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

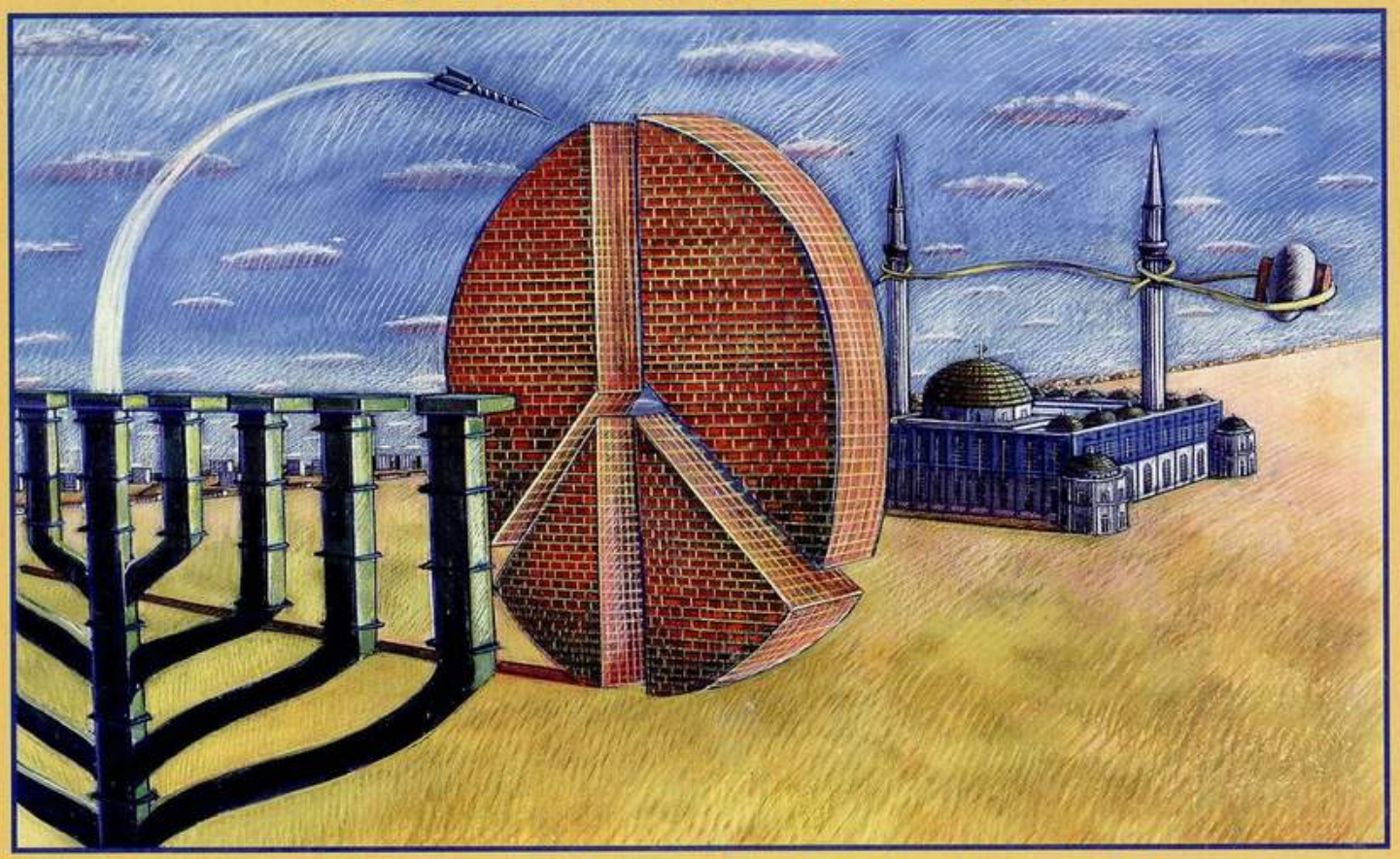
TIKKUN

DAVID BIALE
AGRICULTURE & JEWISH CULTURE

ILANA PARDES
EXILE & IDENTITY

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001 $5.95

INTIFADA II



VOICES FROM ISRAEL: TOM SEGEV, OREN YIFTACHEL, JESSICA MONTELL, DEBORAH FRENCH GRENIMAN, MORDECHAI GAFNI & MORE

Roger S. Gottlieb
BOUNDARIES OF HUMILITY

Stephen Mo Hanan
GABEL'S COMMUNITY

Shelley Burtt
WHICH BABIES TO SAVE?

FIXING ELECTIONS

Danny Goldberg, Charlene Spretnak, Paul Krassner, Dan Cantor, Danny Schechter, Nicholas Von Hoffman, David Ehrenfeld

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False Paradise

Teethed cave, velvet tongue, sibyl
of my mouth: once I bit my mother's finger.
Forefinger, pointing, accusing finger:
I slipped safe-breaking through
some thefted little lock of secret cartilage.
Then I relinquished the stolen finger.

Was it my mother's finger I wanted to defy?
The yad (swinging on its lanyard which the rabbi contacted—
Adam to God in ceilinged plaster-bound
water and color, on the Sistine dome where the artist too,
upwards in leagues of air and ladders, touched
with bristle-brushes hand to hand)—
wasn't that too the finger I had bitten?

Once in blood-sea umbilical-roped,
I swam and reeled, turned and pointed in false paradise.
The yad's cold silver cybernetic arm
was tethered too, to text of sugar and poison, to Torah.
Sibyl in cell-spun subterfuge,
once I waited for the shining metal hand,
for the bidden still unbitten finger of my mother.

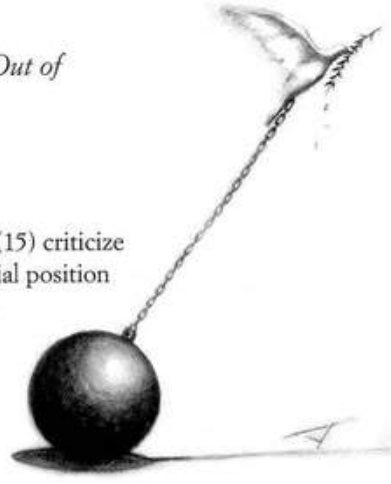
—Valerie Wohlfeld

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 16 NUMBER 1

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Untitled by Richard Ross.

Literary Sikkum:
TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Properties of Light
A Novel of Love, Betrayal, and Quantum Physics

Rebecca Goldstein

Houghton Mifflin, 2000



Rebecca Goldstein, one of the most accomplished and admired novelists on the Jewish American literary scene, now introduces a wholly original, widely imaginative novel that explodes with all the physical and spiritual properties of erotic and intellectual passion. Not surprisingly, Goldstein, as in so many of her earlier novels, delves into the mysteries, and complexities, of the mind and body. At the heart of the novel is essentially a love story, with quantum mechanics, relativity theory, and properties of light thrown in as a way to show how science's passion for knowledge is not unlike the spirit's passion for love and emotion. Indeed, the search is the same, but each venture is fraught with risk. The scientists in Goldstein's novel wish to solve the mysteries of the "real world," but to do so, they must also rendezvous and experiment with the spiritual world, which holds out its own promise for both the erotic and poetic.

False Papers
Essays on Exile and Memory

André Aciman

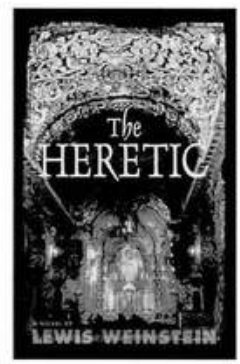
Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000



From the author of the exquisite literary memoir, *Out of Egypt*, comes this equally compelling series of linked essays that explores Aciman's familiar literary terrain: the emotional consequences of living a life in exile, away from home and the memories that tie the spirit to a place that can never truly be returned to, only reimagined. In sections dealing with unrequited love, rainy vacations, homesickness, bus rides, and the consolations of Proust, Aciman connects his own feelings of loss and his memories of growing up in Alexandria in ways that are achingly universal and poignantly true.

The Heretic
Lewis Weinstein

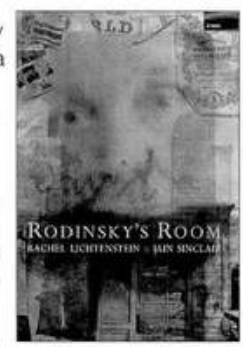
goodnewfiction.com, 2000



This multi-generational tale is set in fifteenth-century Spain, in the land that was the heart, and heat, of an inquisition against those who were alleged to be heretics against the Christian faith. Gabriel Catalan's Jewish father was forced to convert to Christianity, but Gabriel remains a covertly faithful Jew. He becomes wealthy and influential as an advisor to the throne, and a confidant of Princess Isabel. But he is forced to confront the fanatical friar Ricardo Perez, a Dominican monk determined to rid Spain of Jewish heretics. Friar Perez suspects that Gabriel Catalan is in fact a Jew. *The Heretic* is an engaging and enlightening novel set against a uniquely dark age of religious persecution and cruelty.

Rodinsky's Room
Rachel Lichtenstein & Iain Sinclair

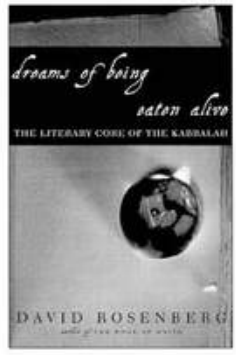
Granta Books, 2000



A deeply haunting, unusually gripping narrative, told in separate voices by each of this book's two authors. Rachel Lichtenstein, a visual artist, becomes obsessed with the story of David Rodinsky and how it may have some emotional connection with her own family's tragic past. David Rodinsky lived for many years in the attic of a synagogue on Princelet Street, in the old Jewish East End of London. One day he disappears, but in his room he leaves behind writings, annotated books and maps, gramophone records, and clothes, which remain undisturbed for over twenty years until Lichtenstein ventures in and uncovers this lost world of a vanished European culture—somehow preserved in Rodinsky's room, a world that Lichtenstein seeks to reimagine in her own art, and revisit by traveling to Poland, Israel, and Jewish London, all in a search for pieces of Rodinsky and herself.

Dreams of Being Eaten Alive

The Literary Core of the Kabbalah



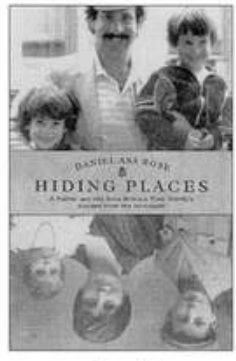
David Rosenberg

Harmony Books, 2000

David Rosenberg, a leading poet and translator of the Bible, and the co-author of the best-selling *The Book of J*, now turns his aesthetic and philosophical attention to the literary impulses of the Kabbalah. And at the core of his speculations is a playful, explosive eroticism, where the pleasures of the soul and the flesh are united and revealed. The secret sexuality of the Kabbalah becomes its own art form in Rosenberg's thoughtful, insightful book, a literary journey that explores the link between science and religion, the mysteries of identity and life after death—all in the context of how the Kabbalah speaks to the new world, in addition to making sense of the old.

Hiding Places

A Father and His Sons Retrace Their Family's Escape from the Holocaust

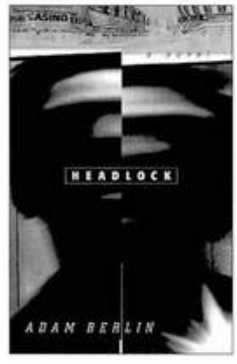


Daniel Asa Rose

Simon & Schuster, 2000

Part literary memoir, part travelogue, Daniel Asa Rose, a child of a Holocaust survivor and now a man with a conflicted and complicated Jewish identity, tells us the remedy he chose for himself and his two young sons after his divorce from his wife and their mother. Rose took his sons on a family trip to Belgium and France where they retracee the footpaths that led to so much death in the author's family. The goal was to somehow inoculate his children from future evil, but the result was a journey of deep emotion, unburied truths and revelations, and forever resonant insights about the losses and recoveries of this family, and its possibilities for healing.

Headlock



Adam Berlin

Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2000

A novel of self-discovery, complete with a supple plot and engaging characters. Adam Berlin tells the story of Odessa Rose, former college wrestler and loose cannon, who sets off for Las Vegas to play the role of bodyguard for his trouble-following, gambling-addicted cousin. This novel asks the right questions about trying to make changes in a life that has depended for so long on all the wrong assets and all the wrong choices.

Biblical Parables and Their Modern Re-Creations

From "Apples of Gold in Silver Settings" to "Imperial Messages"

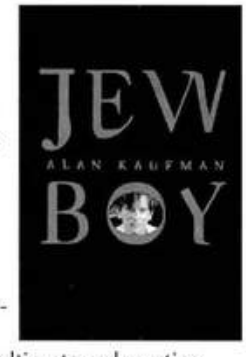


Gila Safran Naveh

SUNY Press, 2000

Bringing together parables from the Scriptures, the synoptic Gospels, Chasidic tales, and medieval philosophy, Gila Safran Naveh brilliantly contrasts the rhetorical strategies of ancient parables with more recent examples of the genre by Kafka, Borges, Calvino, and Agnon. She incorporates linguistic, psychoanalytic, and gender theories in locating the various social, cultural, and political shifts in interpreting the divine.

Jew Boy



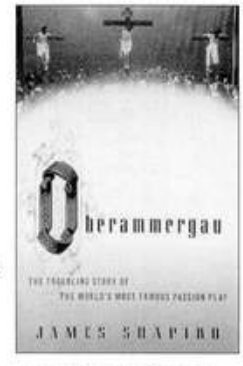
Alan Kaufman

Fromm International Publishing, 2000

An affecting literary memoir by a son of a Holocaust survivor who is determined to free himself from his legacy, including the demons that continue to scar his mother, by hitchhiking across America, living on a kibbutz in Israel, and finally joining the Israeli army. Later he finds himself homeless and an alcoholic, living on the streets of New York. The memoir reveals how his ultimate redemption and return to life is accomplished through his discovery of the divine spark of poetry that exists in his life.

Oberammergau

The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play



James Shapiro

Pantheon Books, 2000

James Shapiro takes his readers on a fascinating trip to this small German village, which has staged its controversial Passion play of the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, every decade since 1634. The play has taken place, without interruption, despite wars, military occupation, religious censorship, and threats of boycott. Shapiro explores the cultural history of this Bavarian village and its connection to this play, as well as the recent ambivalent efforts that have been undertaken to remove the anti-Semitic elements from the play itself.

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Letters to the Editor

Electoral Politics

To the Editor:

Given the nationwide demand for clean money in elections that was rising even before November 7, and now the public outcry over the presidential election itself, we have an extraordinary opportunity.



On Inauguration Day, Saturday, Jan 20, tens (hundreds?) of thousands of us could gather in Washington in a "Clean Up Our Elections!" demonstration, to demand:

1) Either abolishing the electoral college or making each state vote proportional to the vote inside that state;

2) Instant runoff voting (which lets voters name second and third choices to get their votes if their first choices fail, thereby encouraging the creativity of third parties without wrecking progressive energies in "second" parties);

3) Public financing of all federal campaigns, with prohibition of private money, or a very low limit.

At the start, of course, this would be a minority view, but there would be very sizable public support. That support would grow. And, for the first time in thirty years, we would be setting the agenda from the left, for a radically democratic reform.

In the meantime, we should be organizing teach-ins and town meetings on electoral democracy.

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW, DIRECTOR
Shalom Center website
<www.shalomctr.org>

Israel and Palestine

To the Editor:

Where is TIKKUN's outrage over the documented fact that the Palestinian military purposefully places children in front as human shields when shooting at Israeli soldiers? Where is the outrage at

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the lack of protection of Jewish holy sites including Jacob's Tomb, Rachel's Tomb, and the Western Wall? To indicate that Israelis are wasting water on grass while Palestinians suffer in thirst fails to acknowledge the fact that the water used by the Israelis is recycled waste water.

These are serious times and serious analysis and discussions are needed. If TIKKUN wants to validate its claim to being visionary, then perhaps the editors should move to Israel for a few years, live in a war zone, and watch their children as they are scripted into military duty. The experience might facilitate more well-rounded and insightful articles.

FREDRIC B. MEYER, M.D.
Rochester, Minnesota

To the Editor:

I am a TIKKUN subscriber of several years. This, my first letter to you, is inspired by your courageous and wise editorial in the November/December issue on the Middle East crisis. We must be able to empathically understand the crisis through the eyes of *both* the Palestinian and the Israeli people.

My wife and I visited Israel in 1998 on the occasion of the country's fiftieth birthday. We were thrilled to share in the celebration of the country's survival and growth under difficult circumstances. We were, however, concerned by the clear deprecation of the Palestinian and Israeli Arab peoples as well as a somewhat paranoid flavor reflected in the attitudes of many. We plan to return to Israel next year, this time to celebrate our own fiftieth wedding anniversary. If the peace process is subverted, we shall not do so.

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson once wrote that if we do not arrive at an all-inclusive human identity we may eventually destroy ourselves. This understanding comes close to [what TIKKUN editor Michael Lerner calls] the "Unity of All Being."

It has been hard for us to talk with many of our Jewish friends who may be progressive in other matters but unable to see the perspective from both sides. In that respect I found your editorial reassuring.

BURT SHACHTER
Pomona, New York





The Making of the Bibles Moralisées

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Volume II: The Book of Ruth

JOHN LOWDEN

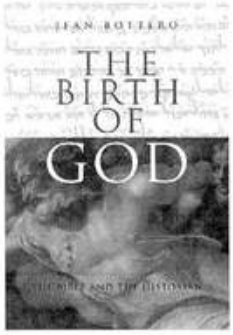
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The Birth of God

The Bible and the Historian

JEAN BOTTÉRO
TRANSLATED BY KEES BOLLE

"In less than a thousand years, this very small people succeeded not only in formulating but in solving one of the supreme problems of religious thought, which those powerful and immortal Babylonians had barely caught sight of, and, in the end, relinquished! This small number of faithful of an initially obscure God, merely by its attachment to His person and by its faith in Him as their only strength, even without the support of properly rational thought, which only later would impose itself and render arguments and proofs among the Greeks, arrives at an experience of interiorization, an enrichment of religion of such a quality that no one has surpassed it."

—*from* The Birth of God

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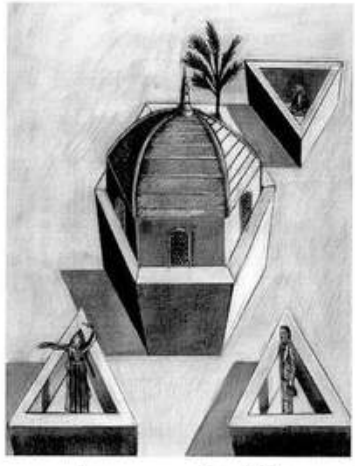
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To the Editor:

I subscribed to your magazine several years ago, as I was in the process of exploring my Jewish identity.

Now, Israel and our Jewish brethren are under attack by Arabs who have pledged to destroy Jews and the Jewish state at all costs. Is there no limit to your self-hate? Arab mothers send their sons out to throw rocks and gasoline bombs at our brethren, while serving as cover for militia snipers—and you side with the Arab attackers. Jewish families are shot at in their homes in Jerusalem, and you side with the Arabs. Our reservists are brutally massacred by rabid Arab mobs, and you say you can understand how they feel—you feel their pain. Arafat has broken one commitment after another, and continues to countenance blood libel defamation of Jews, and calls by mainstream Muslim clerics for Muslims to kill Jews throughout the worlds—and you whine for peace.



Where is your moral center? Where is your even-handedness? Where is your *sechel*? You are trapped in the tired, anachronistic post-1960s, "Judaism is equivalent to liberalism," "Zionism is racism," anti-Semitism of the Left.

It would be laughable if the stakes weren't so high.

BURTON SILVERSTEIN, PH.D.
Toledo, Ohio

To the Editor:

The November/December issue had very little about the crisis in the Middle East except for your heart-felt editorial "Israel and Palestine." But you summed up the situation as well as it could be. You rightly took issue with the "willed ignorance" of Israeli Knesset chair Avraham Burg on his being "puzzled at the Palestinian reaction." You set the record straight on "why there is so much pent-up anger among Palestinians." Your plea for non-violent tactics on the Arab side is well-reasoned, but I fear reason is not the major player now—only rage.

Like all TIKKUN readers I'm saddened by the violence and "by the pathetic state of the Israeli left—its lack of a coherent vision or strategy." It seems all of Israel is just hunkered down for a long battle as more walls go up around Jerusalem and the settlements. Good walls never make good neighbors. Only goodwill can do that, and, for now, that's also been "murdered."

BILL STEYERT
Chicago, Illinois

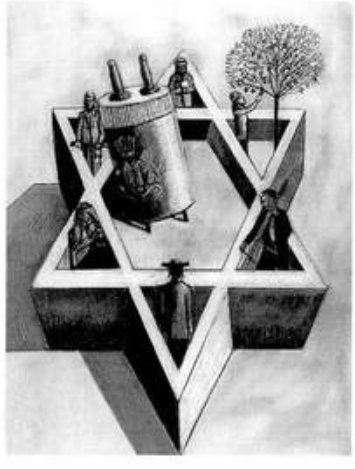
To the Editor:

I read, with great disgust, the article by Michael Lerner entitled "Israel and Palestine." The case that you prepare against Israel, using mistruths, partial facts, incorrect interpretations, and convenient statistics is absolutely sickening and an insult to anyone who is Jewish. You should be ashamed of yourself. I think that you should atone for the memories of your dearly departed, who would be turning over in their graves to know that you could write something so despicable. I will certainly be blotting your name from my memory along with the "magazine" that you edit. I will make every effort possible to inform people of the rag that you represent.

DANIEL SHIMSHAK
University of Massachusetts, Boston

To the Editor:

I'm sorry, Michael Lerner, that you are not coming to Miami, so I could tell my congregants to boycott you. Your behavior in this time of crisis in Israel is a *chillul Hashem* and this comes from someone who always defended you and even subscribed to your magazine in the past. You are ignoring Barak's unprecedented offer to the Palestinians which they rejected. If you think Israel should offer more, then you are truly suicidal and the enemy of the Jewish people.



RABBI ED FARBER
Miami, Florida

To the Editor:

I read Michael Lerner's editorial, "Israel and Palestine," a number of times. I heard recently that it cost you and Tikkun financially and that you have received death threats. I personally want to thank you for the deep spiritual courage it took to take a stand. *That* is so much of what is missing in today's world. People don't speak their truths because of fear.

I am now a new subscriber to TIKKUN and will remain so *because* of the fact that you spoke out. Whether or not I agree is of no consequence—I applaud and support your courage, and that is something I want to be a part of.

I suspect you will get a different subscriber base to fill the ones who left.

JANE DAVIS
Founder/Director
HOPE-HOWSE International

To the Editor:

As I hear friends expressing hatred towards Arabs and a mindless defense of Israel, I was greatly heartened by the article Michael Lerner wrote on atonement. I was beginning to feel that any Jew who expressed any reservations about Israel's actions and who felt empathy towards the Palestinians' suffering was crazy. The article restored some balance for me.

I am reminded of a scene in the film *Ghandi,* where two fathers, a Muslim and a Hindu, are brought to Ghandi in the midst of terrible riots between Muslims and Hindus. Each father has lost a child to the riots and hates the other religion. Ghandi makes a profound suggestion so that each can atone for his own actions. The Muslim is to adopt a Hindu orphan and raise that child as a Hindu, the Hindu is to adopt a Muslim child and raise that child as a Muslim.

The situation in 1948 in India was not much different than what is going on right now in the Middle East. Two wonderful cultures with religions that share many common roots are being destroyed by extremists and by hatred.

LARRY SALTZMAN
Santa Barbara, California

To the Editor:

In his editorial, "Israel and Palestine," Michael Lerner says that in his synagogue on Yom Kippur they atoned for "our side of the story, for Jewish violence." How can he atone for something he didn't do? Self-defense is not a sin.

I find it dumbfounding that Rabbi Lerner is unable to distinguish between Palestinians who are killed when they attack armed Israeli soldiers with stones, molotov cocktails, and automatic weapons, and Israeli soldiers who are lynched by a mob, including members of a police force that is ostensibly in place to keep the peace. Even if those Israeli soldiers were considered "enemies," the cold-blooded slaughter of prisoners of war is forbidden by the Geneva Convention, which all civilized nations follow.

Barak has gone out on a limb, politically, with what he has offered to the Palestinians, and there is no guarantee that the Knesset would approve the offers he made. But he was willing to try, to extend himself to the utmost to finally reach peace and settle the long conflict.

Arafat, however, was unwilling to accept the unprecedented concessions that Barak offered. Trying to get more, he will almost undoubtedly get less. Violence cannot be shown to be more effective than the negotiating table.

Israel clearly has done a number of things wrong in the past, and the treatment of its Arab minority is certainly one of them. However, I disagree with Lerner that there is "no hope that the disgusting cycle of violence on both sides will stop until Israel is willing to end the occupation and end its internal racism against Arab Israelis." A few days ago Prime Minister Barak said on Israeli TV that it takes two to make peace, but only one to make violence. Arafat needs to stop using violence against someone who is willing to negotiate.

Instead of seeing this as a time to atone, I see it as a time to pray that the leadership on both sides of the conflict



be given the wisdom and strength to reach an agreement that is solid and fair. An agreement that will allow Israelis to live without fear from the violent and terrorist acts of their neighbor, and an agreement that will allow Palestinians to begin to build a normal life and join the community of civilized nations.

DR. BARRY J. LEFF
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor:

I have been feeling very disillusioned with Judaism since the recent violence erupted in the Middle East. The more I learn about the situation, the more I disagree with so many of my friends and family. I found your editorial absolutely inspiring. I have been feeling like I am the only Jewish person in the world that has a conscience. I don't know why so many Jewish people feel that a Jewish life is worth more than a non-Jewish life. That's why I found this line particularly inspiring, "But have we not yet learned that in God's eyes every human being is equally treasured?" This is the Judaism that I believe in. Thank you for reaffirming that for me. Your words are an inspiration to people everywhere who strive to be moral before God.

JONATHAN PRAFF
College Park, Maryland

To the Editor:

I've been leading a "support group" on the Middle East at my Reform congregation in Castro Valley, CA, and people [who are critical of Israel's actions] are telling me that they are afraid to speak out about their views in the presence of those members of the congregation known to be hard-liners. I don't get the sense that the hard-liners share that concern in voicing their opinions.

The attacks on you when you dare to speak out are a mechanism for reinforcing the intimidation of others who share your views. It's as if you are put in the role of "the Jew" for the rest of us, the lightening rod for anger and resentment, the one whose mistreatment is used to keep the rest of the population—in this case other Jews—in check.

So I just want to thank you for holding firm, for continuing to think and speak out. You are a shining light.

RUTH HARTMAN
Hayward, California

To the Editor:

I was deeply moved by your editorial, "Israel and Palestine." As an Arab American who is a Muslim, I feel tremendous sorrow at the recent events—not rage—but an enormous sorrow, like a hole in my stomach. I have tried to make a resolution that I will not engage in tit-for-tat, even rhetorically, but instead, focus simply on what we need to do, as Arabs, to reconstitute ourselves morally after years of occupation and deprivation. Make no mistake, occupation dehumanizes both the occupier and the occupied. The events of the last two weeks show this dramatically. *Inshallah*, God willing, we can overcome this.

MOHAMMAD FADEL
United States Court of Appeals
for the Fourth Circuit
Baltimore, Maryland

O Boy!

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my disappointment with Michael Kimmel's article, "A War Against Boys?" (November/December 2000). This piece strikes me as a prime example of the kind of article that perpetuates an academic career but is woefully short on wisdom, a wisdom that is most needed in this country awash in academics.

Kimmel is guilty of precisely the reductionism he criticizes in Sommers, yet seems entirely unaware of that fact. Kimmel's purpose seems to be to refute Sommers' attack on "misguided feminism" and the reduction of gender differences to biological factors. This is a valid critique and one I support. However, he

then proceeds to explain male consciousness as solely derivative of capitalist class relations and the ideology that supports them. We end up with a nasty battle of limited viewpoints each struggling to dominate the other.

Who in our culture is served by this struggle? Certainly not boys. The kind of academic polemic reflected in this article only engenders an atmosphere of egocentric browbeating in which no one is safe to consider another viewpoint. How about a dose of humility from our supposed pundits which acknowledges the limited aspects of truth that their specialties investigate? Aren't boys better served by the question: "How can we understand the powerful forces of intention, physiology, culture, social structure, and development which are shaping the lives of boys in contemporary American culture?"



I ask all the Kimmels and Sommers in our country to step out of the narrow interests of their careers and contribute wisely and humbly to the crying needs of our children.

TOM THRESHER, PH.D.
Berkeley, California

Michael S. Kimmel replies:

If only it were true that an article in TIKKUN would catapult my career into the free agent market for academic superstars!

I don't see how Tom Thresher could have derived such a reductionist view of my argument that I attribute male consciousness to "capitalist class relations and the ideology that supports them." I do believe that current debates about boys are connected to structural factors that are not solely reducible to anatomical differences between boys and girls nor the motivations of individual therapists. It should be obvious to any reader of my work that I do not hold the reductionist views ascribed to me.

Finally, I apologize for my obvious immodesty when confronting a book-length polemic based on no empirical research whatever, having myself spent the better part of two decades doing precisely that research. Unlike Thresher, I do not believe that the two works in question (Sommers' book and my essay) are simply tit-for-tat "he said-she said." I'm afraid I believe that it is more accurate to say "she says with no evidence at all but a fortune of right-wing foundation support—he says with twenty years research in the pages of TIKKUN."

Torah of Money

To the Editor:

We just completed an adult education course at our local synagogue entitled "The Torah of Money" on economic and social inequality. The course's title comes from a book by Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro (*Jews, Money & Social Responsibility*) and is also the name of a column that both men write for your magazine.

We are writing this letter in appreciation of the concept, one which allowed us to explore Jewish sources—from the Torah and the rabbinic period to the present—and their meaning in light of contemporary economic problems in our communities, the nation, and the globe. Students shared their own *tzedakah* practices, discussed a progressive dues policy for the synagogue, and explored ways the Jewish community could work for social justice in the broader geographical area in which we live. At the end of the course, our synagogue's Critical Issues Committee committed itself to continue the dialogue and action with members of the class.

We thank your magazine for continuing the Dekro/Bush column.

RABBI SHEILA PELTZ WEINBERG
AND MAYNARD SEIDER
Amherst, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: You can find that column on page 48 of this issue.

Death, Texas Style

To the Editor:

It was very appropriate for you to publish your editorial on "Bush's Phony Compassion" along with Steve Earle's moving tribute to his friend Jonathan Nobles. Jonathan's life brings to light the most serious flaw in the Texas death penalty apparatus. To justify the death penalty, the Texas sentencing jury has to find that the defendant will always pose a risk of danger to others. Obviously, in Jonathan's case, the jury erred.

Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote in a 1990 dissent on a Virginia death penalty case, "just as the jury occasionally 'gets it wrong' about whether a defendant charged with murder is innocent or guilty, so, too, the jury 'gets it wrong' about whether a defendant convicted of murder is deserving of death.... If it is impossible to construct a system capable of accomodating all evidence relevant to a man's entitlement to be spared death ... then it is the system, not the life of the man sentenced to death, that should be dispatched."

Jonathan Nobles had become an exemplary human being. There are others like him on Texas' death row. Not only did Jonathan's execution reveal a lack of compassion. In the venerable opinion of Justice Thurgood Marshall, it was unlawful.

WALTER LONG
Austin, Texas

CORRECTIONS

The cartoon "You're Just a Sound Byte" on page 75 of the November/December 2000 issue was mistakenly attributed to Boligon. It is by Signe Wilkinson. We apologize for the error.

We Lost Your Email Address—

(actually, our web host lost it)

And That's Why You Are Not Getting Email From TIKKUN!

Whether or not you subscribed before, please join our email list for weekly updates by TIKKUN editor Rabbi Michael Lerner on Israel, American politics and spirituality.

Join by sending an email to **tikkun-subscribe@egroups.com** or go to **www.egroups.com** and search for "**tikkun**."

Getting the Whole Picture As We Enter 2001

Try to imagine our planet as it might be seen by God. A little planet, rotating around the sun at just the right distance to make possible the photosynthesis of plants which sustains animal life. And our sun, one of millions of stars in this galaxy. And this galaxy, one of what astronomers now believe to be one hundred billion galaxies! If you ever have trouble understanding what the Hebrew prayers are about in a synagogue, here's a tip: many of them boil down to the following one word: "Wow!" or some variant of the following thought: "What a blessing to be alive, to take in this incredible universe, and to have the privilege to be conscious of it and part of it."

We don't always approach the universe with humility. There are six billion people on earth, most of us spending much of our time jumping up and down, shouting to each other and to the universe: "Look at me, pay attention to me! I'm so important!" God would certainly be struck by the ways that so many people are willing to be insensitive to each other as they focus on their own personal importance. And wouldn't God be amazed that one small group of people on this planet feels the right to have wildly disproportionate wealth and to close their ears to the pain of tens of millions of people who do not have enough to eat, do not have shelter, and do not have health care?

God would also notice how the human race is destroying the life support system of the planet. While some people are living in harmony with the earth, most of us in advanced industrial nations are engaged in profligate consumption and "don't want to know" how the system of globalized capital is depleting the earth's resources, accelerating global warming, and poisoning the environment. We are soiling our own nest in ways that will almost guarantee that life on the planet will become dramatically worse or even impossible within the century.

Yet as a compassionate being, God would also notice the amazing amount of pain in human beings that has made it hard for us to see the large picture. Economic and political systems based on cruelty and domination have become part of our psychological legacy. Past experiences of pain are transferred from generation to generation, sometimes in the form of explicit punishment and physical violence ("for their own good"), sometimes in more subtle forms of psychological distortion and the withholding of love. Too many children are denied the essential loving support and caring that they deserve. Too many children in advanced industrial societies are taught that they will only merit that love if they can jump through the endless hoops we place in front of them.

Our economic and political system teaches children that they are only to be valued if they buy into their parents' lifestyle or acquire "useful skills" which will serve the interests of the rich and powerful. To make sure that children don't waste too much time connecting to the spiritual realities of the universe (they call that "daydreaming" or "not paying attention"), political leaders debate each other about who can ensure greater testing at earlier grade levels to guarantee that students will learn the skills that might make them a potential "success" in the competitive market. It doesn't take long for most kids to develop a sense of themselves as inadequate in some way, and hence as less deserving of the available emotional, economic, and social wealth that is distributed unequally in the society.

Yet we have an unquenchable desire to have a life filled with meaning and higher purpose—and this cannot be extinguished, no matter how deeply we internalize the belief system that teaches us that we don't deserve love, that life doesn't have meaning, and that we ought to just grow up and be realistic. So, when God views our planet, S/He will see many attempts to create meaning. Some attempts will be beautiful, some hurtful or destructive to others. God will see people accumulating goods without end and seeking power, fame, or sexual conquests, yet S/He will also see people engaged in creating beauty, deepening our knowledge, developing techniques for healing, and participating in communities of service to humanity.

God will also see millions of acts of love, kindness, and generosity. The human race is filled with goodness that often exists side-by-side with our inner legacy of cruelty or pain, and our depression or despair.

God will see us participating in institutions like health care, social security, public education, and government services which were created as the result of the struggle of millions of people in the past to transcend cruelty and show caring for each other. Today, people operate almost totally unconscious of the ways that these governmental services were developed by previous generations as acts of generosity, expressions of the way that people wanted to pass on their own goodness to the future. Our contemporary lack of consciousness of that goodness gives these institutions a coercive and obsolete quality that sometimes undermines our ability to reshape them to fit our own needs.

God will see billions of human beings innovating, making the best of the situations in which they find themselves. God will see the growing numbers of people who are beginning to realize that we need more ecological sanity, more social justice, and more spiritual aliveness. And see also the ways in which many who have this insight feel defeated, powerless, or unable to achieve more than slight transformations in their own lives and hence give up on changing the larger picture.

And God will see the prophets and the visionaries, the people who are trying to heal the pain and encourage the hope and convey the message that a world of love and goodness and spiritual connectedness is still possible—as well as the many people who respond to that message with cynicism and anger, demeaning those who think that a fundamental transformation remains an abiding possibility.

This is all happening as each of us lives our own personal stories and experiences nuances of understanding, moments of transcendence and moments of despair, moments of love and moments of fear.

The End of the Clinton Era—and a Call to Demonstrate

Eight years ago we greeted the Clinton/Gore team with guarded enthusiasm and hopefulness. We had seen troubling signs in the campaign, but we also allowed ourselves to hope that this could be the moment in which the aspirations of the progressive elements of the Sixties generation might be actualized through the actions of a new political leadership.

We were wrong.

Most political commentators say that the Clintons were too liberal and expansive in their first two years, and that their excessively liberal health care plan generated a negative reaction which led to the ascendancy of the Gingrich revolution. A variant on this story: Hillary was the liberal and, once her health care plan bombed, Bill decided to give her less power (a story Hillary herself tended to promote).

These are completely distorted pictures. The reality is far more complex. Bill and Hillary entered the White House in 1993 with a set of inner conflicts about how to be realistic and preserve their self-interest while doing as much good as they possibly could. Their conflicts were not atypical of most who had been involved in the movements of the Sixties and had been disappointed.

The experience of actually having an impact on shaping public events—creating the climate within which civil rights legislation, environmental legislation, anti-sexist regulations, rights for the disabled, and an end to the funding of the war in Vietnam could get passed—helped many of us recognize that ordinary people could be the creative force in history.

Yet the process didn't feel good. On the one hand, undercover police agents played on our feelings of guilt ("we're not doing enough") to provoke violence and to belittle all that was being accomplished through nonviolence. On the other hand, our own conditioning as Americans had led us to expect instant gratification—we imagined the revolution would take only a few short years and that we could instantaneously become the fullest embodiment of our own ideals. When, instead, we found ourselves surrounded by people who were just as limited and screwed up as everyone else, we were furious at each other and ourselves for not yet being the perfect embodiments of anti-sexist, anti-racist, ego-transcendent beings.

It was this screwed up expectation—perfectly symbolized in the oft-quoted (but misunderstood) Pogo cartoon which said "We have met the enemy, and it is us"—that created such disappointment. We were too young and naïve to realize that any social change would necessarily have to be made by the imperfect people we actually are.

The result was a pervasive demand for "political correctness" which led us to brutalize each other for our failures to be all that we had hoped to be. Leaders were trashed as elitists, men were trashed as chauvinists, whites as hopelessly racist, heterosexual couples as being inherently oppressive to homosexuals. Since the PC-ers lacked compassion for themselves or for anyone who didn't already share their values, the movement started to feel as totalitarian as the culture which it critiqued.

Few people were willing to tolerate that kind of brutality for long, so the movement collapsed into a set of interest groups contending with each other about which was "the most oppressed." Rebelling against the utopianism of the Sixties, progressives chose instead to fight for narrowly-construed legal rights and entitlements. Absent a larger transformative vision, those struggles were sometimes successful, but were also easily portrayed by America's ruling elites as nothing more than the selfish pursuit of "special interests." The media jumped in as well to argue that the whole venture of the Sixties was nothing more than a generation pursuing its narcissistic aims. Indeed, the Reagan/Bush years convinced many that nothing more than selfishness was possible, and thus that social change would only happen if tied to narrow self-interest (e.g., the selfish desire for political power).

No wonder people were so excited when the Clintons embraced a politics of meaning and talked about overcoming the selfishness of the Reagan/Bush years. If hope and idealism were on the agenda, people would respond. And they did, not only by electing Clinton but by telling pollsters in overwhelming numbers that they would be willing to pay higher taxes to ensure that everyone received adequate

health care. But the Clintons themselves began to give out a different message in the first months of their administration: they abandoned their promises to gays, environmentalists, civil rights groups and others because "focus groups" led them to believe that standing for their principles might hurt their popularity and damage their self-interest. It was in this context that they put forward their health care proposal—a proposal that was flawed precisely because it rejected politics of meaning assumptions and instead sought to placate the health care and insurance industries by guaranteeing them huge profits and power.

I was in the White House in this period and watched as Hillary's initial embrace of the politics of meaning was countered by advisors who urged the Clintons to be "realistic" and to recognize that people only cared about money and power and not much about love and caring and spiritual meaning. The Clintons experienced the same two voices that we all hear: one urging them to go for their highest hopes, the other warning them that it would be "unrealistic" to imagine that people could respond to anything as meaningful as "caring for others" and "overcoming materialism and selfishness." But as they began to distance themselves from their own hopefulness, tens of millions of their supporters felt abandoned and exposed. When people begin to suspect that their own ideals are unrealistic, they back away. They lose interest in politics and focus on building their personal lives, or they respond to the appeal of tax-cutting conservatives with this reasoning: "If my ideals can't be actualized in some communal way, why not keep my money so I can use it for my own personal and family needs?"

Political energy always flows either to hope or to despair, and when it flows to despair about ideals, people turn to the Right. It was that dynamic which led to the Gingrich revolution and which now leads to the elevation of George W. Bush to the presidency. In the Dubya years, people may look back with nostalgia on the Clinton presidency, pointing to all its accomplishments. They are missing the point. Sure, the Clinton administration passed some good legislation, promulgated some decent presidential edicts, and had good people in the cabinet who did some worthwhile things while in office. The most important way to judge any administration, however, is in terms of whether it sowed hope or despair—whether it empowered people to understand their situation and fight for their ideals or whether it made people cynical about the possibility of moving toward communal idealism.

The Clintons sought to be "realistic"; for them that meant moving away from any ideology of hope and transformation. Instead, they often framed their struggles in a discourse that was shaped by conservative ideologues and by the "common sense" of the media, particularly its assumption that the only thing that motivates people is narrow material self-interest. As a result, the primary legacy of the Clinton years is a deeper cynicism about the possibility of public life and higher values. Clinton's involvement with Monica Lewinsky was an outgrowth of that cynicism, not its cause. Realism had won out over idealism. Taking care of one's self replaced a higher purpose.

Gore's campaign, and the narrow way he framed the post-election struggle for votes, has only deepened that cynicism. Gore joined Bush in supporting major tax cuts, only arguing about whose tax cut plan would put more money into the pockets of middle-class consumers. When critiqued by Bush as a supporter of "big government," Gore had a unique opportunity to say something like, "We Democrats are aware of the many criticisms that Americans have about a government that has gotten out of control, become unresponsive to ordinary citizens, and taken on a bureaucratic set of interests of its own. We want to fix that. But we also believe in something more than just narrow self-interest—we believe that most Americans want to use government as a vehicle to show our caring for each other, for creating a 'We' that stands for some common values that transcend our specific religious and ethnic differences and link us together as a national community." Instead, Gore responded by protesting that he also wanted to downsize government—that he had in fact cut 300,000 jobs from government. No wonder, then, that Gore ran such an uninspired campaign.

Similarly, in the post-election fight for Florida, instead of asking the Supreme Court to step in on the side of democratic values, Gore opportunistically opted for a "states' rights" argument. In short, Gore has played to the ethos of selfishness and materialism. He and the Democrats still don't understand that if people perceive that we are in a period of selfishness and materialism, they will find conservative arguments and politicians more appealing.

Psychological reductionist accounts of the Clinton years miss this important dimension. When I spoke to Hillary and Bill Clinton, they were open to moving in a more idealistic direction, but they felt that there was no one to support them in so doing. They needed the kind of visionary, meaning-oriented movement that had made it possible (and necessary) for Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and even Nixon to support progressive legislation. They needed us to be more visible to them. In the final analysis, the failure of the Clintons was our failure to move beyond our personal lives or self-interested politics and build a movement that is unashamedly utopian and idealistic.

Such a movement is still possible. Let's turn Inauguration Day, January 20, into a day for mass protests, not only against the lack of respect for democratic processes (evidenced by the way votes were discarded in Florida) but also against the selfishness, materialism, and crass opportunism that characterized so much of the post-election debate. We should organize nonviolent civil disobedience not only in Washington, D.C., but also in every community—and begin a national campaign for a new bottom line of love and caring in a society that has lost its moral and spiritual moorings.

Israel Out of the West Bank and Gaza!



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEROME DELAY / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO

Despite the fact that we have called for Palestinians to embrace the nonviolence that made the movements of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela so powerful, our last editorial critiquing Israel's role in the recent intifada has caused a powerful explosion of energy against TIKKUN magazine. We've faced death threats, cancellations of subscriptions, and loss of donations—which now imperils our financial survival.

Ironically, the substance of what we said in the November/December editorial is now being repeated by columnists and journalists in Israel (though not yet by people in the American Jewish establishment or the UJA/Federation-controlled Jewish weekly newspapers):

1. That the deal rejected by Arafat would not have been acceptable to any Palestinian leader, because it left the vast majority of West Bank settlers in place, required the continued presence of Israeli military roads and checkpoints (cutting into shreds the proposed Palestinian state), did not take seriously the interests of Palestinian refugees, and did not ensure Islamic access to the Temple Mount unimpeded by Israeli military control.

2. That the violence and terror against Israeli civilians, while totally immoral and unacceptable, was not qualitatively different either from the violence used by Israel in its documented history of torture against Palestinians or from the acts of various Israeli religious fanatics.

3. That Jewish values require us to insist that Palestinian lives are just as precious to God as Jewish lives, and that it's time for the Jewish world to overcome its chauvinistic attitudes and return to a recognition of the preciousness of all of God's creatures.

The simple truth is that Israelis have three choices: endless war; the incorporation of Palestinians within Israel as citizens with equal rights (which would soon mean a Palestinian majority); or a return to the pre-1967 borders of the State of Israel with slight adjustments to give Israelis control over the Jewish and Armenian quarters of the Old City and to incorporate Gush Etzion into Israel. We opt for the last choice: Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza!

With new elections looming, Israeli peace movement activists are at a disadvantage. Precisely because Barak misled Israel into believing that his Camp David offer was the best possible offer, and that its rejection could only be understood as evidence of Palestinian irrationality and self-destructiveness, Barak guaranteed that many Israelis would interpret the Palestinian national uprising as proof that a peace accord is not possible. Even if Barak reaches an agreement with Arafat in the coming months, many Israelis have sunk into despair about peace. That despair is likely to intensify as Palestinians who have suffered so dramatically in the past few months take actions in the streets that express their resentment and rage, not only against Israel but against Arafat and what they have come to perceive as a phony peace.

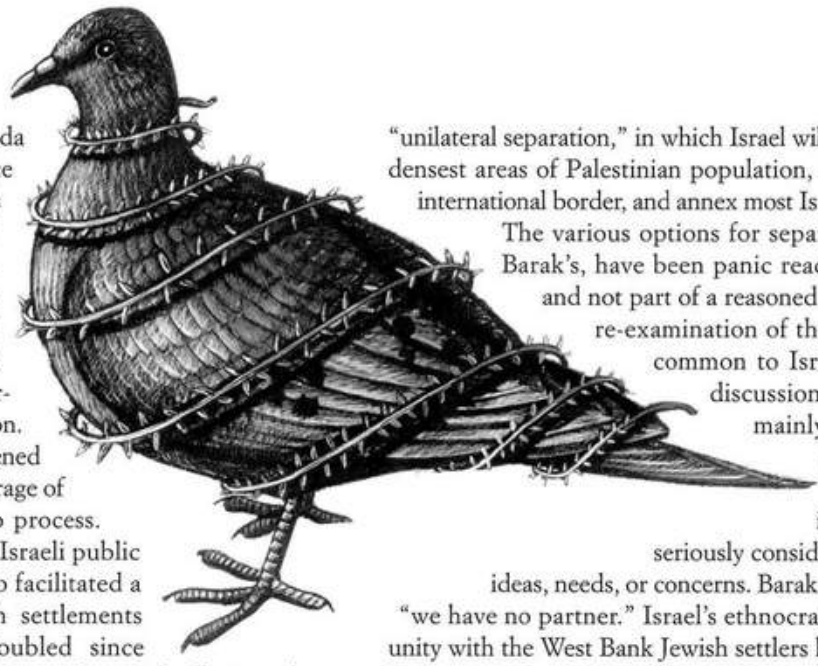
Barak has made his own task immeasurably harder. He will never get a peace agreement that makes sense unless he is willing to do these three things: dismantle the vast majority of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza (or tell settlers to live as law-abiding citizens of a Palestinian state); acknowledge Israeli responsibility for helping to find a solution to the fate of three million Palestinian refugees; and give Palestinians a capital in East Jerusalem that gives them unimpeded access to the Temple Mount. If Arafat settles for less, the agreement will be repudiated by the Palestinian people. Yet if Barak does make such concessions in order to get an agreement, he will have a tough time selling them to Israelis unless he is prepared to admit what is correct about the Palestinian perception of the situation—that is, unless he is willing to admit that he had *not* offered enough at Camp David, which would in turn mean that the Palestinian response was not as crazy as he had represented it to be, nor that his repression of their street demonstrations was justifiable. There's nothing in Barak's character which might lead us to believe that he has the capacity to acknowledge being wrong, or to be able to view the situation from the standpoint of anyone else besides himself.

Failing that, the peace forces in Israel have already begun to consider launching a peace candidacy in opposition to both Barak and Netanyahu/Sharon. A peace party ready to unequivocally commit to the dismantling of settlements could be a powerful new voice in Israeli politics. In our next issue, we will explore some of the strategies that such a party might adopt. In the ensuing pages of this issue, we present some of the voices from Israel that you are not likely to have heard in the mainstream media. ❑

Between Apartheid and Peace

Can Israel Learn from International Experience?

Oren Yiftachel



The Al-Aqsa Intifada has revealed once more that Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territories is dragging the state into intensifying waves of local and regional violence and growing levels of international tension and isolation.

The intifada has also opened our eyes to the distorted mirage of peace created by the Oslo process. Lulled by that mirage, the Israeli public grew blind to the way Oslo facilitated a massive growth of Jewish settlements (their population has doubled since 1993!), and fed the widespread Jewish illusion that Palestinians would be willing to accept less than full sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza. The power of the Oslo mirage has been so great that, even now that its false façade has been exposed, many liberals can still express "shock" and "bitter disappointment" at the outburst of popular Palestinian resistance. Instead of decrying the end of a reconciliation process that in fact was going nowhere, we must move to raise new models for Israeli-Palestinian coexistence and towards a post-Oslo peace.

Debating in a Bubble

The uprising in the territories has thrown Israeli society into a state of uncertainty and, at times, even panic. After the initial surprise and anger, born of the illusion that Jewish and Palestinian elites could stitch together a deal contrary to natural justice and based on the imposition of a Pax Americana, many calls and proposals for a "total Israeli-Palestinian separation" began to surface from different corners of the Israeli political map. This tenor was most prominent around Prime Minister Barak, whose election slogan last year already proclaimed, "we are here, and they are there," and who has recently hinted at the specter of "unilateral separation," in which Israel will retreat from the densest areas of Palestinian population, create a de facto international border, and annex most Israeli settlements.

The various options for separation, including Barak's, have been panic reactions to a crisis, and not part of a reasoned debate or honest re-examination of the situation. As is common to Israeli debates, the discussion has taken place mainly within a Jewish bubble, without anyone listening to, let alone seriously considering, Palestinian ideas, needs, or concerns. Barak himself declared, "we have no partner." Israel's ethnocratic need to reach unity with the West Bank Jewish settlers has assumed a far higher urgency among leaders and the public alike than the necessity to engage with the Palestinian nation from which, after all, separation is to be achieved.

This attitude was vividly reflected by the large banners decorating the stage at the main public ceremony commemorating the fifth anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, at Rabin Square on November 4 this year. The banners told the audience loud and clear: "Together We Remember," and "Together We Continue." This vague sense of "togetherness" is of course aimed at the Jewish public, including the settlers and the circles from which Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, emerged. No attention, no mention, no reference, was made in these banners to the Palestinians, the occupation, or the settlements, for which Rabin was assassinated.

Further, the Jewish debate is being staged without attention to the rich international experience of partitions and separation, from which Israelis and Palestinians can learn many potent lessons. Israeli Jews are as convinced as ever that their situation is unique—historically, politically, and even morally—from the many examples of ethnocratic states. But this blinkered approach is doomed to lead the state into the very same problems, grief, and circles of violence experienced by colonial states reluctant to relinquish that which is not theirs. The writing is on the wall, and Israelis must open their eyes to avoid further "shocks" and "conceptual collapse," as the current crisis is often portrayed.

Professor Oren Yiftachel is chair of the department of geography at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

International Lessons: What Can We Expect?

A brief glance at international experience shows that separation can assume several forms, and that there is usually a direct link between the type of separation and the ensuing levels of conflict, violence, and political instability. At one end, is the (rare) case of partition by agreement, while at the other extreme is the option of unilateral, forced, and unequal separation. Several other possibilities fall between the two extremes.

An example of the first option, separation-by-agreement, can be found in Czechoslovakia, which was divided into two states—Slovakia and the Czech Republic—in the early 1990s. In what was described as a "velvet partition," the two peoples who formed the Czechoslovakian state decided democratically to partition the state, despite an eighty-year history of a Czech-dominated government. While some ethnic tensions do persist, the two states coexist in peace and mutual respect. Both accommodate ethnic minorities from the neighboring nation. Such minorities are granted full civil rights and have not become a major obstacle to the stable and peaceful relations which have developed between the two states. The lesson to Israel is clear: *mutual agreement between two peoples to separate as equals is likely to lead to a stable, peaceful, and democratic political order.*

At the other extreme is the very problematic case of apartheid in South Africa. This regime developed as a result of unilateral separation between whites and blacks, first temporarily, and later permanently. In the apartheid regime, as is well remembered, the powerful and wealthy group, the whites, determined for the subordinant blacks where and how they might work, live, invest, migrate, or be governed.

In order to sweeten the pill of racist oppression, the South African government titled the black areas "states," and recognized their "independence" while keeping the lion's share of the country's land and resources in white hands. But the attempt to force long-term patterns of racial separation eventually collapsed. The "independent" bantustans did not generate stability but resistance to the regime.

This rich South African state gradually deteriorated into economic decline and intensifying waves of violence. Its (partial) recovery only came in the 1990s, when South Africa recognized the equality of all citizens, nullified all forms of forced racial segregation, and became a secular, democratic state. The lesson here for Israel is conspicuous: *a forced unilateral separation, of the type planned by former Prime Minster Netanyahu, and recently by Barak, is doomed to turn into a double-edged sword.* Such a solution is a sure recipe for continuing violence and instability, economic decline and social disorder.

Between these poles exist several other cases relevant to Israel/Palestine, especially that of Ireland. After centuries of British colonial occupation and settlement in Ireland, a violent struggle for independence erupted, leading to Irish home-rule in 1922, and later to full independence. But the partition wasn't complete: Britain annexed about a tenth of Ireland, the northeastern Ulster region, where blocks of British Protestant settlers formed the majority. However, these areas also had a large portion of Catholics who rejected their annexation to Britain and continued the armed struggle for Irish independence. That struggle extended to southern Ireland, where a thirty-year civil war ensued stemming from popular resentment to the annexation of the North to Britain.

The conflict in both sides of Ireland, but especially in the ethnically mixed North, has cost thousands of lives and has not been totally settled to this very day. The lesson to Israel is clear*: unilateral annexation of settlement blocks (as planned by Barak in areas such as Ma'ale Adumim/Abu-Diss or around the city of Ariel) is likely to fan the flames of ethnic conflict for generations to come.*

Finally, we can look at the case of Greece, which received its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1833, twelve years after the eruption of the Greek rebellion. The Ottomans (reluctantly) granted the Greeks independence over only half of the territory we know today as Greece, an area that accommodated only a third of the Greek people. As can be expected, the Greek state evolved into an irredentist, aggressive force. It launched a series of wars against the Ottomans which ended only a century later, with the achievement of Greece's current borders and its rule over the vast majority of Greeks. The lesson to Israel stands out: *a partition perceived as illegitimate will prompt the creation of a belligerent state and generate a cycle of wars instead of enhancing peace.*

Where to From Here?

Given these international and historical lessons, which option will Israel adopt? Will it advance unilateral separation, as foreshadowed recently by government officials, and drag the two peoples into waves of international conflict, violence, and isolation? Will it follow the typical path of colonial and ethnocratic regimes, which depart from territories only after decades of war and heavy human cost? Will it select the Irish option (Barak's favorite) of annexing settlement blocks, and condemn the two future states to an endless series of local violent conflicts? Or will it attempt to look ahead and follow the path charted by Czechoslovakia, which understood that only partition based on mutual agreement and a fair and equal solution can guarantee a stable and prosperous future?

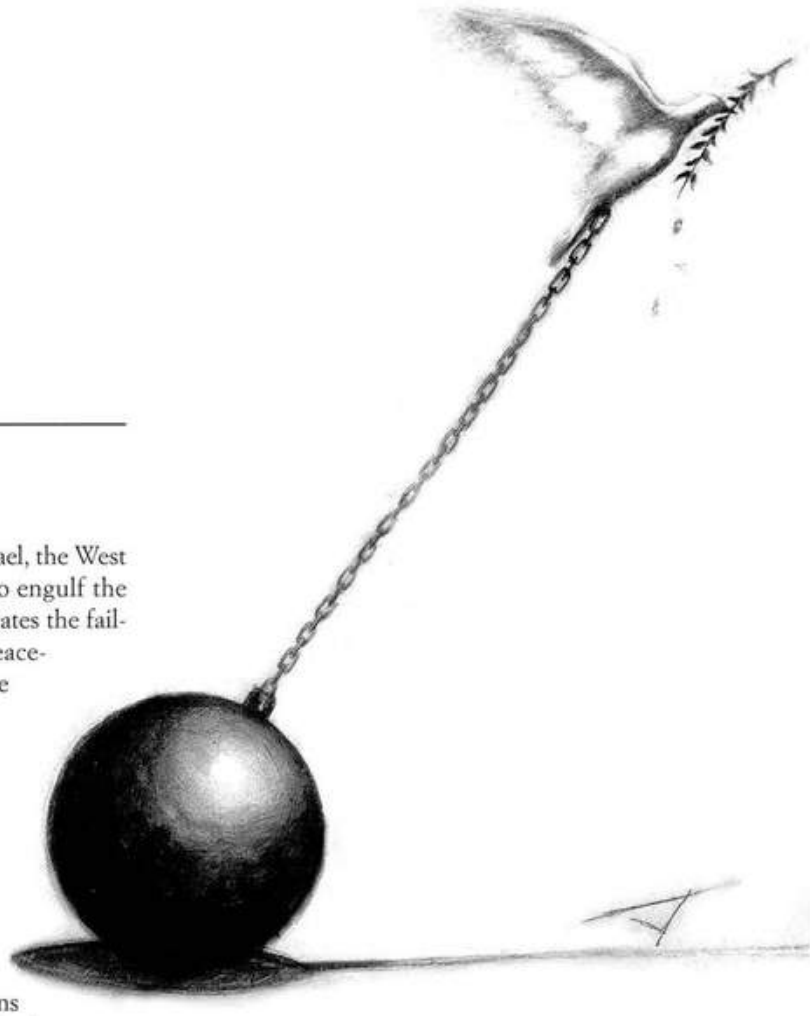
It is important for Israeli leaders and the Israeli public to open their eyes widely, and to see that, despite the uniqueness of every state, there exists a political-geographical logic from which Israel cannot, and will not, escape. This logic points to the existence of two, and only two, options to temper the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

The first is a political-geographical partition perceived as legitimate and just by both sides, with UN decision 242 as a

(continued on page 16)

ISRAEL

The Road to Arab-Israeli Peace



Mubarak Awad and Abdul Aziz Said

The tragic escalation of violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, which threatens to engulf the entire region, dramatically demonstrates the failure of traditional approaches to peacemaking in the Middle East. A new peace paradigm is required because the beliefs, values, and behavior of the conflicting parties are at stake. The fundamental concessions that are needed for peace will emerge, not through technical agreements, but only in a transformed political and psychological environment. Israeli-Palestinian peace is achievable but only at a price: both sides must undergo a change of mind and spirit.

Self-evidently, not all Israelis and Palestinians are accepting of each other, or open to the reality that they are each other's neighbors. Yet Palestinians and Israelis have no other viable choice but to live beside each other; neither can achieve peace alone. The security of the Israelis and the dignity of the Palestinians go hand in hand.

In such a situation the only workable instrument for establishing a Palestinian-Israeli peace is the development of a broad consensus to strengthen their mutual dependencies and cooperative linkages. For example, in this perspective, enhanced Israeli security requires improved Palestinian security. Israeli security is achieved less by placing the Palestinians at a power disadvantage than by circumscribing Israel's freedom to and incentives for undertaking hostile actions.

Given present realities, the Israelis cannot be defeated militarily; yet, they cannot win politically. The loss of the ability to force a verdict by armed conflict imposes a limitation on the practice of Israeli-Palestinian statecraft. But it is a limitation that leaves room for vigor, imagination, and skill in framing and executing reconciliation and coexistence between both parties.

Dr. Awad is the chairman of Non-Violence International and the national director of the National Youth Advocate Program. Professor Said is the director of the International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program at the American University and holds the Mohammed Said Farsi Islamic Peace Chair.

ILLUSTRATION BY JON KRAUSE

- Step One: *Apology and Forgiveness.* Israelis and Palestinians should begin their own process of truth and reconciliation now. Apology and forgiveness are central ingredients. Apology was a key to peace in South Africa and is being currently practiced by the Catholic Church, Germany, and Poland in seeking forgiveness from the Jews for the Holocaust. Israelis should extend an apology to the Palestinians for Israeli abuse of Palestinian basic human rights. Palestinians should apologize to the Israelis for Palestinian acts of violence against Jews. Both must forgive, and accept apology graciously.
- Step Two: *Recognition and Acceptance.* Palestinians and Arabs have to accept Israel as a Jewish state. Palestinians must recognize the Jewish historical, religious, and emotional connection to the Temple Mount. This is consistent with Islamic traditions.

Arabs also need to acknowledge the tragedy of the Holocaust—to listen to the Jewish story of pain and empathize with the historical memory of the Jewish people. The Arabs must acknowledge that the Jewish people have a historical connection to the Old City of Jerusalem and accept Israel into full membership in the Middle East region. Israel must be included in Arab maps, sports, and regional gatherings.

At the same time, Israelis have to accept that there is a Palestinian people and not merely "West Bankers," and

acknowledge the historical memory of the Palestinians. The Israelis should stop referring to Palestinian land as Judea and Samaria and recognize the Palestinians' just claim to their land. Israelis, too, must undergo a process of soul searching and come to terms with a past that includes acts of repression and dehumanization. Finally, Israel must learn to see itself as a Middle Eastern country. Too often, Israel projects itself in the region as a superior Western country, oblivious to its actual geography, an attitude that rekindles Arab resentment of Western colonialism and continued hegemonic behavior.

• Step Three: *Non-Adversarial Relationship*. The Israelis need to abandon the practice of exploiting inter-Arab tensions. In international forums, Israel needs to refrain from voting against Arab states. Similarly, in Arab countries, in public discourse, Israel should be treated as a neighbor rather than an enemy. Israelis and Arabs need to move away from the adversarial posture that both have adopted toward one another in the region and the international arena, toward a cooperative relationship.

• Step Four: *Sharing Progress*. There cannot be peace without economic prosperity. Prosperity must be shared. Opportunities for economic growth will ensure that both Israelis and Palestinians are too busy to hate. Mutual prosperity will provide a basis for overcoming mistrust, paranoia, and defensiveness.

Israeli and Palestinian youth have more in common than their grandparents did. By confronting their differences, they will discover their similarities, as some are already doing.

Israeli society and industry are technologically sophisticated, but Israel has not demonstrated its willingness to help Palestinians. Israelis should pursue policies that promote Israeli investment in Palestine and development of the Palestinian economy. Encouraged by the Palestinians, Arab countries must end the economic boycott of Israel and promote trade and commercial transactions.

• Step Five: *Rights of People not States*. Israelis and Palestinians need to recognize the rights of each other's people. Israel should acknowledge its role in creating the plight of Palestinian refugees. Palestinian refugees should be given the choice to live where they want. Jewish settlers should be granted similar rights to settle in the West Bank. Palestinians should also be compensated for the property that they lost as Jews are now being compensated in Eastern Europe for the same. This process would also apply to Mizrahi Jews who lost property in Arab countries.

If Israel were to accept the return of Palestinian refugees, only a small percentage of the refugees would return. It is generally agreed that a significant number of Palestinian refugees would remain in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria if these governments were given incentives and were willing to integrate them into their societies.

• Step Six: *Mutual Religious Tolerance*. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam need to acknowledge one another. Israel needs to recognize the legitimacy of Islam, rather than view Islam as the enemy. Muslims need to acknowledge that Judaism has a deep historical connection to the Old City of Jerusalem. By recognizing each other's narrative, Jews, Christians, and Muslims prevent the discourse of their respective fundamentalisms from becoming instruments of foreign policy, as is presently the case.

• Step Seven: *Education and Communication for Peace*. Both Palestinians and Israelis need to change curricula, textbooks, and other learning sources to accept the concept of the new truth. Israelis and Arabs who do not know one another are the most aggressive towards one another, because the other has no face. This results in dehumanization. Both sides need to move towards rehumanization and empowerment. Israeli and Palestinian youth have more in common than their grandparents did. By confronting their differences, they will discover their similarities, as some are already doing.

• Step Eight: *Jerusalem*. The final step is possible only when the previous steps are realized. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have equal rights in Jerusalem. Every religious group should acknowledge the right of every other religious group. We need to take politics out of the Old City of Jerusalem.

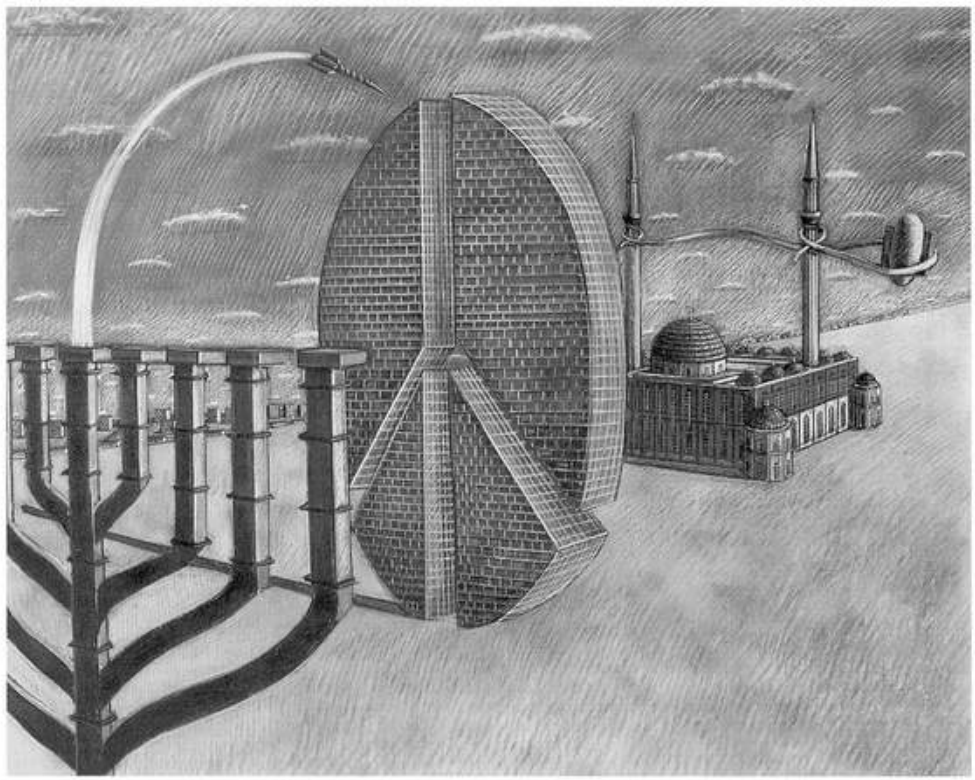
The Old City, whose walls shelter the holy places for three religions, should be administered by a council representing the respective religious communities. Its inhabitants should have the choice of Israeli or Palestinian citizenship. The council should have a rotating leadership. Security in the Old City should be shared between Israelis and Palestinians.

Capitals could be located outside the Old City. Israelis and Palestinians can locate their capitals in metropolitan (greater) West and East Jerusalem—Jerusalem minus the Old City. Borders within metropolitan Jerusalem could disappear. They are illusory. Its inhabitants should be given the choice of Israeli or Palestinian citizenship. Embassies could be located anywhere in greater Jerusalem and serve both Israelis and Palestinians. Finally, we would suggest that were the Arab world to unequivocally and sincerely recognize the right of Israel to exist as a brother nation in the Middle East, the symbolic capital of Jerusalem as the key national identity marker for Israelis would diminish.

• • •

This proposal is not idle dreaming. The journey toward peace requires a great awakening. ❑

An Interview with Adi Ophir



We asked Adi Ophir, a leading Israeli intellectual and peace activist, to write an analysis for us of the situation in Israel. He replied, "I prefer to invest the little energy I have in writing in Hebrew and trying (usually unsuccessfully) to get published in a mainsteam Israeli journal." So, we did this brief interview instead.

Tikkun: I wonder if you'd help us in the United States better understand what has been happening in Israel. Over here, it's hard to get answers to certain questions. For example, do most Palestinians support the rioting or are they caught between a bunch of extremists in their world and extremists in Israel?

Ophir: Most Palestinians support the rioting, except we must remember that it is not rioting to them but their war of independence. And who are we to tell them that they don't have the right to struggle for their independence?

Tikkun: Let's get into the causes of the rioting. Did the core leadership of the Palestinian Authority feel that what Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered at Camp David was impossible to accept? If so, why? Was it the settlements? control of the Temple Mount?

Ophir: First of all, one should bear in mind that nobody knows for sure what Barak offered at Camp David, and different people, even those close to the negotiation, may have (or may wish to present) conflicting impressions about it. But we know for sure what Barak did not offer. He did not offer Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and especially over Haram al-Sharif (Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock); he did not offer to evacuate settlements, or not enough settlements, and he did not offer compensation for those territories that would have remained under Israeli control; and he failed to offer serious ideas that could address the question of the 1948 refugees and the Palestinian claim to the right of return. Some of the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership might have accepted the deal despite its many flaws, in part because they have very high personal and economic stakes in stability and in part, perhaps, because they wished to prevent the bloodshed that a failure in the negotiation was correctly expected to bring about. But even an autocratic regime like the PA needs to take into account the will of the people. And the will of the Palestinian people is not simply the result of the current unacceptable Israeli offer, but of seven years of humiliating negotiations that have led nowhere. It's the result of seeing relatively little improvement in their everyday lives, ongoing Israeli aggression, ever more new houses in the settlements, the confiscation of their land, house demolitions, et cetera, et cetera.

When the overall package is so frustrating, every element in the dispute can become the main issue. The question is only which issue will ignite more people and send them to the streets. The Temple Mount is a very good issue for sending people to the streets. With a little help from Ariel Sharon, it became easily available.

Tikkun: Do you think Arafat should have accepted the State being offered and used that as a wedge to continue to ask for more?

Ophir: I cannot place myself in Arafat's position. I know that my government should have offered more and should have known better about the Palestinians' expected reaction.

Tikkun: Why didn't Barak understand that the Palestinians were being offered too little, and why didn't he offer more at a point when his own political future obviously depended on getting a peace agreement?

Ophir: There may be several possible reasons Barak

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

didn't offer more. In any case, this is certain—Barak is sure that he did make a very generous offer. In this he is mistaken, however. His mistake comes from thinking in terms of proposals made by former Israeli governments, rather than in terms of Palestinian expectations. It's true no Israeli had offered anything like it in the past. But neither Rabin nor Peres (and certainly not Netanyahu) were at the stage of negotiating the "final solution." That was part of the problem. Barak abandoned, quite stupidly, the gradual mechanism of the Oslo Accord. His offer might have been plausible had it been offered as part of an ongoing process. But he wanted a final solution, here and now. He had to amend his offer accordingly and he didn't.

When it came to that offer, Barak estimated (mistakenly, at that time, I think) that he would not be able to convince the Israeli public to accept a more generous deal. He also seriously underestimated then, and continues to underestimate even now, how much the Palestianian struggle is for justice and not only for independence and peace.

Tikkun: Let's turn to the Israeli left. Why did the Israeli peace movement, for years committed to full withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, collapse as soon as the Palestinians rejected a deal that obviously did not involve full withdrawal and began their intifada again?

Ophir: The main bulk of the Israeli peace movement (except for the "radical left," i.e., the ex-communist party; Uri Avnery and his small movement, Gush Shalom; the so-called "post Zionists" like myself; intellectuals like Yiztchak Laor, etc.) was never commited to a full withdrawal; after Rabin's assassination, they even stopped talking about the necessary evacuation of bloody places like Kiryat Arba. It was then that Yossi Beilin's idea to find a formula that would let 80 percent of the settlers stay in their places was born. It was a reaction to Rabin's assassination, not to the reality of the negotiation with the PA. After the assassination, for many on the left it seemed more important to make peace between the Jewish right and the Jewish left than between Jews and Palestinians.

I believe there will be no peace with the Palestinians without a real, torturing rupture within Israeli-Jewish society. So far the price of this rupture seems to most Israelis on the so-called left higher than the price of another little war. Obviously, they fail to realize how easily little wars turn into big ones. That is why the Palestinians feel they have no other option but the use of violence. If you were in their place, you might have joined them.

Tikkun: Does anyone on the peace side in Israel have any possible strategy for what to do to change the political dynamics inside Israel?

Ophir: There is no real strategy, but there is a clear agenda—a return to the old slogans calling for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem. We must also start calling the kind of regime we are having by its name—a Jewish apartheid. ❑

Between Apartheid and Peace *(continued from page 12)*

basis. Israel would then retreat from all occupied territories, except for very small areas mutually agreed upon by the Palestinians. Most Jewish settlements would be evacuated, and would form an important infrastructure for the resettlement and rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees, while the large near-border settlements (such as Gilo or Ramot in the Jerusalem region) may stay under Israeli sovereignty, subject to territorial exchange.

On the Palestinian side, it should be remembered that the success of such a partition must be based on mutual sentiments of trust, and that Jewish fears and security concerns, even if appearing contrived to most Palestinians, are a real issue. The public reaction in Israel to the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada exposed once again the depth of lingering fears among Israeli Jews, fears which can be eased only by a direct discourse of peace and coexistence by Palestinian leaders and shapers of public opinions. Continuing Palestinian violence, if not condemned by the Palestinian leadership and the intelligentsia, is likely to drive the Israelis away from the negotiating table and to negate the trust so central to fulfilling their political dreams.

Along with this political partition, there should be a strengthening of binational frameworks for addressing economic, employment, environmental, and cultural-religious cooperation for the management of the small and shared land accommodating the two peoples. These frameworks should recognize the internal pluralism of the two states, and especially Israel, which includes large and distinct Palestinian Arab and Orthodox Jewish minorities.

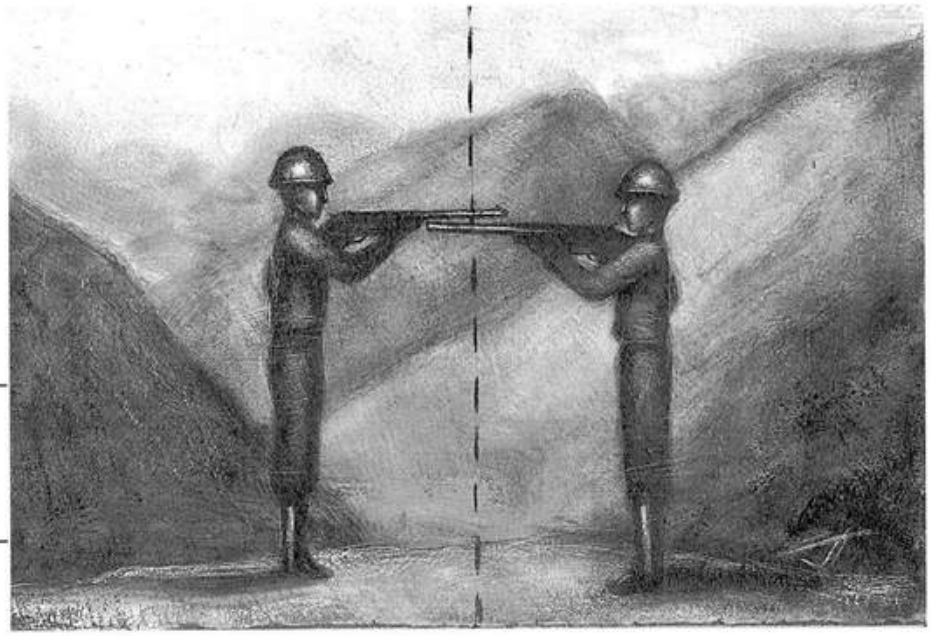
The second option is the granting of equal citizenship to all residents of the Israeli/Palestinian space, with the establishment of a binational (as distinct from a "secular") democratic state. Given the immense problems associated with the very division of political space (the question of refugees, Jerusalem/al-Quds, and Jewish settlements, to name just a few), this option appears more attractive than ever. This solution is favored by many among the Palestinian citizens in Israel, and by small leftist and religious circles among both Palestinians and Jews worldwide. However, given the urgent need to give full expression to Palestinian national sovereignty, and given the severe level of hostilities demonstrated during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a political partition into two states, even if temporary, is currently the preferred option.

The various proposals for separation aired recently by Israeli politicians, academicians, army generals, and even some settler leaders (such as "annex just 11 percent of the West Bank with 80 percent of the settlers" etc.) do make some progress towards reconciliation. But any attempt to suggest that these proposals are serious peace offers is manipulative and dangerous. Such illusions will only serve to generate the next wave of violence, instead of the reachable peace for which this sorry land has waited too long. ❑

ISRAEL

Do Not Ask Israel to Atone

An Open Letter to Michael Lerner



Mordechai Gafni

Dear Michael,

I am deeply disturbed by the content and tone of your critique of Israel since the beginning of the latest crisis. I say that without rancor; I love you both as a friend and a colleague, and believe you to be sincere and true to your convictions. However, in the words of the Talmud, love without reproof is not love; the more authentic the relationship, at times the sharper the critique and the greater the disappointment.

I don't have the space here to fully restate your narrative, but I will cite several salient points which I find most distorted and then try to share an alternative narrative which I think exposes the critical weaknesses in the story you spin. Before I begin, however, let me say that I am proud to count you among my people and that when the Palestinians have Michael Lerners and TIKKUN magazines, then peace will indeed be at hand.

First, although you pay half a sentence of lip service to Palestinian culpability, it is clear from your tone and explicit statement that "the preponderance of responsibility [for the current crisis] lies with Israel." For example, despite your brief expression of rage at the brutal lynching of the two Israeli reservists at Ramallah, your very next sentence reads, "Yet I can also understand that to those Palestinians these two young men killed were just members of the occupying army that had been brutally killing eighty Palestinians and wounding more than 2,000 civilians." If that is not a backhanded justification of the lynching, then I don't know what is; and the very general denouncement later in your article of Palestinian violence cannot not justify your justification. You cannot eat Boston cream pie as your main course and then have lettuce for desert and claim you are on a diet!

You argue (at best) for a sort of moral equivalence between the Palestinians and Israelis, saying that the lynch mob "might have seemed indistinguishable from the Jewish mobs that attacked random Arab Israelis in Nazareth.... For every outrage on one side there is a story of outrage on the other." Michael, you must know that moral equivalency is our century's new form of "the great lie."

The second lynchpin of your argument seems to be that the settlers and Barak are to blame. Barak's offer of 90 percent of the West Bank plus sovereignty or United Nations control of religious sites in Jerusalem, is, you claim, really just a sham. Since the Israelis would still control some of the roads and the Jordan valley, you say, Barak's proposal is a bad deal for the Palestinians. "Nationalist fanatics," your term for the settlers, would "continue their history of violence." Since nothing has really changed, you say, Palestinian rage is justified and "the preponderance of blame is with the Israelis."

Michael, this is all so wildly untrue that I almost don't know where to start responding.

First, you assume that the fact that the Palestinians did not get everything they wanted is because of some evil Israeli intention which you, amazingly, call racist. Michael, you forget what neighborhood we live in here; the Middle East is not the Midwest or Berkeley. To not control the roads and the strategic Jordan valley would—according to virtually every Israeli political and military analyst—put Israel in mortal danger. Thomas Friedman, Cynthia Ozick, and the overwhelming majority of the left-leaning camp in Israel have all echoed emphatically what Clinton said at Camp David: Barak made the best offer any Israeli government has made, or could be expected to make, without committing national suicide.

Michael, you forget or choose to ignore that Israel absorbed millions of refugees from around the world, including 700,000 from the Arab states. You forget or choose to ignore that the Arab refugees have been used by their countrymen and by the surrounding Arab nations as a deliberate, cruel, and cynical propaganda tool. They have

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ILLUSTRATION BY JON KRAUSE

been forced for over fifty years to stay in the camps, being fed diets of hate instead of the nourishment of hope and peace which is their right.

You forget or choose to ignore what Arafat and his senior officials have said in print—in Arabic of course—time and again, that when they talk of the liberation of Palestine, they mean all of Israel, including Tel Aviv, Hertziliya, Rechovot, Safed, and Tiberias. The promisers of a holy war to free "all of Palestine" explicitly list virtually every major city in Israel as being the direct object of "bloody Jihad."

Michael, you would have us believe that things have changed. Yet you forget that Israel is treated as nonexistent on Palestinian maps, television broadcasts, and textbooks. You forget that hate is the clearly documented fare of choice in Palestinian schools. You forget that Arafat and his top officials not only deny the Holocaust consistently and overtly but deny that there was ever a Temple in Jerusalem. They accuse us of falsifying much of our own history.

All who will not martyr their children are deemed evil transgressors. This is what Jihad looks like when it comes to Israel.

For Plato, ignorance is the source of all evil. For biblical consciousness, the loss of memory—the denial of history—is the ultimate source of evil. To create a selective narrative, to tell a distorted story—not to know the story of leaving Egypt—that is to distort political history. That is always the precursor of evil of the very worst kind.

Now about the settlers. With the exception of a tiny group of extremists, you must be aware that the overwhelming majority of settlers are wonderful, moral, everyday decent people. The majority are not religious, and certainly are not nationalist fanatics, and have absolutely no interest in violence against Palestinians. Your painting the settlers as gross villains is both distorting and profoundly offensive to one who lived, walked, loved, and laughed with the settlers for many years. You must know that deep relationships of trust, as well as extensive programs of agricultural aid, medical training, educational development, and the like, were initiated by the settlers in conjunction with their neighboring Arab villages. Virtually every time, these initiatives were brutally destroyed by the PLO, who again and again perpetrated atrocities against their own people.

Michael, I was a settler for three years. I built a settlement a stone's throw from Kalkilya. We had wonderful relations with the people and leadership of Kalkilya. With deep, intimate, human contact we shared our conversation, our hopes, and our dreams. That is, until what we then called the PLO began cutting off the testicles of the people who talked to us, murdering their daughters, shooting their sons in the stomach, and leaving them to die. This was the same Palestinian leadership that executed people in Lebanon—when they had a PLO mini-state there—by tying them to four jeeps and ripping them apart.

You must know, Michael, that the Arab Muslim attempt to destroy Israel has nothing to do with the settlers. Indeed, the issue at its core may have nothing to do with Israel at all. A dangerous fundamentalist Islam—a distortion of so much that is noble and beautiful in Islam—is spreading like wildfire all over the world. Throughout the Third World, horrible violence is seen as a legitimate tool in overthrowing non-Muslim governments. Sudan regularly sells non-Muslim women and children as slaves. Much of Nigeria has recently enacted Muslim law and people are justly terrified of what is to come. Muslims fight for the Kashmir. Muslim Albanians have "spiritually cleansed" 80 percent of the Serb population. In Indonesia, Muslims in Jihad have attacked and massacred Christian villages. The Philippine Muslim rebels are also engaged in Jihad. Almost all of the Jihad movements are funded by Arab states and view themselves—as a function of their faith—as implacable foes of Israel. Muslim militia from all over the world stand poised to come fight in a holy war to free Jerusalem from the infidels. While it is important to note that, thus far, Egypt and Jordan have withstood fundamentalist Muslim pressure, I am hard pressed to see how they can hold out in the long run. I truly hope I am wrong.

Michael, the settlers are not the problem. It is a dangerous, though understandably seductive, illusion to think that if only there were no settlers, it would all be okay.

Michael, perhaps you did not read the recent article in the Palestinian Authority's daily paper, written by its editor, Hafez Bargutti, promising revenge and murder to all parents who refuse to send their ten- and twelve-year-old children to the front lines of the demonstrations. All who will not martyr their children are deemed evil transgressors. This is what Jihad looks like when it comes to Israel.

Michael, you talk about the "brutal murder" of 80 people and the wounding of 2000 civilians. My students, calling me from patrol, have often described scenes similar to that published by a *USA Today* reporter who spent a day on the front lines in the West Bank. First, lines of children are sent with stones to hurl at the Israeli troops. In that first wave, several automatic weapons are usually fired from amongst the children. Then ambulances pull up on the overlooking ridges and behind the children, distributing molotov cocktails, weapons, and more stones. Finally, Palestinians from within the ambulances open fire on the troops with automatic weapons.

Michael, you know that Arafat has consistently used civilians as expendable tools. You know there are training camps which train the child martyrs. You must know that the Israeli army, although clearly not perfect, is the most

(continued on page 24)

ISRAEL

The Al-Aqsa Intifada

Don't Believe What You Read

Jessica Montell

To write about this new uprising is a daunting task. Most of what has been written so far has not contributed to mutual understanding. It has merely served as additional fuel in the propaganda war launched by both sides, causing further polarization. Even the name—the Al-Aqsa Intifada after the mosque on the Temple Mount—reinforces the forces of religious extremism. But this is not a struggle over symbols, like who flies their flag over the holy sites, but rather over issues vital to daily life, as eloquently identified in an "urgent statement to the Israeli public" issued by 120 Palestinian intellectuals:

> The Oslo accords have been used by Israel ... to create unprecedented expansion of settlements, almost double the settler population.... Freedom of movement for Palestinians has been severely curtailed, while settler violence against our communities continues without restraint. Within this, the Palestinian population has no physical, legal, or political means of protection.

Both the Israeli and the international media ignored this underside to the Oslo process. Today, too, the media ignores how the current violence and repression have touched all aspects of Palestinian life. Palestinians are affected not only by the many Palestinian casualties—casualties unprecedented even in the bloodiest days of the first intifada—but also because of the severe restrictions on freedom of movement. Tens of thousands of Palestinians in Hebron have been under curfew since the violence started, prohibited from leaving their homes most of the time. Throughout the West Bank, internal closures have prevented movement between towns and villages; the movement of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has also been affected. These restrictions have devastated the Palestinian economy. In fact, in most families, someone has not been able to work since the clashes began.

Just a few miles away, life continues normally for most Israelis. To be sure, some have been personally touched by violence. Yet, for most Israelis, the battles are waged on the Internet or broadcast nightly on our TV sets. [Editor's Note: See Deborah Greniman's account of an Israeli day during the intifada on page 21.] Despite this fundamental asymmetry, however, Israelis see themselves as the primary victims. It seems clear that the history of Jewish persecution influences Israeli reactions to modern-day security threats, even when the resulting self-perception of Jews as defenseless victims clashes markedly with Israel's military might. Both government rhetoric and the media perpetuate the myth that we are the only victims. While the media extensively covers every Israeli casualty, there is no human face to the tragedy on the other side.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF B'TSELEM

The coverage that does exist of the Palestinian victims tends to reflect self-interest rather than empathy, thus the preoccupation with how the Palestinian casualties make Israel look in the eyes of the world. Israel is keenly aware that it is losing the propaganda war, but it blames public relations rather than its policies in the Occupied Territories. "It's incredible," says television host Gabi Gazit on a typical program, "that the picture of that boy that was killed at the Netzarim junction was so much stronger than the pictures of the lynch against us." As Israeli television critic Rogel Alpher insightfully comments, for Israel, the power of images has distorted the moral equation, as though the death of some nameless boy (twelve-year old Muhammad al-Dura, shot dead in his father's arms) is insignificant compared to the lynching of the entire Israeli collective (as embodied in two IDF soldiers killed by a mob in Ramallah).

In response to Israeli "misrepresentation," leading Israeli publicist Dan Margalit advocates a strategy "to reduce the gap between the cold logic on Israel's side and the bloody photograph giving Palestinians the edge.... A planned and

Jessica Montell is the development director of B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization (www.btselem.org).

creative PR campaign would attack Arafat from an unexpected direction—that he sacrifices children.... If all officials repeated this contention, some of those graphic photos would work against Arafat."

Over the past few weeks, the Israeli media—and Israel's supporters worldwide—have adopted this strategy. Newspapers tell of mothers who raise their children to be martyrs. Mass emails assert that Palestinian gunmen are using children as human shields. So, precisely as Margalit intended, the discourse has shifted from the soldiers who kill children to a critique of Palestinian society, a pagan society (according to one controversial article) that practices child sacrifice.

Hanan Ashrawi rightly has labeled these accusations a classic case of racist demonization, achieved by blaming the victim and dehumanizing Palestinians and their culture. Seventy-four percent of Palestinians in a recent Birzeit University survey opposed the participation of children under age eighteen in the confrontations. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem has found no evidence of organized exploitation of children.

It's time to replace propaganda with research. Why are children risking their lives to confront Israeli soldiers?

"I am convinced that I must participate in the clashes, because it is my duty, like that of every other Palestinian, to protect the al-Aqsa mosque," a thirteen-year-old boy from Hebron told B'Tselem. "And also because I am bored and have nothing to do, so I pass the time doing something useful." When asked why they confront Israeli soldiers, other Palestinian children mentioned the pictures they see on television of the dead and injured, or their personal experiences with the occupying army.

"My family tries everything to prevent me," says a seventeen-year-old boy from the Balata refugee camp near Nablus, who says he regularly participates in confrontations with soldiers. "Sometimes they try to convince me not to participate, and sometimes they lock the door so I can't leave the house. But I try everything to get out and participate in the events." Contrary to the frantic efforts of parents, the Palestinian Authority has made no serious efforts to prevent children from reaching violent demonstrations, as it is obliged to do. Calling the PA to account for neglecting to protect its children, however, does not absolve Israel of its primary responsibility for killing and injuring them.

The Palestinians are no less active participants in the propaganda war, also packaging the truth to reflect their political agenda. The email onslaught decrying "Israeli massacres" never mentions the Palestinian gunfire that frequently precipitates a massive Israeli response. Too often, armed Palestinian gunmen are described by Palestinians as martyred civilians, even when killed in gun battles in which Israelis were also killed. As if they have not had enough genuine martyrs over the past months, a slide show documenting the "brutal murder by Israeli settlers" of Issam Joudeh Hamed is widely distributed on the Internet, although a comprehensive investigation by Physicians for Human Rights (known for its criticisms of Israel in the past and also in this conflict) concluded that he died in a car accident.

Amid such polarization, it is difficult to gather reliable information and draw non-partisan conclusions. The simplistic statements of many belie the scope and complexity of the current situation. Whether Israeli soldiers are in a life-threatening situation or not is crucial to determining whether they used unjustified or excessive force. B'Tselem knows from eleven years of documenting Palestinians killed by IDF gunfire that the IDF's description of a "life-threatening situation" is more often a knee-jerk defense mechanism than an accurate account of what took place. Yet in those cases where soldiers faced genuine danger, they are justified in using proportional force to extricate themselves or others. The broader political questions of the legitimacy of the soldiers' presence in occupied territory does not affect their right to defend themselves, according to human rights and humanitarian law.

To end the violence we do not need more partisans in the propaganda war. Instead we need advocates for justice to hold both sides accountable.

While it may be difficult to ascribe responsibility for each individual killing, this does not mean that no judgements can be made. Israeli soldiers continue to use lethal force in non-life-threatening situations, resulting in injuries and deaths. In some cases, the military appears to be using massive force, shelling residential areas with helicopters and tanks, in retaliation or to boost military or public morale rather than for military necessity. Israel's siege on Palestinian communities constitutes collective punishment, with a devastating impact on all aspects of daily life. At the same time, it does not appear that the Palestinian Authority is making a serious effort to halt Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians (settlers or otherwise), or to prevent their own children from participating in demonstrations.

It is clear that hurling more groundless accusations only escalates mutual hostilities. There is a truth to this conflict, but it is not a truth that can be condensed into a soundbite or a montage of images. To end the violence we do not need more partisans in the propaganda war. Instead we need advocates for justice to hold both sides accountable for their actions and to speak this truth to Israelis who see themselves as the perpetual victim, to Palestinians who portray gunmen as unarmed civilians, and to the Israeli government keenly sensitive to its image abroad but indifferent to the human suffering its policies have wrought. ❑

The Situation: A Day in the Life

Jerusalem, Tishrei 5761, October 2000

Deborah French Greniman

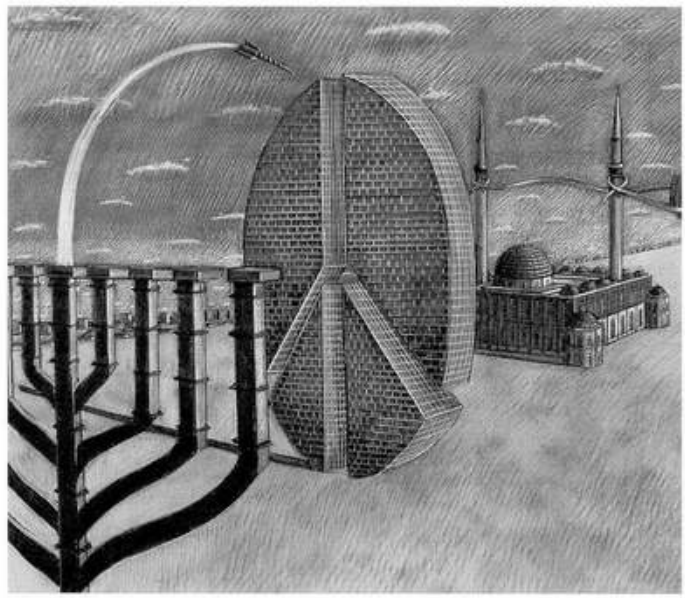


ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Two days after Yom Kippur, the day before the infamous lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah, I rise early to drive my spouse, who chairs Rabbis for Human Rights, to the meeting place from which he is to depart for a day-long trip to the North with other activists. He will visit in Haifa's Rambam (Maimonides) Hospital with Arabs injured in the riots and will pay a condolence call on a family that lost a member to the shots fired by Israeli police into the crowds. A little later, I drive one of my kids to junior high school; although he can take a bus that passes just two blocks from our house, he is nervous about waiting at the stop on Hebron Road, the main artery leading south out of Jerusalem toward Bethlehem, Gush Etzion, and Hebron. I come home, tidy up the kitchen, and listen to the news, which includes a small item about a pedestrian who was run down and killed an hour or two ago by an Arab driver near the entrance to one of the settlements; speculators say this may have been a terror attack. Then I ride my bicycle to the Israel Academy, where I work as an editor. It's a routine morning in the new reality of "the situation."

At around 9:30, I'm having a conversation in the hall with a colleague when another staff member interrupts us to whisper something about Kokhi, who works the telephone switchboard: something terrible has happened to her brother. A moment later Kokhi emerges, in the embrace of her closest friends at work, to wait in the corridor. An attractive young woman with jet-black hair, prominent features, and a bad smoking habit which she usually indulges in this same hallway, she is pregnant with her third child. Her family is sending someone over to break the news: her brother Alon was the man who was run over near the entrance to the settlement of Eli, where he lived, near Jerusalem's northern suburbs—the incident reported on the morning news.

After Kokhi has been led out, weeping, by another brother, we turn to the internet to try to find out more about what happened. According to an item posted by the daily paper *Yediot Aharonot*, the initial impression of the police is that the man was hit by accident. The spot where he had been standing by the roadside was known to be dangerous; visibility was poor at that hour of the morning; and the Arab driver himself, whose car overturned, was badly injured. But residents of Eli take a different view: they are certain that the driver is a terrorist who set out intentionally to kill a Jew with his car.

It's a Jerusalem custom to bury the dead as quickly as possible. The next few hours pass in lowered glances and somber conversations, and then all the staffers who can make it set out for the funeral. I go with my closest colleague, Zofia, in her car, and we end up taking Esther, Rachel, and Gila from the kitchen staff as well. Age, background, and education separate them from Zofia and me, but we've worked together in a small place for over fifteen years and are pretty friendly with each other. Gila, a nuggety woman in her early sixties, has often regaled me with stories of her childhood in Kurdistan and, later, her struggles to educate herself out of illiteracy while pushing her five children through school. Today, however, it's uncomfortable to listen to her. "Look how they keep on killing us, those Arabs, may their names be blotted out. We should shoot them down, push them out; they have no right to be here. It's our country, not theirs. God gave it to us." Zofia and I exchange glances in the front seats, but neither of us relishes the idea of getting into an unwinnable political argument on the way to a funeral. Esther and Rachel, however, demur: "Gila, you're overdoing it; they're not all like that."

Nosing through heavy traffic, we finally arrive at the funeral home, a large, bare structure of beige Jerusalem stone and cement. The parking lot outside is packed with cars and buses, but everyone manages to fit inside, mostly standing, a few sitting on benches around the sides. It's a mixed Jerusalem crowd, and, though Kokhi is neither religious nor Ashkenazi, I notice many national-religious looking types

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(distinguishable by the long skirts and hats worn by the women and the crocheted kippot worn by the men), evidently residents of the settlement where her brother lived. Zofia is looking glum as well as sorrowful. A wailing grandmother is led in, supported by a couple of younger women. Alon's young wife is there; the two small children are not.

The eulogies begin. The first one, given by the rabbi of the settlement, is what one might expect at the funeral of a young man: expressions of sorrow and loss, praise for the dead man's character, some name *midrashim*—"Alon" means "oak tree," thus lending itself to images of a man rooted in his community and branching out into a new, young family. The second eulogy is given by Alon's father-in-law. "They tell us it was an accident," he begins, "but we know better. *This was no accident.*" The eulogy continues with flowery biblical images of Jewish sacrifice and apocalypse. I sense a process taking place; this family and this settlement now have a martyr.

The eulogies finish, and the young man's body, wrapped, following Jerusalem custom, only in a *tallit*, is borne to the waiting hearse. We all hug Kokhi on our way out. Zofia and I consider accompanying the procession to the burial site, but our kitchen staff riders are adamant: they must get to work cleaning the Academy, and in any case it's not the custom in their communities for women to attend a burial. We pile back into the car. Waiting at a traffic light to cross Gaza Road in Rehavia, we watch a young man sweeping the entrance to a flower shop. Gila, sniffing that he's an Arab, starts muttering again: "You see? In the morning they shoot people, and in the afternoon they come to work." Esther and Rachel once more express good-natured objections: "Gila, it's not the same people. The ones who work aren't the ones who join the riots." No one wants to make an issue out of it. We arrive at the Academy, the women get to work, Zofia and I embrace, and I ride my bike home in the gathering dusk.

But the day's not over yet. At home I meet my spouse, Yehiel, back from the North. He tells me about his day. In Rambam Hospital, he talked to Ibrahim, a man from Nazareth with a big bullet wound in his chest. No one from the Jewish side had visited him yet, and though talking was difficult, he was glad of the opportunity to tell his story. He'd been in the tent set up in Nazareth at the contested lot near the Church of the Nativity, where the Moslems insist on their right to build a mosque. Not long ago, it was the site of violent Christian-Moslem clashes. Now, some kids had run into the tent seeking refuge from the police. Ibraham came out to see what was happening and found several policemen pointing guns straight at him. He called out to them not to shoot, but they fired at him anyway and didn't miss.

The next stop was in Arabeh village at the home of Asel Asleh, a seventeen-year-old boy who had been active in dialogue between Arab and Jewish high school pupils. It's a middle-class home, well-appointed; both parents are professionals. Asel, everyone says, was a clean-cut kid, a good student, an outspoken peace activist; it is unimaginable that he was involved in violence. He did go to the demonstration, but he turned around to go home when the police arrived and things heated up. He was shot in the back of the neck. According to his father, eyewitnesses declare that they saw police officers perform a "kill confirmation": they shot him from close range after he was already down on the ground. Nevertheless, he was still alive, his spinal cord severed from his brain, when his father arrived on the scene. But police cordons delayed his evacuation to a hospital, and he died a few hours later. His mother says that, as a teacher, she's always tried to educate toward tolerance. But how can she do that now, after what's happened to her own son? The students won't take her seriously.

There are still a couple more things on my agenda. I drive over to pick up my son and a friend from their JNF-sponsored hiking club. The distance is walkable, but it's dark, and some of the moms are nervous these days about letting kids walk around outside at night. Discussion in the car is about the hike scheduled for the Sukkot vacation, in a few days' time: will it take place, despite "the situation"?

Finally, I get back into the car again to go to a study evening commemorating the thirtieth day of the passing of a good friend's mother-in-law, who died in the United States well before "the situation" began. My friend, Dafna (not her real name), lives in Gush Etzion. She invited me to this evening when I called her after Rosh Hashana to wish her a good new year and to hear from her at first hand about the hardships of living under siege.

There have been shootings almost daily at the main road leading to the Gush from Jerusalem—the same Jerusalem-Hebron highway that runs near my home. Just a few years ago, a new bypass, known as the "Tunnels Road," was built on the highway. It relies on a series of scenic bridges and tunnels blasted through the hills to take the road around rather than through the Arab towns and villages lining the old main road to Hebron via Bethlehem. The rationale was that this would make travel quicker and safer for residents of the Gush and also for residents of Jewish towns within the Green Line lying to the south of Jerusalem, accessible in pre-1967 terms only from the west. As a result, what used to be an hour's traveling time has been cut to fifteen minutes, and new bedroom suburbs have sprung up on both sides of the Green Line. In the transformed reality of "the situation," however, cars plying the bypass have become like ducks in an amusement-park shooting range, and the road is closed more often than not. In our phone conversation, Dafna asked me if she could camp out with her younger kids in our basement if war breaks out. "I'd rather watch it on television," she said, assuming that the war will stay there, twenty minutes' drive from my home.

But the commemorative evening is being held in one of Jerusalem's northern neighborhoods, so I have to drive nowhere more dramatic than the highway running along

the "seam" between East and West Jerusalem. Traffic here is lighter than usual, since this road normally carries a lot of Arab traffic to and from Shuafat, Ramallah, and El Bireh, and those places are now blocked off. Though many of the participants in the study session are from the Gush, there's no settler rhetoric here. Many Gush residents are only moderately right wing, insisting on the national consensus that the area, which, according to the 1947 partition plan, was to have been part of the Jewish State, won't be "returned" to the Palestinians even under a peace agreement. The contents of this evening's study are some disconnected *mishnayot* about the rituals performed by the High Priest in the Temple on Yom Kippur. My thoughts wander briefly to the recent riots on the Temple Mount, but the political significance of the place, though the ground is burning under our feet, isn't part of the discussion.

Dafna and I don't see each other that often, and we snatch a few minutes to talk after the presentation is finished. Our conversation turns again to "the situation" and the difficulties being faced daily by the residents of the Gush. Dafna's eighteen-year-old daughter, who's studying in Jerusalem this year, is often stuck in town and can't get home. "Someone said to me that the situation now is as bad as 1948," Dafna tells me. I object: "In 1948 they had to bring water to Jerusalem under fire in tankers; it's not *that* bad just yet." Still thinking of my spouse's experiences earlier that day, I point out that as hard as it is in the Gush, it's even worse for the Arabs. But they started the violence in the first place, Dafna protests. I tell her about Asel, shot in the back of the neck; Asel's mother is mourning a dead child. "But what was he doing at that demonstration in the first place?" Dafna demands, refusing to sympathize. "I go to demonstrations, too," I reply, "and I don't expect to be shot in the head." We drop the subject and exchange notes on our sons' forthcoming bar mitzvahs instead. I walk out with Dafna as the men in the party exchange stern remarks about what route to use to drive home. The Tunnels Road is closed again; they'll have to drive the long way around, via Beit Shemesh. Someone calls his wife to tell her he'll be home late.

I get into my car and drive back through the lower-class Shmuel HaNavi neighborhood, part Mizrahi and part ultra-Orthodox, and on through ultra-Orthodox Geula. People are preparing for Sukkot, lugging planks and palm fronds through the streets, seemingly unconcerned about the traffic, though these are main roads with bus routes. I'm driving slowly, but I have to jam on the brakes twice to avoid hitting pedestrians who walk in front of my car. I arrive home almost shaking. The hour is late now, but Yael, a neighbor whose politics are similar to mine, is out walking her dog. "The whole country's gone crazy," I blurt out to her. "The Jews, the Arabs, the settlers, probably me, too, at least in the eyes of someone else." I tell her I feel like a character in the story

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by Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav about the master and his servant who saw everyone around them being struck with madness. Knowing that the same fate would surely befall them as well, they put marks on their foreheads to remind each other that they were not sane. Yael is sympathetic. She is a former German Christian who converted to Judaism because she found it the best way to repudiate the Nazi past. Here, in Jerusalem, she works tirelessly to explain the Holocaust to non-Jews and to resist the oppression of the Palestinians.

I finally go to bed. In the morning I reach for the newspaper, and a small headline catches my eye: two men from the settlement of Eli who were with Alon when he was run over have been arrested. By their own admission, they were out on the road the previous morning stoning Arab cars. The real reason we buried Kokhi's brother is that the Arab driver lost control of his car after being hit by a rock.

One more epilogue: Later that day I visit Kokhi, who's sitting *shiva* for her brother at her parents' home on Hebron Road. A half-hour drive northward across town, up the continuation of the same road, would bring me to Ramallah, where the lynching has now happened and Israeli combat helicopters have just finished their reprisal bombing. Jerusalem's hilly terrain prevents us from hearing the blasts. With the Tunnels Road closed and little commuter traffic, it's eerily quiet in what should be the evening rush hour.

Though it's only a few minutes' walk from my own home, the house where Kokhi grew up is in a different world. My family's apartment, far from luxurious, is in a pleasant, middle-class neighborhood, surrounded by tall trees. Kokhi's parents' place is a tiny top-floor walk-up in one of the slummy blocks that line Hebron Road on its way out of town, built in the 1950s to get new immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa out of transit camps. The place is packed, mostly with men listening to a talk being given by the rabbi between the afternoon and evening prayers; some women, mostly hatted, are sitting in the two small back rooms. Squeezing myself in, I find Kokhi in a t-shirt in the kitchen, which is piled high with food brought in for a large family sitting *shiva*. There's barely room for both of us to stand, but we exchange a few words. I ask her how many brothers and sisters they were. "Seven, before," she replies sadly. I look around and cannot imagine a family of nine living and growing in such a small space, and then I think of Alon, whom I never met, looking for a place where he could raise his family comfortably. Cheap land, cheap housing, has been available for years in the territories, which is one reason Dafna is out there, too. The conflict between Arabs and Jews in the Land of Israel/Palestine isn't only a matter of passion, ethnicity, or religion; it is a battle for space, living space, a battle forced by economic reality as much as anything else.

I press Kokhi's hand and go out into the night, back home, where my kids are waiting for me to buy string to put up our Sukkah decorations. ❑

DO NOT ASK ISRAEL TO ATONE *(continued from page 18)*

moral army in the world under the most difficult of circumstances. You know that a level of restraint is almost consistently exhibited by our soldiers in conditions where life and limb are at risk every second. Yes, Michael, there are exceptions, there are lapses—there are a minuscule group of Israelis who have visited Baruch Goldstein's grave. However, the overwhelming majority of the Israeli population deplores Baruch Goldstein. In contrast, the Arabs who ripped apart the soldiers in Ramallah are national heroes.

Despite the abuses which you point out and I hope continue to point out, the Arab minority in Israel, which in all polls is largely hostile to Israel, has prospered in a way unmatched in any even vaguely similar situation, at any time in history, anywhere in the world. Walk into an Israeli hospital and you will see it filled with Arabs getting the same care as Jews. As it should be. But can you imagine, Michael, you or any other Jew consistently going for care at an Arab hospital? The list of such asymmetric anomalies is virtually endless.

You assume, Michael, that Israel has no claim over the West Bank and that, therefore, any encroachment on Palestinian demands is somehow pernicious or evil. The overwhelming majority of Israelis—left and right—intelligent, highly moral, and good people, sharply disagree with you. We feel that we have a claim to the West Bank which is far stronger than the Palestinian claim, but we are willing to forfeit most of our claim for the sake of a lasting peace. We are willing to take enormous security risks and to give up the heartland of our country. Compromise means that both sides give up part of their fair claim.

Michael, you must know that there has never been a Palestinian state; that the Palestinians are indistinguishable from the rest of the Arab world; that Arafat is an Egyptian, and that the initial goal of the PLO was to unite Israel-Palestine with Syria. You must know that the fundamental and clearly stated goal of Palestinian nationalism is "to eradicate the Jews from Palestine" (i.e., all of Israel). This is the current position—expressed much more than once in the Arabic-Palestinian press—long before the present outbreak of violence.

If I had room in this article, I would include a list of literally hundreds of programs initiated by Israel to build bridges of genuine communication and peace with the Palestinians. There are virtually no such Palestinian organizations. Is this coincidence or an indication of something profoundly asymmetric going on in the region?

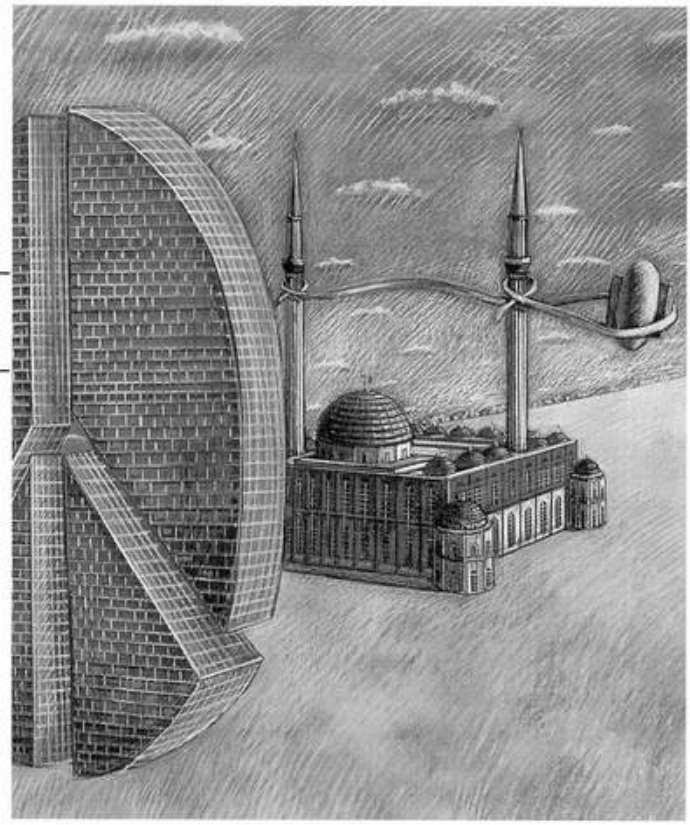
Michael, if I am wrong, then correct me, and I will be happy to admit any error. If there is anything in what I have written that rings true, please share that with me as well. Looking forward to many more years of friendship and holy God wrestling.

I remain
Warmly,
Mordechai ❑

Talking with the Neighbors

Palestinians in Brooklyn

Kathy Dobie



I live in a very Arabic section of Brooklyn and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict taints the air. It is both everywhere and nowhere. Our interaction is over groceries and making change. But behind the grocery store counter, the television is turned to the news, images flashing of barricaded soldiers and stone-throwing boys. I'm sure if I asked, the grocery store clerk could tell me that day's death totals. It seems obscene to merely ask for a pack of cigarettes. Some of these people I had always felt close to, but no longer. How could I say we were friends when we found no way to talk about something that was so close to their hearts?

Once a Palestinian woman had jokingly suggested to me that she would go out on Halloween as she was—her long dress, her headscarf—costumed as a Muslim. What a disguise! How is it that someone being exactly who they are becomes a cipher, a complete mystery, or worse, a cliché? Invisible, unknowable. Like the Hasidim with their *paies,* the Indian woman with her caste mark. But these are my neighbors; fellow citizens, they define me as an American. I'm only half a person, out of the loop, comfortable, perhaps, but very shallow, and very pale I might add, ignorant and dull, if their lives are removed from mine.

Again and again, the Palestinians I know make a distinction between the Israeli people and the Israeli government, and so why not talk to them: not to the spokesmen for the Palestinian people, not to Arafat, who no one seems to like or trust, or to his aides, but to the ordinary person, to people who were neither caught in the heat of the battle nor removed from its suffering, to my neighbors who had (unbearably for me) suddenly become strangers.

I. A Palestinian family in Brooklyn

When he saw the footage on TV of the Palestinian man and his son being shot at by Israeli soldiers, he cried. He was alone in his small clothing store in downtown Brooklyn, having just opened up for the day, and he just sat down at the register and wept. And then he opened the store for business. "Over here, you can do nothing to help. You really can do nothing," he says.

I've known the storeowner for seven or eight years now. I consider him a friend, but he's afraid to be interviewed by me. He's afraid to offend his many Jewish customers and also that the FBI will show up at his store asking questions, though nothing he has to say is even remotely threatening. He doesn't want me to use his name. When I ask him to pick a name to use in the article, he comes up with "Billy Bob Joe," making me, the other employees, and his nine-year-old son laugh. It's just like old times, all of us playing around. His son, still laughing but mischievously now, suggests another name, "Hammas."

No, that won't do at all.

They try on a few more, everyday names like Imad, but Billy Bob Joe wins out. Perhaps he's worried about more than just losing his Jewish customers. Maybe he's worried about losing a certain lightness in his life, an easy intimacy and banter with his customers, black and Puerto Rican, Jewish and white; an American self.

He was born and raised in a village outside Ramallah, but he's been living and working in Brooklyn for close to twenty years. Two years ago, he sent his wife and seven kids to the West Bank to live in the house he built on his family's land, hoping for the day he could get work there and move back himself—then the violence started.

During those first few weeks of the conflict, I watched him become almost ghostlike, quite literally paler, but also hardly present except as a set of dark, worried eyes. His jok-

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

ing stopped. He no longer called any of his female customers "smiley," and the older black men who used to visit him in the morning, just to drink coffee and gossip, began to drift away.

"I was going crazy," he tells me now. "I was calling my wife and kids two, three times a day. Sometimes my wife would be crying. I heard the bullets behind my house." He began to make arrangements to get his family out of there. On the wall of his house, the one it took him eight years to build, the one he has always dreamed about returning to, one of his sons wrote: "To America. For good."

His wife and kids arrived ten days ago. Now the nine of them live in two rooms in downtown Brooklyn. His middle son brought his SonyPlaystation. The oldest girl didn't bring any shoes but the sneakers she wore and now she really wishes she had something else to wear to high school.

When I wonder if he's worried about his children growing up filled with hatred, he's strangely passive, saying only, "I don't know how they'll be when they grow up because they've seen a lot over there. But there's nothing I can do about it." At seven years old, his youngest child has witnessed more violence than he has. "The problem is over here, we see nothing," he says obliquely. "Over there, you see a lot of things."

There must be thousands of men like him, men who left Palestine in order to get work and support their families and found that they left their wives and children to survive a war. One thing he does know: he doesn't want to fight the war over here. When one of the young Palestinians who lives in the neighborhood puts a Palestinian flag up on the cash register, he takes it down. "I don't want everybody to hate me. I have a lot of Jewish customers," he explains.

His wife, fresh from the horror, is completely energized and, unlike him, more than willing to talk. "Come in, sit down," she says warmly and one of her daughters gives me her chair. Hope is small, plump-cheeked and brown-eyed. She's wearing a white veil and a long, chocolate-colored dress. There are two dark marks, like stains, on her face that she says came out the night of the bombing, "the worst night of my life," the night the Israelis retaliated for the mob killing of two of their soldiers.

Hope and her youngest daughter were only yards from the police station when it happened. They were shopping for a suitcase to come here and they saw crowds of people running, then a body coming down from the station's second floor window. She grabbed her daughter's hand and started running. Everyone knew there would be immediate retaliation. That night they slept on the floor in the bedroom of her mother's house—Hope, her sister, and her mother flanking the children with their bodies. The missiles shook the house all night. The next morning, her daughters also woke up with dark spots on their chests and legs.

Hope shows me a needlepoint map of Palestine that she's making. All of the major cities are shown, the temples, the bodies of water in blue, the flag of Palestine, as well as two fists breaking through barbed wire, spilling red drops of blood. All of it rendered in the tiniest stitches.

Hope seems transformed by the violence she saw, by the fact that she and her children survived, and by the passion, "the courage," of the Palestinians, especially the children and their grieving mothers. "Let me tell you something, our kids over there are more smart," she says. "Their mind is open. You think all those mothers will let their kids go and throw rocks at soldiers with guns? They just go." She tells me about Palestinian children who get shot and when they're taken to the hospital, ask to get stitched up as quickly as possible so they can get back to the battle. I don't know if these are true stories or something the adults need to believe about their warrior-children, but I know she's inspired by them.

II. Two young Palestinian-American men

Samir comes to my front door wearing the Palestinian flag like a Superman cape over his shoulders. His friend Amjad had just called him on the cell phone to tell him I wanted to interview them on how it felt to be Palestinian Americans right now. "Bro, I didn't think you were going to do *that*," Amjad says, laughing and shaking his head when Samir walks through the door, straight-faced, the flag billowing out behind him.

Samir's twenty-five, born and raised in Brooklyn; most people call him Sammy. Amjad, who's twenty-eight, grew up in a housing project in Detroit, then moved with his mother and siblings to Brooklyn seven years ago; he's been supporting them ever since. He works fourteen hours a day, six days a week at a grocery store where most of the customers, including me, call him Steve. But when I ask them what names they want to use, they choose their Arab names.

"What is it like for you watching the war on TV?" I ask them. Samir has always spoken in a kind of shorthand and he does now, though his voice is heavy. "Little kids getting killed. Rocks compared to bullets. Tanks; no vehicles. Helicopters shooting at houses. You can't do nothing about it and nobody's helping them."

"You just take it in your heart," Amjad says.

"And hold it in," Samir adds.

What else can they do?

"You're gonna fight over there?" Amjad asks.

"They're not gonna let us in the country," Samir says.

"If they did, would you go and fight?" I ask them and they're both quiet.

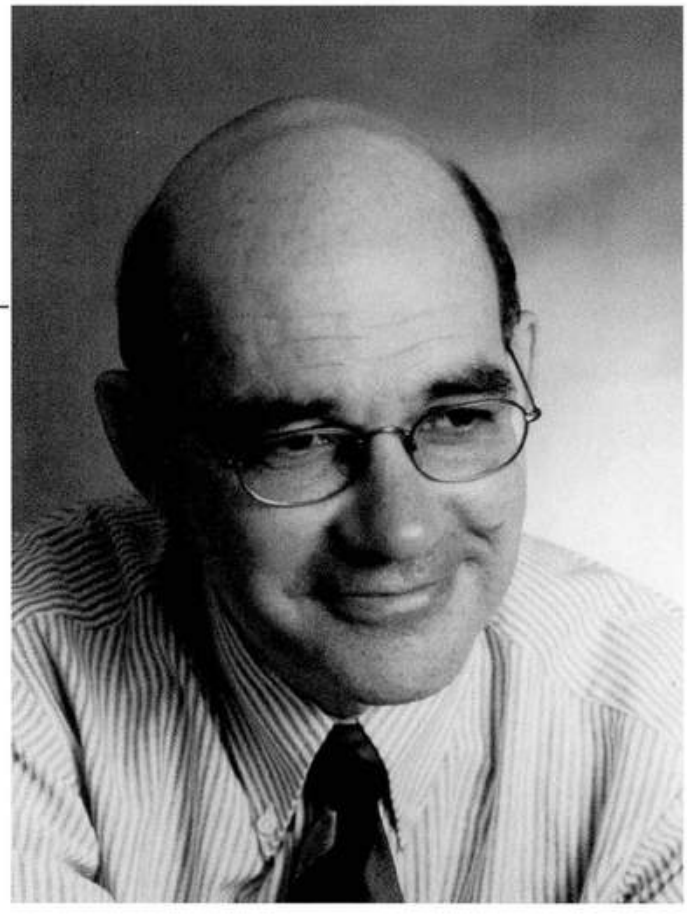
"To tell you the truth, that's a point I wouldn't know," Amjad finally says.

"That I can't answer," Samir adds. "I know a lot of people that are dying to go but I can't answer that one."

If they were over there now, they imagine desperate acts. Not rocks, but guns. "I would try to grab a tank, to tell you

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AN INTERVIEW WITH Tom Segev



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN PORGES COURTESY OF HENRY HOLT

Tom Segev is a columnist for Ha'aretz, *Israel's leading newspaper, and the author of two now-classic works on the history of Israel,* 1949: The First Israelis *and* The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust. *His latest book is* One Palestine, Complete—Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate *(Henry Holt and Co.). He lives in Jerusalem.*

TIKKUN: Could you help us understand why Israelis have acted so surprised at the Palestinian outrage over the terms that were offered to them in Camp David II?

TOM SEGEV: Lots of Israelis thought we were moving toward a settlement. In the period before the recent violence there were several important developments. Barak offered to divide Jerusalem and the sky didn't fall—public reaction was largely favorable. Just as people said to Rabin, "Who needs Gaza?" people were saying, "Who needs Shu'afat?" Something really deep has changed in Israel, so that people are now prepared to pay a price for peace—giving up land. So we were so pleased, and then we were very shocked when the Palestinians responded with a new intifada—it was so completely unexpected. We thought the violence was over.

And of course now the Palestinians have guns and some of them are shooting at us, and that makes people feel that they are in a situation similar to that which we faced during the British Mandate. They don't have tanks and helicopters like we do, but nevertheless they have rifles, and that is shocking.

Now, in retrospect, I can see where we were wrong. We had not really been listening to the Palestinians. [Our] reaction of despair when violence resumed was understandable in that context; some Israeli peace people said "maybe we were wrong and we can't make peace with the Palestinians." But now, a few weeks have passed and we realize that our instinct to make peace was the correct one, and that Barak was not offering the Palestinians a satisfactory deal. Some people warned us about all this, and we didn't listen—and that makes some of us in the peace movement angry, because their warnings were right and we didn't listen.

The major mistake we made was that we talked about giving them 93 percent of the land, but we never looked at the actual maps. And now that we are doing so we realize that what Barak was offering seems far less generous than it appeared when we didn't look at the details. The land we are offering turns out to be a series of little islands with no contiguous territory, separated by Israeli settlements and roads policed by the Israeli Army. So the truth is: we didn't offer them a good deal.

It reminds me of the situation we tried in the 1970s when we offered Palestinians compensation for homes that they used to own in West Jerusalem before 1948. We were going to be so generous and show the Palestinians that we were recognizing their rights. But when Arabs came to make their claims, the office we set up told them: "Since 1948 we paid your upkeep of the house, your property taxes, your cleaning—so you only get a tiny amount of money." The goodwill we thought we would create was undermined by the way we did it, so hardly anyone took it.

And this is the same spirit with which we made our recent offers in Camp David.

A second mistake we made in our assessment of the situation: we didn't bother to look at the actual situation facing Palestinians since we signed Oslo. A section of Palestinian society, closely associated with the Palestinian Authority, has made significant economic gains since Oslo. But another and larger section has gained nothing, and has felt very alienated not only from Israel but from the Palestinian Authority. Much of the rioting has been done by this latter section of the population—people who feel that they have nothing to lose and who hate Arafat as much as they hate Israel.

TIKKUN: Some Western analysts like Daniel Pipes have suggested that Arafat ordered his people into the streets in

order to get a better deal from Israel—and that this whole thing was a calculated gamble by Arafat.

SEGEV: No. He is not controlling these people. If anything, he may be trying to deflect their anger which would otherwise be directed against him and Israel.

The third mistake was Barak's determination to try to force on Arafat a final settlement. But this is a conflict that cannot be solved at the present time because neither side is at a place where they can make concessions significant enough to satisfy the other side. So rather than try to reach a final agreement, we should be prepared for interim agreements.

Barak should have encouraged the Palestinians to declare their own independence and have their own independent state as a first step, not as an after-effect of resolving all the outstanding issues; they don't have anything yet, so let them have a state. When the State of Israel declared its independence and existence, it didn't have a definition of its borders. The Palestinians need not have that worked out to declare their statehood. Leave the problems open.

The leadership of the American Jewish community often communicates that compromise is bad. Why is it bad?

When Barak tried to force the Palestinians to declare that the conflict was over while simultaneously not being willing to make major concessions—this [strategy] was guaranteed to fail. Arafat cannot look into the eyes of 3 million Palestinian refugees and declare, "The conflict is over and you remain as refugees." It's not that Arafat is not a partner for peace—it is that he has been treated in a mistaken way.

TIKKUN: Why shouldn't Barak tell settlers that they must return to the boundaries of pre-1967 Israel?

SEGEV: It is too late. The Likud and Labor [Parties] created these settlements and they are new facts—you can't evacuate whole towns. You can evacuate the 500 Israelis who live in Hebron, but you can't evacuate the whole town of Ariel.

TIKKUN: But many of these settlers are determined to do everything possible to destroy any peace agreement, so no wonder Palestinians do not want them sitting in the middle of a Palestinian state. Many of these settlers (not all) will take provocative actions against the Palestinians, and when the Palestinians defend themselves and demand law and order, the Israeli Army will come in to defend the settlers.

SEGEV: And that is why, once Labor accepted the existence of the settlements, there could be no peace agreement that would work in our generation. After doing the research I've done on the pre-1948 Mandate period—which I've written about in my new book, *One Palestine, Complete*—I've come to realize that the conflict was inevitable, the war was inevitable, and now with the settlements in place the continuation of the conflict is inevitable, and there will be no peace at this time. I was always against the settlements, but now they exist.

I'm not saying, as the settlers and their friends say, that if we dismantle Ariel then [the Palestinians] will ask for Gilo, and if we dismantle Gilo then they will ask for Jaffa. I don't believe this is true. The Palestinians have come to recognize the reality of Israel. They talk about the 1967 borders, not about the 1948 borders.

But a permanent peace with them can only come after they have twenty, thirty, possibly fifty years of their own state, their own society, their own national traditions. They need to have their own achievements, to make their own mistakes—and then they may be able to do what Israel is now doing with a post-Zionist society in which many Israelis are ready to give up ideologies and land. The Palestinians can't reach that now—because now they have nothing.

Unfortunately, and this is also a very bad thing, while I'm talking about this long process, the settlements are being expanded. In fact, even Barak has expanded settlements—and that is a bad thing.

Similarly, it simply won't happen that Israel would let the 3 million [Palestinian] refugees return. But it would be a very important step for Israel to acknowledge responsibility for having created the refugee situation. It would be very important to acknowledge the Palestinian tragedy and Palestinian memory.

TIKKUN: So why doesn't Barak do that?

SEGEV: Because he doesn't think in these terms.

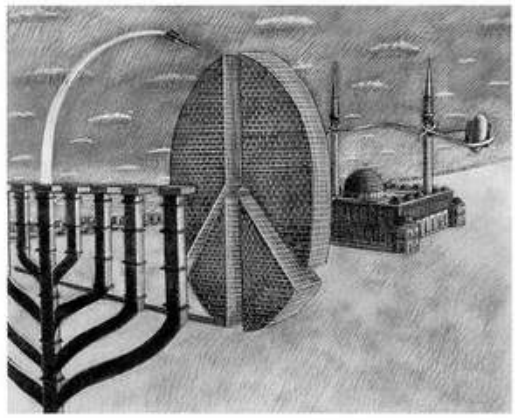
But many ordinary Israelis are beginning to understand our responsibility for the Palestinian refugees—far more than there are Palestinians who actually understand anything about the Holocaust.

The biggest error we made was not to solve the refugee problem. We could have built homes for them in the West Bank. It is appalling to see the circumstances in which so many Palestinian refugees live.

But even the way we did Oslo was incorrect. We had a moment which could have changed the feelings in both countries. But the actual implementation of the accord was done without any poetry (unlike the way Sadat treated us when he wanted to make peace). Rabin signed Oslo, but he hated it, so he implemented it in a very petty way. The Israeli public was willing to make substantial peace, but the lawyers and diplomats sat down at the table and tried to force on the Palestinian people all kinds of harassments and difficult arrangements, and it was the pettiness that got communicated, not a spirit of hope. Rabin and Barak lacked the greatness of a great historical leader who would implement a new policy and present it as something we could celebrate, rather than something we would resent.

I have a real problem with some American Jews. Many of them, perhaps most, all too often take the hawkish side.

You in the TIKKUN community and some others are the exception. But the leadership of the American Jewish community often communicates that compromise is bad. "Why is it bad?" I say. "Finally we are getting rid of Gaza. We are not losing, we are gaining!" But the Americans lament it.



TIKKUN: If you have little to offer a powerless people in terms of a substantial solution for their grievances (e.g. dealing with the 3 million refugees), then at the very least you need to communicate to them a great deal of respect, because that respect is one of the elements for which they hunger most.

SEGEV: I entirely agree.

And yet, there are real possibilities for the future of Israel, because Israelis are beginning to move beyond the old ideology into a post-Zionist situation. There are a million Russian immigrants and they don't care about Zionism—most of them would rather be living in the United States and they are not Zionist. The society has become more Jewish and less focused on Zionism as the negation of the Diaspora. Now we realize that there is an alternative and authentic Jewish existence outside the State of Israel. And we have become more Americanized, more interested in individual rights, civil liberties, and human rights. Israelis feel more secure.

And most people feel that the existence of the State of Israel is no longer in question—that Israel is not going to be destroyed. So now it is possible to create a society that is no longer focused on saving the Jewish people. This is a post-Zionist situation. The irony is that the recent uprising forced us back into a Zionist consciousness. ❑

TALKING WITH THE NEIGHBORS *(continued from page 26)*

the truth," Amjad says. "I would be going out at nights trying to kill me a couple of soldiers. I'm not going to lie." But even if he could go, he wouldn't. "Because if I leave here who's gonna take care of my mother, my sisters? I wouldn't want to go over there and die and nobody's here to take care of them."

So, to be a young Palestinian American male is to have to put yourself to that kind of test: you want to help and the only way you can imagine doing so involves imagining yourself killing and then imagining your own death.

Amjad can't imagine the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis ever ending, he says, except "in a war, until the whole group dies, whichever group it is, Palestinians or Israelis." Samir thinks it will end if the Palestinians get the Al-Aqsa mosque back, and in that he's more like most of the Palestinians I talk to in Brooklyn. None of them question Israel's right to exist but all of them want control over their mosque and even Jerusalem.

As an older Palestinian says to me, "It never end, it never, never end until they turn back Jerusalem to the Palestinians. It's our Holy Land. It's important, important over there. Then everything will be alright. They don't have a right to stay in Jerusalem. It's not their land. It's our land. It's our holy mosque." With a smile, he adds, "Revolution until victory."

Neither Samir nor Amjad want the conflict to spread over here between Brooklyn Arabs and Jews. If he had kids, he wouldn't even let them watch the news on TV, Amjad adds. "Why would you want to let them see what their own people are going through, getting killed and they're just throwing rocks? It would just probably make them hate more. Probably they'd go to school and they want to beat up on a Jewish person for nothing and the Jewish person probably doesn't even know nothing about it."

Samir and Amjad understand perfectly the ways in which they are American. First off, the older people tell them to save, save, save "and we spend, spend, spend," the two of them tell me. Then, there is Samir's love for his Mustang, the money he's poured into it over the years, the way he calls the car, "my baby," all of these things make him seem crazy to the older Palestinians, almost morally suspect. Then there are their huge credit card debts. "That's the American dream," Amjad jokes. "Everybody in America is in debt. That's the only way you know you're having fun."

Still they are the ones who pick their Arabic names for the article. And Samir is the one who recently draped the Palestinian flag over the hood of his Mustang and drove around Brooklyn for four days, only taking the flag off after getting stopped by cops five times, and being told by his friends over and over again to take it off before he got shot.

"Why did you want to drive around like that?" I ask him.

"To bother," he says.

"Just to annoy them," Amjad adds helpfully.

"To annoy them," Samir agrees. "And everybody else? All the Palestinians and the Libyans and the Egyptians? Get happy. Put a smile on their faces." A lot of people flashed him peace signs and gave him the thumbs up, especially in the Arabic neighborhoods. And when Samir drove through the Hasidic section of Williamsburg, people stared at him in alarm, "and the little kids start running."

"Your own little war over here," I say.

"No, not a war. Not a war at all," he says and says it so seriously and with a kind of resigned sadness to his voice that I'm ashamed for putting it so lightly. ❑

Election 2000 and U.S.-Israel Relations

Debra DeLee

As I write, we still don't know who will be the next president of the United States, nor do we know the final composition of the 107th Congress. But even before the dust settles, the one thing we do know is that the challenge for progressive forces in Israel and in the American Jewish community will be to familiarize ourselves with the new players in Washington and to educate them about the complexities of life in the Middle East.

The next administration and Congress will need to learn that a majority of Israelis still support the peace process, even during times of trouble. Polls show that up to 66 percent of Israelis favor continuing the peace process with the Palestinians, compared with 31 percent who do not and 3 percent who don't know. Further, surveys indicate that 59 percent of Israelis would either vote for, or are leaning towards voting for, a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians based on what they have heard until now, while 32 percent would vote against it or are leaning towards voting against it, and 9 percent don't know. Some American Jewish groups have walked away from the peace process, but U.S. decision-makers must be told that the Israeli people have not.

The next administration and Congress will need to learn that Israelis support peace because they are pragmatists who recognize that the only alternative is ongoing rioting, violence, and destruction. Some groups in our community point to renewed hostilities as proof that the peace process failed. But the exact opposite is true. The recent turmoil underscores the failure of prolonged stalemate and what can fill the vacuum in the absence of peace. Israelis already know this, but Washington must be made to understand that peace is the only acceptable response to what is taking place in the region.

The next administration and Congress will need to learn that peace is in the best interests of Israel because it provides the Jewish State with greater international acceptance, foreign investment, economic growth, and stability. The peace process was the reason that Israeli high-tech companies had an environment that encouraged their phenomenal growth, that the tourist industry was booming, that moderate Arab states were willing to establish diplomatic relations, and that the Israeli standard of living had risen to Western European levels.

Debra DeLee is president and CEO of Americans for Peace Now.

And the next administration and Congress will need to learn that peace serves American interests as well. The United States cannot afford to see the spread of hostilities, especially at a time when oil prices are already on the rise, Americans are vulnerable to attack, and countries like Iraq continue to pose a threat.

While the elections resulted in an incoming Congress that will likely look for ways to maintain a strong U.S.-Israeli relationship, it is clear that peace advocates will have our work cut out for us. Although most incumbents were reelected, there are several pro-peace legislators who will not be back for the 107th Congress, most notably Rep. Sam Gejdenson, Sen. Spencer Abraham (the only Arab American Senator), Sen. Charles Robb, and Sen. Frank Lautenberg. Even supporters of the peace negotiations on Capitol Hill were taken aback and dismayed with the recent outburst of violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. One reflection of that dismay was the proliferation of anti-Palestinian bills and resolutions that were introduced. The incoming Congress could well be tempted to take up where the last one left off.

Finally, policies in Washington will still be driven by events in the Middle East. Until there is a significant lessening of violence in the region and a renewal of security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians, it will be difficult to return to the negotiating table to address final status issues that were raised at Camp David. As a result, the incoming administration must guard against sacrificing the pursuit of peace while it is busy putting out fires in the area. Further, Washington will need to react to possible changes in regional leadership. New Israeli elections could produce a dramatic change of direction in Israeli diplomacy, while Yasir Arafat is not going to be on the scene indefinitely.

For all of these reasons, Peace Now in Israel and Americans for Peace Now in the United States know that we will have a tough mission in Washington in 2001. But we will continue to do what we have always done best—providing U.S. officials with information and analysis about the stark realities of the situation, particularly the impediment to peace that the settlement movement poses and the need to consider creative ideas for making Jerusalem a more livable city for all its residents. Most importantly, we will continue to reach out to decision-makers with the message that to be pro-Israel is to be pro-peace. ❑

Seventh Millennium Judaism

David A. Cooper



As the conventional world celebrates the arrival of the third millennium in the Gregorian Calendar, the Hebrew calendar marks the coming of the seventh millennium—in about 240 years. While the dating of the "Common Era" is based on the birth of Christianity, the dating of the Hebrew calendar is built upon a different concept. On the literal level, it is said that 5,761 years ago was the birth of Adam and Eve. On an esoteric level, the kabbalist would say that adamic consciousness came into its fullness 5,761 years ago—that the world witnessed a new realization of the relationship between each individual and the Source of Being. That is, human consciousness (as opposed to animal consciousness) was born as we became aware of our own awareness. This is what distinguishes human consciousness from other forms of consciousness. While animal life has extraordinary awareness, humans have the ability to be aware of and to contemplate our own awareness.

This ability to be aware of our own awareness has opened up vast possibilities. For, while most life is fully dependent upon divine providence, we humans, because of our consciousness, have the potential to participate in the unfolding of each moment. This potential, from a kabbalistic point of view, puts humanity in the position of being a continuing copartner in creation with the Source of Being. Or, said another way, we have the potential of fully realizing the role we play as the Divine expresses Itself through us.

As our intrinsic awareness of this process becomes more developed, we become more wise, more compassionate, more enlightened. We gain more understanding of the way things work, and an ever greater appreciation of the continuing dance of Creator and Creation, which are not two separate things but a single process we call Life. The Jewish perspective is that the full ripening of this understanding is a key purpose of human existence.

Rabbi David A. Cooper is the author of God is a Verb *(Riverhead) and* Handbook of Jewish Meditation *(Jewish Lights). He and his wife Shoshana lead Jewish Meditation retreats.*

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This ability to be aware of our own awareness has opened up vast possibilities.

The kabbalists tell a story to express the progress of our understanding. They remind us that Adam/Eve was born during the "last hour" of the sixth day, just before Shabbat. Adamic consciousness could not come to fruition until almost all of the six days of creation had passed; similarily, the ripening of adamic consciousness—our enlightenment—will take time too. How much time? One thousand years for each day, or a total of six thousand years. Thus, the Jewish mystic believes that within the next 240 years human potential will reach a new plateau and we will enter a thousand year era of Shabbat, a time when a new consciousness will transcend the way we view reality today. This, some would call "messianic consciousness."

What will things look like when the world is imbued with messianic consciousness? And more important, what is our individual and collective role in helping to bring about this

new level of understanding of life? Some assume that we need only survive until the messiah arrives and fixes everything. Judaism suggests, however, that each and every one of us, and each and every act that is done, is a significant element in the birthing of messianic consciousness. In mystical terms, while a new consciousness for humanity will ultimately take the form of a profound paradigm shift, the real focus of our attention must be on the moment-to-moment awareness that leads up to that shift. The way each and every one of us works with our own awareness right now, again and again, is the crucial element in the unfolding of messianic consciousness.

As we reflect upon our lives, we face many important questions: who are we, how are we living our lives, how do we handle relationships, how do we earn a living, how do we serve the community, what are our goals and our ideals, and so forth. One fundamental arena that has enormous potential for deeply informing people in many of these vital areas I would like to generally call "spiritual development." In particular, as there is a mandate in the Torah for Jews to be a light unto the nations, I would like to look more closely at the potential role Judaism could play in daily life in a way that would more profoundly engage the process of raising awareness, thereby smoothing the way for the paradigm shift for all humanity.

The way each and every one of us works with our own awareness ... is the crucial element in the unfolding of messianic consciousness.

There are at least ten key areas that invite exploration. Others are likely to arise. But the following ten subjects are so rich in possibilities, that they are likely to keep us busy for some time to come.

1. Defining God in Absolute vs. Relative Terms

The primary issue in Judaism is how Jews present "God" to the world. The emphasis on the dualistic God, the God out there, the God with a temperament, is probably the most confusing aspect of the Jewish tradition for Jews and non-Jews alike. Kabbalah has always been clear that Ein Sof, the boundless Source, is non-dual, has no attributes, is a simple, all inclusive Oneness. This is the essential truth of Jewish teaching. The faces of God to which we relate in dualistic terms meet many needs, but we must also explore and clearly articulate the true nature of Ein Sof and the interplay of this Oneness with god-names like Yod-Hey-Vov-Hey, Adonoy, El, Elohim, Shaddai, Tzevaot, Makom, Shalom, and so forth.

2. Inclusivity & Impartiality vs. Exclusivity and Chosen-ness

The understanding of the Oneness of Ein Sof must be brought to bear on clarifying the interconnectedness of everything. Nothing can be separated from the Source, and thus exclusivity is a self-contradiction. This means that the issue of chosen-ness must be illuminated in a way that does not alienate Jews and non-Jews alike. Clearly chosen-ness is not a reference to a hierarchical structure which implies some kind of superiority; rather it has to do with the role individual parts play in a wholeness which could not exist without the sum of its parts. Every individual and every organic structure is chosen, so to speak, for the role it plays in this universe. In this context, the mystical role Judaism plays in the unfolding of the universe has profound consequences, particularly from a kabbalistic perspective, for it has been "chosen" to reveal the interconnectedness of all creation with Ein Sof, the boundless Source.

3. Full Integration of the Feminine

Although major advances have been made in this generation for the full integration of the feminine, there are vast areas that continue to need attending in Jewish "law," in the wording of the Talmud, in the Midrash, and in virtually all parts of the Jewish world. The most offensive example that continues fullblown is the insistence on referring to "God" as He or Him, when everyone "agrees" that God has no gender. An enormous healing awaits and is dependent upon the full integration of the feminine in action and deeds, not in words alone.

4. Deep Psycho-Spiritual Exploration of the Wounded Jew

There is a widespread, almost epidemic dis-ease among Jews today that has not been clearly investigated. It expresses itself in a kind of self-hatred, a feeling of embarrassment for anything done by a fellow Jew or the State of Israel, by self-criticism, fear, frustration, anger, bitterness, and a sense of alienation. It is often expressed in a sense of entitlement for exceptional treatment in Jewish environments, in unwarranted expectations for what Judaism is supposed to deliver, in highly charged reactions to evocative language, in strong opinions, in ethnocentrism, and in xenophobia. This alienated feeling—what I would call woundedness—can be found in a large percentage of the Jewish population; it is one of the key elements of the phenomenon, especially present in the latter half of the twentieth century, of extraordinary numbers of Jews seeking spiritual engagement in other traditions, anything but Judaism.

5. New Emphasis On What It Means To Be a Jew

The definition of what it means to be a Jew continues to confuse and lead to contention. Not even the State of Israel has been able to find a resolution to this problem. Up to now, the emphasis tends toward legalisms, bloodlines, maternity, and talmudic debate. It may well be that this question of Jewishness is one that ultimately leads toward what is called a "teku" in the Talmud, an argument that will

(continued on page 49)

SEVENTH MILLENNIUM JUDAISM *(continued from page 32)*

not be resolved until the messiah comes. Meanwhile, the essential heartfulness, compassion, openness, love, and caring that is a fundamental teaching of Judaism seems to be given short shrift to the extent that "lovingkindness" is generally viewed as a Buddhist teaching, "charity" as something that Christians believe in, "devotion" as something Hindus are good at, and "ecstasy" as something owned by the Sufis. The time has come to ask ourselves what Judaism might look like when messianic consciousness has fully come into its own, and then ask ourselves why we need to wait for the messiah to live this kind of Judaism in its fullness right now? What an amazing light that questioning would cast on the real treasures that are easily accessible in Judaism today.

6. Exploration of Alternative Practices

The rapid proliferation of communication and networking is one of the most prominent signs of the increasing integration of the world. There is a cross-fertilization of a wide variety of ideas and technologies, and the ghetto mentality of walling oneself or one's community behind barriers to keep the world outside is becoming less and less feasible as a strategy to maintain group coherence. Religion faced a similar tidal wave when science challenged it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Judaism can learn much and be nurtured by a wide variety of alternative practices as well as learning from other traditions. This does not mean it will be necessary to merge into one world tradition; rather to respect the plurality of individual teachings while understanding places where there are common touchpoints and universal goals. By opening our arms and hearts to each other, everyone gains.

7. The Community At Large: Social Action

Secular Jews have traditionally played an active role in social action. A large number of Jewish institutions and synagogues have programs for helping others. To a great extent, however, many of these programs are defined in a Jewish context, channeling financial and other support to Jewish organizations, Israel, and so forth. Such intracommunal support is, of course, important. On the other hand, even though many Jews are involved in a wide spectrum of social issues, Judaism itself is not known for its international concerns with environmental issues, ecology, hunger, poverty, and the like. The Jewish renewal movement is clearly making inroads in these arenas, and activists like Arthur Waskow stand out for bringing a Jewish presence to many of these areas of concern. Jewish renewal rabbi and leader Reb Zalman Schacter-Shalomi has even called for a rethinking of what is kosher to include these social action issues.

His initiative offers precisely the attitude of inclusivity and interconnectedness that will mark the times of messianic con-



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sciousness. Meanwhile, however, a great deal more awareness and activism is needed in the mainstream Jewish community to bring home the younger generations of Jews who are highly motivated to become involved in social action.

8. The Relationship of a Congregation and Its Rabbi

One of the most important points often missed in discussions of Jewish life is the relationship between a congregation and its rabbi. This is a sensitive subject and rabbis don't like to bring it into the open, even though it is often a major topic of conversation when rabbis are privately discussing their pulpit with each other. Many congregations are respectful and generous in their treatment of the rabbi. However, there are also many situations in which the rabbi is not treated as a spiritual guide, but as a performer who is rated on how he or she fills seats, how much money is raised, how many new members join the congregation, how wonderful and innovative—particularly at High Holiday time—is each sermon, and so forth.



Some of this is simply the name of the game, and clergy in other traditions suffer the same problems as rabbis. But it is known that rabbis generally have a higher burnout and dropout ratio than other denominations, and it is known as well—joked about in many circles—that presidents and officers of synagogues often play power games with the rabbi, making for a dysfunctional situation. This phenomenon has not been adequately studied, and many rabbis as well as their congregations suffer the consequences.

Part of such a study should address questions such as: What Shabbat and Holy Days mean for a rabbi who is always working at these times? What would be the potential of balancing the load with a co-rabbi—particularly with a gender balance as well? What financial arrangements should be made to protect the rabbi from those holding the purse strings? How much time is acceptable to take off? and How much do rabbis themselves invite abuse through codependency and insecurity? These are important issues for the health of a congregation.

9. Greater Exposure to Mystical Judaism

People continue to be afraid and uninformed or misinformed about the mystical side of Judaism, both in terms of Kabbalah and Hasidism. Most mainstream rabbis have had only modest training in this aspect of the tradition. Many yeshivas continue to focus on the halachah, the law, without much balance in study of the agadata, which provides profound teachings that illuminate a vast amount of hidden wisdom in the Talmud. Very little has been done to look at Torah, halachah, prayer, Shabbat, and the Holy Days through the eyes of Kabbalah. Yet this is clearly a thirst expressed again by Jews and non-Jews alike. The entire scope of Yiddishkeit will benefit by looking more closely into the mystical understanding.

10. Rediscovering Contemplative Judasim

In many ways the opening of the mystical side of Judaism goes hand-in-hand with rediscovering contemplative Judaism. Much of Judaism was built on contemplative practices, but they were not as clearly defined as in Buddhism, for example. In Judaism, prayer, study, devotion, celebration, fasting, chanting, visualization, repetition, memorization, and silence are all natural parts of the daily life of normative Jewish practice. All of these have elements of meditative techniques. Many of the Jewish sages would today be called great meditators; we can see this clearly in their writings.

Many Orthodox Jewish practitioners today have great concentration skills, which is the foundation of most meditation techniques. Traditional Jewish lifestyle is imbued with meditative techniques like these. The question is how Jews who choose not to be Orthodox will be able to develop the contemplative skills and understanding which are in many ways a prerequisite for gaining a view of the layers of wisdom hidden under the surface of Jewish teaching. Moreover, how do we make a breakthrough with Orthodox practitioners to appreciate the contemplative tools already in their hands? I don't think it is an overstatement to say that the contemplative approach, specifically meditation, has been the single most attractive aspect of the practices that have accompanied the growth of Buddhism in the West over the past forty years. Yet, although such practices are a natural part of Judaism, many rabbis do not understand them—indeed they often fear them—and thus they are unable to bring these simple meditative practices to their own congregations. What is needed is a much broader program, not simply "mindfulness" training, but a program that deals with the many meditative techniques that can be easily adapted to a Jewish lifestyle.

All of the points noted above are part of a holistic approach to bring Judaism to the fullness of its potential in our times. None of the points individually is the solution; all of them collectively need to be addressed and attended. The riches of Judaism are extraordinary. Many of these gems remain buried under confusion, antipathy, and outright alienation. But the direction is for greater understanding of each other and the world at large. Judaism could play a major role in this process of bringing messianic consciousness, or it could stay on the sidelines. Yet Jewish input will be sorely missed if it is not heard. It is up to us. ❑

Nader and Gore in Retrospect



Danny Goldberg

To read the strident liberal pundits following the photo-finish 2000 presidential election was to be faced with false choices. Ralph Nader was either the only honest national politician or a vain and destructive villain. Gore and Lieberman were either the only virtuous players on the national stage, besieged by philistines on both the right and left, or they were callow carbon copies of Republicans.

The truth, regardless of one's point of view, is far more nuanced. Nader made some serious mistakes, and Gore made far more serious ones, and a rational analysis of the election requires acknowledgment of the deficiencies of both candidates as well as both of their virtues.

There is no need for Nader supporters, of which I was one, to avoid the fact that Ralph acted badly in the last several weeks of the campaign. He shouldn't have campaigned in swing states, especially since he had told so many supporters that he wouldn't. Nader had faxed many people, including me, an article by Molly Ivins that recommended a vote for Nader in uncontested states such as Texas and New York ("voting with your heart"), and a vote for Gore in swing states ("voting with your head"). Moreover, Nader had promised to criticize Bush and Gore equally, but by the campaign's end he was making personal and wildly disproportionate attacks on Gore, and furthering the intellectually dishonest argument that Gore and Bush were indistinguishable. In the heat of the campaign, Nader made idiotic statements: for example, he said that individual states would protect women's right to abortion regardless of a U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade.* In response, many prominent Nader-supporters communicated to their constituencies that they disapproved of Nader's eleventh-hour quest for votes in swing states. Ani Di Franco wrote on her website that while she, as a New Yorker, felt safe in voting for Nader, she would be voting for Gore if she lived in a swing state. Michael Moore, who had been introducing Nader at rallies around the country, pointedly refused to accompany him to swing states, and launched a series of bromides on his widely visited website stressing the importance of defeating Bush.

Even from a purely tactical point of view, Nader's pre-election behavior must be judged a failure. He came nowhere close to the 5 percent that would have created Green Party matching funds in 2004. Had he done no swing state campaigning and avoided personal denunciations of Gore, Nader still would have garnered far more votes than Pat Buchanan, and would have been a far more effective messenger for his own views than he now is.

None of this, however, contradicts the fact that Nader was articulating the frustration and pain of millions of Democrats who felt abandoned like never before by the presidential nominee of their party, and that Nader was raising vital issues such as poverty, corporate influence on government, and the drug war which were completely absent from the major party candidates' campaigns. Nader's errors may tarnish his credibility, but he is still a towering moral figure in American politics whose actual accomplishments outstrip those of most elected officials.

Gore supporters, meanwhile, need to give up the narcotic of blaming Nader for Gore's own massive shortcomings as a candidate. A small percentage of Nader voters certainly would have changed the election, but so could dozens of other, greater factors. The Democrat-supported drug war has deprived hundreds of thousands of black men of their right to vote because of felony convictions, mostly for nonviolent drug crimes; careless Democratic officials created the flawed "butterfly ballot"; and of course a single memorable line from Gore in any of the debates would have given him a relative landslide.

As Ellen Willis pointed out in *Salon,* the Nader effort was galvanized by Gore's selection of Joe Lieberman. Lieberman's greatest claim to fame was his opportunistic criticism of President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, but many Democrats felt that Clinton's sins paled in comparison to the invasive and immoral crusade against him by Kenneth Starr *et al.* More importantly, Lieberman's selection was a defiant insult to several parts of the Democratic base: economic liberals were appalled by Lieberman's conservative voting record and aggressive support of the insurance and pharmaceutical industries; civil libertarians were offended by what even the Anti-Defamation League considered excessive insertions of his religion into a national election and by Lieberman's censorious attacks on popular entertainment. In September, I

Danny Goldberg is copublisher of TIKKUN.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

testified before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee on the subject of the marketing of "violent" entertainment to "children." The star witness, of course, was Lieberman, who not only repeated his mantra demonizing youth culture, he warmly embraced House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde who testified directly prior to Lieberman and who quoted adoringly from Lieberman's campaign book. Lieberman cloyingly thanked the House impeachment manager for the promotion.

Any other running mate would, admittedly, have produced fewer Florida votes. But any other running mate would have resulted in more of Gore's natural progressive base sticking with him—as they did with Clinton—in states such as New Hampshire that he narrowly lost. Missouri, for example, elected an unapologetically liberal Democratic senator, the deceased Mel Carnahan, while the same electorate gave the state's electoral votes to Bush.

Nader didn't create the Nader vote, Gore and Lieberman did.

Throughout the campaign, polls showed that Gore was less enthusiastically supported by his Democratic "base" than Bush was by Republicans. Thus Buchanan, for example, who has a media profile at least as high as Nader's and who had far more money, did far more poorly, not because Buchanan had no message, but because Bush did not alienate his core supporters the way Gore did. In short, Nader didn't create the Nader vote, Gore and Lieberman did.

Last minute efforts by Democrats to convert Nader voters were as ham-handed and as ineffectual as the rest of their campaign in addressing the alienated young people who were Nader's primary supporters. Democratic-leaning columnists lectured and hectored Nader voters instead of reaching out to them with respect for their issues. The pro-choice group NARAL took out TV ads in Minnesota which warned Nader voters that they might be responsible for women losing the right to abortion. Their paternalistic and insulting tone reinforced Nader voters' worst feelings about Gore and actually caused Nader's poll numbers to rise.

Imagine if Gore had said something as innocuous as "I will always be much more of a moderate than Ralph Nader, but I respect his long contribution to ethics in government. I do not agree with all of Nader's positions on the environment and campaign finance reform but I urge voters in the so-called swing states to focus on the fact that either George Bush or I will be elected president, and my positions on the following issues are far more in keeping with Nader than George Bush."

In analyzing part of Clinton's appeal, commentators coined the phrase, the "Elvis vote." Supporters of Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura, liberal on many social issues and more libertarian than the Democrats usually are on taxes, these white lower-class voters gave Clinton electoral margins in states like Missouri, New Hampshire, Arkansas, Tennessee, and West Virginia that Gore failed to carry; any one of them would have given him a decisive victory. Although it's maddening to think that issues of style play such a big role in politics, many of these "Elvis voters" were already put off by Gore's pedantic, condescending tone. Adding the pontificating, snobbish Lieberman reinforced the message that this Democratic ticket looked down on ordinary people, many of the very people who make "popular culture" so popular.

The incestuous, insular world of Washington media and political consultants convinced Al Gore that his biggest problem was Bill Clinton. These self-proclaimed political geniuses were so obsessed with the ephemeral "swing voters" that they blithely ignored the traditional Democratic base that could have given them an easy victory. Their failure to put focus groups in the right context led Gore to believe that Washington jargon like "lockbox" would help him. They blinded him to the Clinton economy, the fact that 19 percent of voters thought they were in the "upper one percent" of the wealthy in this country, and that 40 percent thought they soon would be. As Michael Lerner has long pointed out, appeals based solely on self-interest tend to backfire on Democrats. Gore could have made his point about the unfairness of a tax cut for the wealthiest on moral grounds that people at every economic level could identify with.

The lack of a coherent Democratic rationale, exacerbated by Gore's decision not to differentiate between Republican and Democratic philosophies, led to the re-election of the Republican Congress, a contest in which the political professionals have no Ralph Nader to scapegoat. The timid centrist images of the Democratic Leadership Conference must be replaced by a Democratic vision that takes into account populist Jesse Ventura supporters and a bigger slice of alienated Nader voters. The mantra of the Democratic operatives was that all of their moral compromises were justified because they and they alone could defeat the forces of the reactionary right. Such a Democratic strategy practically requires the empowerment of future Newt Gingrich types, a strategy that the Bush campaign Clintonesquely avoided.

But the most important lesson for progressives and for Democrats is that they need to communicate to each other with mutual respect. The fact is that Gore was preferable to Bush on every progressive issue. We must find a way to pressure Democrats in the future without playing into right-wing personal attacks on Democratic candidates and without delegitimizing the hard-working and sincere progressive Democrats. On the other hand, if Democratic leaders keep their minds arrogantly closed to progressive critiques, especially those from young people, they will be turning their backs on the next generation of support and they will have no one to blame but themselves. ❑

A Green Perspective

Charlene Spretnak

In the recent election, neither the Democratic Party nor the liberal pundits seemed aware that minority parties put forth platforms and candidates not merely as a symbolic gesture or to be "spoilers," but to win at the local level and to pressure majority parties at the national level. All over the world, when a majority party discovers that it cannot win without the votes of a minority party, the majority party publicly makes concessions, usually with regard to policy changes but sometimes with political appointments. In that way, grassroots effort can effect change via the democratic electoral system, as has happened several times in American history.



The Green Party now has a mandate from millions of voters and supporters to be the watchdog party.

It had long seemed to me that the Greens could one day play this sort of constructive role in our national politics. Hence I included such a scenario in a story I wrote as part of the final chapter of *The Resurgence of the Real*, a nonfiction book published in 1997 that continues the political analysis and vision I explored in the American chapter of *Green Politics* (1984). To my surprise, the events of the actual presidential campaign 2000 mirrored the situation in my story: around the third week of October 2000 the Democratic candidate realizes that he could very well lose without Green votes. In the fictional version, Al Gore makes concessions to the Greens in key issue areas and picks up enough votes to win the election handily.

Unfortunately, that did not happen in this election. When Gore finally addressed the Green voters directly, he treated us like naughty children who needed to be brought back into line. He repeatedly lectured, hectored, and threatened us in the closely contested states he canvassed at the eleventh hour. In Minnesota, that strategy, seen nightly on the national news, reportedly caused Nader's support to shoot up by 10 percent. I am not saying that either Nader or the leadership of the Green Party would have cut a deal when the Greens were working so hard everywhere to win at least 5 percent of the vote, but a direct appeal to the Green voters in the crucial states, pledging concessions, would have attracted many people who would have liked to help Gore without abandoning the Green platform.

Let us hope that the Democratic Party will get the hang of dealing respectfully with a minority party, one that is issue-based and takes its platform seriously. They may even realize at some point that the Greens are not simply disaffected Democrats with some ecology tacked on.

As for the immediate future of the Green Party, Nader noted following the election that the party now has a mandate from millions of voters and supporters to be the watchdog party.

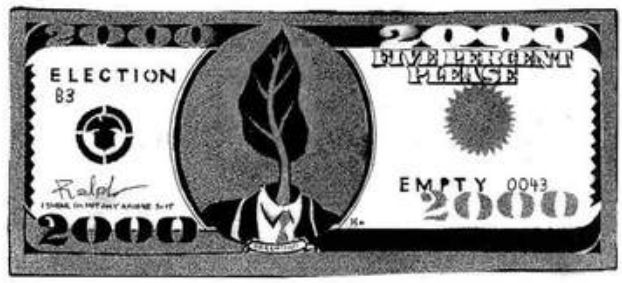
I realize that many progressives voted for Nader either out of respect for him and his positions or to convince the Democratic Party to stop ignoring their progressive wing. Long before the recent presidential campaign, though, other progressives had become Greens. They had studied the Green Party platform (www.gp.org) and are in accord with our emphasis on developing community-based and regional economics that spread wealth and ownership as broadly as possible, on respect for spirituality and a commitment to nonviolence, and on the realization that human systems must fit within the integrity of the Earth's systems. Those progressives have everything to gain by remaining in the Green Party rather than being reabsorbed into a Democratic Party so pro-corporate that it cannot reform itself internally. A vital and growing minority party that pressures the corporate parties is the most effective option. The Greens are now the swing votes. ❑

Charlene Spretnak is a co-founder of the Green Party movement in the United States and is author most recently of The Resurgence of the Real. *Her earlier books include* Green Politics *(co-author) and* The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

The Morning After Election Day

Paul Krassner



In December 1967, I had an epiphany while tripping on an LSD double date—Anita and Abbie Hoffman, me and a dolphin—at the Seaquarium in Miami. I was having a delightful nonverbal encounter with one particular dolphin. Finally it was time to leave, and I had to say goodbye to my new friend. "By the way" I asked, "what are you always smirking about?"

The dolphin replied—and I'm willing to concede that this might have been my own acid projection—"If God is evolution, then how do you know He's finished?" Obviously it was a male chauvinist dolphin. But could a political system actually evolve into a compassionate governing body? Could an economic system evolve into a humane process? Could progress itself evolve into a balance of decentralization and the global village?

And so it came to pass that, early on in the 2000 campaign, I wrote in my journal about a moral paradox: "On the perhaps false assumption that my vote in the presidential election will count, I am torn between voting for Al Gore—or, rather, against George W.—and voting for Ralph Nader. For the last few decades, the Green Party candidate has been fighting for public safety and health. But if I were to vote for Nader, I would in effect be taking a vote away from Gore—who would push for gun control and appoint Supreme Court justices that wouldn't overturn Roe vs. Wade—whereas George W. would do just the opposite. Then why have I decided to not be pragmatic but to vote for Nader? Because I once was talking with a crazy person, and when I used the phrase, "survival games," he corrected me and said, "Idealism is the only survival game."

I faxed a copy of this voting dilemma to my friend, Nick Kazan, and he responded:

"It would seem like a vote for Ralph Nader is an action without consequence, or, to frame it more properly, this action (this vote) would not seem to have the potential to have a consequence. And the question then is: Does the action still have moral value? Of course. But as much value as a vote which could do some good? I'm not sure. Is there value inherent in idealism? Yes. But then: Is one to never be practical? Again, I'm not sure. Besides, you have freed me because I was also vacillating between Gore and Nader, and if you're voting for Ralph, I am now freed up to go practical with Al."

Nick's wife, Robin Swicord, wrote at the bottom of my fax: "Your goals are the only survival game."

I struggled with her comment. What actually *was* my goal? When is idealism simply self-righteousness with a moral spin? Would I now decide to vote for Gore after all? And would Nick then vote for Nader just to keep the balance going? Families were divided. In the *Los Angeles Times,* Robert Scheer, who supported Gore, devoted a column to quoting his offspring; two of his three sons supported Nader. And while former talk show host Phil Donahue campaigned for Nader, his wife, actress/feminist Marlo Thomas, publicly supported Gore.

Certainly I felt strongly about reproductive rights. Indeed, during the Sixties when abortion was illegal, I ran an underground referral service. In September 1969, I was subpoenaed to appear before a Grand Jury investigating criminal charges against physicians who performed abortions. I refused to cooperate, and Bronx District Attorney Burton Roberts threatened me with prison. Gerald Lefcourt filed a suit on my behalf, challenging the constitutionality of the abortion law, pointing out that the D.A. had no power to investigate the violation of an unconstitutional law, and therefore could not force me to testify. I became the only plaintiff in the first lawsuit to declare the abortion laws unconstitutional in New York. Later, various women's groups joined the suit, and ultimately the New York legislature repealed the criminal sanctions against abortion, prior to the Supreme Court decision in Roe vs. Wade.

And yet now, if true that a vote for Nader was a vote for Bush, I found myself in the position of, in effect, voting for a candidate whose favorite Supreme Court justices were anti-abortion: Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. Ironically, then-Senator Al Gore had voted for both. But suppose that, during the *next* four years, no Supreme Court

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Paul Krassner is the author of Sex, Drugs and the Twinkie Murders: 40 Years of Countercultural Journalism *(Loompanics Unlimited); his CD is* Campaign in the Ass *(Artemis Records).*

justice retired or died. Then, in 2004—when they would be even *more* likely to retire or die—would Democrats and liberals be warning me that a vote for Nader is a vote for John McCain?

How long must idealism be postponed?

When I voted for Ralph Nader yesterday, I knew that he would lose, but my vote was an act of optimism, and it's been a long time since I had any hope for the political system. Since Gore won in my state, California, I can avoid the scorn and guilt-tripping, the condescending venom, of Democrats and liberals, though I admit it was strange to be rooting for a candidate I didn't vote for.

I consider that casting my vote for Nader served as my participation in the opening salvo of a nonviolent revolution. And *that* was my goal. That's what I've always wanted. It's what I had in mind when the Youth International Party (the Yippies) was conceived after that acid trip in the Seaquarium.

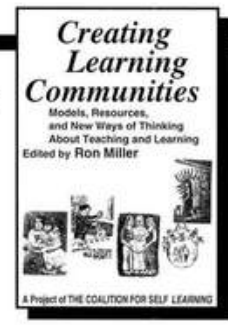
Call me deluded, but by "revolution" I mean helping to speed up the process of evolution just a little. The dolphin was right—"If God is evolution, then how do you know He's finished?"—although, when I told dolphin researcher John Lilly about that incident, he corrected me: "... then how do you know *you're* finished?" ❑

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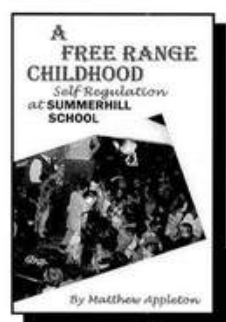
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A Different Way to Vote Third Party

Dan Cantor

This was not an especially exalted electoral season on the American left. Progressives across the country were presented with an old problem—vote for a less-than-perfect Democrat, or support a noble but doomed protest candidate and risk splitting the vote.

In the end, of course, it appears that the worst of all possible scenarios emerged. The Greens failed to reach 5 percent of the vote, and have not established themselves in any meaningful way. Plus they appear to have "spoiled" several Congressional races, and perhaps the presidency itself.

Minor parties can wield real political power.

It would be a shame, however, if the lesson learned by progressives in this election is "Always Vote Democratic," because America truly does need an alternative to the corporate-dominated major parties. At the very least, progressives need a credible "threat of exit" to ensure that the Democrats remain accountable to our issues and values.

Fortunately, there is a way to build such a political party. This November, 100,000 New Yorkers expressed their dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party, and their support for a labor and community-based, multiracial alternative. But they were also voting to help elect Al Gore and Hillary Clinton. By voting on the Working Families Party line, these people in effect voted twice—once to support the better of the viable candidates for president and U.S. Senate, and once to help build a progressive minor party that can create real change in New York State.

This was possible because New York is one of a handful of states that still allow "fusion voting"—minor parties are allowed to cross-nominate candidates also running on one of the major party lines. So Al Gore and Hillary Clinton could run both on the Democratic Party line (Row B) and on the Working Families Party line (Row H). The votes are tallied separately, but count together to determine the winner.

The Working Families Party was formed in 1998 by a coalition of unions and community organizations. One wag put it this way: "The WFP is uniting the Bruce Springsteen vote, the Lauryn Hill vote, and the Pete Seeger vote under one banner." Less musically, the Party supports local living wage laws and a statewide increase in the minimum wage; universal health care; "clean money" campaign finance reform; increased investment in public schools; better workers' compensation benefits; and laws to make it easier for workers to organize unions, among other commitments.

Because it's very clear to the politicians, the media, and the public how many votes a minor party gets on its line, minor parties can wield real political power without running their own candidates. For example, in 1994, Mario Cuomo got more votes on the Democratic line than George Pataki got on the Republican line. It was Pataki's 300,000 votes on the Conservative line that gave him the victory. This, in turn, gave the Conservatives real clout in the Pataki administration and helped advance its anti-government, anti-regulation, pro-tax cuts for the wealthy agenda.

The Working Families Party believes it can have the same kind of impact—but on the other side of the political ledger. In the major races, the party supports the best of the major party candidates. It's not a "splinter" party and it doesn't run "spoiler" races. But it also doesn't cede everything to conservative Democrats. The WFP helps develop and run candidates up and down the ballot, picking races where it has a chance of running an independent third-line challenger, supporting Democrats where they are good, even picking up the odd Republican candidates when they express fidelity to the party's views. Equally important, the party isn't just about elections. It has organizing, advocacy, and political development work that go on all year long. It is small-"d" democratic, and gives organizations—like unions and community groups—and grassroots activists alike real power.

Unfortunately, New York is one of only eight states that currently allow party cross-nomination of candidates, but this can change. Since our tortuous presidential election, there has been strong bipartisan recognition that the rules of the electoral game need to be radically improved. In the twenty or so states that allow ballot initiatives, backers of fusion voting can present a ballot initiative to change state laws. In the other states, a fusion-voting measure would have to pass through the state legislature. But that might not be so hard. Even the major parties can see the benefits of providing a way for minor parties to function without "spoiling."

Perhaps by 2004, millions of Americans will have the same opportunities that New Yorkers have—the ability to cast a "protest vote that counts," to vote for a party that will really advance social justice, without spoiling the election. ❑

Dan Cantor is the WFP's executive director. For more information, call 718-222-3796 or check out www.votewfp.org.

The Challenge Ahead

Transforming Media

Danny Schechter

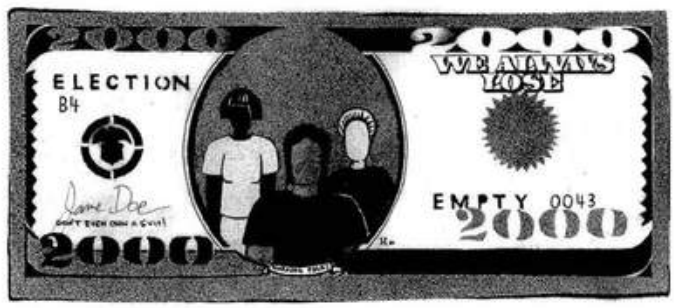


ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MacPHEE

It's one o'clock in the morning, election night. The count on the college of electoral knowledge is 242–242. A stone tie. Tom Brokaw is shaking his head, and all across America those of us who are still awake are watching the count go up and down, watching the lips of pundits moving in sync with the graphics and the drama of the moment. Later, one commentator would tell a Boston radio station that he felt like he was stoned. I am feeling the way I felt in New York just a month earlier watching the Yankees and the Mets dueling through the extra innings of a hard fought World Series as runs by one team were soon matched by the other. I am thinking: politics has become baseball by other means. No one is talking about the vision thing, or the issue thing. It's all about two men and numbers, the horse race thing.

Politics has been effectively depoliticized, turned into a war of symbols and signs, most of it intended to obscure what is really at stake.

The irony is that over the course of the year, politics has been effectively depoliticized, turned into a war of symbols and signs, most of it intended to obscure what is really at stake. Jokes on shows like *Politically Incorrect* are taken more seriously than the ideas of the candidates or the analysts. (i.e. "Whose foreign policy do you like the most? Letterman's or Leno's?") Comedy has subverted consciousness. To be cool these days is to be skeptical. On its cover, the media magazine *Brill's Content* proclaims skepticism to be a virtue.

This process of depoliticization has played out in the media, even becoming a media story in itself. Who hasn't read a column or seen a news show on what in the consulting business is called "the Air War," the billions of dollars in ads campaigns produce to sway the voter/consumer? (NATO bombed the Serbs: the Democrats and Republicans are bombing us.) Even with all this self-referential cynicism, however, reporters continue to discuss the political system as if they operate somewhere outside of it, or above it, in some oversight role as "the fourth estate."

If media objectivity was ever true, it is no longer. Just as media companies have merged with each other, just as show biz has merged into news biz, politics and media are now one. Media Tenor, the German media monitoring organization, has been monitoring the media coverage of the U.S. campaign weekly for mediachannel.org, the website I edit. They have shown that there is a three-day lag between what the media is focusing on and the public opinion polls. When a candidate is not covered, or covered negatively, his or her ranking goes down. The next week, as media coverage yin yangs, so do the polling results.

That coverage is remarkably uniform. Virtually every media organization, for example, downplayed or ignored the Nader campaign and its issues until a few days before the vote. Then, Nader became "the Nader Factor"—with Nader projected as playing a spoiler role. In the immediate aftermath of the vote, Nader voters were blamed for what happened. But no one reported on the incredibly low turnout or the disenfranchisment of minority communities. No one looked carefully at how Gore didn't even carry states won by Dukakis, or the key constituencies that usually vote Democratic. The race became "Mr. Smart Guy" versus "Mr. Nice Guy." Bush was treated as a credible figure, and ipso facto, became one in many people's eyes.

One reason the coverage is so monolithic is that networks share the same data. Though careful not to reveal their own

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reporting methods to the public, the major networks in fact all rely on a special agency that they jointly set up and funded (to save costs, of course) called the Voters News Service, designed to project winners and losers. That is, all the networks get the same information at the same time, even though they all pretend somehow that they are first. On election night, that information was obviously wrong. Finally, the media race imploded. As columnist Norman Solomon put it: "The rushed and faulty projections for election results were dramatic manifestations of the kind of intrinsically flawed coverage of politics that goes on all the time in national media."



The media's coverage of this election in many ways redefined the meaning of U.S. politics. Given their effect, the media's role is a big problem that deserves to become a political issue. It isn't yet, however, even among those of us who want to change America. We tend too often to see media and media politics as an afterthought, a side issue. Even Ralph Nader, who has an incisive critique of the way big media frames the issues and limits the range of debate, didn't talk much about abuses of media power during his campaign until he began to complain about being virtually ignored. By then, his complaints seemed self-serving.

If media has become a key threat to democracy, what are we going to do about it?

It takes a trip outside the United States sometimes to appreciate just how our media works to undermine our democracy. At a recent conference in Germany on how the media sets the agenda, Barbara Pfetsch, a Berlin-based media scholar, offered an eye-opening comparative analysis of the norms of media agenda-setting in the United States and Germany. The Germans have a politically motivated communications culture enriched by ideological debate among well-established mainstream parties from competing traditions, including the Socialists and the Greens who now form a governing coalition. In contrast, Pfetsch depicted the United States as a political system dominated by a media-driven commercial system and by weak parties where ideas and real differences are minimal and cleave to the center. (Hedrik Hetzberg made a similar point in the *New Yorker* recently, arguing that "the United States doesn't really have a two-party system because the Democrats and Republicans aren't really parties but shifting coalitions.")

In both countries, the media and politics interact, but the values and orientations of the actors are different. The media system in Germany is far more politicized. Political success is defined by how the parties and their programs are received. "In contrast," explains Pfetsch, "a media-oriented political communication system [like that in the United States] is concerned only with favorable media coverage and the unspecific support for which the media public is surrogate."

Let's underscore her insight: In the United States, political and media actors do not see the public as "the people" but rather as a "media public," conditioned by media, educated by media, and in many ways misled by media. Political actors then utilize "media logic" to influence this media public. "This approach implies techniques of political marketing, looks for strategic target groups, sees voters as consumers and offers a symbolic product which is constructed and marketed," Pfetsch argues.

"Constructed and marketed"! Yup, that about sums up the presidential election ritual in the United States. I had to go to Leipzig to get a more precise handle on what is happening in my own country. I also learned that one reason Germany has a political culture richer than our own is that Germany has well-financed, non-commercial public broadcasting outlets with large audiences, setting a standard that elevates national political discussion.

If the U.S. media can set the political agenda, they can also set a counteragenda that promotes the rejection of politics. Saying one thing and doing another is nothing new to the media, of course. Just recently we learned that major media companies who said they opposed marketing violent products to children actually did just that. There's a logic to depoliticizing the audience in an industry where stimulating consumers is far more important than educating citizens. If entertainment programming produces higher ratings and revenues, why not cut back on politics? The self-interest and lack of democratic accountability of those at the top of the media system explains why media CEOs give low priority and less airtime to issue oriented programming. On TV, we have lots of heat but little light.

Media cynicism encourages public apathy, and public apathy means fewer voters. Studies by the "Vanishing Voter" project at Harvard University point to the declining level of voting as a function of the loss of engagement by individuals in all phases of the political process. If true, this decline can be blamed in no small part on the media itself.

If media has become a key threat to democracy, what are we going to do about it? I am convinced that the media's power will grow even more insidiously in the next four years unless and until whatever progressive opposition we have starts educating people about it. That's why I am editing mediachannel.org (check it out!). To date, the Right has made media a priority. The Left has virtually ignored it. That has to change if real change can ever be put on the agenda. ❑

Bugs in the System

Nicholas Von Hoffman



ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

As election day 2000 neared, a woman recipient of more than a few taped political messages on her answering machine was heard to say, "Paul Simon has called me three times. I think he has a thing for me." My ads versus yours, my phone banks dueling yours, my mailings clogging the mailboxes with yours. If nothing else, the just-completed presidential campaign proved that $1.5 billion pitted against $1.5 billion may get you nothing more than a stalemate. Having burned their way through three billion bucks, the pols had little to show for the money but a flat-footed tie and the knowledge that at least half of the electorate took neither them nor their messages seriously enough to vote.

Whilst the politicians may wonder how come they got so few votes for so much moola, a loud, intemperate voice from deep underneath makes the earth reverberate with the question, "What the hell is going on here?" A presidential contest, the outcome of which millions were indifferent to, suddenly blew up at its end into a series of unseemly scenes dominated by theatrical posing and mud-rolling wrestling matches by famous names in which the men and women of American politics put their cupidity for power and place over the pretense of serving anyone, any ideal, or anything other than their own preferment.

In a matter of hours the presidential election, heretofore free of interference from legal insects, was overrun by hymenopterous lawyers. The customary restraints that had heretofore kept the arthropods of the bar out of our quadrennial rites having been breached, we must now wait and see if future presidential elections will be decided, not by voters, but by lawyers. Rolling in dough from the gut-busting tolls they levy on daily life and enterprise, the members of the bar had played a powerful enough role financing much of the campaign, but the post-election drama presents us with the possibility that they will supercede voting by litigation. (According to the Center for Responsive Politics, *www.opensecrets.org*, lawyers contributed more money to this recently deceased campaign than the insurance, gas, oil, and pharmaceutical industries combined.)

The closeness of the election gave the profession its opportunity to insert itself into the working business of the great American psephocracy. We can hope that four years hence circumstances will not repeat themselves, but we seem to be in a period like that of 1876–1896, when, nationally, the parties were at something close to arithmetic parity. Opportunities to practice legal wickedness abound.

The Gore-Bush gyrations also cast a flickering light on the shaky social foundations on which our politics sit, an inert molecule mass-bombarded by visual and aural stimuli. Certainly, the campaign taught us that one-way communication in a democratic country is a parlous business. Three billion spent yelling into people's ears without so much as an answering whisper makes for the kind of swirling, pitch-and-yaw politics we have had more than a little of in the past few years.

Campaigns, of course, ardently try to learn what people are thinking, but polls and focus groups are expensive and crude substitutes for the defunct interior communication systems political parties once had to rely on. The isolation bubble in which national politicians are forced to live has been plain enough to see for the last quarter of a century. The bubble's membrane has gotten thicker as politicians have had to concentrate more on money-raising and less on people. No time to press the flesh or work the fences. In the era of capital-intensive politics the campaigning must be left to the advertising people, the media buyers, the public-opinion surveyors, and the market manipulators who profit so handsomely from election work. Appearances at coffee shops and kaffeeklatsches have symbolic import, and hard-working office holders are still sometimes seen at town meeting-type events. Nevertheless they are like the rest of us—lost in a Sahara of strangers.

(continued on page 43)

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predicted famine to commandeer and stockpile food for the bad days ahead. He had Pharaoh's mandate to take this novel and draconian step. Similarly, we are enjoying the last years of plenty before the approaching storm, but as the election made plain, we have no mandate and no Joseph. There was, however, a dark side to the Joseph story. As Genesis recounts, Joseph took a decentralized state in which there were various strong political and social entities and created a centralized, monolithic power with Pharaoh owning all land and resources. In other words, Joseph invented the despotic, all-powerful, pyramid-building monarchy that so oppressed his descendants four hundred years later. That the Joseph solution is closed to us may not prove entirely bad.

What oppresses us now is a democratic, centralized government perverted to the support of corporations and elites—part of a globalizing force that negates diversity, independence, history, culture, foresight, and common sense all at the same time. I voted for Gore for the little that he might do and the active evil that he would avoid, but I had no illusions about the positive things that he could achieve. Yet there are alternatives springing up all around us.

Decentralization and progressive thought are rebounding—Seattle showed us that—and during the next four years and afterwards we can each contribute to a progressive movement in a hundred ways, regardless of what happens in Washington. Our collective task is to build a shadow society that can replace many of the least desirable features of the existing system. Some of the elements of this shadow society could be: community land trusts, micro-lending on the Grameen model, local currencies, community-supported agriculture, local environmental awareness, functional and comprehensible technologies, barter, community self-insurance on the Amish model, community health care and preventive medicine, celebration of cooperation rather than competition, and the teaching of all these practices in our schools.

Above all, we can each begin the absolutely necessary, fundamental change in lifestyle that neither Bush nor Gore could have implemented in this consumption-driven economy which they are both bound—by a billion dollars of campaign contributions—to support to the bitter end. Fortunately, we don't need their help to start the transition from a consumer to a producer culture, which has saved us in the past and might just rescue us again. ❑

Bugs in the System *(continued from page 41)*

A new mark for the physical distance between official and constituent was chalked up when this last 106th Congress stayed in session almost up to Election Day. Even though some of the membership on both sides of the aisle were in electoral dogfights, there was no panic about getting home to campaign in the district. They had finished their campaigning, i.e., gotten their money raised, months before, so they could stay in Washington where they got little or nothing done. Then, strange to say, they did go home, not to reappear until after Thanksgiving.

The campaign was on automatic pilot, with the boys and girls in the bunkers—that is the advertising people, the direct mail specialists, the people with the headsets and monitors and clipboards—having taken the place of the politician on the stump. Who knows if the senator is in the state or the congressperson is in the district, who can tell, who cares? What does it matter since the candidate is always virtually present? In a mass society, Internet or no Internet, communication isn't interactive but is between the politician and the target population, the target demographic group, the target interest group.

Perhaps nothing better is possible. Certainly, nothing better is on the horizon as this latest, low-turnout, low-interest election suggests. Candidate debates suffer from a slipping viewership. Commercial television stations put politicians on for more than a few seconds at their peril. All that advertising money consumed by Gore-Bush and the excitement of a close contest still couldn't entice more than about half of the atomized electorate to the polls.

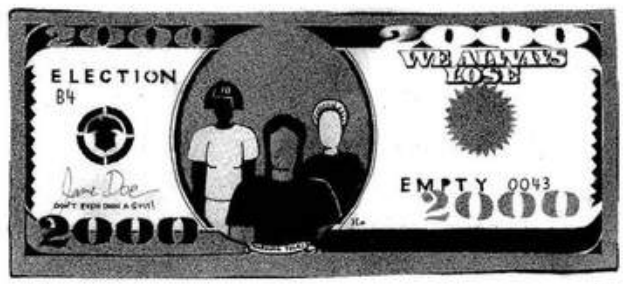
Some people were excited, however. As we saw again in this election, each of these two parties has for its core fifty or a hundred thousand men and women whose base of operation isn't local or state party organization but crisscrosses of associations springing out of their places in colleges and universities, think tanks, political law offices, trade associations, and foundations. Patronage, or the spoils system, has long since been reformed out of existence for the hoi polloi who get *bupkes* for being party activists and ardent campaign workers. But the mental workers, as they have been heard to dub themselves, policy wonks, strategy-wallahs, the talking heads with the dancing brains, the self-assured flotsam and jetsam who crank out those interminable studies and the insipid op-eds, get those assistant under-secretaryship jobs. Famished for power and perks, they pour out of the law schools and the centers for the study of this and that to cop the boodle when their side wins.

Maybe there is no other way to run modern, mass-society party politics than to rely on such people. Whether they are indispensable specialists who make party government effective or plaque in the arteries of the body politic is a puzzle, but they are a peculiar subset who give shape and texture to every modern administration in Washington, just as they are the backbone of the two parties to whom they look for patronage and a livelihood.

Thus for the immediate future we are left with two parties composed of legal, technical, and policy elites, floating strangely disconnected from the broad mass of people whose part in the drama is to be manipulated but not incorporated into the political process. It is a precarious and probably short-lived system which will come to an end when the next bad thing happens. ❑

Foreshadowing a New Society

David Ehrenfeld



By coincidence, at the time of the election I was discussing a book called *The Collapse of Complex Societies* with my graduate class in conservation ecology. The book, by archaeologist Joseph Tainter, has a simple thesis: as societies in the past became ever more complex in their organization and administration, the investment of energy and resources needed to maintain their structures began to yield declining marginal returns, eventually reaching a point at which the costs of maintaining them were so great and the returns so meager that collapse was likely.

Columnist John Farmer wrote, "whoever wins, we'll be okay." I don't think Farmer is right. We face a hostile world and depend on flawed technology we only dimly understand.

We have the most complex empire in history. But the prevailing view of our brightest political pundits is that times are good and prospects are rosy. On the day before the November election, the syndicated columnist John Farmer, a sensible, balanced, and well-informed man, ran a column entitled "Whoever wins, we'll be okay." In it, he said, "this is not a critical time in the history of our country.... With the possible exception of its impact on the Supreme Court (though no president can be sure how his court nominees will turn out), this is not a particularly important election."

I don't think that Farmer was right about this not being a critical time in our country's history. We face an increasingly hostile and desperate world, with crises of soil degradation, food production, climate, nationalism, pollution, emerging and reemerging diseases, poverty, and social disintegration looming on every part of the horizon. To maintain control we depend on an elaborate, flawed technology and a related economic system whose working and linkages we only dimly understand and whose most egregious defects we are constantly patching up with Band-aid solutions predicated on an abundance of cheap, oil-based energy. Now, the petroleum geologists are warning us that global oil production will peak and then start to decline in as little as four or five years, regardless of new wells or whether there is peace in the Middle East. We are beginning to see the early effect of this at the gas pump.

Here are some of the declining marginal returns we are getting for our investment: A fabulously expensive agricultural biotechnology which is not giving the world increased yields of food and is not going to—but which is rapidly destroying the crop genetic resources, ecosystem stability, and cultural continuity upon which our future food supply depends. A fabulously expensive military machine, whose principal weapons are not only too costly to risk losing in combat, but cannot work in any war, especially the kind we are likely to fight. A fabulously expensive health care system that grows less satisfactory and less viable for both practitioners and patients every day. A fabulously expensive and enormous penal system whose rapidly mounting social costs will be borne, ultimately, by every woman, man, and child in the country.

But Farmer may be right when he says that it doesn't matter who won. Curiously, Tainter agrees with him, stating the "leadership ... is of much less importance than many believe.... When marginal returns are declining, there is usually very little that leadership can do in the short term to arrest this trend, and so anything that is tried is bound to appear incompetent." This seems particularly true after this last election—a political dead stymie. The equal numbers of Republican and Democratic voters rule out the possibility that the novel and revolutionary approaches required to meet the terrible challenges of the future will be forthcoming.

Where does this leave us? The biblical Joseph in Egypt took advantage of the last seven years of plenty before the

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MacPHEE

Which Babies?

Dilemmas of Genetic Testing

Shelley Burtt



"MOTHER AND BABY" NO. 2 BY EVELYN WILLIAMS

What sort of life is worth living? Advances in medical technology have given Socrates' question a new, more poignant meaning. For the first time in history, we have the means to will the disappearance of those born disabled at the same time that we have the resources to enable these children to live better and longer lives than was ever possible before. How will we respond to these new cross-cutting possibilities? Genetic testing gives us the tools to choose in advance against certain sorts of lives. How are these tools to be used? What sort of lives are worth living?

As a bereaved parent of a child with Down syndrome, I am painfully aware that the life my son led for two and a half joyous years is a life that many individuals would cut short before it began. Although genetic testing is often presented as a service designed to reassure parents that their children-to-be are without congenital abnormalities, the practice in fact functions to prescreen "defective" fetuses for abortion. The assumption of most health care providers in the United States is that the successful diagnosis of a genetic anomaly provides an opportunity to "cure" a pathological condition. Once the arrival of a normally healthy baby is in doubt, the decision to abort is seen as rational and the opportunity to do so as fortunate.

For an anxious parent, genetic testing accompanied by the possibility of therapeutic abortion appears to enhance individual freedom by providing an additional measure of control over one's reproductive choices. But this perspective represents a woefully limited understanding of what it might mean to live as or with a person whose genetic makeup differs markedly from the general population and in a way that will to some extent impair his functioning. I'd like instead to explore what reasons we might have to resist the conclusion that a diagnosis of genetic abnormality is in itself a good reason to terminate a pregnancy and what cultural resources might be required to encourage this resistance.

My husband and I first welcomed Declan into our lives on a hot summer morning in July 1993. We had just come from the midwives' office where I had refused the genetic test (AFP) that screens for neural tube defects and would almost certainly have alerted us to our son's chromosomal abnormalities. Sitting on a bench outside Central Park, we asked ourselves, "What if there were a disability?" What use would we make of the information the test promised to provide? Although we come from different religious traditions (my husband is Jewish; I am Christian), we shared the view that the decision to create another human being was not conditional on the sort of human being that child turned out to be. For both of us, the child I was carrying was best understood as a gift we were being asked to care for, not a good we had the responsibility or right to examine for defects before accepting. With a blissfully innocent optimism, or perhaps an eerie prescience, we affirmed that day that we would love this child for who he was, whatever that turned out to be.

Not every couple will willingly go through a pregnancy in ignorance of their fetus's health or future prospects, especially when the tests for a variety of disabling conditions are so readily available. What we can insist on, however, is a clear-eyed recognition of how genetic testing actually func-

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tions in our society and a greater commitment on the part of medical practitioners and prospective parents to fully reflect on the knowledge it provides. Whether or not to carry on with a pregnancy at all, let alone one which will result in the birth of a child with either moderate or profound disabilities, ought to be a decision made carefully and thoughtfully by the prospective parents of that child, not by strangers, legislators, or disability rights activists. But what does a good decision in these circumstances look like?

For many bioethicists, the watchword when it comes to difficult decision-making is individual autonomy. The role of the medical practitioner is not to prescribe a course of action but to provide the necessary information for the patient to decide what he or she truly wants to do. Yet, when a fetus is diagnosed as disabled or "defective" in some way, few parents are offered a truly informed choice about their options, as medical providers are rarely neutral when it comes to choosing between bringing an abnormal fetus to term or ending the pregnancy and "trying again." Because genetic abnormality is defined not as one characteristic with which a human being might be challenged but as a treatable medical problem, few parents faced with a positive diagnosis are invited to think beyond the now troubled pregnancy to the joys and rewards as well as the heartache and challenge that accepting and raising a child with special needs can bring.

More than this: to offer a therapeutic abortion as a "cure" for the diagnosed disability is deeply disingenuous. We do not cure cystic fibrosis or Down syndrome by ensuring that fetuses carrying this trait do not come to term; we simply destroy the affected entity. The service health care providers offer in this regard is more truthfully characterized as a form of eugenics, either medical (if driven by physicians' preferences) or personal (if driven by parents'). Physicians genuinely committed to patient autonomy in the context of genetic testing would not prejudge the worth or desirability of bearing a child whose genetic makeup was in some way abnormal. Instead, they would seek to ensure that parents truly understood what it meant to care for a child with special needs. This would mean, at a minimum, encouraging parents to inform themselves about the diagnosed condition, giving them the opportunity to speak to pediatricians familiar with the problem, and enabling them to meet with families already caring for children with this condition.

Those who believe that the practice of genetic testing followed by selective abortion is an acceptable way of ensuring the birth of a healthy child often argue that the desire to parent a certain sort of child is not morally blameworthy. We can wish to be parents without wishing to be parents of a child with Fragile X syndrome or Tay-Sachs disease. Yet few who make this argument are willing to probe how our reproductive desires are constructed or at what point our desires become sufficiently self-reflective to be valid guides to action. On what basis do parents feel themselves "not ready" to parent a child with unexpectedly special needs? The picture they hold of a child's disabling trait and the effect it will have on the child and the family's life as a whole may be grounded in a volatile combination of fear and ignorance, not in some acquaintance with the actual life experiences of individuals already engaged in this task or deep reflection on the nature and purpose of parenting. It also seems likely that we cannot accurately assess in advance what challenges we are ready for. It is difficult to predict how we might grow and change in the face of seemingly adverse circumstances.

Certain parents might feel they cannot responsibly continue a pregnancy in which an abnormality has been diagnosed because they lack the financial or emotional resources to care for such a child. But this assessment is not made in a vacuum. What we feel we can manage depends in part on the level of social and political support families with disabled children can expect to receive, support which in turn depends on the degree to which such lives are valued or appreciated by our community.

The weight it is appropriate to give to parental desires in a reproductive context can perhaps be clarified by considering the internationally prevalent practice of sex-selective abortions. Parents around the world currently use the information derived from prenatal sonograms to advance their desire for a son by aborting female fetuses, a practice about which many physicians and most ethicists have grave moral reservations. Here, where parental desires are already considered suspect, the cultural construction of these desires and the appropriateness of resisting their expression is readily acknowledged. It is held to be an important part of making the world more just to change those cultural scripts which lead parents to prefer a son over a daughter so strongly that they will end a pregnancy rather than have a girl. We need to think critically and courageously about why a similar revaluation of social attitudes towards congenital disabilities is not also considered necessary.

I believe it is possible for some parents, after profound and prayerful reflection, to make the difficult decision that, all things considered, it is best for a child that it never be born. Incapacitating physical or mental deformity or the certainty of a life destroyed by a wasting disease are conditions which might conceivably, but not necessarily, call forth such a conclusion. But a judgement of this sort cannot be made with any fairness when speaking of disabilities such as spina bifida or Down syndrome where the quality of life available to the afflicted person is relatively high. A commitment to truly informed choice would ensure that we do not dismiss the possibility of caring for children burdened by disease or disability without an effort to appreciate and understand their possible lives.

But we need more than a commitment to truly informed choice if we are to create a world in which the birth of a disabled child is not thought of primarily as a stroke of bad luck, readily avoidable by more aggressive prenatal testing.

The lives of those whose capacities fall outside the normal range must be personally and socially recognized as independently valuable, not only worth living in themselves but worth living with.

As the parent of a disabled child, I have experienced first hand the transformed perspective on life possible when one is given the opportunity to live with those who confound our routine expectations, who have too much or too little of a range of expected human traits, who experience life in a way that must remain opaque to the majority of normally functional human beings. What my parents' generation would have called Declan's "mental retardation," we termed his "developmental disabilities." But what was neither retarded nor disabled was an infectious enthusiasm for life which illuminated any interaction with him, an ability to give and receive love that was uncomplicated by the egoism, self-awareness, or self-consciousness of a "typical" child. Parenting this child forced us to reconsider our conception of what qualities and capacities made life worth living; the joy my son clearly took in life and the joy he gave us compelled such a re-evaluation.



But it is not enough to catalog the ways in which life with "them" is valuable for what it brings "us." The respect due to all persons by virtue of their humanity is not dependent on possessing only that sort of genetic makeup which guarantees normal human functioning. Our religious and political traditions teach that each human life has independent and intrinsic value. What would the consequences be of taking this truth seriously when we contemplated becoming parents?

Such a commitment would have to call forth a profound reassessment of the place of human will in the creation of human life. Both the cause of human freedom and of human equality have been admirably served by the ability, achieved only in this century, to choose to become parents. But we in the industrialized world now teeter on the brink of being able to choose what sort of children we want to become parents of. To some this capacity to control our destiny as parents is an almost unadulterated positive. One of the advantages of scientific progress is supposed to be the ability it gives humans to control their lives. Some make the point that being a good parent is hard enough without the additional burdens of severe or moderate disabilities to cope with. Others argue that it is cruel to bring a child into the world who will always be different, for whom the normal trials of life will be magnified hundreds of times. Why not, then, embrace the opportunity offered by advances in prenatal testing to discard those reproductive efforts we will experience as "disappointing," less than perfect, abnormal, or unhealthy? The most important reason is that sorting the results of the human reproductive process in this way ranks human beings according to their capacity to please their creators, fulfill their parents' dreams, or contribute to social productivity. This willingness to sit in judgement over the sorts of persons deserving a place in our moral communities closes down rather than enlarges the scope of human freedom. The ability to control one's destiny that science supposedly promotes turns out to be conditional on being the right sort of person.

As my younger sisters became pregnant in the wake of Declan's death, I hoped right along with them for a niece or nephew free from illness, defect, or developmental challenges. The question is not whether it is right to desire a "normal" child, but how one ought to respond when genetic testing reveals that desire has been thwarted. To take steps at that point to abort the fetus and "try again" is not just to decide against being pregnant or in favor of "controlling one's life." It is to decide in advance and for another that a certain sort of life (a female one, a physically handicapped one, a mentally retarded one) is not worth living. The moral scope and impact of this decision appears to me far more troubling than a decision for or against parenthood based solely on a positive pregnancy test. Postponing an abortion decision until one knows what sort of child has been created places relative weights on human beings: some are more worthy of living, of being cared for, of being cherished, than others.

Having cared, however briefly, for a special needs child, I do not belittle the level of care and commitment called forth by the opportunity to parent a child or adult with moderate to severe disabilities. But I remain deeply skeptical that the best response to these challenges is the one currently favored by the Western medical establishment: to treat congenital imperfections as we do infectious diseases and to seek their cure by their eradication. Rather we need, through a genuine encounter with those whose identities are shaped but never fully encompassed by their bodies' imperfections, to rethink our willingness not only to live with the disabled but to live with unchosen obligations.Our cultural assumptions to the contrary, living a good and rich life does not require and is not identical with complete control of its circumstances. In fact, the aspiration for such "freedom" dishonors a fundamental aspect of the human condition. To those willing to recognize the essential humanity of every possible child, sometimes to choose not to know—or not to act on what we do know—will be the best choice of all. ❑

The Ninth Degree of Tzedakah

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

Maimonides wrote about the eight degrees of *tzedakah*, with partnership at the pinnacle: "upholding the hand of a Jew ... by making a gift or a loan, or entering into a partnership." Recently, however, the United Jewish Endowment Fund (UJEF) broke through the Maimonidean "ceiling" to achieve the ninth degree of *tzedakah*: partnership with non-Jews based upon Jewish values.

The breakthrough came in the form of a UJEF investment in several low-income community development financial institutions (CDFIs) in the District of Columbia. UJEF combined with local Jewish family foundations and individuals to make an "affirmative action loan" of nearly half a million dollars, to be used for housing and job development in neighborhoods that have been starved for credit by mainstream lending institutions. The loans were coordinated and vouchsafed by The Shefa Fund in Philadelphia, as part of our nationwide TZEDEC program (for more about TZEDEC see our November/December 1999 column).

Investments of this kind have only minimal impact on funding for Jewish needs. Nevertheless, the use of Federation monies for "non-Jewish" activism highlights an old tension in Jewish life between "particularism" and "universalism"—what Rabbi Harold Schulweis has called the "Ezra" and "Ruth" paradigms of leadership.

Ezra, who led the Jews back from Babylonian captivity, demanded that the men renounce their foreign wives (Ezra 9:10), a decision motivated by the need to consolidate Jewish identity in order to survive. Ruth, a foreign wife herself, nevertheless rooted herself in Jewish values and became the mother of the Davidic, that is, the messianic, line (Ruth 1:4). Both paradigms have been critical to the survival and evolution of our Jewish civilization. Today, however, universalism is clearly dominant in American Jewish life. The prosperity, prominence, and safety that Jews have achieved here, in combination with the renewal of identity and literacy that we currently enjoy, obviate any need for self-imposed isolation.

But universalism faces a credibility challenge. Though America Jews have famously worked for justice, most of our twentieth century landmark activists were assimilated Jews who had only a marginal connection to Jewish communal life and rarely referenced Judaism's teachings. For the Ruth paradigm to establish firm roots in today's Jewish community, contemporary advocates must not only help "the stranger in our midst," but create partnerships that truly strengthen, deepen, and revitalize Jewish identity.

Our concept of the "Ninth Degree of *Tzedakah*" does precisely that. First, we affirm that *tzedakah* is not simply about poverty relief, but about uplift of the entire Jewish community. As David Hartman and Tzvi Marx write in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* (1987),

> To feel the obligation of *tzedakah* is to ... experience the emotion of communal identity.... Through personal moral training in the very specific issues involved in *tzedakah* ... the foundation is laid for the reformation of society in its juridical and political dimensions. Efforts ... in the microcosm of charity are expected to bear fruit in the macrocosm of righteousness.

Like no other Jewish precept, *tzedakah* affirms the fundamental Jewish theological tenet that "the Earth belongs to God" (Psalm 24:1)—in secular terms, that wealth is the product of a collective human effort—which imposes a covenant of social responsibility on us all. For American Jews, confining *tzedakah* to Jewish causes cannot fulfill the Psalm's deeper meaning. The poor today are not predominantly Jewish. Issues of economic justice and righteousness are not vigorously exercised in decisions about education, intermarriage, ritual practice, and so on (though issues of class and affordability, inclusion, and egalitarianism ought to be).

Maimonides' system of "Eight Degrees" therefore needs reconstruction. We have already argued (in *Jews, Money and Social Responsibility*) that his emphasis on anonymity in *tzedakah*, which was designed to serve as a social equalizer in the intimate Jewish communities of eras past, today boils down too easily to "checkbook charity," which the donor gives without encountering the humanity of the recipients. We have urged that *encounter*, rather than anonymity, be given higher status in our alienated modern world.

Now we are adding a ninth degree of *tzedakah*. Most American Jews are already affirming universalism by contributing as much or more to non-Jewish projects and causes as to Jewish causes. The ninth degree of *tzedakah* seeks to root their generosity in Jewish values so that it builds, rather than drains, the true wealth of our community. ❑

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro are co-authors of Jews, Money and Social Responsibility. *They can be reached at The Shefa Fund, info@shefafund.org. Torah of Money is a service mark of The Shefa Fund.*

JEWISH FICTION

Thinking About What the "Other" Was, and Now Is

Sanford Pinsker



"I fear," a brooding Stephen Dedalus says at one point in James Joyce's *Ulysses,* the abstract words that "make us sad." "Identity" has become one of those words, full of sound and fury but ultimately signifying much less than those who glibly throw the term around often realize. When the year 2000 census data is finally collected and dutifully shifted, my hunch is that we will discover that there aren't enough categories, enough "boxes," if you will, to adequately capture just how complicated identities in multicultural America have become. No doubt policy wonks and assorted sociologists will weigh in with their interpretations, but as someone who figures that fiction writers often have richer insights into the human experience, I've begun to ruminate about what literature can tell us—especially if we use American Jewish literature as a case study.

More than a century ago, Henry James talked about the "complex fate" of being an American. By this he meant the cultural differences—and often the resulting collisions—between new world innocence and old world sophistication, between histories formed over the centuries and an America still very much in progress. To James (and he was hardly alone in this feeling), immigrant Jews were the social Other, not at all "one of us," as the upper classes of the time so baldly put it. Jews had their own ways of marking the differences between disheveled new arrivals and those who prided themselves on their ability to adjust to American mores. The former were greenhorns, the latter, alrightniks. Abraham Cahan's fiction provides us with a running account of the tensions that acculturation caused as an immigrant Jewish generation tried to melt its way into the American mainstream.

The story of Jewish assimilation thus includes discrimination of all sorts, from Jewish quotas at the Ivies and medical schools to the discrimination widely practiced at white shoe law firms, Fortune 500 companies, and private clubs which continued to see Jews as social inferiors, yet "otherness" of the religio-political sort that flourished for centuries in Europe did not establish deep roots here. Like other immigrant groups, Jews were given opportunities to Americanize themselves and in large measure they did precisely that. Irving Howe's encyclopedic study, *World of Our Fathers* (1972), wraps two pounds of brisket around the bare bones of my last sentences, just as Henry Roth's novel, *Call It Sleep* (1934), makes it clear just how disorienting, how traumatic, the immigrant experience in fact was. To be a Jewish American at those times and in those crowded, squalid places was to live between an older world that was not quite dead and a new world that had not yet been entirely born. *Mit en drinen*, my *zayde* used to put it, caught awkwardly in the middle.

The transition from immigrant to American pivoted, it turned out, around a point that could be identified by words ending in "-tion": alienation, marginalization, and their assorted cousins. On the Jewish scene, the social Other became the critical outsider, for only a view from the margins would do when traditional modes of social thinking or literary vision no longer seemed relevant. Modernism may have been born in the chaos of World War I, but for those Jewish intellectuals who came of age during the mid-1930s, it was the Great Depression that changed everything. For such people, identity was a matter of where you positioned yourself on the political Left—and not merely as a Communist or Socialist, but also as a member of this or that left-wing sect. If, for example, you aligned yourself with the *Daily Worker* or *New Masses*, that spoke volumes about your politics and literary sensibility. And the same thing was true if you were counted among the *Partisan Review* crowd that may have (rightly) prided itself on fostering an atmosphere of intellectual independence but that had little patience with those who did not subscribe to its anti-Stalinism and advocacy of literary modernism.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHILLIP VANDERDYKEN



For better or worse, the heyday of such firm—and, yes, combative—literary identities is now almost completely over. For one thing, American Jews are no longer the American Other. This may well be a mixed blessing as any Jewish organization or pulpit rabbi will quickly tell you, for Jews have so completely assimilated, so widely intermarried, that one is left to wonder if the American melting pot has not been a more efficient disappearer of the Jews than were the gas chambers of Nazi Germany. I realize full well that there are considerable differences between cultural genocide and mass murder, but in the end what concerns me is an increasingly *judenrein* America.

Ironically enough, such worries coexist with literary evidence that the Jewish Other has been so turned upside-down that it is now an object of envy by characters who regard Jews as the mainstream. One thinks, for example, of Gish Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), a wonderfully comic novel about a rainbow coalition of teenagers (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jews) who come of age in affluent Scarsdale during the mid-1960s. What Mona Chang, the novel's protagonist, most wants to become is Mona Changowitz, an honorary Jew who can fit in with her high school's hip crowd.

In the process Gen appropriates—and plays with—Jewish stereotypes in much the same way that an older generation of Jewish American entertainers once saw themselves reflected in the minstrel tradition. Eddie Cantor's corked-up *punim* or Sophie Tucker's early career as what was then known as a "coon singer" are probably the most famous examples of a widespread phenomenon. The resulting masks were efforts to simultaneously identify with and distance oneself from the condition of racial-ethnic suffering that linked Blacks to Jews and Jews to Blacks. It was only later that the moguls of Hollywood would insist that stars with Jewish names change them and that the roles they played be as non-Jewish as possible.



Imagining Each Other, Ethan Goffman's recent study of Black-Jewish literature, focuses on writers such as Richard Wright, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Amiri Baraka and the complicated ways in which a shared system of biblical/mythic connections can lead to a common cause or an angry separation. Here, the case of Bernard Malamud is instructive, especially if one compares an early Malamud story such as "Angel Levine" (in which Blacks were really Jews under their pigmented skin, largely because everyone who suffers is, at bottom, a Jew) with the angry shouting matches that erupt when two writers, one melancholy, middle-aged, and Jewish, the other young, militant, and Black, are forced to share floor space in *The Tenants* (1971).

Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* (2000) adds a new wrinkle to the old formula as Coleman Silk, a venerable small-college classics professor, watches as his long, distinguished career goes up in politically correct smoke because of an off-hand remark. What he said, in a word, was "spooks," referring (at least in his mind) to the specters, the ghosts, of two students who had not been present when he called role during the opening weeks of his class. As it turns out, the students were black and much offended by the remark—no matter how much Professor Silk tried to explain that he meant the word in its primary, more precise definition. But it is the late 1990s and nobody at Athena College is willing to risk his or her career by speaking up in Silk's behalf—even those (or perhaps especially those) whom Silk had hired when he was dean.



As Nathan Zuckerman, the narrator of Silk's tale, discovers, each of the characters he runs across in this ersatz detective story has a hidden secret. Indeed, one of the things he comes to realize is that we all have lives hidden from ourselves, and that the neat formulations of, say, classical tragedy are never so nicely defined in life. Coleman Silk, for example, is not the Jewish professor he passed himself off as being but, instead, is an extraordinary black man from an extraordinary black family who simply refused to let race define who he was or could be. Given the classroom incident that leads to his downfall, the resulting ironies multiply in ways that could only happen in a Roth novel and in an era when Black characters can turn minstrel stereotypes on their ear by masquerading as Jews.

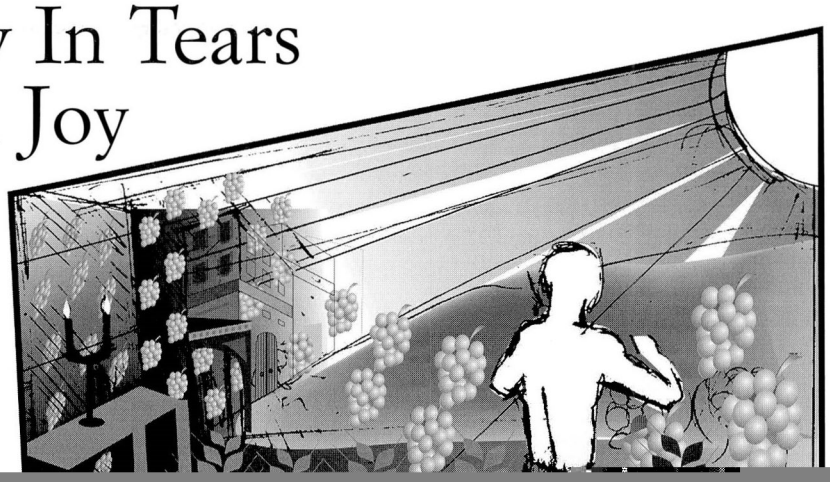
Nor do the permutations stop there as the no-holds-barred Paul Beatty, author of the highly regarded novel, *The White Boy Shuffle* (1996) demonstrates in his latest work, *Tuff* (2000). Rather than a Black who passes himself off as white and Jewish, Beatty gives us a minor character who converts to Judaism and eventually becomes a rabbi. Cast as a Big Brother/mentor for the novel's street-drifting protagonist, Beatty's curious religious figure is largely a source of comic relief as a motley crew of Spanish Harlemites shower him with all manner of verbal trouble.

And finally, there is Tova Reich's disturbing story, "The Third Generation" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, March 2000), in which the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor converts to Catholicism and joins a convent stationed at (where else?) Auschwitz. Nechama Messer (now transmogrified into Sister Consolata) insists that "the Christians are the new Jews" and that Holocaust Connections, Inc., the thriving Holocaust-remembrance business that her father and grandfather run, should be expanded to include not only whales, but also the world's endangered Christians. The Other is now presumably the Catholic, which rather turns Pope John Paul's

(continued on page 59)

JEWISH CULTURE

Those Who Sow In Tears Shall Reap With Joy



Agriculture and Jewish Culture in Interwar Poland

David Biale



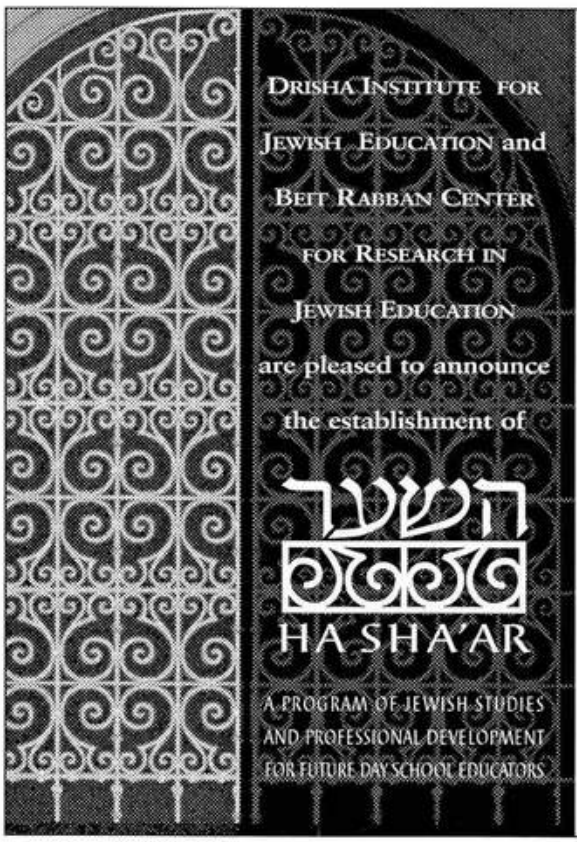
ture and generally were forbidden from owning land. But Jews in the Near East, including the substantial population in Iraq, remained a predominantly agricultural people until the eighth century, when neglect of irrigation by the new Muslim rulers caused Jews and others to migrate to newly invigorated cities. Even so, the famous Cairo Geniza shows that many Mediterranean Jews continued in agricultural professions when they could. As the Muslims conquered the Iberian peninsula from the sources. It was only in the nineteenth century that Jews moved in ever increasing numbers to the cities. By the interwar period, they constituted between one-fourth and one-third of the populations of the five major cities of Poland: Warsaw, Lodz, Vilno, Cracow, and Lvov. In many of the smaller towns, they often constituted a majority of the population. Nevertheless, even in this period of urbanization, close to a quarter of the Jewish population continued to live in small villages where the image created by the Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem of Tevye the Milkman was based on social reality. Most of these village Jews were middlemen in the agricultural economy or artisans, but 4.3 percent of Polish Jews earned their living primar-





The conditions Jews faced in interwar Poland were paradoxical. On the one hand, Poland was a democracy and the Jews were granted equal citizenship. On the other hand, the Polish government systematically subverted the Versailles minority rights treaty, and the explosive growth of anti-Semitism undermined the possibility of Jewish integration. One might argue that the Jewish renaissance was a result both of the new freedom and the new hostility Polish Jews experienced. Blocked from full participation in Polish life, they channeled their liberated energies into Jewish culture. Unlike France, Germany, and Italy, Polish Jewish emancipation did not lead to widespread assimilation, but rather to various forms of Jewish self-assertion. With no place open to them in Polish political parties except for the Socialists and the outlawed Communists, Jews organized themselves into their own parties. These represented the whole gamut of political and religious opinion, often to the point of extreme factionalism. Since the future of Jews in Poland seemed so doubtful, Zionism in its various forms won many adherents and, indeed, the largest Jewish party in the Polish parliament was the General Zionists. The Zionist parties included the Poale Zion socialist Zionists, with its right and left-wing factions, the Mizrahi or religious Zionists, the anti-socialist and militantly nationalistic Revisionists, and the more moderate General Zionists. Against the Zionists, the socialist Bund sought Jewish cultural autonomy in a revolutionary Poland. At the other end of the spectrum was the Agudas Yisroel, the party of the anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews, which claimed to represent tradition but whose very engagement in parliamentary politics bespoke an unacknowledged modernization. The Aguda was the second largest Jewish party and was favored by the government since it pursued a line of accommodation rather than confrontation, which was more typical of the Zionists and Bundists.

This political ferment was accompanied by an intense cultural renaissance, one singular aspect of which was its multilingualism. For most of medieval Jewish history, Jews typically developed a Judeo-version of the local vernacular. These dialects included Hebrew words, although not necessarily only for religious purposes. The Eastern European Jews were distinctive, however, in never developing a Judeo-Polish or a Judeo-Russian. Instead, they preserved medieval Judeo-German, adding some Slavic words to produce the language that we call Yiddish. The process of emancipation in the West typically involved abandoning the Jewish dialect for the language of the nation into which the Jews had been emancipated. The situation in newly independent Poland was much more complicated. Jews were integrated into the Polish school system which a majority of Jewish children attended. Polish quickly became their preferred language. Even in the various Jewish school systems,



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some subjects were required to be taught in Polish. For the generation that came to adulthood in the interwar period, especially in the cities and towns, Polish was the language in which they communicated with each other and, as time went on, with their parents. Yet, because they were frequently excluded from cultural arenas such as the Polish press and the Polish theater, they created their own Jewish newspapers and theaters in Polish. So, paradoxically, Polish often served less as a language of integration than as a language of difference.

Even though Polish became increasingly the vernacular of the interwar Jews, they did not abandon Yiddish, the language of their parents, and some of their most significant cultural activity took place in Yiddish. The Yiddish press flourished and even in a small town like Wloclawek, a variety of local Yiddish newspapers could be found. At the same time, the zeal of many young Polish Jews for Zionism led to cultivation of the Hebrew language, which only a few decades before had begun to be used as a spoken language in the small Jewish community in Palestine. In Poland, the secular Tarbut and the religious Zionist school systems both taught some of their subjects in modern Hebrew, so that a significant number of young Polish Jews became fluent in the language. As Chone Shmeruk, the great scholar of Jewish literature in Poland, has noted, the interwar culture of the Polish Jews was really trilingual.

Take Emanuel Ringelblum as an example. Born in 1900, he received his doctorate from the University of Warsaw in 1926. Much of his work, such as his history of the Jews of Warsaw, was written in Polish. But he also wrote significant works in Yiddish, including his studies of the Polish Jews in the Kocziusko uprising of 1794 and his history of Jewish book publishing. And, as a member of the left-wing of the Poale Zion, the labor Zionist party, he must have also had a commitment to Hebrew.

Ringelblum's own career also mirrors some of the opportunities and obstacles available to Jewish intellectuals in interwar Poland. He was able to receive a degree in history from the University of Warsaw, but, despite his talent, a university teaching position lay out of his reach. Instead, he earned his living teaching in the Jehudia Gymnasium, a Jewish high school in Warsaw (coincidentally, my own aunt taught at that school and the last time she saw Ringelblum was September 3, 1939, when she managed to get through the bombed-out streets of Warsaw for the opening of the school year; due to the war, of course, school was cancelled and only she, Ringelblum, and the school's director showed up). Ringelblum's teacher and the founding father of Jewish historiography in Poland, Meir Balaban, also made his living teaching in the Takhkimoni high school where my father had him as his teacher of Jewish history. In the 1930s, though, Balaban did succeed in obtaining a professorship at the University of Warsaw.

But let us turn from Warsaw back to Wloclawek. It is perhaps no surprise that a vibrant political and cultural life developed among the large concentration of Jews in the cities of Poland. What is even more remarkable is the way a similar process took place in smaller towns and even in villages or shtetlach. Wloclawek had a Jewish population that rose from 4,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century to some 10,000 by the 1930s (out of a total population of 56,000). The community was run by a Kehillah board, chosen in hotly contested elections, by all male Jews in the town over the age of twenty-five. The parties included all those mentioned earlier that competed for seats in the Polish parliament. Several gymnasia (including one for girls) were opened at the end of World War I. A Jewish press, theater, and sports organizations flourished. All of these new institutions took their place side by side with the older, more traditional artisan associations, synagogues, welfare institutions, and burial society, which harkened back to the Middle Ages. Although it resembled in some respects the medieval *kahal*, this community, like countless others in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, had a variety and vitality never before seen in European Jewish life.

Our sources for the lives of these communities frequently come from the literally hundreds of memorial books, or *zikher bikher,* which the survivors of the towns put together after the Holocaust. I have, in fact, drawn much of my information on Wloclawek, including the visual material, from the memorial book for that town. These sources are not, of course, completely reliable. Although they do portray the political and religious struggles that engaged virtually every Polish Jewish community, they often tend to render them somewhat harmless through the lens of nostalgia. But it is important to recognize that the debates over the Jewish religion, Zionism, socialism, and a host of other issues were often treated as life and death matters. The vibrant diversity of opinion sometimes had a dark underside. Contrary to the irenic perception of the *shtetl*, fostered in part by the classic, but problematic, anthropological work, *Life is With People*, the Jewish communities of Poland were not free of violence. Samuel Kassow, who has studied the town of Glbokie, from which his own parents came, has shown how even the synagogues might turn into scenes for fist-fights over personal grudges as well as ideological issues. Brawls between the Bundists and the Zionists were not uncommon. In the 1930s, fundraisers for the mainstream Zionists were beaten by the Revisionists, the ultra-nationalist followers of Vladimir Jabotinsky. When David Ben-Gurion visited Poland in 1933, he had to be protected by a phalanx of bodyguards. Anyone who observes contemporary Israeli politics, with its vituperative language, factionalism, and occasional physical violence, can see the roots of that country's political culture in interwar Poland. Indeed, many of the political parties in Israel, such as the Labor Party, the Likud, and the National Religious Party, originated in inter-

war Poland, although new parties, representing Middle Eastern, North African, and Russian Jews have emerged more recently.

The readiness of some to defend their cause aggressively and even violently could be turned outwards as well. The Zionist leader Yitzhak Gruenbaum fearlessly denounced anti-Semitism to the hostile majority in the Polish parliament. Bundists and Zionists of all stripes formed self-defense groups in the face of physical attacks by the extreme right-wing of the Polish Endek party. Betar, the youth movement of the Revisionist Party, would stage marches in uniform in attempts, not always successful, to intimidate the anti-Semites. The ghetto uprisings during the Holocaust had their origins in the political mobilization of the interwar period and, despite later attempts by Zionist culture to claim that resistance to the Nazis was primarily due to Zionist youth, all factions, including the Communists and Bundists, participated in the war-time underground.



The causes for the ideological contentiousness among the Jews of interwar Poland did not lie only in the internal dynamics of modern Jewish history. Outside influences also played their own major role. As is well known, the interwar period was a time of great ideological passions ranging from communism to fascism. All of these general European phenomena could be found in particularly intense form in the pressure-cooker of the Jewish community in Poland. The Bolshevik Revolution and the Balfour Declaration, both taking place in 1917, had an explosive impact on young Jews. Even Mussolini's fascism attracted Jabotinsky's Revisionist Party, and the Betar youth movement was, to some degree, modeled on the Italian blackshirts.

The political renaissance of the Polish Jews owed much to a generational revolution. The younger generation of Polish Jews increased dramatically in this period. For example, the number of Jewish children turning thirteen rose from twenty-four thousand in 1930 to forty-five thousand in 1938. In this demographic context, the concept of youth (*no'ar*) played an increasingly central role. In the nineteenth century, the Jewish enlighteners or *maskilim* of Eastern Europe had tried to create a revolution in the traditional concept of childhood, which, at least among the elite, had ended with marriage at age thirteen. The *maskil* and later Zionist writer, Moshe Lieb Lilienblum, whose autobiography, *Sins of Youth*, was required reading, lamented at age twenty-nine that he had passed from childhood directly into old age. For a wide variety of reasons, and not only due to the writings of the *maskilim*, the age of Jewish marriage rose in the latter part of the nineteenth century and even more in interwar Poland. For the first time, adolescence or youth, as a distinct period in life, became possible and was adopted as an ideological slogan. Reference to it appears everywhere you look. For instance, a circle of poets in Lithuania called themselves "Yung Vilna," and the historical journal that Emanuel Ringelblum co-edited in the 1920s had the name "Der Yunger Historiker." These two examples could be multiplied many times over.

Each of the political parties sponsored youth movements, and membership in one of them became virtually *de rigeur* for young Polish Jews, especially those who abandoned religion. Generational conflict was the order of the day, as sons and daughters found alternatives to the family in the youth movement. On the other hand, relations between the generations were often more complex than the ideologies of the youth movement dictated. For example, my father's father was a deeply religious Jew who belonged to a Hasidic sect, but he was also a leader of the Mizrahi, the religious Zionist party. So, although my own father joined the militantly secular Zionist "Hashomer Ha-tsair," he and his father were not in totally opposite camps when it came to Jewish nationalism.

In this ideological age, the youth movements displayed no small measure of dogmatism and elitism. Those who took a militantly secular position sometimes went out of their way to outrage the Orthodox, such as by organizing Yom Kippur balls at which they deliberately and provocatively ate non-kosher food. At times, the Zionist movements' critique of Polish Jewish life came close to that of the Polish anti-Semites who insisted that the Jews find a home outside of Poland.

The movement my father joined, the "Hashomer ha-Tsair" or "the Young Guard," was a socialist Zionist movement that started out with an ideology of almost mystical communion with nature; in the 1930s, it was to turn Stalinist in its orientation, a stance it would not disavow until the 1950s. Like other Jewish youth movements in Poland, Hashomer was influenced by Gustav Wyneken, the spiritual leader of the *Wandervogel*, the German youth movement which believed in communion with nature but also harbored anti-Semitic ideas of the German *Volk*. These ideas filtered into the Galician part of the Austro-Hungarian empire during the first World War, and it was there that Hashomer began around 1917. Following the end of the war, it struck roots in independent Poland, where it spread quickly. It was in this movement that young Polish Jews found an alternative Hebrew culture whose leaders were themselves scarcely

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



out of their teens. The movement became the intense center of their lives and an indelible experience that would form their character for the rest of their lives. The *ken,* or "nest," was the focal point of activity, a kind of ideological cell whose members were to collectively found or join a kibbutz in Palestine.

In place of the ten commandments of the Bible, the young guard movement had a secular catechism, the "Ten Commandments of the Shomer." The third commandment is that the "shomer is an active man of labor who knows how to live by the work of his hand," while the ninth proclaims that "the shomer is motivated to perfect himself in body and soul." This ideology of creating a new Jewish body, healthy and strong, was aimed against the perception that the typical Polish Jew was weak and unhealthy. Physical exercise and manual labor became central preoccupations of the movement. As Max Nordau, one of Theodor Herzl's earliest disciples, put it: the purpose of Zionism was to create Jews with muscles.

The tenth commandment states: "The shomer is pure in thoughts, words and deeds. He does not smoke or drink alcohol and he guards his sexual purity." Here was a movement whose ideal of collectivism frowned on individual romances. They rejected traditional Jewish as well as bourgeois sexual morality as hypocritical, but, while theoretically in favor of free love, they in fact adopted a socialist form of asceticism.

And, finally, to bring us back to agriculture, Davis, and my father, the eighth commandment: "The shomer loves nature, acquaints himself with it and knows how to live in its midst." Although, as I suggested earlier, many Polish Jews already lived quite close to nature, the Zionist ideology of Hashomer held that the diasporic Jew was alienated from the earth. Weekly hikes in the Polish countryside were designed to imbue urbanized Jews with a love of nature, as well as to create strong Jewish bodies.

The connection to nature and the ideal of manual labor were both intimately bound up with the glorification of agriculture as the most revolutionary occupation. The argument that the role of the Jews in the economies of Eastern Europe needed to be changed went back to the nineteenth century and was a central tenet of the Eastern European Jewish enlightenment. Traditional Jewish occupations were regarded as unproductive. Like the French physiocrats, the enlighteners argued for a return to agriculture, based, however, more on their romanticization of the Bible than on solid economic theory. These programs bore some fruit in the nineteenth century with agricultural settlements in the south of Russia as well as in Argentina and the United States (in fact, there was a community of Jewish chicken farmers as close to Davis as Petaluma in the early part of the twentieth century). The Zionist call for agricultural settlement in Palestine was part of this larger movement of "productivization."

In order to prepare themselves for their lives as farmers, the members of Hashomer, once they had attained the proper ideological level, went to "Hakhsharah," a Hebrew word meaning "training." This training took place in the Polish countryside, on a farm usually rented from a Polish peasant. There, the group lived collectively in preparation for the collectives, or kibbutzim, that they hoped to found or join in Palestine. As one memoirist describes it, she spent a year on hakhshara during which she planted beets, harvested potatoes, milked cows, and worked in the laundry. When she returned to her family, she found little demand for her new skills, a source of great frustration since she was not able to obtain a certificate from the British mandatory authorities to emigrate to Palestine.

An open letter written by one of the Hashomer groups in Yiddish and addressed "to our parents" captures the ideology of agriculture in an attempt to legitimate their generational revolt: "We are called powerfully to the old-new, to the true culture and spirit which is Mother earth." Agriculture would be the vehicle for communing with the earth, but as this letter suggests, the call to become farmers did not mean simply a resurrection of the peasant; indeed, the 4.3 percent of Jews in Poland who were already farmers were the very antithesis of what Hashomer sought to create. Instead, like other socialist Zionist movements, Hashomer, intent on settling the land of Israel, saw its mission as modernizing. Farmers they would become, but farmers equipped by modern science and technology. This fascinating dialectic between modernizing and anti-modernizing tendencies was critical for the Zionist movement in realizing its project. It was as a result of this dialectic that my father found his way to Davis, while some of his companions spent time in an agricultural training program in, of all places, Algeria.

Some, like my father, never fulfilled their goal of becoming farmers, but others did. My father's *ken*, or at least a portion of it, ended up in Kibbutz Negba in the south of Israel, the site of one of the most intense battles during the 1948 war. A messianic verse in the Book of Psalms promises that "those who sow in tears will reap with joy." If the seeds of the movement to create modern Jewish farmers were sown in the barren soil of interwar Poland, it was in Palestine that some, by dint of sheer luck as well as ideology, were able to reap the fruits. Ironically, though, these Jewish farmers are themselves already historical anachronisms. The agricultural collective or kibbutz is now on its way to the museum, replaced—in a far cry from the vision of its founders—by high technology and global capitalism.

Moreover, many of those who had set their sights on revolutionary transformation, whether in Poland or Palestine, shared the fate of the rest of Polish Jewry in the ghettos and death camps of the Holocaust. Consider again the example of Emanuel Ringelblum. When the Nazis set up the Warsaw ghetto in the spring of 1940, Ringelblum

became its director of social welfare. From this vantage point, he was able to observe the impossible task of the Jewish leadership in dealing with the Germans and the lethal consequences of the conditions they created in the ghetto of starvation and disease. But the impulse of the historian to document remained too strong to ignore. In those terrible conditions, Ringelblum, by now an "old man" in his forties, assembled a group of some twenty young historians to record the details of life in the ghetto. This group, code-named Oneg Shabbat, was very close to the underground that eventually organized the ghetto revolt. On the eve of the uprising, in April 1943, the group buried three caches of metal boxes and milk cans filled with documents. Ringelblum himself, who had earlier slipped over to the so-called Aryan side with his wife and young son, returned to the ghetto the day before the uprising, only to be captured and sent to the Trawiniki labor camp. In July of 1943, after the destruction of the ghetto, he escaped from Trawiniki with the help of the Polish underground and went into hiding with his family in Warsaw. They were betrayed and captured by the Nazis on March 7, 1944, taken into the remains of the ghetto and shot to death. Of the twenty-some members of the Oneg Shabbat group, only two survived, Herz Wasser and Rachela Auerbach, who returned to the ghetto after the war and retrieved two of the caches of documents. The third has never been found.

The heroic story of Ringelblum's activities in the Warsaw ghetto is, of course, well known. What is less well known is that, although convinced that the Jews probably had no future in Poland, Ringelblum nevertheless engaged in a full program of historical research which is much less well known than his *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. Even in the ghetto, Ringelblum continued his work, writing a treatise on Polish-Jewish relations during the war. It is therefore fitting that we remember Emanuel Ringelblum, and the culture out of which he came, not only by reconstructing how these Jews died, but also how they lived.

We cannot, of course, return to the ideological engagements of interwar Poland: more than half a century of the political, economic, and social transformation of the Jews lies in between. But it seems to me that there are some enduring values that we can take from those who would be Jewish farmers in a socialist utopia: the virtues of work with one's hands, of equality of goods, worker ownership, and a life guided not by the acquisition of material goods. These are ideals very much out of vogue today, and most people believe them dead and buried. I predict, though, that they will be resurrected, for they address some of the most persistent questions of the human spirit. Their manifestations in the interwar period were typically associated with the doctrines of socialist materialism, yet their true sources are in spiritual traditions, of which the Jewish is but one. ❑

WHAT THE "OTHER" WAS, AND NOW IS *(cont. from page 52)*

recent pronouncements about the Holocaust and Catholic guilt on their head.

Where does all this leave us? Interestingly enough, as the first generation of Jewish immigrants were finding their way around the streets of the Lower East Side, black scholar-activist W.E.B. DuBois wrote these lines about what he imagined would be the problem of the twentieth century—namely, the color line: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, which dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Fully recognizing the significant historical difference, nonetheless with a nip here, a tuck there, the sentiments could have been applied to immigrant Jews such as the David Levinsky of Abraham Cahan's 1918 novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky*. After making a fortune in the garment industry, Levinsky ends his rags-to-riches tale on a note of regret: if his soul be measured by an American tape, he is indeed a success, but if measured by a Jewish tape, he wonders where the young David swaying over a volume of the Talmud has gone.



Double consciousness, whether DuBois's or Levinsky's, may no longer be enough. The mask that Jews once wore as the Other is now the template for the masks that any number of the newly marginalized slip over their heads. This is, after all, a deeply American story, because whatever else America might be, it is a place where people are constantly reinventing themselves. Perhaps we need a triple, even a quadruple consciousness to account for all the facets competing inside a single frame. Or it may be that Philip Roth is right after all, and that the "human stain" which haunts us, not merely the stain of skin color but something that formerly traveled under the name of Original Sin, is a permanent—and tragic—feature of our condition. DuBois, who was right about so many things, was wrong about the "problem" of the twentieth century. It was not the color line, abiding though that problem has been, but the oceans of blood that totalitarianism and technology were able to spill. Identity, in all combinations of Otherness and Others, is likely to be the problem all of us will have to grapple with as our new century unfolds. ❑



BOOK REVIEW

Papal Fallibility

Dan Bischoff

▪ *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit,* by Garry Wills. Doubleday, 2000.

Garry Wills begins his catalogue of modern Catholic sin by pointing out that, relatively speaking, things have indeed gotten better. The days when a pimple-faced, dissolute teenager could be elected pope (John XII) because of family connections, only to be found dead in his early twenties in the bed of a married woman, are long gone. Popes no longer torture their civil subjects—they have only those who live within Vatican City's walls anyway, mostly house servants, bureaucrats, and canon lawyers—and they no longer amass vast fortunes for themselves and their extensive Italian families.

It was for these sins that Renaissance artists frequently peopled their Hells with popes. But the evils in *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* are quite different. Chief among them, Wills tells us, is the simple sin of lying—not out of avarice (though financial scandals, like the 1980s collapse of Milan's Banco Ambrosiano, which handled the pope's private accounts, still occur), but out of a bizarre need to deny the modern reality that is closing in all around the diminishing Roman priesthood. And what a tangled web they've woven! Wedded to a dubious doctrine of papal infallibility pushed through Vatican Council I by the ill-educated and lachrymose Pope Pius IX in 1870, the Catholic hierarchy has ever since been caught in a headlong spiral of telling more and more elaborate lies to justify its insistence that the Church has always told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the revealed Truth, so help them God.

The lingering consequences have all but devastated the once-sprawling Catholic infrastructure in North America, still the richest of all the national Churches loyal to the pope. Wills, who started out in intellectual life as a good Catholic on William F. Buckley's *National Review*, enumerates the results with a tolls-for-thee cadence: the virtual disappearance of American nuns; a psychologically self-selected cadre of young men who want to become priests that is dwindling so rapidly that one in ten American parishes has no one to minister the flock; an avalanche of lawsuits sparked by clerical pedophile rings in sexually segregated schools that have driven whole archdioceses into humiliating bankruptcy; and, most shocking of all, a laity whose members, by a margin of three out of five, say they no longer heed the Church's teachings in matters of personal morality. Fully 88 percent reject Church theories on contraception.

This hidebound dedication to past fictions has crippled the Catholic leadership in dealing with real issues it needs to meet today, further alienating not only its own members but the rest of an increasingly close-knit world. This has widened the gap between the clergy and the laity nearly as much as the chasm opened by Church teaching on abortion, contraception, and masturbation—all equally condemned as mortal sins which, unrepented, send a believing Catholic's soul straight to Hell on a bullet.

Nothing illustrates this impasse as well as the contemporary Church's clumsy efforts to right historical wrongs while simultaneously denying they ever occurred. And the best example of that has to be the Vatican's quibbling, legalistic attempts to set things right with Jews. The salient dispute between Catholics and Jews for centuries has been the medieval charge that the Jewish people "killed Christ," the origin of so many "blood libels" in the European tradition. Pope John Paul II issued a kind of apology toward the very end of the twentieth century in his encyclical "We Remember," dedicated to the Holocaust, but much of the document was spent pointing out that anti-Semitism as such had never been authoritatively pronounced, *ex cathedra* and therefore infallibly, as part of the Church's official teachings. Of course, Catholic priests have preached deicide from the pulpits, biblical commentaries have explained it, and pogroms were based upon it. But legally the "Church as such" was innocent. In 1997 Pope John Paul II put it this way: "In the Christian world—*I do not say on the part of the Church as such* [emphasis added]—erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long."

The reasons John Paul's "apology" wound up angering as many Jews as it placated are complex and rooted in the dogma of infallibility. It is difficult for an American, raised in the birthplace of public relations where the need to "get ahead of the story" is so

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axiomatic, to comprehend how limiting that dogma is. The Church cannot admit that, in matters of faith and morals, it has ever, in its 2000-year-long tradition, been wrong. It must explain away historical shifts in values, culture, and the natural sciences with casuistry—either reinterpreting history's events or simply ignoring inconvenient facts.

And the facts, especially as regards Pius IX—"Pio Nono" to Italians—are, frankly, real doozies. In 1853, the seventh year of Pius' forty-two-year reign, an Italian servant girl working for a family of well-to-do Jews in the Papal State of Bologna secretly baptized the one-year-old son of her employers when the infant fell ill. Later she told the Inquisition, which began an elaborate investigation into whether or not the servant girl was telling the truth. When it was decided that she was, Pius sent his police to kidnap Edgardo Mortara, now six, and bring him to his private apartments in the Vatican. Edgardo became a nineteenth-century Elian, only in this telling, the addled uncle keeps the boy. Wills lays out an incredible tale:

> When they took the child, the police did not even give the parents a reason for the seizure—in the early days, the Mortaras had no way to contest the story told about their son, since they did not know what the story was. They had to undertake investigations of their own to find the woman who had secretly testified to the Inquisition. By that time, Edgardo had been sent to Rome, where the Pope received him fondly and said he would be brought up a Christian. When Edgardo's parents came from Bologna to recover him in Rome, they were allowed to visit their son in the Esquiline Palace, but not to take him away. *Civilta Cattolica* [the Pope's newspaper] reported that Edgardo's mother, at the sight of a Marian medal on her son, ripped it off contemptuously, proving herself an unfit mother.
>
> The Pope maintained that he was defending spiritual values against a secular world indifferent to matters of faith—a Christian boy could not be trusted to be brought up by Jewish parents. *Civilta Cattolica* predicted that the boy, if returned, would be pressured by his family to renounce the faith (as if there were no pressure being used to foist faith on him at the Esquiline). He might even be tortured, the Jesuit author of the article suggested: "Would it seem right and generous to place this innocent boy on the cross?" By raising the image of a boy being crucified, the paper was tickling the vicious old charge that Jews engaged in ritual murder of Christian boys—and, sure enough, that charge was renewed during the Mortara affair. The newspaper *Il Cattolica* published this account: "While the libertine press was creating such an uproar against the Pope because of the case of the Mortara boy, the most horrendous assassination of a Christian boy was being committed by Jews in Folkchany, a Moldo-Wallachian city." A four-year-old, after disappearing, had been discovered dead from multiple wounds. That was proof, said *Il Cattolica*: "The type of torture was too much like that of Our Lord for them to be fooled about the intention of the murderer or murderers." Other papers picked up this story—but failed to report, later on, that the boy's own uncle was found to have killed him.



Pius IX, author of the doctrine of papal infallibility.

Edgardo, meanwhile, was quite overwhelmed by the frescoed apartments, bejeweled carriages, and luxurious vestments. Finding himself thoroughly enchanted, as perhaps any six-year-old would be, he grew up loving Pius dearly, entered a seminary, and became a priest. The outcry against such autocratic barbarousness became nearly universal. Newspapers, heads of state, even some loyal Catholics denounced Pius. U.S. President James Buchanan resisted requests to protest the Mortara case only because children were daily being separated from their parents in the slave markets of the South at the time.

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When, six years later, yet another surreptitiously baptized Jewish boy, Giuseppe Coen, was taken from his parents, this time in Rome itself, the European powers started to drop Pius. The French army had been occupying Rome only to put down a rebellion against the Pope, and now they pulled out, leaving the streets to the mob—which forced Pius to flee the city.

Ultimately, the Mortara and Coen cases led to the loss of the pope's temporal dominions in 1870. Wills notes, "a government that could do this to children, it was argued, is insupportable by civilized allies." Pius IX truly never recovered from this blow to his prestige. To compensate, he called Vatican Council I and, by stacking commissions, censoring testimony, and finally dispensing with a full Council vote, he declared himself and all successors infallible in matters of faith and doctrine.

It wasn't until several years had passed before a majority of the bishops of the faith had finally acquiesced in this claim, and then only after it had become so identified with Pius' episcopate that it would have been woefully disloyal not to. Pius shut himself up inside the walls of the Vatican, as did all succeeding popes for nearly a century, and began the great Catholic sulk against modernity. It was sort of like John and Yoko going to bed for peace, but less effective.

All this, and we have not even begun to discuss Pius XII, now so memorably nicknamed "Hitler's Pope." Pope Pius XII took office in 1939, coming home from his post as the Vatican's chief diplomat in Berlin, and never mentioned the Holocaust during the war years—though he later would assert that he had done so, several times, and in protest. The silence of this Pius on the great political, moral, and social disaster of his times has been a major stumbling block to his canonization as a saint, something much desired by Pope John Paul II out of respect for Pius XII's fervent anti-Communism (a real virtue to today's Polish Pope). Pius' canonization has been sidetracked for now into a review committee composed of both Catholics and Jews.

Nor have we mentioned the Church's infuriating placement of a convent just outside the walls of Dachau, in a building where the Nazis stored their poison gas, or a later one built in Auschwitz (which sparked violent demonstrations three years ago). Like the canonization as a martyr of Edith Stein, a convert to Catholicism who was yanked out of a convent in Holland and killed in Dachau—not, Wills says carefully, because she was a Carmelite nun, but because she was of Jewish descent—these actions seem determined to capture the suffering of the Holocaust as a peculiarly Catholic agony.

And yet, these recent actions have not been done out of any willful desire to wound, Wills says, but by a Church that is, in the wake of the 1960s Vatican Council II, firmly convinced it needs to reach out a hand of true ecumenicalism for the first time. The Church has failed only because the Roman Curia (the bureaucracy of the Church in Rome under its cardinals) is hemmed in by "structures of deceit" of its own making. For Wills,

> The debilitating effect of intellectual dishonesty can be touching. Even when papal authority sincerely wants to perform a virtuous act, when it spends years screwing up its nerve to do it, when it actually thinks it has done it, when it releases a notice of its having done it, when it expects to be congratulated on doing it—it has not done it. Not because it did not want to do it, or did not believe it did it. It was simply unable to do it, because that would have involved coming clean about the record of the papal institution. And that is all but unthinkable.

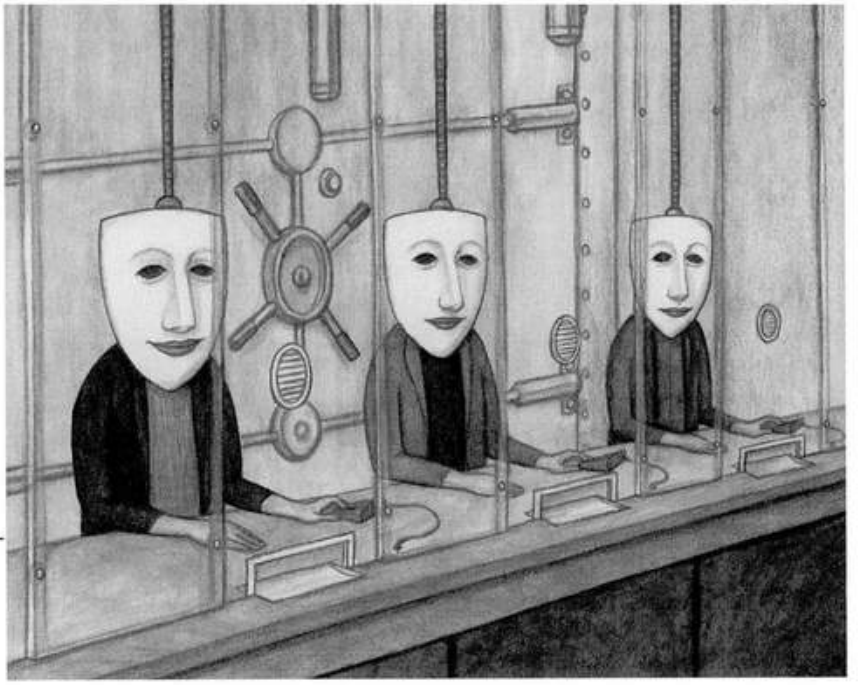
Just as the Church cannot truly reverse its thinking about the Jews (fully 41 percent of American Catholics surveyed in the early 1990s weren't sure whether there was a "divine curse" on the Jewish people because of certain events 2,000 years past), it seems similarly powerless to reverse its past dogmatic absurdities about faith and morals. In fact, they keep compounding them. Using a condom to prevent the transmission of AIDS is a mortal sin, even between married heterosexuals. Celibacy is an essential attribute of a priest, even if priests were allowed to marry for the first 500 years of the Western Church, and even if the requirement creates a gay (and therefore dogmatically condemned) priesthood. Artificial insemination, a modern development that allows otherwise infertile couples to start families, is forbidden because Pius IX condemned masturbation as a mortal sin. If the Church were to reverse itself because of a modern scientific miracle, what would it do, asks one priest, "about the millions we've already consigned to Hell for masturbating?"

Which is right to the point. After their hundred-year-long pout, the Catholic clergy has emerged into a world so changed in its every assumption about the meaning and purpose of life that the priests themselves no longer profess to believe what they are made to say by the Vatican. Having this particular vocation means being able to say what you do not believe with conviction, and even to hold others to those ridiculous beliefs—not a strong recommendation for a life in the priesthood, especially since most seminarians tend to be the sort of people who are very concerned about their personal honor.

A more cogent explication of the dismaying philosophical problems facing a modern Catholic Church is hard to imagine, but *Papal Sin* is also an act of some courage for a practicing Catholic. Speaking truth to popes is often a difficult thing—they are, after all, the last line of authority that can plausibly trace itself back to the precincts of the Western world's beginnings, in the marketplaces and arenas of ancient Rome. The popes will not likely be grateful for this book, but someone should be. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

The Source of Each Other's Completion



Stephen Mo Hanan

- *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning*, by Peter Gabel. Acada Books, 2000.

It's difficult to imagine an example of cognitive dissonance more extreme than reading *The Bank Teller,* Peter Gabel's collection of essays, while sweating on a Stairmaster at a midtown Manhattan health club. Nevertheless, my eagerness to connect with the remarkable spirit and penetrating mind evident in this book kept me glued to it in unlikely places. I read it at the gym, on the bus, on a bench in Central Park, and since Gabel's aim is nothing less than to characterize and diagnose the culture in which we live, every one of these locations served to confirm and amplify his observations. Rarely have I read a book from which I could raise my eyes so consistently, not to rest them, but to observe my surroundings and see the author's meanings so clearly reflected.

It will come as no surprise to readers of TIKKUN that Peter Gabel articulates a vision of the world far more comprehensive and deep than what passes for political commentary in the mainstream press. In fact, the term "political" is inadequate to Gabel's ultimate purpose, which is not so much about apportioning places at the table as about improving the quality of the meal. All but one of the book's essays originally appeared in this magazine, and together they comprise a carefully reasoned, passionately argued case for the global project which underlies TIKKUN's very existence—namely, the Politics of Meaning.

Some years ago, when Michael Lerner began to attract media attention for his too-brief association with the fledgling Clinton White House, I heard Daniel Schorr on NPR deliver an unusually fatuous denunciation of anyone who paid "too much attention to the Politics of Meaning and not enough to the meaning of politics." This glib gag was intended, I suppose, to dismiss those starry-eyed idealists who hoped the new administration would reach beyond the cynical status quo with which the media were prepared to deal. For me, Schorr's remark was an unfortunate symptom of his (and the media's) poverty of imagination. The consequences of such poverty, which limit and tarnish the prosperity the Clinton Era has witnessed, are among the chief themes of Gabel's writing. Not only does he presume to ask, "What shall it profit a culture to gain a global economy and lose its own soul?" but he dares to propose alternatives. He dares to imagine what healing looks like.

What it looks like is community, the complete and authentic presence of individual human beings, one to another, inspiring each other with the courage to take the risk of being, in Gabel's memorable phrase, "the source of each other's completion." The obstacle to this transformation, as Gabel sees it, is fear: fear of humiliation, fear that by extending ourselves to another in the manner that we so deeply desire, we will meet with the kind of scorn Daniel Schorr heaped on Michael Lerner, the contempt with which many a broken heart fends off the threat of yet another wound. Gabel is well aware that we can just as easily be the source of each other's negation, and he sees with a clarity all

Peter Gabel articulates a vision of the world far more comprehensive and deep than what passes for political commentary in the mainstream press.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

too rare that the supreme choice confronting every human being, and humanity as a whole in our social evolution, is which of the two we shall be.

This is the stuff of philosophy and religion, not what we usually think of as politics, but *The Bank Teller*'s greatest achievement is its demonstration of how these two spheres are really one. Gabel is an unashamed veteran of Sixties idealism and social critiques, and one might say that from the simple formula "the personal is political" he has evolved this mighty book as an oak from an acorn. There are roots in the thought of many others (among them Marcuse and Laing are evident and acknowledged), but the foliage, whether branching into examinations of affirmative action, jurisprudence, electoral politics, the Gulf War, or a Maalox commercial, is distinctly Gabel's own. It is his avowed purpose, hallowed in the prophetic tradition, to advocate unstintingly for the wholeness of life, the wholeness of every person and of all people together. For without this wholeness, there can be no authenticity, only the shadow of false selves (Plato and the cave come to mind) counterfeiting a world in which no one really feels they belong.



Consequently, and as with all philosophy worthy of the name, the aim of *The Bank Teller* is less to articulate a particular dogmatic truth than to inspire readers to see and think for themselves. Liberals of conventional stripe will be as challenged by this book as their conservative counterparts, because Gabel's analysis of the failure of modern liberalism hinges on the questioning of materialistic assumptions about the nature of society (and, indeed, of reality) that are taken for granted in almost all political discourse. Gabel's political ideal owes more to Deuteronomy and Isaiah than to Rousseau and Marx; he is imagining a theocracy without priests, a theocracy whose god is love, in which the worth of individuals is derived not from respect for their egos (and thus their rival jockeying for accorded "rights") but from reverence for the animating spirit which dwells within and among them. That which links us is what ennobles us. The perception that this spirit is not only universal but good and worthy of trust frees Gabel to step outside the interlocking hierarchies of our time and replace them with a kind of holy anarchy, the doctrinal love child of Norman O. Brown's exuberant freedom and Paul Goodman's mutual aid.

This is apparent from the very first essay, which gives the book its title and states its major themes. Invoking the image of a row of tellers in a typical American bank, Gabel proceeds to examine their psychological situation in microscopic detail: the suppression of spontaneity, the enacting of roles, the pervasive imposition of "acceptable" behavior, the ensuing artificiality and stress, and, finally, the "collective experience that simultaneously divides a group of people by an infinite distance and unites them in the false communion of being-other-than-themselves together." To know intuitively what's wrong with this way of doing things, one has but to imagine its opposite, a jazz combo or chamber-music ensemble, in which every participant is connected by closely paid, spontaneously flowing attention, each individual contribution gaining its force from its effective melding with the contributions of the others. Children at play present a simpler enactment of the same thing, and one might say that for Gabel, hierarchy is the school-yard bully, sabotaging the fun by domination, intimidation, and fear, precipitating what Gabel calls "the collective flight that holds everyone's alienation in place."

That this model of deadly social order can be met with elsewhere than a bank is patently obvious, and its institutional quality is symbolized for Gabel by the flow chart, that graven image of structured authority which keeps everybody in line, providing a form of security and comfort on the one hand while, on the other, stifling initiative and dissent. People who want the Ten Commandments displayed prominently in classrooms are simply clamoring for a flow chart with Old Testament teeth. But behind this adamant corporate Jehovah is nothing (Nobodaddy, in Blake's word) because, as Gabel observes, the bank "consists of nothing more than a group of people in a room." Everything else, from the dress codes to the deferential smiles to the money itself, is just a symbol, albeit a symbol on which many a livelihood depends. It is rather like the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, except, in the economy of global consumerism, what we are told to pretend not to see isn't a naked monarch but an approaching iceberg.

Essay Two, "The Meaning of the Holocaust," makes this tragically clear. Without in any way diminishing the horror of this monstrous failure of connection, Gabel shows how such a thing is comprehensible, even inevitable, given a set of social premises not terribly different from those that prevail in the bank. There is simply no depth of evil to which a society cannot sink once it abandons love as its governing principle. And the test of love's authenticity is that in its presence nobody gets harmed. Therefore, "the imaginary community that purports to satisfy our ... need for connectedness and recognition" always reveals its duplicity by having to generate an unworthy class of non-members (Jews, Palestinians, Bosnians, Hutus, welfare cheats, immigrants, infidels, gays, rednecks) to outwardly personify the "haunting inner demon" of personal alienation. As Laotze says, "I find good people good, and I find bad people good if I am good (i.e., whole) enough." The greatness of Gabel's heart reminds us how pointless it is to "blame" the perpetrators of crimes, however egregious, when the source of the evil lies "in the spiritual evolution of being itself, and in the as yet incomplete struggle of Being to know itself as Love that realizes itself

through the affirmation of the other."

In other words we are, to varying degrees and in the aggregate, blind, and in our blindness we injure ourselves and our world. The injuries are so painful that we seek to punish those we deem responsible, but when the punishment fails to assuage the pain, we assume it was not sufficiently severe. So the cycle of blame and retaliation continues, unrelieved and unrelieving, as history and today's newspaper bear witness. The Politics of Meaning is both redemptive and radical because it assures us that the cycle can be broken. It recognizes that everybody's inner demons are different, but the consequences of ignoring them are remarkably similar. It asks us, from the sanctuary of our Wholeness, to examine with unflinching perseverance the symptoms and causes of alienation wherever they manifest themselves.

Which brings me back to the Stairmaster. There are any number of reasons that an urban health club can symbolize themes that course through *The Bank Teller*. For one, it illustrates how contemporary life mitigates against wholeness, creating unnecessarily separate categories of mind and body. It is a place often rife with non-encounters, where people who obviously recognize each other pretend they don't in order to avoid making contact. But in this particular instance I want to focus on the banks of TV monitors displayed at health clubs for the diversion of those toiling away on running and climbing machines. Gabel writes about Oliver Stone's film *JFK* as an example of the ongoing social tension between alienation and its opposite, which he labels "desire." He observes that the public colluded in the hasty conviction of Oswald not because of some organized media conspiracy but because of our unconscious

> attach[ment] to the status quo, to our legitimating myths of community, and to denying our own alienation and pain. The interest we share with the mainstream media and with government and corporate elites is to maintain ... the alienated structures of power and social identity that protect us from having to risk emerging from our sealed cubicles and allowing our fragile longing for true community to become a public force.... No matter who killed Kennedy, it was the conflict between the opening-up of desire that he represented and the need of the alienated forces around him to shut this desire down that brought about his death.... To win the struggle between desire and alienation ... people [must] break through the gauzy images of everything being fine except the lone nuts...

There is simply no depth of evil to which a society cannot sink once it abandons love as its governing principle.

As I raise my eyes to ponder this, there are three TV screens before me. On the right I see a paid ad for Rick Lazio's New York senatorial campaign. A gauzy image of a perfect husband and father declares that this candidate does not stoop to "negative ads," and ends with stark white letters on a black background proclaiming, "Hillary Clinton. You Just Can't Trust Her." On the center screen a news program shows long lines of irate motorists demonstrating in London over the fuel shortage while, in the provinces, British hospitals face complete energy shutdowns. This is followed immediately by a commercial for scented oil plug-ins to lend any room in the house "that fresh, clean feeling." Either of these two ironies is Orwellian enough, but their juxtaposition makes me wonder whether such blatantly distorted public discourse must inevitably push people deeper into "our sealed cubicles," or possibly have a salutary reverse effect. Then the screen on the left pulls me into the most elaborate and depressing paradox of all.

On CNN's *Talkback Live* show, the perky moderator is listening to both sides in the dispute between advertisers and actors that led to the Screen Actors Guild commercial strike. The issue is that advertisers do not want to give actors a share in the income generated by commercials in the new cable and Internet markets. A professor of advertising at the university level explains on management's behalf that the average commercial costs $300,000 to make and acceding to the union's demands will drive costs beyond the reach of many advertisers, thus depriving American consumers of exposure to potentially useful products and driving their favorite programs off the air. The president of SAG explains that an actor who does a commercial for, say, Pepsi cannot advertise a rival soft drink as well, and therefore must maximize his Pepsi earnings in order to support his family and make his car payments. He demonstrates the importance of the actors' contribution by pointing to the difficulty advertisers have had, since the strike began, getting non-union actors to emote convincingly. Richard Dreyfuss explains that only a handful of actors earn the fortunes reported in the media, and the vast majority need to do commercials to survive. An audience member responds, "Those guys make more money for one movie than I'll ever see in my lifetime." Someone else calls in to say, "Let them get as much as they can, it's the American way."

No solution is reached, as of course none can be, because no one is questioning the absurd context which renders the situation devoid of meaning, as Gabel understands the word. How the small-time actors feel about the gulf that separates them from megastars who make megabucks is not discussed. How the advertisers feel about the moronic situations they

devise to sell products is not discussed. How the audience feels about the cynicism, acrimony, and hypocrisy being paraded before them is not discussed. How the production and distribution of life's necessities, or the promotion of people's creative energies, could be organized in a non-adversarial manner is certainly not discussed. Nor is the extent to which these omissions deprive us of an accurate understanding of what we are doing here in the first place.



To understand this point, we need only contemplate any assemblage of human beings anywhere at all: on a bus, in a park, at a soccer game, a movie, wherever. It is indisputably true that every single person you see (yourself included) was at some point in their existence a helpless infant, inarticulate, nearly immobile, utterly incapable of surviving on its own. And it is equally true that every single one of these persons (yourself included) will at some point cease to breathe, vanish completely from view, and survive as no more than a memory (inorganic facsimiles notwithstanding) in the mental regions of other people who will undergo the same fate. The truths—our interdependence and impermanence—are far more self-evident than that we are all created equal (in fact it is largely from them that our equality derives) but hardly anyone pays them any attention whatsoever. Were we to do so (as all the world's religious traditions ask us to) the goals to which nationalist zealotry and consumerist industrialism bend us would seem grotesquely trivial. The issues debated during the last presidential election (not to mention the last impeachment) would inspire a vast shaking of heads and clucking of tongues.

And yet wars are fought, villages razed, mountains and jungles denuded, and human dignity brought low over just these goals and just these issues. In the Socratic world the unexamined life may have been not worth living; in our own era it is lethal, and must become ever more so as the Western crisis of meaning pumps psychological fuel into our destructive machinery. But this state of affairs, however perilous, is not the chief source of Gabel's prophetic fervor. Unrepentant Sixties survivor that he is, he seeks ever to remind us that redemption beckons as surely as doom repels, that, worldwide, millions of a generation still very much alive once united in the shared imagining of human enterprise benevolently transformed, and that the spirit behind that vision is neither nostalgic nor naive, but the same power that moves the very cycles of nature, life and history, and makes consciousness the unfolding miracle that it is.

This, of course, is the fundamental difference between the Politics of Meaning and all the previous utopian movements that have stained the landscape of history with blood and slaughter. Gabel perpetually reminds us that we cannot legitimately claim to have God on our side unless we acknowledge that God is on everybody's side. Far too often in human affairs the search for higher ground has meant the destruction of common ground. Not so in *The Bank Teller*. Here, for example, is Gabel on a faction viewed by most liberals as utterly worthless:

> the creationists have been able to touch that dimension of people's ordinary experience that sees life in all its forms as expressive of some indwelling and miraculous beauty and goodness, and that knows with a certain intuition that this indwelling presence must be at the heart of any true knowledge of the world. However absurd the strict content of their views may be ... there is something correct and admirable in their refusal to accept the hegemony of science as a privileged source of truth.... It is the apparent inability of liberals and the Left to address the deepest questions of reality and existence that is partly responsible for the appeal of right-wing movements who do address them, although often in profoundly distorted and destructive forms.

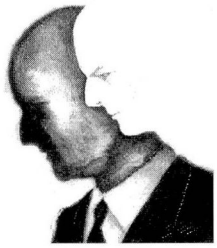
It is precisely this willingness to see the psychological unity in human experience despite its adversarial and even cruel manifestations that makes reading *The Bank Teller* such a positive joy. For all its scrupulous observation of the injustice entrenched in so many contemporary institutions, this is a hopeful book. And the power of its hope was demonstrated to me with a synchronicity full of the miraculous beauty its author would surely appreciate. I return again to the Stairmaster, where I had just finished reading a passage calling for "a new politics aimed at eliciting and fostering the desire for mutual recognition, that seeks to thaw out the mutual ... fear of humiliation by finding ... ways of both creating and spreading the experience of I-and-Thou as well as confidence in the reality of this experience."

What should appear on the TV monitor ahead of me but CNN's live coverage of the popular uprising in Yugoslavia, the nonviolent overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic by a people who had discovered, in their thousands, a desire for mutual recognition that melted even the armed troops of dictatorial power. As I watched in amazement, the citizens of Belgrade entered and took over the State News Agency television station. I felt as if I were witnessing the storming of the Bastille, except that instead of being held inside the fortress, today's prisoners are on the outside, shackled by images and words. And as I was pondering this irony of the media age, CNN interrupted the transmission for a moment of paid propaganda extolling the noble social aspirations of America's pharmaceutical companies! The web of our life, as Shakespeare noticed, is of a mingled yarn.

The Sufi tradition tells the story that, once upon a time, a great prophet warned the human race that presently

(continued on page 79)

about human fallibility—insights that place Niebuhr squarely in the center of contemporary positions like postmodernism, feminist theory, Marxism-after-Stalin, and post-empiricist philosophy of science. Like these very current perspectives, Niebuhr does not tell us what we are to do once we realize that all beliefs can be mistaken and all groups are self-interested. It is fine to talk of humility and openness, but despite such talk every action or inaction is an absolute, a commitment to one reality over another. "Humility" might make sense in setting the tax codes for different religious groups or setting the program for a "holiday" (not "Christmas" of course) school pageant



between equals, or at worst by those with more power to those with less. Workers are not supposed to be tolerant of their employers, unless we want to pretend that textile workers and garbage collectors are on an equal social footing with corporate executives, or that monopoly capitalism embodies the most balanced and just social system we can imagine. Here Niebuhr shares a common religious misconception that moral relations occur simply between "people" and not, as they in fact do, between people with particular social positions. Or, to put it more simply: it was not for Niebuhr to counsel workers to be tolerant of capitalists if he wasn't willing to renounce his professorship

THE SOURCE *(continued from page 68)*

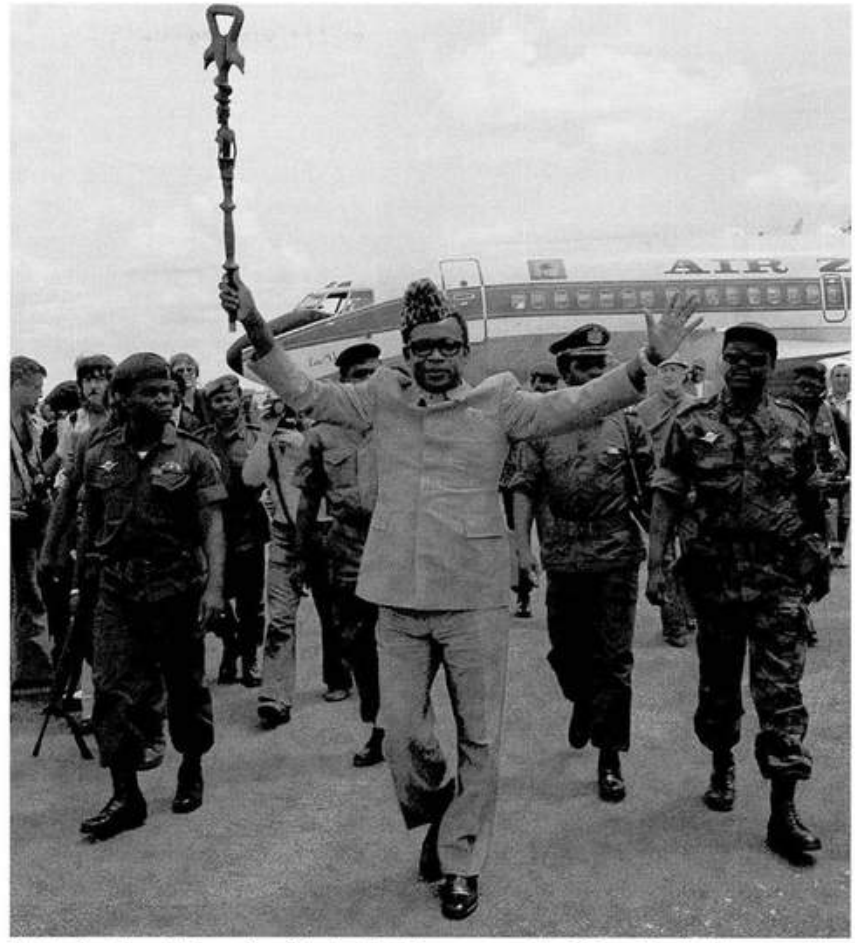
all the world's water would change its character, after which any water that was not specially collected prior to the fateful day would drive people mad. One lone man heeded the warning, collecting all the water he could and securing it in private. On the appointed day, water everywhere ceased to flow, and, when it resumed, all who drank of it altered their behavior drastically. Their method of thinking and speaking made no sense to the lone holdout, and his attempts to communicate with them were useless, since they had all forgotten about the way they used to live, and found his utterances incomprehensible.

The man continued to drink his

Unmasking the African Kurtz

Mark Jacobson

- *In The Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz—Living on the Brink of Disaster in The Congo,* by Michela Wrong. Fourth Estate, 2000.



Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko holds aloft a ceremonial staff after disembarking from his personal aircraft in Kolwezi, Zaire (April 23, 1977).

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO

When *Heart of Darkness* was first published in three installments in the February, March, and April 1899 issues of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* it is unlikely that even the great Conrad could have guessed that his slim 120-page novella would become the dominant historical/moral narrative of the upcoming century, a tale so preternaturally resonant with the brutal times as to become a modern myth. No work of art seems to have captured the nightmare spirit of the twentieth century quite so dead-on. Nor has any single fictional character cast such a frightening shadow (outside of Dracula, who casts no shadow) as Kurtz, the man who embodied "the horror…the horror." The Kurtz saga has proven so universal, so transportable—with people like Marlon Brando playing a Vietnamese/Cambodian version of the madman in the forest—that it is often forgotten that Conrad was writing about a specific place, the Congo, and time, the beginnings of the Belgian colonial presence, as witnessed by the author himself while travelling upriver in 1890.

Michela Wrong, a former BBC and Reuters reporter, attempts to remind us of these specifics in her new book, *In The Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz—Living on the Brink of Disaster in The Congo.* Essentially an on-the-ground account of the demise of the fabulously corrupt reign of Mobutu Sese Seko, who came to power in the aftermath of Congolese independence in 1960, Wrong's book also serves as a vessel in which to contemplate both the endurance of the Kurtz myth and some of its more controversial applications.

Mobutu is the centerpiece here, and rightly so. A man who purloined billions of dollars from his country's treasury, sending money and gold to Swiss banks while his potentially wealthy nation fell apart, Mobutu wore leopard-skin hats, built vast palaces, and appeared on television riding a cushion of clouds. None of the so-called Big Men of Africa—the first generation of leaders following the colonial period—compared to Mobutu as a Cold War favorite of the United States. Ronald Reagan often greeted him at the White House; George Bush called him "one of our most valued friends." He presided over the famous "Rumble in the Jungle" boxing match in 1974, prompting even Muhammad Ali, the Greatest, to sing his praises. "What a country," Ali marveled, watching a black pilot while travelling on a Zairian airplane. "Here, black men fly planes. That Mobutu got something going."

Calling himself "The Guide," "The Father of the Nation," "The Helmsman," "The Messiah," Mobutu mar-

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ried a woman who called herself Marie Antoinette. He also changed the name of the country itself, replacing "Congo," a term suffused with mysticism to the white world, with the Africanized "Zaire." By invoking the heritage of the timeless past, Mobutu intended to instill pride in the people and wipe away what he called the "stain of colonial masters." But Zaire turned out to be short-lived. By 1997, Mobutu—exiled to dusty Morocco and ill with cancer—was overthrown by the forces of career rebel Laurent Kabila. The name of the country was changed back to the Republic of the Congo, which, most pointed out, had been derived from the pre-colonial "Kingdom of Kongo" to begin with.

If, as most agree, the rapacious Belgian King Leopold, so hungry for colonies to aggrandize his little European home, was truly the Kurtz of the Congo, then Mobutu was the Kurtz of Zaire. Kleptocrats both, they stole as much as they could before they could steal no more. With the state of things in the former Zaire there may well be more Kurtzes to come. But as Wrong intimates in this chronicle of her six years in central Africa, the Kurtzian figure is a dangerous catch-all. Pure evil is never exactly pure. What happened in Zaire/Congo is something more messy than mystical, less archly dramatic, and, in the end, a lot sadder.

Of course we might already know this, if we'd bothered to look. But as Wrong often points out, Africa, aside from the occasional outbreaks of genocide, is more often out of sight and mind. Rarely covered by major news organizations since the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa, hardly even mentioned by Bush or Gore in the series of presidential debates, Africa wasn't always this remote. The Congo Crisis, which followed the nation's independence in 1960, once dominated the world press. Before Cuba and the missiles, the Congo was the hottest Cold War battleground. The Soviets had to be kept from Central Africa, we were told over and over. The secession attempt by the mineral-rich Katanga Province during the chaos that followed independence was a standard current-events project in fourth grade classes across America. There was even a top twenty "novelty" hit called "Lumumba, Kasavubu, Tshombe," a semi-racist lampoon of the names of the Congolese leaders. How this changed, how Africa fell off the radar screen and into the realm of the hopeless unmentionable, suitable only for the selective "development" of diamond, oil, and gold reserves, is one of the main themes of *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*. As Wrong intimates, leaders like Mobutu, the Hutu-Tutsi slaughters in the Great Lakes area, the amputations in Sierra Leone, are simply more fodder for the Kurtz "there's evil in them thar hills" myth, more backdoor proof that Africa remains "the dark continent," more reason for us out here in the real world to feel comfortable throwing up our hands at the utter futility of it all instead of probing more deeply into the Congo's complicated reality.

The concerned foreign correspondent descends into a regional Hell, suffers ... then returns.

There are many books in the mode of Wrong's: the concerned foreign correspondent descends into a version of Hell, suffers through electrical shortages in the last hotel in town, sees much distressing stuff, then returns, in angry despair, to tell us all about it. It's a time-honored, venerable sort of reportage dating back to Thucydides. Much great work has been done in the form—Ryszard Kapuscinski's elegantly desolate Angolan account, *Another Day of Life,* certainly among the most notable. At the other end of things are P.J. O'Rourke's blithe deprecations of Third World foibles, like wholesale famine, which can be really rough on the beer supply, even in the uptown districts.

This book is somewhere in the middle. Wrong offers numerous affecting vignettes of somewhat muted "horror." Mobutu's Zaire was more of a grind to a halt—Wrong calls it "a country on Low Batt," referring to the message appearing on rundown cell phones—a slow bleeding job as compared to the lightning terrors of other African "hotspots." The tour of Mama Yemo hospital in Kinshasa, the largest hospital in Africa, is properly mournful. As Mobutu was moving as much as a million dollars a day out of the country, Mama Yemo, named for his mother, became a nest of infection. Doctors were lucky to get their twenty dollars a month and babies were taken from mothers and held for ransom to make sure bills were paid. There is an interesting account of the arrest and trial of King Mizele, a self-styled religious mystic who envisioned the rebirth of a wholly clean and vigorous Kongo Kingdom amid the lugubrious death knell of Mobutu's domain. Also described, in relatively succinct terms, are the doings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the international moneychangers generally responsible for keeping strategically useful dictators like Mobutu flush.

There are respites from the grimness. When Wrong focuses on the Kinshasa street life and the fabulous soukous music for which Zaire became famous, she conveys the sense that the Zairian people, under perpetual siege for more than 100 years, have found the spirit and resiliency to do more than simply survive.

One of the strongest sections of the book does not even take place in Africa, but in the Congolese community now living in Brussels. The phenomena of large numbers of former colonial subjects living in the capital city of their erstwhile "mother country" is largely unfamiliar to

American audiences. With its strange mirroring of a world left behind, this is clearly a different kind of immigration. When Wrong quotes a Congolese expatriate as saying, "there is no African memory left," it strikes a chord of desperate nostalgia for a vicious past mingled with loathing toward a mis-

Together the two men systematically and viciously looted the Congo's "magnificent cake" where, according to Kipling's poem, "there ain't no Ten Commandments." Or at least no ten commandments Leopold felt compelled to abide by. Hochschild includ[redacted]

African politics as the result of an intractable tribalism akin to the so-called "ancient hatreds" often talked about in places like the Balkans. *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz* is only partially successful in avoiding this catchall pit. While Kabila's tribal politics are a

Short Takes

A Look at What's in Other Magazines and on the Web

Here TIKKUN continues our conversation with American intellectual, political, and cultural media.

Synthesis/Regeneration 23

"If we no longer pleaded with corporate leaders to cause a little less harm, what would we do? If we no longer celebrated as victories every brief delay in the corporate devastation of our world, what would we celebrate?" These questions, posed by Paul Cienfuegos in the Fall 2000 issue of *Synthesis/Regeneration 23, A Magazine of Green Social Thought,* are the starting point for a proposal to restructure the way we think about battling corporate power and its deforming influence on the world. In many states, he says, prior to the late 1800s, "corporations were prohibited from owning other corporations, prohibited from donating to political candidates or charitable organizations … and boards of directors and stockholders were held personally liable for all harms and debts." Reframing our fundamental relationship with what Cienfuegos calls "fictitious corporate 'persons'" is possible

integration into the global economy provided the best formula for development." From Seattle to Prague, demonstrators have criticized those policies of the World Bank and the IMF. They are not alone. According to writer Mark Levinson in the Fall 2000 issue, a growing number of people within those agencies also see the current programs as flawed. Levinson cites the controversy over an early version of a World Bank report that questioned the wisdom and effectiveness of sweeping market liberalization. The economist who wrote the report resigned, reportedly because the Bank wanted to "re-shape the message" for the final report, but the debate over what constitutes development and how best to achieve it is growing, and that in itself is a sign of progress.

Whole Earth

"Knowledge crosses a threshold when it goes from 'most' to 'all.'" The Fall 2000 issue of *Whole Earth* is an ambitious and compelling proposal for an All-Species Inventory of Earth. Author Kevin Kelly writes, "If we discovered life on another planet, the first thing we would do is conduct a sys-

WEB WATCH

Refoyl's Yiddish Resources

http://www.cs.engr.uky.edu/~raphael/yiddish.html

If chicken soup can be a comfort food, maybe Yiddish is a comfort language. Test this theory with a visit to Refoyl's Yiddish Resources web page. This *haimishe* site is a delightful mishmash of links to all things Yiddish: find and listen to Yiddish songs, learn Yiddish dance, add the Yiddish alphabet to your computer, buy and sell Yiddish books, and get a weather report in Yiddish. Don't worry if you don't speak the language yet, you'll find links to places where you can learn it, online or off. And when you're ready, click on the link to "The Jabberwocky," in Yiddish of course.

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting

http://www.fair.org

The media has been behaving very badly lately. That's why it's worth visiting the website of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. These watchdogs have been keeping an eye on the

BOOK REVIEW

Building a Fair Economy

Marla Brettschneider

- *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*, by Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel with United For a Fair Economy. The New Press, 2000.



Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel have written a timely and much needed primer

for change that is possible for average folks to achieve in our time. This is a work that can serve as a useful tool for building and contributing to a movement for change. By mid-text we find a useful presentation of the component parts of a movement infrastructure, including the challenges of cultural preparation, organization, and developing public support in movement-building. Here the authors discuss the role of grassroots organizations, coalitions, progressive research organizations, the media, education and training, and cultural work.



In this section in particular, however, the authors could have attended more to the spiritual needs of those of us seeking to build movements. Collins and Yeskel write, "Movements need a cultural component to move people's hearts, to celebrate victories and mourn setbacks, to allow us to experiment with living our visions, and to build the community necessary for long-term movement-building and social change. We need a culture that nurtures and sustains us in the work." It is clear that the authors draw on their own and others' lives within spiritual communities. They offer us a vision for change based on a critique of existing conditions, grounded in the nexus of yearning, of lack and loss, created by and creating our culture of self-interest, isolation, and corporate greed. Unfortunately, these ideas are never developed in the book, which remains pretty firmly within the realm of economics. As a result, TIKKUN readers interested in emancipatory spirituality will find the work mainly a starting point for developing insight and action plans within spiritual/activist communities.

What the authors do provide is an accessible review of concepts designed to re-empower ordinary people to grapple with economic frameworks, issues, and practices too many would think they are incapable of handling. The layout of the text is easy to read and presented so that one can either read through the whole or pick and choose chapters or sections. The authors use humor and cartoons without being patronizing. They make difficult concepts accessible without being insulting to those already familiar with issues of economic inequality or those who have experienced and resisted economic oppression. The action-oriented sections are well done, with explanations of such proposals as fair taxation, debt cancellation, cross-border organizing, shareholder actions, public accountability, and temporary worker organizing.

As the authors themselves note, however, their text is limited in addressing how class and economic issues intersect with racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, ageism, and able-ism. As with the lack of attention to the spiritual aspects of economic inequality, the authors have much personal training in and experience working against these intersecting oppressions. As a reader, I could tell that knowledge of these forms of discrimination and their role in economic injustice informed the research but was too rarely employed in the discussion. The constant assault on human dignity that minorities and marginalized people in this country face is a central part of the inherently related stories of economic apartheid and spiritual deprivation in our lives.

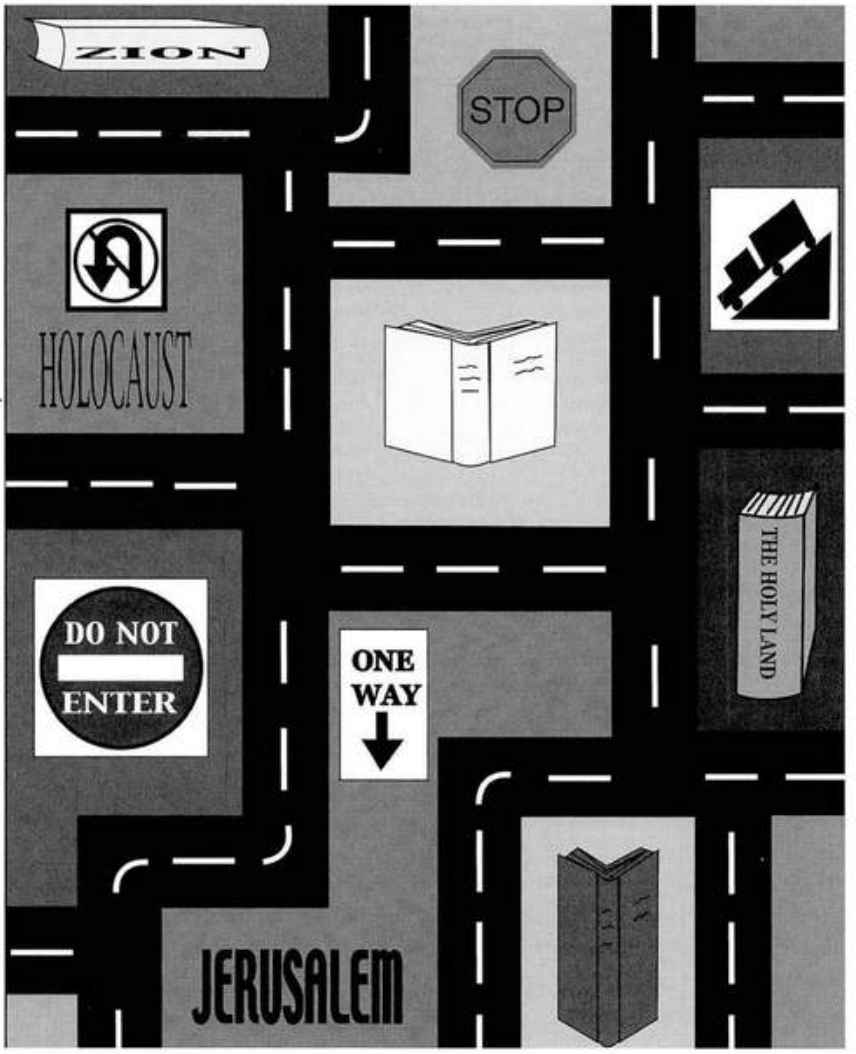
In a related manner, the book focuses on domestic concerns and only briefly makes mention of global inequality and the ways that domestic inequalities in the United States rely on the multifaceted processes of globalization and colonization. Value systems which prioritize some over others, which rely on hierarchies of human worth, chip away at the ethical and spiritual fiber of our productive capacities. The versions of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, ageism, and able-ism which have developed in the United States—and all ideologies which mark, separate, and rank life in such crass ways—creep around the globe and serve to artificially pump-up our so-called blossoming economy.

The book and this kind of economic analysis are much served by the contributions made by organizations such as United for a Fair Economy. UFE was formed in 1994 as a "movement support organization" to "draw attention to the growing income and wealth inequality." The group coordinates a national coalition of organizations working on economic-related issues. Their actions, workshops, and leadership training would be very helpful for those involved in building communities committed to emancipatory spirituality. They mobilize around tax season, have an effective rapid response network, a media response network, a very useful quarterly newsletter, and a website (www.ufenet.org). As the statistics published in the book will likely be out of date soon, the website is a tremendous resource for updated information. UFE often works on the principle of creative direct action, using humor and theatrical techniques in local and national sites to call attention to economic inequality. The organization also developed Responsible Wealth, a group of over 500 wealthy individuals who use their access to make concrete economic change.

Both Collins and Yeskel are significant forces behind the founding and ongoing work of UFE. Their newly published book, *Economic Apartheid in America*, draws on their work there and brings much of the research, analysis, and strategic action of the organization to a wider public. One might see it as providing a clear post-socialist vision of economic justice to coalitions including the growing movement of spiritually-grounded peace and justice groups, Jewish and otherwise. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Mapping Jewish Identity



ILLUSTRACTION BY ELENA RODRIGUEZ

Ilana Pardes

- *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in Modern Jewish Imagination*, by Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi. University of California Press, 2000.

"There has to be somewhere else, I tell myself. And everyone knows that to go somewhere else there are routes, signs, 'maps'—for an exploration, a trip. That's what books are." So writes Hélène Cixous in *Sorties* as she maps out the books and lands she passed through from childhood on. The question of space is one of the most fascinating questions in contemporary literary theory and criticism. What kind of maps do books offer? To what extent do textual voyages serve as a point of departure for a critique of the home one leaves behind? What is the imaginary base of "homelands"? What is the political force of spatial metaphors? What are the interrelations between inscapes and actual sites?

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's *Booking Passage* offers a compelling exploration of such questions in the context of Jewish geographies. In big broad strokes, she follows the changing perceptions of exile and homecoming in the modern Jewish imagination. "Until the late nineteenth century," Ezrahi argues, "Jews were identified in their imagination as wanderers and exiles, their sacred center—Jerusalem, Zion—fatefully out of reach." Ezrahi regards Psalm 137 as the founding text of the poetics of exile: "How can we sing God's song in a foreign land?" ask the exiles by the rivers of Babylon, suggesting that singing in exile is impossible. God's song is supposedly bound to Zion. But Psalm 137 does not end here. The following verses make clear that singing becomes an indispensable mode of resistance in foreign lands: "being elsewhere, being far from Zion, is the pretext for poetry … singing becomes the mnemonic compensation for absence." The singing tongue—the very antithesis of the oblivious tongue that sticks to the palate—is precisely the means by which the lost homeland may spring back to life. Zion becomes a vital, if vulnerable, textual homeland in diasporic culture.

But what happens when the Holy Land, the object of deferred desire, becomes a historical site of return with the rise of Zionism? One of the central questions of the book is "how the reacquisition of the spatial dimension has affected the Jewish literary imagination in the twentieth century." The critique of political Zionism is already evident in S.Y. Abramovitsh's *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*. According to Ezrahi, the Hebrew version of the story—which appeared within a year of the First Zionist Congress in Bazel (1896–97)—is a "subtle but scathing superscription on the Zionist blueprint, a counternarrative to the translation of messianic dreams into the language of nineteenth-century nationalism and of return to 'original space.'" Inspired by his books and by stories

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told in the local bathhouse, Benjamin the Third convinces his friend Sender to accompany him on his voyage to the Holy Land in quest of lost tribes waiting to be rediscovered and redeemed. Their travels, however, turn out to be rather Quixotic. Although the depiction of their dramatic departure from Batalon (Moochville) is replete with allusions to the momentous biblical account of the Exodus, the two travelers never reach the Holy Land. "Lost in space," they wander about in the vicinity of Moochville, their home town. *The Travels of Benjamin the Third* is a skeptical parody "of a text culture—a culture grounded in mythic texts whose relation to observable, scientifically certifiable reality is as remote as that of the romances Quixote read."

Jerusalem, however, remains in a sense beyond reach even when one literally resides there. Yehuda Amichai's poetry often touches on the tension between the utopian image of the city and life (love) in the actual site. Playfully evoking Psalm 137, he declares:

> If I forget thee Jerusalem,
> Then let my right be forgotten
> Let my right be forgotten, and my left remember.
> Let my left remember, and your right close
> And your mouth open near the gate.

"The poet-in-Jerusalem," Ezrahi argues, "rescues the human beloved, the woman *in* Jerusalem, from the suffocating grasp of the metaphoric woman who *is* Jerusalem." In "Jerusalem 1967," Amichai highlights the evasiveness of the city, the city of many names and traces, who belongs to all, ultimately possessed by none:

> The city plays hide-and-seek among her names:
> Yerushalayim, El-Quds, Shalem, Jeru, Yeru, all the while
> Whispering her first, Jebusite name: Y'vus,
> Y'vus, Y'vus, in the dark. She weeps
> With longing: Ilia Capitolina, Ilia, Ilia.

What makes Ezrahi's account of Jewish geographies particularly refreshing is the fact that she doesn't limit the discussion to the Hebrew-Israeli context. She is admirably at home in Yiddish and American literatures as well. In her wide-ranging literary map there are other centers besides Jerusalem. In Scholem Aleichem's *Motl the Cantor's Son*, the "discovery" of America entails a discovery of an alternative Promised Land. In the last of his narratives, Ezrahi writes, Scholem Aleichem "incorporated the American city into a viable extension of Jewish geography," initiating "a process that substitutes mobility as a Jewish opportunity for wandering as a Jewish curse." In 1970 Cynthia Ozick will continue in a similar vein, arguing that "America shall, for a while, become Yavneh." Philip Roth will take it a step further in *Operation Shylock*, where the Diaspora is defined as "the only viable place for Jews."

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But then, there is another center—a "negative center"—that resonates with unmistakable force in Jewish writings ever since "Jewish Europe was destroyed in an apocalypse as great as that which had destroyed ancient Israel." Ezrahi provides illuminating readings of Celan, Pagis, Appelfeld, and I. B. Singer in an attempt to fathom the yearnings for the demolished European center in post-Holocaust literature. "Although the streets of Lodz are not sanctified in collective memory as were the hills of Zion," she writes, "they become accessible to pilgrimages real and imagined, ritual and literary, as an unredeemable and indestructible ruin."

In the conclusion, Ezrahi points to another exile that deconstructs "the exclusive Jewish discourse of exile and homecoming"—the Palestinian exile vis-à-vis the Holy Land as it is reflected in the works of Avot Yeshurun and Anton Shammas.

Given the broad scope of the book, one could hardly ask for more, but some of the writers on the margins of the book could have offered points of departure to other fascinating routes. Leah Goldberg's "Song of Zion" ("Sing us from the Songs of Zion!/ How shall we sing a song of Zion in the land of Zion/if we have not begun to listen?") is mentioned only briefly in the introduction, though Goldberg was deeply preoccupied with questions of exile, homecoming, and writing. She defined herself as "torn between two homelands" (*za'ar shtey hamoladot*) and this painful estrangement was only augmented by her sense of isolation as a woman.

One final remark that will lead us—if briefly—beyond the modern focus of the book. The poetics of exile in the Bible does not begin with Psalm 137, though the latter is surely a central text in this connection. The recurrent murmurings of the Israelites in the wilderness offer another resonant voice, with a very different perception of exile. The wandering Israelites cry much as the exiles who sat by the rivers of Babylon cried, only their notion of exile does not coincide with the official one. Egypt is the land they mourn over, the land of their dreams, not Zion. Biblical geography has its own complications.

What Ezrahi seems to call for, above all, is an exilic position, a critical sensibility that would deconstruct the fetishization of sacred sites. What makes this call all the more forceful is the concomitant invitation to consider how intricate our internal maps may be—oscillating between lost homes, new worlds, stifling streets, ancient seas, and many, many books. ❑

The Boundaries of Humility in Religion and Politics



Roger S. Gottlieb

- *On Niebuhr: A Theological Study,* by Langdon Gilkey. University of Chicago Press, 2001.

> We can no longer buy the highest satisfaction of the individual life at the expense of social injustice. We cannot build our individual ladders to heaven and leave the total human enterprise unredeemed of its excesses and corruptions.
>
> —*Moral Man and Immoral Society,* Reinhold Niebuhr, 1931.

A world-famous theologian and political commentator, Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the last great public intellectuals of American life. Author of twenty or so books and close to a thousand articles, founder of several magazines linking religion to social life, impassioned public speaker, and consultant to the State Department, his thought influenced people as diverse as Martin Luther King Jr., James Cone, and Thomas Merton.

Langdon Gilkey's fine new book on Niebuhr's theology can help counteract the neglect into which his thought has fallen. Indeed, as someone who has been writing on the relations between politics and religion for a decade, I find it extremely interesting that no one ever said to me: "You should read Niebuhr." For Niebuhr was both deeply committed to a religious (Protestant) worldview and also intimately knowledgeable of, and in some ways sympathetic to, liberal and Marxist perspectives. More particularly, Niebuhr strikingly anticipated many later political insights. He advocated nonviolent civil disobedience as a strategy to achieve black civil rights twenty years before the Montgomery bus boycott; he described patriarchal power in the family thirty years before feminism; he critiqued cultural imperialism (even using the phrase) forty years before multiculturalism; and he supported the need for a Jewish state before the Holocaust.

Yet this book is important not only because of Gilkey's careful and often loving presentation. It is just as interesting for the opportunity it gives us to examine the dilemmas Niebuhr faced and how he succeeded—or failed—to solve them. For despite the fact that his active intellectual life ended almost four decades ago, many of his problems remain ours. That fact alone is a sign of his genius.

Niebuhr's starting point is the fallibility and selfishness of human beings, *especially* as they enter into social struggles for power, privilege, property, or prestige; and the consequent need for a fundamental humility and tolerance in our political and religious lives. His commitment to social justice, sympathy for the working class (his first professional job was as minister of a church attended by auto workers), and ardent Christian belief coexisted with his view that every movement, political party, or religious group was limited in understanding and liable to indulge in immoral self-aggrandizement. Niebuhr thus linked ancient Christian teachings about the Fall of Man with distinctively twentieth-century experiences of the horrors of fascism, the dreadful deterioration of communism, and the hypocrisy of capitalism.

Unlike most religious visionaries, especially those in the Western tradition, he also was highly critical of Christian claims to absolute knowledge, truth, or virtue. This critique, as Gilkey points out in his incisive concluding chapter, stemmed from Niebuhr's acceptance of many of the claims of liberal modernity, including the primacy of history and social life in shaping our concepts and beliefs, the use of political action to improve the world, the scientific undermining of traditional religion, and the ethical critique of religious parochialism and oppressiveness.

Yet Niebuhr also spent much of his life inveighing against the naiveté of liberalism, as in his most famous book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society.* Liberals, complained Niebuhr, failed to see that human beings were self-interested, and the more they functioned as collective groups the more self-interested they were. For Niebuhr, neither education, nor reason, nor technological developments would change this fact. If this sounds like a Marxist account of how ideology and political behavior express class interest, that is because Niebuhr constantly utilized (often without direct attribution)

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY JON KRAUSE

such an account. Unlike Marx, however, Niebuhr did not believe that a society run by the working class would end all forms of oppression and injustice. There was no guarantee that workers, any more than Christians, would be completely virtuous. Social life is not about finding the "right" group to run things, but about finding a slightly better balance of power among contending groups.

Niebuhr's skepticism of political movements had a conservative effect in some circles, and, with the advent of the New Left and Liberation Theology, caused him to lose favor from the Sixties on. However, by countering its naïve romanticism about the inherent goodness of "oppressed groups," Niebuhr's position would have done a great deal for the radical politics of the last thirty years. It also is desperately needed in today's ethnic conflicts: one could only imagine what would happen to the Middle East conflict if both sides began from Niebuhr's insight about the universality of human selfishness and pride.

Total or uncritical reliance on any theory or group becomes a kind of idolatry: taking the part as the whole; confusing rational intelligibility with the full truth of the universe or human history; identifying our personal interests with those of "everyone." The task of religion is to provide a permanent position of transcendence by which to judge such errors and pretension. The message of the biblical prophets, Niebuhr taught, was that God was "critical of the elders, the judges and the princes" because of their mistreatment of the poor and powerless. Therefore, justice was "not equal justice but a bias in favor of the poor." (This phrasing is an almost exact anticipation of the claims of Latin American Liberation Theology and the American Black Power theology of James Cone.)

At the same time, however, Niebuhr thought that Christianity was more fitting to our human condition than any other religion or philosophy. Only Christianity, he argued, could help us understand the tensions between human beings as both part of nature and ensouled, good and evil, morally significant and insignificant, socially determined and morally free. It protects us from existential despair by connecting our historical existence to a transcendent God; from idolatry by reminding us that the divine infinitely transcends any particular human religious understanding or moral attitude; and from religious attempts to escape history (as in, for Niebuhr, Eastern religions or mysticism) by teaching that God entered—and continues to care about—history.

Niebuhr wanted religion to give our lives meaning, to remind us of our necessary humility before God.

This apology for Christianity is one of Niebuhr's weakest points, insufficiently criticized by Gilkey. All religions seek to explain evil, provide hope, offer a framework to understand human life, teach morality, and describe methods of (some kind of) salvation. They may use a different vocabulary than Christianity, and they may have a different view of the universe, but to claim that only *his* system will allow us to make sense of our lives is absurd.

Further, and more important: rooting the superiority of Christianity in its relation to our "experience" supposes that we can describe that experience in neutral terms, unshaped by the perspective with which we began. Of course we can't. This is particularly important in relation to Niebuhr's account of sin, which he tends to identify with either pride or selfishness. But, as Valerie Saiving has convincingly argued, women's experience of sin may be quite different than men's—involving a "sinful" lack of self-care, self-assertion, or taking of public responsibility. Niebuhr confuses his experience of highly individualistic, arrogant white men and the organizations they lead with "experience in general."

The point is not just that Niebuhr's theology was sexist. He could not help being sexist just because of the absence, during his lifetime, of a women's movement to represent women's point of view. *His* theology needed the correction of *their* politics. The point is that this need tells us something quite important about the relations between political life and religion.

Niebuhr wanted religion to give our lives meaning, to remind us of our necessary humility before God, to provide images of perfect love, to remind us that life is a mystery rather than a technical problem, and to help us make social life more just. But he failed to see that, while religious views can help heal the hurts of politics, political perspectives are equally necessary for the sanctification of religion. Basic ideas of *religious* life—the nature of God and sin, the ethical status of nature, the meaning of goodness—are altered over time through *political* experience: experience shaped by the self-interested attempt of groups to secure their rights. Between religion and politics, the teaching and the learning need to go both ways. If religion is a permanent position of transcendence through which politics can be judged, *politics offers the same for religion*. While he recognized that "an adequate Christian social ethic must avail itself of non-biblical instruments of calculation," Niebuhr did not see that what religion has to learn from politics can penetrate into religion's most fundamental concepts. A similar error is made by many contemporary spiritual writers, especially those who, like Niebuhr, see religion as something of an alternative to the brutalities of politics.

There is a further problem, unfortunately not really addressed by Gilkey, which has to do with the practical implications of Niebuhr's insights

about human fallibility—insights that place Niebuhr squarely in the center of contemporary positions like postmodernism, feminist theory, Marxism-after-Stalin, and post-empiricist philosophy of science. Like these very current perspectives, Niebuhr does not tell us what we are to do once we realize that all beliefs can be mistaken and all groups are self-interested. It is fine to talk of humility and openness, but despite such talk every action or inaction is an absolute, a commitment to one reality over another. "Humility" might make sense in setting the tax codes for different religious groups or setting the program for a "holiday" (not "Christmas" of course) school pageant. But what is "humility" when we encounter a rape, an environmental struggle, or a strike?



Also, Niebuhr doesn't really recommend any *spiritual practices* to make us more humble. Buddhism, for instance, has a whole repertoire of meditations designed to aid us in becoming less attached to our opinions, forgiving our enemies, dealing with our greed, and distancing ourselves from our fear or anger. For Niebuhr, as for most Protestant theologians, developing these virtues is a matter of intellectual insight or the grace of faith. (That is perhaps why, as he later admitted, he was unaware of how his own vanity led him to ignore his wife's pleas that he spend more time at home and less giving public lectures.)

These errors come together in some of Niebuhr's later political views, when his disappointment with communism took on something of a Cold War tinge and he identified America's victories with divine will (though he was a vocal opponent of our aggression in Vietnam, calling it a "fantastic adventure of U.S. Imperialism"). He asserted, contrary to his earlier position, that "tolerance" should include relations between capitalists and workers. Such a position is fundamentally mistaken, for "tolerance" is a virtue properly extended between equals, or at worst by those with more power to those with less. Workers are not supposed to be tolerant of their employers, unless we want to pretend that textile workers and garbage collectors are on an equal social footing with corporate executives, or that monopoly capitalism embodies the most balanced and just social system we can imagine. Here Niebuhr shares a common religious misconception that moral relations occur simply between "people" and not, as they in fact do, between people with particular social positions. Or, to put it more simply: it was not for Niebuhr to counsel workers to be tolerant of capitalists if he wasn't willing to renounce his professorship, his fame, and his income—and work as a janitor or a secretary.

Niebuhr's dilemmas here are, as I suggested above, absolutely contemporary. Gilkey is perhaps too close to his former mentor to grapple with Niebuhr's problems (for a beginning, see Larry Rasmussen's excellent introduction to his 1989 book, *Reinhold Niebuhr*), but, as far as I can tell, no one has a really adequate answer. Those of us who seek to avoid both mindless fundamentalism and self-indulgent skepticism must join personal humility with the ethical assertion of moral truth; we must combine our recognition of the social and historical relativity of all beliefs with the need to make our beliefs "absolute" by acting on them.

Humility may mean, at least, the willingness to think twice, to constantly re-examine our beliefs and actions, and to listen very carefully to what others have to say. To develop these virtues we will need religious models of humility and self-examination alongside political theories that argue about to whom we should listen and why. If Niebuhr's answers about the implications of human fallibility are inadequate, his description of the problem is as relevant as ever. That alone makes him worth reading—and makes Gilkey's book an important contribution. ❑

THE SOURCE *(continued from page 68)*

all the world's water would change its character, after which any water that was not specially collected prior to the fateful day would drive people mad. One lone man heeded the warning, collecting all the water he could and securing it in private. On the appointed day, water everywhere ceased to flow, and, when it resumed, all who drank of it altered their behavior drastically. Their method of thinking and speaking made no sense to the lone holdout, and his attempts to communicate with them were useless, since they had all forgotten about the way they used to live, and found his utterances incomprehensible.

The man continued to drink his hoarded water for a while, but eventually his isolation became unbearable. He drank the water of the altered world and fell into the same madness as his fellows, forgetting that there had ever been an alternative; he was welcomed by all as a madman who had miraculously regained his senses. I used to view this simply as a commentary on the pernicious effect of social convention and herd mentality. But there is a deeper level to the story, for it also speaks to the inherent need for community, without which even wisdom is sterile. The implication is that between exile with integrity and fellowship with delusion there is nothing to choose. The completion for which we long is indeed within ourselves, but we can actualize it only by offering it to each other with open hearts.

To those of us whose memory of more visionary times makes contemporary culture seem insanely aberrant, to anyone of any age who draws a similar conclusion from the promptings of an inner knowing that springs not from nostalgia but intuition and the conviction that humanity's common destiny must and will surpass the shabby conventions of our own time, *The Bank Teller* is more than a wakeup call, more than a manifesto. Peter Gabel would restore to all of us the water of sanity itself. ❑

PERSONAL ESSAY

Exile

Losing the Motherland



Dina Elenbogen

March, 1999

In 1983, in his living room on Van Buren street, where wandering Jew plants dropped their leaves against his western window, the poet Gerald Stern put this question to the students gathered around him: is there any place where, if you could never return to it, you would want to die? As one of Stern's young, romantic graduate students, I blurted out "Jerusalem." Others said Paris, the Greek islands; I think someone muttered something about home. When I said Jerusalem then, I think I also meant love, that I would want to die if I could never return to the man I loved, who, at the time, lived in Jerusalem.

Over the decade and more that followed that conversation, my travels would take me into the lives of Ethiopian Jews, who after decades of longing for Jerusalem had finally reached their dream. Watching Ethiopian children become Israelis, teaching the teenagers English, sharing *enjara* as part of their family, and studying their lives brought me to Jerusalem numerous times between the years of 1984 and 1998. I thought a lot, during these visits, about exile and about what it meant for my Ethiopian friends to return to a homeland that didn't always feel like home. Before each departure, as I watched the golden light fade against Jerusalem stone, I knew these journeys were a luxury. Yet, even in these moments, I changed Gerald Stern's words from "die" to "suffer greatly." I would have suffered but would not have wanted to die if I could not return to Jerusalem.

In the middle of the Intifada, in 1989, I reunited with a Palestinian friend from Jerusalem who was living in Chicago, and who for political reasons could not return to Jerusalem, his home. I felt his pain as I prepared for my return and packed his unsealed letters and gifts for our mutual American poet friend in Jerusalem. I understood in a more profound way than ever before what a privilege it was to return, year after year, to my spiritual home. And I understood, too, a different kind of suffering.

This past summer, my husband Steve and I pushed our daughter Sarina in her stroller over the harsh stone of Jerusalem streets, carried her through the narrow passages of the Old City, and gave her name at the Wall. As I watched Sarina dance in her father's arms in the men's section of the *kotel,* from where I stood with so many generations of Jewish women, I knew I would be sad if I could not return to this place. But I would no longer equate suffering with not being able to return to a physical place. And thoughts of dying I could now only imagine having if, for some reason, I could never return to my daughter.

My fourteen-year journey in and out of the lives of Ethiopian Jews, back and forth from Chicago to Jerusalem, from one homeland to another, had turned into a book. And on this trip, I felt that I had everything I needed; the journey had come full circle. As I said goodbye to Osnat, an Ethiopian former student who I had watched grow from a shy thirteen-year-old into a bold young woman, and who, throughout this visit, carried my daughter along the sea and sang to her in Hebrew, there were no tears: I knew I had the security of return.

The tears came instead, this time, upon my return to America. My mother's illness, diagnosed as a non-threatening form of scleroderma, had entered her pulmonary system in the short time we'd been away; she was in critical care. As she lay in her hospital bed in Evanston, her mind as sharp as ever, I read her Sholom Aleichem stories, remembering the lilt in her voice when she read to me as a child. This time I listened to the sound of her lungs struggling to take in more air.

Three weeks later, as I was trying to find a babysitter one morning so I could return to the hospital, my father called with the words, "She died." I fell on the floor in sobs larger and deeper than any pain I'd ever known. When I couldn't get up from my knees to comfort my daughter, who was crying from her crib, I understood for the first time what exile really means: how it feels to never be able to return again to the most essential place, to the giver of life, the source, mother, home. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA KASSOF

Dina Elenbogen recently completed a book-length memoir entitled Drawn from Water: an American Poet Encounters Israel and the Ethiopian Jews. *An award-winning poet and prose writer, her work has appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines.*

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