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SURVIVING BUSH

U.S. SENATOR PAUL WELLSTONE
MICHAEL LERNER

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 2001 $5.95

Soul Prints



Mordechai Gafni

• • • • •

RENEWING LITURGY

Catherine Madsen
Arthur Waskow
Rami Shapiro

EDUCATION'S DEMISE

Henry A. Giroux • Alfie Kohn

GEORGE SOROS' WORLD

David C. Korten

AIDS MEMOIR

Marcie Hershman

A PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF RETURN?

Benny Morris • Uri Avnery • David Arnow

PLUS REVIEWS BY:

Harold M. Schulweis on Tuesdays with Morrie
Vladimir Tismaneanu on the Balkans
Kabir Dandona on Cynthia Ozick
Charles Burack on Andrew Harvey

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Still

In the sealed cars of freight trains
across the country travel names,
but where are they going to go,
and will they ever get out,
don't ask, can't say, don't know.

Nathan's name bangs his fists on the wall.
Isaac's name sings in a maddened thrall.
Sarah's name cries that the water go first
to Aaron's name which is dying of thirst.

Do not jump off the train, David's name.
You're the name that has been condemned,
given to no one without a home,
too heavy to bear in this land.

To the son goes a Slavic name as it should,
for here they count the hairs on your head,
for here they divide the bad from the good
based on a name or the shape of an eyelid.

Do not jump off the train. Lech is the name he will have.
Do not jump off the train. There's still time to hold back.
Do not jump. The night spreads like a laugh
mocking the clatter of wheel upon track.

A cloud made of people passed over the land.
From a large cloud a small rain, a sole tear was shed,
a small rain, a sole tear, a season of lack.
Into a forest of black veer the tracks.

That's so that's so, go the wheels.
These woods have no clearing.
That's so that's so.
A cargo of cries disappearing.
That's so that's so.
Awakened in deep night on hearing
that's so that's so,
the clatter of silence on silence.

—Wislawa Szymborska
translated from the Polish by Joanna Trzeciak

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 16 NUMBER 2



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Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Recovering Judaism



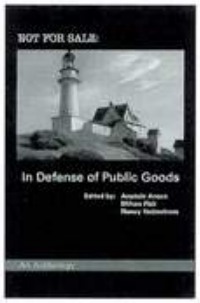
Jacob Neusner
Fortress Press, 2001

Jacob Neusner, a prodigious writer and respected Talmud scholar, uses his deep knowledge of classical texts to highlight the universal dimension of Judaism. Counter to those who have argued that universalism is a Jewish assimilationist accommodation to modernity, Neusner's careful textual readings prove that this has been a central strand of Jewish thinking.

Not For Sale

In Defense of Public Goods

Edited by Anatole Anton, Milton Fisk & Nancy Holmstrom
Westview, Press, 2000



The big claim of globalized capital is that it creates more wealth and more jobs. In this very exciting collection of articles by thinkers ranging from Angela Davis to Richard Rorty, we get a picture of the costs of destroying public goods. The stark irrationality of neoliberalism is exposed and we begin to understand how deeply we have been impoverished by replacing concern about the public good with a narrow focus on accumulating private satisfactions. Unfortunately lacking a spiritual dimension, this book nevertheless provides a useful companion to *Spirit Matters* and *The Bank Teller*.

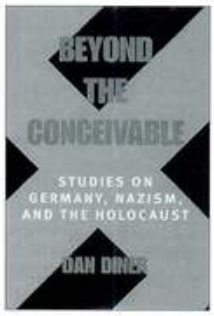
Martyr's Crossing

Amy Wilentz
Simon & Schuster, 2001

Amy Wilentz, the *New Yorker*'s Jerusalem correspondent from 1995 to 1997, is a powerful storyteller, and this novel captures some of the turmoil and distress of the contemporary struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. It's often hard to get beyond the headlines and imagine the texture of daily life for people living in the midst of this struggle, but Wilentz has mixed creativity and imagination with a very insightful understanding of some of the psychodynamics of the struggle.

Beyond the Conceivable

Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust

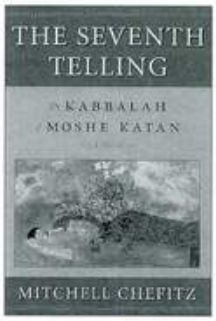


Dan Diner
University of California Press, 2000

Dan Diner is a brilliant theorist of Germany and the Holocaust who divides his time between Beer Sheva and Leipzig. Diner shows that at times anti-Jewish acts were not motivated by anti-Semitic beliefs and that anti-Semitic beliefs did not always lead to anti-Jewish acts. When looked at up close, the motives of anti-Jewish acts included opportunism, careerism, greed, and other various forms of baseness. But the anti-Semitic context guaranteed that those who shared these kinds of motives enjoyed exemption from punishment for ethically repugnant behavior.

The Seventh Telling

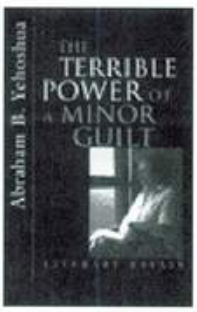
The Kabbalah of Moshe Katan



Mitchell Chefitz
St. Martin's Press, 2001

It's not often that you can read a novel, have fun, and learn so much about the world of Jewish mysticism. Chefitz presents a wise and touching tale of a world filled with stories and surprises. Intriguing and stimulating.

The Terrible Power of a Minor Guilt



A.B. Yehoshua
Syracuse University Press, 2000

In this courageous set of literary essays by one of Israel's most respected novelists, A.B. Yehoshua seeks to restore to discussions of literature a moral dimension absent in much of the past century. The language of criticism is rich with words like credibility, complexity, depth, and novelty, but remarkably free of words like moral, value, right, and good. So Yehoshua jumps in by providing us with a morally sensitive reading of several classic stories, from the biblical story of Cain and Abel to the writings of Euripides and Camus, Joseph Chaim Brenner, Raymond Carver, and more. This should be a required reading for all students of literature.

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Letters to the Editor

What Price Peace?

To the Editor:

Although I just renewed my subscription to TIKKUN, I have been horrified by some of the material you've circulated online and some of the positions you've taken on the current Mideast crisis, which to me read like total support for the Palestinian position, that is, complete withdrawal to the 1967 borders. While in principle this might have been viable thirty years ago (and I'm sorry it wasn't done then, if only to avoid the corrupting effects of the long occupation), it's not a realistic option today, partly because of the settlements, partly because of the parameters of Israeli politics, partly because of the violent means that are being used to achieve it (which I know you do *not* support). In fact it's hardly more realistic than trying to revive the 1946 ideal of a secular binational state. But even if a withdrawal to the 1967 borders could be effected by a stroke of the pen, would that be the end of it? I have no doubt that it would become the base for Palestinian claims on Israel itself, as the Palestinian rejectionists have always maintained.

As you well know, the Palestinians have been emboldened by the long overdue withdrawal from south Lebanon to feel that if they make things hot enough, Israel will pull out of the West Bank and Gaza in exactly the same way. Not only is this a complete misreading of the Israeli mood, but look what actually happened: the Lebanese began daily demonstrations at the border itself, complete with stone-throwing across the border, supported "symbolically" by my old friend Edward Said. If this violence is symbolic, what could it symbolize if not claims upon the territory of Israel itself? Meanwhile, the main result of the new Intifada has been to destroy the Oslo peace process, to decimate and demoralize the Israeli peace camp, and probably, in the near future, to bring Netanyahu or Sharon back to power. This will be terrible for us but not for Arafat, whose popularity has been rising as Palestinian hatred and misery have

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increased, and who has always been more comfortable with a totally intransigent Israeli government.

MORRIS DICKSTEIN
New York, NY

Michael Lerner replies:

I very much respect the concerns you raise in this letter. I would never support any policy that risked the destruction of Israel. But a Palestinian state does not pose such a risk. The Palestinian state created next to Israel would not be permitted to bring in tanks or other threatening military equipment—Israel has the most powerful military in the area, the area is tiny, and no one could "sneak" in major threatening equipment of that sort. As the Gulf War showed, the real threat is from missiles—and for that, the threat is as real from two hundred miles away as from next door. The logic of your position would be to refuse to the Palestinian people any state—and then your argument with me is not about where the borders are, but about whether there should be a state at all.

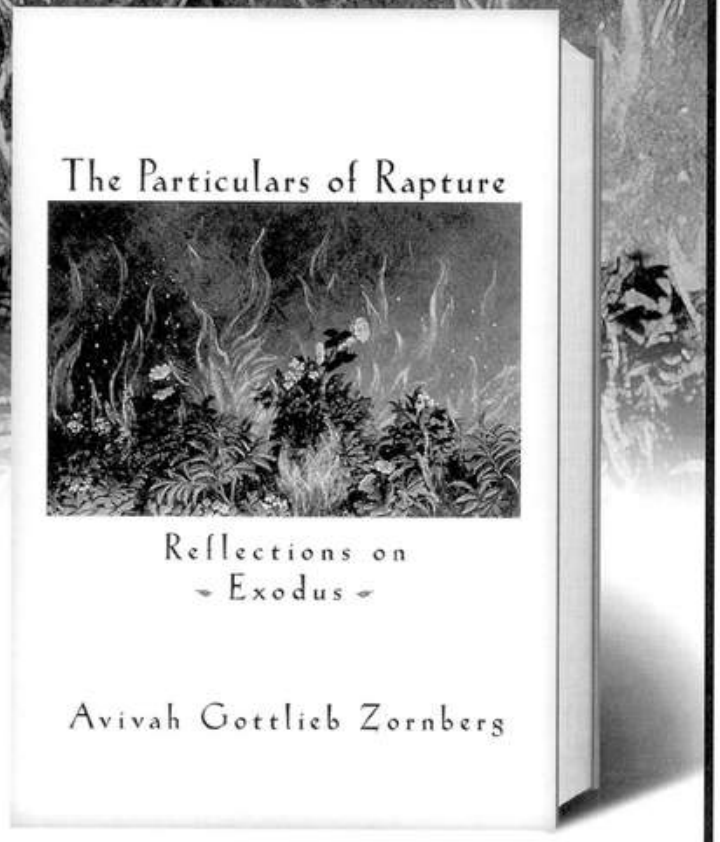
Now, if you don't want Palestinians to have a state, there are only two other options: either incorporate them into Israel and give them the vote, which would mean that within ten years there would be a Palestinian majority and an end to the idea of a Jewish state, or else keep them under Occupation forever. It is recognizing these options that makes most Israelis still favor a two-state solution. Once you favor that, it makes little sense from a strictly military standpoint to argue about the borders. Rather, the key is to create conditions under which the Palestinians can decrease their rage at Israel.

However, everything that Israel has done since 1967 has been to increase that rage. Perhaps you are not familiar with the day-to-day assaults on the Palestinian people, the attacks by settlers, the house demolitions, the theft of land—none of which are responses to rock-throwing children. Once you get the feel of what is happening and was happening before Intifada II, you understand why so many people were predicting this explosion long before it happened.

I know that there are some Palestinians who will never be satisfied as long as Israel exists, just as I know that there are some Israelis who will never be satisfied as long as "the Holy Land" is under

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the control of Arabs. But the majority of the Palestinian people are just like people everywhere—they don't want their lives run by someone else's army. If Israel is brutal enough for long enough maybe it will create the reality that you fear—people so angered by the way they have been brutalized that they will stop at nothing to destroy as many Jews as possible. We are not yet at that point and that's why it's important to support TIKKUN *and other forces that are trying to ensure that we don't get there.*

Hello, President Bush

To the Editor:

In reading TIKKUN's coverage of politics, I am relieved to note the absence of rancor and derision that characterizes much of the writings of the Left about George W. Bush.

As we look back through history, some people seem born for high office; others grow into it. And some just muddle their way through. George W. was not born for the presidency; we can only hope that he will grow into it. I do not hold his lack of intellectual curiosity against him: he will have many advisors, and besides, there are plenty of sharp people whose intellectual skills have made them neither kind nor wise. He is warm and amiable, and has an easy manner about him. I can see how he could unite disparate groups. His style served him well in the casual pace of Texas political life. While I disagree with his politics, I like George W.

He comes to the office of the presidency bearing a terrible burden. I refer not to the peculiarities of this election but to the terrible pretense of his campaign for president: the pretense that he knows things he clearly does not know; that he has experience that he clearly does not have; that he holds dear convictions and ideals that he has clearly not supported in his political past. His handlers will do their best to insulate him, but his weaknesses are profound. I fear that in the next four years the media and his adversaries will take a heavy toll on him. Under these circumstances, it will be easy for George W. to hate; I pray he does not seek revenge through heartless policies or attacks upon his political opponents.

I sense in George W. a core of good-natured honesty, deeply buried. I sense that he is very much a victim of his father's tremendous ambition. George W. is one who has abandoned his inner urgings early on in favor of being accepted by those around him, assenting to the right-wing values of men like his father and Dick Cheney (his surrogate father). It will require more courage and determination than he has shown so far in public life to discover and stand firm on those values that are truly his. I do not envy him in his task. The presidency is a terrifying place to discover oneself. The job has taken a tremendous toll on even the very strongest.

And I am unwilling to spend the next four years hoping the worst will befall him. The eight years of unvarnished hatred shown by many Republicans towards President Clinton was sickening to me. I hope the Democrats and the media have the decency and good sense not to return to that abyss.

Neither do I feel cheated by the manner in which George Bush came to be president. In effect he has saved Gore's supporters the disappointment of Al Gore's failure to be what he never could be: the savior of liberal and progressive politics.

I am willing to give George W. the benefit of the doubt. Yet I will stand firm in my values. This country will need more than gestures of compassion and reaching out to heal our growing rifts. It is my hope that George W. comes to the deepest possible understanding of all that he has been promising this country.

WILLIAM GREENBERG
University Heights, OH

Good Riddance

To the Editor:

The Clintons were never moral spiritual leaders. The Monica Lewinsky scandal was not a result of despair, but of self-absorption, lack of morality, and addiction that was no longer able to be contained within the walls of secrecy. The only way the Clintons could have helped America was to admit their dysfunction loudly and publicly, as a sign of the times, and to ask America to embrace help—spiritually, morally, and physically—as they should have been doing. Instead they chose to deny and pretend nothing important really happened. They were never part of the solution. Their agendas are small and personal and they embody the risks inherent in ego running rampant.

ANN CHRISTIAN
San Francisco, CA

Papal Sin?

To the Editor:

There is a major omission in Dan Bischoff's review of Gary Wills' *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*—Vatican II, which he mentions but shows no signs of having studied or understood. This is regrettable because it prevents him from bringing out the full gravity and poignancy of the failure of the papacy in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The tragedy of the Roman Catholic Church in recent times is that, for one brief and "miraculous" moment with Vatican II, it threw off its defensiveness and institutional dishonesty and surprised itself and everyone else by starting to think and speak realistically, honestly, often forcefully about many major issues facing Christians and the whole world. But all too soon the "pathology of strong institutions" took over. The papacy turned its back on the light and lapsed back into its old defensive stance.

What cannot be undone is the official teaching produced by Vatican II, including the drastic shift in attitude toward the Jewish people, a shift which the present pope shares, despite his otherwise disastrous reign. Much of what is important is found in a few paragraphs in a document entitled "Nostra Aetate." Concerning the death of Jesus, it says clearly, "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion." It goes on to say, "Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture."

I conclude with one of its statements which is as binding on religious Jews as it is on Christians: "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's image." This contains implicitly a far-reaching condemnation of traditional Christianity, and also a forceful lesson for Jews as Israel faces the crisis created by its violent military occupation of Palestinian land and its ruthless oppression of its inhabitants.

B.R. MCCARTHY
Madison, WI

EDITORIAL

Surviving the Bush and Sharon Years



Michael Lerner

Energy always flows either toward hope, community, love, generosity, mutual recognition, and spiritual aliveness or it flows toward despair, cynicism, fear that there is not enough, paranoia about the intentions of others, and a desire to control and to turn everything in our reality into something that can be controlled.

When people are hopeful, they believe that it is safe to

really need is protection from each other because the world is a scary place. It's a story that leads to policies like escalating military budgets and tax cuts (because we don't believe that there is a "we" who can do anything together, so why not have our money back in our own pockets?)

If you understand this you already know all you need to know to be able to build a whole new social reality.

But of course, most of us don't really get it. We live in a world which does not teach us to think in terms of the flow of hopeful energy. And particularly since there is no "objective" (that is to say, spiritless, emotion-less, deadening) way to "measure" the flows of hope versus despair, we are inclined to think of this as merely flowery language with no "real" referent.

But it's not. The degree to which people can sustain hope translates immediately into how much to trust others, how much to throw one's own lot in with others, how much to believe that together with others we could change things and build a world we really want to live in.

When the energy flows toward hope, people don't spend as much time asking, "What's in it for me?" and put more attention to the question, "What could be in it for us?" We let ourselves imagine that someone else could care about us and that we could care about them.

No wonder, then, that hope is so closely tied to love. Love is the ability to extend our caring beyond ourselves, to feel ourselves linked to the well-being of others so that we care about them as we care about ourselves. In this sense, love is not simply a mushy emotion—it is an orientation to reality that gives primacy to a deep intuition: that we will be most fully realized as human beings when we are surrounded by other human beings who are equally fully realized.

But when energy starts to flow away from hope, we doubt that others can have their needs fully realized except if it comes at our expense, so we begin to see the world in terms of a zero-sum game in which my well-being depends on having done better than you and many others.

When those feelings predominate, people start to vote for Right wingers in Congress and the presidency. In fact, to reverse that you'd need to have a politician who could acknowledge why people felt cynical and disillusioned, what was correct in their perceptions of the failures of the Clinton/Gore years, and why that could now be overcome. Gore couldn't do that. Truth is, Al Gore had already aligned himself with the cynicism about government that the New Democrats used as their ticket to prove that they were "centrists" who shared much with the Republicans. Maybe that gave him credibility with the corporate-dominated national media, but it certainly didn't create a movement of people whose loyalty to Gore was anything more than an inch deep. So even when he won, he couldn't win—because he was unable (and unwilling) to mobilize people to fight for the right to have his votes counted. In the final irony, the "realists" who had dominated the Democratic Party calculated that their chances in 2004 would be better if they put their commitment to "the process" as defined by the Supreme Court above any populist democratic notion like "count all the votes." After having been demobilized and privatized by years of Clinton/Gore cynicism and by a media which consistently trivialized the public arena by giving more attention to private sexual sins than to the daily acts by which politicians betrayed the public trust to serve those who raised funds for their elections, most people felt unable to move from anger and disgust to public action and outrage.

To judge from his early days in office, George W. Bush has adopted a very clever strategy for running his presidency. As his inaugural speech made clear, Bush can articulate principles in a way that incorporates the aspirations of a very large section of the population. However, he has appointed an array of right-wingers into powerful positions who will actually implement a very different and in many ways destructive agenda for the poor, the powerless, and the environment. This two-prong approach encourages people to say, "Well, Bush himself isn't so bad, it's only person x or y—perhaps Bush doesn't really know or understand what they are doing in his name!" To the extent that he can convince people that he is above the fray and not really involved in the negative consequences of the policies his Cabinet implements, Bush strengthens his political credibility for the next election.

Meantime, we are already seeing some of the dangerous consequences of his choices. One of Bush's first moves was to suspend federal programs that give support to international NGOs that include abortion as part of their array of services. The most important impact of this move will be to eliminate funding for educational programs that teach family planning and contraception, thus having the paradoxical consequence of increasing the likelihood of unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

On another front, President Bush suspended regulations that outgoing President Clinton had ordered to protect large amounts of federal land from commercial exploitation. The cynicism of the Clinton administration in waiting for the last two weeks of an eight year presidency to take this environmental move made it easier for the Bush administration to portray itself as doing little more than reversing the political grandstanding of an outgoing president. Clinton's parting pardons to friends of friends and donors only re-enforced this feeling that his liberal idealism was only a cover for self-interest—thus paving the way for the retreat from the public sphere that Bush seeks to orchestrate.

Bush's move to use faith-based organizations to provide public services is more worrisome, though not for the reasons that liberals have raised. It's unlikely that many churches, synagogues, or mosques will make religious participation a condition of receiving the federal aid that Bush would channel through them. More likely Bush will use the faith-based organizations to absorb and cover some of the impact of his larger plan: to cut public sector funding.

We've long argued that the sterile, value-neutral, love-absent way that social services have been delivered in this country was a form of "objective caring" without "subjective caring." Liberals in power never paid attention to the subjective experience people were having when they interacted with government. In our view, government should be (objectively) and feel (subjectively) like the embodiment of our community's attempt to care for each other—a way of publicly affirming that we are not just self-interested but willing to give of our resources and our energy to take care of each other's needs. But this kind of politics of meaning perspective was never adopted by the liberals, who always thought it was too spiritual and not hard-nosed enough. Well, the consequence has been that conservatives, who have long held the desire to discredit the public sphere in order to protect corporate power from democratic constraints, were able to convince many Americans that government should be downsized and taxes returned to their own pockets. And what better way to provide a legitimation for that than to give over government responsibilities to the religious communities whose far greater capacity to show subjective caring might then be used to camouflage the decrease in objective caring? It's a clever strategy from the Right—and one that could only have been countered had the Democrats been willing to listen to a politics of meaning approach to public issues.

Energy always flows either toward hope, generosity, and spiritual aliveness or to fear, cynicism, and despair.

So, liberal and progressive forces have reason to worry. It could be a depressing period in the coming years.

Unfortunately, in our justified frustration at the successes of the Bush offensive, many people will conclude that the only realistic alternative is for Democrats to make themselves ever more "centrist" (the current code word for moving to the Right). The Left is seen as being little more than an old-time left-liberal agenda which has little popular appeal. But there is an alternative. We could be using this period to build a very different kind of politics, as U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone suggests in his conversation with us in this issue (p.9).

We have argued through the years that only by fundamentally re-understanding human needs and addressing the hunger for love, connection, and meaning can we develop a politics that could provide an alternative to the limited vision of both Right and Left. Insisting on a spiritual politics in today's climate may seem utopian. But in fact it's far more utopian to imagine that an old-style progressive politics, using the same conceptual tools that shaped the progressive movements of the past thirty years, could reemerge and suddenly begin to sell a vision that has failed to inspire most of the population.

In that sense, the Nader candidacy should have taught us—again—that a populist campaign focused purely on economics will not ignite a prairie fire in this country. Many people agreed with Nader's specific criticisms of corporate capital—but they were uninspired. True, a more fiery candidate might have generated a bit more enthusiasm. But the real reason the Nader campaign failed was that it did not consistently speak deeply enough to a level of human needs that are systematically frustrated by the market: our need to live in loving and caring communities which address not only our material but our spiritual needs. And in the end, Nader's own self-involvement kept him from taking steps that would have given the Greens far greater legitimacy, like urging his own supporters in battleground states like Florida to vote for Gore while demanding from Gore in return that he commit himself to the Green's ecological agenda.

The election revealed close to 3 million people who voted for Nader and perhaps another 20 million who didn't but would have had they not worried that they were going to throw their votes away and elect Bush. Together, that's a substantial force which could play an important role in politics. And many of them will play an important role on the local level. There are literally thousands of local organizing projects in which people are engaged in important and useful work in the struggles for ecological sanity, human rights, economic justice, gender equality, gay and lesbian rights, peace and disarmament, reform of drug laws and prison conditions, and opposition to the worst aspects of globalization and corporate irresponsibility.

The tragic irony is that these people have been unable to shape the larger national picture or have their views contend for power in a serious way. They think they only have two options: Either to push the Democrats back into more liberal politics and try to run again on the platforms of liberalism-past, or to try to build a third party which is even more explicit in its anti-corporate stance because it is unconstrained by the money-interests that dominate the Democratic Party.

Both are losing strategies, because neither goes deep enough into understanding what is missing that would energize people to believe again that there could be a "we," a community of people who cared about each other enough to really build a nurturing and engaging society.

So our task in the coming years is to use this moment to talk of a new vision—along the lines of the Emancipatory Spirituality articulated in *Spirit Matters*.

OK, you might say, "We can talk about the vision thing, but what should we actually do?" And the answer is: the most important thing to do is to help spread a new understanding. "Don't just do something, sit there." A little meditation and a lot of new thinking would be useful. We must allow ourselves to develop a new way of understanding,

because until that happens, we are just going to repeat and recycle the frustrations of the past.

Spreading a new vision of politics is doing something—and something equally important to rushing off into a new project or campaign. The power of religious rituals is precisely that they help people stay in touch with the fundamental truths that they don't want to forget; this is the power, for example, of a Passover Seder—retelling the story year after year of the liberation struggle of the Jewish people as we emerged from slavery. Look at the Passover supplement printed in this issue (between pages 48 and 49) to get a flavor of the kinds of issues that such a ritual brings to our awareness.

We need a retelling of the stories of the past struggles for liberation, the victories that were won, the reasons why people lost hope and went back into fear and isolation, and how that can again be overcome in the future. We need a format in which we can tell the stories of the past forty years, not only to pass on the lessons to a new generation, but also to remind ourselves of the truths that we learned and find hard to hold onto. We need a Seder for progressive social change and a Haggadah that tells the story—and perhaps we should be holding this event on July 4th annually as an alternative way to celebrate America's Independence Day. Our TIKKUN community should probably take the lead in creating this kind of ritual—but we need poets, musicians, graphic artists, and organizers to make this become a powerful annual event. And it will happen when each of us decides to invite friends for this kind of occasion as a yearly ritual.

And we need something else: a regular (bimonthly? monthly?) gathering of all those involved in the work of healing and transforming our society—simply to get together, to listen to each other's stories about the work that we've been doing, and to give each other support and encouragement to keep it up. Not a political meeting to decide a shared agenda—because the people coming may have different agendas and different priorities—but simply an opportunity to acknowledge each other and to remember that we are not alone. You, dear reader, could begin to organize such a gathering in your own community—in your apartment or home to start with, and later, as it grows, in some larger space. Helping all the wide array of people in your community who are committed to social change to recognize each other and feel each other's support would be a major accomplishment.

Add two more elements and you've got a strategy: 1. Organize people in our workplaces, businesses, and professions to demand "A New Bottom Line." 2. Develop a national campaign for a Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would require corporations to get a new charter every twenty years which they could only obtain if they can prove a history of social responsibility as measured by an Ethical Impact Report. We will talk more about these in future editorials, but we raise them here lest you worry that we see no value in activism. ❑

Spiritual Practice: Give To Give, Not To Get

Sometimes people think that spiritual practice is confined to meditation and prayer. Not so. A spiritual life manifests in every interaction.

So, from time to time we will focus on a spiritual practice which you can consider integrating into your life.

Let's start with a spiritual way to give to others.

Generosity to others means giving for the sake of giving without expectation of a "return on the investment," without feeling hurt or ripped off or angry if we do not get back from the recipient in equal measure.

Try it. Giving to give quickly becomes it's own reward. The inner pleasure of this kind of giving can be one of life's great joys.

Model in what you give to others the kind of love you want to receive—and there is a very good chance that you will receive that kind of love in return. Be the goodness you wish for in the world.

If you give to get, you will likely distort the quality of your giving and the gift will feel more like a demand to those who receive it.

Even prayer can be like that: not a statement of awe and wonder and celebration, but a demand on God to deliver something.

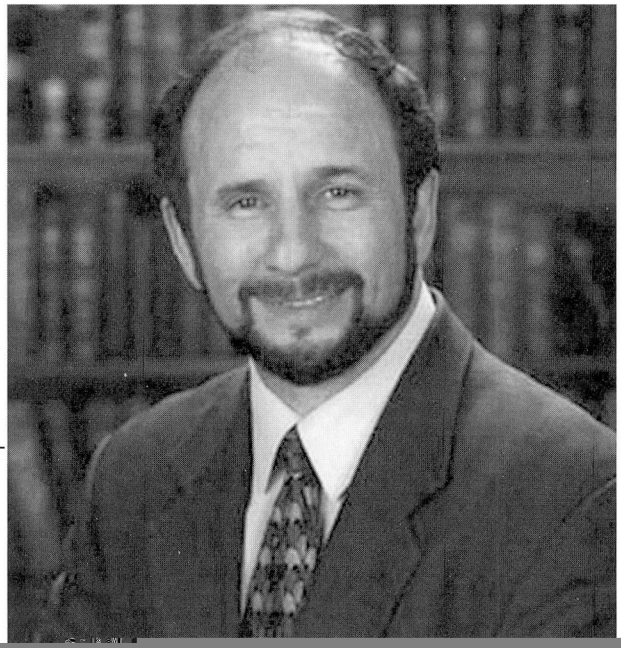
If you are calculating and controlling, if you really act for the sake of some advantage, the universe can feel it, and you end up being disappointed by its response, and by yourself.

So giving to give is the key: give without hope of reward and without anticipation of gratitude. Imagine that people around you are in so much psychological pain that they are not going to be able to really appreciate your goodness, and that the circumstances of their lives have created so much distortion that they won't know how to receive your goodness, so no good deed will go unpunished. Nevertheless, in the midst of that world, see your task as lighting a beacon of hope by being the one person who gives goodness without expectation of real appreciation, even knowing that others who feel unable to be equally giving may respond to your generosity by feeling somewhat resentful.

Start with this simple exercise: Every day find some way to be giving or loving or to do some act of kindness or generosity for someone you barely know, someone who has not done something to "earn" this favor.

Spontaenous acts of giving for the sake of giving are good places to start your spiritual practice. ❑

AN INTERVIEW WITH Senator Paul Wellstone



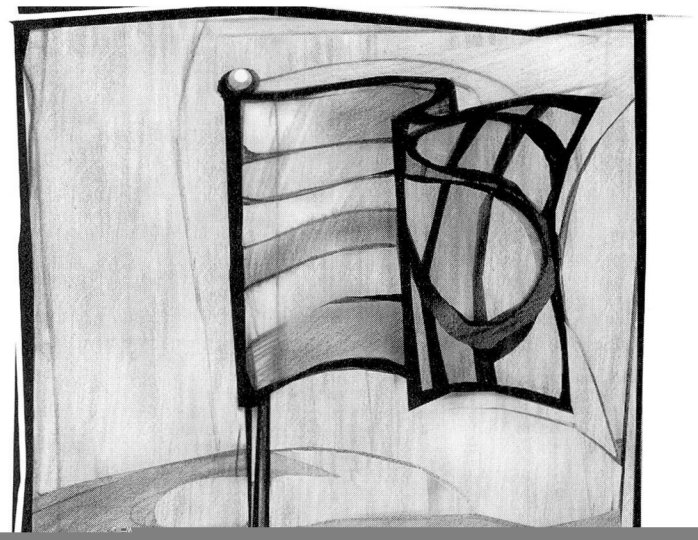
Paul Wellstone is U.S. Senator from Minnesota. This interview was conducted with Rabbi Michael Lerner.

WELLSTONE: The language he used was in essence a Michael Lerner "politics of meaning" discourse, and I think that was very smart of him. But as the disjunction between his words and his policies comes into sharper relief—and I believe it will—people will see through this disjunction. Because many people will still be facing the reality that their children are not getting a good education, they cannot afford good childcare, there is not affordable health security available for their families, and they cannot attain a decent standard of living to support their families. The message that Bush will give them is that there is nothing the federal government can or should do to help. But this is where people live their lives—and it is in these concrete realities, quite

important issues that were not being raised by others in the presidential election in 2000. I have some serious disagreements with Nader in his proposition that there wasn't much difference between Gore and Bush, and with some of the tactical decisions he made. I do realize, however, that there is a progressive void in the Democratic Party, and so the Democratic Party has a lot of work to do. I like to say that my goal is to represent the democratic wing of the Democratic Party. Walter Dean Burnham, a political scientist I admire, writes about "the politics of excluded alternatives," and that is one of the things that severely weakens Democrats as they increasingly succumb to the role of money in politics. It's what Jim Hightower calls "d[illegible]

ENVIRONMENT

Clinton's Environmental Legacy



Paul Wapner

under the more immediate one of economic prosperity, and this limited his achievements.

Clinton was not the first nor will he be the last president to place economic priorities above other values. As long as society continues to put money and material goods above other social goals we will keep getting presidents who place economic growth at the forefront of their agendas. And, as long as this happens, we may be able to save some land here and clean a little air there, but overall we will continue what Gore himself called our slow "nuclear war" against the environment. The work ahead for environmentalists involves nothing less than finding ways to dismantle the hegemony of economic idolatry. It entails developing what Michael Lerner calls a new "bottom line," a society that still cares about material well-being but makes it subservient to our higher aspirations for justice, peace, and ecological balance.

Perhaps Clinton's most significant environmental accomplishments come not in the form of what he achieved but what he staved off.

To many of us, establishing a new bottom line may sound quixotic, especially given that our best efforts during the sweet Clinton years came nowhere near doing this. Such a goal never made it onto his administration's nor society's radar screen. But, what choice do we really have? Environmentally, is it realistic to think that we can protect the earth's ecosystems in any meaningful sense without rearranging our priorities and valuing, at a minimum, the health of our land, water, air, and fellow species over the size of our pocketbooks? Is it really possible to protect the environment over the long run when our number one objective—material accumulation—entails polluting the earth and stripping its resources? As long as we worship economic prosperity, our best hope is to bring more Clintons into office and find ourselves, at the end of their terms, celebrating environmental reforms, but still longing for environmental transformation.

The Clinton Legacy: The Good

Within the boundaries of conventional politics, Clinton has an impressive environmental record and his inability to transcend society's ideals shouldn't take this away from him. One might not go so far as the League of Conservation Voters, which proclaimed that, "Bill Clinton's environmental record in office is one of the best of any president," but one should give credit where it is due. Clinton appointed genuine environmentalists to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Interior, and chose a Vice-President who, despite Gore's many bouts of amnesia, had deep-seated environmental commitments. Clinton established offices within the Department of Justice and the EPA to address issues of environmental justice, and the State Department under his watch began focusing on environmental security threats. Clinton also proposed the largest budgets ever for wildlife protection and preservation of our national parks.

Clinton's most visible legacy will be his protection of large parcels of land from exploitation and development. In his last years of office, he used the Antiquities Act of 1906 to place over 3 million acres of federal land off-limits to development by declaring them "national monuments." These areas include Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante, Arizona's Grand-Canyon-Parashant and California's Pinnacles. With these actions, Clinton set aside more acreage under the Act than Theodore Roosevelt, the first president to take advantage of the Act and the one most credited with establishing the U.S. system of federal land protection.

Clinton also used executive power to order one-third of national forest land off-limits to road building, logging, and oil and gas exploration. This move, which covered more than 58 million acres in 39 states, protected all remaining national forest land that had not already been developed or granted permanent protection as a wilderness area, including the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

These measures, along with efforts to restore the Everglades, restrict flights over the Grand Canyon, ban snowmobiling in national parks, and fight off congressional attempts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling, represent significant achievements. Clinton will be remembered foremost, along with Roosevelt and Carter, for preserving many of America's wildlands and scenic landscapes.



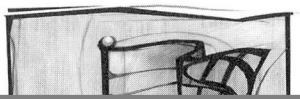
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The Clinton administration also made head-



as a way of protecting land quality. Higher

Over the last half century, the world economy has more than quintupled in size and it is supposed to quintuple again over the next generation. For those of the consuming nations, this has meant unparalleled buying power. Most people of the North have more discretionary income than they or their ancestors ever had, and they are using this to satisfy greater and greater degrees of desire. For example, greater affluence is spurring baby boomers, whose kids have gone off to college, to routinely buy or build bigger homes. According to environmental writer Bill McKibben, the average American home is now roughly 2,500 square feet in size compared to 1,900 square feet in 1977. Additional income is also enabling car owners to buy bigger, fatter, and more gas-guzzling machines. Expeditions, Navigators, and Explorers now outsell Civics and Metros even though most drivers go nowhere near a dirt road and have no desire to drive up the face of a mountain. Greater prosperity is also driving up demand for luxury goods. McKibben records that, in the 1990s, high-end retailers like Hermes, Patek Philippe, and Neiman Marcus had back-orders for $4,000 Kelly bags, $75,000 Jaguars, and $44,500 watches. Industry, of course, is happy to try to meet this demand by producing increasing amounts of stuff. But that is just it: doing so uses more resources and creates more waste, both of which fundamentally damage the environment.

Clinton never once questioned consumerism and affluence as social goals. In fact, it was Clinton's administration which famously told us that it is the economy, stupid, that drives all other social goods and promised everyone a taste of the high life. Almost every policy measure that Clinton undertook had an eye toward economic growth, and economic productivity became the answer to all our woes. Clinton told us that growth would reduce welfare, crime, the federal deficit, and inadequate health care at home, and promote democracy, peace, cultural exchange, and individual liberty abroad. As Clinton pursued this vision through back-to-work welfare reform, fast-track trade talks, and market-opening policies across the globe, other social values had to translate themselves into economic productivity or fall by the wayside.

By failing to address affluence as a problem, Clinton not only limited his own agenda but failed to set meaningful strictures for future policy. For example, many of us now fear that President Bush will open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration, despite its protection under federal law. But how surprised should we really be? Clinton's commitment to economic growth, like those of all his predecessors, was premised on greater energy use and, since the industrial revolution, this has meant burning more fossil fuel. Had Clinton taken a strong stand against fossil fuels and begun the necessary transition to an alternative fuel-based economy or addressed the ecological problems of an ever-growing economy, Bush's threats would seem grossly out of step. To many Americans, however, they are clearly in line with our historical orientation toward energy and, aside from heartfelt concerns about caribou, bear, and stunning landscapes, have a certain common sense behind them.

Clinton toyed with the idea of moving beyond fossil fuels very early in his administration when he proposed raising the price of oil, coal, and natural gas through a BTU tax (based on measuring energy in British thermal units). This would have reduced energy consumption and spurred investment in alternative fuels. Like many of his retreats, however, Clinton rescinded the proposal after critics complained that it would cripple the economy. To show that Clinton got the criticism, he twice offered to open-up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to keep gas prices down. (He did this shamefully during the 1996 presidential election to boost his own chances at the voting booth and during the 2000 election as a campaign gift to Gore.) Clinton's attempt to keep the economy growing by subsidizing oil reveals how difficult it is for even a progressive president to tackle those structures that feed ecological degradation. Clinton never really questioned the hierarchy of social goods as he inherited it, and his actions ended up wedding us closer to fossil fuels and the religion of consumerism and economic growth.

Beyond the Clinton Legacy

It is easy to blame Clinton for not doing more for the environment. But, as we begin to build a post-Clinton environmental movement, it is important to recognize our own role in his limited policies. Many of us were party to Clinton's infatuation with economic prosperity. His economic policies made it possible for more Americans than ever before to invest in stocks and mutual funds, and many of us smiled as these investments shot through the roof of our financial expectations. We spent more during the Clinton years on non-necessities than in any comparable time in U.S. history and, despite plenty of philosophies that explain the poverty of materialism, this made us feel good. Clinton made the economy hum and we sang along. In fact, we knew the tune well because we had been singing it for decades.

Let's face it: almost all of us wish to be materially rich, even if we want this so that we can do more good in the world. We are convinced that material well-being provides significant opportunities to appreciate life in various ways and have a hard time restricting our spending in the absence of bank notices. A central challenge to environmentalists, but especially those in the North, is to come to terms with how the pursuit of affluence can be re-channeled in meaningful and realistic ways. Clinton told us, rightly, that economic and ecological goals are often compatible. However, he said nothing about when the two find themselves at loggerheads. For too long, we've accepted a paradigm that continues to privilege economic prosperity above all other values. It is time to cultivate a new one. ❑

ISRAEL

Civilians Under Siege



PHOTOGRAPH BY JACQUELINE LARMA / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO

B'Tselem

For the past three months, the 3 million Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been virtual prisoners in their communities. Israel has imposed sweeping restrictions on the movement of the Palestinian population, disrupting all aspects of daily life. These restrictions are unprecedented in their harshness and duration, and severely impair Palestinians' ability to earn a living, to obtain proper medical treatment, to study, and to maintain family life. This policy is one of the primary reasons for the increasing destitution and despair in the Occupied Territories and has made the lives of the population unbearable.

Israel uses three primary forms of restrictions on freedom of movement:

Total closure: All Palestinians require permits to enter Israel or cross through Israel or to exit the Occupied Territories to go abroad. Since October 8, Israel has maintained a sweeping prohibition on entry into Israel for any purpose; the safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has also been closed since October 8. In addition, the international border crossings (Rafah border crossing, the Palestinian airport in Rafiah, and the Allenby bridge) have been closed intermittently.

Internal closure: A siege prevents entry and exit from areas, towns, and villages. Israel placed concrete blocks, checkpoints, and other obstacles at all entrances to virtually all villages and towns in the West Bank. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were under siege for long periods of time. In some areas, this siege remains in place: Palestinians do not receive shipments of basic supplies, and they cannot leave their communities, even to travel to neighboring areas for medical care or to go to work or school. Tragedies have occurred when Palestinians needing urgent medical care were not allowed to pass through roadblocks. Ten-year-old Ala Ahmed suffered a ruptured appendix on October 13. Her village, a-Sawiyeh near Nablus, was under blockade at the time. Her father frantically tried to get her to a hospital, but was repeatedly turned back by soldiers at roadblocks. The next day, Ala died.

Curfew: The most sweeping and extreme restriction on movement imposed on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, curfew imprisons an entire population in their homes. For example, the 30,000 Palestinian residents of the H2 area of Hebron have been under curfew almost continuously for three months. The curfew is imposed for the convenience of settlers in the area, and of course does not apply to settlers. Several Palestinian villages in the West Bank were also under curfew for shorter periods of time.

Israel justifies all these restrictions on Palestinian movement as essential for security. However, B'Tselem's analysis of the character and timing of Israel's restrictions on freedom of movement challenges the contention that these restrictions are dictated purely by security considerations: Israel imposes sweeping closure, curfew, and siege on millions of people rather than on individuals who pose a security threat. In many cases, Israel imposes restrictions "in response" to Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians or soldiers, with no connection between the type of restrictions imposed and their effectiveness in preventing similar attacks in the future. The decision to ease restrictions on movement is usually taken as a "gesture" in the context of political developments, frequently with no connection to the security threat which ostensibly justified the restrictions.

In addition, Israel's policy of restrictions on movement is based on blatant discrimination between the two populations living in the Occupied Territories—Palestinians and Jews—solely on the basis of nationality. The restrictions are imposed exclusively on the Palestinian population. Furthermore, in many cases, the explicit aim of the restrictions is to ensure freedom of movement for the Jewish settler population at the expense of the growing desperation of the local population. ❑

B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (www.btselem.org) is the leading Israeli organization monitoring, documenting, and advocating to improve human rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Right of Return (I)

AN INTERVIEW WITH Benny Morris



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KNOPF © ELENA SEIBERT

Benny Morris is the most prominent of Israel's "New Historians." He is the author of several books, including most recently Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999 *(Knopf, 1999). His path-breaking article on the "New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past" first appeared in* TIKKUN *in 1988.*

TIKKUN: In the past few years many Israelis have come to realize that the Palestinian refugee problem was not caused by the voluntary flight of a civilian population expecting the imminent defeat of Israel, but was caused by the military actions of the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement) which forced people out of their homes. These ideas are now entering Israeli textbooks, but have they had any impact on Israeli policy during the current phase of the struggle?

BENNY MORRIS: We must distinguish between official government statements and the attitudes of the public. The official line remains unchanged: that Israel had nothing to do with the creation of the refugees, that Arab leaders asked or ordered Palestinians to flee, and therefore Israel had nothing to do with it. But the Israeli public—partly influenced by our extensive research into recently opened archives, research which is, as you say, now entering high school textbooks—have begun to understand that a large part of the Palestinian population fled because of Israeli attacks and Israeli expulsions.

An increasing number of Israelis now recognize that Israel played a significant part in creating the problem. But Israelis also engage in the psychological repression of what they know intellectually. No people likes to feel that its own statehood was built on the ruins of another people's fortunes.

It's also a matter of current politics. Privately, I assume that someone like Yossi Beilin (who served as Minister of Justice in the Barak cabinet) would agree with my analysis, but would not say so publicly. But Israelis won't admit guilt publicly because they don't want to open the door to demands for a "right to return." There is agreement on this all through the Israeli political spectrum—because the return of hundreds of thousands or possibly millions of Palestinians would undermine the Jewish character of Israel.

TIKKUN: Do you agree with that position?

Morris: I do. The state envisioned by the founders of Zionism was a state composed of a large majority of Jews. At the moment, Israel is about 20 percent Arab and 80 percent Jewish. If you were to allow a right of return for several million Palestinians (who have higher birthrates than Israeli Jews) you'd soon have an almost balanced Arab/Jewish population—and that would soon mean that you'd no longer have a Jewish state.

At the present moment, if you speak to most of these refugees who live in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan you will find that they have a wish to return to their villages, their towns, and their houses. But those villages were destroyed, the towns have been repopulated with Jews, the homes have been transformed in the past fifty-two years. There is no place to bring them back to. What happened in 1948 is irreversible.

TIKKUN: So what should Israel do?

MORRIS: Israel has to be involved in solving the refugee problem, but it cannot do it without a serious commitment on the part of the international community. The refugees have to be economically rehabilitated and given citizenship in the states where they live, with perhaps a trickle of refugees being allowed to return to Israel (a few thousand, no more). We are talking many billions of dollars.

But this is not on the agenda now and won't be for many years, because the Palestinian people are not at a point psychologically where they can agree to such a solution. They—their leaders—still seem to demand a massive return of refugees to Israel. As long as this remains the case, there will be no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

Israel has done its share—it has recognized the PLO, recognized the necessity of dividing Palestine between a Jewish state and a smaller Palestinian state. This is a vast revolution in Israeli thinking compared to where Israelis were on this question in the years between 1948-1992. Barak has even gone further, agreeing to divide Jerusalem. But Israel cannot accept the right of return without facing destruction.

TIKKUN: You mean destruction of the Jewish character of the state?

MORRIS: No, I also mean physical destruction. A country divided between Israelis on the one hand and on the other Palestinians who had returned and were filled with anger not only at the way they had been treated in the past but also at not finding their villages or homes available—that country would quickly become ungovernable. Each individual Jew living in the country would be facing a real physical danger.

So you can't demand recognition of "the right of return" because that recognition would likely lead to demand for implementation somewhere down the road.

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TIKKUN: Could Israel publicly recognize its responsibility for having played a major role in creating the problem?

MORRIS: No, because if it did, even if Arafat today signed an agreement waiving the "right to return," future generations of Palestinians would re-raise the issue based on Israel having publicly stated its responsibility. Perhaps it could be papered over with some vague diplomatic formulation. But no more than that.

TIKKUN: But your own work as an historian proved that Israel had major responsibility for creating the problem.

MORRIS: Yes, and that is true on many levels. On the macro-level, there is no question that there would never have been a Palestinian refugee problem had there been no Zionist movement. If Jews hadn't started buying up land and pushing Palestinians off the land, and then in 1948 and again in 1967, pushing out Palestinians, there would be no Palestinian refugees. And on the micro-level, there were many specific instances in 1947–48 in which Israel took military steps that caused Palestinians to be expelled. But this cannot translate today into acceptance of political guilt that would lead to a "return."

TIKKUN: How about in terms of reparations?

MORRIS: That's something different, and something that Israel could do, but only with the cooperation and strong participation of the world community. We are talking of tens of billions of dollars if not hundreds of billions. But the problem today is that the Palestinians are rejecting this option and demanding instead an actual implementation of the right of return. Of course, they could return to the areas of a Palestinian state, but those areas would become overcrowded and explosive, and Palestinians would once again seek to push into Israel. Also, Palestinians living in the West Bank would probably object to the introduction of millions of refugees into their country. Nothing will work until the refugees themselves are willing to settle for something less than return to their villages and old homes. And Arafat doesn't seem to have the guts to tell this to his own people that they cannot go back to the old country. Perhaps he'd be assassinated if he did say this.

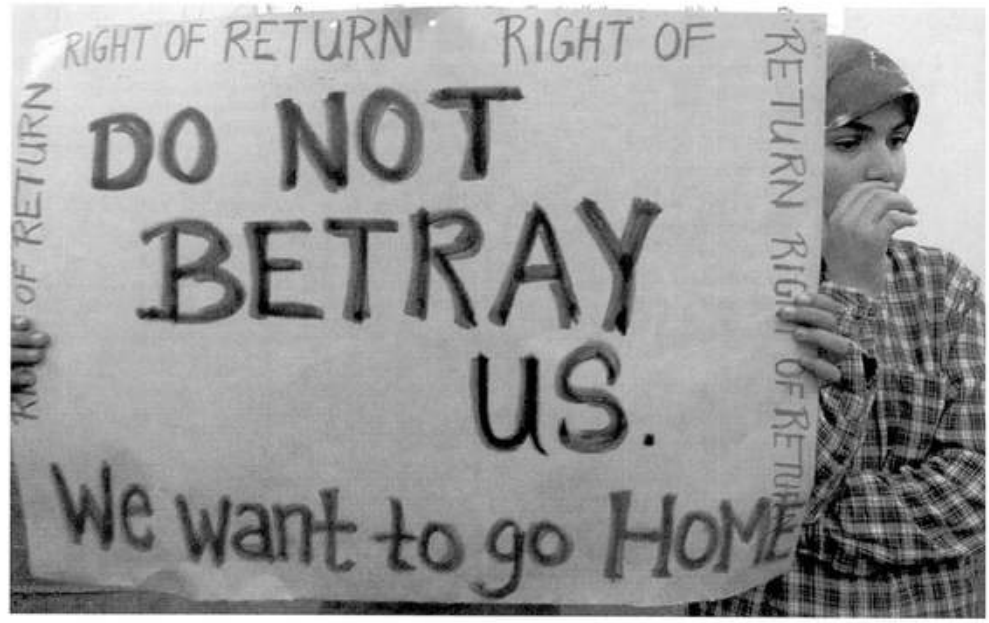
TIKKUN: Perhaps he can't do it because agreeing to that would not be representing the actual desires of the people he represents?

MORRIS: That's right. Of course, Arafat has said the same thing Israel has said: that he would submit any agreement he reached to a democratic vote. But in his case the question remains: to which people would he submit the agreement—to the people living in the West Bank and Gaza, or to all Palestinians around the world? If Arafat includes the Palestinian Diaspora there is no way any agreement he would negotiate that did not include the right of return would in fact pass.

So this is a terrible dilemma. It may be that we need to wait generations before a Palestinian public will emerge that is ready to accept the reality that the refugees cannot return. ❑

The Right of Return (II)

Uri Avnery



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH DALZIEL / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO

We Israelis need a scarecrow to frighten ourselves, one frightening enough to pump adrenaline into our national bloodstream. Otherwise, it seems, we cannot function.

Once it was the Palestinian charter. Very few Palestinians ever read it, even fewer remembered what it said, but we compelled the Palestinians to abolish its paragraphs in a solemn ceremony. Who remembers it today? But since this scarecrow was laid to rest, there is a need for a replacement.

The new scarecrow is the "Right of Return." Not as a practical problem, to be dealt with in rational terms, but as a hair-raising monster: Now the Palestinians' sinister design has been revealed! They want to eliminate Israel by this terrible ploy! They want to throw us into the sea!

The Arabs demand that each and every Palestinian refugee return to his home and land in Israel. The Israelis staunchly object to the return of even one single refugee. On both sides, everything or nothing. In the following lines I shall try to show that the scarecrow is indeed a scarecrow; that even this painful problem can be resolved; that a fair compromise can lead to a historic conciliation.

The Roots of the Conflict

The refugee problem arouses such deep emotions because it touches the root of the conflict between two peoples, the historic clash between two great national movements. One of these, Zionism, sought to establish a state for the Jews, so that, for the first time after thousands of years, they could be masters of their own fate. In the furthering of this aim, Zionism completely ignored the population living in the country. It envisioned a homogenous national state, according to the European model of the late nineteenth century, with as few non-Jews as possible.

The Palestinian national movement expressed the struggle of the native Arabs for national freedom and independence. Nationalists vehemently opposed the penetration of their homeland by another people. As Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the militant Zionist leader, wrote at the time, any other people would have reacted in the same way.

In the war of 1948, the historic clash came to a head. On the eve of the war, some 1.2 million Arabs and some 635,000 Jews lived in Palestine. During the course of the war, started by the Arab side to prevent the partition of the country, more than half of the Palestinian people, around 750,000 persons, were uprooted. Some were driven out by the conquering Israeli army; others fled when the battle reached their homes, as civilians do in every war. After the war, the new State of Israel declined to allow the refugees to return to the territories it had conquered; instead, the Ben-Gurion government eradicated 450 Arab villages and put Jewish settlements on their sites. Thus the refugee problem was created.

The Right of Return

The right of return is a basic human right and cannot be denied in our time.

A short time ago, the international community fought a war against Serbia in order to implement the right of the Kossovars to return to their homes. I propose that the State of Israel recognize the Right of Return in principle, while pointing out that the implementation of the principle can only come about by way of negotiation and agreement.

The president or prime minister of Israel should solemnly apologize to the Palestinians for the injustice inflicted upon them in the realization of Zionist aims, at the same time emphasizing that these aims were mainly directed towards national liberation and saving millions from the Jewish tragedy in Europe. Then, a "truth committee" should be established, composed of Israeli, Palestinian, and international historians, to investigate the events of 1948 and 1967 and to submit a comprehensive report that can become part of both Israeli and Palestinian school curriculum.

Uri Avnery is a journalist, peace activist, former member of the Knesset, and leader of Gush Shalom, the most militant part of the Israeli peace movement. He was the first Israeli to meet Arafat (during the siege of Beirut, July 1982).

Acknowledging the principle, however, still leaves the practical problem, which can only be solved with the establishment of the State of Palestine. The new Palestinian state would take the first step—the granting of Palestinian citizenship to every Palestinian refugee. For the refugees, this step would be of utmost importance, not only for symbolic, but also for very practical reasons. Many Palestinians, who have no citizenship, are denied the privilege of crossing borders altogether and are denied the normal protections offered to citizens of one state living in another.

The second responsibility would be Israel's. A basic element of the Right of Return is the right of every single refugee to choose freely between return and compensation.

While the recognition of the Right of Return in principle is a collective right, its implementation in practice is a private right, in the realm of the individual Palestinian. In order to be able to make his or her decision, each Palestinian must know all the rights accruing to him or her: what sums will be paid to those choosing not to return and what possibilities are open to those who wish to return.

Every refugee has the right to compensation for properties left behind, as well as for the loss of opportunities, etc. This compensation, which undoubtedly will be a great sum, must be paid by an international fund to which all the wealthier economies must contribute. The Palestinians can rightfully demand this from the member states of the United Nations who voted for the partition of Palestine in 1947 and did not lift a finger to prevent the tragedy of the refugees. Yet Israelis must not delude themselves that only others will pay. Israel as "custodian of absentee property" holds huge properties—buildings, lands, movable property—left behind by the refugees, and it is its duty to pay for them.

Return to Palestine or Israel

It is clear that the return of millions of Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel would completely change the character of the state, contrary to the intentions of its founders and most of its citizens. It would, in fact, abolish the principle of "two states for two peoples" on which the demand for a Palestinian state is based.

All this leads to the conclusion that most of the refugees who opt for return should find their place in the State of Palestine. If the Israel–Palestine borders become open to the free movement of people and goods, these former refugees would be able to visit the places where their ancestors lived in Israel while being able to create their own culture and nation in Palestine. To absorb this large number of returnees and provide them with housing and employment, the State of Palestine must receive appropriate compensation from the international fund and Israel. Israel should transfer abandoned Jewish settlements intact to the Palestinian state, and should take the refugee influx into account when negotiating the equitable division of water and resources.

Yet, even given the reasonableness of a Palestinian return to a Palestinian state, in order to make the healing of psychological wounds and a historic conciliation possible there is no way to avoid the return of an appropriate number of refugees to the State of Israel itself. This part of the plan will arouse the strongest opposition in Israel. However, such a limited return is the natural completion of the recognition in principle of the Right of Return and the acceptance of responsibility for the events of the past.

Nobody claims that Israel, which has just successfully absorbed a million new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, is economically unable to absorb a reasonable number of refugees. The government of Israel already recently offered to take back a few thousand refugees annually in the framework of "family reunification." The extreme right in Israel has demanded the annexation of the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and appears quite ready to grant Israeli citizenship to the quarter of a million Arabs living there.

The decisive question is: How many can be brought back? Minimalists say 100,000, maximalists about half a million. Close to 1.1 million Palestinian Arab citizens currently live in Israel. An increase of that number to 1.3 or even 1.5 million will not fundamentally change the demographic picture, especially when Israel is absorbing more than 50,000 new Jewish immigrants every year. I myself have proposed an annual quota of 50,000 for 10 years.

I am aware that my offer far from satisfies Palestinian demands. But I am convinced that the great majority of Palestinians know that compromise is the price both sides have to pay in order to leave behind the painful past and to prepare for the building of their future in the two states.

When Will It Happen?

This solution can be implemented in a few years.

The first stage will be, of course, the achievement of an agreement between the two parties. The second stage will be the process of choosing. An international agency will have to make certain that every refugee family thoroughly knows its rights, is able to choose freely, and makes its choices within an orderly process. The third stage will be the implementation, which will certainly take several years. Clearly the fear of many Israelis, that a catastrophic influx of refugees will suddenly engulf them, is without basis.

When both sides start on the path to the solution, they may find it facilitates reconciliation between them. When they sit together to find creative solutions, all kinds of interesting ideas may turn up. For example, why not rebuild two or three Palestinian villages which were destroyed after 1948, and whose sites are still vacant? Many things that seem impossible today may appear on the table once the atmosphere between the parties changes.

Perhaps then the ancient saying of the Psalmist will apply to the refugees: "The stone the builders refused has become the cornerstone of the building." ❑

ISRAEL

Voices of Reconciliation in a Time of Hatred



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID H. WELLS / NEW ISRAEL FUND

David Arnow

Months have passed since Ariel Sharon's fateful September visit to the Temple Mount, a visit that helped to ignite a second intifada in the West Bank and Gaza and rioting among Israel's 19 percent minority of Arab citizens. In the course of those riots, Israeli Arabs burned banks and Jewish-owned stores, blocked roads, stoned police and cars, and killed one Jewish motorist. In Nazareth hundreds of Jews carried out what was widely called a pogrom, nearly burning down the house of an Arab Knesset member. Elsewhere in Israel Jews burned three mosques and many Arab-owned businesses. Thirteen Arabs were shot and killed by police. Arabs claim the demonstrations turned violent when the police began shooting. The police claim that the shootings were an unfortunate but legitimate response to already rampaging Arab mobs. In the course of the disturbances, nearly a thousand Israeli citizens were arrested. One-third were Jews; two-thirds were Arabs.

Many Jews in Israel had long suspected that Arab citizens of the country were a dangerous fifth column and found their worst fears confirmed. Some of these Jews advocate transfer, removing the Arabs from the country. Others prefer minimizing contact between Jews and Arabs, a milder version of the policy of separation that is an increasingly popular option for dealing with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Others who had been more trusting were shocked and felt betrayed that Israeli Arab demonstrators had violated the norms of civil protest. Some have refused to patronize Arab shops and markets. Others remain disillusioned and fear that instead of serving as a "bridge for peace" Israel's Arab community has become a threat from within. Many blame Israeli Arab leaders for incitement.

A psychologist by training, David Arnow is a past president of the New Israel Fund and is a research fellow at the CUNY Center for Jewish Studies. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of NIF.

But what about those who have *lived* on the front lines of the struggle to build better relations between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens? What is their assessment of the situation and what must be done to move forward?

Nadera and Morele

Nadera Shalhoub Keverkian is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, a Christian, a lecturer in criminology at Hebrew University, and a member of a task force of New Israel Fund board members, Jewish and Arab, charged with analyzing the current internal situation.

It is mid-October and Nadera is worried about the first day of classes. Some of her Arab students come from Nazareth and Um el Fahem, home to several of the dead. Jewish students will have friends whose cars were stoned. Because so much lies just under the surface, Nadera decides that the issues can't be ignored. They must be talked about. She plans to read her students a passage from the end of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. Mandela's words help keep her going. "The oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away my freedom is a prisoner of hatred. He is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor are robbed of their humanity."

"I don't know where the situation here is going," Nadera says, "and that's what makes me so scared. Jews are thinking about the Holocaust. We are thinking about pogroms and massacres. We're reliving Kfar Kassem, and Land Day. The police are supposed to preserve and protect. They killed thirteen citizens of this country."

I ask her if there can be equality for Arabs in a Jewish democratic state.

"It is not possible. It would be like an Islamic democratic state. No one asked us to live here or there. We did not

choose the situation. The Jews did the choosing. It would be better if this were a state for all its citizens, not just a state for the Jews. When I went to school we learned about the Dreyfus case, the Nuremburg trials, Torah and Talmud, all the history of the Jewish people. You need all this for the matriculation exam. Nothing about my own history and my own culture. When we say we want more autonomy it means to teach our kids their own history too, not just Jewish history.

"Why can't Jews understand that I don't want to be seen as an enemy. I grew up being called 'dirty Arab' all the time when I spoke Arabic in Haifa. I feel that this is my country, but it's hard. We feel like we are not wanted here. I thought Jews would remember what it felt like to feel unwanted. But not many seem to."

"It would be better if this were a state for all its citizens, not just a state for the Jews."

I read Nadera a longish excerpt from a speech Ben-Gurion gave in 1947 to the leaders of the Jewish National Fund on the responsibilities of the Zionist state to its non-Jewish citizens.

> In the Jewish State, Jews will not have any right that is denied to Arabs, Greeks, or Armenians, if they are residents and citizens of the State. Every citizen, Jewish, Arab or any other will be eligible to be elected to be president, prime minister, a justice of the high court or any other government office, important or minor.
>
> In the Jewish State we are responsible not only for Jews … but equally for all residents of the state. Our concern will not be for the development of Jewish settlements only, or for education and health for the Jewish community only, but for all communities.… We will need to concern ourselves with health and education, development and all the other services for Arab villages, no less than for those Jewish villages.
>
> In what way will the Jewish state be Jewish? Not only because there will be a Jewish majority, but because of the central responsibilities which will be placed on the State for creating a "national Home" for the Jewish people. In other words, (the State will be Jewish in terms of) the absorption of *aliyah* …

"If the promises were kept," Nadera replies, "that would be different. It sounds very good. It is fair. But it is not the situation. I have two brothers living in miserable Lebanese refugee camps. My mother has extra rooms in the house in Haifa where I grew up. Why can't we bring my brothers back? And you know how far from equality we are now. These are the deep things that Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel need to start talking about."

How does a Zionist peace activist see the situation? The roles that Mordechai (Morele) Bar-On has played over more than fifty years in public life make him the right person to ask: Chief Education Officer for the IDF, Director of the Youth Department of the World Zionist Organization, member of Knesset from the Citizen's Rights Party (RATZ), leader of Peace Now, past president of the New Israel Fund, and now an historian and author.

Morele describes still-strong undercurrents of suspicion. "Lots of Jews feel that the Arabs don't appreciate what they have here. I believe that Israeli Arabs have the right to express solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the territories as long as they are within civic norms. What was new here was the direct confrontation with the police which was seen as a confrontation with the authority of the state.

"If I were an Arab citizen of Israel," he cautions, "I would be sure to be very clear that I was opposing the legitimacy of a particular government or a policy and not the legitimacy of the state itself. But they did not make this distinction clear enough. It's still not completely clear if they were demonstrating against the state or its policies. In any case, the shootings were not justified and we have to find out why the police responded with such force.

"Of course, those who were suspicious of Israeli Arabs before now have more of a basis for their fears. But," he adds, "we also come to this debate with dirty hands. There has been real and serious discrimination. In the beginning this was the result of the forward march of Zionism. There were conflicts between the costs of absorbing Jews and building in the Arab villages. And there was confiscation of Arab-owned land. Part of this was built into the Zionist program, but the time has come to normalize the situation. I'm not talking about ending the Law of Return, but about accepting that now *aliyah* and building the Arab sector should be equal priorities. This does not deny Zionism. It recognizes that we are in a new time and there are new needs. Zionism is still valid, but we are rich and strong enough to help those who have paid the price."

I ask Morele what he thinks about the assertion that Israel cannot be both a Jewish and a democratic state. "A lot of Palestinian Israeli intellectuals claim that Israel can't be both. But there are many nations that have national minorities and they are democratic in the full sense of the word.

"Zionism was a movement to create a national state for the Jews—what the French have, what all nations have wanted except America. The Jews who wanted an alternative to Diaspora had a right to create a state," Morele says. "There is nothing unusual in that. They created a state in which they are a majority. The majority determines certain norms, symbols, holidays, names of streets, etc., and that is to be accepted as something that happens everywhere."

But the relationship between Jews and Arabs inside Israel cannot be disconnected from the external situation. "When we accept the right of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to have their own state, we will be in a stronger position in terms of the Arab minority in Israel. It will create a more balanced situation for both sides." Over the years,

Morele has had many debates with Arabs in Israel who demand a Palestinian state but then argue that Israel must be a state of its citizens and not a Jewish state. "But Israeli Palestinians are completely inconsistent. If there is no place for a Jewish state, there is no place for a Palestinian state."

De Facto Separatism

Although Israel's Declaration of Independence promised a state that would "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex ..." the Arab minority has not been treated that way from the beginning. Feared as a fifth column, the entire community lived under harsh military administration from 1948 until 1966.

After the 1948 war, Israel's War of Independence, 150,000 Arabs remained in the country. Many of these "present absentees," were not allowed to return home and much of their land was confiscated. Disputes over inadequate compensation dragged on for decades. Meanwhile, these uprooted Arabs built new settlements, which the state has still refused to recognize. As a result, these villages, which have grown tremendously over the years, still lack the basic infrastructure—roads, water, electricity, schools, etc.—otherwise supplied by the government.

From the beginning, separation from Arabs, rather than integration, became the norm. Most Arabs live in towns and villages that few Jews would have occasion to visit or even pass through. The system of roads has even been built to bypass them. By mutual consent, both communities attend separate schools until university. Most Arabs (with the exception of the Druze community) are not conscripted into the army. Jews generally don't trust them enough to demand this, nor are many Arabs willing to place themselves in a situation in which they would need to fight against their relatives in the West Bank and Gaza or elsewhere.

Nadera mentioned Kfar Kassem. On the eve of the Suez War in 1956, Israeli soldiers killed forty-three Arab farmers from this village who had returned from their fields unaware that a curfew had been announced. (Recently, Israeli textbooks have begun to mention the incident. Although the officers responsible were tried and punished, government officials only apologized for the incident in 1997.)

With Israel's victory in the 1967 War, its Arab citizens were able to renew contact with their brethren who were now under Israeli occupation. Along with other factors, this contributed to an emerging politicization of Israeli Arab identity resulting in greater political organization and assertiveness. For example, in 1976 the Arab community initiated Land Day, an annual day of protests against the Israel Land Authority's discriminatory policies toward Arab citizens of the state. The protest turned violent and six demonstrators were killed by Israeli police.

The alienation and rage in Israel's Arab sector has mushroomed since the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. In his first speech to the Knesset after the 1992 election, Rabin addressed the plight of the Arab community in terms never used by an Israeli leader before or since:

> On behalf of the new government, I see it as fitting to promise the Arab, Druze, and Bedouin population that we shall do everything possible to close the gaps. We shall try to make the great leap forward that will enhance the welfare of the minorities that have tied their fate to our own.

Rabin slowly began to make changes that continued under Shimon Peres. But with the election of Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu this ground to a halt. The differences in government guidelines are revealing. The Peres guidelines included nine sections dealing with the Arab minority. Netanyahu dropped six of them.

Ismael Abu-Saad, a Bedouin and director of Ben-Gurion University's Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, wistfully recalled the high hopes in the Arab community with the election of Ehud Barak in 1999. "After all, 95 percent of the Arab community voted for Barak. We gave him three-quarters of his 12 percent victory over Netanyahu. For sure we thought that Barak would become the first prime minister to appoint an Arab minister and to include Arab parties in his coalition. None of this happened. Barak never even visited us until the police shot thirteen Arabs. He would visit Jewish development towns where there was

Israel's Arab Minority: Social and Economic Gaps

Infant mortality among Arabs is twice as high as among Jews.

Arabs hold approximately 50 out of 5,000 university faculty positions.

Of the 61 towns at the lowest socioeconomic level, 48 are Arab.

Hourly wages paid to Arab men are 67% of the wages paid to Jewish men.

On a *per capita* basis, the government spends two-thirds as much for Arab municipalities as for Jewish municipalities.

Among 15 government ministries (excluding Defense, Absorption, and Foreign Affairs) Arabs account for 3.7% of employees.

The area of jurisdiction in the Arab municipalities covers approximately 2.5 percent of the State's territory.

Since 1975 the government has built 337,000 residential housing units in the Jewish sector and 1,000 in the Arab sector.

From the *1999–2000 Report on Equality and Integration of the Arab Citizens*, published by the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, *Sikkuy*.

high unemployment, but never an Arab town where the unemployment was twice as high."

Conditions in Arab towns and villages have become perfect breeding grounds for fundamentalism. The Islamicists are winning local elections by providing otherwise unavailable services. Ismael is a religious moderate. "But, in my village," he laments, "the Islamic parties now control the municipal government. They run the only summer camp and that's where my son goes. He wants to be with his friends."

Ismael directs me to the 1999 *Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin*, which he helped write. Among the Negev's 120,000 Bedouin, some 16,000 of their shanties are subject to demolition either because they were built in unrecognized villages or because they lack building permits that are almost impossible to obtain. Between 1992 and 1998, 1,298 dwellings were demolished by the Israeli government.

"The rioting ... had to do with basic things like unemployment."

"Arabs in Israel are losing hope," says Ismael. "We have to carry on with hope, but the hope (*ha'tikvah*) needs to be for all of us, not just the Jews."

The cost of losing hope can be measured in the Arab minority's growing radicalization. For instance, last year some Israeli Arabs burned Israeli flags on Independence Day, or *Nakba* (disaster, in Arabic) as many Arabs call it.

Haifa University sociologist Sammy Smooha, a Jew, has been studying attitudes within the Arab community for more than twenty-five years. He found that from 1976 through 1995 surveys pointed to a clear trend of "Israelization" and moderation among Arab citizens of Israel. By 1999 evidence of growing extremism was apparent. In 1995 6.8 percent of Israeli Arabs denied the right of Israel to exist. Four years later, 18.4 percent felt that way. Similarly, in 1995 35.5 percent denied the right of Israel to exist as a *Jewish* state. In 1999 that figure rose to 45.3 percent.

According to Smooha, "Government policy is very important in shaping these attitudes. And our own government's policy is something that we have control over. Since 1995, improving conditions in the Arab sector has become a lower priority for the government and this feeds radicalization. The Arabs in this country are not living in a vacuum. How we treat them makes them feel more and more alienated." A survey by Givat Haviva's Institute for Peace found that five years ago 27 percent of the Arab citizens of Israel identified themselves as Palestinians living in Israel or as Arab Palestinians living in Israel. Today, 67 percent define themselves that way.

The Hope

Through a network of non-governmental organizations, many supported by the New Israel Fund, Israelis are taking steps to address the growing separation between Israeli Jews and Arabs. In the eyes of Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform Movement's Religious Action Center in Israel, the moral and pragmatic imperatives for treating the Arab minority fairly are closely linked. "An Israel which denies full equality to its Arab minority cannot be an authentically Jewish state. Maybe we couldn't anticipate the level of violence," he says, "but some kind of explosion was to be expected. There are those who are motivated by religious and national enmity and there are those who are frustrated at not finding their place in this country. I'm not excusing the violence, but we cannot shift all the blame to the other to understand where we are going wrong. We have to ask ourselves if we've made these people feel part of this country, like they are wanted."

He quotes Leviticus 19:34. "The stranger who resides with you in your land shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Subjugating another has consequences, Rabbi Regev maintains. "Look at what Nachmanides says about Sarah who 'dealt harshly' with Hagar (Genesis 16:6). 'Our mother transgressed by this and Abraham also, by permitting her to do so. So God heard [Hagar's] affliction and gave her a son ... to afflict the seed of Abraham and Sarah.'"

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, a Reform rabbi who is co-director of Rabbis for Human Rights, finds hope in the peace tents that popped up all over Israel just after the violence subsided. "Jews and Arabs in this country realized that they had gone too far and they managed to pull back and to start talking. But, it is clear that dialogue is not enough," he says. "There are a number of Israeli Arab organizations working for equality, but more Jewish organizations need to start focussing on this too."

"My greatest fear," he says, "is that lip service will be paid to making improvements in the Arab sector. We would just be setting ourselves up for the next explosion. You have to remember that the rioting in the Arab sector was not simply a matter of incitement by their leaders, as many Jews think. The root causes had to do with basic things like unemployment."

Public opinion surveys lend some support to Rabbi Ascherman's view. Polls suggest that nearly 54 percent of Israeli Arabs said their demonstrations (as opposed to *violent* demonstrations) were in response to events which took place on the Al Aqsa Mosque. Only 16 percent said the principal reason for the demonstrations was the unequal treatment of Arab citizens of Israel. But when asked "what must be done so that Israeli Arabs will not be motivated to participate in *violent* demonstrations," nearly 61 percent of Israeli Arabs said "changing government policies and granting equal rights."

Sadly, opposition from the Jewish public to these steps is enormous. One recent survey found that 60 percent (Mina

(continued on page 50)

VOICES OF RECONCILIATION *(continued from page 24)*

Tzemach, October 2000) of Israeli Jews deny that Arabs are discriminated against. Another found that 70 percent oppose appointing an Arab minister and including Arabs in other governmental positions of leadership.

Nonetheless Israeli Jewish leaders have begun to show greater awareness of the needs of the Arab minority. Ami Ayalon, former chief of Israel's internal security service, the Shin Bet, made an unprecedented call on Israeli TV for integrating Israel's Arab population into the fabric of society. Israel's president, Moshe Katzav, has urged the appointment of an Arab minister in the next government. The government has pledged to allocate an extra $250 million for each of the next four years to the Arab sector—less than one-half percent of Israel's annual budget.

Equalizing the allocation of resources and integrating Israel's Arab citizens into the decision-making structure of the country are essential if Jews hope to avoid the path of endless conflict with the Arab minority. Yet, reconciliation requires more.

QUESTION: "What must be done so that Israeli Arabs will not be motivated to participate in violent demonstrations?"

Arab Respondents:	
Changing government policies and granting equal rights	60.5 %
Realization of the national rights of the Palestinians	23.5 %
Other/Don't Know	15.0 %
Jewish Respondents:	
Coexistence and granting equal rights	37.0 %
An approach of force and separatism	39.0 %
Other/Don't Know	24.0 %

Data collected between October 18–20, 2000 by Prof. Ephraim Yaar, The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University

Frank, nationwide dialogue between Jews and Arabs is long overdue. What are the tensions arising from Israel's promise to be a Jewish state and its promise of equality for all its citizens? Jews must hear from Arabs why the past fifty-two years suggest to them that these commitments are irreconcilable. Arabs must hear what it means to Jews when demonstrators overstep the bounds of non-violent protest and when Arab Knesset members use the rhetoric of Israel's most implacable enemies.

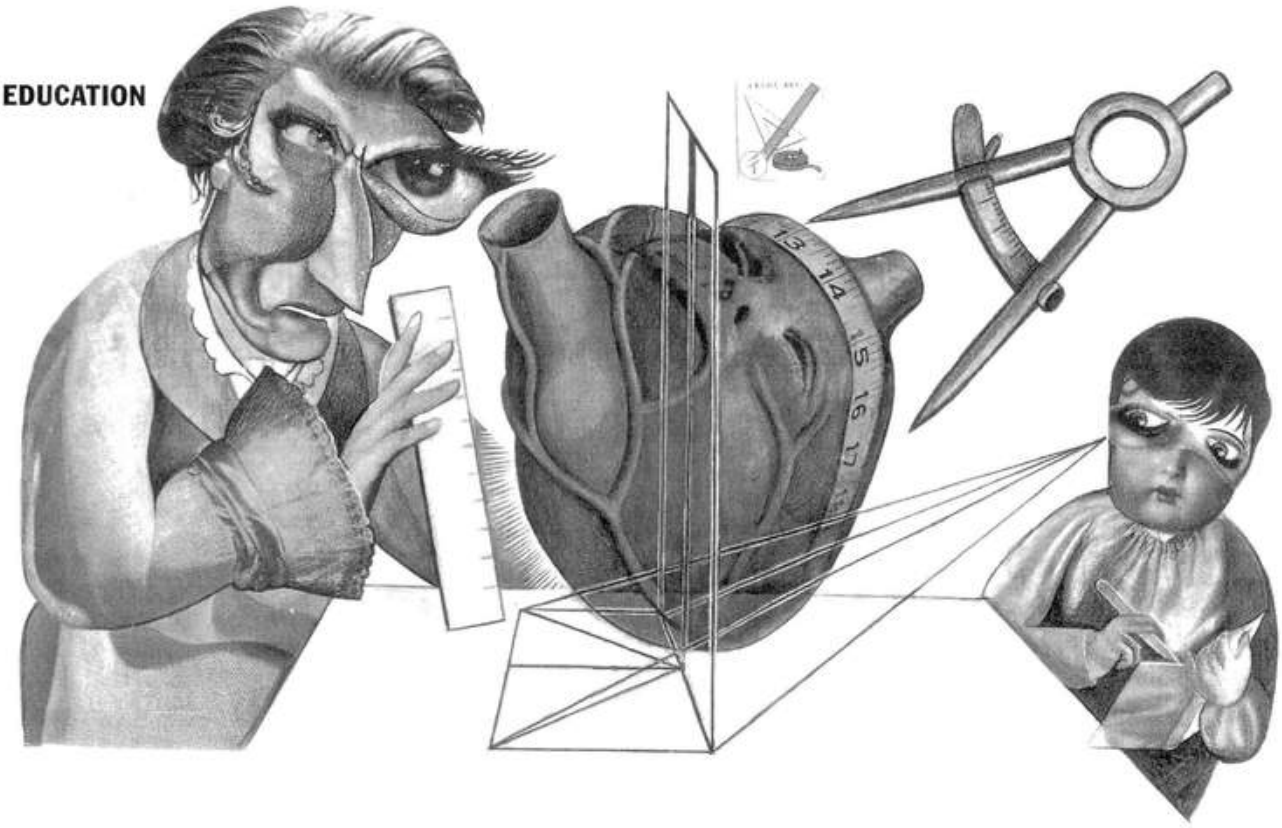
This dialogue has already begun on a limited basis. But, it has been dominated by mutual recriminations about responsibility for the violence that took place within the country. Ehud Barak took an important step in working through this when, albeit reluctantly, he agreed to convene a prestigious, fully independent State Commission of Inquiry to investigate the police's handling of the riots as all Arabs and many Jews have demanded. This will provide Jews and Arabs alike with a chance to understand what went wrong. It will give the Arab community a critical opportunity to present its claims that lethal force by the police transformed essentially peaceful demonstrations into violent riots.

One or perhaps both sides will owe the other an apology and both would do well to consider the wisdom of Maimonides:

> Sins committed against a fellow man, as when a person either injured or cursed or robbed his neighbor, he is never pardoned unless he compensates his neighbor and makes an apology. Even though he has made the compensation, the wrong doer must appease the injured person and ask his pardon.... One must not show himself cruel by not accepting an apology.

The Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs recently held a conference on the history and politics of reconciliation. The role of apology (in conjunction with other forms of restitution) received a great deal of attention. It is certainly worth thinking about in the context of Jewish/Arab relations in Israel. Indeed, Prime Minister Barak is already reportedly considering an apology for the deaths of Arab citizens of Israel in last October's riots. The apology should be broader. A precedent already exists: In 1997, Ehud Barak, then leader of the Labor party, apologized to immigrants from Islamic countries "for mistakes made during the formative years of the state." He called for a "process of national reconciliation." "Actions are not enough," he said. Soon afterward, the Labor party, which had been in power during Israel's early years, issued its own formal apology. While many politicians criticized the move as insufficient or unjustly critical of David Ben-Gurion, prime minister during that period, recipients of Barak's gesture seem to have appreciated it.

Coupled with a sincere effort by the state to advance true equality and inclusion of *all* its citizens, an acknowledgment with an apology from Israel's prime minister for past discrimination against the Arab minority will increase the chances of improving Jewish/Arab relations within the country. It creates room for each side to begin changing its view of the "other" and transforming the negative images that each side passes down to its children. Now those images are dominated by devaluation, if not hatred of the other. If Jews and Arabs want to live in peace with one another, both sides need to teach their children, as Morele Bar-On suggested, that Israel's Arab minority paid a portion of the inevitable price for building a Jewish state. Both sides also need to teach their children that Jews have a right to a Jewish state on the same basis that Palestinians deserve a Palestinian state: denying the legitimacy of one denies legitimacy to the other. Accepting these truths can pave the way for developing a shared story about Israel's past and future that both sides can one day embrace. ❑



The Real Threat to American Schools

Alfie Kohn

The institution of democratic public schooling is under siege today—not only by its enemies but by those who profess to be its friends.

Its enemies, circling like bold buzzards, want to serve up our schools to the marketplace, where the point of reference is what maximizes profit rather than what benefits children. In the words of education historian David Labaree, public schools are regarded with contempt in certain circles "not just because they are deemed ineffective but because they are public." This position typically reflects an animus against public institutions in general, of course, but public schools in particular—contemptuously dubbed "government schools" by their adversaries—are being battered now as never before.

The threat of privatization is not to be taken lightly, both because public schooling is the lifeblood of a democratic society and because of the perseverance and power of the would-be privatizers (particularly now that one of them lives in the White House). Indeed, following decisive popular rejections of voucher proposals, most recently in California and Michigan, proponents have merely changed their tactics and their nomenclature: If people oppose vouchers, well, then let's call them something else. Nevertheless, we can derive some comfort from the sturdy opposition to this assault by mainstream Democrats, teachers' unions, and others with an attachment to the idea of public education. That is why I find my attention gravitating to a threat more insidious than that posed by the voucher vultures. I refer to the "reforms" enacted by politicians and corporate executives, many of whom present themselves as sympathetic to the institution they are forcibly transforming. Their agenda is driven by a few key slogans, such as "tougher standards" and "accountability," the contextual meaning of which can be reduced to a crude series of monosyllables: "Test scores are too low. Make them go up." At least the effort to privatize education is presented in a more or less straightforward manner; the standards and testing movement, by contrast, would save our schools by turning them into giant test-prep centers.

We're not talking here about the SATs and other college-admission exams, but about the relentless use of testing even for students who will never set foot in a university and, in any case, for children much too young to be thinking about

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

what follows high school. While these tests are not exactly new, never before have they been given so frequently and never have they played such a prominent role in schooling. Exams used to be administered mostly to decide where to place kids or what kind of help they needed; only recently have scores been published in the newspaper and used as the primary criteria for judging children, teachers, and schools—indeed, as the basis for flunking students or denying them a diploma, deciding where money should be spent, and so on. Tests have lately become a mechanism by which public officials can impose their will on schools, and they are doing so with a vengeance. This situation is also unusual from an international perspective. Few nations today administer formal examinations to students before the age of sixteen or so. And it isn't easy to find other countries that give multiple-choice tests to students of any age. In short, our children are tested to an extent that is unprecedented in our history and unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

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It has been argued that those who oppose vouchers had better accept this state of affairs. Public schooling has lost its legitimacy, so the argument goes, and can reclaim it only by submitting to the top-down, heavy-handed, corporate-style reform driven by standardized teaching and testing. In response, we might begin by asking, What shall it profit a school if it saves itself but loses its soul? Many parents and other citizens do not fully grasp the extent to which the intellectual life is being squeezed out of schools in the name of raising standards. But the claim is also suspect because some of the most vociferous proponents of testing do not seek to hold the privatizers at bay: they *are* the privatizers. This is particularly obvious in states like Massachusetts, Arizona, and Virginia, whose top education officials make no secret of their desire to see public money spent on private schools. This dual agenda is also held by our new president: an insatiable appetite for testing coexists comfortably with a support for vouchers. Frankly, if your goal were to undermine public education, your first strategy might well be to subject students (and teachers) to a series of exams designed for mass failure. Then, counting on newspapers and other observers to take the results at face value (rather than inquiring into the validity of the tests), you would profess to be shocked—shocked!—at the obvious inadequacy of our schools—and, let's face it, of the whole institution of public schooling.

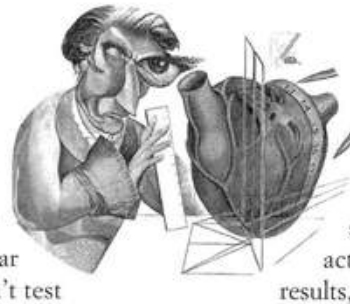
Not everyone pushing standards and accountability is trying to pave the way for vouchers. Some people have accepted on faith the oft-repeated claims that our schools are failing and genuinely want to ensure that they improve. Those claims have been pretty thoroughly debunked by Gerald Bracey (in *Setting the Record Straight* and in his monthly columns for the education journal *Phi Delta Kappan)*, by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (in *The Manufactured Crisis)*, and by Richard Rothstein (in *The Way We Were?*). But for those who haven't taken the time to investigate the charges—or to consider the motives of those who level them—the calls to raise the bar may seem reasonable enough.

The canny way in which the issue has been framed helps to explain where we find ourselves. Raise your hand if you *don't* want high standards for our schools, or if you don't think the relevant people ought to be "held accountable" for their performance. It's rather like hearing a politician pronounce himself a supporter of "law and order": not a simple matter to explain that he may be exaggerating the dimensions of the problem, misanalyzing its causes, and inviting responses that are dangerously counterproductive. Precisely the same is true of the Tougher Standards juggernaut, except that there are a lot fewer people raising questions. The first debate between George W. Bush and Al Gore last October, during which the two competed to see who was more staunchly pro-testing, exemplifies the situation we now face: the overwhelming majority of Congressional representatives, state legislators, and governors of both parties, along with every business group with something to say about education, most newspaper editorial writers, and the American Federation of Teachers have all endorsed a version of education reform in which almost anything can be done to students and to schools, no matter how ill-considered, as long as it is done in the name of standards or accountability. As a result we are facing a situation in this country that can be described without exaggeration as an educational emergency.

In *The Schools Our Children Deserve*, I focused on some of the assumptions on which the standards movement rests. Here I will content myself with a brief outline of only five arguments, followed by a call to action.

1. The Tougher Standards movement is top-down and coercive. Even if you had no objection to the specifics of the state education frameworks and instructional guidelines, or to the design of the standardized tests, these instruments have basically been rammed into classrooms with the force of law. When teachers have resisted commands to "align" their curriculum to mandated standards, they have been pressured to do so by principals, who have been pressured by superintendents, who have been pressured by school boards and state officials. The standards are linked to tests and the tests often have high-stakes attached: an assortment of bribes and threats to coerce everyone into concentrating on the results. If the scores are high, the bribes may include

bonuses for teachers and schools. Students, meanwhile, may receive food, tickets to theme parks or sporting events, gifts, exemptions from in-class final exams, and even substantial scholarships. The threats include loss of funding or accreditation for schools, while students may be held back a year or denied a high school diploma if they don't test well, regardless of their overall academic record.



Of course there is plenty of room for disagreement about how best to teach and to assess learning. But the folks whom writer and teacher Susan Ohanian refers to as the "standardistos" are characterized primarily by their utter intolerance for disagreement. The silver lining here is that because members of our species tend to resist efforts to control them, the standards movement is likely to self-destruct eventually—though, in the absence of active opposition, this may not happen until a generation of children is brought down with it. One very specific, short-term result is already underway: a significant number of teachers and principals are taking early retirement or simply bailing out. Some prospective educators are deciding against a career in this field if it will mean that they will be manipulated with rewards and punishments and compelled to teach a curriculum designed by state legislators and test designers. As a rule, it isn't the mediocre teachers, afraid of being held accountable, who are looking elsewhere for employment; rather, very talented educators tend to resist most strongly the authoritarian nature of the standards movement and the implication that they must become test-prep technicians. Their departure constitutes only one way that the Tougher Standards movement actually lowers standards.

2. It is assumed that harder equals better. A number of mainstream school reformers have for some time argued for more of the same: longer school days, longer school years, more homework, more testing, and so on. (The reductio ad absurdum of this mentality says that if a child has not been successful in third grade, the answer is to flunk him and make him do the same thing all over again.) Today, "more of the same" has morphed into "harder is better": reform basically consists of intensifying the status quo.

This sensibility is in evidence when you hear people complain that schools have been "dumbed down," that they let kids off too easily, that we need to raise the bar, demand higher expectations, and so on. A reasonably bright eight-year-old might reply that an assignment can be too hard as surely as it can be too easy. Clearly, optimal difficulty isn't the same thing as maximum difficulty. But the real problem is that far too much attention is paid to this particular criterion. Evaluating texts, tests, or teaching on the basis of whether they are sufficiently difficult is like judging an opera on the basis of how many notes it contains that are hard for the singers to hit. This error is made by parents who think their children are bored in school because the worksheets are too easy (rather than, say, because the teachers are using worksheets in the first place). The Tougher Standards movement is practically defined by this simplistic thinking. The commissioner of education for the state of Colorado actually commented, "Unless you get bad results, it is highly doubtful you have done anything useful with your tests. Low scores have become synonymous with good tests."

This is the sort of thinking that has led New York, Massachusetts, and other states to institute mandatory high school graduation tests that very few adults (including me) could pass. Deborah Meier, who helped to found the Central Park East schools in New York City, proposes this basic principle: "No student should be expected to meet an academic requirement that a cross section of successful adults in the community cannot." To Meier's Mandate I would modestly propose Kohn's Corollary: "All persons given to pious rhetoric about the need to 'raise standards' and produce 'world-class academic performance for the 21st century' not only should be required to take these exams themselves but must agree to have their scores published in the newspaper."

Meier and I, in trying to locate the essential nature of the Tougher Standards movement, stumbled upon a very dark possibility, one that eclipses the innocent error of confusing difficulty with quality. Suppose that next year almost all the students in your state met the standards and passed the tests. What would be the reaction from most politicians, businesspeople, and pundits? Would they now concede that our public schools are terrific—or would they take this result as prima facie evidence that the standards were too low and the tests were too easy? If you said the latter was more likely, then the inescapable implication is that the phrase "high standards" *by definition* refers to standards that everyone won't be able to meet. And that, in turn, means that the whole standards-and-accountability movement ultimately is not about helping all children to become better learners. Rather, it is an elaborate sorting device. To this extent the movement is not merely undemocratic but antidemocratic.

3. The emphasis on standards and testing promotes the least meaningful form of learning. Some of what you will find in state standards documents is unobjectionable and even appealing. But in the very next paragraph you are likely to come across ridiculously specific dictates laying out particular facts and skills that all students at a given grade level are expected to know. The phrase "specific, measurable standards," a favorite of the standardistos, does not reflect a commitment to excellence but a commitment to behaviorism.

Thinking is messy, and deep thinking is very messy. Standards documents are nothing if not orderly. Moreover,

research has demonstrated the importance of making sure that students are actively involved in designing their own learning, invited to play a role in formulating questions, creating projects, and so on. But the more comprehensive a list of standards is—and, of course, the more it is offered as a dictate rather than as a set of guidelines—the more students (and even teachers) are excluded from this process, the more they are treated as objects rather than subjects, the more alienated they tend to become, and the more teaching becomes a race to cover a huge amount of material. "The greatest enemy of understanding is 'coverage,'" as Howard Gardner and his colleagues have written. But the move to raise standards merely says: Cover more!

Unless we stop exit exams, we face educational ethnic cleansing.

4. Standardized testing is not only uninformative but counterproductive. Begin by realizing that test scores tell us more about the size of students' houses than about the quality of their learning. One study after another has found that socioeconomic status in all its particulars accounts for an overwhelming proportion of the variance in test scores when different schools, towns, or states are compared (of which more later). Ignorance would therefore be the most charitable explanation for the publication of charts that rank schools (or towns or states) by these scores—or for the practice of using those rankings to draw conclusions about classroom practice.

Standardized tests typically measure what matters least. I have never met a teacher who couldn't instantly rattle off the names of several students who were extraordinarily talented thinkers but just don't test well. Ironically, standardized exams *over*estimate other students, who are good at taking tests but often don't understand why the right answers are right or what they mean. Although these findings haven't been widely publicized, studies of students of different ages have found *a statistical association between high scores on standardized tests and relatively shallow thinking.*

The effect of focusing attention on test scores has had a devastating effect on schools across the country, which are cutting back or even eliminating programs in the arts, recess for young children, electives for high schoolers, class meetings (and other activities intended to promote social and moral learning), discussions about current events (since that material will not appear on the test), the use of literature in the early grades (if the tests are focused narrowly on decoding skills), and entire subject areas such as science (if the tests cover only language arts and math). As a rule, every hour spent preparing students to do well on standardized exams is an hour not spent helping them to become critical, creative, curious thinkers.

Of course not all tests are equally bad. A testing program is particularly destructive if one or more of the following is true:

- A lot of the questions are in a multiple-choice format. This does not allow students to generate or even explain solutions and therefore cannot provide a good sense of what they really know.
- The test is timed. This means that what is really being measured is not thoughtfulness but speed.
- The tests are given too frequently. It is neither necessary (in terms of collecting information) nor desirable (in terms of improving the quality of instruction) to test students year after year after year. This practice is generally connected to grade-by-grade performance standards, and they, in turn, reflect the assumption that all students must learn at the same pace. As a descriptive premise, this is out of step with developmental reality; as a prescriptive formula, it ensures that those who require more time to learn will be branded as failures. President Bush would like to require testing every year, which would guarantee that the tests cannibalize the curriculum, as they have in Texas (which has become an educational nightmare despite the fact—or, rather, because of the fact—that scores on that state's tests have risen).
- Children younger than eight or nine are tested. I have yet to hear of a reputable scholar in the field of early childhood education who believes it is appropriate (or even useful) to give standardized tests to children before the end of third grade.
- High stakes are attached to the test results. Again, just about all the relevant experts condemn the practice of basing important decisions, such as graduation or promotion, on the results of a single test. The prestigious National Research Council takes this position, as do most other professional groups. Yet just such high-stakes testing is currently taking place, or scheduled to be introduced soon, in more than half the states.

5. Low-income and minority children suffer most from the Tougher Standards movement. It is sometimes argued that, because inner-city schools are often horrendous to begin with, high-stakes testing and uniform standards will hold poor children of color and their schools to "higher expectations."

Alas, the cure is mostly worse than the disease. In the words of Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), one of the very few elected officials on the national stage who has not been taken in by this movement, "People talk about using tests to motivate students to do well and using tests to ensure that we close the achievement gap. This kind of talk is backwards and unfair.... Far from improving education, high-stakes testing marks a major retreat from fairness, from accuracy, from quality, and from equity."

He's right, first, because many of the tests themselves are biased, requiring a set of knowledge and skills more likely to be possessed by children from a privileged background—hardly a promising mechanism for closing the gap between

(continued on page 60)



THE THREAT TO SCHOOLS *(cont. from p. 28)*
rich and poor. Second, affluent families, schools, and districts are better able to afford the test-prep materials and services that certain companies have begun to peddle. Third, because these tests tend to measure the temporary acquisition of facts and skills more than genuine understanding, and because such tests are more likely to be used and emphasized in schools with higher percentages of minority students, the result is often poorer quality teaching in such schools. "Skills-based instruction, the type to which most children of color are subjected, tends to foster low-level uniformity and subvert academic potential," as Dorothy Strickland, an African-American professor at Rutgers University, has observed. Again, there is no denying that many schools serving low-income children of color were second-rate to begin with. Now, however, some of these schools are becoming third-rate as testing pressures lead to a more systematic use of low-level, drill-and-skill teaching, often in the context of packaged programs purchased by school districts. (Exhibit A is the mindless, militaristic training that passes for teaching in Houston's elementary schools—a legacy of former superintendent Rod Paige, whom Bush tapped as his Secretary of Education.) The more that poor children fill in worksheets on command in an effort to raise their test scores, the further they fall behind affluent kids who are more likely to get lessons that help them understand ideas.

Fourth, standards are not the main ingredient that's in low supply. The focus among policymakers has been on standards of outcome rather than standards of opportunity. Too many public officials, along with like-minded journalists and other observers, are apt to minimize the matter of resources and assume that everything deficient about education for poor and minority children can be remedied by more forceful demands to raise expectations. The implication here would seem to be that teachers and students *could* be doing a better job but have for some reason chosen not to do so and need only be bribed or threatened into improvement. To make matters worse, some supporters of high-stakes testing have not just ignored but contemptuously dismissed the relevance of barriers to achievement in certain neighborhoods. Explanations about very real obstacles such as racism, poverty, fear of crime, low teacher salaries, inadequate facilities, and language barriers are sometimes written off as mere "excuses." This is at once naïve and callous, and, like any other example of minimizing the relevance of structural constraints, ultimately serves the interests of those fortunate enough not to face them.

Finally, when rewards and punishments are applied to educators, those who teach low-scoring populations are the most likely to be branded as failures and may decide to leave the profession. Minority and low-income students are disproportionately affected by the incessant pressure on teachers to raise scores. But when high stakes are applied to the students themselves, there is little doubt about who is most likely to be denied diplomas as a consequence of failing an exit exam—or who will simply give up and drop out in anticipation of such an outcome. If states persist in making a student's fate rest on a single test, the likely result over the next few years will be nothing short of catastrophic. Unless we act to stop this, we will be facing a scenario that might be described without exaggeration as an educational ethnic cleansing.

. . .

And now the good news: we *can* act to stop it. Neither standardized testing nor the Tougher Standards movement is like the weather—that is, a reality to which we must resign ourselves. What we are facing is not a force of nature but a force of politics, and political decisions can be questioned, challenged, and ultimately reversed. For example, parents in Wisconsin successfully lobbied their state legislators to prevent a high-school exit exam from being the sole determinant of whether students are permitted to graduate—a stinging defeat for former governor (and now Secretary of Health and Human Services) Tommy Thompson. In Florida, where schools are graded on the basis of test scores, with successful schools receiving more money and the neediest schools threatened with a loss of funding, a group of teachers and their principal at an "A" school (Gulf Gate Elementary) publicly refused to accept their bonuses.

There's more. (For a detailed description, see www.alfiekohn.org/standards/strategies.htm.) Parents and teachers have taken to the streets in Colorado and Ohio. Lawsuits have been filed in several states to challenge the legality of high-stakes tests. Petitions are being circulated, locally and nationally; legislators are being lobbied; websites are being set up in several states to help testing opponents coordinate their efforts. Most impressive, and most dramatic, has been the growing number of boycotts all across the nation. Parents have said, in effect, "Not with my child you don't!" and refused to allow their children to take the tests. Last spring, a genuine boycott movement spread across Massachusetts, with hundreds of students sitting out that state's required tests as the result of a student-led campaign.

In short, more and more people believe that writing letters to the editor isn't enough, that a line has been crossed such that we can no longer justify our participation in the testing program. That program can continue only with the consent and cooperation of the parents who permit their children to take the tests (and, of course, the educators who allow them to be distributed). If we withhold that consent, if we refuse to cooperate, then the testing process grinds to a halt. If we turn our frustration into action, the question of the hour will not be "How many hours will be wasted on test preparation this year?" but "What if they gave a test and nobody came?" ❑

Zero Tolerance

Creating a Generation of Suspects

Henry A. Giroux



There is a growing sense in American life that politics has become corrupt. Those traditional public spheres in which people could exchange ideas, debate, and shape the conditions that structured their everyday lives increasingly appear to have little relevance or political importance. Emptied of any substantial content, democracy appears imperiled as individuals are unable to translate their privately suffered misery into public concerns and collective action. Civic engagement now appears impotent and public values are rendered invisible in light of the growing power of multinational corporations to privatize public space and disconnect power from issues of equity, social justice, and civic responsibility. Political exhaustion and impoverished intellectual visions are fed by the increasingly popular assumption that there are no alternatives to the present state of affairs. Within the increasing corporatization of everyday life, market values replace social values and people appear more and more willing to retreat into the safe, privatized enclaves of the family, religion, and consumption. The result is not only silence and indifference, but the terrible price paid in what Zygmunt Bauman calls the "hard currency of human suffering."

For many young people and adults today, the private sphere has become the only space in which to imagine any sense of hope, pleasure, or possibility.

As those public spaces that offer forums for debating norms, critically engaging ideas, making private issues public, and evaluating judgments disappear under the juggernaut of neoliberal policies, it becomes crucial for progressives to raise fundamental questions about what it will take to revitalize a politics and ethics that takes seriously the values Bauman names: "citizen participation, the public good, political obligation, social governance, and community." The call for a revitalized politics grounded in an effective democracy substantively challenges the dystopian practices of neoliberalism—with its all-consuming emphasis on market relations, commercialization, privatization, and the creation of a world-wide economy of part-time workers—against its utopian promises. Such an intervention confronts progressives with the problem as well as the challenge of developing those public spheres—such as the media, public and higher education, and other cultural institutions—that provide the conditions for creating citizens who are capable of exercising their freedoms, competent to question the fundamental assumptions that govern political life, and skilled enough to participate in shaping the basic social, political, and economic orders that govern their lives.

For many young people and adults today, the private sphere has become the only space in which to imagine any sense of hope, pleasure, or possibility. Market forces

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ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES FLYNN

increasingly narrow the legitimacy of the public sphere by redefining it around the related issues of consumption and safety. And as social visions of equity cede from public memory, unfettered brutal self-interests are combining with retrograde social polices to make security a top domestic priority. One consequence is that all levels of government are being hollowed out, reducing their role to dismantling social programs and protecting corporate interests from being regulated. Big government is now popularly presented as the enemy of freedom, a strategy designed to undermine a dynamic public sphere and pursue policies that criminalize social problems and prioritize penal methods over social investment. The growing lack of justice in American society is directly connected to the lack of political imagination and collective hope.

We live at a time when the forces and advocates of neoliberalism are not only attempting to undermine all attempts to revive the culture of politics as an ethical response to the demise of democratic public life, but are also aggressively waging a war against the very possibility of creating non-commodified public spheres and forums that provide the conditions for critical education, link learning to social change, political agency to the defense of public goods, and intellectual courage with the refusal to surrender knowledge to the highest bidder. Understood as both a set of economic policies and an impoverished notion of citizenship, neoliberalism represents not just a series of market-driven programs but also a coherent set of cultural, political, and educational practices.

Often missing in analyses of neoliberalism are the effects its practices and policies are having on urban public schools and youth. Traditionally, public schools have been seen as an invaluable public good, largely immune from the language of privatization and commercialism. With the advent of neoliberalism however, public schools are no longer seen as a public asset but are now viewed as a private good. Moreover, as the state, stripped of its power to mediate between human needs and capital, loses its capacity to offer social guarantees to youth and other marginalized groups, young people are increasingly removed from the inventory of ethical and political concerns. One consequence is the growing support among the American public for policies, at all levels of government, that abandon young people, especially youth of color, to the dictates of a society that increasingly addresses social problems through the police, courts, and prison system. This is clear not only in the growth of domestic militarization and widespread use of zero tolerance policies both in the criminal justice system and the public schools—with their emphasis on mandatory intolerance—but also in the degrading representations, repressive practices, and policies that target young people across a wider variety of public spheres. For example, within the last decade, youth have become public enemy number one—blamed in the press, Hollywood films, and on an endless array of right-wing talk shows for nearly all of our major social ills extending from violence and drug use to the breakdown of family values. Rather than being *at risk* in a society marked by deep racial, economic, and social inequalities, youth have become *the risk*.

Rather than being at risk *in a society marked by deep racial, economic, and social inequalities, youth have become* the risk.

This shift in the public's perception of young people as ultraviolent, predatory, and morally depraved serves to largely eradicate any notion of adult responsibility for youth, offering few possibilities for analyzing how teens view themselves and their own sense of agency, experience their relations with others within diverse social spheres, and mediate power relations with adults. Symptomatic of the increasing treatment of youth as a generation of suspects is the growing emergence of zero tolerance policies in the schools and the implications the latter have for public education.

Across the nation school districts are lining up to embrace zero tolerance policies. Emulating state and federal laws passed in the 1990s based on mandatory sentencing and "three strikes and you're out" policies, many educators first invoked zero tolerance rules against kids who brought guns to schools—fueled by the high profile school shootings in the mid-1990s. But as the climate of fear increased, the assumption that schools were dealing with a new breed of student—violent, amoral, and apathetic—began to take hold in the public imagination. As school safety become a top educational priority, zero tolerance policies were broadened and now include a range of behavioral infractions that encompass everything from possessing drugs or weapons to threatening other students—all broadly conceived and loosely defined. One of the most publicized cases illustrating the harshness of zero tolerance policies took place recently in Decatur, Illinois when seven African American students, who participated in a fight at a football game that lasted seventeen seconds and was marked by the absence of any weapons, were expelled for two years. Two of the young men were seniors about to graduate. None of the boys at the hearing were allowed counsel or the right to face their accusers; nor were their parents allowed any degree of involvement in the case. When Jesse Jackson brought national attention to the incident, the Decatur school board reduced the expulsions to one year.

Any sense of perspective seems lost, as school systems across the country clamor for metal detectors, armed guards, see-through knapsacks, and, in some cases, armed teachers. Some school systems are investing in new software in order

to "profile" students who might exhibit criminal behavior. What was viewed in the past as typical teenage behavior is now criminalized by school officials. For example, a sixth grader in Austell, Georgia was suspended for ten days because she had a ten-inch chain on her Tweety Bird wallet that violated the school district's zero tolerance policy—the chain was defined as a deadly weapon. Officials at Rangeview High School in Colorado, after unsuccessfully trying to expel a student because they found three baseball bats on the floor of his car, ended up suspending him, and *USA Today* reported on two Illinois seven-year-olds who were "suspended for having nail clippers with knifelike attachments."

As *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman points out, zero tolerance has become a code word for a "quick and dirty way of kicking kids out" of school. For example, The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reported in June of 1999 that "partly as a result of such rigor in enforcing Colorado's zero tolerance law, the number of kids kicked out of public schools has skyrocketed since 1993—from 437 before the law to nearly 2,000 in the 1996–1997 school year." Within such a climate of disdain and intolerance, expelling students does more than pose a threat to innocent kids, it also suggests that local school boards are refusing to do the hard work of exercising judgment, trying to understand what the

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conditions are that undermine school safety, and providing reasonable services for all students and viable alternatives for the troubled ones. But there is more at stake. As the criminalization of young people finds its way into the classroom, it becomes easier to punish students rather than listen to them. Even though enforcing such policies clogs up the courts and puts additional pressure on an already overburdened juvenile justice system, educators appear to have few qualms about doing so. Moreover, automatic expulsion policies do little to produce either a safer school or society since, as Clare Kittredge points out, "we already know that lack of attachment to the school is one of the prime predictors of delinquency."



Most insidiously, zero tolerance laws, while a threat to all youth and any viable notion of democratic public education, reinforce in the public imagination the image of students of color as a source of public fears and a threat to public school safety. Zero tolerance policies and laws appear to be well-tailored to mobilizing racialized codes and racial-based moral panics. Not only do most of the high profile zero tolerance cases, such as the Decatur school incident, often involve African American students, but such policies also reinforce the racial inequities that plague school systems across the country. For example, the *New York Times* has reported on a number of studies illustrating "that black students in public schools across the country are far more likely than whites to be suspended or expelled, and far less likely to be in gifted or advanced placement classes." Even in a city such as San Francisco, considered a bastion of liberalism, African American students pay a far greater price for zero tolerance policies. Libero Della Piana reports that "according to data collected by Justice Matters, a San Francisco agency advocating equity in education, African Americans make up 52 percent of all suspended students in the district—far in excess of the 16 percent of the general population." A federal study recently reported that "black students are suspended and expelled from public schools far out of proportion to their enrollment numbers.... In 1998, the first year national expulsion figures were gathered, 31 percent of kids expelled were black, but blacks made up only 17 percent of the students in public schools."

As compassion and understanding give way to rigidity and intolerance, schools increasingly become more militarized and function as a conduit to the penal system. The measure of such a transformation is not limited to the increasingly fortress-like quality of American schools—which are marked by the foreboding presence of hired armed guards in the corridors, patrolled cafeterias, locked doors, video surveillance cameras, electronic badges, police dogs, and routine drug searches. It is also present in a culture of fear that exhibits a deep distrust, if not hostility and revulsion, towards young people, especially youth of color. In Louisiana for instance, school board member Ray St. Pierre proposed that any student in junior high or high school who is caught fighting "would be handcuffed inside the school by sheriff's deputies and taken to a juvenile facility where he would be charged with disturbing the peace." In case parents miss the point, they would have to pay a cash bond for their child's release. As a result of St. Pierre's notion of getting tough on misbehavior, the school provides not only an opportunity for students to leave with a diploma but also with a police record. The image of kids being handcuffed, pulled out of a school, and dragged away in the back of a police van or patrol car has become so commonplace in the United States that the psychological, political, and social consequences of such a brutal policy barely raise an eyebrow and are more routinely met with public approval.

As well as turning schools into an adjunct of the criminal justice system, zero tolerance policies also further rationalize misplaced legislative priorities, and that has profound social costs. Instead of investing in early childhood programs, repairing deteriorating school buildings, or hiring more qualified teachers, schools now spend millions of dollars to upgrade security. This logic of domestic militarization produces an authoritarian irrationalism, as in Fremont High School in Oakland, California where school administrators decided to build a security fence costing $500,000 rather than replace the broken heating system. In fact many states now spend more on prisons than on university construction.

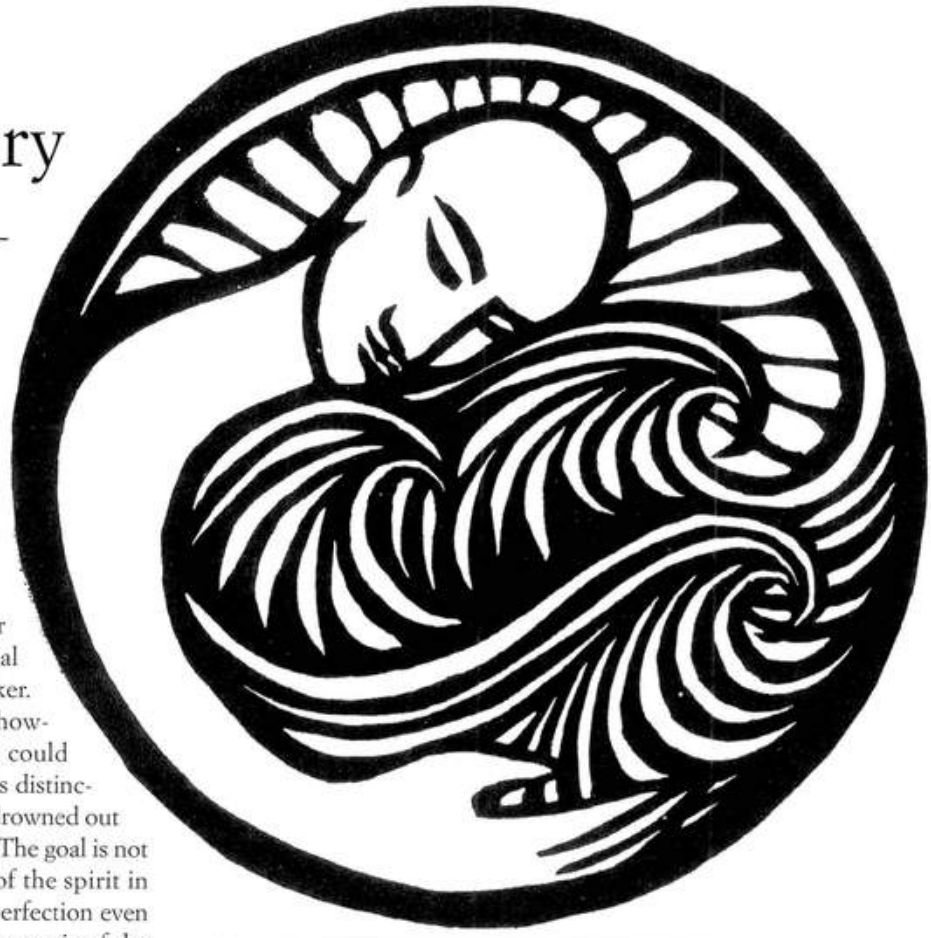
Young people are quickly realizing that schools have more in common with military boot camps and prisons than they do with other institutions in American society. In addition, as schools abandon their institutional role as models for democratic citizenship, they lose their ability to provide students with the skills to cope with human differences, uncertainty, and the various symbolic and institutional forces that undermine political agency and democratic public life itself. As schools become militarized and fenced off from the communities that surround them, they lose their ability to become anything other than spaces of containment and control. Discipline and training replace education for all but the privileged as schools increasingly take on an uncanny resemblance to oversized police precincts. Coupled with the corporate emphasis on privatizing schools, the motif of punishment and withdrawal—civic and interpersonal—governs this new form of school regulation and administration.

(continued on page 58)

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Live Your Story

Mordechai Gafni



Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show …
—Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*

I. The Wave of Your Story

One of the great blessings of our time is the symphony of spiritual possibilities available to the seeker. The shadow of this blessing, however, is that the gorgeous harmony which could emerge from each spiritual system playing its distinctive song is becoming rapidly indiscernible, drowned out as it is by the cacophonies of spiritual cliché. The goal is not religious sameness but a grand symphony of the spirit in which each religion plays its instrument to perfection even while listening deeply and respectfully to the music of the others. To achieve this sublime sound we need to distinguish the particular tones which each particular instrument is called to play.

In recent years the biblical instrument has become duller and duller, gradually losing the pristine clarity of its melody. Many of those who in earlier generations were seduced by her charms have abandoned her, leaving for what they feel to be the more subtle and sophisticated tones of the instruments from the East.

As a lover of both instruments but one whose primary commitment and love is to biblical music, I will try to set down in this short essay something of the essential movement in the biblical score. Occasionally explicitly, but mostly by implication, I will compare the biblical and Buddhist instrument. My goal is not triumphalist—it is rather to pick out the unique biblical notes, with the hope that their melody will be discernable once again.

In lieu of an overture, let me state at the outset what I hold to be the essence of the biblical myth position.

The mantra of biblical myth is "Live Your Story." Your story is part of what I term your soul print. A soul print is made up of your dreams and your destiny both lived and unlived, conscious and not yet conscious. It is made up of your past and all of your yesterdays. It is your successes and especially your failures. It is the partner you married and the partner you didn't. It is your fear, fragility, and vulnerability, as well as your grandiosity and larger than life yearnings. Your soul print is the song only you can sing, the poem only you can write, the way of being in the world which is you and you alone. To impress your soul print on the lips of reality is the highest goal of spiritual living.

The essential question of living is whether you will be the hero of your story—or, tragically, a minor character in your own drama.

To realize the meaning of this idea, allow me to begin with the technique best used with the biblical instrument—establishing an essential ontology of words, which will then serve as the backdrop for our major movement.

The Physics of the Soul

This little light of mine…

I love sappy love songs. In great poetry, classical literature, mysticism, and sappy love songs, the most often used metaphor for soul is light. The image used most often

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ILLUSTRATION BY CAREN BELLE LOEBEL-FRIED

in biblical myth to describe the soul print is also light. Your soul print is your light. When we sing, "You light up my life," or "You are my sunshine," we don't mean "you support me financially" or "you help me to advance politically." It means that your infinite specialness—your soul print—illuminates my existence. In the language of biblical myth, the image for light is The Candle of God. And the myth masters drive our analogy home when they call out "The Candle of God is the soul of man." Apparently the association of light and spirit is burned into the fiber of our souls.

To decipher this connection—beyond the obvious observation that light is bright and we can see by it—we need to introduce a kabbalistic core principle: the physical and spiritual worlds are mirrors of each other. This idea—found throughout the Kabbalah as well as comprising a basic element of Plato's thought—suggests that models in the physical world are reflected images of the spiritual and therefore often the best way to understand the spiritual world. Given that understanding, let's explore how the nature of physical light "illuminates" the nature of the soul.

Living your story is about expressing the originality of your commonness. It is about making the ordinary extra-ordinary.

Light, modern science teaches us, has two distinct properties: particle and wave. Understood as a particle, light exists as one particular point. Understood as a wave, light possesses a flowing and more amorphous quality.

In ancient biblical myth, light is also understood as a two-fold phenomenon. The word for "light" in Hebrew is "*sapir*," (the root for the English "sapphire"). In Hebrew, "*sapir*" is the root for the words "*mispar*," "number," and "*sippur*," "story." Like a particle, *mispar* expresses the point-like quality of light; like a wave, *sippur* captures light's fluid nature. "Number" and "story" express the two-fold physics of our soul-light. The physics of the soul reflects the physics of light.

Let's study these qualities further.

Sippur, story, corresponds to the wave quality of light, flowing and streaming, just like the tales of our lives. The wave function of our soul is thus our story, the wave-like rush of events and emotions we experience in a lifetime. The *sippur,* or story quality, of your soul print refers to the flow of events, the unique patterns of your story line, the whorls of your soul print lines. The incidents, details, images, and apparent coincidences of your life all weave a story unlike that of any other human being on the face of the planet.

Mispar, number, corresponds to the particle nature of light, implying a discrete unit, a uniqueness, just as each of us is unique. Numbering something is a way of identifying a specific moment, place, thing, or person in the sea of infinity. A number is the call of the infinite through a finite point; number is infinity limiting itself in order to be heard and seen. The person called is summoned as a One, a singular being with a discrete, defined destiny to fulfill. The soul's numbering says that you are singled out, unique, one and only, and that therefore you are called to a mission, a "point" of meaning, that you alone are charged to fulfill.

Does the prospect of being singled out sound daunting, even lonely? It is, but only at first glance. Superficially, your uniquely numbered soul does isolate you as being one and only one, alone, as opposed to being part of the All-One-Ness. However, on a deeper level, only by responding to your unique call do you open up the channels in your soul print which create connection, loving, and community. Alone-ness is the path to all-one-ness. Your singularity is actually the most powerful access point to the greater One. Number is the call of the One through the one.

Yet as *Sippur/Mispar* etymologically reveals, your soul print is much more than a number or even a specific mission. It is also your story, a wave of emotions, actions, and interactions. There exists a *sippur* for each of our souls, the story of our light. Realizing your soul print comes from your ability to follow the outline of your own story. For it is your own story, your unique story, that calls you. *Mispar* and *sippur*, the wave and the particle, merge into one.

Soul-Story

Let's turn our attention to story, the wave function of light, the soul's story. This story is made up of the common moments that we all share—eating, sleeping, loving, arguing, studying, taking care of the details, and all the rest. The wonderful poet Charles Reznikoff writes:

> Not for victory
> But for the day's work done
> As well as I was able;
> Not for a seat upon the dais
> But at the common table.

Reznikoff's "common table" speaks of that which is normal, routine, unextraordinary—life's daily fare of food. But "common" also means "communal," that which we all share, there where we all sit. Your story is in large part how you live uniquely at the common table. Each of us sleeps, eats, loves, rages, works, and speaks. Not one of us, however, does those things in quite the same way. Living your story is about expressing the originality of your commonness. It is about making the ordinary extra-ordinary. You can make your common, true-life story into something novel. Of course, that is not all. Your story is also the revealer of your unique destiny. Unlike a call, which is focused and specific, your story is the unique weave, the

blending and the melding of all the moments and encounters of a lifetime. All of these are bound together into the book of your life.

Signing the Book of Life

In biblical myth ritual, there is a special prayer in which we ask to be written into the book of life. Really though, explains the kabbalistic master of Slonim, it is not we who are asking God to inscribe us, but God asking us. "Please, this year, write yourself in the book of life!" God entreats us. Now, what could God possibly mean by such a plea? A beautiful explanation is hidden in the mysteries of ancient Hebrew. Remember that our core soul print word is *sappir*, light. The word for book, as in the book of life, is *sefer*—deriving from the identical three-letter root (samech, peh, reysh) as *Sapir* and its derivatives *mispar,* and *sippur. Sefer,* your book of life, is made up of the chapters of your *sippur,* your story. "Write yourself in the book of life," God says, as he turns to every human being, "Live Your Story."

Our goal is never to escape our stories but to make our stories sacred.

God has placed a pen in our hands, inviting—some would even say commanding—us to become both the authors and the heroes of our own tale. Every incident, relationship, residence, and experience is part of the plot. The essential question of living is whether you will be the hero of your story—or, tragically, a minor character in your own drama.

It is the expression of our unique and personal passion play that signs us in the book of life. Remember the powerful teaching of Chaim Vital—that each of us has our own letter in the Bible. Only through our unique story do we realize our biblical letter and become part of the cosmic scroll.

Biblical myth's radical affirmation of the value of one's distinct and singular life-story is fundamentally different in outlook than that of many popular spiritual understandings. To cite but one persuasive counterexample, Don Juan in *Journey to Ixtalan* tells us, "I had a terribly strong attachment to my personal history....I honestly felt that without [my personal history] my life had not continuity or purpose.... I don't have personal history anymore....I dropped it one day when I felt it was no longer necessary."

This notion of moving beyond personal history is particularly important in Buddhism. Buddhism is one of the most powerful systems of consciousness ever known; one of my most exciting writing projects has been an analysis of the meeting points between biblical myth/Kabbalah and the Buddhist Sutras. The Zen master is my model no less than the biblical myth master is. Yet, my respect and love for a sister system in no way implies agreement with it. Quite the opposite. One of the reasons that I am a biblical myth mystic and not a Buddhist is because my whole being rejects the Buddhist idea of moving beyond our personal story as the path to Nirvana.

Let me try to state this moment in Buddhist consciousness clearly. For those readers more familiar with Eastern spiritual systems, what I am about to say accurately reflects both early Buddhism (Theravada, the small vehicle) and later Buddhism (Mahayana, the great vehicle). For Buddhists, the goal is to move beyond *Samsara,* "the vicious circle of the world of existences," which is fueled by ignorance. This world is a realm of suffering and confusion. The major source of suffering is ignorance and the major expression of ignorance is the belief in a Self. French Scholar Alfred Foucher was not all wrong when he suggested that for biblical myth the goal is immortality while for Buddhism the goal is to disappear. Now I understand that at least one school of Buddhists (the Middle School) would explain that to disappear means to merge with the infinite goodness and wisdom that is the force of the universe. Yet, even given this moderate formulation of the idea of disappearance, we biblical myth mystics take strong issue with our Buddhist brothers and sisters. For the underlying goal even in this moderate Buddhist system is to become conscious of the fundamental discontinuity and therefore illusion of self. Yes, the goal is to be one with goodness and wisdom, say the biblical myth masters. However, in biblical consciousness, such awareness must be accomplished without losing your unique place in the universe, your sense of self within the One.

For me, the cycle of my life, or the cycle of my successive lives—in Buddhist terms, my karma—is something I want to fix, but not escape. There is a *tikkun*—a fixing, in kabbalistic language—that I believe is the plot line of my story, and of every story.

Our goal is never to escape our stories but to make our stories sacred. That is why the core book of biblical myth, the Torah, is written neither as a series of Zen koans nor as a Sutra, nor even as a Western philosophical essay. The Torah is, pure and simple, a story. Because, as the masters said, "God loves stories."

Our story is our essence. To move beyond it would be to lose ourselves. That may be success for the Buddhist, but it is failure for the biblical mystic.

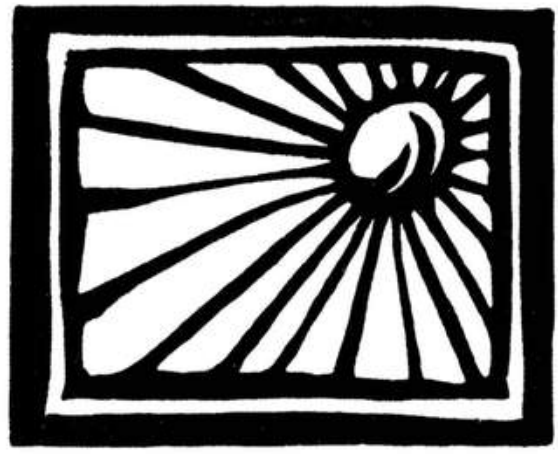
Don Juan meets Dovid of Lilov

Don Juan and the Sutras can be most starkly contrasted with the biblical myth mystic Dovid of Lilov.

Dovid of Lilov was asked by his students, "What section of the Talmud will you study in heaven?" The Talmud is divided into twenty volumes, each with its own subdivisions; each section, or "tractate," deals with a particular section of law and philosophy.

Much to the surprise of the students, Dovid of Lilov did not respond with any of the known tractates. Rather, he said, "In heaven, I will spend all my time studying Tractate Dovid Lilov."

Dovid of Lilov did not fall into obsessive narcissism late in his life. Instead, he realized that his life was sacred ground. Laura Riding, one of the most exciting yet unsung American poets of the twentieth century, captured Dovid of Lilov's idea in one elegant sentence: "Until the story of ourselves is told, nothing besides told can suffice us: we shall go on quietly craving it."



To lose hope in life is to lose the thread of your story. To recover hope is to reweave the fabric of your story.

The Lost Thread

What if we can't remember the stories of our past or make sense of the stories of our present?

Remember the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur? Our hero Theseus travels through the underground labyrinth to slay the Minotaur. His challenge, however, is more than to slay the beast; he must also find his way back out of the maze after his success. Often we get lost in our own accomplishments. We slay the beast, but stay stuck in the maze. Ariadne, the King's daughter, symbol of the feminine energy, has given Theseus a length of thread to help him retrace his steps. The thread in our personal myth is what keeps us connected to the light as we wander in the labyrinths of darkness. The thread is the thread of the story. When we lose that thread (no matter how many beasts we slay), we are lost.

This is precisely what Franz Kafka had in mind in his masterpiece, *The Trial*. The plot of the novel is intentionally an impossible path. The thread of meaning frays, and at points when the story line seems in reach, it slips out of grasp again, like a lure drawing the reader along. Frustration, anger, and a radical hopelessness gradually build in the reader as Kafka subjects us to the very feelings that his protagonist K. undergoes as he is arrested, for what and by whom he doesn't know. Every time he detects a glimmer of sense in the proceedings, it vanishes into nonsense. K. is overwhelmed, incapable of making sense of or telling his story, tortured by a nonsensical system of bureaucracy and human inanity. In an all too apt passage, Kafka captures how we all feel on occasion about our lives: "He was too tired to survey all the conclusions arising from the story.... The simple story had lost its clear outline, he wanted to put it out of his mind."

What Kafka is describing is the unique torture of modernity, the sense of being disassociated, de-storied, displaced. K. is just an initial; he is essentially nameless, devoid of context, history, or soul print. Through pain, the torturer aims to force the victim to betray and abandon his story.

There is a straight line from *The Trial* to George Orwell's *1984,* the quintessential modern torture novel. A diabolical anti-self social system featuring the omnipresent Big Brother turns individuals into veritable slaves of the system. Winston Smith, the protagonist, attempts to rebel against Big Brother's ever-watchful eye. His growing rebelliousness culminates in an epic love affair. When the lovers are inevitably caught and tortured, they betray each other, their selfhood crushed. In literature, movies—and sometimes, tragically, in life—we have seen how torture can push people beyond the bounds of their story.

To lose hope in life is to lose the thread of your story. To recover hope is to reweave the fabric of your story. A single thread can be enough to lead us back to re-ravel the full tapestry of our tale.

A story can have the strength of a thousand incantations, the incense of the most sacred of spaces, the heat and light of the most brilliant of flames. The lines of your soul print are the lines of your story.

II. Tell Your Story

To be free often has little in common with political revolutions. Emancipation is not a political goal to be realized in the distant future; it is an accessible psychospiritual reality that comes when you live your authentic Soul Print Story. "I call out from the narrow places—answer me please with the expanses," said King David. The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mitzrayim*, which, the kabbalists note, literally translated means "the Narrow Places." The philosopher and early psychologist William James—speaking soul print language without using the term—told us we need to expand into our "wider selves." For us today, the Exodus is an intimate spiritual journey in which we depart from the narrow, constricted straits in our lives and seek wider vistas.

In the kabbalistic version of the Exodus from Egypt that we have explored, Moses is not only a revolutionary but also a spiritual master. His journey from Egypt to the

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Promised Land is also a spiritual journey home to an expanded self. Every human being is invited to embark.

It is the second century BCE, in Israel. The disciples approach their master and say, "There is a man blowing the Ram's horn in Galilee, claiming to be Messiah. Master, is it true?"

The teacher opens the window and reaches out his hand to feel the wind. After a moment's concentration, he says, "No, it is not true."

Most of the students are appropriately impressed at their master's ability to sense the spiritual reality by the wind. However, one novice, a slightly impudent disciple, is troubled. "If you are so spiritually intuitive," he asks the master, "then why did you need to put your hand out the window? Why couldn't you sense the air in the room to see if Redemption had arrived?"

The master responds ever so softly, "Because in my room, the Messiah has already come."

The master in the story was a mystic, one of the precursors of the kabbalists who would later manifest themselves in thirteenth-century Spain. Starting with this ancient Israeli master, the essence of kabbalistic teaching has been the possibility of immediate redemption by moving from constricted to expanded consciousness, by claiming your room, a room of your own as it were—the great dimensions of your story.

Re-collected Pieces: The Storytelling Ritual

How do we do it? How do we pass over from the narrow to the wide? The answer comes through drama. Biblical myth lays out a specific plan, a psycho-spiritual process, a ritual under the full moon of early spring. It takes place as part of the biblical myth freedom holiday that occurs at the spring seed-planting time. It is no coincidence that this is the dramatic ritual that Jesus and the disciples were enacting at the Last Supper. Each year the process invites us to act out and actualize our exodus. In Hebrew the ritual is called "Pe-Sach" which the kabbalists interpret to mean "The Mouth That Speaks," a profoundly appropriate name. The formal name of the dramatic ritual—quite a mouthful in every way—is, "Telling the Story of the Exodus from Egypt." The key word here is *sippur*—story. The *sippur*—"telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt"—is the path to *sapir*, our soul-print light.

Henceforth we will refer to this drama as the Storytelling Ritual, the tale of the exodus from slavery into freedom. It is a ritual that all human beings can make part of their lives. Retelling the myth of emancipation from slavery impels you to reclaim the story of your wider self.

"In every generation there is a new understanding of leaving Egypt," said Master Isaac of Gur. "Egypt is inside us. We all have our own Pharaohs. Indeed, not only in every generation, but also in every person there is a point of freedom—to touch that point is to take leave of an inner Egypt. That point is known only by the person himself."

The Exodus myth enjoins us once a year to re-narrate our personal tale. In the graphic imagery of one mystic, "All year God walks behind us and collects the pieces of our lives that we have left behind." For example, we might relinquish the memory of a relationship that hurt us deeply. We forget all about that job that didn't pan out. Conversely, we repress moments of success and achievement either because they're too good to be believed or give us vertigo, inviting us to heights that frighten us. Once a year God gives us back the lost pieces of our lives by charging us to tell our stories. Those pieces are rewoven into the tapestry of our tale.

"Won't you help me sing these songs of Freedom, they're all I've ever had," asks Bob Marley on behalf of all of us. The Divine answers, "Yes, I will help you sing your song of freedom. Here are the pieces of your story—re-sing it and be Redeemed!" For to re-deem is to deem again, and to deem is to reckon to be worthy of attention. Redemption itself is therefore inherent in re-collection; the attention we pay to old details that we reclaim with renewed appreciation.

The Talking Cure

The night of the Storytelling Ritual is called *Leil Shimurim,* "A Night of Guarding/Watching." Instead of being the audience of the spectacle of history and humanity, we turn into the actors of the drama; it is God who turns into the watcher, the wide-eyed, hand-clapping audience to our recollections. The divine promise is to remain silent but present during the drama.

One of the inheritors of biblical myth consciousness was Josef Bruer in Vienna, who collaborated with a man named Sigmund Freud in developing what they called the talking cure. Or, as their contemporary, the writer Eric Hodgins wrote, "Talk: The four-letter word for psychotherapy." At the core of the process sits the client, who re-tells her story to the silent listener. In the telling, the forgotten or repressed tatters of the story are reclaimed and integrated into the whole self. At the time of *Leil Shimurim*, it is as if God sits in the therapist's chair, silent but listening, healing us with a cosmic hearing.

In the Storytelling Ritual, we reclaim both our greatness, which frightens us, and our failures, which embarrass us. Only when our story is complete do we have the inner equilibrium and integrity necessary for healing and growth. When we leave behind sections of our story, we can never realize our soul print.

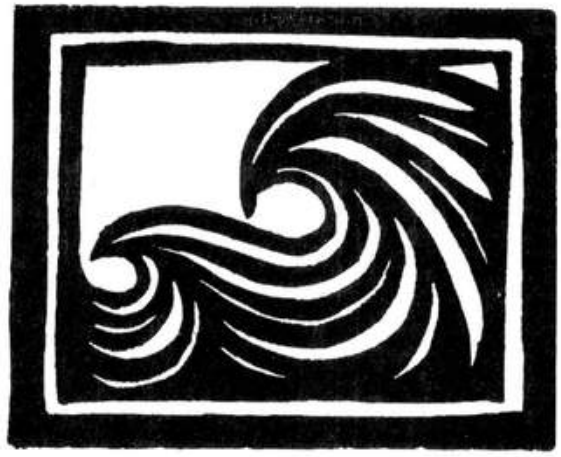
Sublime Stories

Every age contributes a more advanced chapter to the spirit's quest for freedom. Only recently has our consciousness evolved to a place where we grasp that the greatest story in the universe is our own. Yet when we leave an earlier epoch behind, we don't forget its truths—rather, we refract their light through the prism of our more evolved

understandings. To understand where we are in the evolutionary scale of the spirit, we need to trace the history of the spirit's stories. We can follow the spirit's evolution from the telling of Sublime Stories to Saint Stories to Soul Print Stories.

Early biblical mysticism centered on what I call sublime storytelling—elaborate recountings of the divine realm. The central text of this lofty tradition is called *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, the "story of the Chariot," and emerges from Ezekiel's ecstatic vision.

The entire first chapter of Ezekiel is a soul-stunning recording of the prophet's vision of the divine chariot, replete with emerald wheels, four-faced angels, a throne of sapphire, and radiating rainbows. Each elaborate detail was taken by the mystics to symbolize a different dimension of higher spiritual reality. The vision was a blueprint of the divine, as the soul in its yearning for meaning reached for the heights and told stories of the divine realm.



We all have sacred stories, with great mysteries within us.

Saint Stories

Later mysticism shifted the locus of significance from heaven to earth, grounding and transforming the sublime story into what I call the saint story. Isaac "The Lion" Luria and his students in the Renaissance years, as well as succeeding generations, taught that the chariot is actually incarnate in the great masters. "The Masters are the Chariot!" cry out the mystics. The search for meaning has shifted. The Chariot has landed in the souls of the saints.

In this understanding, Ezekiel's chariot represents an intricate depth-psychology chart of the souls of the spiritually developed. In the souls of these spiritually masterful teachers, we find the divine vehicle as well as the divine road. God's presence is experienced in the world in the person of the spiritually evolved, the yogis, masters, *bohdisatvas,* and saints. This is the mystery of incarnation—that infinite beauty and spirit resides in finite, imperfect, and frail human beings. The *Ma'aseh Merkavah* is translated into the story of the Masters. This idea is actually the spiritual antecedent of our modern idea of biography. From uniquely lived lives, we can derive important information and insight.

Thus, there developed a new mystical genre, *sippuri tzadikim*, in English called Saint Stories, the stories of the mystical masters of the ages. Every detail of a master's life dripped divine import; each event was a new chapter of spiritual significance. The master's childhood adventures, his first teaching jobs, friendships, and failures—all these were the design and detail of Ezekiel's chariot. Each detail of dress and behavior was a beacon of illumination. Even the unique pathology of a saint became a lesson, with stories ranging from manic depressive bouts or cutting humor to irrepressible sexuality and conflicts with other masters. These were people parables. While this stage of evolution offered important stories to further the path of the spirit, the saints transcended our reality. We might be awed and occasionally even inspired by them, but we viewed their behavior as totally beyond our grasp and therefore not worth the reach. These were not *our* stories. Yet, is it not wonderful to allow ourselves to be awed?

Sacred Autobiography

The next critical stage in the spirit's evolution is occurring here and now, as we tell our own stories, our Soul Print Stories.

We all have sacred stories, with great mysteries within us. We are the masters; we are Moses, we are Buddha. You are the Chariot. The saint story you must tell is the story of yourself, your Sacred Autobiography.

Creating Sacred Autobiography is the spiritual imperative of our generation. We need to know that in the details of our lives dangle the keys to heaven. No corner of our story is created in vain; we have never been down any dead-end street, never met an unnecessary face, never heard a senseless song. Every nuance, event, image, and incident of our lives is a source of vital psychological and spiritual information. Telling our autobiographies, we forge a coherent narrative out of our life stories, shedding light on the meaning of our lives.

One of the saddest sentences I have read in psychological literature appears in an otherwise learned work by British psychoanalyst Anthony Storr, *Solitude*. Storr develops his arguments using anecdotes about various famous people. In a chapter paradoxically titled "The Significance of the Individual," he makes the following observation: "The literary genre of autobiography is now so popular that men and women of little interest and no distinction feel impelled to record their life stories." What a tragic and misguided thought! There are simply no men and women of little interest and no distinction existing in the world. Indeed, it is far from certain that the anecdotes of the famous on which Storr builds his work have the most to teach us. In fact, it is certain that they do not.

ILLUSTRATION BY CAREN BELLE LOEBEL-FRIED

Forgers and Editors

When we sanitize our life stories, telling only the tale of our triumph as judged by the external standards of success and failure, we risk turning our beautiful lives into failures. Since no one wants to be a failure, we begin to edit, forget, plagiarize, or just excise out whole sections of our story. We become forgers of our own signature.

I recently encountered a high school friend who became very involved in spiritual practice about five years ago. I offhandedly asked him how old he was. Without a moment of hesitation, he responded, "I just had my fifth birthday." It took me a second to realize that he meant that it had been five years since his "enlightenment." He was implicitly declaring that his life before enlightenment was valueless. He had ripped out those pages from his book of life. I told him sadly that I did not believe he was five; we cannot tear out pages from our book of life without paying a very heavy price.

In retelling my story I connect the dots of my life. In connecting the dots, patterns begin to emerge.

Masters of Return

One of the paths of inner work in biblical myth is called *teshuvah*. A hard word to translate, its closest equivalent might be "return."

To return is one of the prime goals in biblical myth. The most profound return is the return from the exile of the self. *Teshuvah* is an act of spiritual excavation, digging beyond the build-up of dust to the authenticity that has always rested deep within. To return sends you back to the place and time where you went into hiding, so you can tell yourself that it is okay to come out now. My own attempt to return led me to a game of hide and seek I played around age six. I was hiding in a closet under a huge pile of winter clothes. Everyone had gotten back to base and was called free. I didn't want to come out. The world I'd experienced outside seemed an arbitrary and dangerous place and the winter clothes were warm and protective. I must have stayed in there for over an hour, wishing I could stay forever. In the end, I came out for dinner. I didn't really come out until twenty-five years later, after a painful divorce. Only then did I return to reclaim my story. Only then did I paste back in all the pages that I had ripped out of my book of life to make it prettier and less painful.

Telling our stories means coming out of hiding and returning to our sources. That is the only way we can really find freedom.

To Search Out the Broken

As we seek to return, reclaim, recollect, and retell our stories, we return to the Storytelling Ritual on the biblical myth-freedom day. That is, the feast of Pe-Sach, or Passover, the ritual of "Telling the Story of the Exodus from Egypt." For all of us, no matter our faith, this Storytelling Ritual simulates and celebrates our movement from exile to redemption, from slavery to freedom. It is a time when we free ourselves from the internal editors who, though wanting to help us, have falsified the stories of our lives.

At the opening of the Storytelling Ritual, a round matzah cracker (the source of the wafer used during the Christian communion service) is broken in half. As if the breaking of this cracker were a starting gun, the evening takes off along the track from slavery to freedom. Each person relives leaving Egypt. Each one invites, invents, and enacts his or her personal return from the dark and narrow to the wide and bright. The storytelling builds until the journey culminates with the famed *afikoman* hunt. What is an *afikoman*? Remember that matzah cracker broken at the beginning of the meal? Well, somewhere along the way to freedom someone has very surreptitiously hidden half of that broken cracker—the *afikoman*.

Late in the night, after we have each told and been told, given and received the stories of emancipation, we send the children to find the hidden *afikoman*. In a symbolic sense, the children we send are none other than ourselves, returning to that moment when the world seemed so broken that we began to hide.

The children go searching throughout the house, and having exultantly found the flat broken bread of slavery, they come running to return it to the adult. This is the child in us bringing our broken piece back to the adult in us. The process of healing has begun. The Storytelling Ritual is complete. Perhaps most important, the child who finds the broken treasure gets a prize.

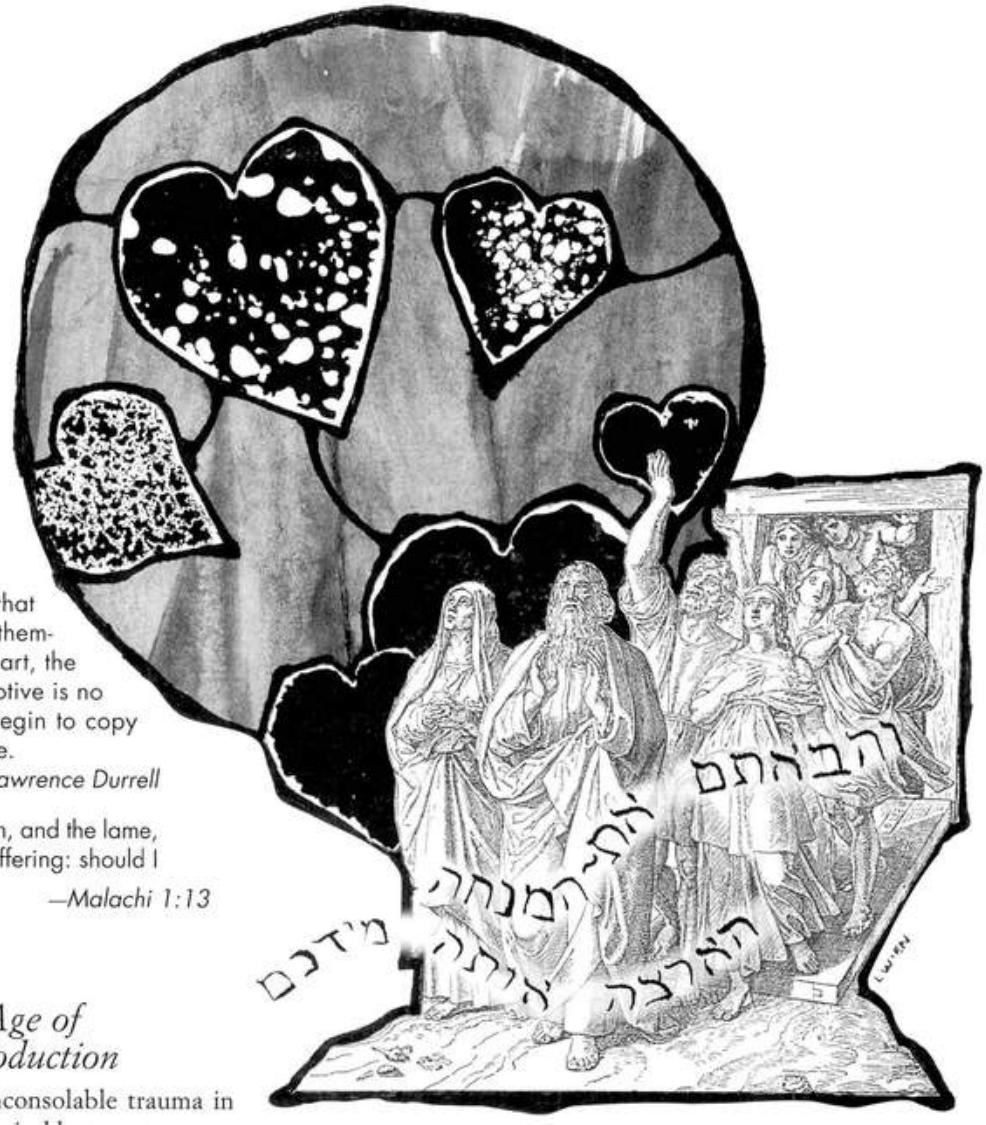
The goal of the biblical myth storytelling ritual is no less than know thyself. However, in the mystical consciousness of biblical myth there is no difference between the individualism of know thyself and the spiritual imperative to know God.

Indeed they are virtually identical. "In all your ways Know God," writes King Solomon in Proverbs. For the kabbalists this means in "all the ways" and byways of your story—in all the forgotten nooks and crannies of your experience—know the God that is with you. To "know" in biblical myth is to know intimately. Carnal knowledge. We are invited to intimacy with the textured surfaces and complex patterns of our story. So often our lives appear as a series of disconnected and disjointed dots and lines. Rupture and dislocation mark the spirit-scapes of our lives. In retelling my story I connect the dots of my life. In connecting the dots, patterns begin to emerge, images begin to crystallize and some of the haze of unconscious living is dispelled. I begin to know myself—and so begin to know God. ❑

CURRENT DEBATE

Kitsch and Liturgy

Catherine Madsen



Civilizations die in the measure that they have become conscious of themselves. They realize, they lose heart, the propulsion of the unconscious motive is no longer there. Desperately they begin to copy themselves in the mirror. It is no use.

—*Lawrence Durrell*

And ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand?

—*Malachi 1:13*

Prayer in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

There is a peculiar and inconsolable trauma in seeing a fully evolved liturgical language—even a language one *could* not believe in—replaced almost overnight, not by the language one could believe in but by a thinner version of itself with a much reduced vocabulary. The vacuity of new liturgical writing in English seems to be its hallmark, its purpose, so pervasive that even denominational boundaries are helpless to hold it back. One need not miss the authoritarian style, the masculine focus, or the pompous delivery of old liturgy to miss its moral intensity, its heightened emotional register, its fusion of sound and sense. One need not endorse rigid traditionalism to feel that the new liturgies have excised something crucial and introduced something counterfeit.

There is no reason why the use of a modern vernacular—the lessening of a linguistic demand—should entail the lessening of an emotional demand. Even where the modern vernacular called old beliefs into question, the new liturgies might have incorporated the incisive and liberating words of the enemies of belief—William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Elias Canetti—to put worship to the test and see if it could survive. For the most part they tried nothing of the kind. They surrendered from the outset to shallow and patronizing forms of piety, as if *that* were the point of modernity. One might suspect that the writers simply did not care for emotional demands.

In my lifetime I have watched this surrender in three traditions. The Latin Mass evaporated from my mostly Catholic neighborhood on the East Side of Detroit when I was fourteen or so (leaving my agnostic Protestant family the only ones who still listened to it, on records of the monks of Solesmes), while pious teenagers learned to sing:

Sons of God, hear his holy Word,
Gather 'round the table of the Lord,
Eat His body, drink His blood,
And we'll sing a song of love,
Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, halleluyah!

A few years later the Episcopal Church rose to the challenge of the nuclear age by revising the subordinate clauses out of its prayer book, a move which did not inspire confidence in young doubters like me. When I came seriously to religion in my late thirties it was to Judaism, whose much

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEORA WIEN

greater moral authority had ripped me out of every form of ease and simplicity, indicted me every which way as an enemy and a bad risk, and disclosed layer by layer its inexhaustible texts and remarkable music; but when—trembling with fear of unworthiness—I first set foot in a synagogue, I discovered that Jewish Renewal had gotten there first:

> And then, and then, both men and women will be gentle,
> And then, and then, both women and men will be strong,
> And then all will be
> So varied, rich and free,
> And everywhere will be called Eden once again.



To learn this jingle at the same time that I learned its original, the *Alenu*—to encounter an upbeat alternative to the intransigent and tragic assertion that God has made us unlike the nations, has given us a fate unlike theirs—was barely conceivable. *And then, and then all the children will be above average,* I muttered, grinding my teeth. What gear had slipped in the minds of the people who wrote this stuff? Did they really think it could substitute for the old prayers? I had not understood how the Catholics could trade mystery for folksiness, or Episcopalians prefer flat declarative statements of faith to subtle Reformation psychology; how had the Jewish people gone from Sinai—from Yavneh—from the clouds over Poland—to this infantile sloganeering?

There are innumerable other examples, both Jewish and Christian (no doubt the reader can supply his or her own); there are distinctions to be drawn between revisions imposed from above and effusions that bubble up from below. But stylistically there is relatively little difference between what religious professionals and lay liturgists are doing, and the boundaries between categories are rather fluid. More or less by general consent—dissenting voices are assumed to belong to the right wing of religion—the liturgical vernacular of the last few decades has evolved into a smooth, nonthreatening imitation of religious language, with no power to make the soul or to break the heart.

People in the demographic profiles for whom these efforts are intended—modern skeptical people, young people, feminists, sexual outlaws—are supposed to greet this vernacular with relief. We are supposed to find it fresh and creative; it is supposed to make us "comfortable" at worship; it is supposed to compensate for centuries of oppression. If we find it galling and dispiriting we are dismissed as mere ingrates. But it *is* dispiriting; it is exhausting. The direct emotions of ardor and terror and inarticulate joy—the real stuff of religion—are all quite off limits; not only are they never invoked at full strength, they are scarcely alluded to in recognizable form. One has to keep holding back, pretending that prayer is not a bodily instinct, pretending that we come to religion with our problems already solved rather than out of a desperate urge to confront them. The new liturgical English (Hebrew, *baruch Hashem,* remains relatively intact) assures us relentlessly that what we are doing is "meaningful," while never allowing a powerful meaning to surface.

Perhaps it's no wonder that people so intensely aware of the strong element of social control in traditional religion are so frankly controlling in their own liturgies. They have political points to advance and longstanding social patterns to break. But to use liturgy for secondary goals of this kind is to undermine its central function: the rectification of our relation with the universe in the presence of other people. Nothing is rectified—nothing is even enacted—in the new prayers: they are static, self-satisfied, an uncomprehending parroting of old forms of love and fear with all the love and fear taken out.

Often the new prayers invoke emotions outright at points where the old prayers would have encoded them in God-language; but each emotion is seized upon and displayed—generally before it can be felt—with a kind of allrightnik complacency that militates against privacy or reflection. This mood recalls nothing so much as Milan Kundera's well-known definition of kitsch in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*:

> Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass!
> The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!
> It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.

Contemporary liturgy is awash in the second tear. Jewish Renewal is only one recent offender, and its way was prepared by earlier generations. (In most Christian denominations there is an unbroken tradition of liturgical kitsch reaching well back into the nineteenth century). The Reform *Selichot* reading quoted by President Clinton in his disgrace—"Now is the time of turning," which plays on sweetly irrelevant images of leaves turning color and animals turning in migration before ever getting to the moral turning of *teshuvah*—is one instance that achieved unexpected fame. Mordecai Kaplan, an early exponent of the abstraction of "meaning" from the supernatural language of traditional prayer, wrote reams in this vein, and one example still in use in *The New Machzor* (1978) may serve to illustrate how badly the method can falsify the emotions. The prayer (signed by Eugene Kohn and Ira Eisenstein as well as by Kaplan) is a long introduction to the traditional Yizkor prayers; this is perhaps one-third of it:

> Eternal God, we have come to sanctify our fleeting lives by linking them with Yours, O Life of all ages. In You generations past, present, and future are united in one bond of life.
>
> At this sacred hour, we are aware of those souls through whom we have come to know of Your grace and love. All the wisdom, beauty, and affection that have enriched our lives are the garnered fruits of our communion with others. [Here follow several paragraphs commemorating the dead in a rosy light—"beloved parents who watched over us," "a

wife or a husband with whom we were truly united," "brothers and sisters … in the youthful adventure of discovering life's possibilities."]

Some of us call to mind children, entrusted to our care all too briefly, taken from us before they reached the years of maturity and fulfillment, to whom we gave our loving care and from whom we received a trust that enriched our lives.

All of us recall beloved relatives and friends whose affection and devotion enhanced our lives, and whose visible presence will never return to cheer, encourage or support us.



Though the prayer does attempt to face directly and conscientiously the greatest griefs of our lives, its language is transparently intended to crank up our emotions—as if we might not remember how shock and desolation feel, when we have come to the synagogue precisely to say Yizkor. The funeral-parlor atmosphere of euphemism and hush, the hothouse overgrowth of predictable adjectives ("fleeting lives," "garnered fruits"), the whitewashed sweetness of the family relationships are meant to provide a sense of elevation without recalling actual experience. "At this sacred hour, we are aware" is a stage direction, as the leader of a guided meditation might say "become aware that you are bathed in pure light." These manipulations break down irreparably at the suggestion that the love of our dead—even our dead children—"enriched" or "enhanced" our lives. I had never particularly noticed the prayer's [illegible]

Those who accept kitsch as worship must internalize the sense of being mere sheep in need of a green pasture.

What Kaplan and his inheritors, and their Christian counterparts, have made clear is that we cannot walk into services expecting to find the language of emotion we are conversant with elsewhere—Lear's *Thou must be patient, we came crying hither,* David's *My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee.* There are very occasional exceptions—Lear actually does turn up in the Harlow machzor, in a poem by Anthony Hecht—but they are not enough to salvage the general tone. Except when they are translating directly from older sources, modern liturgists seem overwhelmingly intent on inducing self-satisfaction.

They may not realize how close self-satisfaction is to self-contempt. Those who accept kitsch as worship must internalize the sense of being mere sheep in need of a green pasture. Those who resist it must constantly fight outright shame. The worst humiliation of contemporary religious life is the abjectness of needing God and a community badly enough *even to sit through this.*

Safer Torah

Tomás Kulka, in an attempt to pin down a workable definition of kitsch in *Kitsch and Art* (1996), says something that applies as usefully to liturgy as to painting. A kitsch painting's reason for being, he says, is its subject matter: the big-eyed child, the cute kitten, the sunset with palm trees. The style of the painting is not particularly important,

observes that people use kitsch to convince themselves they are normal. "Typical consumers of kitsch are pleased not only because they respond spontaneously, but also because they know they are responding in the right kind of way." To be able to produce a dependable stock response is a minor victory, a bulwark against the fear of the unexpected. In this light, the heavy concentration of kitsch in liberal liturgies begins to make sense: when so many congregants are uncertain why they should be there at all, a heavily explanatory and lightly emotional mode provides a strong sense of established definitions.

At one level, kitsch intends nothing less than to restore the soul—to supply abundantly, and in an accessible shorthand, a reminder of what we love. This is surely why children, animals, landscapes, Jesus, the American flag, and the smile supply so much of the subject matter of kitsch in the wider culture: these images give instant access to a world of feeling that is suppressed by our daily work. They bring out our protective instincts, or our sense of being protected; they remind us of all that cannot be bought and sold. At the same time, this shorthand is the most easily packaged thing in the world; it will stop us in our tracks in the aisle at Walmart and remind us of what we love, and charge us $5.99 for it. Try to package *My son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee.*

The restorative effects of kitsch depend, of course, on the viewer's not probing too deeply.

The restorative effects of kitsch depend, of course, on the viewer's not probing too deeply: the Christian cannot be thinking about the compromising uses of the image of Jesus, the lover of children cannot be thinking about access to health insurance, the lover of landscape cannot be thinking about climate change. As soon as such complications are introduced, we need another order of thinking: we see that whatever restores our souls is fragile, the things that we love can perish, and we need more than our protective instincts to defend and maintain them. We need policy, judgment, resourceful imagination, bullheaded stamina. Similarly, a prayer that walls off a space where contingency does not threaten is very easily threatened by the simplest realities. The least breath of doubt can shatter its mood. A durable language of prayer must meet the difficulty of the task with an answering difficulty; it must defend the perishable with a strength that attempts the imperishable. Prayer that attempts less—prayer that falsifies the emotions, or plugs in a political shorthand, or otherwise stands between us and our full energies—is a sketch, a simulation, even a pornography, of worship.

I mean this quite literally. Pornography, after all, is all subject matter and no reflection: a stylized, schematic representation of sex that offers everything but the problematic essentials, the body and the consent of a person we know. Kitsch liturgy also offers everything but the problematic essentials, the dependence of every good thing in our lives on our undependable good acts, and the uncanniness and danger of facing a God who knows us. There is a certain sort of docile porn watcher who humbly waits to be shown the definition and practice of sex—the curious underwear, the terminology, the positions—in the belief that he or she has no other way to find out. There are congregants who wait just as humbly to be shown the nature of worship. Both cede to authorities a knowledge that their own minds and bodies could give them more quickly, more kindly, and in more detail; both shrink from a knowledge that must be arrived at in one's own person and at the cost of one's whole future.

That some people consistently prefer kitsch to art, and false emotion to true emotion—and pornography to their lovers—is comprehensible: there are no surprises. The essentials of sex are terrifying: close contact with the solid, strong-smelling body of a lover who never quite ceases to be a stranger; each body's mysterious responses (or lack of response) and the indelible stains of its past; misplaced attention, bad timing, habits that grow into sorrows and inhibitions. The essentials of worship are no less terrifying: close contact between one's own solid, strong-smelling body and the intangible bodiless; the steep moral demands that bodies make on the bodiless, and the bodiless on them; the confusion of presence and absence in speaking to God, and our own propensity to be absent from the people who need us (sometimes when we think we are most present). That people can want to keep praying—alone or in groups—only means that they accept the full terms of the relationship, like lovers who keep making love in spite of the sorrows: this belongs to them, this is their territory, they refuse to be evicted from it. They acknowledge that trust and accord can never be quite free of caution and uncertainty; that some knowledge can be had only slowly, tentatively, and in dire emotional pain; that fear and trembling is a permanent, or at least a recurrent, condition of the experience.

Opinions will vary on whether a pornography of worship is dangerous, as they vary on the dangers of sexual pornography. But it is worth noting that Americans tend to see kitsch as merely a problem of taste, whereas Europeans see it as a political problem. The willingness to be satisfied with a schema, the insensibility to anything but one's own satisfaction, the simple conviction that there *is* a right way which somebody else can show you, is as bad a preparation for religious or national life as it is for marriage. People who are strongly attached to kitsch will fight fiercely to preserve it as their only aesthetic form; they have, they claim, the right to their simplicity, the right to be protected from anxieties and ambiguities, the right *not to know.* Ethics recapitulates aesthetics: if we want a comforting simplicity that badly, we will get it at the expense of anyone who unsettles us.

Spiritual Sobriety and the Iconic Face

Liturgy, like kitsch, is an emblematic form. It displays certain images—visual or verbal—as keys to the justice and mercy it wants to induce in us. Unlike kitsch, it has historically been willing to display images that unsettle us as part of the inductive process. For peoples of the book who have come to mistrust language—who no longer believe, perhaps, that justice and mercy can be brought into being through words—a visual parallel may provide some illumination. If we can see the difference between kitsch and icon, we may be able to transfer that difference back to the verbal realm.



In the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, the icon of a saint is considered a window to the soul of the man or woman it pictures. It is not a portrait—not, in the ordinary sense and especially not in the idolatrous sense, an "image"—but a schematic rendering of *the kind of look* with which a profound consciousness regards you. In a sense it is a schema that points beyond schema, as if kitsch were to recognize its own limitations and become aware: as if the big-eyed child were to look out at you from the painting not with a cute, pouty reproach but with expectant attention and utter emotional seriousness. The icon painter renounces realism as mere histrionics, and aims for a stylized severity. The deliberately flat surface of the picture must become spiritually transparent, to reveal the real demand of an imagined face.

The Russian priest and philosopher Pavel Florensky, in his 1922 treatise *Iconostasis,* insists on the icon's immediacy, its transforming power: "Because an icon makes the light of an illumined person appear to us, it is an energy … the icon possesses cognitive meaning." The icon "remembers its prototype"; it reassembles the consciousness of the saint for those who come after. It possesses "power to remind." The believer—even the nonbeliever, as secular art historians and buyers of art books know—is arrested, reoriented, compelled by the icon's look. Icon painters make a distinction between the *litzo* and the *lik*, which Florensky's translators render as the "face" and the "countenance" or "holy face"; the *litzo* may reveal nothing, but the *lik* returns us, without refuge or recourse, to holy imperatives. Louise Bogan makes the same distinction in her poem "St. Christopher":

> This is the look we do not see
> In manners or in mimicry.

The holy face reveals an *achieved* profundity of consciousness. The look must be won. It cannot be feigned; it cannot be approximated; try to turn it into kitsch and it will simply escape you. Let it appear on your face in response to the icon's face, and you may begin to grow into it.

Kitsch has power to remind, but it reminds us of less; a profound consciousness is simply invisible to it. As a schematic rendering, kitsch is one step below the face; it presents the *lichina* or mask, "the absolute opposite of *countenance.*" It is a form of concealment. We may feel soothed by kitsch, safely restored to a protective or protected role; we will never feel intelligently regarded.

There are bad icons, icons that fail to remind. Florensky does not call them kitsch—though to Western observers certain late, realistic icons look something like it—but he has no use for them: "If [the] goal is not reached—if neither the steadily empathetic gaze nor the swiftly intuitive glance evokes in the viewer the reality of the other world (as the pungent scent of seaweed in the air evokes in us the still faraway ocean), then nothing can be said of that icon except that it has failed to enter into the works of spiritual culture and that its value is therefore either merely material or (at best) archaeological." Kitsch gives us the sight of the ocean without the smell; the eyes without the demand.

What is remarkable about icon painting is that it uses a generic and highly formal visual style to trigger reliably a strong *and reflective* emotional response: it attempts to make reproducible, inescapable, the answering emotions of awe, humility, self-correction, beseeching, and the profound sense of being seen. It does this by reproducing the look that sees. It is the converse of mechanical reproduction: as methodical as the style is, it depends fundamentally on stillness, expectancy, the belief in a real encounter. If kitsch never says anything for the first time, only for the tenth, the icon always says it for the first time: each time it demands that we "forget not what our eyes have seen, and that it not stray from our hearts all the days of our lives" (Deut. 4:9).

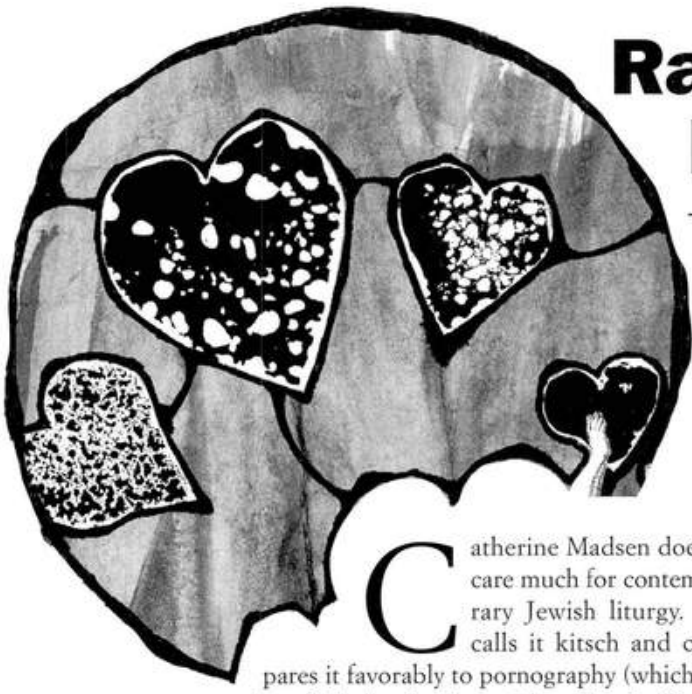
Judaism, as a tradition that mistrusts not only images but the very seeing of the eye—and which has bitter memories of, and live anxieties about, Russian Orthodoxy—may have no use for the tradition of icon painting. But the demand of the iconic face is the demand that Levinas speaks of, the imperative not to kill: it reminds us that all is contingent upon our own acts. "The manifestation of the face is already discourse," says Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*; "The eyes break through the mask—the language of the eyes, impossible to dissemble." We do not need a visual reproduction of the "holy face" if we insist on regarding living faces as holy. But if we refuse the visual reminder—the image of the image of God—we must instead be able to hear the kind of language with which a profound consciousness regards us. Liturgy in which spiritual sobriety cannot appear is *not* an energy, it does not possess cognitive meaning. It does not remember its prototype, who spoke and the world became.

I have heard it suggested that the real Jewish liturgists of our time will turn out to be Yehuda Amichai and Leonard Cohen. Certainly the rough edges of disillusion and irony in their work serve the same function as the severe looks of icons. Severity is a kitsch-repellent: it does not permit the second tear. Cohen writes:

> When I have not rage or sorrow, and you depart from me, then I am most afraid. When the belly is full, and the mind has its sayings, then I fear for my soul; I rush to you as a child at night breaks into its parents' room. Do not forget me in my satisfaction. When the heart grins at itself, the world is destroyed.... Overthrow this even terror with a sweet remembrance: when I was with you, when my soul delighted you, when I was what you wanted. (*Book of Mercy*, in *Stranger Music*, Pantheon 1993)

Kitsch might mention the sweet remembrance—it would certainly mention the child—but it could not mention the terror; it could not mistrust the impulse toward satisfaction. "And what about God?" asks Amichai, employing a barely translatable liturgical pun. "Once we sang *Ein keloheinu,* there is none like our God. Now we sing *Ein eloheinu,* there is no our-God." A lesser poet might have turned the next line—"But we sing. We still sing"—into a ringing affirmation, the sort of thing that blurb-writers call a triumph of the human spirit. Amichai makes it any number of things: defiance, chagrin, bewilderment, liberation. We sing through historical compulsion, because we were chosen to; because we choose to; *because*. The unresolved meaning is impossible to kitsch liturgy, which must present one identifiable meaning; it signals the simultaneous presence and absence of transcendence, which kitsch cannot handle. But that is what we must handle; it is what Jews (and except for three years of their history, even Christians) have always been required to handle, in the form of an invisible God. The makers of modern liturgy, in refusing this paradox, have misunderstood their task and their opportunity.

Liturgical language is only an intellectual question because it is first a physical and emotional question. It is not a matter of aesthetic one-upmanship but of moral adequacy. It matters politically because the religious left is needlessly crippling itself in its struggle against the religious right: the face and voice of moral reflectiveness should be its home territory. It matters privately because people sacrifice their emotional responsiveness daily, simply in order to make a living; if religion does not restore that responsiveness at its full strength, religion is wasting our time. Liturgy is not a crowd control method for nervous rabbis, priests and ministers who fear the strength of their congregants' feelings; it is not a soapbox for theologians; it is not a holding pattern in which the congregants circle, bored and resigned, until they can come back to earth. It is the rope on which God suspends the earth over the void. Swinging on its end we are held in the simultaneous state of absolute attention and absolute rest that constitutes adoration. Without it the people perish. ❑



Rami Shapiro Responds

Catherine Madsen doesn't care much for contemporary Jewish liturgy. She calls it kitsch and compares it favorably to pornography (which she doesn't like) and unfavorably to Russian Orthodox iconography (which she does). I am no expert on kitsch, usually associating it with portraits of Elvis painted on velvet. I know a bit less (OK, a bit more) about pornography, and almost nothing at all about iconography. So I will have to take Madsen's word on all of this. I also agree with her that much, if not most, contemporary liturgy is vapid. Her quote from Lawrence Durrell tells us why: "Civilizations die in the measure that they have become conscious of themselves." Liberal Judaisms are excruciatingly self-conscious; and it shows.

I grew up in an Orthodox home. When my zayde and father *davened* there was no thought of being moved, or motivated. They *davened* because they were Jews. They paid no attention to the words they were saying. Saying them was all that mattered. I made the mistake of thinking about them, and thereby set myself inexorably on the road to kitsch.

Jewish prayer rests on three basic assumptions. First, there is a creator God who cares about me and judges my behavior. Second, God chose the Jews to carry His one true revelation into the world. And third, God commands us to

(continued on page 49)

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is the purveyor of much kitsch. You can find most of it at www.simplyjewish.com.

The Embodiment of God in Prayer

Arthur Waskow



Why do the communities of Jewish renewal seek forms of prayer different from those our forebears used? For the same reason rabbinic contact with God (based on words) was so different from biblical contact with God (based on bodily acts of offering food from the earth). The reason is that God's Self has changed in relation to the world, and so the world must address God in new ways.

The God we address is much more suffused in the universe than the God we worshipped before modernity. Powers that our forebears once ascribed to a Being totally beyond us—a Being with the power to destroy all life on earth, to create new species, to overthrow tyrants—are now suffused into our own hands.

If God is increasingly embodied in the world, increasingly immanent, how do we pray? If we are ourselves an aspect of God, how do we speak to what is not Other but an aspect of ourselves?

We must "embody" our connection with the God who is embodied.

Circle

So the communities of Jewish renewal have begun to make important changes in prayer. The first changes came not from thoughts of word and mind, but from an act of body: If you *daven* in a circle, where is God?

Not somewhere else. Not in the Ark, across many rows of behatted heads and past an empty gulf of no man's land. Not in Jerusalem, thousands of miles away. Not high above, reigning in royal splendor.

As we *daven* in a circle, we pause at the moment of Barchu when, traditionally, an amalgam of individual daveners becomes annealed into a community. We look around the circle of the daveners, pausing at each face to say in silence, "This is the face of God." "And this is the face of God." "And this." "And this."

We look deep into the closed and angry faces, the crinkling humorous ones, the calm and peaceful faces, and the closed, withdrawn ones, into worried frowns and anxious glances, into tear-filled eyes and smiles of welcome. As we do this, we see the faces open, change, deepen—not dropping whatever had been there before, simply enfolding it in a deeper vision.

Do this often enough, and you begin to believe it: my face and your face are the face of God. Believe it long enough, and you begin to act it out. You nourish every neighbor, for each is a face of God.

Name

Another powerful way of recognizing this Presence is actually re-naming God. For hundreds of years, Jews have substituted "Adonai"—"Lord"—for any attempt to pronounce the sacred name "YHWH." Lord, Judge, King, Commander—all name the God Who Is Beyond Us. But what might we hear in these letters that speaks to the God within us?

Try pronouncing those letters with no vowels between, not "Yahweh," not "Yehovah," just "Yyyyyhhhhwwwwhhhh," so that it becomes just a rough breathing.

God as the Breath of Life, not King: the interwoven Breath that dances all of life: what we breathe in is what the trees breathe out, what the trees breathe in is what we breathe out. The Name that exists in all languages, all species.

So in prayer we substitute for "YHWH" not the traditional "Adonai," but "Yah," another ancient name (as in Hallelu-Yah, "Let us praise God") said like a breath, and we address God not as King, Melech ha-Olam, but as "Breath of Life, Ruach ha-Olam."

The Psalms, those ancient hymns to God, change when God is in us. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has taught pairs of people to read a psalm in dialogue within the minyan: One person reads the first verse of the psalm

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEORA WIEN

silently, absorbs it, and decides how to express something close to this thought in her or his own words.

Then s/he faces the "spark of God" in the other partner to say the new thought to the God Who lives in the partner's face. The second partner pays full attention to what the first one says, and then turns back to the printed page to absorb the second verse of the psalm and do the same work of midrashic transmutation—taking into account both what s/he has already heard, and what the text says. They continue to go back and forth, speaking to God in each other, until the psalm is completed.



Becoming God and facing God in this way brings the psalm alive. The movement of thought and feeling that is characteristic of most psalms becomes far more intelligible than what emerges from a more-or-less rote reading. In addition, by addressing a human partner as God and being addressed as God, many participants find themselves spiritually moved in new ways.

Dance

Our prayer books say, "All my bones will praise You." Yet most Jews let their bodies sit locked into place during prayers, let the holy breath become shallow and weak. Since in the morning blessings we praise the God who opens our eyes, stretches our muscles, strengthens our footsteps, this is an important moment to let every bone and muscle praise the Breath of Life.

Indeed, originally these prayers were chanted as people arose from bed, when the bodily actions themselves were connected with the words. Nowadays, since the morning prayers are often said in the congregation, some congregations encourage the people to stand, stretch, turn, walk, make a kind of dance of the acts of morning waking.

So the prayers become not only ways to praise the God who gets our bodies going in the morning, but also ways to get our bodies going in the morning. The praise and the act are suffused with each other: We embody God.

The davening leader may ask each person in the circle to create a gesture on the spot that expresses each of the morning blessings, and then everyone imitates this gesture. These gestures may be repeated—first one, then two, then three, and so on until the congregation has, in effect, created a unique dance for that one morning.

We can create an even simpler individual dance on Friday night. The song the kabbalists created to welcome Shabbat, Lecha Dodi, says in its chorus, "*P'nai Shabbat n'kabbalah*," "We will receive the presence of Shabbat." Literally, this phrase means, "We will receive the faces of Shabbat." So we invite people to let their work-tense faces receive the face that Shabbat wears: take off their glasses, let their hands stroke their foreheads, smooth away frowns, loosen the jaw muscles, rub the eyes. All this while they sing or hum the song, until they feel their face has indeed let Shabbat enter.

One of the deepest and most evocative of these new ways of embodying prayer was developed by Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi. For years, Hasidim had taken the Simchat Torah festival, with its seven circle-dances with the Torah Scroll, as an important time to draw deeply on a kabbalistic tradition about seven aspects of God. In that tradition, God emanated Divinity into the world not through one undifferentiated flash, but in seven distinct Sephirot, dimensions of Divinity.

These Sephirot are different in quality from each other: Chesed, overflowing unboundaried outpouring love, differs from Gevurah, rigorous boundary-making, and each differs from their synthesis, Tiferet or Rachamim—the intense and focused love borne by and in and of the womb, shining in overpowering beauty.

Schachter-Shalomi taught Jewish renewal communities to create distinctive dances for the different Sephirot—unrestrained and giddy for Chesed, focused and rigorous for Gevurah, and so on. Suddenly, the Sephirot became embodied, available to celebrants as aspects of their own selves. People learned to explore which of the Sephirot within themselves were weak and needed practice toward the healing of the *neshamah* (breathing-soul).

Chant

Rabbi Shefa Gold has developed what feels like an entirely new form of prayer, yet it is deeply rooted in the traditional service. It uses chanting to shape the breathing of the whole community into a single rhythm, and to fuse breath, melody, and verbal meaning into a unity.

She has listened beneath the fleshed-out, opulently clothed order of prayer we have inherited; has stripped it down to its skeleton of purpose; has from the traditional text chosen a few phrases that crystallize the meaning in each of the crucial elements, and has turned these crystalline phrases into melodic chants. Thus she may take the section of the service that precedes the Shema—several pages long—and instead of murmuring every word, as in a traditional service, lead the congregation into a powerful chant of half a dozen words that she has set to melody. That chant may go on for five or ten minutes, over and over, as the congregation deepens first its understanding of the prayer, and finally its presence within the prayer.

Through these chants, the breath enters deeply into the body, is carried by the blood to every nerve and muscle. The Breath of Life becomes a divine presence in every cell.

Listen

When we pray we speak to God; when we read and learn Torah we are opening ourselves to hear God. In a community that hears the speaker and the listener, God and the world, as deeply intertwined, what does it mean to embody Torah—the listening—just as we embody prayer—the speaking?

Several forms of embodiment of Torah have emerged. One practice developed by Phyllis Berman, and which has begun to be adopted in some "mainstream" congregations, involves the *aliyot*, the ritual in which people are called up to the Torah as various passages are read. In this practice, whoever is leading the Torah service will choose a few parts of the weekly portion that address a continuing Godwrestle likely to be urgent among some congregants. For example, the Torah passage where the Israelites stand between Pharaoh's chariots and the Red Sea may evoke a frightening moment of choice between uncertain futures.

The leader will invite all congregants who feel the Torah passage is speaking to this issue in their lives to join in that *aliyah*. After the Torah passage has been read and translated, the leader asks God's blessing in a specifically directed way to meet the special needs of those who came up for each *aliyah*. This practice has made the archetypal nature of the Torah apparent to many who had never before understood how it might speak to their own lives.

New Midrash

All these methods are midrash in a new key, turning poetic metaphors into bodily acts. Not that such physical midrash was utterly unheard of among Jews. For example, Jeremiah wore a yoke upon his shoulders to make physically explicit his warning that the people faced the yoke of slavery to Babylon. What is new is the use of such approaches not only by a few Prophets or kabbalistic adepts, but by much larger circles of the Jewish people.

If the Jewish people and Judaism are going through a transformation as profound as the one that shaped and was shaped by the Talmud, it would be neither surprising nor outrageous for Jews to seek new "names" and ways of connecting with God. As for those who dismiss such ways of thinking as historicism that itself denigrates the Eternal, some Jewish renewal people answer that it is God Who has veiled the Divine Self from our access in the old ways, God Who is working in the world to bring about these changes, and therefore God Who is calling us to create new forms of contact.

Critics of this renewal movement also ask whether a God "embodied" in the universe is less likely to demand of us a constant transcendence of the present state of things, less likely to demand a constant effort towards tikkun? If whatever is, is Divine, they wonder, then who will need to change it?

But the notion of *tikkun olam* in Kabbalah is not so static. Even those who said God, Israel, and Torah were One did not think we could forget about doing the mitzvot that would repair the shattered vessels. They simply said that God, Torah, and Israel were all shattered, all in need of healing.

From this standpoint, there are "lower" and "fuller" versions of immanence. Although it is true that whatever exists is Divinity, it may be Divinity in its reduced and shattered state, a jigsaw puzzle jumbled on the floor. It remains our task through conscious action to bring the pieces of this puzzle into wholeness, to lift this Divinity from merely being All (*ha'kol*) to its fuller level of conscious Harmony (*shalom*).

In this way, God's Body—of which we are all part—becomes most fully God's Body only when we seek to know and act as part of it. ❑

Rami Shapiro *(continued from page 46)*

read the siddur. If you can live with these assumptions, you have no need of liturgical end runs. But if you can't ...

My experience of God as the nondual Source and Substance of all reality comes not through prayer but through long periods of silence and chanting; it leaves no room for judging, choosing, or commanding. For me, the purpose of communal prayer is not to lead us to God, but to remind us of godliness.

The Hebrew verb to pray, *hitpallel*, is reflexive. It means to examine oneself—to measure our actions against the highest ethical standards of the community. That is why the person praying is called a *mitpalel* rather than a *mefalel*; *mitpalel* is self-directed, *mefalel* is other-directed. Our liturgy should remind us of those standards.

I think Madsen's critique of liturgy is also a critique of organized religion as a whole: "The willingness to be satisfied with a schema, the insensibility to anything but one's own satisfaction, the simple conviction that there is a right way which somebody else can show you...." This is what religion is. In Judaism our schema is Torah; our insensibility is *brit*; our right way to live is Halachah. Organized religion is designed to keep us safe from the immediacy of God and the radical universalism God-encounter brings. We are so frightened of these that we are willing to surrender our reason and will to religious elites who offer us the grossest magical thinking: Do this and God will do that.



Madsen has done us a great service. I only wish she had gone a bit further and offered us a way out. One might assume that she is in favor of a return to conventional liturgy, but she never says that explicitly. And if that is her solution, it will fail. Once you see the little man behind the curtain, all faith in the Great and Wonderful Wizard is gone forever. So let me offer my own solution.

First, admit that the curtain is down, and there is no going back. Second, make it plain that the purpose of public worship is not about God but godliness. Third, create bold new liturgies that clearly reflect our values. And fourth, offer those who desire it a straight path to God and godliness through *niggunim* (wordless melodies), Hebrew chanting (à la Shefa Gold), and silent meditation.

In the meantime I have bills to pay. So I am ordering some velvet, and negotiating a deal with the Playboy Channel. ❑

PERSONAL ESSAY

Here I Am

Marcie Hershman



I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.
—Job 42:5

I have never sung the following words, but on my brother's video I have heard others singing them; they are part of a language I do not speak: "*Kol ha'olam kulo gesher tzar me'od,/V'ha'ikar lo lefa-ched klal.*"

"The world is just a narrow bridge," the congregation sings in Hebrew, their faces turned to the front where the podium is empty, "and the most important thing is not to fear at all." At this point, I recognize the top of my brother's head moving into the frame. Though I'd inserted the tape, I feel anxious about seeing him again. I know that he will reappear on the screen as he looked then, his face will be ill and scarred. My thumb bends at its single joint, poised atop the remote's stop button. But it seems that Rob has decided not to stand; he stays hidden behind the podium. Or perhaps the video camera, shaking and inexpertly wielded, has tilted just enough to sink my view.

The words the rabbi translated moments before into English reverberate as the congregation sings. Their voices are heartfelt and uneven. A narrow bridge. I can't listen to this. Pointing the remote, I hit the stop button. The twenty-five-inch television screen shoots full of static, then mutes via remote zap-zap. The dark square of glass crackles. I am thinking: The moments when we near the other end of the span must be among the most challenging. Everyone trembles on the approach. Too ill, too weary, some might cry, "I can't go on!" but, like Beckett's great small characters Vladimir and Estragon, in the next breath, they will also announce, "I'll go on." Taking leave of the bridge happens to everyone. Yet not one of us truly sees what lies ahead next.

I once asked Robert if he was afraid. He told me that he wasn't—he said that he truly was not. "Rob, I'm afraid," I said. Robert said nothing. He was propped up against pillows, one eye covered over with gauze and bandages, the other eye open to me. Then he nodded. "I know you are, Marcie," he said quietly.

Robert started walking across the bridge all of a sudden more quickly than I. He tried turning back at the middle of the arc, and could not. The rule of the elder's protective watchfulness superceded by plague and illness. I could not grab hold of the tail of his shirt, tugging him toward me as I would have if he were still a small boy running heedless of danger into a busy street.

The world is a narrow bridge and the point is not to be afraid. I was afraid, though, watching him. Afraid, as I shouted for him. As I went after him, the distance between the two of us increasing with each stride or slide. At some point, the world split into multiple spans and Rob stood on one sweeping off in a direction that I couldn't follow. He was moving along an arc that seemed to me abruptly short, yet was primed to take him somewhere much farther.

The label on the black plastic video box reads: "Rob Hershman, *Maggid* Ordination, December 11, 1994." Inside lay the videotape of a celebration driven to deadline by the human desire to say aloud and in public the same words that one dreads he or she will have to say later, when the recipient is no longer alive to receive them. The tapes were made as tokens of witness for those of us who could not travel to the ceremony in Los Angeles, the city where Robert moved in late 1992, three years after Ron's death, and a year and a half after meeting Gary, who as his life partner would make a new home with him.

Atop the videocassette was a note penned in blue ink in my brother's surprisingly crabbed handwriting. "Here's the tape of my *maggid* ceremony—all shot atop my friend Louise's seven-month pregnant tummy. How's that for life-affirming?" The padded mailer I'd ripped open also held a typed transcript of the speech—a speech that we read aloud

ILLUSTRATION BY BENNY ALBA

Marcie Hershman is the author of Tales of the Master Race *and* Safe in America. *"Here I Am" is excerpted from* Speak to Me: Grief, Love and What Endures *by Marcie Hershman, to be published by Beacon Press. © Marcie Hershman. All rights reserved.*

now, paragraph by paragraph, at the Passover table at the point in the Seder where the service relates the frightened Jews' exodus from Pharaoh's Egypt. It seems right to speak Robert's words when the table is full of plates and food, and history crowds in with nearly unimaginable hardships and journeys. It seems right to add my brother's words to the Seder's layered traditions because rituals must encounter the present as well as the past. To be alive, to move across, rituals must not be enacted as if their meaning just stopped, preserved in year A or at juncture C. Rituals, like life, must be renewed so that they can renew.

Rituals, like life, must be renewed so that they can renew.

Until Rob's own ordination as a *maggid*, I hadn't heard of the ceremony. In fact, the ritual is new, embraced by the more mystical Jews to whom he gravitated. The term "*maggid*" is spun from the source word meaning: "to tell it." A *maggid* is an individual who, while not a rabbi, is revered as a learned storyteller and teacher in the community. Essentially, a *maggid* endeavors to wake others up. The ordination ceremony honors the presence of a special voice. In particular, on December 11, 1994, in a community guided by Rabbis Jonathan Omer-Man and Judith Halevy, this new ritual honored Rob's voice and the urgency of the experience that kept deepening his message.

I'd tried to play the video all the way through only once before. That attempt came not long after the package arrived, in the first cold months of 1995. I recall Rebecca sitting on the wool rug beside me, her arm resting against mine. I faced the television screen not with stirrings of curiosity or joy, but a sense of gloom. I feared what was on the way: To see Robert as a gaunt image on videotape when I knew that in California, a continent distant, he awoke each day physically more drained than he appeared on this memento's projection? I could hardly listen to what he was saying as his image filled the screen, so anxious was I to see and measure how ill—or how well—he looked. I could, however, focus easily on the written transcript of his speech, could by reading his words in their lines on a page hear Rob's strongest voice in my head, could in my mind's eye imagine him gesturing, his face shining. But I did not like the bridge upon which the videotape so implacably, startlingly, set us: one at either end, three thousand miles between us, and endlessness visible next.

A narrow bridge and the important thing? The remote is a black oblong with buttons up and down its front like the brass on a soldier's uniform. Now, for the second time in five years, I raise my hand and point in the hope of moving across. The invisible eye winks. Fast- forward.

"We are in the denouement of the story of Joseph," my brother's voice says, from the direction of the screen. My head is down, but I know just where he is; he is picking up the ceremony just where I want him to, about to speak the same text of the transcript we read from at Passover. This will be where he interprets a story I used to hear without truly understanding it. But on tape, a new *maggid* is prepared to "tell it." His voice sounds reedy—strained with ill health, but determined to persevere. "You'll remember that Joseph is the second youngest of the patriarch Jacob's eleven sons, and the eldest of his beloved wife Rachel. He is his father's favorite and a pretty grandiose kid. Remember the coat of many colors and the dreams about his elder brothers bowing down to him?" he says. "The brothers finally have enough. They decide to sell Joseph into slavery, telling their father Jacob that he was torn apart by wild beasts. Jacob goes into deep mourning, but the young Joseph, after many adventures and some strategic dreams, ends up the most powerful man in Egypt, holding the keys to its abundant granaries at a time of worldwide famine."

Rob's voice streams from the screen ahead of me. "Jacob," he continues, "also known as Israel, and his clan are starving back in Canaan—the Promised Land—so he sends his sons down to Egypt to procure supplies. They appear as supplicants before Joseph, whom they do not recognize even though he recognizes them. Joseph puts the brothers through many tests in which they reveal that they have grown in compassion, just as he has grown in humility. Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers and forgives them for selling him into slavery, since it now seems plain that God, who appears for the first time in this whole story, had sent him ahead to insure the survival of Jacob's clan, the seventy nomads who at this point comprise the whole people of Israel. The brothers speed back to Canaan to tell the tidings to their father Jacob, and to prepare to bring their starving family back to Egypt under Joseph's protection."

I look up to see my brother's video image standing behind the podium. He is wearing glasses which, because of the extreme thinness of his face, appear very large. He is wearing a dark indigo suit, elegant in its tailoring, a fine white shirt, and a richly colored tie. I try to look at his clothes and not the painful uneveness of his skin, the roughened red sores and fleshy welts of the Kaposi's sarcoma I'd forgotten about. As I'd forgotten the beard that can only barely cover the sores. And forgotten, too, the sharpened jut of his cheekbones and his chin, and the thinning high arch of his nose. Such physical details really do melt away in memory, just as my friends who earlier had lost people they loved to illness told me they would. Rob turns directly to the camera and pauses. He smiles, long in the tooth. And says: "The lines upon which I'd like to focus begin when Jacob interrupts the brothers' telling of their news. Here is my own translation.

"'I don't need to hear anymore,' said Israel. 'If my son Joseph is still alive then I will go and see him before I die.' So Israel set out with all he had and he came to Beersheba and offered up sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God called out to Israel in a vision by night, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And Jacob answered, 'Here I am.' And the vision said, 'I am the Lord, the God of your fathers. Do not fear to go down into Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I myself will also bring you back up, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.'"

Rob turns his head as does any good speaker. He is taking his audience into his gaze: those on the left, those on the right, those sitting or standing in the back. Many of these the camera does not attempt to record; they are simply assumed as present. Rob is looking out toward them with his deep, dark eyes, liquid with their full shine and shadow.

He says slowly, "Think of the worlds these five lines contain. First you have Jacob, who after a lifetime of loss is now weary, wary, passive, and self-pitying. And still he is also Israel, the man of wholeness who earned his name by wrestling all night with an Angel of God, and who now, once more, slashes through to the essential. He doesn't care about the details, or even the consequences; all he knows is that before he dies, he must see his son Joseph. There is a clarity of purpose that comes when one acknowledges the closeness of death. Jacob in one stroke declares that he will leave the land which God has promised to his grandfather Abraham and go down into Egypt—the country his father Isaac had been expressly forbidden to visit. Jacob is alone, out on a limb—like Lear, he is a great ruined tower of a man out in the darkness. But where Lear looks into the void, learns compassion, and goes mad," Rob says, "Jacob is vouchsafed a vision: A voice calls tenderly out of the darkness, acknowledges him, and takes his hand. The voice of God speaks of the descent that is necessary for the ascent, the exile that is necessary for the return, the turning away from the Promised Land that is necessary for the promise to be fulfilled. The vision is challenging, expansive: God will make Israel a great nation—the small band of nomads will become the six hundred thousand souls who will later stand at Sinai. But it is also loving and tender, as small as the promise that Jacob will die in his beloved son Joseph's arms, that Joseph's hand will gently close his eyes for the final time."

The camera dips. My brother has been moved slightly from the center of the focus. His left shoulder and arm are out of the frame. Then the lens zooms in and finds his face just as he lowers his head. He clears his throat, seems to be glancing down at what must be a page of his own transcript under the bar of the frame. His jaw tightens. When he looks up, he has a slightly somber smile. The glasses hide his eyes. "But for me," he continues, his voice rough, "the whole miracle of these lines is contained in two of its simplest words: Jacob's '*Heneini*'—'Here I am' and God's '*A-raid*'—

Chai 1924–2000

for Yehuda Amichai

Page of sand, scab-flakes of ink;

page of sand, page of skin:
where are you now?

On the tongue, life is a verb
and death, a proverb:
Apple eats apple-blossom,

seed eats the apple....
Your name, in the macaroni
of tongues, Ah-me-*hide*,
foreign and sentimental

as the pendant *Chai*—life—
noosing the ancients of St. Pete
waiting for the Early Bird Special

—or the girls in Bolinas
you saw loosening

their tefilin-strap

bikinis: souls
opening and closing,

a prayer drifting everywhere
but up—
Proverbial waves lap

a beach of crumbs.
Letters swirl in fat broth,
a name is lifted to the lips;
waiters wipe

the clock face clean.
Drop the page,
come out. *Come out:*

the body is an apple
to the seed,

the body is a seed in the earth.

—David Gewanter

'I will go down.' God calls Jacob's name twice—once, perhaps to wake him, and the second time to call him totally to himself. And through all his conflicts and confusion Jacob is able to answer, 'Here I am.' He knows who he is and where he stands, and he is able to clear his heart and open himself fully to God's words.

"How I envy," Rob says, "our forefathers and mothers who could hear the voice of God with such utter directness. God tells Jacob, the man of so many wanderings, that he has to make one more journey. But this is not to be like most human journeys—a stumbling in the dark—for God parts the veil for one moment, giving Jacob a vision of the Exodus which is still four hundred years away. And most important of all, God says *'A-raid'*—'I will go down'—promising not only that He will watch over the people of Israel in their exile, sending blessings from above, but that He shares the exile with us. He walks right by our sides.

God does not spare us our sorrows, but sometimes He makes us worthy of them.

"The name for Egypt in Hebrew, 'Mitzrayim,' is rooted in the Hebrew words for narrow, constricted, and also for sorrow. For Jacob and the people of Israel, Egypt is the promise of food in a starving time; it is a haven, even if it will soon become a narrow place, a land of bondage. What God's words in this passage teach us is that we must honor Israel's descent into Egypt as reverently as we celebrate our deliverance from it. The narrow place is a source of sorrow, but it can also be a birth canal." Someone moans, and the camera, as if startled, pans across front rows, pulled toward the source of the abrupt cry. There is a shuffling, a shifting of weight, but as the camera's lens scans across the rows the congregation seems a single mass, no one turning about or standing out. Robert says, "The important thing to remember, even when we descend into a place of constriction and pain, is that God goes with us.

"In my own spiritual path," he says, then pauses, "I have had to descend into a narrow place. My world for the last ten years has been scourged and straitened by AIDS. It is a world where, unlike God's promise to Jacob, the sons do not close their fathers' eyes, but fathers close their sons'. Almost all the friends I thought I would be growing old with are already dead or dying. My own body each day contrives a new betrayal. For someone who once leapt onto airplanes to cover a revolution in Iran or a CIA bungle in Cambodia, the seven-block walk from my house to the ocean now seems as much as I can handle. The world is getting smaller, tighter, lonelier. Yet even in this Egypt of AIDS I am full of gratitude for the havens I have found, uplifted and transformed when I have felt the nearness of God. When I see how lovers kiss away each other's sores; when I see a father massage his son's swollen feet, help him to the toilet, brush his teeth; when I see friends, hideously young, face their deaths with bravery and grace, I know that God has accompanied us into our exile, into our very narrow place.

"God cannot save us from suffering, but He can accompany us, and in the moments of our true wholeness, we can feel his love. God does not spare us our sorrows, but sometimes He makes us worthy of them. God stood by Israel in our Egyptian exile even though it took us four hundred years to finally call out to Him and to devise a path for our own deliverance.

"We make our journeys in the dark. God is with us but we so rarely feel His presence. What my studies with my miraculous teachers, what my ever-deeper life of meditation and prayer has taught me, is the sustaining power of a spiritual discipline.

"When we were finally ready to return from Egypt to the Promised Land, God did not whisk us there on a magic carpet. We had to put one foot before the other. We had to wander and squabble, feeling hunger and despair, and even when we arrived we were not sure where we were or what to do. The Jewish path is tough; instead of answers, we are given mitzvot, good deeds and duties, ways to bring holiness into our lives by action and discipline. In our tradition, the reward for fulfilling one mitzvah is the opportunity to perform another. Still, for me, this is a path of meaning, a path of sustaining joy."

I glance up, a final glance, knowing how my eyes can get in the way of my hearing.

The tape looks to be moving quickly now, though the speed has not increased. Static is breaking through the illusion and veracity of the image. In the center of the lens stands a haggard, gaunt, and gleaming man. He looks out, his face scoured and marked. His gaze is incomprehensibly gentle.

"I have no idea," he continues, his voice thin and wind-lost, but persisting, "what the ultimate purpose of my own particular descent into the narrow place of AIDS might be. I am even willing to believe that, in itself, it has no purpose at all. What I do know, however, is that the work of our lives is the making of our meaning, so that we may ultimately link up with the source of all meaning, the Ein Sof, blessed be He. We bless each other and we bless God when we do our work wholeheartedly—knowing what is important, fulfilling our duties, our mitzvot, and acting in the world in as righteous and as loving a way as possible.

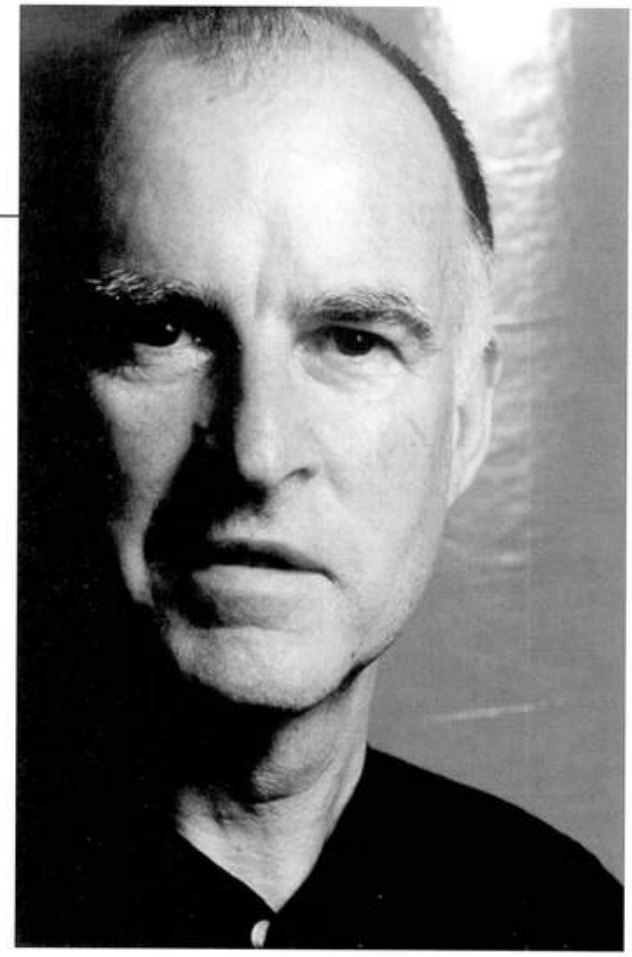
"In deepest humility," Robert says, to finish, "I take on this holy charge to be a *maggid*, a teacher in the community of Israel. I can only promise that I will work faithfully for as long as I am given. And I can only pray that when God calls out my name, I can answer with some of the heart-felt clarity of Jacob, *Heneini*. Here I am."

Static streams across the screen.

I do not press stop when his face disappears. ❑

AN INTERVIEW WITH Jerry Brown

Mark Jacobson



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY CITY OF OAKLAND

In the 1970s it seemed possible that California's "Governor Moonbeam," Jerry Brown, might make it to the White House. Few guessed that his future lay in the city of Oakland. These days, as Oakland's mayor, Brown's applying his global vision to local conditions. Though not without critics, Mayor Brown is putting his progressive politics to the real-world acid test.

TIKKUN: Do you find that there is a difference between personal morality and political morality?

BROWN: You know that gives me pause for reflection. Is morality different in an individual situation? When it's one person versus another person, or one person in the presence of another person, that's a face-to-face encounter. It enables each person to meet the other, to notice their being and to respond.

Now, if you step aside and look at the role of a political leader of a country or a state, you're dealing with large aggregates of people. It's a whole different scale and a different dimension that are brought to bear. Although there are similarities in terms of thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not lie—those are basic moral norms.

It goes down to your wisdom, your conscience, and the custom of the [place] where you are. Morality is embedded in place. It's something that takes its character over time from a given place. And that's why Marshall McLuhan, I think, said, "At the speed of light, there is no morality." Morality comes out of a village, a country, a happening among a people, and a memory and a way of doing things that allows people to perceive what is good and what is bad. What is right and what is wrong.

TIKKUN: In your interpersonal relations, do you remain yourself even though you're the mayor or the governor or potentially the president?

BROWN: Well, there's a public self. There's diplomacy. There are roles that are played. But that's true in private life. In fact a famous sociologist, Erving Gofman, wrote a book called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* that was all about analyzing relationships in terms of role-playing.

TIKKUN: Your situation is more extreme than most people's. First of all everybody knows who you are. You're in a position where you can make decisions and influence other peoples' lives. Does that put an extra pressure on your personal moral code?

BROWN: No, I don't think so. First of all, a lot of politics is that you're saying things to win votes. You're inventing issues to move swing voters. That's the process.

TIKKUN: Well, you're elected now.

BROWN: Yeah. But you know the press is working to get stories that are juicy and interesting, whereas politicians are working to avoid stories that come at their expense. So you can't get away from the political theater in which the governing process shows up.

TIKKUN: Do you enjoy that?

BROWN: Yeah. I find it more interesting than being on a mountaintop somewhere.

TIKKUN: Was there ever a real temptation for you to just totally withdraw from public life? And go sit on that mountaintop?

BROWN: As a permanent commitment? No. As a temporary commitment? Yes. I did go to Japan for six months, and studied and practiced Zen meditation a few hours a day. But that was not going to be my life.

Mark Jacobson, currently a contributing editor at New York Magazine, *is the author of two novels:* Gojiro *and* Everyone and No One.

TIKKUN: Is there a lack of abstraction in your day-to-day life because being a mayor is so much more of a hands-on job than being governor?

BROWN: Well, being a mayor means dealing with concrete issues, but they illustrate larger abstractions. Like crime or welfare or safe streets. Or schooling. You know, the city is the place where public policy shows up. And public policy debated in Congress or in a state capitol is very general. It's like, "we need a reading program of thus and such." But then when you're in a city and you have several schools, you want to know, are they able to provide an environment and the leadership that will enable kids to read? You can go out and visit those schools, you can talk to the superintendent. There's much more contact with the real thing.

Being a mayor means dealing with concrete issues.... It's really the intersection between theory and practice. That's what a city is, from my point of view.

TIKKUN: Do you enjoy that personal kind of thing?

BROWN: Yeah, it's really the intersection between theory and practice. That's what a city is, from my point of view.

TIKKUN: Are you a proponent of "quality of life" policing?

BROWN: Well, yeah. I mean you've gotta make the place safe. You know, people in nice neighborhoods don't have drug dealers standing on the corner all day. They do in low-income areas and they don't like it. A lot of these people who have great pronouncements against the war on drugs don't live in these neighborhoods. You congregate poverty by various state and federal policies and then you get a synergy of negativity. You've gotta break that.

TIKKUN: I'm particularly interested in the inner-city educational situation. How do you deal with the issue of race in school in Oakland?

BROWN: You work with it. I mean half the kids in the school are African American. I've appointed three members of the school board who are African American. And they're smart. We're working with the faith community, we're promoting charter schools, including a military academy. And a performing arts school.

TIKKUN: Oakland is the Ebonics city, right? What's your position on that?

BROWN: Well, you know a language is an idiom with an army. So, I mean, what's an idiom, what's a language? It's a way of communicating that certain people use that persists over time. If you isolate people they will develop a language different from other people who are isolated somewhere else. And that is part of the gap between young people, particularly people in the inner city of color, and the white power structure. Or the black power structure, for that matter. I think we should pay attention to it.

I mean, there was an intention there. Understanding, helping kids read and decipher things, I think that's good. The truth of the matter is, if you go back and read the original Ebonics resolution, it was written very poorly.

But there is [also] a certain amount of racial prejudice. If the people speaking Ebonics were all multimillionaires, then it'd be the thing to do to learn it. I like to situate this stuff in a real context. The context of this was for people to look down at Oakland. And, given the abysmal performance, it's not a completely unreasonable attitude. Given the fact that, you know, [only] 10 percent of the ninth graders actually end up going to a four-year college on the first try.

TIKKUN: These days it seems like many schools are being started with a mandate to channel people into service communities at the expense of getting a liberal education.

BROWN: Well, where do you get a liberal education these days unless you go to Exeter or something?

TIKKUN: There are generalized high schools in New York City where you learn math and English, things like that.

BROWN: Yeah, but they're the exception.

TIKKUN: Do you think that's OK?

BROWN: I think first of all the whole schooling [organization] is the biggest industry in the world. And it's a massive economy. And it will keep growing.

TIKKUN: Now, when you're in sixth and seventh grade they're already telling you to be a plumber.

BROWN: Well, they don't tell you. They say, "What would you like to do?" Don't they? You're talking about tracking. I think a plumber, you know, makes sixty grand a year. A teacher makes thirty-one. In Oakland, 70 percent of the kids are three grades behind and 30 percent are four grades or more behind. So, if you can be a plumber, you know, hallelujah. But I know what you're talking about. There should be more academic grounding to give people more freedom. Everybody should be given the opportunity to be an intelligent citizen. But, you know, just given the way things are happening that's certainly not the case in the big inner-city schools.

TIKKUN: At what point do you throw your hands up?

BROWN: I don't throw them up. I'm doing something about it by creating charter schools. I changed the charter of Oakland to allow me to add three appointed members to the school board. And they're stirring stuff up.

TIKKUN: Do you create elite schools? Is that really a good idea?

BROWN: Why not? We have elite schools. Inside the public schools you have a small group who are taking the AP courses and going to college. They're a fraction of the high schoolers. We had about 4,000 kids in the ninth grade; four years later let's just say approximately 400 will take the

courses to go to college. So there's a 90 percent fall-off. That's now, in Oakland. Fact. Do you think that 90 percent of the kids who are dropping out are any better or worse off because a tiny fraction of their fellow students are preparing for college and hanging out together?

Now, there is a lot of tracking and there's evidence to say that black kids in particular are tracked unfairly at third grade and fourth grade, and that's bad. These kids have talent. A lot of them are very bright. This bell curve is not distributed racially. I think it's completely outside of race. And the schools don't grok that. That's true. So I agree with you, tracking is evil.

TIKKUN: Well, what do you do to combat that as a mayor?

BROWN: Well, I put people on the school board who push the superintendent. We're trying to up the standards for everybody and make it better. But of course, as you up the standards you make it even tougher on the ones who are slower. So then that's another thing. What do you do? If you make it tougher, the ones who are slower will even be further behind. If you don't make it tougher, then you acquiesce to failure and mediocrity. Those are your two non-acceptable alternatives. So what do we do? We create a variety of charter schools. Washington, D.C. has a hospitality school for the tourist industry. Hotels, restaurants. And they have that in high school. You need a variety of educational settings that will relate to the particular interests of kids. And then, of course, they need income. The problem is a lot of these people just don't have the resources. So their lives are stressed and they need help. That's bad. So there should be some kind of income supplement by the federal government.

You have environmental liberals, you have sexual liberals, you have racial liberals, you have gender liberals. You have gentrification liberals.

TIKKUN: What's your general opinion of the electorate's choice this particular election?

BROWN: I think the electorate expressed itself precisely. For half it didn't matter and for the other half they were evenly divided. So I think that was a perfect reflection of what was presented.

TIKKUN: Forgetting these particular two guys, is it better for the mayor of Oakland that the Democrats are in or the Republicans? Or does it not matter at all?

BROWN: People have a feeling that things went pretty well under Clinton. Now, how much you can ascribe to Clinton is a matter for serious conversation. Because it's the global economy, it's historical trends, it's the Federal Reserve.

TIKKUN: Do you have philosophical problems with the global economy?

BROWN: Capitalism requires capital and it generates more capital. We got a port, and we've got people coming. Yeah, there's a positive. But you know, the manufacturing jobs disappear, you lose control over your space. The environment is being disrupted. But in the short-term financial matter, obviously world trade has had an economically positive impact on Oakland.

TIKKUN: So this is a situation where your own personal beliefs might not necessarily coincide with what's good for your municipality, right?

BROWN: Well, it's not as much a question of personal belief as it is short-term and long-term consequences. And there can be good and bad. Nothing is a free good. You know, you can eat a steak with a lot of mushrooms on it and a lot of gravy. And it sure tastes good. But it doesn't mean that it's not going to cause you serious cardiac issues down the road. So, you know, we're getting a steak here and it's quite delicious. But that doesn't mean we're not going to have cardiac arrest sometime down the road from a variety of social, environmental, and financial causes.

TIKKUN: It might be hard to sell the long-term consequences when you're making money now.

BROWN: When you're biting into that delicious steak? Yes. It's very difficult. Then there are a lot of people who are getting the crumbs. The homeless, the minimum wage people. The floaters. The people who are just kind of the left-behinders.

TIKKUN: Has being the mayor given you a slightly strange contempt for progressives?

BROWN: No. Remember, the independent progressives were the Bull Moose party. And that just became the Prohibition Party. Then it became a nothing. The word was dusted off after "liberalism" went into disuse, about twenty years ago. It took about ten years for "progressive" to totally replace it.

TIKKUN: People don't want to call themselves liberal anymore. So they have to call themselves something, right?

BROWN: Progressives also usually are white people.

TIKKUN: Well, that's not really a hundred percent true, I don't think.

BROWN: Well, the progressives in San Francisco voted for Tom Ammiano, and the African Americans and the Chinese voted for Willie Brown. So there are cleavages. It's not just liberal. You have environmental liberals, you have sexual liberals, you have racial liberals, you have gender liberals. You have gentrification liberals. You have to unpack the term "progressive" because it covers a multitude of virtues and vices.

TIKKUN: Are you going to run again, do you think?

BROWN: Yeah, I'll probably make my announcement...

TIKKUN: So you're enjoying your job.

BROWN: I thoroughly enjoy it. It's an interesting place to be. It's a good place to think about things. ❑

ZERO TOLERANCE *(cont. from page 32)*

Neoliberalism works not only to produce a depoliticized consumer culture, it also limits the possibilities for *any* noncommodified social domains where young and old alike can experience dissent and difference as part of a multicultural democracy, locate metaphors of hope, respond to those who carry on the legacies of moral witnessing, and imagine relationships outside of the dictates of the market and the authoritarian rule of penal control. Educators and others need to rethink what it means to not only challenge a system that turns its children into a generation of suspects, but also how it might be possible to radically transform a social order marked by zero tolerance policies that reinforce modes of authoritarian control and social amnesia in a vast and related number of powerful institutional spheres. This suggests the need for both a collective struggle for public space and a public dialogue about how to imagine reappropriating a notion of politics that contributes to the development of authentic democracy while simultaneously articulating a new discourse, set of theoretical tools, and social possibilities for reviving civic education as a basis for political agency and social transformation.

Progressives need a new vocabulary for linking hope, social citizenship, and education to the demands of a substantive democracy.

Zero tolerance is not *the* problem as much as it is symptomatic of a much broader set of issues centered around the gulf between the *regime of the political*—everything that concerns modes of power—and the *realm of politics*—the multiple ways in which human beings create and question established power, transform institutions, and reject "all authority that would fail to render an account and provide reasons ... for the validity of its pronouncements." Because it has no stake in defining political culture outside of the interest of the market, neoliberalism systematically denies citizens the tools and vocabulary that would link the possibilities for self-reflection, deliberation, and collective action to opening up public space and deepening the imperatives of democracy. Neoliberalism offers no intellectual tools or political vocabulary for addressing this gap nor does it have any interest in supporting forms of civic education designed to question, challenge, and transform power as part of a political and ethical response to the demise of democratic public life.

There is more at stake here than recognizing the limits and social costs of a neoliberal philosophy that reduces all relationships to the exchange of goods and money; there is also the responsibility on the part of critical intellectuals and other activists to rethink the nature of the public, and how new forms of social citizenship and civic education that have a purchase on people's everyday lives and struggles might be expressed through a wide range of institutions. I believe that intellectuals and other cultural workers bear an enormous responsibility to oppose neoliberalism by bringing democratic political culture back to life. Part of this challenge suggests creating new locations of struggle, vocabularies, and subject positions that allow people in a wide variety of public spheres to become more than they are now, to question what it is they have become within existing institutional and social formations. In part this suggests resisting the attack on existing public spheres such as the schools while simultaneously creating new spaces in clubs, neighborhoods, bookstores, schools, and other places where dialogue and critical exchanges become possible.

Progressives need a new vocabulary for linking hope, social citizenship, and education to the demands of a substantive democracy. While I believe we need a new vocabulary for connecting how we read critically to how we engage in movements for social change, I also believe that simply invoking the relationship between theory and practice, critique and social action will not do. Any attempt to give new life to a substantive democratic politics must also address how people learn to be political agents and what kind of educational work is necessary within what kind of public spaces to enable people to use their full intellectual resources to both provide a profound critique of existing institutions and struggle to create, as Stuart Hall puts it, "what would be a good life or a better kind of life for the majority of people." As progressives, we are required to understand more fully why the tools we used in the past feel awkward in the present, often failing to respond to problems now facing the United States and other parts of the globe. More specifically, we need to understand the failure of existing critical discourses to bridge the gap between how the society represents itself and how and why individuals fail to understand and critically engage such representations in order to intervene in the oppressive social relationships they often legitimate.

The growing attack on youth and public education in American society may say less about the reputed apathy of the populace than about the bankruptcy of the old political languages and the need for a new language and vision for clarifying our intellectual, ethical, and political projects, especially as they work to reabsorb questions of agency, ethics, and meaning back into politics and public life. Along these lines, Sheldon Wolin has recently argued that we need to rethink the notion of loss and how it impacts upon the possibility for opening up democratic public life. Wolin points to the need for progressives, theorists, and critical educators to resurrect and raise questions about "What survives of the defeated, the indigestible, the unassimilated, the 'cross-grained,' the 'not wholly obsolete'." He argues that

"something is missing" in an age of manufactured politics and pseudo-publics catering almost exclusively to desires and drives produced by the commercial hysteria of the market. What is missing is a language, movement, and vision that refuses to equate democracy with consumerism, market relations, and privatization. In the absence of such a language and the social formations and public spheres that make it operative, politics becomes narcissistic and caters to the mood of widespread pessimism and the cathartic allure of the spectacle.

Against neoliberalism, progressives need to resurrect a language of resistance and possibility, a language that embraces a militant utopianism while constantly being attentive to those forces that seek to turn such hope into a new slogan or punish and dismiss those who dare look beyond the horizon of the given. Hope, in this instance, is the precondition for individual and social struggle, the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites, the mark of courage on the part of intellectuals in and out of the academy who use the resources of theory to address pressing social problems. But hope is also a referent for civic courage and its ability to mediate the *memory* of loss and the *experience* of injustice as part of a broader attempt to open up new locations of struggle, contest the workings of oppressive power, and undermine various forms of domination. At its best, civic courage as a political practice begins when one's life can no longer be taken for granted. In doing so, it makes concrete the possibility for transforming hope and politics into an ethical space and public act that confronts the flow of everyday experience and the weight of social suffering with the force of individual and collective resistance and the unending project of democratic social transformation.

Zero tolerance has become a metaphor for hollowing out the state and expanding the forces of domestic militarization, for reducing democracy to the rule of capital and replacing an ethic of mutual aid with an appeal to excessive individualism and social indifference. Within this logic, the notion of the political increasingly equates power with domination, and politics with consumerism and passivity. Within this insufferable climate of manufactured indifference, increased repression, and unabated exploitation, young people become the new casualties in an ongoing war against justice, freedom, social citizenship, and democracy. As desperate as these conditions appear at the present moment, they have increasingly become the basis for a surge of political resistance on the part of many youth, intellectuals, labor unions, educators, and other activists.

One glimmer of hope can be found in the recent examples of protest and resistance set by young people on campuses across the country dedicated to fighting the increasing corporatization of higher education as well as those who marched in Seattle, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and in other cities protesting the actions of the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the overall injustices perpetrated by global capitalism. For many of these young people, politics is about expanding the possibilities of democracy, community, solidarity, and social justice. Their struggles for social and economic justice remind us that collective problems deserve collective solutions. The crisis of youth and race is really symptomatic of the much broader crisis of democracy; in spite of what is portrayed in the dominant media, the enemy of democracy is not difference but bigotry, widespread poverty, the growing racial divide, under-funded public schools, and miserable health care for large segments of the population.



The enemy of democracy is not difference but bigotry, widespread poverty, the growing racial divide, under-funded public schools, and miserable health care for large segments of the population.

For many youth, the future appears to be a repeat of the present, a period not unlike what the singer and songwriter Gil Scott-Heron once called "winter in America." The time for social change has never been so urgent; the fate of an entire generation of young people is at stake. As parents, critical citizens, and educators we need to defend democratic public life, construct vibrant public spheres, and develop strategies and social movements that connect meaning, justice, and social agency with a viable notion of democratic politics. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES FLYNN

ECONOMIC POLICY

After the Final Merger



Charles E. Smith

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Call me Frank. I was CEO of a Fortune 500 company in the year 2000. Back then, the stock market kept going up and most of the world measured its success by how well the economy was doing.

I spent most of my time on mergers and acquisitions. My main job was to swallow up or be swallowed by other companies that would give us new markets, new products, and new "synergies" as we used to call them. With synergy, two plus two was supposed to equal five. That hardly ever happened, of course, but we kept saying it anyway. Every time we merged, we changed the names of our companies. Bestar Bank became Moon Bank became Horizon Bank became Gesellschaft bank. As time went on, the names meant less and less, but we kept making up new names in the hope that we had finally reached the critical mass we had been seeking.

Looking back, all that merger mania was more about finding ways to deal with our lack of creativity, our always increasing costs, the constant drain on our people, and our lack of anything but the same corny old visions: shareholder satisfaction, globalization, results. After trying any training program that looked promising and reorganizing ourselves to the point of boredom, we resorted to masking our problems with mergers.

Human nature, however, didn't want to cooperate. People became selfish, careerist, and power hungry. Groups seemed small-minded and almost everyone avoided conflict or saying what they really thought. In this world, the CEO was the hero, the more decisive and commanding the better. Sometimes I thought we had done no more in centuries than shift from a system of royalty to one of corporate hierarchy or even corporate slavery where culture, rewards, and the encouragement of timidity had taken the place of chains and physical threats. There was little honest enthusiasm on most people's faces.

As a country, we were a well-developed democracy. We had a bill of rights, protections for individuals, and free speech in public places. In companies, though, people had almost no rights. They had no right to assemble, little free speech, and almost no due process except within employment contracts. Senior managers determined what counted and if their lower-downs dared to disagree, they were shunned or otherwise exiled to hinterlands of unimportant activity.

As long as we were growing it was easy to make light of many of our problems. It was easy to say that they would be solved by the next stage of growth, cost cutting, and reorganization. It made sense at the time. Plus, with everyone closed off into gated communities and fenced off even from their own self-experience, who was to know? People didn't think much in those days. They did what they were supposed to do. Consultants made a lot of money. Many consultants thought very well and made great suggestions. The results were almost always short-lived and the consultants also didn't fight for what they believed because they wanted more business. Keeping people from being upset was the game.

I've lost my last CEO job. I was running the number two machine tool business in the world and could do no wrong. Markets were safe. There were only two machine tool companies on the planet and we were able to control

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SHAW

prices and customers seamlessly. Our 400,000 employees didn't complain much in public, and I was always at the main table at major political dinners. Our contributions went a long way towards determining who was elected. Then the number one company bought us and I was out on the street along with a third of our workforce. Of course, they said that much of this could happen from normal attrition and no one would be treated badly. It's amazing how gullible people are even when they hear the same lie over and over again.



Now, in most of the world, there is no one left to merge with. Some still try to force-fit companies together, but the fact is that every sensible merger that could have happened has already happened. The stock market is still holding its own as people and mutual funds choose between different companies. But the game is over. And there is the smell of profound change in the air. It used to be that there were so many companies, and the oppressive effects of arbitrary hierarchy and bureaucracy were so widespread, that there was no clear target to resist. Now there are fewer targets. So much of what mergers were able to mask is still there: people not committed to each other; people treated like objects; a phony commitment to results; an environment in which process is more important than results; a lack of diversity; an absence of ethical vision; arbitrary actions by bosses and quiet compliance everywhere else; company interests that are more important than customer service; staying in business being more important than delivering value; the lack of shared meaning as a platform for people to live and work together.

When the subject turns to money and power, I've not seen much sustained corporate learning. Don't get me wrong. There was learning along the way. The problem is that it happened entirely in events like great meetings, training programs, seminars, startups, and hot projects. Sometimes it occurred in simple sharing with colleagues in airplanes, restaurants, and social situations. At these times, we seemed to wake up, to become conscious of our world as it was, and not as we were being told it was, or hoped it was.

In these events, each with a beginning, middle, and an end, we saw our past, present, and future clearly and distinctly. We felt powerful and aware. Then the event ended and we fell back immediately into the decisive corporate context that did most of our thinking for us. We felt like we were running through a huge maze inside a box programmed with its own agenda. The next day, 90 percent of our conversations were on cost-cutting and what was wrong with people.

We should have taken this "wake-up" primer with the same authority as the ten commandments. It seems idiot simple now: Tell the truth about your actual experience. Co-invent models for balancing extraordinary economic success with integrity in relationships, thinking, spirit, and shared meaning. Encourage the John Kennedy-like speaking of dreams and visions of companies in which people are individually 100 percent responsible and held to account for the quality of their relationships and results. Ask forbidden questions, and then talk in an open and vulnerable way about possible answers. Ask why no one has ever written a poem or love song about their corporate life. Listen generously.

In events, people would sometimes feel protected and many would let their guard down, speak openly, and generate alternatives outside the existing context. They would find their passion, compassion, and enthusiasm for extraordinary results. But, when trying to apply these principles to business-as-usual situations the unspoken reaction, almost always, would be, "I agree but I've got my job to do." "You are a touchie-feelie, woolly-thinking, naïve softie who lacks rigor. What's really important here is performance. Everything else isn't real. If I listen to you I won't be able to do my job, which is who I am." "Your style just doesn't fit here." "Stop complaining and give me an alternative I can use. I need help with what to do and not with how to change my thinking. If you can help me with what I am measured on, you can do what you want as long as it doesn't look weird. I know you are right but I must look good in public, no matter what."

Looking back, I would create a new model of leadership and management. My target would be the way the world measures performance. I would insist on measures that emphasize performance and results, relationships and conflict, inventiveness and creative thinking, and attention to spiritual values and principles. Too many corporations still only measure and act on performance. The transformation they need is in areas they don't measure.

Every organization believes in the righteousness of its existing measures. "Of course, without profit, we could not stay in business." "Of course, relationships are the most important." "Of course, values and shared meaning are most important." "Of course, thinking is most vital." While all of these measures are valid, there are times when one in particular will need to be made a priority or the whole enterprise will falter or fail. For years, I told people that their singular focus on performance, or relationship, or research, was insufficient to their needs, and that they were paying a very high price for this. While many admitted this was so, no one changed their behavior or point of view. While they gained insight, their moment-to-moment ways of measuring success were not altered. Many non-profit organizations selected the most value-oriented person as their leader when what they needed most was a strong business person. Many corporations chose the most financially hard-driving person when what they needed most was someone who could turn the company into a genuine team. It became clear that unless a way could be found to change people's perspective—and the

(continued on page 64)

My Meritocratic Rise



ILLUSTRATION BY STAN SHAW

S. M. Miller

The attacks on affirmative action, the stress on testing students, the emphasis on education as the guarantor of good jobs, and the attention paid to careful, presumably unbiased selection of employees all suggest that we have—or almost have—a perfect meritocracy imperiled by "preferential hiring." Surveying this phenomenon has led me to review my own rise in the academic meritocracy, with surprising results.

I started college as the beneficiary of a bias favoring males. My high school grades were, to assess them kindly, somewhat less than distinguished. I would not have been admitted to Brooklyn College if the admission minimum grade average for "boys" was not several points lower than for "girls" (the college catalogue openly stated this discriminating practice). If the admission requirement differences had been eliminated, girls would have outnumbered boys in the college.

Well, skip over my continuing performance as a marginally mediocre college student. I won a graduate fellowship to Princeton because Oskar Morgenstern, a professor there, was associated with the National Bureau of Economic Research where I was a research assistant to Arthur F. Burns, a leading economist. Burns wrote a letter of recommendation for me that any casual reader might regard as faint praise indeed. Morgenstern knew, however, that Burns was chary of handing out accolades and regarded the letter as an argument for my potential. He persuaded his colleagues to offer me a fellowship. If I had not known Morgenstern and had Morgenstern not known the praise-reluctant Burns—no fellowship.

The prestige of the Princeton connection played a major role in my winning the position of assistant regional economist at the Federal Public Housing Administration. From there, I went to teach in the Economics Department at Rutgers University. While I would like to think that I was selected because of my outstanding merit, this was in the post-World War II GI Bill days. Teaching supply shortages more than individual accomplishment propelled me into securing my first full-time academic employment. Even so, with a sudden decline in the fortunes of the state of New Jersey (Rutgers had just become a state university) and a struggle over academic freedom (I had refused to heed the request of the university's public relations office that I modify my attack on the Taft-Hartley Law for a radio program sponsored by the university), I was terminated after two years, along with a number of colleagues.

No jobs were available. As the new term opened in September, a friend was offered a part-time position in the sociology department at Brooklyn College. He turned it down and recommended me to teach courses in industrial sociology and introductory sociology. What qualified me? Propinquity. When I was a graduate student in economics at Columbia (this was before I went to Princeton), I hung out with sociology grad students, who were much more interesting than the economics students. I sat in on a course of the well-known sociologist Robert Merton and, on the basis of some questions that I asked in class, he wrote a brief letter of recommendation saying he had only good things to say about me. I got the Brooklyn College job.

I was saved from unemployment but teaching only two-fifths time and receiving only two-fifths pay (five courses a term was the standard teaching load). About six weeks into the semester, a young economics professor suddenly quit. A member of the economics faculty with whom I had been friendly since my undergraduate days (indeed, she acquainted me with academic and social mores) recommended me to replace the departed hotshot. I was offered his full five-course load but convinced the chair of the department to offer two of the courses to a friend of mine who had no teaching experience. Again, connections worked for me (and for my friend).

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I stayed at Brooklyn College, becoming a full-time member of the sociology department and rose over time to associate professor. I had one leave working as a researcher at the Rockland Community Mental Heath Board, a position I learned about through a friend who worked in the professional division of the New York State Employment Service.

I became restive and looked for other jobs. One that emerged was at Syracuse University—yes, where a friend in the sociology department championed my interest. I became a full professor, purely on merit I'm sure.

I was affiliated with the Youth Development Center at Syracuse University which was supported by the Ford Foundation. Through that contact, I received a grant from the foundation and moved back to New York City. Since I wanted an academic base, a friend at New York University tried to arrange my appointment to the graduate sociology department. A member of the department felt—incorrectly I believe—that my interests were too close to his and argued successfully against offering me a regular appointment. My friend then approached the School of Education where she had some clout and managed to have me offered a position there, with a connection to the graduate sociology department. Again, connections made the difference.

Meanwhile, my Ford grant involved spending some time looking at Ford Foundation projects and I became friendly with some staff members. When the division was permitted to hire an additional person, I was offered the position, which I took for two years. Again, no search was conducted.

After two years, I went back to NYU. The university moved into financial difficulties. On leave for a year in London, I wondered if the university would survive. An inquiry came from Boston University—would I be interested in being considered for chair of the sociology department? I was, and I got it. Oh, did I mention that a close friend was the chair of the search committee?

In recent years, sociologists have developed "network analysis" to depict the clustering of relations, for example, among members of the boards of directors of various corporations. Other sociologists have emphasized the "social capital" of connections—the inequitable distribution of access to people who can help you get a good job. In New York City, the social capital of connection is well-understood. The injunction is never directly to ask someone to do some good thing for you (e.g., make a possible job contact). Rather, ask someone who influences the person whom you want to contact to intervene on your behalf. That is known as locating the "rabbi" of the person who is important for your career. The "rabbi" makes the connection for you.

In my case, I had a useful supportive network, many "rabbis," and various forms of social capital to help me in locating jobs.

The larger moral of this autobiographical educational and employment exposure is that it is not easy to build and maintain procedures that are truly meritocratic. Even the simple open posting (what currently is termed "transparency") of job openings is easily subverted. Some years ago, I checked on the listing of a sociological position which asked for a most unusual combination of experience and interests. I learned that the job description was written to fit the individual whom the department wanted to hire.

To create a truly meritocratic society we would need to look more closely at what standards for judging people are actually used and what and how judgments are made relative to those standards. How can we avoid judges who evaluate candidates on the basis of personal pique or their personal narrow interest? And, if decisions will always come in part through social capital and networks, how do we insure that the poor, the minority, the disadvantaged, get into the loop of the privileged?

In the meantime, if you still believe our society is meritocratic, review your own travels through the job world. You may be surprised; I was. ❑

AFTER THE FINAL MERGER *(continued from page 62)*

measures that they use to determine success—there would be little conscious change in the world.

Human nature, the way people think, and the overpowering presence of existing institutions make some things hard to imagine. For example, it's hard to imagine an organization or community where people rise above their own point of view; where genuine and caring relationships are common; where intellectuals feel their ideas and compassionate people honor ideas; where spiritual people appreciate money and rigor; and where spirituality and profound meaning walk hand in hand with business as usual. Einstein said, in a personal letter to a friend, that there was no necessary relationship between sense experience and thinking. In other words, all thinking is arbitrary, and not logically related to the experience from which it is derived. Everyone, he said, literally makes their own mind up and while their choice makes perfect sense to them, it makes no necessary sense in any absolute way. This insight, Einstein said, was the code breaker in any field from physics to social relations to business.

Once we can see that our thinking need not be tied to our sense experience, our imaginations are free and our futures limitless. As long as we are locked into the personal certainty that what we think is *true* and based on *absolute necessity*, we will continue to be caught in a hopeless trap of self righteousness, avoiding any points of view other than our own. To begin to create new measures, we need to continue developing new ways of seeing, new ways of examining our own assumptions, and new ways of talking to one another. We need to teach ourselves to measure and discuss what is missing, as well as what is there. We need to learn to appreciate where integrity and energy are out of balance, to self-assess and re-adjust, to re-balance at critical junctures, and to break out of automatic and ineffective thinking. This is now my project. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Understanding the Balkans



ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHILLIP VANDERYKEN

Vladimir Tismaneanu

- *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804–1999,* by Misha Glenny. Viking, 2000.

Can Balkan history and politics be understood *rationally?* Or is this a territory dominated by emotions, centuries-old vendettas, and fatal failures to cope with the challenges of modernity—in short, a territory of *irrationality?* These seemingly flippant questions are actually of burning importance in light of Yugoslavia's wars of secession and the still unfinished nation-building stories of Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo, potentially explosive spots on the map of twenty-first century Europe. Misha Glenny, one of the most respected and knowledgeable writers on Eastern Europe, wants to make Balkan history accessible to rational people. As a journalist he covered the collapse of East-European communism and the fall of Yugoslavia for the BBC and authored two excellent books on these topics. Fascinated by the spectacular dynamics of events in recent years, Glenny—unlike many of his peers—knows and respects the traditions of the region he chooses to cover. He is as astute as an insider, preserving, however, the advantage of the external observer. His recent book, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804–1999* is the result of several years of painstaking research.

The Balkans is an imposing volume, chock-full of data, names, years, and events. Its clearly stated ambition is to challenge what Glenny correctly perceives as the fallacious "ancient hatreds" theory of history that was notoriously spelled out by Robert Kaplan in his *Balkan Ghosts* in the early 1990s. While Kaplan's book was dismissed by serious academics, it remains the historical authority in the minds of many journalists, travel literature writers, pundits, and policymakers (the most famous example is first-term President Clinton's initial espousal of Kaplan's theses to justify non-intervention in Bosnia, which might have stopped the murderous actions of Serbian military and paramilitary forces). Kaplan's gloomy vision claims that the nations of Southeastern Europe have always engaged in fratricidal, tribalistic wars, and no matter what the presumably enlightened West tries to do to stop bloodshed in the Balkans, the risk for new waves of angry battles and appalling massacres will always be very high. Providing an antivenin for ancient hatreds theory, Glenny's thesis is unequivocal: Most of the ethnic and political conflict in the Balkans (Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, Greece, to some extent Hungary) has its roots not in atavistic instincts and tribal sentiments of intolerance for otherness, but rather in games played by cynical great powers. Yes, he admits that nationalist sentiments and ideologies developed in the region more or less endogenously, but the application and exacerbation of these local passions lay with foreign interests and agendas.

Glenny revisits two centuries of Balkan history in order to dispel the condescending vision of the Balkans as a region of lunatic, bloody feuds, murders, and even genocide; he rejects the vision of an isolated and immutable Balkan politics. Instead, he proposes a comprehensively dynamic perspective that connects the region to the overall European history. Thus, far from being essentially different from the rest of the continent's tragedies, the Balkan horrors simply magnify and condense these atrocities.

The four main themes of the book, although not explicitly delineated by the author, are: nationalism, fascism, communism, and democracy—or rather the chances for liberal democracy in a region beset with resentment and ethnic violence, and deprived, some would

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argue, of traditions of civil society and legal-procedural institutions.

In his attention to detail and emphasis on the major symbolic interactions and mutual interferences, Glenny provides strong arguments against essentialist and primordialist theses on national identity and nationalism in general. Far from being "genetic" luggage specific to the Balkan nations, this intense nationalism has explanations that relate to the historical circumstances in which it emerged, or better said, was constructed. In brief, Balkan nationalism is as much an "invented tradition," as historian Eric Hobsbawm might put it, as any other. Furthermore, its endurance in sometimes extreme forms of expression does not stem necessarily from presumed "habits of the heart," but rather from the uses and abuses of historical memories by political and cultural entrepreneurs (more often than not connected and manipulated by foreign powers).

The chapters focused on the diplomatic games played by great powers, from the fateful Berlin Congress in 1878 to the Dayton agreements in the 1990s, show that many of the region's tragedies found their catalysts (if not direct causes) in the failure of the West to understand the intricacies of nation-state building in the region. Glenny's warnings regarding the explosive elements in the still-smoldering Macedonian and Kosovo regions should be taken seriously in light of his powerful documentation of the previous consequences of naïveté, ignorance, or benign neglect.

So, what is Balkan nationalism for Glenny? Far from being a firm, even rigid, centuries-old ideological constellation, it is rather a weak, precarious, self-doubting phenomenon. Indeed, as he writes, "nationalism and national identities in the region are built on fragile foundations.... They change over a few generations; they mutate over the course of a war; they are reinvented following the break-up of a large empire or state; and they emerge anew during the construction of new states. Balkan nationalism evokes such ferocious passion because, paradoxically, it is so labile." This may be true, but then how does one account for the fact that no matter how one reads the dynamics that led to the disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia (or, earlier, of Austria-Hungary), it was the resurrection by local intellectuals (historians, ethnographers, poets, novelists) of national emotions and especially mythologies that energized political elites and enthusiastic followers into their search for ethnic reassertion? In this respect, I think that Glenny would have benefited from Isaiah Berlin's insightful discussion on nationalism as a response to humiliation and status-deprivation. Yes, nationalism can be the product of manipulation, but this is only part of the story: genuine national sentiment was indeed one of the most powerful corroding forces that led to the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc in general (think not only of the Baltic states, but also of Poland or Hungary). The point is to distinguish between liberal and anti-liberal forms of nationalism. The former is directly related to civic engagement, the latter is the opposite of the ideal of a civil, decent society.

To achieve his polemical but intellectually justified goal, Glenny deconstructs the popular dichotomy between a presumably rational, culturally sophisticated, and politically liberal Central Europe as distinct from the less advanced, potentially irrational, and savage Balkans. He is indebted to major academic works, primarily to Maria Todorova's important book *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), an endeavor meant to highlight the attempt by Western and Central European intellectuals to institute a cultural and political hierarchy in the heart of Europe.

While Glenny writes a series of superb vignettes that allow the reader to follow the meanders of Balkan history throughout the last two hundred years, the abundance of names and data is a bit exaggerated, daunting even for a relatively knowledgeable reader. Many of the characters described are disembodied, as though the author tries to exhaust a huge amount of information and cannot make up his mind about what is truly indispensable. The chapters dealing with the twentieth century are much more exciting than the arcane analyses of the revolts and liberation wars of the previous hundred years. Fascism is better treated than communism as a major source of turbulence in the region. Yugoslavia and Albania, Glenny's main areas of expertise, are far better examined than Romania or Bulgaria. Furthermore, I have serious doubts that Romania's history truly fits into the foreign power/decisive influence scheme proposed by Glenny.

Here let me point out a few problems regarding his treatment of twentieth-century Balkan and Romanian history. The region faced three major problems following World War I and during the inter-war period: first, the social question; second, the political question; and third, the ethnic question. Fascism and communism competed to propose radical solutions to all three issues, and Glenny does not go into sufficient analysis to explore the role of the communist international movement in organizing political and social unrest in the region. How about the existence of the Comintern's Vienna-based Balkan Bureau and its relentless attacks on the legacies of the Versailles peace treaties? How about Central European Jewish writer Manes Sperber's extraordinary novels (sometimes called the "Comintern trilogy") dealing precisely with the appeal of cosmopolitan Bolshevism among marginalized revolutionary intellectuals in the Balkans? In general, it seems that for Glenny the role of the Soviet Union is not essential in exploring the political and intellectual developments in the 1930s and 1940s. But in fact, Stalin's designs in the region were absolutely crucial. Right-wing radicalism was inseparable from left-wing

revolutionary activism. Both abhorred and subverted fragile, relatively pluralist constructs (as, for instance, the interwar constitutional monarchy in Romania).

In contrast, Glenny does a very good job analyzing the nature of anti-Semitism in different Southeast European societies. Still, one is struck by the differences between Romania, where anti-Semitism was a key ingredient of radical right apocalyptical fervor, and Serbia and Bulgaria, where it played a minor or no role whatsoever. Regarding the discussion of Marshal Ion Antonescu's policies toward Jews during World War II, Glenny should update his sources. In light of new evidence, including the recently published, utterly moving *Journal* of writer Mihail Sebastian, a distinguished Jewish intellectual subjected to anti-Semitic humiliations in World War II Bucharest, the following passage sounds excessively lenient: "Antonescu was not a pronounced anti-Semite, and in Wallachia—in contrast to Moldavia—anti-Jewish measures were implemented in a dilatory fashion." True, most of the Jewish population in Southern Romania survived the Holocaust, but it is simply inaccurate to consider this the result of a deliberate policy of the pro-Nazi Marshal to save the Jews. In the long run, had the Axis won the war, Antonescu's plan was to transform Romania into an ethnically pure state. Jews and Gypsies would have been deported and likely exterminated and ethnic Hungarians were supposed to be expelled from Transylvania to their "home-country."

Regarding the tribulations of Romanian communism, Glenny mentions different struggles at the top and the strange combination of Stalinism and nationalism under Nicolae Ceausescu. Yet when it comes to Ceausescu's fate and the December 1989 Romanian revolution, Glenny's bibliography inexplicably ignores Andrei Codrescu's fascinating account, *The Hole in the Flag*. Glenny does better when he discusses the crises within



Yugoslav communism, especially the elimination of Milovan Djilas, the suppression of the liberal Marxist movement in Croatia, and Tito's persecution of proto-nationalist trends within the Serbian communist elite. However, given Glenny's main theses, how does one explain the rise of nationalism in the region? Who were the main articulators of nationalist discourses? I would have expected more discussion on intellectuals as producers of ethnocentric symbols of exclusion, ethnic self-aggrandizement, self-pity, and exalted martyrology. Instead, very little is said about works of Balkan mythographers, either from the nineteenth century or the twentieth century (e.g., the Serbian novelist Dobrica Cosic, a main inspirer of the fantasies of alleged threats of national annihilation put out in the notorious memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1986, or the far right intellectuals in inter-war Romania who joined, and celebrated, the mystical-murderous Iron Guard).

In dealing with Balkan nationalism, Glenny does not elaborate on the different types of national identity discourse: from the romantic-liberal versions that inspired the revolutionaries of 1848 to the illiberal, authoritarian, and populist exaltations of ethnically pure communities. My point? It was not the intervention of any great power that led to the rise of strong nationalist movements in countries like Romania or Serbia: neither Iron Guard's *capitan* Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, nor a populist fundamentalist-apparatchik like Slobodan Milosevic were created by foreign action.

Although Glenny writes poignantly about the region's political cultures, more focus on personalities, their backgrounds, mutual interferences, and influences would have made this book more accessible. Several examples: Glenny examines Romanian fascism, but makes little effort to link it to other similar movements in the region. Comparison and contrast would have helped readers understand not only the peculiar features of the Guardist adventure, but also the role of Orthodox mystique in the shaping of this movement. Unlike other Fascisms (German, Italian, Hungarian), Romania's Iron Guard (also known as the Legion of Archangel Michael) proclaimed a revolutionary rejection of modernity in the name of pure peasant Christian values as embodied by orthodoxy (an "archangelic revolution" as historian Eugen Weber once called it). The experience of the Sephardi Jewish community in Bulgaria would have certainly benefited from references to Nobel-prize-winner writer Elias Canetti's unforgettable memoirs.

As of the writing of this review, Milosevic has been voted out of power and Vojislav Kostunica, a constitutional lawyer who once translated the Federalist Papers into Serbian, is the country's new president. But does this mean that a certain type of charismatic politics of anger, anti-Westernism, and personalized authoritarianism is over? And, how do these events relate to Glenny's main point that much of the viciousness of Balkan nationalism is the result of post-enlightenment Western ideological intoxication rather than domestic or "Oriental" traditions and affinities (presumably pre- or even anti-Enlightenment)? Hard as it may be to engage in predictions, a look at Milosevic's past political formula (his true mindset) may be an indicator of the future. Milosevic was neither a

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BOOK REVIEW

Essaying Ozick

Kabir Dandona

▪ *Quarrel & Quandary: Essays*, by Cynthia Ozick. Knopf, 2000.

On the morning of March 1, 1580 (or the afternoon or evening, we don't really know), Michel de Montaigne—lawyer, two-term Mayor of Bordeaux, bibliophile, and private muser—sat down (or reclined, again the historical record is wanting) to write the introductory note to his two volumes of *essais*, the first of their kind in the history of literature. "This, reader," he wrote, "is an honest book."

Montaigne wrote his *essais*, literally his "attempts," we learn in the same note, "for the pleasure of my relatives and friends so that when they have lost me—which soon they must—they may recover some features of my character and disposition, and thus keep the memory they have of me more completely and vividly alive." Montaigne apparently envisioned his collected essays as comprising a sort of Cubist self-portrait, a series of studies of himself from various angles from which the actual man might be imagined.

His choice of angles is itself revealing. The volumes include essays "On idleness," "On liars," "On cannibals," "On Democritus and Heraclitus," "On Books," "On Cruelty," and "On the art of Conversation." Less ruminative, more polemic, there is "A Defence of Seneca and Plutarch" and a somewhat seditious argument "That it is folly to measure truth and error by our own capacity." Already we know something of the man, of his immediate universe, of his politics, and of his preoccupations. A record of his intellectual whereabouts during the years 1572–1580, Montaigne's *essais* also give us some sense of what it might have been like to spend an evening in his company; if jester of letters Ian Frazier is correct in his assertion that "an essay is a person talking," then to have read Montaigne is to have listened to him.

He does not force, plead, or importune. Nor does he (in his sanctimonious age) condemn or indict. He is, above all, reasonable. In temperament, that is. He has little use for the stricture of "pure reason," for his intent is at once more modest and more ambitious than Kant's. Montaigne seeks that truth to which philosophy does not condescend; or alternatively, that truth which is lost upon philosophy, which snubs it, resents its formality and priggishness, and which often teaches its vanity and superfluity.

Essayistic truth is not monumental. Nor is it incontrovertible. It tends to settle about the belly, not the brain, and is as often intuited and felt as it is derived and deduced. Most of all, it differs from the philosophical sort in its umbilical dependence on language, as Cynthia Ozick describes with her characteristic panache in "She: Portrait of the Essay as a Warm Body":

> I may not be persuaded by Emersonianism as an ideology, but Emerson—his voice, his language, his music—persuades me. When we look for superlatives, not for nothing do we speak of "commanding" or "compelling" prose. If I am a skeptical rationalist or an advanced biochemist, I may regard (or discard) the idea of the soul as no better than a puff of warm vapor. But here is Emerson on the soul: "when it breathes through [man's] intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love." And then—well, I am in thrall, I am possessed; I believe.

So the essayist, if successful, is something of a verbal magician, a lothario. Writes Ozick: "At the end of the day, the essay … co-opts agreement; it courts agreement; it seduces agreement. For the brief hour we give to it, we are sure to fall into surrender and conviction. And this will occur even if we are intrinsically roused to resistance."

If Ozick writes about the essay genre with authoritative perspicacity, it is probably because she is herself a veteran essayist, one of the English language's finest. *Quarrel & Quandary*—her fourth essay collection (the others *Art & Ardor*, *Metaphor & Memory*, and *Fame & Folly*)—updates us on her recent concerns and activities, while graciously recounting some of her youthful misadventures. Ozick's foci remain mostly bookish and it is, perhaps, good for us that they should remain so. She is an inspired reader, finding in the text what most of us miss, and so to read her is to experience literature refracted through a superior intelligence. This collection includes considerations of Dostoevsky, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, an essay entitled "What is poetry about?," another on the genesis of fictional characters, and a provocative piece on "The Impossibility of Being Kafka."

Dead by 1924, vatic Kafka anticipated it all. He expected our era, with "its anomie, its depersonalization, afflicted innocence, innovative cruelty, authoritarian demagoguery, and tech-

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nologically adept killing." Quite different from that of other prophets, Kafka's work has about it an unceremonious assurance. It is exact in its postulations but in no way flaunts itself as prophecy. The question is: how could Kafka have known so knowingly in 1919, when sections of *The Trial* were first published, what the next thirty years (in particular) would do to the world? Ozick offers he didn't.

> If he was able to imagine man reduced to insect, it was not because he was prophetic. Writers, even the geniuses among them, are not seers. It was his own status and condition that Kafka knew. His language was German, and that, possibly, is the point. That Kafka breathed and thought and suffered in German—in Prague, a German-hating city—may be the ultimate exegesis of everything he wrote.

Ozick's Kafka is deeper than most, if not as foresightful. She restores situation and humanity to him. The much-neglected basic facts of his life—that he was a German-speaking Jew in anti-German, anti-Semitic Prague, that he feared and resented his philistine father yet continued to live under his roof well into adulthood, etc.—explain too much about the man and his work to be ignored. That they are in favor of a rootless, discarnate, solitary, Munch-like screamer with inside information about the deformed future is not only silly in its disregard for undisputable influence but is also an injustice to Kafka's ability to discern his time. "Kafka did not need to be, in the premonitory sense, a seer; as an observer of his own time and place, he *saw*," Ozick writes with a creative author's insight.

No one should attempt to write about New York unless he is willing to be unlucky. Panning for truth in the city is as likely to turn up the platitudinous (fool's profundity) as it is the penetrant. Unyielding, inscrutable, impenetrable, encrypted—New York is, in fact, none of these things. The problem in interpreting it is other.

Groucho Marx identified the difficulty when (albeit writing about something else) he complained that there are "too many people and too many things." Even the most discerning intellect cannot but be overwhelmed by the city's numbers and proportions, by its charge and commotion, and most of all by its unending parade of detail. What is an author to make of so many million moustaches, potbellies, and running noses? Or of the many sidewalk spectacles of various genre that accost you while strolling, apparently organic to the concrete from which they spring?

Essayistic truth tends to settle about the belly, not the brain, and is as often intuited and felt as it is derived and deduced.

Little, if wise. The temptation is to abstract from this monstrous circus summary truth, something New York can only confute for, ultimately, the city is (in Isaiah Berlin's bipartite taxonomy) more fox than hedgehog. The truth of New York *is* its details, nothing more.

Nevertheless, one does feel a pressure to make something of it all. That, of course, is what a writer does. Feeling said pressure, Saul Bellow strategized retreat, admonishing: "Those who want to contemplate the phenomenon [of New York] are well-advised to assume a contemplative position elsewhere. Those who wish to *feel* its depth had better be careful. For fifteen years I lived in and with New York. I now reside in Chicago."

Bolder than Bellow, Ozick ponders the city from within, ambling about town like E. B. White, observing, noting, and—alas—abstracting. Her essay "The Synthetic Sublime," if not quite an attempt to bottle New York's essence, is at least a stab at characterizing the city, an endeavor dangerous enough in its own right. She opens:

> More than any other metropolis in the Western world, New York disappears and then it disappears again; or say that it metamorphoses between disappearances, so that every seventy-five years or so another city bursts out, as if against nature—new shapes, new pursuits, new immigrants with their unfamiliar tongues and worried uneasy bustle.

Yes, New York changes. But fear not: "Catapult us forward a thousand years, and we won't recognize the place; yet it is certain to be, uninterruptedly, New York, populous, evolving, faithfully inconstant, magnetic, man-made, unnatural—the synthetic sublime." Ozick spends more than a page pleading this much hackneyed observation, recently articulated in no more than six words by Jonathan Mandell, writing in the *New York Times* of a city "ever-changing (yet somehow always familiar)."

There is more in this vein, I'm afraid. Ozick instructs us that New York "means to impress the here and now." And that "The poor of New York occupy streets only blocks away from the palaces." It is unfortunate and disappointing that a mind as playful, perceptive, and original as Cynthia Ozick's should settle for observations and ideas as easy and as trite as these, especially since elsewhere—in, for example, her earlier essays "Washington Square, 1946" and "The Question of Our Speech: The Return to Aural Culture"—where New York is more incidental to her thoughts, she has mined the city for precious insight. Not so here, where the most interesting remarks are bound in quotes, insight on loan from E.B. White and George Templeton Strong. Yet, in a stray, almost inadvertent reflection on the city's nouveau-hip Upper West Side, she does manage to hit upon the question of the hour:

> There is something of a puzzle in all this exuberant fashionableness and

> household seductiveness, this bean-grinding, face-creaming, bed-making: where are the political and literary intellectuals the Upper West Side is famous for, why are the conversations about olives and fish?

Which brings us to "Public Intellectuals," a much livelier essay, in which Ozick inveighs against intellectual sociopolitical reticence, taking issue with E.M. Forster who in 1941, with "all of torn up Europe dangling from German jaws" as she puts it, addressed the seventeenth International PEN Writers' Congress thus: "Art for Art's sake? I should just think so, and more so than ever at the present time. It is the one orderly product which our muddled race has produced." But is not Art itself, however pure, subject to the judgments and dictates, arbitrary and unqualified though they may be, of the *nichtkunstwelt*? And given that recent history has more than once substituted aesthetic policing for responsible criticism, is it not in Art's utmost interest to maintain a public advocacy, to do whatever it can to prevent its fate from being decided behind closed doors? To ask Art to show itself in public is not the same as urging a political art, the consequence of which is almost always aesthetic disaster. It is also quite different from the Günter Grass variety of microphonic declamation I would guess Ms. Ozick esteems as the exemplary model of the "public intellectual"—a term, interestingly, not all buy; essayist Joseph Epstein, for one, rejects it as a sham-coinage of our media age. In any case, here is Ozick with her usual recourse to metaphor: "Public intellectuals know that history is where we swim, that we are *in* it, that we can't see over or around it, that it is our ineluctable task to grapple with it."

"Public Intellectuals" is an essay interesting for its resultant moral urgency. The essay has, by the end, an imperative quality, even a demagogic prosody absent at its outset. It begins irresolutely and innocently enough, with a question ("If there are public intellectuals, it must follow that there are also private intellectuals. What is the difference between them?"), but soon accelerates tempo, ending unequivocally *forte*:

> we cannot live above or apart from our own time and what it imposes on us; that willy-nilly we breathe inside the cage of our generation, and must perform with it. Thinkers—whether they count as public intellectuals or the more reticent and less visible sort—are obliged above all to make distinctions, particularly in an age of mindlessly spreading moral equivalence.... People who are privileged to be thinkers are obliged to respect exigency and admit to crisis.

Proof, if it was needed, that an essay really is an excursion from one position, mood, or attitude to another.

That Cynthia Ozick is an author of abundant flair is certain. I know of no other writer of prose who wields metaphor as debonairly as she. Often, it seems Ozick writes not with a pen but with a magic wand, with a Mozartean effortlessness. But, like Mozart's music, Ozick's prose flirts with frippery. Some passages are dizzying in their metaphorical bustle, others so thick with metaphor that reading them is like drinking honey. One is tempted, with undue causticity perhaps, to ask—like Emperor Joseph II at the premiere of Mozart's "Abduction from the Seraglio"—whether her prose does not, in fact, have "too many notes."

I am, most likely, too sensitive and too severe. I ought to commend her command of rhetoric. I should laud her for exalting the unlikely and the commonplace by forging metaphors of rotary phones, The Cold War, Siamese twins, monkish scribes, and "the Ancient Mariner's sudden love for the repulsive creatures of the sea"—thereby refreshing our reality and animating our too familiar literature.

Ultimately, the measure of an essay, and of an essay collection, is not the agreement it wins but the debate it arouses. And the essays in *Quarrel & Quandary*, one or two excepting, arouse much. ❑

THE BALKANS *(continued from page 67)*

communist nostalgic, nor a Fascist dictator, but an opportunistic, populist leader. His talent was to play on collective anxieties and neuroses, promising impossible things to a population psychologically conditioned by relentless, state-dominated propaganda.

The secret of successful populism is linked to cultivating visions of collective salvation via mystical communion with the "national body." Regarding this element, Kostunica's political discourse has not been that different from Milosevic's. Both read and admired Cosic's novels about Serbia as the martyr nation of the Balkans (once again, while he quotes from many Balkan authors, Glenny does not mention Cosic's enormously influential writings). One can only hope that Kostunica will indeed be the revolutionary statesmen who will help Serbia get out of its victimhood complex. But beyond the concrete details of this or that country's local politics, one thing is sure; the carnage in the former Yugoslavia was not the result of great powers' blunders or selfish games, although these powers were certainly bystanders. It was not German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, or the Vatican, but Slobodan Milosevic who did his utmost to ruin whatever form of republican equality existed in post-Tito Yugoslavia.

As for the exhaustion of nationalist magic and the chances for liberal values in the region, one does not need to believe in any "ancient hatred" in order to understand that without strong, consistent and generous Western assistance, deep-seated though temporarily muted rage and discontent may easily and dangerously translate into new populist-bellicose waves. So, in spite of its flaws, including an overwhelming and often dispensable quantity of anecdotal historical details, Glenny's book succeeds in providing a lucid, penetrating, and engaging account of two centuries of Balkan ethnic and political turmoil. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

The World According to George Soros



David C. Korten

- *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism*, by George Soros. Public Affairs, 2000.

> No man can serve two masters:
> for either he will hate the one, and
> love the other;
> or else he will hold to the one, and
> despise the other.
> Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
> —Matthew 6:24

George Soros, high stakes financial speculator, international philanthropist, and a man of grand contradictions tells us in his final paragraph of *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism* that writing it clarified his thinking on his plan for the world and led him to a clear sense of mission for his foundation network. He closes with an ominous sentence.

> I shall not spell it [the mission for his foundation network] out here because it would interfere with my flexibility in carrying it out—there is a parallel here with the problem of making public pronouncements when I was actively engaged in making money—but I can state it in general terms: to foster the civil society component of the Open Society Alliance.

This is pure Soros: Soros writing a book about Soros and his secret plan to create a global open society. It befits the outsized ego of the man who in an interview for a 1995 *New Yorker* profile reflected on the parallels between himself and the God of the Old Testament and observed that as a child he thought of himself as superhuman.

Open Society, a revised edition of his earlier *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered*, is its own contradiction. After presenting a devastating critique of capitalism sure to beguile progressives and infuriate market fundamentalists, it concludes that global capitalism is the best of all possible worlds and sets forth a program of "reforms" that on close reading are little more than a call to give yet more money and power to the stewards of global capitalism—the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank.

There are three reasons to read *Open Society*. The first is for the penetrating Soros critique of capitalism. The second is for insights into the limited worldview of those who live in the world of high finance. The third is to understand why we must be skeptical of the public pretensions of persons of means who profess to serve two masters.

The Critique

Although the insights of the Soros critique of global capitalism are scarcely new, they are rarely articulated with such candor and accuracy by those who have so mastered its ways for personal gain. The following is a sampling of Soros' insights.

1. Unregulated financial markets are inherently unstable. Soros observes that, contrary to conventional economic theory, financial markets are not driven toward a relatively stable and rational price by the objective value

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SHAW

assessment of such things as the soundness of a company's management, products, or record of profitability. Rather they are constantly driven away from equilibrium by the momentum of self-fulfilling expectations—a rising stock price attracts buyers who further raise the price—to the point of collapse. The recent massive inflation and subsequent collapse in the price of the shares of unprofitable dot-com companies illustrates Soros' point.

Bank lending also contributes to the instability, because the price of real and financial assets is set in part by their collateral value. The higher their market price rises the larger the loans banks are willing to make to their buyers to bid up prices. When the bubble bursts, the value of the assets plummets below the amount of the money borrowed against them. This forces banks to call their loans and cut back on the lending, which depresses asset prices and dries up the money supply. The economy then tanks—until credit worthiness is restored and a new boom phase begins

2. Financial markets render irrelevant the morality of their participants. According to Soros there is no meaningful place for individual moral behavior in the context of financial markets, because such behavior has no consequence other than to reduce the financial return to the ethical actor.

> When I bought shares in Lockheed and Northrop after the managements were indicted for bribery, I helped sustain the price of their stocks. When I sold sterling short in 1992, the Bank of England was on the other side of my transactions, and I was in effect taking money out of the pockets of British taxpayers. But if I had tried to take social consequences into account, it would have thrown off my risk-reward calculation, and my profits would have been reduced.

Soros argues that if he had not bought Lockheed and Northrop, then somebody else would have, and Britain would have devalued sterling no matter what he did. "Bringing my social conscience into the decision-making process would make no difference in the real world; but it may adversely affect my own results." One can challenge the Soros claim that such behavior is amoral rather than immoral, but his basic argument is accurate. His understanding that it is futile to look to individual morality as the solution to the excesses of financial markets is all too accurate.

3. Corporate employees are duty-bound to serve only corporate financial interests. Soros writes:

> Publicly owned companies are single-purpose organizations—their purpose is to make money. The tougher the competition, the less they can afford to deviate. Those in charge may be well-intentioned and upright citizens, but their room for maneuver is strictly circumscribed by the position they occupy. They are duty-bound to uphold the interests of the company. If they think that cigarettes are unhealthy or that fostering civil war to obtain mining concessions is unconscionable, they ought to quit their jobs. Their place will be taken by people who are willing to carry on.

Though not specifically mentioned by Soros, this is why corporations are properly excluded from the political processes by which societies define their goals and the rules of the marketplace. They are incapable of distinguishing between private corporate interests and broader public interests.

4. The fact that a strategy or policy produces economic returns in the short-term does not mean the long-term results will be beneficial. The focus of financial markets is on short-term individual gain to the exclusion of both social and longer-term consequences. The fact that particular policies and strategies are effective in producing short-term financial returns does not mean they are more generally beneficial or desirable. Soros offers the example that running up a budget or trade deficit "feels good while it lasts, but there can be hell to pay later."

5. The relationship between the center and the periphery of the capitalist system is profoundly unequal. The powerful countries at the center of the capitalist system are both wealthier and more stable than countries at the periphery because control of the financial system and ownership of productive assets allows them to shape economic and political affairs to their benefit. "Foreign ownership of capital deprives peripheral countries of autonomy and often hinders the development of democratic institutions. The international flow of capital is subject to catastrophic interruptions." In times of uncertainty financial capital tends to return to its country of origin, thus depriving countries at the periphery of the financial liquidity necessary to the function of monetized economies. "The center's most important feature is that it controls its own economic policies and holds in its hands the economic destinies of periphery countries."

6. In the capitalist system financial values tend to displace social values in sectors where this is destructive of important public interests. Soros writes:

> Monetary values have usurped the role of intrinsic values, and markets have come to dominate spheres of existence where they do not properly belong. Law and medicine, politics, education, science, the arts, even personal relations—achievements or qualities that ought to be valued for their own sake are converted into monetary terms; they are judged by the money they fetch rather than their intrinsic value." Because financial "capital is free to go where most rewarded, ... countries vie to attract and retain capital, and if they are to succeed they must give precedence to the requirements of international capital over other social objectives.

The Limitations

The Soros critique would seem to establish an iron-clad case for the conclusion—widely shared among the civil-society groups protesting the forces of corporate globalization—that each nation must maintain its essential economic sovereignty by regulating the

flow of goods and money across its borders and that market forces must be subordinated to the democratically determined rules of a strong public sector. Soros' world view and personal interests are, however, much too aligned with the status quo to accept the logical outcome of his own argument.

> My critique of the global capitalist system falls under two main headings. One concerns the defects of the market mechanism, primarily the instabilities built into international financial markets. The other concerns the deficiencies of the nonmarket sector, primarily the failure of politics at the national and international levels. The deficiencies of the nonmarket sector far outweigh the defects of the market mechanism.

In his focus on financial markets, Soros scarcely mentions the real economy of goods and services, people and nature. Nor does he make more than passing reference to human rights, democracy, equity, and the environment—all of which are obvious victims of the corporate global economy. As to poverty and economic justice, Soros tells us, "I am altogether leery of so-called social and economic freedoms and the corresponding human rights: freedom from hunger or the rights to a square meal" because rights must be enforced by the state and this "would give the state too big a role in the economy."

In a rare mention of the poor, Soros suggests their needs are best left to the charity of the rich: "We must recognize that under global capitalism individual states have limited capacity to look after the welfare of their citizens, yet it behooves the rich to come to the aid of the poor." His only mention of the possibility of a less extreme form of capitalism that might value a more equitable distribution of income and ownership is to categorically reject it. "Social justice emphatically does not mean equality, because that would take us right back to communism. I prefer the Rawlsian concept of social justice, which holds that an increase in total wealth must also bring some benefit to the most disadvantaged. What 'some' means has to be defined by each society for itself, and the definition is liable to vary over time."

Soros has no great quarrel with democracy in moderation, but warns us to beware of the unruly masses. He fears, for example, that if the General Assembly of the United Nations were turned into an effective legislative body, "we might just have an overdose of democracy, with every NGO breaking down the doors with legislative proposals. International civil society is capable of great achievements such as the ban on land mines, but with the help of the Internet it could become too much of a good thing. We have all seen what happened at the WTO meeting in Seattle." The self-appointed, self-righteous billionaire with a secret plan for the world goes on to tell us that he is "rather leery of self-appointed, self-righteous NGOs."



The limits of the Soros worldview were especially evident in his April 13, 1994 testimony before the Banking Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. He explained to committee members that when a speculator bets that a price will rise and it falls instead, he is forced to protect himself by selling—which accelerates the price drop and increases market volatility. "No great harm is done," he told the Committee, "except perhaps higher volatility," unless everyone rushes to sell at the same time and a discontinuity is created, meaning that a speculator who has to sell can find no buyers and consequently may suffer "catastrophic losses." When Soros says, "No great harm is done," he means there is no threat to the integrity of the system and the losses of the speculators who created the crisis fall within acceptable limits. The millions of people whose lives and livelihoods are disrupted by the machinations of the global financial casino in which they have no say simply aren't on his screen.

Soros takes no note of the fact that from an elite perspective, the genius of finance capitalism is its ability to manage the money system in a way that maintains a sharp distinction between those who live by their labor and those who live by money—keeping money scarce for the former while allowing the latter to create it in abundance through the interaction of debt pyramids and financial bubbles. The result is an inexorable transfer of control over the real wealth of society from the many whose labor produces the goods and services by which we all live to the financial elites who make only money. Enough money trickles down to the working classes in times of economic boom to create the illusion that new wealth is being enjoyed by all. Behind the illusion, however, there is a darker reality of growing inequality and the depletion of real wealth. Either Soros has not seen through to the reality behind the illusion or he chooses to ignore it.

The Contradictions

Soros professes his allegiance to two masters: maximizing private profit in his market dealings and the public good in his philanthropy. Indeed, he asserts as a guiding principle that, "People should separate their role as market participant from their role as political participant. As market participants, people ought to pursue their individual self-interests; as participants in the political process, they ought to be guided by the public interest." It's a tidy bifurcation, but begs the question of whether it is possible for either individuals or society to sustain such a division between private greed and public citizenship.

Consider what it means in the specific case of George Soros, who at one and the same time is investing hundreds of millions of dollars for his private profit in the countries of Eastern Europe and spending still more hundreds of millions through his foundations in those same countries to

shape their economic and political policies in the public interest. One marvels at the discipline that would be required to compartmentalize these interests in one's daily dealings. When Soros meets with political leaders, including heads of state, how are they to know whether they are dealing with the private Soros or the public Soros? Can even Soros be clear which he is representing in any given encounter? When Soros The Beneficent finds himself pitted against Soros The Greedy, whose side is Soros the Arbiter most likely to favor?

Soros the Benevolent has confronted Soros the Greedy and Soros the Greedy wins hands down.

The Soros reform agenda reveals the deep conflicts. Most of Chapter 10, "A New Global Financial Architecture," is devoted to spelling out the myriad reasons why governments of countries at the periphery of the global economy best serve their citizens by regulating financial markets, foreign investors, and economic borders. Yet Soros concludes that "the instability of the international financial system has no architectural solution at present; it is more a challenge for day-to-day management" and declares capital controls, the obvious step to curtail instability, to be "beggar-thy-neighbor policies that could disrupt the global capitalist system."

Soros the Benevolent has confronted Soros the Greedy and Soros the Greedy wins hands down. Soros the Arbiter proceeds to settle for a no-reform strengthen-the-status-quo "solution" that calls for the three stewards of global capitalism—the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO—to keep markets open to foreign predators, keep the periphery in debt (but not too much debt), and step in when the system falters with generous bail-outs for those who made bad bets.

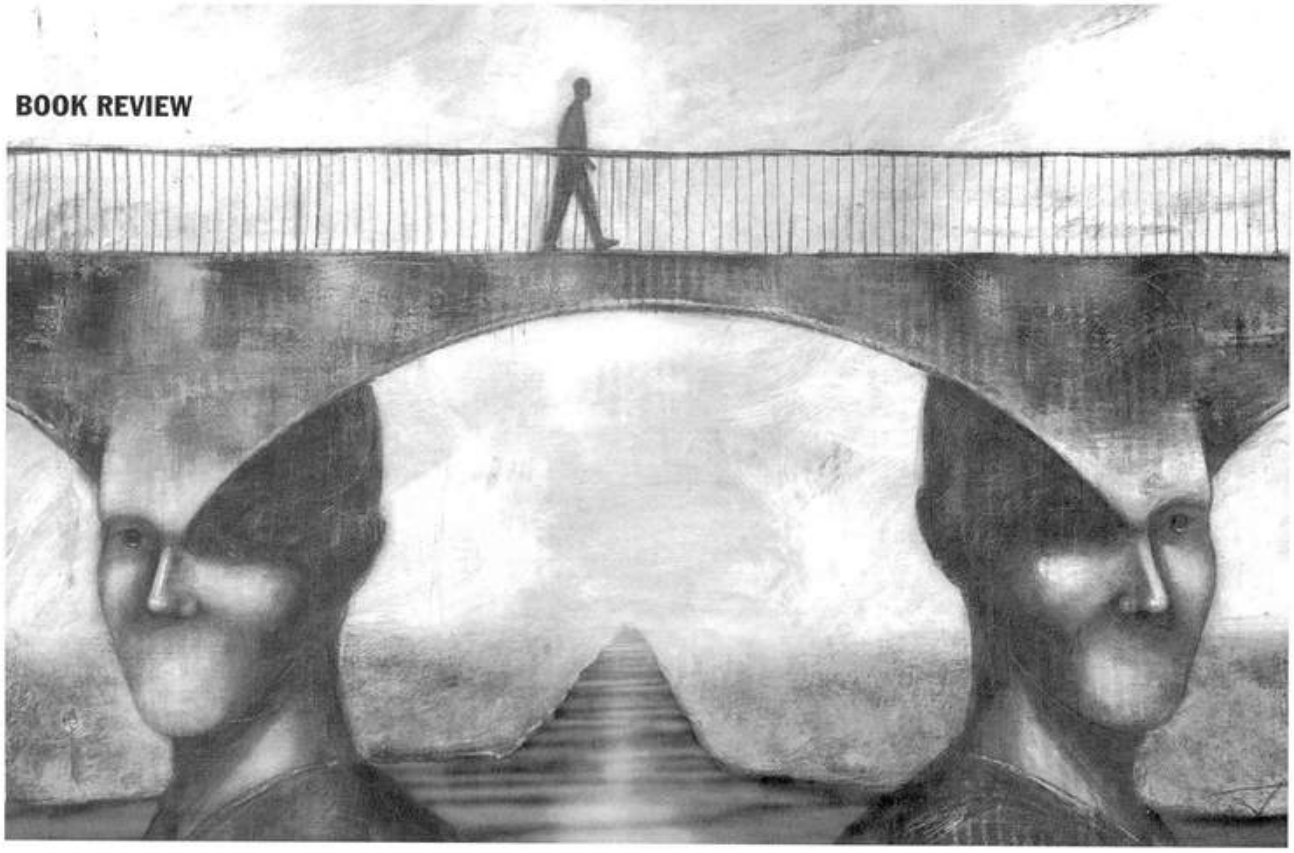
The Soros treatment of democracy is similarly conflicted. He properly acknowledges that "Open society cannot be designed from first principles: It must be created by the people who live in it." Yet his proposal for creating open society centers on a proposed alliance of the world's most powerful states acting under the tutelage of the United States to impose on other states an unspecified set of open society principles. This sounds distressingly similar to the undemocratic, top-down process by which an alliance of the United States, the European Union, Canada, and Japan under the leadership of the United States acts through the IMF, World Bank, and WTO to dictate the principles of open markets to the rest of the world. In the end, the main difference between the "open society" of George Soros and the "open markets" of the market fundamentalists who Soros criticizes is that the former includes just enough space for self-criticism and error correction to prevent the self-destruction of capitalism's powerful mechanisms of wealth extraction and concentration.

Quoting the famous dictum of Cardinal Richelieu that "states have no principles, only interests," Soros concludes that his plan for open society can succeed only with the strong support of civil society. "If citizens have principles, they can impose them on their governments. That is why I advocate an alliance of democratic states: It would have the active engagement of civil society to ensure that governments remain true to the principles of that alliance." The Soros plan thus calls for civil society to impose the principles of open society on powerful states that will in turn impose them on weaker states.

It is here that Soros reveals the most fundamental contradiction of his plan—and the reason civil-society groups must be wary when the beguiling billionaire comes calling with checkbook in hand. "As the recent demonstrations in Seattle and Washington have shown, civil society can be mobilized in opposition to international institutions; a way must be found to mobilize it in their favor.... While civil society is an important part of open society, the common good cannot be left solely in their care. We need public institutions to protect the public interests. The WTO is such an institution; it would be a pity to destroy it."

The thrust of the secret plan for civil society Soros intends to implement through his network of foundations is thus revealed: to mobilize civil society in support of the institutions that to date it has valiantly opposed (even in the face of massive police violence and brutality) as elitist, undemocratic, and a threat to the health of people, community, and planet. Putting it bluntly, Soros plans to buy civil society. The chutzpah of this undertaking is exceeded only by its grand contradiction. Soros needs civil society because it is motivated by principle, not money. To buy civil society, Soros would first have to destroy the dedication to principle that makes it an essential element of his plan.

In his conclusion Soros tells us, "I have learned a lot from other people's criticism, and I can continue to do so after the book is published." I thus commend to him the biblical instruction that "No man [nor woman] can serve two masters." At any given point in our lifetime we each make our choice as to whether we will devote our life to the practice of public citizenship or the pursuit of private greed. George Soros now faces such a choice. If he proceeds with his plan to use his money and influence to realign civil society behind the institutions of greed and his personal financial interests he has made one choice. He could yet, however, make a choice for citizenship by heeding his own critique—which is consistent with that of civil society—and mobilize his foundations in support of civil society's self-defined mission to align the institutions and values of the economy with the interests of life. ❑



Yom Kippur with Morrie

Harold M. Schulweis

- *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* by Mitch Albom. Doubleday, 2000.

When I put down the slender book *Tuesdays With Morrie*, I felt a double sadness. First, for the death of a courageous and good man whose life was ravaged by ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease. But I was also saddened because I sensed that Judaism and the synagogue had lost Morrie and Morrie's children. Morrie was so unmistakably Jewish and yet so far removed from Judaism; so close and yet so far.

I know Morrie Schwartz—not personally, I never met him. But I would know him anywhere. I know his *neshamah* and his *mishpochah*, his soul and his household. It was as if Morrie were raised in my father's house, a child of East European immigrant Jews, secular, cultural, ethnic, Yiddishist, socialist Jews. When I thought of Morrie, I thought of my Papa and his friends.

Morrie and I were landsmen. He was raised in my neighborhood, Tremont Avenue in the Bronx, in a one bedroom apartment in a red brick building near an Italian beer garden. His stepmother, Eva, sang the same songs my mother sang. They were not religious songs. They were *volkslieder*, Yiddish secular folk songs, songs of the people. Most of the songs had a sweet soft sadness to them, songs like the one about a destitute woman, hungry and alone, selling cigarettes in the rain and crying for support. The language sung and spoken between our parents was not simply another language like English or even Hebrew. Yiddish for that generation was the *Mama Loshen*, mother tongue, the sweet soul of Yiddishkeit.

And Yiddishkeit was not Judaism as traditionally understood. Yiddishkeit was not the Judaism of the synagogue, or daily prayers, or Sabbath observance, or ritual law, or theological doctrine, and especially not the Judaism of religious denominations like Orthodoxy, Reform, Conservative, or Reconstructionist Judaism. Yiddishkeit was Jewishness; a world of ethics, ethnicity, folk culture, and idealism of *die massen*, the masses, the property of proletarian, not bourgeois, Jews.

Yiddishkeit was the way of "*der poshiter yid*," the common Jew, the simple Jew, "*der arbater*," the worker.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY JON KRAUSE

A synonym for Yiddishkeit was *menschlichkeit*, the ideal of humaneness, kindness, and decency. The word I heard in my home most often was "*yoisher*" which means justice, usually social justice. And "*mitzvah*," which did not mean "commandment" as my Zayde taught, but "to do a mitzvah," to do the decent thing.

Morrie, like Papa, was raised in the era of depression. On his deathbed, Morrie still remembers looking for a job in the fur factory where his father worked. What he recalls as he enters the factory were walls closed in around him, a room dark and hot, the windows covered with filth, the machines churning like train wheels. The fur hairs flying, leaving a thickened air, and the workers sewing their pelts together, bent over their needles. And the boss marching up and down the rows screaming for them to go faster.

Morrie Schwartz resolved that he would never allow himself to do any work that exploited someone else; never would he allow himself to make money off the sweat of others. Like Papa.

Yiddishkeit, the culture of Yiddish, was expressed in Yiddish poetry, art, music that poured out its heart to comfort the underdog, the laborer, the exploited, the helpless. Yiddishist culture was reflected in the great Yiddish classics—the writings of Mendele Mocher Seforim, Shalom Aleichem, and Y. L. Peretz—and came into my home through the great Yiddish newspapers such as *Der Tog*, the *Morgan Journal*, *Der Forvetz* and Yiddish plays written by Sholom Asch, Peretz Hirschbein, David Pinski, and through works by artists Maurice Schwartz, Muni Weisenfreud (Paul Muni), and Ludwig Satz.

I had a dog. My dog was not called Rover or Spot. My dog was given a Yiddish name, "Ropchik," after a dog in one of the short stories of Shalom Aleichem. In that story Ropchik was the smallest, weakest dog, the last to receive a scrap of meat from the butcher. All the other dogs beat him out. Ropchik represented the oppressed Jewish proletarian.

Papa didn't send me to yeshivah to study with rabbis. My father, like Morrie's, had different heroes: Chayim Zhitlovsky, Karalnik, David Dubinsky, Sidney Hellman. My father could never warm up to rabbis. Ironically, in later years poor Papa had to suffer his son's attraction to the rabbinate. Forgive me Papa.

I went to *schulah*. Papa and his *chaverim* sent their children to Yiddish afternoon *schulah*. Whether associated with the Arbeter Farband, Shalom Aleichem, or Arbeter ring, these Yiddishist schools offered no classes in prayer or ritual law, in Mishnah or Gemorah. There was no God talk. Some Jews still get nervous when Senator Lieberman talks about God and faith. For them, it's not Jewish.

Morrie would never deny his Jewishness, but asked about his religion I think he would say "none."

Morrie considered himself an agnostic. He would not have a traditional funeral. He instructed his family to have him cremated and then added, "Make sure they don't overcook me."

So filled with Jewish sensibilities, Morrie was so far from Judaism.

The author of the book recalls that when Ted Koppel, the TV host of ABC's "Nightline," interviewed Morrie, Morrie turned to Koppel, himself a Jew, and asked him, "Tell me something about faith." Koppel is nonplussed and answers rather stiffly, "I usually don't talk about such things with people I've only known a few minutes." But Morrie presses on, "Ted, I'm dying and I don't have a lot of time here." Ted Koppel laughs and says, "All right then. Faith." and then quotes a line from Marcus Aurelius. Now I have nothing against Marcus Aurelius or against stoic philosophy but that response struck me as odd and revealing.

I thought about Morrie. Not only because he is such a loveable eccentric individual but because there are tens of thousands of native-born Jews like Morrie who call themselves secular, cultural, ethnic, and ethical Jews and who are so estranged from Judaism and the world of the synagogue. When the Jewish Population Study was published in 1990, it recorded the response of a huge number of native-born Jews (1.2 million) who, when asked "What is your religion?" answered "none." Morrie would never deny his Jewishness, but asked about his religion I think he would say "none."

I love Morrie and his family—the tailors, peddlers, cloak makers, cigar workers, hat makers, painters, and their friends. I love their compassion, their moral sensibility, their *menschlekeit*, their universalistic and humanistic outrage at injustice. But I am struck by the disconnection, the chasm between Yiddishkeit and Judaism, between moral sensibility and Jewish law, between conscience and Jewish belief, between the home and the synagogue.

And by the end of the book I was saddened because I think that the synagogue bears some responsibility for the loss of Morrie. So I found myself talking (in the margins) to the author of the book. Didn't the synagogue ever teach Morrie the religious roots of his humanism, the theological foundations of his moral sensibility, the rooteedness of Yiddishkeit in the soil of Judaism, the ethics of Jewish ritual? In the book, Morrie in his dying condition naturally spoke to his interviewer about death, dying, and the funeral. Not a word about the Jewish connection, the sacred sources of your idealism. I jotted down, all over the margins of the book, the Jewish moral wisdom that shapes the collective Jewish conscience and affects the way Jews think, feel, and act about dying. I wrote it down for Morrie's children—the missing chapters. On the border of

a page, I wrote down a section from the Talmud in Moed Katan 27a. It begins this way:

> Tanu Rabbanam: "Our rabbis taught: formerly, they used to carry food to the house of mourning, the rich in silver and gold baskets and the poor in baskets of willow twigs. But the poor felt ashamed. They therefore instituted the tradition that all should carry food to the mourners in baskets of twigs. Because of the honor of the poor.
>
> They used to serve drinks in the house of the mourners. The rich in white glass vessels, and the poor in colored glasses. But the poor felt shamed. So they instituted a tradition that all should be served drinks in colored glasses out of respect for the poor.
>
> In former times the custom was to uncover the face of the rich and cover the face of the poor because the faces of the poor had turned livid during lives of drought. And the poor were shamed. Therefore, the law was instituted that all of the faces of the deceased were to be covered out of respect for the poor.
>
> Formerly the expense of taking the dead out to his burial fell hard upon his next of kin, so the next of kin abandoned the deceased and fled. Then Rabbi Rabban Gamliel ordered that he be buried in flaxen, linen vestments rather than in woolen vestments.

Nowadays all the world follows the practice of being buried in simple linen *tachrichin* so that the poor will not be shamed. This is the Jewish ethics of ritual law and this is the ritual of ethics. Jewish law has a heart and the Jewish heart must be known to be cultivated.

Morrie speaks of death and the dignity of man. Did anyone in his Talmud Torah class teach Morrie why the Jewish burial must take place as soon as possible, why ideally it should not be delayed? The quick burial is based on deep respect for humanity. It is called *kavod ha-met*, respect for the dignity of the human being. Did Morrie ever hear the rabbinic parable explaining the



tradition of a quick burial? In Deuteronomy 21 we read that if a man is found guilty and sentenced to death, "the body shall not hang all night. It is a reproach to God. The body must be buried on the same day." Why a reproach? Here's a parable. A king once had a twin brother. When the twin brother was apprehended and tried, found guilty and hanged on a tree, the people passed by and cried out, "The king is dead." Therefore, we do not let the body remain overnight but bury the deceased immediately. For it is a desecration of the king.

This is the meaning of the audacious parable. The king is God and God's twin brother is the human being. So when a human being dies and is unburied, God is defaced. The funeral is done as quickly as possible in order to educate the people that human life is holy. "*Der mensh iz heylig.*" Human life is holier than the scroll of the Torah. That is the religious ground of Morrie's humanism.

Morrie may have heard that according to ritual law the casket remains closed at the funeral. But why? Is it something you have to obey blindly because the rabbi said so? The casket is closed because of deep, religious Jewish humanism. When the casket is open and people pass by, we become spectators, voyeurs; and the deceased becomes an object, an it, a thing. The deceased is a *nireh v'aino roeh*, seen but not able to see. That is no honor to the person. That is a disrespect to the human being who must be honored in death as in life. That is the Jewish ritual of respect for human beings.

Morrie was not taught this way, not by *schul* and not by Hebrew School. Morrie was told what is to be done, when it is to be done, where it is to be done, and how it is to be done; he was taught by fiat and quotation but not given the moral and poetic "why" things are done. To know where, when, how, but not why is to sever the soul's connection between law and ethics, between Halachah and humanness, between Yiddishkeit and Judaism. Morrie's children wonder why flowers are not prominently displayed. What does the tradition have against flowers? But they should know that the tradition encourages the mourner to honor the deceased by using that money for the living, to use it to add fragrance to the life of the poor or the sick. We honor the dead by elevating the living. We beautify the mitzvah by beautifying the life of the ignored.

Throughout the book Morrie expresses his criticism of mindless materialism in our world. Where does that sensibility come from? It derives from the Bible's protest against deification of money, against the disgrace of worshipping the calf of gold in all its forms. It is translated into all kinds of ritual laws and customs.

- The shofar that is covered with gold is *pasul*. It is invalid because the sound of the Shevarim, the quavering notes that call for justice, is not to be muffled by the gold mouthpiece on the shofar.
- The high priest must remove his vestments of silver and gold when he enters into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. He must put on plain linen clothes, lest you think that silver and gold can atone for transgression.
- When on the festival of Shavuot the first fruits are brought, they must not be brought in gold baskets but only in baskets of straw. God is not impressed with glitter.
- On the eve of the Sabbath, the Jewish custom is to search one's clothing to remove any coins because on the Sabbath we mean to break off our relations with the pocket.
- Rabbi Israel Salanter taught his students the laws that deal with "blitztrop." If you find a speck of blood in a fertilized egg it is not

> proper to eat it. It is *treif*. He went on to explain to his students that this law applies to more than eggs. If you take money in which you find the blood of exploitation of workers, it is *treif*, it is prohibited.

Morrie didn't get it because Morrie wasn't taught. The ethics of Yiddishkeit, of Jewish humanism, did not come out of the air. Jewish conscience is implanted in the ethics of ritual and the ritual of ethics. The philanthropy of the Jewish people is a cultivated conscience. Why were we trained as children to fast on Yom Kippur? We teach our children to fast to soften their hearts; not to punish their bodies, but to sensitize their souls. Our blessed children have lived lives without having to go a single day without food or drink. But they fast today not to diet the body, but to feel the pangs of hunger, the faintness that poverty visits on millions who go to bed without a meal.

We fast and we pray for clean hands and a clean heart. You cannot pray with filthy hands. Listen to our prophet Isaiah: "When you spread forth your hands I will hide My eyes from you. Your hands are full of blood.

"Wash you, make you clean, put aside the evil of your doings before Mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." This is the ethics of ritual canonized in the Bible and read in the Yom Kippur Haftorah; it is the ritual of ethic.

The sense of "*rachmones*," the compassion of Yiddishkeit, did not originate in Spinoza, Karl Marx, Freidrich Engels, or Ludwig Feuerbach. It came from the Torah, from the book of Exodus: "If you take your neighbor's clothes to pledge, you shall deliver it to him by the time the sun goes down—for that is his only covering for his skin—"*bameh yishkav*." How shall he sleep?

Morrie's Yiddish sense of universalism did not come from Marcus Aurelius or Immanuel Kant or Hegel but from the conscience of Jewish people canonized in the prophets. From Malachi (2:10), the last of the prophets, who declared: "Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another?" From the book of Job he heard, "Did not the One who made me in the womb make him?"

The passion for peace and reconciliation he learned not from Voltaire but from Isaiah in the eighth century BCE who, while Egypt and Assyria raged against Israel, spoke these words in the name of God, "Blessed be My people Egypt, and the work of My hands Assyria, and Israel, Mine inheritance."

Yiddishkeit had no staying power.

Yiddishkeit is the child of Judaism. And when it is orphaned, it is lost. Yiddishkeit was orphaned. I witnessed the terrible truth. Yiddishkeit had no staying power. It did not continue to the next generation. The Yiddish schools I attended died, the Yiddish theater disappeared, the Yiddish press collapsed. Yiddishkeit was branches without roots, branches cut off from the soil of Judaism.

I mourn for Morrie. At Morrie's funeral there was no kaddish, no *El Mole*, no shivah, no minyan, and no continuity. I meet Morrie's children and his children's children. They call themselves "cultural Jews" but it is a culture bereft of language, bereft of God, bereft of the holy days or holy months. It is a stomach culture, an occasional yearning for lox and bagels. Yiddishkeit has been reduced to a way of eating.

Morrie's children will not deny that they are Jews, but theirs is a Jewishness without knowledge or conviction or practice or passion. They are neither/nor Jews; neither believers nor atheists, neither Zionists nor anti-Zionists, neither socialists nor capitalists. They are neither/nor Jews. It reminds me of a Yiddish joke—they are a cross between a chicken and a rabbit, *nisht ahin un nisht aher*.

Where are they? They're not here. They are not members of the Jewish community. It's not their membership that I crave. I want their minds and their souls. I want their participation in one ethical action project, and in adult education. I want their children in our Hebrew and Day School and in our Youth Program and in our Camp Ramah programs.

I want the branches and leaves to come to life, to connect with the poetry of Psalms and the passion of Jeremiah and the wisdom of *The Ethics of the Fathers* and the logic of Talmud and the song of Hasidism. Morrie deserves a better end and his children deserve a better beginning.

It is the task of the synagogue to embrace them, to overcome the false either/or choices that rupture our Jewish civilization.

> either Yiddishkeit or Judaism
> either ethics or ethnicity
> either social action or prayer
> either love of humanity or love of my people
> either spirituality or Halachah.

The Jewish response is both/and. The Jewish response is oneness, wholeness; *Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Elohenu, Adonai echad.*

Morrie's children belong here. Morrie belongs here. For him I recite kaddish. For him I recite yizkor.

Morrie's children belong here with us. I miss Morrie's children. There are millions of Jews missing from Judaism. We have to bring them in to join Yiddishkeit with Judaism, humanism with Halachah, ethics with ethnicity, private prayer with public passion for justice.

For Morrie and his children, the prophecy of Joel: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old shall dream dreams, your young shall see visions."

For Morrie and his children, the last line of the last prophet, Malachi: "... and He shall turn the heart of the parents to the children and the heart of the children to their parents."

Yiskor with Morrie. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Interfaith Spirituality



Charles Michael Burack

- *The Direct Path: Creating a Journey to the Divine Using the World's Mystical Traditions,* by Andrew Harvey. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishers, 2000.

Increasingly, spiritual seekers are looking outside their native religious traditions for spiritual insights, practices, and teachers, forging uniquely integrative spiritual paths. A deep, wise, and passionate teacher who has inspired me and many others to explore the world's traditions and develop our own direct relationship with God is Andrew Harvey. Born in India, educated in England, and now living in America, Harvey was raised by Christian parents, spent time at the Hindu ashram of Sri Aurobindo, was a devotee of the Hindu guru Mother Meera, studied with Tibetan mystic Thuksey Rinpoche, and was a close friend of the Catholic priest Bede Griffith. When Mother Meera would not accept his homosexuality, he renounced her claim to be an avatar of the Divine Mother and in 1993 broke off their fifteen year guru/disciple relationship.

Harvey's new book, *The Direct Path: Creating a Journey to the Divine Using the World's Mystical Traditions,* warns seekers about the corruption and damage done by the master-disciple system in all the major mystical traditions. Each of these traditions "in different but fundamentally similar ways, controls believers and claims to broker the relationship between the believer and God in ways that both subtly and blatantly keep the believer from claiming the full range of his or her innate divine powers." He believes that all these traditions have "failed in one essential task—the reducing of human anxiety and aggression through the instruction of human beings in their essential divine nature."

Harvey's "radical disillusion" with abusive religious power structures had a very positive result: it expanded his "vision of the possibilities of mystical activism" and birthed his vision of "the Direct Path," which is "the Path to God without dogma or priests or gurus, the Path of direct self-empowerment and self-awakening in and under God in the heart of life." This Path "has always been known and followed by a certain part of humanity."

While the Path opens the seeker to her own divinity, it is neither self-centered nor isolated because the seeker simultaneously discovers the divinity in all beings, commits herself to deepening this awareness, and dedicates her life to serving God and God's creation. For Harvey, "mystical experience has to be made real in active service of all beings everywhere and in a burning commitment to transform the conditions of earth life in every way and on every level."

Like many creation-centered mystics, Harvey affirms that All is in God, and God is in All. His understanding of "the inner unity of all mystical traditions" was powerfully influenced by the nineteenth-century Bengali mystic Ramakrishna, who said that "all are calling on the same God ... it is not good to feel that my religion is true and other religions are false.... God has made religions to suit different aspirants, times, and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths."

Harvey's book is thus a selective compendium of powerful spiritual ideas and practices from the world's major religions. He describes such practices as mindfulness and mantra meditations, concentration techniques, chanting, self-inquiry exercises, methods for invoking the divine presence, and contemplative readings of sacred texts, always encouraging the seeker to begin and end these practices "by dedicating all of their beauty, power, and insight to the welfare of all beings throughout the universe." Harvey also offers seekers a map of the stages of spiritual development.

The book is not meant to be, nor should it be taken as, a complete guide to the Direct Path. It is certainly a wonderful starting point for seekers who want to explore a variety of powerful transformative practices from around the world. Harvey draws on his own vast experience, offering wise suggestions on how to perform or modify practices to enhance their transformative power. I agree with Harvey that spiritual companions, teachers, and guides are essential, but that none of these individuals should dictate the nature of our own direct relationship to God. ❑

Charles Burack, Ph.D., is founder of Work Visions and the Center for Sacred Arts and a core faculty member at Naropa University in Oakland, California. He also teaches at the University of Creation Spirituality.

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH SOLIE

MIDRASH

Pillar of Salt

Cecil Helman



But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. —Genesis 19:26

She looked back. Just as the two angels were leading them to safety, and into the city of Zoar. The four of them fleeing: she, her husband Lot, and her two daughters. She looked back, and was turned into salt. Now everyone believes that she disobeyed. That she looked behind her out of curiosity, and was punished for it.

But say, for a moment, that she looked back for quite another reason. Out of compassion, say, and pity. And that as she looked back, she wept.

Possibly she wept for all the dying people of the flaming cities, down on the arid plain. Terrified, screaming, running here and there with their skins all afire—with not even one righteous man among them, to tell them why it was happening.

And wept not only for the doomed citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah—drowned under heavenly showers of brimstone and fire—but also for all those other ones. The ones drowned under showers of water, many generations before. Who had watched with horror as Noah's wooden womb floated off out of sight, and the waters rose swiftly around them. Who had realized then that nothing could ever save them…

. . .

And say, too, that she wept too much. For all the burnt people, and the drowned ones. That there was far too much compassion. Too many tears. As many as all the waters of the flood added together, in all the seas of the drowned world. An endless flood of a million billion salty tears. Flowing in torrents from her eyes, and then from every pore, filling every particle of her shaking body. Tears soaking into the desert floor beneath her feet. Until, at the end to it all, every bit of her was dissolved.

And then, say, she began to evaporate. In the bright midday sun, in the incandescent heat of the burning cities. All the multitude of her droplets rising up into the heavens, from whence they had come. Until finally all of the waters were gone, and only the salt of her tears remained.

A high pile of salt. As high as a person. Salt forming out of her a singular statue of sorrow. A monument, maybe, to too much compassion.

Carved in the shape of a woman … ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLY SIMMONS

Cecil Helman is the author of The Body of Frankenstein's Monster *(WW Norton, 1992) and* Culture, Health and Illness *(Butterworths-Heineman, 1994) among others. He is currently at work on a collection of modern midrashim.*

Tikkun (te-kün) … to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

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