If a judge were free to reduce the sentence whenever mitigating factors made such leniency appropriate, there would be no "mandatory" minimum at all! Before examining the rigidity issue further, though, we should observe that many mandatory sentencing laws generate their own specific additional problems. Often, these laws draw strikingly unfair or irrational distinctions. An example of unfairness is the notorious "100-to-1" disparity in the treatment of powder and crack cocaine in the federal drug laws. There is a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years for trafficking in 5000 grams of powder cocaine or in 50 grams of crack, and a five-year minimum for 500 grams of powder or 5 grams of crack. Because 90 percent of federal crack defendants are black while almost half of the powder cocaine defendants are white, this disparity has had a greatly disproportionate impact on black defendants. Yet the 100-to-1 ratio lives on, having survived legal challenges on equal protection grounds, the United States Sentencing Commission's recommendation that it be abolished, and recent research suggesting that there is little scientific basis for the distinction.

As for irrationality, consider the sentencing of LSD traffickers. As with other drugs, the mandatory minimum sentence for the sale of LSD depends on the amount sold—ten years for ten grams or more, five years for amounts between one and ten grams. LSD, however, is so potent—the average dose contains only .05 milligrams, or one twenty-thousandth of a gram—that it is normally transferred to a carrier medium, like blotter paper, gelatin, or sugar cubes, and sold by the dose rather than by weight. But the Supreme Court has held that the applicable mandatory minimum statute requires taking into consideration the *combined* weight of the carrier medium and the LSD dose. Thus a person who sells six doses of LSD on sugar cubes (which weigh more than 2 grams apiece) is subject to the mandatory ten-year minimum sentence, while someone who sells 19,000 doses in pure form would escape even the five-year minimum!

Further potential for unfairness and irrationality in the federal mandatory minimum laws lies in the very limited exception that these laws permit. Generally, a defendant

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAIN McLAUGHLIN / IMPACT VISUALS





convicted under one of these statutes can receive less than the mandatory minimum *only* if the prosecution moves for a lower sentence in return for "substantial assistance" in prosecuting others. This bonus for aiding the government creates what federal appellate judge Frank Easterbrook has called the prospect of "inverted sentencing": "The more serious the defendant's crimes, the lower the sentence—because the greater his wrongs, the more information and assistance he has to offer a prosecutor." Nor is this just a theoretical possibility, as the case of twenty-year-old Nicole Richardson of Mobile, Alabama illustrates. Richardson told a government informant where to find her boyfriend to finalize an LSD sale. With no information to trade for a sentence reduction, she was convicted of conspiracy to distribute 21.19 grams of LSD and drew the ten-year mandatory minimum. Her boyfriend was able to help prosecutors—and his sentence was reduced to five years.

Yet problems like "inverted sentencing," the crack/powder differential, and the LSD absurdity are not at the heart of the qualms many people feel about mandatory minimum sentences. These problems, after all, could be eliminated without abandoning mandatory minimums altogether. Indeed, "inverted sentencing" may have become less likely since Congress enacted a "safety valve" provision in 1994, making the most frequently applied mandatory minimum drug statutes inapplicable to a carefully defined category of nonviolent, low level offenders with little or no prior criminal records.

What *cannot* so easily be remedied is the problem I earlier called "rigidity." Mandatory minimum statutes, by their very nature, compel us to disregard highly relevant aspects of the individual defendant's case. If we look more carefully at this problem, we will see that it creates a conflict with very basic notions of justice.

One of the ideas most frequently singled out as central to the concept of justice is this: like cases are to be treated alike, and unlike cases are to be treated differently. The belief that this is a—even *the*—crucial aspect of justice can be traced back to Aristotle. Mandatory minimum sentences violate both parts of this precept: they mete out the same treatment to greatly differing cases, while sharply distinguishing between situations that are virtually identical.

Treating unlike cases the same: Smith, once a champion boxer, is now brain-damaged and broke, having lost most of his considerable earnings to crafty, dishonest hangers-on. He's tried running a restaurant but it failed, and the loan shark who'd advanced him his start-up capital is threatening violence unless he gets a payment at once. In desperation, Smith yields to a friend's importunings and agrees, for $1000, to drive an auto from Mexico into California. Smith is pretty sure the car must contain drugs, though he asks no questions. He's caught coming over the border. There is a kilogram of heroin concealed in the car.

Jones, like Smith, has no prior criminal record and agrees to drive a drug-laden car over the border. Jones, however, is wealthy; he's doing this not for money, but because he craves the excitement and enjoys the thought of flouting the law. Moreover, Jones was explicitly told that there is a kilo of heroin in the car. Indeed, he volunteered to drive the car to San Diego after hearing this, purely for the thrill.

Surely these are extremely different cases. Is it right that Smith and Jones should receive the same ten-year prison sentence?

Treating like cases differently: Mark has been convicted in federal court of possessing a small quantity of crack cocaine for personal use, and so has Michael—5 grams of crack in Mark's case, 5.01 grams in Michael's. These cases may seem almost indistinguishable, but the trifling difference in what they possessed makes a big difference in sentencing. Michael must go to prison for five years, but Mark is not subject to any mandatory minimum, and can *at most* be sentenced to one year in prison!

Here is a third example, which some people will think illustrates "treating like cases differently" while others may view it as differentiating between unlike cases—but in precisely the wrong way. Peter and Paul are two California criminals. Peter, penniless in Los Angeles at age eighteen, was convicted of grand theft for picking an acquaintance's pocket and stealing $500. After his probation for this offense, he was caught burglarizing a neighbor's house. Shortly after he'd served his burglary sentence, Peter held up a liquor store at gunpoint.

Paul's crimes are the same, but in reverse chronological order. He was convicted of armed robbery of a liquor store at age eighteen, and he burglarized a neighbor's home after serving time for the robbery. After his second prison term, Paul seemed to settle down to lawful employment. But several years later, during a recession, he lost his job and, as an

PHOTOGRAPH BY C. TAKAGI / IMPACT VISUALS



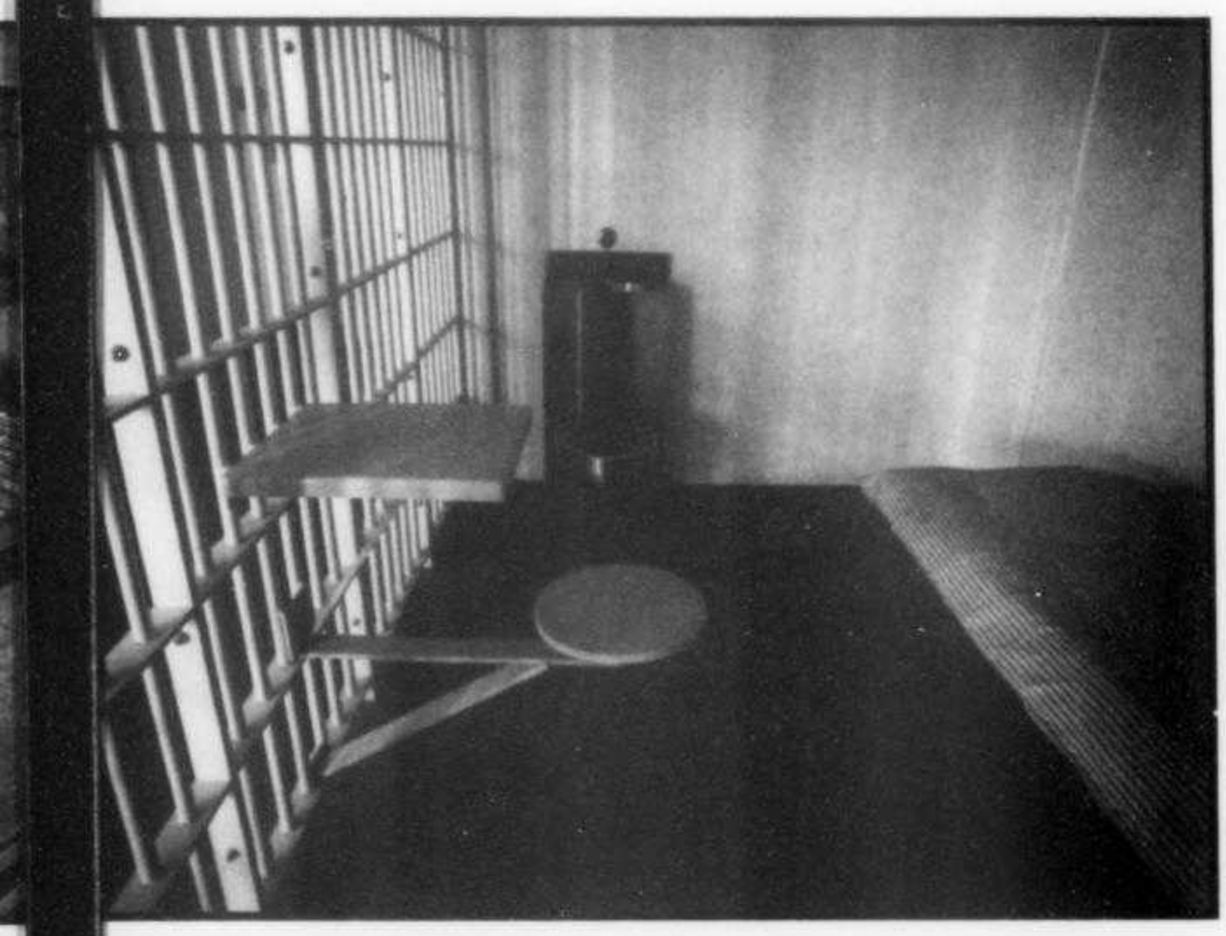


ex-con, couldn't find another. Destitute, he stole a wallet containing $500 from the pocket of a coat hanging in a restaurant.

One might say that these criminal records are, given the facts cited, "the same": chronology is irrelevant. Or one might say that Peter's is the more serious record because it exhibits a progression from nonviolent theft to potentially violent burglary to actual use of a gun, while Paul's final offense seems the product of circumstances and desperation more than of a settled "career criminal" pattern. Under California's "three strikes" sentencing law, however, it is only Paul who must receive a mandatory twenty-five-year-to-life sentence. The law requires such a sentence for *any* third felony provided the two prior felonies were "violent" or "serious." Paul's priors—robbery and burglary—both qualify, but Peter's first felony (grand theft) is neither violent nor serious. Peter will probably receive a sentence of twelve years or less.

Examples like those I have offered strongly challenge the justice, and even the rationality, of mandatory minimum sentencing laws. Proponents of such laws have various possible responses, but these seem unconvincing. They can argue, for instance, that the Mark/Michael example proves nothing because it doesn't really involve "treating *like* cases differently." The cases differ in a respect—quantity of cocaine—made relevant by law. That it's a very small difference merely confirms Justice Holmes's adage that "Whenever the law draws a line there will be cases very near each other on opposite sides." That is undoubtedly true, yet there's still something unseemly if the consequences that turn on the line are grossly disproportionate to the differences between the cases lying on either side—especially where one could so easily avoid such disproportion (as by making the sentence vary more smoothly in proportion to the amount of crack possessed, with no sharp "cliff" at five grams).

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK KURTZ / IMPACT VISUALS



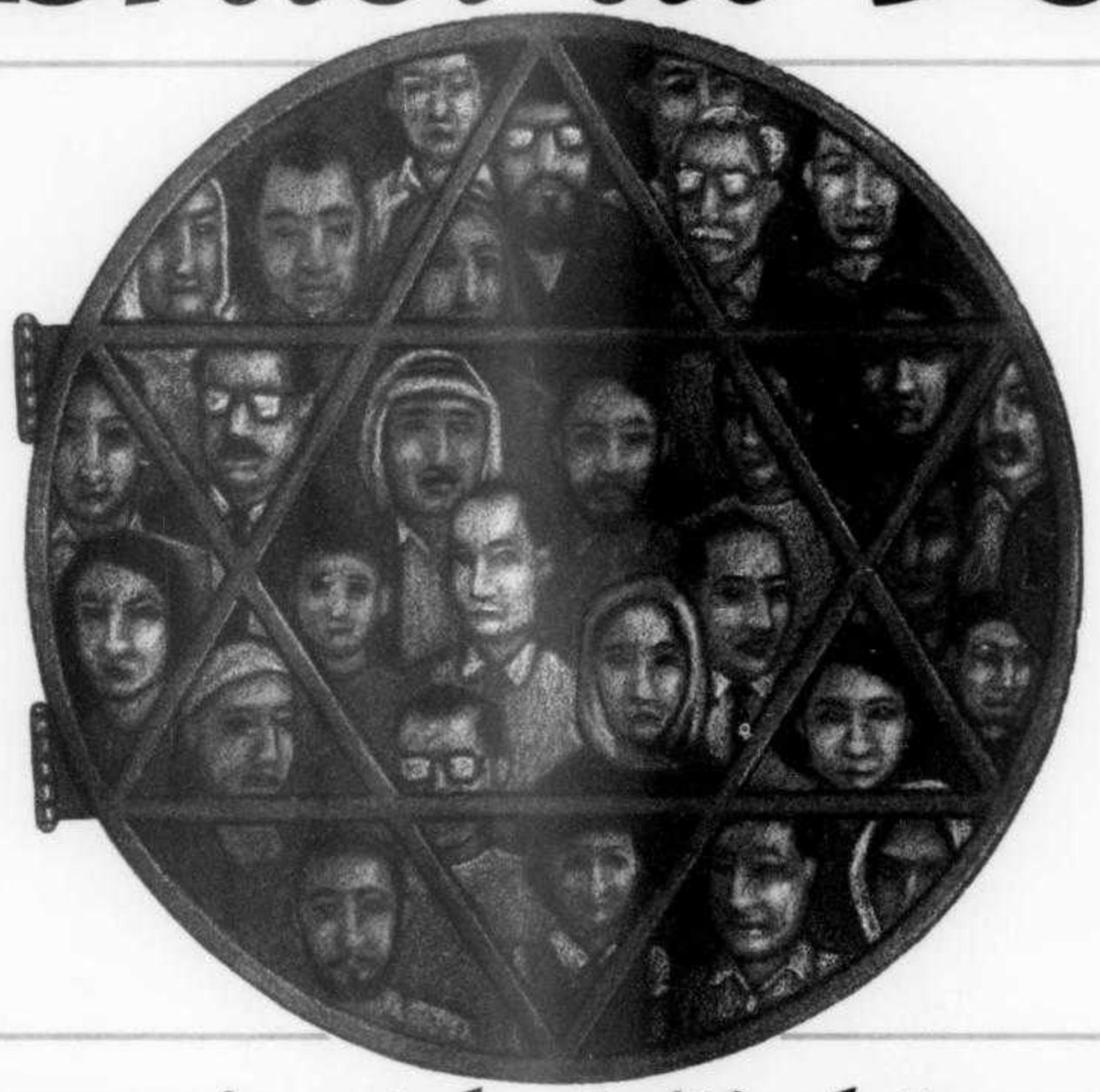
Ironically, when a defendant charged with murder in a capital-punishment state is convicted, the life-or-death sentencing conviction must rest on an individualized examination of all relevant considerations, and the sentencer must be allowed to weigh any potentially mitigating feature of the killer's character or record or the circumstances of the crime. Why, then, should those guilty of lesser crimes be subjected to lengthy prison terms without any regard to the individual, potentially mitigating features of their cases?

An advocate of mandatory minimum sentencing laws could dismiss all of my examples by appealing to the criminal-law goal of deterrence. She could argue that these laws are aimed at crimes (or patterns of crimes) so dangerous and harmful that there is an imperative social need to deter anyone from committing them. And the way to deter potential wrongdoers is to send the message that those caught engaging in such conduct will do serious jail time, regardless of any other considerations—including whether the injunction to "treat like cases alike" is thereby violated. In essence, this amounts to arguing that the need for deterrence and crime control trumps the claims of justice in the individual's case.

There are two flaws in this argument, one empirical and one conceptual. Empirically, the evidence that stiff mandatory minimums are effective crime-control mechanisms is simply lacking. An extensive study of the federal mandatory-minimum laws, undertaken by the federal Sentencing Commission, concluded in 1991 that these laws are applied so unevenly as to dramatically reduce the certainty of punishment. (The uneven application stems from the prosecutors' largely unfettered discretion to choose whether or not to charge defendants with offenses carrying mandatory minimums.) Since deterrence depends on certainty perhaps even more than on severity of punishment, the mandatory sentence laws are unlikely to attain their deterrent goals. More recently, the Rand Corporation's Drug Policy Research Center, focusing on cocaine sentences, concluded that mandatory minimums are not cost-effective methods of reducing cocaine consumption and drug-related crime. Researchers studying state mandatory-minimum laws have likewise cast doubt on their deterrent success.

More fundamental, however, is the conceptual question of whether it is morally proper to allow the pursuit of the common good—here, crime control—to override the requirements of justice. Suppose that harsh mandatory minimum sentences *did* decrease the crime rate, but that we also believed such sentences rode roughshod over some basic principles of justice. Is the sacrifice an acceptable one? If so, just how much further might the readiness to sacrifice justice extend? Do we risk defending our society against criminals at the price of destroying its moral legitimacy? These are questions that I believe anyone pondering the wisdom of mandatory minimum sentencing ought to confront. ❑

Israel at 50



A Compassionately Critical Assessment

THE FIRST OF A TWO-PART SERIES

Since TIKKUN *was started in 1986 we have articulated the perspective of those in the Zionist movement who seek peace and full reconciliation with the Palestinian people, a rectification of the oppression of Sephardim and Ethiopian Jews within Israel, religious pluralism, women's liberation, and a complete separation of state and synagogue. Many of us on the* TIKKUN *editorial board are Israelis. Others of us spend months there each year, have supported our children serving in the Israeli army, and deeply love Israel. Aware that Israel portrays itself as the State of the Jewish people, claims to speak in our name, and solicits our financial and political support,* TIKKUN *writers are fully engaged in the worldwide dialogue about how that Jewish State can best actualize the highest moral vision of our people.*

In this issue of TIKKUN *and in our May/June issue, we have invited a variety of Israeli, Palestinian, and American writers to share their reflections as Israel completes its fiftieth year. We do not speak in one voice or share one perspective. Some are secular Israelis who insist that Israel live not by a higher standard, but by the same standard that human-rights-affirming nations demand (not always successfully) of all people on the planet. Others articulate the moral, spiritual, and historical claims of the Jewish tradition, well aware that the Torah repeatedly tells us that the Jews' claim to the Land of Israel is totally dependent on our ability to create in it a morally coherent and holy reality. Still others of us approach Israel hoping that it can soon take a place in the emerging global consciousness to create planetary solidarity and an ethos of love and caring and spiritual awareness among all peoples.*

We at TIKKUN *are deeply grateful to Israel for providing a haven for many Jews who escaped from the murderous hostility of the countries where they were born. After witnessing the murder of some six million of our people, the dramatic creation of the State of Israel in 1948 seemed like nothing less than a modern miracle. We continue to rejoice in that miracle and to pray for Israel's peace, security, and a deepening ability to realize the most profound visions of the Jewish people.*

—Rabbi Michael Lerner

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

Rabbi Michael Lerner

Post-Zionism

Restoring Compassion, Overcoming Chauvinism

If you judge "who is a people's God" by what they hold sacred, where and for whom they are prepared to make sacrifices, where and for whom they spend their money, then you have to conclude that for much of the past fifty years the real object of worship of much of the Jewish people has been Israel and Zionism. Unfortunately, like all false gods, this one has failed to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the Jewish people. If many Jews turn away from Judaism today, Israel has played no small part in that process. Judaism may be one of Israel's most important casualties.

The State that was created to preserve Jews may be at the center of the process that leads Jews away from their Jewishness.

Of course, secularization and assimilation did not begin with Israel. The process of disillusionment with Judaism began hundreds of years before, when the Jewish world, traumatized by escalating violence against Jews in the modern world (the expulsion from Spain, 1492; the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Poland in 1648; the pogroms in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), responded by holding on to the past with a rigidity that made Jewish life feel sterile and oppressive to many. Chasidism was one response to this rigidity, but that creative spiritual movement all too quickly lost its nerve—in order to prove its religious legitimacy Chasidism became increasingly focused on narrow legalistic practices, joining the rest of Orthodoxy in a fearful response to the modern world. Yet the more Jewish life was dominated by religious rigidity and a cultural legacy shaped by generations of suffering, guilt-tripping, and patriarchal norms, the more Jews rushed from this community when the ghetto walls finally opened in the nineteenth century, hoping to find the liberty, equality, and fraternity promised by the French and American revolutions.

What they found instead was class oppression, virulent nationalism, and anti-Semitism. Yet for many, there was no way back into a religious tradition that seemed to require belief in a powerful patriarchal God who was supposed to intervene in human affairs on behalf of the Jewish people and moral values. Such a God had been absent through many of the past nineteen hundred years, and proved to be absent once again in the escalating suffering of the Jewish masses in Europe during World War I and especially during the Holocaust. Most Jews had never been exposed to a different understanding of God, one that comes out of the Jewish mystical tradition and has become more common in the Jewish Renewal movement: God as the Force of Healing and Transformation in the universe Who works in partnership with that which is best in human beings. Instead, disillusioned with God's failure to materialize as the Power that would make everything OK, the good parent who could assure a safe world, many Jews projected these same hopes onto material success in capitalist societies, onto socialist or communist movements, or onto Zionism.

Zionists wrote a story of Jewish history that portrayed Jews as totally powerless, suffering, and unable to shape their own destiny until a Zionist movement emerged to allow Jews to reenter history as the subject of their own story, ready to take "a land without a people" (because for them the Palestinians were invisible) for "a people without a land." By force of arms, manipulation of power politics, and acts of collective will, the Jewish people would become the shapers of its own history once again as we had been in ancient days. What counted, the Zionists argued, was action and results. Jews had been a wimpy group of moralists—what was needed was a people who could wield the same power that governed the other nations of the world. To normalize Jewish existence, Zionists argued, we had to reject an obsessive focus on Jewish values and focus instead on power. Their arguments seemed indisputable after Nazism and Hitler wiped out millions of Jews and crushed the hopes of millions more for international working class solidarity. "We can't trust anyone or any ideal," many Jews concluded. "We can only rely on ourselves and the power we can accumulate. Judaism may be fine as an ethnic identity—but its ideals are utopian and irrelevant to the real world's Evil."

Michael Lerner is editor of TIKKUN, *author of* Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation *(Harper/Collins, 1995), and rabbi of Beyt Tikkun Congregation in San Francisco.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO



ISRAEL AT FIFTY

The valorization of the real, of that which "works," has been a central part of the modern world's self-understanding. To the ideologists of Stalinist Russia, the critiques of Stalinism articulated by democratic socialist intellectuals and Trotskyites had no relevance because the reality of Stalinist power showed that the Communist Party approach "worked," while those who yearned for a more democratic socialism were merely wimpy dreamers who had failed to build a reality because they did not run a nation. To the ideologists of American capitalism, the triumph of the international capitalist market under the dominion of American-sponsored multinational corporations is proof that capitalism "works" and a refutation of all those who want to build a world based on principles of justice and equality. The same "show me where it is working" approach valorizes Western technology, science, and medicine, as modern technocrats are unwilling to imagine the ways that these "successes" have also narrowed our vision and produced massive alienation and inner despair.

Yet this valorization of what is real as opposed to what could and should be is the essence of what Judaism calls idolatry.

Judaism entered the world as the first spiritual tradition that understood the need to critique "that which is" in the name of "that which ought to be and could be." God is the voice of the future calling to the present, critiquing the present, and speaking to us in ways that elicit within us the capacity to see beyond the contemporary reality. As I describe in my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, Judaism's central claim is that the spiritual and the political must go hand in hand, and that a central spiritual goal is to heal and transform the world. From this Jewish standpoint, power is always illusory, a momentary self-deception that allows ruling elites to convince people that the way things are is the only way things can be. For Judaism, the goal is to critique power in the name of the ultimate Power, the Power of healing and transformation, the Power that can free the captives and redeem the humble, that can raise up those who have been bowed down. And the message of this Power is clear: love your neighbor, love the stranger, pursue justice, live as holy beings, because, like all human beings on the planet, you are created in the image of God.

The Prophets made clear that, to the extent that Jews might create a society that was equally oppressive and unjust as those of the rest of the world, they would have no claim to the Land of Israel or even to survival as a people. The Prophets' message was a critique not only of the political world, but of the "official" representatives of Judaism in any period in which ritual had become a handmaiden to the morally obtuse.

This revolutionary message of Judaism was obscured by the thousands of years of persecution it had elicited, and so it ultimately became invisible to the religious Zionists who were so impressed by the military successes of the Israeli army that they began to read its victories as the current manifestation of God's will. The utopian and transformative voice of Judaism, like the universalistic hopes of the secular socialist movements, seemed to have been refuted by the triumph of Evil under Hitler and Stalin. Many Jews concluded that to maintain these hopeful visions was to be dangerously out of touch with reality, and those socialists and religious Jews who sought to be part of the Zionist movement had to adopt a new discourse of realism in order not to be marginalized and ridiculed. Religious Zionists, who might have functioned as a powerful moral constraint on the worship of power, became, after the 1967 War, even more fanatical worshippers of Israeli power, now consecrated as the Will of God. They were soon joined by ultra-Orthodox sects that had once rejected the very notion of Zionism, but who now proclaimed the sanctity of holding the Land of Israel. Once Judaism collapsed into this ultra-nationalist discourse, those who insisted that Zionism must address the pain of its victims sometimes became seen as non-Jewish or "Westernized" because they used the language of human rights. Ironically, many sensitive Israelis and Jews from around the world who have critiqued Israel's policy toward the Palestinians on moral grounds have been forced to go outside the bounds of the organized Jewish community. Some of them have been unaware of the solid Jewish religious foundation for their critique, but many of them have been turned off by official Jewish "political correctness," which has treated any serious criticism of Israel as though it were overt sacrilege and a manifestation of psychological dysfunction.

Perhaps it would be unfair to have expected those European and North African Jews who formed the State of Israel to have transcended their traumatization and to have been able to hold on to a vision of a different kind of world, a world based on love and caring. I think we need to be compassionate toward a people that crawled out of the gas chambers and crematoria of Europe. It would be unfair to judge them. If they came out of the experience of hundreds of years of oppression estranged from God, if they could no longer believe that the world could be based on principles of love and justice, who can blame them? And who can be surprised if people who have experienced centuries of being treated in demeaning and oppressive ways, finally being hunted down like vermin and thrown into crematoria and gas chambers, join the list of previously humiliated groups who have embraced the techniques and philosophies of their past oppressors? Oppression breeds moral and psychological distortion even as it simultaneously provides possibilities for wisdom and moral sensitivity.

So it should not be so surprising that the Zionism that emerged from this experience would have both moments of moral sensitivity and tendencies toward moral blindness, especially as it engaged the Palestinians. As the New Historians in Israel have shown, from the 1920s onwards the



Holocaust survivors arriving by boat in Haifa, 1946.

socialist Zionists who played the major role in shaping Israel were often indistinguishable from their Herut/Revisionist opponents in their desire to empty the land of Palestinians. Yet if this "original sin" of Zionism was built into the very fabric of the enterprise even before the Holocaust, it was itself a product of Jewish experience, not a manifestation of some innate evil. The experience of oppression in both European and Arab lands, the unrelenting opposition to a Jewish presence in Israel by Arab landlords, the seeming impossibility of a larger social transformation to a world based on more humane principles than self-interested nationalism, the persistence of anti- Semitism in even the most "enlightened" of Western countries, all combined to make Jewish insensitivity to the Palestinian population seem like an "acceptable cost" and the only "realistic" path. Voices who called for a morally-based political approach that would emphasize reconciliation and cooperation with the Palestinian people, voices like those of Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, were drowned out or dismissed as merely utopian.

None of this is meant to diminish the huge accomplishments of the State of Israel. As a refuge for Jews from Europe, North Africa, Asia, and now Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, Israel has played a major humanitarian role. Those who created it, supported it, who helped fund it, and who have been its loyal allies deserve our respect and admiration.

Yet Judaism has been one of the casualties of this project.

To the extent that Judaism has lost its ability to critique the distortions of the Jewish people, to the extent that it has become a cheerleader for a particular state, its army, its fundraisers, and its ideological support structure, Judaism has lost its connection to God and Torah. Instead of reclaiming its role as the voice of possibility, it has allowed itself to be subsumed as a prop to a deeply flawed existing reality.

The result has been to create an Israel and a Judaism that can no longer speak to the spiritual hunger of the next generation of Jews. Many young Jews visit Israel and are excited by its vitality and exuberance. But many are appalled by the lack of moral sensitivity, the racism, and the absence of any larger spiritual vision beyond "making it" in the international capitalist market.

Worse still, the transformation of American Judaism in the past fifty years into a cheerleading chorus for whatever direction the Israeli government has taken has caused major disaffection among the generation of Jews who grew up after the Holocaust. Growing up in a Jewish community dominated by fundraisers and the rich, told that any questions about Israel reflect a self-hating mentality, many younger Jews have been forced to look elsewhere for a moral and spiritual alternative to the ethos of selfishness and materialism that dominate both American society and some institutions of the organized Jewish community.

Israel and its cheerleaders have in fact become impediments to Jewish continuity.

Perhaps the problem is only that of Diaspora Jewry. Certainly in Israel the celebration of Israel's fiftieth anniversary would feel less conflicted?

Not so.

Many of the Israelis we asked to write about Israel and Zionism gave a troubling reason for refusing: their hearts were breaking at the current situation in Israel. One after another spoke of their despair. A peace-oriented prime minister had been assassinated. His eventual replacement, Benjamin Netanyahu, has rejected the fundamental assumption of the peace process and has insisted on retaining Israeli control over as much of the West Bank as circumstances make possible. The oppression of Palestinians has persisted, and the anger of the world's peoples at the Jewish people's insensitivity is growing (when we wake up to this in the twenty-first century, will we then revert to explanations that talk about the "inherent anti-Semitism of the non-Jew," or will be willing to recognize that Israel, speaking in the name of the Jewish people, has been pursuing policies that would rightly anger the morally sensitive throughout the world?) Meanwhile, Jewish religious fundamentalists have already taken control of the city of Jerusalem, and their rapid rate of growth and increasing political power already have given them the ability to impose their religious practices on the lives of many Israelis, and to make life difficult for Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel.

Which is to say, Israeli Jews are like most other people, only more so. They embody the same distortions and the same beauty that most other human beings embody. Israel has powerful accomplishments that ought not be underplayed. It is a society that was built upon the ashes of European Jewry, and managed to absorb within it huge numbers of refugees from European, Islamic, and Soviet societies. The creativity and determination to survive of a people that had been despised, oppressed, raped, and murdered is a powerful testimony to the indomitable spirit of human beings and the presence within us of a capacity to be God's partner in continually reshaping and recreating the world. In this respect, Israel can be an inspiration to the world, a testimony to the ways that aspects of oppression can be overcome, an enduring monument to the possibility of transformation that should inspire the most downtrodden of peoples today.

It is impossible to live in Israel for any length of time without being impressed by Israel's intellectual, cultural and

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES



scientific creativity, and by the goodness, generosity and compassion of most Jews who live there. Yet Israel is also a state that has caused incredible pain and suffering to the Palestinian people. And in this respect, a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the State must also be a moment in which we acknowledge the contradictory reality: our ability as Jews to create a place in which we could be secure could only be bought at the expense of another people.

We did not come to the Middle East as imperialists or in order to extend colonial rule, though some Zionists tried to manipulate colonialist powers to support the Zionist enterprise. We Jews jumped from the burning buildings of Europe and Arab lands. We landed on the backs of the Palestinians. We did not intend to do that, and we did not intend to cause them harm. The fire we were escaping required us to jump, and Palestinians were the unintended victims of that jump.

But once we had landed on their backs and unintentionally hurt them, we were unable to acknowledge what had happened.

Israel closed its ears and pretended for decades that the Palestinian people did not exist. Even when Israel conquered the West Bank during the 1967 war, it refused to recognize the Palestinians as a legitimate people. Because it saw them as part of the Jordanian people, it could not see that it was Hussein, not the Palestinians, who had started hostilities; and it refused to treat them as people with legitimate national rights or aspirations. It took the Intifada with its hundreds of deaths of Palestinians (and the far fewer deaths of Israeli occupiers) to wake Israelis up to the recognition that there was really another people in their land, and that Israel was occupying territory and ruling over the lives of more than a million people who wanted their own freedom and self-determination. And even so, many Jews continue to deny this reality.

Israelis have good reason to be angry at the rejection by Palestinians of a partition agreement in 1947, and at the Palestinians' attempts to keep us out when it was the Jews who lived in refugee camps. Israelis are right to be outraged at terrorist acts against Israeli civilians. This behavior by some of the Islamic fundamentalists is totally disgusting. Our indignation at these acts is total. Yet just as the many acts of Jewish terror against Palestinian civilians in the pre-State period did not undermine the legitimacy of the Zionist dream, so equally the actions of those Arabs determined to undermine the peace process ought not to be used to justify Israel's denial of Palestinian national self-determination.

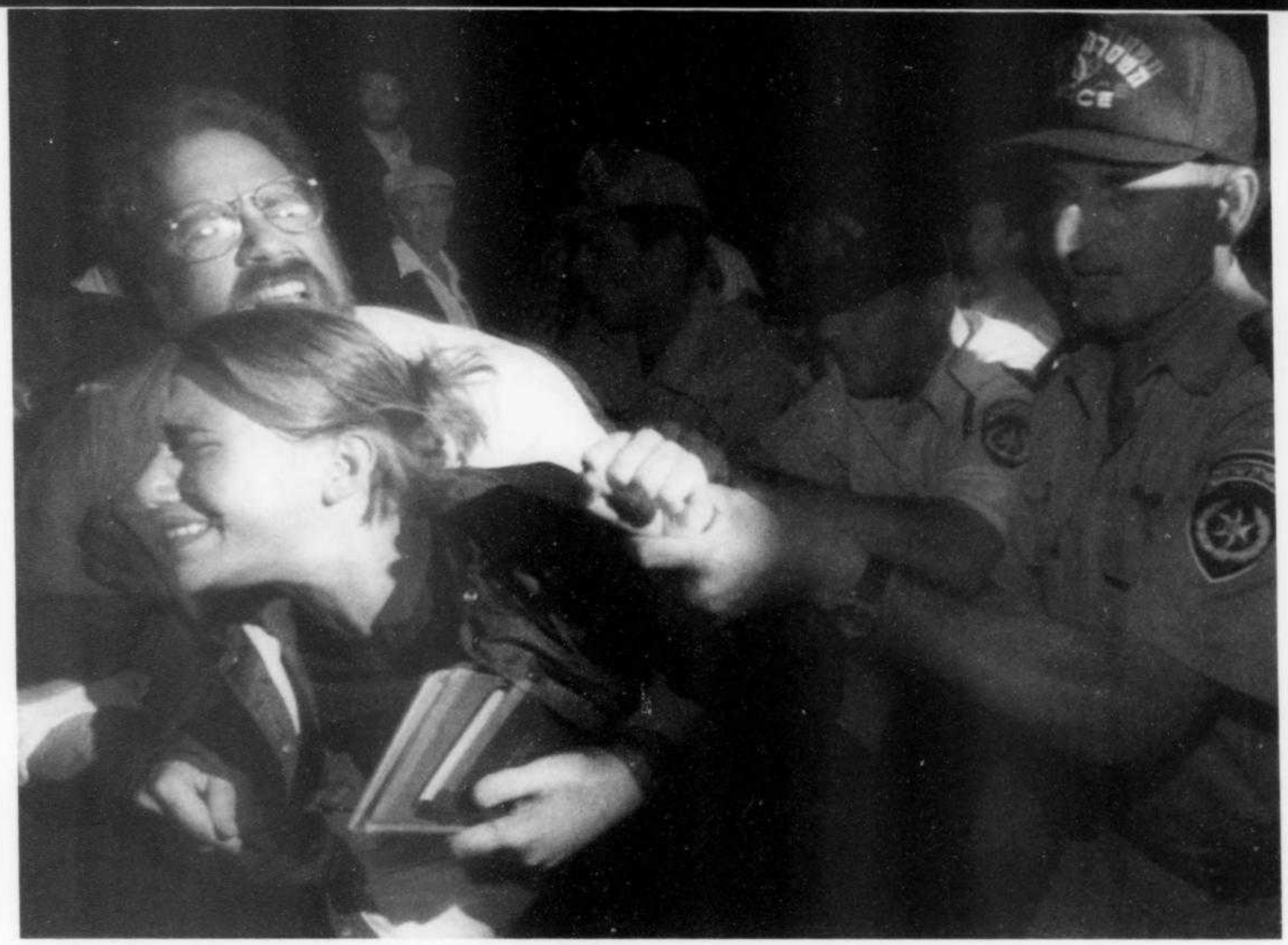
Denial of the "Other" led to domination over the "Other," the denial of civil liberties, and the systematic torture of Palestinians. The information has been well documented by B'Tselem, the Israeli Civil Rights Organization and summarized in past issues of TIKKUN. At first, most Jews simply denied the information. But eventually, many Israelis came to accept it—and, as we've demonstrated in TIKKUN, to justify it.

Domination over others, however, distorts not only the victims but the victimizers. Sexist society, for example, is bad not only for women but for men. Racist societies not only create oppressed groups, but also racists who are thereby distanced from the God within. You cannot create a society that oppresses others and expect that you will not yourself begin to embody the ugliness of the immorally powerful. Of course, Jews in the Diaspora often engaged in goyim-bashing sentiments, not only in popular culture but also in the commentaries and halachic rulings of our sages. But the meaning of that kind of discourse is entirely different when it is used by an oppressed minority to ward off the dominant culture's systematic demeaning of the minority—in this case, of Jews; when used in the context of Jewish power in Israel, however, it functions as a vehicle to close the eyes of Jews, now the dominant majority, to the pain they are inflicting on others. Hence, the troubling and painful experience so many people have when we listen to Israelis, themselves only barely escaped from societies in which they were seen as inferior and undeserving of basic civil liberties, now making racist generalizations about the entire Arab world or the entire Palestinian people.

Who has not heard some Israelis describe the entire Palestinian people as terrorists? Who has not heard the ways that Israelis proclaim their moral superiority even in occupation ("we don't treat them the way other occupiers do" or "look at all we've done for them"), or the ways that they proudly claim that they have a democratic society (as though a society could be democratic while systematically exercising sovereignty over a minority group, refusing to allow them either to participate in the electoral process or to develop their own political autonomy)? Who has not been horrified to hear the tales of armed settlers entering into Arab villages, beating, brutalizing, destroying shops, sometimes even murdering? The stories are documented. Sometimes Israeli law intervenes to temporarily jail the vigilantes—and then later, as in the case of the "Underground" of the 1980s, the Jewish terrorists or would-be terrorists are freed, and even honored. Each year the murderer who entered a mosque and killed twenty-seven people at prayer has his grave visited and honored by hundreds of Jews.

Those who are friendly to the cause of Palestinians are dismissed as traitors; finally, a pro-peace Prime Minister was so demeaned that extremists felt murdering him was justified. Anyone who was in Israel at the time knows this was not an isolated act. There were other assaults on peace-oriented members of the Knesset, there were threats of violence that intimidated large sectors of Israeli society that wanted to move toward reconciliation. And this climate of violence continues.

Inevitably, the demeaning of the "Other" has a psychic impact that begins to shape Israeli society, so that what



Conservative Jews prevented from praying at the Wailing Wall, 1997.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATI STEIN / AP PHOTO

started as the demeaning of the Palestinians carries over into a demeaning of each other. The next group to experience this demeaning were the hundreds of thousands of Jews from Africa and the Middle East (usually referred to as "Sephardim" or "Mizrachim") who were made into second class citizens by an Ashkenazi (European-based) cultural elite. Conceived of by many Ashkenazim as only marginally better than the Arabs, made to feel that their entire cultural experience (including their commitment to Jewish religious practices) was valueless, these Sephardic Jews developed a fierce antagonism to the Labor party that ruled Israel in its first thirty years, an antagonism that now expresses itself in their knee-jerk allegiance to the political Right (even though the Right supports free-market economic policies that are often at odds with the interests of the majority of Sephardim), and in their knee-jerk opposition to the peace process (often in compensatory rage at Palestinians who are the only group around with even lower status than themselves).

The spirit of demeaning the "Other" becomes the norm, and with it an assault on Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Renewal Jews becomes much more visible. From the start of the State, Labor made electoral deals with the Orthodox party Agudat Yisrael that gave them the right to prohibit secular marriage and divorce. But the escalating militancy of the ultra-Orthodox parties has now led to a deepening of the confrontation not only with secular Jews but with other denominations of Judaism. In this climate, the throwing of excrement on Conservative Jews seeking to pray at the Western Wall becomes another extension of the general habit of demeaning the other. Though supposedly the holiest site in Jewish religious practice, the Wall is now a prisoner to those Orthodox who will not allow other Jewish denominations to hold religious services there. Nor does it stop there. Within the Orthodox camp, the "modern Orthodox" often find themselves demeaned by the ultra-Orthodox, and vice versa. Reform and Conservative Jews are rightly outraged at the way their religious movements are denied equal rights in Israel, yet they have been unwilling to give similar energies to the struggle against Netanyahu's attempts to prolong the occupation of the Palestinians. These struggles are inseparable: the ethos of demeaning the "Other," once started toward Palestinians, quickly gets out of control.

Nor is there a progressive movement in Israel capable of changing all these dynamics. Unfortunately, the Israeli Left shares the same defects as the Left of other Western countries: a narrow focus on economic and "rights" issues that makes it impossible for them to speak to the hunger of the vast majority of the population for meaning and purpose. The Left thus becomes the regulative power for the globalized capitalist economy, trying to rectify the worst faults of the system, but fundamentally committed to helping people fit into it. Yet as many people are coming to realize, the rising tide of globalization does not raise all ships equally, and many fear its consequences. So, for a very large section of the Israeli population, Shimon Peres' vision of an



Israel integrated into the world economy is not a vision that is likely to provide them with much more than technological unemployment.

What the Israeli Left lacks is any vision of meaning that could possibly help people make sense of their lives in terms that transcend self and that tie them to some larger vision of the good. No wonder, then, that Israelis respect the Rightist settlers who are willing to put their bodies on the line for some higher vision. No wonder they are unresponsive to a Left that is culturally alienated both from the nationalist and the religious experience of the Jewish people. Given the either/or mentality of Israeli culture, people are forced to choose between a religious sensibility that dismisses individual freedom and rights as a Western intrusion into Jewish authenticity, and a market-oriented culture of selfishness and materialism that is distinguishable from the rest of the West only in its language and its momentary flirtations with Jewish history. Israel desperately needs Jewish Renewal, which will be resisted as much by the Left as by the Right, but which will have resonance for the many Israelis who vote for the Right because they can't stand the cultural vacuity, materialism, narcissism, and seeming hostility to Judaism of the Left. Yet Jewish Renewal will have to struggle against the tendency of most Israelis to dismiss every variant of Judaism as inauthentic except that of the ultra-Rightists, a variant that the majority finds oppressive and hateful.

Despite all the problems, this historical moment will pass. By the middle of the twenty-first century, a significant part of the Israeli population will be involved in the same kind of movement to rectify the history of racism and oppression of Palestinians and of Sephardic Jews that we have had in the U.S. in relationship to African Americans. The chauvinistic consciousness that today predominates in some sections of the American Jewish community and in the government and religious communities of Israel will be viewed in the same way that we today view those who supported slavery or who opposed the right of women to vote.

In a post-Zionist society, the assumptions of Jewish superiority, and of Western superiority, will be questioned and challenged. Eventually, the same hunger for spiritual meaning and ethical coherence that has become central to American society in the late twentieth century will become the center of Israeli society. In that context, we will find a Left that begins to address a politics of meaning, and a progressive, religious, Jewish renewal movement that seeks to reclaim God from the hands of those who have reduced the divine to the contours of their own narrow needs for security or for reassurance. The major dialogue within Israel in 2048 will be: "How do we heal and repair the damage done to Judaism, Palestinians, Sephardic/Mizrachi Jews, Ethiopian Jews, Russian Jews, poor Jews, by the way that we created and sustained the State of Israel in its first fifty years?" Hopefully, this question will be dealt with in a compassionate way, avoiding the destructive "political correctness" of similar dialogues about racism in the U.S., and accepting with sadness the fact that people who have been brutalized often become abusers, and that our task is not to judge but to heal.

Infused with a vision of God as the Force of healing and transformation, committed to rewarding those institutions that promote love and caring and ethical/spiritual/ecological sensitivity, a post-Zionist Israel that embodies Jewish renewal could indeed become a light unto the nations.

When that happens, we will be able to celebrate the existence of Israel and the accomplishments of the Zionist movement in a fuller way. Even today, with all its flaws and distortions, we approach Israel as we do any other human accomplishment: responding with compassion and caring to people who are, like we ourselves, flawed and inadequate.

In the final analysis, Israel is part of our family, and like every part of our family, we let our loving and compassion override our judgments and distancing. We approach Israel not as strangers, but with a sense of attachment, commitment, caring and joy. For all the disappointments, Israel is part of us and we are part of it. We love our family, we see its pain, and we will contribute to its healing.

One step on the path of healing is to realize that Jewish self-interest is intrincately connected to the well-being of all people on the planet. So part of our healing is to move beyond ourselves, to seek higher ground by focusing some of our energies on global problems—working as part of the family of nations to save the planet from ecological destruction, from war, and from the spiritual ravages and depredations of the global economic marketplace.

Humankind is ready to take a powerful leap forward to a new level of consciousness in which we can see our connection to all other people and to all forms of Being. This new level of consciousness will involve a leap over forms of nationalism and tribal identities that have limited us in the past. But it will not require that anyone leave behind her identity or her tribe, only that the traditions of the past be renewed and reconstituted in the light of a higher universalistic consciousness. Issues of national sovereignty will be replaced with a global consciousness that allows us to recognize ourselves and God in each other. As we become more aware of the Unity of All Being, we will also be suffused with a spirit of compassion and humility that will make possible a solidarity that seem utopian today. This process is already happening in Jewish Renewal, as it is in the renewal movements of many of the world's religious and spiritual traditions, and it will become the dominant theme of the twenty-first century. In that process, we as Jews will be able to bring the lessons of our own oppression, as well as the lessons of transcendence that we have preserved. Into the glorious mix of voices and experiences that will be the human drama of the future, our distinctive Jewish voice will bring a helpful note. ❑



Aharon Appelfeld

A Novelist's Optimism

Reclaiming the Jewish Tradition

I came to Israel after the Holocaust. I was in a concentration camp (Tran-nistria) and then, after, I hid in the woods. I was fourteen years old. I came as an orphan with no language, no parents, no education, nothing. Israel became my home. And this was the experience of a hundred thousand children who came to Israel. We would have been criminals in Europe—in Israel we became human beings. This was something Israel gave us, and we will never forget it. It is something very deep and important to me.

I have been living in Israel for fifty-one years, and most of my writing is about Europe. I am deeply affiliated with the Jews in Europe, and with Diaspora Jews. I am a Jew and feel myself to be Jewish. I'm an Israeli Jew but first a Jew.

One of the tragedies of Israel is that the secular Zionists misunderstood the depths of Jewishness. When I came to Israel, the illusion was that we were going to "create the new Jew." But how can you change a nation, its characters, its mentality? The tragedy was that ideological secular Israelis wanted to change the character of a nation and that is impossible to do. Moreover, what was so bad about being Jewish? Why did we need to change? There was a general conception among secular Zionists that the Jew was too weak, too spiritual, and that our real task should be to be more like other nations. The Zionists said we had walked willingly to the slaughter; but we had been slaughtered not because of our deficiencies, but because we were surrounded by barbarians. If Jews had really been weak, they would never have survived for two thousand years in this kind of European circumstance.

Jews in the Diaspora were, generally speaking, very courageous people, because they lived under conditions of threat and neither converted nor ran away. So there was no fundamental need to transform who we were as a people. In fact, who we were as a people was something to be proud of. We were a spiritual nation, and we should be a spiritual nation, and spirit should be at the center of our lives, and classical Judaism should be at the center of our lives. Can you imagine if French people, or even Germans, were to say we don't want to be French or German anymore? This form of Zionism was a kind of self-hatred. It came from the Haskallah (Jewish Enlightenment), but was accepted because of self-hatred. This self-hatred was a product of our oppression, a way in which we slowly began to accept the concepts of our oppressor.

Today, many secular Israelis understand that this was a mistake. Many people have turned to religion, and some to a nationalist religion, because the secular life in Israel that was so rich in the beginning became empty. Now Israeli culture is struggling about what we are going to be, what kind of Jews we are going to be: how we are going to absorb and reclaim our long cultural heritage. On the one side, we have liberal secularists who are mostly anti-religious, and on the other side we have a religious community that is slowly becoming anti-liberal and anti-state.



The long Jewish tradition in Israel and the Diaspora is very dear to me—both the religious and secular traditions are very dear to me. I believe that the Conservative movement can make a serious contribution to Israel, adding back into Israel the original spirit of B'nai Akiba, with its combination of Torah and *derech eretz* (common decency and sensitivity to others).

Actually, I am optimistic. I have a feeling that something new and good will emerge in Israel to heal our present situation. I know my friends will find me naive. But I went through Hell and I remain an optimist. I feel that in Israel there is a thirst for Jewish spirituality, a real spirituality that would provide a Jewish meaning to people's lives. From that will emerge a Jew who doesn't hate his heritage, doesn't hate himself, and who will be good to his community and his surroundings. Israel could then become a Jewish state. I don't mean a halachic state, I mean a state that reflects the cultural, religious, and historical wisdom during the past two hundred years since the French revolution. Mendelsohn is part of our experience, Freud, Wittgenstein, Herzl, Marx—all these are a part of our experience that must be reintegrated into our life. We cannot become halachic Jews again, but we should not become assimilated into the dominant values of the West either. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY CYN MAURICE

Aharon Appelfeld is one of Israel's most respected novelists, author of Badenheim 1939 *and a new novel,* The Iron Tracks *(Schocken, February 1998).*



Benny Morris

Looking Back
A Personal Assessment of the Zionist Experience

It is both apt and unfair to reflect upon the history of Zionism during the dying days of the Netanyahu government. Unfair because Netanyahu in many ways is the least representative of the movement's and Israel's succession of leaders: none was as incompetent and mendacious, none so foolhardy and distrusted by colleague and rival alike. Against none before had the police recommended criminal prosecution and none had surrounded himself to an overwhelming degree with cronies who were themselves targets of police investigation and judicial prosecution. (The most recent case has been the director general of the Prime Minister's Office, Avigdor Lieberman, who is under a number of police criminal investigations and was forced to resign).

By and large, Zionism's leaders and those who led the State of Israel during its first forty-eight years were a public service-oriented lot: Moshe Sharett and Levi Eshkol radiated no sense of hubris or indifference to the common good, and David Ben-Gurion, while certainly spending most of his life amassing power, used that power above all for the movement, party, and state. None of these leaders cared about or amassed wealth. And they were, all-in-all, a highly intelligent, competent lot, not merely clever spokesmen. All of them—Chaim Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, yes and also Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir—gave off a basic scent of trustworthiness. Whatever the slants of political opinion, they were trusted by the bulk of the country's citizens; people knew where they stood.



Chaim Weizmann sworn in as first president of the State of Israel.

With Netanyahu, it is clearly otherwise. Those who voted against him have only been reinforced in their opposition; most of his former colleagues in the leadership of the Likud—Shamir, Moshe Arens, Dan Meridor, Benny Begin—have over the past months gone on record proclaiming the man's basic untrustworthiness. Here, beyond his succession of mistakes and failures—*The Economist* quite accurately dubbed Netanyahu a "serial bungler"—lies the single most important explanation for his demise as a public figure.

Hence, there is something unfair about regarding Zionism and its record through the prism of Netanyahu and his record.

But there is also an over-riding aptness about it. It is apt in the sense that Netanyahu represents that stream of Zionism, Revisionist-Herut-Likud, that until twenty years ago was an often-shunned, alienated minority, but which in 1977 triumphed over Labor Zionism and has held sway in the Israeli polity ever since. (Even in the elections of 1992, which brought the Rabin-Peres government to power, the Right won far more votes than the center-left among the country's Jewish citizenry—but this was outweighed by the overwhelming majority won by Labor-Meretz among the Arab citizens.)

It is Netanyahu's expansionist, greater Israel philosophy (inherited from his father, the historian Ben-Zion Netanyahu, who was briefly secretary to Zeev Jabotinsky, the Polish journalist who founded and headed Revisionist Zionism) that has been in tune with the trends of Israeli history and opinion since 1967. And it is his de-socializing, privatizing, capitalist socio-economic ethos that has governed the Israeli economy during the past decade or so. So Netanyahu rightly reflects the way Zionism has moved, if not the movement's nature and direction during its first eighty-odd years.

For all of Netanyahu's proven skills in personal political survival—he has flabbergasted most critics with his grotesque escapades and successful escapes from the jaws of various self-made snafus—his government appears certain to fall in the coming months.

Unexpectedly for most, it is economic issues that have set the government's fall in motion. The signs of economic downturn are basic and legion. Nationally, Israel has more

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ISRAELI CONSULATE

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than 150,000 unemployed, with most economists predicting that the number will pass 200,000 in 1998 (even as the country continues to host several hundred thousand low-wage guest Thai, Eastern European and Palestinian laborers). Israel's deteriorating economy has also seen a drastic decline in growth rates during the past two years. In 1997, for the first time in its history, Israel had a negative growth rate (Gross Domestic Product per capita) of –0.4 percent. By comparison, most Western economies, including Israel's during the previous Labor-led government, have registered a steady, positive 1–3 percent annual growth rate.

Israel is probably the only Second or Third World country that has evolved into a going economic concern.

The autarchy and self-dependence dreamt of by Theodor Herzl, Zionism's prophet and founder, and by Ben-Gurion one hundred and fifty years ago, still remain well out of reach. Israel continues to devote more than a quarter of its annual budget to repaying foreign debts and still receives some $4 billion in foreign aid a year. Inflation currently runs at about 8 percent annually, 700,000 Israelis, or close to 15 percent of the population, are classified by the government as living below the poverty line, and the gap between rich and poor, never greater, continues to grow steadily. (The poor and the unemployed by and large come from the country's Sephardi and Arab communities, inevitably raising also the specter of renewed ethnic antagonisms.) Over the past two years, a string of factories and companies have gone into bankruptcy and/or have instituted massive lay-offs; indeed, some Israeli firms have found it more profitable to farm out production to plants in neighboring Jordan, where salaries are much lower. Many kibbutzim, unable to make ends meet, are selling off former agricultural lands to private entrepreneurs and builders. Meanwhile, the Netanyahu government pushes ahead with its plans to "de-socialize" the economy and to privatize government-owned companies and utilities (El-Al Israel Airlines appears next on the list). On the socio-economic plane, a whole series of basic Zionist tenets and dreams are daily being eroded and supplanted.

Despite these recent developments, however, the Zionist enterprise has been, all-in-all, a resounding economic success. A land described by most Western travellers of the mid-nineteenth century as "desolate" and "barren" has been turned, by a century of Zionist enterprise and capital, into a thriving, Western-style economy. Israel is probably the only Second or Third World country that, despite an almost complete absence of natural resources, has evolved into a going economic concern—though admittedly while receiving major injections of aid from America, West Germany, and Diaspora Jews.

And Israel is not just an economic success story: with all its shortcomings, it is the region's only democracy and one of the few to have taken root in any post-World War II state. It may still lord it over hundreds of thousands of occupied, stateless, and right-less Palestinians in the West Bank. But its close to 5 million Jewish and million or so Arab citizens by and large enjoy the full panoply of civil and human rights enjoyed by citizens of Western democracies.

Yet the emergence of the Jewish State and its nature are vastly different from what Herzl conceived. Indeed, looking back over the hundred or so years of political Zionism and the fifty years of Israeli statehood, what has emerged appears in many ways not to be to the liking of a large part of its citizenry. Israel appears enveloped in a cloak of gloom, with few exhibiting a genuine sense of celebration and festivity. Indeed, the man who just resigned from managing the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, former Likud finance minister Yitzhak Moda'i, recently, somewhat idiosyncratically, asked a television interviewer: "What is there to celebrate?" His predecessor Yossi Peled's call to drastically reduce spending on the celebrations has been echoed by a range of other public figures.

This wave of disaffection has not been motivated solely by the economic situation. It feeds on a deeper, more general psychological malaise. Large sections of the Israeli public—and not just those who voted for Shimon Peres in the



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RNS / REUTERS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich in Washington DC, January 19, 1998.

1996 prime ministerial elections—are not only displeased with the Netanyahu government's performance but seem increasingly disillusioned with Israeli society and politics as a whole, alienated and even disgusted by the way Israel has developed and looks. This disaffection is also retrospective, relating as much to Zionist and Israeli history as to the present; the ills of the present—the seemingly endless, perhaps insoluble, struggle with the Palestinians, with the rest of the Arab world looming threateningly in the background; the steady "religification" of Israeli society, politics,

and law; the seeming corruption and qualitative diminution of Israel's political world; the steady "de-collectivisation" of Israel's core Jewish population, transforming a formerly ideologically unified and motivated mass into a disparate collection of private, often selfish, individuals and interest groups—these present ills are seen as stemming directly from avoidable mistakes and long-term unavoidable processes, most of them preceding Netanyahu and his inept sidekicks.

In September 1897, at the end of the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Theodor Herzl, its organizer, jotted down in his diary that he expected a Jewish state to be established within "perhaps five and certainly within fifty years." As it turned out, he was off by a year.

But the manner in which that state emerged and developed and its nature are in many ways thoroughly at odds with what he had envisioned. True, great power support and patronage had been necessary to get the Zionist ball rolling; and true, "the seven-hour day" or thereabouts that Herzl had predicted is now in place. (This and other quotations from *The Jewish State, an Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*, 1896, are from the English edition published in London in 1934 by the Central Office of the Zionist Organisation.) And true, he had accurately predicted the (belated) re-introduction of the "shekel"—the Second Temple currency—as the new state's coinage. (This and other quotations from *Altneuland*, 1902, are from the English edition published by Bloch Publishing Co., New York, 1941).

"And if it should occur that men of other creeds and different nationalities come to live among us, we shall accord them honorable protection and equality before the law. We have learnt toleration in Europe."—Herzl

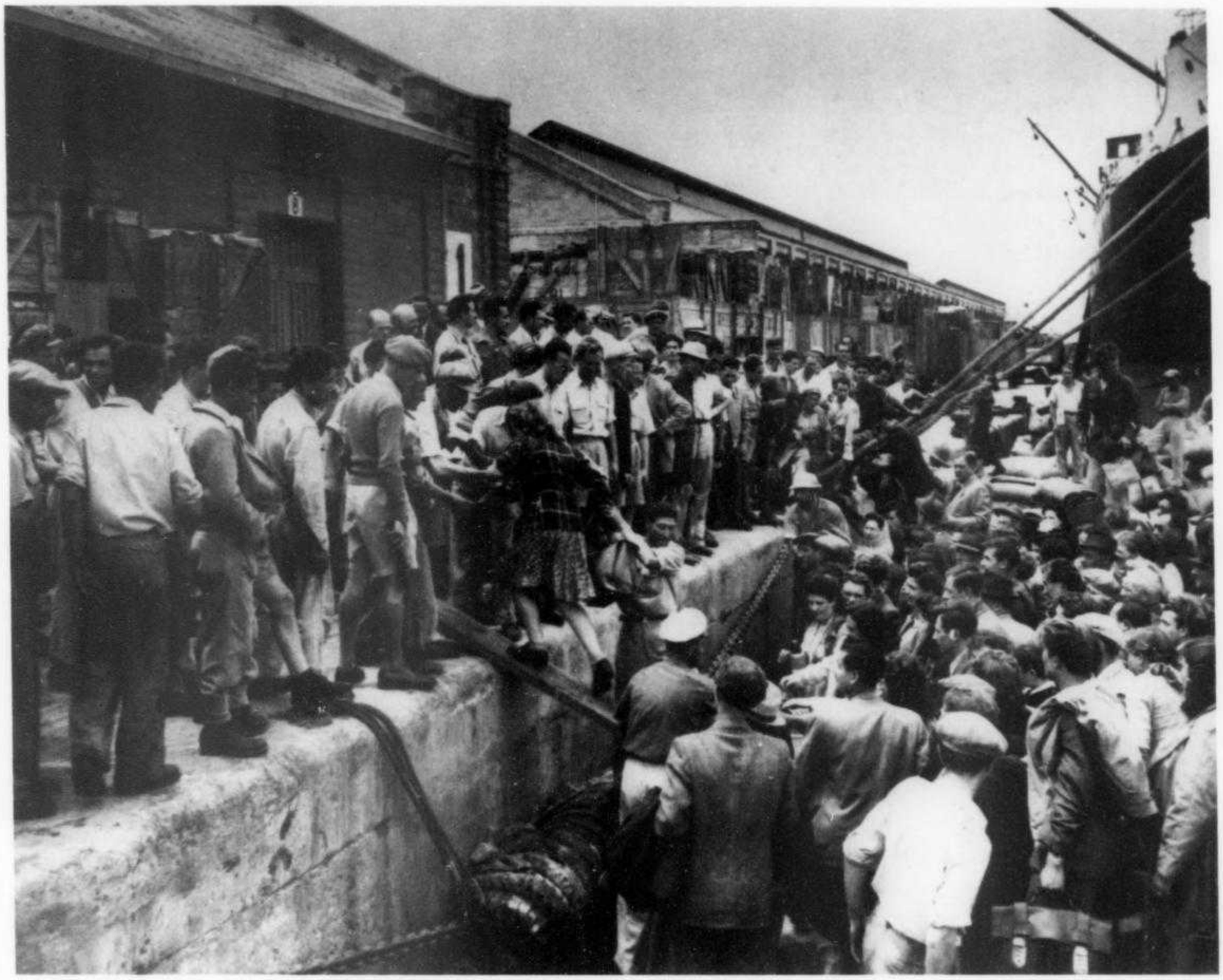
But on most major counts (as well as on a multiplicity of minor ones) Herzl had gotten everything wrong.

He had hoped and believed that the new Jewish State would be liberal, democratic, secular, and tolerant. Given the peculiar nature of Judaism and Jewish society in Eastern Europe, Herzl was aware of the danger of religious interference and influence in the functioning of his envisioned body politic. But he failed to anticipate what actually happened in Israel—the establishment of religious, Orthodox, and ultra-Orthodox political parties that would hold successive coalition governments by the throat and Israeli society in general in thrall. Nor did he anticipate the intolerance, much of it religious in origin, that would characterize Israel's dealings with minorities and other religions (including Reform and Conservative Judaism) and many Israelis' attitudes towards contrary viewpoints.

(Without doubt the mass influx into Israel during the 1950s and 1960s of Sephardi Jews from Muslim countries, without a tradition of democracy or tolerance, reinforced the dogmatism and orthodoxy that characterized the Jewish religious establishment that arrived from Eastern Europe. Herzl, of course, had failed completely to foresee the "Levantinization" of Israel and the immigration to Israel of Sephardi Jewry—in his writings he had almost completely ignored the Diaspora communities in the Muslim world—and to anticipate that they would form over 40 percent of Israel's Jewish population. In *The Jewish State* and *Altneuland* he had implied that the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe would provide the new State's artisan and working classes, with Western and Central European Jewish immigrants providing the managerial class.)

"Our community of race," wrote Herzl in *The Jewish State*, "is peculiar and unique, for we are bound together only by the faith of our fathers. Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks.... They must not interfere in the administration of the state ... else they will conjure up difficulties without and within.... Every man will be ... free in his faith or his disbelief. And if it should occur that men of other creeds and different nationalities come to live among us, we shall accord them honorable protection and equality before the law. We have learnt toleration in Europe."

A hundred years on, with the spectacular growth of Sephardi ultra-Orthodoxy looming in the foreground, religion and religious power are indeed threatening Israel with a drastic change of constitution in the direction of quasi-theocratic government. In Israel's first elections, in January 1949, the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox political parties won sixteen seats; in the 1996 general elections, they won twenty-three seats—ten Shas (Sephardi ultra-Orthodox), four Degel Hatora-Agudat Yisrael (Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox), and nine National Religious Party (Orthodox)—despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the immigrants to Israel since 1949 were secular Jews. Moreover, there are more than a dozen additional Orthodox MKs in the various non-religious Knesset factions. It is estimated today that something more than 25 percent of Israeli Jews are observant or Orthodox and some 10 percent are ultra-Orthodox.



One of many scenes of refugees arriving in the Holy Land.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JUDAH L. MAGNES MUSEUM

The growth of the relative weight of religious power in the Israeli political arena is only part of the picture; that growth has been accompanied by an expansion of economic and cultural power. In the past few years, religious lobbying has forced a number of shopping malls in the Tel Aviv area—a largely secular area—to close their doors on the Sabbath (in Jerusalem of course they closed on Saturdays from the word go). One of Jerusalem's main streets, Bar-Ilan, connecting the city's entrance to Jerusalem's (secular) northeastern districts (Ramat Eshkol, French Hill, Pisgat Ze'ev) has been partially shut down on the Sabbath following months of often violent ultra-Orthodox street demonstrations. Many of the country's soccer matches have been moved from Saturday to Friday afternoon.

Political power has translated over the past two years into a dramatic increase in state subsidies for religious people and institutions. The ultra-Orthodox parties have easily brushed aside calls that their youth do military service or any alternative state service while gaining substantial increases in subsidies for youths who spend those same years studying in yeshivot. The 1998 state budget allocates to Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox yeshivot close to IL 1 billion. These state subsidies over the years, today more than ever, have made it possible for the ultra-Orthodox communities (a) to remain unproductive economically and (b) to maintain an extremely high birth rate. In other words, the secular Jews' taxes and parties have in effect funded the physical growth of the *haredi* communities and of their political power.

Culturally, Herzl, a successful German language playwright, essayist, and journalist, had hoped that the Jewish State would in essence replicate the Central Europe he had known, and form an enclave of European culture in the midst of the "barbarous" East, with Jewish minds now fertlizing its arts and sciences rather than those of the lands of their dispersion.

Himself ignorant of the Hebrew language, Herzl rejected the idea of Hebrew becoming the national language of the Jewish state: "We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us has a sufficient acquaintance

with Hebrew to ask for a railway-ticket in that language? Such a thing cannot be done. Yet the difficulty can be easily circumvented. Every man can preserve the language in which his thoughts are at home. Switzerland affords a conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues" (*The Jewish State*).

But as history has shown, the resurrection of Hebrew was to be one of the main cultural feats of the reborn Jewish community in Palestine and, contrary to Herzl's understanding, Hebrew proved adaptable and fashionable for modern needs and usage. Indeed, if anything, the dominance of Hebrew and the drive towards the cultural integration of successive waves of immigrants have "killed off" the languages of the Diaspora among second and third generation Israelis, so that the "new Jew" born in Zion is vastly remote from the multi-lingual, cultured "old Jew" of Central Europe.

If Hebrew was rejected by Herzl as being a dead and unresuscitatable language, Yiddish he regarded as a linguistic malformation, an unattractive and impure hybrid. Perhaps he was moved above all by his respect for German. "We shall give up using those miserable stunted jargons," he wrote of Yiddish or, more accurately, of the different types of Yiddish spoken in the various regions of Central and Eastern Europe. He predicted that Zionist society in Palestine would sift through and try out the main languages of Europe and, in the end, choose the most useful for its own purposes as its "national" language. "The language which will prove itself to be of greatest utility for general intercourse will be adopted without compulsion as our national tongue," he wrote in *The Jewish State*. Later, somewhat more charitably and following his encounter with Eastern European Jewry, he wrote in *Altneuland* of Hebrew as just one of many languages which would be spoken in the Jewish State, alongside Yiddish, Russian, French, German, and so forth.

Herzl's attitude towards Palestine's Arabs was that of the garden variety European imperialist towards native populations.

But Herzl's main and most significant area of shortsightedness related to what was to emerge as the main obstacle confronting Zionism and Israel—"the Arab problem."

Herzl had experienced at first hand and understood the maelstrom of central European nationalism (and the anti-Semitism that it bred) and had fashioned his Zionist movement both in response to and in emulation of the nationalisms he had grown up with. He had also taken account of the power and purpose of the imperialisms that at the end of the nineteenth century dominated the globe and had understood that Zionism's success required some form of great power sponsorship and alliance. Thus he wrote-predicted in *The Jewish State*: "We should there [i.e., in Palestine] form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism."

For Herzl, nationalism was an European phenomenon. He completely failed to foresee that the winds of nationalism, coming off the plains of Europe, were also about to sweep through the imperial domains, and that the Arab world, in whose midst Zionism was being planted, would also fall under their spell. Herzl's attitude towards Palestine's Arabs was that of the garden-variety European imperialist towards native populations. Thus he failed completely to predict the Arab nationalist antagonism to Zionism and to the emergence of a Jewish state, and the decades-long struggle that would follow.

The Jewish State, Herzl's revolutionary, programmatic essay proposing a Zionist solution to the Jewish problem, is truly remarkable in that, in recommending that the Zionist state be established in Palestine, it fails completely to note that Palestine already contains a sizeable (Arab) population (in 1896 there were in the country around 550,000 Arabs as well as perhaps 30–40,000 Jews), fails completely to take the Arabs into account in its scheme of future things. The Arabs are simply not there.

Perhaps even more remarkably, Arabs are scarcely mentioned in Herzl's second book, the utopian novel *Altneuland*, about life in the prospective Jewish state, written three to four years after his brief sojourn in Palestine. In 1898, he had visited Jaffa and Jerusalem and passed through the countryside of what was then called by the Zionists "Judea," around the new Jewish settlements of Rehovot, Rishon LeZion, and Nes Ziona. He had most certainly been told about the occasional Arab attacks on the settlements and settlers, which had resulted in a handful of fatalities. Yet Arabs almost don't figure in *Altneuland*'s pages.

In the first part of the novel, which takes place in 1902, the presence of Arabs is mentioned incidentally. But they figure as the source and cause of Palestine's desolation and as a natural part of the surrounding filth and aridity. The large, mostly Arab town of Jaffa is 'in extreme decay.... The alleys were dirty, neglected, full of vile odors. Everywhere misery in bright Oriental rags. Poor Turks, dirty Arabs, timid Jews lounged about—indolent, beggarly, hopeless.... [Outside Jaffa] the inhabitants of the blackish Arab villages looked like brigands. Naked children played in the dirty alleys."

Propelling us into the future, to 1923, *Altneuland* again devotes some passing references to the Arabs. But again, they only appear obliquely, tangential to the main, Jewish story. We are introduced to one "Reschid," a prosperous cultivator of oranges who lauds the Jewish influx as having brought prosperity to him and his kind: "Our orange trans-



Palestinian children and their mother on the West Bank, 1984.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEO STONE / IMPACT VISUALS

port [i.e., export] has multiplied tenfold since we have good transportation facilities to connect us with the whole world. Everything here has increased in value since your immigration," he tells his Jewish interlocutors.

When one of them asks: "Were not the older inhabitants of Palestine ruined by the Jewish immigration? And didn't they have to leave the country?" Reschid partially sidesteps the question. He responds that "naturally, the landowners gained most because they were able to sell to the Jewish society at high prices...." Reschid fails to respond directly to the question about Arab emigration. But later in *Altneuland* he says that the poorer Arabs—"those who had nothing"—only gained from Zionism, which provided them with "opportunities to work, means of livelihood, prosperity. Nothing could have been more wretched than an Arab village at the end of the nineteenth century." In short, "the Jews have enriched us," says Reschid—and this was to be the Zionist refrain down to the end of the 1930s: Zionism brought only prosperity to the Arabs of Palestine; why were they being so churlish?

In Herzl's utopian vision, by 1923 the Jews constitute the "majority" of the population of Palestine. Herzl seems to imply that this came about through massive immigration. But elsewhere, in his diary entry for 12 June 1895, Herzl had suggested another route by which this majority could have come about (one he diplomatically refrained from alluding to publicly, in *Altneuland*):

"When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. The property-owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly." (From Rafael Patai, ed., *The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl*, Vol. I. Needless to say, the "poor" of Palestine at the time constituted more than 90 percent per cent of the total population.)

Herzl was not unique among the Zionist leadership in oscillating between Jewish immigration and the transfer of the Arabs as the solution to the "demographic" problem presented by Zionism's intention to establish a Jewish state in a land with an Arab majority. Zionism had always regarded the achievement of a Jewish majority as a precondition for, and as part of the drive towards, Jewish sovereignty. Most Zionists had also thought in terms of some form of displacement and dispossession—albeit through steady purchase—of the Arabs of Palestine as part of the process of making the land "Jewish"; all understood that it was best to forge a Jewish state with as few (alien and potentially troublesome) Arabs as possible.

From the first, the main problem facing the movement—above and beyond raising funds and mobilizing potential immigrants and placating or persuading great powers—was the presence in Palestine of a non-Jewish and antagonistic Arab population, to some degree supported by millions of fellow Arabs in the lands around.

The Zionist leaders and settlers constructed several psychological lines of defense to fend off this uncomfortable reality. Like Herzl, most initially tended simply to ignore the Arabs' presence. Subsequently, when Arab opposition made complete denial illogical, the Zionists tended to argue that most of the Arabs (a) bore no ill-will towards Zionism and (b) understood that the growth of the Zionist enterprise would benefit them as well. What friction and opposition there was was explained away by attributing it to this or that special-interest group in the Arab population. "The Arabs" did not oppose Zionism; rather it was the "effendi class" or the Muslim clerics or the Christian merchants and so on, each for his own particularist, selfish reasons. Admittedly, occasionally, these groups succeeded in "inciting" wider groups of unemployed or devout Arabs to bouts of violence against the new settlers. What the authorities, Ottoman or British, and the Zionists had to do, went the explanation, was somehow to persuade the majority of their honorable intentions while neutralizing the "inciters." Arab opposition to the Zionist enterprise would then disappear.

The problem, of course, was that Zionism's intentions, as perceived by the majority of the locals, were far from honorable; the Zionists, simply put, wanted to take over "their" land, and no amount of Zionist "explaining" could persuade them otherwise. Hence, as a succession of British commissions of inquiry determined and as various Zionist leaders, such as Ben-Gurion and Zeev Jabotinsky, privately acknowledged, it was not really small special-interest groups that opposed the Zionist influx but the overwhelming bulk of the population. Though the largely backward, generally illiterate Arab population was not, before the 1920s, a separate "people" (they were "Arabs," "Muslims," "Nabulsis," "Jaffa-ites," "Jerusalem-ites," perhaps "southern Syrians," but certainly not "Palestinians"), from the start it resented the arrival of the trickle, soon to be a flood, of foreigners, and feared their intentions and appetites. It was not merely a handful of rabble-rousers or Christian priests or Muslim fanatics who resented the influx.

Zionist leaders tried to sell "Zionism" to the locals and to persuade the Ottoman Turkish authorities and Western dignitaries that there was enough room in the country for both Jews and Arabs, and that the backward locals would only benefit from a healthy dose of Jewish-European capital and values. But the locals weren't having any of that. Several thousand locals may have worked for the new Jewish farmers, and many others may have marginally benefited from Jewish capital. But they did not become pro-Zionist. Indeed, self-appointed spokesmen for the local population continuously petitioned Istanbul and, after 1917, London, to halt the Zionist influx and enterprise before it brought disaster. Specifically, from 1891 on, they expressed their fear and predictions of dispossession and expulsion: the Jews wanted the Land, the whole Land, and ultimately would push them out into the desert. (Ironically, the mirror image of this prediction were Jewish fears and talk of the Arabs' intention to push them, the Jews, "into the sea.")

Under British rule, which began in 1917–1918, the Arabs of Palestine gradually began to evolve into a "people": by 1920–21, the Palestinian Arab elite began thinking of their situation and future as distinct from those of Syria; by 1936–1939, during the Arab Revolt, masses of Palestinians joined in the national struggle against the British occupier and the Zionist usurper; and by 1948, probably most Palestinians regarded themselves as a separate "people," even though they failed to match the Jews' level of national consciousness, commitment, and dedication (an asymmetry which underlay the Palestinians' poor military performance and collapse during that year's Israeli-Arab war). As Palestinian national consciousness began to emerge, so the fear of personal dispossession and injury increasingly gave way to prognoses of national dispossession and catastrophe.

From the Palestinian Arab viewpoint, "1948" marked that catastrophe, a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. Paradoxically, however, the shattering of Palestinian society and the exile of the 700,000 who became refugees in the course of the war, reinforced the Palestinians' sense of "peoplehood" even as it temporarily crushed Palestinian national power. A succession of disasters thereafter—the 1967 War, the crushing of the PLO in Amman in 1970, and the crushing of the PLO in Lebanon in 1982—only served to underline the Palestinians' sense of identity and national purpose (much as disasters had a major national consciousness-building function in Jewish and Yishuv history).

While Zionist leaders may, during Ottoman and early British days, only have toyed with the idea of solving the "Arab Problem" through transfer, during the last decade of the Mandate the idea became increasingly attractive and realistic. Arab resistance to the Zionist influx through continuous political action and periodic bouts of violence in 1920, 1921, 1929, and 1936–9 had the dual effect of both heightening Jewish fears regarding the Fifth Column potential of the Arab population that would remain in the prospective Jewish state and of propelling the British authorities to curb Jewish immigration. With the Arabs increasingly viewed as mortal enemies and with the British obviating the possibility of the Yishuv achieving majority status in Palestine through immigration, the transfer option gradually emerged as the simplest, clearest, and only realistic solution to "the Arab problem." What's more, in July 1937 that option received an imperial imprimatur and new legitimacy when it was propounded by the Royal Peel Commission as part of its proposal to divide Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs. As the commission acknowledged, perhaps it was possible to "create" an area with a Jewish majority by dividing Palestine in a certain way. But any carve-up which left the Jews in control of a sizeable area would necessarily also leave a very large (and potentially subversive and destabilizing) Arab minority within its domain. Hence, in addition to proposing partition, the Peel Commission recommended that the 225,000–300,000 Arabs living in the area allocated for Jewish statehood (the Coastal Plain, Galilee and the Jezreel and Jordan valleys) be transferred—voluntarily, if possible, but by compulsion if necessary.

The Yishuv's leadership, which over the previous decades had occasionally raised the transfer idea in closed forums, now enthusiastically embraced the idea in semi-public venues. As Ben-Gurion put it in his speech to the 20th Zionist Congress plenum in Zurich on 7 August 1937: "We must carefully examine the question whether the transfer is possible, whether it is necessary, whether it is moral, and will it bring benefit. We do not want to dispossess. [But] transfer of [Arab] inhabitants happened in the past, in the [Jezreel] Valley, in the Sharon [i.e., the Coastal Plain] and in other places. We know of the Jewish National Fund's actions in this regard. Now the transfer will have to be carried out on a different scale altogether. In many parts of the country new Jewish settlement will not be possible unless there is a

transfer of the Arab peasantry. The [Peel] Commission dealt with this matter seriously, and it is important that [the transfer] plan came from them and not from us.... The transfer of the population is what makes possible a comprehensive [Jewish] settlement plan. Thankfully, the Arab people have large, empty areas [outside Palestine]. Jewish power in the country, which is continuously growing, will also increase our possibilities to carry out the transfer on a large scale. You must remember, that this method contains an important humane and Zionist idea, to shift parts of a people [i.e., the Palestine Arabs] to their own country and to settle empty lands [in Syria, Transjordan, and Iraq]."

But the subject of transfer remained sensitive, especially as Palestinian leaders and most of the Arab world rejected the Peel recommendations *in toto* and as the British government in short order also shelved them. Thenceforward, the idea was still bandied about by the Zionist leadership, in internal discussions and in meetings with foreign leaders and officials, but circumspectly, cautiously, secretly. Ben-Gurion, like others, understood that, for the good of the cause, the idea could not be pushed publicly and must not be aired too often. And on no account could the Zionist movement endorse transfer as its official policy.

Hence, the Yishuv entered 1948 without a master plan for expulsion. Nor did it adopt and implement a transfer policy in the course of the war. Rather, the transfer of Palestinian Arabs that occurred took place naturally as the two interspersed communities joined battle and as the weaker side gradually fell apart and fled under the hammer blows of war. But, at the same time, what happened—and especially the Israeli government's decision in June 1948 to bar the return of the refugees—cannot be understood without taking account of the pro-transfer mindset and predisposition of the bulk of the Zionist leadership, officials, and officer corps. All, given the previous half century of conflict and mutual hatred, understood that a Jewish state without Arabs or without a large Arab minority would be infinitely more secure and "better off" in almost every way than a state burdened and threatened by the presence of a large Arab population.

But the creation and perpetuation of the refugee problem was to hound Israel and to poison Israeli-Arab relations during the following fifty years. Moreover, it was one of the factors that helped transform what had largely been an interethnic, civil conflict between the two populations of Palestine into the interstate conflict that has dominated Israeli and Middle Eastern history since 1948. For it was precisely the unignorable plight and suffering of the Palestinian Arabs during April–May of that year that forced the hand of the reluctant Arab political and military leaders to take the plunge and invade Palestine on 15–16 May. And, once embroiled in Palestine, militarily and politically, the Arab states found themselves unable thereafter to extricate themselves with a modicum of honor.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IEIT HORNBAK / 2 MAJ



Jewish settlers at a demonstration against Palestine self-rule, 1996.

Of course, other factors also contributed to the transformation of an internal Palestinian imbroglio into the interstate conflict. The Jewish State of Israel had come into being against the deepest wishes of the whole Arab and Islamic worlds, not just those of Palestine's Arabs; moreover, its establishment physically split in two the Islamic world and severed the eastern half of the Arab world (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Arabian Peninsula) from its western half (Egypt and the Maghreb), a development that the Arabs regarded as unconscionable.

Between May 1948 and June 1967, the Palestinians were marginalized, though their presence inside the neighboring Arab states and along Israel's borders, coupled with their periodic low-key harassment of Israel, acted as a yeast which kept the Middle East in continuous ferment. The Palestinians, and especially the refugees, never allowed the Arab world to forget or disengage.

Following the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the areas of Palestinian demographic concentration, the Palestinians returned to center stage of the conflict: once again they became "the problem" that the Zionist entity would have to "solve" if it ever hoped to have peace and, in the absence of a settlement, to contend with on a daily basis, under the watchful gaze of a troubled Arab world and the world in general.

The post-1967 years were marked by a succession of wars between Israel and various Arab states (the War of Attrition of 1968–70, the October War of 1973, the Lebanon War of 1982–85). The Palestinian problem in one way or another supplied either the immediate trigger to the eruption or, more vaguely, served as a contributory factor in the background. In 1968–70 and 1973 Egypt and Syria wanted to retrieve the lands lost in 1967 and to reclaim their honor lost in 1948 and 1967; in 1982 Israel engaged the Syrian forces in Lebanon as it sought once and for all to squash the PLO in order to facilitate the immediate or gradual annexation of the West Bank. Through the 1967–97 period, all the Arab states, spurred by the PLO, exhibited a resolve to solve the Palestinian problem, which continued to constitute a palpable testimony to their own incompetence, weakness, and dishonor. Moreover, in the cases of Jordan and Lebanon (1970–71 and 1975–82 respectively) the domestic

Palestinian problem had clearly demonstrated an ability to de-stabilise host countries from within.

Given the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict unfolded in a world characterized by global East-West conflict, it was perhaps inevitable that the two would interlock and interstice. Herzl had foreseen Western great power promotion of Zionism both in order to be rid of troublesome Jewish minorities and of erecting an outpost and bulwark against the barbaric Orient. But he had completely failed to anticipate the recruitment of states and peoples in the Middle East (as elsewhere in the Third World) within the context of a bi-polar global conflict.

None of this, not the precipitation and decades of Arab antagonism and violence towards the Yishuv during Ottoman and British times, nor Zionist transfer thinking, nor the war of 1948 and the wars that followed, nor the great powers' involvement in, and in some ways, exacerbation of, the regional conflict, is to be found in Herzl's published pronouncements on the future course of Zionism. Immersed in the world of European Semite and anti-Semite and in his effort to elicit funds from magnates and political support from potentates, he had failed to project the European realities he knew, of nationalist conflict, great power rivalries, and minority-majority antagonisms, onto his "new Middle East." To those nurtured on *The Jewish State* and *Altneuland*, these realities must have come as a very unpleasant surprise indeed.

Herzl had predicted the establishment of a (Jewish) liberal Western democracy in Palestine. Curiously, what has evolved over the past fifty years is a unique admixture of democracy and authoritarianism, liberalism and theocratic obscuratism.

To many, it appeared that as the State matured, and the Fifties gave way to the Sixties and the Sixties to the Seventies, Israeli society was indeed evolving, albeit slowly, into Herzl's utopia. By the late 1980s, under the impact of regional events (the October War of 1973, the Lebanon War of 1982–5, and the Intifada) and Western influences which penetrated via the media and the arts, a large segment of Israeli society—its Ashkenazi bedrock and the westernized or "Israelified" Sephardi middle class—cast off the chains of ideology and constrictive provincialism and adopted a more open, liberal, capitalist, and democratic world view.

It was this process which underlay the cultural openness that in the late 1980s and 1990s produced Israel's "New Historiography" as well as the conciliatory politics of of the Rabin-Peres years that resulted in the recognition of the PLO, the Oslo agreements, the negotiations with Syria, and the peace treaty with Jordan.

The New Historiography posited a fresh and more critical look at the history of Zionism and Israel and of the Zionist-Arab conflict.

Initially, the focus of the New Historians—who included Oxford University Professor Avi Shlaim and myself—was the 1948 War, which was seen as *the* revolutionary, defining event in Zionist history as well as in the history of the conflict. While not disputing that the Arabs—the Palestinians in November–December 1947 and the Arab states in May 1948—initiated the bouts of hostilities, the New Historians discovered that different Arab groups and states entered the conflict with different aims in mind. While Israel then and subsequently was to maintain that "five" Arab states invaded in order to "throw the Jews into the sea," the mass of new documentation, as interpreted by the New Historians, convincingly demonstrated that Jordan, which had the best and most effective of the armies engaged in the war, entered Palestine in order to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and to annex the territories the UN had earmarked for such a state (prinicpally the West Bank); the Lebanese Army failed altogether to invade Palestine; and Egypt's army had in great measure joined the conflict in order to prevent Jordan from grabbing all the Palestinian Arab areas and to get hold of chunks of territory for itself.

Conversely, while the Yishuv's leadership formally accepted the 1947 Partition Resolution, large sections of Israeli society—including the Ahdut Ha'avodah party,

And There Are Days

And there are days when everyone says, I was there
I'm ready to testify, I stood a short distance away
    from the accident,
from the bomb, the crucifixion, I almost got hit,
    almost got crucified.
I saw the faces of bride and groom under the
    chuppah and almost rejoiced.
When David lay with Bathsheba I was the voyeur,
I happened to be there on the roof fixing the pipes,
    taking down a flag.
With my own eyes I saw the Chanukah miracle in
    the Temple,
I saw General Allenby entering Jaffa Gate,
I saw God.
And then there are days when everything's an alibi:
    wasn't there didn't hear
I only heard the explosion from a distance and I
    split, saw the smoke but
was reading a newspaper. I was staying in some
    other place.
I didn't see God, I've got witnesses.
And the God of Jerusalem is the eternal alibi God,
wasn't there didn't see didn't hear
was in some other place. Was some Place, some
    Other.

—Yehuda Amichai
translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

Herut, and Mapainiks like Ben-Gurion—were opposed to or extremely unhappy with partition and from early on viewed the war as an ideal opportunity to expand the new state's borders beyond the UN-earmarked partition boundaries and at the expense of the Palestinians. Like Jordan's King Abdullah, they too were opposed to the emergence of a Palestinian Arab state and moved to prevent it.

The New Historians argue that, in the course of the war, the Yishuv's armed forces, the Haganah, IZL, LHI, and IDF, had a major hand in precipitating the flight of the Palestinian Arab population, thus creating the Palestinian refugee problem. There were a great number of expulsions and atrocities against the civilian population (and Arab prisoners of war), and these were a major factor in the initiation of the exodus.

The New Historians also came to dispute the long-held portrayal of the Yishuv-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab battles as a fight between "David" and "Goliath." The new documentation (mobilized most effectively by Dr. Amitzur Ilan of the Hebrew University in *The Origin of the Arab-Israeli Arms Race* (1996)) clearly showed that the Yishuv was far stronger than the (far larger) Palestinian Arab community and stronger, as well, through most of the war than the Arab armies that attacked or engaged it.

In the wake of the 1948 War, the New Historians demonstrated that there were Arab leaders—Abdullah of Jordan and President Hosni Zaim of Syria—who were interested in peace and that Israel's leaders were as much responsible as the Arabs for the absence of serious peace-making or the failure to achieve peace in the years 1949–51. (For example, Ben-Gurion turned down Abdullah's and Zaim's offers to meet and to talk peace.)

Israeli historians are now beginning to look at the 1967 War and a fresh look at 1973 and 1982 as well is sure to follow. Already, 1967 and its aftermath (there is still a severe problem of access to documents) are beginning to look somewhat different from the traditional Israeli descriptions. In an interview given in the 1970s and published last year, Moshe Dayan—Israel's defense minister in 1967 and 1973—is quoted as saying that most of the border troubles between Israel and Syria in the 1950s and 1960s were instigated by Israel; he also implied that the main reason the IDF conquered the Golan Heights in June 1967 was because of pressure by Israel's border kibbutzim who coveted the fertile lands up above (and not because of Syrian shelling of the kibbutzim).

A fresh look at the early 1970s may also reinforce the argument—already made in the memoirs of a number of Labor politicans and officials from that time—that Israel's premier, Golda Meir, rejected reasonable Egyptian peace or non-belligerency offers in 1970–1, thus "forcing" the Arabs to launch the 1973 October War.

Because of the work of the New Historians, down the road we will have a generally revamped understanding of the Zionist-Arab conflict, with both the Arabs and Israelis emerging somewhat more human and life-size than has hitherto been the case in Israeli historiography. This may be no bad thing for Israeli society.

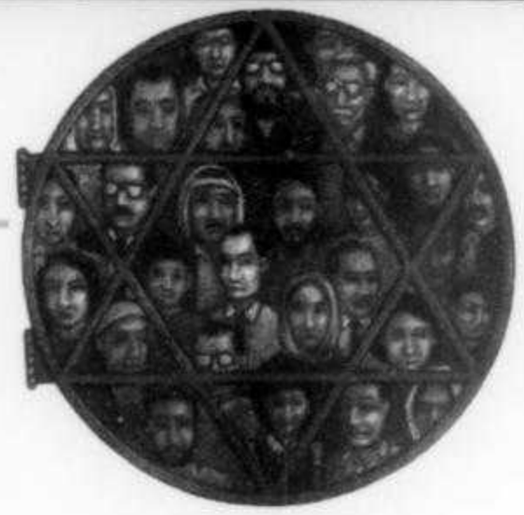
But, unfortunately, this historiography will be read by and influence only those Israelis who are "Western" or are undergoing this process of Westernization, and these constitute only about one-half of Israeli society.

Israeli society has been moving for the past three decades in two directions simultaneously. If one half has been moving toward the West and modernity, the other half, composed of the ultra-Orthodox communities, much of the mainstream Orthodox community, and the Sephardi working and lower middle classes, have been moving, spiritually and intellectually, in the opposite direction, backward in time.

Impelled by the Messianic currents unleashed by the 1967 war and (among the Sephardis) by a resentment of the Ashkenazi establishment and Western values, these sections of society have been driven towards and captivated by a heightened nationalism or ultra-nationalism, provincialism, fundamentalism, and obscurantism. Unfortunately for Israel, these groups—represented in the Knesset by Degel Hatorah/Agudat Yisrael, Shas, and large sections of the Likud and the NRP—have a demographic edge.

The pertinacity of Israel's "Arab problem"—with external Arab enemies still howling at the gates outside while a semi-occupied Palestinian population continues to strive for more and more sovereignty over more and more of Palestine while a large Arab minority inside Israel proper growingly affirms its loyalty to and identification with its Palestinian brothers rather than the Jewish State—leaves a series of paradoxes and ironies at the core of Zionist history.

Zionism set out to provide a haven for the world's most persecuted people. But the vast majority of the oppressed Jews of the Russian Empire preferred, in the end, to shift westward and found safe and prosperous havens in the United States and the British dominions. Moreover, Zionism, because of its relative belatedness and painfully slow advance towards statehood, failed to meet the major challenge that world history set it: Nazism. Zionism failed to provide in time the haven that Europe's Jews needed as the German death machine churned them up in the camps and forests of Europe. Lastly, having at last succeeded—in no small measure as a result of the Holocaust—in setting up a Jewish state, the Zionist leaders discovered that the "safe haven" they had established was probably the unsafest place on earth for Jews, individually and as a collectivity. Arab and Muslim states sought its destruction as various armies and terrorist organisations sought to kill and maim its inhabitants. And, indeed, Israel remains the ultimate target of a host of Muslim/Arab states, including Iraq, Iran, and Libya, whose drive towards the acquisition of non-conventional arms, including atomic weapons, will render the country's continued existence perilous for the foreseeable future. ❑



Pnina Motzafi-Haller

A Mizrahi Call
for a More Democratic Israel

Last night, my son Yoni asked me to help him with his homework. The subject of his studies is *Moshavot Rishonot* (First Agricultural Settlements). When I first heard that this subject would be a distinct part of the class curriculum, to be taught along with Math or Hebrew Lit., I asked the school mistress, a woman of Yemeni origin, if there would also be a topic of studies called *Ayarot Pituah Rishonot* (First Development Towns). This was my way of commenting about a particular kind of historiography that privileges Ashkenazi pioneers over the Mizrahi immigrant settlers of peripheral towns (known as Ayarot Pituah). She said something playful and we never discussed the issue again.

The storyline of *Moshavot Rishonot*, the book Yoni brought home, is built around three imaginary families and traces in thirty-three detailed chapters their struggles to survive as they founded Petach Tikva, Rishon LeZion and other *First Moshavot*. It is an endearing story that invites the young reader to identify with its two key protagonists: Miraleh, a nine-and-a-half-year-old girl who emigrated with her parents from Hungary, and her best friend Sarahleh, who came from Russia. Into the evolving plot enters a single young Halutz who is the romantic address for both Miraleh and Sarahleh. We are told that he came to Israel from Romania. It was not until chapter twenty-two that I finally found the only Yemeni person in this Zionist story—the Little Yemeni Boy. He enters the story through Miraleh's eyes, who describes him as: "A small boy, darker and thinner than all the kids I have ever known. One could see he ate like a little bird. He wore a long, gray dress called *galabiya*. He had lots of small, black very dense curls and two *peot* on his cheeks. He spoke a strange language, a bit Arabic, a bit Hebrew: something unclear."

Lest we have any doubt, our Miraleh makes it clear this boy is different: "*I must say, any way I looked at him he was different from any child I had ever known.*" Miraleh, however, proves much more tolerant than her mother and the other people in the neighborhood who do not buy the Little Yemenite's cheese because they think he is Arab. She believes he is Jewish and is the only one who listens to his story. He tells her he and his family (all twenty of them) live in a cave, that they walked all the way from Yemen to Jerusalem, that he is the only hope for any income for his family, and so forth. She heroically convinces her mother and the other women to buy the little boy's cheese.

The representation of the Yemenites within this single chapter is not complete without the obligatory photographs of a Yemenite bride, the embroidery of Yemenite women's pants, and other similar pictures that document the "folklore" of Yemenite Jews. There is also a section directed to the "interested student" who might want to try a recipe of something called "Yemeni food," as well as instructions on how to perform Yemeni dance steps. The chapter concludes by asking those of the student readers who are children of Moshavot: had Yemenite Jews settled in YOUR *moshava*? If so, how many years ago did THEY come to YOUR *moshava* and what work did THEY perform?

I have presented this textbook and the way it represents the Israeli "Self" and the Yemeni "Other" at some length because I want to illustrate how the exclusion of Mizrahi Jews is carried out in Israel today, fifty years after the establishment of the Zionist State. The Yemeni boy remains nameless. He represents a category of people whose entry into the main narrative is through their exotic food, customs, and dance steps. His poverty, unlike that of Hungarian, Russian, and Romanian Jewish immigrants, is not heroic. He is not included as a subject, as a person who is part of the historical doing of the time. He is for ever the "Other" who came to do a particular kind of work in Our *Moshava*.

I could give many more examples of the exclusion of Mizrahim, Yemenites as well as other Jews of Arab Lands, from the historical narrative that defines the Israeli national Self. Recently, I saw a photograph of a man holding a few pages of a book. The caption reads "nine out of four hundred." It is a powerful visual representation of the limited space (nine pages) accorded to Mizrahi history within the four-hundred page Jewish History textbook used by Israeli schools today. Like the story of the Little Yemenite Boy, this photo reminds us of the intrinsically Euro-centered and Orientalist view of the non-Ashkenazi Jew as the "Other" whose only salvation comes when he is distinguished from the despised Arab due to his *strange* yet acceptable Jewishness.

This practice, whereby a ruling group writes a *national history* from its narrow particular perspective in ways that exclude the role played by other groups in the historical process, is not unique to Israeli Zionist historiography. As an anthropologist, I have analyzed and written about similar

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processes in Africa and elsewhere. Yet, as a Mizrahi intellectual, I have been deeply affected by the dominant Zionist historiography that distorts, disfigures, and destroys the historical agency of Mizrahim. What my son and other children learn through such stories only reaffirms the message that being a Mizrahi means you are associated with lack of progress, dark traditionalism, ignorance. The unavoidable outcome is self-contempt and lack of dignity. The only way to become *Israeli* is to erase any trace of that identity.

Despite the Zionists' best efforts to create a homogeneous Israeli society, fifty years after independence Israeli society is more fragmented than ever. The emergence of a clear, assertive, and unapologetic Mizrahi voice over the last decade is part of such a process of fragmentation. I would like to argue here that such fragmentation is positive, is healing rather than destructive, and that it signals the hope for a more democratic future for Israel in a post-Zionist era.

But let me return to mainstream Zionist historiography and the very real damage it has caused, not only to Mizrahim in Israel but to the kind of society it justifies. Zionist historiography distorts, disfigures, and destroys the past of the Mizrahim. While the brave New Historians have begun over the past few years to write a more balanced historiography that looks at the Palestinian perspective in the Zionist saga, no coherent, critical, Mizrahi-centered narrative has been developed yet in Israel.

Over the past few years, I have spent many months examining archival material from the 1950s with an eye for the missing story, the silenced story of the Mizrahi immigrants about their experiences during the first critical years of Israeli statehood. My reading led me to the amazing testimony of Eliyahu Elyashar, a leader of the Sephardim who had been living in Palestine generations before the arrival of the first Zionist settlers. In two voluminous texts, *To Live with Jews* and his recent, posthumous *To Live with Palestinians,* Elyashar depicts in great detail the struggle for power among the various Jewish segments of the population in the pre-State era, and their shifting relationships with resident Palestinians, and with the Turkish, and later the British colonialists. Elyashar's historical trajectory brings to light other historical scenarios that the Zionists ruled out. For example, he speaks about attempts to establish co-existence with Arab neighbors, and to fight against the demonization of the Arab by the Eastern European Zionists. But Elyashar's books are not part of the school curriculum, nor have I seen a serious analytical effort to integrate his records into a fuller, more complete historical narrative.

My historical exploration did not convince me, on the one hand, that Sephardim in the pre-State era, or that Mizrahim in the early years of statehood, were all noble, good people nor, on the other hand, that they were the hapless victims of Ashkenazi oppression. Instead, my work has enabled me to see beyond the distortions and exclusions built into the dominant, official Zionist historiography and to realize that the actual historical outcome—the rise to hegemony of the secular socialist Zionists led by East-European Jews—was not inevitable nor was it the only force that had shaped the emerging society.



A North African family at the Joint Distribution Committee hospital in Marseille, 1949, on their way to Israel.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JUDAH L. MAGNES MUSEUM

One of my exhilarating discoveries was the realization that Mizrahis, a group generally represented as traditionalists who could not grasp the essence of Western democracy, had, in fact, a clear and powerful vision of equality. Such a discovery clearly has rehabilitative value. It allows Mizrahim to see that there is nothing to be ashamed of in their recent past. It restores a sense of dignity and pride. But beyond that, such historical reconstruction presents a genuine critique of the incoherence of Euro-centered Zionism's idea of a democratic state as a state that grants civil rights only to particular sectors of the population and not to others. As the title of the well-known Mizrahi writer Sammi Michael's recent book suggests, such historiography illustrates that the rhetoric of socialist equality was empty and that there have always been in the Jewish state *Equal and More Equal* people.

Who are the Mizrahim?

I have argued that dominant Israeli claims to universalism must be exposed, and that hegemonic Zionist narratives must be understood for what they are—the views of a particular social group of Eastern European, secular Zionists with an increasingly narrowing social base in today's Israel. That is, the group that succeeded in controlling the State is as particularistic, as *ethnic,* as the Mizrahi collective identity they worked so hard to *absorb,* i.e., to eliminate. Mizrahiyut is no more exotic than East European Zionism. It is not an unchanged *culture* common to a population of people whose father was born in Asia-Africa (as the increasingly more convoluted definitions of the Central Bureau of Statistics will

have us believe). It is an identity that has become a significant force in Israeli social reality because it was constituted within specific relations of power. Thus, Mizrahiyut is clearly an Israeli social phenomena and it is defined within a social and political reality that defines other, similarly partial identities.

The conclusion of this analysis is inevitable: the argument that the ruling group can represent all groups (what I have called its *claims to universality*, or what popular discourse calls the *melting pot*) must be put aside because it conceals a thinly disguised version of a totalitarian dream. It is more and more apparent in contemporary Israel that the social base of these narrow elites is becoming increasingly more limited. In fact, the heightened social and political struggles in Israel in the 1990s suggest that the claims to knowledge and historical truth by the dominant secular Zionist sectors have been under growing attack. Contemporary, assertive Mizrahi voices (note the plural form) are participating in a process of *breaking the center*, a process that involves other ethnic categories (Soviet Jews, Palestinian citizens of the State) and groups defined along gender and religious lines. And here is my second conclusion: the only way of reaching a reconciled society in Israel is to accept the multiple claims by the various groups that make up contemporary Israeli society.

Shas and Keshet—contemporary assertive Mizrahi voices

The Mizrahi voice enters into the recent proliferation of groups at two critical points: in the religious agenda of Shas, and in the secular, leftist social agenda of Keshet (Hakeshet Hademocratit Hamizrahit). These two explicitly Mizrahi-centered movements are radically different in nature and in their visions of a future Israeli society. A political party that swept ten Knesset seats only to join the Likud coalition, Shas draws on mostly lower-class Mizrahi voters and boasts an impressive grassroot Mizrahi religious alternative educational system that streches from daycare centers to Yeshivas. Keshet is a fledgling two-year-old movement of intellectuals with a stated claim of staying out of party politics. Most observers place Keshet and Shas on the two extreme ends of the transforming Israeli scene.

Yet, in their very different ways, these two contemporary movements pose the same radical challenge to existing definitions of Israeli-hood and Zionist ideology. In their assertive claims to Mizrahi identity as a viable base for Israeli-hood, in their refusal to accept Mizrahi identity as a deformed, lacking version of an Ashkenazi, Euro-centered model of the Israeli self, these two movements expose the claims to universalism by the ruling elite as essentially particularistic and Orientalist. Such Euro-centric definitions have bred cultural paternalism and inequality among Jews, and a cycle of wars with Palestinians and Arab neighbors. Both Shas and Keshet defy the hegemonic definition of Mizrahiyut as an identity that must be left out, erased, in order to enter the Israeli collective.

Shas defiance takes the avenue of reclaiming the religious content of Mizrahi life. For Shas, Jewish identity is an ontological identity that justifies their right to live and to act in a Jewish state. Keshet fights for a social agenda of equality that includes not only Mizrahim and their civic rights (Keshet currently is campaigning for the Mizrahi rights to state-lands now sold by kibbutzim and for an equal share of Mizrahi cultural creation in State funds, for example) but also for the equal rights of women and Palestinians. Keshet argues that Mizrahim, as well as women, Palestinians, and other oppressed groups, have an inalienable right to have access to good schools, to employment, and to participate in the public space of society. In its most fundamental thesis, Keshet defends the right to difference as a universal right, and sees itself as the real (and only) Left in contemporary Israel. Its struggle is not to gain power, but to work against the exclusion of other groups from the sharing of power and resources.

The way to a post-Zionist society must begin not with the cancellation of all differences (as the melting pot ideology has it) but rather with the acknowledgment of distinctions. Existing Ashkenazi-Zionist ideals and institutions have in this sense to be deconstructed, because they are based on unexamined assumptions which have proven destructive and oppressive. Further,the democratic process in Israel can be considerably deepened and expanded if it is made accountable to the demands of those sections of the populations—Mizrahim, women, Palestinians—who traditionally have been excluded from it. To that end, new assertive Mizrahi voices are joining the increasingly assertive voices of feminists and Palestinians in a multi-faceted struggle to expand democratic practices.

This leaves us, however, with an apparent, perhaps irresolvable paradox. The Mizrahi agenda advanced by both Shas and Keshet is one of social reform, not of revolution. However, while struggling through legislative reforms to change the present Israeli institutional setting, both movements also assert that these very institutions and settings are rooted in the cultural and political values of the dominant Ashkenazi, male, Euro-centered segments of society. Especially for Keshet, the inherent contradiction is always there: do we accept government grants for an alternative school that advocates Mizrahi-centered curriculum, or do we reject the system that dictates culturally-biased tests as the entry ticket for higher education? The simultaneous acceptance of the system in an effort to reform it from within while at the same time rejecting its foundations condemns Keshet (much more than Shas) to ambiguous, peripheral relations with the existing establishment. The outcome has had paralyzing political effects.

Is it possible to resolve this paradox? I think it is not. But the absence of a solution is the very precondition for a really democratic Israel. The articulation of a vision of equality by minority groups, by feminists, and by oppressed segments of the population should inform concrete, daily struggles. That is what makes democratic interaction possible. ❑



Rashid Khalidi

A Universal Jubilee?

Palestinians 50 Years after 1948



A Palestinian refugee camp at Nahr al-Barid in northern Lebanon, winter 1948.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES

As might be expected, the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Israel is being treated as an occasion for universal jubilation, whether in Israel, in the American Jewish community, in the American political sphere, or among world leaders who have been involved in symbolic celebrations of this event.

It should surprise no one that the devastating impact of 1948 on the Palestinian people has been generally forgotten in the rush to observe the fiftieth birthday of Israel. Indeed this latest episode fits well into a larger pattern; in the course of the struggle between these two people, history is repressed as each tries to come into being at the expense of the other. Such a pattern was natural given the Jewish attempt to establish a state in a land with an Arab majority, and to impose the fact of Israel's existence on the stubborn reality of Palestinian peoplehood in Palestine. While Israelis and their friends have much to celebrate in 1998, which marks their victory in this struggle, Palestinians and those who know their history have much to mourn. For them, the fiftieth anniversary of Israel's establishment marks what since 1948 has been universally known in Arabic as *al-nakba*—the catastrophe—meaning the disappearance of Arab Palestine in 1948.

The year 1948 has many meanings for Palestinians. It means the year in which they lost their country, the year the entity called Palestine disappeared from the map; with it dis-

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appeared for several decades the Palestinians' hopes for self-determination and statehood. It means the year in which about 750,000 of the total Palestinian population of 1.4 million became refugees, some fleeing, others driven out of their homes by the forces of the nascent Israeli state. Of these, some ended up in refugee camps; over the past two and a half generations, the majority of these have clawed their way out of the camps to prosperity, mobility and success elsewhere. It means the year in which the two cities with the largest Arab populations in Palestine, Jaffa and Haifa, the centers of the country's Arab economic and intellectual life, together with many other towns and 418 villages, were overrun and emptied of most of their Arab inhabitants. It means the year in which the vast bulk of Palestine's land and huge amounts of other property passed out of the hands of the country's Arab population and into that of the new State of Israel. It means the year in which the Palestinians disappeared from the world stage as a people; instead, they became a "refugee problem," losing their voice to the Arab regimes which purported to speak for them until the Palestinians wrested back the right to represent themselves in the 1960s.

Clearly, Palestinians have little cause to celebrate anything in 1998: indeed it marks a collective trauma in their national history on the order of Sedan in 1870 for France, or Pearl Harbor in 1941 for Americans. Of course, both France and the United States eventually turned the tables and overcame the humiliation of defeat on the battlefield: that is highly unlikely—indeed virtually unimaginable—in the Palestinian case. In this respect the trauma of the Palestinians is much more akin to that of the Armenians and the Kurds, who like the Palestinians were victims of brutal campaigns of what we have learned to call ethnic cleansing. For these two peoples, to the injury of losing their respective national homelands, and with them the prospect of an independent national existence, has been added the insult of decades of non-recognition of the hurt which had been done to them. The denial that the Armenians were the victims of genocide, and the curtain of silence drawn over several generations of repression of the Kurds by three different Middle Eastern governments, (those of Iraq, Turkey and Iran) constitute close parallels to what has happened to the Palestinians.

For the Palestinians, this non-recognition of their national agony has been in some ways the unkindest cut of all. Not only did they feel that they were the victims in 1948, losing their country, most of their property, and seeing 13,000 of their fellow citizens killed (6,000 Israelis died in the conflict, in each case about 1 percent of the respective total populations: the differences were that most of the Palestinians killed were civilians, while most of the Israelis were combatants, and, most importantly, that the Israelis won the war, got their nation-state, and ended up with all that property). Beyond this, because the Palestinians were the victims of victims, defeated and dispossessed by the survivors of the modern era's greatest human atrocity, the Holocaust, their own suffering was forgotten or ignored. Even worse, as the history came to be written, they were depicted as the villains of the piece, the latest incarnation of a sequence of tormentors who have persecuted the Jewish people.

In light of the enormity of the evil done to the Jews—albeit elsewhere and at the hands of others—the specificity of Palestine, of what had actually happened in this small Mediterranean country in the years leading up to 1948, quickly faded in the international imaginary. This specificity was replaced by a narrative in which Israel and the Jewish people figured predominantly, and in which the center-piece was not the tragedy of the Palestinians, but rather the greatest trauma in Jewish history and one of the greatest in modern human experience: the Holocaust. This powerful and inspiring narrative of national redemption and resurrection firmly reoriented Jewish history on a completely new axis, with the birth of Israel serving as the bright counterpoint to the black horror of what had happened in the death-camps of Europe only a few years before. In this grand scheme of things, the Palestinians could only be an annoying complication, to be written out of the history, painted out of the pictures, the names of hundreds of their ancestral villages erased as new Hebrew names were concocted or resurrected, their very name and that of their country becoming almost epithets in polite company.

As if all of this were not enough, an insidious process of blaming the victims ensued, ensuring that even if a few inconvenient facts about what had happened in 1948 did come out, they could be laid at the door of the Palestinians themselves, or of their fellow Arabs. Thus the scandalous canard that "their leaders told them to leave" was concocted, which assiduous research has shown to have been an essentially false story devised and propagated by Israeli apologists, and which untold multitudes have come to believe to be gospel truth in the intervening decades. Thus, we had the self-delusional and comforting argument that while the Zionist leadership was willing to share Palestine and live in peace with the Arabs before 1948, it was the Arabs who refused accommodation, started the war, lost it, and deserved all the consequences. From this premise followed logically the conclusion that nearly 1.4 million Palestinians and their descendants unto the third generation and beyond somehow deserved everything that happened to them in 1948 and afterwards because of the sins or the stupidity of their leaders.

Like all successful big lies, each of these embodied some element of truth, however small. Thus, in beleaguered Haifa in the spring of 1948, some Arab League representatives did tell the population to leave, although other Arab leaders told them to stay. In fact, the Arab leadership all over the rest of the country futilely tried to keep the Palestinian population from fleeing their homes. They did this as the refugee tide turned into a flood as defeat turned into rout in the spring of 1948 under the hammer blows of Plan Dalet. This was the



Civilians being herded into prison after the siege of Acre in May, 1948.

Zionist master plan for the conquest of the coastal strip, including Jaffa and Haifa, and other key strategic regions of the country, which was implemented before the Mandate ended on May 15, 1948. Thus, while a very few important individuals of integrity and courage, like Judah Magnes and Martin Buber, sincerely called for sharing Palestine with the Arabs, the hard pragmatists who led the Labor Zionist parties, like Ben-Gurion, and their even harder rivals among the revisionists, like Jabotinsky and Begin, knew from at least the 1930s onwards that this was a fight to the finish over who would dominate the country. These leaders intended to win the whole country for the Jews exclusively, and knew from the mid-1940's onwards that the big battalions were on their side.

By the time the Arab armies entered Palestine on May 15, 1948, the miserably disorganized Palestinians had been crushed by the victorious military forces of the nascent Jewish State, which had already turned into refugees perhaps half of the 750,000 Palestinians who ultimately fled their homes. The Palestinians and the Arab states were hamstrung by internal divisions and appallingly bad leadership, not to speak of the scrupulously respected secret commitments made by King Abdullah, who controlled the two best Arab armies in the field, Jordan's Arab Legion and the Iraqi contingent, to the Zionist leadership to restrict his forces' sphere of action.

The 1948 war was nonetheless a closely fought affair, at least at the outset, and was very costly to the new State. Coming in the wake of the Holocaust, the losses which the nascent State of Israel incurred were particularly painful. But these losses, combined with the sweet intoxication of victory

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES

as a new Jewish national polity arose in the ancestral homeland of the Jews, and with the vindication of the central premises of Zionism which the atrocities of the Nazi era had conclusively provided blinded Israelis and those who sympathized with them to the losses involved in the dispossession of an entire people.

From the celebratory frenzy which has just begun moving into high gear this year, it is clear that little has changed since 1948 as far as the international representation of this event is concerned. We are told that this is Israel's jubilee birthday, a holiday, an occasion for universal rejoicing. We do not hear the heads of state of governments the world over phoning one another to commemorate the simultaneous passing of Palestine in 1948, nor are there plans anywhere in the world for a solemn observance of the dispossession of the Palestinian people. Just as they have been for the past fifty years, the Palestinians are forgotten in all the festivities.

But genuine celebration, one which would commemorate the establishment of a Jewish State at peace with its neighbors, cannot take place until two things happen. The first is a realization that in the zero-sum terms in which both communities understood reality in 1948, the birth of Israel necessarily involved the bloody infanticide of Palestine. The second is the righting of this wrong, insofar as this is possible, via the much-delayed birth of a State of Palestine. This State will not be born, and peace will not come, until the reality of what happened in 1948 has been confronted. For there can be no progress towards the reconciliation which is necessary to resolve this conflict unless we can get out of the closed box which posits Israeli innocence regarding what has happened to the Palestinians, and which places the primary onus for their own victimization on the Palestinians themselves.

In other words, history—meaning history which is not obsessively self-reflexive as so much of Israeli and Palestinian history is—has to be let back in. While neither people should be expected to change its national narrative, it will be necessary for both to take account of elements of the other's. For Palestinians, this does not require acceptance of the idea of Israeli innocence, but rather an understanding of the oppressive weight of the European context which drove Jews to Zionism—and drove many of them to Zion—and to doing what they did in Palestine to the Palestinians. Edward Said has stressed recently that Palestinians must do this if they are ever to comprehend and come to terms with what has happened to them over the past half century and more. As I have argued elsewhere, it will also require that the Palestinians accept some responsibility for their own failures in the 1930s, 1940s and afterwards.

Israelis will have to accept and atone for the fact that, however pure their motives and intentions may have been, and however pressing their circumstances at the time, in the process of constituting their nation-state they did grievous harm to a weaker people which had done nothing to them

before this conflict began, harm which continues half a century later. This will require confronting a potent and well-entrenched reading of Jewish history (one embodying profound distortions of Palestinian history) which will not surrender the hegemony it has attained over the past half century without a struggle.

None of this will be easy. Both Palestinians and Israelis are accustomed to viewing themselves as victims, and to seeing the other as no more than one of a series of accessories involved in inflicting suffering on them. Rather than granting the Palestinians agency and accepting that they too may have honorable or at least rational motivations, many Israelis and Jews see the Palestinians as driven by the same blind hatred which has driven so many persecutors in Jewish history. There is no room in such a scheme for the idea that Israeli actions may have some bearing on, or could even cause, Palestinian behavior: by definition, Israelis are victims, no matter what they do. Similarly, for Palestinians, Israel and Zionism are only part of a vast concatenation of forces including Britain, the United States, and the Arab regimes, which has conspired throughout this century to deprive them of self-determination, and ultimately of their very land and homes in many cases. And since the Palestinians are by definition victims, their actions are invariably justified, even if they cause great suffering to Israelis, since the suffering the Israelis have inflicted on the Palestinians has generally been even greater.

The fact that there is some truth in the world view of both only makes both more stubborn. To underline these similarities, however, is not to say that the two are the same; historically, in the conflict between them in Palestine over the past century, one side eventually grew far stronger and became the winner, while the other grew far weaker and ended up the loser. In this conflict, one became the victimizer and the other the victim. And yet this is not the way in which these two peoples are regarded by the world, or at least in the United States. As I write these words, there is a debate whether Yasser Arafat should or should not visit the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. and learn about a crime committed against the Jewish people on another continent by another people when he was a thirteen-year-old boy. Completely different though the events were in scale, scope, and universal historical importance, there is no museum, no memorial, no notice anywhere which records what Israel did to the Palestinians in 1948. Nor would Binyamin Netanyahu visit one if such did exist, even though he is head of government of a state which stands today on the ruins and in the place of Palestine.



Palestinian children protest Israeli land confiscation, 1991.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL DIX / IMPACT VISUALS

While 1948 therefore does not mark a universal jubilee, it could still provide a valuable occasion for reflection on the differing meanings of the events of that climactic year for these two peoples, which in turn could be a stepping-stone to something else more substantial. However, if instead of sober reflection this anniversary is used by Israel and its friends for triumphalist crowing which rubs more salt into the wounds of the Palestinians, it will take us further away from the possibility of peace and reconciliation between the two peoples. Nor is it sufficient for this occasion to be used to mourn the sad fate of the Palestinians, and to demand atonement for what was done to them, understandable though the impulse to mourn is, and important though atonement would be. If the Palestinians are able to put forth such a demand credibly, doing so must be coupled with an attempt to understand why the awful course of Jewish history in Europe led Zionism to do what it did in Palestine, unjust though this was to the Palestinians, and why that same history might lead some to celebrate this outcome, tragic though it was for the Palestinians.

If there is ever to be a universal celebration which Palestinians and Israelis can share, much will have to change in the way of attitudes, and today we are certainly very far from any such changes. As has been suggested, the Palestinian attitude towards Jewish history will have to evolve, something which is exceedingly difficult while the Palestinians rightly feel themselves to be oppressed by the overwhelming power of the Jewish State, half of them living in exile from their homeland, and the rest under military occupation or living as second class citizens within it. Perhaps most importantly, however, if such a celebration is to be truly universal, the Palestinians must have something concrete such as independent statehood and national self-determination, to celebrate alongside the Israelis. For this to happen, Israelis and their supporters must recognize and make restitution for the harm that was done to the Palestinian people in creating the state of Israel in 1948. After half a century, perhaps it is finally time for that process to begin. ❑



Amos Oz

A Monologue
Behind the Sound and Fury

I love Israel even at times when I don't like it, even when I can't stand it.

I love it because I feel somewhat at home in Israel, even though it is a flawed home. It needs some mending. If Israel at times is disappointing, that is the nature of dreams—to be somewhat disappointing once they are fulfilled.

Israel is a dream come true. The only way to keep a dream rosy and intact is to never live it out. This is true of planting a garden, raising a family, living out a sexual fantasy, or building a nation.

Some people expected Israel to be a moral light unto the nations. Others expected it to be a nonstop macho show—Entebbe every week. Others wanted it to be an incarnation of the Jewish shtetl from Eastern Europe. They visit us and say "no bagels, no lox, no Jewish State."

Dreams can only remain wonderful as long as they don't come true. But the real Israel is not one dream come true, but a conglomeration of dreams, fantasies, blueprints and masterplans. There were people who came here to humbly wait for the messiah. There were others, more ambitious, who intended to make the messiah come immediately. Others wanted to BE the messiah, or to reconstruct the ancient kingdoms of David and Solomon with all their glory, or to build a Marxist paradise (so one day Stalin could visit and get the grand tour of a kibbutz, and the kibbutzniks could have a lengthy discussion with him and teach him once and for all what Marxism/Leninism is all about, and then, they fantasized, he would rise to his feet, say "You Jews did socialism better here than we did in Russia," and die of happiness). There were Europeans who hoped to rebuild Vienna or Prague in the heart of the Middle East, with good manners and tea and European decorum, music, peace and quiet between two and four in the afternoon, and a lot of *Gamitlichkeit.* Next door there were people who wanted this place to become a fifty-second state of the U.S. or a Scandanavian social democracy. The founders of my own kibbutz, Hulda, semi-religious social anarchists, maintained that it was time for the Jewish people to come back to Israel to create a loose federation of rural communities where the Jews would undergo a deep religious renewal, not in synagogue, but by being in constant touch with the elements of nature, by hard physical work and sharing everything with each other. There was, in short, a rainbow of fantasies.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE JUDAH L. MAGNES MUSEUM

Zionism was an uneasy coalition of diverse dreams, and by definition it would have been impossible for all those dreams to have been fulfilled. Today, some are partially fulfilled, some forgotten, and some have turned into nightmares.

Amos Oz, for years an activist in Peace Now and universally recognized as one of Israel's most talented novelists, recently published a novel, Panther in the Basement *(Harcourt Brace, November 1997).*

Israel is a fiery collection of arguments, and I like it this way, although it is no garden of roses. There is something very creative about this situation. Israel is a living open street seminar about Jewish heritage, about the meaning of Judaism, about morality, about the significance or marginality of holy places, about a hierarchy of different Jewish values. A whole nation has been immersed for the past thirty years in a debate which is superficially political or military but which is essentially ethical, historical, even theological about the kind of identity they want.

Outsiders say, "Can't you Israelis lower your voices a little bit when you disagree with each other? The noises that you are making are embarrassing us in front of our non-Jewish neighbors."

No way, no deal.

One of the consequences of being a citizen of an independent state of the Jewish people is that I feel free to conduct my argument at the top of my voice if I so choose and to hell with my neighbors. Israel belongs in a Felini movie, not an Ingmar Bergman film. Hence the sound and the fury, the anger and sometimes the bad blood. When abroad, some of us peace-oriented Israelis are requested to shut up for the sake of unity. At least abroad, some American Jews say, we need to present a unified Jewish facade. I say to them, "Brilliant idea, let's present a unified facade. Why don't you people pretend to be Peace Now and keep your ideas to yourself, so that we all speak in a Peace Now voice and appear perfectly united?" But the only kind of unity they have in mind is for me to shut up for the sake of unity. For some bizarre reason, the only unity they have in mind is right-wing and Orthodox.

I'm not an optimist but an activist.

In Israel, every line at a bus stop is likely to catch a spark and turn into a fascinating, fiery street seminar, with total strangers arguing about politics, strategies, the Bible, morality, ethics, and the real purpose of God. While noisily disagreeing about metaphysics, they are elbowing their way to the top of the line. This is a vivacious culture—after all, culture is not just about spending money on opera.

Some impatient outsiders ask, "When are you going to give us a juicy little Jewish civil war?" They want the fight, the settlers shooting at the peaceniks, the Ashkenazi at the Sephardi, the religious at the secular. I tell those people, "The Israeli civil war has been going on for seventy years, but it is mostly a verbal civil war. We fight by calling each other terrible names, thus inflicting cancer and heart attacks on each other."

Issues like the separation of Church and State have been settled in other countries through very bloody civil wars. Ours is relatively civilized by comparison. It is going to take a very long time to be resolved. But I think it won't be as bloody as other such struggles (think of how many tens of thousands of people died in the American civil war over establishing America's rules of the game). Another politician or writer might get assassinated. We are not immune, of course, to further nasty episodes of violence. But I don't think we are going to have a civil war in the honored tradition of the most civilized nations.

The assasination of Yitzchak Rabin was dark and immensely significant; yet what followed afterwards was equally significant. The next morning the whole nation was out in the streets, half mourning Rabin as a saint, the other half maintaining that Rabin was the worst traitor in all of Jewish history who deserved to face a court martial for treason. Although everyone was arguing with everyone, there was not a single recorded episode of violence—not a punch in the eye or a slap in the face. If the President of France had been shot, you'd see tanks in the streets of Paris tomorrow. The assasination was extremely un-Jewish; what followed was very Jewish.

We don't actually have a debate about "Who is a Jew?" It's really just over "Who is a rabbi?" To me, the answer is very simple: everyone is a rabbi. This is a nation of 5.9 million rabbis, teachers, prophets, prime ministers, and messiahs. Everyone talks and no one listens (except for me—I listen sometimes, that is how I make a living). Who is a Jew? Everyone who is mad enough to call himself or herself a Jew is a Jew.

It's not for nothing that we never had a pope. If anyone would call herself or himself the Pope of the Jews, everybody would slap this Jewish pope on the back, saying "Hi, Pope, we don't know each other, but your uncle and my grandfather used to do business together in Minsk or Casablanca, so let me tell you once and for all what God really wants from us." Judaism is a game of interpretations and interpretations of interpretations. Every time the Jews live in submission, obedience, in blind religious discipline, rather than in open interpretation, there are bad times for Jews. Israel is facing huge problems, the most urgent being the feud with the Palestinians. But Orthodoxy is a digression, because it tries to restrict and excommunicate the freedom of interpretation, the built-in argumentativeness which has been the soul of this culture.

The worst part of the Israeli-Arab conflict might be over. Deep in their hearts, even the Right knows that there will be a partition, and, though they may fight over the boundaries, they know that there will be a Palestinian state. Gone are the days of total cognitive blocks between Israel and the Arabs, when the Arabs treated Israel as a passing infection, while many of us treated the Palestinian tragedy as a non-issue.

When we can no longer use the Palestinian issue as a diversion, we will be faced with each other, a society full of screaming prophets. And that will present us with dangers and great changes. We will have a lot of work to do.

My "I," May He Rest In Peace

My "I," *may he rest in peace* — My I who is living
says: May I
have peace in the rest of my life.
I want peace right now while I'm still alive.
I don't want to wait like that Hasid who wished for
one leg of
the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged
chair
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of
my peace now.
I've lived my life out in wars of every stripe: battles
without
and within, face-to-face combat, the faces always
my own,
my lover-face and my enemy-face.
Wars with the old weapons, sticks and stones, blunt
axe, words,
dull ripping knife, love and hate,
and wars with newfangled weapons, machine-gun,
missile,
words, landmines going off, love and hate.
I don't want to prove my parents right — that life is
war.
I want peace with all my body and all my soul. Rest
me in peace.

—Yehuda Amichai
translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

Then we will have to face our real issues: How do we deal with the disappointments of so many? How do we conduct the dialogue, between ourselves and also between ourselves and those Jews who wish to live elsewhere? How does one reconcile even a decent nation-state with ethical requirements? The nation-state is a crude instrument. It is not a handmade suit for Jewish culture or for the highest ethical standards.

I'm not an optimist but an activist. Israel at the moment is in deep crisis. But I refuse to share the somewhat whining despair of some of my fellow intellectuals in Tel Aviv as they face the fiftieth anniversary of the State. Their despair comes in part from the fact that intellectuals had a very formative role in the early years in Israel. Intellectuals had reason to feel that they were the composers and conductors of the orchestra. In recent years, we (including me, sometimes) are bewildered and angry at the shrinking role of the thinkers, the intellectuals, the poets, the moralizers. There was a certain attempt at harmonizing early Zionism, its requirements and aspirations, with the vision of the sensitive lot. Not so today. The intellectuals still have lots more influence here than they have in America or in most countries in the world, but nothing like what they felt they had forty or fifty years ago.

I belong by temperament to those who ask, "What do we need to do next?" I think I have the answer: what we ought to do, rather than search our souls about the shattering of the dream, is to win over the thirty to forty thousand middle-of-the-road Israelis who could be on our side, not only on issues of peace with the Palestinians, but also on issues of the separation of state and synagogue and the support for more democracy and for human and civil rights.

Many of our potential supporters would have been on our side but for the errors made by progressive forces who were often condescending and made fun of the legitimate fears and apprehensions of many ordinary Israelis. Some of us peace activists have made fun of these fears and apprehensions, have treated insecurity as a sign of lack of intelligence, and thus have alienated many middle-of-the-road Israelis; that has been a grave error both morally and politically. We could win over another 50,000 Israelis—not Archie Bunker, but we could win Edith (we already have Michael and Gloria), if we try to reason with her, not to insult or shame her. We need to talk to her eye-to-eye. That is what I do, rather than go to the intellectual places in Tel Aviv to talk to other peacemakers about how terrible things are and how impotent we all are. I go to developing towns and to other places where I can talk to middle-of-the-road Israelis.

The Arab citizens of the State of Israel have not been treated correctly. There can be no such thing as a Jewish state; it must be the State of the Jewish people and all its citizens, which means that Israeli Arabs will have the option to be full-scale citizens with all the rights and duties (including joining the Israeli army). Israel needs to look the Palestinian tragedy right in the eye and say, "We will do everything we can, short of commiting suicide, to cure this tragedy."

I regard the clash between Israel and Palestine in 1948 as a tragedy because it was a clash between right and right. Both Palestinians and Israelis bear responsibility. It was a clash between two deeply injured, hysterical, terror-ridden nations. Neither side can be terribly proud of what they did in 1948. We have to see how we can heal these wounds by dealing with the Palestinian refugees—those refugees ought to be taken out of the refugee camps now, even before we know the exact boundaries of a future Palestine. Israel and Palestine may live forever with different narratives of what really happened in 1948. But when I see a car accident, I don't ask who caused the accident, but who is bleeding most heavily; it is they who deserve the most urgent attention. Today it is those refugees living in the camps, they and the victims of terrorism in the streets of Israel and the victims of oppression in the West Bank, who need our attention. This, not the blame, is urgent. There is enough blame for everyone. ❑



Tzvi Marx

Religious Zionism
From Idealism to Idolatry

Why is it so difficult to celebrate what should be a special year in the life of Medinat Yisrael? Why this personal reluctance to become engaged by what should be the occasion of joy, by what my mind insists is a great achievement, fifty years of liberation for the Jewish people, but my soul resists? I don't think that this reluctance is only personal. Consider the lagging efforts in Israel itself to initiate what were supposed to have been creative activities in the name of this celebration.



Israeli soldiers at the Wailing Wall during the Yom Kippur war, 1967.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

One can give all kinds of explanations for this strange dissonance; I can only reflect on my personal feelings from the vantage point of a Jew for whom the very meaning of Israel was defined by the dreams of the Prophets and the sages, that is to say from the perspective of religious Zionism. My connections to that Zionism were nurtured in the "black" yeshivot of New York, where the moral teachings of the Talmud and the traditional commentators were the bread and butter of spiritual discourse. But also by the spirit of the B'nei Akiba religious youth movement to which I belonged as a teenager, and especially by the time I spent at its advanced work camp—*mahane avoda*—in upstate New York under the personal guidance of Haim Druckman, then a *shaliah* for B'nei Akiba. He later became a rabbi and Kenesset Member, a leading spokesman of the Mafdal (National Religious Party) as an activist in Gush Emunim.

From the yeshivot and from socializing with my religious Zionist friends and the *madrichim* (counselors) of B'nei Akiba, I learned to dream of Zion as a place where our highest ideals would finally be realized. We would show the world how to create an ideal society imbued with sensitivity and consideration for the "Other" that was sorely lacking in the Jewishly-stunted Diaspora and certainly (we thought) was lacking in the general (secular and Christian) society. We sang the songs of Zion with such a warm feeling: "*Anu banu arza, livnot u'lehibanot ba*"—"We are coming to the Land to build and to be built by it."

I visited Israel five times from 1968–1975 before finally making aliyah with my family at the age of thirty-four in 1976. I had finally realized my dream.

I took it for granted that unlike the societies in which Jews over the millenia had found themselves being objects of hatred and abuse by virtue of their difference from others, in our society we would educate each other to have consideration and sensitivity for the "stranger," for the weaker minority of our society, and we would do so in keeping with the teachings of our Judaic culture "to love the stranger" (Lev. 19:34, Deut. 10:19). Indeed, I was always moved by the moral refinement of that Talmudic teaching in Baba Metzia (32b, a tractate studied in virtually all the yeshivot) to give priority in assisting the "enemy" with his fallen mule before assisting a friend, so "as to subdue one's evil inclina-

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Tzvi Marx is an Orthodox rabbi who served for over a decade as the education director at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

tion" which would ordinarily lean one to discriminate against one's foe. It gave me pride in my legacy: a tradition which teaches this kind of consideration for one's enemy would, I felt, diligently search for ways to live in peace.

The crack in my illusions began following an incident in my neighborhood in which Israeli teenagers, without cause, harassed an Arab night-watchman who was standing guard over a construction site. I intervened to protect him and went to call the police. To my surprise, my neighbors, whom I thought would hold the teenagers till the police came, let them go on the grounds that he was only "an Arab." In fact he was probably a Bedouin, but that actually made no difference. The point was that in this situation the shoe was on the other foot. In his own society, the Jew could harass the "Other" without fear of social reprisal. I was quite shocked to experience this "new" form of "Judaism." I experienced inner turmoil. Surely we would not allow our return to our land, what the Chief Rabbinate had told us to call "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption," to be soiled by the practice of discrimination. I was sure that this incident must be some kind of exception.

How disillusioned I became in the course of the almost twenty years that I resided in Jerusalem as I repeatedly discovered that these sentiments towards the "Other" were not at all exceptional.

Studies of attitudes toward minorities in Israel disclosed that there was indeed a serious problem of prejudice, but for me the most shocking aspect of these studies was that the highest percentages of this prejudice were with "religious" youth. As assessed in a survey reported at a Meimad-sponsored conference on the theme "The 'Other' in Religious Education" (*International Jerusalem Post*, March 3, 1997) 76 percent of religious youth believe that Israeli Arab citizens have no right to be involved in Israel's diplomatic affairs. Only 41 percent feel that toasting the murder of an Arab in Jerusalem with champagne is a racist act, (in comparison to 71 percent secular students). Forty-one percent of the state-religious schools' future teachers (as against only 8 percent of secular school teacher trainees) reject the idea that Israeli Arabs should have equal rights.

How is one to explain this from a religious perspective? How could the Torah of "*rachmanim and gomlei hasadim*" (workers of compassion and good deeds) become so distorted ? This was for me not a theoretical question, but an existential one. When the Jewish underground planned the destruction of a mosque and seriously wounded Arab leaders with bombs; when Baruch Goldstein murdered praying Moslems in Hebron and his grave was enshrined by some *roshei yeshiva*; when Yigal Amir murdered Yitzchak Rabin in Tel Aviv following a period in which national religious teachers asked their students to consider under what conditions they might take the law into their own hands to prevent a Jew (including an elected prime minister) from dismantling settlements in the name of the holy land (See *JP* 17 Jan. 1994); when Jewish women were assaulted for praying at the Wall during a period when the Wall was under the supervision of the national religious party; I took all this personally. I mean that it forced me to think about the relation between Zionism and my understanding of Torah.

Thankfully, I had been exposed to the culture of Torah. I know that there are many divergent paths of Torah and know that the way of gentleness was its *derech hamelech*—the king's highway. "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and its paths are those of peace" (Proverbs 4:2). But I also knew that in its diversity there also existed highways that fed on insecurity and on superiority feelings and on longings for power as well.

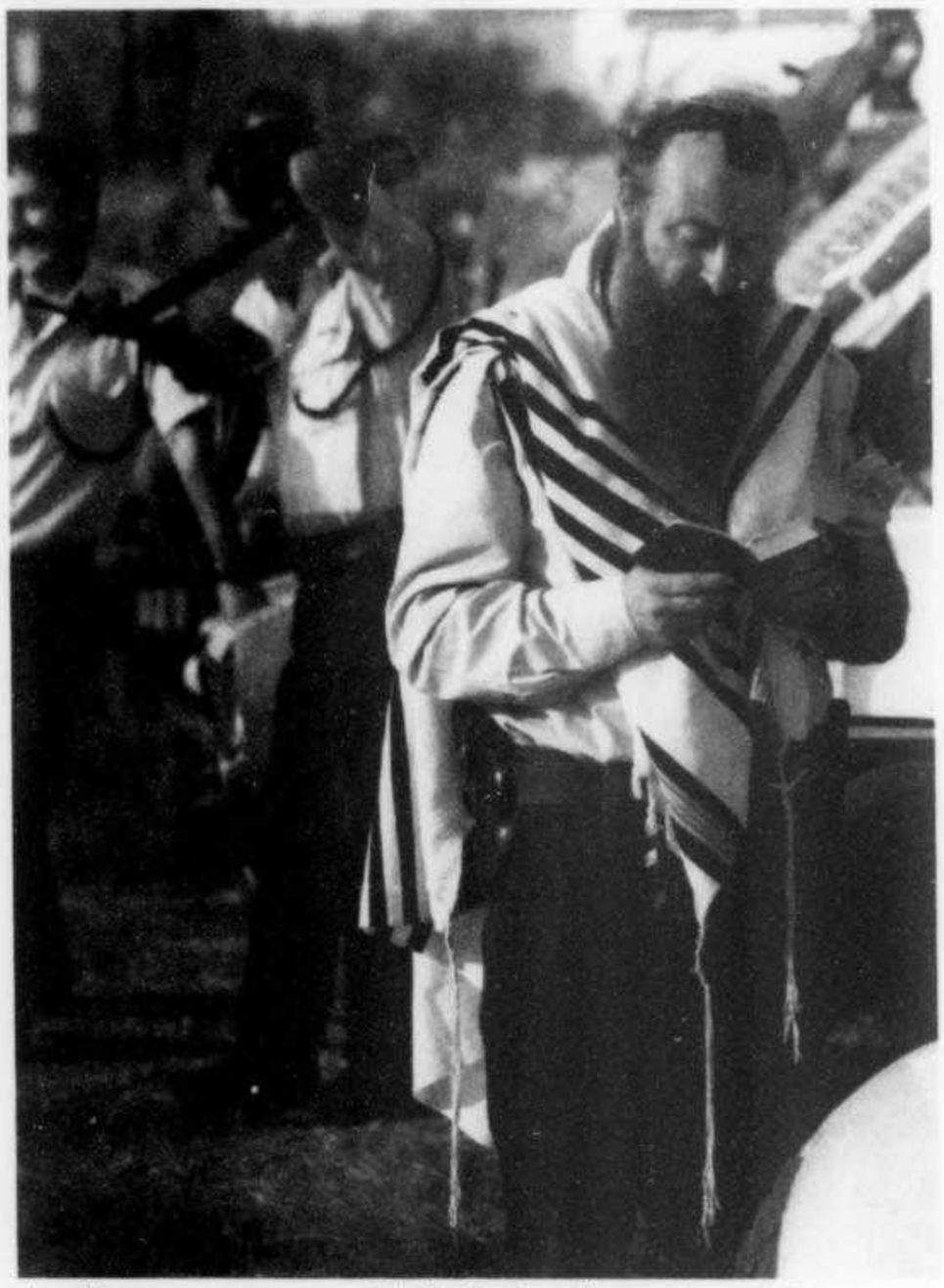


The return to Israel confronts religious Zionism with the living consequences of its own shortcomings in the moral and ethical realm. Speaking personally, for me the return to Israel freed me to perceive non-Jews as individuals, whereas in the Diaspora I had perceived them as a collective, mostly in terms of the history of anti-Semitism. It was only in Israel, perhaps finally at home, that I began to perceive non-Jews with the same variety of human qualities as I was learning to perceive Jews. Just as I had been idealizing Jews, I had been demonizing non-Jews. Israel was a corrective to both distortions.

I could, as a result, no longer passively accept the midrashic teaching that those who accompanied Abraham and Isaac to Mount Moriah were to be likened to animals: "'You stay here with the donkeys'—you who resemble donkeys."(Midrash Genesis Rabba 56:2 commenting on Gen. 22:5) I could no longer accept as informative the talmudic teaching (Avoda Zara 2b) that all the nations rejected the Ten Commandments because they were not capable of bearing its moral demands, as if by definition the Jews could. In the context of polemics, this teaching was a tactic (during another period in a war between cultures). It's time, now, to abandon that tactic, because it gives a distorted image of the "Other" with whom we have to live.

What happened to the religious vision, in which our return to the Holy Land would stimulate the realization of holiness (as in "a kingdom of priests, a holy people"—Ex. 19:6)? in which the holy ideals envisioned in the holiness code of Leviticus ("you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy"—culminating in the "loving of one's neighbor" (19:18) and of "the stranger" (19:34)) would be realized? Or the words of Isaiah (1:27) that "Zion shall be redeemed with justice and … loving kindness?" Or those of

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A policeman at prayer outside the Jenin police station, 1995.

the sages that "the three identifying marks of an Israelite are compassion, shame, and kindness" (Talmud Yebamot 79a)? Or the religious teaching of Maimonides that "the ordinances of the Torah were meant to bring upon the world not vengeance, but mercy, loving kindness, and peace" (Mishna Torah: The Sabbath 2:3) and that the messianic aspiration did not betoken "that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the non-Jews ... but that it devote itself to the Torah and its wisdom...." (Laws of Kings and Wars 12: 4)?

For now it must honestly be acknowledged by those who define themselves in terms of the religious inspirations of Judaism that Israel has not become a "light onto the nations" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). Israel has not demonstrated itself as "a wise and discerning people"(Deut. 4:6). We have not learned to be with one another in our land in a way that would raise the Psalmist's words to our lips, "how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133) nor to treat the stranger according to the maxim "there shall be one law for you, whether stranger or citizen of the country" (Num. 9:14: 15:15).

The mere return to "land" is not by itself a cure for the disempowering weakness that was the condition of the Diaspora, or for the weaknesses that are the human lot. On the contrary, the return to the land may give some of us the opportunity to express those weaknesses in larger and more virulent forms than we wanted to acknowledge in the more limited context of Diaspora. There is a special kind of "religious" approach to the land that is not about security issues, but about the "spiritual" need to be the master of all the territories that had been conquered in the Six Day War. This need was articulated in religious terms by Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi Kook, who taught that "the chosenness (by God) of the land [the whole land] preceded the election of the nation" and therefore that the land must not be relinquished, no matter what; whoever dares to give up part of the Land of Israel is by definition a traitor to the Jewish people. No one is spiritually empowered to give away (even in good faith negotiations) the physical land of Israel that God has in His benificence in our time miraculously restored to us.

The bearers of this arrogant message were the leadership of the national religious movements who had hijacked the Torah, so to speak, and forced it to voice a Torah of violence in the name of God. They cited prooftexts from Talmud and Torah ("You shall possess it" Deut. 11:31 and the commentaries of Nachmanides and the Minhat Hinuch). Even when a recognized halachist like the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Obadiah Yosef, ruled that "land" may be ceded to Palestinians for the sake of peace according to the judgement of duly elected leaders, his life was threatened, because the Torah had become subordinated to the hunger for a certain kind of power. These religious nationalists gloried in the unreal vision of a "greater Israel" that they had fantasied over when studying the boundaries of David and Solomon's empires in ancient Biblical times. That the price of such a vision was the suppression of another people that happened to be underfoot, and that young Israelis would have to do the suppression with all the morally negative consequences to their sensibilities, did not seem to make an impression upon this nationalist religious leadership.

It is important to note that there were other voices in the religious world, particulary the Netivot Shalom movement, that provided a religious voice against this insane religious Zionism. Headed by Rav Yehuda Amital and Prof. Avi Ravitzky, Netivot Shalom tried to bring traditional Jewish ethical values to political discussions, and to show that the moral well being of Jews required attention to the humanity of the "Other." The editor of TIKKUN magazine, Michael Lerner, helped create a Beyt Midrash leShalom (Jewish Study Center for Peace) in Jerusalem at which many religious leaders taught Israelis how to read Jewish texts in a way that supported peace, caring for the "Other," and ethical sensitivity. And there were other examples of this kind of spiritual sensitivity as well. In this line, one is grateful for the thoughtful research of brothers Drs. Zvi and Noam Zohar (of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem) who showed that from a halachic perspective "it is not always wrong to hand over Jews [not to speak of Jewish land] even to goyim" (*JP* 19 Jan. 1994). Former Chief Rabbi of

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RNS / REUTERS

England, Lord Emmanuel Jacobovitz, has courageously criticized rabbis more concerned about Israel's military or physical security, "more concerned with the quantity of land under Jewish control—where the borders are to be—than with the quality of its Jewish life." Tzivia Greenfield of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Har Nof neightborhood, with two paratrooper sons, used to argue with rabbis in her sons' yeshivot "to be more tolerant of children who didn't have right-wing views, and to focus on the importance of Commandments like 'Love for the fellow man.'" (*JR*, 28 Nov. 1996). All these voices are encouraging counterweights to the morally blunting message of the mainstream national religious movement.

But the plain fact is that the force of the baneful religious Zionism of the national religious party was too much for this morally caring counter-movement. In their one attempt to translate their enthusiasm into a political voice by running in elections to the Knesset several years ago, the religious peace forces did not garner even one seat. And since then, they have had to settle back as a mere protest "voice in the wilderness." One of the reasons for this kind of paralysis is the "it's very hard to passionately vocalize … moderation. It's a lot easier to get out on the corner and say, 'Traitors.'" This is the view of Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, spiritual leader of Congregation Ahavath Torah in Englewood New Jersey, who headed Shvil Hazahav (Golden Mean), a group of American Orthodox rabbis that wanted to support the peace process.

Another problem is that, in their desire to stay in the good graces of those who have used Torah to support policies that are insensitive to the humanity of Palestinians, many peace-oriented religious activists are overly focused on how people on the Right will view them. Sometimes one has to cry out: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" (Gen. 18:25) without playing the game of quotes and counter-quotes from halachic sources. Wanting to stay within the Halacha can easily be a cover for passivity in a time of injustice when action is called for. One cannot always do the Lord's work within the rules. We've had the Netivot Shalom community make its halachic arguments for more than a decade. What is needed today is not new halachic research, but moral courage and faith—qualities that are not taught in the conventional yeshiva curriculum.

Let me be clear that I do not share the view of those (like Prof. Daniel Boyarin currently at the University of California, Berkeley) who think that the Diaspora is that form of Jewish living where the Jewish people were at their best precisely because their disempowered minority status allowed them to exercise their religious ideals without the opportunity to exploit others. In the first place, the price for exclusively Diaspora living was too high. It invited too much persecution. And further, this view smacks of romanticization of the ghetto. It overlooks the actual humanly impoverished condition of a people often under intolerable social pressures.

At the same time I do not worship at the shrine of the land, idolizing it like those who liturgically proclaimed the return to the land as "the beginning of the flowering of the redemption" (the standard siddur prayer for Israel composed by the chief rabbinate of Israel). Whether the creation of the State of Israel is a step toward redemption depends on what the people of Israel do in the land—the kind of moral and ethical reality they create there. One is tempted to call this glorification of the land of Israel a new form of idolatry.

I do say "*shehecheyanu*" (a benediction expressing gratitude) for the achievement of raising a nation from the ashes and for its fiftieth anniversary—for experiencing the transition from "exile" to "return." But my joy is tempered by my realization of the human pain caused to others in this process. Even the justified slaying and relocating of our enemies, but certainly the unjustified slaying of children and other innocents and their imprisonment, must seriously dampen the fullness of that enthusiasm.

One must not begrudge the achievement of ingathering the Jewish people after 1900 years of exile, subjugation, and varying degrees of persecution. But one may not be indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinians. One must care deeply about the pain that we inflicted in the process of our liberation. We must be prepared to compromise for the sake of limiting the continuation of that hurt and for the redemption of our own highest values. And it is because of that larger perspective that the jubilee of Israel's existence invites a deep look at ourselves, no less into the gruesome as into the inspiring details of what was entailed in our return as a people back to our land. "*Mathil bignut, ve'gomer bishvach*"—"One commences with shame, and concludes with praise," in telling the story of how our national self unfolded on its way to redemption (Talmud Pesahim 116a). Moral self-acceptance must be accompanied by self-criticism. The road to glory in the Jewish telling is paved with constant incentives to self-correction and tikkun. ❑



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN / IMPACT VISUALS

Ultra-Orthodox Jews at the Cave of the Patriarchs, Hebron, in 1992.



Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Entering Israel's Second Yovel



Let me share with you some reflections as Medinat Israel, on the threshold of the new century-millennium, is entering her fiftieth year, her first Jubilee or *Yovel*.

When our Prophets spoke of the future, they gave us a vision of Zion and Jerusalem that is yet to be fulfilled, saying: "My house shall be a house of prayer for all people (Isaiah 56:7)"; "Even from them [the non-Jews] shall I [God] take priests and Levites (Isaiah 66:21)"; and "Out of Zion shall come forth Torah, and the word of God from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2)." This served as a wonderful vision of Israel as a flowing fountain, from which would come forth inspiration and a light that would proceed to the whole world.

Unfortunately, although the people who traditionally prayed every day for the return to Zion, as well as the secular early Zionists, hoped and planned and worked for a good future, they were not futurists. They thought of the future by looking through a rear-view mirror, and pursued a kind of nostalgic future. "There will be a time when there will be a kingdom greater than that of King Solomon," they thought, but that was the problem: they were taking King

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has been at the forefront of pioneering Jewish spiritual renewal. His most recent book is From Age-ing to Sage-ing *(Time Warner, 1998).*

Solomon's realm as their reference point. Now that the Zionist ideal has found its realization in the State, what can we look forward to? Any move from an ideal to reality entails a certain amount of degradation; more shadow energy, what we call *klippah* in Jewish mysticism, begins to adhere. As long as a Jewish state was a dream, a myth, a hope, we saw the good and it looked to us that it could be sustained out of Justice. But now that we meet it in palpable reality—Oy, does it need mercy.

The myth that sustained us throughout our Diaspora was that of the return. Now that we have returned and have a sovereign country, we have little to propel us into the future. We are scared—mythless. It will take poets, dreamers, and mystics to reach into a yet unrealized future to dream the next story of our people. Without an active myth, a dynamic transpersonal story, Israel will be bereft of the invisible means of sustenance and support.

Herzl was more of a futurist than many others. He wrote a novel, *AltNeuLand*, which was his stab at science fiction. In it he explored a European capitalist democracy and made room for non-Jewish Zionists. He still lacked, however, a forward-looking vision of what an Israel seated in the heart of the bridge between Asia and Africa could become in the global village.

The hopeful believer in me is not willing to give up. Seeing the hand of God in history, I trust that we will be led through these transitions; the dreams and visions will come, yet the labor and the contractions are painful.

Without having an attractive vision of what is yet to come, we have created an Israel which now must face a daunting situation. Jerusalem is becoming more and more dominated by the ultra-Orthodox, to the point that some secular Jews are fleeing to other parts of the country. People in one enclave feel less connected with those of others, and even more at odds with each other in the same milieu. The haredim believe in an ultimate future in which they will triumph and prevail as a result of their *mesirat nefesh*, their tenacious sacrificial devotion.

Our Palestinian cousins have their own triumphalists as tenaciously contending that Allah has promised them that they will prevail. Both the haredim and the Palestinians have little understanding of the compromises necessary for a negotiated peace. So we have two kinds of triumphalists confronting each other, unable to recognize that Israel is an experiment that cannot be called off. Providence has seen to it that the most difficult partners that could be involved in this struggle had to wrestle with one another. When we have learned how to collaborate in peace at least as well as we now collaborate in creating strife, we will have a model for others. The people in Rwanda and Bosnia and others all over the globe are waiting for the results of our experiment. The messiah we are waiting for is us: Israelis *and* Palestinians

Unfortunately, the mental and spiritual capacities to work toward peace are not available to many of the people involved. You can feel this in Israel. Even in Lod—Tel Aviv—from the moment you step off the plane, you can feel the tone of language raised up to a more nervous and strident pitch. You speak to the taxi cab drivers or to people on the street and you can feel that you are in the nervous system of the reptilian brain, a kind of Jurassic Park. Everything has to do with turf. Even among the various religious groups in B'nai B'raq and Me'ah She'arim there are turf wars. The splinters of political parties in the Knesset are no better. The country is attuned more to the reptilian brain than to the cortex; to even speak of spirituality, the brain would have to be attuned to a yet still higher level, the soul level, where intuition resides.

The Palestinians are not more advanced. As I read the Koran, for all my respect for this Ishmaelean Midrash on Torah, I feel pain over the references to *Shaitan ar-rag'im*, "Satan who is to be stoned," a phrase that occurs in the "Salaat" prayer recited five times a day. Israel has been identified as Shaitan and Israelis are to be stoned. So on both sides we have images of the demonized "Other" that are rooted in the present and in the past but not in the desirable future. What a handicap to irenic dialogue. At the moment, neither side recognizes that we need to live in a post-triumphalist era.

How can we move beyond this current situation? Imagine an Israel with a halachic government. I shudder in my *kishkes* when I think of what this would be like *in the short run*, with attempts to impose the most reactionary religious practice on so many people who describe themselves either as secular or as other than right-wing orthodox. But when I take a longer view, through this next yovel, I realize that such a halachic government would have to work out for itself many of the things that Jewish Renewal communities have already tried to work out: namely, how to live in this modern world according to values and mitzvot. Right now right-wing religious can always say, "someone else, who is not religious, is in charge, and we are the opposition, and in the meantime we have to employ *Shabbos goyim*, non-Jews who do work which we must not do on the Sabbath." But if they had to work out every bit of Halacha for a Jewish state and keep the air force, fire brigades, hospitals and ambulances doing their jobs, it could be a laboratory for bringing halachic Judaism up to date.

As to Eretz Yisrael, the land, the ecology: we need matriots, not patriots, who will care for the environment, rooted in the commands of *bal tash'chit* (the Torah tradition teachings about not destroying the earth). Orthodox people have not done their theological or even halachic homework, and for that matter neither have the secularists or Reform or Conservative Jews. We have never had a decent statement accepted by the various denominations of Jews concerning

what we think the Holocaust was all about. We need a theological statement about the State of Israel, including a statement about how we should relate to the Abrahamic peoples who formed Christianity and Islam (and hence are really in a very different condition from those who are merely accepting the seven commandments designed for the Children of Noah).

We need an Israel committed to diversity in the Jewish religious community, an Israel which allows the individual to live an autonomous moral, ethical, and halachic life rather than a heteronomous order that is directed by a spiritually constipated elite. There is not yet a *mussar* in Israel that recognizes who the other is—namely, that the other is a precious spark of the Living God.

So all this is the dark side.

But if we could take Isaiah's future vision into the present, we could begin to think in very different terms: about a United States of the Middle East. I draw a certain kind of hope from the collaboration that is already taking place between some groups in Jordan and Israel on the level of commerce. In hope, I extend that vision to other domains.

We have to move away from nationalism to an organ-based understanding—what I call an organismic understanding—of our place on the planet. We need some of each of the organs of the whole body of the Jewish people in Israel. It makes sense that we need the B'nai Yisrael from India and the Falashas from Ethiopia in Israel along with the Edot Hamizrach and the Ashkenazim. We must be prepared to give up the idea that the Northern Hemisphere is the only decent place from which to learn, as if the Ashkenazim have the corner on wisdom. At the same time, I don't think it's useful to think of Israel as our homeland as if we all were ever to live there. If we, who are in the Diaspora, form a good part of the *body* of the Jewish people, then Israel is our *heart*. There are so many people who go to live in Israel and then come back to live in the Diaspora. If we made a census of the *yordim*, Israelis who live and work abroad, as well as of the *olim*, the immigrants, and add to this the number of us who periodically visit and sojourn in Israel, we would get a more realistic picture of the Jewish people. If you have an organismic understanding, you can see that we in the Diaspora bring nourishment to the heart and we get nourishment from the heart. We are vitally important and necessary. The flow of vigor from us to Israel and from Israel to us can be seen like a circulation system.

The Palestinians in diaspora could also bring the wisdom of their experience to their community in the Holy Land. Among the Palestinians there are *yordim* emigrées all over the globe. They too visit their home from time to time and need a way to keep their identity in their diaspora. So it is not an issue of *Lebensraum* for either of us. Both sides need to recognize that we are not talking about land, but about cultural centers to which we and they could come, and then it would not make so much of a difference exactly where the territorial line is being drawn.

The Diaspora consciousness helped us to think in universal terms. Theology is the afterthought of the believer.

Once we realize that the Holy Land is about getting to our deepest heart place, then we should institute social practices in accord with this insight. If we go to the Holy Land, we should spiritually prepare for that moment in our lives. Perhaps after we come off the ship or the airplane to Israel, each person should go through a one-day preparation process that would raise the spiritual vibrations of people coming to the Land. If you need a driver's license to qualify to drive on the road, then anyone making aliyah should have to prepare to live in that country on a higher moral level.

These are solutions that our cortex and our intuition propose. However, we cannot totally deny the reptilian brain, even if we wanted to. Every human being needs that part, even though we need the higher brain functions as well. The reptilian brain connects us to the soil, and so we need Eretz Yisrael. The chthonic power issuing from the dark places in our being that connect us to the voice of the earth cannot be denied, as the Jungians well understood. There is some way in which the land itself nourishes our being, and we cannot abandon that connection. We cannot remain Jews for many generations without a connection to that particular piece of land.

Mythically we, as Jews, are tied into this land, and our very understanding of how we should live and be as Jews in the universe is organically tied into our connection to the Land of Israel. The calendar of Judaism is the most organismic one I know: it connects us to both the moon and the sun, it honors time and it honors the seasons. This connection came to us because we lived in a land that "flowed with milk and honey"—to live in a land that was not particularly great for agriculture, we had to learn certain ecological lessons that the whole planet now needs to learn.

The Diaspora consciousness helped us to think in universal terms. Theology is the afterthought of the believer. First comes an experience, and then later we try to make sense of that experience through a theological insight. We made a theology to fit our Diaspora situation. But we always retained the prayer in which we called for "*hamachazir shecheenato leTziyon,*" that God will return the Shechinah, His Presence, to dwell in the holy land. We prayed for the transcendent God to become immanent in the holy land in Her feminine aspect (as the Shechinah). In this vision, God

would honor *all* of Her children (not just Jews), and thus "*Eym habanim s'meycha*," "the mother of *many* children is made happy," honoring all the people—not just Jews—who live in the land. God as the transcendent Being is not the whole story. If we want God to be immanent with us, we have to say "our Shechinah of the Holy Land," just as we may say, "our Shechinah of the Rocky Mountains," that is, God as the Shechinah embodied and manifested in and through this particular place (wherever that is).

There is a different God-feel in the South Sea Islands than in Alaska. If we are like nerve cells of the global organism, then the particular location in which we find ourselves in Earth's body has some powerful impact on how we experience our reality. So, we as Jews have a special connection to the Land of Israel, provided we understand that connection in a Shechinah way.

We always place God outside of ourselves, and we don't see clearly enough how we swim in God. From an organismic point of view, we are like blood corpuscles swimming in the big God body. To serve God is to serve the totality of which I am part. We have to honor the organic connection between everything that is. I don't want to think of God transcendent as something divorced from me, because I swim in that God transcendent, and inside me swims God immanent. What separates God transcendent from God immanent is only the thin veil of my consciousness. If I allow that to become transparent, then we have the *Yichud* (unity) of *Echad* (the oneness), and there the transcendent and immanent are One.

According to the Kabbalistic roadmap, the first fifty years is governed by God's attribute of forgiving lovingkindness (*chesed*), while the second Yovel is governed by limit-setting severity (*gevurah*).

The next Yovel is the Yovel of gevurah, demanding a certain amount of self-control and a certain amount of *t'shuvah*. The mistakes that we made in Israel over all these past fifty years came into being in the context of a very forgiving matrix—that is part of what I mean by saying that the first yovel was *chesed*. We didn't get slapped by instant karma when we did something wrong—we were in a forgiving environment. I don't think that is going to remain the case in the next fifty years. I think we are going to get some very quick karmic response—and that is *gevurah*. I think that we are going to face some harsh realities in the next fifty years that will massage us into being a better people (and that's the hopefulness in *gevurah*).

To envision this future, we will need nurturing wombmen and women. The way to overcome the difficulties of *gevurah* is through *rachamim*, compassion (from *rechem*, womb). We need to nurture the place of compassion in our dealings with the problems of the State of Israel. The key is to really validate the pain of whoever is on the other side. For Israel, that may be a nobler way to relate to the Palestinians. (Wouldn't it be wonderful if Jews could prepare food for Moslems during Ramadan, when they fast to honor their traditions, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could go to each other's circumcision ceremonies, sharing the legacy of Abraham as we both do?) Any negotiation process must begin by recognizing the other and validating them for who they are. We must honor the other person first before anything that is to happen at the negotiating table can work.

We could, in the near future, take one small step toward solving some of our problems, a step that that would bring us nearer to the prophetic vision: we should take the space to the south of the Temple Mount (currently undeveloped) and use it to create a space to serve as a House of Prayer for All People, an ecumenical plaza in which people of all faiths can pray together, and Jews of all denominations could pray, each in their own way. Let this be a place where Moslems, Buddhists, Christians, Jews all gather for prayer. We should have a weekly concert by the Levites' orchestra and choir to broadcast to the entire world—and let the Levites be chosen from all the different religions—to sing with us their sacred songs and to create "a new song" to God.

An other step: Israelis have to spend much time serving in the army as reserves and regular soldiers. If they immediately enter civilian life without shedding that "attitude" our civic life becomes more and more tense. We need a virtual mikveh, an experiential immersion pool for cleansing, for the people coming out of the army that allows them to ritually separate themselves from the consciousness that they had to develop while serving in that war-charged adversarial context.

For the last few years I have worked on the issues of ageing and written a book called *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: Dealing with Spiritual Eldering*. In this work I proposed that an elder corps be formed by people who have become elders, by people who have done their inner work in a way that they could become Wisdom keepers, peace makers, whistle blowers, and ombudspeople serving as stewards for the next seven generations. I believe that an elder corps composed of people who have done their inner work, taken not only from Jews but from all who seek the peace of Jerusalem, could meet with Israeli and Palestinian grandparents and with those who have lost their loved ones and propose ways to sort out our differences.

These and many other ideas are steps issuing from the vision of Jewish Renewal. A vital Jewish renewal could attract many people in Israel to a spiritual, ecological, ethical and moral tradition that could help them in the coming Yovel of *Gevurah*.

As Herzl said a century ago "*Im tirtzu eyn zu aggadah*"—"If you will it, it is not just a legend." May we see it in our day.

Blessings to you in hope for the world's tikkun. ❑



Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir

100 Years of Zionism
50 Years of a Jewish State

Translated by Debora Kohn

This is a selective translation. Because of space considerations, we could not present the full richness and complexity of the original. (As a result we may have highlighted that which was most provocative and bold in the original).

WE

- WE are the damned /remnants of Europe.
- WE are the Jews that Europe didn't manage to kill.
- WE are the place where the Nazi nightmare is still alive—in the minds of the survivors and those who were brought up in their shadow, and in the minds of those who were submerged in the endless stream of words seeking to make the Holocaust holy and to put Auschwitz in the empty place of God.
- WE are the last place in Europe where the Nazi past is still profitable—because the State has converted the destruction of European Jewry into a national property, symbolic capital, "light unto the nations," and funding for Israeli Jews.
- WE are the last landing place for the wandering Jew, the one that Europe could not bear. We are the last ghetto of European Jewry.
- WE are the last frontier of the military colonialism that Europe abandoned in shame decades ago.
- WE are a thorn Europe has left in the Orient—now converted into the litmus test Arab countries must take before entering into the New World Order.
- WE are an emblem of Europe's Orientalism that shamelessly shines in the Orient, Orientalism which has always been devoid of self-consciousness, but is now already empty of desire too, left only with mastery, paternalism, and violence.
- WE are the encounter with the Orient that Europe always fantasized and feared, an encounter that inadvertently became central to the dynamics of Israeli society and its State's apparatuses. Now we have an "inner Orient" and an "outer Orient," and the clear hierarchy of a master relationship between the "White Jew" and his two "Oriental Others."
- WE are a site of experiments for testing the universalizability of evil—the principle of universalizability being a European legacy and the practices for the production of evil imported from a Europe which no longer exists. The hypothesis to be corroborated (one that has not yet been refuted) is: "it can happen to everyone"; the victims of yesterday may always become today's victimizers. Every person can find herself participating in the hatred, humiliation, and oppression of the "Other," in racial discrimination, in ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods and cities; everyone may end up cooperating with a regime that produces and distributes evil systematically.
- WE are the screen on which a Hebrew version of the separation of Church and State is being projected—backwards. While in Europe the Church has been pushed out of the political arena almost completely, here the religious establishment leads the country back to "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" and xenophobic theocrats gain more and more positions of power.
- WE are a screen on which the story of the collapse of the democratic welfare state is being projected, once again, as a replica of what happened in Europe, yet more rapidly and without learning anything from the Europeans' experience. On the ruins of this welfare state there has emerged a growing sector of foreign labor, where non-Jewish workers are almost enslaved by Jewish capitalists, harshly exploited and denied basic human rights due to the pressures of the global economy combined with the xenophobic ideology of the Jewish state.
- WE are subjects of a political regime without a constitution, a regime that lacks a tradition of civil rights, an idea and a vision of civil society, and an ethos of solidarity that goes beyond the Jewish tribe.
- WE are a laboratory for political and military experiments in various kinds of political messianisms that Europe had invented in the nineteenth century and since the end of the Second World War has worked so hard to forget. Many of those ugly nationalist and racist myths that Europe can no longer present in public find an overt hiding place among us and are now daily manifested.
- WE are a collection of remnants, remains of so many things Europe tried and abandoned or is still struggling to abandon: nationalism, racism, fascism, colonialism, Orientalism, statism, militarism, state capitalism, and an unbridled market economy. Indeed, we were spared Stalinism only, perhaps, because we knew a much nicer

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and more humane model of collective life, the glorious Kibbutz, once a spectacle of socialism with an enlightened face that was a perfect disguise of Zionist colonialism and a proud manifestation of Israeli statism.

They Tell Us

They tell us that all of the above is a story of success (except for the six million who couldn't make it). They tell us that this is the most successful political vision of the twentieth century, perhaps the only vision of *tikkun olam* that has ever been actualized. They tell us that we, Israelis, are the children of this vision and they promise us that the continuation of this dream will not shame its origins. They keep on telling us about the return of the Jews to history as a political and military power, about Jewish sovereignty for the first time since the Destruction of the second Temple, and about the Jewish military strength that enables us to defend Jews wherever they may be in the world. Again and again, they proudly tell us about the miracle of the revival of the Hebrew language. And they remind us that we have achieved Jewish normalization in relationship to TERRITORY, POWER, WORK and CIVIL RIGHTS.

Let's explore briefly these "successes."

- Jewish Sovereignty.

This has turned out to be the biggest danger to Jewish cultural and moral existence and (with a little help from Iraq and Iran) to its physical existence as well. The Jewish national movement drew particularist elements from Jewish rabbinical culture and sought to mold them into nationalism with a universalistic claim and a modern, enlightened halo. The result, however, is a threatening mixture of chauvinist nationalism and rabbinical racism equipped with the modern state's mechanisms of power and oppression. Nowadays, we see Jewish history through the frame of this state and conceive the latter as the telos and culmination of the former. The very existence of the Jewish State has become a yardstick by which one is supposed to measure and evaluate all forms of Jewish life. Yet "Jewish sovereignty" today has become the cry of a violent Jewish nationalism, whose discursive, political, and military practices amplify the totalistic element in the logic of sovereignty. The very idea and the daily practices of Jewish sovereignty threaten today every Israeli who wants his citizenship to be determined in non-Jewish, universalistic terms, as well as every Jew who refuses to shape his Jewish life according to the logic of political sovereignty.

- Jewish Military Power.

Israel has not managed to transform and overcome the binary relations and the radical separation between Jew and non-Jew; it has only inverted those relations and emphasized that separation, the Jew becoming the powerful master, the Jew's Gentile turning into an eternal victim. Jewish sovereignty must depend on military power because it was created by exiling and expropriating the land of so many non-Jews. Those exiled and expropriated others have created and nurtured a permanent "external threat," a threat often multiplied by the political and military policy of the Jewish State because the very existence of such a threat seems necessary to the logic of Jewish sovereignty. Jewish military power became the basic scheme and the ultimate symbol of political sovereignty, the major instrument for the creation, representation, and implementation of "the general will." Military power became the spectacle of Jewish sovereignty, its necessary supplement and natural substitute, while military organizations and militaristic practices and ideology have become a major factor in the structuration of Israeli society. In the meantime, since the independence of the State of Israel, Jews have killed tens of thousands of non-Jews, and more Jews have been killed while serving in the Israeli army than the number of Jews who were killed by non-Jews throughout the world.

- Revival of the Hebrew Language.

The revival of Hebrew as a modern language was accomplished by an active forgetfulness of the languages of the Jews. A society of immigrants needs a common language, but the exclusivity that was demanded by the champions of the modernized Hebrew language was derived from the logic of Jewish sovereignty and from the cultural needs of the new immigrants. The quick empowerment of Hebrew over the languages of the immigrants caused the loss of Jewish cultural memory and dramatically narrowed its scope, cutting connections to the cultures from which these immigrants came and impoverishing the society that could no longer draw on these cultural roots. Most Israeli Jews, secular and orthodox alike, can hardly read the rich sources of Jewish culture; at the same time, most Israeli Jews have been exiled from non-Jewish cultural arenas in which their grandparents felt so much at home.

- Normalcy.

This is the last thing one can say about Jewish existence in Israel, particulary in relationship to the Israeli approach to four major domains of social and political life: territory, war, work, and human and civil rights.

Territory. The land has become a fetish, holy places have become idols, the political management of the territory has become a form of worship: Jews turned from a nation without a territory (whatever "nation" meant before Zionism) to a nation enslaved to the mystical meaning of its territory, collectively practicing a kind of territorial paganism. Religious Jews sanctify the land and its dust because of the past that was invested and is now laid buried in them; secular Jews sanctify the landscape because of the strategic significance hidden under any uprising hill and along any deep valley, those necessary investments for any future war. The land belongs to the "Jewish People," neither to the State of Israel nor to its citizens. Therefore the Jewish government has appropriated almost 90 percent of the land, forbids Jews to sell land to non-Jews and turn the allocation of land into an

instrument of power over the entire population, and, too often, into an instrument of direct coercion over the non-Jewish population.

War. Instead of being a terrible but temporary disturbance of civic life, the state of war is the general framework for civic life in Israel. Israelis live between wars, the last always too close to forget, the next always too close to escape. Mourning and war preparations go hand in hand. In between the five or six "official" wars, an ongoing battle against terror has never ceased. Enforced military service, annual reserve duty (*milu'im*), war drills, active stations for the distribution of gas masks—all these regularly punctuate and systematically structure civic life and constitute a major part of its routine.

Work. "White" Jews abandoned the production conveyor belts long ago; Jews of color are in the process of abandoning them. In their place came Palestinians, who, once put under a never-ending curfew, have been partially replaced by foreign workers. Non-Jewish labor mediates between Jewish wealth and Jewish consumer society. As Jews worship the land but hardly cultivate it any longer, it is non-Jewish labor that mediates now between the Jews and their lands. In Europe the Jew was blamed for the atrocities of capitalism because Jews were forced to become the financial mediators of the market economy. In Israel Jews are both the mediators and the owners of wealth, and their part in actual production is constantly diminishing. This abnormal role of the Jews in the Israeli economy is made even more abnormal due to the influx of money that comes from the United States, from both governmental and Jewish sources. Whatever normalcy means in economic terms, Jewish work has not become normal in the Jewish State.

Civil Rights. Almost six million people are under the rule of the Jewish State; more than a million and a half are under the rule of the Palestinian Authority, whose own rule is made possible, tolerated, and severely restricted by the Israeli government. Among these seven and a half million, two million enjoy few or no civil rights and their lives are administered by an Israeli martial government or by the security forces of a Palestinian authoritarian government. Among the almost six million Israeli citizens, every sixth person is an Arab who is formally a citizen but denied full partnership in the State which is legally declared to belong to the Jewish people, i.e., to millions who are not its citizens. Arabs are systematically discriminated against and some aspects of this discrimination are codified in the legal system (the law of return, land ownership). Jewish immigrants become citizens overnight; their naturalization takes no longer than it takes to kick out those unwanted Palestinians whose expulsion is legally authorized on the basis of "security reasons."

The Real Question

In this situation, assuming the overall success of the Zionist enterprise, THEY tell us that the only question left open, the real question, is how to get "peace." People on the right would say "peace with security," and they may give up peace if they believe that "security" can be secured without it. People on the left would emphasize peaceful co-existence, and sometimes even be content with putting an end to the Occupation. But most leftists and rightists alike, when wishing "peace and security" for the Jewish State, implicitly accept the logic of Jewish sovereignty and approve of its separatist, particularistic consequences and its holistic claim upon social, cultural, and political life. Most Jews in Israel believe that a solution to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict must be based on some kind of separation between the two peoples. In the midst of a national, nationalist conflict, most people adhere to the principle of the nation-state. They fail to realize that the real question is not about peace or security or even the termination of the Occupation. They fail to realize that the real question lies in the very idea of national sovereignty and that the real problem of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict is how to overcome its separatist-holistic logic.

Putting an end to the Occupation is of course a *sine qua non* for any solution of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict. Until Palestinians enjoy full citizenship and their rights are fully respected, there will be neither peace nor security. In the present situation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state seems an inevitable solution. This means, however, two nation-states instead of one, two political systems based on the nationalization of citizenship and sovereignty. Under present conditions, this also means handing jails and torture chambers from the Israeli Security Service to its Palestinian counterpart (something which has already been partially accomplished). It also means ethnic cleansing of Jewish settlements, as well as Palestinian villages and neighborhoods. (No political solution under the terms of nationalist sovereignty is imaginable without the evacuation of at least some Jewish settlements, whose very existence is the most difficult obstacle towards the establishment of a Palestinian state). Above all, perhaps, a Palestinian state means under present conditions the perpetuation of the colonial economic order in which Jewish wealth exploits Palestinian labor under the protection of two nationalistic police systems.

The coupling of nationalism and political sovereignty is an European idea that has been planted throughout the world and now shapes the lives of people everywhere in destructive ways. Our task must be to break this connection between "nation" and "nationalism," interpreted in ethnic and racial terms on the one hand, and political sovereignty, interpreted in terms of autonomous subjectivity, on the other hand. We need to start dreaming of a state that does not rely on the notion of nationalist sovereignty, a state in which sovereignty is fragmented anyway, and the national (even nationalistic) dimension of culture and society is granted a partial, well-checked political voice. A state in which nationalism becomes one voice among many, one dimension of a culture, of social life, and of personal identity, no more, perhaps less

than any other: religion, gender, linguistic community, class, and profession.

Envisioning Another State

In Zionist history there were a few thinkers (e.g., Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem) who played with the idea of a new kind of state, a state that would exist between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. Following their steps we envision a state that will not be a nation-state. Such a state would provide a way for all the different kinds of communities to forge relations among themselves. None of these communities would have sole possession of the state, and each one of them would have to resolve the conflicts between itself and the other groups in accord with democratic principles. Religious Jews would stop sanctifying the land with their blood and the blood of others. They would release their religious culture from territorial idolatry and be free to renovate it, outside of and against the strictures of state power. Secular Jews would be able to cultivate their Judaism without depending on a nationalistic translation of religious principles. Secularism could develop outside the state and its artificial civic religion and often imposed rituals. Traditional Jews would be able to cultivate their tradions without having to confront the state-authorized religious establishment. We Jews could acknowledge the evil we did to the Palestinians without fearing that we would lose our world. We would be able to heal and reconstruct our silenced memory and to confront the question of how to repair what can be repaired of the damage and loss that we and our fathers have done.

The link between citizenship and nationality would be transformed, though, due to the present make up of the state's population, not completely cut. This would be a state where Palestinians become full citizens without having to abandon or lose their national identity. Once again they would be the owners of the land, only they would have to share it with their Jewish compatriots. The public work of memory and forgiveness that would be performed by many Jews, plus generous compensation by the state, would make such a sharing more acceptable, with less resentment and feelings of vengeance, though not without difficulties.

In the state we envision, the correlation between economic status and national or ethnic origin would be erased in principle, and political means to erase it in practice would be developed. The state would seek to limit the free market and redirect it in ways that would repair the injustices done to Palestinians, Mizrachi Jews, and foreign workers. It would enable their children to get into the market with a better starting point than their parents. Like Switzerland, which has four official languages, this new state would have Hebrew and Arabic, and perhaps English and Russian, as its official languages. The borders would be open and naturalization would be regulated on a universal, not national basis. The state would be free from the instinct to use its armed forces for handling internal or external conflicts and would dare activate those forces only for truly defensive goals. Since it would contain strong and antagonist chauvinist, nationalist, and religious fractions the state would need a strong police force to act against any violent attempt to undermine the universalistic structure of the state.

The new state would base its legitimation on its ability to protect the openess of societal relations and freedom of public communication, exchange of ideas, and the commerce of goods. The state apparatuses would contract and give greater space to civil society and civil forms of communication, but they would also protect that space and those means of communication from the distortions of the market. The state would put limits on the ability of the economic market, the media, science, technology or religion to disrupt the communicative webs of civil society. The state we envision would strive to be no more than this: a guardian of the societies and cultures under its jurisdiction. It would work hard to refrain from thinking the ensemble of its citizens as comprising one society or as sharing one culture. It would be a state of citizens who share by necessity only one thing in common: the state in which they are citizens.

Jews and Palestinians will need much imagination, courage, and creativity to develop together these kinds of mechanisms of defense. The development of an independent Palestinian state during an interim period seems an inevitable step toward the possibility of such a cooperation. But that cooperation in overcoming both nationalism and the nationalized state is ultimately inevitable if one wishes to overcome a post-colonial situation in which Palestine would be virtually dominated by Israel and Israel would be virtually enslaved to its ongoing mastery over the Palestinians. Whether such a cooperation would lead to a bi-national state, a federation or alliance between two independent states, or to another kind of political arrangement does not really matter. What matters is that any such arrangement worth dreaming about and striving for must uncouple the unholy coupling of nationalism and political sovereignty.

Not a Dream

We are the garbage heap of Europe. The crap that we still have on our backs forces us to dream about a different state and a different society. Recent catastrophes caused by national conflicts force us to face the ongoing threat of the nation-state as a disastrous political form. The globalization of the market and the media, along with other historical changes that are gradually eroding the unity of the nation-state and its totalitarian claims, give reason to hope that the dream of overcoming the nation-state is possible. The way to the new kind of state that will be founded in the land of Israel/Palestine is not longer than the way between the casino in Basel where in 1897 the first Zionist Congress took place and the Tel Aviv Museum where in 1948 the independence of Israel was proclaimed.

IM TIRZU EIN ZO AGADA. ❑



Letty Cottin Pogrebin

A Values Approach to the U.S.-Israel Relationship

Since the founding of the Jewish State, it has been axiomatic in international politics that the United States has a "special relationship" with Israel. This relationship (which is supported by 92 percent of American Jews, according to a 1997 poll by Penn, Schoem & Berland Associates), has been grounded in a compelling dogma of American foreign policy—the belief that the U.S. should pursue its *interests* and defend its *values*. During the Cold War, America's best interests dictated our support of Israel because of its strategic importance in the region. At the same time, the ideological importance of the Jewish State emanated from our two nations' having a similar settler-nation history, a democratic ethos, and many cultural commonalities, most often expressed as "shared values."

In recent years, however, both orthodoxies have been challenged—the first by dramatic geopolitical changes, the second by developments in Israel itself—raising the possibility that the solidity of the partnership may no longer be taken for granted. With the collapse of the Soviet threat and advances in long-range missile technology, the strategic rationale for the special U.S./Israel relationship has diminished. More precisely, it has transmogrified into a general concern for the stability of the region to ensure American access to oil and to prevent nuclear proliferation. What concerns me as we mark Israel's fiftieth anniversary is the erosion of the second rationale for the special relationship, and its consequences for the Jewish State and the Jewish people.

I worry about what will happen if Americans no longer feel ideologically linked to Israel through common ethics, morality, and reverence for democratic principles. What if our societies eventually differ so greatly that "shared values" ceases to be a credible basis on which to forge a special bond? How will that affect American foreign policy, the $3 billion aid package, the organized Jewish community and its pro-Israel activism, philanthropic contributions to Israel, and fundamental questions of Jewish identity and Jewish pride? A discussion of values is not a naive, new age-y indulgence, but rather a hard-nosed, frankly self-interested analysis of political realities that have dramatic consequences for the Jewish State.

Thus far, in the public sphere, the values rhetoric still holds. President Clinton has spoken of "the unique bond that unites the United States and Israel … based on shared values and shared ideals." In contrast, he calls Egypt (which receives the second largest foreign aid package after Israel's) "one of our most important global partners" with "special meaning for all of us" as "the birthplace of much of our civilization." No mention of shared values. In an address to the Israeli Knesset in October 1994, the President said, "the survival of Israel is important not only to our interests, but to every single value we hold dear as a people." What would happen if the cherished values of most Americans and the core values of a growing number of Israelis are way out of synch? Will Americans—particularly American Jews—remain strongly pro-Israel if Israeli institutions become less reflective of the values "we hold dear as a people"?

Developments in Israel have already soured many American Jews, whose support is an essential prerequisite for an Israel-friendly policy. As seen from a values perspective, five issues raise concern because they challenge the pre-eminent shibboleths of democracy: limits on religious freedom; inroads into freedom of speech; institutionalized discrimination; miscarriages of justice; and foot-dragging on the peace process. Each of these is not just an Israeli problem; it is the business of any American who loves the Jewish State and cares about its soul as well as its survival.

1. Religious Freedom

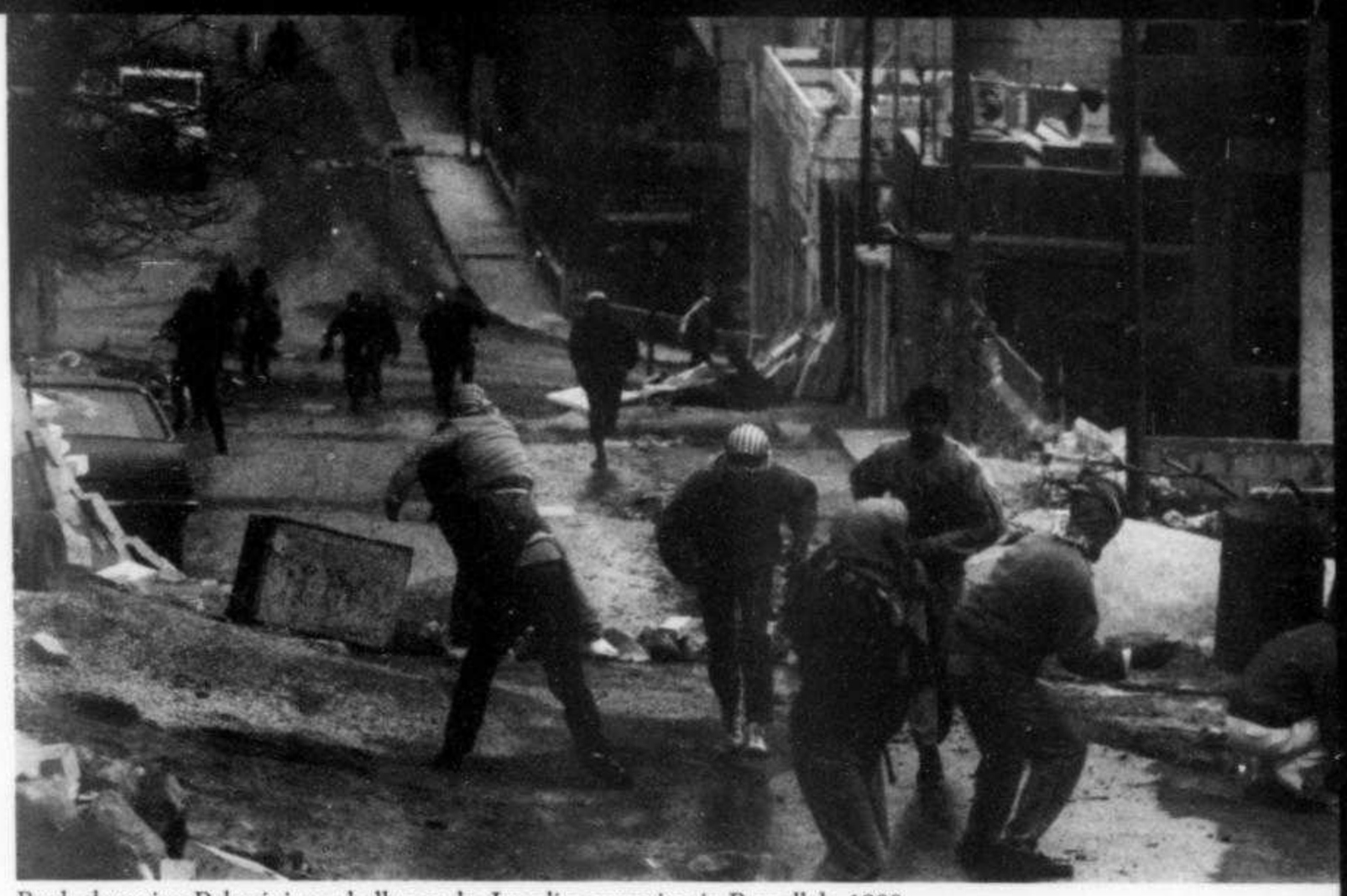
Whatever values we've shared these last fifty years, separation of religion and state is not one of them. In Israel, the wall between synagogue and state is a sieve. Religious parties sit in the Knesset and barter their economic and social demands to join the governing coalition. Only Jewish immigrants get automatic citizenship, and only Orthdox rabbis get to say who is a Jew. There is no such thing as civil marriage or divorce; matters of personal status are the exclusive province of the Orthodox rabbinate. Yeshiva students are given draft deferments (an issue now before Israel's Supreme Court). Israeli hotels must serve kosher food. The law forbids Jews to work on the Sabbath; an employer who violates that prohibition is subject to prosecution and fines.

There are innumerable examples of Orthodox interference in Israel's secular life. According to Rafi Har-Lev, former director-general of El Al, the national airline would have enjoyed double or triple revenues had it been able to operate seven days a week. He says El Al can survive only if it is sold,

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but the religious parties have conditioned such a sale on a pledge that the buyer would not operate on Shabbat, making privatization impossible. Another instance: the State Comptroller found that the Absorption Ministry, which is supposed to integrate new *olim* (immigrants) into the complexities of Israeli life, approved millions of shekels for *haredi*-style "spiritual absorption," Shabbat seminars, and other programs run by ultra-Orthodox organizations.

The idea of one religious group imposing its will on others is anathema in the U.S., founded as a haven from religious coercion. It is particularly abhorrent to most American Jews, who view church-state separation as a keystone of democracy and their best guarantee against tyranny of the majority.



Rock-throwing Palestinians challenge the Israeli occupation in Ramallah, 1988.

Americans may be unaware of the fine points of the debate, but they know that those who favor the status quo—continued Orthodox hegemony—are presently going head to head with Reform and Conservative Jews, advocates of religious pluralism who beg and lobby for recognition of their authenticity. Americans know that Israeli society is deeply divided, riven by religious animosity even more than by Arab-Jewish tensions. They've seen an Orthodox-sponsored ad in the *Jerusalem Post* denouncing non-Orthodox Jews as "fraudulent," "heretical," "satanic." They've seen hooligan *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox) heave chairs at women praying together at the Western Wall in a manner consistent with Jewish law but not Orthodox sensibilities.

They're aware that *haredim* threw human excrement at Jews mourning the dead on Israel's Memorial day. On Shavuot, which marks God's revelation at Mt. Sinai, the ultra-Orthodox attacked Conservative Jews worshiping in an egalitarian minyan at a considerable distance from the Wall, pelting them with rocks and coffee, trampling their *kipot* and prayer shawls, and calling them Nazis and whores. Worse yet, the police presence at such incidents has been suspiciously lax, sometimes even hostile, and political leaders have been slow to condemn the brutality for fear of wounding the politically powerful *haredim*. To settle the matter once and for all, the religious parties introduced a bill in the Knesset that would give the Wall the status of an Orthodox synagogue, thus legitimatizing *haredi* authority at this pre-eminent historical site, the last remnant of the Second Temple, whose meaning is precious to the whole Jewish people.

The Conversion bill, which would legalize the status quo and expressly invalidate non-Orthodox conversions, has perhaps left the deepest wounds. For many American Jews, it is the last straw—a naked grab for power and a symbol of Orthodox arrogance and superiority. Insulted and angry, some Jews have put their money where their mouth is. "There has been a significant drop in financial and other support for Israel in our area," Minnesota State Representative Jim Rhodes told a Knesset committee in January, shortly before the Ne'eman Committee presented its proposals to solve the impasse. "The Conversion bill has created very bad feeling in the local Jewish community. The feeling is that a rift has been created between us."

In an urgent memo to the lay and professional heads of Jewish federations, Barry Shrage, president of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies, recently wrote: "Our current system is in crisis. Many Jews are increasingly alienated from Israel, donors are demanding more choice and a clearer sense of how their contributions are used." In short, non-Orthodox Jews are unwilling to see their dollars go to people who would define them out of Judaism.

Am Echad, a group of Orthodox signatories to an ad in *The New York Times,* claims that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, gave Orthodoxy the power of a state religion to insure Jewish unity for all time; in fact he did so in order to present a united front before the U.N. during the struggle for independence. The truth is, Ben-Gurion worried about the dominance of the *haredim*. Leonard Fein, for example, has pointed to a 1963 letter from Ben Gurion to Rabbi Jay Kaufman, then vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, containing the following words: "To my great sorrow, the Orthodox Jews in Israel are currently divided into two groups, either zealots who wish to enforce religion by utilizing the power of the state or politicians who use religion as a political spade with which to dig for their own profit. There is an absolute necessity to expand the Progressive congregations. As they grow, the government will grant them rights equal to those accorded to Orthdox congregations."

While most Israelis have little understanding of Reform or Conservative Judaism, they are far from sanguine about the

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Jerome M. Segal

On a Knife Edge

Israel at 50: Israel at 3500

Israel, understood as a nation state, as a corporate entity recognized in international law, is fifty years old. Israel, understood as the Jewish people, as that nation promised to Abraham and persisting to this day, is some thirty-five-hundred years old.

The telling of that history lies at the heart of the ancient culture and religion of Israel. Indeed, the secret of Jewish survival may be the centrality given to history, coupled with a conception of history as the story, not of a king or a state, but of the evolution of a people. How then does the fifty year history of the State of Israel fit within that larger story? What meaning does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict give to the larger thirty-five-hundred-year-old story of the Jewish people?

On the most overt level, the creation of Israel in 1948 rescued that story. Without the State of Israel, the story of the Jewish people would have reached its moral climax in the Holocaust—and while Jews and individual Jewish communities survived the Holocaust, it is likely that there would have been no further event in the life of the Jewish people. Rather, the only story would have been the fragmentation of the surviving Jewish communities, general assimilation, perhaps the continued existence and evolution of Judaism. Without Israel the State, there would not have been much more to be said about Israel the people.

With the founding of Israel the State, of course, the story as story is radically different. For the first time in almost two thousand years, the Jewish people returned to state power. Now, the existence of Israel and its continuing conflict with the Palestinians imposes a narrative framework on those of the Jewish people living outside of Israel. Who we are is defined, whether we like it or not, in large part in relation to the roles we play (or neglect to play) in relation to Israel the State.

What remains to be written is the heart of this story: What happens when the Jewish people regain state power after almost two millennia? What has been the meaning of our statelessness? What has been the meaning of our perseverance and sacrifice and love in maintaining Judaism and our peoplehood? What, during these 2,000 years, has been our evolution—not just as a people without a Temple religion, but as a self-conscious people living under the state power of others?

The answer to these questions may lie in the terms of the moral drama raised by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which presents us with two contrasting visions of the struggle for Palestine. The first is contained in Golda Meir's famous characterization of Israel as "a land without a people for a people without a land." Her modern Israel is a secular miracle arising in all its purity out of the brilliance and dedication of the Zionist movement.

How radically different that is from the characterization of the first conquest of Palestine as found in Joshua 24:13. Here Joshua quotes to the assembled Israelites the words of the Lord: "I have given you a land for which you did not labor and towns which you did not build, and you have settled in them; you are enjoying vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."

Two ways of seeing. Golda Meir would have us see only a land that was empty, a desert reclaimed. The Bible would have us see in every town and olive grove the prior presence of those who were dispossessed.

Of the two, the more honest history is found in the Bible. Why? The reasons are multiple, and in fairness to Golda Meir, it must be said that the second time around the situation had far greater moral complexity and the Israelites had a far better claim. But the most important reason for the different characterizations is that thirty-two hundred years ago, the conquest of a land that belonged to others, the occupation of their homes and cities and towns and vineyards, did not constitute a moral problem. Or at least, it did not if it was sanctioned by God, if God was the effective agent of such great events. And indeed, the passage quoted from Joshua is part of a rendition of all that the Lord has done for the Israelites and is immediately followed by the injunction: "Now, therefore revere the Lord and serve Him with undivided loyalty...."

Thirty-two hundred years later, Zionists would have a hard time reconciling righteousness with dispossessing another people—thus for most Jews, Israelis or not, the dispossession of the Palestinians was simply denied. Palestinians became a non-people with a non-presence, or their departure was portrayed as a voluntary act ("they left of their own accord so that the Arab armies could unimpeded kill the Jews") or as their own fault ("they launched an unjustified aggressive war of extermination") or as historically necessary ("creating a state is no simple thing, and our need was greater than theirs"). Historical distortion and historical simplification are the tribute Jewish self-identity

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Jerome M. Segal is the president of the Jewish Peace Lobby, and director of The Jerusalem Project of the Univeristy of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies. He is the author of Creating the Palestinian State: A Strategy for Peace *(1989).*

pays to universal morality. Thus, ironically, Golda Meir's willful blindness reflects moral progress; implicitly it accepts that morality is not tribal. Since in principle the "Other" (i.e. the Palestinian) is a bearer of rights, a fictional history was required, one in which the Palestinian experience is not witnessed.

But if this is all that has or will occur, then in the worst sense the Jewish people have normalized and assimilated; we have become a people like all others. If there is no deeper grappling with the moral issues posed by the re-creation of Israel the State, then the heightened moral sense and commitment of Judaism to justice honed over centuries of persecution and injustice becomes no more than an artifact of weakness and statelessness. The Jewish story becomes a general message to humanity: there is no enduring moral growth, only the differing rhetoric and vantage points of the strong and the weak. And if this is indeed the message, then the entire enterprise of Judaism has failed because the ultimate faith of the Torah is a faith in moral growth through history.

Where then, after fifty years, are we? We stand in midstream. I refer not to the peace process per se—though they differ on many other things, real peace is in the self-interest of those on the right as much as those on the left. No, we are midstream in a battle for the moral sense of the people.

Israel today is on a knife edge. It can descend towards religious fundamentalism, back towards a moral tribalism, or it can come to grips with the Palestinian experience and even recognize the partial legitimacy of the Palestinian cause. Often it seems a losing battle. Today, substantial numbers of young Israelis express sympathy with Rabin's assassin, and many openly endorse racism. But we have also seen the emergence of the "New Historians" and a change in how the conflict is taught, at least on the university level.

The Israeli peace movement, in part out of a misplaced tactical sense, has never taken up this struggle for the moral sense of the people. The central terms of its discourse have been how to achieve security, how to achieve lasting peace, and how to retain Israel as both a democracy and a Jewish state. Nonetheless, a very substantial proportion of Israeli Jews do recognize the partial legitimacy of Palestinian claims. Consider one bit of data: 39 percent of Israeli Jews believe that Palestinians have some legitimate rights with regard to Jerusalem. Among Meretz supporters it is 82 percent, and among Labor 55 percent. But this perception is not restricted to those on the Left. Even among those identified with the far right wing, some 22 percent of Israeli Jews give some moral legitimacy to Palestinian claims with regard to Jerusalem.

It is on this latent moral sense that we can build. To date, the Palestinians have not made it easy for us by producing a Martin Luther King, Jr. or a Gandhi. So we must struggle towards a fuller and wider perception of the truth on our own. It is not that people need to become experts and master the details of complex events—it suffices to simply grasp



PHOTOGRAPH BY TORDAI / IMPACT VISUALS

Palestinian refugees at Jabalya Camp in Gaza, 1988.

the basics. When the Zionist movement launched its project of return, the Palestinians were there. That they experienced themselves as threatened was both understandable and reasonable. That they would experience the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as a vast injustice is also understandable. And that they would fight to prevent it, and to reverse it, is also understandable. No people would have acted differently. We would have not acted differently.

We are near-obsessed with the need for others to visit our museums of the Holocaust—not because we want them to understand the Holocaust, but because we want them to understand Israel. But what of Hillel's dictum that we not impose on others what we would not have them impose on ourselves? Where is the museum of the Palestinian experience, and is Israel the people willing to visit it?

Hillel's dictum may turn out to be the most critical statement of the issues facing Israel, both as a people and as a nation state.

For example, the central difference between Barak (Labor) and Netanyahu (Likud) is their assessment of the Palestinians' minimal demands. Netanyahu thinks that he can lower Palestinian expectations and force them to accept less than Labor would give. Labor thinks the Palestinian minimum consists of genuine statehood in most of the West Bank. What neither Labor nor Likud represent, however, is a generous peace, a peace in which Israel, the victorious party, both out of strength but also out of an awareness of the elemental injustice of what befell the Palestinians, offers more than the Palestinians can win at the negotiating table: sharing sovereignty over Jerusalem, full sharing of water resources, reparations for lost homes and land, even the return of some of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees.

To make such a peace is today beyond Israel's moral capacity. Yet we must not rule it out. It was only ten years ago that the PLO was holed up in Tunisia; only ten years ago that Yitzhak Rabin boasted "we will break their bones." I believe that Israel, both as a State and a people, possesses the latent potential to make a generous peace. Our history cries out for it, and it is the peace most likely to endure. ❑



Rami Shapiro

Simply Jewish
Diaspora Judaism Matters

Let me ask you a question: has a reborn Israel led to a reborn Judaism? We have seen the blooming of the desert; but is the soul any less parched? We have seen brown hillsides turn green with new forests; but is the heart any less barren? We have seen brave soldiers push back terrible armies; but is the greater enemy—meaninglessness—any less a threat? We have seen an ancient language revived; but is there a new poetry of the spirit? We have seen the rebirth of Orthodoxy; but have we seen the rebirth of Judaism?

I don't think so. The truth is that almost everything fresh and new in Jewish learning and spirituality is coming from the Diaspora, not Israel. Israel is where we go to explore the past, the United States is where we go to create the future.

Why? Because the founders of Israel believed Judaism to be essentially irrelevant to their dream. They had little use for it and happily delegated it to those rabbis for whom they also had little use. Judaism in Israel is, to a great extent, an imitation of Judaism in the shtetl. Where Israel had once given birth to prophets, it now produces clerks. Where Judaism once challenged kings, it now stands on the sidelines of world events. How sad.

Where Israel had once given birth to prophets, it now produces clerks.

And what are we doing about it? We are exporting Reform and Conservative Judaisms from the United States. Who does this benefit? Reform and Conservative rabbis in the United States. The reason these movements are having such difficulty in Israel has less to do with the power of Orthodoxy then it does the irrelevancy of these movements to most Israelis. Liberal Judaism today is a variation of Orthodoxy; it is, as many Orthodox claim, Judaism Lite. Israelis may not dabble in Judaism very often, but like a dieter who chooses to binge once in a while, when they do indulge they want the real thing. When and if Israelis discover a need for American-style liberal Judaism, they know where to find it.

So what should we liberal Jews be doing about the future of Judaism in Israel?

First, we should pressure our Reform and Conservative leaders to cease all efforts to secure parity with the Orthodox, recognizing that we cannot sell a product until we create a market for it. Second, we should endow an Israeli think tank for the reinvention of Judaism—not to conserve, reform, or reconstruct the past, but to boldly and unabashedly invent the future. We should articulate a Judaism as revolutionary and as compelling as that which the Pharisees pitted against their priestly rivals. Third, we should create a network of cutting edge and affordable private schools—Israeli Etons—that will promote academic excellence, liberal values, and this bold new Judaism, and which will shape a new generation of Israeli leaders. And, fourth, we should establish a fund for Israelis who wish to fight the religious establishment on issues that matter to them. The key to all of this is the success of the think tank.

The think tank should be located on a kibbutz where liberal Israeli religious scholars, scientists, philosophers, rabbis, artists, poets, and mystics (you can find them in the growing number of Buddhist meditation communities in Israel) can live together to explore, experiment, and create a new Judaism for the twenty-first century.

Each year thirty-six applicants would be chosen for the project. Each would receive a grant to cover his or her living expenses for one year. The first four months of that year would be spent at the think tank attending daily sessions facilitated by the participants themselves, seeking to articulate Judaism's essential vision, mission, and values, and to fashion the means for living these in the twenty-first century. This period of intense study and creativity would be followed by six months of teaching at chavurah-style learning centers established around the country for the purpose of testing the ideas and practices formulated by the group over the previous four months. During the final two months of their fellowship, grantees would be back at the kibbutz comparing notes and refining their efforts. The last month of one fellowship group would overlap with the first month of the next, so that information could be exchanged, and a sense of continuity maintained. The project would have to be funded for seven years, expecting that the seventh year would produce a viable and thriving new vision of what Judaism is and can become.

This is, of course, an extremely rough model. Yet programs like this hold much promise. If we in the Diaspora wish to do something for Judaism in Israel and ultimately the world, we would be better served if we funded the future rather than fight over who will bury the past. ❑

Rami Shapiro, PhD, is author of Minyan *and* Wisdom of the Jewish Sages *(both from Bell Tower). He also directs The Virtual Yeshiva, an on-line resource for Jewish Renewal, at http://www.rasheit.org/.*



Dr. Daniel Gordis

When Only Half a Dream Comes True

Almost immediately after I was born, my grandfather left his family in America and moved to Israel. He had vowed to make aliyah ever since his joblessness during the Depression had eroded both his faith in America and his pride. He waited for me, the eldest child of his only daughter, to be born, and left to begin life anew. He said goodbye to my grandmother, my mother and her older brothers, picked up and was off to seek a better world.

Shortly after he arrived in Israel, he had a rubber stamp made up, which he used at the top of every air-letter that he wrote for the next fifteen years. It read: "Jews!Come to Israel, so that you may live and we may live."

Not particularly subtle, this little exhortation. But my grandfather's message is one that American Jews hear from a variety of corners: life in America is a dead end for Jews. According to this view, the real future of the Jewish people is in Israel, and those American Jews who genuinely care about Jewish life and intensive Jewish living will decide to make aliyah.

This sensibility about Israel, and the derisive view of the Diaspora that inevitably accompanies it, was hardly my grandfather's invention, of course. For centuries, we have been conditioned to believe that the ultimate salvation of the Jewish people was tied to a geographic pre-condition. Before the recitation of the Shema in the morning, traditional Jews say "and bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth, and lead us with dignity to our land. For You are a God who brings about salvation...."

Only moments later, the *Amidah*, the liturgical apex of the morning service, continues, "Sound that great shofar to [announce] our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Praised are You, Lord, who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel."

Our people's literature reflects two long-held passionate dreams: we dreamt of a renewed homeland and we dreamt of salvation. With time, though, the two became one. We lost the ability to distinguish between those dreams, and came to trust that if only we could re-establish our homeland, we would also see salvation. Our homeland would redeem us. Our homeland would redeem the world.

But that was not to be. The trauma of contemporary Israel for Jews worldwide is that it has shattered those associations. We *have* reestablished a sovereign Jewish state, but it has not brought about salvation. For all its impressive accomplishments, and there are many, Israel has not brought the Messiah. It has not redeemed the world.

For the first time in two thousand years, we're in control of a tiny slice of the world. But learning that we're doing no better than many others in making it a decent place has devastated other assumptions that had long been bulwarks of our spiritual lives. Gone are our cavalier beliefs about sovereignty and the Messiah. Our naive conviction that Jews would automatically be a force for good in the world—simply by being Jews—has also been upended. And perhaps most importantly for us, we can no longer simply assume that the future of a rich, thoughtful, sensitive, and compassionate Judaism lies exclusively in Israel. Indeed, the ultimate conclusion that we as American Jews must draw is that our work in the Diaspora to fashion a Judaism which *could be* a force for salvation is not of secondary importance to Israel. Our communities are at the very least equal partners in this sacred enterprise.

Choosing to live in Israel needs to come from the Jewish richness and intensity that Israel uniquely offers, not from a sense of the vacuousness of Diaspora living. What the crisis in Zionist ideology has taught us is that Diaspora Jewry is every bit as critical as Israel to the survival of a Judaism that merits survival. Indeed, what many once saw as the deepest problems of American Judaism are proving in some ways its greatest strengths.

True, living as Jews in a Christian country is not an uncomplicated venture. But ironically, it is the fact that this is a Christian country (along with America's tradition of a separation between Church and State) that frees us from the corrupting dangers of a religion coupled with power.

Israel desperately needs our model.

Similarly, the Protestantization of American Judaism, with its denominations and virtually innumerable sub-groups, has not been healthy in every way. But plurality has also bred pluralism, if only a grudging one. The existence of a wide variety of deeply committed and educated Jews has forced many American Jews to rethink their original assumption that their own take on the Jewish world was unquestionably the right one. With rare exceptions, Israel has not produced passionate religious thinkers with this sort of humility. Until it does, Judaism needs Diaspora Judaism desperately.

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Daniel Gordis is a vice-president of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles and Dean of its recently founded rabbinical school. His latest book, Does the World Need the Jews? *was published by Scribner in September.*



Stanley K. Sheinbaum

Jewish Unity

I was bar mitzvah'd Orthodox in 1933, fifteen years before the United Nations granted statehood to Israel. With the Holocaust as background, Israel for me represented not only a shelter—to put it mildly—but also an identity for myself and for my people in the world. As the years rolled on, my pride in Israel grew dramatically. The idea of Israel and the military strength of its people was making its mark. Time and again surrounding Arabs tried to beat back those achievements—always unsuccessfully.

Peace, I thought, had to be the first priority, at least for somebody like myself, an American Jew, who wanted to help in every way. Only through peace with the Palestinians and the surrounding Arabs could terrorism wane and could Israel blossom into its fullest potential. That is what I wanted.

But now I am not so sure. Within Israel there is a centrifugal force pitting Israelis against Israelis with an intensity that is relatively new: the religious versus the secular; the left versus the right; the rich versus the poor; the Sephardim versus the Ashkenazi; the Ethiopian and Russian Jews versus the rest. It is a new Israel and it is being torn asunder. Its very symbolic strength is in danger of being lost. A less cohesive Israel will be further endangered if the surrounding Arab world senses a weakness.

What should the attitude of American Jews be to this new Israel? In these last months, there has clearly been a falling off of support for Israel. An almost steady flow of newspaper articles in the regular press as well as in the Jewish press tells of a significant cutback in American Jewish contributions to the major American Jewish organizations such as the Federation.

Several factors are at work. For right or for wrong, assimilation in this country has perhaps created its own uncertainty for American Jews about their Jewishness. The current friction within Israel on the conversion issue has provoked an intense reaction on the part of Reform and Conservative Jews. At a time when Israel itself is no longer Israel as it was, American Jews do not want doubt thrown on their Jewishness.

Added to those doubts, occasionally someone in Israel comments that Israel no longer needs US support or aid. That factor is perhaps more important to American Jewry than the concern about conversion, even at a time when American aid to other countries is also under siege. Even though individual American Jews may be withholding their own money, they see American Jewish aid to Israel as objective evidence that we continue to support the State in an increasingly trying time.

Lastly, we must factor in Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is anything but popular in the U.S. Oslo meant much to Americans and American Jews. It seemed that finally a solution to the peace dilemma was in process. Mr. Netanyahu, with his clever facility with the English language, seems to be very inconsistent in his support of Oslo. At times, he appears against it. Other times, he sends the message that Oslo is okay, but needs basic change. On these occasions he often emits the message that he is locked into opposing Oslo by his radical right, thus placing his own political survival above the need for peace. In the process, he has alienated his American Jewish constituency.

Perhaps we all should have done aliyah and become more a part of the struggle. Hardly a Jew has not carefully weighed that possibility. At the very least, however, Israel cannot be without the support of its closest allies. The strength of Israel that I dreamt about—and certainly a return to its unity—must be our first priority. The current vindictiveness of Jew against Jew and Israeli against Israeli must be brought to an end. That divisiveness is now the major impediment to achieving peace. ❑

Stanley K. Sheinbaum is the publisher of New Perspectives Quarterly. *He was a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, and helped found the People for the American Way.*

HALF A DREAM *(continued from page 77)*

Yes, maintaining Jewish identity in this country will be a constant struggle. But the need to *earn* the loyalty and allegiance of contemporary Jews will force us to preserve—and when necessary, to create—a Judaism that merits their devotion. That challenge, and not the mere existence of a Jewish state, may prove to be the source of our salvation.

We cannot simply look about and say that Zionism—at least as we've known it thus far—is a vestige of past Jewish ideology. The real question is what we will do about it. American Jews need to recognize that the days of the denigration of the Diaspora must be over. Our way of Jewish life is not second fiddle, and we are not the junior partners. The Israel-Diaspora relationship is a partnership of equals. History will judge us on the basis of whether we have the courage and conviction to play the role that Jews, Israel, and the world, so desperately need us to accept. ❑



Kathleen Kern

A Christian Perspective

I am a Christian who came to Israel with a deep awareness—instilled by my parents and my acaden.ic background—of the horrific abuses the Church has inflicted on Jews for two millennia.

In the winter and spring of 1995, under the auspices of my organization, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), I visited with numerous Israelis and Palestinians involved in peace and human rights work. After meeting with grassroots organizers in the West Bank city of Hebron, we received an invitation from the mayor's office to set up a project there.

I knew before the project started in June 1995 that my knowledge of the history of Christian anti-Semitism would be both a burden and a tool. On the whole, my knowledge has been a useful tool that has helped our team in Hebron establish warm relationships with dozens of Israeli peace and human rights activists. It has helped us connect Israelis with Palestinians who are facing home demolition and ongoing harassment from Israeli soldiers and settlers. To do our work, our team has had to open ourselves to the pain and suffering that begat the pain and suffering that begat the pain and suffering *ad infinitum*.

But at the moment, I only feel the "burden" part. I am tired and sick at heart from what I have seen over the last two years, and I have done almost nothing for the last three days besides deal with the fallout from death threats that some Kachnik—probably at the behest of the Hebron settlers—has made against my co-workers there.

When I first sent TIKKUN my reflection piece on Israel at fifty, I tried to convey my ambivalence—how I juggle my relationships with Israelis and Palestinians, my evangelical/fundamentalist upbringing, the realities of what I see, and the historical context that gave rise to Zionism.

You, Michael Lerner, told me it came across as emotionally detached.

So you want to know how I really feel about Israel after having worked for nearly seventeen months as a human rights activist in Hebron? You don't want the version that I give in presentations to Mennonite Churches that emphasize our conflict resolution work? You don't want the version I give Jewish friends to avoid seeing that veil of pain drop across their faces? You don't want the version that I tell the children in my household so they won't grow up thinking Israelis are bad people?



Arab schoolchildren on the main street of Hebron.

Are you so sure you want to open those doors that my rage has strained against for the past two years? Are you? Well here it goes. Israel makes me want to throw things at a wall until the plaster shatters and my arms are too sore to hurl anything else. Israel makes me wish that my theology permitted me a purgatory where folks like Ariel Sharon would have to experience every bit of the pain and terror they have inflicted on their victims over the last decades. Israel makes me want to point my finger, like Emile Zola, like the prophet Nathan, at Netanyahu and his cronies, and say: "*J'accuse*—You are the man," as silent wraiths heap corpses of ewe lambs, slaughtered on the altar of Israeli expansionism, at his feet.

You don't want the version I give Jewish friends to avoid seeing that veil of pain drop across their faces?

God! Do you have any idea what you are asking of me, when you say you want something less detached? I have expended enormous energy to subdue my passion so that I don't repulse those who are only moderately interested in my work. I walk on eggshells so that I do not detonate the passion of others who are too involved with the conflict.

Much of what I have witnessed, I can report only with detachment: I have seen a man with his hands and feet blown off, skin boiled red, thrashing about like a seal. I have seen

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES MARGOLIS

Kathleen Kern is the author of We are the Pharisees *(Herald Press, 1995).*

men picking up little bits of people stuck to asphalt, walls, and trees in Jerusalem. I have seen Israeli soldiers in Hebron beckon settlers to come over and spit on terrified young men they have detained at a checkpoint. I have seen the huge grin on the face of a man holding me up by the hair with his left hand as he drew the other hand back to punch me in the ear. From the ground I watched him run away with my camera held over his head like a football, surrounded by other settlers in white shirts and black pants. They laughed and cheered as though he had made a touch down. I have been called "Nazi"; I have been spit at times too numerous to mention. I have on many occasions had Miriam Levinger cackle at me, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

I have listened as countless soldiers and settlers who have never had a civil conversation with a Palestinian—let alone eaten with them, lived with them, babysat for them as I have—tell me all about what Arabs "are like." I have heard Israeli soldiers tell me, "you have seen nothing," when I confront them about physically abusing young Palestinian men they had detained against the wall across from our apartment. I have stood one too many times in front of tearful Palestinian women asking me "*Laish*? Why? Why? WHY are they doing this? What have we done?" as they nursed the bruises of their children who had been attacked by soldiers or settlers. I have listened to their sobs and wails as bulldozers plowed into their houses while Israeli soldiers laughed and cheered. My bile, my tears, well up as I write. Before I went to Hebron I lived under the illusion that houses and human bodies were solid. I didn't know they could come apart so easily.

It is better to detach. It is better to think of myself as a biological organism, made up of a finite amount of fluids, because otherwise I think my tears, my vomit, would drown the Fertile Crescent.

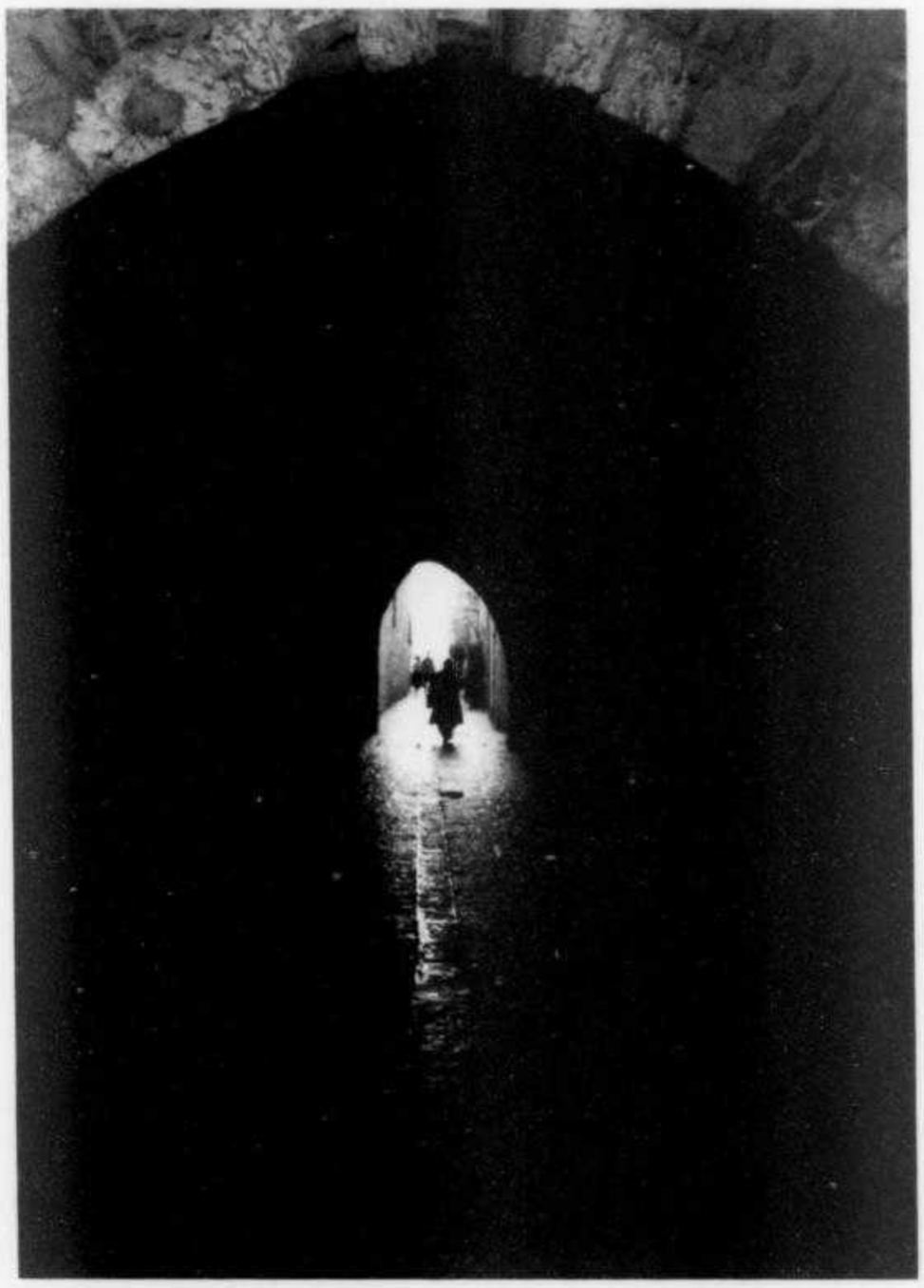
The year before I joined CPT, I finished a book, *We Are the Pharisees*, in which I examined ways the Church has used Jesus' diatribes against the Pharisees as anti-Semitic propaganda. I wrote "… until we understand our horrible history of persecuting the Jews, we cannot really talk with [Jews] on issues surrounding the state of Israel and Israeli-Palestinian relationships. Some of my friends have expressed impatience with the way Jews "use" their past persecutions in order to justify Israeli policies. I believe this is the wrong approach. As long as we refuse to listen to the Jews regarding their history, the Jews have every right to refuse to listen to us. We need to understand why Jews throughout the world crave the security that came with the founding of the State of Israel."

I received my author's copies a week before I flew to Israel for the first time. As I re-read my words today, I ask myself, "Do I still believe them? Do I still believe anything I believed before the Israeli-Palestinian conflict infected me?" I am able to rise above my rage long enough to realize that, yes, my words still hold true. Even given my experiences in Hebron, I don't think there is much I would add or change.

As a Christian white European American I want to take responsibility for the injustices in the Middle East. If I can take responsibility for what has happened, that gives me a small measure of control, right? The silence roils in my stomach. I will continue. I still believe I have an obligation to follow Jesus' command that I love my enemies. Can I love Mr. Shektman, Miriam Levinger, and the anonymous Kachniks currently threatening the lives of my friends in Hebron? Yes, I can love them. They were not born hateful. I know—no, I am certain—that God loves them.

Israeli friends have told me that W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming" has become especially meaningful to them to them in the last few years—"things fall apart; the center cannot hold."

The lines from that poem that leap out at me are, "the best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity." Is that what you meant, when you said you wanted less detachment and more passion? Because there has to be some emotional force that matches those who vociferously defend their right to treat others with contempt? What if the passion only adds to the cumulative rage mushrooming in the region? What if it makes me lose control and betray the principles of nonviolence to which I have committed my life? What if my detachment is the only thing holding me together? ❑



PHOTOGRAPH BY JODI PERELMAN

The all new *but Torah true*

TIKKUN PASSOVER SUPPLEMENT 1998

(For your Seder, a Haggadah supplement.)

Kadesh (the kiddush over the wine)—As we bless this wine, symbol of our joy and our freedom, we proudly identify with all the generations that have gone before us who have brought to the world the good news that healing and transformation are possible. The goal of the Seder is to tell the story of how the Jewish people went from slavery to freedom, and in that process came to recognize God as the Transformative Force in the universe, the Force that makes possible transformation. Because we are made in God's image and are meant to be partners with God in tikkun—the healing and transformation of the world—the point of the Passover Seder is not merely to celebrate the past but to use the Seder table to discuss how to transform the present.

Let us start with our own experience. Let each person at the table tell a story of some way in which he or she became part of a social movement that succeeded in changing more than anyone had thought possible at the beginning. For example, tell the story of your involvement in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the ecology movement, the anti-war movement, the anti-Apartheid movement, the struggle for human rights, the struggle for Soviet Jewry, etc. Or if you've never been involved in any social movement, tell about some more personal situation in which you thought you'd have to compromise your personal values to accommodate to a reality that was oppressive, then decided to struggle, and how you succeeded in accomplishing more than you ever expected.

One caveat: Of course we know that the successes have only been partial, that the problems continue, that our movements' victories have only been stepping stones to deeper struggles yet to be fought. Even liberation from Egypt only opened up the space for further problems for the Jewish people. Our victories are never total, rarely even as much as we had hoped for. Yet tonight our focus is on celebrating what HAS been accomplished, and exploring what might be, rather than on what has not or what you think cannot be accomplished. Let cynicism be banished from the table—and let joy and celebration of what we have been able to accomplish shape our minds for this holiday.

Urchatz—We wash our hands, without saying the blessing. Imagine that you are washing away all cynicism and despair, and allowing yourself to be filled with the hope that the world could be really transformed in accord with our highest vision.

Karpas—We eat a vegetable, sing of Spring and hope.

Yachatz—We break the matza and hide one part (the Afikomen). We recognize that liberation is made by imperfect people, broken, fragmented—so don't be waiting till you are totally pure, holy, spiritually-centered, and psychologically healthy to get involved in tikkun (the healing and repair of the world). It will be imperfect people, wounded healers, who do the healing as we simultaneously work on ourselves.

Maggid—Tell the story. But don't tell it as though it were a myth. Tell it as if it were true. Here are some of the elements in the traditional story that make it resonate with the experience of anyone who has ever been involved in trying to change things, and that make it useful for today:

1. Moses comes from the house of the oppressor—thus rejecting the notion that the oppressed themselves have all the wisdom they need to free themselves. There is a real place for a vanguard, a group of people who come to consciousness first and then decide to share what they know with others who haven't yet gotten that knowledge.

2. Pharaoh's first response is to make things harder for the Israelites. And the Israelites get angry at Moses, who is seen as a self-appointed vanguard who is making things worse. And they are right, things do get worse in the short run when you struggle for your liberation. No pain, no gain.

3. Pharaoh's heart is hardened. At first, insensitivity is chosen, but eventually it becomes so much a matter of character structure that it's as if God is hardening his heart—Pharaoh just can't respond to his own self-interest any more.

4. The plagues are all natural phenomena that are given a deeper meaning by Moses, and eventually seen



in that way by everyone else. What will it take for us to understand the relationship between the injustice of the international triumph of the free marketplace, on the one hand, and the consequent destruction of the environment on the other?

Seder drama: do a role-playing activity at the Seder table. One person should be Moses, one Pharaoh, one Moses' sister Miriam, one an Israelite who doubts whether it's possible to get out of Egypt or that anything can be changed, one an Israelite who is willing to take the risk, one an Egyptian who thinks Pharaoh should let the Jews go, etc. Now have a conversation with each other, pretending to be the person you've been assigned, and show how they would see the whole Passover story.

Tell the story in this kind of way. For more tips, read Michael Lerner's *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* and Arthur Waskow's *Seasons of our Joy*. Make sure people don't waste their time with discussions about "did this really happen?" and instead focus on how the themes continue to happen even in our own life experience.

Rachtzah—Wash again—this time imagining that you are washing away the limitations of mitzrayim consciousness (being in too narrow a spiritual framework).

Motzi Matza—Take the Matza and let it transpose you back to Egypt. Imagine yourself and your family actually engaged in preparing to leave—the psychological conflicts you feel, the doubts about whether to trust in the possibility of a new world.

Marror—Taste the bitter herbs (horseradish unprocessed) and remember that the struggle is not just a party, and if you insist that it always 'feel good' you'll remain stuck in oppression.

Korech—eat the maror with charoset, because the struggle will always have the mixture of bitter and sweet.

Shulchan Orech—Now eat and enjoy a tasty meal.

Tzafun—Find the afikomen—symbolizing part of you that was split off and must be reintegrated into your full being to be a whole and free person.

Barech—If you've eaten and been satisfied, thank God for all that we have been given.

Elijah—Open the door. Talk about your visions of the messianic age. Don't be "realistic"—go for your highest fantasies. Let each person share her fantasy, and let everyone else respond by finding some part of each vision that you can affirm as something you share.

Shefoch Hamotcha—Remembering the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the Holocaust, and the ways that those who choose to testify to the possibility of transformation become the butt of everyone's anger and displaced frustrations, and eventually their murderous rage. Being a spiritual or moral vanguard is risky. No wonder it's easier to assimilate into the celebration of money and cynicism of the contemporary world.

Hallel—We sing songs of praise to God. But many of us have trouble with traditional conceptions of God as a powerful patriarch or a judgmental and angry parent in heaven. Jewish renewal today involves rejecting concepts of God that make no sense to us—in order to give space to discover the God that can be real to us. Don't make an idol of older conceptions of God. Don't think of yourself as an atheist if you can't accept patriarchal or hierarchical conceptions of Divinity. Our task today is to open ourselves to experiencing awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the universe, and to the accumulated wisdom that we can discern from studying Jewish texts and history. In that process, we can find our own connection to God. All language about God is necessarily misleading and limited, but there is every reason to reject that kind of language which distances us rather than takes us toward awe and wonder. So, pause here and share with each other some of your thinking about God.

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

Venomar lefanav shirah chadasha, Hallelu-Yah.

Nirtza—Conclude with songs of revolution, freedom, and social struggle: whatever from the history and cultures of the world resonates with our own struggles.

By Michael Lerner. From TIKKUN magazine. You have our permission to reprint this and share with others—but encourage them to subscribe to help keep alive the magazine that encourages this kind of renewal activity. Subscriptions: $31/yr. TIKKUN, 26 Fell St., S.F., CA 94102.



PASSOVER

Coming Out of the Narrow Place



Karen van Hoek

It is almost a cliché to say that Pesach, the celebration of the liberation from Egypt, is also about the journey towards spiritual liberation. Many of us are familiar with various interpretations of Pesach observance as a program for self-improvement: cleaning out the *chametz* (leavened grain) symbolizes the effort to search out and correct our character flaws; the exodus from *Mitzrayim* (Egypt), which in Hebrew means "the narrows" or "the narrow place," symbolizes release from a state of narrow, constricted consciousness. Instead, we should ask ourselves what we mean by spiritual liberation. What is the "narrow place" that we wish to leave behind, and how does our personal growth support the larger goal of *tikkun olam,* healing the world? It is worth considering whether our efforts at healing and transformation will lead us out of Mitzrayim or only take us deeper into slavery.

Mitzrayim can be defined as a state of consciousness in which there seems to be only one right way to think, feel, and be, and in which anything or anyone deviating from that one right way is suppressed or punished. When the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, the one right way to be was determined by Pharaoh's whim; people lived or died according to their willingness to submit to Pharaoh's control. Many (perhaps all) of us have an internal Pharaoh, a voice within our heads that judges which of our thoughts and feelings are worthy to exist and attempts to suppress or punish all others.

Mitzrayim consciousness also makes it impossible to offer genuine recognition and unconditional acceptance of others. Instead we attempt to make others meet our standards, and grant ourselves the authority to judge the validity of their experience ("You have no right to feel that way!"; "How can you possibly think something like that?").

Beyond these everyday forms of invalidation, Mitzrayim consciousness encompasses the kind of dehumanization of the "Other" that legitimates physical violence. Coming out of Mitzrayim is essential if we are to create a world in which people recognize one another as beings created in the Image of God, and in which people are free to express their true selves without fear of violence, either physical or psychological.

Yet it is not always easy to see the way out, particularly when we are looking through the filter of Mitzrayim thinking. We may strive for self-improvement in ways that actually serve the inner Pharaoh. It is tempting to think of personal growth in terms of overcoming our negativity: ridding ourselves of anger, fear, envy, sadness, or whatever other emotions we've decided are unacceptable. But all of these efforts to cut off aspects of ourselves simply lead us into a narrower, more constricted state of mind, as they reinforce the fundamental beliefs of Mitzrayim: that there is one right way to think and feel, and that one person or one part of our consciousness can legitimately say to the others, "You have no right to be."

The way out of Mitzrayim is suggested by the kabbalistic tradition, which associates Pesach with the *sefirah* (the Divine emanation) of *Chesed*: the quality of compassion, generosity, expansiveness. We can begin to open up the Narrow Place by recognizing that we cannot punish ourselves into being more loving, and by instead practicing

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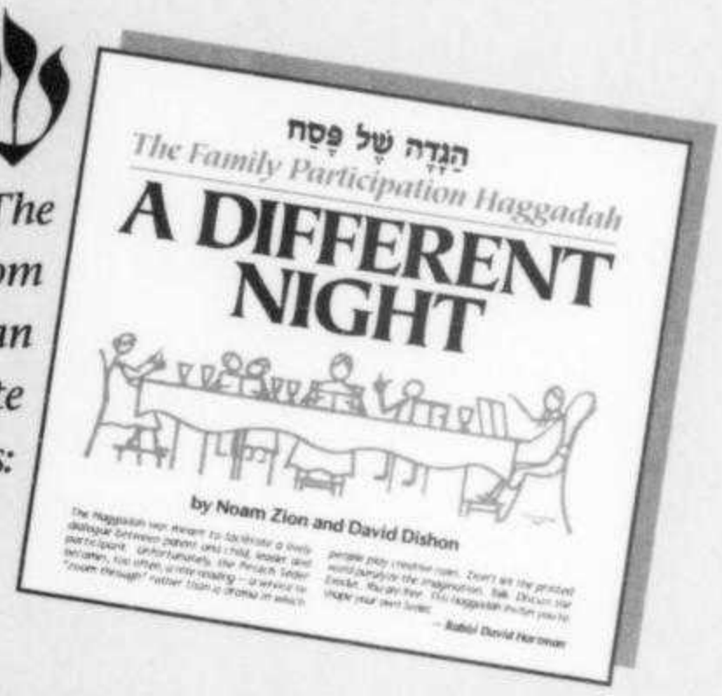
Karen van Hoek teaches cognitive linguistics at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

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compassion both towards other people and also towards the facets of ourselves that we have deemed unworthy.

The Torah hints that kindness towards others is inseparable from acceptance of self: Too often, our difficulty in accepting our own "negative traits" spills over into our treatment of other people, as we identify others with the rejected, shadow aspects of ourselves. But the Torah's commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" could also be read (with a change in vowel signs) as "Love thy badness as thyself." This doesn't mean that we should act on every feeling and impulse we experience, but only that we learn to listen openheartedly to all facets of ourselves, including the so-called negatives, to discover the messages they are attempting to convey.

The removal of chametz has traditionally symbolized letting go of pride, as the puffed-up, leavened bread is contrasted with the flat, humble matzah. Assuming that the traditional notion of pride does not refer to healthy self-esteem, we might consider the chametz to symbolize the ways we exaggerate some facets of ourselves to cover up other parts that we would rather discard: for example, taking pride in excessive niceness as a cover for anger, or inflating our sense of power to compensate for feelings of helplessness (or conversely, insisting on our status as victims to avoid claiming our power). Chametz can also symbolize the ways we seek status and ego gratification to compensate for the pain of feeling cut off from others and from our true selves. The ritual search for chametz then becomes a reminder to search out the ways in which we have distorted our sense of ourselves, and to discover what is hiding underneath.

The Seder itself makes clear that the way out of Mitzrayim is not to run away from our negative feelings and painful experiences. Instead we encounter them viscerally in the guise of the ritual foods—the matzah, the bitter herbs—and symbolically take them into ourselves, thereby transforming them. In the context of the Seder, false splits are healed and things reveal their multi-faceted nature: the salt water represents both the tears of the Israelites and the joyful deliverance at the Sea of Reeds, the matzah is both the bread of affliction and the bread of liberation, and so forth.

Embracing the energy of *chesed* could mean deliberately seeking to embrace aspects of ourselves that we have denied, or reaching out to people who seem very different from us. The Torah tells us that an *erev rav,* a mixed multitude, came forth from Mitzrayim. The truest indication that we are in fact coming out of the narrow place is when we begin to appreciate our own complexity, the ways in which we do not live up to one narrow set of standards, and to appreciate the same in others as well. We can let the *chesed* consciousness of Pesach inspire us to reconcile the opposites within ourselves and in the world, and thereby hasten the liberation of the world from Mitzrayim. ❑

A Different Haggadah

David Biale

- *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah,* by Noam Zion and David Dishon. Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997.
- *The Jerusalem Haggadah.* Illumination by Yael Hershberg, calligraphy by Izzy Pludwinski, commentary by Marc Michael Epstein, photographs by Oded Antman. Aryeh Editions, 1997.



The Jerusalem Haggadah *deserves a place among the great medieval illuminated Haggadot like the Bird's Head and Sarajevo manuscripts.*

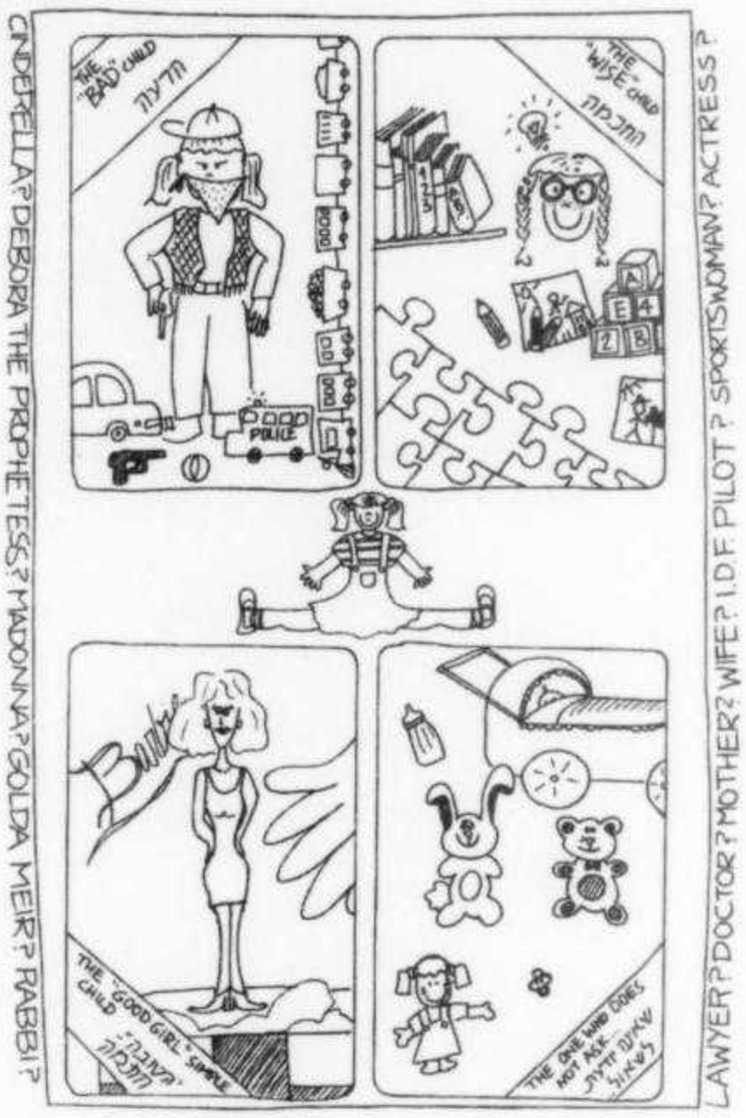
ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF ARYEH EDITIONS

One thing that Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews have accomplished collectively is to turn the Passover Seder into rote ritual. Whether it be an Orthodox recitation of every line in the Haggadah, lasting until well after midnight, or a Reform sprint through Maxwell House's abridged version, the contemporary Seder has all too often turned this most creative of Jewish texts into an exercise in tedium. Even those earnest Jewish Renewal efforts to bring current controversies into the ceremony often come off as stilted and didactic.

Yet, the Seder is perhaps the greatest invitation in the Jewish liturgical year to innovation and originality. The Haggadah is founded on the principle of telling a story rather than reciting a fixed text. As we have it today, the Haggadah is not the recitation of the biblical story, but a series of midrashim by the rabbis—stories told on stories. To be sure, this originally free-wheeling text became itself fixed by the early Middle Ages, but Jews nevertheless continued to treat the Haggadah as a vehicle for midrashic and artistic license, including some of the finest examples of medieval Jewish art. As Maimonides said: "One must make changes on this night, so the children will notice and ask: 'Why is this night different?'"

Noam Zion and David Dishon, two Fellows of Jerusalem's Hartman Institute, have taken Maimonides' principle to heart and created a Haggadah that provokes rather than preaches. They weave a wonderful variety of traditional and contemporary sources together with the standard text. Winston Churchill appears with Don Isaac Abrabanel and Kibbutz Ein Harod with Isaac Bashevis Singer. Their commentary suggests new ways of unsettling the ritual. Since, for example, the four questions and the answers are to be given in the vernacular, they recommend trying to ask them in as many languages as can be mustered around

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A Different Night *is a Haggadah with a sense of humor.*

the table. The Haggadah is filled with whimsical cartoons and graphics, including different artists' depictions of the four sons and a newspaper account of the Exodus. This is a Haggadah with a sense of humor that might just succeed in bridging that traditional chasm of the Passover Seder between didactic parents and yawning children.

Zion and Dishon have made clever and informative use of the long tradition of Haggadot. For instance, they bring in a unique sixteenth century manuscript that offers a prayer for the righteous non-Jews who have protected Jews: "Pour out Your Love on the nations who have known You...." This hitherto unknown prayer appears together in their Haggadah with the canonical curse, added after the Crusader pogroms in the Middle Ages: "Pour out Your Wrath on the nations that do not know You...." By recovering this prayer and juxtaposing it with the traditional curse, Zion and Dishon make us confront the traditional Jewish attitude towards the non-Jew in all its ambivalent complexity.

In drawing on this long tradition, including heretical Haggadot from this century, Zion and Dishon have created what seems to me the first pluralistic Haggadah, one that challenges readers with many traditions. In a time of increasing polarization between Jews, especially in Israel, one can only be grateful that out of Zion has come forth a truly inclusive Haggadah.

Out of Jerusalem has also come a very different Haggadah, the sumptuously illustrated and beautifully calligraphed *Jerusalem Haggadah*, a very expensive facsimile edition that deserves a place among the great medieval illuminated Haggadot like the Bird's Head and Sarajevo manuscripts. The *Jerusalem Haggadah* is based on architectural motifs from the city of Jerusalem, most of them from ordinary older buildings from the Turkish and Mandate periods. Yael Hershberg, the very talented illuminator, has taken these motifs—a door lintel or a window arch—and reproduced them in a way that gives one the feeling of the real stone. A set of accompanying photographs by Oded Antman shows the actual building from which the motifs were taken; these photographs are themselves a wonderful portrait of the living city. But the way the city has treated some of its architectural landmarks also comes in for subtle criticism. In at least one place, the building from which Hershberg took inspiration was destroyed; for the Haggadah, Antman photographed the hole in the ground where it stood. Hershberg writes in her introduction to the Haggadah that she intended her art in part as a message of protest against the contemporary defacement of the beauty of the city.

Like Zion and Dishon, Hershberg has a wonderfully whimsical sense of humor. In one panel, she draws the Binyan Klal, a modern office building in front of which rides the Messiah on a donkey. In another, she creates a map of the Land of Israel, showing the Israelites leaving Egypt, crossing the Jordan and coming to Jerusalem; amidst all of the biblical scenery, a tiny hang-glider hovers over the Mediterranean. One of my favorite pages is the "Had Gadya," portrayed as a night scene in which the various characters in the song (the goat-kid, the cat, dog, etc.) are linked together in a macabre dance on the walls of the Old City.

Hershberg's Jerusalem is a resolutely Jewish city and since so many of the buildings that she celebrates were built by Arabs, one wishes that she had put them into the city more than she does. Indeed, one could make the same criticism of the Zion and Dishon Haggadah which only mentions Arabs in passing as "terrorists." Surely the fact that Jews are now free but find themselves ruling another people ought to be a legitimate subject for discussion around the Seder table, even without the Haggadah dictating a position. The Seder commemorates a political event and it is hard to make this holiday apolitical. By not acknowledging fully that the beauty of Jerusalem was created by Jews, Muslims, and Christians, the *Jerusalem Haggadah* misses an opportunity to transcend politics and bring together all of Jerusalem's residents.

Yet, the great achievement of the team (which also includes precise calligraphy by Izzy Pludwinski and a poetic commentary by Marc Epstein) that put together the *Jerusalem Haggadah* is to have created something that transcends our time. Linked to an almost two thousand year tradition, the *Jerusalem Haggadah* like Zion and Dishon's *A Different Night,* demonstrates that a ritual need not be set in stone, even Jerusalem stone. The ritual lives from the verbal and visual creativity that people bring to it, from the daring to make this night not only different from all other nights of the year, but also different from all the other Passovers we have celebrated. ❑

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REVIEW

Romantic Architects *and their* Killing Machines



Omer Bartov

- *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* by Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996.

For most people—with the notable exception of most Poles—Auschwitz symbolizes the Nazi genocide of the Jews. But in the early post-War years it was camps such as Buchenwald, Dachau, and Mauthausen, located in Germany and Austria and used mainly to incarcerate the real and imaginary political opponents of Hitler's regime along with those described by it as "asocials," that is, criminals and "sexual deviants," that appeared to represent the worst of Nazi barbarism. The "discovery" of Auschwitz coincided with the shift in emphasis from those killed by the Nazis for what they did to those murdered for who they were, of whom the Jews constituted the vast majority. In the last few years, however, while access to the archives in Eastern Europe and Russia has made possible more detailed studies of the "Final Solution," a new trend has set in that expresses discomfort with the apparent over-emphasis on the fate of the Jews. For example, the figure of eleven million victims is now frequently cited when speaking of Nazi crimes, normally without specifying who that number includes.

But Auschwitz existed long before the Nazis came there, and the first goal of Deborah Dwork's and Robert Jan van Pelt's remarkable book is to uncover the links between its pre-Nazi past and the uses to which it was put by the SS. Indeed, Auschwitz was featured prominently in nationalist German discourse as one of the important centers of medieval German settlement in the East, from which the Germans had been pushed out by the Slavs and to which they allegedly had a right to return as the bearers of culture and civilization. Hence initially the German occupiers planned to remake Auschwitz as a focus for the settlement of ethnic Germans, for which purpose the local Polish population was deported and the substantial Jewish minority subsequently murdered. In order to imprison real or perceived Polish opponents, the SS transformed the former Polish barracks into a concentration camp (Auschwitz I or the *Stammlager*), and gained financial assistance for its costly operations by providing the industrial giant IG Farben with land and slave labor to construct a synthetic rubber plant in what came to be known as Auschwitz III, Monowitz, or Buna (described in Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*).

With the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, however, Heinrich Himmler turned his attention to the even more ambitious *Generalplan Ost*, which envisioned a vast demographic restructuring of the Reich's newly opened *Lebensraum* by uprooting millions of inhabitants and bringing in German colonizers. Meanwhile, the SS built Auschwitz II, or Birkenau, to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war and Jews sent there. This enormous camp was gradually turned into a mass-extermination facility, as the Red Army's refusal to collapse dispelled Himmler's *Lebensraum* fantasies and compelled him to turn his attention once more to Auschwitz, this time strictly as a site for "solving" the "Jewish question," the Jews being the only "enemy" the Nazis could still destroy. Increasingly modern killing facilities were planned and constructed, compared to which the original gas chamber and crematorium in Auschwitz I seemed positively amateurish. German technicians kept improving their murder machine until the very end, which coincided with the

Omer Bartov is Professor of History at Rutgers University. His recent publications include Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich *(1991), and* Murder in our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation *(1996), both with Oxford University Press.*

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID REGAN

murder of Hungarian Jewry, the last surviving Jewish community in occupied Europe, just months before the camp was liberated.

Since 1945, while eventually recognizing their responsibility for the Holocaust, the Germans have done their best to disown Auschwitz and "forget" its German past, referring to it as a town somewhere in the "East," that very same "East" to which the Nazi regime's victims had been sent on their last journey. Conversely, the Poles have appropriated Auschwitz as their site of martyrdom, and conveniently "forgot" that the vast majority of the victims, some 1.1 million men, women and children gassed there, were Jews. For example, the International Youth Meeting Center located next to Auschwitz is devoted to Polish-German reconciliation, rather than to reconciliation with the Jews or the Gypsies, for whose murder the killing facilities were primarily employed. The Jews, for their part, have insisted on identifying Auschwitz as a site of Jewish victimhood, have resented Polish Communist, nationalist, and Catholic attempts to evade the issue, and, especially in the case of the Zionists, have used organized tours of the camp as an occasion for reasserting Jewish national renewal.

Dwork's and van Pelt's impressive and original study will be of much value to any scholar interested in this topic. The most important part of the book is van Pelt's detailed analysis of the architectural blueprints of Auschwitz, the only surviving original documents of the camp. However, one must question the implications of his immersion in and fascination with the technical minutiae of crematoria and gas chambers for our understanding of the Nazi genocidal practice. The closer the book comes to the horror of Birkenau, the more it seems that the location of a chimney or the number of double or triple muffle ovens does not matter all that much. It is at this point, too, that the link between the medieval history of German settlement in Auschwitz, its later romanticization and exploitation by modern nationalists, and the practice of industrial murder, appears too tenuous to explain anything in particular. Most modern nations have created mythical versions of their past to legitimize their contemporary identity, and have used war and violence to further their goals; yet none came close to the Nazis. In other words, we still need to understand how Himmler's crackpot Germanic aspirations were combined with his architects' homicidal sketches, the industrialists' urge for profit, and the traditions of a well-trained bureaucracy, to create the most efficient killing facility in history.

Not too long ago, the gas chambers were the subject of a debate by some French "negationists," among whom was Jean-Claude Pressac who set out to prove that they had not been used to kill people and, to his credit, discovered that they indeed were. It was, in fact, the detailed research by Pressac (in his later incarnation) and van Pelt that finally put this question to rest. But reconstructing the mechanics of the killing machine is only part of the endeavor to grasp modern genocide. After all, hundreds of thousands of Jews were shot or machine-gunned to death, yet we have little interest in the design of the weapons used for this purpose. Genocide is first and foremost about killing men, women, and children, not merely about building barracks, crematoria, and gas chambers, which only serve as the means to carry out mass murder. Our attention must never waver from the fact of murder, even as we try to understand how it was actually perpetrated. A book that attempts to include everything—history, mythology, technology, ideology, and the experience of the victims—is in constant threat of breaking apart at the seams. And while Dwork's and van Pelt's effort should be praised, it is not always successful, not least because the victims' perspective appears more in the form of anecdotes intended to humanize the technological focus of the text rather than as the very reason for our interest in the psychopathic plans of a few murderous architects.

In Dwork's and van Pelt's history of genocide, the story of the victims, to use Primo Levi's metaphor, drowns in the technocrats' blueprints, acting only as a kind of background to the "real" story, that of the German vision of Auschwitz. Meanwhile, the plans of those who organized murder are followed with tremendous interest, not least because what they designed were facilities for exterminating humanity. Yet fascination with their actions is akin to contamination by evil.

In the last few years we have witnessed a growth in what is called Holocaust studies or the study of genocide more generally. This phenomenon can be traced to various causes, among them the realization that the Holocaust was indeed at the center of the Nazi enterprise, and the recognition that genocide has remained a permanent feature of post-1945 reality. It is also related, however, to a public fascination with evil and violence, which in turn is both reflected and promoted by scholarship and the media.

The task of the historian is to attempt to understand and explain genocide without being polluted by its horror. The point is not, as some would have it, to avoid studying the extremes of human behavior because of their fascinating yet repelling nature; nor should we try to draw false "lessons" from past crimes: the Holocaust has already been used to legitimize widely differing ideologies and theologies. Rather, we must insist on the need to comprehend the evolution and effects of evil without becoming engrossed in a detached contemplation of its technicalities or, conversely, allowing our prose to degenerate into the kind of kitsch that dominates so much of our era's preoccupation with violence and horror. This is no easy task, since scholars necessarily develop some empathy with their protagonists even while recognizing their inhumanity, and, at the same time, are exposed to the tastes and fashions of their own time. But it is a goal well worth pursuing. ❑

Bearing Witness

Bernie Glassman

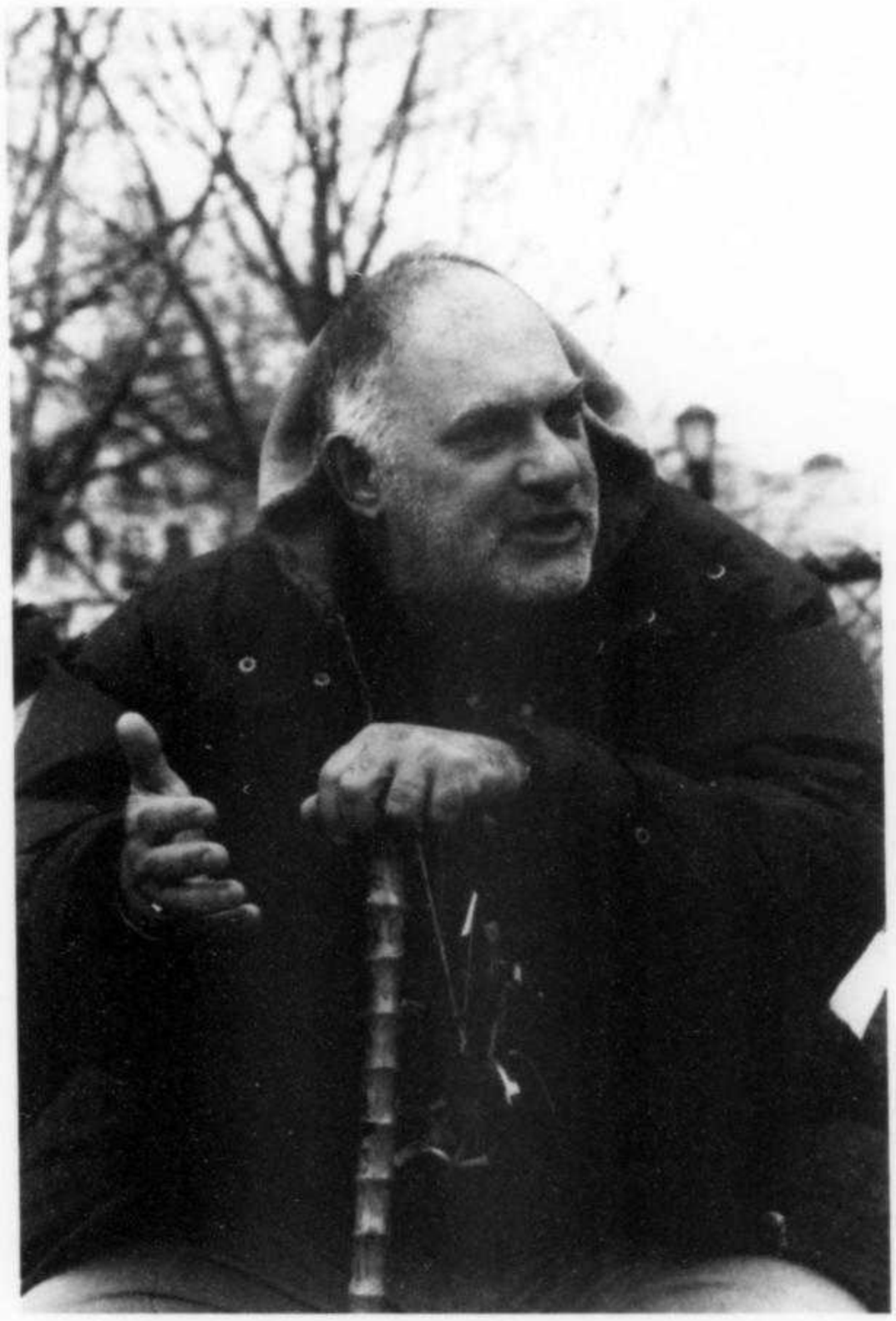
Bernie Glassman has been leading people on street retreats in New York City's Bowery since 1991. He and his students and associates live on the streets of New York City for five days without money or change of clothes, learning from the unknown and the unexpected. In this excerpt from Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace *(Bell Tower, May 1998), he describes the places where he likes to sit and feel their energy for bearing witness.*

There are several rules we follow during our street retreats. We always break into small packs, three or four participants per pack. Each pack goes its own way to find food, hang out with other people on the streets, and keep warm and dry. The members of each pack must stay together. The men are separated from the women because some food pantries serve only one and not the other. But we spend the nights together. We also try to get together twice a day for meditation and service at a place I designate ahead of time.

This meeting place is very important. During our first five street retreats we used to assemble at a crack park in lower Manhattan on the corner of Christie and Houston. People were shooting up all around us as we sat by a deserted basketball court. Before beginning our meditation sessions we always picked up some of the needles, vials, glass, and trash that littered the ground. Finally, around 1995, I went down to look at the park again before a street retreat and found that it was under construction. The neighborhood was becoming gentrified and the park was closed for renovation. I knew it wasn't going to be the same any longer, so we moved up to Tompkins Square Park in Alphabet City, close to the Bowery.

What are these places where we sit together, warming up in the sun some days, huddling together against the cold and the damp on others? Why am I drawn to sit there, meditate there, hold a service there?

During the early years I chose these places through intuition, without knowing exactly why. After visiting Auschwitz for the first time I realized that places of great suffering were also places of great healing. But the healing cannot arise until we bear witness to the suffering.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER CUNNINGHAM

Most of us miss that. What we see are people sleeping on the concrete in the middle of the day, shooting up, peeing in the open because they have no bathroom, or else gathered around a fire in an iron can with bottles in paper bags. What we see is garbage on the ground and graffiti on the walls. We see a place of suffering and chaos, and we want to get away. But in trying to leave the suffering behind, we never see the possibilities for healing. Each of these places has tremendous healing energy—not just for those who live there and die there, but also for those of us who visit and bear witness.

In May 1993, I participated in an interfaith conference just outside Zurich, Switzerland. The Jesuit who organized that conference, Father Niklaus Brantschen, had once come with us on the streets in New York City. He invited me to the conference, and while there he told me about the famous Zurich drug park called the Letten. A short while ago the Zurich authorities, realizing the extent of drug use in the city, had begun a new experiment. They sectioned off a large embankment the size of a football field just outside the very center of town, within easy walking distance of the train sta-

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tion, and allowed the purchase, sale, and use of drugs to take place there. Their rationale was that addicts should have a safe place in which they could buy and use drugs instead of having to do this illegally, often engaging in criminal or dangerous activities to feed their habit. Safe needles would be given out to prevent the spread of disease. And by bringing addicts out in public it was hoped they would be more accessible to social workers and drug counselors.

Unfortunately, while the Swiss addicts did indeed congregate at the Letten, other addicts did too. Dealers and users came to the Letten from all over the world, including southeast Asia and South America, to take advantage of this new legal drug market.

After the conference I was taken to see the Letten. What I saw there I don't think I'll forget in my entire life.

The Letten was on a low embankment by the railroad tracks, on both sides of the river feeding into Lake Zurich. From one end to the other people were shooting up heroin, sniffing cocaine, using every conceivable drug in the world. We began to make our way through the Letten, and there were thousands of people there. Some were completely stoned, some were hallucinating. They were alone, in couples, or in small groups exchanging big stashes of cash for drugs. It was so packed with humanity that at times we had to push our way through. Some of the people were sprawled on the ground, totally oblivious of us as we made our way through the park. Imagine an open food market with every food from around the world, packed with food growers, vendors and buyers, retailers and wholesalers, and people eating whatever they buy right at the scene. Now imagine that same market, only with drugs instead of food, and you'll get a tiny glimpse of what the Letten in Zurich looked like that Sunday afternoon.

We were told that 16,000 needles were being given away each day at the Letten. We trod them underfoot with each step we took, walking around thousands of addicts lying in a stupor on the grass, or else bathing or washing in the river, ignoring us completely. Even the dealers ignored us as they exchanged piles of currency in all denominations. And as I looked up I saw Swiss policemen high over the embankment monitoring the scene.

I felt as though I was in a scene from Dante's *Inferno.* Once again, I was surrounded by hungry ghosts. Their cries, most of them silent, were all around me, clamoring, wanting, needing, always hungry. The drug addicts were like sheep herded inside an enclosure, away from the beautiful streets of the city, far from the eyes of the rest of society. The dealers carried guns to protect their money, their faces full of greed for the profits they might make. And just a short distance away was the Bahnhofstrasse, one of Europe's most expensive shopping streets, full of banks laundering the dealers' cash for later use and distribution. The Letten was full of greed, anger, and ignorance. It was also a living metaphor of a society in denial, blaming those who were suffering, aiding and abetting the perpetrators, thriving financially on the proceeds from that suffering, taking no responsibility, simply looking away.

Then and there I knew I had to come back and sit in the Letten for several days, surrounded by the vials, needles, matches, and white powder, beneath the indifferent gaze of the Swiss policemen protecting society from contact with its own disease, its own pain. I felt a powerful urge to sit right in the middle of it all.

Once again, I was surrounded by hungry ghosts. Their cries, most of them silent, were all around me, clamoring, wanting, needing, always hungry.

But a month before my next visit to Zurich I was informed by Niklaus that the Letten had been closed up. The Zurich authorities had decided they'd had enough. Their experiment hadn't worked out. They hadn't counted on so many foreigners arriving by train at the city terminal and walking straight to the Letten. And the horrible scene offended their sensibilities. So one day, without any warning, the policemen came down to the embankment and threw all the people out of the Letten, leaving it empty and wasted.

Even then it wasn't over. Drug users continued to be drawn to the Letten as if to a magnet, even though drug deals were no longer permitted to take place. So the police fenced the area completely, so that no one could go inside.

I, too, was drawn to the Letten. I had never seen so much human devastation, so densely packed in an enclosed area. To this day I regret that I was never able to sit for several days in the middle of all that suffering.

People have asked me: What would have happened had you sat in the Letten for days, even weeks? Do you think somebody would have stopped using? Do you think somebody would have stopped selling drugs because you sat there?

My answer is that I don't know. When you go to bear witness, it means that you go with no preconceived notions about what you'll see and what will happen. I wanted to sit there and find out. Bearing witness means to have a relationship. I wanted to have a relationship with the Letten and all its inhabitants, as I subsequently wished to have a relationship with Auschwitz and all its inhabitants, as I try to do with the places where we sit during street retreats with all their inhabitants. Out of bearing witness, out of the relationship, a healing arises. In what form, through what activity or event, through what person, I have no idea. But I knew for certain that healing would arise in the Letten. Of itself, fruit would be born. ❑

A Jew in Poland

Don R. Singer

In November 1997 I joined the second annual Bearing Witness Retreat at Auschwitz/Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp in Poland. Sponsored by the Peacemaker Community, this five-day international, interfaith, contemplative retreat was the result of the work of Bernie Glassman, a leading social activist and Zen Master.

I participated in the first retreat in 1996. I had been reluctant to go until I remembered the journey I took with my father and mother in 1950, first to Dachau and then to



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER CUNNINGHAM

Israel, where I spent a year and met many survivors. That unmediated intimacy with places and people was an awakening for me. It set me on the path to become a rabbi.

But I did not talk about these events as a rabbi; I did not want to take people into that darkness. I had forgotten the prophetic call to singularly bear true witness. It was not until I went on the retreat in 1996 that I realized that without entering that darkness we sustain the illusions that create the event. So now my heart tells me to go to Auschwitz every year, with other Jews and non-Jews who are drawn to dwell there for a while, to look, to listen and to bear witness, to let the heart break without the protection of the "golden calf of scorn."

During the retreat, we spend daylight in Birkenau. We walk through the vast fields of chimneys and remnants of the wooden hutches that held tens of thousands. We sit in silence. We recite names of those who died: by the tracks where the captive people had disembarked, in the hutches where they had spent their nights, by the crematoria where they had gone up in smoke. In the mornings we conduct our separate religious services: Buddhist, Moslem, Christian and Jewish, and in the morning and afternoon we recite Kaddish together. In the evenings, we gather at the Auschwitz auditorium to tell our stories and to pour out our hearts and sing Jewish songs.

Poland was my first lesson at Auschwitz. For hundreds of years Poland had been the center of Jewish life. A great and loving culture had flourished in Yiddish and Hebrew. Half the Jews who died in the death camps were Polish Jews. Some who returned to their Polish homes in the wake of the war were killed in the chaos and meanness of that savaged land. Because of this legacy, many Jews throughout the world carry a terrifying image of betrayal from a dangerous, heartless Poland. The Iron Curtain has separated us; for almost fifty years we have lived with a burden of bitterness. My heart fluttered and my stomach turned when I entered Poland.

Forty of the hundred and fifty retreat participants were Polish. That first year they came out of respect for Bernie, but their hearts weren't in it. They had been on brief outings to Auschwitz in their school years; they were used to hearing about the Holocaust. But now they were being asked to dwell there, together with Jews, Germans and others, all of us heirs to the monstrous scandal that had once been Europe. The curtain of isolation was gone. They had to lift their faces to see the new horizon. And there we all were, face to face.

As our teacher Martin Buber says, "Real life is meeting." All at once I was free of what had been a subtle burden of enmity. I felt a startling affinity for the Poles; I felt I knew them. I took pleasure in the thought that my grandmother had come from here. I felt responsible to reach out to the Poles and to speak up for them back home. The Jews were part of Poland's body and soul. One new friend told me,

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HOUSE OF ONE PEOPLE

"The Jews were here for seven hundred years—they are still here."

It was the Poles who organized much of the 1997 retreat. This time we were joined by Staszek Krajewski, a leader of the Polish Jewish community and a member of the Auschwitz Board of Directors. I think of him as the "normal Polish Jew" because, with his yarmulke and beard, he is absolutely at home as a Jew in Poland.

During that retreat, we listened to Polish poems of the Holocaust. One evening there was a reading of *Still*, by Nobel Prize winner Wislawa Szymborska:

> In sealed box cars travel
> names across the land
> ...
> Don't jump while it's moving, name David. You're a name
> that dooms to defeat, given to no one, and homeless,
> too heavy to bear in this land.
> Let our sons have Slavic names, for here they count hairs
> on the head
> for here they tell good from evil
> by names and by eyelids' shape ...
> *(Translation by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanaugh)*

That night Eve, the daughter of a survivor, spoke about her Israeli brother. Several years back, on his travels throughout Poland looking for remnants of Jewish life, he'd entered a remote village. An old Polish woman had beckoned to him to follow her and had taken him down to the cellar of her house. Opening a door that had not been opened for many years, she revealed a synagogue left untouched since the Holocaust. The *Aron Kodesh* was still there with a torah inside. There were tables and chairs used for study, with Talmud tracts actually left open, as though the people had left suddenly and in a hurry.

He gave her money in exchange for everything inside the little cellar, and as soon as he returned to Israel he called the Museum of the Diaspora. A delegation immediately flew to Poland, traveled to the small village, retrieved everything inside the abandoned synagogue, and brought them to the Museum in Israel.

Then Staczek, the "normal Polish Jew," spoke: "At birth I was given a Polish name. But I have changed my name back to a Jewish name; it is Shalom. I listened to the story of a synagogue transported to Israel. The only problem with the story is that it makes Poland into a graveyard of the Jews. It is as if I do not exist. I exist!"

He spoke in English. But when he finished it was the Poles who applauded first, as if he had spoken in their language. For they already knew what we were beginning to realize about this land. A Jew can be at home in Poland.

Another Polish Jew gave me his deceased uncle's Yom Kippur prayer book printed in 1907. I wish my mother were alive to help me read the Yiddish commentary. The prayer book contains a beautiful blessing in Hebrew about dreams: "May my dreams be God's dreams. May my dreams be the dreams of all people." ❑

EVANGELICAL WOMEN'S GROUPS *(continued from page 19)*

crucial is to provide spaces wherein women in pain describe the turmoil in their lives and receive tender and extended prayers for healing from a supportive, compassionate community. Again and again, I have heard women in Aglow share stories of unfaithful husbands, abusive or alcoholic parents, and children who had wrecked their lives on drugs and other destructive habits. Others whose lives have been less troubled give accounts of more prosaic domestic or job-related dilemmas, sharing their own ideas about how to live as women of integrity and peace in a not so peaceable world. What propels all of these women into participation in an all-women's group is a desire for caring souls who will help renew their hope, not conservative politics and certainly not submissiveness. Indeed, they claim to find far more sustenance in Aglow groups, where friendships bloom and are cultivated by telephone and frequent visiting, than in twelve-step and other recovery groups that thrive on partial anonymity—many of these women have participated in some such recovery group prior to their involvement in Aglow. Among this "network of caring women" (the group's slogan), participants seek a tangible work of transformation—not only of themselves but also of their families and even, they hope, their communities. They believe themselves, as women loved and nurtured by God, capable of healing each others' woundedness and of bringing joy to a broken, cynical world.

Just as those of us who are not African American women could still cheer both the aims and the spirit of the Million Woman March, surely we who are not evangelical believers do not have to agree with the theology of Aglow and like groups in order to respect the dignity of their lives and commitments, to witness with compassion the ways in which they, like the devout of other religious traditions, are struggling to renew themselves and honor their faith. Coming to some understanding of the impulses that unite more than divide these women from progressive Jews, Christians, and others does not deny the forces of estrangement that lurk nearby, issues ranging from abortion and homosexuality to welfare and government spending. But if we began afresh with a commitment to empathy, a commitment to recant our smugness and instead take seriously the lives and stories of this ample segment of the female population, we could help open crucial doors for civil debate on these and related issues.

Such a perspective would challenge us to forge a more truly inclusive vision, one that would not scorn women who happen to be religious, even conservatively so. Instead of alienating these women, that perspective could clarify the relevance and worth of feminism and religious progressivism for all women. And it should remind all of us, for the umpteenth time, to look deeper than the surface rhetoric of any movement or organization for its larger truths. ❑

LATIN AMERICA'S RURAL POOR *(continued from page 17)*
interstices of the system, vote for elite candidates, and devise projects that complement the neo-liberal mode. In other words, state terrorism was a prelude to Clinton's celebrated free market and democracy settlement in Guatemala—precisely the sort of settlement the MST is trying to avoid in Brazil.

What has happened in Guatemala is typical: Latin American neo-liberal regimes and their backers in Washington have responded to the growing peasant movements by militarizing the countryside: there are 40,000 soldiers in Chiapas, Mexico in addition to at least five new paramilitary groups formed since 1995. In Peru, the US-backed military occupies three-quarters of the countryside; in Bolivia the military, with help from US DEA advisors, has mounted a major assault on the more than 40,000 families whose only livelihood is coca leaf cultivation. Washington's responsibility for the militarization of the Latin American countryside and its ensuing violence is transparent. Clinton's push for free markets is undermining local peasant producers who are ruined by cheap US corn and grain imports. The White House's financing of agribusiness export strategies is converting the countryside into one big plantation, displacing peasant and Indian communal farmers. Those not displaced by the market, those peasants who decide to stay and organize or to grow alternative marketable crops, are driven out by US-trained and armed military and para-military forces. With Washington's backing of the increased militarization of the continent, Clinton may surpass Reagan's bloody record of 275,000 dead Central Americans in the 1980s. Is it any wonder that during his recent trip to Latin America, Clinton spent almost all of his time with bankers, CEOs and presidents? In his only excursion onto the streets of Rio, the poor pelted his limo with cow manure. Last year, a Tzotziles Indian in Chiapas said to me, "the current Mexican and US governments are bad; we are trying to change ours—what about you?"

For us in the U.S., the emerging peasant movements can and should represent a new model for political action: they are not poseurs waving automatic rifles for photographers, but serious organizers of autonomous social and political movements. They sustain political action before, during and after elections. Their organizers make a living farming, not behind a desk. They meet in assemblies, not in the kind of top-down structures that characterize U.S. trade unions. Above all, ethics are seen as an integral element in politics: the movements are not merely instruments of socio-economic interests but a means of self-realization. Their festivals, educational programs, co-operatives and sense of community offer a rich context to create a new person for a new society while engaging in the day-to-day struggle against the onslaught of the free market. ❑

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A VALUES APPROACH *(continued from page 73)*

undue influence of the ultra-Orthodox over their daily life. A 1996 survey by the Modi'in Ezrahi institute revealed that nearly half of the secular Jewish population and more than a third of "traditional" Jews hold negative opinions of the religious sector. The main reasons for these feelings were: intervention of the Orthodox in politics, religious coercion, taking control of the country, causing hatred among Jews, and the fear that mixing religion and politics endangers democracy.

And it may get worse before it gets better—unless Israel embraces a radical solution: outright separation of synagogue and state. Forget about getting non-Orthodox denominations a piece of the existing pie; change the pie. Get God out of the public sphere and into Israeli shuls, churches, mosques, homes, and hearts where religion can be observed in private, unfettered by government and unbesmirched by politics.

2. *Freedom of Speech*

American concerns about inroads into Israelis' right to free speech were ignited in 1986 when the Knesset passed a law (rescinded by the Labor government in 1993) prohibiting Israelis from meeting or talking with representatives of the PLO or any other Palestinian organization, even if the meetings were devoted to peacemaking. In 1988, those on the Right felt the effects of speech suppression when the anti-Arab Kach party, founded by extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane, was disqualified from running for the Knesset under Section 7A of the Basic Law. This clause states that a party cannot participate in elections if it expresses, "Negation of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people; negation of the democratic character of the State; (or) incitement to racism."

For the most part, Americans understood the ban in the light of Israel's combustible political climate and the tinder box represented by Kach's advocacy of expulsion and Nuremberg-type laws against Arabs. Nevertheless, many of us remain uncomfortable when political speech is muzzled; we believe democracy is strong enough to withstand racist propaganda. When Turkey, for example, banned its largest political party this year because the party sought to replace the secular government with a theocratic Islamic authority, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin noted that Americans "will have difficulty understanding and reconciling this action with our concept of democracy." During the height of the Red scare, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed a ban on the Communist party. "Under our system," says law Professor Leon Friedman, "Kach or the Ku Klux Klan couldn't be outlawed if they formed a political party, unless they incited imminent lawless action *and* that action was deemed *likely* to occur."

While free speech is often characterized as a preoccupation of liberals, it happens that many Israeli free speech cases involve extremists on the Right. Last December, Tatiana Susskin was sentenced to two years in prison for racist slander because she drew pictures on a wall depicting the prophet Mohammad as a pig. However offensive this may be Muslim sensibilities, it is no more so than the burning of the American flag is to US patriots. Another Israeli misstep was a news blackout of a criminal investigation of right-wing activists arrested for inciting violence and praising the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Recently, fourteen Members of Knesset introduced a bill that would stiffen penalties for political incitement.

A central tenet of American democracy holds that the right to speak one's mind is the crucible of freedom. It protects everyone—leftists, Arabs, peaceniks, racists, pornographers, Nazis—however toxic their message may be to others. As has been said, the answer to odious speech is more speech, not less.

3. *Institutionalized Discrimination*

Though Americans are far from bias-free, we react with outrage to stories of flagrant unfairness or violations of democratic norms. In the Israeli context this means: housing discrimination against Arab Israeli citizens and Palestinians in the West Bank. Job discrimination against women, "Oriental" Jews, and new *olim*. Mortgage subsidies for Jewish settlers in the West Bank but not for Israelis in development towns. Millions spent to service and protect the settlements while infrastructure and security needs are shortchanged elsewhere. Discrimination against Ethiopian *olim* in social services, the educational system (where they are tracked into vocational training) and the Army (where reports of racial harassment abound), not to mention the appalling treatment of Ethiopians at Israeli blood banks. Discrimination against Israeli Arabs in child allowances, municipal services, allocation of resources to their villages, neighborhoods, and schools—and shutting them out of politics (no Arab citizens occupy top government posts).

To hear that Israelis are guilty of such behavior strikes many Jews as shockingly un-Jewish. It leaves us feeling disoriented, disenchanted, betrayed, like a loyal wife who one day discovers her husband has been cheating on her.

4. *Miscarriages of Justice*

News stories about serious Israeli misdeeds embarrass American Jews and confound other devotees of the Jewish State. Among the most egregious examples: the military police and Shin Bet security service employ torture and other inhumane interrogation methods; military commanders employ administrative detention for periods of up to six months without due process. The police mistreat pre-indictment detainees who are locked in their prison cells for a month or more and never permitted to see the light of day. Police fail to observe regulations in handling under-age suspects. Shin Bet bars a lawyer from meeting with his client, who happens to be a right-wing Jewish extremist.

B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, reports that beatings, maltreatment, and degradation of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities remain "a common, almost routine occurrence." In one infamous case, video footage captures Israeli Border police brutally beating, kicking, and abusing six Palestinian workers caught in Israel without permits. B'Tselem finds that security forces employed "violence and degradation" in searching Palestinian homes in Hebron. With all this, the Knesset is currently considering a bill, proposed by the government, that would deny compensation to innocent Palestinians injured by Israeli security forces and would remove all accountability for Israeli human rights violations. Small comfort that miscarriages of justice are suffered by Arabs *and* Jews, left *and* right.

In the judicial arena, partisan efforts to discredit Israel's civil legal system include attacks on the integrity of the High Court of Justice (literally the court of last resort), and slurs and death threats against particular Supreme Court Justices. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, has called the High Court, "worse than a tribunal of non-Jews," and told a Rabbinical conference that lawyers should be forbidden to represent clients in secular courts.

While most Israelis remain steadfast advocates of the rule of law, these well-publicized exceptions have done serious damage to Israel's image as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East. The answer is not to squelch the bad publicity but to end the bad behavior.

5. Footdragging on the Peace Process

Ruling over another people—occupying their land and denying them basic rights—offends the average American's most rudimentary sense of justice.The resumption of Jewish settlement activity in the West Bank is seen by many Americans as a provocation, an obstacle to peace, and a violation of human rights under the Geneva Conventions. The same is true for government expropriation of Palestinian land (since 1967, one-third of East Jerusalem has been expropriated by Israel), the "quiet deportation" of Palestinians from East Jerusalem through revocation of their residency, the denial of building permits to Arabs in Jerusalem, the use of collective punishment, the practice of home demolitions, the groundbreaking on Har Homa, and the stealth opening of the Hasmonean tunnel.

Netanyahu's retreat from the peace process is taking its toll in many forms—from negative aliyah ("Israel will be unable to attract immigration from the West as long as the atmosphere of emergency and war prevails," says M.K. Yossi Sarid), to a precipitous decline in tourism, to a wait-and-see attitude among investors who demand stability as a pre-requisite for risk-taking. A 1997 poll of American business executives found that 62 percent would hold back from new personal or business investments in Israel if the Oslo process "collapses;" 61 percent said the Netanyahu government is on the wrong track.

President Clinton told AIPAC's 1995 policy conference that, because Israel is "on the front line of the battle of freedom and peace," it is backed by "America's strength and our global leadership." More recently, in a December 13, 1997 letter to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Mr. Clinton again referred to the two nations' "powerful bonds, common interests, shared values and deep affection," adding, "It is the broadest conception of American national interest to support like-minded friends and allies." I worry about the time when these particular friends become less and less like-minded. But what if Israel lets freedom slide and peace slip away; what happens to America's support and willingness to take risks?

Critical Connections

Obviously, the U.S. will not be turning its back on the Middle East in the immediate future; the *interests* rationale will keep us involved even if the *values* rationale deteriorates. But over the long haul, everything is connected. Israel's place in the world community and the nature of America's role in the region will depend in large part on the tenor and texture of U.S./Israel relations, which will depend on whether American Jews persist in their pro-Israel advocacy and giving, which will depend on how Israel relates to Jews in the Diaspora and how she treats less powerful segments of her own population and her Palestinian neighbors, which, finally, will determine whether the American people continue to identify with the Jewish State and defend our shared values.

That historic, gut-level identification is what's at stake when Israeli democracy falters and Jews lose their moral compass. It is not enough to cite Israel's miraculous history (some would say her biblical mandate), her parliamentary system, Supreme Court, free and feisty press corps, and robust and disputatious electorate. As long as there are erosions of freedom and serious moral lapses, Americans are likely to question Israel's special status. By the same token, it is not enough to praise the Jewish State by comparing her to the Palestinian Authority or to other Arab nations whose record of authoritarianism, corruption, and human rights violations were never anybody's exemplar. Israel is obliged to operate on the principles on which the country was founded—Jewish standards of ethical fairness and respect for the dignity of every human being, and Western standards of democracy and justice. Finally, it is not enough to keep parroting that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East; a democracy *is* as it *does*. And at the moment, in the American mind, Israel is not doing so well.

For those of us committed to U.S./Israel friendship and deeply invested in the long-term well-being of the Jewish state, forewarned is forearmed. ❑

INTERVIEW WITH PETE HAMILL *(continued from page 26)*

The second thing, and I hope it's in the novel without being spelled out, was the gift of moral intelligence. That you just don't automatically ratify what is good and what is evil or simply feel it. You have to think about it. You have to think about the consequences of actions, of moral actions. That evil ends up with mounds of corpses. Evil ends up with a black kid hanging off a tree in Mississippi. Evil ends up with Goodman, Schwerner, and Cheney. You have to think about that.

And then the third thing, of course, was irony. That nobody more than the Jews, except possibly some of the Irish, understood the great disjunction between what is promised and what is delivered. Jews particularly had to look at Christians, who were the children of Judaism in an indirect way, but to look and see this religion that offered love and forgiveness and redemption at the heart of its creed—and then to see people burning in the Inquisition. The only thing you could do is make jokes.

The only thing you could do is to say this is preposterous. That sort of fatalistic humor, the fatalistic streak, that's at the heart of irony. I think you find it in the man who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, and you find it in Lenny Bruce. You find there's a line there. And that gift, to be given to all the rest of us, was the other thing that I wanted to acknowledge in my indirect way in that book.

NEWFIELD: You and I have talked about the problem of, in some poor places, kids believing learning is soft or weak or attainment is not a positive in life. That you have to act dumber than you are.

HAMILL: Yeah, it was true when I was growing up. I didn't meet a single person who had ever gone to college until I went in the Navy. And that wasn't because there was common agreement about this, or that there was some head guy who said, "You can't even think about this." It was a sort of shared assumption, what I call the "green ceiling." That who-do-you-think-you-are thing among working class Irish that said, "You're Irish. You have to be a cop or a longshoreman or whatever." So that if you said, "Gee I'd really like to be an artist" they would look at you as if it was a preposterous notion.

Part of it was not brutal. I think it was people like my father and his generation wanting to protect us without articulating it. Wanting to protect us from a sense of failure, for trying something that we would fail at. And so they wanted us to have some kind of safety which would give them a sense of safety. In other words, if we got a civil service job that would last for thirty years, they knew we were okay for thirty years. Whereas to go out in a world in which you're rolling dice and trying to be a writer or artist or something like that, since nobody had ever done that in the places they came from, they just didn't want you to be hurt by a failure in attempting to do that. Or a disappointment. Or coming up against the realities of the world in which various discriminations would prevent you from doing that.

NEWFIELD: A final question. Where do you think racism, and race relations, and black leadership are at this point? You wrote this great *Letter to a Black Friend* a few years ago in Esquire, which raised a lot of questions about coalition politics and universal humanism. Where would you say we are now?

HAMILL: I really do believe that we're better off now certainly than thirty years ago. There's this expanding, continually expanding black middle class. There are numerous success stories. But I think there is an abiding problem which is the insistence by too many black intellectuals, who should know better, on the permanent exceptionalism of the black American experience. That because of the experience of slavery, which was different from the chosen arrival here by so many immigrants, there is a scar that is forever ineradicable. Which is bullshit.

You can't say that slavery is effecting you more deeply now as you get farther and farther away from the reality of slavery. Can't be. Anymore than you can say that the Irish are forever marred by the Irish famine. Or that Jews will be marked forever in some way by the history of medieval anti-semitism. It's absurd.

I think black intellectuals should be examining themselves, thinking of what they're teaching, thinking about what vision of history and possibility and philosophy they're passing on to young African Americans. And what the consequences would be. Affirmative action has become the way we talk about this to some extent. But my attitude towards affirmative action, having come from white poverty, is that it should have been, from the beginning, class-based instead of race-based. Nobody can tell me that the son of a black doctor is more permanently scarred than the son of an Italian bricklayer. There are class unities between blacks and white and Latinos and Asians that can be a source of tremendous healing power, once they're recognized, once the commonality of the experience is recognized. But they are being broken to some extent by the way affirmative action is now handled.

I think one of the things we have to do in a lot of our school systems, in particular in big cities like New York, is we have to teach the history of those cities. I think one of the things that's very important for the young African Americans, young Latinos, the children of immigrants, to know is that they are not the first people to whom bad things have happened. That for cycle after cycle after cycle of immigration and urban experiences, the arrival of blacks from the South in large numbers, for example, have been greeted with unhappy times of a temporary nature. That the more you know about that history, the more you know about the processing function of great cities, the more consoling it is to younger people. They will see that there are patterns. And that the pattern is, "You work very hard, you get through it." ❑

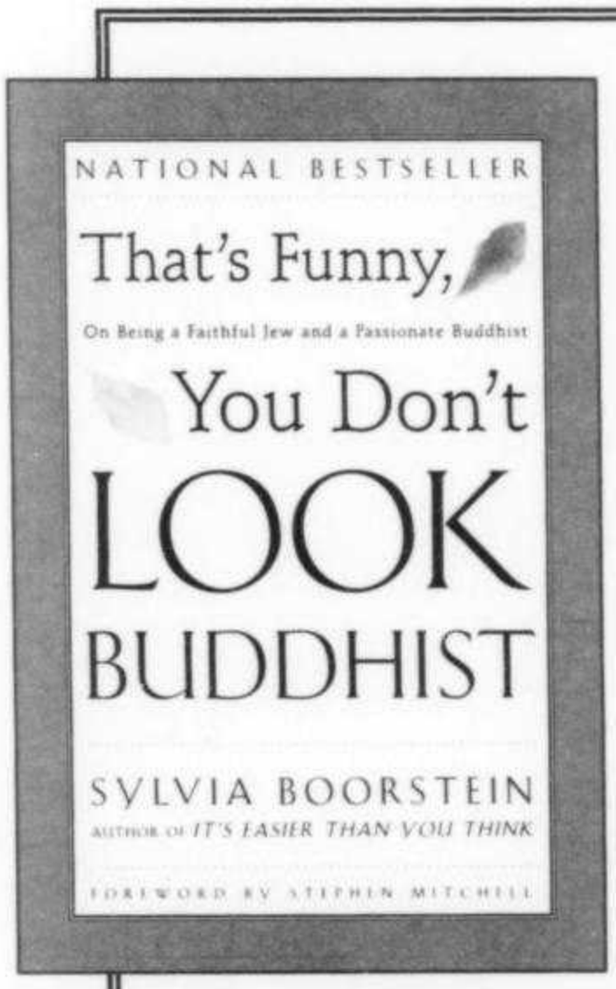
YOGA *(continued from page 96)*
austere self-discipline, hatha yoga, and meditation—is to still our ordinary consciousness so that realization of our essential connection to a much greater reality can arise. Patanjali's writings, variously dated between 200 B.C.E. and 400 C.E., appear to summarize an oral belief system that had existed for centuries. Miller's presentation, unlike those by writers such as Mircea Eliade and I. K. Taimni, conveys the essence of the philosophy without drowning us in technical terms or exposition that is scholastic and academic. One can read this beautifully produced little book with no earlier training, and come away with an appreciation for the depth of Raja yoga philosophy, including the way the *asanas* and breathing practices of hatha yoga are ultimately aimed at quieting the body so that the mind can begin to approach what Patanjali calls "infinite knowledge." Contrary to the way it is often presented, this system is not a technique of stress reduction aimed at helping us do "better" at our conventional lives.

In contrast to Miller's in-depth study of a classic yoga text, the *Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga* is a wide-ranging reference work with entries on over two thousand key concepts, practices, and personalities of all forms of yoga. Feuerstein draws on his knowledge of more than 3,000 years of texts and myriad different schools of yogic philosophy, as well as cutting-edge issues in contemporary academic scholarship. This book is a wonderful resource for anyone who wants to feel at home in the terminology of Hindu spirituality, which—not unlike Jewish spirituality—necessarily makes reference to texts and terms that originated in the distant past and in a foreign language.

For those wishing to begin their approach to yoga with a conventional hatha yoga practice there now exist a multitude of how-to books. These volumes typically contain a brief account of yoga philosophy, detailed descriptions of *asanas* and breathing exercises, some tips on diet, and a few meditation practices. A surprising variety of styles can be found in any good bookstore. For example: B. K. S. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* is the textbook for the most popular school of yoga practice, one emphasizing strict attention to form and the use of props to help recalcitrant American bodies adapt to Indian twists and bends; Beryl Bender's (inappropriately named) *Power Yoga* prescribes a physically demanding, dynamic posture flow, deep breathing, and the generation of heat to allow muscles to stretch to new lengths; Jean Couch's *Runners' World Yoga Book* is geared to all levels of proficiency, and illustrates each *asana* with pictures of people with high, medium, and low degrees of flexibility.

Esther Myers' *Yoga and You* is a lovely contribution to this crowded field. She provides detailed instructions and useful illustrations, and she is particularly adept at stressing how breathing techniques can be integrated into each *asana*. One of the few women writing on a subject that has generallly been dominated by men, Myers not only demonstrates a technical mastery of advanced postures but communicates an emotional and spiritual sensitivity to the psychic concerns of those who would use their bodies to help still their minds.

After nearly thirty years of hatha yoga, I still sometimes feel like writing a letter of thanks to someone after I practice. A good deal of medical study has shown that hatha yoga will cure many back problems, increase energy, improve your posture and balance, and lower blood pressure: yet when I think of these *asanas* as connected to my own (often fumbling) attempts at spiritual growth, however, their significance is far greater. Those who continue *asana* practice beyond the first feel-good weeks or months are, I suspect, the ones who see the wonderful things it does for our bodies as an aid to an even more vital transformation of who we are. ❑



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READING SPIRIT

Dimensions of Yoga

Roger S. Gottlieb

- *Yoga — Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*, by Barbara Stoler Miller. University of California Press, 1997.
- *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, by George Feuerstein. Shambhala, 1997.
- *Yoga And You: Energizing and Relaxing Yoga for New and Experienced Students*, by Esther Myers. Shambhala, 1997.



I first studied yoga nearly thirty years ago, while living in a small house in the Indian Himalayas. I had bought a used book in New Delhi for about a dime, and found the beginning poses it described sufficiently easy to allow my naturally stiff muscles some access to the practice. At the time "yoga" meant to me only a series of static physical positions (called *asanas*)—place the right ankle here, move the left thigh there, try like hell to get up on your head without falling over! I could, of course, intuit that this form of exercise was very different from my high school wrestling, and certainly a long way from the many scorekeeping games that dominate the American concept of "sport." I could tell that yoga had something to do with the mind as well as the body, and with the spirit as well. ("When in the headstand," the little book counseled, "close your eyes, take slow deep breaths, and pray.")

But like many of the estimated six million Americans who practice yoga now, I had little idea that these physical postures and weird breathing exercises were a small, and not at all self-sufficient, part of an ancient and vast system of philosophy and spiritual discipline. For what I took to be yoga was really hatha yoga, the physical component of the *ashtanga* or eight-limbed path of Raja (Kingly) yoga—which was itself only one of the four main types of yoga conceived of by esoteric Hindu spiritual teachings. Raja yoga focuses on control or purification of consciousness as a way to realize our true identity, and to unify that identity with the essential nature of the universe. For Hinduism, the spiritual path in general is the pursuit of that unity. Other types of yoga focus on devotional love, active service to others, or intellectual apprehension as ways to achieve this goal.

That first yoga book was written by Swami Sivananda, a man whose biography bears out the complexity of the term. Sivananda was a Western educated Indian who practiced medicine in London for many years. During this time he began to suspect that the materialist and reductionist approach to healing which still dominates Western medicine lacked an adequate understanding of both physical health and deeper aspects of human well-being. Sivananda returned to India and sought out teachers of traditional Raja yoga, bringing their detailed teachings out of Indian backwaters to the attention of the Western world. He founded a center for the study of yoga philosophy and practice in Rishikesh—the place where the Beatles would come nearly fifty years later to study meditation with the Maharishi. And he trained a number of the more famous yoga teachers (including Vishnudevananda and Satchidinanda), who spread the techniques and perspectives to Europe and America.

The books by Miller and Feuerstein will enable anyone to delve deeply into the philosophy that underlies the practice of hatha yoga. They reveal that the real purpose to yoga is not to be flexible, to lose weight or even to achieve physical health. It is, as in Patanjali's classic yoga sutra which Miller has translated, to achieve a "cessation of the turnings of thought." In other words, the entire system of Raja yoga—which includes morality,

(continued on page 95)

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PAPA

Roger S. Gottlieb teaches philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His two most recent books are This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment *and* The Ecological Community.

No, Mr. Netanyahu



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meeting with Moral Majority Leader Jerry Falwell, Jan. 1998.

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