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

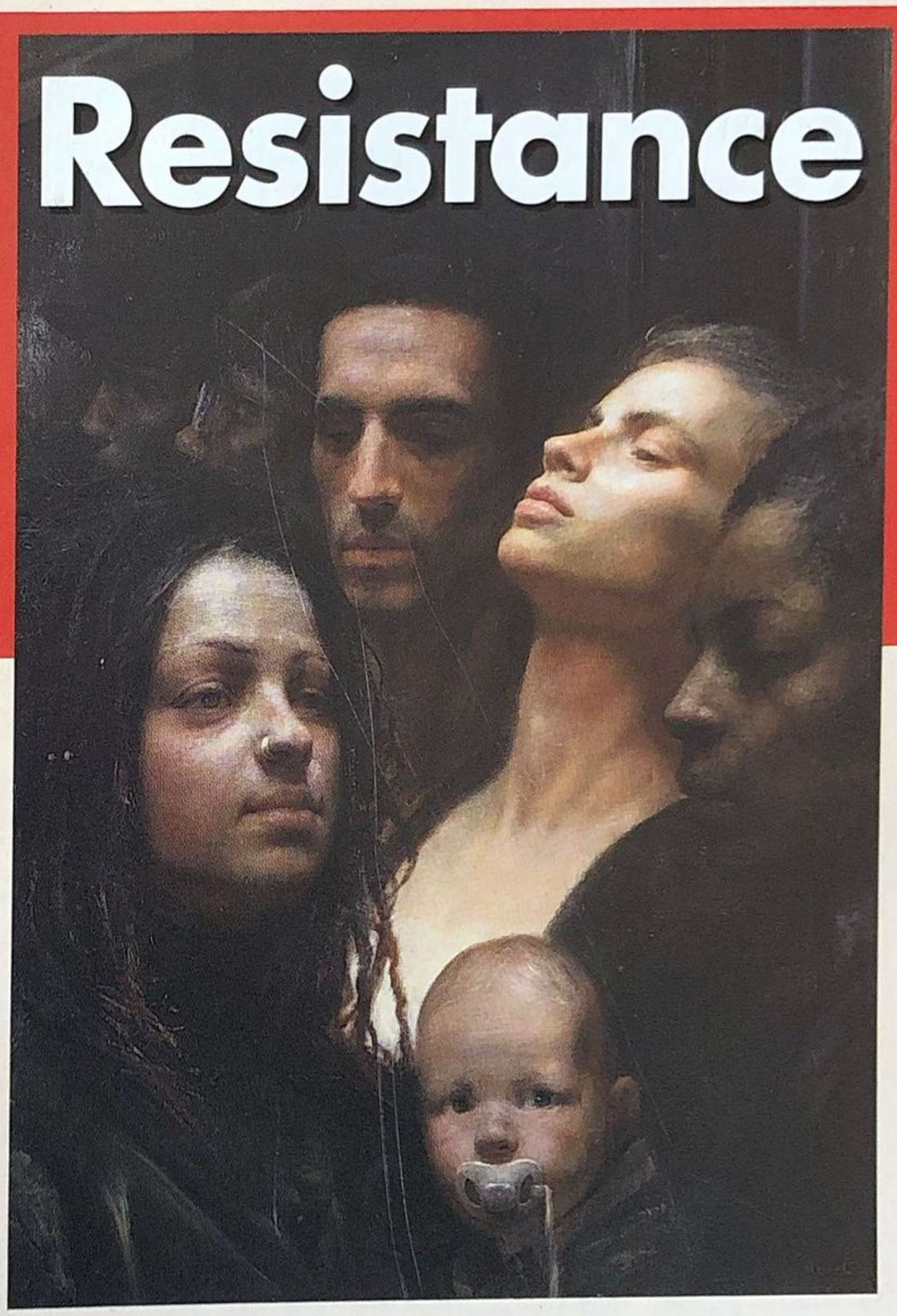
TIKKUN

SAINT EDITH?
MARY GORDON

SEDER OF THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1999 $5.95

Spiritual Resistance
Inner Enlightenment and Social Transformation
Roger S. Gottlieb



MONEY AND MEANING
Stephen Goldbart

HILLEL INCORPORATED
Jeremy Deutchman

CAMPAIGN REFORM
Micah L. Sifry

EATING MEAT?
Kimberly French • Richard H. Schwartz

POSTMODERN NONSENSE?
Michael Bérubé

ISRAEL & PALESTINE:
THE PEACE PROCESS
Jerome Slater

INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD SAID
Mark LeVine

PLUS:
New Fiction by Rebecca Goldstein • Poetry by Marge Piercy & Merle Feld
Personal Essay by David Mamet • Marcelo Bronstein on Healing
Jack Newfield interviews U.S. Senator Charles Schumer

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Salt waters

It is a bowl of tears on the table
into which we drip the parsley,
into which we dip the egg.

It is a miniature ocean on the table,
salt as the Sea of Reeds through
which they were to pass

not to safety [never safety]
but to where they were promised
they would if they chose be free.

It is the salt water of our sweat
pressed through our skin
as the body labors, for we are bidden

not only to rest on the seventh day
but work on the others, and the brain
too in its fever of creation exudes.

Salt like the sea, salt like our blood
salt like the waters of the womb:
the salt of regret and the salt of effort.

—Marge Piercy

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TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 14 NUMBER 2

2 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

5 **EDITORIAL:** *Post-Impeachment: Was the Right Crazy?*



FEATURES:

7 **Israel and Palestine**
Peace after Israeli elections? For **Jerome Slater**, only U.S. pressure on Israel can salvage *What's Left of the Peace Process* (7). **Edward Said** calls for a binational secular state in his *Interview* with **Mark LeVine** (11). **John Dear** proposes a global spirituality of *Nonviolence* (16).

17 **Religion**
Sometimes organized religion gets it wrong. In *Saint Edith?* Catholic novelist **Mary Gordon** criticizes the Pope's actions to canonize this Jewish feminist nun (17). Insider **Jeremy Deutchman** reports that *Hillel Incorporated*'s recruitment campaign has cheapened its Jewish content (21).

24 **Money and Meaning**
Too often we forget that those on the Left have money too. First **Micah L. Sifry** calls on wealthy Jews—some of the largest campaign donors—to endorse *Campaign Finance Reform* (24). Then **Stephen Goldbart** profiles these progressive *New Rich* who choose to make money matter (27).

33 **Cover Story: SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE**
Spiritual Awakening need not lead to political passivity. Philosopher **Roger S. Gottlieb** uses his own life to suggest ways spiritual people can become more involved in everyday struggles as well as larger political and social movements (33). He's followed by **Marcelo Bronstein**, who shows us a path toward *Healing* (39).



41 **PASSOVER** With *The Seder of the Children of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah*, **Arthur Waskow** affirms the possibilities of reconciliation between Jews and Arabs.

50 **EATING MEAT?** **Richard H. Schwartz** says *Vegetarianism* must accompany Jewish renewal (50).



FICTION, ESSAYS AND POETRY:

4 *Broken Matzah* by **Merle Feld**

32 *The Fireman's Child* by **David Mamet**

53 *Lamb Shank* by **Marge Piercy** (plus *Lettuce in rebellion* on the back cover and *Salt waters*, opposite)

58 *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen* by **Rebecca Goldstein**

REVIEWS:

71 **Nan Fink Gefen** on **Helene Aylon**, feminism, and God.

73 **Michael Bérubé** on **Alan Sokal** and postmodernism.

77 **Scott Sherman** on **Murray Kempton**'s legacy.

80 *Short Takes*: A look at other magazines.

Inside back cover:
Sikkum: Books TIKKUN recommends.



COLUMNS:

31 *Torah of Money.* **Lawrence Bush** and **Jeffrey Dekro** ask *Who Owns Wealth?*

38 *Torat Chesed.* **Bradley Shavit Artson** reveals the meaning of *Mitzvot*.

49 *Soul and Society.* **Matthew Fox** explains *Easter, Passover and All That.*

54 *Tikkun Olam.* **Danny Siegel** tells how we can care for *Our Elders*.

55 *Interview.* **Jack Newfield** interviews **Senator Charles Schumer**.

Front cover: *Untitled,* 1998.
By Steven Assael. Oil on canvas.
Courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York

Back cover, inside front cover, and **page 53:**
These poems by Marge Piercy are excerpted from the Seder Plate section of *The Art of Blessing the Day*, Knopf, 1999.

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Letters to the Editor

The ADL vs. Superman



To the Editor:

Publisher Danny Goldberg is right when he says, "To like or dislike a piece of entertainment is a matter of personal taste" ("The ADL vs. Superman," January/February 1999). He is, however, wrong about virtually everything else he says about the Anti-Defamation League and the *Superman/Rugrats* issue. Obviously he completely missed the point of my *New York Times* op-ed on trivialization of the Holocaust in popular culture.

More than fifty years after the end of the war and the liberation of the remnant of European Jewry, and as survivors and witnesses pass on, it is necessary to teach the history of the Holocaust accurately. Too often, well-meaning people, either ignoring or ignorant of that history, make mistakes. This is exactly what happened in the *Superman/Rugrats* incidents.

To set the record straight, there was no "p.r. assault on comics by ADL," as Mr. Goldberg claims. The exclusion of naming Jews as victims from the *Superman* series and the offensive caricature in the *Rugrats* comic strip made news long before ADL was involved. Despite what Mr. Goldberg believes, we never contacted the *Washington Post*; their decision on the *Rugrats* comic strip was based on the deluge of complaints they received from their readers, like other newspapers across the country. In an October 1 letter, the president of Nickelodeon agreed with us that "the television character of Grandpa Boris may not translate well into a comic strip," and "in order to prevent any potential misinterpretation, the Grandpa Boris illustration will no longer be used in the comic strip series." Our statement in support of Nickelodeon's decision was released on October 20, three weeks later!

In both cases, we did what we always do: act responsibly. We contacted the principals—DC Comics on June 30 and

TIKKUN (Vol. 14, No. 2, ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. TIKKUN, 26 Fell St., San Francisco, CA 94102. TIKKUN subscribers are members of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. Email us at magazine@tikkun.org. **Visit the TIKKUN website at http://www.tikkun.org**

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Manuscript submission: Do not send letters of inquiry. Unsolicited manuscripts not accepted via email. **Non-fiction:** Send to 26 Fell St., San Francisco, CA 94102. **Fiction:** Thane Rosenbaum, 60 W. 87th, New York, NY 10024. **Poetry:** Joshua Weiner, P.O. Box 1884, Provincetown, MA 02657-0245. Our evaluation process may take up to four months. Submissions without a self-addressed stamped envelope will not be returned.

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Letters to the Editor: Mail or email to our San Francisco office. Letters may be shortened for space.

Advertising queries should be addressed to Robin Aronson, 120 W. 44th Street, Suite 704, New York, NY 10036; (212) 840-6843.

Distribution: U.S. bookstores and newsstands by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Route 250, Milan, OH 44846-9705; (800) 221-3148.

Postmaster: Send address changes to TIKKUN, POB 460926, Escondido, CA 92046. Periodical-rate postage paid at Oakland, CA and additional mailing offices by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, 3137 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609.

Nickelodeon on September 25—and discussed our concerns with them.

Popular culture—film, television, even cartoons and comic strips—can play an important role in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust, as long as history is portrayed honestly and as long as the language and images of the Holocaust are not debased. While some like Mr. Goldberg may disagree with us, ADL will continue to speak out, as we have for 85 years, on issues we believe important to the Jewish people.

ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN
NATIONAL DIRECTOR
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

Prince of Egypt

To the Editor:

After reading not one but three glowing reviews of *Prince of Egypt* in TIKKUN, written by three rabbis I greatly admire, I hied myself off to see the film—and was deeply disappointed.

What I saw had none of the grandeur of the biblical account of Exodus. I agree that the presentations of Moses and Ramses, Tzipporah and Miriam, are pleasant midrashim, well suited to the psychotherapeutic atmosphere of America in this generation. But that is all they are—pleasant.

The terrifying collision between God and the would-be godlet Pharaoh through the sequence of plagues is almost eliminated. (The film's best moments are the ten seconds in which the plagues flash darkly on the screen.) The Egyptian magicians become a prat-falling Abbot and Costello. The Bible's moment when they are awe-struck into begging Pharaoh to save Egypt by freeing the Israelites is lost in their jokeyness.

Indeed, it is awe that is lost. Moses may indeed be the guy next door—the hesitant young Reverend King who grows into the Martin Luther King, Jr., we know, and even more—but in King's life one can feel the awe, the moments of direct God-connection. Not in this film's Moses.

God grant that some Redgrave, some Bergman, may choose to do this story right. And God grant that in their hunger for a film that will communicate to all the world the depth of the Jewish vision, our rabbis not settle for a cartoon pleasantry.

DONALD D. GAMOW

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—RODGER KAMENETZ

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LETTERS

Yossi Beilin & TIKKUN

To the Editor:

The most significant piece in the worthwhile November/December issue of TIKKUN was, in my opinion, the letter to the editor from Yossi Beilin on the "Just Say No to UJA?" roundtable you had run previously [July/August 1998]. In the letter, Beilin encouraged TIKKUN readers "to continue with your loud voice of support for Israeli peace efforts."

The battle for the hearts and minds of the soul of the American Jewish community over the next few years will determine more than Middle East peace, it will be decisive in determining whether or not Judaism, as a diverse set of religious beliefs and practices, deserves to survive.

The Yossi Beilin letter also demonstrates that many in Israel applaud all who challenge the stifling role the so-called American "Jewish Establishment" plays in preventing peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

DAVID E. BLANK, PH.D.
Louisville, KY

America's Ethical "Schizophrenia"

To the Editor:

I object to your use of the term "schizophrenia" as in "Sexual McCarthyism and Ethical Schizophrenia" in the November/December 1998 issue. Schizophrenia is an organic brain disease affecting the lives of many people throughout the world.

I try to assist in repairing the world by working for Grand Avenue Club, a community-based program that helps men and women recovering from mental illness to work, go to school, acquire decent housing, and have access to a community that appreciates and cares about them. We are affiliated with the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD), the organizing arm of an international social movement that is committed to offering hope and opportunity to thousands of adults who are struggling with the disabling effects of the mental illnesses, including poverty, isolation, a sense of hopelessness, and stigma.

It is painful to see a term like "schizophrenia" used as inappropriately by TIKKUN as by other journalistic enterprises.

RACHEL FORMAN
Milwaukee, WI

... And Sexual McCarthyism

To the Editor:

People decry "Sexual McCarthyism" in TIKKUN and elsewhere, and I am grateful for that. But this term is now becoming just another sound bite while Americans go back to sleep, lulled into conceiving the TV spectacle as soap opera with no real implications for their lives.

Should we not be exasperated by the Republicans' continued insistence that this is all about the "rule of law" when there would be no Paula Jones suit, no perjury allegation, no obstruction of justice allegation, without a host of high-powered lawyers who were bent on destroying this President? What does it mean for our democracy that wealthy people who despise you can come after you through the mechanism of the legal system in order to destroy you? It does not look like democracy to me. It looks like a legal "coup d'état."

We soothe ourselves with the thought that the Republicans are just digging their own grave, that this will come to haunt them in 2000. I would not count on it. With a machine primed to get out the conservative vote in their districts, it is not hard to grasp the tenuous position most moderate Republicans find themselves in. No doubt they are alarmed—and they are the ones with whom discourse can be had.

Is this a legal "coup d'état"? What shall we do now?

SUSAN M. ANDERSEN
New York, NY

Broken Matzah

On the New Jersey transit train
I pulled my particularity
out of a brown paper bag:
one of four broken pieces of
buttered matzah.
Slowly, delicately
I proceeded with my dinner.

The young man across the aisle
in his dark business suit
pale skin, wavy black hair
looked to me Italian
but I admit I'm not good at that.

He seemed uncomfortable,
not so much with the *chremzel*
I carefully dipped into
a little puddle of sour cream,
not even with my public
consumption of food—
probably I was brought up
to know better, but I was
brought up
so long ago I've misplaced
some of my mother's niceties—

No, I think it was the matzah
that did it, it was the matzah
that singled me out,
the unmistakable display
of my particularity:
four broken pieces of buttered
matzah.

Or maybe he didn't care at all
didn't notice
maybe his breathing didn't
become slightly irregular
maybe it was all
my imagination
or my breathing
becoming slightly irregular.

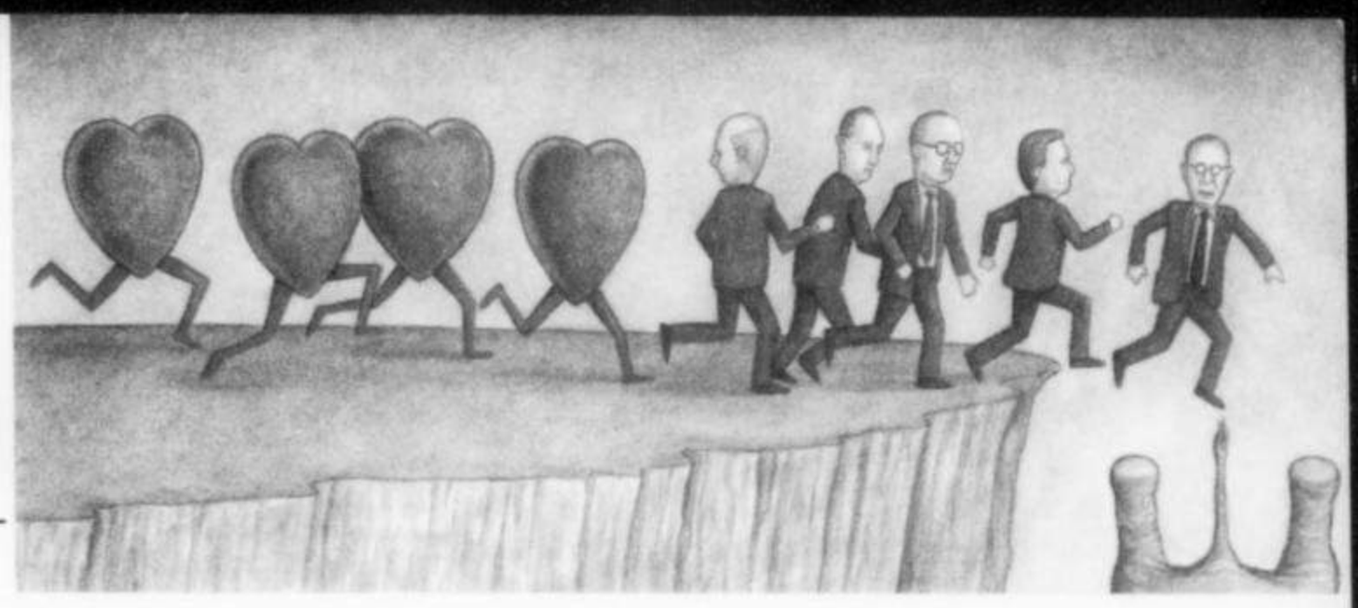
How like my mother I am, after all,
who trained us in our largely
Jewish Brooklyn neighborhood
not to wear our old playclothes
outside on Sundays
so as not to offend our Christian
neighbors on their way home from
church.

In those days I took her at her
word;
now I wonder as the train
pulls into Penn Station
if Marie Brady who lived across
the street
ever noticed us in our Sunday finery,
ever thought it curious
that we dressed up on her Sabbath,
ever questioned our carefully
guarded
particularity, ever saw close up
a buttered piece of matzah.

—Merle Feld

EDITORIAL

Post-Impeachment: Was the Right Crazy?



Rabbi Michael Lerner

One central question remains about the seemingly endless efforts to bring down Bill Clinton: why have right-wingers been so dogged and willing to discredit themselves, politics, and public discourse for the sake of "getting Clinton"?

We first need to understand right-wing politics as the intersection of three groups with somewhat separate agendas who have been cleverly (but not necessarily permanently) welded together by Republican strategists.

- The first group are members of America's corporate elite who feel threatened by the growing popular support for environmental and social justice movements, movements which have sought to put constraints on corporate rapaciousness and social irresponsibility. The marketers of cancer and heart disease (tobacco and alcohol), the dumpers of environmental wastes and toxins, those who wastefully squander the world's resources—and all their subcontractors and employees—know that they can't beat the social justice people on the substance of their arguments. Instead, they've taken the tack of trying to dismantle government (except for its policing, military, and corporate welfare services). From their standpoint, the growing cynicism about politics and politicians produced by prolonging the Lewinsky affair can only help them, since it leads people to lose interest in the public sphere and thus makes it easier to cripple government.
- They are joined in this anti-government stance by some working-class and middle-income people who feel badly treated by government bureaucrats and disgruntled by liberal social programs that have sustained the lifestyles of the poor and the pathologies that result from poverty (rather than, for example, eliminate poverty by providing full employment). Their anger has led them to also join the assault on government.
- Finally, there are many people who felt deeply threatened by what was best about the cultural upsurge of the 1960s: its explicit endorsement of everyone's longing for greater love, connection, and solidarity. This great bringing to consciousness of our desire for mutual recognition, powerfully articulated in the writings of Peter Gabel, never formally entered the language of conventional liberal or progressive politics, but it was the energy that fueled the social movements that opened so many people to hope. Yet simultaneously that energy frightened those whose childhood experiences made them irretrievably committed to an inner despair about the possibility of ever being fully recognized for anything but external accomplishments (how much money, fame, test scores, victories in sports or in love affairs they can accumulate). For so many children, love is offered in a deeply conditional way—and most end up convincing themselves that such limited love is all that will ever be available to them or anyone.

In the many years I worked as a psychotherapist I observed that almost everyone has some of this dynamic in their childhood, but there is quite a range of family differences about how much genuine recognition gets communicated along with messages of love contingent on performance, and how deeply children give up on ever getting fully recognized and loved. One thing many of my colleagues and I noticed: those who feel most depressed about ever receiving unconditional love often feel physically sickened or emotionally shattered when confronted by social or spiritual movements that affirm the possibility of more love and more connection. Their inner voices shouting "this is all New Age baloney, radical propaganda, naïve childish foolishness" drown out a deeper voice saying "I'll never get this kind of love and recognition myself—I never have unless I was desperately involved in pleasing my parents and the long line of authority figures that followed after them—so why should I bother to open myself to being rejected again?" Furious at those political liberals and leftists and their spiritual and psychological allies who seem to be urging a new level of openness and vulnerability, these deeply wounded people join authoritarian social movements and cling to fundamentalist religious communities which can assure them of their self-worth and demean those who might open them up to what they imagine would only be new shaming were they to believe that the world could be based on love and caring.

No wonder, then, the delight that these folk take in finding that the person who represented himself as the public embodiment of such Sixties aspirations, Bill Clinton, is actually full of hypocrisy and has betrayed his own constituencies. The more they can explore those failures, the more they can be assured that the Left's moral critiques of capitalism, so close to some of the religious language of Torah (for Jews) and of Jesus (for Christians), is "really" nothing more than a sham. For these people, the key is not winning an election but confirming the legitimacy of their closing to their own inner hopes. For this last group, Ken Starr, who seems to share their obsessions even as he serves the interests of the corporate elites, is a real hero.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

But it's not just people on the Right who are shaped by these kinds of psychological issues. The tension between our hopes for connection and our depressive certainty that it won't work out has been just as rampant in liberal and progressive circles, though taking different forms. At precisely the moments when we seem closest to obtaining our goals, we get most scared and take actions to ensure that we won't have to tolerate the anxiety of winning and thus violate the childhood injunctions we received that we were not really worthy of recognition. Rather than becoming a warm and nourishing and compassionate arena, liberal and progressive politics is filled with mutual recriminations and put downs, most powerfully represented by the way it brutally attacks its own leadership, undervalues its activists, and supports a climate of pervasive "political correctness" that finds ways to communicate to everyone that they aren't "enough" (anti-racist enough, anti-sexist enough, anti-homophobic enough, ecologically sensitive enough, or whatever).

At the moments when we are able to hold onto the possibility of loving connection, we allow ourselves, in the daring words of John Lennon, to "Imagine" all kinds of wonderful things—a world in which love is pervasive and determining. At such moments, even those whose economic interests might lead them to ecological and social justice insensitivity become open to new possibilities as they begin to move toward their highest aspirations for a life of meaning and transcendent purpose. But when those moments fade, when the fears reappear, those who have allowed themselves to be vulnerable in some way become the most dedicated to showing that they are not "naïve" and that they will not allow themselves to be shamed, as they were in their own childhood, by continuing to hope. At such moments, they become vigorous advocates of narrow economistic explanations—"it's the economy, stupid"—and won't even allow themselves to remember their own feelings of hope. If some protect themselves from the potential vulnerability of openness by joining fundamentalist movements, others become hard-boiled mainstream journalists or leftist academics or even very decent business people or professionals who try to keep some of their former commitment to idealistic goals, yet feel viscerally turned off by those who insist that those earlier hopes remain the deepest truths to which we must return.

If we factor in these dynamics, contemporary politics is much easier to understand. Of course, from the standpoint of what the human race needs—an immediate focus on saving the planet from environmental destruction, stopping ethnic and religious struggles, transforming military spending to health and education—the Right's agenda is irrational. But on their own terms, many of these right-wingers have been following a consistent agenda (though one we dislike). Hypocritical? Well, yes—some of their leaders have had affairs and lied about them, but hypocrisy of this sort exists in every corner of the political spectrum (imagine if someone were checking how many liberals and progressives who moan about the environment nevertheless participate in environmentally insensitive practices in their homes or in their patterns of consumption). Destructive? Yes. But irrational? Well, no. As I've tried to show, the picture is more complex than that.

And it's this same complexity that accounts for the way people feel about Clinton. Few people want him run out of office by right-wing thugs like Ken Starr, and hence people answer with "approval" when asked about Clinton's job performance. Yet most people feel betrayed by Clinton, not only by his lying about the Lewinsky affair, but by the ways that he manipulated our hopes and then betrayed us. I doubt if it was a conscious conspiracy. My own encounters with the Clintons convinced me that they were like everyone else: really wanting a different world, really too scared to stay committed to their own visions, and then acting from the (self-fulfilling) assumption that no one else would be there for them if they were to really pay attention to anything besides their own narrowly construed self-interest and popularity. The result: a presidency which will be best remembered for facilitating the globalization of capital, escalating military spending dramatically, building more prisons, incarcerating more people for drug offenses, and successfully subverting serious ecological and social justice movements (in short, the agenda of a moderate Republican, qualified by good stands on abortion and pious words about civil rights).

So why not despair? Because even though we continue to run away from it, hide from it, misremember it, the fact remains that most of us have some dim recollection of the energizing excitement we felt when we allowed ourselves to hope, to connect with others in a loving way, and to believe that there was something more meaningful in the world than accumulating material goods, secure incomes, and other forms of self-protective isolation. They form the core of the growing interest in spirituality and they remain powerful though unconscious elements driving our choices. Those aspirations are always there, can be tapped again, and will be. And that's why the Ken Starrs will never have the last word.

Passover and Radical Hope

Try going to a Seder this year—and help put the focus on what Seders are really supposed to be about: reminding us that despite all the overwhelming obstacles, there is a Force of Healing and Transformation that makes it possible to overcome the evil and cruelty in the world. Since we should not only testify to this possibility, but actualize it, use part of your Seder time to discuss visions of what should be and strategies for how to get there. Issues to address: the globalization of capital, the continuing oppression of Palestinians, the growing ecological crisis. Think big, hope big. Happy Passover! ❑

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

What's Left of the Peace Process

Jerome Slater

"Prime Minister Netanyahu has rightly said that we will not commit suicide in order to please the United States. So we are committing suicide to please ourselves." —Ma'ariv, *December 18, 1997*

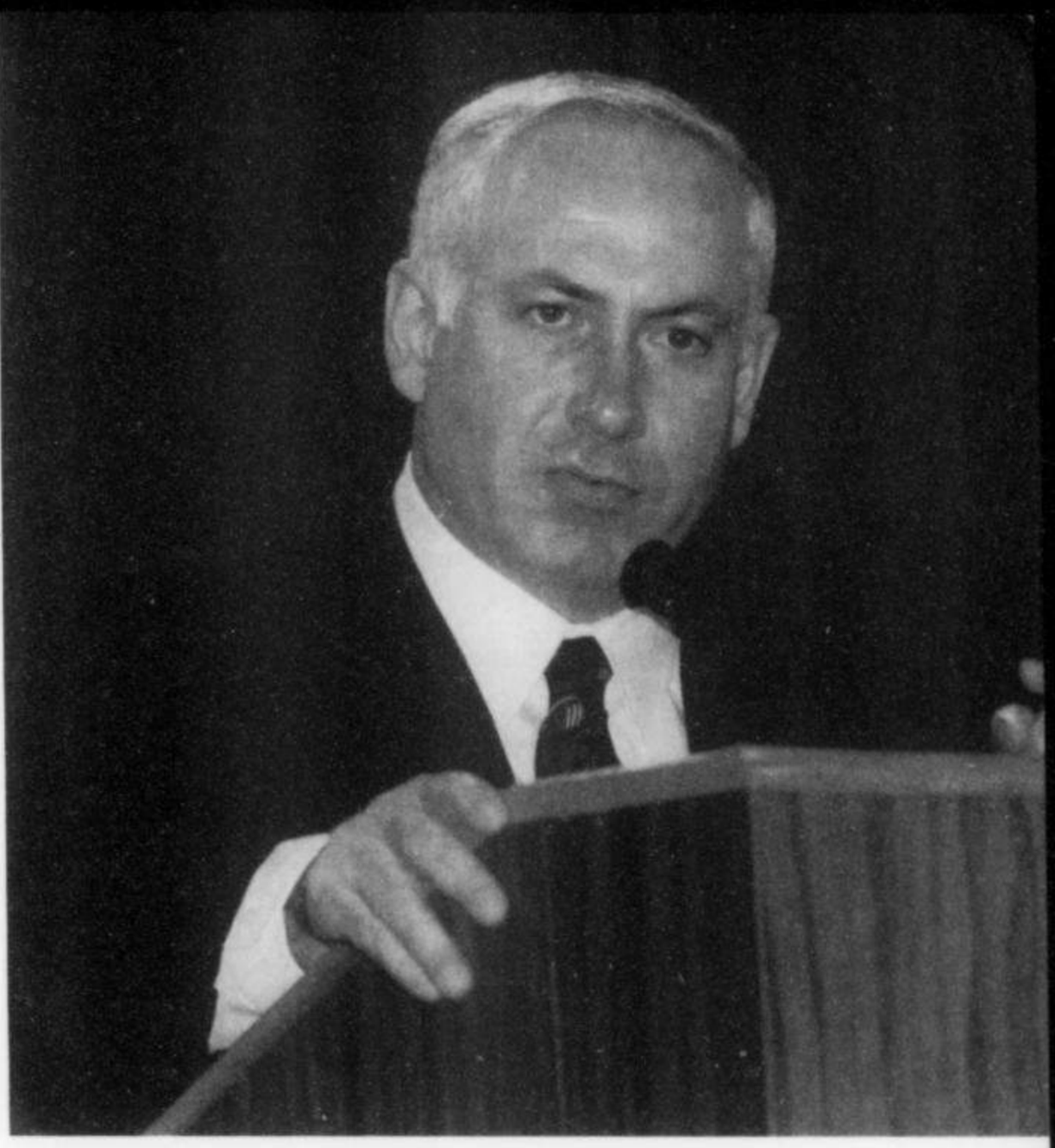
As the aftermath of the Wye agreements has made clear, Benjamin Netanyahu has neither the intention nor the capability of reaching the kind of generous compromise with the Palestinians that is the *sine qua non* for a just and stable peace. The Clinton administration, by its adamant refusal to use American leverage with Israel on behalf of a true peace, in effect has been collaborating with Netanyahu's intransigence.

Even if Netanyahu loses the Israeli elections in May, his policies are likely to continue if he is replaced by another right-wing prime minister, or even, perhaps, if he is replaced by a center-right coalition (when I refer to "Netanyahu" in this article, I am using his name to stand in for Israeli rightists generally). Meanwhile, because of both the Israeli elections and the impeachment process in Washington, it is obvious that there will be no change in the policies of the Clinton administration for at least the next few months. But after that, there must be a reassessment of U.S. policies in what is left of the peace process.

If Netanyahu or another right-wing government is elected in May, the United States will face three choices:

- It can continue its traditional policies of near unconditional support for whatever Israeli government is in power, in which case disaster threatens: a moral disaster, a disaster to the true national security of Israel, and, sooner or later, a disaster to U.S. national security. The deadly combination of Israeli intransigence, Islamic fanaticism, and the rapid spread of weapons of mass destruction threatens nothing less than Armageddon in the Middle East. And because of Arab or Islamic fury at the United States' nearly unqualified support of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians, nuclear or other forms of catastrophic terrorism will sooner or later reach America.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY TSAFRIR ABAYOV / IMPACT VISUALS

- It can disengage from Israel, and allow events to run their course. While this policy might minimize the dangers of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the United States itself, it is likely that the prospects for peace would be further undermined.
- Or, it can become *seriously* engaged in a real peace process; since the Israeli government is the primary obstacle to peace, this inevitably must mean the employment of full American political and economic leverage against Netanyahu or any other right-wing Israeli governments.

The best choice in both the moral and national interest is real engagement, and that should be tried first. The United States has an obligation to its own interests, to Israel, and to the Palestinians to make a serious effort to bring about changes in Netanyahu's policies. But if a strategy of leverage—both positive and negative—fails to change those policies, if the Israeli government cannot be dissuaded from its plunge toward catastrophe, then the United States must distance itself from the conflict.

Netanyahu and the "Peace Process"

Though Netanyahu now hints that some kind of independent Palestinian "state" may be acceptable, what he really has in mind—as Rashid Khalidi and Edward Said have forcefully pointed out in TIKKUN—is permanent Israeli occupation and control over a series of disconnected, impoverished, and impotent Palestinian bantustans. The name of the game for the Likud and Netanyahu is sheer power, and since there is now a radical imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians, Netanyahu and his allies will seek to impose whatever terms they believe they can get away with.

In the first flush of enthusiasm after Wye, the media were quick to proclaim the emergence of a new Netanyahu and even a new Ariel Sharon as pragmatists who had abandoned the Likud ideology of Greater Israel and who, if Israel's genuine security needs could be met, were prepared for a two-state compromise settlement with the Palestinians. It has not taken the Israeli government long to puncture this illusion, even at the level of pure ideology. In an interview with the *Jerusalem Report*, November 23, 1998, Netanyahu is quoted as saying, "We remain attached to the Land of Israel.... We try to keep as much of it as we can under our jurisdiction."

Lest this be misinterpreted as meaningless rhetoric, since Wye the Netanyahu/Sharon government has repeatedly interrupted the process of Israeli withdrawals; has unilaterally imposed one new condition after another; has urged the settlers "to grab more land" in the West Bank before May; has embarked upon a new program of settlement expansion; has assured the Israeli right wing that the 13 percent redeployment may not be implemented and that even if it is, it will be the last; and has threatened to annex the West Bank if Arafat declares a Palestinian state in May.

There has been a kind of conspiracy of silence over the potential consequences of a breakdown of the peace process.

In the past year, a variety of reports from Israel have revealed Netanyahu's plans for a final settlement: Israeli annexation of about 60 percent of the West Bank; full Israeli sovereignty in, and control over, all of "Greater Jerusalem," including not only formerly Arab East Jerusalem but large parts of the surrounding areas; full Israeli military and political control over the Jordan Valley and nearby mountains; the continued expansion of Jewish settlements throughout East Jerusalem and the West Bank; a heavy Israeli military presence in the West Bank and Gaza, even in areas *not* formally annexed to Israel; and full Israeli control over all the water resources of the West Bank. Gaza and the West Bank will be cut off from each other, and within the West Bank the Palestinian enclaves will also be isolated, cut off from access to the Arab world and from each other, surrounded by Jewish settlements, Israeli-controlled highways, and military units. Even in East Jerusalem, there will be a Jewish majority and total Israeli control, for the Palestinians will be gradually forced out or, at best, reduced to small, impoverished neighborhoods—that is, ghettos—surrounded by Jewish areas.

If the Peace Process Breaks Down

There has been a kind of conspiracy of silence over the potential consequences of a breakdown of the peace process, perhaps because in the worst case they are nothing short of apocalyptic. But the risks are real. Israel has hundreds of nuclear weapons, Syria has nerve gas mounted on ballistic missiles aimed at Israeli cities, and it is only a matter of time before other Arab states or—far worse—fanatical terrorist groups obtain weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical, or biological.

Here is the nightmare scenario:

The intransigence of the Netanyahu government and its clear intention to continue to dominate the West Bank and deny the Palestinians true national citizenship and sovereignty lead to a resumption of sustained terrorism, this time with the tacit acquiescence or open support of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority and with the general support of the Palestinian population.

Israel reacts with economic and military retaliation that creates widespread desperation among the Palestinians, and this results in the eclipse of Arafat by Hamas and other Palestinian extremists.

The intifada resumes, this time not with stones but with guns and bombs. Israel responds with unprecedented repression, and the cycle of communal violence and counterviolence continues to escalate until Israel decides to reoccupy the West Bank and perhaps Gaza in order to crush the Palestinian movement—maybe even expelling large numbers of Palestinians into neighboring Arab states.

An inflamed Arab world greatly increases its support of the new intifada or, worse, moderate governments that try to stand clear are overthrown and replaced by extremists in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan.

In these circumstances, even if a general war in the Middle East could somehow be averted, there is likely to be escalating international terrorism against Israel and its supporters—sooner or later including nuclear or other forms of mass terrorism.

Netanyahu and Clinton

As the Israeli right wing, whether led by Netanyahu or not, is evidently beyond persuasion, whether on behalf of justice for the Palestinians or the enlightened Israeli national interest, progress toward a genuine compromise is likely to be dependent on the willingness of the U.S. government to help create some semblance of a balance of negotiating power between Israel and the Palestinians.

Since Netanyahu came to power, the Clinton administration has acted as though it were powerless to do anything about the progressive breakdown of the peace process; even the emerging Israeli sabotage of Clinton's last gasp, the Wye agreements, has been met with nothing beyond the usual hand-wringing that in the circumstances amounts to acquiescence. But a serious American government would be far from powerless; the historical record unmistakably demonstrates that when it chooses to act, the United States has enormous leverage over Israel's policies. If the U.S. govern-

ment were to withdraw its political support from Israel, and, even to go beyond that, to make continuing economic support conditional on Israeli compromise with the Palestinians, Israel would be completely isolated, for every other Western government has correctly concluded that it is Israel rather than the Palestinians that is the obstacle to peace.

The prospect of American alienation would be highly alarming to the Israeli public, and even more so to Israeli economic, political, and military elites. As a result, Netanyahu—whatever his blustering to the contrary—has been highly sensitive to the impact of his policies on the American government. For that reason, in the past three years, firm U.S. policies might well have induced Netanyahu to seek a more reasonable compromise with the Palestinians. Or, that failing, active American displeasure in all probability would have so eroded Netanyahu's domestic support that his government would have collapsed much sooner and new elections been held while peace was still in easy reach.

However, Netanyahu quickly took Clinton's measure and realized he had little reason to be concerned: here was a man who ran for cover at the first sign of domestic resistance, a man who repeatedly abandoned America's long-term national interests and claim of moral leadership for the sake of marginal domestic political gain—in short, a man who could be rolled. As in the case of Yitzhak Shamir during "the peace process" of the early 1990s ("I would have conducted negotiations for ten years, and in the meantime we would have ... [added] half a million souls in Judea and Samaria"), Netanyahu has been playing for time—holding out just enough hope for progress in order to buy time to create new "facts on the ground" in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

The response of the Clinton administration toward this ongoing slide toward disaster has been remarkably weak, and can only have emboldened Netanyahu. From the outset, Clinton backed away from even the relatively modest measures of the Bush administration with respect to Israeli settlements in the occupied areas—linking U.S. loan guarantees, a very small component of total U.S. economic assistance to Israel, to non-expansion of Israeli settlement. By contrast, Clinton has repeatedly assured Netanyahu that the United States would never employ its economic or military assistance programs to Israel as leverage in policy disagreements and, in fact, the administration has effectively abandoned the Bush anti-settlement policies.

Indeed, the Administration has refused to employ even the most modest political and diplomatic leverage with Israel, fearing—not without reason—a storm of protest from Congress and some American Jewish organizations. Clinton, Gore, and Secretary of State Albright have repeatedly proclaimed that the United States would issue no "ultimatums" or do anything to "impose" its own plans—not even, evidently, to publicly disclose its own ideas.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM AP / WORLD WIDE PHOTOS

Palestinians vote to eliminate all clauses in their charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

Why the United States Should Act

It is often argued that the United States has no right to "impose" its own vision of peace upon an Israeli government that has been democratically elected. However, even if the United States did not have its own crucial national interests at stake, this argument would be questionable. Twenty years ago, one of America's wisest and most experienced foreign policy statesmen, George Ball, wrote a famous (or notorious) article in *Foreign Affairs* (April 1977) calling on the United States to "Save Israel in Spite of Herself." Israel's hardline policies were jeopardizing the chances for real peace, Ball argued, requiring the United States to act against Israeli government policies but on behalf of true Israeli interests. On its face, the argument seemed presumptuous. Surely, though, it is hardly unprecedented for governments—even democratic governments—to misjudge their own interests and bring catastrophe upon themselves.

In any case, it is hardly necessary to resort to the Ball argument in order to justify U.S. pressures on the Netanyahu government. For one thing, there is now a clear Israeli majority for the creation of a genuinely independent Palestinian state, and even growing support for a compromise over Jerusalem, meaning that the government does not reflect the current Israeli consensus. Israel no longer needs to be saved from "itself," but only from Netanyahu.

Furthermore, even if Israel has the "right" to commit suicide, it certainly has no right to jeopardize others: Israeli policies have undercut U.S. relations with the Arab world, contributed to Washington's inability to get Arab support for possible military actions against Iraq, and put at risk the U.S. national interest in Middle East stability and the control of international Islamic terrorism. Finally, the United States has moral obligations not only to the Israelis but also to the Palestinians. In effect America has collaborated with the Israelis in refusing to recognize the moral complexity of Israel's conflict with the Palestinians, which from the outset has involved a tragic clash of two legitimate nationalist movements with strong claims to the same tiny piece of

land. Fifty years of nearly unconditional moral, political, economic, and military American support of Israel—however well-intentioned, even noble—has created for the United States a compelling moral obligation to now level the playing field.

What Must Be Done

Left to its own devices, there is next to no chance that Netanyahu or any right-wing successor will make peace with the Palestinians—indeed, in the absence of U.S. pressure, even a Likud-Labor coalition government would likely be too weak and internally divided to reach the necessary compromises.

That's why the American government—hopefully backed by parallel efforts by the American Jewish community—should begin making continued moral, political, and economic support conditional on reasonable Israeli concessions, while at the same time offering Israel additional benefits in the context of a peace settlement. There are good historical reasons to believe that such a strategy would succeed. One of the many myths about the Arab-Israeli conflict is that Israel never responds to outside pressures, indeed that such pressures are counterproductive and result only in an outraged nationalist reaction and an even harder policy line. The historical record, however, decisively demonstrates otherwise:

- In late 1948 Israeli troops ignored international protests and advanced into the Sinai peninsula, clearly Egyptian territory that was neither allocated to Israel by the 1947 UN partition resolution nor was part of ancient Palestine. But when Truman threatened a wholesale reassessment of U.S. policy if Israel didn't immediately desist, Ben-Gurion ordered the troops withdrawn.
- In 1956 Israeli troops again occupied much of the Sinai after they joined with British and French forces in attacking Egypt in the Suez War. There was every indication that Israel intended to permanently occupy much of the area—until Eisenhower bluntly threatened to cut off all U.S. political and economic support of Israel. Ben-Gurion hastily changed his mind, once again withdrawing the Israeli forces.
- In 1967 U.S. pressures forced Israel to accept a ceasefire and refrain from further advances into Syria.
- Similarly, in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Israel agreed to a ceasefire and halted its advance into Egypt only after the Nixon administration threatened to end the American military airlift to Israel and to fly in food, water, and medicine to surrounded Egyptian forces.
- In 1975 Israel agreed to a partial withdrawal from the Sinai only after the Nixon administration combined promises of new American aid with the threat of a major shift in U.S. policy if Israel refused to withdraw.
- In 1978 Jimmy Carter wrote a letter to Menachem Begin warning of a suspension of U.S. aid if Israel continued with its invasion of South Lebanon; Begin withdrew the Israeli troops.
- In 1979 the Carter administration used carrot-and-stick policies to induce Begin to agree to the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai in exchange for a peace treaty with Egypt.
- In July 1981 suspensions of some U.S. military aid deliveries, this time augmented by pressures from American Jewish leaders and close supporters of Israel in Congress, convinced Begin he had to end the bombing of civilians in Beirut and accept a ceasefire in Lebanon or face a major shift in American attitudes toward Israel.
- A year later, the Israelis discarded their planned ground assault against PLO forces in Beirut after strong Reagan administration and congressional warnings threatened the end of the policy of unconditional U.S. aid to Israel.
- Finally, in 1991–92, the Bush administration used the American loan-guarantee program to pressure the Shamir government to end the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Even more significantly, the Israeli public's alarm at the growing tensions between the U.S. and Israeli governments was a major component in Yitzhak Rabin's defeat of Shamir in the 1992 Israeli elections.

In addition to public pressures and, if need be, economic sanctions, there are important positive incentives the United States can offer Israel to induce it to agree to a compromise peace. First, the American government can offer to formalize and solidify the *de facto* U.S. commitment to Israel's basic security that has existed since the 1950s. It is well established that, from Eisenhower onward, most American presidents have privately offered to join with Israel in a "mutual" defense pact if Israel made the territorial and other concessions necessary to bring about a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

Second, the United States can offer to participate in an international peacekeeping force in the Golan Heights and along the border between Israel and a Palestinian state, or even to unilaterally station American troops inside Israel itself. Such actions would significantly add to the already powerful Israeli deterrent against any large-scale Arab attack and would strengthen the credibility of the American commitment, much as the U.S. commitments to defend Berlin and South Korea were made credible by the stationing of ground combat troops there.

To be sure, there would be some political opposition in both Israel and the United States to a formal alliance, especially if it included a long-term U.S. ground combat presence in the West Bank, the Golan Heights, or Israel itself. The Israelis have always been of two minds about this idea:

(continued on page 67)

AN INTERVIEW WITH Edward Said

Mark LeVine



Long known to the wider public for championing Palestinian rights while criticizing its leadership, Edward Said is also one of the most important cultural and literary critics of the post-war era. His books Orientalism *and* Culture and Imperialism *have redefined the social sciences.*

LeVine: Almost twenty years ago, in the introduction to *The Question of Palestine*, you asked, "What are Israel, the United States, and the Arabs going to do about the Palestinians?" Would you answer this question differently today?

Said: I think the main thing that must strike people, and that certainly strikes me, is the fact that we've somehow kept going, one way or another. Nearly all the way-stations during the last thirty years have been negative, or even disastrous—such as the expulsion from Lebanon in 1982—and we always seem to be given up for dead, or at least finished politically. But somehow, nevertheless, we keep going.

By now we've accumulated enough collective history to convince ourselves and the rest of the world that we're here to stay and that most of the schemes for diminishing us haven't fully succeeded—although I think Oslo has come very close. Also, there has been a general recognition that Palestinians have to be admitted to the political picture somehow; though not fully, and certainly not with all of our history accepted. Unfortunately, even our leaders today have shied away from recognizing us as a people who have lived through all that we have since 1948. The whole emphasis of the peace process, especially since Oslo (1993), has been on our forgetting the past, on trying to be pragmatic, trying to fit into the Israeli scheme of things. But ultimately I think the overwhelming majority of Palestinians today have remained conscious of the original dispossession, and have sought to get that acknowledged and redressed.

LeVine: You have written that "throughout the five years of the peace process, the Palestinian leadership has shown the most wanton disregard, the most astonishing callousness, the most unqualified duplicity in handling its moral and political responsibilities with regard to its people's past." Why has the Palestinian leadership been, to quote you, "so disgracefully supine" in the negotiations with Israel? Why has it been so incapable of delivering a mature, honest, and successful leadership?

Said: I've known Arafat and many of the people around him since the late 1960s when I met them in Jordan. What has impressed me over time, aside from their commitment to Palestine, which is undeniable, is their sense that Palestine can not come about, that its fulfillment as a political project cannot come about, without the Americans and, to a certain extent, the Israelis.

During the 1980s when I used to see Arafat in Tunisia, I became vividly aware of how he thought the United States was ruled—as a kind of mirror image of Syria. That is, he believed that there was one man who ruled everything and unless you reached out to that man, you were never going to get anything done. Thus the whole ANC model of mass organization and mass campaigning for human rights never penetrated Arafat's awareness. I got into my first public debate with the leadership in the late 1980s when I tried to explain this point of view and criticized their tactics vis-à-vis the United States, which even then struck me as slavish and fawning. Second, I also criticized Arafat for not completely leveling with his people. That is to say, he was trying to make contact with the Reagan administration at the same time his rhetoric was going in the other direction.

Third, perhaps the most disheartening thing of all, at the level of sheer competence—that is to say, how to do things, whether they be negotiations, understanding, or getting to know your enemies and the people you're dealing with (whether your own people in the West Bank or the Israelis and Americans)—nothing was done; we remained at an extremely primitive level. I know for instance that in Tunis in the 1980s they established an "America Committee" to do research and initiate contacts. Not one member of the committee knew English, and as for "research," they had a fitful subscription to *Time* magazine. The same problem existed with Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. There too the leadership—badly educated, unmodern, basically self-interested political apparatchiks—was looking for power brokers in Israel and the United States, not looking for people whose commitment to the kind of values the struggle required was

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE PINEIRO / COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

uppermost. And I deeply regretted that. That pattern has been continued, along with the requirement that we constantly demonstrate our loyalty to the national leadership no matter what mistakes it makes. Thus the fact that nobody demanded an accounting from Arafat of his extraordinary alliance with Saddam Hussein during the late 1980s and 1990s before the Gulf War, the price of which we're still paying, strikes me as lamentable. Not to mention that he's been able to either cow or buy off critical voices by the bushel.

LeVine: Arafat and the Palestinian leadership seem to believe that the Wye Agreement is "better than nothing." Is it?

Said: As far as I'm concerned, Arafat has sold us down the river with the Wye River Memorandum, which has begun unraveling even as its implementation proceeds on the ground. First, the 40 percent of the land supposedly being given to Arafat's corrupt Authority was broken down into bits and pieces, all of it subject to Israel's choice of the location of the land to be partially vacated and the date it is to be vacated. I believe Rashid Khalidi explained the reality of percentages in the last issue of Tikkun. Additionally, we must understand that the Palestinian areas are, for the most part, non-contiguous and allow no free passage between them. Jerusalem remains off limits to residents of the West Bank and Gaza, and most of the rest of the Wye River Memorandum is taken up with security arrangements which in effect commit the Palestinian Authority to Israel's security forces, with no reciprocity—even though expropriating land, uprooting centuries-old olive trees, and expanding or building new settlements certainly constitute a continuing threat to Palestinian security.

So I think the Palestinian leadership should be roundly censured by as many people as possible for so disgracefully supine a negotiating performance. Arafat and company have basically delivered themselves to the combined Israeli and U.S. intelligence apparatus, thereby putting an end to anything even resembling a democratic and independent Palestinian national life.

Moreover, allowing the CIA to become the arbiter of our national life strikes me as, to say the least, a little extreme. In fact, there has been a long, surreptitious history of Palestinian involvement with the CIA which I've always lamented. Now it's become so blatant that the CIA plus assorted Palestinians and Israelis can decide what books, broadcasts, or newspaper articles are considered incitement and will trigger a process of punishment. It's grotesque. The CIA has no business in our or any civil society's life, and the fact that it has been given this power over us as a way, in Arafat's mind, of pressuring Israel, strikes me, to put it mildly, as inappropriate and shortsighted.

And, as for the notion that the tiny bits of land that we're getting are enough at the same time that Defense Minister Ariel Sharon is exhorting settlers to take as much land as possible in the interim—that's part of the same damaged and flawed strategy. Just thinking about it makes me feel desperate.

Arafat and company have basically delivered themselves to the combined Israeli and U.S. intelligence apparatus, thereby putting an end to anything even resembling a democratic and independent Palestinian national life.

LeVine: In fact, you've come out recently against declaring a state in May. Why?

Said: For practical reasons, we don't have the makings of a state. We don't have contiguous territory, we don't have sovereignty, control over territory or water.... And to try to cover this lack up with another declaration of statehood, which we already did in Algiers in 1988, strikes me as a rather pathetic and even ludicrous exercise. Actually, when you mention it in front of audiences in Palestine, as I did during our recent trip, the notion brings forth giggles. So who Arafat thinks he's fooling, and who he thinks he's threatening with this "declaration," I don't really know. People criticize me for personalizing my criticism and focusing on Arafat, but who else is there? There's no one else but Arafat—that's part of the problem, unfortunately.

LeVine: If Arafat does declare a state in May, on the land given in Wye, should American Jews and Arabs support it? Wouldn't such a declaration freeze Palestinians into a reality in which they could not live, while allowing those who would oppose their struggle for more to call them "greedy" and "untrustworthy"?

Said: I think that since Arafat's been announcing this state so often, there are many things we should do before the official announcement next May. In fact, I think we should make the declaration of the state a secondary, or even tertiary, focus. Number one, we have to devise a tactic for preventing any more expropriation of Palestinian territory. This hasn't been done. The midnight hour is upon us, and with Sharon on the rampage, all of our energy should be spent rescuing as much land as we can.

In other words, what I'm trying to suggest here is that there are a number of far more important priorities than just declaring or recognizing a state, both for Israelis and Palestinians, and for their Diaspora communities. Second, I think it's terribly important for Palestinians to do something about the fact that Israeli settlements are still being built by Palestinians and Palestinian contractors. This has to stop. Third, I think that whether a state is declared or not, certainly institutions such as schools, universities, health care,

etc., all have to be tended to—as of now they're simply being given over to a gang of commission agents and crooks that are a serious threat to Palestinian national life. These are the priorities, supporting NGOs and civil institutions that are doing work on the ground to help build a sustainable Palestinian society for the long term.

LeVine: What exactly is the strategy that might lead from where we are now historically to full reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian people? Or between Jews and Arabs?

Said: You have to understand that the whole two-state solution was based essentially on an elaboration out of Zionism. But this notion that Jews and Arabs/Palestinians should be separated into their own two little states just simply hasn't worked. Wherever you turn, they're intermingled. Jews and Arabs simply can't be separated without massive deportations and ethnic cleansings, which I hope never happen.

Israel is not a Jewish state exclusively, because there are at least a million Palestinians who are citizens of Israel, comprising 20 percent of the population. The West Bank and Gaza are massively inhabited by a large number of Israeli Jews—perhaps over 150,000. So I think the whole notion of surgical separation, which Rabin used to dream of, and which Netanyahu still thinks he's enacting, is a fiction. What we have is a nascent form of apartheid, where one population has sovereignty and power and the other one doesn't, and both of them live together in this unequal and unjust way. At some point we have to realize this simple fact, that the two populations have to find a *modus vivendi* that is qualitatively better than the present one.

LeVine: What kind of strategy can lead to this sort of reconciliation?

Said: I think that is *the* central question, not this tinkering with the peace process, not playing the games of all the institutions—the think tanks, the government schemes to promote something called the peace process—which are in fact leading nowhere except to a whole bunch of misleading and dangerous way-stations that encourage the strong to get stronger and the weak to get weaker. What is of the utmost importance now, although it might seem like a small, almost slender hope, is to try to find like-minded people on the Israeli and American-Jewish side to talk with Palestinians who believe in democracy, citizenship, and co-existence, and to develop an irresistible current that will lead to the realization of those ideas.

Everyone would be surprised as to how many people actually believe that this kind of co-existence is possible, whether you call it binationalism, cantonization, confederation, but something that takes seriously into account the full presence of the "Other" as a component of the new Palestine/Israel, or Israel/Palestine. I don't think there's another serious political alternative available.

LeVine: Even if the proposed final solution is more like Oslo than Wye?

Said: Yes, because, to repeat, Oslo was based on separation, and the only separation that has taken place and that can take place is not a physical separation but a separation of the powerless and the powerful; but even that isn't a real separation because the powerful need the powerless to exploit and to have as a symbol of their power. That has always struck me as the meaning of Oslo, to resolve the Palestinian problem by consigning Palestinians to the role of secondary citizens in a Greater Israel. So out of that can only come a fully schematized apartheid, an intensified version of the situation of Palestinians inside Israel. We must move beyond that.

LeVine: If you had the power to create a binational state—not in some messianic era, but in this generation …

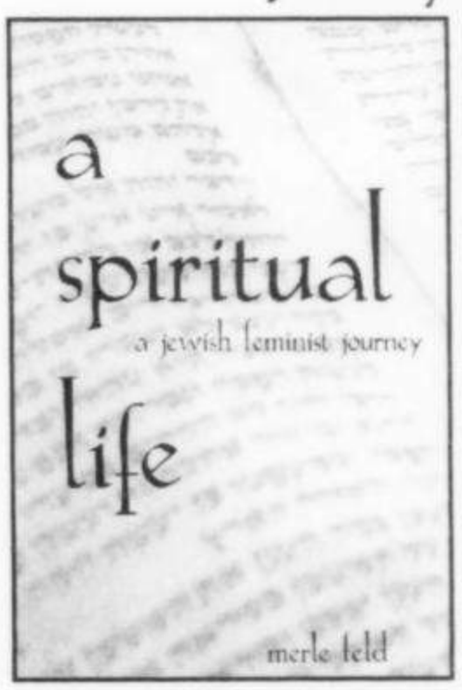
Said: Yes, I understand precisely. First, it has to be secular. It cannot rest on any notion of sanctified privilege of the sort Zionism or Islamic or Christian messianism have claimed. It has to be secular in the profound sense of that word. Second, it has to deal with issues of social and political justice, whereby the main category is that of the citizen, and not the privileged member of an unassailable community—whether Jewish, Muslim, Arab, or whatever. And I think that this is a category sorely lacking in the Arab world today, and certainly it's lacking inside Israel as far as the minority Palestinian community, at the least, is concerned.

LeVine: You have said that you can't understand how

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Palestinians have accepted the continual implementation of the Israeli occupation through thirty-one years, particularly as pertains to the creation of a ring of settlements around Jerusalem. Why do you think it has been so hard for Palestinians to successfully develop and deploy a movement of massive non-violent resistance to the occupation?

SAID: The violence in my opinion has always been counter-productive. It's led absolutely nowhere; it's polarized people, it's produced for Palestinians more confinement, more expropriation of land, more impoverishment of rights and movement. It's led, in fact, to the inequities of Oslo. The main problem has been the tension between the demands of loyalty to a nationalist leadership on the one hand, and on the other the desperate requirement that Palestinians should have a national leadership up to the task at hand. We've always picked the former and stuck with nationalist leaders that seem to require from us loyalty at any cost. We haven't demanded from the cadres who have produced the PLO on the ground, whether we're speaking of Faisal Husseini or of the ones who came in from Tunis after 1994, we haven't required from them the kind of performance that is adequate to stop Israeli impingements in Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank.

That's the part that mystifies me the most. I mean we've learned neither the lessons of non-violent mass struggle, whether in the United States, South Africa, or India, nor the means of successful violent struggle such as occurred in Vietnam or Algeria. That's the problem we have to overcome. We have to at least try to remember and benefit from the experience of others. Thus there's no way we can stop what's happening now without serious alliances between us and like-minded Israeli Jews. And I don't mean the kind of expedient alliances that tie the PLO to the Labor Party, which was considered a major breakthrough.

Where I differ from my Palestinian contemporaries and friends—and this is a very important point also—is that I think it's vitally important for Palestinians to take their message inside Israeli society, not through violent means but rather through intellectual and political means. We've never done that; we've always found people willing to come to us, but we've never been willing to go in a revolutionary and innovative way inside Israeli society and bring our message to people directly. This is of the utmost importance; when many Palestinians say, "We don't want 'normalization' with Israelis," they are not realizing that it has nothing to do with normalization. It has everything to do with what Gramsci says—of creating a new hegemony, a new consent, of a policy of convincing Israelis that we're here to stay and that the only way we're both going to survive is to survive together in some equitable way.

LEVINE: After your talk at the Landscape Perspectives on Palestine conference we both attended at Bir Zeit University in November, a colleague told me that many if not most of his students were put off, or at least uninterested, by your call for them to obtain an understanding for the Jewish suffering, particularly the Holocaust, that is part of the complex Israeli/Jewish psychology underlying current attitudes toward "security" and giving up land for peace. Are there any practical steps that might be taken to get that consciousness more widely accepted in the Palestinian world?

SAID: I must say that this is the most immediate issue in my mind in terms of both strategy and tactics—that is, how to work with Israelis, with the "Other." In the first place, most liberation movements have always targeted segments of the adversarial community for cooperation and communication and joint work. It was certainly true in South Africa, Vietnam, and Algeria. So why it should be any different here is beyond my comprehension. Second, whatever other colonialists were, they were not like Jews, who came to Palestine bringing with them their history in this land. The French colonists who came to Algeria in the nineteenth century were not bringing with them their history, they were trying to start a new history there, as were the Boers in South Africa. But the Jews were trying to revive a history as well as bringing their history of persecution and genocide in Europe with them.

Now I know it's asking a lot to ask Palestinians, who have suffered dispossession and not a wit of understanding or compassion from most Jewish immigrants, to understand this point of view, but I think it's absolutely necessary if both of us are to admit the facts of each other's history. What I do say is that it's extremely important for us to admit the dimension of suffering that occurred with the Holocaust and at the same time to declare that it has nothing to do with us in the sense that we didn't cause it and we can't be expected to pay for the crime of genocide. That it happened is one thing; that it can be exploited at our expense is quite another.

This is very difficult for Palestinians to understand; so when I say to Palestinians that the Holocaust is an experience of collective suffering that all Jews share, they think that this is in some way giving up something to Zionism, when in fact it has nothing to do with Zionism, but rather with accepting

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC FIELD

the tragic facts of a history of Western anti-Semitism and genocide. What we can do is to accept that and say that we, as Palestinians, are not the expiators, the ones who have to pay for this. I think it's perfectly moral to say that.

LeVine: Can you tie this distinction into the idea that several Jewish thinkers, including Michael Lerner, have been writing about, namely, that whiteness has become a way for Jews to become part of the dominant culture and to benefit from a political consciousness that in fact has long excluded and victimized them?

Said: Absolutely. In fact, I came to this conclusion in *Orientalism*, where in a section on the association of anti-Semitism and Orientalism in the nineteenth century I make clear that Jews were always considered oriental people and not part of Europe, although in time, with the enfranchisement of European Jews, they gradually became part of the dominant culture. But we must also realize that the consciousness of being part of a superior Western civilization has always been at the heart of Zionism and in the thinking of people like Hertzl, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion. I think it's done more harm than good for Israelis and Jews because, whether they like it or not, Israel is not part of Europe, it's part of the Islamic world. And thus Israel has to learn to live within an Islamic environment, and the notion that they somehow belong to a separate, superior, Western, white—whatever you want to call it—culture, is, in my opinion, simply a dangerous confection.

LeVine: At a meeting with Israeli academics after the Bir Zeit conference you had an argument with some of them over the trend toward the postmodern emphasis on the 'text' in much contemporary critical theory. Moreover, you have also been critical of the trend toward multiculturalism and identity politics in the United States as not being "truly radical thought" because they don't encourage people to think for themselves, to think against authority and orthodoxy and with skepticism. Can you explain further?

Said: There's no doubt that the early efflorescence of theory that I participated in in the late 1960s has led to a kind of jargonization, specialization, and professionalization which has very little to do with the historical and political world in which people live. It's become very much an American and European hothouse, with very little reference—whether it's called Marxism, feminism, gender studies, or multiculturalism—to actual political and social existence and struggle.

Second, the tendency toward postmodernism has, in my opinion, tended to lighten the burden of history in which, for example, Palestinians and Jews live. We are very much creatures of our history and history-laden identities, and the postmodern lightening of the gravity of history has very little to do with the issues and lives most of us have to contend with, whether those of ourselves or of our adversaries. Third, I think that the value of multiculturalism is really in combating the various ideologies of ethnic and religious identity—identity as a fixed, stable, essentialized and nativized thing, rather than identity as a composite, constantly changing, fluid series of currents, mixed and varied at all times.

I'm very pleased to register myself under the banner of multiculturalism, not as a pastime or academic slogan, but rather as a way to work with others who are jammed together with me on a tiny territory—to bring it now to Palestine and Israel—and who so far have managed to survive by denying the full historical and political existence of the other. So I think multiculturalism can be consonant with ideals of emancipation and enlightenment if it's applied to concrete situations in which people of different cultures have not been able to live together peacefully, but in my opinion can.

LeVine: So how do you actualize this transformation from theoretical intervention to practical strategy that can lead to solidarity on the ground?

Said: Given the limitations that I have to work with—my distance from the scene, my illness and age—it really is with speaking and writing, and trying to address audiences that in the past I would have preferred not to address, to talk in ways that more genuinely tally with what I define as the intellectual's role: to be a voice of dissent and provocation, rather than of comfort and mere 'solidarity'; to speak essentially one universal and accessible language. ❑

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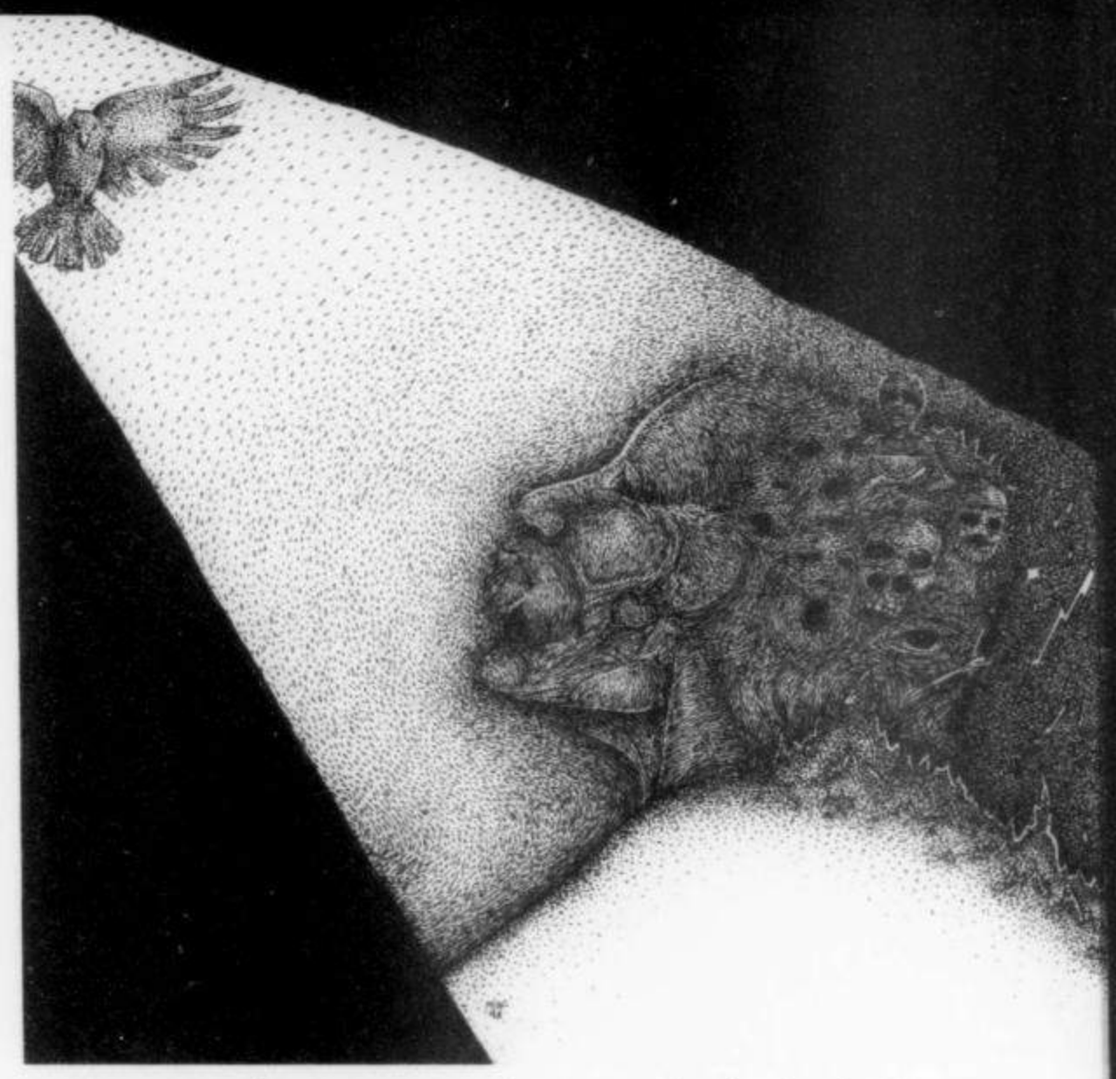
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Currently, over 40,000 people, mostly children, die every day of starvation (at least 20 million a year), while over 30 wars are being waged and over 20,000 nuclear weapons are still maintained. From starvation to ethnic hatred to war and the ongoing threat of global destruction, the spectrum of violence overshadows us all.

In a world of suffering and systemic injustice, our faith must address these realities, seek peace, and offer the alternative vision of nonviolence, or it loses its authenticity, as the prophets insist.

We in the United States can no longer claim a private, spiritualized religion when our own country leads the way in this addiction to violence and thus violates every spiritual and moral value. Dr. King called America "the greatest purveyor of violence on earth." Today, our faith challenges us to make it the greatest purveyor of peace.

Last summer, the United States bombed Sudan and Afghanistan, killing at least 30 people, in response to terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania which killed 263 people and injured more than 5,500.

In December, we watched in horror as the United States bombed Iraq killing at least 65 people, injuring scores more, destroying schools and hospitals, and knocking out water supplies in Baghdad for over 300,000 people.

Retaliatory violence, bombing raids, and war never solve anything. State-sanctioned murder not only violates international law, it also inflames existing hatred and leads to further terrorist attacks and even more distrust, death, and destruction. Armed military terror, initiated by the United States and aimed at Africa or Asia, escalates the spiral of violence in regions already drenched in blood and despair.

Rev. John Dear is the executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the largest interfaith peace organization in the United States, based in Nyack, NY. He is the author of a dozen books on peace and nonviolence.

Our warmaking economy thrives on the death of others, and so we keep on bombing and preparing for war, even though we have no enemies. We cut funding for jobs, health care, education, and food for the hungry, but increase our military spending by another $100 billion. The bomb makers and military "defense" contractors grow rich on the suffering of the world's children. In the process, we lose any trace of authentic religious belief.

Look at the situation in Iraq. By bombing Iraq, we killed Iraqi people to send a message to Saddam that he should not kill Iraqi people or threaten other nations. There is no logic to such madness, yet we repeat this failed policy time and time again. As a result, the people and children of Iraq have suffered too much. Already, according to the United Nations, more than one million Iraqi civilians have died as a result of the economic sanctions. They should not have to suffer any more—whether from the Iraqi government or the U.S. government.

We should stop all our plans to bomb Iraq, and immediately lift the economic sanctions, while continuing an embargo of arms transfers and sales to Iraq and all other nations of the Middle East. That would be a big step toward creating a region free of all weapons of mass destruction. Meanwhile, we should dismantle our own stockpile of nuclear weapons, something the end of the Cold War called for years ago. Then, we might lift the pall of fear that covers the human race and learn new nonviolent, non-military ways to resolve our conflicts.

Even as we reverse our policies toward Iraq and the world, we also need to pursue a deep, spiritual change. As people of faith, we not only need to demand that our country disarm its weapons and seek justice and peace with all, we need to live out a new spirituality based on active nonviolence.

Nonviolence is a way of life which holds that every human being is equal, a child of God, a sister or brother. Given this basic faith principle, we should, first of all, not hurt or kill anyone, much less look the other way in the face

(continued on page 67)

ILLUSTRATION BY MAC McGILL

RELIGION

Saint Edith?

Mary Gordon



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The canonization of Edith Stein has been quite properly a source of outrage and anguish for both the Jewish and Catholic communities. It contains within itself tormenting problems for both Catholics and Jews; it forces us, if we give it proper attention, to raise painful questions. We must ask ourselves: Is conversion necessarily a betrayal? Is conversion an act with different moral valences at different historical moments? What is the relationship of the private spiritual—let us call it appetite, vocation, ambition—to the soul's connection to other human beings, and to the responsibility of public witness? How do questions of gender affect the nature and course of a religious life?

It is crucial that Stein's canonization and the issues it raises be addressed in their full and often paradoxical complexity. This is not to say that I feel in any way ambivalent about the wrongness of Stein's canonization, only that I feel in a special position to discuss the extent and subtleties of its wrongness. I venture to say that I am the only contributor to TIKKUN who grew up with a picture of Edith Stein in her family home, and the only one whose parents were members of the Edith Stein Guild. In addition to this specialized knowledge, I believe I have, as a Catholic, an insider's understanding of the meaning of canonization and the place of canonized saints in the lives of Catholics.

It is possible to say at once that the Catholic church would be unrecognizable without the existence of canonized saints, venerated by a devoted populace, and also that there is no need for canonized saints at all. Canonization is like an Oscar; not getting the Oscar doesn't mean that the movie wasn't made, wasn't good, or didn't get critical approval. Canonization is primarily about publicity in the etymological and literal sense: making public, disseminating information about a life primarily so that life might be emulated. By definition, a saint is anyone who has achieved salvation, that is to say, has achieved her or his eternal reward and resides for all eternity in heaven. One need not be canonized to be a saint, even to be prayed to. The Feast of All Saints, one of the most sacred of the Church year, celebrates all such blessed men and women, whether or not their names are known. Canonization is the Church's way of asserting that *this* life is exemplary and worthy of special recognition. Like all acts importantly concerned with publicity, there are often economic and particularly political motives behind canonization. It is no accident that in the reign of John Paul II, Bishop Oscar Romero, assassinated by the El Salvadoran right wing; Dorothy Day; and Pope John XXIII have not been canonized, while Edith Stein and Padre Pio, a southern Italian stygmatist who predicted the end of the world in the 1950s, are about to be elevated this coming year.

Canonization, then, does nothing for the canonized; it is, rather, a living metaphor for what the Church holds valuable and praiseworthy at a particular historical moment.

The project of canonizing Edith Stein presses a lot of Pope John Paul's tenderest buttons. He has been adamant, obsessive even, in asserting that the Holocaust had other victims than Jews. What he means by "other" is Catholic. This is important for him as a Pole, and as someone who was, in his personal life, courageous in defense of Jews and in resistance to the Nazis. In addition, Edith Stein was a noted phenomonologist, a student of the philosopher Edmund Husserl, and the Pope did his thesis on the work of Husserl when he was still Karyl Wotyjla, student.

I will digress a moment to describe the particular historical and cultural fantasy to which Karyl Wotyjla and my family are both heirs. This fantasy is a tribal *folie à deux* in which each group—Catholics and Jews—sees the other as the "important" other, Protestants never having been major players in the same way for either faith. It is easy to imagine

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Mary Gordon's most recent works are The Shadow Man, *a memoir, and* Spending, *a novel.* Seeing Through Places, *a collection of essays, will be published next year. She is the Millicent McIntosh Professor of English at Barnard College.*



that Jews might have seen themselves cut off from the dominant intellectual, aesthetic, and historical traditions represented by European Catholicism, to say nothing of the sheer political and economic power represented by Catholicism and its interests, and that this perception might lead them to wish to become part of the dominant group. More subtle is the Catholic fascination with Jews, a post-Enlightenment phenomenon centralized in northern Europe, but not exclusive to it, most common among intellectuals, but not limited to them. This habit of mind sees in the Jews, the people of the book, a richness and giftedness, an ancient provenance which the perceivers would like to approach and, ideally, to transform and to absorb. Catholic intellectuals—and this is not, despite certain well-cherished prejudices, an oxymoron—have treasured a dream of a complex and intellectually respectable philosophical base to their faith in which the dominant secularism that has constituted modernist (and now postmodernist) thought would be offered an alternative of faith. For such a person—and the present Pope is one—Edith Stein, the intellectual's intellectual, a Jew, a Carmelite, a Holocaust victim, is the most desirable possible person of all who could be presented for canonization.

For Jews, questions of conversion have always been inflected by history: when one's people have been ordered to convert at the point of death, when one is part of a beleaguered minority whose survival is at stake, whose extinction is a goal of the dominant majority, then each person's removal from the beleaguered minority can reasonably be seen as an abandonment. Given this, I will yet make an assumption—and it may be for some people a large one—that a conversion from Judaism to Christianity can be a sincere act, motivated by responsiveness to—for lack of a better word—the style of another faith. I use the word style not to suggest something divorced from and inferior to content, but to indicate a deep rhythmic imprint, a map for the ordering of the world. I would argue that it is possible to see a conversion as fulfilling a deep temperamental need, and this, it seems to me, was the case when Edith Stein converted in 1922.

In the context of the deeply problematic history of the Jews in Germany, the Twenties were a period of relatively easy assimilation. Jews had some positions of authority and rank, they were able to attend the university and hold public office, they owned property and had full political rights. Edith Stein was a perfect example of an assimilated Jew. Born in 1891 in Breslau, Germany, the daughter of an Orthodox lumber merchant, she was a gifted student who declared herself an atheist as a teenager, and pursued her philosophical career at the University of Gottingen. In a milieu like Stein's, it was possible to ignore the underlying poison that would result in the rise of Nazism, or at least not have it as an important part of one's consciousness. In her studies at the university, Edith Stein moved from the philosophical basis of phenomenology to a taste for a more theological outlook. This shift in focus was in part motivated by her experience of the Great War, in which she served as a nurse in a hospital for infectious diseases, and by the example of the widow of a friend of hers killed in the war, whose religiously-based acceptance of the loss of her husband was an inspiration to Stein. At the time, many Jewish phenomenologists, including Husserl himself, had converted to Christianity, attracted by the Incarnational theology of the New Testament.

It was at the home of her friend the war widow that Edith Stein first read St. Theresa of Avila's spiritual autobiography. She read it ravenously one night, and felt she had found the truth for which she had been searching. The road to Rome was a straight one from Avila; it was the example of the spiritual achievement of Theresa—intellectual, poetic, highly literary—that was the most important catalyst to Stein's conversion.

It would be difficult to find a model like Theresa in Jewish lore. That is to say, a woman, highly trained in spiritual discipline, who had authority and power, who was encouraged to speak at length of her mystical experience. The Judaism of Germany in the 1920s—even had Stein been well-versed in its traditions, which she was not—would not have provided her with the spiritual education, the kind of Olympian level of mentoring, that Catholicism offered (with important limitations, ordination being one of them) to women with spiritual ambitions and appetites. Judith Heshcopf Banki, Associate National Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, has remarked:

> We may regret her (Stein's) conversion to what her niece called the religion of our persecutors. But given the extraordinary combination of intellectual brilliance and spiritual hunger that came together in her, where could she have turned in the Jewish community of her time? Was there a Talmud Torah or rabbinical academy that would have taken her speculative philosophical interests seriously? How could she have latched onto the rich and demanding legacy of rabbinic thought as a woman, and an argumentative woman at that? Recalling the much-told story that Franz Rosenzweig was called back from the threshold of conversion to Christianity by a visit to an Orthodox synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur, Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer asks whether Rosenzweig would have remained "if he had been hurried upstairs to sit behind a mehiza."

The situation of Jews in 1933, when Edith Stein entered the Carmelite convent, had shifted from easy assimilation to persecution. If Edith Stein had died in 1922 or 1923, run down by a tram or felled by a bacterium, she would be a person who received my great admiration. Many of us would be attracted to the sweep of her philosophical work. Her

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CORBIS / BETTMAN-UPI

doctoral work for Husserl was on the importance of empathy as a basis for moral contact. Only by the imaginative act of empathy, being able to put oneself in the psychic position of the other, Stein asserts, can a person act with a fully realized moral sensibility. She was an early feminist, and predated later thought in asserting that women were different from men and that their different gifts should be prized. "Man," she says, "appears more objective," but his objectivity is limited; "woman's attitude is personal," and therefore she is more likely to attain the freedom of "a complete human being." Woman's natural predisposition toward the personal is ethically more valuable because "the human person is more precious than all objective values." "A high vocation," she says, "is designated in feminine singularity—that is, to bring the true humanity in oneself and in others to development." Yet she asserts the need for intellectual discipline, self-consciousness, and self-interest in women. She invokes the "co-operation of intellect and will," because "where discipline of mind and will is lacking emotional life becomes a compulsion without secure direction."

Stein asserts that her model for female competence and authority comes from her Jewish forbears. Unlike Simone Weil, Edith Stein never dissociated herself from her Judaism, and always acknowledged the greatness of the tradition from which she had decided to diverge. In 1933, she wrote an autobiographical work, *Life in a Jewish Family*, which she said would "constitute a response to the horrendous caricature of Jews," which, as though from a concave mirror, emerges in the "programmed writing and speeches of the new dictators." She was early and outspoken in her clear understanding of the inescapable Nazi threat to the Jews, and courageous in her public opposition to Hitler. In 1933, she tried to arrange an audience with Pope Pius IX to urge him to write an encyclical condemning Nazism because of its treatment of the Jews. The Pope did not reply to her request.

All this makes her decision to enter Carmel difficult to comprehend. The Carmelites are an order who live an entirely cloistered life; they never leave their convent, where they live austere and penitential lives of silence, poverty, and prayer. She made the decision in 1933, the same year she wrote her autobiography and tried to petition the Pope. Stein said she based her decision on her belief that she could most benefit the Jews by withdrawing and praying for them. As an observer one may ask why, when she was so clear about the danger to her people and her sense of solidarity with them, did she choose to remove herself from their fate, and place herself in the privileged position of a cloistered convent?

Could one ask the questions: In a time of mortal danger, is removing oneself to Carmel a morally different act from emigrating to England or America? Emigration might not have been an act of heroism, or martyrdom, but was it therefore ignoble? Was it morally incumbent on all Jews—even, or

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especially, those who had converted to Catholicism—to stand and die with their people? Can we not take Stein at her word that she believed she was doing the greatest good for the Jews and the world by devoting her life to praying for them?

These could be left as tantalizing questions were it not for the question of canonization. As I noted, to be canonized is a public certification, not of interestingness, but of sanctity. I believe it would be possible to see Stein as a compelling but disturbing woman whose life came together at a particular moment of nightmare. But the Church does not allow for

The Church does not need more saints; it does need to atone for its sins toward the Jewish people.

such latitude or equivocalness in judgement when it canonizes. To canonize is to seal, from on high, the interpretation of a saint's life. It is not possible to say that a saint has sinned grievously without repentance, even without consciousness. In canonizing Edith Stein, the Church removes all possibility of doubt about whether her decision to enter Carmel was self-interested in a morally compromising fashion, unconsciously self-hating, and so ethically problematic. It certifies it as an inevitably right act.

But objections about the canonization of Edith Stein don't come from questions of the rightness of her vocational choices. Rather, they come from two main sources. First, there is a disagreement about the reasons for her death. The Church asserts that Edith Stein was sent to Auschwitz in 1942 as a martyr to the faith, not as one of six million Jews. They assert that she was hunted down in her Dutch convent because of an anti-Nazi letter written by the bishops of Holland, and therefore her death was an act of *odium fidei*, hatred of the faith. Those who disagree see her death as no different from any other Jew's. The other nuns who were killed at Auschwitz were also Jewish converts. One of them was Stein's less-gifted sister, Rosa, who joined her as a Carmelite. When Stein applied for asylum for herself and her sister at a convent in Switzerland, she was told there was a place for her, but not her sister. She refused to go without her sister, and the two died together.

The other objection to Stein's canonization stems from the notion that in certifying someone as a saint, the Church is urging her example to be followed by the living. In the case of Edith Stein, this would suggest that the Church is urging the conversion of Jews to Catholicism. The work of the Second Vatican Council (1959–63) went a long way towards asserting that Catholics were not in the business of wholesale evangelization of Jews, and the Stein canonization would seem to undo much of its work.

I have a third objection to Stein's canonization. It is an intellectual one, text-based. I have been unequivocally opposed to her canonization because I believed Stein was guilty of an intellectual and moral sin: endorsing the notion that Jews had sinned in their failure to convert to Christianity. In researching this point, however, I discovered an interesting ambiguity—unsolvable by me, but pointing to some of the conundrums Stein creates.

The idea finds its expression in Stein's spiritual last will and testament in which she asked God to accept her life,

> for the atonement of the unbelief of the Jewish People and for this: that the Lord may be accepted by His own people and His kingdom may come in glory, for the salvation of Germany and for world peace.

These words were repeated in multiple sources I consulted about Stein. But in reading a biography of Stein written by an Orthodox Catholic Partisan, who locates herself in a Carmelite Convent, I discovered at the end of her preface the following fuller translation of the same text:

> May the Lord accept my life and death for the honor and glory of his name, for the needs of his Holy Church—especially for the preservation, sanctification and final perfecting of our holy Order, and in particular for the Carmels of Cologne and Echt—for the Jewish people, that the Lord may be received by his own and his kingdom come in glory, for the deliverance of Germany and peace throughout the world, and finally for all my relatives living and dead, and all whom God has given me: may none of them be lost.

Both translations cite the same original source: the Stein documents presented to the Holy Office of Canonization.

It makes a difference to any assessment of Edith Stein as a thinker whether or not she interpreted Jews' non-conversion as a sin. In both translations, the suggested hope that "the Lord may be accepted by His own people"/"received by his own" certainly has a whiff of a dream of large scale conversion, but this is tonally very different from an accusation of sin. The differences in translation point to the emotionally charged, confused, and shaky ground on which the Stein case rests.

Even the more favorable translation does not alter my belief that it was a grave offense to the Jewish community on the part of the Catholic Church to canonize Edith Stein. The Church does not need more saints; it does need to atone for its sins toward the Jewish people, and it does need to avoid creating any greater scandal and offense to the Jews. The canonization of Edith Stein is the wishful re-dreaming of Europeans who have a stake in believing that the Holocaust was something other than what it was: the determination to obliterate the Jewish people. That Catholics and other non-Jews perished as well is certainly worth remembering, but it is not central to the case. St. Edith Stein pushes the image of the non-Jewish victim of the Holocaust to an unnatural place in the spotlight, a vexed place that is distorting to real vision. ❑

Hillel Incorporated

The Franchising of Modern American Jewry

Jeremy Deutchman



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

Consider this: you are an assimilated Jewish American freshman newly arrived at the University of Rhode Island. You finish plugging in your laptop and decide to check out the student activities fair. As you pass through the quad you notice a thirty-foot papier-mâché snowball resting immediately in your path, threatening at any moment to break free of its restraints. Intrigued, you approach the poster board that serves as the object's display card, and read: "The World's Largest Matzoh Ball, sponsored by Hillel, the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life." This mountainous *knaidel* strikes within you a chord of memory, an awakening of peoplehood. "Who am I?" you start to wonder. "Could I be more than a once-a-year Jew?" Perhaps you walk away smiling, oddly sated; perhaps you decide to seek out the Hillel building to investigate further. Stepping under the banner which hangs over the Hillel entryway, "Building a Jewish Renaissance for the 21st Century," you are transformed; you now personify the individual American Jew's struggle down the road that leads from assimilation to reintegration. You have become a modern Hillel success story.

Jeremy Deutchman is a graduate of UC Berkeley in Jewish Studies. In 1997, he was appointed to a two-year term on Hillel's International Board of Directors. He is currently completing his Master's Degree in Religion at Harvard.

Welcome to Hillel, a decades-old national organization charged with reawakening Jewish identification through observance of ritual law and encouragement of personal growth and spirituality. Hillel, or FJCL (shorthand for the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life), views as its primary responsibility nothing less than reclaiming the Jewish souls of a generation. Its premise is quite simple: if we are to bring about a grassroots movement of Jewish renewal, Hillel leaders reason, what better place to begin than college, the one American institution that plays host to an overwhelming majority of American Jews? Its problem is that a large proportion of Jewish students seldom participate in Hillel programs.

In its present incarnation, led by the charismatic Richard Joel, Hillel purports to serve all populations of student Jews with a particular emphasis on involving the majority Jewish student body (as contrasted to the minority of already-observant, identifying Jews who need no urging to involve themselves in Jewish campus life). This majority, so the conventional wisdom tells us, typically does not take part in Hillel activities for a wide variety of reasons: many are intimidated by their unfamiliarity with the corpus of Jewish text and culture; some simply see no personal relevance in what they view to be a particularist

tradition that, through its explicit message of chosenness, implicitly denigrates non-Jews; still others have their own methods of connecting with Judaism that do not necessarily involve Hillel. For such students, Hillel is just another clique: warm and wonderful and highly effective for the small coterie of individuals who spend most of their time there, but dorky and isolating and socially awkward for those who do not.



To address this image problem, Hillel, with the help of New York philanthropist Michael Steinhardt, endowed a series of one-year fellowships, known collectively as the Steinhardt Jewish Campus Service Corps (JCSC), of which I was a recipient two years ago at the University of California, Los Angeles. The JCSC Fellowship is offered to recent college graduates who are encouraged to operate outside the traditional Hillel framework in order to bring more college-age Jews into Hillel; as the 1997 Hillel annual report boasts:

> Where do you expect to find Hillel on campus? In the Hillel building or interfaith center? Think again. Not content to wait for students to walk through its doors, Hillel is bringing Jewish experiences to students in fraternity and sorority houses, dorms, and dining halls. You may be surprised to learn that Jewish Renaissance is taking place on athletic fields, in art galleries, and in student unions anywhere on campus that Jewish students congregate.

Now in its fifth year, the JCSC program has grown dramatically, from twenty-one Fellows in 1994 to more than seventy-five this year. Almost universally praised, and consistently offered as proof of Hillel's success, the JCSC Fellowship is the bedrock upon which subsequent Hillel initiatives rest.

Though ostensibly carriers of Jewish renewal, however, the arrival of the JCSC reflects a subtle, deeply troubling trend in modern American Judaism. Call it the mass marketing of Jewish cultural expression, perhaps best expressed in the language of the Hillel movement. When Richard Joel refers repeatedly in his meetings to "fashioning the franchise" that is Hillel, we begin to understand how even the best of intentions can lead to unexpected results. One has only to thumb through a copy of Hillel's annual report to recognize its similarity to that published by any number of Fortune 500 companies. Joel's mantra is that Hillels worldwide should enjoy "interdependent self-sufficiency," a goal which in appropriately murky business-speak allows each agency to boast real success without establishing strict definitions of such success. At the various yearly conferences the key word is "Engagement": we must "engage" students in campus Jewish life, and then "empower" them to remain committed. That's the equivalent in corporate terms of making the hard sell and ensuring buyer loyalty.

In its guise as a corporate entity, Hillel becomes impersonal. Witness the rise of the Toolbox, Hillel's latest innovation in Jewish programming. Posted on Hillel's website, the Toolbox is a compilation of JCSC programs, a sort of "how to" manual for the uninitiated. Interested in putting together a program for Shavuot? The Toolbox offers ideas, describes processes, and even lists useful phone numbers for the staging of your event. The brainchild of JCSC supervisor Rhoda Weisman, the Toolbox provides an excellent resource for those in search of the perfect programming idea. However, its usefulness only reinforces the corporate atmosphere of the organization. Religious practice becomes a commodity like any other, and Hillel becomes the Jewish world's Starbucks or Blockbuster.

The franchising of Hillel empties the rituals that the organization promotes of much of their significance, and gives rise instead to Judaism as gimmick. Perhaps it should be encouraging that several dozen students spent a number of afternoons constructing a sixty pound dumpling to showcase an aspect of Jewish life. It would be nice, after all, to think that the whole recipe for Jewish renewal could be found in several hundred boxes of matzoh meal. The danger, it seems to me, is that the matzoh ball no longer represents something Jewish; it becomes Judaism. Symbol triumphs over substance: students approach the display, read the brief synopsis of the Passover story offered in the poster board placard, and walk away confident that in so doing they have fulfilled their Pesach obligation to retell the story.

Examples of this emphasis on a marketed Judaism abound in modern Hillel parlance. "Tabling," or sitting in the middle of campus at a designated table upon which the JCSC places flyers promoting Hillel events, is of critical importance to the JCSC strategy. JCSCs are encouraged to use portions of their budgets to purchase various items to distribute as "prizes" to those who actually stop by a Hillel table. Some Fellows use their funds to buy holiday-specific foods (hamentashen for Purim, suvganiyot for Chanukah), while others apply theirs towards more lasting paraphernalia such as cigarette lighters embossed with the logo "Lights Up For Judaism," kazoos, and samples of Calvin Klein's CK1 cologne. Proponents of the JCSC strategy offer as justification the need to provide an interface, a point of entry from which disaffected Jewish students can launch themselves into the larger world of Jewish observance. But what kind of renewal do we seek? Promoting such a "carrots-and-sticks" mentality runs the risk of reducing Judaism to the stuff of television infomercials: For just $19.99 (or your participation in our matzoh ball extravaganza), you, too, can be the proud owner of this one-of-a-kind cigarette lighter. And when we take our lighter home and it falls apart, we have as our enduring memory … the building of a matzoh ball. What then motivates the Jewish student to return to Judaism when Hillel's own emphasis on alternative forms suggests an easier (less substantial) means of Jewish expression?

Undergirding the modern Hillel renaissance movement is the eternal quest for dollars. When Hillel leadership launched their "Campaign for Jewish Renaissance" in July of 1996, they set for themselves a six year, two hundred million dollar fundraising goal. In its first year, the organization raised upwards of thirty million, and the enthusiasm that programs such as the JCSC Fellowship engender will likely spark even more financial commitments in coming years. Influential members of the American Jewish community donate large sums of money, earmarked for specific Hillel goals. The emphasis on fundraising is not itself the problem; yet, as it competes with neighboring Jewish organizations for the limited dollars available, Hillel finds itself under pressure to offer quantifiable results. In particular, the need to boast large numbers of student participants in order to attract greater numbers of donors only reinforces the "Judaism as gimmick" mentality. When funding is contingent on quantifiable proof of programmatic success, brute numbers replace real religious engagement as the standard of such success. And, since large numbers of students tend to turn out for events such as Princeton University's recent Jewish version of MTV's popular game show "Singled Out," Hillels find themselves in a double bind: if they increase programming laden with heavy Jewish content, participation drops and donors balk, which in turn threatens funding for more content-rich events. However, if they increase programming of a secular, universal nature, they increase student participation, but run the risk of betraying their mission.

This is not to say that Hillel focuses all of its energies on bar hopping and roller blading; on the contrary, the bulk of the organization's programs focus on helping the students to access the rich culture that is theirs. However, in placing an outreach emphasis on a slick, marketed Judaism, Hillel makes a clear statement that its primary objective is bodies first, religion second. Fighting desperately against the compartmentalization of modern life, JCSCs argue that it is specifically the comedy club trips, etc., which prove to the unaffiliated that they can be "normal" and still be Jews. The irony, of course, is that "cool," disaffected Jews are often even more turned off by the transparency of Hillel's sales pitch; if they want "cool," they will head to the nearest fraternity party, not to their local house of worship. College-age Jews must learn to be Jewish before they can learn to be Jews going to a comedy club.

In order to assume their roles as fully functioning members of the American Jewish community, today's young adults must have an understanding of how Jewish values relate to a broad range of contemporary issues (be they personal, psychological, or religious). The Hillel marketers are right in thinking it unlikely that talmudic exploration alone will be sufficient to attract hordes of twenty-somethings bred on a steady diet of *Jerry Springer* and *Melrose Place*. What is needed urgently is a greater integration of the social and the religious. One of the most successful events in recent UCLA memory involved such integration: Jewish students, outraged by what they viewed as a misguided attempt to end affirmative action, joined forces with African American and Latino students and marched across campus in protest of California's recent Proposition 209.

More emphasis, too, should be placed on the importance of prayer. In our cynical age, American Jews have embraced secularism to a degree that prohibits profound introspection, and young Jews often will not pray because they cannot. Students must gain a broader awareness of what makes their tradition spiritually unique—they must be given a reason to recognize that Judaism is as vibrant and exciting a spiritual tradition as is, for example, Buddhism. In attempting to service a broad constituency of campus Jews, Hillel Shabbat services often pay too much attention to denominational correctness and too little to making the services more spiritually rich. It is of course wonderful that one Hillel might offer three separate services on any given Friday night, but less heartening when attendance at these services proves that form replaces content (i.e., the Reform service might be spiritually dead, but at least there's no *mechitza*).

A former JCSC friend of mine suggests that, as an alternative, Hillel might direct its resources to funding large numbers of Israel trips. He quite correctly notes the high correlation of campus Jewish involvement to those students newly returned from either a summer, semester, or year spent in the Middle East. But what would be the realistic prospect of widespread Jewish renewal brought about by these energized students, given the fact that they would be returning to campuses whose programmatic thrust is often vacuous, more concerned with image than with the substance that underlies the image? It is my suggestion that Hillels offer financial subsidies for the kinds of Israel experiences that will provide these students with the tools necessary to foster spiritual, ethical, and religious change in the campus Jewish community (and, by extension, in the American Jewish community at large). Hillel professionals might draft a contract with the Israel-bound student: "We will pay for a percentage of your experience (e.g., the airfare or the program tuition) in exchange for a pledge of

(continued on page 70)

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Campaign Finance Reform

Micah L. Sifry

"Big money in politics is the moral issue of our time."—*Senator Paul Wellstone*

Jews have long understood the importance of opening up American democracy to all. As Leonard Fein writes in *Where Are We? The Inner Life of America's Jews*, "both the welfare of the Jews and the condition of justice depend on the health of liberal, democratic pluralism." Thus the Jewish community has stood in the forefront of struggles for civil and equal rights, as well as many other significant social movements, out of a combination of moral and self-interest. Jews have acted from the belief that the best defense against social instability, the breeding ground of anti-Semitism, "is a politics that speaks to the needs of those who have been left out or left behind, a politics of inclusion."

But today we have a politics of exclusion—based on wealth. A tiny fraction of the population participates in the financing of campaigns, while the bulk of the citizenry is reduced to playing the role of spectators. That's a problem because, as we all know, in the current system of privately financed election campaigns money matters more than anything else. It determines who runs a serious campaign for office, what sorts of issues are raised, and how elected officials govern. Individuals can't run for office if they don't have a personal bankroll or connections to large numbers of wealthy donors. Our representatives are consumed by the money chase, becoming part-time legislators and full-time fund-raisers.

It is an open secret that Jewish donors participate in the current system in numbers far beyond their proportion in the population. According to J.J. Goldberg, author of *Jewish Power*, "Jews are one of the largest sources of Democratic financing, donating or raising as much as half of the party's presidential campaign funds." According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the leading watchdog group on money in politics, pro-Israel PACs and individuals gave $4.2 million to members of Congress in the 1996 cycle, more than any other single-issue group.

Wealth has fed a sense of Jewish political security in the United States. So let's not beat around the bush: if we change the system, will Jewish security diminish? Will Jewish influence on elected officials or on the issues Jews care most about lessen? No. A level financial playing field (we're not talking about unilateral disarmament here) can only invigorate other forms of political participation. "The Jewish community, because it votes disproportionately, volunteers disproportionately and runs for office disproportionately, will do well in any system," says Rabbi David Saperstein, head of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Jews in America have flourished in politics because of their engagement, activism, and the integrity of the causes they espouse. Thus, any reforms that make our political system more democratic and pluralistic should be "good for the Jews."

Is there any doubt that the system needs fundamental reform? This was the first billion-dollar-plus congressional election in American history—and the final campaign reports aren't even in yet. Senate and House candidates raised at least $575.3 million through October 14—an 11 percent increase over the last mid-term election in 1994. The various party committees reported raising $291.5 million in hard money, almost 25 percent more than they gathered in 1994. And both parties roped in $172.5 million in soft money contributions, a whopping 112.4 percent increase in their receipt of these huge, unregulated donations over the previous mid-term cycle. That adds up to more than a billion dollars, without even counting the additional money independently spent by various interest groups hoping to influence the election returns.

The vast bulk of this money flowed to congressional incumbents, who—not surprisingly—did very well on Election Day. In the House, where the disparity in funding between challengers and incumbents is typically huge, over 98 percent won re-election. More than 60 percent of House districts saw one candidate outspending the other by a margin of 10:1 or more. In the Senate, where the funding match-ups were occasionally more even, 90 percent of the incumbents won re-election. Overall, 95 percent of the candidates who spent the most money won—and in nearly every case where the higher spender lost it was because the victorious challenger had nearly as much money to spend.

As with past elections, the biggest sources for all this cash were a tiny elite, mostly representing business interests: Wall Street, bankers, tobacco, insurance, real estate, oil and gas companies, telephone utilities, etc. Just .25 percent of the population supplies 80 percent of the individual contributions to congressional campaigns. And this group is

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most unrepresentative of the country as a whole: 95 percent of big money contributors to the 1996 congressional campaigns were white, according to a recent academic survey supported by the Joyce Foundation. By contrast, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans make up 25 percent of the population. Eighty percent of the big donors were men, while women make up 51 percent of the population. Nearly half the donors were over the age of sixty, while just 13 percent of the public is sixty-five or older. Eighty-one percent of the donor class of 1996 had annual incomes of over $100,000; 20 percent of the whole group actually topped $500,000! In comparison, according to the IRS, in 1995 (the most current year for which data is available), only 4.6 percent of taxpayers filing returns declared income over $100,000. A minuscule .29 percent declared income over $500,000.

And the problem isn't just that the people who finance campaigns don't look like America. Their interests are also markedly different from those of average Americans. More than half of the donors in the Joyce survey said they support cutting taxes even if that means reducing public services (only one-third of the public agrees with that proposition). By a two-to-one margin, the donor class opposes cutting defense spending and supports free trade "even if jobs are lost." Pluralities reject national health insurance and disagree with spending more to reduce poverty.

The impact on governance is enormous. Those incumbents who worry about their re-election or political advancement tend to do the bidding of deep-pocketed donors—especially when the issues at stake are far from public consciousness. One can document a host of special favors sought by and granted to wealthy interests in the last year: alcohol producers rallying to block tougher drunk-driving standards; health insurers and HMOs watering down attempts to regulate the health care industry; polluters delaying the implementation of tougher air-quality standards and softening the White House's position on global warming; credit card agencies skewing the bankruptcy code to make it easier for them to collect from debtors; meat and poultry packers blocking efforts to strengthen food safety enforcement—the list goes on and on. And in every case we find the narrow interests of organized money swinging the vote against the broader public interest.

In a society that is at least formally dedicated to democracy and pluralism, never has there been such a tremendous gap between the American people and their political representatives. Turnout in the 1998 elections dropped again, from 38 percent of eligible voters in 1994 to just 36 percent this past November. People don't care to vote when they don't think their choices will make much difference in decisions that affect their lives. And polls consistently show that the public thinks their representatives are more responsive to the special interests who fund their campaigns than to their own constituents. Why bother pulling the lever in the voting booth when others, who vote with dollars, pull the strings?

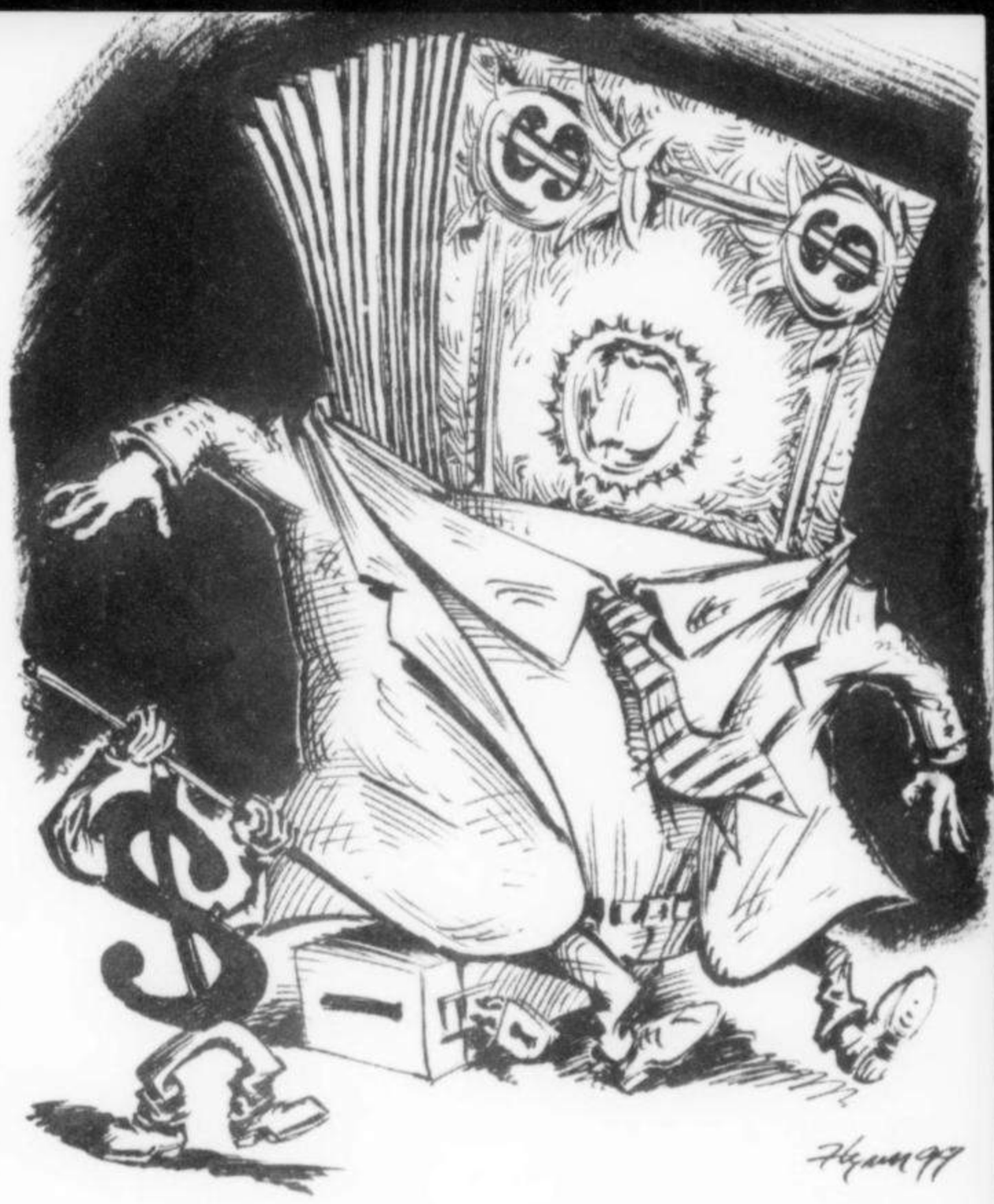


ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

Fortunately, the movement for comprehensive campaign finance reform in America is alive and well. In the last few years the activist community has begun to coalesce around a common long-range goal: Clean Money Campaign Reform—a new approach under which candidates who agree not to raise any private money and agree to abide by spending caps receive limited, but ample, public financing for their campaigns. Under this strictly voluntary system—voluntary to conform with Supreme Court precedent—candidates can qualify for Clean Money by first raising a relatively large number of small "qualifying contributions" from their districts and then agreeing to spending limits and to forego any private money (even their own). Additional public funds would be provided to Clean Money candidates who are outspent by privately financed opponents or targeted by outside groups with independent expenditures. Some of the public grant (for federal, if not state elections) would come in the form of free and discounted broadcast time. Clean Money Campaign Reform is a comprehensive approach that goes beyond merely providing public financing to candidates. "Soft money" would be banned. "Issue campaigns" posing as electioneering would be reined in.

Unlike more incremental approaches (like the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan bills which, at best, moderate the role of big money), Clean Money addresses each of the

major problems with the existing system of privately financed campaigns by creating an alternative, competitive campaign finance system alongside the current one. It stops the flow of special interest money into campaigns by creating an alternative source of financing that enables candidates to refuse all private contributions. It ends the money chase for candidates who can demonstrate a threshold level of popular support. It reduces and limits campaign spending by inducing candidates to voluntarily accept such limits. It opens up the system to more candidates, thus turning the tables on those who say campaign finance reform would limit free speech because candidates will no longer be deterred by the burden of big money fundraising. And by freeing candidates to meet and listen to voters and debate issues rather than spend most of their time buttering-up potential donors, it re-orients campaigns around average people and their organizations and gives voters the primary role in elections.



The cost of such a system would be about five dollars a year per average taxpayer to cover all congressional campaigns (and about the same amount for most state elections)—far less than what every one of us pays for in unjustified tax breaks, corporate welfare, and countless other boondoggles purchased with special interest campaign contributions. Though Clean Money is by constitutional necessity a voluntary system, it would be robust enough to attract the participation of most, if not all, candidates for office. Of course, no solution can close off every avenue of moneyed influence, but Clean Money Campaign Reform blocks the most corrupting path, that of large sums of private money given directly from special interests to candidates.

Is this reform politically viable? Voters in three states and legislators in a fourth certainly think so. In November 1996, by a margin of 56 to 44 percent, Maine became the first state in the nation to enact such a system into law by ballot initiative. Then, in June of 1997, lawmakers in Vermont passed similar legislation, with broad bipartisan support. And this past November, voters in Arizona and Massachusetts approved Clean Elections initiatives, by margins of 67 and 51 percent, respectively. Public opinion is clearly way ahead of the politicians when it comes to grappling with the public financing of campaigns.

As a political vehicle capable of exciting a wide variety of groups, Clean Money is already showing its potential. Grass-roots organizations like it because it empowers anyone who can mobilize a large base of support behind a candidate, regardless of whether that candidate has access to money. Some elected officials find it attractive because it liberates them from the fundraising rat-race and the perception of conflict of interest that permeates the existing system. Public interest groups favor it because they see the potential of electing candidates not beholden to powerful special interests. And some business leaders have begun to back it because they are tired of being constantly dunned for dollars by candidates.

But this does not mean the battle is won. While the public is ready to vote for far-reaching changes if offered them on the ballot, campaign finance reform is still viewed as a "second-tier" issue. More public education on the connections between money-in-politics and bread-and-butter concerns is needed. In addition, many elected officials still believe that they have nothing to fear if they continue to block efforts to reform the existing system—that they will not be punished at the polls. That perception has to be changed. And while the media does a fairly good job of reporting on aspects of the problem—detailing particular *quid pro quos*, highlighting which legislators are in the pockets of which industries—there remains an overarching cynicism in the press about the prospects for real reform.

The good news is, as the victories in Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont have shown, patient and deliberate coalition building and legislative maneuvering can pay off in significant ways. Activists in more than forty states are working on building their own Clean Money coalitions, and the victories this November have given their efforts a real boost.

Many Jews are already at the forefront of this struggle. Senator Paul Wellstone has taken the lead in drafting model Clean Money legislation for federal elections, and Senator Russ Feingold—a leader in the fight to shut down soft money—has endorsed Clean Elections as his long-term goal. Prominent donors like George Soros, philanthropist and founder of the Open Society Institute, Arnold Hiatt, former CEO of Stride-Rite, and New York real-estate developers Douglas Durst and Bruce Ratner are important supporters of the movement in the states. With the help of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, rabbis and social action leaders in Arizona and Massachusetts were deeply involved in the successful ballot initiatives there this fall, and the center is currently producing a comprehensive program guide to help congregations work effectively on the issue at the state level. Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center, says that the movement for reform has to focus on fundamental values. "It is illogical and foolhardy for us to expect just results from an unjust system. What does it say to those in the religious community who are taught that it is our obligation to provide a voice for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, when it is precisely those people who are being systematically excluded from the political arena today" he asks. "If we take that obligation seriously, then campaign finance reform has to be our top priority." ❑

For information on getting involved with Clean Money Campaign Reform, contact Public Campaign, a nonprofit, non-partisan organization located at 1320 19th St NW, Suite M-1, Washington, DC, 20036, call 888-293-5755 or visit their website at www.publicampaign.org.

Issues of the "New Rich"

Choosing to Make Money Matter

Stephen Goldbart



Most of us think of money as unpleasant, dirty, corrupt—at best a necessary resource for daily living. People whose politics are progressive or left-leaning often can be ambivalent, if not hostile, to people of wealth: if you have "made it" then you are not to be trusted—you have crossed over to the other side.

Not surprisingly, this degree of discomfort with people of wealth has had a markedly negative impact on the effectiveness of many progressive organizations in obtaining both funding and political support. If you have the attitude that most people with money are, in fact, representatives of the problems you are trying to change or solve, you are not likely to garner much sympathy and support for your financial needs. Seeing your potential ally as an enemy is not the best way to make many friends.

But exactly who is "them" and who is "us"? What happens when you, or one of your friends or relatives, has financial resources beyond anyone's twenty-something fantasy or imagination? What happens when the children of the Sixties become wealthy? Take a close look around and you will find a rapidly increasing population of baby boomers coming of financial age. This is in part the consequence of an unprecedented inter-generational transfer of wealth, estimated to be as much as eight trillion dollars over the next two decades. Combine this mind-bending fact with the emergence of an expanded upper-middle class of people who have achieved financial success in the world of work. Dubbed "The New Rich" by *Newsweek* magazine, many of these people have made big money in the Silicon Valley gold rush or in the wildly "bull" stock market of the Nineties.

As a psychologist who has been practicing for over twenty years in the San Francisco Bay Area, I have watched my baby boomer patients—many of whom were part of the 1960s counter-culture—financially come of age. Unlike members of the old rich—the power elite who have always had money and are used to having money—these New Rich find their experience of having money to be a mixed blessing. Certainly achieving financial success is central to the American Dream. But having money, particularly for the baby boomer generation, is not an endpoint: money does not make for instant satisfaction, happiness, fulfillment, or the feeling that one's life is making a difference. Many of these baby boomers still experience a yearning inside themselves, a voice within that expresses their wish to make a difference, wanting to improve the condition of their immediate family and of the larger community.

Some of these now-wealthy boomers find the answer to their soul-searching by becoming active in philanthropy and projects of social concern. But many others find themselves trapped in angst and indecision: while they understand how the achievement of financial success affords a broader range of choices, they feel confused and uncertain as to what choices to make. Listen to Andrea's story: Andrea, a forty-three-year-old school guidance counselor, spent the year of 1995 caring for her terminally ill father. Active in local ecology projects and a mother of two school-age kids, Andrea's appreciation of the "Dow" was more in

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

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line with the Tao of Lao Tze than with the New York Exchange. When her father passed away later that year, she found herself the owner/manager of a portfolio worth about three million dollars. She and her husband, a public high school teacher, were overwhelmed by the change. As Andrea slowly began to take hold of what she now possessed, she was of two minds: one person in her was excited about having money; another person in her wasn't sleeping nights. She felt anxious and ashamed—had she taken a moral fall? Does having this money—and not giving it all away—make her an instant "bad person" who is in dire need of morality therapy?

There was no mistaking that virtually overnight she had become a different person from her peers: everybody in Andrea's life worked hard to eke out a middle-class existence. She felt distant from her closest friends and colleagues because she feared their jealousy, envy, and downright judgment of her. So she and her husband decided on the most practical solution: to "hide out." To not tell anyone about the extent of their inheritance. Secretly they'd give to causes and charities. In order to feel safe, she tried very hard to "pass" as a regular working person, to be her old self, to not show off. And so Andrea prayed that nothing would be leaked, that no one would find out that they were, at least by the standards of their community, "wealthy"! But as Andrea felt compelled to hide her wealth she also began to feel disconnected from herself and from her personal power. Instead of feeling on top of the world, she felt confused and guilt-ridden.

Why should the "affluenza" of the well-off be of concern to you? It is easy to feel distant—if not irritated—in considering the emotional troubles of those people who have money. For most of us, the notion of financial independence is a fanciful idea: it's winning the lottery, or something we watch at the movies, or read about in tabloid stories of people like Donald Trump. We often perceive the wealthy as self-centered, driven individuals who have little real concern for their fellow human beings or for the ecology of the planet; their philanthropy seems to spring from the hope of tax benefits rather than altruism. Because of this perception, however, the achievement of financial independence can turn a regular person into a hard-to-reach, non-empathic other. Like images on a movie screen, the wealthy are no longer "us" but a distinctly different "them"—people we may admire, envy, or scorn, but people who are distant and apart from us. The fear of a class difference can actually create a class distinction that makes communication challenging, if not impossible.

Consider this: these people of new wealth—many of whom may be your friends, relatives, and colleagues—are a cohort who are likely to become as powerful as, if not more powerful than, the relatively small cadre of the "power elite" who traditionally controlled money and power in America. What is so interesting and potentially very exciting about the New Rich is that they represent a lateral extension of money and power in America. Like Andrea, many of these people are not from the traditional power elite, but from the professional/technical ranks and the broader middle class. Having not grown up being fed by the proverbial silver spoon, the lives of these people are closer to the lives of the average working person. As Peter Karoff of the Philanthropic Initiative said in a recent *New York Times* feature on giving, "What you've got are large numbers of families and individuals who have never had a legacy of wealth and are just beginning in philanthropy ... people are starting projects directly out of their life experiences. They are using a whole new language and a whole new approach to giving."

These newly-wealthy have the potential to be a powerful force of change, but only if they are not overly inhibited by guilt and internal conflict.

These newly-wealthy individuals and families have the potential to be a powerful force of change politically and socially, but only if they are not overly inhibited by guilt and internal conflict. A confused, alienated, unfocused group of newly wealthy Americans will waste many of their powerful resources. A psychologically-empowered and socially-awakened group of this kind could have a huge impact on the quality of life in America. Why shouldn't these children of the Sixties—who are finally coming into money and power—become the leaders of social forces that will help develop the sort of new "bottom line" of compassion and social justice proposed by the Politics of Meaning?

"Giving back to the community" has always been part of the psychology of having money. But the psychological motives and values underlying this philanthropy are often mixed, a complex interplay of altruism and narcissism. If we only view people of wealth as either being narcissistically consumed with themselves or as people who are living the life of the buddha of compassion—well, we're missing the reality that most of these newly wealthy people are somewhere on a continuum between self-interest and a desire to achieve some higher meaning for their lives.

Because our culture supports individual achievement while offering relatively little reward for social activism, it's often too easy for the wealthy to use the statement "I do it because it feels good to me" as a good-enough reason for philanthropy. We as a culture should not accept that reasoning. Instead, we need to support those with wealth who really care about the impact of their philanthropic dollar on

the projects they fund, not just the impact of philanthropy on the bottom line of their 1040 return.

The psychological issues around having money can become a wake-up call for previously inhibited or hidden altruism. Once cultivated, such altruism can flourish as a resource for the betterment of the individual, their family, and for society. But, for this altruism to be used most effectively, we must ask who will be the beneficiaries of this giving, and what kinds of philanthropic strategies will be supported by it. For many, philanthropy is a response to either local organizations that share particular personal concerns of the giver (often in the realms of creativity or artistry such as art galleries or the opera), or is an ameliorative response to the pain and suffering of an identified individual or group. We are all too aware of the kinds of tragedies and sorrows that affect one or another group of people in our society or abroad. Certainly these are reasonable aims of charity.

Unfortunately, less attention is paid to philanthropic causes with the mission of seriously speaking to and changing the source of chronic social issues. Here I think of strategies at the regional or national level. One example of such a strategy may be providing vocational training and placement programs that are well connected and supported by a network of businesses and industries. This kind of "bigger picture" strategic philanthropy is targeted at re-making the bottom line that underlies our social ills. Since many of the baby boomers were influenced by the social conscience of the Sixties, as a group they are more likely to be sensitive to, and potentially in support of, "taking the long view" when it comes to strategic philanthropy. By raising their understanding about the possibilities of strategic giving, and by appreciating and accepting the complexity of their motivations, we can encourage these new people of wealth to steward their resources and become a catalytic force of positive change in our society.

If we want the vast resources of the New Rich to have a real strategic impact, their very personal involvement in the stewardship of their wealth is crucial. Keep in mind that people with money, particularly those who have primarily earned rather than inherited it, are typically assertive individuals who are used to making a difference in their work lives. Paul Schervish, a Boston College sociologist whose specialty is the study of the wealthy, talks about their sense of "hyper-agency"—the ability to be the master of your destiny and get things done. When having money leads to retirement or semi-retirement, they still have the energy



and vitality of hyper-agency that is in search of new avenues for expression.

The New Rich, for the most part, are people who have achieved a degree of financial success relatively early in life, not in their seventies or eighties but in their thirties and forties. We are talking about people who still have plenty of time and energy to be productive. Their questions about money and meaning relate very directly to what they could be doing in their daily lives. Many are used to hands-on involvement, and they want this same kind of involvement with whatever they are going to do next. They need to ask themselves whether they should keep on doing the work that they have always done, or stretch the envelope of their usual routines and get involved in new endeavors, new arenas that can provide a broader sense of accomplishment and meaning. Here's the story of a man whose success in the computer industry led to such a crisis of meaning and identity.

John woke up one Monday morning and had the sudden and surprising realization that he didn't have to go to work. His computer software company had "gone public" the prior month, providing him with a more than comfortable financial picture. At age forty-four, John had achieved financial success beyond his wildest dreams. Coming from a lower-middle-class family background—with parents who had worked hard their whole lives and had little to show for it—made his success all the more striking.

Yet having achieved his pot of gold had turned out to be more emotionally complicated than he had ever imagined. He felt happy and empowered by his success, and was letting himself enjoy the material benefits of having money. But much of the time he felt uneasy, unsure of his new social status and position. Since finishing college, John had worked and worked and worked, usually sixty hours a week or more. His wife, a nutritionist for the county government,

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had also worked fifty-plus hours a week. What John understood about daily life was faithfully going to work, striving to make his company financially successful, trying to create a team spirit among his co-workers. Now that he had achieved financial success, he did not really know what to do with himself. He had ideas about how to expand his business, but just making it bigger didn't satisfy his longings or reduce his sense of angst. Building a business was no longer a satisfying way to spend the majority of his time: "been there, done that." But then what? John was drifting at sea, in waters that he did not know how to navigate.

For both Andrea and John, life as they had known it had changed: achieving financial success is an undeniable turning point in life, one in which questions of value and meaning take center stage. There are new opportunities in life if the psychological impediments can be overcome—including old beliefs, routines, and patterns that inhibit or block change. John needed a new turf on which to exercise his well-honed capacity for hyper-agency; he was not going to feel satisfied with a passive role in his daily pursuits. Andrea's inheritance gave her the opportunity to expand and evolve her identity in the world. Now the social concerns she felt every night when she watched the television news were issues she could potentially do something about.

But first John and Andrea needed to see themselves as different people—people who could accept their money as a resource that could actually make a difference. Their legacies—what will be communicated to their children and their children's children—could not be established by simply having a large house and a large bank account. For people like John and Andrea, traversing this rite of passage to a more empowered sense of self takes more than the removal of psychological obstacles to change. To fully make this transition, they need to re-evaluate their values, dreams, and aspirations in light of the resources that they have today—not the picture they had of themselves when they were twenty or even thirty. John discovered that being an active participant in philanthropy—which led to his creation of a charitable foundation—was both challenging and satisfying. He felt energized and excited about these new interests in much the same way he did when he was struggling to develop his business. Andrea's passion was ignited by the socially responsible investment movement, leading her to enlist as a board member of a community development bank. With these ventures they each started to become active in the world in a way they never had before.

None of these transformations comes easily. Besides facing up to our private psychological issues, we have to find ways of talking with our friends and family about money matters: this means overcoming concerns with envy, jealousy, guilt, and power struggles. Communicating one's concerns about having and/or inheriting money can open a Pandora's box. As a practicing psychologist, I have found that money issues are far more difficult for people to talk about than sexual problems or relationship issues. And when the topic of money surfaces within the family or with friends, the results are often painful and explosive. Sibling rivalry evolves into outright warfare: Should the always dependent, always failing brother get more money than the always hard-working sister? What about the sibling who is chronically coping with a serious drug abuse problem—can you trust that he or she will manage not to squander the inheritance? Money issues are one of the key reasons for divorce, as well as for the breakdown of family unity following death or loss.

Unfortunately, for many people, shopping sprees and endless weekends away take the place of talking about these nuts and bolts issues and doing the necessary psychological work to resolve them. Having all the things you want and taking great vacations does not in itself provide for the deeper sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that is the benefit of altruistic behavior. Even someone like Jerry Seinfeld may tire of driving his fifty-plus cars up and down the runway of his Santa Monica airplane hangar storage facility! As with addiction to alcohol or drugs, the spending of money can ameliorate immediate feelings of anxiety and emptiness, but at the price of disabling meaning and connection within ourselves and to the larger world in which we live.

These kinds of psychological issues inhibit the New Rich from fully owning their money and the incredible range of choices that go with it. What a waste of talent, power, and promise! People like Andrea and John are representative of an emerging, financially empowered social class who could make a dramatic difference—in their lives, the lives of their families, communities, and the larger society. But like so many of us, they suffer from a limited vision of what is possible, from the same kind of surplus powerlessness that infects most of us. Having money doesn't automatically empower them to really do anything outside of the realm of their daily lives. And even in their daily lives, they often find themselves unsure of how to improve themselves, or how to improve their relationships. Far from being a panacea, having and inheriting money frequently heralds a life crisis—or at minimum, a re-evaluation—in which people have the opportunity to seriously question their values and lifestyle choices.

American society is in need of ideas and methodologies that speak to the values and meaning issues of those who are fortunate to have achieved financial success. In my work, I try to enable people who have money to fully appreciate the choices they have which can improve their lives, the lives of their children, their work relationships, and their community. Together with Joan Difuria, co-founder of the Money, Meaning, and Choices Institute, I help people transcend the taboo of talking about money by encouraging them to confront and work through the often painful issues relating to the fair distribution of money to family and non-family members. We develop action plans that recognize family diversity,

(continued on page 66)

IN GOD WE TRUST

Who Owns Wealth?

A Pesach Perspective

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

Why do progressive people rebel almost viscerally, from deep within their souls, against the accumulation of vast wealth by individuals?

Why shouldn't Bill Gates, inventor of the world's dominant computer operating system, be entitled to his $40 billion? Why shouldn't corporate executives make millions if their decisions earn billions in shareholder profits?

Judaism explains why: because "the earth belongs to God" (Psalm 24:1), not to Pharaoh. All of Judaism's economic ideals of stewardship, *tzedakah* and social responsibility—what we call the "Torah of Money"—are built on this principle.

And so was the Pesach revolution! According to Shmuel of Sokhokhow, a Hassidic rabbi of the early twentieth century (see Meir Tamari's *The Challenge of Wealth*), we endured slavery in Egypt in order to learn that wealth comes from God, not from the Nile River. Even after liberation, that hard-earned lesson needed restating:

> When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in … beware lest your heart grow haughty … and you say to yourselves, 'My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.' Remember that it is … your God who gives you the power to get wealth.… (Deut. 8:12-18)

The Torah, however, embeds this principle within an alienating "Lordship" theology: God "hardens Pharaoh's heart" and prolongs Egypt's agony simply to display Divine power; God drowns the Egyptians to "assert My authority against Pharaoh"; God showers down manna in the wilderness so the Hebrews will "know that I the Lord am your God." For most of us, such images of an autocratic Lord defy belief and offend our humanistic and democratic sensibilities.

Should the principle that "the earth belongs to God" therefore be discarded as mere obeisance to The Boss—or can we redeem the bedrock of the Torah of Money from its antiquated "Lordship" theology? To do so, we take inspiration from three contemporary Jews:

• Albert Einstein, the paradigmatic "genius" of the twentieth century, was nevertheless firm in his insistence that "in science … the work of the individual is so bound up with that of his [*sic*] scientific predecessors and contemporaries that it appears almost as an impersonal product of his generation" (see Ronald W. Clark's *Einstein, The Life and Times*). As a matter of conviction, Einstein repeatedly affirmed the collective nature of scientific progress.

• Gar Alperovitz, a member of TIKKUN's editorial board, has expressed this perception more bluntly (in *Israel Horizons*, Spring, 1992): "When a bright young computer inventor produces an innovation that makes him a millionaire, he commonly thinks he 'deserves' all that he receives. His 'invention,' however, is literally unthinkable without the previous … centuries of knowledge, skills, wealth. He picks the best fruit of a tree which stands on a huge mountain of human contribution."

• Finally, Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream has broadened the principle to all business activity (in *We Gave Away a Fortune*, ed. Mogil, Slepian and Woodrow): "I always felt like we were holding the business in trust for the community. After all, the community allows you to exist. People in the community buy your product. They provide the infrastructure; they provide all the resources you use; they provide everything except the idea."

Conclusion: The humbling recognition that "the earth belongs to God" translates into a radicalizing recognition of the collective effort involved in the generation of wealth. Within our wealth-worshipping culture (the very idioms of which—"stars," "models," "idols"—bespeak a modern idolatry), the assertion of this reality is deeply radical, for it declares individual wealth to be neither a right, nor a privilege, nor a measure of individual human worth, but a form of stewardship, freighted with responsibilities.

From its outset, the Pesach story affirms this perspective. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams of abundance and famine, Joseph is made prime minister and proceeds, in God's name, to collectivize Egypt's harvest: wealth that is God's, i.e., created by the whole society, will be used to sustain the whole society through hard times.

Then there arises a "new king" who does "not know Joseph"—who does not embrace the collective wisdom of the Torah of Money. His obtuseness brings his kingdom to ruin, as the Jewish struggle for economic justice broadens from the decision-making of a prime minister to the decision-making of a whole people.

In an America whose wealth is polarized as never before, this tale bears repeating—at our seder tables and beyond. ❑

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ILLUSTRATION BY LAWRENCE BUSH

PERSONAL ESSAY

The Fireman's Child

David Mamet

We search for that to which we may enslave ourselves—whether it is a machine, e.g., the computer; a human being, e.g., a dictator; or a supposedly perfect human mechanism, i.e., a law or a fundamentalist religion or an organization—and call it divine, beyond possibility of error. Our subjugation, however it might prove painful, destructive, or absurd, is denominated the highest reason.

We know that any one legislator must be hypocritical, and, not improbably, will act in a venal, criminal, or questionable manner (just as any other citizen), but we feel that agglomeration somehow improves—nay cleanses; nay purifies—the legislator, rendering the legislative body demi-gods of probity, perception, and grace.

A fireman and his wife adopted a boy.

They had contracted with his birth mother, a single woman who did not wish or was not able to raise the child.

The adoptive family raised the boy from birth.

When he turned four, a man appeared who claimed and proved to be the boy's biologic father. He had been the lover of the birth mother. They had separated before the man knew of her pregnancy. On learning now, almost five years later, of the child's existence, he sued for custody, and the court awarded it to him.

The boy was taken, by court order, from a loving, secure home, the only home he had ever known, from adoring parents and siblings, and awarded in custody to a man he had never seen.

There exist photographs and videotapes of the child being taken, screaming, from his home, his fingers pried from the only mother he would ever know.

In the background we see sheriff's deputies, several of them with their faces buried in their hands.

The decision outraged reason, justice, human concern for the child, and community sentiment. Its rectitude resided only in the mind of the judge, who saw the law as something other-than-human (that is, as something perfect); who sought, in a difficult case, to excuse his cowardice through adherence to the supposed principles of that mechanism his actions reduced to absurdity.

But what would have been done had I been a member of that crowd, or had I been that neighbor who pried the child's fingers from his mother?

For the mechanism did not exist—

To say "stop" would have required, on the part of the neighbor, of a deputy, of an onlooker, an act of vast heroism. For they could not have imagined, in that heat of passion—nor, indeed, can I at this safe remove—how such an act could have come to any healthy, happy, or positive end. And that is, of course, the greatest heroism; to perform an act for its own sake because it is right, because the actor knows—not in reference to an authorized source, but in the absence of any such reference—that the act is right.

How can the individual differentiate between this knowledge, leading to heroism, and that consciousness of mission which resulted in destruction and outrage?

Perhaps the true act of heroism is one of submission, rather than of assault; as, in the case of the child, the essence of the heroic act would have been to *side with* him. With such an intention the component of *resistance to authority* would have been small, the essential act being one of *surrender*, of, in effect, a confession of powerlessness in the face of human error. And thus, finally, of humility before God.

In the O.J. Simpson case we saw applauded *subjugation to the will of the state*, where those unhappy with the verdict attempted to rationalize away their confusion or dissatisfaction thusly: "The state is superior. And its laws are just. We cannot, as individuals, know Right until it has been passed through some engine of abstraction."

The individual's sense of security is, in this case, determined by his ability to accept the absurd as being the workings of a greater intellect than his own; or, at the least—in the instance in question—a lamentable application of a principle the protection of which is of such importance that subscription to momentary cruelty or nonsense in its name is not only necessary but in fact praiseworthy.

How can there be independent action without independent thought? How can there be independent thought in the face of screaming demands for conformity and unanimity of the mass culture?

Were we to destroy all mass communication and disband the schools, could the result be a civilization less tribal, superstitious, and pre-literate than that in which we live?

The case of the fireman's child was an example of that savagery which the Torah came into being to mark the end—infant sacrifice as the approved action of the ignorant in the face of the unknowable. ❑

David Mamet is the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of Oleanna, *and* Glengarry Glen Ross*; his films include* The Postman Always Rings Twice *and* The Untouchables. *This essay is excerpted from* Essays *forthcoming from The Free Press.*

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A Spirituality of Resistance

Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth

Roger S. Gottlieb



ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Spiritual teachings offer us peace in place of pain. Or at least they offer us a way to accept and be at peace with the inevitable distress that comes from being alive. After my first child died at the age of two months, I went through a period of shrinking from the sight of children. Yet I liked kids and didn't want to go through life feeling envious whenever I encountered them. I asked myself what I could do. *"It's simple,"* I realized; *"when I see a child and start to feel that gnawing bitterness, I will thank God that I have eyesight to see them. Some people, after all, are blind."* This was a spiritual approach: it made me a better person and made me happier. It took nothing away from anyone else, but instead increased the world's positive resources.

If we choose to follow a spiritual path, we face a dilemma. On the one hand, my awareness of the generalized suffering in the world—of the Holocaust and other genocides, and of the ecocide that threatens us all—makes me feel decidedly *unpeaceful*. I'd rather not be aware of them. Various forms of escape are so attractive, and seem so natural, in a world like ours. On the other hand, spiritual growth cannot be accomplished while I'm screening out the pains and dangers around me. This response will thwart my spiritual aspirations and leave me no better off than when I began. A way out of this dilemma requires that we face—and resist—that which frightens us the most.

My own search for spiritual peace began as a child. I might come upon it unexpectedly on a brilliant spring afternoon, when instead of taking the bus home from elementary school I would walk the one and a half miles back to my house. Every tree, flowering bush, and blade of grass of this well-kept suburban setting seemed wonderfully, almost painfully, alive. And that almost-but-not-quite pain mixed with enough joy to float my little body back to my slightly anxious mother, home wondering why I hadn't gotten off the school bus.

As I got older I explored Mediterranean islands, hung out in tiny tribal settlements in northern Pakistan, and trekked through the Himalayas. Living as a young man with no responsibilities, far from the industrial madness that seemed to be driving everyone crazy, I discovered an ever-deeper experience of serenity: that same wonderful, almost painful, sense of being alive; a simple joy in every leaf, in the glow of stars and moon, in the touch of my lover's hand. I was also helped by psychedelic chemicals that were conducive to deep feelings of peace, belonging, and openness. Under their influence, my heart opened not just to this or that leaf or river, but to the entire cosmos.

So I have known these moments, treasured them, and thanked the spirits for them. Yet at the same time there has almost always been a little voice that comes in somewhere during the experience and starts to ask painful questions. *"Of course, this all feels wonderful. The world is beautiful: that tree, this piece of music, your lover's breast. But what about the Others? What about the people who aren't having such a great time?"*

My awareness of the Others has taken many forms. It began, I suppose, on train rides to New York from my home in White Plains. The last few miles, before the cavernous

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ILLUSTRATION BY SANTIAGO CARBONELL / PRAXIS ARTE INTERNACIONAL

confusion of Grand Central Station, the track ran through the middle of Harlem's black ghetto. The blocks of tenements riveted me. I peered at shabbiness, dirt, laundry drying on back porches, peeled paint, tired old cars, junk-filled yards. And the people glimpsed casually from the train window against which my boy's nose was pushed seemed tired, old at any age, and beaten down.

It all made such a contrast to the brilliant green lawns on my street, my friends' immaculate split-levels. I couldn't see any reason why my family and the other kids at school should be so much better off. It seemed obvious that the people in Harlem, crammed into those ugly buildings, lacking so much that I had, didn't deserve their fate. And it was simultaneously clear that my parents, my friends, and I didn't really deserve what we had either. As I passed through Harlem for those fleeting moments, I wondered if I was right to really enjoy what I had while these other people had so much less.

I couldn't figure out what I felt about a world that was set up this way; and I didn't know how to be thoroughly at home here, full of unmixed joy at all the goodies I enjoyed, when I couldn't help but see how different it was for others.

It reminded me of those who, having been spared in a car crash which killed four acquaintances, would say, *"It's a miracle that I wasn't killed."* *"Some miracle,"* I'd think, *"you weren't taken and all the Others are dead. What kind of miracle is that?"*

* * *

We have feelings of peace or joy. These feelings, we want to say, prove how beautiful, how holy, the universe is. Or perhaps the feelings call up images of a more personal sense of the divine: of God the compassionate Father/Mother, of Jesus the Savior, of the Grace of Allah. The feelings then become signs of God's perfection and love, of the deep protectiveness with which a Guiding Force holds us.

For me, in between these feelings of love or serenity and the assertion of perfection and God's love, there lies an often uncrossable gap: all I know about the pain, cruelty, and injustice that permeates this life, all the suffering for which I can find no justification, rationale, or excuse.

I am concerned that to achieve spiritual peace I will have to accept what should not be accepted: that I will be told to concentrate on myself, and forget about others; or that I will be reassured that all this pain is encompassed by Forces and Realities that somehow make up for it. I cannot respond in any of these ways. I seek to live on this earth, without having to rely on promises of aid and comfort from Cosmic Forces. And I cannot forget the Others, or the threats to myself and my children. I don't see how I can accept the world, or approve of it, when these other realities are as genuine as any experiences of mystical delight or tranquillity I might have. To find a peaceful heart, I need a spirituality in which the world's unjustified pain is not denied, avoided, or forgotten. For me, the spiritual challenge is to combine moral and political commitments that direct us to respond to injustice and needless suffering with spiritual teachings about serenity and wisdom. In the act of resistance, I believe, an answer to this challenge can be found.

* * *

In *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*, the contemporary American Buddhist teachers Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield put the spiritual challenge this way:

> Wisdom replaces ignorance in our minds when we realize that happiness does not lie in the accumulation of more and more pleasant feelings, that gratifying craving does not bring us a feeling of wholeness or completion. It simply leads to more craving and more aversion. When we realize in our own experience that happiness comes not from reaching out but from letting go, not from seeking pleasurable experience but from opening in the moment to what is true, this transformation of understanding then frees the energy of compassion within us. Our minds are no longer bound up in pushing away pain or holding on to pleasure. Compassion becomes the natural response of an open heart.

The question is: what am I letting in and what am I keeping out? Isn't there a difference between letting go of my own desires, and letting go of my concern for others? Give up my own desires—for fame, higher salary, some free time, more sex—this I understand. But what would it mean to "let go" of my hope that poor people might have a better life? or to "open my heart" to the realities of abused children or the dolphins suffocating in two-mile-long fishing nets?

What might we have to screen out—and what might we have to add on top—to let go of them?

The well-known American spiritual teacher Ram Dass once said that for him the essential task of spiritual life, regardless of circumstances, is to "quiet my mind, open my heart, and relieve the suffering that I see around me." Supported by his belief that the universe is to be trusted, that it is worth our 'faith,' Ram Dass acts to end suffering while remaining unattached to the outcome of his actions. He writes:

> Somehow I have faith in the universe—I'm not sure where it comes from—even with all the horror and the torture and so on. This is hard to say because it's morally reprehensible to even think that the people who died in the Holocaust are, from a soul point of view, on an evolutionary path in which that experience was functional. That sounds too horrible to consider. But that's the part that isn't humanistic about the spiritual path. I have such a deep conviction about that, and it's part of what allows me to be in the presence of suffering. If somebody is suffering, even though I will do my best to relieve them, there's another part of me that trusts that the suffering is in the greater good and if I could see, I could understand.

The belief Ram Dass expresses here takes us far beyond the reality of the earth. He later admits that "certain things are not reversible—like what we're doing to the forests and species, which will disappear...." In the case of the irreversibility of ecological damage it's clear that even Ram Dass' own metaphysical view cannot accommodate the slaughter of non-human innocents. The human-centered view that sees the entire universe as a learning ground for people is a little hard to apply to species made extinct and whole ecosystems poisoned.

What is more poignant is that this extremely intelligent and generous man admits quite candidly that the core of his teaching—the necessity to open the heart to the world's pain—depends on his belief that we (humans, anyway) are all on a cosmic trip of spiritual evolution.

The pain is real, but for the "greater good."

What would have happened, I wonder, if he had lost that faith? Would he still have opened to what was going on around him? Is it truly openness if to sustain it we have to believe that the pain is somehow justified? That, like the irritability of the teething infant or the distress of childbirth, the suffering is intimately connected to a Greater Good? Ram Dass is no escapist. He has set up foundations to help the blind and sat in rooms with dying AIDS patients. But when we believe suffering is "all to the good," then it is damped down—as we might do to a fire burning too fast when we toss some water on it and reduce the air flow—by a metaphysics which puts it all In Perspective.

Of course it takes a certain kind of deep strength to accept that the world is the way it is. Denials, avoidance, hysteria, numbness to the pain involved, we might say, are ways of not accepting the facts. That is, of not having the emotional courage to be with the dark truths of our time. But acceptance that something is going on is very different from accepting the thing itself, approving of it, or feeling that a universe in which it takes place deserves our blessing.

In place of an acceptance that is passive, or that hides from the facts, we can offer resistance. In a spirituality of resistance evil is not avoided, wished away, or neutralized by a metaphysics that promises that it will be All Right in the End. In this spiritual realm we can fully experience the deepest of joys because we engage directly with unjust suffering by opposing it. In the act of resistance, our acceptance of cruelty, injustice, and unnecessary death is made complete—we embrace them by seeking their end. Why is resistance so powerful? Because in the act of resistance we fully engage that which frightens and depresses us the most. What we would avoid, deny, submit to, or go along with is brought into full reality. We no longer have to feel that it is too much, that we cannot tolerate a world in which it exists, or that we have to let it command our obedience. We can open our hearts in full acceptance of the world, not by telling others or ourselves that there is some cosmic meaning for all this pain, but by seeking to do something about it.

* * *

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Just what is resistance?

To begin with, to resist is to oppose superior and threatening powers in a context of injustice, oppression, or violence. When we resist we cannot be neutral, or tolerantly accept that everyone's viewpoint is equally valid. When we fight back against rape, or concentration camps, or environmental ruin, the lines are drawn.

Nevertheless, while resistance means we take a stand in the face of a painful reality, it is not always clear exactly what should be done. Nor does it mean that the people we oppose are unredeemably evil (though they sometimes are). People may take part in unredeemably evil activities, even though they are more frightened, numb, or weak than they are outright ethical monsters. What resistance does mean is that I answer my students' question—"But who is to judge what is right or wrong?"—by saying "We are; each and every one of us." We make the judgment, even though the situation may be terribly complex. We oppose the evil, even as we try to have compassion for the evildoers.

To resist is to act with the aim of lessening the collective injustice, oppression, and violence we face. We are not resisting if all we are trying to do is get the pain shifted somewhere else. Working to have the toxins stored in the next town over, or buying sun block when the thinning ozone makes the sunlight dangerous—these things might be prudent, or good for my health. But they do not really count as resistance to the massive forces of environmental destruction. Individual self-protection poses no threat to the powers-that-be, but seeks to accommodate those forces, to coexist with them.

Because the engines of environmental destruction, like many other types of evil, are strong, entrenched, and often mighty rich, and because we carry conflicting obligations, time pressures, and simple fatigue, it often seems easier or safer not to resist. Thus if we are to act, we will need to overcome the temptations of fear or laziness, of complacency and habit. These temptations, as I know very well from my own life, are continual. Unless we are in the throes of some extreme situation—the oil company at the gates of our little village, as it were; or unless we are heroes, or just plain tirelessly devoted—we will give in to those temptations.

But that is not what we always do. While the dominant social forces make it ever so easy to go along with business as usual, we may come to realize that these same forces are controlling, constraining, and limiting us. Since resistance involves throwing off limits, there can be an element of gladness, even joy, when we engage in it. Instead of conforming to the ways things are, living day to day with the gnawing feeling that something is not right, we refuse to go along. We attempt to halt or slow, if only in the most minuscule ways, the machinery of ruin. And when we do so we often experience the rush of feeling which comes from liberating the energy long buried by our suppressed awareness that we have been part of something we know to be wrong. In this light, the deep satisfaction expressed by some Jews who resisted the Nazis makes perfect sense. They chose to resist—and to just that extent, no matter what the forces arrayed against them, they had become free.

In fact, the emotional and spiritual meaning of the Holocaust can be profoundly changed when we think of it not solely as the history of how the Jews were slaughtered but also of how they fought back. The images of victimization remain, but along with the piles of dead bodies we see resistance fighters. Auschwitz is identified not only with the millions who were gassed, but also with the organized network of inmates who blew up one of the crematoria. Poring over the historical record, we see that the Jews sang songs to celebrate their survival, smuggled forbidden food into the ghettos, blew up Nazi troop trains and at times expended superhuman courage and determination just to stay alive. These resistors show us that despite all the pain inflicted by violent oppression, freedom is always possible. Not freedom from the situation, but freedom within it.

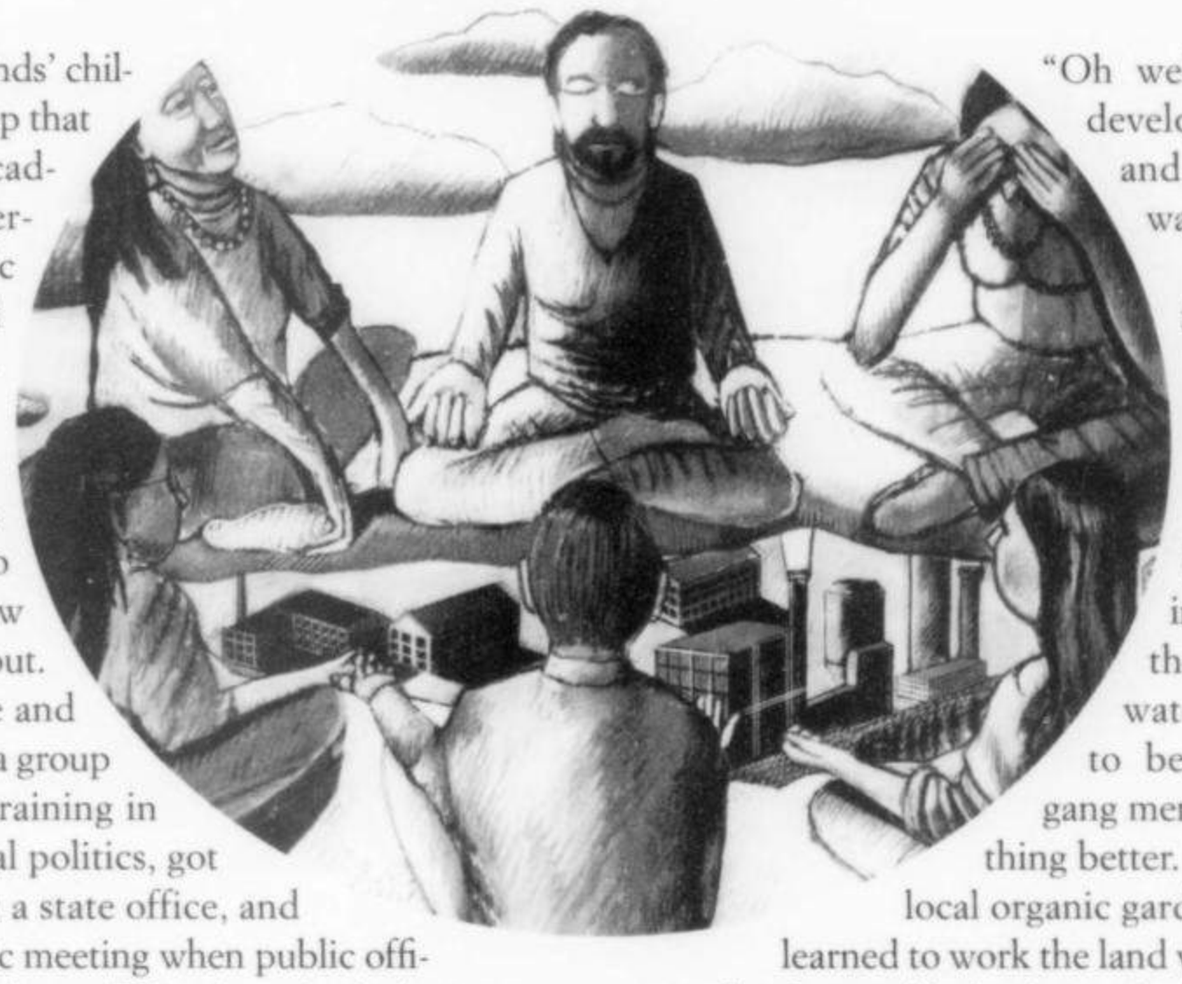
In the same way, the despair engendered by environmental destruction—the self-caused cancer plagues, the dying coral reefs, the newly dangerous sunlight—can be altered by our knowledge of the people throughout the world who are resisting that destruction; and our own spiritual life can reach its most profound point when we join our energies to theirs. Our sense of the ultimate meaning of the environmental crisis may change if we see it as a time of joyful resistance, a time when we can deeply penetrate the meaning of our existence.

In the freedom of resistance comes a unique and pure happiness. It may last for only a short while before it once again gets clouded by regrets for losses, confusion over strategy, and fear for the future. But for a precious time we are at one both with ourselves and the world. Life, usually so flawed, has become perfect. Feeding the world as it has fed us, we are at that moment like a bee pollinating an apple tree, like the salmon struggling upstream against the rapids to lay its eggs, like the hawk bringing back fresh kill for its chicks, like a maple tree offering soft red buds to the warming April sunshine.

* * *

Resistance takes many forms. In any given situation, we can see that there are choices to be made: between living in denial, and living in the truth; between accepting the way things are and saying "no" to them. We can speak up, act up, share our concerns with others, give money, teach our children the truth, confront political candidates, write letters to the editor, join groups to keep indigenous peoples from being slaughtered, hug trees to protect forests from bulldozers, shut down the local polluter, nationalize the oil industry, and overthrow the government. For a start.

Consider Diana Steck, a housewife from Yukon, PA, who confronted the relation between the chronic illnesses of her



own and many of her friends' children and the nearby dump that contained chromium, cadmium, lead, arsenic, mercury, and other toxic chemicals. She struggled with condescending government officials who promised an investigation and did nothing; and health 'experts' who told her she didn't know what she was talking about. Refusing to give up, she and some neighbors became a group with a name, received training in grassroots environmental politics, got arrested for sitting-in at a state office, and took over a crucial public meeting when public officials tried to dodge the issue. Friends and relatives were shocked when she was arrested or tried to stop trucks from going to the dump. But Diana had become a different person, one who wouldn't get stopped by her own fears or others' judgments. "All this," she said, referring to countless illnesses in her town, "happened for a reason. Otherwise we'd still be out here, just stupidly working and making money, oblivious to the world around us. We wouldn't be the people we are today. We wouldn't be as complete."

In my own community of Jamaica Plain, a racially and economically mixed section on Boston's southern edge, people banded together to protect our treasured Jamaica Pond: an actual lake—one and one-half miles around—within the city limits! The Pond is bordered by a thin belt of trees and graced by sea gulls, Canadian geese, ducks, exotic-looking cormorants, snapping turtles, and imported swans. Its marvelously clear water attracts joggers, strollers, baby carriages, dog-walkers, drummers on hot summer nights, old Chinese ladies doing Tai Chi, and couples of various sexual persuasions dreamily holding hands.

When you stand at the little boathouse where popsicles and popcorn are sold, you can look across the water and see the sun set over wooded hills. These hills, which border the park but are not actually part of it, were sold to a builder who wants to replace the old trees with luxury condos so that proud owners can enjoy the vista of the Pond while the rest of us can view the sun setting over expensive apartments.

A local social worker spearheaded the opposition, raising 4,000 signatures demanding that the local development board forbid the project and the city or state acquire the land. On the coldest night of the winter of 1998, 350 people jammed a local church to make their voices heard—to say that this spot was not only lovely, but also sacred. Each of us at the meeting could have found something else to do that evening; could have left the effort to others; could have felt, "Oh well, you can't fight the developers." But we didn't, and in the end the project was stopped.

As we resist, we look for allies, and sometimes find them in unlikely places. Melody Chavis, a writer and community activist in Berkeley, faced a neighborhood increasingly dominated by the drug trade. She watched local kids grow up to be pushers, junkies, and gang members, and offered something better. She connected them to a local organic gardening center, where they learned to work the land with their own hands, and to take deep pride in the ecological quality of what they were growing. For a number of kids the healthy connection to the soil meant a viable alternative to the polluted options that surrounded them.

Our allies can be from the neighborhood, or from very far away. In an ecological age, "Love your neighbor" includes the whole world. Consider, for instance, the way international activity has been mobilized in response to the Narmada river valley project in India. Called by critics the "world's greatest planned environmental disaster," the project envisaged 30 major, 135 medium, and 3,000 minor dams throughout central India. If completed as planned, it would displace close to 400,000 people, destroy wildlife habitat, and flood some of the last remaining tropical forest in India. As early as 1977, local opposition formed when people realized that there was in fact no land available for the local people who were to be displaced—that they would simply join the millions of other "refugees from development." During the next decade and a half, opposition grew and took a variety of forms: road blockades, hunger fasts, demonstrations at state capitals, and massive gatherings at sites which were to be flooded. What is crucial here is the way a ring of international solidarity has formed around resistance to the Narmada valley project. Japanese environmentalists persuaded their government not to advance money to it, while American activists pressured the World Bank. In 1992, facing reports that the entire project was colored by fraud and incompetence, legislators in Finland, Sweden, and the United States asked the World Bank not to lend any more money. The International Rivers Project, located in San Francisco, organizes financial and technical aid to the continuing struggle.

Even though ozone depletion and acid rain make everyone "neighbors," we should remember that if the dam goes

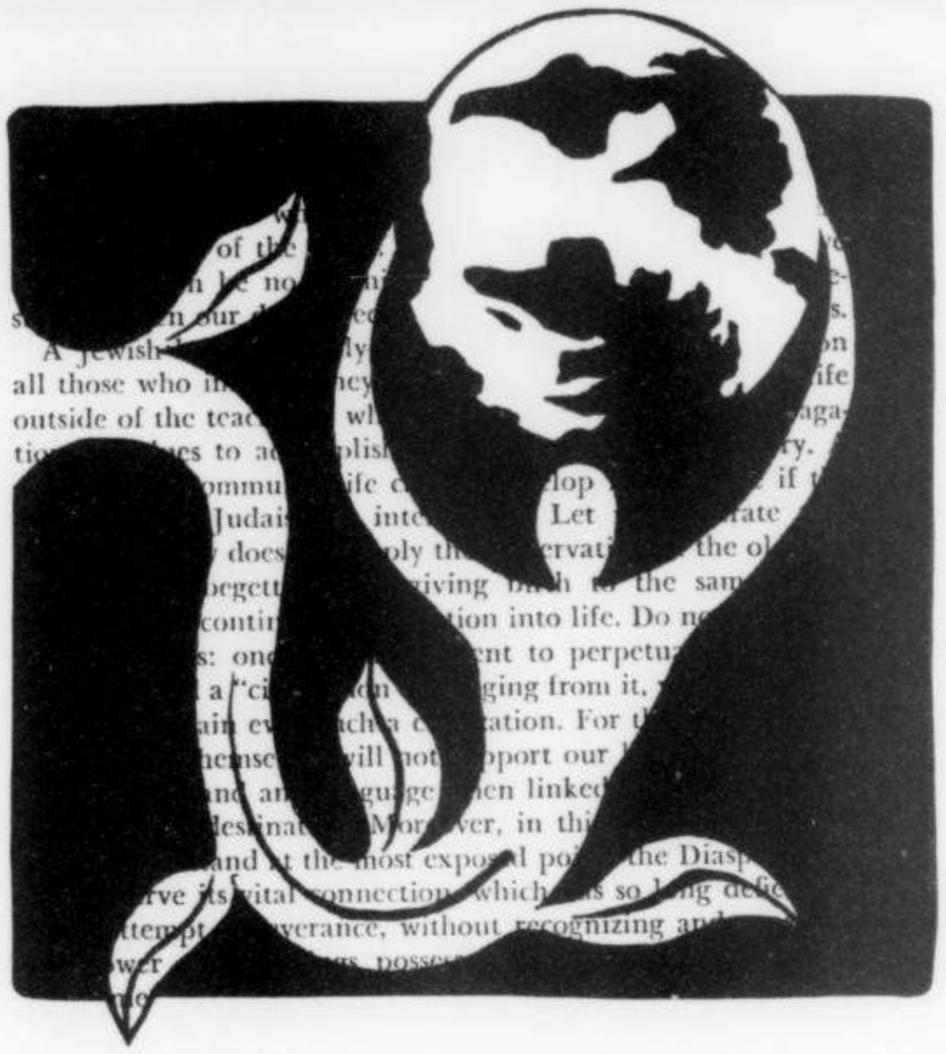
(continued on page 68)

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

TORAT CHESED

A Contemporary Understanding of Mitzvot

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson



In Hebrew, the word "mitzvah" means commandment. At its simplest level, a mitzvah embodies God's will, creating an imperative for those who would live their lives in accordance with God's desire. Of course, there are more literal and less literal ways to understand commandments. By refusing to reduce mitzvot to an idolatrous transcript (as though God were just a big man with a mouth and the Torah was simply the written record of a recording at Sinai), we restore God's grandeur and sovereignty, the Torah's dynamism and relevance. Such a nuanced view celebrates the active role of human intellect, soul, and passion in perceiving the content of God's revelation. Mitzvot are our perception of God's will—mediated through human understanding.

In Aramaic, the word "mitzvah" means connection. Here, then, is the next level for understanding the word's meaning in a modern context. The business of every Jew is to testify to God's goodness and God's sovereignty by fashioning our lives in ways of holiness and peace. We connect ourselves to our Creator; we link ourselves to the one who liberated us from slavery, by the way we live our lives. Each deed either strengthens our connection to God, or attenuates that link. There is no neutrality in the world of action: we either weave a web of goodness, with each new action adding a new strand to the fabric of our lives, or we snip away at the weave of righteousness that Judaism establishes in the world. In this second sense, mitzvah isn't just what you do because God said so. God isn't a cop, and mitzvot are not simply statutes. We do mitzvot because we seek to allow holiness into our lives.

On a third level, our prayers speak of the mitzvot that God has given "us," the entire Jewish people. Mitzvot are not possible without the dynamics of relationship: between God and Am Yisrael, between each individual Jew and the House of Israel as an entity. Just as each intimate relationship generates special obligations that testify to the unique contours of that relationship and which keep the relationship fresh and vital, so do the mitzvot emerge between God and us, re-igniting our passion, keeping our ancient covenant young.

Finally, mitzvot are, to use the words of the Bible, *kol demama dakah*, that "still small voice" within. Each of us is a product of the raw power that exploded into the reality of the cosmos, in the inexplicable act the Kabbalists call the Creation and physicists call the Big Bang. Just as the force of the Big Bang is still detectable through sophisticated technology, so does the power of the Creation reverberate in each and every human soul. By training ourselves to listen with a spiritual ear, we can learn to hear the ultimate power within. Our sacred tradition comes from that same act of sacred listening, by which the sages of Israel learned to hear the still, small voice, and to transcribe what they heard into words. Those words are the distillation of the Big Bang, percolating into mitzvot: sacred deeds which concretize the amorphous energy of the Creation into the more tangible realm of human society. Through mitzvot, Jews are engaged in tikkun olam, repair of the world, because we are tapping into the primal power that brought the world into being in the first place.

At each of these levels, as commandment, as connection, as expression of relationship, and as the outward crystallization of Creation, mitzvot function as the indispensable manifestation of meaningful Jewish life. Stripped of a zeal for the performance of mitzvot, Jewish living degrades into mere ethnicity or, worse, aesthetics. We may well differ about how God's will is applied in the world. We may not all agree as to what constitutes a mitzvah in each community and in each new age. But the search for answers to the age-old question, what does the Lord require of you? is no less pressing today than it was millennia ago. And in that energizing search, we have an important role to play on behalf of *i* Yisrael, the entire Jewish people. ❑

Bradley Shavit Artson is executive vice president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California, and the author of It's A Mitzvah! Step-By-Step to Jewish Living *(Rabbinical Assembly & Behrman House).*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Healing: A Jewish Word



Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein

Healing is a Jewish concept poignantly evoked in Moses' prayer, *El na refana la*, which he intones for his sister Miriam when she contracts leprosy. *Refana*, from the root *refuah*, literally means "to cure"; Moses prays, "God please cure her," because he knows that cure comes from God. If cure is a miraculous event that we pray to attain, however, healing is what we, as spiritual beings, can bring to the process of cure.

More than a decade ago I visited a man who had leukemia. Entering his room, I reflexively asked him, "How are you?"—and just as immediately regretted it. However, his answer revealed that my question was not as frivolous as I had feared. He explained that, although a cure might not be possible, he had never felt so healed, so alive, and so whole, despite his grim condition.

That sense of wholeness can be understood as a state of completeness, what we call *shlaymut*. As Arthur Green suggests in his essay "Restoring the Aleph," we can gain insight into this state by seeking

> to expand the bounds of the holy, to find the One manifest everywhere, to understand that each of us is not just a separate willful being but a unique spark of that single divine light. It is by finding those sparks in one another and drawing their light together that we discover and articulate the deeper truth about this world in which we live. That truth understands that there is ultimately only one Being, present in each of us, longing to know its own source and draw together the uniqueness of each being and the singularity of the Source from which we all come and to which we all return.

If indeed we are part of "one Being" as we say each day in the Aleinu prayer ("ayn od," there is none else), then the concept of healing takes on added significance. In this context, healing is not just the attempt to fix something that is broken, but is the constant striving of the spirit to bring us back to the original oneness.

The Jewish way of walking through life (*halachah*) is a way of marching towards such healing. *Tikkun olam*, the repair of the world, is a macrocosm of *tikkun atzmi*, the repair of the inner self. The Jewish tradition offers guidance on bringing balance to both the inner and outer healing process through three different paths: the biblical, the mystical, and the liturgical. Each adds something unique to the worldly struggle to achieve redemption.

On the biblical path, we see this balance of inner and outer healing through the analogy of the stories of our people. Every biblical hero is not just a role model for each Jew, but is easily identifiable as a human being, marked by flaws and failures, a hero striving for a human transformation. And each of these intensely personal inner struggles mirrors the documented national struggle.

Jacob, whose very name means "twisted," wrestles with the angel before meeting his brother Esau. Jacob knows that he has cheated his brother and has not forgotten his own crookedness in the twenty years since their last encounter. But, in making the decision to face Esau, Jacob crosses the metaphoric river and becomes *Israel*, which means "straight" (*yashar*); he leaves the place of bondage, and so redeems himself and his relationship to his brother.

Implied in the struggle for redemption is the striving for freedom; in a personal sense, we cannot redeem the best in ourselves if we fail to liberate ourselves from our own pettiness. Jacob, our alter ego on the biblical path, is frightened to meet his brother, but is convinced that he has come

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEN SERON

Marcelo Bronstein is co-rabbi at B'nai Jeshurun synagogue in New York City.

to this crossroads for a reason and so frees himself from his fear. The story offers us the optimistic implication that we are not necessarily doomed to repeat the same stories over and over, but that we have the power to change our individual world view and our circumstances. We can become the scriptwriters of our own lives and redeem the best in ourselves, the divine center, which transcends our mundane pettiness. We can become instruments of redemption and achieve transformation.

Kabbalah offers a mystical path within Judaism towards redemption and transcendence. Kabbalah, which can be interpreted to mean "to receive," is a window to the unknown, a path of study and observance for understanding our relationship with the universe. Through its many different schools, Kabbalah has been used as a way of navigating the many mysteries of God's creation, and the possibilities of our changing relationship within this divine sea.

For the mystic, according to Ben Zion Bosker in *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*,

> empirical existence appears fragmented, beset by endless conflicts and contradictions between individuals and groups; the values on which it tends to focus are material things. The mystic is a sensitive spirit who rebels against such orientation in life … [his/her] goal is not to gain conceptual knowledge [or] to find confirmation that the higher reality exists.… Rather, [the mystic] seeks to … embrace the vibrations of this higher reality which pulsate through existence. [The mystic's] goal is to establish *d'vaykut*, union with, or as Jewish mystics prefer to define it, cleaving to, God.

The mystical understanding of reality dwells in the interstices of our lives, raising our consciousness beyond the level of *pschat*, the simple understanding of reality, and even further, beyond the *drash*, the interpretive understanding of reality, to *sod*, the mystery. Modern psychology, for example, dwells in the domain of the *drash* as it uses a rationalistic approach to gain insight into the meaning of our emotions in order to achieve change. But the journey of the ego—the here and now, immediate reality—is not important to the kabbalistic approach. We are much more than our own story. Life and death are not defined by biology alone.

We can become instruments of redemption and achieve transformation.

Instead, our identification of ourselves as divine creatures who are part of divine Creation will lead us to cleave to God. As a part of the whole, we have an effect on the universe. We partner with God when we work to repair the world.

The path of the mystic is the path of the unknown. To always "know" means to create a virtual reality of rationalization that gives us a false sense of control and creates a barrier between people and the real experiences of life. To not know means to approach reality with an open heart and mind. To not know means to lose control. When we, as human beings, are in deep despair, we do not know how we are going to go on—but somehow the healing process of the mystery of life allows us to continue.

The liturgical path toward healing has been explored by Samson Raphael Hirsch in his book, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, where he uses the word "*moadim*" to describe the observance of Jewish holidays. *Mo-ed* is ordinarily defined as festival, but Hirsch draws upon earlier meanings of the word—from its first roots as a way of referring to those places in the desert where the Tabernacle was set to its later meaning as a designated locality for an assembly with a given purpose. As Hirsch explains, the word "moadim" can simultaneously incorporate a holy time and a sacred place, allowing us to view our passage through the periodic Holy Days of the calendar as a journey through tents in time.

(continued on page 70)

Is There a DOCTORATE in the house? *Maybe a Master?*

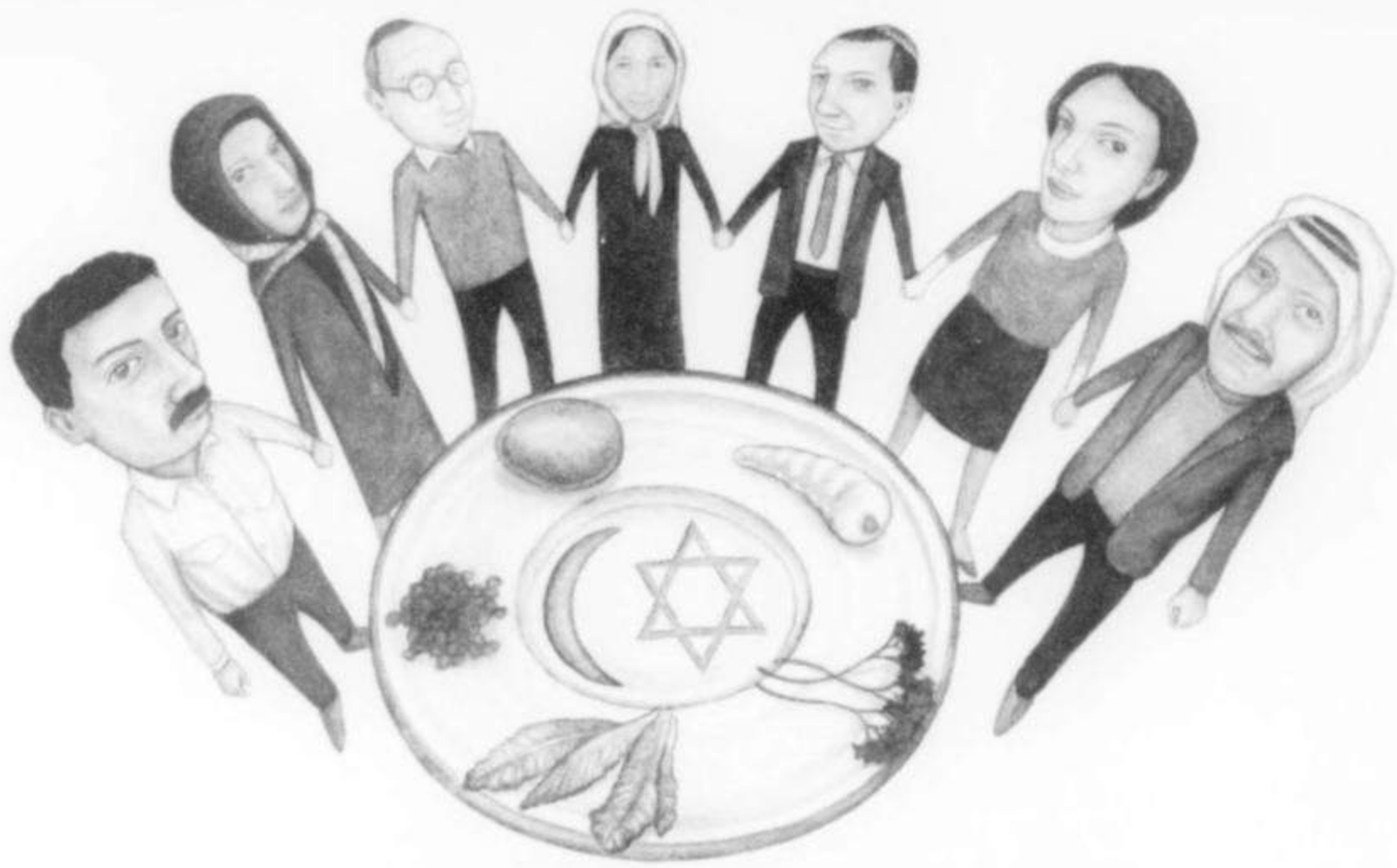
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The Seder of the Children of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah

Woven by Rabbi Arthur Waskow

This year, instead of our annual TIKKUN *supplement to the standard Seder, we are printing the outlines of a separate Seder aimed at bringing Jews and Palestinians together to recognize our common roots in Abraham and our common destiny in sharing the land of Israel/Palestine. You might consider convening such a supplemental Seder on the evening of April 4—the fifth night of Pesach, the night of Easter Sunday, and the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s murder. The Seder could be held as a Jewish event, or as a joint effort by Jews and Arab-Americans; it could be held at home; or at and by a synagogue or havurah or Hillel House; or as a community-wide event. You might also use time during the Seder to discuss steps that you and your community might take to support Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and to ensure the viability of the newly emerging Palestinian state living at peace with Israel. Of course, you may also choose to incorporate any of the elements of this Seder into your own regularly scheduled Seders, using them as a jumping off point for provoking discussion about our responsibility as Jews, beneficiaries of God's liberatory power when we got out of Egypt, to support the liberation of the Palestinian people and the deeper process of reconciliation among the Children of Abraham.*
We thank Arthur Waskow for assembling this Seder. —*The Editors of* TIKKUN

Prepare the Seder table with

1. **a plate of four sheets of matzah (unleavened bread);**
2. **another plate that holds**
   - **(a) sprigs of mint or parsley,**
   - **(b) a paste of ground horseradish,**
   - **(c) a separate paste—charoset (made of chopped nuts, raisins, apples, and grape juice), and**
   - **(d) a roasted egg;**
3. **a bowl of strongly salted water; and**
4. **several bottles of unfermented red grape juice.**

* * * * *

Reader says aloud:
In the name of God, the Compassionate!
All present respond:
In the name of God, the Compassionate!
Hand everyone a cup of grape juice.
Reader says:
We begin with the cup of spring, when earth awakes and peoples come to birth.

Blessings over First Cup

All recite three blessings: the blessing over the fruit of the grapevine, the blessing over all the nations, and the she-hecheyanu.

Blessed are You, the Breath of Life,
Who breathed into the earth of an ancient land
the vine that brings forth fruit
that brings forth juice
as red as blood—
the joyful juice of grapes that give us not death
but life.

•

Blessed are You Who taught:

"In that day Israel shall be the third alongside Egypt and Assyria, each a blessing in the midst of the earth—for YHWH [pronounce Yahh, with a strong sense of breathing] of the multitudes has blessed each, saying: 'Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.'" [Isaiah 19:24]

•

Blessed are You, Breath of Life, Who has filled us with life, lifted us up, and carried us to this moment.
All drink.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO



Songs of Peace

All sing:
Shalu shalom Yiru-shalayim [repeat four times].
Shalom, shalom, shalom, shalom
Shalom, shalom—Shalu shalom Yiru-shalayim.

Pray for the peace of Yisrael,
Pray for the peace of Yishmael,
Pray for the peace of all the world—
The whole world shall live in peace.
Or:
Od yavo shalom alenu [repeat three times]
V'al kulam.
Salaam … alenu v'al kol ha'olam
Salaam … salaam …
[May peace yet come to us—and to all; to us and all the world.]

Blessing over Greens

Give everyone a sprig of mint or similar greens, pass a bowl of salt water, and have everyone dip the mint into the water.
Together all recite:
Blessed are You, Breath of Life, Who breathes life into adam and adamah, into human-earthling and the earthy-humus, Who brings forth from the earth what keeps the human alive, and brings forth from the human the compassion that restores life to the earth.
Everyone eats the sprig of mint. (From this point on, everyone should feel free to eat greens and other raw vegetables from plates at the table.)

Blessing over Second Cup

Reader:
We lift the second cup: the cup of memory.
Say again the blessing over the fruit of the grapevine, and drink.
All read together:
We are taught: "And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: 'It is because of what the Breath of Life did for *me*, breathing me forth from slavery in the Narrow Place.'" For it was not only our forebears that the Breath of Life freed, but us as well. So in every generation, let every human being look upon himself, herself, as if we all came out of the Narrow Place today.
One reads:
For us today, the Narrow Place is the place of bloodshed that comes from war between the two families of Abraham—the family that calls him Ibrahim, and the family that calls him Avraham—the children of Hajr/Hagar through her child Ismail/Yishmael and the children of Sarah through her child Is'haq/Yitzchak.
Another reads:
May the Narrow Place through which we move become the narrow birth canal. May the blood we have shed become the blood of birthing! For today we tell both the story of the Narrow Place that holds us in its grip, and the story of turning that Narrow Place into the birth canal for two new peoples and a new way of being, a new way of living face to face in the Land that gave two peoples birth.

Where shall we begin the story? Like the traditional Haggadah, we will have two tellings: One that tells the story of our ancestors, and one that tells the conflict of our two peoples in this century.

Let us start by looking at the way Yitzchak/Is'haq and Ismail/Yishmael are seen in the sacred texts of our two peoples.

The Story of Ismail and Yitzchak

Reader:
From the Torah: Avraham was childless … and he came in to Hagar [whose name can be understood as "HaGer, the stranger"] and she conceived … and the messenger of YHWH said to her:
All read:
I will make your seed many, many
Too many to count.
You shall bear a son.
You shall call him Yishmael/God Hears—
For God has heard your suffering.
Reader:
Wild donkey of a man he shall be,
His hand against everyone
And everyone's hand against him.
And then—facing all his kinfolk shall he dwell.
All read:
So she called the name of YHWH … "You God of Seeing!" …
Therefore the well [where God's messenger gave forth this prophecy]
was called Be'er LaChai Ro'i,
the Well of The Living One Who Sees Me.
Reader:
And God said to Avraham, "As for your wife Sarai
You shall not call her name Sarai
For Sarah/Princess is her name.
I will bless her; I will give you a son by her
I will bless her so that she shall give rise to nations;
Rulers of peoples shall issue from her."
And as for Yishmael/God Hears,
I hear you;
Here, I will make him blessed,
I will make him bear fruit,
I will make him many, beyond and beyond;
He will beget twelve leaders
And a great nation I will make of him.
All read:
"… Sarah your wife shall bear you a son
You shall call his name Yitzchak/Laughing One;



I will raise up my covenant with him
As an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.
And my covenant I will raise up with Yitzchak
Whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."

Reader:

And from the Koran, the story of Ismail:

All read:

He was strictly true to what he promised and he was an apostle and a prophet. He used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of the Lord.

Reader:

And we gave Ibrahim the good news of Is'haq, a prophet, one of the Righteous. We blessed Ibrahim and Is'haq.

All read:

And remember Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the house with this prayer:

Our Lord! Accept this service from us for thou art the All Hearing the All Knowing. Our Lord make of us submissive bowing to thy will and of our progeny a people submissive bowing to thy will.

Reader:

And again from the Torah:
Avraham died at a good ripe age,
and was gathered to his people.

All read:

Yitzchak and Ishmael his sons buried him
In the cave of Machpelah....
Now it was after Avraham's death that God blessed Yitzchak his son,
And Yitzchak settled by the Well of the Living One Who Sees Me....

These are the years of the life of Ishmael:
One hundred years and thirty years and seven years,
Then he breathed out.
He died and was gathered to his people.
Now they dwelt from Havila to Shur, which faces Egypt,
Back to where you come to Assyria;
Facing all his kinfolk did he live.

One reads:

What questions emerge from the reading of these texts?
Are there visions for reconciliation in these verses?

In Jewish tradition, Isaac is the son who is bound in order to be sacrificed. In Muslim tradition it is Ishmael. In our generation, both peoples, the Israeli and the Palestinian, have faced the possibility of destruction, of being sacrificed.

Another reads:

Why are we Jews asked, year after year on Rosh Hashanah, to read the story of Hagar and Ishmael? Cherie Brown, a counselor and coalition-builder who lives in Washington, D.C., teaches *Four Teachings*:

The first teaching: Ishmael exists. On this holy Day of Remembrance we are asked to Remember his existence.

The second teaching: There is no pain that is so great, no estrangement that is so final, that reconciliation is not possible. Despite the separate paths of Isaac and Ishmael and the creation of two separate peoples with distinct and separate identities and histories, the story requires us to remember that Ishmael and Isaac will always have the same father. Their fates will always be inextricably tied to one another.

The third teaching: When we refuse to respond to the cry of Hagar, the cry of the stranger, when we only focus on our own worries and concerns and fail to hear the cry of our brother, our sister—we condemn ourselves to living desperate lives, cut off from our own humanity.

God heard the cry of Hagar and Ishmael. Are we not meant to follow God's lead?

And the fourth teaching, for me the most important: We are being asked on Rosh Hashanah to stop seeing ourselves always as the victim, and to stop living a life based on victimization.

After all, it was not Isaac who was forced to wander in the desert. It was Hagar and Ishmael. If the teachers of Torah wanted us to focus on our own history of victimization on this most important day (and God knows there are enough examples from our history to draw on) wouldn't we have a different passage to listen to?

Blessing over Third Cup

Reader:

We lift the third cup: the cup of determination.

Say again the blessing over the fruit of the grapevine, and drink.

Reader:

Why is this Pesach night different from every other Pesach night?

All read:

Because tonight *two* peoples
Call out to each other: "Let our people go!"

Tonight the children of Hagar through Ishmael
and the children of Sarah through Isaac
call out to each other:
We too are children of Abraham!
We are cousins, you and we!

As Isaac and Ishmael once met at Be'er LaChai Ro-i,
the Well of the Living One Who Sees,
So it is time for us to meet—
Time for us to see each other, face to face.
Time for us to make peace with each other.

They met for the sake of their dead father, Abraham;
We must meet for the sake of our dead children—
Dead at each others' hands.
For the sake of our children's children,
So that they not learn to kill.

So tonight we will ask each other Four More Questions:



The First Question

From the plate with four slices of matzah, lift the bottom slice.
Say aloud:
This is the bread of affliction: it is whole, and so long as it is whole, no one can eat from it.
Now break it; let everyone see these two pieces.
Reader:
The First Question: Why do we break the matzah in two?
All read:
Because the bread of affliction becomes the bread of freedom—when we share it. Because the Land that gives bread to two peoples must be divided in two, so that both peoples may eat of it. So long as one people grasps the whole land, it is a land of affliction, and no one is nourished by it. When each people can eat from part of the Land, it will become a land of freedom.
Pass the broken pieces of matzah from hand to hand. Each person breaks off a piece and hands that piece to someone else.
Together they say:
Blessed is the Breath of Life Who brings forth bread from the earth and compassion from each earthy-human.
Everyone eats the matzah.
One reads:
A letter from Dalia Landau, a teacher and counselor living in Jerusalem, who served as an officer in the Israel Defence Forces, to Bashir Khayri, a lawyer, who had been deported to Lebanon the day before.

January 14, 1988
Dear Bashir,

We got to know each other twenty years ago. Ever since, we have become part of each other's lives. Now I hear that you are about to be deported.

After the Six Day War, you came with two other people to see the house in Ramle where you were born. This was my first encounter with Palestinians. My family had been living in that house since 1948, just after your family was forced to leave. You were a child of six then, and I was a year old. My family had come to the new state of Israel together with 50,000 other Bulgarian Jews, and your house was considered "abandoned property."

Following your first visit in 1967, I later accepted your invitation to visit you in Ramallah, where I found myself surrounded by hospitality. We talked for hours and established a warm personal connection. However, it became clear that our political views were very far apart. Each of us saw through the lens created by the suffering of his own people.

But some change in perspective was beginning to take place in me. One unforgettable day, your father came to our house in Ramle, accompanied by your brother. Your father was then old and blind. He touched the rugged stones of the house. He then asked if the lemon tree was still in the backyard. He was led to the abundant tree, which he had planted many years before. He caressed it and stood silent. Tears were rolling down his face.

Many years later, after the death of your father, your mother told me that, whenever he felt troubled at night and could not sleep, he would pace up and down your rented house in Ramallah, holding a shriveled lemon in his hand. It was the same lemon my father had given him on that visit.

Ever since I met you, the feeling has been growing in me that "home" was not just my home. The lemon tree which yielded so much fruit and gave us so much delight lived in other people's hearts, too. The spacious house with its high ceilings, big windows, and large grounds was no longer just an "Arab house," a desirable form of architecture. It had faces behind it now. The walls evoked other people's memories and tears.

It was very painful for me, as a young woman twenty years ago, to wake up to a few then-well-hidden facts. For example, we were all led to believe that the Arab population of Ramle and Lod had run away before the advancing Israeli army in 1948, leaving everything behind in a rushed and cowardly escape. This belief reassured us. It was meant to prevent guilt and remorse. But after 1967, I met not only you, but also an Israeli Jew who had personally participated in the expulsion from Ramle and Lod. He told me the story as he had experienced it, and as Yitzhak Rabin later confirmed in his memoirs.

While I was learning to live with these painful facts, you were imprisoned. You were charged with planting a bomb that killed several civilians. My heart aches for those murdered even now. For your crime, you sat in prison for fifteen years. Passing the Ramle prison on my way to work, I often wondered if you were there. I never had the courage to ask. It was too painful.

After my marriage and the death of my parents, I inherited the house in Ramle. I shared our story with my husband, and he and I both felt that we wanted to dedicate that house to some healing purpose.

Following your release from prison, we sought you out and met you. I felt that you and I, your family and mine, were bound by a strange destiny, that the house with which our childhood memories were connected had forced us to face each other. However, our conversations revealed that, despite the passage of time, your basic position has not changed—and this makes it impossible to find common ground. Perhaps some day, if we are both willing to make sacrifices, some kind of mutual forgiveness may yet emerge.

[The Landaus turned the Ramle property into the site of the Open House project, providing educational services to the Arab community in Ramle and serving as a meeting center for Arabs and Jews.]

Reader:
Now there are homes that have been turned into dust. Gila Svirsky, an Israeli who lives in Jerusalem, an organizer of Bat Shalom—Israeli women who work closely with Palestinian women—writes an open letter she calls "Lena Doesn't Live Here Anymore."



One reads:
Friends,

I recently witnessed the destruction of a Palestinian home by the Israel army in Anata, just on the border of Jerusalem. The town is composed almost entirely of Palestinian refugees who had lived in the Old City of Jerusalem and fled in 1967. A group of peace activists heard about the demolition as it was taking place, and we were able to get to a hill overlooking the house.

The scene was horrific. We surged down the hill in our small group until the soldiers blocked our progress with their guns and bodies. M.K. Naomi Chazan, who was with us, demanded to see the order proclaiming this a closed military zone, and after several long minutes the officer complied. Who knows if the order was genuine or invented at the last minute. But the guns were real.

So there we stood on the side of the hill and watched with an unbearable sense of helplessness as the civil administration's bulldozer took the house apart wall by wall. He drove through the garden's profusion of flowers and slammed the front door until the entire front wall was shattered and dangling from metal rods. He came from every side; finally, he lifted off the roof, barely suspended, and sent it crashing below. When that was done, he went around the back of the house, crashed through all the fruit trees, including a small olive stand, and knocked over a water tank on a platform. Its cascade of water drenched the trees now uprooted and broken. I have never seen anyone in the Middle East deliberately waste so much water.

Then, suddenly, gunshots rang out. Some of the young Palestinian men had begun throwing stones—from a very great distance—and Israeli soldiers retaliated by opening fire and running up the hill after them. The soldiers were shooting as they ran, setting off their guns like the Wild West. I saw the commander and told him that this was illegal, a clear violation of the open fire regulations of the Israeli army, which stipulate that a soldier's life be in danger before he opens fire. I demanded repeatedly that he tell the soldiers to stop. The commander shrugged and didn't bother answering.

Amazingly, no stray bullets had hit any of our group, although the Palestinians, as usual, were not as lucky. The son of one of the neighbors had been hit by a bullet. Already in the hospital was Arabiyeh, the mother of the family, who had been violently struck by soldiers when she tried to prevent them from destroying her home.

This long, sad story must not end here. Our group, the same people and more I hope, will be going back next Friday to begin rebuilding this home. This is a new tradition of non-violent resistance. The Palestinians rebuild, the Israeli army demolishes, and they rebuild again. As one of the neighbors said, we'll see who lasts longer.

If you cannot come to our rebuilding effort and even if you can, please use your power to get this to stop. The messages you have sent are incredibly effective; foreign political leaders have begun to raise the issue of home demolitions with Israeli leaders. Write to your congressional representatives, the president, and others in power. Tell them that the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes must be stopped. Say it in the subject line, so they get the point quickly. And circulate this letter to more people.

Thank you for listening.

The Second Question

Hand two sprigs of mint to everyone; have each person dip one sprig in the horseradish, and one in the sweet charoset paste.

All say together:
Blessed are You, Breath of Life, Who breathes life into adam and adamah, into human-earthling and the earthy-humus, Who brings forth from the earth what keeps the human alive, and brings forth from the human the compassion that restores life to the earth.

Each person eats first the sprig dipped in horseradish, then the one dipped in charoset.

Reader:
The Second Question: Why do we dip herbs three times, once in salt water, once in bitter herbs, and once in sweet charoset?

All read:
First for the tears of two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian; then for the bitterness of both peoples, tasting ruined lives; and then for the sweetness of two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli. For the future of both peoples, who must learn not to repeat the sorrows of the past but to create the joys of the future.

One reads:
On March 14, 1997, the *Jerusalem Post* retold an eyewitness account of new bloodshed:

"We got out of the bus at the observation point and started to see all the process of the pumps at the (former) Naharim electricity plant. In the middle of the description, suddenly we heard a burst of fire. I looked up and saw a Jordanian soldier firing from the observation tower.

"I shouted to the girls to go down the bank which was covered in mustard plants in bloom. The girls started to take cover as one burst came after another.

"The soldier saw that he was not succeeding, so he came after us to the edge (of the slope) and started firing at us from face-to-face distance. He had to change a magazine and when he did so, which didn't work, that was the end of it. It was a nightmare. I still can't take in what happened here.

"I started to call the girls who were around me and saw that some of them didn't answer me. I said to myself, 'What will happen until help comes?' so I started to push them into the field and covered them until help came.

"They are hysterical. We didn't tell them all the truth. We told them that some are wounded and some of them would not be coming back to us."

Within days, King Hussein of Jordan came to visit the



seven Israeli families whose children had been killed. He said to them, "No words can express how I personally feel, how my family feels, how my people feel. We consider this a loss that all of us suffered. I feel that I have lost a child, and I feel that if there is anything in life, it is to insure that all the children enjoy peace and security. I hope you consider me a brother and a member of the family."

One reads:

Another letter from Gila Svirsky:

Since the bulldozers began scarring the land at Jabal Abu Ghaneim [Har Homa], a tiny tent "city" of about a dozen tents has sprung up on the hillside opposite. For the last couple weeks, hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis have come to this site every day (and some have slept there)—to protest, express solidarity, and make it clear to one another that this is a struggle that we share. Neither side can do it alone.

Last Thursday hundreds of children, women, and men from many Israeli and Palestinian peace organizations came together on the hillside to call for the bulldozers to stop. Representatives of a dozen organizations spoke eloquently about ending the bloodshed, creating a Palestinian state, sharing Jerusalem as a capital, finding a way to live together cooperatively on this land cherished by both peoples. Their words seemed so clear and compelling as they carried across the valley, a reflection of the spring flowers pushing their way out of the rocky terrain around us.

But perhaps the most encouraging part was the children. The organizers had set up swings and slides, and set mattresses down so the children would have softer landings. Soon they were playing hide-'n-seek together ("Mommy, count to ten in Arabic for me"; "Daddy, tell him in Hebrew that it's his turn to hide"). Then it was time to draw pictures of the landscape, and suddenly fifty portraits appeared of the blue skies and green-covered hill opposite. The children posed as a group, holding their crayoned drawings out in front of them as the media caught their hopeful perceptions, eclipsing for a moment the harsher political reality behind them.

We adults settled into comfortable conversations. I heard some "un-organized" singing at a distance and went to observe. It was a group of Israeli and Palestinian children, perhaps eight to ten years old, sitting on the ground completely mixed up with one another, trying to sing "Heveinu Shalom Aleikhem" together, which the Palestinian children rendered as "Shalom Aleifa." The Hebrew words literally mean "we bring peace to you"; in Israel, the intent is "welcome." When that was over, the Palestinian children sang with gusto "Biladi"—"My Country"—which has spontaneously become the national anthem of the Palestinians. These children will grow into adulthood creating their own state. It reminded me of the fervor of the Jewish children who helped create their own state of Israel. Too much fervor on both sides to ever extinguish, I thought to myself.

Later in the afternoon, two small groups of women separated themselves—Israelis from Bat Shalom and Palestinians from the adjoining village of Beit Sahur. Together we formed a joint delegation to pay a condolence call at the home of the Salah family, whose son Abdallah had been killed last Saturday by Israeli cross-fire in the territories.

We filed into the room and each woman, in turn, spoke a few quiet words to the mother who sat stonily in the corner. We took seats around the room—by then we were perhaps forty women there—and some of the women began to weep. One of them said that the grandparents of the boy were refugees of 1948 … from Jerusalem, of course.

A man came in and stood at the doorway. "I am the father of Abdallah, the martyr," he announced in fluent Hebrew. "My son, the student," he added. He then made a speech that sounded—and he said it was—rehearsed repeatedly in the media over the past five days: "My son was never in trouble with the army a single day of his life. He was a good student and going to be an engineer. The floor I built over our heads was for him when he would get married." It was a moving eulogy, spoken with much love and tears.

One of the women from Bat Shalom said a few words about the sorrow we felt over Abdallah's death, and our prayers that there would be no more violence and bloodshed.

That opened a flood of wrath from the mother. "Where are the Israelis when my boy is killed? Where is the world? Why did King Hussein get down on his knees to ask forgiveness in Israel, but Netanyahu does nothing? He is a dog, the son of a dog, and I would kill him with my bare hands, if I could." We sat and listened to her unanswerable questions, responded when she allowed us, heard her rage; one of the Israeli women kept her hand on her arm throughout. The mother would not cry among us, as the father had let himself do. When she drew to an end, the women stood up.

"May Allah have mercy on his soul," we each said as we embraced her before parting. As we left the home, each of us was handed a glossy picture of Abdallah: a skinny, serious-looking twenty-one-year-old. He looked like he would have made a fine engineer.

The Third Question

Reader:

The Third Question: Why does the Torah teach: "When a stranger lives-as-a-stranger with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. The stranger who lives-as-a-stranger [*hager hagar*] with you shall be as one of your citizens; You shall love her as yourself."

All read:

Because Torah teaches:

Hagar HaMitzria [Hagar the Egyptian] was a stranger in our midst, and we oppressed her; We were strangers in the Land of Egypt, and the Land of Rome, and the Land of Spain, and the Land of Germany—and they oppressed us;



Therefore—When once again Hagar/The Stranger lives with you, you shall not oppress her; you shall love the stranger as yourself.

Blessing over Fourth Cup

Reader:
We lift the fourth cup: the cup of covenant and hope.
Say again the blessing over the fruit of the grapevine, and drink.

•

One Reads:

The Four Children

Four children bring different questions to the Seder table tonight:

The angry child asks, "Why should I compromise?"

And we answer that we choose the route of compromise because the alternative is the mutual destruction, both moral and physical, of our two peoples. If we fail to compromise, we will lose a vision of the future for our children.

The naïve child asks, "Why can't we just love each other?"

And we answer that neither of us can live as if history has not happened. Unfortunately, too much blood has already been shed on both sides. It takes time to build trust.

The frightened child asks, "How can I be safe?"

And we answer that we are both afraid. "How can I be safe if my brother or sister is not safe?"

The wise child asks, "How can we take the steps that walk in peace, toward peace?"

This is the question with which we wrestle tonight. But this is a question that goes beyond tonight. For in each one of us lives all four children: Each of us bears in our own belly the angry one, the frightened one, the naïve one, the wise one. Which of these children shall we bring to birth? Only if we can deeply hear all four of them can we truthfully answer the fourth question. Only if we can deeply hear all four of them can we bring to birth a child, a people, that is truly wise.

The Fourth Question

Reader:
The Fourth Question: Why is there an egg upon the Pesach plate?
All read:
It is the egg of birthing.
When the midwives Shifrah and Puah
Saved the children that Pharaoh ordered them to kill,
That was the beginning of the birth-time;
When Pharaoh's daughter joined with Miriam
To give a second birth to Moses from the waters,
She birthed herself anew into God's daughter, Bat-yah,
And our people turned to draw ourself toward life.
When God became our Midwife
And named us Her firstborn,
Though we were the smallest and youngest of the peoples,
The birthing began;
When the waters of the Red Sea broke,
We were delivered.

So tonight it is our task to help the Midwife
Who tonight is giving birth to two new peoples—
For tonight only Hagar can give a new birth to the children of Israel,
And only Sarah can give a new birth to the children of Ishmael.

Our lives are in each other's hands.
No Pharaoh can force us to kill.

* * * * *

One reads or sings:

Sarah and Hagar

I am calling you oh Sarah
this is your sister Hagar
calling through the centuries
to reach you from afar

Here is my son Ishmael
your sister's son alive
we share the sons of Abraham
two peoples one tribe

Oh yes I am your Sarah
I remember you Hagar
your voice comes through the distance
a cry upon my heart

It was I who cast you out in fear and jealousy
yet your vision survived the wilderness
to reach your destiny

But it wasn't till my Isaac lay under the knife
that I recognized your peril
the danger to your life

I tremble now Hagar
for our peril's still the same
we will not survive as strangers
we must speak each other's name

We must tell each others' stories,
make each other strong
and sing the dream of ancient lands
where both of us belong

we must hear the prayers
where spirit first was sown
that all of our children
may call this land their home

—By Linda Hirschhorn 1985, 1997
recorded on More Than Luck and a Prayer



If the Seder is being held on April 4, use this passage as it is. If not, modify as necessary.

Reader:

Tonight we gather on the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. He taught us how to act when the path ahead is harsh and dimly lit:

"However dismal and catastrophic may be the present circumstances, we know that we are not alone, for God dwells with us in life's most confining and oppressive cells."

On the very night before his death, he called to mind the ancient images of freedom from the Narrow Place, of journey toward the Promised Land:

"I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy tonight, I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!"

One reads:

Ishmael

O Ishmael …
Listen.
It is Isaac speaking.
Too long have we crossed swords over Sinai,
Too long has there been desert between us,
Where nothing grows.
Only Death.
Let there be peace.

One night,
At the foot of Sabbath,
I waited for you.

You said you would come to Jerusalem,
And meet me face to face.
I watched you, Ishmael,
As you rode above the desert sand,
On a strange, colossal camel,
With smoking hooves,
Across a cloudless sky.
You alighted.
And I ran to meet you,
And held out both my hands.
I have waited for this moment
Countless generations.
We wept and embraced.

O Ishmael,
How long shall we wage war with one another?
How long must there be rancor and mistrust?
How much more blood must still be spilled
Before the final epic?
How many shall we shovel in the sand?

O Ishmael,
Let us be reconciled at last,
In the field of the dead,
By the gravestones of our beloved sons,
As we were once long ago
By the field of Ephron,
In the cave of Machpelah,
When we buried
Our father,
Abraham.

O Ishmael,
My Brother.

—By Amy Azen

* * * * *



Eat dinner, and after eating, sing:

From You I receive,
To You I give,
Together we share,
And from this we live.

Finish by singing "We Shall Overcome," and end with either of the songs from the beginning.

And everyone 'neath vine and figtree shall live in peace and unafraid *[repeat twice]*
And into plowshares beat their swords; nation shall learn war no more *[repeat twice]*.

This effort was initiated by The Shalom Center (P.O. Box 380, Accord, NY 12404, phone (914) 626-7272, email shalomctr@aol.com), and was assisted by Break the Silence, a network of American Jews committed to peace between Israel and Palestine. It draws upon the model *Seder of the Children of Abraham* created by Rabbi Devorah Bartnoff, z'l; Catherine Essoyan; Rabbi Mordechai Liebling; and Rabbi Brian Walt, compiled by New Jewish Agenda, and published by Adama Books in 1984, through the efforts of Reena Bernards, Jeffrey Dekro, and Esther Cohen. Most of the selections from Torah and Koran were chosen for the 1984 Seder, and most of the "Four Children" passage appeared there. Wherever a new passage or liturgy is not otherwise credited, it is by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of The Shalom Center, who also shaped the Seder. Naomi Mara Hyman and David F. Waskow helped trace some sources. Copyright © 1999 by Arthur Waskow. ❑

SOUL AND SOCIETY

Easter, Passover and All That



Matthew Fox

At our Seder meal a year ago at the University of Creation Spirituality, with two hundred persons in attendance, a Tibetan Buddhist rose and said, "I am so thrilled to be at this Seder. I have many Jewish friends and this is the first time I have ever been invited to a Jewish ritual. In fact, I didn't know the Jewish people had any rituals. All my Jewish friends are always inviting me to Buddhist meditation centers." Ah, a sign of our times!

This reminds me of the rabbi I know—in fact he conducted our Seder last year—who, while in the seminary in the Seventies, kept asking his professors, "Tell us about our mystical heritage. I want to study Jewish mysticism." Finally, after his constant pestering, the professor replied, "There is no Jewish mysticism!" On graduating, he went to India to live with Rajneesh and his community for three years to learn something about mysticism.

This bias against mysticism is not restricted to Jewish intellectuals or rabbinic seminaries. I have rarely met a Catholic priest or a Protestant minister who was instructed in the wisdom literature of Israel which is our shared cosmological, feminist, and mystical heritage (and which the historical Jesus knew so well). In my twelve-year training as a Dominican we never once studied the mystics. I never once heard the name "Meister Eckhart" mentioned even though he was a Dominican and the greatest mystic of the church. The modern era and contemporary academia are biased against mysticism and are practically ignorant of the Cosmic Christ (or Buddha Nature or Cosmic Wisdom) tradition. Being ignorant of this tradition, we don't get what the Easter fuss is all about.

The most profound grasp of Easter comes, I believe, not from a Christian writer but from the Jewish prophet and feminist psychologist, Otto Rank. Rank said that the idea of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the most "revolutionary idea" ever proposed by the human species. Why would he say such a thing? In his work with artists, Rank came to the conclusion that fear of death was the ultimate block to the creative process. Fear of death leads to fear of life (an insight on which Ernest Becker's posthumously-awarded Pulitzer Prize book, *The Fear of Death*, is based). Rank analyzed the evolution of the human species in terms of its quest for immortality or soul. Tribal people found soul in the tribe; the Egyptian pyramids guaranteed the immortality of the pharaoh, an immortality in which ordinary citizens could participate vicariously; Greeks found soul in art and beauty; Romans in law; Christians from the fourth century on in family; Freud in psychoanalysis.

But Rank believed that Jesus and Paul *democratized* soul by putting forth the belief that *everyone resurrects from the dead.* Death is no longer anything to be feared by anyone. For believers, the Easter event symbolizes the triumph of life over death, spring over winter, justice over injustice, liberation over captivity. And this assurance allows us to get on with living. And living means above all for Rank, creating. The empty tomb becomes a fertile womb. Rank interprets Deuteronomy "I put before you life and death, choose life" to mean: Choose birth. Choose creativity. Give birth.

It takes a mystical sense, a sense of the Cosmic Christ, to grasp the impact of Easter because, as the Jesus seminar scholars tell us, the resurrection is not about the historical Jesus as such. The tradition of the Cosmic Christ is that of the divine wisdom that is found in every being in the universe, the light of the Divine in all things. Those who reported experiencing the risen Christ did not say, "we've seen the historical Jesus, we've seen the historical Jesus." Rather, they said, "we've seen the risen Lord." But Lord is a

(continued on page 66)

ILLUSTRATION BY OENONE TERRILL

Matthew Fox is the author of twenty-three books including The Coming of the Cosmic Christ *and* Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh *which will appear in March 1999. He is founder of the new University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland (510-835-4827).*

VEGETARIANISM: Essential for Jewish Renewal?

Richard H. Schwartz

Spirituality has led to a growing awareness of the unity of all beings, of our fundamental interconnectedness. For some this reflection has stayed on the level of purely personal enlightenment without much manifestation in behavior, but for others this understanding has led to a greater sense of responsibility, first toward all other human beings, and second toward animals. One form that this awareness takes is a growing move toward vegetarianism.

No surprise, then, that the Jewish renewal consciousness that increasingly manifests in all the various denominations of Judaism has a strong proclivity toward vegetarianism. Let me explain why I believe that Jewish renewal must associate itself with vegetarianism.

Jewish renewal means a return to Jewish traditions in a process Rabbi Arthur Waskow has called "Godwrestling," struggling with the Torah and Jewish traditions to find deeper meanings. Jewish vegetarians in particular are constantly wrestling with a tradition that, on the one hand, has been centered on animal sacrifices and the eating of meat during festivals, but that, on the other hand, contains strong indications that vegetarianism is at the heart of Jewish tradition.

God's first dietary law allowed only vegetarian foods: "And God said: 'Behold I have given you every herb yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed—to you it shall be for food.'" (Genesis 1:29). Some of the greatest Jewish sages have taught that permission to eat meat was given later only as a grudging concession to people's weakness, and that many prohibitions and restrictions were applied to keep alive a sense of reverence for life.

• The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides felt that animal sacrifices were a concession to the practices of a time when the common mode of worship involved sacrifices and that the Israelites were not ready to worship in a way radically different from their neighbors. However, human sacrifices were eliminated, pagan practices were forbidden, and sacrifices were confined to one central location with the hope that the Israelites would be weaned from this practice.

• The prophets stressed many times that God preferred mercy and justice over animal sacrifices, and that the sacrifices were in fact an abomination to God if carried out without efforts to combat poverty and oppression.

• Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel and one of the outstanding Jewish philosophers of the twentieth century, believed that the many Jewish dietary restrictions implied a hidden reprimand designed to keep alive the feeling of reverence for life. He taught that people will again be vegetarians in the time of the Messiah, basing this view on Isaiah's prophecy about the harmony and peace that would prevail during the Messianic time: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb … and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

• Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, a highly respected modern Torah commentator, has stated that "the laws of kashrut are designed to teach us compassion and to lead us gently to vegetarianism."

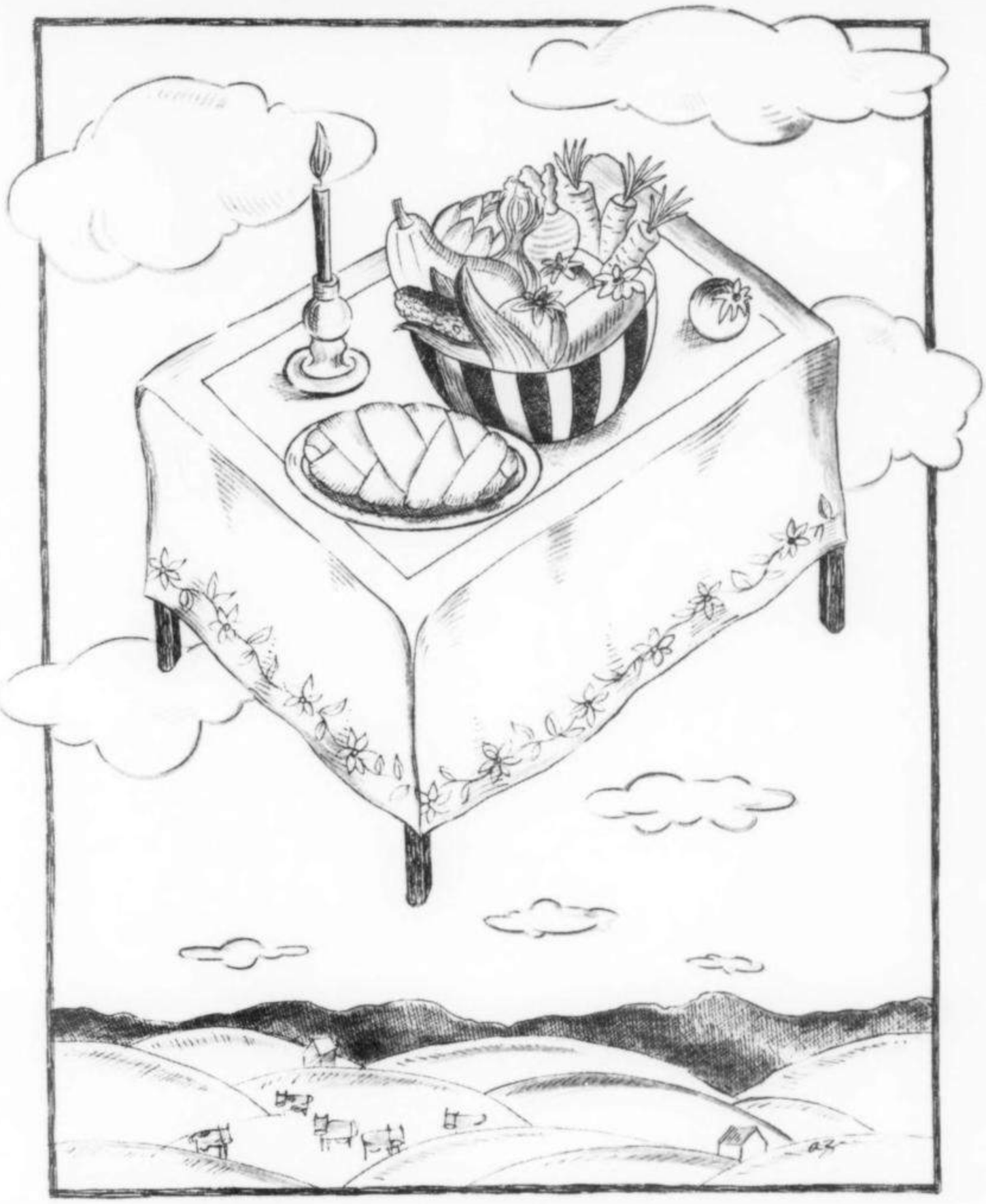
Vegetarianism is not only a messianic goal, however, but one we need to pursue in the here and now. Jewish renewal emphasizes that each of us should attempt *tikkun olam*, the transformation, healing, and repair of the world. In response, today's Jewish vegetarians are challenging Jews to adopt vegetarianism to protect the environment, help the hungry, take care of our health and lives, and treat animals with respect and compassion.

• Judaism teaches that "the earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1). We are to be partners and co-workers with God in preserving the world and seeing that the earth's resources are properly used. However, non-vegetarian diets require the wasteful use of land, water, energy, and other agricultural resources, and contribute substantially to many environmental threats, including air and water pollution, soil erosion and depletion, the destruction of tropical rain forests and other habitats, and global warming. Vegetarianism thus becomes part of a practice Jewish renewal calls "eco-kashrut," which means that to minimize our damage to the environment all of our actions, along with eating, must be kosher.

• Jewish renewal, as Michael Lerner has pointed out (*Jewish Renewal*, xxiv), "will not accept a world in which some people live in luxury and affluence while others are

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starving and homeless, a world in which people learn to close their ears and eyes to the pain of the physically and emotionally abused, a world that makes it 'common sense' to 'look out for number one' while ignoring the needs of others." But even as Judaism stresses that we are to share our bread with the hungry (today 15 to 20 million people die each year from hunger), 70 percent of the grain grown in the United States and over a third of the grain grown worldwide is fed to animals destined for slaughter. While Judaism stresses that we must work for peace and that violence is the inevitable result of unjust conditions, the waste of valuable resources caused by animal-centered diets leads to widespread hunger and poverty that can produce instability and war. Plant-based diets, on the other hand, can help reduce hunger through the efficient use of land, water, fuel and other agricultural resources.



• Judaism mandates that we be very careful about preserving our health and our lives. Animal-based diets, however, have been linked in numerous scientific studies to heart disease, stroke, several forms of cancer, and other degenerative diseases.

• Judaism forbids *tsa'ar ba'alei chayim*, causing needless suffering to animals, yet today animals are raised for food under inhumane conditions, in crowded, confined cages and stalls where they are denied fresh air, exercise, companionship, and satisfaction of their basic needs and instincts. In the most straightforward way, vegetarians show their concern for animals by not eating them.

Taken together, these examples are powerful evidence of the way that animal-based diets violate basic Jewish teachings. Few people put the matter so plainly because they are afraid to shake the status quo. Yet challenging the status quo is an important aspect of Jewish renewal too.

As Rabbi Lerner has pointed out, many Jews leave Judaism not because it is too different from the larger society, but because it is too similar. In the Western world, vegetarianism has always been viewed by the majority as disturbing and even threatening. As early as ancient Roman times, vegetarianism was "one of the signs of a radical thinker, the individual who criticises the status quo, who desires something better, more humane and more civilised for the whole of society." (Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism*, 97)

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDI ZEISLER

Shifting to a diet based on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes is an effective way to challenge the dominant paradigm that stresses one's own benefits without sufficient consideration for the harm that might be done to other people, animals, and the environment. By refusing to eat meat, vegetarians also can help shift the focus of Jewish life from materialism and conspicuous consumption to the sanctity of every day living. Vegetarianism is an effective way of showing idealistic young Jews how Judaism can apply to every aspect of life, not just a few sacred occasions or holy days, and how Jewish values can have an impact on some of the critical problems facing the world today.

In view of the strong case for vegetarianism that can be made based on Jewish teachings, I hope that the considerable energy, talent, and commitment of the Jewish renewal movement will now be channeled into the doing of a great *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of God's name) by strongly promoting a widespread discussion of Jewish values related to our diets. Such an effort will help many Jews decide to adopt sensible, healthy, ecological, plant-based diets, resulting in great benefits for them, for Judaism, and for our threatened planet. ❑

Meat Eater

Kimberly French



Eight years ago I moved to the country. I wanted everything—a vegetable garden, fruit trees, flowers, and animals. Especially animals. Some of the animals arrived unbidden, like the two half-tailed kittens that someone dumped across the street with an open can of cat food. Others, I researched and then searched for.

I sought out a family whose sheep won top prizes at local fairs. These people were as crazy about animals as I was. I went back to their farm again and again. They loved literature, weaving, and everything English. I drank a lot of tea. I asked a lot of questions about food, shelter, fencing, bedding, types of wool, ease of lambing, veterinary care, disposal of the sheep that get sick and die. Then I bought three sheep.

"What do you do with them?" everyone asks me. I know what they mean is, "You don't eat them, do you?" At first, the answer was no. I even stopped buying dog food that had "mutton byproducts" in it.

And so my little flock grew, with new lambs each spring. I thought I could manage up to twenty sheep. But I soon realized that five or six was closer to what my pasture and energy level could handle.

From the beginning I hadn't ruled out eating lambs I raised. I had eaten meat all my life. Where was the logic in buying meat that had had who knows what done to it when I had healthy lambs in my backyard? In my third summer of sheep raising, with two adolescent rams mounting everything that moved, the time had come to face the question dead-on.

Roger Jackson (a pseudonym) became my henchman. He kills animals for a living. On Labor Day weekend I took three sheep to his slaughterhouse. I made three trips, each time with one sheep stuffed into a large dog crate, bleating the whole way.

Within minutes of entering the slaughterhouse, I saw carcasses hanging, guts spilling, heard animals screaming, smelled rusty blood and chainsaw exhaust. The place has just two rooms: a killing room and a cutting room. Nothing's hidden. No one asks "May I help you?" Customers are expected to pick their way among heads, pelts, and unidentifiable gore on the floor and interrupt the killing or cutting in order to state their business.

Kimberly French is a freelance writer and editor who lives on a small homestead in southeastern Massachusetts.

On my first trip, I found Jackson sawing a hog in half. He pointed me toward a young woman with bleached, permed hair and a Guns 'n' Roses t-shirt, who was making change over a carcass in the cutting room. "She'll show you where to put him."

His daughter, Wendy, came out, and I unloaded my first six-month-old lamb. A few months earlier he'd caught his horns in a pen and ripped them off. They'd grown back in lumpy. My other sheep had names from novels (Celie, Lucy, Codi) and from public radio newscasts (Nina, Cokie, Boutros), but I'd named him Dinner and his twin brother Lunch. I treated the others like pets. I fed them dropped apples. I scratched Boutros' back until his eyes rolled in an ecstatic swoon. But I had barely handled Lunch and Dinner.

Unused to the halter, Dinner dug his hooves into the gravel. "Don't pull his wool or you'll bruise the meat," Wendy told me. He bucked, and I yanked him toward the pen. Once he was in, an enormous ram kept humping him. Dinner bleated continually.

"How do you want him cut up?" Wendy asked.

"What are the choices?"

She pulled out a big piece of butcher's paper and scrawled my name and number. "Boned and rolled, steaks, chops. How do you eat?"

I didn't eat much meat. I wasn't sure I'd be able to eat this meat at all. I couldn't answer.

"Why don't we give you a variety? That way, when you come back next time, you'll know what you want."

I asked Jackson if he'd be interested in buying the lamb's twin and a ewe. He met me with a feed bag and, somehow, single-handedly stuffed Lunch into it. I couldn't help feeling tenderness toward Lunch. He had his mother's pretty face, and I could tell by the way he kept tentatively approaching me that he could be a pet.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREA KASSOF

Jackson hooked the bag on a scale. He eyed me to make sure I was watching. "Didn't think I could get him in there, did you?" I shook my head. He laughed. Lunch weighed eighty pounds. Jackson had estimated eighty-five. "Good thing I weighed him."

What I should do with Codi, the ewe, had been gnawing at me for months. The previous spring she'd rejected her twin lambs. She had butted them when they'd tried to nurse. She'd have killed them if I hadn't taken them away. I'd tried to get enough milk-replacement formula into them, but one had died the first night, in my bedroom. The other had struggled on, unable to stand. For a couple of weeks I had taken him out to the barn several times a day to force nursing. With furious tears, I'd tied Codi to a fence, held her head with one hand, and tried to hook the lamb up with the other hand, mindful to keep my own baby upright in a backpack. I'd also tried rubbing him with a newborn lamb to fool its mother into adopting him, a technique I'd read about called "grafting." Nothing had worked. He'd become a sweet bottle lamb. He followed me around like a puppy and leaped in the air whenever I came home. Everywhere I went, he was sure to go.

I couldn't breed Codi again. I'd put up a few signs, but no one wanted a ewe who couldn't be bred. She infuriated me—but she was like family, and she trusted me. I knew that any real farmer would "cull" her. A friend had teased, "A new reason to eat meat—revenge."

Lamb Shank

It grosses out many of my friends.
They don't eat meat, let alone
place it on a ritual platter.
I am not so particular, or more so.

Made of flesh and bone, liver
and sinew, salty blood and brain,
I know they weren't ghosts who trekked
out of baked mud huts into the desert.

Blood was spilled, red and real:
first ours, then theirs. Blood
splashed on the doorposts proclaimed
in danger the rebellion within.

We are pack and herd animals.
One Jew is not a Jew, but we are
a people together, plural, joined.
We were made flesh and we bled.

And we fled, under the sign
of the slaughtered lamb to live
and die for each other. We are
meat that thinks and sings.

—Marge Piercy

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Codi stepped politely across the driveway in front of the slaughterhouse. It could have been a show ring. "Halter broke, huh?" Jackson called over, smirking.

Jackson had told me he'd pay fifteen to fifty cents per pound for an older ewe depending on how much was fat. He eyed her and pronounced that she was worth twenty-eight cents on 130 pounds. His big fingers fumbled with a calculator. He did the multiplication twice: $36.40.

"Can you make it forty?"

"No, that would be thirty-one cents a pound," he shot back. "I might lose money at that."

He pulled out two twenties. Neither of us had change. "Because you're so cute and young and vivacious, here's forty, but I don't do that all the time. I'll get it out of you next time."

I took the extra $3.60—not one of my prouder moments. I drove away, listening to Codi's distinctive deep bleat ringing out from the barnyard noise.

I didn't breed my ewes the next season. But my business with Jackson was unfinished.

A scene in the movie *Roger and Me* a few years back had stuck with me. The filmmaker returned to his hometown of Flint, Michigan, and documented what had happened since the General Motors plant shut down there. One woman raised rabbits for a little income. As she answered questions, she cuddled a white bunny. Then she offered to show how she kills her rabbits, broke its neck, and proceeded to skin it. The Cambridge, Massachusetts, audience groaned and laughed at her. Their squeamishness disgusted me. I hated it in myself.

Both sets of my grandparents slaughtered steers, hogs, and chickens on their farms. My parents grew up not just knowing, but seeing, that hamburger came from cows, bacon from hogs, drumsticks from chickens. If they had felt any squeamishness, it was squelched early on. But not for me. The disembodied act of buying meat in a supermarket felt completely ordinary—until I started trying to make the pieces of my homestead fit together. Something didn't feel right about dropping off my animal, then picking him up in little packages. It was as though I had made a long journey to participate in a terrible but enlightening rite, then turned tail and run.

I wanted to know how my animals were turned into meat. Jackson agreed to let me watch him work. I arrived on a Thursday afternoon.

Jackson killed two animals before I could figure out how he did it. He herded another one from the maze of pens outside into a red steel chute. He wrapped a chain around its right rear leg, then lifted the front wall of the chute enough to shove it into the room. He pushed a switch that hung from the ceiling. A hydraulic lift hoisted the animal. Its free rear leg thrashed. He lowered it, slowly, headfirst,

(continued on page 69)



Bringing out Radiance in the Faces of our Elders

Danny Siegel

One of my bumper stickers reads: Be kind to your children—they will choose your nursing home. Reactions: (a) a chuckle, (b) an uncomfortable chuckle, (c) a moment's flash of terror. Here are five programs for anyone who believes that there are some nursing homes that could be (a) slightly, (b) moderately, (c) vastly improved.

1. Second Wind Dreams goes into nursing homes and asks the residents, what is your dream? then makes the dream come true. Now in more than two hundred nursing homes in North America, Second Wind Dreams has done everything from buying a dress for a woman who hadn't gone to worship services in years because she didn't have anything nice enough to wear, to flying an eighty-seven-year-old man from South Carolina to see his eighty-three-year-old brother in California whom he hadn't seen in thirty years, to buying a radio with a tape deck and tapes for another elder. When she had her wish fulfilled, she put a tape in the tape deck and got up to dance. And more than half of the dreams cost $25 or less. This is Big Time, Awesome, Simple. For details, contact: Second Wind Dreams, 4031 Willows Way, Marietta, GA 30062, attn: P.K. Beville, 770-977-3528, email: gatric@aol.com, website: www.secondwind.org.

2. Are any nursing homes doing it just right? Yes. Trust me. Make one phone call. Contact Neila Houghton-Daggett, the former activities director at Harborside Healthcare-Crestwood, 40 Crosby St., Milford, NH 03055, 603-645-6500. Ask about Martha's adventures and the astonishing activities of the other residents: snowmobiling, horseback riding, helicopter rides, motorcycle rides, tap dancing lessons, fancy dinners at fancy restaurants. I've been there (having read about it in *Good Housekeeping* a couple of years ago). What you hear will blow your mind, all because the program director, Ms. Houghton-Daggett, said, "Of course. Why not?" instead of, "You're too frail. It's against the rules."

3. Imagine pure (riotous) fun parties consisting of nursing home residents and members of the local Harley-Davidson chevra. I have the 8 x 10 glossy photographs, have spoken to the people who did it, and, most of all, seen the videos. Here's the key: get the video, turn off the picture, and just listen to what is going on. Laughter. Wonderful, heartwarming, laughter-from-the-kishkas. To make your own biker party for elders contact Beth Huber or Robin Moose, Stanly Manor, Inc., 625 Bethany Rd., Albemarle, NC 28001, 704-982-0770, email: lmoose@ctc.net.

4. Want to revamp your nursing home? Dr. William Thomas' program, The Eden Alternative, is a wonder to behold. Eden homes are based not on a medical model, but rather on a human (read: *menschlich*) model. Let's begin with some statistics: in the first full year, he reduced the cost of medications from $220,006 to $135,901, a savings of $84,105, more than 38 percent! By the end of two and a half years, the cost had been reduced by 50 percent from pre-Eden days. The kicker: there were 50 percent fewer infections than at a similar home nearby.

In Eden homes you'll find a great abundance of animals (the first Eden home I visited had approximately eighty residents, eight cats, four dogs, and one hundred birds), plants (by the hundreds, the air was so fresh), and on-site child day care facilities (for constant interaction between the elders and little children). They also wisely reconfigure the power structure, allowing front-line people like attendants, nurse's aides, and the folks who change soiled diapers to make more of the important decisions. They are the ones who know the residents best of all. Three states—Missouri, Texas, and North Carolina—are already instituting the program in their state-owned homes. Private nursing homes throughout North America are seeing the light. You can learn about the program by reading Dr. Thomas' books. Start with: *Life Worth Living: How Someone You Love Can Still Enjoy Life in a Nursing Home*. Read it, and pass it on to someone in a position to change things in a home in your community. You can round out your reading with his second book, too: *Open Hearts, Open Minds*. Contact: The Eden Alternative, c/o Dr. William Thomas, 742 Turnpike Rd., Sherburne, NY 13460, 607-674-5232, fax: 607-674-6723, email: eden@norwich.net, website: www.edenalt.com.

5. If you have local independent housing for your elders, and if federal funding was involved in the project, then the residents are entitled to have pets. I suspect many

(continued on page 69)

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH SOLIE

Danny Siegel is the author of twenty books including Good People, *a collection of essays about everyday people who are Mitzvah heroes and* Tell Me a Mitzvah, *Tzedakah stories for children.*

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Senator Charles Schumer

Jack Newfield



PHOTOGRAPH BY BOLIVAR ARELLANO / NEW YORK POST

Charles Schumer was elected to the United States Senate from New York in 1998, defeating three-term incumbent Alfonse D'Amato. Before that, he served in the House of Representatives for eighteen years. In the House, he was the principal architect of the Brady Bill and the Crime Control Act of 1994.

NEWFIELD: You're forty-eight years old, in your prime, and starting a dream job. What are the big things you want to accomplish? The big issues you want to tackle? And in twenty-five years, what do you want people to say about you?

SCHUMER: The thing I'd want people to say about me is that, in some way, I helped bring the Senate and the Congress back to what it used to be, the people's branch of government, doing things that made a difference in people's lives. I have devoted my life to government. I'm still basically an idealist, which translates into getting real things done to make people's lives better.

NEWFIELD: What are your priorities?

SCHUMER: The highest priority you can have is education.

NEWFIELD: How does a senator effect that mystical exchange between teacher and pupil in a classroom thousands of miles away?

SCHUMER: When I started to get involved in the crime issue, people said, "it's a local issue." I said, "No, there are lots of ways the federal government can help." And the best way the federal government can help, and did in the Crime Bill, is to find programs that work around the country and help them spread.

NEWFIELD: Replicate success.

SCHUMER: Replicate success using federal dollars as an incentive, a partial incentive. In education, I'm going to try to find what works. One thing I want to do is improve the quality of teachers. There are a lot of people who want to go into teaching; it's fundamentally a very fulfilling profession. But people don't feel they have financial support. We pay starting teachers in particular too little to attract the quality people that we need. I want to make it easier for good people who want to go into teaching to do that.

NEWFIELD: How do you do that from the three committees, Banking, Judiciary, and Rules, that you have been assigned to?

SCHUMER: You don't.

NEWFIELD: You don't need to be on a relevant committee to reform education?

SCHUMER: Correct. A good idea wins in the Senate. For example, I'm going to put making all tuition deductible on the floor; it's something I campaigned for. I won't put it on the floor January 15th. I'm going to have to talk to every senator. I'm going to try to line up a Republican co-sponsor and build a coalition—but I don't have to be on a committee to do it.

What I want to do first with education is my student loan idea. Basically, if you go into teaching and teach for five years, your student loans should be forgiven. It doesn't cost that much.

NEWFIELD: You got over 70 percent of the Jewish vote against Senator D'Amato. Bob Abrams got only about 59 percent in 1992. How did you do that? What does it say about the Jewish community?

SCHUMER: It says a number of things. First, it says that Jewish voters care. They want someone who's good on Israel and who's good on Jewish issues. But they also want somebody who's going to be pro-choice and pro-gun control and pro-gay rights. To the vast majority of the Jewish

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community, just being good on Israel or on Jewish issues is not enough.

I think the second thing it says is that the negative appeal that some people made in this election …

NEWFIELD: Name them.

SCHUMER: Well, Finklestein and others …

NEWFIELD: You mean Arthur Finklestein and Assemblyman Dov Hikind?

SCHUMER: Right. It utterly amazes me how little Al D'Amato understood the Jewish community. He knows he's going down with the Jewish community in the polls and he brings out Dov Hikind, who is just nasty and off the wall. Hikind said because I voted against the Gulf War, I'm for Saddam Hussein. It is my profound belief that every time he put Dov Hikind on, I gained with the Jewish vote. For every one vote I lost in Boro Park, I picked up three in Westchester.…

NEWFIELD: Do you think D'Amato and company didn't grasp the diversity of the Jewish community?

SCHUMER: Correct. You see, they won in 1992 by negative campaigning. But they won because they had Crown Heights, which had riots in 1991. And in Crown Heights, D'Amato is strong.

They said that I didn't care about the Holocaust because I missed a vote that was purely procedural—how could they say that? That tactic would have won over Schumer haters who weren't voting for me already. But it wouldn't have won over voters in the middle. I think it alienated Christian voters. So, I think their Jewish-vote strategy of being nasty, negative, and divisive hurt D'Amato.

NEWFIELD: How did you feel personally, as a patriotic, sensitive Jew, when people would try to imply you were sympathetic to Iraq? As a human being, what did it feel like?

SCHUMER: I felt it was outrageous, and I thought it was a cheap shot. Voters aren't that stupid, they're not that gullible. And I regarded it more as a reflection on D'Amato's campaign than as a reflection either on the truth or on me.

NEWFIELD: Do you think the Jewish vote in general, given your success and Barbara Boxer's success nationally, is becoming more liberal again after a period when Jews were voting for Nixon and Reagan?

SCHUMER: I don't know if they're becoming "more liberal" again. After all, on social issues I think Jews are liberal. But on crime and on economic issues, they're not as liberal as they used to be, for obvious reasons. I think, though, that Jews are afraid of the Christian Right. More than fear—because Jews are pretty secure in America these days and thank God for that—Jewish people are tolerant people and they don't like it when they see all these negative attacks. It turns their stomachs. One year on immigrants, the next year on gays, the next year on blacks. They say to themselves, this is not the place for me.

I've met lots of Jewish business people who are Republicans, who are not liberal by any stretch of the imagination, but who are highly uncomfortable with the Republican way of winning votes. I think that discomfort is going to continue until the Republican party becomes a party which bases its appeal more on unity and on positive issues, even issues I disagree with, than on saying "I don't like that group, so everyone vote for me."

NEWFIELD: So you see tolerance versus intolerance as a fault line in American politics?

SCHUMER: Correct, I do. America is a remarkably tolerant place. De Tocqueville said the great driving force in America was toward equality. I think that's still true in a lot of ways.

NEWFIELD: On that point, I know that you've said that, other things being equal, you would like to see a black or Latino person, unnamed, be the mayor of New York City after Giuliani. What is the principle behind that impulse?

SCHUMER: I didn't say this when you asked me the initial question about my legacy, but, if I could be somebody who could heal the racial divide in America, then, after twenty-five years, I'd go to my grave a very happy and satisfied man. To go back to de Tocqueville, in the 1830s when we were a nation of farmers, he said that America would become the greatest country in the world, but the one poison that could do us in was racism. Let me give you a separate example. I walked into the Senate chamber yesterday for the first time, and I saw all the senators: No blacks! No Hispanics! America would be a better place, we would all live together better, if minorities had more representation.

That doesn't mean I'll always side with a minority over a white. I try to judge the best candidate. But overall I think that is a goal that we all should be working for.

NEWFIELD: How would you apply that goal to the next election in New York City, in general principles?

SCHUMER: Well, in general principles, treat each person on his or her own. That is an American ideal. I got where I did not because of my last name, not because of good looks, but because I worked hard and I struggled and I had good ideas. So I'd want to apply those principles to the mayor's race. But there have to be more ways to encourage black and Latino participation in elections, not even specifically the mayoral race. I think it's better for America, better for New York—better for everyone—if minority communities feel enfranchised, feel empowered, participate fully. That's the way to bring us to true equality. Whatever I can do to help that happen, I will.

NEWFIELD: I've heard you talk a lot about how your experiences at Harvard with radical violence-oriented students affected you politically and intellectually in terms of opposing both extremes of the political spectrum. Given the assassination of abortion doctors and the hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepherd, is the threat of violence or the linkage of terrorism to extreme politics now associated with the Right the way it was with the Left in the late Sixties?

SCHUMER: This is how I got involved in politics: I was cut from the basketball team. A guy knocks on my door, says

how would you like to join the Harvard Young Democrats, we're working for Eugene McCarthy. That introduction to politics led to a lifetime, thus far at least, of a profession and of service—a great deal of hard work, but also a lot of fulfillment. But while I was at Harvard, I became very leery of people who acted like they had the moral message from on high, and could take power into their own hands instead of working through the democratic process.

For example, Harvard Medical School wanted to expand into a vacant lot. It was opposed by the radical group that used to be the SDS but had been taken over by the PLP, Progressive Labor Party, the Maoists. They had a debate in Adams House where one of the leaders of the PLP debated a professor from Harvard Medical School. The Harvard Medical School man made a plea to let them expand. This was I guess 1970 or so, and he said, "a few years before you were born, mothers would shudder every time their child who was four or five years old would get a cold because they'd be afraid that it would develop into polio." He pointed to the picture of the building and said, "because of buildings like that and people working in buildings like that, that's no longer a problem. Maybe we could do the same thing for cancer or diabetes or heart attacks." And the SDS guy spit on his shoes. I think of that scene every week. I'm always dubious of people who think they have this moral message from God, that they *know* what is right, which leads them to saying violence is appropriate.

Then it was on the Left. But I'm equally afraid, or maybe more afraid, of that impulse on the Right these days.

Being against violence has been one of my main themes and underlying it is basically a fundamental belief in democracy. It was Churchill who said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others. It works slowly, bumps and grinds, but I do believe the system works.

NEWFIELD: What kind of shape do you think toleration, free speech, and the Bill of Rights are in today in this society? Is this a main theme you will work on as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee?

SCHUMER: I think there's a group of people who want to take tolerance and free speech away.

NEWFIELD: Give me names and addresses....

SCHUMER: The Republicans have nothing else to do so they say that we should praise the judge who wanted to put the Ten Commandments on his courtroom ceiling. I believe in the Ten Commandments; I believe in God. But I don't believe you have to introduce God into the courtroom. I believe in the fundamental tolerance of the American people. The fairness of the system, in broad terms, doesn't always prevail immediately, but it ultimately prevails as long as people like myself are vigilant against the threat of violence, against intolerance.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NORCIA / NEW YORK POST

We can pass a law that says you can only buy one gun a month ... what do you need twelve guns a year for?

NEWFIELD: What else do you hope to achieve on the Judiciary Committee?

SCHUMER: I want to continue my fight on gun control. I believe that we should require more—not less—with guns than what we do with cars. License and register guns. That'll be a long struggle. We can pass a law that says you can only buy one gun a month ... what do you need twelve guns a year for? It would stop the gun runners who go to states that have no gun laws, fill their trunks up with five hundred little cheap Saturday Night Specials, and then sell them on street corners in big cities. You know, the people who go from New York City to South Carolina, from Chicago to Mississippi or Texas, from California to the western Rocky Mountain states. One of the keys here is persuading the president to make this a major issue—which, thus far, he hasn't.

NEWFIELD: Let me go into one other area. Your Senate colleague Pat Moynihan has popularized this phrase, "defining deviancy down." What does that mean to you?

SCHUMER: One meaning is: have certain standards, don't go to the lowest common denominator. Second, because someone doesn't live up to your standard doesn't mean you treat them with harshness. Raise them up to your standard. I think those two concepts are consistent.

NEWFIELD: What is your reaction to Bill Bennett's attempt to link morality with governance? Do you think it's relevant?

SCHUMER: All too often, the far Right these days wants to say that it can impose its morality on other people through government. For example, prayer in the schools. I believe in God. I don't think having a child recite a prayer every day at nine in the morning is going to make that child a more moral person. I do think that the good parenting and good values that parents, family, church or synagogue, and others can bring to the child matter. But they're looking for cheap ways out. So government can be a moral force by example, maybe, but I don't think by imposition.

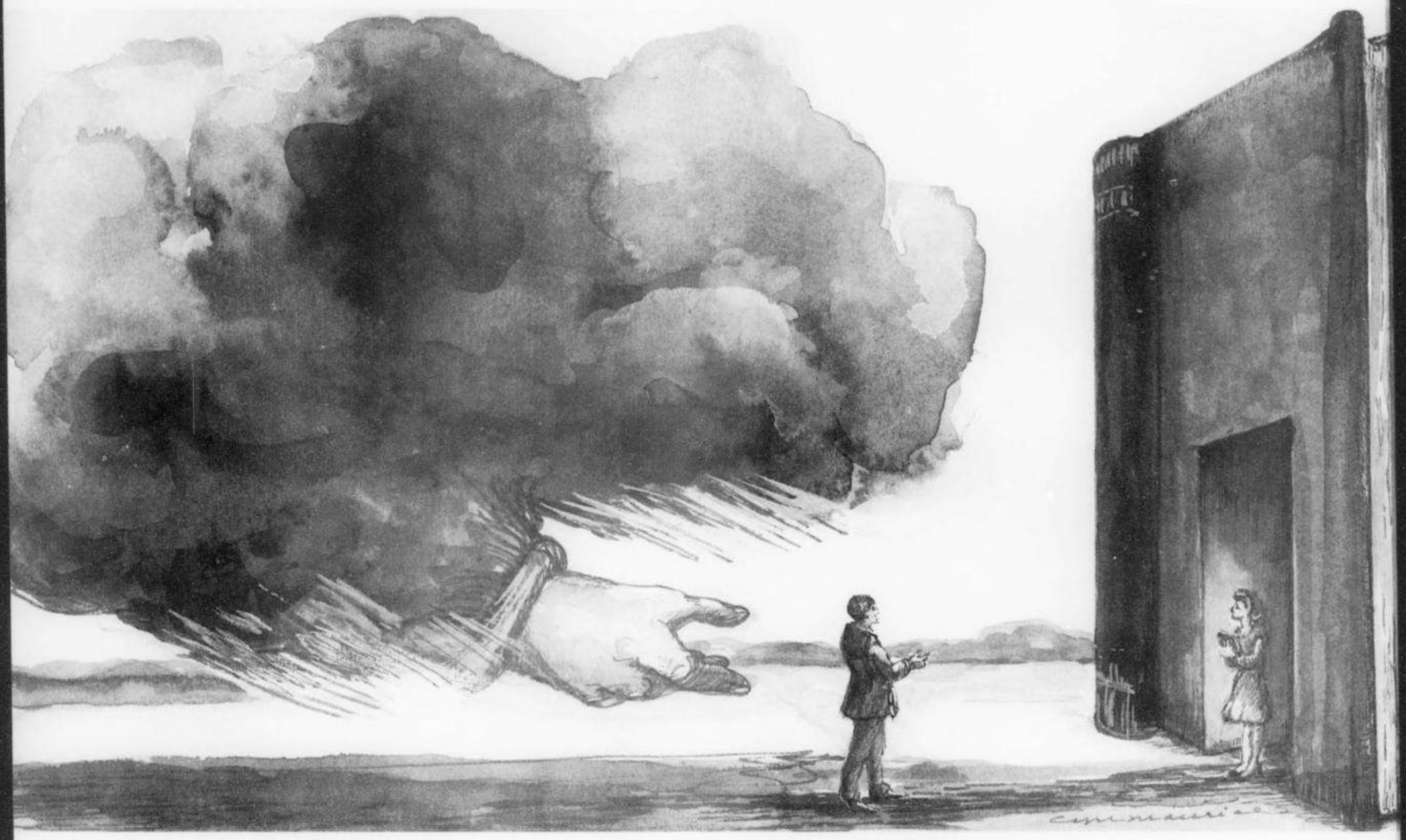
NEWFIELD: What is character in the context of political leadership?

SCHUMER: Being a good example.

NEWFIELD: Thank you. ❑

FICTION

Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen



Rebecca Goldstein

There was a flasher loose in the stacks of Columbia University's Butler Library, my senior year at Barnard. He struck on at least nine different occasions, three of them within the last two weeks of the end of classes. Entrance to the stacks requires a Columbia ID, which meant that the pervert had credentials, but that was hardly a consequence to strain the credulity of a Barnard senior.

There are twelve levels of stacks in Butler Library, and they are murkily lit and largely desolate. Suspended bulbs create puddles of dimness just sufficient for making out the call numbers posted on the ends of the bookshelves. The objects of one's search, the books, can be seen only once one turns the dial of the timed light fixtures that are also attached to the ends of the bookshelves.

The span allotted for illumination is not much. A maximum of ten minutes, and the sizzle of the phosphorescence gives out, the aisle once again plunged into thick gloom.

The possibilities for deviancy that lurk in the twilit obscurity of the stacks had been recognized long before the Butler flasher made his nine (at the least) appearances that spring of my senior year. Several people I knew back then claimed to have had sex in the stacks. This was, in fact, rather a popular thing to claim—perhaps even, for all I know, to do. The secret life that went on in the more God-forsaken areas of that very same building that has engraved on its façade the iconographic names of Western civilization—Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, etc.—was a source of fond amusement and perverse pride, reaching out to embrace even our man in the dirty raincoat.

How quintessentially Columbia, we seniors sentimentally mused. In how many institutions of higher learning could a graduate student reaching for a copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—for so it had reportedly happened on one of the nine occasions—turn at the noise of a strangled apology, to confront the Ding-an-sich? I would soon be moving

ILLUSTRATION BY CYN MAURICE

Rebecca Goldstein is a former philosophy professor who became a fiction writer. She is the author of five books, including The Mind-Body Problem *and* Mazel, *and became a MacArthur Fellow in 1995.* *Copyright © Rebecca Goldstein. All Rights Reserved.*

to Princeton, to pursue my graduate studies there, and I remember half-earnestly entreating a friend whether Princeton's Firestone Library—no doubt well-endowed, no doubt well-lit—would be able to offer me anything in the way of the pure adrenaline rush of paranoid thrill I always experienced upon entering the stacks of Butler.

And still do, for that matter, for it wasn't long before I was back on the campus atop Morningside Heights. Four years after graduating from Barnard, I returned, now as a faculty member in Barnard's philosophy department, subletting an apartment on 110th Street right off of Broadway that belonged to a woman who had graduated with me from Barnard and who had gone off to Europe in search of a subject for her first novel. I arrived in early August and immediately got to work preparing my semester's courses, of which there would be three, a daunting prospect for a newly-hatched Ph.D., especially since one of the courses would be the Senior Seminar, meant to be the culminating academic experience in the philosophy major's undergraduate career.

The fall semester of the seminar is traditionally devoted to an historical philosopher, the spring semester to either a more contemporary thinker or to a topic. I had chosen Descartes for the fall, partly because Descartes has become so utterly unglamorous. Ever since Wittgenstein, he's been everybody's whipping boy. A talented undergraduate philosophy major is just as likely to pronounce glibly upon the "Cartesian fallacy" as to apply to law school after graduation, and this offends me. The whole notion of fashions in thought offends me.

My preparations for the seminar that summer convinced me how very much more subtle Descartes' arguments were than the trendy objections being flung his way. In the service of convincing my students likewise I planned to have them read a book that I admire, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen: The Defence of Reason in Descartes'* Meditations, written by Harry G. Frankfurt, then a professor of philosophy at Yale. Frankfurt's unveiling of the marvelous argumentative machinery moving Descartes' *Meditations* along, the ingenious strategy that underlies the intricate structure of his attempt to validate reason, had given back to contemporary philosophy's favorite whipping boy at least some of his due.

And so it was that about a week before classes were to begin I made my way over to Barnard's Wollman Library—a far airier structure than Butler, though of course lacking the latter's vast holdings—in order to put Frankfurt's book, among others, on reserve.

However, I was stopped cold near the door by an inexplicably gesticulating librarian. She was pointing, the expression on her face one of outraged disbelief, to a sign that was propped up on a chair placed right inside the open door, boldly stating that the library was closed for this week.

It is true that, not noticing the posted warning, I had blithely circumvented it. My capacity for oblivion to the external world is considerable. Only a few days before, I had wandered into freshly laid pavement and totaled a new pair of Italian high heels I had extravagantly purchased in anticipation of the entrance into adulthood that lecturing before a class would entail.

But then, even as we stood there, the peeving librarian and the peeved-upon I, a political scientist I remembered from undergraduate days made his way, unimpeded, past the barricade, heading straight for the reserve desk. Confused, I tried to explain myself to Wollman's gatekeeper.

"I just want to…" I began; put some books on reserve for my classes, was how I meant to finish, but she cut me off.

"Read the sign." Her voice was alarmingly measured, and her expression grim enough to shove me down off my tottering pose of maturity. I am rendered helpless before certain forms of anger, especially when they emanate from an authority figure. To speak precisely, the irate librarian really was not, in any shape or form, my authority, but neither she nor I had any realization of that fact at the moment.

In many ways, I am a craven creature. I might have been, at the age of twenty-six, quite ready to take on the powerful Wittgensteinian cartel in contemporary philosophy. Still, one only needed to have placed me before a glowering librarian shaking a finger in my face, and all thought processes were seized up in fear. I have, with the years, grown somewhat less abject under fire, but not much.

In retrospect, I realized that the librarian had simply mistaken me for an unbelievably nervy student, a brat who would not take no for an answer. That she would mistake me for a student was really, after all, no surprise. Nobody had ever yet taken me for anything else. The only question people usually had for me was whether I was in college or high school, or maybe even junior high. Even though I was dressed that day in a crisp linen sundress and the high-heeled sandals I had just bought to replace the cemented pair, the attempt at sartorial sophistication had not interfered with the automatic response of the librarian.

"I just want to…" I tried once more to get the compelling reason out.

This time her voice was so incensed that several others inside the library—faculty members who looked their parts—glanced over with activated interest. I turned on a high heel and fled.

I slouched across the way to MacIntosh Student Center, collapsing with a cup of tea into one of the little booths they used to have there before renovating them away. My hand was trembling so that the wilting white linen of my dress was in danger of being splattered.

This is a bad omen, I heard my innermost voice, which is pre-philosophical and incorrigibly superstitious, declaring. I shouldn't be here, I'm not ready to teach, what do I even know? The librarian with murder flashing in her eyes had been too bizarre not to be a sign.

The voice I was hearing harkened back to my religious childhood, much given over to the search after an immense

truth that measured itself out in small signs and innuendoes. Against this voice, I had mounted my own defense of reason, which had been strong enough to carry me this far. I depended upon it. So instead of succumbing to the sense of profound trespass that the librarian's rebuke had brought down on me, I gulped my tea, although my hand still trembled, crossed Broadway, and made my way over to Butler Library.

I entered the stacks, and a vague uneasiness settled over me, thick with associations that constituted a sense of relocated familiarity more comforting to me, at that moment, than even the cup of MacIntosh tea had been.

The good old stack-haunting sicko, the phantom flasher, I thought fondly, getting off the rickety elevator on the sixth floor, where most of the philosophy books are shelved. My rate of success at Butler had never been very high, in contrast to Firestone, where I always found my book.

The call number of *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen* is B1854.F7, shelved in one of the more desolately isolated areas of Butler. I made my way through the forlorn shadows, trying to muffle the silly clatter of my high heels. Locating the shelf, I turned the dial for my illumination.

There was a man standing there, facing me, no more than two feet away.

There was a man standing there, facing me, no more than two feet away.

I screamed—I believe rather lustily. This being Butler, nobody came running, which in this case was just as well, for there was nothing observably wrong with the man. I determined this reassuring fact even as I screamed. His fly, in particular, was properly zipped. There was not a single noticeable sign of sexual deviancy.

In fact, he was an Orthodox Jew. His was wearing the *de rigueur* dark trousers and white shirt, and his black silk yarmulke was singularly huge, encasing the upper dome of his head and reaching down to cover his forehead.

It was the sort of yarmulke my own father and brother wore, though in far smaller and more modified versions. This was one of the most serious yarmulkes I'd ever seen.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to startle you. The light had just gone out. Are you okay?"

Both his voice and his manner presented a great deal of material for analysis, confounding me with contradictions, both internal and in relation to pre-formed views. It was apparent, for example, that he did not come from the areas of Brooklyn that the size of his yarmulke suggested. His enunciation was impeccable, as pure as almost any I had ever heard at, say, Princeton.

The size of his yarmulke ought to have precluded, as well, the nature of the ambiguous smile he was bestowing on me, a young woman in a sleeveless dress. He looked to be about the age that I would have looked had I looked my age. There was the slightest sardonic edge to his smile; it contained a judgment of me, or so I judged. Though I could not see his eyebrows beneath the oversized yarmulke, I drew them in as raised.

Was his judgment of me prompted by my having screamed? Who wouldn't have screamed under the circumstances?

His gaze was too direct, too interested, given the size of the yarmulke. Quite frankly, it would have been too interested even with no yarmulke at all.

"Are you okay?" he repeated, as I stood there rapidly analyzing.

"Yes, I'm okay. Of course I'm okay. I was just startled."

"Who wouldn't be? I almost screamed myself."

But you didn't, I thought. I was almost positive, in fact, that he had been smiling at the moment of illumination.

"I ought to introduce myself," he said—perhaps to further reassure me? "I'm Zachary Syke."

I had little choice but to tell him my name, which, given the nature of that name, yielded him information that could hardly have been neutral to him, again judging by the size of his yarmulke.

His ambiguous smile returned, its sardonic undertones grown slightly stronger with the increase in his knowledge. I thought I detected the presence of yet more judgment: perhaps on my dress, which was, in addition to being immodestly sleeveless, cut well-above my knees? A yarmulke of those dimensions brought out certain well-defined areas of my paranoia. It signaled a world I had rejected, a world I had come to regard just as harshly as it regarded me.

The books on either side of us were philosophical, and this fact, too, confuted my pre-conceptions. The size of Syke's yarmulke ought to have kept him away from the stacks of this section. My own family, to cite a non-random example, had vigorously balked when I had first announced my intention of studying philosophy—as well they should have, for I had gone on to realize a great number of their worst fears. (They were still awaiting the announcement of an intermarriage, the grandchildren who wouldn't know that they were Jewish.)

What, I wondered, would my family have made of Zachary Syke, standing there in the stacks of Butler Library, with a philosophy book in his hand?

"What's the book?" I asked him out of curiosity.

He held up *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen: The Defence of Reason in Descartes'* Meditations.

"Amazing," I said.

"An amazing book?" He looked down at it. "I haven't read it."

"Well, it's extremely good. But what I had meant by 'amazing' is that, believe it or not, that's the very book I came here to get."

"Not so amazing," he said.



ILLUSTRATION BY OENONE TERRILL

"No?"

"No. I had a feeling."

"A feeling?"

For one off-guarded moment I had falsely attributed rationality to the Orthodox Jew in the stacks.

"Take it," he said, holding out Frankfurt's book to me.

His smile was at once so inscrutable and so radiant that I was at a loss. Was he demon, dreamer, or madman?

"I'm not a madman," he said in answer to my unvoiced question. "And I'm not a demon, either. I am a dreamer, though. A Jewish dreamer. And so are you. A Jewish dreamer, if ever I saw one."

He smiled—dreamily, demonically, madly. I grabbed the book from his hand, and, for the second time that day, I turned and fled.

I didn't see Syke again until near the end of that fall semester. It was the last week of classes and the anteroom of our department was overflowing with students registering various levels of anxiety. When I opened my door in order to show one of them out and the next one in, I saw him sitting there, deep in conversation with Dolores Delillo, one of my weaker students from Introduction to Philosophy.

I had spent more time with Dolores than with any other student that semester. I had, more than likely, spent more time with Dolores than with any other person, for not only did the demands of those three courses leave me very little time for friends and such, but I was also nursing a confused and broken heart—well, in any case, it was confused. I taught my classes, met with my students, and when I left it was to go back to my apartment to prepare for my teaching.

Dolores, pale and solemn, hadn't missed a single one of my office hours. Her doggedness clashed with her diffidence, with the soft and breathless way she had of speaking. But soft and breathless, she never failed to show up. A freshman who had come to Barnard from a Catholic high school upstate, she responded to the purifying properties of clear thinking and bracing rationality with an appreciation that had touched me. She always sat in the front row in class, right in the middle, and I liked to watch her face as I lectured. Her eyes, behind the round glasses that gave her the look of a very pretty owl, seemed often to glow in response to some point I had made, and this was certainly encouraging to the terribly inexperienced teacher that I was. Dolores, just like me, saw philosophy as the natural foe of the dark forces of fanaticism (represented by our respective families and the parochial schools we had both attended), and that's why she, like me, fell hopelessly in love with the discipline.

Dolores' case was significantly more hopeless than mine, however, for, though she was extremely bright and articulate, she really didn't have much philosophical talent.

The gift for philosophy is a peculiar sort of intelligence, which has often seemed to me (cantor's daughter that I am) analogous to a gift for music. If it's arguments that have to be sung in tune, Dolores Delillo was tone-deaf.

The week before, she had thoroughly discombobulated me by announcing that she intended to declare philosophy as her major. As I tried to talk her out of it—both on the general grounds that philosophy is a terribly impractical major for anyone to pursue and on grounds more peculiar to Dolores—I suddenly saw, in horror, that her eyes, stricken behind the owl-like glasses, were over-running with tears.

I hadn't seen her since then. Dolores, my most devoted pupil, had absented herself from class, including the final lecture that I had delivered only that morning. Of course, I was concerned, and was planning to ask an older member of the department for advice.

Many times, over the course of that first semester, I had felt desperately inadequate in dealing with the psychological needs of my undergraduates. I often found myself wishing I had picked up yet one more graduate degree—in clinical psychology—before hazarding pedagogy. The powers of wisdom, with which the students, not much younger than myself, insisted on infusing me, were unnerving in their radical non-existence.

Syke and Dolores were sitting side by side on one of the orange couches in the anteroom, facing one another in what looked like well-established intimacy. Dolores was in the middle of saying something when I emerged. She stopped mid-sentence, and both she and Syke gaped up at me.

Dolores still seemed to me to have the aggrieved, or perhaps even grief-stricken, expression with which she had departed my office the week before. Syke, on the other hand, was smiling, broadly and beneficently.

To say that I was shocked to see him sitting there in the sanctity of the philosophy department anteroom hardly does justice to my state.

"You remember me," Syke announced, rather unnecessarily. The students crowding the room all seemed to be staring up at me with strangely devouring expressions. What wouldn't I have done to provoke such universal avidity during one of my lectures? I could barely even begin to imagine what they might be thinking about me and the man with the huge shiny yarmulke bisecting his forehead.



"I see that you're very busy. You're a popular professor." He looked like one of my doting family members would have looked had any been inclined to dote. "But it's important that I speak to you. Today. I must speak to you today."

Despite the mad insistence of his words, his tone was relatively easy-going, his expression relatively sane. But what the hell was he saying and why the hell was he saying it to me, here, within the sanctity of the philosophy department's anteroom?

"It's not possible," I said.

There were various ways to interpret that statement, and I meant them all.

"I'll wait in one of the classrooms until you have a moment to spare. Now go teach your students," and he gave me the full baffling beatitude of his smile.

I found him in room 328, where, earlier that morning, I had delivered my final lecture in Introduction to Philosophy, which had been on Hume's coruscating arguments for a skepticism as impossible to maintain as it is to undermine.

He was sitting in the center seat in the very first row: Dolores' place. I still hadn't spoken to her. She had left before I'd gotten to see her this afternoon.

"Look," he said, pointing a finger at the board. "There's a message for you."

It was the phrase "necessary connections." I had been discussing with my class Hume's argument that we never perceive any necessary connections in nature, the argument that forms part of his skeptical conclusions regarding the justifiability of causal reasoning.

However, I had not come to room 328 to engage in the search after truth with the madman from the stacks. I was there for one reason only. I sat down on the desk and stared him down, as severely as my face would allow.

"How did you find me?"

He laughed softly.

"I could tell you that I have powers. I could tell you that I, like you—" he gestured toward the blackboard—"receive messages. I could tell you all that, and far more, and it would all be true. But it's also true that I was able to discover who had checked out *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen* on an officer's card that allowed her to keep it out for an entire semester."

"I didn't keep it. I put it on reserve," I shot back, absurdly defensive.

"I know that," he said softly.

I stared at him, pondering.

"I don't understand," I finally said.

"You will. You were made for understanding. It's your deepest attribute. Truth is your calling. You were born with a big soul. You were born with a great knowledge of truth and beauty and goodness. No, wait a moment." He closed his eyes, his expression one of concentrated attendance. "At least a great knowledge of truth and beauty," he amended.

It was that elision that made me crack up at last, and I laughed a good bit of a while, covering my face with my hands.

When I looked again, there was Syke staring up at me with his large and liquid eyes, the look on his face one which I can only describe as luminously tender. Really, I had never seen anything quite like that expression before. Men had stared up—or, more commonly, down—at me with faces sufficiently involved, even moved. But it may very well require the element of pure lunacy to produce a gaze quite like that one.

The absolute vulnerability of the madman who would offer me its sight astounded. I began to feel vaguely frightened—not of, but rather for, Zachary Syke.

"Why is that a message for me?" I asked, in the momentary confusion of my softening mood, pointing to my own chalk marks.

"We'll get to that in a moment. There's something I have to discuss with you first. It's Dolores. I'm very concerned about her. I'm sure you are, too, of course. What are you going to do about her? What are you going to do to help Dolores?"

"Well, I already told her, in the strongest possible terms, what a mistake it would be for her to major in philosophy."

Now it was his turn to stare at me as if barely able to take in the senselessness of my words.

"Not to major in philosophy? What are you talking about?" He shook his head in disbelief. "Dolores Delillo is in love with you. She's infatuated with you. She's not a very strong person and I don't think that her obsession is good for either of you."

"Do you know Dolores? I mean did you ever meet her before today?" I didn't ask him how he even had the concept of women loving women. Such an idea would never have occurred to anyone in my family. Come to think of it, it had been rather slow in occurring to me. The man was one confoundment of pre-conceptions after another, and I felt correspondingly impressed.

He shrugged in a way that indicated that the answer to my voiced questions were both no and irrelevant.

"But you know she's not a very strong person. You know she's infatuated with me."

"I could tell you that I have powers. I could tell you that I get messages…"

"And it would all be true…"

"And it would all be true. But I could also tell you that I spent a good hour speaking to her outside your office today, and supernatural powers were redundant. Anyone with half a brain could see the girl is in trouble. I'm concerned about

ILLUSTRATION BY OENONE TERRILL

her, but more concerned, quite frankly, about you. Think about it very carefully. And be very gentle with her. This is a frighteningly fragile young woman. But you can't allow her to sustain any delusions about you. You have to nip her obsession in the bud. You have to be very firm."

"Gentle but firm," I said. I had already realized that Syke was, in fact, entirely right about Dolores, and I meekly acknowledged the implication about my missing brain-half as justified. Astonishingly, the man was absolutely right.

"Gentle but firm," he repeated, gently but firmly. "But not with me," he added and then grinned.

"And what is it that I'm supposed to be with you, pray tell?"

"What you're supposed to be with me is my bride."

This couldn't have been more matter-of-factly spoken.

I took a few beats.

"So you're a madman, after all. A shame. I was beginning to like you. Or in any case, I was preparing to overlook some of the reasons I have for not liking you."

"You don't like madmen."

"I don't like madmen whose lunacies make claims on me. What in God's name is going on underneath that ridiculously over-sized yarmulke, the likes of which, I have to tell you, I have never before seen."

"It's the yarmulke you don't like," he said amiably. "I think it's entirely a matter of the yarmulke. I'll change the yarmulke and you'll be my bride."

"Do, by all means, change the yarmulke. Definitely change the yarmulke before you try this out on the next girl." I thought of something. "Wait a minute. Did my parents set you up to do this? Is this some sort of crazy match my parents dreamed up?"

A momentary dip in intelligence, entirely understandable. My parents, quite obviously, hadn't planted Zachary Syke in the stacks of Butler Library. I was simply snatching at explanatory straws.

"You and I dreamed it up. Our souls dreamed it up long before you and I even entered this life. You are my bride and I am your groom. That's the plan. I'm simply informing you of the plan. But there's always Plan B. I would be less than honest if I didn't tell you that there's always Plan B."

"Plan B?"

"The other plans tucked away in the metaphysical folds. There always have to be other plans, because we always have free will. You don't have to worry about that. Free will is a fact."

"Thank you, Zachary. I'm glad to hear that. It's a concern I often have."

He smiled.

"You are my bride. Every word, every achingly ironic nuance convinces me. Irony is the language of the jilted truth-lover. You've been jilted by the truth because it was the wrong truth for you."

"You've been jilted by the truth because it was the wrong truth for you."

His metaphor may have had its merits, but its choice of words glanced a raw nerve. Taylor, I cried out in the jagged pain that followed. It was Taylor, not truth, who had been my jilting, or maybe jilted, lover.

"And now I'm jilting you," I said. In the fullness of my heartache, I turned a cold eye on this minor demented drama.

"For the time being," he smiled. I was certain his eyebrows were raised.

"Tell me something, Zachary. You have any eyebrows under there?"

He picked up the yarmulke, clean off his head. The effect was large and all for the good.

"I'll change the yarmulke," he said.

"It won't make any difference to me. You have to know that, Zachary. I'm being gentle and firm. Look at me," I demanded. I was clad in black suede: a short skirt, a vest and turtle neck; almost thigh-high boots. I had kept my legs uncrossed out of concern of offending him by showing even more leg. Now I emphatically crossed them. "Do I look like your bride?"

There was that luminous gaze again.

"You look exactly like my bride," he said softly. "We've seen one another before."

"In the stacks. I remember it only too well."

"Before the stacks. So very long before the stacks. Listen to your inner voice. It's trying so hard to speak to you, to get through all that worldliness you've piled on top of it. Listen." His voice was low and insistent, almost—dare I use the word?—seductive.

"You couldn't be more wrong about me. You don't know the first thing about me. But you're right about the yarmulke," I added, marvelling.

"We'll see," he said, dropping the yarmulke back down onto his head, so obliterating any sex appeal that I had to figure I had only dreamed it—Jewish dreamer that I am.

"Well," he said, getting up from my poor Dolores' seat. "I think I've given you a few things to think about."

"Well, thank you for that. I have such a dearth of subjects to occupy my mind." I threw an arm back to indicate the blackboard, closely covered with my analysis of Hume's skeptical conclusions. He laughed one more time, his eyes doing that thing again, then disappeared out the door.

It was true enough, though, that I had been given a few new things to think about. That night I didn't devote the last moments of wakefulness to the details of my Taylored confusion, but instead considered issues of Syke. There were unanswered questions that I was annoyed with myself for not having posed when I had had the chance, back in Milbank's 328—which room, I was fairly certain, had been chosen by him because its digits add up to thirteen, the number of



God's attributes.

But why, I wondered, had Syke been so insistent on speaking to me on precisely that day? Was it some sort of Kabbalistic thing? I was no student of Jewish mysticism and wasn't certain to what extent astrological signs are woven into the complex madness. Had Syke been awaiting the right alignment of planets before coming to annoy the hell out of me? As soon as the semester ended, and I had a little time to myself, I'd go check out some books by Gershom Sholem. Suddenly, I was curious. How absurd that I, without really thinking about it, had continued to avoid the Kabbalah as intellectually off-limits, hearing the echoes of my father and other teachers I'd had growing up, admonishing that the power of Kabbalistic knowledge is so great that it can rip the mind away from its very moorings in sanity.

However, something happened the very next day to displace all thoughts of Kabbalah-maddened demons dreaming in Butler's stacks.

Taylor called me from London. He said he wanted to come and be with me in New York.

Taylor and I had been together pretty much all through our graduate years at Princeton. He was the golden boy of my year, so brilliant he'd made grown professors all but weep with collective pride in the glorious possibilities of human intelligence. He did our species proud. No one I had ever heard could speak as Taylor, in his Oxbridge accent, could. The sentences Taylor spun, oh God, the sentences. Worlds rose up to glisten with a manner of being far superior to mere reality within the sweeping syntax of his breath-defying sentences.

And though Taylor spoke as great musicians play, he was a gifted listener as well, especially to me, enwrapping me in a generosity of attention that had made me feel as nothing on earth had ever made me feel, there within the worlds that rose and fell in Taylor's words, in the clouds of glory stirred up by Taylor's sentences.

The problem—or at least a small part of it, as it gradually emerged—was that the sentences, incomparable in spoken form, went all puffy and ineffective when they were put down on paper. It was of the essence of their magic that they be fugacious and in flight. Pinned down and examined, they revealed themselves as flailingly imperfect. Taylor himself had come to know, by way of inference, of this dismaying disparity, so apparent to others but not to him, between Taylor heard and Taylor read. So he talked on and on, spell-binding us all, and found ingenious ways to avoid handing in his course papers, able to anticipate only too well the disappointment these would bring upon his admirers. The professors continued to beam, far longer than one would have anticipated, for he would go to them to discuss his ideas, and to listen to Taylor was to be swept up in enchantment. Still, a dissertation had to be produced, and this Taylor could not manage. Eventually, the beams went to dim and finally to black, and the gold leached out of the golden boy.

The last year of graduate school our relationship also darkened, as an agonized Taylor began to insinuate, with ever more nastiness, that the very progress of my own dissertation was a sign of the shallowness of my thought, while I, reading those puffy sentences that never seemed to go anywhere, demanded if he had any idea at all what it was to construct a bloody valid argument.

Things eventually turned ugly between us, too ugly for me to dwell upon. We parted—for the best, we both agreed, though the pain was a long time dissipating. I still wasn't even half way at the goal of caring nothing more for Taylor.

And now here he was, Taylor—his voice, in any case, which was undeniably his very best body part, in my ear, telling me precisely how it was that I was feeling, for he always could wonderfully describe my inner states to me, far better than I could describe them to myself. This was a feature of his eloquence I particularly adored.

What to do? I resisted the inflaming properties of his long transatlantic sentences, telling him I needed time to think, that it might be disaster for us to start it up all over again; I'd made some significant progress in separating, and surely he had as well.

"But why ought we to do all this work in separating from one another, when the very intensity of the effort is a measure of our love?"

It was one of the simplest utterances I'd ever heard him form, and, for that very reason, piercing. And besides, it very nearly amounted to a bloody valid argument.

We spoke every day for the next two weeks and at the end of that time, the day after I'd told him that no, I didn't want him to come to New York, Zachary Syke showed up at my office door.

"Not today, Zachary. I've just been through a rough time."

"I know," he said. "You've been through a great spiritual cleansing. I couldn't come to see you until it had been resolved. It was very important that I not influence you at all. I just want to tell you that you decided the right thing."

"Go away, Syke. Just go away."

I'd told Taylor, of course, all about my Kabbalistic suitor. He was enormously intrigued, asking me, among other things, whether I'd ever confirmed the spelling of the extremely suggestive last name.

"Okay, I'll go away. But here's my phone number. Call me when you want to. I won't answer unless I'm told to, but you can always try calling me."

"What exactly do you mean that you won't answer unless you're told to? Whose telling you what to do?"

ILLUSTRATION BY CYN MAURICE

"My inner voice. I listen to my inner voice."

"And have you always had an inner voice?"

Once again, I was regretting my not having paused long enough in my ascending academic career to collect that degree in clinical psychology.

"No. It came to me out of my despair. I had reached a point when all I could do was to fall to my knees before God, to crawl before Him on my knees without any shred of ego left and beg Him to do with me what He would. I gave my will, my life, over to Him. Soon after that I met someone who taught me how to hear my inner voice, how to distinguish it from all the false and deceitful ones. You have an inner voice, too, a very strong one, even though you constantly struggle against it."

"Did your inner voice tell you that about my inner voice?"

He ignored my impertinence to stare at me intently.

"You keep hearing a Hebrew phrase in your head, don't you. You're hearing it right now."

The tears started to my eyes, a chill descending my length. This time, he'd managed to spook me far more profoundly than he had even back in the stacks.

"What is it?" he whispered. "Tell me what the phrase is."

"*Tikkun neffesh*," I whispered back. The phrase means, literally, healing or reparation of the soul. "I've never heard it before, not that I remember. I've heard the expression *tikkun olam* but never tikkun neffesh."

"It's a very fundamental phrase in the Kaballah. It has to do with one's past lives, what one came into this life in order to rectify. So that's the phrase that you keep hearing. I should have known. And you still insist on denying the existence of your inner voice, your Jewish soul, the destiny that we two compacted in the most joyful moment of our souls' long quest?"

"I still insist, Zachary. There's always Plan B. You assured me of that yourself. Free will. I depend upon it."

"That would be the only thing I succeed in convincing you of."

He smiled, one final luminously loopy smile, and he was gone.

It took some years for Zachary Syke to disappear altogether from my life. He used to show up at times that were often, I have to admit, uncannily significant. He came to pay a shiva call when my father died in the spring semester of that first year of my teaching, tracking me down in my parental home in White Plains, God only knows how. I stopped asking him his deductive methods. He spent a very long time speaking alone with my mother, the two tête-à-tête, as if they had known each other for years. I don't know what they said to one another; for some reason, she didn't want to share it with me. But she told me that he was the only one who had been able to console her, "and not only about your father."

"How is it that you come to know such a person as Rabbi Syke?" she asked me, clearly impressed.

"Is he a rabbi, Mom?"

"I don't really know. I just assumed it, from the way he spoke."

He called me the week that I learned that I was getting tenure, to wish me mazel tov, he said, but he didn't get in touch with me to wish me mazel tov when Taylor and I got married.

The last time I saw him I was pushing a baby carriage down Broadway, with my firstborn, a girl, bundled up inside. This time it was she who received the gift of all the light of Syke's smile.

"Plan B," I introduced her to him.

"I see. It's also a beautiful plan."

"And you? Where's your Plan B?"

"I'm moving to Jerusalem. That's my Plan B. I leave tomorrow. I just came by to say good-bye to you."

"You came by here?"

We were standing on the corner of 89th St. and Broadway, a good fifteen blocks from my apartment. We were near the organic food store where I used to go to do most of my grocery shopping. My daughter was gumming an organic pretzel.

"Try to bring her up Jewish," is what he said to me. I stood there watching him make his way down Broadway, following the big black yarmulke until it finally disappeared from sight.

I look around for Syke, now and then, unable to convince myself that he'll stay irrevocably detached. I've become a sometime student of the Kabbalah, and I always think that I might just happen upon him in Butler Library, in the most forsaken of all its areas, where the books of Jewish mysticism are stacked.

I had a strong premonition he'd show up last spring, when Taylor and I, after years that had brought out the worst in each of us, finally decided to call it quits. Taylor's gone back to London, none of his "works-in-progress"—the various books he'd talked publishers into a frenzy over—carried to any satisfactory result, with the exception of the two quite fantastic daughters we brought into the world together. In those two girls, I see the immensities of Taylor's promise undimmed. Zachary Syke, I can only hope, is well along now on his own Plan B.

"There's always a Plan B," I hear that voice inside me quietly saying. At the oddest junctures, it will speak to me. "Tucked away in the metaphysical folds. There always have to be other plans because we always have free will."

There are times when I almost believe that. There are times when I almost believe that the life I have freely chosen has displaced a destiny I once compacted with another, so long ago, in a joyful moment of our souls' long quest. ❑

He smiled, one final luminously loopy smile, and he was gone.

ISSUES OF THE "NEW RICH" *(continued from page 30)*
encourage communication, and foster the building of trust and family unity. We help people to create a family legacy of passionate interests and compassionate social concern.

In working with families struggling with inheritance and money distribution issues, we encourage all family members to contribute to the development of an ongoing set of "family values about money," as well as a family "ethical will" that articulates the values that the family hopes to convey to coming generations. These tools, in part borrowed from the Jewish tradition, encourage families to come together and pro-actively clarify their values and desires about money—how they want these values to be lived today, as well as taught to the next generation. Our approach encourages people to assess and then re-balance their time and energy investments across four major life domains: self, family, work, and community. For some, this may mean committing more of their time to their family; for others, it may mean a greater commitment to philanthropy and social action. Our aim is to help people understand the barriers—psychological and social—to making changes that would ultimately better serve their needs and the needs of the larger community.



We encourage people to find passionate interests through which to express their altruism, and once these interests are identified, infuse an expectation of direct action and involvement. In so doing, we advocate finding at least one thing that people can do to make a difference in each of the four domains each and every month of their lives. While acknowledging the usefulness of "checkbook philanthropy" we believe that the experience of giving can be more meaningful and satisfying when people have a degree of personal involvement in a charitable project.

Regardless of the side of the "financial class divide" that we inhabit, all of us need to move from a philosophy of "us and them" to the possibilities of shared visions and resources. If you are among the "us" who inhabit an overly limited view of people with wealth, I hope these ideas will open your hearts and minds to considering ways of bridging the perceptual gap that separates "you" from "them." If you are a person who has recently inherited money, or if you see yourself as a new wealth individual, I hope these ideas will inspire you to find avenues of meaning for your money and to open up channels of communication with your friends, family, and people of all social classes. I encourage each of us to take the risk of transcending our usual inhibitions to share ideas, learn from each other, and forge healing relationships.

I believe we are at the threshold of an emerging social movement comprised of these New Rich individuals and families who have the financial power to make a real contribution. I foresee that in the next five years, as the baby boomers move toward retirement and increasingly take control over their inheritances, there will be a broad-based expansion of interest from the media, the finance industry, the non-profit sector, and political groups all focusing on the psychosocial issues that affect money and meaning. These newly wealthy people will be pulled in a multitude of directions with anxiety/fear, greed/narcissism, and altruism/philanthropy all competing for center stage. Yet with clarity of values and goals, the incredible energy and financial resources of these individuals and families could join the many dedicated people of their generation who do not have the resources but share the vision, so that together they could play a powerful role in healing and transforming our world. ❑

EASTER, PASSOVER AND ALL THAT *(continued from page 49)*
cosmic Christ title—"lord" means governor of the universe. All beings get wounded in this universe and all beings resurrect. This cosmic habit is being affirmed by today's science wherein we are learning anew that even galaxies, stars and supernovas live, die, and resurrect (that is, they spew their elements into the universe and thereby seed other beings). The mystery of life, death, and resurrection is a cosmic mystery, not merely a religious one.

Easter leaves unanswered the question: What form does our resurrection take? It does not leave unanswered the question: Need we fear death? In fact, it opens the door (the tomb? the stone holding us in our tombs?) to living more fully. That is its power, its hope. That is why its observance in the traditional Passover season is appropriate: The belief of Jesus being the last lamb slain in the age of the ram does not usurp the memory of the Passover liberation events but might even carry them forward. To be liberated from our fear of death is an exodus happening. To be free to create is an Exodus event. Indeed, our creativity may be the only way out of the moral dilemmas into which we paint ourselves as a species. Can anything but creativity reinvent an economic system that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer? Can anything but creativity find alternatives to the prison-industrial complex that is warehousing so many of our disenchanted young citizens? Thomas Aquinas taught that the "first resurrection" is the spiritual transformation that occurs when we overcome our fear of death. If we undergo this, we have no need to worry about a second resurrection, i.e. that which follows this life.

When so many powers of death and pseudo immortalities offer themselves to us daily, when Thanatos manifests itself everywhere in a culture, deadening our souls and boring us all in the process, it is good to believe and even better to act out a hope that Eros wins. ❑

What's Left of the Peace Process *(from page 10)*
most have favored it because of the security benefits, but others have been opposed because they fear excessive dependence on the United States and want to preserve an unconstrained Israeli freedom of military action in the area.

However, if an Israeli government were to decide that it prefers increased security over unilateralism, it is likely that the Israeli public and the American Congress and general public would support a defense alliance with teeth—recall that during the Gulf War there was overwhelming support in both Israel and the United States for the stationing of American soldiers manning Patriot batteries to help defend Israel against Scud attacks.

In short, there is every reason to expect that there would be strong political support in the United States for formalizing and extending the already-existing American military commitment to the security of Israel, provided there was unambiguous Israeli support and it was presented to Congress and the American public as a necessary component of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

Clinton, Israel, and the American Jewish Community

In light of Clinton's domestic travails, there is little chance that in the present circumstances he would agree even to purely rhetorical or diplomatic pressures against Israel, let alone to a strategy which ties American economic assistance to Israeli concessions in the peace process. And if Clinton is succeeded by Al Gore, the prospects would—at least initially—appear to be no better, in light of Gore's long association with the Likud line and its followers in the United States.

Even so, those who are truly concerned both with Israel's future and with justice to the Palestinians cannot simply assume that America's leaders are immune to rational persuasion; in any case, we have little moral choice but to continue the struggle. Much of the effort at persuasion should be focused on the American Jewish community, for both Congress and the president might be more amenable to the strategy suggested here if there were strong public support for decisive U.S. policies on the part of the American Jewish community.

It is well established that the Likud/AIPAC line is rejected by most American Jews, who strongly support the peace process and are privately disenchanted with the Netanyahu government. For well-understood and powerful historical reasons, the Jewish community has always been hesitant to publicly criticize Israel. But today it is an Israeli government that is the main obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For this reason, the Jewish community has a high responsibility to act on behalf of the true interests of Israel as well as of the United States, freeing Clinton or his successor to employ American leverage in the cause of peace. ❑

Nonviolence *(continued from page 16)*
of pain and suffering. A spirituality of nonviolence pushes us to speak the truth publicly in a spirit of love and compassion. It recognizes that in a world like ours, silence is complicit with the crime of violence. We have to condemn violence wherever we see it, to resist systemic injustice and to speak out for peace.

Second, a spirituality of nonviolence challenges us to seek justice, to dismantle underlying economic and political systems that crush hundreds of millions into destitution and death. That means working actively to end hunger and poverty, including the hunger and poverty caused by economic sanctions on Iraq.

Third, a spirituality of nonviolence calls us to pursue nuclear disarmament and the abolition of war, to hasten Isaiah's vision of that day when we shall "beat swords into plowshares and study war no more."

Finally, a spirituality of nonviolence introduces us to the God of peace. "Great is peace," the ancients wrote in the classical rabbinic period, "for God's name is peace." As we begin to worship the God of nonviolence, our hearts are disarmed and we become people of nonviolence.

Why practice nonviolence? Because when we bomb people who bomb, we become bombers. When we kill people who kill, we become killers. When we execute people who shoot people, we become executioners and murderers. When we incinerate people through our weapons of mass destruction to show that they should not incinerate people, we become the problem.

The spiritual wisdom of nonviolence teaches us we can do better. When we practice nonviolence, we become the people our God created us to be. We live up to our fullest spiritual potential when we enter into the vision of God's peace and discover that peace is at the heart of God.

Faith in the God of peace demands that we embark on an entirely new way of life towards a new kind of culture, rooted in peace and justice for all.

Nonviolence lies at the heart of every religion, indeed of every person. We have been created to practice nonviolence. Though our culture socializes us to respond violently at every turn, it is never too late to learn the ancient wisdom of nonviolence. Martin Luther King, Jr. summed up the situation the night before he was killed: "The choice before us is no longer between violence or nonviolence. It's either nonviolence or nonexistence."

Last November, the United Nations declared the first decade of the new millennium a "Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World." As we stand at the door of a new millennium, the times push us to educate ourselves in the way of nonviolence, and to place it at the center of our faith lives. Never was there a better time to implement the spiritual wisdom of nonviolence than right now. If we do, we will discover the real meaning of spirituality. ❑

A Spirituality of Resistance

(continued from page 37)

through, the writer and the readers of this book will not be displaced, and people in India will. We are not all affected equally by everything that takes place in the world. Martin Luther King's claim that we are bound by an "inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" must be read in the most general of ways, or else we will paper over the differences between the drowned and the saved. Yet it is also true, I believe, that similar forces are at work in crazy dam projects, unnecessary condo building, and leaking toxic dumps. Monoculture, big money, blind indifference, and shortsighted thoughtlessness carry their weight everywhere. For that reason, resistance to one is resistance to all.



Moving beyond my ego takes me not only into connection with the suffering Others who are human, but with the more-than-human as well.

At times acts of resistance will demand everything we have. Chico Mendes was murdered for defending the rainforest and the people who live there. Ken Saro-Wiwa was hung by the Nigerian government for resisting the toxic effects of oil extraction in Nigeria—these and countless unknown others have put their time, money, energy, and even their lives on the line.

However, some acts of resistance will involve doing just a little more than we are doing already. We can make one extra phone call, toss a few more dollars towards the organization that is doing good work, not buy the chemicalized food, take the trouble to ask the office manager to use the organic bathroom cleanser. Returns on such actions won't be as grand or dramatic as those times when we manifest a greater devotion. Still, they can be essential parts both of a worldwide environmental movement and our own, most personal, spiritual life. Like a short but heartfelt prayer, a daily ten minutes of meditation, a brief reading from Psalms, each act of resistance can be a small but loving acknowledgment of our yearning to join the best within us to the best for others.

Finally, in resistance we can keep up our hope. Optimism is not always easy to hold onto, especially as we become more and more knowledgeable about what is really going on. But our knowledge should include successes as well as failures, our moments of grace as a species and culture as well as our moments of degradation. We can read of Gaviotas, a tiny Colombian village that re- claimed seemingly barren land with sustainable agriculture, democratic decision making, and an inclusive economic structure. Its windmills convert mild breezes into energy, its solar collectors work in the rain, and children's seesaws power its water pumps. In the shelter of the Caribbean pines planted as a renewable crop, an ancient rain forest is regenerating. We can marvel at the growth of the organic food industry, the resurgent forests of the American northeast, the return of the wolves to Yellowstone. We can marvel at the growth, in about a decade, of an environmental justice movement that includes groups from Texas to Massachusetts, from California to Georgia. All these examples of resistance can inspire our own. They are precious opportunities to know, as deeply as we know anything, that the environmental crisis is a time of great courage as well as great loss.

* * *

If spirituality means, among other things, moving beyond my isolated ego (and this is, indeed, the way it is frequently portrayed) then resistance is that movement. For in acts of resistance I go beyond my isolation, my self-concern, my very sense of myself as fully separate. And that sense of moving beyond my ego takes me not only into connection with the suffering Others who are human, but with the more-than-human as well. I can walk over to Jamaica Pond, pat the trunk of a sugar maple tree I pass along the way and say, only half believing I won't be understood: "You and me pal—we're in this together. Best of luck to us both." I can know that my kinship with the beings of this earth is essential to who I am; and that I will not let them be wantonly destroyed without some defiance. Paradoxically, if I put some of my soul into resistance, I will occasionally be able to put down my burden of selfhood and responsibility, that searing sense that I must make it all better. There will be moments when I realize that I am merely a brief flower of mind and feeling in this vast meadow of existence. At my best I will try to be a true flower and not some plastic rose that doesn't bloom and will not wither for a hundred years. I will have offered myself to all the other flowers, to the life and health and blossoming of the rest of this garden we call the earth. Having done so I will then be able to feel the full sweetness of the springtime sun, the evening rain, and even the approach of the chill winter morning of my own natural, fitting and joyous death. ❑

Excerpted from A Spirituality of Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth *(Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.*

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Meat Eater *(continued from page 53)*



into a barrel. Then I saw: Just before its head disappeared, he stuck a knife in its throat. In and out.

The conversion of an animal into meat was routine and quick. Jackson and his employees killed and cleaned the animals with the same competent ease they might use to move pallets around a warehouse. Jackson told me that watching the first one is the hardest. It was true. After an afternoon of watching the slaughter, I knew what to expect.

Jackson went to get another animal, and an employee named Reg took over. Reg hooked each rear leg tendon and hoisted the carcass again. He slit the belly. The intestines popped out and slithered slowly toward the chest. He cut out the anus, reached into the belly slit, and pulled it through, along with a mass of organs. He tossed them in a pile on the floor. Every week a rendering company hauls away barrels of the stuff.

He sawed the length of the backbone. Steam rose from the animal and the chainsaw. Reg constantly hosed down the carcass, then his own hands and brown rubber apron. The air in the killing room was heavy with moisture. A customer came in for his meat, and Jackson opened the freezer door. The room filled with knee-high fog, as in a dream scene in a play.

Reg grabbed a steel and sharpened his knives, tossing the steel first like a drumstick. He scraped the skin, gently, as a barber would, and every now and then broke into a staccato riff: Ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba-ah. He flamed the body with a torch. The acrid smell of burning skin mingled with steam.

Another animal screamed in the chute. "Pick the leg up," Jackson commanded Reg.

"She ain't going to let me."

They got her lifted. Shrieks filled the room. My ears pulsated. She tried to pull herself up. She fell back. Jackson put the knife in. Dark red blood gushed into the barrel. Jackson jerked backward. Did he cut himself?

"That's the closest I ever came," he shouted. He sounded amazed. She had bitten him.

While he examined the puncture, the animal thrashed wildly, then more slowly. Its free leg reached for the ceiling, flexed. The tail flopped. The leg relaxed.

The frozen meat I picked up from the slaughterhouse, thirty-nine pounds of it, looked sterile in its white paper. I stared at it, trying to remember the animal it had been. The next evening five members of my family sat on the screened porch for our first lamb dinner in years. Five sheep crunched grass fifty feet away.

"What do you do with them?" I thought of the thorn bushes that had overrun the property before I had gotten sheep, the wool-filled comforter on my bed, the sweaters I've knitted, the manure that feeds the garden and orchard, the visual pleasure of sheep grazing. And now, this meal. We normally say blessings only on Fridays, but that night we spontaneously fell quiet for a few moments.

Eating a lamb named Dinner wasn't hard at all. It's what I've been doing all my life. The hard part was taking him to the slaughterhouse and watching Jackson do his job, my job.

I'd always felt that arguments like the one Dick Gregory makes in his essay "If You Had to Kill Your Own Hog" had merit: that if we human beings understood, firsthand, that eating meat meant that someone had to slit an animal's throat, hang it, and chop it into pieces, we'd all become vegetarians. I was prepared for that to happen to me. Instead, I came to believe the opposite. It is only because we are so far removed from the process that we can ask whether humans should kill for food. If we had grown up seeing animals slaughtered, if we depended on the animals we raised or hunted for our livelihood or survival, if we had to kill our own animals for meat, no one would ask the question. ❑

Tikkun Olam *(continued from page 54)*

such programs have not mentioned this to the residents because they don't want to deal with cats, dogs, birds, fish, and other life-lengthening critters. Here is what you need to know and to have in hand when approaching the appropriate people in power. In 1983, the federal government passed the Housing and Urban Recovery Act (United States Code: 12USC 1701r-1). A portion of this piece of legislation covers issues of tenancy by elderly and disabled individuals in federally assisted rental housing developments. In part, section 227(a) reads: No owner or manager of any federally assisted rental housing for the elderly or handicapped may (1) As a condition of tenancy or otherwise, prohibit or prevent any tenant in such housing from owning common household pets or having common household pets living in the dwelling accommodations of such tenant in such housing; or (2) Restrict or discriminate against any person in connection with admission to, or continued occupancy of, such housing by reason of the ownership of such pets by, or the presence of such pets in the dwelling accommodations of, such person.

The standard questions I get when I present some of these ideas include: (1) Who is going to pay for the helicopter ride for the residents, and (2) What happens if one of the residents falls off the Harley (you should excuse the expression) hog. I stand by my two long-standing principles: Don't ask *me* about the details, ask the experts: P.K., Neila, Beth, Robin, and Bill can answer your questions. If it's being done in one place, it can be done somewhere else. If it's not being done, it's time to ask some hard questions, like whether the well-being of the residents is really the purpose of the nursing home and its administration. If not, isn't it time for a change?

One more bumper sticker: Stop Yer Whining. If we are dissatisfied with a particular nursing home or independent housing for our elders, let's stop whining and do something about it. ❑

HILLEL INCORPORATED *(continued from page 23)*

service upon your return." Students would then bring their particular Jewish energies home to their respective communities, and would serve as catalysts for the kind of Jewish renaissance that Hillel hopes to spark. This Israel-inspired dedication to Judaism could conceivably revolutionize the ways in which American and Jewish college students explore how their cultural and religious identities shape their everyday experiences: e.g., "If being a Reform Jew in Israel means that I identify with such and such political party, how does my Judaism reflect on my American political affiliation?" Perhaps then we might witness a large-scale movement of American Jewish *teshuvah*, students feeling a renewed Jewish faith and evincing strong currents of optimism about the future of American Jewry.



But the most basic problem is this: the Judaism that we offer through Hillel has to provide a substantive alternative to the materialism and selfishness of American society. If Judaism is merely another one of the many variants of private life fun offered in the consumer marketplace, it will have little appeal to those growing number of college students who feel the need for something deeper. Judaism needs to be an alternative to the mainstream culture, not a celebration of it with Hebrew letters and Jewish cultural symbols. It should be no surprise to anyone that the corporate style of Hillel increasingly reflects a corporate substance, a Judaism with its confrontative and revolutionary aspects submerged and its culture turned into another one of the many flavors through which American values can be consumed.

It has not been my intention to use these pages as an argument for the irrelevance of Hillel in the arena of Jewish student life. Indeed, as both a graduate of the JCSC program and a current member of Hillel's Board of Directors, I consider myself lucky to count among my colleagues individuals whose drive, desire, capability, and Jewish passion are boundless. And in choosing as my focus the ways in which I feel that Hillel undermines its own mission, I necessarily omitted the volumes of programs that do speak to genuine issues in modern Jewish life. I also have not touched in these pages on the decidedly under-examined point that Jewish students themselves must assume responsibility for Hillel programming. If the Hillel "franchising" campaign has a positive side, it is that it offers a substantial budget for innovative, student-driven programming.

Yet, as it is currently run, Hillel stumbles precisely where its leaders see its strengths. In believing that it can co-opt corporate language without assuming a corporate soul, Hillel proves itself short-sighted, and fails to recognize the gradual crisis of meaning that the emphasis of symbol over substance renders inevitable. Until we change course, we force ourselves to cling to the hope that kosher Chinese food and matzoh balls will carry us through to a Jewish future. ❑

HEALING *(continued from page 40)*

When in these tents, we are summoned outside our ordinary schedule to a place where the mundane halts and where we dedicate ourselves to spiritual activities. Hirsch notes that moadim "interrupt the ordinary activities of our life and give our spirit the power and concentration for the future by redefining those ideas on which the Jewish life is based." By eradicating "such evil consequences of past activity as are deadly to body and spirit" the moadim "thus restore us lost purity and the hope of blessing."

As we travel with them, moadim effect healing. By annual invitation we enter the tent of Pesach, where we are invited to examine the individual relevance and polarities of slavery and freedom, oppression and redemption, *maror* (bitter) and *haroset* (sweet), *hametz* (leaven) and *matzah* (unleaven). In calendrical turn we enter the next tent, Shavuot, where we are invited to examine Sinai and the revelation and to participate in the wedding of God with God's people (with the Torah as *ketubah*). Sukkot is the tent that puts in evidence the fragility of our material possession. From Chanukah to Purim, we are invited to relive and resolve anti-Semitism and victory, conquest and self-parody, ashes and light. From the seventeenth of Tammuz to the ninth of Av we are invited into the tent to re-experience fasting and remembrance, pain and reconstruction from destruction.

The orbit of the moadim are cycles of healing, and the tents are the entry posts for accessing the process of healing. Another orbit finds the tent touching ground at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in which we are invited to engage in forgiveness, repentance, and a personal encounter with God. This orbit ends with the sealing of our destiny and perhaps an invitation to enter into another orbit of tents in time, another chance to achieve oneness and to heal the chasms within our communities.

These are the paths the Jewish tradition gives us to heal ourselves, regardless of whether the need to heal derives from internal, interpersonal, or communal brokenness. Here is where the real mending of the world begins—from the inner circle of bearing witness to the devastation produced by brokenness, love and generosity become a commitment to act. Healing is not a philosophically abstract concept. Healing is the constant struggle to keep balance. It is the struggle of the parent who needs to work but who also wrestles with how best to care for his or her child. It is the struggle of a human being who doesn't want to be swallowed by corporate life, who knows that there is something wrong with living just to work. It is the struggle of the person who, in a moment of self-evolution, becomes aware of his or her past failures and of the need for repair. It is the search for love and the need to touch and be touched in the current ocean of individualism and self-supremacy. It is the moment of decision before change when change has to take place. ❑

ART REVIEW

The Nature of God, Torah, and Art

Nan Fink Gefen



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HELENE AYLON

Forthcoming shows by Helene Aylon:
- *25/25.* February 12–March 13, Project Artaud, San Francisco (group show).
- *Gravity.* June 4–August 4, Whitney Museum, Stamford, Connecticut Branch (group show).

In this age of spiritual quest, many people are searching to discover the nature of God. Is "He" really a he, that "Father-in-the-Sky" we learned about as children? Our minds, informed by feminism and environmental consciousness, reject this notion. Yet the alternatives are not clear, and we scramble to find an understanding more in line with our experience.

Judaism holds the belief that the Divine has many "faces," or names, but is ultimately indefinable. We humans cannot ever fully know who or what God is. We're like a group of blindfolded people trying to describe an elephant, each patting only part of its body. One of us describes it as thick-skinned and muscular, and another as watery and rounded. The best we can do is name what we experience, acknowledging that the Holy is beyond comprehension.

Because of this understanding, God is given many names in Judaism. Almost all of them are male, reflecting the patriarchal roots of the religion. But many people are discovering the female God-name Shechinah, the in-dwelling One, the One that sustains and nourishes. I've been to services where the language in the liturgy is feminized and this name is substituted for all the masculine God-names. Some feel more spiritually open with this language, moving beyond old, negative images of God. I've also participated in services where only androgynous God-names are used, such as Yah, or Creator, or Holy One, or Makom (Place), freeing everyone from the either-or choice of God's gender.

The exploration of God-names points the way to a deeper understanding of the nature of the Divine. Names are not just neutral tags; they help us begin to experience the subtle balance of energies that are hinted at in Jewish mysticism, the balance of male and female, transcendent and immanent, beyond and within. If we center our questions about God's nature on the exploration of God-names and what they emanate, we can be led to a rich, subtle, and nuanced spirituality.

But a problem remains—what are we going to do about the way God is represented in the Torah? Even if we find meaning in the different God-names and agree that God ultimately is indefinable, we still are confronted with the Torah God.

The Torah, we are told, is where God's words are repeated, His laws listed, His desires made known (always male, always capitalized). According to traditionalists, God dictated the entire Torah to Moses, who passed it on to the Hebrew people. The Torah is understood as the place where God's nature is most fully and concretely revealed.

And what is this nature? The answer is not easy for many of us to accept. Although the God of Torah has flashes of compassion for the Hebrew people and saves them from destruction again and again, He is warmongering, sexist, and chauvinistic. We're given explanations for God's temper tantrums—they're developmental (God Himself is in a process of moving from immaturity to maturity through the Torah) or they're object lessons for humankind (God comes down to our level and acts with human emotion so that we can relate). But we're still left with a queasy feeling. This is not the God of our mystical experience.

What are we to do? Some of us reject the Torah entirely, and never read it—except passages in the Haggadah at Passover. Or we consider it to be an interesting story that has little to do with our own experience of Ultimate Reality. Or we appreciate its historical value. Some of us study it, skipping over the sections that show God acting in painful and unacceptable ways. Or we delve into the meanings behind the words in an attempt to stretch the Torah to its mystical fullest, away from literal meaning. Some of us have made our peace with it, accepting this representation of the Divine.

Nan Fink Gefen, the co-founding publisher of Tikkun, *is the author of the forthcoming* The Silence Within: A Beginning Guide to Jewish Meditation, *and the co-director of Chochmat HaLev, a center of Jewish meditation in the Bay Area.*

ART REVIEW

Helene Aylon, an artist whose work has been exhibited in most major U.S. cities in this last decade, takes a radical approach to the question of God in Torah. God needs to be liberated, she tells us. The Divine Being could not have written this misogynous text. The words of Torah are an ungodly projection onto God, made by those in power at the time.

Aylon's most widely-viewed piece, an elaborate installation entitled "The Liberation of G-d," gets her point across in a most provocative way. In one section, Hebrew Bibles are displayed with their offensive passages about warfare, treatment of women, sacrifice of animals, and so forth, highlighted in pink marker on translucent parchment covering the pages. Two videos show Aylon doing this work. The swish-swish of the marker is the only sound.

Most people respond to Aylon's work from the *kishkes*. On a table at the entrance to this installation, viewers are invited to write their responses to the dilemma of the Torah God (or G-d, as Aylon, raised in orthodoxy, always writes). Over five thousand letters have been collected, most of them expressing great gratitude for her work.

Since the "The Liberation of G-d," Aylon has gone on to create three more installations: "The Women's Section" (which addresses the misogyny experienced by her grandmothers), "My Notebooks" (which expresses her sadness about the perpetuation of biblical sexism), and "Epilogue: Alone with My Mother" (which portrays the tug of her mother's orthodox tradition, and the loneliness of walking away from it). These powerful pieces show how the misrepresentation of God in Torah has had dire consequences throughout the centuries, most specifically for Aylon and the women in her family.

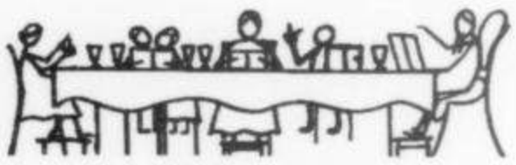
Aylon helps us realize that the Torah gives us, at best, an incomplete understanding of the nature of God. Too much is included that serves patriarchal purposes, and too much is left out. We come back once again to the realization that the nature of God can never be fully known, and that we must each find our way to a connection to the Divine. For some of us, this will include Torah study—with the realization that the Torah God is a flawed image. For others, however, the path will be through meditation, or experiencing nature, or a daily spiritual practice. Mystical Judaism will help us broaden our perception, giving us language to describe what we discover about the Divine.

We can't just dismiss the damage that has been done through the propagation of the Torah God, however. Too many people have been excluded from the community, or suffered oppression, or been wrongfully treated in His name. Thus we take on the task of healing, *tikkun*, as we seek to broaden our own understanding of the nature of God. By doing so, we, like Aylon, become part of the generations through history who seek justice. ❑

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— DAVID BIALE, *TIKKUN* REVIEW, 1998



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BOOK REVIEW

Of Fine Clothes *and* Naked Emperors



Michael Bérubé

- *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*, by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont. Picador, 1998.

I'm not supposed to say a good word about *Fashionable Nonsense*. Ever since Alan Sokal pulled off his now-famous hoax in 1996, and got *Social Text* to publish an essay full of fashionable and unfashionable nonsense, the party lines have been drawn, and reviews of the hoax and Sokal's subsequent (more serious) essays have been fairly predictable. In the pro-Sokal camp, you find an odd assortment of querulous scientists, cultural conservatives, and left thinkers who dissent from postmodern or social-constructionist beliefs about what it is to be a human person with political agency. In the anti-Sokal camp, an equally odd assortment of science-studies scholars and theoretically-minded leftists who really, really hate being called jargon-spouting, academic-careerist, pseudo-leftists but who can't quite bring themselves to defend *Social Text*'s decision to publish the piece either (let alone the journal's far worse decision *not* to publish Sokal's follow-up). Belonging as I do to this latter group, but not being one of the many targets named in the original parody essay, I was among the first (of many thousands) to contact Professor Sokal by email in June 1996 to ask him what he thought he'd actually accomplished. Our subsequent lengthy exchange, though testy, was reasonably cordial and underheated, which is probably one reason why, when Sokal was invited to speak at the University of Illinois in 1997, he asked his hosts whether he could stage his presentation as a debate with me.

Over the past three years I have remained largely unsympathetic to Sokal's general aim, an aim shared by leftists of good will and fine political credentials, from Noam Chomsky to Barbara Ehrenreich to Barbara Epstein (the first two of whom have kindly blurbed *Fashionable Nonsense*, and the third of whom helped Sokal with his original parody). As I see it, this aim involves getting leftists to abandon certain allegedly "relativist" strains of contemporary theory (even the ones that provide formidable intellectual grounds for resisting racism, imperialism, eugenics, and the like) in favor of forms of thought that rest their claims to truth on appeals to objective fact (as that term is understood by its proponents).

The broadest reason I oppose this aim is that I do not believe there is, in the realm of social theory, an account of "fact" or "objectivity" that is satisfactory for all possible social, ethical, and historical contexts. Put another way, I believe it is a mistake to appeal to supposedly universal truths that govern human affairs, and that it is better for us to recognize that mutable *humans*, and not immutable laws, govern human affairs. Nor do I believe that a universally objective account of truth is even necessary for social change; any theory that speaks of *relative probabilities*, *contingencies*, and *likely outcomes*, I think, will suffice for the job, and depending on what the job is (establishing universal health care, opposing mandatory clitoridectomy), the argumentative and moral strategies will differ from case to case. This, in a very small nutshell, is the idea behind the work of antifoundationalist thinkers like Richard Rorty and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, and the idea of the idea, as I understand it, is to

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID BALL

Michael Bérubé is professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; his latest book is The Employment of English: Theory, Jobs, and the Future of Literary Study *(NYU, 1998).*

check the moral and intellectual hubris of people who think that *their* neutral, objective account of the social world is self-evidently right and just.

Having said all that, though, I have to admit being taken aback by *Fashionable Nonsense*. It isn't quite the book Sokal and Bricmont think it is (it's actually two books, one of which is quite thought-provoking), but it cannot—or should not—be dismissed by the theoretical left as another snarling, intemperate broadside after the manner of Paul Gross and Norman Levitt's *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and its Quarrels with Science*. Indeed, for patient readers, those who are inclined neither to burn the book nor to crow yet again that the theory-emperor has no clothes (a metaphor that appears no fewer than three times in the book), the book offers a lesson or two worth learning. At the very least, Sokal and Bricmont have made the case that there was something odd about the French psychoanalytic left in the 1960s and 1970s, and that the oddness varied directly with the influence of Jacques Lacan (who, in his senescence, became unfathomably odd himself). But this half of their book, though it gives the book its title, isn't the half worth learning from. The book's other half consists of a handful of essays on the status of knowledge in the sciences and the humanities; it's here that the book offers something edifying and useful, and here that its argument is really worth debating.

The sections of *Fashionable Nonsense* that deal with individual theorists (Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, Baudrillard, and so forth) are uneven and sometimes (particularly in the cases of Gilles Deleuze and Bruno Latour) simply crabbed and ungenerous. For the most part, they are also unreadable—not because of Sokal and Bricmont, but because of Lacan, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Baudrillard, whose writings are (in that order) quite vulnerable to reasonable critique. Try as I may, I just can't find any point in defending these theorists once they start writing randomly, omnidirectionally, about physics and math.

Of course, sometimes the writers in question are simply looking for a good loopy metaphor, as with Lacan's account of the moebius strip as an image of subjectivity; no harm there, no foul (though occasionally Sokal and Bricmont get literal-minded, complaining that their targets do not "justify" the relevance or application of their metaphors). And to be sure, the fact that Lacan and Luce Irigaray are clueless about science doesn't invalidate their contributions to psychoanalysis; the important things in this school of thought, after all, have nothing to do with fluid mechanics, and everything to do with the linguistic construction of the "subject," the firm distinction between the subject and the individual, the radical emphasis on the role of the unconscious, and the insistence on the primacy of desire. These hypotheses remain central to many contemporary accounts of our psychic and social lives, and even if Lacan was a charlatan toward the end of his life, twiddling with knots and holding five-minute sham therapy sessions, who cares?

Even if Lacan was a charlatan toward the end of his life ... who cares?

But whatever defense one might marshal for Lacan and crew, the general impression rendered by *Fashionable Nonsense* is pretty damning by any measure: for whatever reasons, there was a time when certain French thinkers evidently expounded, at every opportunity, on theoretical sciences they barely understood. You'd think it was part of the official job description of the Post-1968 French Intellectual, except that Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes seem to have generally avoided the impulse. Thus one finds the usually clear-headed Julia Kristeva writing sentences like

> in the syntactic operations following the mirror stage, the subject is already sure of his uniqueness: his flight toward the "point ñ" in the signifying is stopped. One thinks for example of a set C_0 on a usual space R^3 where for every continuous function F on R^3 and each integer $n > 0$, the set of points X where $F(X)$ exceeds n is *bounded*, the functions of C_0 tending to 0 when the variable X recedes toward the "other scene."

Kristeva abandoned this kind of thing more than twenty years ago, as Sokal and Bricmont admit, but it's remarkable nonetheless that someone as incisive as Kristeva obviously felt, upon her arrival in the Lacanian quarter of Paris (from her native Bulgaria), that the way to produce a theory of language was to haul out some of the technical implications of Gödel-Bernays set theory and then casually drop phrases like "dedekind structure with orthocomplements." Interestingly, all the mischief and *faux* erudition centers on math and physics; for whatever reason, the French mode of science-envy did not latch onto similarly "foundational" sciences like biology or chemistry. As a result, the post-Sokal debate on "science studies" has strangely focused on only one mode—arguably the most "objective" mode—of scientific knowledge, as opposed to, say, debates about evolution, environmental degradation, medical practice, or genetic determinism.

It is a shame that Sokal and Bricmont, by compiling this book and quoting its subjects at such length (they do so, they explain, in order to avoid the charge that they are quoting out of context), have given such ready ammunition to our vast legions of English-speaking anti-intellectuals, whether in the faculty lounge with their meerschaums or at the city desk with their suspenders, who relish nothing so much as confirmation of their conviction that they need never bother to read what I call "theory" and what one of my meerschaumy colleagues once

called "froggy nonsense." More accurately, though, it is a shame that Lacan, Irigarary, Baudrillard, and company have given anti-intellectuals such ready ammunition; as Sokal and Bricmont repeatedly point out, no one put a gun to their heads and forced them to write gobbledygook about math and physics. So if this book gives aid and comfort to know-nothings, it is hardly the fault of Sokal and Bricmont.

It behooves me, then, to explain where and why I'm not among Sokal's fans. In between the tiny chapters on French thinkers, Sokal and Bricmont have placed two "Intermezzi" and then closed with an epilogue. These chapters, I think, are the heart of the book, and make *Fashionable Nonsense* considerably better than most complaints about "postmodernism." At the same time, both the strengths and the weaknesses of these chapters suggest avenues for more substantive exchanges between the sciences and the humanities—should anyone still be willing to pursue them.

These chapters seem relatively productive to me, as opposed to the merely negative or debunking function of the rest of the book, because they broach two questions that are fundamental to the epistemological issues in dispute. First, if Lacan et al. are incompetent commentators on science, what would a *good* sociology of science look like, and how would it help us understand where scientific knowledge is truly "objective" (or, to use a better term, observer-independent) and where it isn't? And second, what is the relation between epistemic relativism (a relativism about what we know and how we know it) and ethical relativism, especially if the latter is untethered from the former? That is, if you believe that astrophysics discloses the laws of the universe, why doesn't it follow that moral theory obeys immutable laws as well? Conversely, if you acknowledge cultural differences in moral affairs, should you insist that the physical universe is observer-relative as well? I don't think Sokal and Bricmont offer satisfactory answers to these questions; on the contrary, they insist that they are concerned "only with *epistemic* relativism and not with moral or aesthetic relativism, which raise very different issues." But they do the questions the honor of taking them seriously, and their position is less inflexible or dogmatic than one would suspect.

We can get a practical handle on these abstract questions by asking how we account for radical change in human understanding, either in the natural sciences or the social sciences. To what extent are these disciplines dependent on social factors, ranging from funding priorities to the political inclinations of individual researchers? With regard to the natural sciences, the hard-line realist position is that natural phenomena themselves provoke changes in understanding by showing that current theories do not fit facts. The hard-line constructionist (or "postmodern") position is that theories and facts are so intimately interdependent that different interpretive paradigms are "incommensurable," not resolvable by recourse to Nature (or by recourse to reasoned dialogue, or anything else). The middle-of-the-road position admits that social factors play a role in how scientific knowledge is generated, but insists that the knowledge itself is observer-independent nonetheless. Sokal and Bricmont generally try to hold to the middle position, but occasionally they lapse back into hard-line realism for polemical purposes, as when they fault one science-studies textbook for holding that "a theory is never wrong in the sense that it is contradicted by the facts; rather, the facts change when the theories change." Clearly, if the "facts" change when theories change, then you've opened the door to all kinds of mischief, from radical skepticism to Holocaust revisionism. But as Sokal and Bricmont themselves point out in their critique of Karl Popper, it really isn't possible to say that theories can be unambiguously "contradicted" by facts, either. Theories can be disputed

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by other theories, but at no point in our lives do Facts simply raise their heads and speak in Nature's own voice to tell us that all our theories are wrong, dead wrong.

That's why it's so important for historians and philosophers of science to account for what happens when theories collide: if facts aren't wholly independent of theories, then everything we "know" depends on how one theory comes to displace another. What, then, are hard-line constructionists saying when they insist on the "incommensurability" of paradigms? In the realm of science, they're suggesting that theories die only when all their adherents die, because if theoretical paradigms really are incommensurable, then no one ever gets persuaded to adopt a newer theory in place of an older one. In the realm of human affairs, where constructionism is more plausible, they're sensibly cautioning us against thinking that there is one universal moral code to which we can appeal when profound cultural disputes arise. In both realms, though, it may very well be that social constructionists tend to speak too readily about the incommensurability of paradigms, without stopping to ask how it might be that different paradigms might be made intelligible to each other—as must surely happen time and again, whenever anyone, moral philosopher or astrophysicist, experiences a profound change of worldview.

The question of epistemic and ethical relativism, then, follows directly from the question of how theories change. And on this question, Sokal and Bricmont do some waffling of their own. They cite, for instance, a 1996 dispute about Zuni land claims, with regard to which British archeologist Roger Anyon reportedly claimed that the Zuni world view was "just as valid as the archeological viewpoint." Sokal and Bricmont maintain that the Zunis' ancestors did not emerge, as the Zuni claim, "onto the surface of earth from a subterranean world of spirits"; they remind us that most scientists place the Bering Strait migration about ten or twenty thousand years in the past. The second account, no doubt, is more scientifically accurate than the first, and it is a stretch, at best, to consider the two accounts "equally valid." (Their incommensurability is not the same thing as their equivalence.) But since the issue at hand had to do with scientists asserting their "right" (or at least their "need") to dig up sacred Zuni burial grounds, why should Sokal and Bricmont go after Anyon? Why are Zuni beliefs being measured here for their probable "validity"? The effect is to substitute an epistemic dilemma of how two groups understand a fact for an ethical one, and that's a suspect move in itself—as if the group with the "best" account of human prehistory gets to do what it wants with the fossil record other people happen to be standing on (physically and philosophically). Here, Sokal and Bricmont claim that it's possible to defend native land claims without "endorsing uncritically (or hypocritically) their societies' traditional creation myths," but they decline to explain how it's possible, or when it's necessary, to decouple epistemic realism about fossils and DNA from moral relativism about other people's creation myths.

At no point in our lives do Facts simply raise their heads and speak in Nature's own voice to tell us that all our theories are wrong, dead wrong.

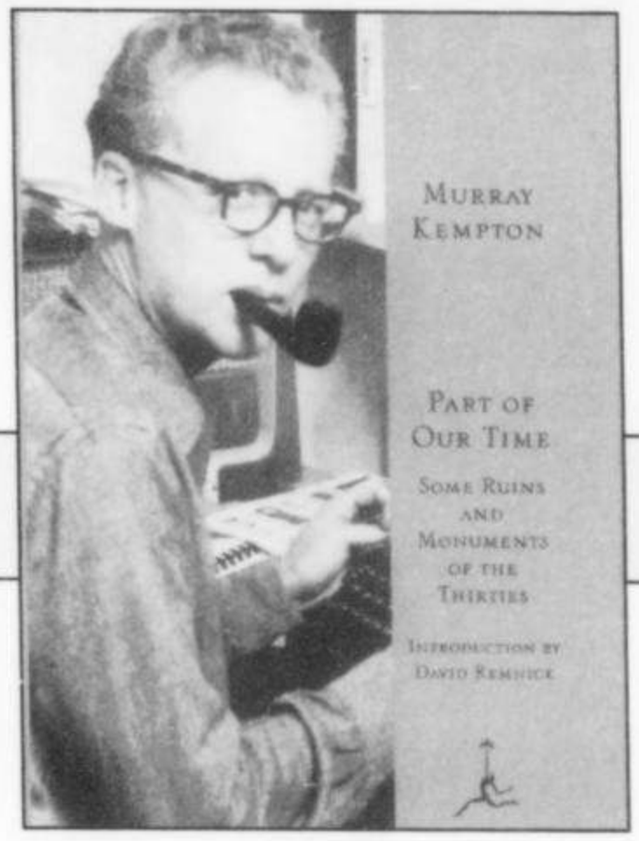
The reason these questions are so important, I think, and so worthy of further inquiry, is that when we leave the realm of math and physics for more dicey sciences like genetics or primatology, it actually becomes quite difficult to specify the point at which we can be sure that the phenomena we observe are not of our own making, and consequently difficult to distinguish epistemological relativism from its more innocuous cousins. (For a vivid illustration of this point, just follow any recent exchange between Steven Jay Gould and Daniel Dennett or Michael Behe on the question of whether Darwinian evolution is purposeful or random.) What's at stake here, ultimately, has to do with the status of the boundary between what John Searle calls "brute fact" and "social reality"—a boundary which, for Sokal and Bricmont as for many others, provides the distinction between where it's unreasonable to be a relativist (with regard to the existence of Neptune, say) and where it's often morally necessary (when moral claims are advanced in radically different registers). While I want to suggest that Sokal and Bricmont are right to insist on brute fact (hydrogen, gravity, globular clusters) as an "observer-independent" realm, I also want to suggest that it is in fact (ahem) harder to distinguish between brute fact and social reality than Sokal and Bricmont care to admit. This point, however, will remain obscure so long as these disputes are played out over math and physics; if the science in question were bioengineering or ecology, by contrast, it would be quite clear to many laypeople and scientists alike that the realm of "observer-independent objectivity" is harder to attain than Sokal and Bricmont—and their supporters—are letting on.

But since the Sokal-*Social Text* affair has usually generated more heat than light, it's gratifying that *Fashionable Nonsense*, in its best moments, raises the debate to this level of complexity. Readers who take the Intermezzi and Epilogue seriously will find the book capable of repaying their interest with interest, and those who hanker after good popularizations of quantum physics, advanced math, and science studies can consult the book's copious and helpful suggestions for further reading: for unlike the notes in Sokal's parody essay, all the footnotes here are real, and offered in good faith. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

PART OF HIS TIME

Murray Kempton's Depression Decade



Scott Sherman

- *Part of Our Time: Some Ruins and Monuments of the Thirties*, by Murray Kempton, Introduction by David Remnick. Modern Library, 1998.

When Murray Kempton died in 1997, *Newsday* put his photograph on the cover. The headline declared: "A Half-Century of Elegance and Truth." It isn't often that a newspaperman's death makes the front page, but Kempton, who joined *Newsday* in 1981, was no ordinary scribe. Garry Wills called his journalism "the most perceptive of our time." David Remnick considered him "the best since Mencken." Jimmy Breslin remarked that "the man has brought more honor to newspapers than anyone in my lifetime." But Kempton wasn't universally revered: J. Edgar Hoover dubbed him a "snake" and a "rat."

For Kempton's admirers, the Modern Library's handsome new edition of his forgotten 1955 masterpiece, *Part of Our Time: Some Ruins and Monuments of the Thirties*, is a cause for celebration. Of the four books he wrote, this is the one for which he will be remembered. It is probably the most outstanding book on early twentieth-century American radicalism, and certainly one of the most beautifully written non-fiction works published since 1945.

Part of Our Time is about people shaped by the left-wing "myths" of the Thirties, people who, in Kempton's words, "read and discussed every interior short paragraph of *The New York Times*," people who were "the committed and the dedicated." If W.H. Auden considered the Thirties "a low dishonest decade," Kempton saw it as a period filled with idealism and sacrifice. Of the various individuals he describes, some buckled under the weight of that idealism; others endured and became useful citizens. At the end of another low dishonest decade, when irony and sarcasm have replaced idealism and commitment, *Part of Our Time*, rescued from oblivion, still glows with a feverish intensity. But it imparts an overwhelming sense of melancholy and yearning.

The year 1931 was not a time when the American businessman held his head high," writes Kempton. "All the ancient values he represented seemed to wither around him." As America declined—192,000 workers were on strike in March 1937—many turned to Russia for inspiration: "It was possible to believe that, as Lenin had achieved the revolution, Stalin was building the new Jerusalem." These days the culture industry is eager to manufacture imagery of American sacrifice in World War II, but the bleak period that preceded it is routinely forgotten. *Part of Our Time* takes us there, and we see, for instance, how in Detroit in 1932, "there were whole city blocks without light or artificial heat … so many families had their water turned off that the schools instituted compulsory weekly showers for their pupils."

The breakdown of the nation's economy helped to alter the consciousness of a generation, and it was artists and intellectuals who succumbed most forcefully to the belief that "no man was an island. He could not escape history. If Madrid fell, he fell with it." Those were some of the "myths" of the depression decade. But Kempton is no prosecutor; he himself was a radical in those years, first with the Young Communist League and then with the Socialist Party, and he understood the impulse that prompted Archibald MacLeish to write poems hailing the true comrades "who have fought the police in the parks of the same cities."

Meticulously constructed from interviews, direct observation, old newspaper clippings, and books like Upton Sinclair's *Boston* and Saul Alinsky's *John L. Lewis, Part of Our Time* recreates this forgotten landscape of Thirties radicalism: the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; the odyssey of young left-wing actors from New York to Hollywood; the rise of the Communist-led National Maritime Union on the New York waterfront; and the quest of the Reuther brothers to organize Detroit's auto industry. We see James T. Farrell refusing to yield to literary Stalinism; Alger Hiss struggling to escape from "shabby-genteel" Baltimore; and J.B. Matthews, Joe McCarthy's hatchet man in the Fifties, spouting revolutionary slogans from the stage of Madison Square Garden. Kempton's method, for the most part,

Scott Sherman's articles have appeared in The Nation, Lingua Franca, *and* The New York Observer.

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is to construct each chapter around two oppositional personalities: one whose radicalism led him into the Communist Party, and one whose radicalism kept him out of it. It's an ingenious, if problematic, organizing principle for a book, and achieves its maximum effect in "The Dry Bones," which is about two forgotten men, Gardner "Pat" Jackson and Lee Pressman.

The chapter begins with one Boston morning in 1926, when Jackson's wife, peering over her morning paper, prodded: "Pat, there's something strange about this trial down in Dedham. Why don't you see if you can find out something about it?" Jackson, a young reporter on the *Boston Globe*, immediately realized that Sacco and Vanzetti were being railroaded, and quickly resigned from the *Globe* to head their defense committee. The verdict energized an entire generation of intellectuals and eventually drove Jackson to government service in Washington, where the New Deal was in its most idealistic and heady phase. He was one of the bright young men in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), and he intended to use his influence to help poverty-stricken tenant farmers. But Jackson's illusions were shattered when his boss, Henry Wallace, purged the department's young "extremists" in an effort to curry favor with conservative southern Democrats.

Lee Pressman, following a stint at Harvard Law School, also joined the AAA and was discharged along with Jackson. Unlike Jackson, Pressman was a Communist. One evening in Pittsburgh in 1937, a friend casually asked him when the killing in Russia would cease. "Do you mean," Pressman replied with astonishment, "that you reject the Terror?" Pressman's talent and cunning subsequently made him an influential figure in the CIO, but after the war the Party's influence in the unions reached its nadir. In 1948, the CIO's president, Philip Murray, decided to make an example of Pressman: Murray told him that he would have to resign if he persisted in his support of Henry Wallace's ill-fated third-party presidential campaign, where the Communist Party made its last stand. Forced to "choose between his career and his vision of history," Pressman selected the latter, and, in the wake of Wallace's defeat, found himself under investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

For Kempton, Jackson and Pressman represent two distinct breeds of radicals. After his departure from the AAA, Jackson joined the leftist daily *PM*, and "had a hard time finding the assurance of a permanent commitment." But he kept at it: "He worked with the co-operatives; he spent himself in causes ranging from civil liberties to the American Indian. And most of what he did, he did for nothing." Pressman, on the other hand, took care of himself, sending the CIO an $83,000 bill for some routine paperwork on the Taft-Hartley Act. To the end, he remained an unrepentant Communist but a loose-lipped witness before HUAC, naming his closest friend. Kempton's final judgment is acidic: "His disasters were his own … they cost him not just a friend but his only friend, not just a dream but his only dream, and not just the sale of something dear, but the sale of himself." When we leave him, "there were reports that Pressman was interested in Israeli real estate; an old enemy commented that he was still seeking history and a solid six per cent."

In a similar way, Kempton examines the distinct trajectories of Paul Robeson and A. Philip Randolph. Kempton's sympathy lies with Randolph, the independent pacifist, socialist, and labor leader who led the Pullman porters to victory and later, by threatening a march on Washington, played a decisive role in desegregating the defense industry and the military itself. About Robeson, however, Kempton is scathing: "He came to Harlem only upon special occasions," writes the author, "almost always for assemblages honoring the Negro's putative identification with the Soviet Union."

Kempton concludes *Part of Our Time* with a stunning final chapter on those Americans who joined the anti-fascist struggle in Europe. We are told that Sam Levinger, a twenty-year-old leftist from Ohio State University, "is dead in a grave which is either unmarked or desecrated in Franco's Spain"; before he perished, he wrote in a poem: "Comrades, the battle is bloody and the war is long/Still let us climb the gray hills and charge the guns." Concludes Kempton on the last page:

> Those are tired words, and they have absorbed all the agony which is the truth of life. They are resigned, but they are undefeated. They do not suggest that somebody else charge the guns. They know the worst, but they will make the charge themselves. I miss them very much and I wish we had them back.

If Lee Pressman, Paul Robeson, and Alger Hiss were the "ruins" of the Thirties, the "monuments" were A. Philip Randolph, Walter Reuther, Pat Jackson, and James T. Farrell, "whose real triumph … was in being true to himself and his calling." Looking back nearly half century later, we can say that Kempton was correct about his monuments. To the very end, despite some twists and turns, each remained true to himself and his calling: Randolph to civil rights, Reuther to trade unionism, Jackson to journalism, and Farrell to the novel. *Part of Our Time* insists that very little was accomplished by radicals in the Thirties, but Kempton's heroes bequeathed a concrete legacy.

Regarding the villains, however, the record is a bit more ambiguous. Consider his treatment of Paul Robeson. Robeson "did not know the Negro," proclaims Kempton. His view of Robeson as a Stalinist robot and aspiring aristocrat falls short, especially in light of Martin Duberman's monumental *Paul Robeson*. Kempton could have produced a more nuanced portrait of Robeson, but the architecture of *Part of Our Time*—which entailed a stark juxtaposition between rigid Communists and

freethinking Socialists—prevented him from doing so. (Reviewing Duberman's biography in *The New York Review of Books* in 1989, Kempton retrospectively acknowledged Robeson's complexity and depth.)

The Kempton of the 1980s and 1990s was never without sympathy for the underdog, but this book reveals a younger man full of anger and disgust for the "cheap and terrible" treason of Elizabeth Bentley, the hubris of the student radicals, and the mediocrity of Hollywood Communists "unable to corrupt the movies with their ideas; the movies corrupted them and they got rich fabricating empty banalities to fit Hollywood's idea of life in America." Is that an accurate description of the Hollywood radicals? Some prominent historians of the period—Richard Pells in particular—think Kempton was excessively harsh in that judgment.

Equally debatable is Kempton's sweeping generalization about the personality traits of people who became Communists in the Thirties. They were not traitors, he says, but rather philistines, lazy second-raters and men and women "desperate to conform." That may have been so with many of the Party members Kempton knew personally, but it was certainly not true of Robeson, Benjamin Davis, Robert Thompson, and others. Recent books by Mark Naison and Robin D.G. Kelley confirm the opportunism of the Party leadership, but show how the experience of the ordinary Communist was not always "ephemeral and trivial," as Kempton argues.

It is worth noting that Kempton's rancor toward the Party, which is a steady undercurrent of *Part of Our Time*, vanished after its publication in 1955. In the middle and late 1950s, Kempton wrote beautiful and stirring columns about Communists caught in the web of McCarthyism. (The best of them are in his collection *America Comes of Middle Age*.) In 1962 he agreed to speak at a political demonstration in New York called to protest the McCarran Act. The auditorium was overflowing with Communists. This is what he said:

> This country has not been kind to you, but this country has been fortunate in having you. You have been arrested, you have been followed, you have had your phones bugged.... Throughout this, I can think of numbers of you I have known who have remained gallant, and pleasant and unbroken.

Kempton's speech concluded: "Our children's children will some day walk together in the light and they will do so because numbers of you have done what you could to keep your courage and your patience. I salute you and I hope for times to be better."

Despite his later generosity and eloquence, Kempton's core argument in *Part of Our Time* is sound: "There is a not-inglorious record of an American radicalism which swam against the stream," he wrote in the book. "The part that failed was the part which rode with a stream that was outside America." In contrast, Kempton delineates the sort of "old breed of radical" personified by his friend Pat Jackson, a breed that "knew disaster and pain and bereavement." Its members understood that "the art of life is to save enough of yourself from every disaster to begin again in something like your old image." The "old breed" of radical was a person anchored in the American tradition, a person who drew inspiration not from the Comintern and Earl Browder but from Whitman and Thoreau, Eugene Debs and Upton Sinclair. Kempton wanted us to remember that Gardner Jackson and his comrades honored that tradition, while Lee Pressman and his comrades did not. In an afterword to the 1967 paperback edition of *Part of Our Time*, Kempton did not budge from that assessment. But he was honest enough to admit that Pressman, "dismissed as a ghost, still functions usefully as a labor lawyer."

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Kempton was fond of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.'s dictum that "every man should take part in the actions and passions of his time or else risk being judged not to have lived." By that standard, Kempton lived. Because he had no use for the phony doctrine of journalistic objectivity, and because he believed in action, he spoke at the first national convention for Students for a Democratic Society. He moderated panel discussions in Harlem between Malcolm X and James Farmer on the fate of the Freedom Riders. He wrote pamphlets for beleaguered members of the Black Panther Party. And he served as a Eugene McCarthy delegate to the 1968 Democratic convention.

If Kempton's activism waned in the Reagan/Clinton years, no doubt it had much to do with the general temper of the times. But the rebel spirit continued to move his pen, and, to the end, he brought an egalitarian demeanor to a profession that has lost its moral compass—a profession that, increasingly, has no use for men and women like Kempton. In the last paragraph of his last column for *New York Newsday*—shuttered by the Times Mirror corporation in 1995—he wrote in farewell:

> It is a very bad deed, my masters, to set a tree to growing and then kill it full of life and growing still. It is not a much better deed to look at an enterprise that has served you honorably and done you honor and throw it away with no more ceremony than it takes to sear it with the brand: Failure. And there cannot be much health left in a social order where corporations can clamorously proclaim a failure on Friday with entire assurance that therefore their stock will go up on Monday. Oh well. That is the way with masters.

In his work over five decades, and in his life, Kempton never forgot the essential difference between masters and servants, and he always sided with the latter. His triumph was that he remained true to himself and his calling, and to the best impulses of the Thirties. ❑

Short Takes

A Look at What's in Other Monthlies and Bi-Monthlies

Here TIKKUN continues our conversation with American intellectual, political, and cultural monthly and bimonthly magazines.

The Atlantic Monthly

Roger Shattuck, writing in the January issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, examines how modern culture, particularly in universities, romanticizes evil in "When Evil is Cool." Shattuck focuses on the way evil can be inserted into a story that "obliges us to ponder an implied greatness of evil—its claim on our admiration as a dynamic element of reality." Shattuck looks at Dostoevski, Chekhov, the criminal trial of Leopold and Loeb, and the film *Pulp Fiction* in arguing that acceptance and admiration of evil is dangerous. Shattuck warns that "Our culture, in particular the institution of the university, has contrived over the past few decades to transform sin and evil into a positive term: "transgression." He concludes, "On an intellectual level … evil can be supremely cool."

The Utne Reader

In the February issue of *The Utne Reader*, Andrew Kimbrell writes about work in the twenty-first century in "Breaking the Job Lock: Imagine a World Where Pursuing our Passions Pays the Bills." In spite of all the recent technological advances, Americans are working harder than ever, and most workers feel that their jobs are meaningless. Kimbrell notes that the kind of work that Americans are performing is important, and that work should be good for the mind, body, spirit, family, and community. We should re-envision work so that it is connected to the rest of our lives. Our work lives should be consistent with our passions and beliefs. The "virtues of caring and empathy in our personal lives … must replace efficiency as the paramount value of the workplace."

Mother Jones

In the February issue of *Mother Jones*, G. Pascal Zachary examines the influence of American culture on the world in "The World Gets in Touch with its Inner American: Open Markets, Workaholism and Manic Consumerism." American corporations and culture are changing the way countries do business and individuals conduct their lives. In Thailand, women dream of having American babies, while the country's new constitution embraces individual rights over Asian communalism. Terms like "shareholder value" and "risk-taking" have entered the vocabulary of Asian and European markets. But Zachary observes the dark side: for example, growing disparities between rich and poor. And while "Americanization seems unstoppable," he notes that some, like France and Germany, are resisting. They "are taking steps to address the inequities fostered by their own embrace of the American model."

The American Prospect

In the January-February issue of *The American Prospect*, Anthony Lewis examines "The Prosecutorial State: Criminalizing American Politics." Lewis points out that "instead of debating uses of public policy, we focus more and more on allegations of personal wrongdoing." Lewis sees this trend not just in the Starr investigation of Clinton, but also in the government's investigations of nobelist David Baltimore, Stanford University president Donald Kennedy, former HUD secretary Henry Cisneros, and finally, agriculture secretary Mike Espy. Lewis doubts that American leadership, corporations, or academic life have become more corrupt. What has changed is the level of cynicism that Americans now have with regard to their public officials and institutions. "There lurks in all of us a lust to see the great brought low.…"

Lingua Franca

Michael Z. Wise contributes "Totem and Taboo: The New Berlin Struggles to Build a Holocaust Memorial" to the December/January issue of *Lingua Franca*. In this article, Wise profiles James Young, a professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts who has written widely on the value of Holocaust memorials. Young has become a pivotal member of the memorial's design panel in part because he is the only foreigner and Jew on the committee. Ironically, in his past writings, Young has been openly dubious about memorials, questioning whether they ultimately defeat the purpose for which they were intended. Wise quotes Young saying "once we assign a monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember." Now that the Social Democratic Party is in power, the government seems to be adopting Young's former position with respect to memorials. All this debate has put Young in the position of re-evaluating many of his earlier works, although he still feels that it would be better to have "a thousand years of Holocaust memorial competitions in Germany than a single 'final solution' to Germany's memorial problem." ❑

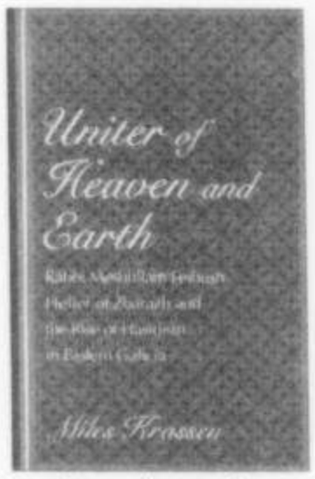
Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

The Language of Truth
The Torah Commentary of the Sefat Emet
Translated and interpreted by Arthur Green
(Jewish Publication Society, 1998)



Arthur Green, best known for his powerful biography of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, makes accessible in this book another important Hasidic teacher: Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter of Ger (known as the Sefat Emet). Green's selections tend to amplify the mystical heritage that this Hasidic master sought to revive in the Hasidic world; his helpful comments on the commentaries make this book a significant contribution.

Uniter of Heaven and Earth
Miles Krassen
(SUNY Press, 1998)



This book is a masterful, scholarly study of Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh and the rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia. Oberlin College's director of Jewish Studies shows how Hasidism moved from its original democratic faith in the Jewish masses to a pessimistic emphasis on inherent limitations of the masses and the need to have faith in extraordinary exemplars of spiritual wisdom (the *tzadikim* of the Jewish past and the contemporary Hasidic masters who would soon create their own courts and dynasties).

The Post-Corporate World
Life After Capitalism
David C. Korten
(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999)



David Korten, chair of the People-Centered Development Forum and author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, has warned us before about the way that international development is causing social and environmental deterioration. In this new book Korten argues that we must understand the universe as a self-organizing system engaged in the realization of its possibilities through a continuing process of transcendence toward ever-higher levels of order and self-definition. That living organism is now threatened by the cancer of capitalism; Korten's book is designed to show us how to fight this economic cancer while preserving that which is valuable in market economies.

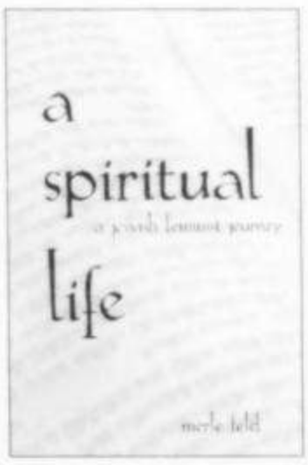
Sephardic-American Voices
Two Hundred Years of a Literary Legacy
Edited by Diane Matza
(Brandeis University Press, 1999)



Though they comprise a majority of the current Jewish residents of Israel, Sephardim have always been a small minority within the American Jewish scene, their culture often ignored and their literary contribution minimized. Matza's exciting collection should rectify this, bringing us a rich array of talented and important writers too rarely included in the official Jewish canon: Ruth Behar, Victor Perera, Stanley Sultan, Ruth Knafo Setton, Herbert Hadad, Ammiel Alcalay, Jordan Elgrably, Rebecca Camhi Fromer, and many more.

Turbulent Souls
A Catholic Son's Return to his Jewish Family
Stephen J. Dubner
(Morrow, 1998)

Stephen Dubner's family history is one of spiritual misdirection, as both of his parents independently converted to Christianity, then raised a Catholic family in which their children knew nothing of their Jewish origins, or, for that matter, that their Jewish mother was the first cousin of Ethel Rosenberg. But Dubner does eventually find his way back to Judaism, and has written a lyrical and at times achingly funny and poignant memoir of the mystical roads of return that are sometimes traveled without a compass, but with deep spiritual instinct.



A Spiritual Life
A Jewish Feminist Journey
Merle Feld
(State University of New York Press, 1999)

When Merle Feld takes on her own personal "Jewish feminist journey," we get a tour de force of poetry, reflective accounts of daily life by a woman seriously committed to Judaism, and wonderful moments of fresh insight. Feld locates spiritual growth in the daily life of a daughter, mother, friend, rebbetzin, and rebel. Her distinctive voice is characterized by a simplicity and honest humility that renders the profundity of her insights all the more startling. Feld has a gift for making that which seems esoteric, accessible; and that which seems ordinary, transcendent.

תיקון

Tikkun (te-kün) … to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

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

עַם, וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וַתִּתֶּן לָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

HONORING LETTUCE FROM THE SEDER PLATE

Lettuce in rebellion

Bland almost as water,
you are meek and prolific as mice.
You are the carrier of sharp news,
a pretense for dressing you up,
a hanger, a clothes horse,
but with a certain shy sweetness.

You sit there demurely in the garden
rows with almost no pests.
Then one day you stick up
a tower of leaves
and turn bitter overnight,
sculptured, tall, inedible.

You have escaped us:
our sharp teeth and our salad
bowls, our sandwiches and rolls.
Instead like a green rocket you rise
hot and spiky, joyfully bitter
waving your own new flag.

—Marge Piercy

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

It's not enough to support our principles …
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