

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

TIKKUN

**SURVIVING
ARIEL SHARON**

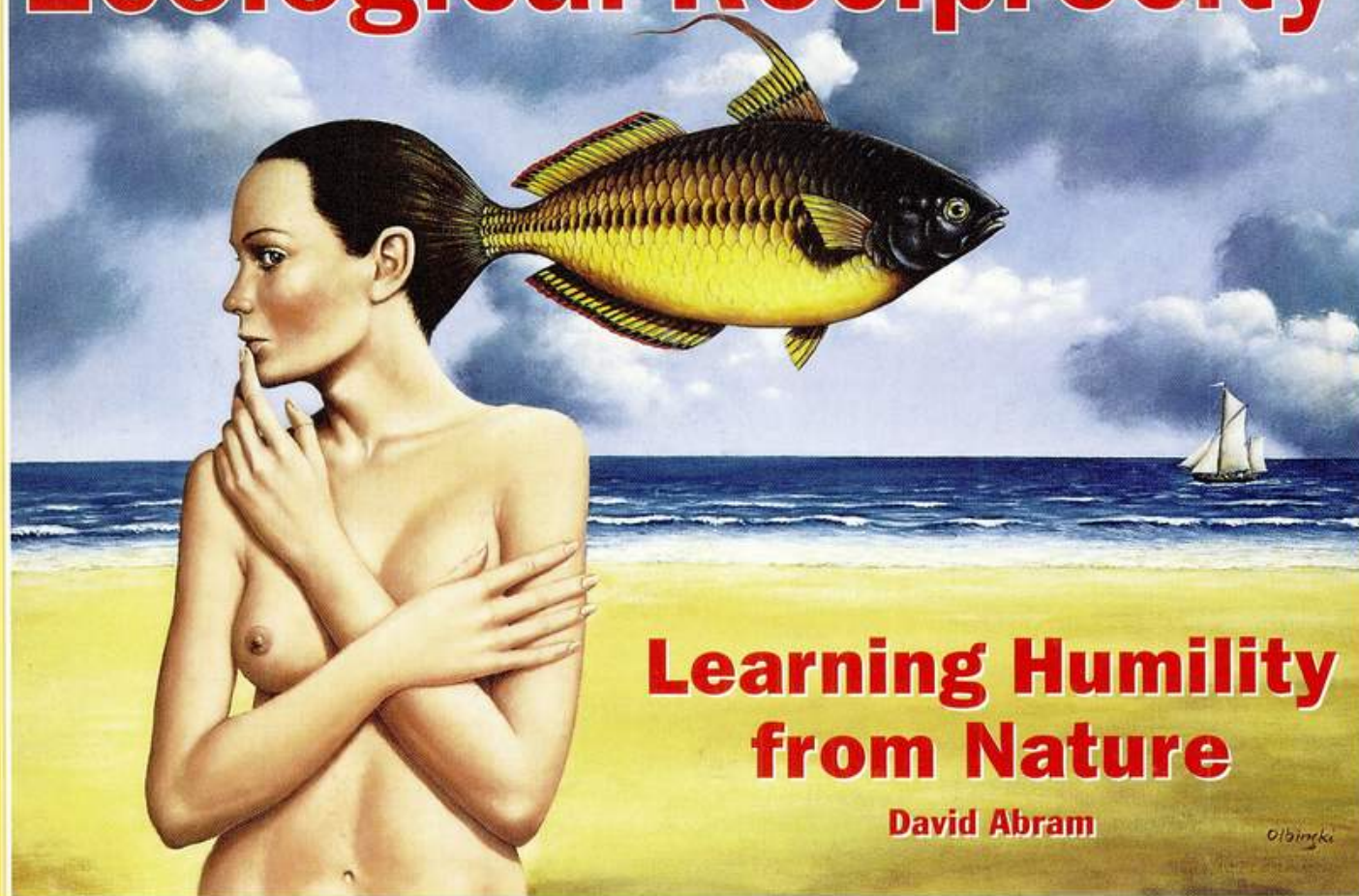
DAVID GROSSMAN, JEROME SLATER,
MICHAEL LERNER

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

MAY/JUNE 2001

\$5.95

Ecological Reciprocity



Learning Humility from Nature

David Abram

CANCER & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Kenny Ausubel • Nina Moliver

THE FLORIDA FIASCO

Michael Tomasky

CHRISTIAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Arthur Green • Dagmar Herzog •
Walter Brueggemann

THE NEW URBANISM

Jane Jacobs

CIRCUMCISION: THE UNKINDEST CUT?

Alternative perspectives from Michael S. Kimmel and David Zaslow

PLUS: Bradley Shavit Artson on INFERTILITY



SpiderMan

Death is outer space come down to earth.
Picking blackberries once on a hot green hill
we saw a yellow orb-weaver spider
put a zig-zag stitch in the bottom of its web.
A swell of happiness. But that night
you cried out crisply and when I looked in
you took a deep breath *here we go*
arching your back showing me where.
Feel my back, daddy.

You will not remember my sweetest season,
but I will tell this story again, my music,
my perfect condition, about one thing alone,
there's no turning away from your melody
as one can get stuck on a line of a poem,
which wants to be music but is only *to* music,
as this is about you and to you.
Someday they will also lap at you,
the low tides of mystery,
absent outdoor commands, furious black seasons,
the laughed-off infinite of foggy nights,
a moon yawing in a mist. Above, the branches
are coming for you like forks, like bare arms.
Nothing important moves for miles.

A light year is shorter than knowing a soul is gone.
Pressed to this instant, the heart hurt like a stopped fist,
my hand steady on you, little lazy god of work.
My boy, my love, my truly poem, I will hang
head-down in my garden web even when I'm gone into space,
at rest in the cords of creation, marvelous stuff,
stronger than steel, only fused quartz is stronger
than spider silk. And if the web should break?
Trap-door and recluse spiders, wandering and fishing spiders,
we'll all pour down like silver and start again.

—Sean Enright

2 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

5 PUBLISHER'S NOTES

7 EDITORIALS: *Faith-Based Defunding of the Public Sector; Surviving Ariel Sharon*

ARTICLES:

11 Surviving Ariel Sharon

Michael Lerner talks with Israeli novelist **David Grossman** (11) about building a culture of hope and trust towards Palestinians in Israel. **Jerome Slater** (16) argues that Israeli actions, rather than Arab anti-Semitism, are the cause of today's Intifada.

21 COVER STORY: Ecological Reciprocity

The wild ways of salmon lead **David Abram** on a meditation about the value of humility, the sacredness of place, and the importance of reciprocating the gifts we receive from other living beings.

27 The New Urbanism

Jane Jacobs talks with **Roberta Brandes Gratz** (27) about a progressive response to development. In their *Torah of Money* column, **Lawrence Bush** and **Jeffrey Dekro** (32) address the problem of predatory lending.

33 Cancer and Alternative Medicine

In a shocking exposé of the cancer industry and its response to alternative therapies, **Kenny Ausubel** (33) tells what happens *When Healing Becomes a Crime*. Following is **Nina Moliver's** (39) controversial claim about the role food choices play in shaping our health.

41 Infertility and Circumcision

One of the first targets of Jewish feminism was the law and our bodies. Now it's men's turn. **Bradley Shavit Artson** (41) tackles Jewish laws on infertility. **Michael S. Kimmel** (43) makes a passionate case against circumcision; **David Zaslow** (49) makes a spiritually-based case for it.

51 Holocaust

Geoffrey Hartman explains the value of *Holocaust Videography*.

57 American Politics

Alisa Valderrama (57) updates us on *Student Activism and Corporate Reform*. **Michael Tomasky** (58) critiques the media's role (or lack of it) in the *Florida Fiasco*, while **Michael Christ** and **Peter Zheutlin** (61) remind us that nuclear war remains a substantial threat.

REVIEWS:

64 For **Jonathan Schorsch**, **André Aciman's** latest disappoints.

65 **Christian Anti-Semitism: Arthur Green** (65) reviews

James Carroll's history of Catholic anti-Semitism and **Dagmar Herzog** (69) considers a new anthology on Christian theologians' betrayal of the Jews during the Holocaust. A counterpoint follows from **Walter Brueggemann** (73).

74 Whither the American synagogue? **David M. Gordis** enlarges on **Sidney Schwartz's** question.

75 Cheapest is not always best. **David M. Stone** explains why in his review of **Robert Reich's** newest book.



77 **Nicholas Von Hoffman** on **Bob Woodward** on **Alan Greenspan**.

80 **Ya'acov Gabriel** on the New York music scene.

Inside Back Cover: *Sikkum*: Books TIKKUN recommends.

Opposite:
SpiderMan by Sean Enright.

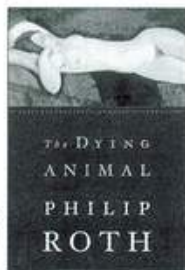
Front Cover:
Significant Increase in Confidence by Rafal Olbinski.
Acrylic on Canvas. Courtesy of Patinae Gallery,
www.patinae.com.

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

The Dying Animal

Philip Roth
Houghton Mifflin, 2001

In 156 engaging and life-enhancing pages, Philip Roth shows again that he is the most talented and brilliant novelist writing in the English language today. The story of David Kepesh, an over-sixty TV culture critic, and Consuela Castillo, the twenty-four-year-old daughter of a wealthy Cuban exile, may be the most powerful assault on ageism ever written. Returning to the liberatory elements of 1960s sexuality, Roth smashes the constraints of contemporary political correctness and shows us the salvific power of love in the most unexpected ways.



Living Waters The Mei HaShiloach

A Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi
Mordechai Yosef of Isbitza
Translated and edited by Betsalel Philip
Edwards
Jason Aronson, 2001

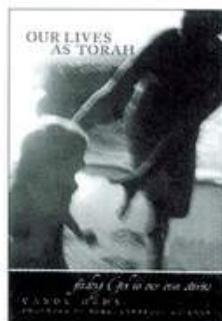
Those of us who had the pleasure to study with Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach know that his particular genius was to translate the insights of the Isbitzer Rebbe into a contemporary lingo. The Isbitzer Rebbe was a spiritual genius at the level of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Zalman Schachter Shalomi, so his commentary on Torah is filled with deep insights. This volume, a welcome first step, does not contain the original Hebrew, and the English is somewhat strained and doesn't fully reveal the depths of wisdom that can be found in Isbitz.



Our Lives as Torah

Carol Ochs
Jossey-Bass, 2001

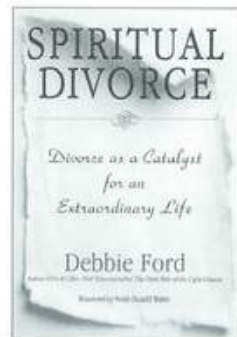
Carol Ochs' latest book is a lively and refreshing guide to finding God in our own life stories. Weaving insights from the Jewish tradition into a larger fabric that includes the details and dramas of our own lives, Ochs shows us how to mine the richness of our individual and collective experience. Written in an easily accessible style, Ochs has many deep theological insights which deserve serious attention.



Spiritual Divorce

Debbie Ford
HarperSanFrancisco, 2001

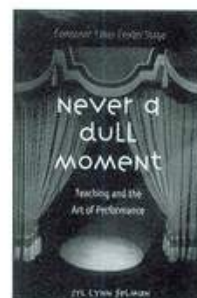
Debbie Ford is not urging you to leave a relationship in order to find personal fulfillment. But she does want to help those who have found themselves in the situation of divorce to see that they may be given new opportunities to serve God and to draw upon spiritual resources that were missing in the marriage. There are some moments when this book verges on New Agey clichés, but mixed in with that are some very valuable and empowering insights. Compared to the spiritually empty and sometimes legally conflictual process of many divorces, the paths outlined in this book provide a way to make divorce a really powerful moment of transformation and healing.



Never a Dull Moment

Jyl Lynn Felman
Routledge, 2001

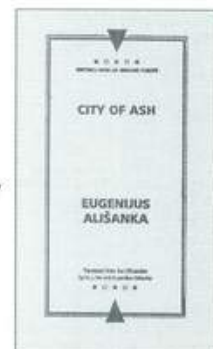
TIKKUN author and lesbian visionary, Jyl Lynn Felman never fails to excite and shake up her readers. Here she is at the top of her game—witty, insightful, provocative, sexy, and moving. Every classroom would benefit from Felman's approach, and universities would become centers of life culture instead of institutions dedicated to destroying our interest in ideas, if this book became the standard by which tenure was granted. Get every college president you know to read it.



City of Ash

Eugenijus Ališanka
Translated by H. L. Hix and the author
Northwestern University Press, 2000

This second book by a leading young poet of Lithuania expressively frustrates the formal regulations of the Language Commission in his own country and the armchair tourism of Eastern Europe in the United States. In poems that are by turns elliptical and fragmentary, Ališanka spins the web of haunted connections between the real and the unreal in a city that is contemporaneous even as it rises from the shards of history. This is a volume from another world that seems to speak immediately from a literary and political climate quite our own.



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Letters to the Editor

Traitor Lerner?

To the Editor:

I came across an article authored by Michael Lerner in an Arabic newspaper in which he accuses Ariel Sharon of certain crimes. Michael Lerner, I am astounded that you would add to the anti-Israel incitement in the Arabic press. There is no crime that is worse than that of being a traitor to one's own people. You are a disgrace. There is no form of life lower than you. Let me inform you, Ayatollah Lerner, that despite the work of enemies of the Jewish homeland such as yourself, Israel remains strong and viable due to its brave and strong people. I am proud to tell you, Ayatollah Lerner, that *Am Yisrael Chai* [the Israeli People Live]! Nothing that you do or say will ever change that.

ALAN KATZ

Editor Responds:

We at TIKKUN are proud supporters of the State of Israel—and for that very reason we are critical of Israel's continued

occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which we believe to be both immoral and self-destructive. My article critiquing Sharon was printed in the Jerusalem Post and was reprinted elsewhere without my permission. But the language used here is typical of many other communications I've been receiving in which there is the added element of explicit death threats. Rabin was called "traitor" for months before his actual assassination by a Jewish zealot certain that peacemakers seek to destroy Israel. In fact, peacemakers remain Israel's best hope—even in the age of Ariel Sharon.

To the Editor:

I was saddened to hear that your editor, Michael Lerner, has become the brunt of personal attacks because of his stand on fairness to the Palestinians. Unfortunately, I think it comes with the turf. Years ago, my father, an extremely intelligent man, said to me, "I'm sure the Palestinians have an equally valid point

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of view, which as a Jew I choose to ignore." That statement by him was part of what made me realize that most, if not all, the violence on this planet is fueled by making some kind of narrow band of humanity one's primary identity. Once this occurs, I believe it is inevitable that a different morality becomes operative favoring those inside the chosen group. Though not denying my Jewishness, I consider myself, foremost, a member of the conscious community.

JOEL KRAMER
Bolin, CA

To the Editor:

Since the beginning of the current Intifada, I say "my parents were Jewish" because that is exactly the way I feel. Actually, only my father is Jewish, so according to the Orthodox and Conservative traditions, I'm not Jewish. My religious beliefs have long been outside of the Jewish religion. When the Intifada began, however, and Israel began getting international attention for committing war crimes such as shooting children in cold blood, I began to feel ashamed to claim any Jewish heritage.

It makes it worse when the majority of the Jewish community seems to take the "Israel, Right or Wrong" stance and tries to justify Israel's actions by dehumanizing the Palestinians, making categorical accusations such as "Palestinian parents are sending their children to be killed" and "All Palestinians are terrorists."

While I know that there is a small Jewish movement for justice in Palestine and undoubtedly a larger "silent" Jewish population which deplores Israel's conduct in this war, it is truly depressing most of the time to listen to Jewish friends, relatives, and acquaintances, not to mention the media and letters to the editor, almost rabidly supporting Israel. It seems lost on most of these folks that the international human rights laws and treaties that Israel is violating (ignoring) were, to a great degree, motivated by Jewish suffering in and before WWII. For a country that claims to represent the world's Jews, to violate these laws is an abomination.

SEQUOIA D. SCHROEDER
Van Nuys, California

To the Editor:

I am puzzled by your magazine's "one sided approach" to the right of return of Palestinian refugees (TIKKUN March/April

2001). I haven't heard an admission of guilt from the Arab world for their refusal to accept the UN partition of 1947, two states, Jew and Arab; nor for their invasion of Israel. Until they are willing to take responsibility for their action, Oslo is dead and the peace process is a dream.

MARCEL WACHSTOCK
Queens, NY

Kitsch or Liturgy?

To the editor:

Catherine Madsen (TIKKUN March/April 2001) condemns the new liturgy she characterizes as kitsch. Kitsch is an aesthetic category, not a spiritual one. Its criterion is personal taste. Madsen provides proof-texts for her thesis from Kundera and Kulka, demonstrating how completely she has missed the point: it is very easy to agree on well-chosen words to sum up kitsch's dismissable essence, but much harder to agree which works of art (or liturgy) belong in that category.

The point that Madsen has missed—and Jewish Renewal has taken as a core truth—is that every path to Divine connection is different, shaped by individual experience and subjectivities such as

matters of taste. In contrast, Madsen's analysis is predicated on aesthetic standards wielded like a club, as expressed in the art-snob hyperbole of this sentence: "The worst humiliation of contemporary religious life is the abjectness of needing God and a community badly enough even to sit through this."

I bless everyone who has worked to create community with Madsen's problems: the worst thing we should endure is to sit through liturgy that rubs us the wrong way. There are many more serious challenges: creating a holy place to hold and nurture the community's diversity requires working things out *al kiddush HaShem* (to sanctify the One) even with those you dislike; practicing *tzedakah* (righteousness and charity), *g'milut hasadim* (acts of loving-kindness), and renewing the partnership with God in *tikkun olam* and *tikkun ba-lev* (healing the world, healing the heart) no matter how life presses you down; and confronting your own shortcomings and hypocrisies as you go.

I agree that Jewish Renewal as a movement privileges the Edenic vision over the stark encounter with failure and

NEIGHBORS

The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland

Jan T. Gross

One summer day in 1941, half of the Polish town of Jedwabne murdered the other half—1,600 men, women, and children—all but seven of the town's Jews. Most arresting is the realization that Jedwabne's Jews were clubbed, drowned, gutted, and burned not by faceless Nazis, but by people they knew well. *Neighbors* describes what happened and tries to explain why.

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LETTERS

pain. But shul on Shabbos may be the only place many encounter a shared vision of hope in lives of hard, slow work to heal the world. Tolerating a too-sentimental Aleynu seems a small sacrifice. It doesn't force us to like what displeases our sensibilities, nor to cease struggling for a deepening of practice and understanding. But it does put things in perspective.

I can envisage Renewalists splitting off into an assortment of specializations. But my own hope is that we learn instead to do a much harder thing: I hope ours are the first generations that successfully resist the temptation to make edicts out of our personal proclivities. I pray that we turn our energy instead to learning generosity, compromise, and patience in diversity.

ARLENE GOLDBARD
Seattle, WA

To the Editor:

As the author of the "kitschy" new liturgy cited by Catherine Madsen in the March/April 2001 issue, allow me to point out that she didn't do her homework. My poem was not written as liturgy but rather, as part of an unpublished mythological manuscript written in the late Seventies. This manuscript provided the philosophical underpinnings of my monumental work of art, "The Dinner Party," honoring the achievements of women in Western Civilization.

Some years later, I was commissioned to create an illuminated poster of this poem and it was this image, I believe, that made its way into the hands of various people of differing religions, both Christian and Jewish, who were moved to include it in their prayer books.

No one was more surprised than I by what has become a continuing number of requests for permission to incorporate this poem into different liturgies—unless it might be my twenty-three generations of rabbi forefathers who are possibly collectively turning over in their graves because the words of their decidedly secular descendant have taken on liturgical meaning, not only in Reconstructionist Jewish services but in services of several branches of the Christian church.

Actually, I must admit that—

Madsen's comments notwithstanding—I am pleased that an artist's words have assumed such broad religious meaning.

JUDY CHICAGO
Belen, NM

Catherine Madsen responds:

Arlene Goldbard is, of course, right that working on substantive matters with people we may or may not like is the essence of communal religious life, and that we can do it with or without wholly satisfying liturgy. I've done that steadily for the ten years of my life as a Jew, as a frequent sheliach tzibbur and a founding member of my shul's Chevra Kadisha, as well as a member of various committees. (Like many insistent writers I am more amiable in person than in print.) That isn't a point I missed, it's a point I take as so fundamental as not to need stating: if bad liturgy were enough to drive me out of the community, why not just leave instead of complaining?

But there's a point Goldbard misses: kitsch, when used publicly and set above criticism, doesn't remain a matter of personal taste. It becomes genuinely demoralizing to certain serious and committed people who badly want to become stronger people and can't manage it on a diet of liturgical mind candy. The operative words of the sentence she takes as quintessential "art-snob hyperbole" are abjectness and humiliation: it's painful when the writers of liturgy consistently heap contempt on our needs and on the intelligence of the people we pray with—even the people we may not like. I call it "the worst humiliation" because the rest of religious life really is full of honor and purpose; where is the capacity of new liturgical writing for honor and purpose?

My apologies to Judy Chicago; I did know that her poem (or the unrhymed version of it, which I didn't quote) was not originally written as liturgy, but since my objection wasn't to her having written it but to its use as liturgy I didn't go into the details. In a journal with footnotes I would certainly have given the full explanation in a footnote.

I should add that my article was not specifically intended as an attack on Jewish Renewal liturgy, and I was sorry to

see it billed as such; naturally that rouses people who are fond of Renewal to a defensiveness I had no particular intent to provoke. The problem is wider, and really has to do with how words can pull their weight in the mending of the world, as our tradition says they did at its making. That's neither a trivial question nor—except instrumentally—an aesthetic one.

The Bank Teller

To the Editor:

I agree with the high praise Stephen Mo Hanan bestowed on Peter Gabel's *The Bank Teller*. But in reading the book I was especially struck by something not touched on in Hanan's review: Gabel's analysis of how the very openness to each other generated by the movements of the 1960s created a heightened fear of humiliation that led group after group to undermine itself through strikingly similar, self-destructive dynamics.

My own feeling is that beneath our ambivalence about creating and participating in non-hierarchical, mutually connected relations—reflected in attacking group leaders and otherwise undermining the group—is a crucial legacy of narcissistic wounding. The inherent abusiveness of our capitalistic, unloving, unaccepting society revisits itself in the family, producing narcissistically wounded individuals. These individuals (speaking from experience) can't tolerate too much connectedness—for it threatens to undermine the semblance of self-structure they have. Further, it threatens to undermine the mechanism of making others satellites of the self to avoid extreme feelings of vulnerability. The movement experience, with its dissolving of the old social norms, can of course heighten this terror of loss of self.

What addresses this fragility and vulnerability (the precursor to identity politics in my view) is a spirituality which makes the self matter. Once the self matters (or in Gabel's term, is recognized), a natural orientation toward connectedness emerges.

So: the Left must address the psychosociological basis of self-wounding if it is to get beyond identity politics to a politics of true humanitarianism.

KIM NEMIROW
Napa, CA



Publisher's Notes

Danny Goldberg

As someone who believes in God and prays every day, I am sickened by the way Democrats and Republicans use religion in politics. Instead of trying to create and implement programs that express the deep spiritual truth of human beings' interconnectedness, a truth that is inherent in all religions, the political class views religious language and symbolism as devices for constituency-building or social control or both. It is neither anti-religion nor unspiritual to vigorously oppose such distortions.

In an article for the *American Prospect* that contained much of the rationale for many aspects of the Gore-Lieberman campaign, Gore pollster and strategist Stan Greenberg wrote that following the Monica Lewinsky scandal, "Democrats were again identified with a 1960s-style irresponsibility. Voters want political leaders who put family at the center of political discussion and are drawn to candidates who respect the public's religious faith." Undoubtedly this theory heavily influenced Gore's selection of Joseph Lieberman, the most overtly religious candidate for national office since William Jennings Bryan.

Similarly, during the election Bush cited Jesus Christ as his favorite philosopher, and appeared at an Iowa drug and alcohol addiction treatment center sitting in front of a huge picture of Jesus. At the inauguration there were numerous references to Jesus Christ and one of President Bush's first public actions after being inaugurated was to propose making it easier for religious organizations to receive tax dollars—a supposedly more constitutionally valid version of his Attorney General John Ashcroft's "charitable choice" proposal from 1996.

It is both a moral and a political mistake for Democrats to get sucked into Bush or Lieberman's seductive attempts to blend religion and politics.

The Bush/Ashcroft proposal for using tax dollars to fund religious groups' social service activity is dangerous. I have enormous admiration for the social service work of religious charities. My family visits and supports the St. Joseph's Church on our block because they have the best soup kitchen and homeless shelter in the neighborhood and the local priest, Father Tos, radiates spirituality, inclusiveness,

and caring. Government funding of Catholic programs would not, however, go directly to spiritual beacons like Father Tos, but to governing institutions such as the New York Archdiocese whose hierarchy—including the current Cardinal Egan—has made attacks on artistic freedom, gay and lesbian rights, and women's right to an abortion a major part of its public mission.

Religions have the legal right to discriminate in hiring and may choose who they serve based on religious views. Federal funding of religious programs would have the effect of forcing all Americans to subsidize such discrimination. Moreover, the government, while not endorsing one particular religion, would be creating a cartel of those religions which have sophisticated lobbying efforts. Religions that are not part of the cartel, and the millions of Americans who are not affiliated with a religion, would be excluded from equal treatment.

Furthermore, the "winning" religions, the ones that did attract government funding, would be distracted from their core spiritual culture and orient themselves more and more toward pleasing the government, as several of TIKKUN's Religion in Politics panelists also argued (November/December 2000). Even Reverend Pat Robertson has opposed the Bush plan on this basis, although his alternative, allowing taxpayers to make donations to religions of their choice in lieu of paying taxes, poses even greater problems. We all would love to pay taxes only for those programs we support!

I believe that the vast majority of Americans believe in God, but I don't think that this is the same as believing in one specific religion or group of politically approved religions. Millions of spiritual people are turned off to established religions precisely because they feel these organizations are too political and too intolerant of other paths.

Progressives and Democrats also should not be afraid to state that atheists and agnostics are morally and politically entitled to demur from the majority of believers without being treated like second-class citizens.

As Democrats try to figure out what went wrong in 2000, they also need to revisit—and reject—Greenberg's references to a supposed Democratic "over-identification with 1960s style irresponsibility." Which national pre-Clinton Democrat embodied the Sixties? Surely not those psychedelic

It is both a moral and a political mistake ... to get sucked into Bush or Lieberman's seductive attempts to blend religion and politics.

Danny Goldberg is copublisher of TIKKUN.

PUBLISHER'S NOTES

candidates for national office Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, or Lloyd Bentsen, nor the Yippie-inspired congressional leaders of the last twenty years, Tip O'Neill, Jim Wright, Thomas Foley, George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, or Richard Gephardt! This is not a cast of characters one can imagine dancing at the Fillmore, chanting in peace marches, living on communes, etc.

When Bill Clinton "distanced" himself from Democratic Party traditions, he did so in a very narrow and specific arena—a cluster of issues relating to race and poverty—in an attempt to regain working-class, white, "Reagan Democrats" who felt abandoned because of some mistakes the Democrats made during and following the civil rights movement. Most famously, in 1992, Clinton criticized Jesse Jackson for including the hitherto-unknown rapper Sister Souljah at a Rainbow Coalition conference.

In 1996, Clinton signed the legislation drastically reducing welfare. He also ostentatiously supported the death penalty.

I would have preferred it if Clinton had reached out to these "Reagan Democrats" in ways that were less destructive to America's most defenseless citizens. To me, the crudeness of these positions was Clinton's greatest moral failing. However, his political genius was that by appointing unprecedented numbers of minorities to important government positions, by fighting for affirmative action at a critical time, and by numerous symbolic gestures of respect (and by being blessed with repellent enemies) he was able to become enormously popular with African Americans and other minorities.

Notwithstanding the myopia of anti-Sixties Washington policy wonks, other issues raised in the Sixties and identified with Democrats, such as women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, and environmentalism, are positive for Democrats. When Democrats blur the distinctions on these issues and

When Democrats alienate young people ... they lose.

alienate young people in an effort to curry favor with the Washington intelligentsia, they lose. Clinton's ability to win was based on a personal charisma that maintained the support of groups identified with these issues at the same time as he recaptured white working-class votes. Gore's failure was particularly severe among young people; he won eighteen-to-twenty-nine year olds by a mere one percent in contrast to Clinton's 1996 margin of 19 percent.

Part of the problem is that politics is, by nature, linear and literal. At the governmental level, all relevant action derives from laws, hence the preponderance of lawyers in electoral politics. Even at the activist level, agendas are funneled through this sort of programmatic prism. After years of this kind of thinking, artistic, spiritual, and intuitive sensibilities tend to atrophy.

Even during the Sixties there was a clash between the left-brained politicians and the right-brained Sixties culture. Prior to the 1967 "Be-In" organized by Allen Ginsberg, Allen Watts, and other San Francisco hippies, a group of Berkeley radicals met with the organizers and asked what the "demands" of the Be-In were. The hippies laughed because the whole notion of a Be-In was at odds with "demands."

Abbie Hoffman was as open to culture as any leftist but still he marched on Bob Dylan's Greenwich Village house on Dylan's thirtieth birthday along with "Dylanologist" A.J. Weberman, absurdly protesting that Dylan had abandoned "political songs" for merely artistic efforts such as "Blonde on Blonde."

John Lennon was as much of a political activist as any artist, but in his song "Revolution" he mocked humorless lefties by singing "If you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao—you ain't gonna make it with anyone anyhow."

Shortly after the 2000 election in which more than half of eligible voters chose to vote for neither focus-group tested candidate, the anthology of thirty-year-old Beatles songs became the best-selling album of the election year en route to becoming the best-selling album ever.

While culturally tone-deaf members of the Washington media continue to attack Clinton for supposedly diminishing the presidency, they have developed amnesia about the cultural posture of President Reagan, who was lionized by both conservatives and Washington insiders on his ninetieth birthday. Both these presidents were popular in part because they "got" the cultural *zeitgeist*.

In 1983, President Reagan appeared on a network television tribute to James Bond saying, "James Bond is a man of honor, a symbol of real value to the free world." Also in that year, Nancy Reagan named television star Mr. T as the White House Santa and posed for photos sitting on his

(continued on page 56)

Dear readers, writers, and staff,

Following this issue, we will no longer be publishers of TIKKUN. Our original commitment was for two years, but we extended it to what has been four wonderful and exciting years as publishers. We leave in order to pursue other interests, but with a strong commitment to help TIKKUN's new publisher in any way we can. We believe it is vital for TIKKUN to maintain its place as a unique voice on culture, politics, and society. We thank all of the wonderful writers we worked with and hope they continue to contribute to the magazine. We also thank TIKKUN's tireless and devoted staff.

Love,
Victor Goldberg and Danny Goldberg

Faith-Based Defunding of the Public Sector

How Spirit Matters Once Again

Michael Lerner

The central political agenda of America's conservative forces is to protect corporate power. Having witnessed how social reform movements were able to use democratic processes to put constraints on the worst aspects of the competitive marketplace, conservatives have sought to delegitimize the public arena itself. By generating cynicism about politics, they hope to convince people that any valuable social goals ought to be achieved outside the realm of government.

President Bush's faith-based initiative is a smart extension of the conservative assault on democratic politics. On the one hand, Bush's tax plan reduces the funds that are available for any social concerns. Forget about providing health care, building housing for the homeless, eliminating world hunger, or providing funds for our society's transition from fossil fuel to other less environmentally dangerous sources of energy.

On the other hand, Bush suggests giving new funds to faith-based organizations, so that they may deliver social services to our communities. As the funding levels decrease, Bush will be able to say, "Well, people should step in and create more of these local projects—and pay for them out of voluntary giving." By shifting the burden to private institutions, the government will no longer be asked to provide essential human services—except police, army, and taxation. It is a very clever way to defund the public sector under the guise of involving religious communities. And Bush's plan deepens the societal conviction that we can't trust government to do anything important (and hence should not allow it to meddle with the "rights" of corporate polluters, tobacco companies, or other socially irresponsible activities of America's elites).

Bush could never get away with this initiative if the liberal and progressive view of government had not been so

Faith-based funding could be a fig leaf for a strategy of abandoning the most needy. If so, religious people should not be part of that.



one-dimensional in its understanding of human needs. Government ought to be the vehicle through which we

each manifest our caring for others—a proxy which we create to do some of the caring and protecting that we don't have time or social power to do on our own. But the liberal/progressive world, stuck in a conception of human beings as primarily driven by material needs ("it's the economy, stupid"), created a government which delivered money (a kind of "objective caring") and did so in a way that made people feel that some out-of-control bureaucracy—a bureaucracy that didn't care one whit

for them and often disrespected them—was doing them some big favor by giving them back some of the money they paid in taxes. In short, liberals didn't pay attention to what it felt like to be recipients of government services and didn't show any "subjective caring." No one in government was rewarded (and some were even penalized) for taking time to show the recipients of government services that ordinary citizens were important. Government should have been a vehicle to show that we all care about each other's needs.

I personally experienced this arrogance this past year when I had to get a building permit for some minor changes in my house, changes my neighbors did not oppose and which only affected me. I was treated as though I were

EDITORIALS

seeking a special favor. The process of securing city and county approval for these minor changes dragged on for over fifteen months, and at each point along the way the government officials I met were disrespectful, uncooperative, and threatening ("maybe we should send some inspectors out there—we'll probably find code violations that you never dreamt about"). I was told over and over by contractors that the key to success was to try to find one sympathetic person in the bureaucracy, play to their ego, win them over, and then urge them to become my protector. Now, I was doing nothing illegal, environmentally destructive, or mercenary; I was merely making some minor changes in my house. Well, no wonder that others respond to these kinds of experiences by cheering on Bush's efforts to defund government and send the money back to those who pay taxes!

Imagine, instead, if Bill and Hillary Clinton had actually listened to TIKKUN when we raised these issues to them, and

had recognized that human beings have spiritual needs, meaning needs, and needs for recognition and respect. A politics of meaning approach would encourage government employees to communicate to the public a sense that the

government was operating as a vehicle for each of us to express our caring toward all the rest of us. Institutions would be seen as productive and efficient to the extent that they fostered love and caring, ethical/spiritual/ecological consciousness, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe. If that were the goal of government institutions, people would feel

very differently about them, and would not be so open to defunding the public sector.

But Bill and Hillary chose instead to build a materialistic and "objective" public sphere, with the result that many people now say, "Fine, you can have that public sphere lacking in any sense of the spiritual dimension of life, but we will give our money to fund activities that we really care about through institutions that are not in the public sphere at all, so we can get back to talking about love and Spirit."

And that's exactly what has happened. Nor is this choice irrational. Look at the powerful success of AA as compared to government programs dealing with alcoholism. It turns out that when you address God or a Higher Power, the meaning of your own life, and other spiritual issues, you can be more effective in dealing with a wide variety of social problems than when you are constricted by the narrow conceptions of human needs that are sufficiently *parve* (neutral) to be discussed in public institutions. No wonder, then, that First Amendment arguments against Bush's faith-based funding have fallen flat on their nose: separation of church and state all too often seems to mean "let's ignore the ethical and spiritual dimension of human needs."

The terrible side of all this is that Bush's strategy actually might work to further erode public support for government, thereby giving a free pass to corporate social and economic irresponsibility. Nothing will change this until progressives are willing to publicly acknowledge the limitations of their narrow conception of government and publicly embrace a politics of meaning. Till then, the Left has given the Right a free ride to dismantle many of the accomplishments of social change movements of the twentieth century.

So far, it has been the Right in the religious world that has sounded the alarm against Bush's initiative, on the quite legitimate ground that they might be forced to repress their advocacy for their own religious perspective in order to acquire government funding. A more pressing objection should be raised by the religious Left: faith-based funding is a fig leaf for a strategy of abandoning the most needy, and religious people should not be part of that.

*Government should have
been a vehicle to show
that we all care about
each other's needs.*

A WEEK WITH MICHAEL LERNER

SPIRIT MATTERS IN OUR
PROFESSIONS AND BUSINESSES:
BRINGING THE SACRED INTO OUR WORK

August 13–19

Elat Chayyim, The Catskills, New York

Whether you work in a high-tech firm, do science research, run a corporation, or work as a doctor, bus driver, lawyer, teacher, social worker, nurse, or union organizer, you know that it's hard to keep your spiritual values aligned with your work experience. *This can change* by creating a new bottom line in the workplace that values caring, ethical, and ecologically-concerned behavior, and encourages recognition of the wonder of creation.

This week we will be engaged in the unashamedly utopian task of building an on-going support network for people who wish to bring a sacred dimension into their work. We will delve into both inner spiritual development and practical techniques for organizing a spiritual political movement capable of transforming the world of work. Are you willing to play a role in your profession or work place in beginning to build a whole new strategy for social transformation? If so, join us at Elat Chayyim in the beautiful foothills of the Catskill Mountains of New York. It is a warm, supportive, learning and prayerful environment. The cuisine is gourmet Kosher vegetarian, often with a fish option.

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Surviving Ariel Sharon's "Unity" Government

When Labor leaders joined Ariel Sharon's government, they claimed it was precisely because Sharon was such a grave danger; they joined, Labor said, to prevent Sharon from escalating the struggle. In reality, they find themselves defending Sharon's immoral sieges of Palestinian cities, sieges that have caused mass hunger, denial of medical care, and other outrageous denials of human rights. B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, has determined that these sieges of West Bank towns and villages are an act of collective punishment explicitly forbidden in international law.

The deal Ariel Sharon is offering to the Palestinian Authority (PA)—he will withdraw from parts of Gaza and the West Bank if the PA will police Palestinian rage—is an impossible deal. Imagine if someone had told civil rights leaders that they could be granted partial (not fully equal) human rights for Blacks, but in exchange they'd have to arrest Black Muslims and Black Panthers and ensure that anti-white violence of any sort stop. It's an impossible deal. If Arafat accepts it, he can't enforce it; if he doesn't accept it, he's portrayed as intransigent.

In arguing against the deal Sharon is offering, we are not supporting Palestinian violence. In fact, we've repeatedly called on the Palestinians to renounce this violence, to affirm the humanity of the Israeli people, and to engage in sustained, nonviolent civil disobedience. We at TIKKUN mourn the recent killings and woundings of Israelis. We don't want Israelis to have to live in fear. Yet it's hard to expect Palestinians to practice nonviolence when Israeli troops, by blocking off roads and supplies, are literally causing people to starve; are depriving people of the ability to get medical care; are assassinating political leaders; and are responding to nonviolent demonstrations with tear gas and violence.

Nevertheless, the respect shown for the value and dignity of human life conveyed through a principled Palestinian commitment to nonviolence would be the one thing that might break through to Israeli consciousness and pave the way for Israelis to respond to Palestinian needs. We know that violence will always strengthen the appeal of the Ariel Sharons of this world. The route of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi is the only moral and politically wise strategy.

Whatever the Palestinians choose, Israel's alternative to

Palestinian violence—endless repression—cannot work either. Repression does not stop terrorism. It is always possible for a terrorist to "get through," no matter how tight the security. If you give a person sufficient reason to feel that s/he is ready to give up her/his life to "get you," no amount of protective mechanisms can ever work.

There's only one way to stop terrorism: stop treating the

Palestinian people so badly that they want to kill you. Of course, many Jews will respond that the Palestinians want to kill us because they are irrational haters of Jews. But as Jerome Slater shows in his article on page 16 of this issue, Palestinian anger can be accounted for as a response to the actual behavior of Jews in Palestine, and cannot be

reduced to a new manifestation of an "eternal hatred" that some Jews imagine will always be there against us no matter what we do.

Our master narrative about ourselves for the past 2,000 years has been that we Jews practice a higher level of morality than many of those around us. Jews often took solace in the fact that we would never do to others what they did to us. The Zionists disputed this belief, arguing that this notion was part of our ghetto-inspired fantasy, and that what was needed was a "normalization" of Jewish experience so that we would become like everyone else, "a nation like all other nations." But few who articulated that ideal imagined that Israel would become one of the more oppressive nations in the world, a human rights violator that would lead people to seek comparisons with some of the worst violators of recent history.

I never find analogies to other countries particularly enlightening. Israel is not engaged in genocide like the Nazis. Nor has Israel done anything even vaguely comparable to the reckless destruction of life that was inflicted on Vietnam by the democratically elected government of the United States (whose war criminals like Henry Kissinger still have not been brought to justice). Israel is not engaged in racist apartheid (Arab Israelis are legally allowed to live wherever they wish, to go to the same stores and movies and swim in the same beaches and swimming pools and attend the same public schools as Jews). But what Israel is doing, and what it must do as long as it intends to protect Israeli settlers and refuses to acknowledge its responsibility to

The route of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi is the only moral and politically wise strategy for Palestinians.

EDITORIALS

Palestinian refugees, is engaging in a war of brutality against a mostly unarmed and defenseless population—and this is a violation of Jewish values and of international standards of human rights.

It is true that many other nations are worse violators of human rights, but it is also true that many, many nations violate rights less often than the place we call a Jewish State. Jewish ethics does not allow us to say that we can hurt other people if someone else is doing the same.

For too long, we've protected ourselves from letting it sink in that Israel is behaving in ways that generate legitimate outrage by morally sensitive people around the world. We simply refuse to see ourselves as anything but righteous victims. But in fact what is being done in the name of the Jewish people is generating animosity towards us that will be a lasting legacy for our children and grandchildren. They will face a world in which "Jew" has come to be identified with the oppressive behavior of the State of Israel towards a relatively powerless minority.

In our own times, we are not yet feeling the consequences of our actions for two main reasons. First, there is the legacy of guilt in Western societies about the Holocaust. Because most Western societies have never been fully willing to acknowledge their own role in allowing the Holocaust, in excluding Jews when we needed refuge, and in retaining the anti-Semitic legacies of Christianity without fully confronting how that contributed to the possibility of Nazism, they act out their guilty conscience by giving us

Jews a "moral pass" and not insisting that we live by the highest standards. That is not good for the Jews. Guilt-based tolerance is a shaky foundation, and it gives Jews the feeling that we still are not accepted as equals. As women report about their experience, being on a pedestal of innocence and purity is just the flip side of being demeaned and seen as more dirty and lustful than everyone else. We as Jews should be insisting that we be held to the same standards as the rest of the world—it's only then that we could feel truly accepted and integrated into a multicultural reality.

But that standard ought to be one that reflects our highest vision, rather than a lowered vision that fits the actual behavior of the State of Israel.

Second, Jews have had special protection because of our political and economic clout in the world's dominant imperial power. We've been able to convince American society that Israel is a needed strategic ally, and that has led the United

States and its powerful media to portray Israel's faults with a very gentle hand. But don't count on this lasting for generations to come. The next generation of Jews, even if they retain such economic and political power, have much less interest in Israel, in large part because they don't resonate with Israel's current behavior. Moreover, America's future elites may find their economic interests best served by abandoning Israel in response to pressures from others who have built up resentments against Israeli behavior.

Israel is acting in ways that are not good for the Jews and not good for Israelis. That's why we've repeatedly urged Israel to dismantle the settlements and end the Occupation. Ariel Sharon's "unity" government is a disaster because it puts a pleasant face on the continuation of the Occupation, yet every day under Sharon the Occupation has become even more brutal and oppressive. Every day I get emails from people on the West Bank, including young Israelis who are part of the peace movement. They tell of incredible brutality against the Palestinian people. They talk about people being denied food, water, and medical care. They tell of beatings and torture. They tell of innocent children being shot who have nothing to do with rock-throwing demonstrations.

For this to be the reality of a country that calls itself "the Jewish State" is a true tragedy. It is a tragedy for humanity, because it makes so many people despair about the possibility of ever building a decent world. It is a tragedy for the Jewish people, because our potential is to teach and embody a biblical vision of a world healed and transformed.

Note: If you want to read some of the information I get each day, so you can't say "I didn't know," please subscribe to our email list by sending your email address to magazine@tikkun.org, and by checking our newly redesigned website at www.tikkun.org. □

Israel's violations of Palestinian rights is a tragedy for humanity and the Jewish people.

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A CONVERSATION WITH David Grossman

Michael Lerner

David Grossman is an Israeli novelist whose recent book, *See Under: Love*, has been adapted as a play by A Traveling Jewish Theatre. He has written six novels (including *The Book of Intimate Grammar*), ten children's books, and two books of reportage. His newest book, *Be My Knife*, will be published by Farrar Straus & Giroux in 2002.

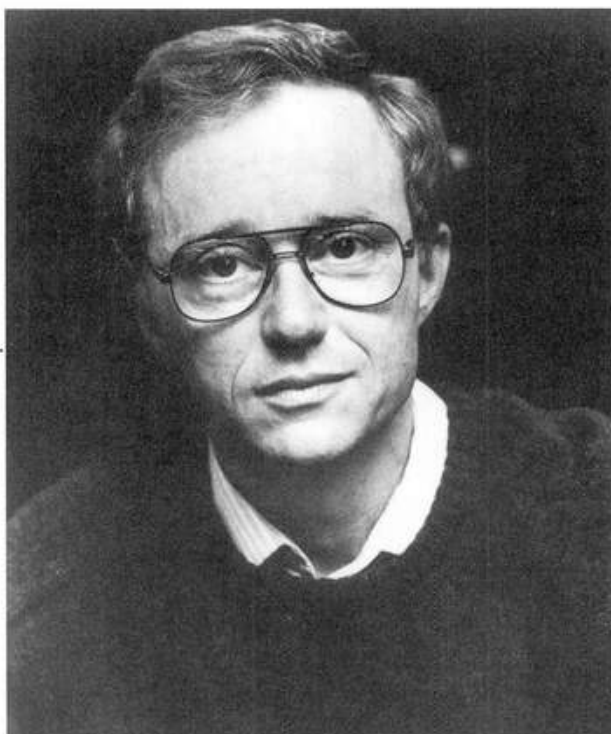
LERNER: How are things going for you, David? I haven't seen you for many years, since my son finished his time in the Israeli army (*tzanhanim*—paratroopers).

GROSSMAN: Personally, fine. But our personal lives are deeply shaped by the social reality, and right now it is very depressing. We may have to see much more violence to get back to the point that was reached at Taba just before Sharon was elected.

LERNER: The Palestinians are presented in the media as being very unrealistic and wanting too much. Yet from their standpoint, the fundamental agreement at Oslo was never taken seriously. They had entered into a deal—they would recognize Israel's right to exist within the pre-1967 borders and in exchange they would be allowed to form a state in the West Bank and Gaza with some minor border adjustments. Instead, in subsequent years Israel switched the subject of negotiations from the timetable of withdrawal of Israeli troops to the subject of how much of the West Bank would be withdrawn from—precisely the issue that Palestinians had thought had been resolved by the Oslo accord. So they felt betrayed.

GROSSMAN: Even worse than that. While Israel gave the Palestinians many promises, actually it doubled the number of settlers since signing the Oslo accord. The amount of land confiscated increased, the amount of land paved over for highways for Israelis only. So although Israeli prime ministers said, "let's negotiate," they kept on switching the topic of the negotiations away from what had originally been promised, and the Palestinians had to go along because they were the weaker party, more in need of Israeli withdrawal, and they have very few ways to pressure Israel. Step by step the reality was dictated by Israel's perceived security needs,

Michael Lerner is editor of *TIKKUN* and author of *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*.



not by the joint needs of both sides—and eventually the resentments at this betrayal exploded when Sharon came to the Temple Mount. And now he is the prime minister, which is a nightmare we have to get used to.

LERNER: Since Intifada II there has been a dramatic change in the Jewish world, so that many of the people who were the "soft Left" are now the "soft Right"—they actually believe that the Palestinians wish to destroy Israel and will settle for nothing less. But in objective terms, the Palestinians remain very weak and continue to pose no serious military threat.

GROSSMAN: You are looking for logic. But both sides are highly emotional. I've seen that in Palestinians too there is a major change—they no longer think Israel really wants a compromise. And with that there has been a return among the elites to a kind of despair that makes them feel they will never get what they need without the destruction of Israel, because Israel will never give them a legitimate state. And as a result, more and more Palestinians are suddenly turning back to the denial of the right of Israel to exist.

It's a vicious circle. If I were a Palestinian, I think I would feel the same—I would feel cheated, lied to, by Israel and by Bill Clinton and the United States. I would have heard their promises, yet every time I look outside my window I see an Israeli settlement on the top of the hill. When I want to go out of my village to the nearest village, I have to go through two roadblocks of Israelis. Sometimes to go to work it will take me four hours to use all the detour roads. In the summer I don't have water. Forty thousand settlers in Gaza have more water than a million Palestinians in Gaza. So of course I would see the Israelis as oppressors.

Most Israelis don't know the facts—because they don't want to know. And if someone doesn't want to know they won't hear—no matter how much the facts are available to them to know. Instead, most Israelis feel that we offered

CONVERSATION

them everything. When Barak came back from Camp David he said he turned over every possible stone and that the Palestinians rejected it. I wrote at the time an article saying he had not turned every stone, and he was very angry with me. But now we saw, in the last weeks before the election, that there were many other stones that could have been turned had Barak really wanted to make a reasonable deal.

In your March/April 2001 editorial you said that Barak, after being elected, should have said that we were going all the way for peace. You are absolutely right—he should have made it clear that we would make all the compromises that need to be made that are not dangerous to our existence. But he did the opposite. He did not try to shape public opinion toward peace.

But he did one thing—he put everything on the table. He did it the wrong way, but I think most Israelis now know what we have to give up to make real peace. I think the election of Ariel Sharon shows that most Israelis are not mature enough to make those concessions. And when I listen to Palestinians I'm not sure that they are willing to make the concessions that they need to make, which would be to give up the demand for the right to return.

LERNER: Uri Avnery makes the argument that Israel can acknowledge that it had the major responsibility in creating the Palestinian refugee problem, but Israel also has to say that it is prepared to take back 30,000 refugees a year for the next thirty years, not 3 million a year.

GROSSMAN: But right cannot be divided, so if we acknowledge that we are majorly responsible, why not be coherent and say "let's bring them all." It cannot be divided.

LERNER: Why not? The United States acknowledges that it was responsible for slavery and segregation and a long history of oppression of African Americans. And we have worked to create an affirmative action program so that slowly, bit by bit, small sections of the African American population would be given a better set of opportunities. We haven't given reparations for slavery, we haven't given them back all the wealth they created. Just because we acknowledge responsibility, it doesn't follow that we're going to do everything necessary to rectify that past in the course of one or two generations. And if you ask, "Why not?" most Americans will say, "Because it is politically impossible to make full restitution at this point, and it's still better to take some steps than no steps."

Why can't Israel take that same stance? Why can't it say, "There is no way we are going to be able to bring back the entire Palestinian people in ten or even twenty years, but we are going to acknowledge our responsibility for having played a major role in creating the situation of Palestinian suffering, and we will bring back some Palestinians who are willing to live as a minority within a Jewish state, and we will do our best to get the other countries of the world involved with us in making sure that a Palestinian state is economically viable and that refugees in other countries either get to

return to that state or get enough economic support to be integrated into the countries in which they live. Why aren't we bringing everybody back? Because we want to keep a Jewish state. Just as the United States has a policy of bringing in political immigrants who are suffering in other places from political oppression, but that doesn't mean that every single such person gets to come to the United States. There are strict immigration quotas each year, and only that certain number are admitted. That's what we in Israel will also do."

GROSSMAN: I agree with this! Basically I agree with you. I think we Israelis only have a partial responsibility. There was a war and it was not initiated by Israel. It's wrong for them to act as though Israel was solely responsible.

For years we fought shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinian peace camp for the idea of two states for two peoples. Now if the Palestinians advocate for the right of return, they will have a state and a half (Palestine and half of Israel) and very soon they will be the majority here, and then we won't have Israel as a Jewish state.

LERNER: You're absolutely right about Arabs taking some responsibility for having participated in causing the problem. The Arabs made huge mistakes, and they were acting in ways that were morally unacceptable. But the people who live as refugees today...

GROSSMAN: They were not responsible, and Israel must take major steps to help them and solve that problem. My book, *The Yellow Wind*, taught Israelis how terrible it was to live in that situation. If there is a chance to ease the suffering by bringing some people back to Israel, we should do so. But it must be formulated in such a way to make sure that future generations of Palestinians don't feel that they get the right to eliminate Israel as a Jewish state.

If they have a right [of return], it is a fully existing right. You can't divide it. And if I am responsible for future generations ... you have to formulate our position in ways that will still be viable fifty years from now. You can't say that they have the right and then deny it. My Palestinian friends ask me, "What you are afraid of? If peace comes, there will be full reconciliation and we can live together." Deep in my heart I want to believe this, because it fits my heart's desires. But I live here in this fanatic and extreme area, and I know that a good solution is one that tries to minimize friction between hostile populations and doesn't depend too much upon the faith in the good-heartedness of human beings, either Jew or Muslim, and their ability to transcend their fears and anxieties.

LERNER: Well, and this is not our position, but I'd like to hear how you answer their objection, "If the only way Israel can remain a Jewish state is to keep millions of Palestinians in a condition of abject poverty and oppression, then maybe having such a Jewish state is not morally viable." And while I personally want to see a Jewish state persist, I do have to tell you that in my experience as a rabbi in the United States I meet many younger Jews who say things like, "My parents

were Jewish, but I don't really connect to all that;" and when I ask why, they respond by pointing to Israel and its image of Jewishness and they feel they have nothing in common with the brutality that they see Israelis engaged in toward Palestinians, nor with the insensitivity of so many other Jews who manage to deny the brutality and pretend that it really is not happening.

GROSSMAN: Israel is much more than the oppression of Palestinians, and Judaism doesn't only consist of those who justify Israeli policy, but also of people like you who put their time into fighting these policies.

One of the things that makes Israel such a fascinating place for me is that I'm confronted with questions about how to live and build a society and I don't always have the answers.

But if we bring to Israel now a half million people who were raised on hatred for Israel—even though given how they were treated by us I can understand their hatred—and then hope that they will be an integral part of this state which they hate so much, I don't think it could work.

LERNER: But if it were 30,000 refugees a year then it could be a more gradual process.

GROSSMAN: But Israel doesn't even know how to treat its own existing Israeli Palestinian minority. I'm afraid that if more Palestinians came there might be a backlash to create an apartheid regime. I think we have to start by rectifying the treatment of our currently existing Arab minority by giving them equal rights.

Barak was so obtuse in the way he treated these Israeli Palestinians; I think Sharon might be better than him, he's smarter than Barak on that point. Barak had no sensitivity for people's feelings or how to do the right thing.

Now I agree with you that we've done a lot of things to generate anger and hatred from Palestinians, but given that reality, I don't want to live in a state where we Jews become a minority within an angry Palestinian majority.

Yet I want there to be among the 315 states that exist on earth the melody of a Jewish state. I want to see how Jews can have a state of their own, and we've just started that experiment. This is a place to allow me to create our Jewish reality. And I hope that eventually we will create a Jewish state which treats its minority in a very good way, even though at the moment it doesn't. But that is a result of the situation and the history, and not all of that is Israel's fault.

LERNER: I certainly agree. In fact, in an op-ed that was just published in the *Los Angeles Times* I further develop a theme discussed in *TIKKUN*: the need for the Palestinian people to embrace a whole different strategy—to follow the path of non-violence laid out by Martin Luther King Jr. and by Mahatma Gandhi. I believe that the key to changing the situation lies in

their hands, because I believe that the majority of Israelis are decent and good people who could overcome their fears and would respond in a more generous way if their enemy didn't restimulate in them fears of the Holocaust.

Yet I also think it's sad that Israel actually is playing a role in undermining the next generation's commitment to their own Jewishness, not only in the Galut (Diaspora), but also among many young Israelis who are leaving Israel.

GROSSMAN: Certainly Israel can't be the sole factor in undermining Judaism in the Diaspora?

LERNER: No, but it plays a role. Not just the militarism—because there's another level that is also operating: Israel claims to be not just a state of Jews, but a Jewish state, an embodiment of what it is to be Jewish. Many, many young people come to Israel to visit, and while many are turned on by the energy of the place, the most sensitive among them quickly pick up that the same materialism and selfishness that are the dominant values of American society are the dominant values

in Israel as well. And that makes many conclude that the whole notion of Judaism—that there could be an alternative to the bottom line of money and power that runs the capitalist world, that human beings are not to live by bread alone, that love and justice and *chesed* (lovingkindness) could be the bottom line—is really just a fantasy that can't be real, because the very people who are supposedly embodying those values are actually embodying the dominant values of the globalized capitalist world—cynicism, self-interest, fear of the other, looking out for number one, materialism. So their experience with Israel convinces them that there is nothing but "making it for oneself," and even if they become involved in their synagogue or Jewish community after that, it is involvement with the external forms. Internally they have rejected God, because they've rejected the possibility of a world based on love and justice and *chesed*.

GROSSMAN: Well it's very painful to hear this. But you have to recognize that Israelis growing up in a society which has been at war for the past fifty-two years are going to have adopted a war mentality or a survivors' mentality. When I look at Israeli society today I see how vulgar and cruel many people tend to be. I think that it was recognizing this terrible price that Israel was paying for this war that led Yitzhak Rabin to finally realize that the war needed to end, and it was so ironic that he then was murdered by this very violence and fanaticism that prevail now in Israel.

I don't think we can be a light to the nations—but I still hope that we can be a light for ourselves. My experience in Israel is that there remains so much room to create something different from what prevails today—something more spiritual, more egalitarian. You yourself said in your editorial in *TIKKUN* that a leader could have tapped into Israeli idealism,

*Israel is much more
than the oppression of
Palestinians, and
Judaism has voices like
TIKKUN which don't
justify Israeli policy.*

CONVERSATION

because it is there under the surface, and I see it. Many, many Israelis have a real need to be generous, to be loving, to live life with all the layers of possibility—and this energy could be liberated. We need a really courageous leader—not like Barak who did not have the level of courage needed—who would tell people that we have the courage to be generous, generous in concessions and able to acknowledge the suffering of our neighbors and our responsibility for what we did. Only then, when we have that kind of courage, will we begin to test the nature of a Jewish state. Not now—we are just fighting to be something. We haven't yet even started exploring what a Jewish state could be. We can create a state which would make you, Michael, say to yourself: "I want to be there, not in California—because this is the spiritual center of Judaism."

LERNER: I hope for such an Israel also, an Israel which has moved beyond fear. And that raises for me the issue of the abiding impact of Holocaust consciousness.

So, I want to also ask you about *See Under: Love*, which is in my estimation not only your greatest work but also one of the great pieces of literature of the twentieth century. That book comes out of the period in which Israel was completely into denial about the Holocaust and so Momik, the Israeli portrayed in the book, has to piece together what really happened. Yet today, some would argue, we have the opposite reality in Israel: not too little but too much knowledge of the Holocaust, so that everything is seen through that framework. Israelis see themselves as powerless through that framework—and as a result they have difficulty acknowledging how much real power they have.

GROSSMAN: You are absolutely right. We have never internalized our military strength, and because of that we overuse our force without recognizing that we are doing so. We are so easily threatened—we feel our existence is so fragile, which it is not. This is why I feel it's so important for Israel to experience peace—to allow us to heal these historic wounds, so that we would not have to feel like victims all the time even though we are the strongest force in the area. I remember in the first days of the Intifada I was surrounded by people who were asking, "Is this the end of Israel?" even though they were aware of the actual facts of our relative power and the Palestinians' relative powerlessness. I said, "The Palestinians have stones, and a few thousand guns, and they can't stand up to our powerful army."

Yet many Israelis actually feel this vulnerability, and maybe they need to feel that way. We feel as survivors and needing to use everything in our environment to enhance our ability to survive. All our history we survived to live, but now we live to survive only. This is the paradox of survival. But a central point of *See Under: Love* tries to bring out is this: there is a big difference between survival only and allowing yourself to live life on all the layers that life enables you to experience. If you live only to survive, somewhere down the road you will be destroyed—or if you survive you will live only by the sword, you will never give trust to your enemy or even

to your partner, you will treat your partner as your enemy.

LERNER: There is in Israel a deep fear of being seen as a "frier"—as someone who is well-intentioned but silly and naïve and likely to end up being hurt and allowing others to be hurt because of an idealistic belief that love and caring between human beings is possible. In my book, *Spirit Matters*, I try to show that this fear is a central reason why people will not open themselves up to Spirit or to the possibility of a world based on love and caring.

GROSSMAN: Here you are touching on a central dynamic and psychological core of Israeli society. And this may be one of the tragic consequences of the Shoah: we are afraid of hoping or trusting the other. Momik in *See Under: Love* tells his wife in bed that he has to prepare himself for the next catastrophe, so that when it comes he will have nothing for which the deprivation of it will cause him unbearable pain. This is the core of the deep defeatism that permeates Israeli political thinking, particularly on the Right. But for me it is humiliating to surrender to this pessimism. If we are doomed to forever live in a climate of hatred, to generate hatred, and then to respond to it with more hatred, there is very little reason to live in Israel. But I am hopeful—I think what is happening at this point in Israel is the last spasms of an old way of being that will eventually be overcome.

LERNER: It seems to me unlikely that we could build genuine reconciliation till we overcome that fear. So what kind of dynamic intervention might make such a change of consciousness possible?

GROSSMAN: I'm afraid we don't have that intervention. We can't seem to get that kind of openness to hope until people feel that their existence as a nation has been ensured. And I don't think we can achieve that till we have a real peace with the Arabs. That is why peace is so essential—and not just for the Arabs. Israelis need to understand that our need for peace is much deeper than simply that it would be good to have peace so we could stop occupying the West Bank. We need peace so that we can reclaim our own identity which has been confiscated by the situation. It is only when we have peace that we Israelis will be able to live our lives as though they are our own. And it is only then that the kind of idealism which we find in *TIKKUN* magazine will actually be able to flourish in Israel. Until there is peace, I don't see how we are going to have a change in all the rest of the attitudes—I don't see how, for example, the social gap between rich and poor is going to change.

LERNER: This is Yossi Beilin's argument too—that people's hearts will change when the political arrangements have been put in place. But it seems to me that you'll never be able to put the political arrangements in place until there has been this change of heart—otherwise you get a replay of what has happened in the past years since Oslo: a political arrangement in place, but then undermined and abandoned because people don't yet feel that they can trust each other.

GROSSMAN: But Beilin's path has not yet been disproven. Even though Sharon won the election, don't forget that a majority of Israelis today hold a position that they didn't hold ten years ago—today they are for a two-state solution, and that happened not as a result of a change of heart but as a result of political developments in Israel between 1987 and 1993. Even in the latest election in February, 40 percent of the voters, despite the violence and the lynchings and all the disappointment with Barak, nevertheless voted for Barak, hoping for peace.

When you live amidst fear and violence, and then come to people to ask them to change their hearts, you are unlikely to get much of a response—especially when you are talking about the Jewish people who have been so traumatized by the violence of the Holocaust. People are very reluctant to change their hearts and thereby give away their historic “expertise” as survivors to try to go a new way. And this is part of a truth that is true for everyone, Jewish or not: people are reluctant to let go of one branch that they have been clinging to in order to try to cling to a new branch.

This is why I think that the primary energy has to be in creating a framework of coexistence that does not depend on love between us and them—I don't think that will happen for many, many generations. The French don't love the Germans and even the West Germans don't love the East Germans. So maybe we have to lower our expectations to something more realistic: what I wish is that maybe fifty years after a peace agreement between us and the Palestinians and Arab countries, we will see more cultural curiosity, and people will be able to understand that their interests lie in this kind of coexistence, and only then will we begin to acknowledge the similarities between us and the Palestinians.

But if we do get a peace agreement, we will eventually have very good relationships. There are deep differences between us and the Egyptians or the Syrians. But between us and the Palestinian people there are a lot of similarities, and I believe that we will be able to work together beautifully. When I meet with Palestinians from a similar background I find that we have so much in common with them, rationally, intellectually, emotionally. I rarely find as much in common between Israelis and American Jews—we, Israelis and Palestinians, were shaped by the same conflict and by the same fears. I can argue and quarrel with them, but there is something in their temperature, sense of humor, emotionalism, and possibly even a tendency toward self-destruction that makes possible a deep level of connection.

But I am very desperate about the current situation. I fear that both peoples are trapped in their fears. I do not see a way out without another violent clash—and it's horrible. We are on the edge of an abyss and we are falling very rapidly.

If I were a Palestinian, I think I would feel cheated and lied to by Israel and the United States.

After this next eruption of violence—and I hope that other Arab countries don't get swept up into it—then we shall have to sit with the Palestinians and negotiate again beginning from the point that we stopped at Taba just before the election of Sharon. A solution will require two states, dividing Jerusalem, a fateful compromise from both sides on the right of return, and uprooting most of the settlements (I do not see how they can exist there—they will always be a burning center of hostility and animosity and a symbol of humiliation to the Palestinians, everything that is contradictory to coexistence). And then, many years after we get to the point of making this kind of a peace, we can get to a point where we can build good personal relationships between the two peoples. I don't think I will see this in my lifetime. It will be a process of education for both us Israelis and for the Palestinians.

When that happens, we will begin the real history of Israel. You and I will meet in the heaven that neither of us believes in, after our deaths, because it won't happen in our lifetime, and we will have a very exciting conversation about what a real Jewish state could and should be. But we have to build the foundations now by insisting on our joint vision of peace, Michael. Honi ha Me'agel, a legendary figure from the Talmud, is said to have encountered an old man planting a carob tree, and it is well known that carob trees don't bear fruit till after many, many years, and so he asked, “why are you doing that?” and the man answered, “I am doing this for the sake of my children and grandchildren just as my grandparents before them planted for me.” But if we don't take risks for peace today our grandchildren will continue to hate and to be hated.

For that reason, Michael, I wish you and many of your TIKKUN readers would come to Israel. If one million American Jews like your son Akiba who came to Israel to serve in the Israeli army were to come, it would transform Israel. One million American Jews who had been educated in a long tradition of pluralism and liberalism would have made a huge difference. And I wish you would bring Jewish renewal to Israel—it is so badly needed. We have so many young people going to India to find a spiritual foundation, but it would be so much better if they could find the kind of Judaism which you discuss, which is both spiritual and simultaneously insistent on the value of every human being, including the Palestinian people. We need the Jewish religious humanist and peace-loving voice in our Israeli choir. The religious peace people in Israel don't have that level of dedication and certainty about the importance of peace that you have. If we had your kind of Jewish renewal in Israel, it could make a powerful impact and speak to the spiritual needs of many Israelis that cannot today be satisfied by the kind of Judaism they see being presented to them. □

Israel, Anti-Semitism and the Palestinian Problem

Jerome Slater

Almost all Jews of my generation, we who came of age in America in the 1930s and 1940s, personally experienced anti-Semitism, thought of ourselves as passionate Zionists, and rejoiced at the establishment of the State of Israel and its 1948 and 1967 victories over its Arab enemies. Indeed, following three years as an antisubmarine warfare destroyer officer in the U.S. Navy in the late 1950s, I volunteered my services to the Israeli Navy, should the need arise.

I say all this as a partial explanation for the depth of disillusion and despair that I and many Jews feel over what we regard as Israel's fall from the humanism and liberal values of the Jewish tradition, especially in its relationship with the Palestinians. Sadly, many other American Jews feel no such disillusion, partially because they remain ignorant—or rather, in many cases, they willfully *choose* to remain ignorant—of the real Israeli-Palestinian story, and partially because their focus on historical anti-Semitism and Jewish impotence is so deeply rooted that they are simply impervious to new realities.

Because of the historical vulnerability of the Jewish people to periodic outbreaks of murderous anti-Semitism, perhaps it is not surprising that even many liberal Jews are interpreting the current Palestinian uprising against Israel in that context. From this understandable but dangerously wrong misperception, the conclusion inevitably follows: Israel must make no further concessions to the Palestinians, for such concessions will be taken as a sign of weakness and will therefore be an invitation to disaster.

Those who interpret the present conflict in this manner are also likely to accept at face value the standard Israeli historical mythology, that Israel has always been willing to compromise with the Palestinians, but has had no “partners for peace,” in the current cliché. And this is so, the myth holds, because of an irrational Palestinian hatred of the Israelis, driven by primitive anti-Semitism—that is, rather than by actual Israeli behavior.

The current Intifada is said to have reconfirmed these lessons of Jewish history, conclusively demonstrating—even, it is said, to the formerly naïve Israeli and American Jewish Left—that nothing has changed, that the Palestinians seek

to destroy Israel “in stages.” One can be nearly certain that this assessment will be accompanied by a reworking of one of the oldest and most pernicious clichés about international conflict, announced as if it were a brilliant new insight: “The only thing the Palestinians understand is the language of power.”

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, 1947-49

The demythologized history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict challenges the standard version in a number of ways. To be sure, it must be acknowledged that some classic Islamic texts contain anti-Semitic references—though it is also true there are anti-Muslim references in some of the most revered Jewish thinkers of the past 1300 years. More particularly, both because early Zionism became aligned with British colonialism in the Mideast and because some Jews who lived in Arab lands sought to ally themselves with European imperialism, Arab anticolonialism in the early twentieth century included an element of anti-Semitism.

Even so, in Palestine itself the Jewish and Arab communities lived in relatively peaceful coexistence until fears of a huge onslaught of European Jewish immigration led many Palestinians to believe that Western colonialism was going to solve Europe's “Jewish problem” at the expense of the Palestinians. It was this Palestinian fear of losing their political rights, land, and society to a European Jewish influx that led to the conflict between the Yishuv and the Arab peoples of Palestine.

These fears were justified, because Ben-Gurion and other leading Zionists had no real intention of compromising with the Palestinians. On the contrary, the historical evidence is incontrovertible that Ben-Gurion agreed to the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine only as a necessary tactical step that would later be reversed: “when we become a strong power after the establishment of the state.” Later, Ben-Gurion told the Zionist Congress, “we will abolish partition and spread throughout all of Palestine” (quoted in Benny Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, p. 24).

And that is exactly what happened. Israel under Ben-Gurion, Begin, Dayan, and others sought to expand to the limits of biblical Palestine, which in their conception included all of Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza strip, substantial parts of Jordan, southern Lebanon, the Golan

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Heights, and Egypt's Sinai peninsula. Typically, Ben-Gurion made no bones about it: "Before the founding of the state our main interest was self-defense. But now the issue at hand is conquest, not self-defense. As for setting the borders—it's an open-ended matter" (from the 1949 Israeli archives, quoted by Tom Segev, 1949: *The First Israelis*, p. 6).

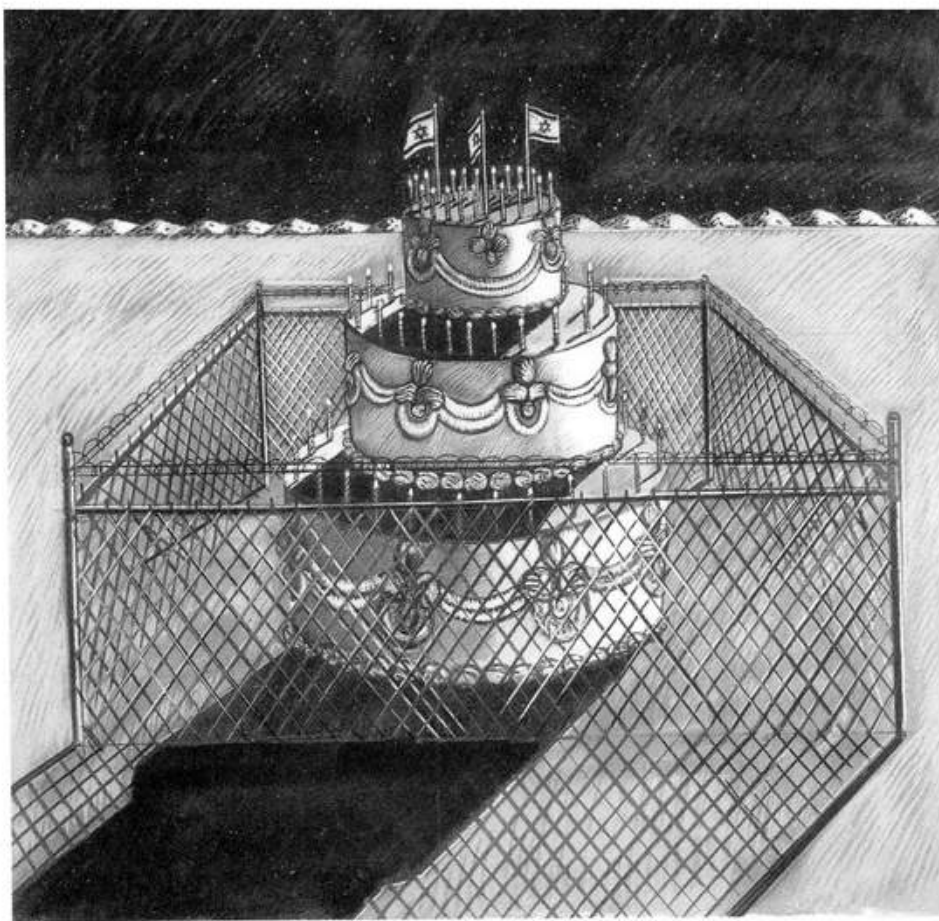
As for the attitude of the Palestinians toward the Israelis, it would be helpful to keep in mind some incontrovertible historical facts. To begin with, the Arabs of Palestine were the overwhelming majority during recent centuries and had been promised by the British that they would gain political sovereignty over it after World War I. To be sure, the Jews had a claim on Palestine as well, a claim that certainly became more powerful after the Holocaust irrefutably demonstrated the need for a Jewish state, for which, by the 1930s, there was no alternative to Palestine. Even so, it is not hard to understand Palestinian anger at the loss of their political rights.

Secondly, even before the Arab invasion in the spring of 1948, and continuing well after Israel won the war, some 600,000–700,000 Palestinians were deliberately driven out of their country, their homes, and their villages, in what prominent Israeli and American Jewish historians (e.g., Meron Benvenisti and Ian Lustick) are beginning to acknowledge was nothing less than "ethnic cleansing." Emotionally loaded as that term is, it accurately describes the Israeli psychological warfare, economic pressures, artillery bombardments, political assassinations, terrorist attacks, and even massacres that forced the Palestinians to flee.

To be sure, the Israelis had their reasons. Beginning with the Jewish influx into Palestine after 1917, Zionist leaders realized that it would be hard to build a secure Jewish state with a large, resentful Arab minority—which one day, because of the higher Arab birth rate, might even become a majority. Therefore, they began discussing various ways in which the Palestinians could be "transferred" (the preferred Zionist euphemism) out of the country—including, if necessary, by force.

To the general demographic and security problem was added the desire to find space, homes, and productive land for the post-Holocaust Jewish immigrants. These were indeed serious problems. Even so, it does not follow that the utterly ruthless methods by which the transfer mentality was implemented in the Palestinian expulsion in 1947–1949 were justified.

It is true that in the aftermath of the 1948 war, hundreds of thousands of Jewish citizens either fled or were driven out of such Arab countries as Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, and Iran, and some regard this as establishing a refugee



symmetry that, in effect, cancels out Palestinian refugee claims against Israel. While it is easy to understand the emotional force behind this argument, especially by those Israeli Jews or their descendants who experienced Arab anti-Semitism, it is hard to accept the current implications. The symmetry is largely a false one, because the Palestinian Arabs were not responsible for the actions of the Arab states, and there is no justice in making them pay for it.

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, 1967–present

In the aftermath of the 1967 War, Israel seized the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and the West Bank, establishing an occupation that is still in existence. While there is a reasonable argument that the Israeli expansion from the 1947 UN-established boundaries to its post-1948 boundaries was a response to genuine security needs, that cannot be said about the continued occupation of the post-1967 territories. On the contrary, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are security liabilities; the primary motivation for their seizure was ideological, as the terms "Judea and Samaria" made evident.

Immediately following the war, another 100,000 or so Palestinians were expelled, either from Jerusalem into the West Bank or out of the West Bank into Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, and the process of "creating facts on the ground" began: the ten-fold expansion of the boundaries of "Jerusalem"; the building of Jewish neighborhoods in Arab East Jerusalem; the use of economic and administrative pressures to force the Palestinians out of Jerusalem; the building of Jewish settlements—some of them by the most fanatical

elements in Israeli society—throughout Gaza and the West Bank, in order to prevent the Palestinians from ever gaining an independent state in those areas; the seizure of the water aquifers of the West Bank and the use of that water to serve Jewish rather than Palestinian needs; the use of economic pressure and collective punishment to suppress Palestinian resistance; the ongoing demolition of Palestinian homes, destruction of orchards, and land confiscation, either to make way for Israeli roads and settlements or simply as punishment; and the violent suppression of the first and second Palestinian Intifadas, including political assassinations and undercover death squads to liquidate activists.

Might all this have something to do with Palestinian “anti-Semitism”? This is not to deny that crude anti-Semitic stereotypes and insults continue to appear in Palestinian textbooks and newspapers—although a recent major Israeli study found that anti-Semitism in Palestinian textbooks is actually *declining*. In any case, the crucial point is that it was not racism, but the displacement of the Palestinian people in 1948 and 1967 that led to the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

In the early years after its formation, the PLO was clearly maximalist, insisting on the complete “liberation” of all of Palestine, which it sought to achieve by guerrilla warfare and outright terrorism. However, by the late 1960s this rejectionist position began gradually giving way to a willingness to consider a two-state diplomatic solution with Israel. Nothing came of it, because Israel ignored the many indications of an emerging Palestinian pragmatism, refusing even to talk with the PLO, let alone compromise with it.

Nonetheless, the PLO’s position continued to evolve, and in 1988 it finally officially proposed a detailed two-state solution. Under the terms of the PLO commitment, a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, would agree to be largely demilitarized, would accept the stationing of international peace-keeping forces along its borders with Israel, would end terrorism and all forms of attack on Israel from its territory, would enter into some kind of confederal arrangement with Jordan while refraining from alliances with Arab rejectionist states, and in all probability would agree to a settlement of the refugee problem on the basis of a token return to Israel, combined with large-scale international economic compensation of the refugees and their resettlement in the new Palestinian state and in other countries.

The first meaningful agreement between Israel and the PLO was the Oslo Accords of 1993, the terms of which were the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO, and a five-year transitional period under which Israel would gradually withdraw its troops and administrative structure from the major Palestinian population centers. At the end of the transitional period, there would be a permanent settlement. In turn, Arafat promised to end anti-Israeli violence in the

territories and to suppress all forms of terrorism, even agreeing to direct cooperation with Israeli security forces.

Although the Oslo accords did not quite specify that a permanent settlement must include the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, there was no doubt that this was the universal expectation of the Palestinians, the United States, the international community, and indeed of the Israeli government and public opinion. The more serious flaw of Oslo was that it postponed until the final status negotiations all the other difficult issues: the borders of the Palestinian state, the Jerusalem issue, the disposition of the Israeli settlements, and the refugee issue.

Arafat was severely criticized by many Palestinians for these gaping loopholes in the Oslo agreements, and in retrospect the critics were right. What perhaps could not have been foreseen was the extent to which the Rabin, Peres, and—of course—Netanyahu governments remained committed to a hard-line position that, in effect, would have prevented any truly viable independent Palestinian state from being created.

In the next few years, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres violated both the spirit and the letter of the Oslo agreements. When in October 1995 Rabin announced before the Knesset his detailed plans for a permanent settlement, it was clear his conception differed dramatically from the international consensus on the meaning of Oslo. Rabin stated the following: there would be no return to the pre-1967 borders; a united Jerusalem, including settlements in East Jerusalem and its suburbs, would remain under exclusive Israeli sovereignty; most of the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza would stay in place under Israeli sovereignty; a wide-ranging series of Israeli-only new roads would be built throughout the territories to ensure free access to and military control over the settlements; Israel would retain settlements and military bases in the Jordan River Valley, deep inside Palestinian territory; and the Palestinians would receive an “entity” that would be the “home to most of the Palestinian residents living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.... We would like this to be less than a state.”

Over the next five years, Israel implemented Rabin’s conception of peace with the Palestinians. Even if Israel had finally agreed to a Palestinian “state” on these terms, the Palestinians would have ended up with a series of isolated enclaves on less than 50 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, cut off from each other and surrounded by Israeli settlers and military bases, and with little or no control of their water resources.

Even the letter of the Oslo accords has often been disregarded by all Israeli governments since 1993: the scheduled series of Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank was repeatedly delayed and has still not been completed; many Palestinian prisoners that Israel had committed to release remain in jail; the promised Palestinian air field in Gaza was

delayed; detailed provisions requiring free Palestinian passageway between Gaza and the West Bank, as well as free access of people, vehicles, and goods within the territories, have often been interrupted by Israeli closures that cause great personal and economic hardship; Palestinians living outside Jerusalem are often prevented from attending services at the Muslim mosques on the Temple Mount; and tax collections and money from the sale of Palestinian goods that was to have been transferred by Israel to the Palestinian authority has been frequently held up.

Yet, until the Al-Aqsa Intifada in late 2000, with the exceptions of brief periods following the Goldstein massacre in Hebron and the 1996 Peres-authorized Israeli assassination of a Palestinian activist accused of terrorism, the Palestinians complied with their obligation to end violence and terrorism, and the Palestinian security forces under Arafat worked hand in hand with Israeli security forces, often in joint patrols, to identify and jail extremists and suspected terrorists, some of them from lists drawn up by the Israelis.

Barak and the Peace Process

By the time Barak took office in 1999, not only had Israel's actions subverted the Oslo process, they had also gravely undermined Arafat's position among the Palestinians, who were now in worse shape—politically, economically, and psychologically—than they had been when the agreements were signed in 1993.

The general perception of the Camp David summit negotiations is that Barak made an unprecedented offer to the Palestinians, far more generous than anything the Israelis had ever been prepared to concede, only to be met by a shocking if not perverse rejection by Arafat, who was not only unwilling to compromise but rewarded Barak by ordering a violent uprising at just the moment when the chances for peace had never been greater.

There is just enough plausibility in this narrative to have initially persuaded even the Israeli peace camp that they had naively misunderstood the real intentions of the Palestinian leadership, and that Israel really did lack "a partner for peace." But this disillusion with the Palestinians quickly gave way to a more sober reassessment among serious Israeli analysts, the great majority of whom now are far more critical of the Barak proposals and have a much greater empathic understanding of the plight of Arafat and the Palestinians.

The main lines of Barak's unwritten proposals at Camp David were that Israel would agree to a demilitarized Palestinian state in Gaza and about 90 percent of the West Bank (later increased to about 92–94 percent), with

sovereignty over, and its capital in, those parts of East Jerusalem that were still Palestinian. The Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem would remain under Israeli sovereignty, as would much of the Old City. As for the Temple Mount, Barak's proposals were murky and in dispute: in some versions, while rejecting Palestinian sovereignty over what the Jews call the Temple Mount—even over the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Muslim Dome of the Rock—Barak might have been prepared to consider some form of dual control or "God's sovereignty" over the Muslim religious

sites, while retaining Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall.

As for the settlements, Israel would annex 8–10 percent of the West Bank along the old 1967 border, within which 80 percent of the settlers were located; the fate of the remaining 20 percent, most of whom were the most hardcore ideological Jewish fundamentalists, located in the West Bank and Gaza heartland,

was left unclear: whether they would be withdrawn, whether they would be left in place to decide on their own whether they wished to return to Israel or become Palestinian citizens, or whether they would be only nominally under Palestinian sovereignty while continuing under Israeli military protection.

In exchange for the Israeli annexations, the Palestinians would receive some Israeli land in the Negev desert adjacent to the Gaza Strip—though this land, aside from being barren, would be only about 10–15 percent of the size of the Israeli-annexed areas. In addition, Israel would retain troops, early-warning stations, and military bases in the Jordan River Valley and mountain passes, perhaps as part of an international peacekeeping force, for a transitional period of about twelve years.

There were no detailed proposals on how the West Bank water sources would be controlled, other than an Israeli promise to work with the Palestinians in developing desalinization plants and other sources of new water. However, the very silence of Barak on this issue, together with the fact that the proposed Israeli settlement annexations included most of the West Bank water aquifers—which was precisely why some of the settlements had been put there in the first place—made it obvious that Israel would continue its control over most of the West Bank water.

Finally, while Israel might agree to the return of about 10,000 Palestinian refugees to Israel under a "family reunification" plan, there would be no general Palestinian right of return, and Israel would not even acknowledge that it bore any political or moral responsibility for the expulsions of 1948 and 1967.

Thus, while it is true that Barak went further than any previous Israeli leader, he didn't go nearly far enough. In

The Palestinian security forces under Arafat worked hand in hand with Israeli security forces, often in joint patrols.

the end, there would have been a non-viable, impoverished Palestinian state; Israel would retain control of most of Jerusalem and its suburbs, including Palestinian access to the Muslim religious sites on the Temple Mount; Gaza would be separated from the West Bank and the West Bank itself would be divided into at least three different enclaves separated from each other by Israeli-controlled settlements, military bases, and roads; the Israeli army would continue to occupy the Jordan River Valley for a number of years to come—perhaps indefinitely; and Israel would refuse even to acknowledge that it bore any responsibility for the refugee problem, let alone allowing more than a token number of refugees to return to Israel.

The standard moderate criticism of Arafat's refusal to accept such terms—for example, as repeatedly argued in a series of influential columns by Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*—is that while, yes, Barak's offers did not go far enough to meet legitimate Palestinian demands, Arafat should have accepted them as the basis for continued negotiations, making counterproposals rather than ending diplomacy.

This criticism, however, blithely ignores the clear-cut historical record since 1967, and *especially* since Oslo: the longer “the peace process” is stretched out, the more Israel takes advantage of its unconstrained power to preempt the outcome of negotiations by creating facts on the ground. Even as Barak was negotiating at Camp David, he was expanding the pace of land confiscation, settlement construction, and military road building in the West Bank and even Gaza at the greatest rate since 1992—exceeding even that of the Netanyahu government. (*Ha'aretz*, February 27, 2001)

In any case, when the Palestinians finally exploded with rage last fall, Arafat had few options. Perhaps in theory he could have chosen the course of nonviolent resistance, following the examples of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela. But even if he had been so inclined personally, he could not have imposed such a demanding strategy on his own people, whose sufferings and frustration had only increased since Oslo. Moreover, there is plenty of reason to doubt that nonviolent resistance would have moved the Israelis to make the kinds of concessions necessary to produce a genuine peace with the Palestinians: a return of Israel to the pre-June 4, 1967 lines (with some minor and equitable territorial trades that would allow the incorporation of some Israeli settlements into Israel); the complete Israeli military withdrawal from all the occupied territories; the dismantling of the remaining settlements, including the Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem; the turning over of most or all of the West Bank water aquifers to the Palestinians; Palestinian sovereignty

over their mosques on the Temple Mount; a fair and equitable partition of Jerusalem; and some kind of fair solution to the refugee problem.

In short, in light of an impasse that was unlikely to be broken for years to come, if ever, an Arafat willingness to continue to prolong the agreements or settle for “interim agreements” would have allowed Barak—and now Sharon—to continue the traditional Israeli policy of “creating facts on the ground,” making it increasingly unlikely that a fair settlement would ever be reached.

*The use of violence—
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problematic.*

Still, the use of violence—even in a just cause—is bound to be highly problematic, both for the obvious moral reasons and also on practical grounds. That is the case for the present Palestinian revolution, not least because it has produced Ariel Sharon. Yet, it is an issue over which reasonable people can and do disagree, and there is no gainsaying the dilemma: after all, if it had not been

for the first Palestinian uprising, the Intifada of the late 1980s, Israel would have refused even to meet with the Palestinians, let alone make any concessions to them.

Conclusion

There is no basis for the assertion that Palestinian outrage at, or even hatred of, the Israelis is a manifestation of traditional “anti-Semitism,” rather than the consequence of the Zionist dispossession of the Palestinians and over fifty years of Israeli injustice and repression. Furthermore, it has not been Israeli “powerlessness” that has been the problem, but precisely the opposite. Blinded by their ideology and mythology, the Israelis have not been significantly constrained in their treatment of the Palestinians by considerations of justice or morality. In such situations, constraints will exist only when dictated by self-interest, meaning the presence of countervailing power: precisely what has been missing in the conflict between the Palestinian David and the Israeli Goliath.

Even under the questionable assumption that the Palestinian uprising today is the result of Arafat's strategy rather than simply an uncontrollable explosion from below, the goal clearly is to restore some kind of balance of power as well as to convince the Israelis that they cannot simply impose their will on the Palestinians without paying an unacceptable cost to their own self-interests.

In any case, whether or not one agrees with Palestinian tactics, the focus on anti-Semitism distorts our understanding of the worsening conflict. This is not to minimize the pernicious effects of anti-Semitism, whatever its causes. By the same token, we cannot ignore the intensifying anti-Arab racism in some Israeli quarters. In the end, a true Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation will require the removal of both Palestinian and Jewish racism. □

Reciprocity

Water-borne reflections from the Northwest Coast

David Abram



The Lessons of Salmon

My first encounter with spawning salmon gleams with a cool, moonlit radiance in my memory. I'd grown up in the suburban East Coast and knew nothing of this wild fish and its ways. The year was 1987 and I was kayaking in the Prince William Sound twenty months before the taut, ever-shifting surface of that life-filled sea was generously layered with a glistening blanket of oil by the Exxon company. We had beached our kayaks on one of the larger islands for the night, and after a simple meal I went walking off along the coast as the sun slipped down toward the horizon, drinking the salt air and listening to the lapping of the small waves and the wind in the needles. After some time I came to the edge of a surging stream about twelve feet across, whose surface was rippling and splashing in the fading light. Without paying much attention, I sat down on a mossy rock a ways back from the stream's edge just to bask in the rushing speech of those waters, and to gaze out into the oncoming night. I remember I lost myself in some reverie or other, until my awareness was brought back to the place by a pale glow beginning to spread into the sky from the rocks on the far side of the stream. The glow got steadily more intense until, as I watched, the full moon was hatched from those rocks, huge and round as a ripe peach, pouring its radiance across the stony beach and the gleaming waves and the rustling spruce needles and generally casting a kind of spell over the whole place.

Now, I have never, of course, seen a cow jump over the moon. But that night I did see a fish jump over the moon. A great streamlined silhouette, its tail flapping, arced right over the full moon, and splashed back into the water. Whaa?! I couldn't believe what I'd just seen, and so was

still staring at the afterimage—and then another silhouette leapt right over the moon!

I got up and walked over to the water's edge: the stream was thick with salmon, boiling with salmon, all jostling and surging against the current in fits and starts—it was as if the stream was *made* of salmon! I gazed and gazed for a couple hours. Then went back to my tent and tried to sleep, but couldn't. So I came back in the middle of the night and stood staring into that moon-illuminated river of fish, then waded out into that mass of silvery, sparkling muscles all surging and lunging against the current. In the middle of the stream I was up to my knees in salmon, but they didn't care—didn't even notice; they bumped into my legs and then plunged on past with a single-minded determination I'd never encountered before, nosing aside their dead or dying siblings and cousins as they floated back downstream on their sides, their mottled skin beginning to fall off; the earnest salmon around me just nudged them aside, hardly noticing, intent on one thing and one thing alone—getting upstream to their spawning place, depositing their eggs and fertilizing those eggs, before they too began to fall apart and to die. I'd never imagined such intensity, such single mindedness. Their total focus on getting upstream to create new life, their utter obliviousness to everything else—to their dead or dying relatives, to other species who might prey upon them (to me, for instance, my own legs shivering among them), to everything other than the impulse to procreate...

There seemed something strangely familiar about this—something weirdly familiar about this apparent readiness to multiply at all costs, and this consequent obliviousness to all other beings and species. It seemed so similar to ... So much like, like—well yes, of course, so much like us, us humans!—our own species, *Homo sapiens*, steadily multiplying and multiplying these last several centuries without much noticing anything else, seemingly deaf and blind to the presence of all the other species with whom we share

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this wild world. And so, right then and there, I began to wonder if our own species was not caught in a kind of spawn, if we were not, indeed, spawning. I mean, this would explain our apparent obliviousness to everything other than ourselves, our willingness to shove aside not only other species in our rather reckless rush to multiply and fill the earth, but to nudge aside also all those humans who are falling apart and dying as a result of the steady swelling of our numbers and the steady surge of technological progress. And it would imply that those who wish to spark a new awareness and recognition of other species—of other animals, plants, and forests—must also work to awaken us from this steady, many-centuries-long spawning behavior that seems to hold us in its grip.

But I mean no disrespect to the salmon. I have no wish to insult them, or to offend them in any way, and so I must straightaway apologize to them—apologize to the wild Sockeye and the Chinook, to the Pink and the Chum and the Coho, for this admittedly awkward comparison. For if we humans are in a spawn, it is hardly that seasonal, cyclical replenishment that the salmon practice: rather it is a steady, unending surge, a procreation and proliferation without bounds—after all, we’ve more than *tripled* the human population of this wild planet in the course of the last sixty years. The amount of increase in the 1990s alone exceeded the size of the entire human population that was alive in the year 1600! Moreover, if spawning salmon *seem* oblivious to all else as they surge up the rivers and streams, their relentless self-sacrifice on behalf of new life actually nourishes countless other species. After they spawn, their spawned-out bodies provide food for the bears, for the river otters, for raccoons, coyotes, skunks, bobcats, and squirrels, food for eagles and red-tailed hawks and winter wrens, and for all the local corvids—ravens and crows and stellar jays and gray jays—and thus the salmon’s spirit filters into and nourishes the whole of these forests. If the steady growth of the human population leads *us* to clearcut these mountainsides, the spawning salmon vitalize and invigorate these forested slopes, gifting them with wild nutrients.

So let me try to correct whatever wrong, whatever offense I might have committed with my clumsy comparison by praising the salmon, this most amazing of earthly mysteries, this graceful intelligence that joins the land to the sea and the sea to the land, this bright intermediary binding matter and spirit, whose life feeds *both* our bodies and our imaginations, and whose loss impoverishes human culture no less than it impoverishes the vitality of the land and the forests. Is not Salmon the real genius of these coastal forests? All who live and work in these forests, sheltered from the drenching rains by hemlocks and cedars and firs, harvesting wood from these trees, planting soils fed by these mountain rivers—or even pouring through books plucked from the library stacks at the universities, or toiling away in front of computer terminals up on the Microsoft campus—

all who live here in the coastal Northwest are under the influence of salmon, our minds inevitably informed by this collective anadromous intelligence whose patterns and rhythms provided the living template for the earliest patterns of human settlement in this terrain, the infrastructure for the rhythms of human culture in this watery realm.

The strange ways of the salmon are a key and unifying component of this ecosystem, as integral to the mind of this land as is the monsoon to the mind of the Himalayas. As we become conscious of their influence, as we watch them and eat them and ponder their ways, we learn so much from them. They teach us wonder, of course, and humility—since these fish carry secrets that we simply cannot fathom with all our analytical tools. How do the wild salmon find their way back to their home stream after swimming thousands of miles out across the vast Pacific? We simply do not know. After several years out at sea, do they simply retrace their strokes to get home? No! Indeed, it is clear that the salmon commonly return by a different route than that by which they left. Nevertheless, a single stock of wild sockeye that were marked and later observed spread out across 2,300 miles of ocean (sighted off the Aleutian Islands, near the Kamchatka Peninsula, and along the coast of Japan) all turned up at the mouth of their natal stream within three days of one another.

How? By what magic do they find their way back not just to the right river mouth, or the right tributary of that river, but to the precise little stream where they once hatched? By what kind of deep somatic attunement—feeling their way between faint electromagnetic anomalies, riding a particular angle of the sun as it filters down through the rippled surface above, dreaming their way through gradients of scent and taste toward the lost beloved—how do they find their way to that source, that particular place inseparable from their being? Each genetically distinct population of wild salmon is perfectly tuned, it would seem, to the geological character, the climatic variables, the disturbance regimes, and the flow patterns of its native stream, a tunement born from thousands of years of intimate adaptation to that one stretch of water and rock and shadow, each fish (according to naturalist Tim McNulty) a perfect expression of the evolutionary wisdom of its particular watershed. And so, besides teaching us a new capacity for astonishment, the salmon also instruct us about the primordial primacy of place. It is a primacy long forgotten by our steadily globalizing civilization, with its spreading malls and video outlets, this culture where the highways heading into town—lined with Taco Bells, video outlets, Jiffy Lubes, Sizzler Steakhouses, and Barnes&Noble Superstores—look just like the highways leading into every other town, and so the stream of cars we’re swimming in might just as well be carrying us into Eureka or Eugene or Ukiah (or, for that matter, into Bellingham or Birmingham or Billings) because when we finally reach the headwaters of our highway and head inside our office-building, the

computer terminal we'll gaze at when we finally get to work will gaze back at us with the same blank stare no matter where we're pushing the buttons. The place doesn't really make any difference for us, at least not as long as we consider the land to be merely a backdrop against which human history unfolds, or a stockpile of resources for the global spread of our human monoculture.

But doesn't the place *where* we are actually make some difference to *who* we are? Clearly that is what the salmon teach us. As we try to compensate for the dwindling salmon runs with hatchery-reared fish whose eggs have been plucked from other, far-off, watersheds, those confused and dumbed-down hatchery salmon make it clear to us that real places are *not* interchangeable—at least not for wild, earth-born beings—and that wild, sustainable (or self-replenishing) culture is indissolubly place-specific.

However, the greatest and most profound lesson that the salmon teach us is the power and the magic of reciprocity. Reciprocity! The two-way flow, the reciprocal exchange between realms. The gift of the mountains and the forests to the vast ocean, and later, the return of that gift, now offered from the sea to the land, to these forests and mountain valleys, which ensures that the gift will be reborn afresh from a clump of luminous eggs buried beneath a layer of pebbles, so that it can be given, once again, to the salty depths of the sea. This circulation, this *systole* and *diastole*, is one of the

signs that the earth *is alive*, this rhythmic pulse of finned and flashing fish spreading out through various arteries into the wide body of the ocean, circulating there, growing there, only to return by various veins to the beating heart of the forest, gravid with new life.

Or maybe it's best to think of this seasonal reciprocity as a kind of breathing, as an exhalation of thousands, of hundreds of thousands of young salmon from the land out into the sea to mingle there with whales and algal blooms, and then the great inhalation, the breathing back in of all that vital nourishment from the oceans into the mouths of rivers, flowing up those rivers into tributaries, and from there into the branching streams that filter into the green forests, the living lungs of this earthly world. Or else it is the ocean that is breathing, inhaling these finned nutrients down from the forested slopes, sucking them down over rocks and through rapids and hydroelectric dams, past settlements and cities and out into its vast cycling currents and tides, circulating this silvery life within itself before breathing it back up into the valleys and the mountain forests.

Reciprocity, the ceaseless give and take, the flow that moves in two directions—this is the real teaching of the salmon. It is the foundation of any real ethic: give unto others as you would have them give unto you. But this is not the *golden* rule; this is, rather, the *silver* rule, the lesson taught by silvery fish scales glinting in the moonlight: if you wish

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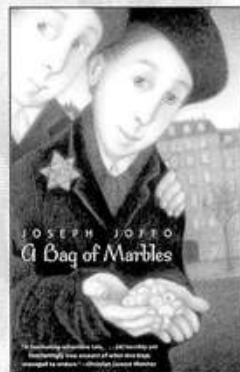
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to receive sustenance from the land then you must offer sustenance *to* the land in return. If you wish to draw nourishment from the waters and the winds, then you must honor and shelter those waters and winds. Most specifically, never take more from the living land than you need, and indeed never take more from the land than you *return* to the land—not only with nourishing offerings and propitiations, but also with prayers and praises—gifting the breathing earth with our eloquence, honoring the sensuous and sentient surroundings with the heartfelt gratitude of our songs and our dances, feeding the more-than-human world with our grateful attention. The First Salmon Ceremonies that once resounded up and down the Northwest coast every year were filled with such eloquence, with such prayers and praise songs honoring the salmon, and the rivers, and the abundant, animate earth.

The City Walls

Yet in so many ways our culture has forgotten the wild teaching of reciprocity. Our civilization does not consider the land around us as an animate, living matrix but as a set of determinate processes which we describe in entirely mechanomorphic terms. We define nature not as a community of living subjects held together by an intricate gift economy—wherein each being, each life, is nourished by a host of others and then gives of its life in return—rather we speak of the nature around us as an almost random concatenation of passive things, a conglomeration of objects and automatic processes, void of all interiority, lacking all spontaneity, without any active agency—merely a stockpile of resources waiting to be requisitioned by us.

But how can one practice reciprocity with an inert or determinate object? How can one enter into relationship with something that has no life, no interiority, no active agency of its own? The only active agents in this world, the only real subjects among this concatenation of passive objects, are us humans. And so, indeed, reciprocity is cultivated between human persons, and ethics emerges as the practice of right relationship within human society. The rest of nature, presumably, cannot reciprocate our attentions.

For over two millennia, Western, alphabetic civilization has defined itself in opposition to the wild, as a realm apart from earthly nature. Our philosophers have played a key role in establishing, and certifying, this opposition. In one of Plato's most brilliant and scintillating dialogues, Socrates is asked by Phaedrus why he almost never ventures out beyond the walls of Athens to wander in the open countryside. Socrates answers him with these words: "Look Phaedrus: I'm a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in the town will." There's nothing I can *learn* outside the city walls—trees and other animals have nothing to teach; only from other people can I really learn anything. Right there, at the very origin of our philosophical tradition in Athens, is already erected this apparent bifurcation—this wall—between the intelligent

world of humans and the ostensibly mute world of nature. Two thousand years later, the same wall is patched up and renovated by Monsieur Descartes, with his neat distinction between thinking substance, or mind—which is the special province of humankind—and extended substance, or matter—which is everything else. You still see that old wall, not quite between the city and the country now, but between the human mind, which is one thing, and material nature, which is another thing. Material nature is a kind of pure exterior, the human mind a kind of pure interior. Many thinkers have tried to breach this wall in the course of the twentieth century, but it has proved surprisingly resilient. The barrier has been well preserved in the academic distinction between the *sciences*, which study the objective, readily quantifiable world of external nature, and the *humanities*, which get to deal with the subjective interior—with that more qualitative domain that is, presumably, the special haunt of humankind.

But my main point here is that reciprocity—and hence, ethics—is simply not possible in such a situation, when the entities to be related do not partake of the same world, when they have no commonality, no common ground on which to meet and make contact. It is simply not possible to enter into a living relationship, much less a reciprocal relationship, with an inert object. It is not possible to *reciprocate* a purely passive or mechanical or insentient conglomeration of objects.

Reciprocity is only possible if there is some common ground, some common medium through which a mutual exchange can unfold. But how shall we locate, or establish, a common ground between ourselves and the rest of nature? Shall we say (in the manner of biologist Edward O. Wilson) that we humans, too, are entirely a part of the objective, quantifiable, determinate world of nature that we see automatically doing its thing all around us—that our actions, our emotions and even our thoughts are nothing other than a set of genetically programmed automatisms that will soon be mapped out and measured? Perhaps, but then we rob ourselves of our own active agency, our own ability to willfully act, to respond, to reciprocate another being.

Maybe, then, we should try to breach the wall from the other side, like many postmodern theorists who assert that nature, itself, is largely a social construction. These thinkers claim that our experience of other-than-human phenomena is always already structured by the dynamic play of social forces—by the polarizations, distributions, and dissimulations of power in which we are culturally situated. Numerous deconstructive analyses stress the extent to which the natural world we seem to experience is thoroughly "constructed" by the particular culture that enfolds us.

Yet such theorists tend to perpetuate, in postmodern guise, the most spurious of all *modern* presumptions—the presumption that humankind is the sole creative (or constructive) agency in the earthly world. Their analyses all too easily become merely a new justification for the manipulation and alteration of other-than-human realities for our own,



exclusively human purposes. They risk being taken up, for instance, by those who wish to justify the biogenetic engineering of other organisms for purely human benefit: since nature is already a social construction, then why not continue to “construct” the nature around us as we see fit?

But what if we were to supplement the warranted assertion that our experience of non-human nature is largely structured by human culture, with an acknowledgement that human culture is itself structured and informed, in countless ways, by the wider-than-human matrix of powers in which humankind is embedded?

Why not acknowledge that while our notions of the world may be structured by our particular culture, cultures are themselves structured by the interplay of gravity, winds, waters, and sunlight, by the migratory movements of particular animals and the nutritional and medicinal powers of the local plants. Why not admit that human culture is itself influenced, organized, and mediated by many agencies that are not human or of human artifice?

By acknowledging the direct, material influence of these non-human agencies, we do not pin human reality to a static or determinate order of essences. For by affirming the canyons, the wind, the moon, and the forest as actors, as animate agents like ourselves, we simultaneously acknowledge their formative influence *and* their otherness (their wild indeterminacy, their existence not as fathomable objects but as inscrutable entities with whom we stand in a living relation). *Of course* the world we experience is not an objective and determinate reality—there is no doubt that it is a social creation! But the “society” that constructs this indeterminate world is much vaster than any merely *human* society—it includes spiders and swallows and subterranean seepages along with us two-leggeds. Surely it is time to outgrow this most tenacious of modernist presumptions: for all our craftiness and creative ferment, we humans are by no means the sole, or even the primary, agents of the world’s construction.

As soon as we acknowledge the active influence of these other beings and elements, we find ourselves negotiating relationships with every aspect of the sensuous terrain that surrounds us. And reciprocity—the simple practice of mutual respect—becomes an imperative.

In other words, reciprocity, the deep lesson of the salmon, only becomes possible when the rest of nature is experienced as something that can *reciprocate us*, only if nature is recognized not as a concatenation of objects but as a community of living subjects, a complexly intertwined society of beings who—like ourselves—are active, animate agencies. But also only if we humans are recognized not as disembodied minds but as material, *bodily* subjects, as animals in our own right, and thus as participants in the same world that the salmon inhabit, characters in the same vast story.

Among many of the First Nations peoples who fished and hunted along the Northwest coast, it was common knowledge that the salmon, when they were not visiting us in the rivers and streams of the forest, were off living in their own camps and villages, under the sea, or beyond the horizon, where they would take off their silvery skins and walk around in human form. When, for example, in the nineteenth century several Skagit Indians accompanied a white expedition back to the East coast and saw the abundance of pale, pink-skinned people living there, they

reported back to their tribe that they had been to salmon country and had seen the salmon walking around as human beings! To most moderns today, this seems like an amazing flight of fancy. But what if such a notion—of humans and salmon sharing a common flesh, indeed as relatives, as members of a common family—is a basic prerequisite for reciprocity, for the

establishment of a right and respectful relation between the people of this terrain and the fish that sustains them? Does contemporary American culture today maintain such a respectful relation to the salmon? Not at all: salmon populations have been dwindling and going extinct since we began manipulating salmon runs, for our own purposes, in the nineteenth century. Perhaps then there is something to be learned from these curious beliefs and ways of speaking.

At the First Salmon Ceremonies people paid homage to the fish, and spoke to them, addressing them by such honorific titles as “Noble One” or “Lightning Following One Another,” “Two Gills on Back,” “Quartz Nose,” “Three Leaps,” “Noble Chief,” or “Chief Spring Salmon.” The salmon, in other words, were treated as royalty—as, in Jonathan Raban’s words, “the lords and ladies of the sea.” And they were addressed, spoken to. But really, now: why speak to a fish in this exalted manner? Why even speak to these fish at all? Surely they cannot understand our words, if even they can hear us. Clearly, it is another flight of fancy... Unless, unless the very act of addressing these strange, water-born beings is the simplest, most elegant way of turning our awareness toward them, unless speaking to the salmon and then listening or watching for their reply is a powerful way to tune our human senses to these other shapes of sentience—to bind our own attention to these other embodied intelligences—and so to let ourselves be instructed, and informed, by their ways. Another way of ensuring, and of enacting, reciprocity.

The Many-Voiced Earth

What role, then, *does* language play in the practice of reciprocity? In the mainstream, dominant culture, we spend a great deal of time talking *about* nature, about other animals, about “the environment.” But many indigenous,

*How shall we locate, or
establish, a common
ground between ourselves
and the rest of nature?*

oral peoples seem to spend just as much time talking *to* the world—speaking to the salmon, to the forest, to the land itself—and listening for its replies.

The modern, civilized assumption is that language is precisely that which distinguishes and separates us two-leggeds from all the other animals, since humans alone possess the capacity for meaningful speech. Language, for us moderns, is an exclusively human property. Traditional oral cultures commonly hold a much more expansive view of language, one which *includes* verbal language, of course, but which also includes the communicative power of bodily expressions and gestures (like a scowl, or a shrug, or the tail-between-the-legs gesture made by a submissive young wolf) as well as the expressive, evocative potency of many non-verbal sounds (laughter, for instance, or the honking of a flock of geese veering south for the winter, or the distant rumble of thunder, or even the whoosh of the wind in the high grasses). For a majority of indigenous cultures, language—or meaningful speech—is not an exclusively human property, but is rather a property of the surrounding earth itself, in which we humans participate. The commonality of this belief is remarkable, given the tremendous differences between indigenous peoples worldwide. Nevertheless, whether one consults the Haida people of the island Northwest or the Hopi people of the Southwest desert, whether one asks among the Huarani of the Amazon basin or the Pintupi and Pitjantjarra of Australia, the most articulate members of the culture will insist that the coherence of their spoken language is inseparable from the coherence of the local ecology—from the expressive vitality of the more-than-human terrain. For such indigenous, oral peoples, it is the animate earth that speaks; human speech is just one part of that much wider conversation.

From an indigenous perspective, in other words, everything speaks. And so we humans must take care with our own speaking, since many other beings are listening, and can hear us. Here, for example, are some observations made by a member of the Mattole Indians—a California tribe that has now vanished from the world. Recorded in an interview half a century ago, his words describe the proper way to behave around water and waves.

The water watches you and has a definite attitude, favorable or otherwise, toward you. Do not speak just before a wave breaks. Do not speak to passing rough water in a stream. Do not look at water very long for any one time, unless you have been to this spot ten times or more. Then the water there is used to you and does not mind if you're looking at it. Older men can talk in the presence of the water because they have been around so long that the water knows them. Until the water at any spot does know you, however, it becomes very rough if you talk in its presence or look at it too long.

—G.W. Hewes, quoted in Alfred Kroeber and Samuel Barrett, *Fishing Among the Indians of Northwest California*

What a curious kind of etiquette! And how odd it sounds to many of us today. And yet it is a striking example of reciprocity—the felt mutuality and exchange between people and water. And it functions to keep the members of a coastal fishing culture exquisitely attentive and attuned to the fluid ways of the water, to the shifting eddies along the river, the pattern of waves along the coast. Such an etiquette toward the fluid element inculcates a steady respect, and ensures that the culture will not readily violate the health of those waters, or the vitality of the watershed.

Of Whales and Wild Culture

The Makah Indians comprise a culture profoundly informed by the whale—a society whose traditions have been defined by the hunting of gray and humpback whales, and by the intimate knowledge of the whales that such hunting requires. For at least 2,000 years (and very probably more like 4,000 years), the ancestors of the Makah have lived in settlements around the Northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula—the westernmost point of land in what is now the contiguous United States—close to the migratory routes of whales and other sea mammals. Archeological evidence unearthed over the last forty years confirms the deep record preserved in the Makah oral traditions, and demonstrates that theirs was a complex and highly organized hunting and fishing society. It is clear, both from the oral stories and the material evidence, that the Makah traditionally fished not only in the streams but offshore, and that they hunted fur seals and other sea mammals in long cedar canoes. It is also abundantly clear that the most formidable and awe-filled event, which radiated its intensity into all areas of the culture, was the whale hunt. That is, the engagement most laden with spiritual power and significance was the life and death encounter with this entity who comes to meet us humans from the depths of a fluid world we can barely penetrate, this mysterious intelligence so much larger than our own, the confrontation with whom startles us, willy-nilly, into our most attentive and wakeful mode of being. The whale was the primary source of sustenance—both physical and spiritual—for the Makah people, and as the gift of its flesh was shared among all members of the community, a kind of nourishment spread not just into their limbs and muscles, but into their minds as well. The vast life and the inscrutable sentience of the whale became a part of their own collective being, binding them into a common spirit, ensuring the rich cohesion of their culture. These were a people made of whale.

The Makah are the only tribe whose right to hunt the whale was written into the treaties that they signed with the U.S. government in 1855. They knew the habits of the whale as well as anyone, and when the numbers of gray whales were plummeting, as a result of overhunting around the planet by American and European commercial whaling

(continued on page 54)

CONVERSATION

A CONVERSATION WITH Jane Jacobs

Roberta Brandes Gratz

Jane Jacobs changed the way we think about and view cities. Her pioneering books, starting with *Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961, were always cutting edge, but forty years later are as fresh and relevant as ever. *The Nature of Economics* is just out in paperback (Vintage Books, 2001).

If there is a Jacobs method, it is to observe, to find patterns, to see connections, and to draw conclusions strictly from what is, without theorizing about what could, should, or would be. She demonstrated that cities are living organisms. Healthy communities need busy, lively streets. Density and diversity are interdependent. Good development combines many functions made vibrant by the opportunity for serendipity and innovation that only comes with flexibility. Cities are the anchor and engine of regional and national economies. The nature of economy and the economy of nature are variations of each other.

I first met Jane Jacobs in 1978 when, after fifteen years as a reporter for the New York Post, I embarked on my first book about cities. My editor at the time was Jason Epstein, then and still Jane's editor, who said to me, "you must start by going to visit Jane Jacobs in Toronto." She welcomed me in her characteristically warm and generous manner, showing me interesting things happening around the city from which lessons could be drawn.

We began a conversation back then that has continued on and off over the years. I often have tested on her my newest observations. She never has ceased to be encouraging, whether challenging or endorsing my thinking. At eighty-four, she is as sharp and provocative as ever and our dialogue continues. What I have learned is limitless. What follows are excerpts from recent conversations.

GRATZ: How would you summarize the major thesis of your newest book, *The Nature of Economics*?

JACOBS: Economies behave according to universal natural laws—of development, of expansion, of continuity, of self-correction. It's not arbitrary. An economy is either



obeying those laws or going into decline. Economics as a formal discipline has not gone very deeply into the subject. It has skimmed the surface without looking at what really creates expansion. It will never be a real science unless it does base itself on those foundations.

GRATZ: Are you saying that economists oversimplify the way economies work the way city planners try to formalize the way cities work, figuring, "well, if this is true, therefore that is true," viewing things in a very linear way?

JACOBS: Yes, and fragmenting it. Thinking about pieces of a city separately. It gets very rococo and not simple in the mathematical models. I don't want to blame economists too much for this, except in not being curious enough. After all, economics is a changing thing, and they come out of a tradition in which, if you learned something new, you did fragment it, and you separated it and then made it rococo. It's a tradition that no one person is to blame for and various people had bits and pieces of the truth. Adam Smith did. But they didn't get to put it together, and then they got onto this really miserable track. I call it retreating into their own heads. They got more interested—Marx did, Mills did, Keynes did, all the philosophers did—in how an economy *can* work, what *should* it do, how *could* it be made to do what I want it to do, instead of studying how economies *do* behave, whether you like it or not.

GRATZ: How did you arrive at the nature aspect? We talk of cities as living organisms, the ecology of a city. Certainly those parallels to nature have been part of the discourse but you took it another step. It is a continuum, but then there is a jump.

Roberta Brandes Gratz is an award-winning journalist and urban critic, lecturer, and author of *The Living City: Thinking Small in a Big Way* and *Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown* (both John Wiley & Sons).



JACOBS: The jump is this: the resemblances between a city and its ecology and its economy are kind of obvious. Lots of people have made parallels, beginning with the early ecologists—as I point out in the book—who gave [their study] a name linking it to economy. The Greeks deliberately were drawing attention to how similar this ecology was to the economy of nature. You see the parallels. [The nature of economy and the economy of nature.] They were different versions of the same process. Think of the early, naked, empty-handed ancestors that we had. What did they have to go on? They had these sticks and bones, just provided by nature and they did something and made differentiations from them.

GRATZ: It sounds like you're saying essentially two things. One, if you understand the natural processes, then you'll at least have a road map to the economic process. Two, the real trick is to learn from and draw from those natural processes, the processes of nature. And you made the distinction between *imitating* and *learning from* nature.

JACOBS: Yes, you can't call it imitating. Learning from is different.

GRATZ: Explain *biomimicry* and how you draw on it with some examples.

JACOBS: [Essentially, biomimicry is] noticing and being aware of how things are made in nature when they're made by natural processes. For instance, the abalone shell and ceramics. For us to make good ceramics we need to heat them and use a lot of fuel. To learn how to do this at life-friendly temperatures, you've got to study the very complicated chemistry of nature and it may or may not be possible. It wouldn't hurt to learn how the abalone does it. Maybe some time is lost, but learning new things is seldom a waste of time. It may be for some of the people doing it, but for humankind in general it is not a waste of time.

GRATZ: And you cite the genius of the spider web.

JACOBS: Yes. We can make fabrics at life-friendly temperatures, but the interesting thing about the spider's web is the extraordinary qualities of strength and resilience that those strands have. We don't have anything like this.

GRATZ: In its natural form? A steel cable is certainly stronger than a spider's web.

JACOBS: Not per volume. It takes more of it to equal the same strength. And the spider's web is not exploitative of the earth. It's made of renewable resources. We'd really save a great deal of metal, and it would make possible what just isn't possible yet. So, it is worthwhile to aim at this. It may not be practical now, but inventors can be ahead of their time.

GRATZ: That process makes me think of a term I like to use, "failure with value." We don't look beyond the immediate surface of either the failure or the success to understand where it

came from and how it happened. This whole focus on big, big, big—everyone forgets where big comes from and that once it gets to a certain size, it begins to break up in one way or another.

That reminds me of your "Thing Theory." ["The Thing Theory" as presented in *The Nature of Economies* holds that development is the result of possessing things such as factories, dams, schools, tractors, whatever—often bunches of things subsumed under the category of infrastructure.] In the context of economies the focus is so much on things rather than on process.

JACOBS: One terrible whole set of examples of [the Thing Theory] has been the foreign aid of the last fifty years. The public has been so misled, all those stories about how this was going to reform things or bring about prosperity where there had only been poverty, because such and such was being provided by foreign aid. This was the whole rationale behind dams or highways, or even things like schools and clean water systems. Who can object to that? Look how often the sequel to these "clean water systems" was that they developed defects, got holes in the pipes, and couldn't be fixed. There wasn't the co-development, the human capital, the skills [to maintain and use these things]. They were just these sad failures after awhile. And worse, it made a lot of people feel that the supposed beneficiaries of these things were worthless people. They'd gotten these presents and then wouldn't even keep them up. There was one failure after another and they all seemed to have their own circumstances. There were all kinds of reasons given but really, there was only one reason in the end: The "thing" had nothing to do with development, nothing to do with development *there*, in that place, only in the distant place that provided these things.

GRATZ: Nothing to do with helping the *process* of development either start, move, or incubate.

JACOBS: No. In fact, it often interfered with what possibilities there were that were naturally arising by diverting energy and interest. Many bright, young foreign aid workers over the years saw this and wrote reports about it, but nothing came of it. One of these reports contrasted the failures [of] formal aid decisions based on assets as things with what people were actually doing in that village—what they were making, what they were selling. People in the village had plans. They were humble plans but they were tailor-made for some kind of micro-investment program which didn't exist then.

GRATZ: It is interesting because micro-lending, for which, of course, the Grameen Bank is best known, has gotten a lot of attention and the World Bank has supposedly started a micro-lending program. Foundations are interested in supporting these efforts. This seems quite recent.

JACOBS: It started in the Seventies. It's still developing. This is one of those things that counters the notion that only big stuff succeeds. When these things are successes, yes, then big dumb inert things like the World Bank pick up on them. When I wrote *The Economy of Cities*, one of the criticisms often directed against it was that it was nostalgic because it talked so much about small things and how they start. It was about an America and an economic life that had disappeared. This was the era of Galbraith's Modern Industrial State. It finally dawned on people that big economic things were actually shedding jobs, and job growth came from small, young things.

GRATZ: The change actually is already visible. Today the focus of institutions and the media is global, yet people are doing things rooted in localities, almost a new kind of manufacturing, artisan-based, hands-on work combined with computer-age technology. Five people may be producing what a hundred people produced fifty years ago but it is not recognized institutionally as significant.

JACOBS: That's right and in fact, getting recognized when they're very young can be dangerous. They can be squelched. Look, when Rochester changed from scientifically a very vital city into a company town of Eastman's [later Eastman Kodak], one company avoided becoming destroyed by Eastman's.

GRATZ: Which was that?

JACOBS: Xerox. Because it was so small, so obscure, and didn't seem like a threat at all. It had a different name then. But it was in Rochester and it was a film company. Eastman couldn't stand other companies that would compete with him for labor, couldn't stand having any of his own skilled people break away from him and start companies of their own. He tied them up in big lawsuits. He managed to reduce what was one of the most active, state-of-the-art scientific cities of the time to a one-company town.

GRATZ: Can you explain why what you call the law of

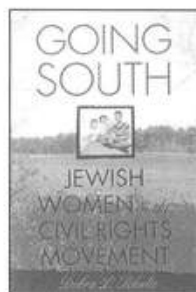
responsive substitutions is a more accurate way of looking at what the law of diminishing returns conventionally looks at?

JACOBS: The law of diminishing returns is a gloomy thing, and a lot of people stop at that. First you cream off what's easiest and least expensive. You clear-cut the forest or whatever you're doing. Then it gets expensive. In the course of it becoming expensive, everything is getting ruined. People think there's no recourse for this. [In the Sixties there] was an exercise under the direction of some scientists from MIT to show what was going to happen in the near future because of increased population. The prophesy was horrendous; people were soon going to starve by the millions for lack of food. It completely ignored the law of responsive substitution.

GRATZ: This lesson was learned during the 1973 oil crunch. Of course, a lot of those lessons are now ignored.

JACOBS: Conservation is certainly one way the law of responsive substitution can be used. The amount of oil that was saved by just conservation was enormous, which surprised a lot of people. There're all kinds of new machinery and technical equipment. Miniaturization is part of it. They use very small amounts of resources in comparison to what similar work used a short time back.

GRATZ: Things get smaller but packaging gets bigger for marketing, to make it visible from twenty feet away. When I first started traveling around Central Europe, there was no



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GOING SOUTH

Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement

Debra L. Schultz
with a foreword by
Blanche Wiesen Cook

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CONVERSATION

litter. When K-mart took over government stores in the Czech Republic, it carried all sorts of disposable items. They didn't sell. Now things are changing. They're getting the fast foods, the disposable packaging, and now they're very much a consumer society.

JACOBS: Don't make the mistake of extrapolating that what they're doing now will go on continuously. It won't. There will come a reaction against that. It's also like people extrapolating from sprawl that it is going to go on indefinitely. You can already see a change of attitudes starting. For instance there's a recognition of the importance of human capital. It's not subject to the law of diminishing returns. The more you use it, the more it increases. But there's too much emphasis [on the notion] that this is very educated capital for high-tech. Everything can't run on educated high-tech. Other kinds of initiatives and skills need to be respected and given a chance to develop. No economy could run on high-tech alone, anymore than Detroit could be successful in the automobile industry alone, which was the high-tech of its time. I just can't emphasize enough how diversity must be the focus.

GRATZ: New York is a good example. New York was at its height years ago when its economy was the most diverse. Now the emphasis is on the so-called service economy, which everyone seems to define differently. All is well and good in a booming market, but when that market falters, not enough will exist in other sectors, like manufacturing, to take up the slack.

JACOBS: It's going to have to correct itself. New York seems to be finally repairing itself after decades of "urban renewal"—wiping out small businesses, dislocating thousands of families, and frittering away its wealth on projects that were supposed to compensate the city's tax return. Consider Soho; big plans for a highway and urban renewal would have wiped out most of that district's people, buildings, and potential for new and existing businesses. Now that district is one of the richest in the world and a great benefit to the city's tax structure. For thirty years after the war, the city was not behaving like this. It was throwing away its potential.

GRATZ: Many other cities today are also repairing themselves but only up to a point. The same destructive policies persist in new guises. In New York, no real respect for small businesses and industrial districts exists. Real estate, financial services, and dot-coms are the only coins of the realm. Worse, there's no understanding how the other segments of the economy work or how they can be nurtured. Big, erroneous projects keep emerging. But there's an intelligent public resistance, stronger and more effective than during

the urban renewal days. Also, great infusions of immigrants are naturally reviving whole neighborhoods and some industries. Officials can say what they want, but mostly immigrants, not government, turned New York around in the 1980s and 1990s.

JACOBS: Immigrants add new small things and they have a chance to grow.

GRATZ: You have made the point that gentrification is basically telling us something. Explain what it is telling people.

*Everything can't run on
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chance to develop.*

JACOBS: Typically gentrification begins in neglected neighborhoods that need some improvement, need new money coming in, new ideas, and so on. It typically begins with artists and artisans, not always, but often enough. They move in and open the eyes of others, especially young professionals. It becomes a fashionable area—interesting, successful—which it is because it's become diversified. And when there's money and times are good, so many people want to be in on this that it

turns into a feeding frenzy of speculation and evictions and the pricing-out of the former population.

What is all this telling us? We think of it as supply and demand, we're being told that the demand for such neighborhoods is greater than the supply of them and that's why the feeding frenzy occurs. What can you do about increasing the supply? It's pitiful that so many good neighborhoods were wiped out by urban renewal and highways and stadiums and all kinds of ill-placed things. That said, don't do any more of that. There are more treasures, more worthy areas, that haven't been recognized yet. Those areas need to be identified. We have a pretty good idea what they are: places where the streets and the buildings are of even scale. And where there's a lot of variety among the buildings. Variety goes deeper than decoration. It applies to uses as well. There must be an urban tolerance among the neighbors, where people are very willing to tolerate different kinds of lifestyles. When the general ethos of a neighborhood is gay-bashing, it's not going to be a good candidate.

GRATZ: When the gentrification pressure starts, what can be done?

JACOBS: Diversity must be retained, of incomes, types of people, and so on. Only ownership can do it; the rehabilitation of places and nonprofit ownership of them. Instead of building big new social housing, just doing lots of little opportunistic examples like these, some with artists and some not, would do a lot. There are great, clever architects doing these things. The key is spreading out the work to include several neighborhoods. You don't want to end up with only dull, high-income space.

GRATZ: So the neighborhoods that have had bites taken

out of them through demolition should be re-woven. One could take some of what you've written, and interpret what you're saying as, "there should be no government interference."

JACOBS: No. I say very clearly that it's important for governments to set standards but not how they shall be reached. It's important for government to act as guardian. There are all kinds of regulations. One thing that disappoints me about planners is that they have not applied themselves to identifying and removing a lot of harmful regulations. Planners got them in and planners should have the responsibility of getting them out.

GRATZ: Some of your notions are so basic and so easy to understand that some professionals are dismissing them as either too simple or not relevant.

JACOBS: There are still professionals who do that but not as many as there used to be. What pleases me is how many professionals have built further upon these ideas. I have no doubt that economics is going to become a different kind of subject and a new science because it's so inadequate as it is. Useful ideas like "human capital" and "natural capital" are creeping in. When economics develops, it's going to incorporate some of the ideas I'm talking about. So, I'm very hopeful about that, but I think it will take time. □

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Predatory Lending—and Your Portfolio

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

Home ownership has long been the main repository of wealth for the greatest number of Americans. Nearly 65 percent own their homes, including 49 percent in central cities.

Although stock ownership has become nearly as common, no stock portfolio ever planted a garden, paid a school tax, or became a cornerstone of community life.

“Dine on onions, but have a home,” advises the Talmud (Pesachim 114a). Thousands of low-income families have been following such advice: Between 1993 and 1998, mortgage lending increased particularly for African Americans and Hispanics—thanks mostly to the subprime (higher interest) lending industry, which increased its loans from 80,000 to 790,000 in the same period.

With this boom, however, has come a plague of “predatory lending” practices that are sucking hard-earned wealth out of minority neighborhoods—and funneling it to Wall Street. These practices include:

- *Cash-Out Refinancing*, in which homeowners with significant home equity are convinced to refinance beyond their existing mortgage balance, producing a high monthly obligation that often leads to default.

- *Excessive fees (“points”), unnecessary insurance and prepayment penalties*, which make it extremely difficult for borrowers to get out from under their onerous loans.

- *Hidden Balloon Payments*, which postpone up to 85 percent of the principal repayment until the very end of the loan period. Borrowers are overwhelmed by this last payment and must refinance again.

A predatory loan often begins with a visit from a “home improvement” salesman who offers to arrange a home repair loan that will leave some extra cash for “bills consolidation.” Actually, the salesman represents a mortgage company and will lead the homeowner into refinancing her house at an inflated interest rate, with insurance add-ons and fees that quickly drain her of years of equity. Statistics show elderly minority people, particularly widows and

other single women, to be most vulnerable: old houses may be in disrepair, and a lifelong acquaintance with discrimination might make them doubtful about their prospects with mainstream lenders. Steering them to high-interest loans is the stock-in-trade of predatory brokers.

Irv Ackelsberg, a Philadelphia Legal Services attorney and an expert on predatory lending, notes the similarities between this parasitic industry and the drug trade: “Predatory lending is the housing equivalent of the crack epidemic. The mortgage brokers and rip-off contractors are the runners and corner boys. The Wall Street investment houses that buy the companies,

or package their loans as securities, are the drug cartels.”

Indeed, big business links to predatory lending are beginning to come to light. For example, Coop America, ACORN, and the Social Investors Forum recently joined in a campaign (www.telcitibank.org) against the purchase by Citigroup, America’s largest financial institution, of Associates First Capital, the second largest subprime lender, which has a blatant record of predatory lending. (Citigroup includes Citibank, Travelers, and Salomon Smith Barney.)

Writing in *Dollars & Sense*, Jeanette Bradley and Peter Skillern note that predatory lending enables banks to skirt the Community Reinvestment Act of 1976, which otherwise “allows community groups to hold banks accountable for their lending.... For example, Bank of America is the largest subprime lender in the country. Wells Fargo owns three subprime lenders.... Yet federal regulators do not investigate whether these subsidiaries comply with consumer laws.”

Profits from predatory lending actually enrich more than half the American population. Irv Ackelsberg notes that “the real consumers of predatory companies are not the people whose equity is being ripped off. The real consumers are mutual funds, which invest in securities backed by predatory mortgages.” Even socially responsible funds may be involved, since most do not yet screen against these securities. “We need to introduce the investors to the the raffish, the ‘dealers,’” Ackelsberg concludes—which he is doing with the Philadelphia Task Force on Predatory Lending through homeowner education, investor education, and a barrage of lawsuits.

Judaism universally forbids “the use of all items essential

(continued on page 60)

*Big business links
to predatory lending
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come to light.*

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

POLITICS

Bill Clinton's legacy disrupted was not ideological, since many of them have Democratic pedigrees (Tim Russert, Chris Matthews, Cokie Roberts). Rather, it was rooted in the fact that Clinton didn't play by their rules or honor Washington mores, yet he always seemed to stroll out of the outhouse, as it were, smelling like a rose; as long as Clinton had high approval ratings, the media couldn't touch him. And that, at bottom, meant that the American people trusted Bill Clinton more than they trusted the media.

The media elite couldn't stomach this, because as they see it, once they decide on something, it must be right. Now when I say "the media decide on something," I do not mean that seven leaders of the vast media conspiracy gather in a conference room in Washington or New York and decide what shall be. I do mean, however, that the biggest of the media big shots do constitute a sort of loosely knit confederacy, and they size up developments, chat with one another informally, watch one another's programs, read one another's columns, and more or less settle on a story line. I've seen it happen before my eyes in compressed situations—in press filing rooms after debates, for example, when journalists talk with one another and quickly decide who "won."

There's the arrogance. Now, the laziness. This, too, is fairly straightforward. Once a story line is established, there's not much profit in running it through the traps—submitting it to difficult questions to see if it holds up under scrutiny. Defense attorneys do this when they prepare for a case—someone on the defense team plays the part of the prosecutor, and he or she anticipates every hard question the prosecution might throw at the key defense witnesses. They have to make sure their argument holds water because they have to prove something. But today's media—particularly the electronic, pundit-for-hire, instant-news-cycle media—don't have to prove anything. They mostly just have to assert. And, if something is asserted often and loudly enough, it becomes "true." All energy then flows from that truth. The media do need, in the interest of "balance," people who are willing to say Not X when everyone else is saying X, especially if they can be made to look, frankly, a little kooky (during the Clinton pardon scandals, particularly those involving Hillary, television producers were hopeful that I would come on their air and defend her as our era's Joan of Arc).

But doing real reporting that runs contrary to the established wisdom, digging out facts as Palast did, requires original thought, which too few people are interested in, and actual work, which fewer and fewer news organizations are outfitted to do. The cable channels that do so much now to shape our national discourse, for example, are not news-gathering organizations in any traditional sense. They have reporters they can send to the scene of an aircrash or a Florida Supreme Court hearing, to give the viewer the impression that actual reporting is being done. Occasionally,

some reporting is done. But mostly, they pull their news off the wires, in a fashion no more sophisticated than you can manage at home with Google, and then bring people on the air to talk and talk and talk. Even real news outfits like CNN have cut back drastically in recent months and are moving more toward the talk model. News organizations like this are scarcely well-equipped to follow up on reports like Gregory Palast's, even if they were inclined.

These, today, are the problems. The conventional wisdom is set by a relatively small handful of people who seem to think the fact that they're powerful means they're right; then, once it's established, even enterprising journalists can find it just too hard to swim against the tide. By the way, this is explicitly not a conspiracy theory, the label used to discredit any notion that argues against the way things are. If anything, it is a coincidence theory—that is, because of technological changes, the increasing power of the media, and the movement from news gathering to news commenting, this situation has just sort of... come about. Good journalists like Greg Palast aren't being censored, in the sense that we understand that term. They just make things too complicated.

A bleak state of affairs. Fortunately, this windbagery can often be ignored, as fewer and fewer Americans really take the elite media's opinions seriously. On the other hand: Ramming a point of view down America's throat is one thing. Ignoring crucial facts that may well have turned a presidential election is quite another, but that's exactly what happens when journalism settles on the conclusion before it has the facts. And that's, as an old newsman used to say, the way it is. □

PREDATORY LENDING (continued from page 32)

primarily for food, shelter, or for earning a living ... as security for a loan" (Meir Tamari, *The Challenge of Wealth*, 1995). For this and many other reasons, predatory lending deserves no place in any Jewish portfolio. Students at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia recently began working with ACORN against predatory lending, and the Coalition for a Jewish Voice in Seattle, a legislative lobbying group, is examining the issue. The Jewish Fund for Justice and The Shefa Fund are exploring shareholder activism against the subprime "cartels" and integrating opposition to predatory lending into their grantmaking and advocacy programs. Other Jewish foundations and organizations, including synagogues, should scrutinize their investments and join campaigns for legal reform. (At this writing, predatory lending is legal in all states but North Carolina.)

The plague can also be countered through Jewish investment in community development financial institutions (CDFIs), which make housing loans available in low-income neighborhoods with the intention of building, rather than draining, their wealth. For information about CDFIs in your locale, contact info@shefafund.org. □

When Healing Becomes a Crime

The Surprising Facts behind "Unproven" Cancer Therapies

Kenny Ausubel

There is another cancer war—against “unproven” alternative cancer therapies. But is the medical standard of proof a double standard?

In February 2001, a federal government-sponsored report under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was published finding “noteworthy cases of survival” among cancer patients using the Hoxsey herbal treatment. After seventy-five years, Uncle Sam is finally giving a state nod to what is arguably the most notorious alternative cancer therapy in American history.

In the 1950s at the height of organized medicine’s crusade against the Hoxsey Cancer Clinics, the American Medical Association crystallized the medical establishment’s sentiments in its supremely influential *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. “It is fair to observe that the American Medical Association or any other association or individual has no need to go beyond the Hoxsey label to be convinced. Any such person who would seriously contend that scientific medicine is under any obligation to investigate such a mixture or its promoter is either stupid or dishonest.”

The recent NIH report marks a surprising reversal in the longstanding medical civil war between conventional and alternative approaches. After a long exile, alternative therapies are now ascendant, riding a crest of popular demand, scientific validation, and commercial promise. The face of cancer treatment may soon become almost unrecognizable as



Alternative therapies are now ascendant, riding a crest of popular demand, scientific validation, and commercial promise.

valuable alternative therapies begin to permeate mainstream practice.

If Harry Hoxsey had lived to witness this apparent sea-change in medicine, he might likely feel very mixed emotions. He would heartily cheer the grassroots surge propelling the movement, the same kind that once carried his Hoxsey Cancer Clinics to unmatched heights of popularity and validation. He would be exhilarated by the philosophical conversion of his enemies. But he would also be cynical, suspicious that a clinging monopoly was fighting to save face and above all keep its corner on the cancer market. But then, Hoxsey survived decades of being “hunted like a wild beast” only to see his clinics padlocked without the scientific test he relentlessly sought. He died a broken man, anguished over the future he felt was robbed from humanity. Yet the Hoxsey treatment did live on, thriving as an underground legend, still attracting more patients today than any of the other banished therapies, irrepressible after all.

The astonishing saga of the rise and fall and rebirth of Hoxsey pro-

vides a classic case history of the corrosive medical politics that have long prevented the fair investigation of promising alternative cancer therapies. Paradoxically, this long-standing denunciation has not been based on the objective scientific evidence that is supposed to determine the acceptance or rejection of medical therapies. Rather, the dismissal typifies the kind of pre-factual conclusion that has characterized “scientific” medicine’s century-long pattern of *condemnation without investigation*.

In fact, the unspoken reason for the renaissance of alternative cancer therapies is sadly obvious: The medical establishment has largely lost its celebrated “War on Cancer” based on surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. But what

Kenny Ausubel is the founder of the annual Bioneers conference (www.bioneers.org) and the author most recently of *When Healing Becomes a Crime* (Inner Traditions, 2000) based on his award-winning documentary, *Hoxsey* (1987). © 2001.

has remained hidden from most people is the existence of the other cancer war: organized medicine's zealous campaign against "unorthodox" cancer treatments and their practitioners. Over the course of the twentieth century, innovators such as Harry Hoxsey advanced more than one hundred alternative approaches, at least several of which have seemed to hold significant promise. Yet rather than inviting interest and investigation from mainstream medicine, their champions have been ridiculed, threatened with the loss of professional licenses, harassed, prosecuted, or driven out of the country.

The facts clearly reveal that a consortium of interests has consistently condemned these treatments without investigation: the American Medical Association (AMA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the American Cancer Society (ACS), as well as certain large corporations that profit from the cancer industry. It is important to emphasize that this confederation of interests known as *organized medicine* consists principally of medical politicians and business interests, not practicing doctors. Physicians themselves have often objected to the unscientific rejection of alternative therapies and to restrictions on their own freedom to research or administer them.

The news blackout and disinformation campaign muffling this scandal have been so effective that most people do not happen into the underground of "disappeared" therapies until the fateful moment when they or their friends or relations are diagnosed with the dread disease. Usually only while fighting for their lives do patients discover the plethora of alternative cancer therapies claiming to offer hope and benefit, though with little if any scientific evidence to support the assertions. The story of Hoxsey sheds disturbing light on the many anecdotes of "people who got well when they weren't supposed to," as cancer surgeon Dr. Bernie Siegel terms these remarkable remissions in the netherworld of alternative therapies.

The Hoxsey Legend

In 1840 Illinois horse farmer John Hoxsey found his prize stallion with a malignant tumor on its right hock. As a Quaker, he couldn't bear shooting the animal, so he put it out to pasture to die peacefully. Three weeks later, he noticed the tumor stabilizing, and observed the animal browsing knee-deep in a corner of the pasture with a profusion of weeds, eating plants not part of its normal diet.

Within three months the tumor dried up and began to separate from the healthy tissue. The farmer retreated to the barn, where he began to experiment with these herbs revealed to him by "horse sense." He devised three formulas: an internal tonic, an herbal-mineral red paste, and a mineral-based yellow powder for external use. Within a year the horse was well, and the veterinarian became locally famous for treating animals with cancer.

The farmer's grandson John C. Hoxsey, a veterinarian in southern Illinois, was the first to try the remedies on people, and claimed positive results. His son Harry showed an early interest and began working with him at the age of eight. When John suffered an untimely accident, he bequeathed the formulas to the fifteen-year-old boy with a charge to treat poor people for free, and to minister to all races, creeds, and religions without prejudice. He asked that the treatment carry the Hoxsey name. Finally, he warned the boy against the "High Priests of Medicine" who would fight him tooth-and-nail because he was taking money out of their pockets.

Hoxsey planned to go to medical school to bring the treatment to the world, but soon found he had been blackballed after secretly treating several terminal patients who pled for their lives. With a local banker backing him, he founded the first Hoxsey Cancer Clinic in 1924, championed by the chamber of commerce and high school marching bands on Main Street.

As early word of his reputed successes spread, Hoxsey was invited to nearby Chicago, headquarters of the newly powerful AMA, to demonstrate the treatment. Grisly and indisputable photographic proof of the terminal case Hoxsey treated verifies that the patient recovered, living on for twelve years, cancer-free.

Hoxsey then claimed that a high AMA official offered him a contract for the rights to the formulas. The alleged agreement assigned the property rights to a consortium of doctors including Dr. Morris Fishbein, the AMA chief and editor of the *JAMA*. Hoxsey himself would be required to cease any further practice, to be awarded a small percentage of profits after ten years if the treatment panned out. Invoking his Quaker father's deathbed charge that poor people be treated for free and that the treatment carry the family name, Hoxsey said the official threatened to hound him out of business unless he acquiesced.

Whatever may have happened, that's when the battle started. The AMA first denied the entire incident, then later acknowledged the patient's remission, though crediting it to prior treatments by surgery and radiation.

Yet one thing was certain: Hoxsey had made a very powerful enemy. By crossing swords with Fishbein, he alienated the most powerful figure in medicine. The AMA promptly dubbed him the worst cancer quack of the century, and he would be arrested more times than any other person in medical history.

Hoxsey quickly found himself opposing Fishbein's emerging medical-corporate complex. As late as 1900, medicine was therapeutically pluralistic and financially unprofitable. Doctors had the highest suicide rate of any profession owing to their extreme poverty and low social standing. Fishbein's AMA would engineer an industrialized medical monoculture. What radically tipped the balance of power was an arranged marriage between big business and organized medicine. Under Fishbein's direction, the AMA

sailed into a golden harbor of prosperity fueled by surgery, radiation, drugs, and a sprawling high-tech hospital system. The corporatization of medicine throttled diversity. The code word for competition was quackery.

It was easy for the medical profession to paint Hoxsey as a quack: he fit the image perfectly. Brandishing his famed tonic bottle, the ex-coal miner arrived straight from central casting as the stereotype of the snake-oil salesman. When the AMA coerced the pathologist who performed Hoxsey's biopsies to cease and desist, Hoxsey could no longer verify the validity of his reputed successes. Organized medicine quickly adopted the stance that his alleged "cures" fell into three categories: those who never had cancer in the first place; those who were cured by prior radiation and surgery; and those who died. In exasperation, Hoxsey attempted an end run by approaching the National Cancer Institute. In close collaboration with the AMA, the federal agency refused his application for a test because his medical records did not include all the biopsies.

Meanwhile Hoxsey struck oil in Texas and used his riches to promote his burgeoning clinic and finance his court battles. Piqued at Hoxsey's rise, Fishbein struck back in the public media, penning an inflammatory article in the *Hearst Sunday papers* entitled "Blood Money," in a classic example of purple prose and yellow journalism. Outraged, Hoxsey sued Fishbein. In two consecutive trials, Hoxsey beat Fishbein, standing as the first person labeled a "quack" to defeat the AMA in court. During the trials, Hoxsey's lawyers revealed that Fishbein had failed anatomy in medical school, never completed his internship, and never practiced a day of medicine in his entire career.

By now Fishbein was mired in multiple scandals, including his effective but unpopular obstruction of national health insurance at a time when doctors had become the richest professionals in the country and the *Journal* the most profitable publication in the world. Drug ads powered *JAMA*, but its biggest single advertiser in the 1940s was Phillip Morris. (Camel cigarettes had the largest booth at the AMA's 1948 convention, boasting in its ads that "More doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette.") Enmeshed in controversy, Fishbein's stock was trading low, and, shortly after his first loss to Hoxsey, the AMA chief was deposed in a humiliating spectacle.

But ironically Hoxsey's stunning dark-horse victory against the "most terrifying trade organization on Earth" only ended up bringing the house down. He immediately



faced a decade-long "quackdown" by the FDA.

By the 1950s, Hoxsey was riding what was arguably the largest alternative-medicine movement in American history. A survey by the Chicago Medical Society showed 85 percent of people still using "drugless healers." Hoxsey's Dallas stronghold grew to be the world's largest privately owned cancer center with 12,000 patients and branches spreading to seventeen states. Congressmen, judges, and even some doctors ardently supported his quest for an investigation. Two federal courts upheld the therapeutic value of the treatment. Even his archenemies, the American Medical

Association and the Food and Drug Administration, admitted that the therapy does cure certain forms of cancer. *JAMA* itself had published the research of a respected physician who got results superior to surgery using a red paste identical to Hoxsey's for skin cancers including lethal melanoma, a skin cancer that also spreads internally.

Medical authorities escalated their quackdown in the McCarthyite wake of the 1950s. On the heels of a California law criminalizing all cancer treatments except surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, the federal government finally outlawed Hoxsey entirely in the United States in 1960 on questionable technicalities. Chief nurse Mildred Nelson took the clinic to Tijuana in 1963, abandoning any hope of operating in the United States. It was the first alternative clinic to set up shop south of the border. Mildred quietly treated another 30,000 patients there until her death in 1999. Like Hoxsey, she claimed a high success rate, but her contention is unverifiable since the treatment has yet to be rigorously tested.

Hoxsey never claimed a panacea or cure-all. He maintained that the Dallas doctors used his clinic as a "dumping ground" for hopeless cases, and that the great majority of patients he got were terminal, having already had the limit of surgery and radiation. He said he cured about 25 percent of those. Of virgin cases with no prior treatment, he claimed an 80 percent success rate. Seventy-five years after Hoxsey began, why do we still not know the validity of his claims?

The "Unproven Treatments"

Organized medicine has systematically dismissed alternative cancer therapies as "unproven," lacking the rigorous scientific proof of clinical trials. But if the Hoxsey treatment is unproven, it's not *disproven*. Like virtually all the "unorthodox" cancer therapies over the course of the twentieth century, it was politically railroaded rather than medically tested. However, over the last few decades, controlled

CANCER

laboratory tests have shown all the individual herbs in the internal tonic to possess anti-tumor and anti-cancer properties, as I documented in detail in my recent book on Hoxsey, *When Healing Becomes A Crime*. Though the formula has never been tested as a whole entity, clearly there is a credible scientific basis for looking at it. Organized medicine has not disputed the effectiveness of the external remedies since 1950, and the red paste (Mohs treatment) is listed in Taber's Medical Encyclopedia as a "standard treatment," though it is seldom used.

After all, plants are the cornerstone of pharmaceutical drugs. The very word *drug* derives from the Dutch term *droog*, which means "to dry," since people have historically dried plants to make medicinal preparations. It is well proven that many botanicals possess powerful anti-cancer properties. Numerous primary pharmaceuticals derive from plants, as do several major chemotherapy drugs, such as Taxol from the Pacific Yew tree, Vincristine and Vinblastine from the Madagascar periwinkle, and Camptothecin from the wood and bark of a Chinese tree. About 30 percent of chemotherapy drugs altogether are derived from natural substances, mainly plants. A quarter of modern drugs still contain a plant substance, and about half are modeled on plant chemistry.

During Hoxsey's era, surgery and radiation were primitive and excessive. Both were solely local treatments, reflecting the profession's belief that cancer was a local disease. As such they could address just a quarter of all cases, claiming to cure only about a quarter of those. With the advent of toxic chemotherapy drugs in the 1950s, organized medicine at last acknowledged cancer as a systemic disease, which Hoxsey and the other "unorthodox" practitioners had been asserting throughout.

Clearly, conventional cancer treatments have an important place in medicine and save lives. But since the 1950s, evidence has steadily accumulated that surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy are far less effective than the public is being led to believe. Investigative journalist Daniel Greenberg, writing in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 1975, produced the first widely reported exposé showing that cancer survival rates since the 1950s had not progressed, and that improvements from 1930 to 1950 were mainly a consequence of improved hospital nursing care and support systems. Greenberg found that even the valid improvements were very, very small, and that there had been no significant advancements in treating any of the major forms of cancer.

By 1969, Dr. Hardin Jones had already released a shocking report on this issue at the Science Writers Convention, sponsored by the American Cancer Society. Jones, a respected professor of medical physics from the University of California at Berkeley and an expert on statistics and the

effects of radiation and drugs, concluded that "the common malignancies show a remarkably similar rate of demise, whether treated or untreated." Joining the fray, Nobel laureate James Watson charged that the American public had been sold a "nasty bill of goods about cancer." This eminent co-discoverer of the DNA double helix remarked bluntly that the War on Cancer was "a bunch of shit."

These "proven" cancer treatments are themselves largely unproven. The standard of proof for therapeutic efficacy is in fact a double standard. Surgery was grandfathered in as

standard practice early in the twentieth century without randomized, double-blind clinical trials, which only became widespread in the 1960s with the advent of chemotherapy. Its dangers and limitations have since been only superficially acknowledged or studied, and little is known about its efficacy in relation to a baseline marker of no treatment.

Like surgery, radiation therapy was grandfathered in without rigorous testing. Radiation is carcinogenic and mutagenic. In the few tests comparing radiation treatment against no treatment, according to Jones, "Most of the time, it makes not the slightest difference if the machine is turned on or not." Jones went even further, saying, "My studies have proved conclusively that *untreated cancer victims actually live up to four times longer*." Radiation is often combined with surgery despite the fact that tests have generally shown it made no apparent favorable difference. A recent study with patients with the most common form of lung cancer found that postoperative radiation therapy, which is routinely given, actually raises the relative risk of death by 21 percent, with its most detrimental effects on those in the early stages of illness. Nevertheless, radiation is used on about half of cancer patients.

It was into this disappointing setting that chemotherapy entered as the next great hope of cancer treatment. Chemotherapy drugs are poisons that are indiscriminate killers of cells, both healthy and malignant. The strategy is quite literally to kill the cancer without killing the patient. By the mid-1980s, prominent members of orthodoxy published unsettling assessments that could no longer be dismissed. Writing in *Scientific American*, Dr. John Cairns of Harvard found that chemotherapy was able to save the lives of just 2 to 3 percent of cancer patients, mostly those with the rarest kinds of the disease. By medicine's own standards, at best chemotherapy is *unproved* against 90 percent of adult solid tumors, the huge majority of common cancers resulting in death. Moreover, true placebo controls have been almost abandoned in the testing of chemotherapy. Drug regimen is tested against drug regimen, and doctors hardly ever look at whether the drugs do better than simple good nursing care. Because chemotherapy drugs are outright poisons, many carcinogenic, the drugs themselves can

16 Oz. HOXSEY TONIC			31653
Each 5 cc contains:			
Potassium Iodide.....	150 mg.		
Licorice.....	20 mg.		
Red Clover.....	20 mg.		
Burdock Root.....	10 mg.		
Sulphur (sic) Root.....	10 mg.		
Berberis Root.....	10 mg.		
Poke Root.....	10 mg.		
Cascara Amara.....	5 mg.		
Prickly Ash Bark.....	5 mg.		
Blackberry Bark.....	20 mg.		
Dose: One teaspoonful after meals and at bedtime.			
Prescribed by Dr. Stadl, D.O.			
Distributed by HOXSEY CLINIC Dallas, Texas Shane Weil			

cause "treatment deaths" and additional cancers. One study among women surviving ovarian cancer after chemotherapy treatment showed a one-hundred-fold greater subsequent incidence of leukemia over those not receiving chemotherapy. In some studies, when chemotherapy and radiation were combined, the incidence of secondary tumors was about twenty-five times the expected rate. Nevertheless, chemotherapy is given to 80 percent of patients

Amazingly, 85 percent of prescribed standard medical treatments across the board lack scientific validation, according to the *New York Times*. Richard Smith, editor of the *British Medical Journal*, suggests that "this is partly because only one percent of the articles in medical journals are scientifically sound, and partly because many treatments have never been assessed at all."

A hundred years from now, medicine will likely come to regard some of these "proven" cancer treatments the way we now remember the use of mercury and bloodletting. As Dr. Abigail Zuger recently wrote in the *New York Times* contemplating the hundredth anniversary of the 1899 *Merck Manual*:

"We have harnessed our own set of poisons for medical treatment; in a hundred years a discussion of cancer chemotherapy may read as chillingly as endorsements of strychnine for tuberculosis and arsenic for diabetes do today."

The Big Business of Cancer

The medical civil war between Hoxsey and organized medicine has largely reflected a trade war. Profitability has often been the driving force behind the adoption of official therapeutics. At over \$110 billion a year just in the United States, cancer is big business, a whopping 10 percent of the national health-care bill. The typical cancer patient spends upward of \$100,000 on treatment. It is estimated that each hospital admission for cancer produces two to three times the billings of a typical non-cancer admission. More people work in the field than die from the disease each year. According to Dr. Samuel Epstein, a professor of environmental and occupational medicine at the University of Illinois in Chicago, "For decades, the war on cancer has been dominated by powerful groups of interlocking professional and financial interests, with the highly profitable drug development system at its hub." (For more, see TIKKUN's November/December 2000 issue.) Global sales of chemotherapy drugs in 1997 were \$30.9 billion, about \$12 billion of it in the United States.

Pharmaceutical companies pin the high costs of drugs on the forbidding expense of testing and approving each new drug, now pegged at \$500 million. In fact, this prohibitive figure has served as a barrier of entry for all but giant

corporations. The entire system is founded in patents, twenty-year exclusive licenses that provide monopoly protection. As an herbal product, the Hoxsey tonic cannot be patented and therefore occupies the status of an orphan drug that no company will develop. While approving about forty highly toxic cancer drugs, *the FDA has yet to approve a single nontoxic cancer agent or one not patented by a major pharmaceutical company.*

Alternative therapies are finally emerging in part because of the dramatic cost savings they represent, and because at

A hundred years from now, medicine will likely come to regard some of these "proven cancer treatments" the way we now remember the use of mercury and bloodletting.

least some may well represent a major new profit center. "Alternative medicine is clearly the largest growth industry in health care today," wrote Jane Brody in the *New York Times* in 1998. Dr. David Eisenberg of Harvard surveyed the American public to find 42 percent using alternative therapies in 1997. The number of visits to alternative practitioners exceeded total visits to primary-care physicians. Spending was conservatively estimated at \$21.2 billion, with at least \$12.2 billion paid out-of-pocket by committed customers. Total out-of-pocket expenditures

for alternative therapies were comparable with expenditures for all physician services.

The numbers are no less dramatic for cancer treatment. A national study estimated 64 percent of cancer patients to be using alternative therapies. A recent survey at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, the world's largest with 13,000 patients, found an astounding 83 percent using alternatives.

Major corporations are already entering the alternative marketplace. Procter & Gamble initially spent millions sponsoring the research of Dr. Nick Gonzalez, who took up the work of Donald Kelley, a dentist who reputedly cured himself of terminal pancreatic cancer using enzymes and other nutritional means. A pilot study with pancreatic cancer patients provided better results than had been seen in the history of medicine for a disease that is 95 percent incurable. The subjects lived an average of triple the usual survival rate, and two patients have lived for four and five years with no detectable disease. Nestlé has also financed the work of Dr. Gonzalez. These studies led to a \$1.4 million grant to Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons by the NIH's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and supervised by the NCI. The engagement of large corporations vaulted the formerly reviled treatment to instant plausibility. When big companies start to take a stake in alternative cancer therapies, it signifies the maturation of a market and consecrates a political realignment.

Both M. D. Anderson and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center have been testing green tea, or more

CANCER

accurately several of its “active” ingredients, for anti-cancer properties. Because various studies have shown that green tea reduces the risk of colorectal, lung, esophageal, and pancreatic cancers, Lipton tea company is also testing the substance at the University of Arizona.

In association with the NCI, M. D. Anderson is set to evaluate shark cartilage, which is reputed to have anti-cancer activity and is widely used by a cancer underground in the United States and abroad. (Sadly, this market surge is further endangering several shark species.) The University of Toronto is testing mistletoe, a folk remedy for cancer espoused by the Austrian spiritual philosopher Rudolf Steiner, originator of Waldorf education and biodynamic farming. Mistletoe has shown anti-tumor effects in both human and animals studies in Germany.

The release of the report on Hoxsey through the NIH's NCCAM is a harbinger of the changes to come. As the report concludes, further investigation “is justified not only because of the public health issue to justify the large number of patients who seek treatment at this clinic, but also because of the several noteworthy cases of survival.” The report specifically notes a seven-year melanoma patient who had no other treatment besides Hoxsey's tonic and external salves. Average survival time for advanced melanoma is seven months. If such a remarkable remission occurred using conventional treatments, it would be front-page news worldwide.

“It's interesting to contemplate the dilemma that the National Cancer Institute is in,” conjectures Ralph Moss, an advisor to the NCCAM and NCI, and a respected researcher and author on both alternative and conventional cancer treatments. “If they do decide to do the tests, then there's always that possibility—and I think it's a damn good possibility—that some of these treatments are going to turn out to be quite valuable. If they decide not to do the tests, there's going to be tremendous fury in Congress and the public, because what then are they about? If they're not about scientific testing, what good are they? Why are we wasting our money?”

“What we're saying is: Prove them or disprove them. We've had seventy-five years of Hoxsey. Does it work? Doesn't it work? Nobody knows. How do you know? Short of good studies, how does one decide issues like that? We don't want people doing something if it's not going to work for them, not in terms of just conventional treatment, but alternative treatments as well.”

“The best-case scenario,” Moss speculates, “is that some tests will be carried out with the imprimatur of NCI, NCCAM, and probably other collaborative centers like the University of Texas and Columbia. Some of those will show that there's no effectiveness, and some of them will probably show that there is effectiveness in some treatments. The ones that are shown to be effective that are funded by and based on NCI-reported research are then going to be published in

major medical journals. The first one that validates a non-toxic treatment is the beginning of the end of this Middle Ages that we're in. Because once one goes through the door, then a lot of others are going through the door, and that's what they're afraid of. They're afraid that, if a Hoxsey were proven to be effective, the public will run to it because nobody wants the chemo drugs. If chemo is the only choice, then they'll reluctantly take it, but the minute it's known there is something nontoxic out there, everybody's going to want it.”

The abiding truth for cancer patients is that they want unrestricted access to all treatments. According to one analysis, only about 5 percent entirely abandon conventional cancer care even when pursuing an alternative. What patients seek is the best of all worlds, an expanded menu of options supported by access to credible information. The stereotype that orthodoxy has long put forth of poor, credulous cancer patients ripe for exploitation by clever promoters turns out to be false. In a study by sociologist Barrie Cassileth, the profile of patients using alternative cancer therapies describes well-educated, middle-income, often female clients who have done a considerable amount of due diligence to make their choice.

While physicians fought fiercely for their professional sovereignty during the twentieth century, the greater social issue today is the sovereignty of the patient. In a market economy, goes the old saw, the customer is always right. The AMA's Oliver Field, an architect of the aggressive repression against Hoxsey and myriad “quack” therapies in the 1950s, responded surprisingly when I posed to him the polarizing question of freedom of medical choice. “This is a free country. You pays your money and you takes your choice. If it's wrong, you're the one who's going to suffer.”

It was anomalous to hear the former head of the AMA's Bureau of Investigation, which once boasted a rolodex of over 300,000 “quacks,” echo the words of his past nemesis. Judge William Hawley Atwell, who ruled twice in Hoxsey's favor in federal courts and fully affirmed the therapy's value, had stated in 1949 regarding Hoxsey's victory over Dr. Morris Fishbein: “So I wish to say, pay your money and take your choice. Those who need a doctor, if you think one side is the best, go and get him. If you think the other side is best, you certainly have the right to go and get him. This is a free country; that is what we stand for in America.”

Why was the Hoxsey therapy not investigated in the first place seventy-five years ago? The overarching truth is that it has been politically railroaded instead of medically tested. The medical civil war has distorted cancer from a medical question into a political issue. The many practitioners and doctors thrust involuntarily into the front lines of the cancer wars would surely prefer to settle the question in a clinic or laboratory, not a courtroom. Meanwhile, cancer patients remain trapped in the crossfire, fighting for their lives. □

Cancer: Toxins and Lifestyles

Nina Moliver

In "The High Stakes of Cancer Prevention" (TIKKUN, November/December 2000), Dr. Samuel Epstein and Liza Gross critique the for-profit role played by the medical and pharmaceutical industries in cancer research and argue for a shift in focus to the role environmental toxins, particularly petrochemicals, play in creating cancer. I support and applaud their work. I must differ with the authors, however, when they identify a focus on questions of food and lifestyle choices as a "blame-the-victim," pro-industry stance enabling vested interests to evade responsibility. Instead, I see the struggle against environmental toxins as indivisible from, and complementary to, a needed shift in our thinking about food.

Interestingly, Epstein does acknowledge tobacco as a lifestyle choice creating cancer. Yet a tobacco habit is not just a lifestyle choice; it is also a social product, as recent legal cases against tobacco companies have confirmed. The same is true of food choices. In fact, food choices are much more prone to corporate manipulation than the choice of a tobacco habit, because we all must eat food. The food industry, which is much larger than the tobacco industry, could not maintain its profits if the average American ate primarily whole, locally grown, minimally processed plant foods. Like medical drugs, food produces its highest profit margin when it is processed through many layers of technology. The result is a gigantic web of public-relations misinformation, fed through every branch of mainstream "health care" and always backed by "sound science," about the role of food in human health and disease.

Because of our globalized culture and modern food transport and storage, people have lost a feeling for what kind of food to eat that makes sense. The foods normally eaten historically by sedentary, temperate-climate populations—such as whole grains, vegetables, and legumes—usually get skipped in our society. People are too overworked to prepare regular meals at home from fresh, whole, unprocessed foods. Most of today's available foods are



processed, lifeless, embalmed, colored, zapped, and chemicalized. Taste buds are over-stimulated and dulled, and discretion is lost. While animals in the wild are rejecting genetically altered plants from their smell alone, Americans eat large amounts of adulterated and fake food each day without a nod.

A holistic approach to food looks at the underlying nature of the whole food, the balance among the different foods chosen, how the foods were grown and prepared, the health and vitality of the plant or animal consumed, and its effect on the digestive system. In contrast, people in our society are taught to focus on isolated components such as beta carotene, zinc, and protein, and on ensuring that they are "getting enough" of each component. For example, people have been convinced that they need to eat animal food in order to "get enough" protein, without understanding the overall impact of consuming large amounts of animal products. Similarly, women are told that to maintain their bones they need a huge intake of calcium, for which they supposedly need dairy products. Where, then, do cows get their calcium? How do the rest of the vertebrates maintain bones into old age without drinking milk?

Worldwide epidemiological data indicates that the more dairy people consume, and the more animal protein people consume, the higher are their rates of both osteoporosis and breast cancer. The medical literature is replete with reports of the harmful health effects of both meat and dairy consumption. Cruciferous leafy greens are a much safer and more beneficial source of calcium than dairy. However, the dairy industry is the biggest corporate supporter of the American Dietetic Association. Many who have worked to develop our standard food guidelines and set federal nutrition policies have financial connections with the dairy industry, as recent successful lawsuits have exposed. Scientific data linking recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone to cancer in rats have been protected by the courts as proprietary information of Monsanto. Former Monsanto employees, who returned to Monsanto after having reviewed their own work during their brief tenure at the

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CANCER

FDA, were responsible for the approval of this hormone that the rest of the world has outlawed.

Epstein takes results from people consuming olive oil, which is of plant origin, and erroneously extrapolates them to people who consume the equivalent amount of fat in meat, dairy, poultry, and eggs. But animal products have a different effect on the body than do plant foods, for a whole array of reasons, only one of which is the concentration of environmental toxins in fatty tissue. In contrast to most animal food, many plant foods exercise a protective effect on the body in various ways, including assisting in the detection and expulsion of poisons. This protective effect may be able to counter some of the damage being done by the chemicals and pesticides with which these vegetables may be grown.

The medical establishment endlessly understates the role that food plays in shaping health. At the same time, mainstream vending machines and fast-food outlets are found in and near every hospital and public school. The impact of food on the body is poorly tested because theories are most readily tested when they have the potential to produce a saleable product. This industry pressure to promote products affects the perceptions of researchers, and hence their results. One carefully constructed study demonstrating that a vegan diet lowered blood pressure as much as, or more than, drugs, was dismissed by peer review with remarks such as, "This method is not clinically practical" and "Where have you been? Drugs work great!"

Studies that try to isolate one food component and determine its role in the cancer landscape will usually not produce significant results. That is because the diet is an integrated whole, and each ingredient needs to be considered in the context of what else is taken with it. Studies comparing vegetarians to meat-eaters usually have the vegetarian role played by lacto-ovo vegetarians rather than vegans, and their intake is usually not controlled for refined or artificial food products. Still, cancer rates are generally much lower among vegetarians than among meat-eaters.

To our cells and tissues, everything that passes through our body is part of the body's environment. If white flour and refined sugar do not harmonize with the needs of the body, then from the body's perspective they are environmental toxins as much as any other. When our body is deluged with unbalanced foods, our organs become sluggish; our bloodstream becomes cloudy and sticky; and our cells start to function in the acidic and anaerobic environment that invites disease.

The quality of our food supply today is a critical social issue. Cows today are fed not grass but grains, which produce much fattier meat. Sawdust, cardboard boxes, chicken feces, and remnants of sick, dead animals often fill out their diet. Animals are poorly inspected and riddled with disease. Antibiotics fed daily to livestock, pus from endlessly infected cow's udders, and the medications applied to the udders—all are part of Americans' daily fare. Sexual and

growth hormones stimulate animals to grow unnaturally fast, and to make cows give twenty-five to fifty times as much milk per day as would be normal. These hormones also stimulate human cells to proliferate at unnatural rates and are therefore probably responsible for premature sexual development, unnatural height, unnatural weight gain, and rapid stimulation of malignant cells.

Even the quality of organic plant food is being progressively degraded. As topsoil continues to erode worldwide because of the soil erosion brought about by animal agriculture, the nutrient-rich quality of organic food declines along with it. And even the most fastidious eaters today are probably consuming gene-altered food against their will. In the meanwhile, "food disparagement laws" in many states, laws that are probably unconstitutional, threaten people with jail for exposing the toxicity of our food supply.

Yet despite the dramatic degradation of food quality, choosing a healthier lifestyle can be an empowering form of resistance to the stranglehold of globalized corporations over mainstream medicine and our ecosystem. We can refuse to allow our bodies to capitulate to the chronic state of illness and toxicity that is considered normal. We can choose organic plant-based whole foods and avoid the fast-food culture as surely as we can refuse tobacco, unnecessary hysterectomies, and a seven-day workweek. As people embrace this lifestyle of self-empowerment in their food choices, they are much more likely to be skeptical about medical advice they receive and to understand its roots in corporate conflicts of interest.

We do not know what proportion of cancer can be traced primarily to diet/lifestyle issues and what proportion to industrial toxins (although we do know that the two taken together are far more responsible for most cancers than the "genetic inheritance" which receives most of the research attention). What is important is that the two are interconnected. A carcinogen does not cause cancer by itself, but only in interaction with a host. For example, rates of cancer are higher when members of a population exposed to certain carcinogens have consumed excessive alcohol.

Like tobacco, food is both a personal lifestyle issue and a political issue; its effects require both an agent and a host. Huge industries warp both our understanding of and the availability of normal human foods, and then profit from the illnesses that ensue from eating the food that is available. Added to this is the unparalleled ecological damage done by agribusiness and animal agriculture, a major unsung contributor to global climate change.

Just as no natural health movement can be holistic if it ignores that we all live downwind from this all-pervasive environmental corruption, no environmental movement can address pollution at its root if it ignores the role that today's food plays in creating epidemic chronic illness. Each dimension requires the other, and both must be addressed if we are to succeed. □

The Work of Our Hands

Infertility and Family Issues Facing the Jewish Community

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson

What is the work of one's hands?
Those are one's sons and daughters.
Ketubot 72a

It may just be my particular perspective, but it seems to me that infertility is a growing issue in the Jewish community. In grappling with the pressing challenge, it's important to recognize its complexity. Not all of the contributing factors are negative. For example, because women are now pursuing careers, by the time men and women remember to get married it's already on the later side. The vast preponderance of people within the Jewish community celebrate the achievements of young Jewish women, but their success does pose a biological challenge.

A second, equally positive factor in the rise of infertility issues is the phenomenon of gay and lesbian Jews who desire to commit to monogamous Jewish relationships, to have children, and to raise their children Jewishly. This is no less a blessing than the ability of women to serve as professionals, and the Jewish community ought to encourage and facilitate Jews who want to be part of our community and who want to be able to bring their talents and their insight to enrich our Jewish world. But it is also clear that gay and lesbian Jews can't have children the old-fashioned way, which then raises issues about how that childbearing is accomplished and how the Jewish community responds to these would-be parents' needs.

Finally, there are Jews who are infertile—who simply cannot have children even though they want to.

Let's take a moment to clarify the traditional stance of Judaism about the bearing of children, which means we must first distinguish between what Judaism teaches and what our Bubbies and Zaydes might have said. With all due

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respect, what Jews say about children often is not what Judaism teaches about children.

The standard Jewish opinion presented to young couples about the bearing of children is "why don't you, already?" The Jewish people have become a relentless PR machine, pressuring young people into the bearing of children whether they can or not, whether they should or not. In this regard, the stance of would-be grandparents does not accurately reflect what Judaism actually teaches.

A fundamental principle of Jewish law is that a mitzvah only obligates people capable of fulfilling that mitzvah. Let's illustrate that ideal with an example: If you are isolated on a desert island, and the choice is to eat *treif* or to starve to death, then according to Jewish law you must eat *treif*. *Kashrut* is only a mitzvah for people who are capable of observing it. That caveat holds true for every other ritual mitzvah as well. They are only obligatory if it is possible to fulfill them, so the first principle to recall is that it is a mitzvah (a commanded obligation) for people to have children only if they can. That rule means that there is already a large group of people for whom it is *not* an obligation according to traditional Judaism. For a couple incapable of bearing children biologically, Judaism imposes absolutely no obligation that they must (despite the pressures coming from the Jewish community, which doesn't make that important distinction).

A second point to keep in mind: the biblical verse that mandates bearing children—*pru u-r'vu*, you should reproduce and multiply, found twice in the book of Genesis—is understood by halachic tradition as pertaining only to

men ... a biological accomplishment of no small proportion. Technically, it is only the Jewish *man* who is obligated to bear children. Rabbinic sources dispute whether his minimal obligation is to sire a boy and a girl, or whether two children of the same gender suffice, but all agree that the minimum number is two. (According to Halachah, it is the job of a Jewish wife to facilitate her husband's performance of mitzvot, including this one. So although the wife is not herself obligated by the commandment of multiply, her willingness to marry him creates the presumption that she will willingly participate in this mitzvah.)

We live in an age in which technology has expanded who can have children, and this also is a complicated blessing. *In vitro* fertilization, either with the sperm of the husband or with a donor, makes it possible for many couples who could not have had a child to now do so. Surrogate motherhood, in which another woman's uterus houses the ovum either of the mother or of a donor, offers another way in which couples who were previously incapable of having children are now able to do so. A third, relatively new option is adoption, which has no formal standing in Jewish law. There is no Jewish ritual for adoption; there is no halachic category for adoption; there is no procedure in traditional Jewish law whereby biological parents stop being parents and someone else starts being the parent. It is a highly commendable good deed to adopt a child; it is a good deed of *gidel banim u'vanot*, the raising of boys and girls. In the sense that this is a commendable religious act, it is indeed a mitzvah, but it is no obligation. In the Bible, Mordecai raises his niece Esther, and she loves and venerates him for it. But he does not become her father, because Judaism *per se* does not provide such an institution.

These three modern options—artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, and adoption—and perhaps others as yet undiscovered, allow people to become parents in ways that we were not prepared to acknowledge in the past, but which Judaism today must acknowledge. The Jewish community has an interest in assisting those who would be Jewish parents to be able to bear and raise Jewish children, for the sake of our survival as a people, and for the sake of our covenant with God.

Were the Jewish community to acknowledge that there are many young Jews who are not obligated to bear children, that would constitute a great advance. Were the community to actively support insemination, surrogacy, and adoption for those who need that assistance in order to become parents, that would move us even further. But even those steps would no longer suffice. There remain some unresolved issues that compel us to venture beyond where Jewish tradition (as it is now formulated) has been.

- The unrelenting pressure on young Jews to have children is not only unhalachic, it is pernicious. I have seen so many times where rabbis give sermons pressuring people to have children and cause unbelievable pain to those Jews

already brokenhearted because they are trying desperately to do just that—and can't. Or, to those Jews who are wise enough about who they are to know that they are capable of loving children, but not of raising them. The unexamined conviction that every biologically capable Jew ought to be spawning legions of children is dangerous and negative, and it needs to stop. Judaism affirms that raising children is a good, if you do it well. Parenting is surely the hardest job a person will ever love, and if someone isn't burning to raise children, then they shouldn't. We all know people for whom having children was not a favor—not to their children, not to themselves, and not to the community.

- We need to acknowledge publicly that being a family is not just a matter of raising children. Prior to my having children, when people asked me how my family was, they were referring to my parents and my siblings. Once I had children, they were referring to my wife and my children. Please notice that my wife was invisible until there were children, and that we weren't considered a family until there were children. This is wrong. Recognizing only those families that have children teaches people that their dignity and their worth comes only if they are producing another generation of Jews, and this error is arrogant and sinful. The worth of human beings is not measured by what we do but by who we are, by simply being. Families come in all shapes and sizes, not in one cookie-cutter mold, and our job as a community is to celebrate real families as Jews live them, to encourage and welcome them into living as much of a Jewish life as they are willing to incorporate.

Let me close by offering a decidedly untraditional interpretation of the biblical *pru u-r'vu*, one which I learned from Professor Richard Elliot Friedman. Notice that in Hebrew, *pru u-r'vu*—"you should reproduce and multiply"—is in the second person plural. Contemporary American English doesn't have such a category, but for those from the South, the translation would be "y'all should reproduce and multiply." (For those of you who are from New York or Philadelphia, it's "youse guys...") I propose that we attend to the grammatical choices made in the Torah. This passage is not addressed to each and every individual, but to the group. If we translate that grammatical imperative into life, we would understand this mitzvah not to pertain to each individual Jew, but to humanity as a whole, to whom it was given. Humanity as a whole has an obligation to replicate and populate the earth. And the reality is that we have more than fulfilled that mitzvah. We have reproduced and multiplied, and we have *already* filled the earth. This mitzvah, therefore, is no longer operative. Armed with the more faithful reading of the Torah, we can then say to those Jews who are currently producing Jewish children, that they are doing it not as a fulfillment of *pru u-r'vu*; humanity accomplished that mitzvah long before any of us were born. What they are fulfilling is *gidel banim*—the raising of children. That is a fine

(continued on page 48)

The Kindest Un-Cut

Feminism, Judaism, and My Son's Foreskin

Michael S. Kimmel

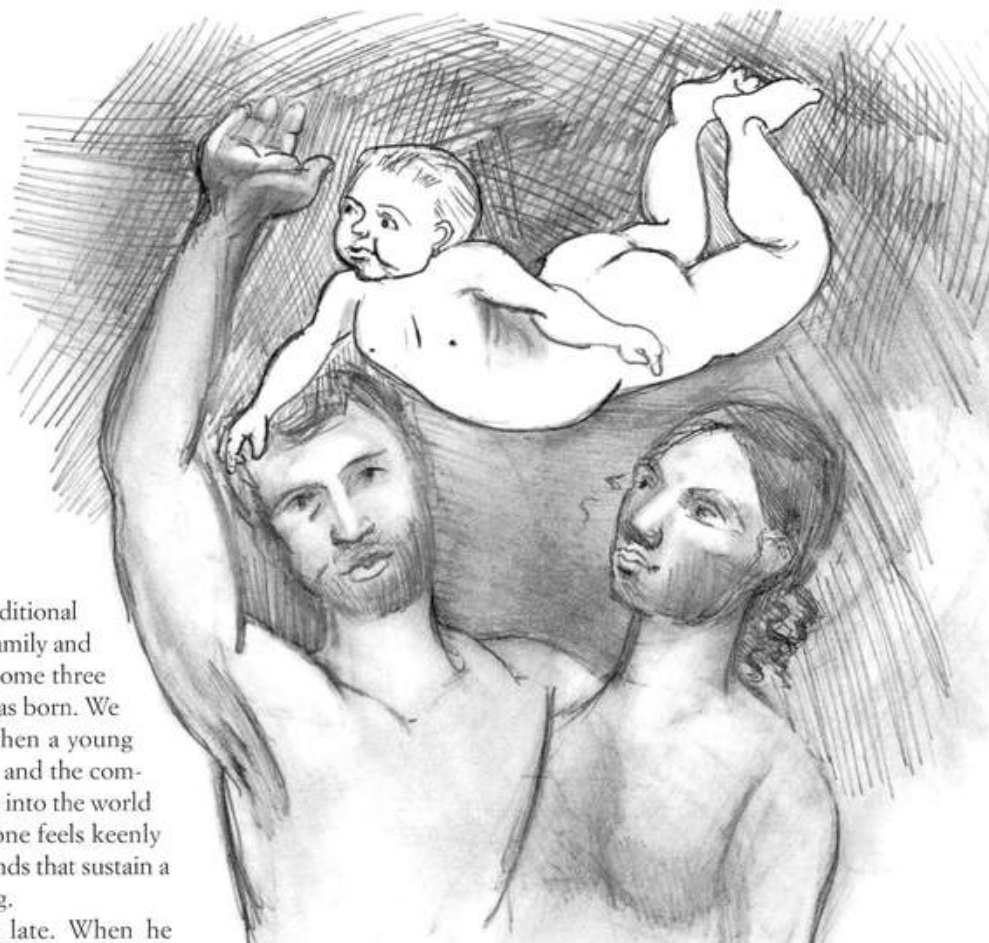
Although it was a little late by traditional religious standards, the entire family and many friends gathered in our home three weeks after our son, Zachary, was born. We had gathered for his *bris*, the moment when a young Jewish boy is first brought into the family and the community, the moment of his formal entrance into the world of Judaism. At such symbolic moments, one feels keenly the sinews of connection to family and friends that sustain a life, animate it, give it context and meaning.

The mohel, of course, was running late. When he arrived, everyone gathered in the living room, where we had set up a table on which we had placed the various items we would use in the ceremony. A special chair had been reserved for the "sandek," the honored family male elder, often the baby's grandfather or great-grandfather, who would hold the baby during much of the proceedings. (In our case, a godmother and godfather shared this role.)

As family and friends drew closer together, glasses of wine and champagne in their hands, the ritual began with prayers over the wine and bread. Our first toast to this new creature who had entered all our lives. Then the mohel began the naming ceremony, and some relatives and friends offered their wishes for this young life.

Amy, my wife, and I each offered a thought to the other and to Zachary as we entered this new phase of our lives as parents together. For my part, I quoted Adrienne Rich, who had written that "if I could have one wish for my own sons, it is that they should have the courage of women." I wished nothing more for Zachary than that he would have Amy's courage, her integrity, and her passion.

Then it was the moment for which we had all carefully prepared, about which we had endlessly talked, debated, argued, discussed. We took a pitcher of water and a bowl to the door of the house. Amy and I carried Zachary over to



the threshold. With one hand I held his little body and with the other held his tiny legs over the bowl. Amy poured some water over his feet and rubbed it in. Then she held him and I did the same. Throughout, the mohel chanted in prayer. And in that way, we welcomed Zachary into our home and into our lives.

By now you are, of course, waiting for the "real" *bris* to begin, for the mohel to stuff a wine-soaked handkerchief into our son's mouth to muffle his cries and slightly anesthetize him, and then circumcise him, cutting off his foreskin in fulfillment of God's commandment to Abraham that he mark his son, Isaac, as a sign of obedience.

Sorry to disappoint, but that's the end of our story. Or at least the end of the story of Zachary's *bris*. There was no circumcision on that day. We had decided not to circumcise our son. Although he enters a world filled with violence, he would enter it without violence done to him. Although he will no doubt suffer many cuts and scrapes during his life, he would not bleed by our hand.

This was not an easy decision, but we had plenty of time to prepare—nine months to be exact. From the moment we saw the sonogram and read the results of the amniocentesis, the debate had been joined. Would we or wouldn't we? How would we decide? The remainder of this essay charts that process.

First, we talked. Constantly. Just when we thought the issue settled, we'd open it again. Each time one of us would

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read something, think something, pull something new off the Internet, we would reopen the discussion anew. We talked with friends, family members, religious authorities, doctors, and nurses. We asked our heterosexual women friends whether they had a preference for cut or uncut men. We each sought counsel from the email discussion groups to which we belonged, and we consulted organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association. We ordered and read more than a dozen books and pamphlets.

We contacted advocacy groups like National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC), National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males (NOHARM), and Doctors Opposing Circumcision (DOC). But these organizations, while eager, were too one-sided, and tended to minimize the difficulty of our decision.

And we didn't even bother calling the organizations like Brothers United for Future Foreskins (BUFF), National Organization of Restoring Men (NORM), and RECover a Penis (RECAP) that encourage men who might "feel victimized by the unnecessary loss of their natural anatomical wholeness," as Joseph Zoske writes in *Journal of Men's Studies* (1998), to undergo penile reconstructive surgery to "correct" the circumcised penis. Such procedures (involving either attaching a new flap or pulling the remaining tissue down over the glans to create a pseudo-foreskin) seem as unnecessary as circumcision, and no doubt attend to psychological distress that has only the most tenuous connection to a small flap of penile tissue.

Pros and Cons

We heard a lot of arguments, for and against. To be sure, there is no shortage of arguments in favor of circumcision. Some are aesthetic, and offer a psychological theory based on that aesthetic. Without circumcision, we heard, our son will look different from his father, and thus develop shame about his body. Our son will look different from other Jewish boys, especially in our heavily Jewish neighborhood, thus be subject to ridicule and teasing, and develop a sense that he does not belong. As one man on an email list to which I posed the question wrote, "I don't want my kid to be an object of interest while taking public showers, such as in gym class or in athletic clubs" (David Garnier, personal communication).

Other arguments are medical. After all, male circumcision is the most common surgical procedure in the United States and medical insurance carriers routinely cover hospital circumcision (which raises the incentives of medical practitioners to advocate the procedure). Our son's risks of

penile infection, STD, and especially penile cancer would be significantly lower if he were to be circumcised. The likelihood of uterine cancer in his female sexual partners would be higher if he were not.

In addition, there were conflicting reports on the effects of circumcision on sexual functioning. There is some evidence from sex surveys that circumcised men are more sexually active and more sexually adventurous, especially as regards oral and anal sex. Circumcised men masturbate

more often. And because circumcised men have less sexual sensitivity—after all, the foreskin contains about 1,000 nerve endings, fully one-third of the organ's pleasure receptors—there is some evidence that circumcision delays ejaculation somewhat.

And, of course, the weight of family, history, and culture do not rest lightly on the shoulders of the new parent. As Jews we knew full well the several-thousand-year-old tradition of following one of the most fundamen-

tal of God's commandments to Abraham—that "every male among you shall be circumcised...and that shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."

In the end, none of the arguments in favor of circumcision was fully persuasive. Taken together, however, they raised issues that spoke to the core of our identities as a man and a woman, as parents, as feminists, and as Jews. Each of the points of contention seems worth discussing in a bit more detail.

The Psychological Aesthetics of Difference

That our son would look different from his father was easily negotiated. We decided that we will simply tell him that Daddy had no choice about his own body and especially his penis, but that now, as parents, we loved him so much that we decided we didn't want to hurt him like that—turning something that could be a cause of embarrassment into a source of pride.

And he will look more and more *like* the other boys rather than different. Circumcision of newborns is decreasingly popular, performed routinely only in the United States (as a medical procedure in the hospital) and in Israel, where it remains a significant religious ceremony. (Adolescent circumcision remains the norm in most Islamic nations.) After these two countries, only Canada (25%) and Australia (10%) have rates of newborn circumcision in double digits; in European nations it is virtually nonexistent among non-Jews. Over four-fifths of all men in the world are uncircumcised.

Here in the United States, rates have fallen from well over 85 percent in 1960 to about 66 percent in 2000, so there was every reason to believe that more and more boys

None of the arguments in favor of circumcision was fully persuasive. Taken together, however, they raised issues that spoke to the core of our identities.

would look like Zachary and that he had little to fear by way of social ostracism. In our own neighborhood in heavily Jewish Brooklyn, about half the baby boys born in our local hospital are circumcised in the hospital (though there is no information about those who have it performed as a religious ceremony in their homes or elsewhere).

Medical Ambivalence

While it is true that the risk of penile cancer or infection is virtually non-existent among circumcised men, rates among uncircumcised men, though higher, are still minuscule. In 1991, the American Academy of Pediatrics finally lifted its long-time advocacy of routine hospital circumcision for health reasons, and now takes no position on the question, thus leaving the decision entirely up to the parents' aesthetic or religious beliefs. They concluded that there were no medical benefits to circumcision as long as the boy was instructed in proper cleanliness.

Even the redoubtable Benjamin Spock changed his mind over the years. Having always stood for the conventional wisdom that parents know best, Spock told *Redbook* in an interview in 1989 that his preference "if I had the good fortune to have another son, would be to leave his little penis alone." In a pamphlet, "Circumcision: A Medical or Human Rights Issue?" one doctor went so far as to suggest that removing the foreskin for strictly hygienic purposes was analogous to removing the eyelid for a cleaner eyeball.

Future sexual functioning didn't weigh particularly heavily in our minds either. For one thing, sexual functioning is so profoundly variable; we expect that if we teach Zachary to develop respect for his and others' bodies as well as their personal integrity, sexual pleasure will not be an issue for him or his partners. Second, the evidence is inconsistent. While circumcised men in the United States seem to have more sex, more varied sex, and masturbate more often, this may be more of a function of race, class, education, and religion than with whether or not the man is circumcised. It's middle class white men—who tend to be the most secular and the most sexual—who still compose the majority of circumcised men. Among blacks and Hispanics, rates of oral sex and masturbation are significantly lower than among white men, and middle class men are more sexually active and adventurous than working class men. "People with graduate degrees are the most likely to masturbate," noted Ed Laumann, a sociologist and one of the principal researchers in the University of Chicago sex survey in the early 1990s.

Nor were we ultimately concerned about the eventual effect on potential women partners. An informal poll among heterosexual women friends yielded a mixed anecdotal

response. Most said they preferred circumcised men, and one or two indicated significant aesthetic discomfort with intact men. But an article in the January 1999 *British Journal of Urology* reported that women who had slept with both circumcised and intact men preferred sex with men who were not circumcised. The article reported that the women achieved orgasm faster, and were more likely to achieve multiple orgasms.

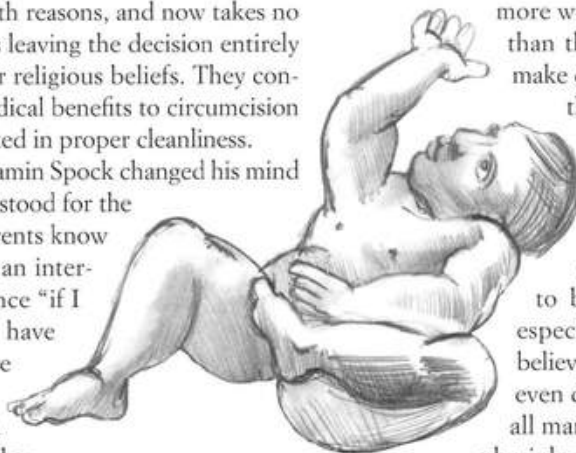
The Burden of History

Actually, the historical record of medical opinion consistently pushed us further into the anti-circumcision camp. The more we learned about the medical history, the more we were convinced that concerns other than the health of the baby led doctors to make circumcision a routine practice. Before the 1870s, in the United States, routine medical circumcision was quite rare, hovering around 5 to 6 percent of all newborn baby boys. Subscribers to the new Victorian sexual morality sought to reduce what critics perceived to be rampant sexual promiscuity, and especially masturbation, which, they believed, resulted in all sorts of debilities and even death. Masturbation was said to cause all manner of emotional, psychological, and physiological problems, from bed-wetting to adolescent insolence, acne to mental retardation, insanity, psychological exhaustion, and neurasthenia.

Circumcision's well-established ability to curb sexual appetite and pleasure was prescribed as a potential cure for sexual profligacy. Lewis Sayre, a prominent New York physician, hailed as "the Columbus of the prepuce" by his colleagues, experimented with circumcision as a cure for paralysis and other muscular ailments. Sayre's colleagues also noted that Jews had a lower rate of STDs than non-Jews, and hypothesized that this had to do with circumcision. (Actually this had to do with the fact that Jews had very little sexual contact with non-Jews.)

Another physician, Dr. Peter Remondino, advocated universal male circumcision since the foreskin, which he labeled "an unyielding tube," left the intact male "a victim to all manner of ills, sufferings...and other conditions calculated to weaken him physically, mentally, and morally; to land him, perchance, in jail, or even in a lunatic asylum." And Robert Tooke's popular *All About the Baby* (1896) recommended circumcision to prevent "the vile habit of masturbation."

J. H. Kellogg, pioneering health reformer, cereal inventor, and general medical quack also sounded the alarm; his best-selling health advice book, *Plain Facts for Old and Young* (1888), included nearly 100 pages on the dangers of masturbation. Circumcision is almost always successful in



curbing masturbation, he counseled, and he suggested that the operation be performed “by a surgeon without administering anesthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect upon the mind....” (Though this may have begun the tradition of not using anesthesia to perform circumcision, Kellogg did not pretend that the baby feels no pain during the procedure. Anyone who has ever witnessed a routine medical circumcision performed without anesthesia knows only too well how much pain the infant does feel.)

Victorian morality was pervasive. And as waves of uncircumcised immigrants entered the United States, circumcision of newborns was a way to stake a claim for a truly “American” morality. Rates jumped to 25 percent by 1900. After World War II, when the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that rates of STD were higher among blacks and uncircumcised white men, circumcision rates continued to climb, and by 1980, nearly nine of every ten American boys was circumcised.

But it now appears that the rapid spread of circumcision as a routine medical procedure had more to do with Victorian hysteria about sexuality than it did with hygiene. And given the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recent backpedaling on the issue—from ritual endorsement to anxious agnosticism to its most recent resigned disapproval—there seems to be no medical argument—historical or hygienic—to compel the procedure.

The Weights of Tradition

The combined weights of family and religious culture were not so easily negotiated. As predicted, the future grandmothers were somewhat more sanguine about the prospect of non-circumcision than were the future grandfathers. It’s ironic that it’s always been women—even within Judaism—who have opposed circumcision as a violence done to their babies, and circumcised males who have supported it. Perhaps it is analogous to fraternity or military initiation ceremonies, where the salutary outcome of feeling a sense of belonging to the larger homosocial group is deemed worth any price, including the removal of a third of one’s potential sexual pleasure.

In our case, neither Amy nor I felt any strong compulsion towards circumcision, but I was more strongly opposed on moral grounds. Amy’s opposition would come later, when she first held Zachary in her arms and she felt a visceral rage that anyone would do anything that would ever hurt this new creature. In very gender stereotyped terms, Amy’s opposition grew from her emotional, visceral connection to the baby; mine grew first from a principled

opposition grounded in a sense of justice and ethics.

But equally gendered, I suppose, I felt that my Judaism had always given me the ability to stand up against injustice, that the imperative of the post-Holocaust generation of “Never Again!” impelled me to speak out against injustices wherever I saw them.

Ultimately, it came down to Judaism. Jewish law is unequivocal on the subject—it has been a time-honored tradition since the celebrated Covenant with Abraham, the

founding moment of monotheism. In Genesis 17, God appears before an aged Abraham—he’s ninety-nine!—and commands that Abraham circumcise himself, his son, and all male members of his household (slaves and servants included).

Today circumcision is seen as a mitzvah, linking the family to a 4000-year history of a people. In his masterful compendium of Jewish law and lore, *Essential Judaism*, George Robinson writes that it is a

mitzvah “one performs for its own sake as a subordination of oneself to a larger entity.” What’s a tiny foreskin compared to 4,000 years of tradition? And so it appeared that Jewish tradition might yet extract its pound of flesh—well, more likely about a quarter of an ounce—from yet another innocent baby.

Yet Judaism today is hardly as monolithic as we once thought. Even in biblical times there seems to have been some dissent about the procedure. If one follows the ritual as prescribed by Jewish law, the baby is held during the circumcision on what is called the Chair of Elijah, named after the prophet “who railed against the Jews for forsaking the ritual of circumcision.” What that says to me is that not long after circumcision was instituted, there were a lot of people who were already resisting it. Then, too, there is the law that the *brit milah* be performed on the eighth day after the birth of the son, a law so ironclad that it is perhaps the only Jewish ritual that may not be postponed for the Sabbath or even for Yom Kippur. Those who were interested in enforcing circumcision were determined that there be no excuses—no doubt because a lot of people were trying to wiggle their way out.

In her research, Amy found that even as recently as the mid-nineteenth century, in Eastern Europe and Russia there was a widespread move to stop the practice—ironically, just when it was becoming more widespread in the United States. Led by women—what a surprise!—who thought the practice barbaric and patriarchal, the movement eventually even convinced Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, who refused to allow his own son to be circumcised.

It is, after all, quite perplexing: why would God ask

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Abraham do such a thing to himself and all the males of his household—especially his son? For years, I had a little cartoon in my study that depicted Abraham, standing alone on top of a mountain, looking up at the sky, forlorn and exasperated. The caption read, “Let me see if I have this right: You want us to cut the ends of our dicks off?!!?”

Sublimating Pleasure for Torah

The circumcision as ritual makes sense, however, in three ways—one sexual, one political, and one symbolic. Throughout history, commentators on circumcision have agreed that the goal was to transform men’s (and women’s) sexual experience, and thus make men more eager to study Torah. The only thing they disagreed on was how, exactly, circumcision would accomplish this feat of sublimation.

Most observers assumed it would make a man less sexually sensitive, reduce his sexual ardor, and constrain his sexual impulses. In his fascinating study, *Eros and the Jews*, David Biale finds two contradictory impulses leading towards the same conclusion. Ancient Jews, such as Philo, understood circumcision as “the symbol of the excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure.” In *Guide to the Perplexed*, the great medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides prefigured J. H. Kellogg by nearly a millennium when he wrote that the commandment to circumcise was “not prescribed with a view to perfecting what is defective congenitally, but to perfecting what is defective morally.” A chief reason for the ritual was “the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible.” After all, he continued, “the fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable.”

While Maimonides argued that the physiological loss was “the real purpose” of the ritual, others believed that the psychological impact far outweighed the physical. Biale notes that an early medieval Midrash Tadshe suggests that the “covenant of circumcision was therefore placed on the genitals so that the fear of God would restrain them from sin.” Later thinkers took the physical to new extremes. The early-nineteenth-century scholar, Nahman of Bratslav, great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, argued that circumcision symbolizes the complete excision of sexual pleasure so that the “true zaddik” (holy man) experiences pain, not pleasure, during intercourse.

On the one hand, writers were convinced that men would feel less—much less, and therefore their frustration would lead inevitably towards holier devotion to study. On the other hand, some writers were convinced that circumcised men would experience far *more* sexual excitement—so

much more, in fact, that it would leave both him and his partner so frustrated that they wouldn’t want to have sex again. In an astonishing passage, Isaac ben Yedaiah, a late thirteenth-century French follower of Maimonides described the difference in such overheated prose that it borders on the salacious (which alone makes it worth quoting at length):

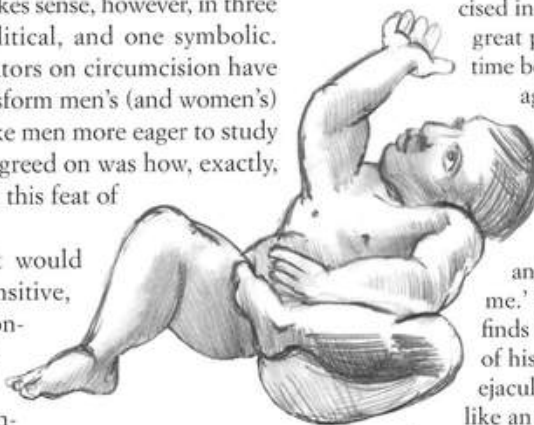
[A beautiful woman] will court a man who is uncircumcised in the flesh and lie against his breast with great passion, for he thrusts inside her a long time because of the foreskin, which is a barrier against ejaculation in intercourse. Thus she feels pleasure and reaches an orgasm first. When an uncircumcised man sleeps with her and then resolves to return to his home, she brazenly grasps him, holding on to his genitals and says to him, ‘Come back, make love to me.’ This is because of the pleasure that she finds in intercourse with him, from the sinews of his testicles—sinews of iron—and from his ejaculation—that of a horse—which he shoots like an arrow into her womb. They are united

without separating and he makes love twice and three times in one night, yet the appetite is not filled. And so he acts with her night after night. The sexual activity emaciates him of his bodily fat and afflicts his flesh and he devotes his brain entirely to women, an evil thing.

But when a circumcised man desires the beauty of a woman...he will find himself performing his task quickly, emitting his seed as soon as he inserts the crown.... He has an orgasm first; he does not hold back his strength. As soon as he begins intercourse with her, he immediately comes to a climax. She has no pleasure from him when she lies down or when she arises and it would be better for her if he had not known her ... for he arouses her passion to no avail and she remains in a state of desire ... (cited in Biale).

So more excitement means less pleasure—for both him and his female partner. Ancient rabbis, like Philo, had argued that not only did circumcision restrain male sexual ardor, but diminished women’s pleasure. “It is hard for a woman to separate herself from an uncircumcised man with whom she has had intercourse.” Everyone now seemed to agree that circumcision reduces the pleasure of the woman, which is precisely why it seems to have been prescribed. And precisely why Amy and I were growing increasingly suspicious.

There were political issues involved as well. It’s interesting to observe the expansion of the ritual in terms of the relationship between Jews and their neighbors. Originally, apparently, the ritual consisted of only the *brit milah*—which is the excision of a small part of the foreskin. This enabled some Jewish men to continue to “pass” as gentiles in the ancient edition of those locker room showers that my friends continually discussed. Disgruntled rabbis then added the



CIRCUMCISION

brit periah which removed the entire foreskin, making it impossible to pass as gentile. (It's an ironic twist of history that it is the *brit periah* that was adopted by modern medicine when it still prescribed routine neonatal circumcision.)

But this expansion also raised, for us, the thorniest political and moral dilemma. A close friend, a child of Holocaust survivors, told me the story of his uncle, who was not so lucky. His was the now-classic story of the young man, sneaking his way onto a train leaving Germany, under the watchful eyes of the Nazis. When caught, he was forced to strip in the station, and when it was discovered that he was circumcised, he was shot on the spot.

Here was a political reason *to* circumcise, a slap in the face of anti-Semitism, a way to connect my son to a history of resistance against anti-Semitism, and to recognize the ways in which physical difference (whether congenitally or culturally derived) is grounds for discrimination. In fact, some historians claim that the *brit periah*, the more extensive circumcision, was first used by the Egyptians to mark their Hebrew slaves, so that they would be readily and permanently identifiable. Ironic then, that once free, these same Hebrews made the more dramatic statement a matter of their own *inclusion*.

Penile Patriarchy

But what was ultimately decisive for us was the larger symbolic meaning of circumcision, and particularly the gendered politics of the ritual. After all, it is not circumcision that makes a man Jewish; one can certainly be Jewish without it. Religious membership is passed on through the mother: if the mother is Jewish then the baby is Jewish and nothing that the baby does—or that is done to him or her—can change that basic fact. A rabbi is trained to counsel parents of mixed religious backgrounds (in which the man is Jewish and the woman is not) that circumcision does not make their son Jewish, but that only the mother's conversion will make it so.

No, circumcision means something else: the reproduction of patriarchy. Abraham cements *his* relationship to God by a symbolic genital mutilation of his son. It is on the body of his son that Abraham writes his own beliefs. In a religion marked by the ritual exclusion of women, such a marking not only enables Isaac to be included within the community of men—he can be part of a minyan, can pray in the temple, can study Torah—but he can also lay claim to all the privileges to which being a Jewish male now entitles him. Monotheistic religions invariably worship male Gods, and exhibit patriarchal political arrangements between the sexes. (Looked at this way, since both Judaism and Islam practice circumcision, it is really Christianity that is the deviant case, and it would be worth exploring how Christianity justified its evasion of the practice since it is certain that Jesus was circumcised.)

Circumcision, it became clear, is the single moment of

the reproduction of patriarchy. It's when patriarchy happens, the single crystalline moment when the rule of the fathers is reproduced, the moment when male privilege and entitlement is passed from one generation to the next, when the power of the fathers is enacted upon the sons, a power which the sons will someday then enact on the bodies of their own sons. To circumcise our son, then, would be, unwittingly or not, to accept as legitimate 4000 years not of Jewish tradition, but of patriarchal domination of women.

Our choice was clear.

We welcomed Zachary into our family on that morning without a circumcision. We decided that we want him to live in a world without violence, so we welcomed him without violence. We decided that we want him to live in a world in which he is free to experience the fullness of the pleasures of his body, so we welcomed him with all his fleshy nerves intact. And we decided that we want him to live in a world in which male entitlement is a waning memory, and in which women and men are seen—in both ritual and in reality—as full equals and partners. So we welcomed him equally, his mother and I, in the time-honored way that desert cultures have always welcomed strangers to their tents: We washed his feet. □

THE WORK OF OUR HANDS (continued from page 42)

mitzvah on its own, and it makes a level playing field in which all Jewish parents, however they became parents, are doing the same mitzvah together. We need no longer strain after pernicious distinctions between one kind of parent and another. Instead, we can concentrate our efforts, as we should, on encouraging Jewish parents to raise their children in love, compassion, and faithfulness. The world needs more mensches.

Hillary Rodham Clinton named her book based on an African proverb, which I like to Judaize: it takes a shtetl to raise a Jewish child. It takes all of us, nurturing each other and each other's children, to be able to do that. It is time for the Jewish community to recognize all Jewish families, not just the ones some of us favor. That is to say, specifically, we need to welcome gay and lesbian Jews; we need to welcome single-parent families; we need to celebrate the families of those Jews who want to be with us, and who need our support and need our affirmation, and deserve it.

And then, finally, it means that when we talk about Jewish children—and I say this with a heavy heart, as the father of an autistic son—when we talk about Jewish children, we must mean all Jewish children. The day has long passed in which the Jewish community can justify the way it ignores special-needs children by saying, “Well, we just can't afford it.” We can afford anything we set our minds to. And in an age in which we are fighting for our people's lives, we cannot afford to do anything less than our Creator, who made a covenant with our entire people, and so, therefore, should we. □

Circumcision and *Brit*: They're Not the Same Thing

David Zaslow

In 1984 our son Ari had a beautiful, natural, home birth. Our daughter Rachel was born in the same bed and into the same loving environment three years earlier. My wife Devorah and I were resolute about our decision not to circumcise our son. We felt like pioneers braving the obstacles of both family and Jewish tradition. We reasoned that if we made such an effort to create a loving welcome into the world, how could we inflict unnecessary pain upon this beautiful soul just because of an archaic tradition?

Oy, how we all change! In 1988 I had a spiritual awakening. I was forty years old when I "heard the call," and soon I was on the path to becoming a rabbi. At first my personal spiritual practices and study were not a contradiction to having an uncircumcised son. After all, my original reasoning against the ritual still seemed true.

But little by little something inside me was changing. Not a sense of returning to tradition. Not a sense of tribal loyalty. Not even a sense that our decision not to circumcise was a mistake. But a sense that there is a difference between a circumcision and a *brit*.

A *brit* is a covenant or partnership with the Divine. I was experiencing this covenant myself. Firsthand. Connecting to the Holy One. Personally. Me. I no longer saw Jewish rituals as symbolic. They were, when administered properly, not symbols but parts of a spiritual technology for covenanting with G-d.

Shabbat candlelighting was no longer a quaint representation of an ancient fire ritual. The wine was not a symbol but an actuality. Candles and wine were signals to G-d that our family was ready for Sabbath. And when we sang "Shalom Alechem" to welcome in angels it wasn't because it was symbolic. We sang it because we were actually welcoming real angels. We blessed our children because we were connecting the souls of our children to Shechinah.

Oh, how I had changed! I felt like Tevya about to tell Golda that their daughter's engagement was off! "Oy"

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*I felt like Tevya about to tell
Golda that their daughter's
engagement was off!*

I thought, "What, am I going to tell Devorah about my new ideas about *brit*?" Could I conjure up a dream scene like in *Fiddler*? I opted for the truth—at least for "my" truth. Coincidentally, Devorah was coming to the same conclusion but for completely different reasons.

We arranged for Ari's belated circumcision when he was six years old. My change of mind was strictly spiritual. I believed that G-d's covenant was a real energy pact. I believed that Elijah was an animate energy force, and that his chair at a circumcision was not just symbolic. And if there was a psychological benefit for Ari to have his penis look like mine, then great.

For Devorah, the decision was strictly practical. She took the psychological path. Now that we were so fully immersed in daily Jewish life, what would it be like for our son to be at Jewish summer camp uncircumcised? Or on a summer trip to Israel?

We explained to Ari what was going to happen and told him that this was a special Jewish mitzvah. He picked an

additional Hebrew name for himself. We bought him gifts and tried to make it special for him. In all honesty I cannot say how much of a choice this was for Ari, but in his six-year-old wisdom he completely consented.

In the operating room, while Ari was under anesthesia, Rabbi Aryeh Hirschfield conducted the sacred rite. The anesthesiologist placed a drop of wine on my son's lips. We welcomed Elijah. We prayed. The Jewish physician cut. We sang. I wept!

The next morning, while lying on the living room floor together, I told my son, my only son, that had I done this when he was eight days old there would have hardly been any pain. I told him that I didn't do it then because I didn't want to cause him any pain. I asked his forgiveness for causing him so much pain now.

His answer still gives me shivers, "Of course I forgive you Daddy. But why didn't you do it then? I wanted you to do it then!" My mind went numb. I thought, "What did he mean by 'I wanted you to do it then?' Dare I ask?" I asked. He answered, "I wanted you to do it when I was eight days old." I asked, "You remember?" I was getting zapped by an angel. He repeated his cryptic words again, "I wanted you to do it then!" With tears streaming down both our cheeks we sat together in silence.

A Rabbi's Thoughts

Our rebbes teach us that there are three kinds of mitzvot. The first are called *mishpatim* or judgments. These are the logical, universal, moral commandments discovered by all peoples in all spiritual traditions (i.e., don't kill, don't steal, honor your parents, etc.).

The second category of mitzvot are *eidot*, or memorial rituals (make a seder on Passover to remember the exodus; read the story of Esther on Purim, etc.). They are not universal, but strictly tribal reenactments to help those of us who are Jewish use the past for the benefit of the future.

The third category, under which *brit milah* falls, is the most mysterious. They are called *hukkim*, which we translate as statutes. These include kosher dietary laws and circumcision. What are they for? There is no clear answer. Why do we do them? There is no clear answer. The best we can do is rationalize. We do these mitzvot to show our love for G-d. We call it the practice of *bittul hanefesh*, to put the rational mind aside so that the heart and soul might open.

In Deuteronomy 30:6 the Torah says, "And YHVH, your God, will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love YHVH, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul ..." It almost seems as if Torah Herself is trying to explain the profound impact of the ritual as a means of increasing compassion and empathy.

Okay, to abstain from shrimp I can give up reason, but must we cause needless pain to our sons? Torah says, "Yes." When administered sensitively the *brit* ceremony is the most incredible father/son bonding experience. It is not a means of "reproducing patriarchy, male privilege and entitlement." On the contrary, it seems to be a means of reproducing male love and compassion. Our mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters experience the awesome spiritual bonding power of blood every month. Men have this opportunity only during circumcision.

The *brit* is the once in a lifetime chance for the souls of father and son to bond in the deepest way imaginable. As a rabbi, this is the intention that I bring into the rite. I ask the dads to hold the hands of their sons, and to whisper blessings of love to them. I tell them not to deny that there might be some pain, but to carry that pain for their sons. I encourage the dads to cry for their

sons and for all the pain their sons will experience in their lives. I encourage the dads to weep and pray for all children. This is the essence, I believe, of making a covenant.

Reflection on Kimmel's Essay

My only serious criticism of Michael Kimmel's otherwise caring and moderate essay was in the fictitious imagining of his son's circumcision. He wrote that the "mohel, of course, was running late." As the ceremony was about to begin he was waiting "... for the mohel to stuff a wine-soaked handkerchief" into the baby's mouth to "muffle his cries." Mohels don't stuff handkerchiefs into babies' mouths! And I never met one who ran late. The whole image conjures up a weird, medieval caricature.

To ascribe the cause of male privilege and patriarchy to *brit milah* is incorrect. I can think of several aspects in Judaism that do contribute to patriarchy (i.e., required separation of men and women in prayer, not ordaining women as rabbis, etc.) but not the *brit* ceremony.

There is nothing moral or immoral about the choices we make about circumcision. This is not a moral mitzvah. It is a spiritual practice that is purposely not based on the issues that Kimmel and his wife struggled with: logic, aesthetics, good medicine, the weight of tradition, or the history of anti-Semitism.

It is a bonding ritual which I believe leads to higher levels of consciousness for both fathers and sons. I tell my non-Jewish friends that unless circumcision is done for spiritual or covenantal reasons, it is not necessary. To my Jewish friends who agonize about what to do I say, "I know exactly what you are going through. May the struggle be good!" I advise them to ask the Shechinah to help them make the decision. □

His answer still gives me shivers, "Of course I forgive you Daddy. But why didn't you do it then? I wanted you to do it then!"

HOLOCAUST

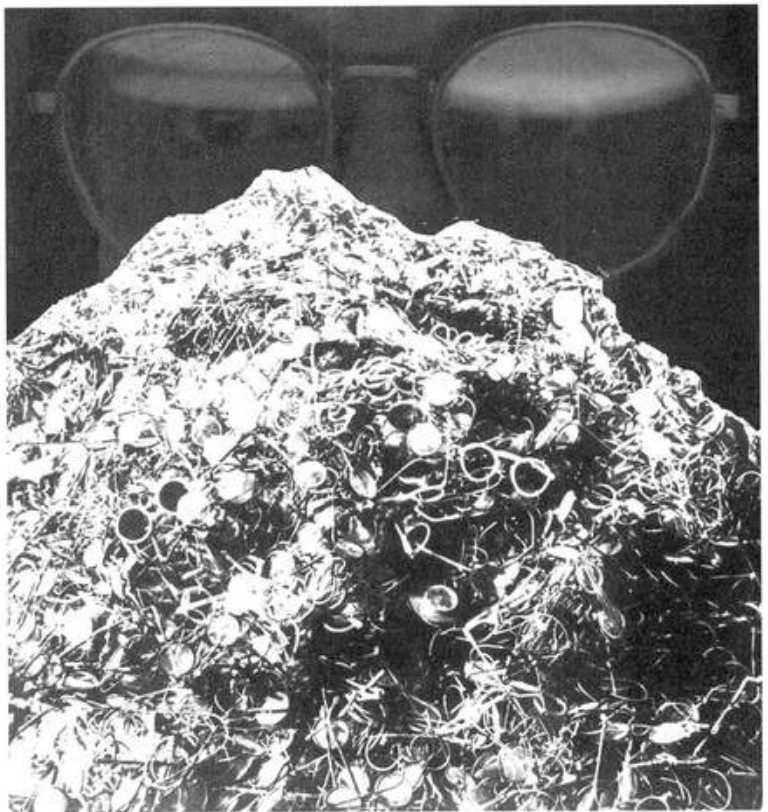
Holocaust Videography, Oral History, and Education

Geoffrey Hartman

I will not try to answer in this essay a crucial question which has been formulated in the following terms: "To what extent should memory, with its powerful and legitimate but inconsistent demands on our attention, be the guiding spirit of historiography?" While recognizing "the need to sort out the tangle of the competing claims of history and of memory ... in the lengthening shadow of the Holocaust," my main purpose is to clarify the importance of survivor videotestimony rather than to adjudicate competing claims.

What was initiated in New Haven and led to the founding of Yale's video archive for Holocaust testimony in 1981 involves the careful use of modern technology to augment historical knowledge and strengthen the collective memory. But it is not primarily the collection or confirmation of historical data for which testimony archives will be important, though this is one of their values. The trained historian, who still, on the whole, distrusts oral history (especially when gathered so long after the event), can consult many other sources, including the records of the Nazi bureaucracy; contemporary chronicles; letters and diaries in the YIVO archive; the reports of those who stumbled on or inspected the liberated camps; testimonies in the Berlin Bundesarchiv collected from 1948 on by the Verein der Verfolgten des Nazi Regimes; Ilya Ehrenberg and Vasily Grossman's *The Black Book*; the Nuremberg, Auschwitz, Eichmann, and Barbie trial proceedings; and documents and personal accounts that came like a flood in the first years after Liberation. Further sources are still coming to light, from recently opened Soviet archives, for example. There are also a considerable number of audiotestimonies, beginning with Paolo Boder's interviews in the DP camps. Even without the recent use of video to record the survivors and bystanders, our knowledge of the event has become monumental in its scope.

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This does not detract, however, from the innovative character of videotestimony. I see the medium, first of all, as an extension of oral tradition under modern circumstances. Pierre Nora connects the appeal of oral, and particularly audiovisual, history ("fragments put before our eyes") with the sense of directness we have become accustomed to through the media. Our taste for the everyday life of the past, and the biographies of ordinary people, displays, he says, "the will to make the history we are reconstructing equal to the history we have lived...." It remains unclear, at the same time, whether this intense desire for a direct, (tele)visual experience compensates for the indirectness of the past (increasing, because history, in an era of transformations, recedes from memory faster than ever) or for the poverty of the present—a rich poverty, related to media that trap us in the false present of simulacra. They oversalt experience, as it were, and so keep us thirsting. Why are we not sated with reality but need to mirror and intensify it this way?

The scandal is increased by the fact that the micro-histories in the Holocaust archive are mainly grim and painful. They are not an escape from the "acceleration of history" into "the slow rhythm of past times." There does occur a significant slowing through the very effort of speaking. But this slowing indicates that terror usurps the real once more, that everything is marked by it, as if narrative time—the very time of transmission—was always about to collapse. There is significant tension between the "rage to transmit" and an "impotence to communicate." The survivor interview often reveals a temporal flaw that threatens ordinary time—a time that has to be extemporized and regained by what I define as a testimonial alliance, that is, an alliance between witness and listener.

A second remarkable feature of Holocaust testimony is the way it changes the image of the victim. Both the medium of video and the non-journalistic, non-interrogative structure of the interview contribute to this. Concerning video as a medium I want to say at this point only that the shaming of the victims was linked to an oppressive gaze intended to implant in them a permanent feeling of nakedness and vulnerability. It shamed the victims by taking away their right to a sense of shame while, by a vicious *Schadenfreude*, acting out an anti-Semitic rhetoric denouncing the Jew as dangerously without shame. Videotaping the survivors can have, therefore, a very basic, compensatory function: the victims are seen, and listened to, as fully human, even when recalling their former nakedness.

As to the interview itself, it has a collective as well as personal dimension by giving everyone the opportunity to tell their story, not only the gifted or literate. It is, moreover, a public act of witness, made possible both by the survivors' readiness to testify and the interviewers' readiness to listen. That readiness cannot be taken for granted because the experience of the survivors was so shattering, so disintegrating—both for the survivors, and now, potentially, for interviewer and listener.

To define precisely the survivors' catastrophic experience would require a comparison of different kinds of suffering, and I am reluctant to engage in that. It is more important to suggest that the giving and taking of testimony in the kind of framework Yale provides has a legitimate restitutive function. Nazism imputed a guilt to Jews as Jews that condemned them to an ignoble death. In case there were survivors, physical and mental humiliation would disable their witnessing power by instilling, as I have mentioned, an intolerable self-disgust. What has come to be known as "survivor guilt" may be related also to that; and while I honor Primo Levi's caution in *The Drowned and the Saved* that the witnesses who did not come back, who "drowned," may have had a truer story to tell than the saved, I wonder whether in his own self he was not touched by the kind of suspicion that often greeted survivors on their return. He had to welcome himself, as it were, or return to himself with untainted eyes. Every strong aggression leaves an indelible mark on the victim.

The reduction of the victim through a psychic and bodily shaming is captured by Dan Pagis' brief poem "Testimony," which compares the uniformed, booted persecutors "created in the image," to the "shade" the camp inmate has become. Pagis compounds the irony of his allusion to Genesis 1:27 when he uses the language of faith to welcome his nothingness, his own decreation:

And he in his mercy left nothing of me that would die.
And I fled to him, rose weightless, blue,
forgiving—I would even say: apologizing—
smoke to omnipotent smoke
without image or likeness.

(translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have called Holocaust witnessing an "impossible" act, because of the decreation Pagis describes.

A Testimonial Alliance

How is it possible, then, that thousands of testimonies exist? They are enabled by an alliance between witness and listener, by a supportive interview that creates a provisional community, if only for the space of the telling. This testimonial alliance suggests a further possibility, prospective rather than retrospective: that a larger communal bond might come about, that the terrible and isolating experience of the survivors might be reintegrated into our culture—even while troubling, radically, the pride and pretension of that culture.

I doubt that we can ever fully integrate knowledge of the Holocaust into normal life. One survivor said bluntly: "If I told you everything, if I held nothing back, you'd fall ill." Itzhak Zuckermann's remark in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* is even more decisive: "If you could lick my heart, it would poison you." Imre Kertész, a Hungarian survivor of Auschwitz, goes so far as to use the expression "Holocaust as culture" to indicate the universe of death created by the perpetrators, one that cannot be reconciled with civilized conceptions.

Let me be more precise about the pressures on the concerned thinker. It is not only that remembering is a duty, or that we cannot forget—that a train, a dog, a green uniform, an old photo, bring back the pang of knowledge or involuntary images. But also that, as we seek to make room for life, a contemporary insanity does not allow us to forget. What we believed to be utterly in the past and universally condemned is being repeated. Consequently, the "Never Forget" that presently echoes all around us no longer refers to the Holocaust alone: today, in school or out, the act of remembrance is exposed to competitive comparisons. We are challenged all the time by the question of what analogies are valid between what happened then and what is still happening so many years later.

Sometimes an even more subversive thought surfaces. Can knowledge of the Holocaust, or of these other atrocities, a knowledge that tends to become obsessive, that induces, in fact, new trauma, really help to prevent what no knowledge has so far been able to forestall?

I keep hoping against the odds that knowledge will produce enlightenment. But one has to face the issue of the relation of such knowledge to the transmission of trauma. Knowledge of extreme events, and particularly of the Shoah, can instill secondary trauma. ("My Father Bleeds History" is the title of a section of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*; it could also be an appropriate title for a memoir on the Black experience.)

To add emotion to knowledge, to create an understanding that is not *pro forma* but truly sympathetic, is always to overcome a dissociation or a psychological defense. Yet it is useless to ask "how much emotion?" as if it were a matter of

adding, as in a formula, something strong to something bland. The arousal of emotion, in fact, when studying a subject so close to us, can be counterproductive and undermine the attempt to learn. It may increase feelings of powerlessness, of anguished perplexity, and abort the striving for a redemptive or at least remedial knowledge. In a way, our journey parallels that of the survivor-witnesses: we too must overcome psychic numbing, even if what caused it seems very different. In our case, the numbing is due to professional deformation. Knowledge is easily depersonalized and over-objectified.

The numbing may persist, however, because what makes us care—the rehearsal or recreation, in strong images and words, of the terrible things that happened—may induce secondary trauma. A potentially traumatic transmission occurs not only within the family but whenever later generations have to negotiate a passage from basic trust to worldliness. Since this passage often coincides with education in high school and college, and the precarious phase of life called adolescence, it has pedagogical urgency. Young people are especially defenseless, that is, wonderfully and precariously empathic, so emotional shock could lead to a contrary result, to new defenses against knowledge, and even to a paralysis that enshrines, as it were, the moment of initiation. I have heard too many stories about the impact of atrocity photos on a young mind.

If any medium can prevent retraumatization, especially of younger people, while communicating personally, rather than abstractly or statistically, what happened during the time of victimage, it is the videotestimonies. Instead of atrocity photos, and without sacrificing realism or candor, the witness-accounts transmit gripping stories. They touch on depths of suffering, but also on what spiritual resources there were. They tell of death and dehumanization but convey, through a succession of remarkably detailed memories, the life that managed to persist. Above all, they defeat, posthumously, the Nazi policy of annihilation which aimed at programmatic soul-murder, not physical death alone. The testimonies help to undo a taint that intended to mark the victim's psyche permanently, if not to destroy it.

I am not sure how the testimonies prevent secondary trauma. Perhaps the survivors' own honesty in facing their damaged lives plays a role, or the mediation of the interviewer, even the "appalled interviewer." The commandant of a labor camp orders Joan B. to boil some water when he learns one of the inmates is about to give birth. "Boil water. But the water wasn't to help with the act of giving birth. He drowned the newborn in the boiling water." The appalled interviewer asks, "Did you see that?" "Oh, yes, I did," the witness imperturbably replied. "Did you say anything?" the dialogue continues. "No, I didn't." (Lawrence Langer

describes this incident in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*.) The presence to the story of both witness and interviewer relieves the incident's inhumanity without moderating it.

Each episode now disclosed is not an impersonal package (with time bomb) addressed mechanically, through the media, "To Whom It May Concern." The survivor-storyteller delivers the message personally and in a real time utterly different from that of photojournalism or illusionistic docudrama. Thus the testimonies come out of a memory-milieu to which no simple

byline can be given: should the witness sign off "New Haven, November 1995," or "Warsaw, April 1943"? "Berlin, September 1996," or "Minsk 1942" or "Auschwitz..."? Each witness-account, a unique *viva voce* telling, a spotlight moment of two and more hours, arrives as a return of memory, often from the depths, in the presence of a sympathetic listener who makes up for the indifferent

or busy non-listeners in the survivor's life.

We hear active words, spontaneous metaphors, a mixture of remembered and unexpected thoughts. Time itself is curiously restored, though not always restorative. The forward-looking memory, the hope of having a story to tell, a hope that seemed to die during the time of victimage, is shown to have been dormant rather than dead. That hope is finally realized, after many years; before our eyes it revives and takes hold of the interview. The shame of having been a victim, illogical as that feeling is, has a chance of being relieved by the objectifying power of testimony. The witness describes openly and plainly what was suffered, and does so without creating a compensatory, heroic myth.

I am not saying heroism was absent, but that there is little mythic inflation in the testimonies. During the Crusades, the chronicles of Jewish persecution were sustained by the ennobling idea of *kiddush hashem*. In the testimonies too we glimpse a stubborn faith, sometimes leading to resistance and feats of heroism. Or gestures as brave and absurd as Primo Levi quoting Dante to fellow inmates in Auschwitz. Yet such moments are not the substance or tenor of the testimonies—they do not affect us more deeply than hearing the daily and more grievous part. Like the survivors themselves, we acknowledge what happened from day to day, acknowledge the cost of the struggle not to die, and learn how not to assuage or ameliorate this. If there is a myth, a "grand narrative" in addition to a "chaos narrative"—fragmented, wounded, plural memories that need suture—it is that of *Überleben*, surviving in order to tell the story, of becoming by sheer act of will an *Ahasverus*, or, as in the Book of Job, the "I alone [who] have escaped to tell thee." Yet survival as such is not the end of the matter. Often the most telling part of the testimonies is what happened after Liberation: the effort to survive survival. □

*Our journey parallels that
of the survivor-witnesses:
we too must overcome
psychic numbing.*

RECIPROCITY (continued from page 26)

ships, the Makah recognized it early, and voluntarily gave up hunting whales in the 1920s, fully a decade or more before the United States issued a ban on the taking of gray whales. Yet what a painful decision this must have been, to voluntarily turn away from this encounter, this exchange with a wild Other that lay at the heart of their cultural life. So much of daily life, from mundane practices like the fashioning of tools and the preparation and cooking of food to their ceremonial traditions—their stories and songs and dances, the initiation of the young into the secret societies which carried the ritual lore of the tribe—were all structured by their interchange with the whale.

Today the gray whales—Blessed Be!—seem to have rebounded somewhat from the brink of extinction. Thanks no doubt to the moratorium on commercial whaling, perhaps some 25,000 of them are now pursuing their nomadic life in the Pacific Ocean, migrating between their winter breeding grounds off the Mexican coast and their summer feeding areas in the Bering and Beaufort seas. And in May 1999, the Makah people—or, more specifically, seven Makah whalers paddling a dugout cedar canoe and using a hand-thrust harpoon to initiate the kill—hunted and killed a gray whale for the first time in seven decades, reviving a tradition that dates back at least two millennia. For this they have been reviled in the media, they have been called murderers by environmental groups, and they have been laughed at and ridiculed because their technique was not perfect—because, that is, it wasn't entirely easy for them to resuscitate traditional techniques that have been slumbering for some seventy-five years.

It *is* a conundrum, this killing of a whale. Many of my environmental comrades are outraged—indeed, almost the entire environmental community seems to be scandalized that anyone, much less a Native American community, would hunt or willfully kill such a unique and mysterious being. Why cannot the Makah renew their cultural traditions by simply *pretending* to hunt the whale, or by a symbolic hunt? Instead of harpooning the whale, why couldn't they just dart it with a radio-transmitter so we could more accurately track the whale's migratory route? In this manner they could contribute to the rational, scientific assessment of whale behavior. Or else, if the Makah are hoping to revitalize their economy, why can't they do it by taking people out on whale-watching tours, like everyone else? Why do they have to *kill* the whale?

Yet such arguments from the environmental community arise from a perspective all too similar to that which I wrote of above, the view that considers nature to be something entirely different from human culture. Culture, with

Socrates, exists on this side of the city wall, nature and the whales exist on the other side. Nature is something that we humans look at from outside, not something that we are *in* and *of*. The whales are a remarkable spectacle to see, so let's peer at them from the rail of the boat, or better yet let's fit them with radio transmitters so we can track them on our screens, as we now track the wolves through Yellowstone, but let us take care not to ever imagine that we ourselves are really inside of the same world that those whales inhabit!

Our relation to nature must remain that of spectators looking at a spectacle, or perhaps that of managers overseeing a very complicated set of processes, but we are never to participate in those processes.

If our sense of standing outside of or apart from nature once led us to manipulate and mine up the living land with little consideration for anything other than our own benefit, today that same sense of separation leads us continually to try to monitor and manage nature from outside, as though we were not entirely embedded in the very matrix we seek to control. Lord knows, it is a difficult and scary thing to give up one's sense of control, and so to accept one's vulnerability. Yet reciprocity is simply not possible in such a one-sided situation—where one entity is always the manager, and the other is the managed; or where one species is the spectator, and the other the spectacle.

What is most disturbing, and most astonishing, about the possible renewal of the whale hunt by an indigenous nation like the Makah is that it marks a potential site where the managerial ethos that currently holds sway between humankind and the rest of nature is beginning to dissolve in the face of a new, more participatory ethic of vulnerability and reciprocity.

Would the whales prefer that the Makah give up hunting and leave their harpoons in the museum? Not being a whale, of course, I don't know. I'm fairly sure that the whales would prefer it if *industrial* whaling came to an end, if the commercial whaling fleets of Japan and of Norway backed off and shut themselves down. And maybe they'd even prefer it if the indigenous whalers in Alaska and Russia, who are permitted to hunt them under the "aboriginal clause" of the International Whaling Commission, would also back off from their easy reliance on motorboats and high powered rifles and harpoon cannons and radio transmitters and airplanes and even helicopters in their pursuit of so-called "subsistence whaling." But I'm not sure that the whales much prefer those folks who chase them around in whale-watching motorboats just to gawk and stare at them. (After all, whales have an exquisitely refined auditory sense underwater: can we imagine what it would feel like to hear these whale-watching boats following us around all the time? "Whiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiirrrr...").





I'm not sure that the whales don't crave a more direct way to teach us, a way less encumbered by technology and yet more motivated by the practicalities of our own mammalian life—I'm not sure that they don't desire a more straightforward way to instruct us, to lead our canoes around on risky chases, and to transform our lives with astonishment, to enliven our communities and to shape our cultures.

Of course those, like myself, who are members of the dominant culture can hardly tell the Makah that they should not avail themselves of the technologies that the dominant culture uses whenever it wants (motorboats and helicopters and harpoon canons). But we can admit to the Makah that our own overdependence upon such technologies is slowly killing us, that our overreliance upon many technologies is destroying our health and wreaking havoc on our society—that we desperately need to learn how to live and to work without depending so much upon all these machinic mediations. We can say to the Makah: "Your culture, your traditions still carry knowledge of how to live a life *relatively* unmediated by such high-speed technologies which seem to undermine any prospect of reciprocity not only with other animals, but with our human neighbors as well. As you now find and rejuvenate those traditions, might you please teach us something of those skills?"

For the Makah, it seems to me, are not only resuscitating their own traditions. If they are sincere in their wish to revive their traditional, labor-intensive hunting practices, and if they persist in this careful and difficult craft, then they are also opening a channel for the whales to begin to inform human culture again—not as quaint, aesthetic symbols to put on posters, but as magnanimous and dangerous powers with whom we find our lives entwined.

Humility in a More-than-Human World

Of course the whales would not be the only species to break through our contemporary hubris and to draw us back into relation. Other species are already beckoning to us, trying to lure us back *inside* the world. Indeed, the salmon, it seems, are at last beginning to get through to us. If and when we finally do breach those dams on the lower Snake River, it will be a remarkable moment in the human story. It would be an event quite different from merely being forced by the Endangered Species Act to back off from overfishing or from overhunting a particular animal; something very different from deciding not to clearcut another swath of old-growth forest, or not to develop a particular plot of land that turns out to be prime habitat for a rare critter. It would be different because in this case we would not only be halting our projected plans, or interrupting progress, but actually undoing what has already been done, *reversing* our ostensible progress... We'd be acknowledging that a mistake was made and acting to undo it—even at the cost of certain arrangements that have come to be

taken for granted by various citizens. And perhaps at some real economic cost as well, at least in the short term. In this instance, in other words, we would be acting not just to limit ourselves, but to *reverse* ourselves on behalf of another species.

Such a reversal would indeed mark a wondrous moment in the human story—the moment when modern humankind, so drunk on our apparently unlimited technological capacity, begins to recognize and accept that we do have limits after all, and that we have overstepped those limits, and must take a little step back in order to correct things. Breaching those dams would be like, well, like collective humankind drinking a full glass of *humility*. It would be one of our finest moments—an act to stand in stark contrast to other contemporary activities glaring with unexamined hubris, like our steady plunge into biotechnology (our gleeful rush to alter the genome of other animals and plants to serve our own, exclusively human, purposes).

And what, after all, would have induced us to take down the dams, to reverse ourselves in this manner? Some might say that it was the Endangered Species Act that forced the breaching of the dams. Or maybe it was the native tribes—the Umatilla, the Warm Springs, the Yakama, and the Nez Perce—these peoples who are struggling to keep alive their own old cultural traditions so deeply intertwined with the wild salmon runs (fishing traditions that stretch back some 200 or 300 *generations*) and that are now threatening to sue the federal government if those dams are not breached. Or maybe it was the economic interests, like the Alaska fishing industry, or the Bonneville Power Administration, which began to realize that it might be cheaper to lose a little of its generating capacity than to continue spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year on elaborate, Rube Goldberg-like salmon-recovery schemes that simply don't work. Or perhaps some would say that it was simply the steady rise of environmental and ecological awareness in the minds of more and more citizens throughout the Northwest. But while each of these factors will have made a difference, when we finally breach the dams, it will be, ultimately, *because the salmon, themselves, induced us to do so*. Because we got tired, finally, of the endless arguing among ourselves, exhausted by the constant call for further studies and the interminable bickering between our various human factions, and so decided to let another voice, another shape of intelligence, in on the conversation. It is an intelligence that speaks to us not in words, but in an eloquent language of metamorphosis, and grace, and reciprocity. A fluid voice that, once we allowed it into the conversation, could not help but begin to heal the various rifts within our communities.

It is the salmon, in their sad, eloquent way, that are instructing us to take down the dams, and we would do well to acknowledge their active influence in all this. For our

ECOLOGY

own health, I suspect, we need to accept that there are other animate forces in the world besides ourselves and our own creations. We need to acknowledge that humans are not the only active agents in the world—that there are other kinds, other shapes, other styles of active agency.

And, in truth, the glinting speech of the salmon is not unfamiliar to us. Not only because our cultures have long been influenced and informed by these finned and fluid folks, but because their collective style of sentience stirs an echo in the very depths of our flesh, a kind of memory in the bones. For of course we too are a gift from the ocean to the land. It is a truth readily evidenced by the salt in our tears, and the saltiness of our blood: we still carry the sea within us—we are ocean-born beings!—swimmers who once crawled out of the brine and grew legs and began wandering up the river valleys. And so it behooves us to allow magic to move in the other direction, as well, and not to impede the flow of life from the mountains and the forests back to the wombish world of the sea. I'll draw these watery reflections to a close with "The Sea" by Mary Oliver.

Stroke by
stroke my
body remembers that life and cries for
the lost parts of itself—
fins, gills
opening like flowers into
the flesh—my legs
want to lock and become
one muscle, I swear I know
just what the blue-gray scales
shingling
the rest of me would
feel like!
paradise! Sprawled
in that motherlap,
in that dreamhouse
of salt and exercise,
what a spillage
of nostalgia pleads
from the very bones! how
they long to give up the long trek
inland, the brittle
beauty of understanding,
and dive,
and simply
become again a flaming body
of blind feeling
sleeking along
in the luminous roughage of the sea's body,
vanished
like victory inside that
insucking genesis, that
roaring flamboyance, that
perfect
beginning and
conclusion of our own.

—Mary Oliver

PUBLISHER'S NOTES (continued from page 6)

lap; Mrs. Reagan appeared as herself in an episode of the TV series *Diff'rent Strokes*; and in the spirit of Reagan's outreach to the mass-media audience, former Republican President Gerald Ford, his wife Betty Ford, and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made cameo appearances on the prime-time soap opera *Dynasty*.

Reagan continually peppered his speeches with references to whatever the cultural *zeitgeist* of the moment was—such as when he told an audience of college students in 1988, "If you ask me, as Robert Palmer has been singing recently, you are simply irresistible." (For more focus on Reagan's regime, read *The Clothes Have No Emperor*, by Paul Slansky.)

When I've written on this subject before, I've sometimes been criticized for advocating pandering to the lowest common denominator. In fact, I am suggesting quite the opposite. What is happening now is that Democrats fail to explain their ideas and most Americans are genuinely confused as to the distinction between political parties and their policies. Bill O'Reilly, who continually uses his highly rated Fox news show to bash Democratic spokesmen such as Clinton and Jesse Jackson, talks more about the corrupting influence of money in politics and about the disparity between rich and poor than almost any "liberal" in public view.

Democrats in 2001 continue to be defensive about their core beliefs, adding to confusion and apathy. Regarding Bush's tax cut, instead of passionately explaining the moral value of experimental federal government programs aimed at improving education, addressing poverty, and protecting the environment, Democrats attack the Bush tax cut solely because it will benefit wealthy people. I agree that millionaires and billionaires don't need a tax cut, but the moral and political imperative for taxes comes from the positive social use of such funds. If Republicans were as intimidated by failed defense programs as Democrats are by failed social programs, increased military spending would be dead in the water.

As this issue went to press, the Academy Award winners had not been named but much political commentary had been expended on one of the nominees, *Traffic*. In the Washington world, conservatives such as William Bennett and Abe Rosenthal attacked the film because it questioned the drug war, while liberals praised it for the same reason. To me, although beautifully shot and acted, *Traffic* had far too conventional a political subtext. Young people were depicted as shallow morons. Pot smoking was depicted as rapidly leading to crack—and degradation—in a manner no less misleading than *Reefer Madness*, and the evil consequences of the drug war were depicted as being death and corruption in Mexico, rather than the unconscionable imprisonment in the United States of hundreds of thousands of nonviolent drug offenders, disproportionately black and almost exclusively poor.

Student Activism, Corporate Reform

Alisa Valderrama

In this world of haves and have-nots, the university has always been an epicenter of dialogue, a place for shoulds and should-nots. Still, the university is not a place removed from the world. We are talking about money. Last fall, members of the Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC) converged at Yale University to discuss a strategic plan for corporate reform that would begin with the universities we attend. If our universities are going to invest and thereby become part-owners in socially irresponsible corporations and if, as students, we benefit from the profits of our university's investments in the form of financial aid or new buildings, we need to assume responsibility for the other implications of those investments.

For centuries, institutions of higher learning have been regarded as the moral centers of society, promoting our highest ideals and the growth of humane values. Today, as very influential non-profit institutions, our universities have an ever-increasing obligation to act in the public interest. But the truth is that universities are also shaped by the principles of capitalism, where the bottom line is profit, sometimes at a great cost to society or the environment.

Universities usually invest their endowment funds in the stock market. Much of this money comes from alumni who work in the corporate world, thereby ensuring co-dependent relationships between the specific corporations and the schools their alumni represent. Furthermore, at most schools investment decisions are made by university regents or boards of trustees who are often themselves business leaders or board members of the same corporations represented in the university's portfolio. Corporate ties also extend into the academic realm: corporations give money to leading university departments to produce research and data for corporate reports, and in turn are rewarded when universities invest in their stocks.

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The close—even seemingly inextricable—ties between universities and corporations are often strong enough to thwart students' efforts to persuade their colleges to take action against corporate malfeasance. First, students must demonstrate sufficient corporate wrongdoing to attract university administrators' attention. Even once the case is made, universities often offer a less than acceptable response. Most common is the university administrator who claims that university investments are "neutral" or "passive," and

that universities are not or should not be directly involved in shaping corporate decisions. While it is true universities usually abstain from voting on proxy resolutions at shareholder meetings, abstention during a proxy vote is not a neutral position, not a zero vote. It is counted as a vote for the management, and against the resolution. The only ethical responses to corporate malfeasance are for universities to use their shareholder power to initiate a change for the better within the corporations or to demonstrate disapproval of a company's business practices by selling their stock in that company.

While the actions of one university or even the united action of several universities may have minimal effect on the stock value of a corporation, the ethical stance taken by these universities at least begins a dialogue that can spread through the campus and out to the larger society. When a large number of universities exercise some investor responsibility, they send a powerful message to society at large. Look, for example, at the important role university-led divestment campaigns played in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. Such efforts are continuing. Harvard, Stanford, and American University cut off business ties with PepsiCo before Pepsi pulled out of Myanmar (formerly Burma, where a violent military regime benefits from such foreign investments.) Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Brown, Cornell, Swarthmore, and Tufts are among the many schools with active committees empowered to review investment decisions based on socially responsible investment principles.

(continued on page 63)

The Media and the Florida Fiasco

Michael Tomasky

On Friday night, February 16, a television news magazine show broadcast a devastating story. A private company that had been hired by the state of Florida to remove convicted felons from the voter rolls had made a series of errors. Among other examples of overreach, the firm, Data Base Technologies, purged from the voter rolls thousands of voters who had indeed been convicted of felonies in other states but who had served their time, paid their debt, and thus were—under both Florida and federal law—entitled to restoration of their full citizenship rights, including the franchise. The firm was paid \$4 million to make follow-up telephone calls to ensure it had purged voters correctly—calls it never made. Evidence was ample that the government of Florida, namely Governor Jeb Bush and Secretary of State Katherine Harris, knew of the firm's excesses and failures and did nothing to correct them. The net result of all this is that nearly 64,000 rightful voters were not permitted to cast their ballots. Given the profiles of the voters in question—poor, and disproportionately black and Latino—they would certainly have voted for Al Gore in fairly large numbers. So, if even one-third of them had voted—about 21,000—Gore would have received, based on larger patterns among this disenfranchised demographic, about 16,000 of those votes. To put it bluntly: A wildly inaccurate purge of voters, which the state of Florida knew to be inaccurate but did nothing to correct, cost Al Gore Florida, and the presidency.

This sounds reasonably interesting, no? The weary consumer of American “news” has learned not to expect much, but one would hope that, in an election as close and bitterly contested as this one, such a report would at least raise an eyebrow or two among the chattering class, and at most spark a wide-ranging conversation about or perhaps investigations into what really happened in Florida. It did not. The reason it did not is that the TV news magazine in question was not *60 Minutes* or *Dateline*. It was *BBC Newsnight*, and the report aired in the wrong country.

The report was the work of investigative journalist

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Gregory Palast, an expatriate American, a columnist for Britain's *Observer*, and the one journalist who appears to have done some actual independent legwork during the election. While the media plague descended upon Tallahassee to cover Florida Supreme Court arguments (I loved the fact that political reporters lost their hotel rooms to sportswriters

*Nearly 64,000
rightful voters were
not permitted to
cast their ballots.*

covering the Florida-Florida State football game that same weekend—a perfect metaphor, forced upon us by the gods, for the way in which political coverage has come more and more to mimic sports coverage), Palast was knocking around the state, talking with county elections commissioners who told him stunning stories of over-aggressive purges. Indeed, when Palast con-

fronted Clayton Roberts, the state's elections commissioner, he was told to “please turn off that camera.”

Palast's reporting was astonishing. But noodle around on the Internet to find out how much pick-up Palast's story got since he started breaking it in November, and you'll find fewer than two dozen mentions of it. Many of those are in passing. Most are in either the alternative (e.g., *The Nation*) or the British press. There is one mention in the *New York Times*, in a column by Bob Herbert. The only American newspaper that actually developed a story based on Palast's reporting was the *Orlando Sentinel*. No network or major cable channel such as CNN tried to follow up the story in any serious way. When Palast had a conversation with a CBS producer who was interested in picking up the story, Palast walked the producer through the story, handing over names and phone numbers of sources, only to be told later that CBS honchos decided the story “didn't hold up” after placing a call to Jeb Bush's office. And so, it's gone; one more tree falling in the forest.

This is not, as I suggested above, surprising. And though it is outrageous, it is outrageous in a very shopworn sort of way, in a way that makes it difficult to get all but a handful of us worked up over anymore. But it is still worth commenting on because of what it tells us about the mindset of the major media, whose distinguishing and problematic traits these days are neither the liberalism that conservatives presume and denounce, nor the corporatism that progressives presume and denounce. Rather, the traits are, first, arrogance, and, second, laziness. These are the reasons stories like Palast's are ignored.

Ever since Reed Irvine created Accuracy In Media in the mid-1970s, AIM has relentlessly and effectively espoused one position: The liberals control the media. This is, on one level, undeniably true. As surveys have shown over and over again, most reporters—three-quarters or so—describe themselves as being somewhere between the center and the left. Editors, who often are left out of such surveys, tend to be older, whiter, more male, more likely to have moved out to the suburbs—in other words, somewhat more conservative. And then there are publishers, the vast majority of whom—at least of papers with circulations higher than 100,000—are conservative, according to surveys. However, the publishers of America's two agenda-setting newspapers are liberal, or more liberal than not—Arthur Sulzberger Jr. of the *New York Times* and Katherine Graham of the *Washington Post*—and their power is so overwhelming that they outweigh a hundred publishers in Akron or Tulsa or wherever, and have given Irvine all the ammunition he needs to make his argument that American newspaperdom is a haven of McGovernites. Irvine and others have made this case so effectively over the years that conservative papers (the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*) are able to present themselves to the world as an embattled minority, and the Fox News Channel, the most obviously ideological news station in America, can use its extremely clever slogan (“We report, you decide”) to make a case that it alone is presenting viewers with a snapshot of the world's events that is not distorted by a liberal slant.

The Left's answer to Irvine was Berkeley professor Ben Bagdikian, who wrote frequently and urgently on the topics of media monopolization, concentration of ownership, and increasing corporatization of the American press. Bagdikian pressed the case that monopolization decreased the bandwidth of permissible opinion. Another left critique, advanced notably by Alexander Cockburn and Noam Chomsky, has argued, in essence, that propaganda is to democratic societies as threat and coercion are to totalitarian ones. That is to say, that journalism as a general rule operates within the parameters set by the government and accepts its premises—hence, as Cockburn often wrote in the 1980s, the



American media were sanguine about monstrous human rights abuses and levels of poverty in Nicaragua as long as Somoza, an ally, was in charge. Once the Sandinistas took over, however, the media, at the Reagan administration's urging, suddenly got interested in Nicaraguan human rights and poverty. The ones who do not accept these premises sit at the lonely end of the media bar.

The Bagdikian and Cockburn/Chomsky arguments have both been mightily influential. And both critiques are, or were, true to varying degrees. Media monopolization continues apace, and certainly non-mainstreamers still find it tough getting air time. But both of these arguments are outdated now. Neither describes the present media problem, and why stories like Palast's aren't taken seriously.

The Cockburn argument comes reasonably close, but it doesn't quite apply. It is, in the main, an ideological argument. But the reasons a story like Palast's goes nowhere are more psychological than ideological. In the simplest terms, the media had already decided on the story, and Palast's revelations ruined the story. The story the media had decided on was, simply, that George W. Bush won, Al Gore lost, Bill Clinton—and this, to the elite Washington media, was the really important part—saw his “legacy” rejected, and it was now time to “move on” and let Dubya govern. Palast's findings interfered with this, and suggested implicitly that the agreed-upon story line was dead wrong.

That's not ideology at work so much as arrogance. Or vanity—certainly the desire of many media big shots to see

Stop Playing the Nuclear Game

Michael Christ and Peter Zheutlin

The basic medical facts about a full-scale nuclear war have been clear and undisputed for decades.

Hundreds of millions would be killed and injured. Massive outbreaks of disease would follow. Food supplies and water would be contaminated and the systems to deliver them destroyed. Drastic and sudden climate changes would wreak havoc on agriculture and human and animal populations. All essential services, including medical and health services, would be rendered useless. Epidemics would rage. Civil defense—the notion that there is somewhere to hide—remains a hoax.

While the risk of an all-out nuclear war has receded since the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons remain very much a part of the world's political and military landscape. The chance that nuclear weapons will one day be used—in war, by terrorists, or by accident or miscalculation—continues to rise inexorably over time. Unappreciated is the fact that just a single modern nuclear weapon is capable of inflicting unprecedented catastrophe, killing millions and wounding millions more. No amount of planning can prepare the medical community, the public, or government to respond meaningfully.

Yet, despite these truths, the medical realities of nuclear war and nuclear weapons are not yet fully a part of political reality. Instead, the romance with nuclear weapons continues and the world flirts, every day, with disaster.

Notwithstanding abundant evidence to the contrary, there is a widespread public perception that the threat of nuclear war is a relic of the twentieth century. The deep

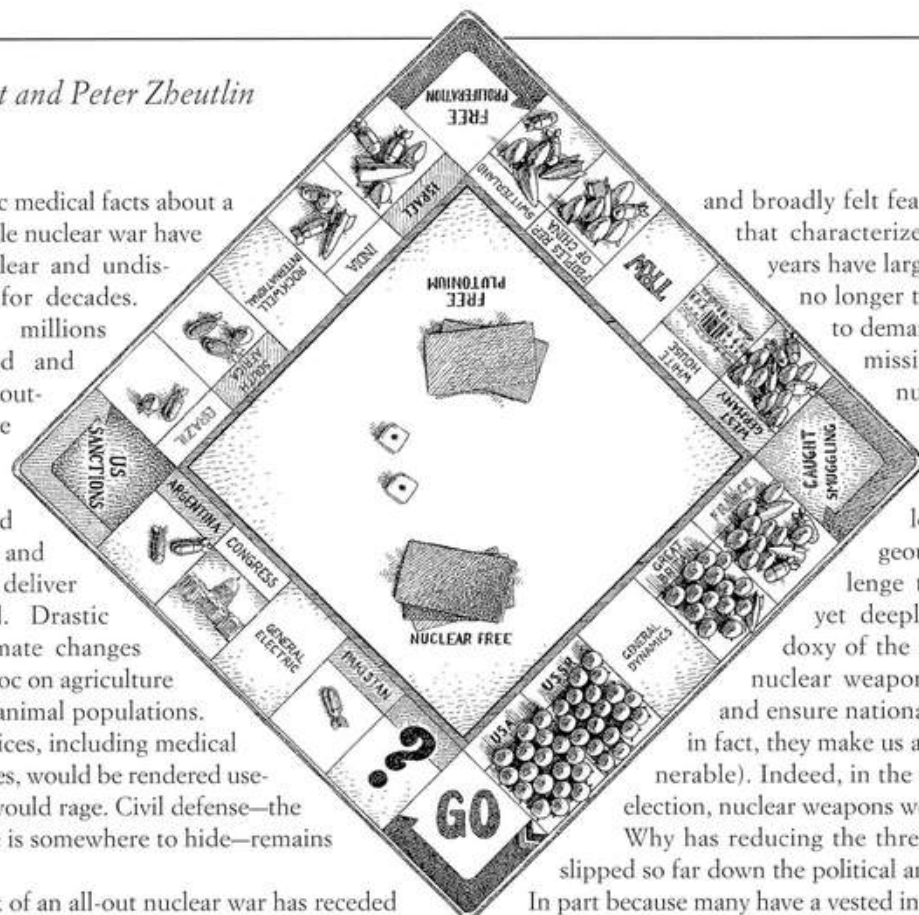
and broadly felt fears of nuclear war that characterized the Cold War years have largely faded. People no longer take to the streets to demand the removal of missiles, an end to nuclear testing, and global nuclear disarmament. Few political leaders are courageous enough to challenge the fundamental, yet deeply flawed, orthodoxy of the nuclear age—that nuclear weapons make us safer and ensure national security (when, in fact, they make us all profoundly vulnerable). Indeed, in the 2000 presidential election, nuclear weapons were a non-issue.

Why has reducing the threat of nuclear war slipped so far down the political and public agenda?

In part because many have a vested interest in the status quo. But also, in part, because the public is not demanding change. This gives political leaders little incentive to address the issues boldly.

Yet the nuclear powers remain poised and ready, just as they were during the Cold War, to wage nuclear war. Hundreds of cities are targeted for destruction. The United States and Russian arsenals still total more than 30,000 nuclear weapons, with thousands of those on hair-trigger alert, ready to be launched at a moment's notice. Russia, which once maintained a pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, has withdrawn that pledge, even as control over its nuclear arsenal has become a matter of global concern. In the United States, the Senate has rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and possible deployment of a National Missile Defense (NMD) system threatens to undo decades of efforts to control nuclear weapons. Indeed, the United States has ambitious plans for the militarization of space, even beyond NMD.

Despite their promise, enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) three decades ago and reiterated just last May, the five original nuclear weapons states (the U.S., the U.K., France, China, and Russia) have not, despite



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some reductions, moved meaningfully towards the elimination of their nuclear arsenals—a promise made in exchange for a commitment from the non-nuclear states not to acquire nuclear arms.

There are other grave problems as well. India and Pakistan, in a nearly constant state of war for decades, now have nuclear weapons. Many other states are working fervently to obtain them, especially in the troubled Middle East where only Israel currently has a nuclear arsenal. Neither India, Pakistan, nor Israel are signatories to the NPT.

The Middle East presents special problems. The peace process has virtually collapsed and violence is again the order of the day. Israel has nuclear weapons and other states in the region covet them. Yet, within Israel, a democracy, the subject of nuclear weapons is virtually taboo. Just over a year ago, on

February 2, 2000, the Knesset held its first ever, and to this date only, open debate on Israel's nuclear weapons policy. The debate was very short and very contentious, but the fact that it happened at all was significant. In the end, the lid was shut, no further debates have been held, and Israel's nuclear arsenal continues to be an open secret Israelis have learned to live with.

The taboo on public debate undermines Israel's democracy by avoiding critical questions—questions similar to those the citizens of all nuclear-armed countries must ask themselves:

- Are nuclear weapons good or bad for Israel's national security? Is the security of Israeli citizens enhanced or endangered by Israel's nuclear weapons?
- Assuming, for the sake of argument, that nuclear weapons have been an effective deterrent in the past, will they continue to be so if other states in the region acquire nuclear weapons?
- Under what circumstances would the Israeli people give their consent to the use of nuclear weapons, and what would the future of Israel be once nuclear weapons were used?
- Is the policy of nuclear ambiguity good for Israel?
- What sacrifices, in terms of human health and the environment, have been made to build and maintain Israel's nuclear arsenal?

While the nuclear conundrum is largely seen, even today, as a U.S./Russian problem, the presence of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and South Asia, where violent conflict has persisted for generations, is deeply troublesome. In neither region do there exist the safeguards—political and technical—to restrain nuclear weapons use, nor the experience of managing the highly complex and dangerous mechanisms of the deeply flawed theory of nuclear deterrence.

There are abundant reasons why the risks of nuclear war continue to dog us into the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the list of reasons is getting longer, not shorter. But one significant reason, largely hidden from view for many decades and now emerging with greater clarity, is the environmental, medical, and toxic legacy of the nuclear age.

Even if nuclear weapons are never used in war, by accident, miscalculation, or in a terrorist attack, the legacy of radioactive and toxic contamination from the testing,

production, and maintenance of nuclear arsenals over the last half-century presents intractable and costly long-term problems. Workers who were exposed to radiation and chemical hazards as they toiled in nuclear weapons plants and those living downwind of such sites continue to suffer disproportionate

rates of work-related death and disease. Some nuclear weapons production sites, such as the Hanford Reservation in Washington state and Chelyabinsk in Russia, still pose potentially catastrophic health and environmental risks. Cleaning up contaminated soil and water and quarantining sites that cannot be cleaned—sites the government has called “national sacrifice zones”—will cost untold billions of dollars over hundreds—and perhaps thousands—of years. Holding onto existing nuclear arsenals, along with the proliferation of new ones, only compounds these enormous health, safety, and environmental problems.

Abolishing nuclear weapons and redressing the toxic legacy of the nuclear age is a moral, medical, and environmental imperative. Despite the seriousness of the threats that have accompanied us into the twenty-first century, the opportunity to eliminate nuclear weapons is greater than ever.

Dismissed in past decades, even by arms control advocates, as utopian and unachievable, abolition is widely supported today, not just by citizen's groups, but by world leaders, national governments, and many who were once ardent practitioners of nuclear statecraft, among them former leaders of the United States defense establishment and more than sixty former military commanders from around the world. The World Court ruled in 1996 that nuclear weapons use, or threatened use, is generally illegal under international and humanitarian law, and that nuclear weapon states have an obligation to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons. The 187 countries that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the United States and Russia included, recently affirmed an obligation to make elimination of nuclear weapons an “unequivocal undertaking.” While deeds, not words, will be the true measure of this commitment, it is a step in the right direction.

Abolishing nuclear weapons and redressing the toxic legacy of the nuclear age is a moral, medical, and environmental imperative.

In short, what was once a vision shared by only a few has garnered widespread support. The critical question, of course, is how do we get there from here? The answer will ultimately be an international agreement—a convention or treaty—that establishes a new norm. Our organization, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, together with the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms and the International Network of Engineers and Scientists Against Proliferation, have introduced a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, now under consideration at the United Nations, that provides a vision of what complete nuclear disarmament might look like in concrete detail. But there are many important milestones on the road to abolition and some of the intermediate steps needed to get there are now clear:

1. The United States must abandon plans to deploy a National Missile Defense system. Deployment of such a system would require abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and could well spawn a new nuclear arms race. The system is deeply flawed technically and may cost well in excess of \$100 billion. The risks of deploying such a system far outweigh the dangers it is supposed to protect against. Indeed, NMD has itself become a potential threat to global security.

2. Countries that have not yet done so—the United States in particular—must ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty so that it will enter into force. The U.S. Senate's 1999 defeat of the CTBT, an agreement that has been sought for nearly forty years and is essential to nuclear non-proliferation efforts, was a major step backwards. The Bush Administration must change course and make U.S. ratification of the CTBT a top priority. Without U.S. ratification, the CTBT is dead.

3. The United States and Russia must de-alert the thousands of nuclear weapons now on hair-trigger alert in their arsenals. What possible rationale can there be for maintaining a Cold War posture that greatly increases the chances that nuclear weapons will be fired by accident or miscalculation?

4. Both countries must make further deep reductions in their nuclear arsenals right now. Since a single nuclear weapon is capable of killing millions and wounding millions more, today's nuclear arsenals are excessive by any measure. Even Russia's proposal of 1,500 warheads per side can be seen only as a welcome first step.

John Kenneth Galbraith, the great economist and former advisor to President John F. Kennedy, has called nuclear disarmament the great unfinished business of the twentieth century. It is our obligation, as physicians and concerned citizens, to finish the business of nuclear disarmament. The medical reality of nuclear war must inform the political reality of the twenty-first century. It will be up to an aroused and impassioned citizenry to demand the abolition of nuclear weapons, for unless nuclear weapons are abolished, their use, someday, is a virtual certainty. □

STUDENT ACTIVISM, CORPORATE REFORM (from page 57)

Last spring, Cornell University students successfully encouraged Home Depot—the nation's largest retailer of old growth rainforest wood—to phase in a plan calling for only certified wood grown in sustainable forests. Even when student protesters can't obtain a satisfactory university response, their demands on their own may change corporate behavior.



Even footwear giant Nike can no longer turn a deaf ear on the call for social responsibility; the company has suffered slumping sales in the past year due in part to student allegations of sweatshop-style abuses in its foreign factories.

Students are able to sway university investment practices in part because the paradigm for what constitutes an investment-worthy business is shifting. Alongside profit, investors are increasingly analyzing potential investments in terms of the kind of effect a company has on society and on the environment; they are coming to see that responsible businesses are quite capable of generating high returns on investments. Rather than cling to an outdated and irresponsible investment strategy, our universities should take their place at the forefront of such a movement.

This is why, on over 250 campuses nationwide, students are awakening to these issues and taking action to challenge the so-called passive shareholder position that most universities have taken. The movement has gained wide popularity because it has united a variety of social and environmental groups. Students are becoming aware of the fact that much of the environmental damage and social harm that has been done in the past fifty years has been done by big business, and they are seeking ways to use their place as students to make a permanent impact.

Students are saying clearly that neither we nor our colleges should be complacent with conventionally held (read: outdated) economic views that environmental concerns and human rights are "externalities" and therefore expendable. Just as our schools' abstention from voting on shareholder resolutions constitutes a vote against the resolutions, unless students speak out against irresponsible investments by their universities they will be tacitly endorsing their universities' disparity between deed and creed. Universities should once again be the benchmark for intellectualism, responsibility, and, most of all, benevolence in our society. As students increasingly seek reform at the points of intersection between the corporate and academic world, we will be one step closer to that goal. We in STARC have pledged to keep a vigil for universities to put their money where our ideals should lie. □

The Key of Loss

Jonathan Schorsch

- *False Papers: Essays on Exile and Memory*, by André Aciman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

I desperately wanted to like this new collection of essays and three "tales" by the author of *Out of Egypt* (1994). Many of these pieces appeared earlier in places such as *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Review of Books*; some were even chosen for inclusion in the *Best American Essays* anthology. I eagerly anticipated the conjuring up of a cosmopolitan Mediterranean Jewish world and mindset. Indeed, the depictions of life in Alexandria leading up to the final flight of the Jews in the 1960s, the difficult unfamiliarity of subsequent childhood years in working-class Rome, and the first heady trip to Paris do not disappoint. Literature-inspired cogitations, often wonderful, bejewel the narrative's temporal twists and turns.

The power of any of these essays read individually might be inspiring, but when read together, their effectiveness diminishes noticeably. Aciman's writing favors one modality, "the key of loss," which comes across in too many repetitive, mannered, saccharine, even cloying, passages. The biggest problem with autobiographical essays such as these is precisely the self-prominence of the author and the amount of hubris involved in plastering everywhere the author's opinions, reminiscences, conclusions, epiphanies, whims, delusions, self-delusions, willful toy-with-yourself self-delusions, nostalgia, faux nostalgia, and anticipatory nostalgia (an incomplete list).

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Additionally, something annoyingly bourgeois surfaces too often for comfort: the distaste and repulsion felt by this elite, worldly exile for the lower classes and anything which lacks proper civility. In a New York City park he seeks "a secluded shaded bench away from the drunks." Propositioned on a dark street by a young Parisian woman, Aciman "shrank back, as one does

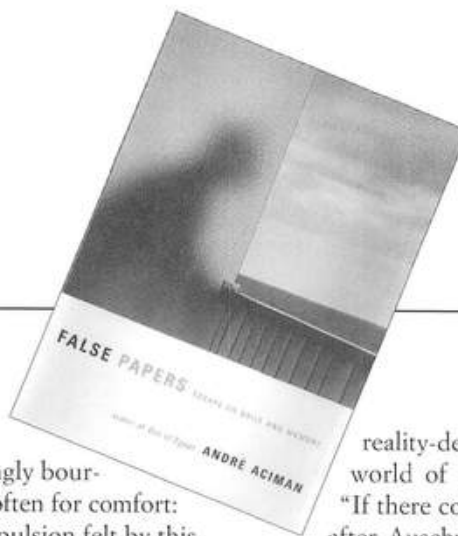
The biggest problem is the amount of hubris involved in plastering everywhere the author's opinions.

with a beggar who has come too close and to whom one hands a coin without touching hands." His forcibly-removed native city of Alexandria, to which Aciman frequently returns in thought and finally once in person, disappoints him terribly because it has now become so, well, Egyptian, without the Jews and Europeans who had made it so, well, classy and European. Granted, Aciman has a personal right to anti-Egyptian sentiment, but his attitude is not fully explicable based solely on family history. Aciman's neurotic memory and mnemonic antics appear remarkably self-centered, lacking much sympathy for, or even attentiveness to, anyone else.

Despite his very real and tragic forced homelessness, Aciman's continuous insistence on his exilic melancholy perhaps serves as the false papers of the collection's title. I am reminded of David Marc's summation of the

reality-denying suburban world of 1950s television: "If there could be no poetry after Auschwitz [the famous line of Theodor Adorno], there could at least be New Rochelle." Now tragedy seems nearly fully assuaged by a comfortable, contemplated jet-set life based on the Upper West Side. Here is a glimpse of a visit to Paris: "Of course, as my wife and I both know, I have already recorded that selfsame visit in a memoir. What makes the present situation all the more uncanny is that earlier today, wandering into one of my favorite foreign-language bookshops on the rue de Rivoli, I had asked for the book [i.e., his own memoir]—with studied nonchalance, as authors do." This kind of overly yet insufficiently self-conscious cosmopolitanism cannot pass itself off as loss.

Another frank disappointment is the paucity of Jewishness threading Aciman's essays. Every journey seems to occur around Christmas, a word which appears thought-provokingly often in these pages. He has every right to be, as he calls himself, a "disbeliever." But I cannot help thinking that the most tragic loss of Aciman's exile is the one he does not bother to even mention but which leaves exile particularly unredeemed: the utter evacuation of the traditions and culture in which he was at least partially raised. Perhaps this is the unintended but inevitable self-fulfilling prophecy of Aciman's postmodern nostalgia: "It's not that you cannot come back home; it's that you've never really left anything to have to come back to." The layers of posturing to be found in this collection are such that one cannot be quite certain here as to who is fooling whom. □



The Sin of the Church

Arthur Green

■ *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History*, by James Carroll. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword* is a history of Christian, and specifically Roman Catholic, attitudes toward and treatment of Jews and Judaism over the course of nineteen centuries. Beginning with an extended meditation on the cross planted outside the Auschwitz barracks and the controversy that continues to surround it, Carroll unflinchingly traces the history of Christian anti-Judaism all the way back to the gospels themselves. Over the course of more than 600 pages of narrative, he takes the reader through the history of the Western world—touching on politics, philosophy, theology, and a host of other topics—all from the viewpoint of the Church's "Jewish Question."

But this book is also James Carroll's own story, and the weaving together of historical and personal narrative is masterfully done. A former Paulist priest and still a committed Catholic, Carroll gives an account of his own adolescent spiritual strivings. His mother was the dominant Catholic influence in his early life and the way in which spiritual quest is nurtured by a search for maternal love is a *leitmotif* that Carroll expresses in touching and personally revealing ways. His later questioning of his Catholic faith and his struggles with the institutional Church are also part of the story.

In the concluding chapters Carroll calls for the convening of a Third Vatican Council to complete the work of reconciliation that was so admirably begun by Vatican II under the leadership of Pope John XXIII. Carroll gives the present pope good grades for his devotion to continuing that work, culminating in his visit to Israel and his praying at the Western Wall in 1999. But he also decries the undercutting of Vatican II's intentions by the conservative forces represented in this same papacy. Coming in for special condemnation are the ongoing papal resistance to democratization and the re-introduction of exclusivist claims to salvation, particularly in the recent encyclical *Dominus Jesus*. That docu-

ment, issued by the Vatican in early 2000, stands in direct contradiction to the spirit of all that has been accomplished over decades of what seemed like real progress in interfaith dialogue, reaching beyond calls for "tolerance" to a real mutuality of respect and understanding.

I have tremendous respect for the daring, moral courage, and intellectual honesty of this book. I am also deeply moved by the personal character of Carroll's undertaking. It is always interesting to see in another's story close parallels to my own religious journey, despite the great differences due to the fact that we grew up and engaged in our seeking in the contexts of different—and in those days really opposing—religious traditions. I have lived wholly within Judaism as a seeker, a scholar, and a theologian over the course of forty years, and I like to



think I learn from exposure to all the world's great traditions—but the most significant other for me has always been Roman Catholic. My own faith and questioning over the years have been nurtured both by reading and by personal contacts with individuals raised within, and usually struggling with, the Catholic Church and their Catholic Christian faith.

Let me begin there, with the struggle. If we Jews are the original dissenters of the Western world, as Carroll suggests somewhere early in the volume, I heartily welcome Carroll himself to the club. To stand up in sharp criticism of an institution and tradition you love is no easy matter. We in the Jewish community are new at that for different reasons than he is. Our historical role was as dissenters from truths the Catholic Church would have liked to believe were held universally. That is, we dissented from somebody else's religion, and we paid the price for it. But over the past quarter century some of us have learned what it is, and how vital, to speak up clearly against actions and attitudes found among our *own* people and committed in the name of our own religion, or an institution (a state, for example) that is in some way the embodiment of that religion. Without minimizing the complexities of the Middle East conflict, many words have been said and deeds done that diminish the good name of Israel, which is also the name of the entire Jewish people. Learning to dissent in the context of love and ongoing commitment, while well-meaning loyalists hurl accusations of perfidy and betrayal, is not easy. Knowing the moral anguish caused by such experiences vastly increases my respect for Carroll's undertaking.

So here it is, the history we have known to be true all along, laid out for all to see by a Catholic writer. There is something of vindication in that, to be sure, but it is all too sad and ugly to lead to any sense of triumph. The direct line that runs from the Gospel

of John to the Crusades, through the charges of ritual murder and desecration of the host, the Chmielnicki massacres (in which, incidentally, Jews and Catholics were fellow-victims of Cossack Orthodox rage), the ghettos, the expulsions, the pogroms of Eastern Europe, early and late, and into the Holocaust—that line has been clear to us Jews all along. The vicious-

Learning to dissent in the context of love and ongoing commitment is not easy.

ness with which this legacy of hatred was pursued through the ages, long after *ecclesia* was clearly triumphant over *synagoga* by any standard of measurement, looks like nothing so much as sibling insecurity, the younger brother never secure enough in his victory to stop beating his weakened older brother on the head, a clear token that he will never quite *believe* that he has been chosen to replace the firstborn. The key theme of Genesis: the endless anxiety of that younger brother—whom *we once were* with regard to the older inhabitants of Canaan—the tale of Jacob and Esau, of Ephraim and Manassah, was stood on its head and turned against us.

Yes, the Church has to fully admit its responsibility. In theological language, that means confessing its sin. And it is the sin of the Church, the body of Christendom, with all the attraction to worldly power that carried it to greatness—it is the Church that needs to attest to *its* sin, not just the errant ways of some Christians who “distorted” or “failed to understand” the Church's message of love. Nobody in the world understands the game of casuistry better than the two of us, Jews and Catholics, and we will have none of it. I affirm and rejoice in the fact that Carroll allows for no slipping past real accountability by means of elegantly drawn distinctions.

So I am an enthusiastic supporter of James Carroll's call for a Vatican III. Too bad it's not much more in his hands than it is in mine. But I want to push the agenda a bit beyond his own bold steps. We need to move toward a deeper psychological understanding of this sibling story as a whole, and especially its denouement in the Holocaust. Carroll does not sufficiently come to terms, it seems to me, with the degree of anti-Christian rebellion that Nazism marks. In this sense he leaves too much room for the Christian apologetic that will come and point out the resurgence of Teutonic paganism and Wagnerian mythos at the heart of Nazism, and will thus attempt to absolve Christianity of responsibility for an ideology that is anti-Christian at its core. For this reason I believe that a true day of reckoning and repentance for the Church has to deal with the deep ambivalence with which the peoples of the Roman Empire and especially the fierce tribes of Northern Europe accepted their submission to the rule of Christ.

The codes of violence, vengeance, and honor by which these people had lived from time immemorial were vitiated when they were conquered in the name of this skinny Jew hanging from a tree. Yes, they accepted his love, longing for salvation from death and the promise of life everlasting. But they also must have resented him terribly for imposing on them a demand for love of neighbor, for contrition of heart, for doing good unto others, and, worst of all, for loving and forgiving their enemies. What manly Goth, Viking, Slav, or Roman ever lived that way? The love of Christ became Christian devotion, the church after Constantine. The hatred of Christ was displaced and turned against the Jews, those who had foisted this ninety-eight-pound weakling of a savior upon them. Vengeance has been wreaked upon the Jews ever since. And some of it touches close even to the most sacred act of Catholic piety. Those

who aspired to salvation through the Christian Paschal rite, the ritual ingestion of what the Church averred to be the very body and blood of God's martyred son, turned around and said of the Jews, their shadow people, the "bad" twin brother: "they celebrate their Passover by consuming the blood of our innocent martyred Christian children." There are psychological factors here that one would have to work hard to overlook.

I am suggesting that true reconciliation between Jews and Catholics will not happen without examining and accepting the deep psychopathology of the Jewish/Christian relationship, as Richard Rubenstein and others have long insisted. Nazism was a horrible attempt by forces at the heart of Europe to break loose, to free it once and for all of the yoke that links our two traditions and histories to one another. The distorted Nietzschean proclamation of freedom from the Christian ethos went hand in hand with the freedom to exterminate the Jews, the people who had, through Jesus of Nazareth, given that ethos to the world. If our recovery from the Nazi debacle is truly going to change us, all of that will have to be examined.

Of course it takes two to have a psychopathological relationship. We Jews for too long reveled in the moral righteousness granted us by our victimhood. Any hint of talk about Jewish complicity in the nightmare of our history, any sense that Christian exclusivism, for example, had been inherited from our claims of unique chosenness as God's only people, was dismissed as a cruel way of "blaming the victim." But our collective re-entry into the world of power politics and our often powerful voice as citizens in democratic countries no longer allow us the luxury of this dismissal. As we ask that Christians go further than is comfortable in examining their history and attitudes in relation to us, we have some serious questions to ask of ourselves as well. The limiting of noble Biblical ethical proclamations to one's fellow-Jew

rather than extending them to all humanity, as found in not a few rabbinic commentaries, is unacceptable. The relative tolerance of halachic authorities in the past for taking economic advantage of non-Jews, including governments, has to be re-examined and repudiated. The daily blessing that thanks God "for not having made me a gentile" is fully as worthy of rejection as the one in which we men are to thank God "for not having made me a woman," all apologetics notwithstanding. The rabbis' demonization of Esau, the supposed ancestor of Christendom, and of Balaam, the prophet of the non-Jews, speak ill of our tradition. I could go on, but this is not the place.

For 2000 years we Jews were without worldly power, especially on the political stage. Yes, the Catholic Church has at times been drunk with power, and the call for Vatican III to step back from that place is appropriate. We who are new to power and

insecure about how much we really have should learn the lesson well. Carroll's call for the Church to embrace democracy in an unambiguous way is also an important one. Here we Jews would seem to be in much better shape. Acceptance of democracy and its values scores high on any survey of Jews, especially in North America. But what is the relationship between our *Judaism* and the widespread identification Jews feel with democracy? We Jews justly take collective pride in the memory of Jewish individuals who contributed to the cause of civil rights in this country as well as in South Africa, even though most of these were quite alienated from Judaism and (especially in South Africa) some were Jewish communists. We should take less pride in Israel's one-time close association with Apartheid South Africa as an ally and arms customer. We should take less pride in the fear of most Jewish leaders to speak out against the Vietnam war

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BOOK REVIEW

because vocal Jewish protest might lead to anti-Semitism, or to speak out today against violations of human rights in the occupied territories, lest we be seen as divided in our support for Israel. In Israel the relationship between Jewish values and those of democracy is being put to a much more serious test, and the results so far are not entirely encouraging.

It was Mordecai Kaplan who spoke first of the need for a Judaism that would truly take democracy seriously. As the Catholic has to ask what democratic restructuring would leave of a hierarchy and how the Church could function without it, we would have to examine Halachah, the normative way of Jewish practice, and ask how the introduction of democracy would change the most elementary structures of Jewish law. What will replace the old Talmudic "order of women," for example, containing all the laws of marriage, divorce, and personal status, once women are fully integrated into a new legislative process? Oh, for a Yavneh II, if only we could!

With regard to exclusivity of claim, I strongly believe that our repentance has to take place together. This is *not*, I should emphasize, because the situation requires mutuality in change, nor does Carroll in any way call for it. To do so would be inappropriate. The sins of Christendom against the Jewish people are what they are, and it is the churches, all of them, that need to repent. I am not claiming that we share the blame for anti-Semitism over the ages. It is only the depth of Carroll's longing for change that calls forth in me a response that says: "Yes, and we too will have to change." We do need the Church to repudiate the exclusivity of its claim as a means to salvation. Our world had gotten too small and we are both too aware of other religions, including those that have their roots outside the biblical tradition, to speak

the language of exclusiveness. But we Jews also need to go back to the midrashic readings of Sinai, cutting through our own exclusivist language, exposing to the light of critical reappraisal even the text that says the mountain is called Sinai because that sounds like the word *sin'ah*, hatred, referring to the hatred God presumably feels (or perhaps that we are to feel) for the "nations of the world" who did not accept God's Torah.

We will also have to hold up the biblical teaching on "chosenness" itself to the examination of conscience, asking whether reinterpretation of this concept in a non-triumphalist and non-exclusivist way is honestly possible, or

whether Kaplan was right in demanding that it be excised entirely from our liturgy. Dare we ask others to change and ourselves continue to speak, as we do in the weekly Havdalah service at the conclusion of the Sabbath, of a God who distinguishes "light from darkness, the holy from the profane, Israel from the nations?" When we ask ourselves the really hard question of the Holocaust—"Had we not been the victims, how many of us would have risked our lives and our children's lives to save gypsies, or gays, or Catholics, for that matter?"—we do not have the nerve to even try to answer. The next question: "Would our Judaism have demanded of us that we do so?" is also one that we cannot ignore.

In turning so much of Carroll's Vatican III call back on the Jews and what we need to do, I by no means want to diminish my hope that his call be heard within the Church. It is also at moments like this when we Jews tend ever-so-briefly to envy Catholics for the centralization of authority that so characterizes their tradition. They do change slowly, encountering lots of conservative resistance along the way, but at least on the surface level of praxis and official statement, they

change entirely. If any group of rabbis were to undertake the proposals I have made here, they would immediately be denounced by ten other groups of rabbis. If we could convince the Conservatives to join with the Reform in such a gathering, the Orthodox would use it as an occasion to pronounce their exclusive loyalty to authentic Judaism. Were the modern Orthodox to join—and that is entirely out of the question—others would leap up to say how those traitors were never really Orthodox in the first place. Yes, we live happily without fears of a vindictive hierarchy or threats of excommunication. But not a few of us experienced a strong sense of *aggiornamento*-envy after Vatican II. Let me say clearly that the great and positive changes that have taken place in the Catholic Church since the days of John XXIII and following in his noble footsteps have made a real difference in the world. They have impressed us tremendously and challenged us more than a little.

But now let me come to the heart of the matter. We *need* each other. Catholics and Jews represent two great spiritual traditions of the Western world, nourished by the shared font of a common Scripture. We both hear and seek to fulfill the biblical call to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." There is much that we still have to say to the world. The most essential teaching of Hebrew Scripture, that every human being is created in the image of God, has still not been heard. We share that Scripture, meaning the call of God to teach it to the world, even if we disagree sharply on some of the details of its demand on us (birth control and abortion, to name the big ones). We live in a society gone mad in the pursuit of money to buy creature comforts undreamed of by prior generations and a hunger for ever more exotic experiences that seems to know no end. The gap between rich and poor grows day by day, a situation not likely to be ameliorated by the new crowd in

(continued on page 72)



Theology of Betrayal

Dagmar Herzog

■ *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Ericksen and Susannah Heschel. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1999.

“You have not experienced the Jews.”

For me the most intense sentence in *Betrayal* comes early on. It appears in co-editor Robert Ericksen’s essay on three very prominent Protestant theologians with close affinities for Nazism. One of these men was the systematic theologian and Luther scholar Paul Althaus, someone with longstanding investments in a mystical notion of the German *Volk* and someone so enamored of Hitler that he saw Hitler’s accession to power in 1933 as “a gift and miracle of God.” Although the brutality of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 seemed to have given him some pause, Althaus never did openly protest the mistreatment of Jews. When questioned on this by his son in the mid-1950s, Althaus did not say what one might expect. He did not invoke the notion of a totalitarian regime in which protest might have been dangerous (if not to life or limb then at least to his career), nor did he argue that protest would have been useless. Instead he said only this: “You have not experienced the Jews.”

I think we might dwell on this sentence for a moment. Ten years after



mass torture and mass murder of Jews in such astronomical proportions as to be almost unimaginable, ten years after the defeat of fascism, it was still “the Jews” from whom threat purportedly emanated. They were implicitly the reason for their own destruction. This is an incredible sleight-of-hand. As Ericksen reports, already in the 1920s, before the Nazis’ rise to power, Althaus was complaining about what he called “Jewish hatred” (although he granted that with “serious Jews” this “hatred” could be discussed) and he was expressing concern about “the threat of a quite specific disintegrated and demoralizing urban spirituality, whose representative now is primarily the Jewish *Volk*.”

I am reminded here of feminist theorist Judith Butler’s perceptive essay on the beating of Rodney King by members of the Los Angeles police force. Butler outlines how the notorious video of the beating, the hard and

seemingly incontrovertible factual visual evidence of white-on-black violence, served not to ensure the indictment of the police but rather the opposite. So saturated by racist presumptions is the visual field of many white Americans that the black body on the ground being beaten was itself “read” as the source of danger. There appears to have been something quite similar going on among many non-Jewish Germans of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—and indeed 1950s.

Essay after essay in *Betrayal* quotes Catholics and Protestants who (far from feeling any responsibility for or kinship towards the tiny minority of Jews in their midst) complained of what they saw as “excessive” Jewish influence on German society and culture. Over and over, Jews were portrayed as the powerful ones, even the scary ones, and thus Nazi announcements that Jews would be put in their place came as a relief. Even German Catholic leaders, who are generally thought to have been more immune to fascism than Protestants, are shown experiencing appallingly rapid conversions to

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BOOK REVIEW

Nazism in the first year of the Third Reich. The evidence amassed in this volume, not only of Christian accommodation to Nazism and of Christians' sometimes shared values with Nazism, but indeed of Christians' fervent affirmation of Nazism, should put to rest once and for all the idea that Christian conviction or affiliation was primarily a source of resistance to the National Socialist regime.

On the contrary, over and over again the essays show that Protestants' and Catholics' own derogatory ideas about Jews (or rather what they fantasized Jews were) could only have had the effect of making the disenfranchisement, persecution, torture, and murder of Jews seem less morally reprehensible than they most assuredly were. As Ericksen and Susannah Heschel put it in their introduction, the role of the churches "involved moral suasion: Through the support for Nazi policies articulated by many religious leaders, ordinary Germans were reassured that those policies did not violate the tenets of Christian faith and morality."

Furthermore, and devastatingly, we learn that Christian investment in Nazism was a lopsided, unrequited, love affair. For Nazis, on the whole, did not particularly like Christians at all. After the war, the anti-Christian attitudes of much of the National Socialist leadership were constantly reiterated in support of the notion that Christians had been in danger in the Third Reich and that there was some kind of profound incompatibility between Christianity and Nazism. Yet the evidence gathered here points us to another conclusion: although many Nazis were indeed anti-Christian, this by no means meant that Christians tended toward anti-Nazism. Influential academic theologians and lowly clerics and congregants alike instead eagerly outdid themselves in the production of anti-Semitic propaganda.

The anti-Jewish argumentation among Christian leaders was remarkably incoherent. Most of us are familiar with the paradoxical but powerful

conjunction in anti-Semitic rhetoric of anti-capitalist and anti-communist sentiment, and the way, however illogical, that Jews got blamed for *both* capitalism and communism. But the inventive profusion of such mutually incompatible nonsense spewed by Nazi-era Christian theologians and clergymen documented in this book can still astonish. Among other things, theologians claimed that Jesus had actually been "Aryan" and not Jewish at all (since he was from the pagan part of Galilee and there had been rumors that Mary had an affair with a Greek). Or they argued that possibly Jesus was Jewish but it had been part of God's dialectical plan that the ultimate destruction of and triumph over Judaism had to come from someone within it.

Some theologians sought to prove the stagnancy and sterile legalism and moral corruption of the biblical Hebrews, in contrast to whom Jesus brought liberation and true salvation. Others, however, endorsed the Jews of the Old Testament as acceptable, but argued that since biblical times, since leaving their rural lifestyles and joining diasporic urbanity, Jews had degenerated and "mongrelized." Still others argued that the Old Testament, the "Jewish" part of the Bible, had to be discarded entirely. Finally, some theologians contended that the Old Testament could safely be retained by Christians because already it "fought against" "the Jewish religion of legalism"—in other words, the Old Testament was inoffensive because it too was anti-Jewish. And throughout all of this, Jesus himself and Christianity as a belief system were associated with "love," while Jews and Judaism were associated with "hatred."

Even the small number of Christian theologians who strongly opposed Nazism seemed too often to persist in the centuries-old belief that there was something intolerable in the very existence of Judaism and Jewishness. Many of those leading Protestant resisters against Nazism (gathered under the

umbrella grouping of the Confessing Church) who have been revered in the decades since the war for their courage in defending the purity of the Christian gospel against the incursions of the Nazi state shared these more problematic attitudes. As someone close to this group—Eberhard Bethge—summarized it in self-critical hindsight in a documentary made decades later, "we were against Hitler's church policy, but at the same time we were anti-Semites." Also the two biggest heroes of the Confessing movement, Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, believed early on that there was such a thing as a "Jewish question" or "problem," that the state had a right to address this problem, and that it was appropriate to curtail Jews since they did in fact exert disproportionate "influence." Both men would eventually change their minds. Bonhoeffer would pay for that with his life. But what needs to be grasped is both how truly unique Bonhoeffer's eventual dissent from the regime's anti-Jewish policies was, and how ambivalent about Jews even he remained.

Bonhoeffer's complex case is discussed at some length. In the early 1940s, as he struggled to save a few Jews from the mass deportations, Bonhoeffer also wrote about what was theologically wrong with Nazi policy. Not only did he point out that the Christian messiah was in fact Jewish, he also argued that "The Jew keeps open the question of Christ. He is the sign of the free mercy-choice and of the repudiating wrath of God." As the essay by Ken Barnes summarizes it, the tragic significance of this passage lies in the way "the ultimate importance of Jews for Bonhoeffer's Christianity lay in their rejection of Christ, their role as a sign both that belief is a choice and that God punishes unbelievers." And as Barnes also points out, this is not much of an advance over Bonhoeffer's 1933 reiteration of the old standard Christian anti-Jewish canard that Jewish suffering on earth was God's punishment for Jews' crucifixion of Christ.

The Israeli psychoanalyst Zvi Rex once observed that "the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz." You may have to read this line more than once to let it sink in, because initially the mind rearranges it and assumes he's talking about Jews' difficulties forgiving Germans. But no: "The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz." Since 1945 for sure, and I would argue since even before then as non-persecuted Germans during the Third Reich prepared their counter-narratives in anticipation of future defeat and shame, narratives which seek to lift moral blame from German non-Jews have proliferated. One of the great contributions made by the *Betrayal* anthology has to do precisely with the evidence it includes about the post-Holocaust period. It is not just that a number of the essays document the amazingly threadbare and quite shameless—but nonetheless usually successful—excuses put forward by Christian clerics after the war to retain their positions despite obvious entanglement with Nazi projects. It is also that the inability of the majority of German Christian theologians to confront the implications of the Holocaust for Christian theology has had lasting consequences up to the present.

Sometimes it would seem that the reason for the extraordinary amount of scholarship on the Nazi period and the Holocaust is not just the shocking heinousness of the crime—which draws scholars to it like file shavings to a magnet—but also the persistence, and indeed the sophistication, of the self-exculpatory counter-narratives generated by those seeking to extricate themselves from the taint of shared guilt. This is where Christians have continued to make themselves culpable. Since the later 1970s there have been a few German Christian theologians who have argued that if Christianity were to have any hope of saving itself, what it most desperately needed was to "experience the Jews"—to make critical confrontation with the Holocaust and with

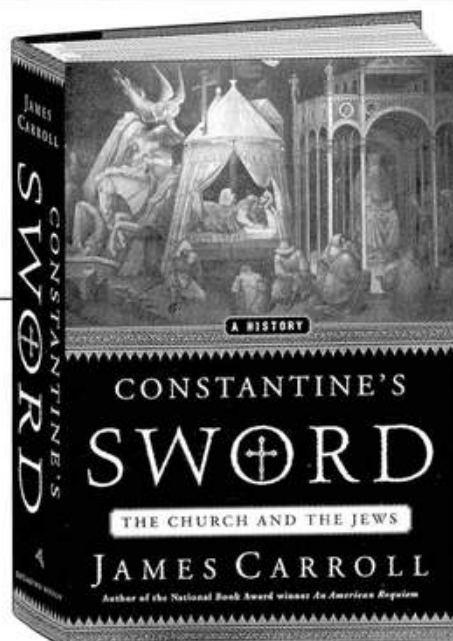
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BOOK REVIEW

centuries of Christian anti-Judaism central to its reworking of its own message. But these perspectives came late and have been decidedly marginal.

Not even knowledge of the full extent of the Holocaust seemed to have helped otherwise anti-Nazi Christians to rethink their attachment to a notion of Christian superiority over Judaism, or their conviction that what God ultimately wanted was for Judaism to disappear. As late as 1953, for example, the preeminent anti-fascist Protestant theologian Karl Barth argued that: "The existence of the synagogue beside the church is something like an ontological impossibility, a wound, yes a gaping hole, in the body of Christ Himself, that is simply unbearable."

Micha Brumlik's concluding essay in the *Betrayal* book analyzes the evolution of post-Holocaust Christian theology in Germany. He reminds us that in the late 1940s (and my own research

finds evidence of these attitudes up through 1960), Christian declarations continued to insist that Jews needed to convert to Christ, "in whom alone their salvation stands." As one Protestant group put it in 1948 in its "Statement on the Jewish Question": "God will not be mocked." And in 1949, for example, as Brumlik reports, former members of the Confessing Church continued to uphold the view that the Holocaust itself was an expression of God's wrath at Jewish disobedience. As Brumlik brilliantly points out, all of these statements turned the supposed Christian God of love into the very God of revenge that Christians ascribed to the Old Testament Hebrews.

It is important and only fair to reiterate that Christian faith was also for some anti-fascists the source of their ability to resist Nazism. The courage that their faith made possible should never be trivialized or minimized. And

it is also important to point out that secular humanism seemed to many anti-fascist Christians to be an unsatisfactory option precisely because fascism, in their eyes, was about the worship of the human being, the turning of people into gods. We can look back today and say that this was a misunderstanding of Nazism—that really what Nazism was about was worship of some human beings at the expense of others—but nonetheless in their historical context the anti-fascist Christians' critique of secular humanism needs to be taken seriously. But having granted this, nothing quite excuses post-Holocaust Christians' purveying of anti-Jewish stereotypes and ongoing obsessive insistence that Jesus Christ was the Messiah for everyone. *Betrayal* is an outstanding and a deeply troubling book. Its power is cumulative and relentless, and it is richly deserving of a popular readership. □

THE SIN OF THE CHURCH (continued from page 68)

Washington. Millions are degraded by hunger, by disease—I think especially of the ravages of AIDS—by addictions, by the need to enter prostitution, sweatshop slavery, or other forms of degrading work just to feed their children. Meanwhile we keep working harder and harder, longer hours, more overtime, more wage earners per family—hence having less quality time with our children, even with ourselves. We Jews and Catholics have such important things to say about all this: Love for one another, human dignity, the importance of time out, rest, the Sabbath. We share a prophetic tradition that speaks of God's special love for the poor and downtrodden. We also have to help postmodern, urbanized Westerners to get back in touch with an inner self who is too frightened to come forth in the busy, rough-and-tumble world where we live most of our lives. But that inner self needs to be addressed and nurtured. We live in an age of great spiritual hunger and we need to support one another, and others, in responding to that need. Only in that way will

human behavior begin to change, leading us toward greater harmony with the natural world in which we live, and which is itself so gravely threatened.

We are coming out of an age that thought it knew better than the collective wisdom of ancient religious traditions. In the early twentieth century many thinking people assumed that science would have all the answers. The progress of scientific knowledge would turn aside the darkness, and the need for religion would recede. But the opposite has been the case. Western science, for all its great and real accomplishments, has not become a source of ultimate values. Living in the shadow of Auschwitz and the constant threat of potential nuclear disaster has led millions in the past half century to quest for some deeper truth. Many of those have turned away from the legacy of the West altogether, finding Judaism and Christianity both to be vacuous and morally bankrupt. But we believe that is not the case. The Western spiritual traditions, if read with open heart and a discerning eye, have much to say

to just the sort of engaged spirituality that is so urgently needed in our day. As we have seen the focus of our ultimate anxiety shift from the nuclear worry to the threat of ecological disaster, it has become clear that we will have to turn to the wisdom of *all* the world's spiritual storehouses. These now have to become the common property of all humanity and the translation of their insights into a more universalist mode of discourse is an urgent priority. The real role of religion in this new century will be to help in effecting the great changes in attitude toward ourselves, our environment, and the precious resources required for the very survival of our planet. The rapacious overconsumption and anxious desire of each generation for more, ever more, that has characterized our way of living, especially that of Americans, is going to end soon. For it to end peacefully and by change of heart—that is our shared work as people of faith. It is time to bury all the old hatchets, and bury them finally and deeply, so that we can set about the task that lies before us. □

A Christian Counterpoint

Walter Brueggemann

The issuance of *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* in September 2000 by 170 Jewish scholars is an immensely important event in the long, troubled relationship between Jews and Christians, and more broadly in the emerging ecumenism of religious pluralism in the United States. In that manifesto, those Jewish scholars dared to articulate the judgment that it was time for Jews to revisit assumptions and stereotypes concerning Christians and to recognize that not all Christians are committed to anti-Semitism. This recognition is grounded, not in a retraction of older judgments, but in the suggestion that there has been a change, indeed repentance upon the part of many Christians from an old uncriticized, often unacknowledged anti-Semitism. (The statement has of course not gone unchallenged by other Jewish interpreters.)

That such an initiative could be taken by Jewish scholars is on the one hand an embarrassment to those Christian interpreters who have failed to take some such correlative initiative toward Jews. On the other hand, however, it is perhaps inescapable that such an initiative could only have come from Jews, certainly not from Christians who have too much to answer for from a history of abuse and domination.

In any case, I have wondered about an appropriate Christian response to *Dabru Emet* that might be made, for surely a response is invited and appropriate. Indeed, the generous gesture of the manifesto cannot go without a response. I suggest that such a response

from Christians who are deeply implicated in the history of anti-Semitism might be a recognition that a) the theological situation of Christians in the

*Christians have much
to learn from Jews
about the maintenance
of a distinct identity
and a distinct ethic.*

United States is increasingly like that of Jews and that therefore b) Christians have much to learn from Jews about faithfulness in a cultural environment that is, if not hostile, at least indifferent to the claims of a particular faith tradition.

The impetus for such a recognition on the part of Christians is the awareness that in a culture increasingly secular (or, alternatively, increasingly given to a generic religious ecumenism), Christian faith of a disciplined, obedient kind is increasingly marginalized and without civic authority. The matter should not be overstated, but also should not go unrecognized, that our willingness as Christians to bet everything on the historical person of Jesus—what some theologians refer to as our scandalous particularity—is as odd in the U.S. culture as the Jews' willingness to bet everything on the Torah.

As a consequence, Christians, not unlike Jews, are and will become more fully situated at the margin of culture with their embarrassingly odd claim of

particularity, rather than in a position of dominance that permitted (and perhaps evoked) abusiveness. Given such a new situation of deprivileging and marginalization, the church (or at least certain traditions of the church, i.e., old "main-line" and Protestant) finds itself in a context of practicing "disciplines of self-identity" that have never been required in seasons of hegemony. In that new situation, Christians have much to learn from Jews about the maintenance of a distinct identity and a distinct ethic:

about the cadences of a mother tongue;
about the informed valuing of particular traditions;
about the practice of concrete hope;
about the nurture and retention of the endangered young;
about an ethic that is necessarily accommodating but finally uncompromising;
about the traditioning processes of liturgy and the relation of those liturgic processes to public life.

Christians will perforce continue to regard Jews as "other," and Jews would not want it otherwise. At least to some extent, however, Christians may now be properly the ones instructed by Jews. Such an acknowledgement, grounded in the concreteness of social location and in repentance about a history of domination, is now, in my judgment, a required Christian undertaking. That undertaking might also be a fitting response to *Dabru Emet*, a response that does not gloss over deep differences and long abuse, even as *Dabru Emet* does not gloss them over. Such a response might be a gesture of receptivity and acknowledgement of this staggering Jewish initiative, a parallel acknowledgement of being in a new place ... together, while intensely and foundationally distinct. □

Walter Brueggemann is a professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ.

Changing the American Synagogue

David M. Gordis

■ *Finding a Spiritual Home*, by Sidney Schwartz. Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Is the contemporary synagogue a vital force generating renewed passion for Jewish life, or is it rather a superannuated institution contributing to the decline of Jewish participation, loyalty, and behavior? The response of Sid Schwartz's informative and richly textured guide to synagogue life, *Finding a Spiritual Home*, is that, in fact, it is some of each, but that failing synagogues can be transformed and renewed so as to restore them to vital functioning. After a probing and critical survey of the state of the American synagogue, Schwartz profiles several examples of "best practices," representing the full range of denominational choices from Rabbi Avi Weiss' Riverdale, New York, Orthodox synagogue to his own Reconstructionist congregation in Washington, and Rabbi Larry Kushner's Reform congregation in Massachusetts.

The fact that Schwartz's success stories cover the range of denominations and that these successful synagogues are most easily identified by their rabbinic leaders raises a number of issues now surfacing in the very active "business" of synagogue transformation. Schwartz's book appears at a time when large and small-scale efforts at synagogue renewal proliferate. Among the better known of the national efforts are Synagogue 2000 which concentrates its attentions on the spiritual dimensions, the Reform ECE Project focusing on synagogue

educational efforts, and Project STAR (Synagogue Transformation and Renewal) undertaken by three prominent Jewish philanthropists. Is success possible only when these efforts are led by talented and "charismatic" rabbis and therefore not replicable absent extraordinary leadership? Are denominational differences at all relevant to the objectives established by these transformational efforts? Is the synagogue best described as a single institution, or would it be more accurate to think of the contemporary synagogue as a complex of institutions, sharing a single label and including a worship dimension of some sort, but so diverse in size, scope, governance, style, ideology, structure, and program that it hardly represents a single institution at all?

Along with other Americans and perhaps under the influence of American Protestantism, Jews have adopted an ethic of individualism in place of the communal focus of an earlier time. Successful synagogues appear to be those which are most responsive to the needs of individual seekers. A large range of worship options and opportunities for personal growth and spiritual experience appear to characterize the success stories. These synagogues are exciting places for their members, generating fierce loyalty.

Enhancing the responsiveness of synagogues to the needs of members is certainly a positive goal. But should we not also be concerned about a new narcissism in synagogue life and in Jewish life in general? Has the mentality of "what can the synagogue do for me?" driven out of communal consciousness other important questions, such as, what norms does the synagogue as the

institutional bearer of Jewish tradition establish for me? At a time of rampant individualism, what responsibilities towards others does the synagogue articulate? And, at a time of resurgent anti-intellectualism, what might the role of the synagogue be in restoring a balance between the intellectual and the spiritual dimensions of Jewish tradition?

While the nature of synagogue worship comes up in a number of the examples cited by Schwartz, more emphasis is placed on streamlining, on participation, and on music than on liturgical issues. I am led to wonder what synagogue members actually believe and whether synagogue liturgies articulate the beliefs of synagogue worshippers. And, if not, does this make any difference? Can an institution centered on a liturgy that is not reflective of the beliefs of its constituency endure?

The very focus on synagogue transformation suggests a degree of ambivalence: it stipulates the continuing dependence of the Jewish community on a flourishing synagogue at its center for the continued vitality of Jewish life even as it questions whether the synagogue is capable of playing the required role. The best reason to undertake efforts at synagogue transformation may be that there is no alternative central institution. But the nature of that institution or the complex of institutions bearing that label must still be determined by an informed Jewish community reshaping itself and its institutions for a new age. Rabbi Schwartz has produced a snapshot of impressive current efforts. What these successes actually mean for the broader Jewish community and for the future of Jewish life remains to be seen, analyzed, and pondered. □

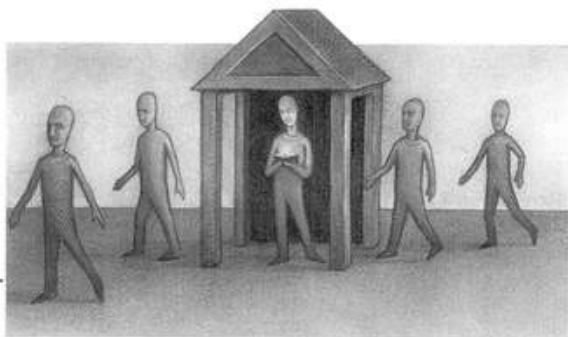


ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

Rabbi David M. Gordis is president of Hebrew College.

Locked in the Next Terrific Deal

David M. Stone

■ *The Future of Success*, by Robert B. Reich. Knopf, 2001.

The very day Robert B. Reich's *The Future of Success* landed at my door, the *Wall Street Journal*, of all places, ran a special feature on the spread of stress in the workplace and work-related stress outside it. Then, as I was reading Reich's engaging look at the economic, technological, and social forces pressing down on American workers and families, the *New York Times* had its own special Working section about the new employment choices facing Americans at the end of the technology boom and the beginning of what may or may not be a recession. At the same time, a *Newsweek* cover feature on "hyper-parenting" used much the same language as I read in the book about changes in family life wrought by the demands of the new economy.

Indeed, every day in the mainstream press, there's plenty of evidence of the trends that Reich so accessibly describes in his latest book. Now a professor of economic and social policy at Brandeis University, Reich was Bill Clinton's fellow Rhodes Scholar and first-term Secretary of Labor. He looks back on his own frantic tenure in a high-profile, high-pressure cabinet job as an example of how educated professionals have been driven to an unhealthy imbalance between the value of work, family, and community. In fact, he called his published memoir of those years *Locked in the Cabinet*.

For Reich, the personal is not only political but also economic. He

relentlessly builds the case that our individual choices as consumers and investors, parents and spouses are perfectly rational—but not necessarily a good thing. He describes how the virtuous cycle of knowledge and technology-driven success in the marketplace can quickly morph into the vicious cycle of brutal competition that has vastly widened the income divide between the haves and have-nots and diminished the quality of life for even the well-off. The question looms, "So, what do we do about it?" I wonder whether Reich the policymaker is entirely satisfied with his own answers.

Some full disclosure is in order: I was one of Bob Reich's research assistants when he was on the faculty at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in the 1980s. From the first moments I sat before him in a Cambridge classroom, I admired his personal charm, verbal grace, and ability to synthesize a number of recognizable social and economic trends into a coherent analysis and pithy commentary. No wonder that, as a public affairs television producer, I immediately wanted to build a show around him based on one of his first books, *The Next American Frontier*. In the nascent, mid-1980s world of on-air punditry, he gave great sound bite. And still does. But some things have changed since those old fashioned analog days.

In the depths of the 1991 recession, then-*Philadelphia Inquirer* reporters Donald Barlett and James Steele won some renown for their series "What Went Wrong," connecting the dots between the high-flying lifestyles of Wall Street financiers and Washington lobbyists with the increasingly desperate lives

of the unemployed workers whose steel, coal, and textile jobs corporate America was efficiently shipping off-shore. But Reich had been way ahead of them. Years earlier in *The Next American Frontier*, he revealed both the contrasts and connections between two increasingly divergent sectors in America's economy: the booming corporate law and investment banking world of Wall Street that was attracting so many of my law school classmates into the fray of leveraged buyouts and junk bonds; and the declining industrial world of Main Street, especially in the mill and mine towns of western Pennsylvania where I often traveled as an aide to a governor intent on saving and creating local jobs.

In the midst of the 1980s boom, Reich spoke and wrote vividly about this growing division between knowledge workers—the "symbolic analysts" adept at financial manipulation and creative design—and the industrial workers whose rote functions could just as easily be performed by Third World laborers or increasingly advanced robotics at a fraction of the cost. He explained how the leveraging of corporate equity in the increasingly global financial markets was not only making a handful of bankers, lawyers, and investors enormously wealthy, but also a contributing cause of the factory shut-downs that sucked the life out of so many American communities in that go-go era.

More than a decade and a Democratic administration later, the story all sounds remarkably familiar in our brave new digital world. Many of those unionized industrial jobs are only a dim memory, along with their health and retirement benefits. There's a new working middle-class that spends its time not on production lines wearing safety hardhats, but in front of computer screens

Now an independent television producer in New York, David M. Stone served as communications director to U.S. Senator Harris Wofford between 1991 and 1995.

wearing telephone headsets. Technology has turned information into a widely accessible commodity.

With laudable hindsight, in *The Future of Success*, Reich self-deprecatingly admits he was mistaken in his earlier understanding of the division between “symbolic analysts” and other workers. He now believes that it’s not simply information technology that puts a lucky few at the top of the heap, but a person’s ability to be creative in either conceiving new ideas, or in marketing and promoting those ideas—or themselves—as products.

He divides this new economic elite between the “geeks” who come up with the original ideas and the “shrinks” who market and manage them—what the entertainment industry would call the “suits.” (I’m not sure whether “shrink,” in this case derives from “shrink-wrap” packaging or from the psychic support many such “suits” provide to brilliant but insecure “geeks.”) “Most of the time the two kinds of enterprise will complement each other,” Reich suggests, “the first providing content, the second attracting the eyeballs. These alliances are the building blocks of the new economy.”

But economically and politically, the more important divide Reich considers is the one between both these types of entrepreneurial self-promoters—who increasingly use the tools of digital technology—and everyone else, whose far lower-paid service industry jobs are high-touch rather than high-tech: everyone from social workers and nurses’ aides to retail sales clerks and massage therapists. Why is that divide growing and driving even the already well-off to work harder than ever before? A lot of it boils down to what Reich calls our collective “delight” with the “terrific deal.” The information and communications revolution has made it easier and easier for consumers and companies to constantly search out and switch to something better. The flip side, of course, is that sellers have to scramble harder and harder to keep every customer, hold every client, seize

every opportunity, get every contract.

There’s a trade-off for speed and flexibility: insecurity. “The faster the economy changes—with new innovations and opportunities engendering faster switches by customers and investors in response—the harder it is for people to be confident of what any of us will earn next year or even next month, what they will be doing, where

*There’s a trade-off for
speed and flexibility:
insecurity.*

they will be doing it,” Reich says. “As a result, our lives are less predictable.”

This point is repeated often. Shortly after we read the above, Reich again writes, “The easier it is for buyers to switch to a better deal, the harder sellers have to work to attract and to keep them.” The very phrase “terrific deal” appears as often as four times on a single page. In fact, there’s a lot of repetition. Like lecture notes, every chapter begins and ends with a summary of what we’re about to read, or have just read. Subchapters often also have summaries, which feed a “heard it before” feeling. Coming out of Reich’s mouth, this can be a charming and useful pedagogical device—attention class, this *will* be on the final. But in black ink on a white page, the constant repetition becomes somewhat irritating.

Nowadays, the very speed and information explosion Reich describes also makes it impossible for him to stay ahead of the curve. His concern about the intrusiveness of cell phones, faxes, beepers, and e-mail on our lives is hardly news. “Attracting eyeballs” and “stickiness” and the notion of being the “CEO of the brand called me” are already old hat to anyone who’s paid any attention to the exploding mainstream press coverage of business, personal finance, and lifestyle, so there’s really not much “news” that Reich can report on this front.

For example, he points out that in this far more fluid and insecure economy, “the very meaning of a company or university or any other institution is growing less coherent. All institutions are flattening into networks of entrepreneurial groups, temporary projects, electronic communities and coalitions linked to various brands and portals.” It’s been a few years since the *New York Times* ran a story on how feature film production is increasingly seen as the model for many other types of economic endeavors. A group of complementary professionals, vendors, and subcontractors come together in a temporary alliance in order to accomplish a specific goal. Those at the top of the heap get paid enormous sums for their starring roles and those at the bottom, such as grips, gofers, and caterers, may get comparatively little. But once the movie’s over, all the jobs basically disappear, the paychecks stop, and everyone has to go on to the next project—with not much of a safety net in between. Today more and more Americans are working that way. As Reich puts it, instead of fixed costs of established industrial behemoths, we workers are the “variable costs” of nimble marketing vehicles who come together under the marketing banner of a name “brand.”

Most of the book focuses on people just like him, me, and probably you: the “geeks” and “shrinks” who do the thinking, writing, branding, and marketing—the creative people at the upper end of the economic spectrum among whom the trend is toward extremes of compensation that look more and more like the exponential difference between Julia Roberts and her decently-paid makeup artists. “What do people do when their earnings are less predictable, their jobs less secure, and their incomes potentially higher or lower than before?” he asks. “They work harder. Not only do they put more hours on the job, they also work more intensively.” For him as a cabinet secretary and for many others

(continued on page 79)

Woodward on Greenspan

Nicholas Von Hoffman

■ *Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom*, by Bob Woodward. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

At some point in the last twenty years Bob Woodward ceased being a writer of books and became a brand name. The Woodward brand may not have been the pure gold of Coca-Cola or Johnson and Johnson's ouchless Band-Aids, but judging from the frequency with which "Woodwards" have appeared and the attention they have required, we can presume they have sold well.

Brand names, like children and pets, need looking after. If you don't take care of them they may get sickly—just consider Maytag, Firestone, and Sara Lee, which, whatever they may be now, ain't what they used to be. Likewise Woodward.

The new model Woodward, *Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom*, is dull, badly written, and poorly conceived. It contains none of the sensational nuggets that have sent earlier Woodward-brand volumes on their way up the bestseller lists. Like some previous Woodwards, this one also has believability problems. Instead of telling the reader where what he offers as facts originate, there are too many notes such as, "Most of the information in this chapter comes from the author's interviews with five knowledgeable sources, each of whom was interviewed on numerous occasions." That won't suffice for important, heretofore unknown, revelations, but since there

aren't any in *Maestro* it doesn't matter if the author made them up or not.

A wiser brand manager would not have undertaken to write a book about Alan Greenspan who, when all is said and done, is a man who has spent most of his seventy-three years hunched over a desk, looking at numbers flickering out at him from a computer terminal. It does not necessarily follow that because a person's name is often spoken on the

If Woodward's book about Greenspan is silly and irrelevant, Greenspan himself isn't. Beginning somewhere in the middle years of the last decade, the soft-spoken numerologist was made into a sort of god-on-earth procreator of national prosperity. It was on account of the Fed chairman's abracadabra that we were all rolling around drunk with wealth, tossing greenbacks in the air in nouveau riche ecstasy. Who

If Woodward's book about Greenspan is silly and irrelevant, Greenspan himself isn't.

news programs, he will make a satisfactory subject for a book. Even granting that the man is so colorless he has a certain color, his tennis-playing, establishmentarian Washington life is too grayed-out and uneventful to hold any reader's interest past page five.

Greenspan does hold a very important job. He is the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, an institution whose working and function almost nobody understands, including, it sometimes seems, the people who run it. Nonetheless, the Fed is at the center of a great many very important things that affect the daily life of millions. It takes a particularly obtuse mind to skip all of that and write a book filled with somnambulant descriptions of Greenspan leading discussions about whether or not to raise or lower something called the Fed funds rate by one-quarter of one percent. A sizeable chunk of this book is literally taken up with such trivial arcana.

woulda thunk it? The slightly bent Figure Filbert became an American hero. In recent months, of course, as layoffs, bankruptcies, and falling stock prices have sobered us up, Greenspan, while not yet pulled down from his plinth, is being attacked for failing to act soon enough or acting too soon or whatever, as if this frail person sitting in front of his computer contemplating the ever-changing numbers on the screen has the power to call forth booms and busts by himself.

Whatever a Fed chairman's real powers may be, anyone in that job is likely to get to be very well known. It was not always so. For many years Fed chairmen seemed to live in gracious anonymity behind the walls of their marble, art deco, New Deal-era temple, but pressure from Congress and changing times made these men more like public figures. With President Nixon's appointee, Arthur Burns, Fed chairmen began playing star roles.

Burns was an accomplished practitioner of quadruple-speak, the prolix art of sounding profound and saying nothing at great length. Greenspan is

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BOOK REVIEW

famous for it now; reporters call his language Greenspanish. But it was Burns, Greenspan's teacher at Columbia, who first perfected the art, a necessary one since idle words by Fed chairmen can have earthquake-like effects on the minds and imaginations of the hyperkinetic personalities who trade stocks and bonds on Wall Street.

Burns is credited, if that's the right word, with bringing on the ruinous inflation of the 1970s. This act of monetary pyromania was performed for the benefit of Richard Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign. The textbooks teach that the Federal Reserve Board and its chairman stand alone, independent of political influence. (Though the president appoints the Fed chairman and the Senate gives its advice and consent, the appointment is for a fixed term of four years and not subject to removal by the president.) Nevertheless, since it is believed that Fed chairmen can bring on recessions or conjure up prosperity, presidents are prone to put pressure on them, especially at election time. Richard Nixon was convinced that in 1960 an intransigent William McChesney Martin, Fed chairman at the time, cost him the election by choosing to fight inflation and thereby bringing on a small recession instead of going the other way. After Burns was installed in the job no such mistake was repeated.

Politically accommodating Fed chairmen strive to lower interest rates, but according to the school of political economy led by Milton Friedman, trying to adjust interest rates to a level that suits major officeholders facing reelection will result in opening the money-supply spigot and causing inflationary surges. The technicalities about how this happens need not detain us in looking at Greenspan, who is famous as an "inflation hawk" and equally famous as an interest-rate diddler. So, has he really been able to keep inflation "under control," "tame," or "in check" while at the same time keeping interest rates at a level that pleases the stock market and the automobile and construction

industries? Though Greenspan has been richly praised for doing so, today's dollar would only be worth sixty-six cents in 1987, the year Greenspan was appointed to the Fed by Ronald Reagan. During his tenure the dollar has lost a third of its value, the penny, as a unit of money, has become worthless, and the nickel is in danger of going the same way. Hence, after a look at the hard numbers, you may wonder if Alan Greenspan resembles his teacher and guide, Arthur Burns. Unfortunately, since Woodward does not understand what Burns' actual record was, he's unable to discuss Burns and Greenspan in any intelligent fashion.

Many businesspeople and economists are convinced that the road to prosperity is loose money and a degree of inflation. That has more or less been the position of the Democratic Party since the 1890s and the days of William Jennings Bryan, three-time Party presidential nominee and Democratic hero in the days of yore. When it came to preventing inflation, the Republican Greenspan seems to have talked the talk somewhat better than he walked the walk, but to most people splashing merrily in the golden pond of American prosperity that didn't matter. The inflation of the Greenspan period was nothing compared to the homes, the cars, the jobs, and the paper profits in the 401Ks.

Greenspan himself doesn't seem to attribute the happy times to manipulation of the value of the dollar but, *inter alia*, to a gigantic surge in productivity owing to the flowering of electronic technologies. One of the many things Woodward's book lacks is an enquiry into the relationship of productivity to the money numbers. If Greenspan is right, and there is plenty of evidence to support the proposition, then why the endless tinkering with interest rates? Why was that necessary? The sequel is what Friedman has said always results from keeping those rates low, namely pumping too much money into the system, thereby causing inflation (which, you may recall, has often been

described as too many dollars chasing after too few goods and services). If there has been one thing that Alan Greenspan has been obsessed with in his years at the Fed it has been inflation. Alas, Woodward not only does not obsess on it, he doesn't seem to understand it, and he certainly doesn't give readers enough of the background of the country's tussle with it to throw some light on the chairman's methods of dealing with this sempiternal public problem.

While it is not easy to fathom the chairman's involuted public locutions, he appears to have had more than one reason for his interest rate manipulations. Greenspan's record shows that at some point he ceased to be a believer in unrestricted free markets and felt compelled to use his office to play the soft-landings and fine-tunings game. "Soft landing" is the term for preventing the economy from smash landing, while "fine-tuning" refers to keeping the economy on a nicely even course with just so much growth, etc. Although the idea that you can fine-tune the economy has been around for more than forty years, there is no evidence that the Federal Reserve or anybody else at the nonexistent controls of this very large airplane knows how to do it.

As for bumpy landings, Greenspan had only been installed as Fed chairman a few months when the stock market went kerplunk in 1987. His reaction was anything but that of a free marketeer as he rushed to stabilize stock prices. Since then Greenspan has seen virtually the whole savings of the middle class masses moved into the stock market via various retirement and tax-sheltered investment accounts. The chairman, along with many others, has greeted these developments with unalloyed contentment, seemingly unaware of or indifferent to the real possibility that a system of *de facto* price controls may ultimately be slapped on the financial markets to protect the retirement savings of half the population. Or it may be that the markets will have to be force-fed money to keep prices up and

safeguard savings from being wiped out by a market crash. That might result in their being wiped out by inflation instead, of course.

Since the free market credo blanches at any discussion of such horrible contingencies and the making of plans to deal with same, when whatever happens happens it will be dealt with on a very ad hoc basis. That is how Greenspan tackled the 1987 crash when he used the resources of the Fed to stabilize stock prices. Nonetheless, Alan Greenspan, who in his salad days was an Ayn Rand objectivist acolyte (a subject sadly ignored in Mr. Woodward's volume), has made his contribution toward the government control of capital markets, albeit in what may prove to be an ill-thought-out and reckless way.

Although you would never know it or anything else about this subject from reading Woodward's book, the Federal Reserve Board was created in 1913 only after a humongous battle with what Woodrow Wilson and his chief advisor, Louis Brandeis, called "the money trust." Against the desires of most of the country's money men, control of the nation's new central bank was placed in the hands of presidential appointees in the belief that an institution as powerful as the Federal Reserve had to be safely in public hands.

It has not worked out that way. Although the Fed is a creature of Congress, where the exclusive power to create and control money is explicitly vested by the Constitution, over the decades Congress's actual control has been next to nil. Presidents have been in a position to exercise greater control—and sometimes they've done so for their immediate political needs—but ordinarily the Fed has been in the control of bankers and the men and women of Wall Street. And never more so than with Alan Greenspan, who has been Wall Street's champion and nominee during his years at the Fed. But there are many other pipers out there still blowing their pipes and one of these days they're going to present their bill and ask to be paid. □

LOCKED IN THE NEXT DEAL (from p. 76)
in the private sector, Reich concludes that the result is our diminishing roles as parents, spouses, and community members.

Collectively speaking, he says, we're all a bit like hamsters on the running wheel, spinning faster and faster 24/7 to keep up with the constant challenges and opportunities of the new digital economy, a point that has been made by many others, from Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* to Arlie Russell Hochschild's *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*.

The most significant part of the relentless economic sorting mechanism Reich describes isn't among upper middle-class professionals yearning for CEO and IPO-level paydays. It's between those of us who are benefiting from the "terrific deals" of the new digital economy and the many people who are effectively punished by them. "We're not aware that we're demanding wage cuts and fighting unions, but that's often the effect when we choose the cheapest product or service," Reich points out. Even more ironically, charitable foundations, unions, and pension funds can often work against the values of their own stakeholders by pursuing aggressive investment strategies that push for corporate profitability at all costs.

It turns out that in an age of "terrific deals," the rising tide may not lift all boats, but may instead sink many in the working class. While educated couples may choose to have two incomes because of the social status and personal fulfillment of careers, most intact American families have at least two incomes because they have to in order to make ends meet. Their communities, Reich points out, often don't have the tax base to support quality public schools. Their children may fall even further behind those of parents who have the resources to live in better neighborhoods or pay for private schools.

But even if some of the facts aren't new to us, we look to thinkers and

policymakers like Reich not only for fresh syntheses, but also for responsive and realistic answers to the problem. After all, he has the experience and mindset to create rational public policy, and this is what he tentatively begins to do at the book's conclusion. Reich is skeptical of the voluntary simplicity movement and its self-help ethos. Some people may opt out of the race, he says, but the real problem lies with economic incentives that make such choices irrational for most of us.

Reich doesn't suggest that government can, or should, turn back the clock on new economic realities. Instead, he says, it should respond to these new conditions with policies that may stitch back together the frayed threads of exhausted families and fragmented communities. His prescriptions for more effective cushions against the inherent insecurity of "the age of the terrific deal"—such as more portable health insurance—are, as he himself acknowledges, merely "points of departure, rather than a full agenda of reform."

Reich sees earlier eras of economic reform—when our political system yielded effective policies concerning child labor, workplace conditions and hours, as well as social insurance—as evidence that American society has the capacity to make wise public choices governing the private sector. But such landmark legislative action often came in response to economic catastrophe that clearly reached the level of national emergency.

Can our special-interest-driven political system respond to chronic inequality and insecurity without the pressure of another Great Depression? The past eight years of the Democratic administration in which Reich served do not provide much reason for optimism that the future of success will look very different than the present. In the meantime, his lively and expansive discussion may help keep hope alive while the Republicans try to let the invisible hand of the marketplace work its magic on our lives. □

Lower Manhattan Music

Ya'acov Gabriel

The mystical is unavoidable. On a trip to New York last December, I hung out with my hipper than hip childhood friend Paul. He's the kind of guy who knows the best new music from Portugal, the best place to get a winter toque, and the best place to get a breakfast in Lower Manhattan. He took me to a spot called Kitchenette where we had a chance encounter that made me feel like we were in a piece from *The New Yorker's* "Talk of the Town" section. Right next to us were two cool young women, quite affable and worldly. As we got to know each other, one of them invited me to see her band at the annual Knitting Factory's Jewish Music Festival. She turned out to be Basya Schechter, and she and her group Pharaoh's Daughter were wonderful, much better than I had a right to expect. How often do you get to see a predominantly women's band (Tracey Love-Wright on woodwinds, Martha Colby on cello, Jen Gilleran on tabla drums, and Basya, the singer/songwriter, on oud, guitar, and hand percussion) play Mizrahi/Arabic music with total self assurance, with Yiddish and English lyrics and with rock n' roll's accessibility?

There is nothing pretentious or self-indulgent about Basya and her buddies; her stage persona is as *heimish* (down-home) as Phish or Cheryl



Wheeler. I was especially blown away by her singing so emotionally and smoothly over such complicated Middle Eastern rhythms. What came to mind was Paul Simon's last CD, or the Beatles during their Indian Raga period, which is pretty heady company indeed.

When I later listened to Pharaoh's Daughter's knitting factory records release, "Out of the Reeds" (www.knittingfactory.com or www.jewmu.com), I was happy to see that their brilliance also worked on disk. Songs such as "Hevel," "Taich," "African Niggun," and especially "Shnirele Perele" are truly World Beat. They mix Eastern European and Middle Eastern, Western and African, Yiddishist and Soho Jazz in a way that renews our faith in music's ability to leap past boundaries. Again, what blew me away was how effortless and natural these creative gymnastics sounded. A second gift in listening to Pharaoh's Daughter is their connection to the rest of the Downtown Jewish music scene. Some of the other people playing the festival were the Klezmatics, Uri Caine, Hasidic New Wave, Adam Morrison with International House of Trance,

Anthony Coleman, rapper Paul Barman, and Klezmokum. Based on how good Basya, Adam, and the Klezmatics are, I'd like to get to know their compatriots as well.

If you hear that these folks are coming to your town, or if you're planning to be in New York soon, check them out. Some of the venues they play at home are Tonic, Makor (on the Upper West Side), and the venerable old Knitting Factory itself. Michael Dorff began programming this new hybrid music there ten years ago, but in many ways it's still an unknown hot-house flower that has not yet been fully exported outside of New York's unique, cross-referential milieu. As a Bronx boy whose first languages were Yiddish and Italian, who later fell in love with Doo Wop and R&B in yeshiva, and who now makes music in hyper-laidback, All-American Colorado, I love what music critic George Robinson calls, "mind-bending, genre-busting Jewish music." I think I also understand the challenge and the need to try to promote music that is, at once, ethnically truthful and adventurously anarchic. For that reason, I hope this radical new music takes wing and spreads, even in the strangely Texas Two-Step (i.e. conservative) political atmosphere we find ourselves in these days.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCY ADLER

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