

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

TIKKUN

ISRAEL: A PATH FORWARD

CHERIE R. BROWN,
GUSH SHALOM, AND OTHERS

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

JULY/AUGUST 2001

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**WHY WE ALLOWED
THE SUPREME COURT
TO STEAL THE
ELECTION:**

ALIENATION V. COMMUNITY

by Peter Gabel

FACING DEATH

Richard Lichtman

INTEGRAL POLITICS

Gregory Wilpert

KABBALAH OF AIKIDO

Daniel Kohn

THE JEWISH CIVIL WAR

Marc H. Ellis



**PLUS: Gail Straub on SPIRITUAL STEWARDSHIP,
Paul Buhle on the FORWARD
Mordechai Gafni on OUR CALLING**

In 1932

They came down the alleys
Singing their hunger
In limp voice with limp cap
Held cupwise
Asking at the end
Of muscled arm
A handout.

They came down the alleys
Gaunt shadows of thinness
Eating hungry crevices
Beside their singing mouths.

So long ago they sang
So long they sang.
Some dropped dimes
And looked away.

My mother thrust bread
My mother thrust coffee
From behind the door
To still their singing

—Arthur Purdy

- 2 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**
- 6 **A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER**
- 7 **SPIRIT MATTERS:** *Is Spirituality Good for Your Health*—and more.
- 11 **EDITORIALS:** *Strategies for Middle East Peace.*

FEATURES:

13 **Israel**

This is the moment for progressive Jews to stop the talk and walk the walk when it comes to Israel. How? **Cherie Brown** shares *Lessons Learned in Organizing American Jews* (13). Then, a petition appealing for *International Intervention* (16) and a manifesto from Gush Shalom outlining *80 Theses for a New Peace Camp* (17) provide the basis for action. The section concludes with an analysis by **Marc H. Ellis** of the *Jewish Civil War* over current Israeli policy, and his call for a new age of prophecy in response (24).

33 **COVER STORY: Alienation v. Community**

The Supreme Court was able to give Election 2001 to Bush, **Peter Gabel** argues, only because the Gore team chose alienation over community, the right of the individual state (Florida) rather than the fundamental American right to vote. This is the deepest analysis you have read yet of the *Political Meaning of Bush v. Gore*.



44 **Spiritual Paths**

Gregory Wilpert presents *Integral Politics* as a spiritual Third Way (44). **Gail Straub** connects spirituality with environmentalism (52), while **Daniel Kohn** tells us how he found Kabbalah in the practice of Aikido (53).

61 **Poetry and Prose**

Feminist midrash is the focus of **Steven P. Schneider's** essay on trends in Jewish American Poetry (61). After poetry, prose: Proust had his madeleine; **Floyd Skloot** gives us *Cream of Kohlrabi* (65).



ARTICLES:

29 **PERSONAL ESSAY**

Richard Lichtman meditates on *Dying in America*.

32 **TORAH OF MONEY**

Lawrence Bush and **Jeffrey Dekro** call on Jewish institutions to pursue *Spiritual Self-Interest*.

50 **SOUL PRINTS**

Mordechai Gafni on *Our Calling*.

80 **CHILD OF SPIRIT**

New columnist **Susan Dermond** teaches us how to raise our children in spirit with nature.



REVIEWS:

70 **Julie E. Cooper** explores the oft-overlooked *Jewish Political Tradition*.

72 *Forward or Backward?* **Paul Buhle** chronicles the ins and outs of the century-old *Forward*.

77 *Judaism Naturally*. **Jonathan Schorsch** reviews a collection of eco-Jewish essays edited by **Arthur Waskow**.

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

Opposite:

"In 1932" by Arthur Purdy.

Front Cover:

The Rescue by Juan Kelley.
Courtesy of Turner Carroll Gallery.

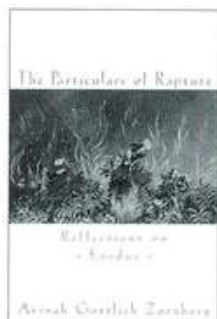
Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

The Particulars of Rapture

Reflections on Exodus

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg
Doubleday, 2001

Avivah Zornberg is one of Jerusalem's most exciting teachers of Torah, not only because of the subtlety of her thinking but also because of the beauty of her language and sophistication of her presentation. In *The Particulars of Rapture* she continues the engaging and brilliant work she began in her reflections on *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire*.



Trusting the Spirit

Renewal and Reform in American Religion

Richard Cimino
Jossey-Bass, 2001

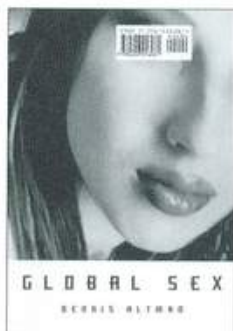
The renewal of Judaism that we develop in TIKKUN is also happening in other religious communities. Cimino introduces us to many of them here. For anyone who has been feeling that their own renewal work was a drop in the bucket, this book shows that the bucket is filling in many different ways!



Global Sex

Dennis Altman
University of Chicago Press, 2001

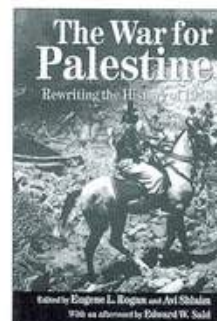
Altman calls for a "political economy of sexuality" in this startling book written by the author of *AIDS in the Mind of America*. A meaningful sexual politics must address the inequities of the larger socioeconomic order. Sexual and social justice go hand in hand.



The War for Palestine

Edited by Eugene L. Rogan
and Avi Shlaim
Cambridge University Press, 2001

This is an important collection of articles about the birth of the State of Israel, with Israeli "New Historians" and Arab writers exploring the most thorny issues. Benny Morris presents clear evidence of atrocities committed by Israeli forces against Palestinian villagers, but denies that there was a policy of expulsion. Laila Parson disputes this conclusion on the basis of Israeli actions toward the Druze. And there are other interesting conflicts in the articles by others here, including Charles Tripp, Fawaz A. Gerges, Joshua Landis, and Rashid Khalidi.

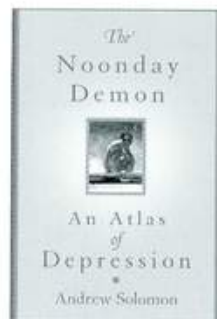


The Noonday Demon

An Atlas of Depression

Andrew Solomon
Scribner, 2001

Chronicling a vast array of human experience (including his own), Solomon weaves together a deeply poetic, yet always honest, vision of depression. Investigating the cultural, political, and economic influences affecting human moods worldwide, he debunks some of the myths about the disease—for example, that it is primarily a modern middle class affliction. A must read for all who seek a better understanding of the dimensions of suffering.



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Web Design

Jer Welter

Publisher

Trish Vradenburg

Controller

Valerie Bach

2107 Van Ness, Suite 302

San Francisco, CA 94109

415-575-1200

fax: 415-575-1434

magazine@tikkun.org

Visit the TIKKUN website at

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Letters to the Editor

Right of Return II

To the Editor:

Uri Avnery's stance ("Right of Return II," March/April 2001) smacks of a certain brand of hubris that often emanates from the (at times, Jewish) ultra-left. It is characterized by ignoring important historical facts as well as a sense that it is incumbent on one of the parties to a conflict to formulate and make all the concessions in an attempt at a solution.

Demography and history dictate against this approach. During the early years of the founding of Israel, there was a remarkable symmetry in the number of Jews who were forced to emigrate from Arab countries [and the number of Arabs expelled from Israel]. Another fact is that this movement of Jewish and Arab populations was not unique. Much larger shifts were taking place elsewhere. For example, in the late 1940s, over 12 million people of German ancestry were forced to leave their homes in Eastern European countries. Many of these families had lived in these areas for genera-



tions. When India and Pakistan gained independence from Great Britain in 1947, 10 million Hindus and Muslims had to relocate. So the Palestinian Arabs represent only a small fraction of the millions of displaced people from that era. Yet according to Avnery's and much of Palestinian thinking, it is only for these people (as per events of fifty years ago, not today) that "return" is being declared an entitlement. For the 120 million descendants of the others, resettlement was undertaken long ago, and their "right to return" is recognized by no one.

If we have a two-state solution, the "Palestinians with keys" will need to make their new life in their West Bank state. Their Jewish counterparts, the Mizrahi refugees from Arab lands who fled their ancestral homes in the early years of Israel's existence, are not marking time until they return. Neither have they been compensated. They started a new life in their new homeland.

In 1948, the U.N. plan offered the

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Arabs of Palestine a state. Tragically and self-destructively, they refused it. While it appears they will now have another opportunity, a state for the Palestinians does not entail refugees returning to their original homes in the Jewish state, but to new ones in their new Palestinian state.

TOM HERZ
San Francisco, CA

Warfare, Anger, and Torah

To the Editor:

What is so remarkable about the conversations in *TIKKUN*, including the discussion between David Grossman and Michael Lerner (May/June 2001), is that the tone of disagreement is respectful. Despite many areas of overlap, their disagreement involves something that at the moment seems impossible for many Jews even to consider: the right of Arabs who choose to return to Israel and live under Israeli law to return in fact.

Despite the outrageous impossibility of Arab return to most Jews both in and out of Israel, those who study Arab response to the seemingly marvelous and generous offers of the Camp David formulation have suggested that without the Arab right of return, all the other offers are of no real meaning to the Palestinians.

No one is foolish enough to believe that the solutions to Middle East problems are easy to uncover. But no one is quite wise enough to listen to the symbolic thinking of the people who are causing the upheaval. In particular, we do not attend mindfully to our own symbolic thinking. Instead, positions harden, enmity is recreated, and people go on thinking it is "good to do bad." It is good to be a suicide bomber and kill Israelis, say the extreme Arabs, and, say the extreme Jews, it is good for the Arabs to be under siege because siege is essentially a passive state and the Arabs will learn that we mean business without our actually doing anything actively vicious.

This last is the current, official Israeli position which many Americans assent to and which many of the readers of this magazine find anathema. The majority opinion states: We cannot let a flood of Arabs return. We will lose the Jewish state. Instead, we will give the dispossessed to fate, to chance, to the afflictions of siege, to "the Romans."

We are so used to seeing ourselves as oppressed and powerless that even when we have bulldozers, tanks, bombs, and all the military might and the territorial power, we *still* see ourselves as so hated, so insecure, so wronged, and so violated that we have no choice except to rise up and to keep recreating an enemy who hates us enough to enable us to continue our familiar behavior. Now *necessity* is doing the besieging, the claiming of territory, the betraying of promises, and the fearing of a flood tide of Palestinians returning. So long as we wield violent power while feeling helpless and hated, it will be impossible to listen to anyone else carefully enough to find any solution. So long as we see ourselves as powerless to be kind, to create love, to give people what they want, and to step aside as Esau did when Jacob returned after a long hard time away, until we understand that both power and peace come from answering prayers, not from claiming one's own, we will, as we always have, become powerless, out of Judah, out of Canaan, out of Israel, out of the promised land, never learning the lesson of milk and honey we are supposed to let flow instead of blood and war.

Here on the outside, if there is an ethos of love and community, we have a chance of deconstructing the enemy that has become the Jewish necessity. Then we, the dispossessed, returning yet again, would have a chance of carrying the milk and honey home.

CHANA MISHA BERUCH
Princeton, NJ

To the Editor:

As an American Jew, my "ownership" of Israel is limited at best. I remind myself frequently that I don't have responsibility for the way the Israeli government behaves.

Still, I'm never sure what upsets me more: a Palestinian act of terrorism, showing that hatred of Israelis still runs strong—or a violent Israeli response to the terrorism, showing that although Jews are commanded to be "a light unto the nations," the Israeli government still seems to believe that two wrongs make a right.

RACHEL BARENBLAT
From the Internet

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—*Library Journal*
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Prejudices Past and Present

To the Editor:

What a serendipity it was to find you! When I looked up *Sojourners Magazine* the other day, I found the article "A Cry for Atonement" by Michael Lerner; and I almost cried from a mixture of relief and joy ... relief from the fact that there are those, like you and other Jewish folks, who care about the injustice the Palestinians are receiving ... joy, because maybe there is some hope that things will change.

I love the Jewish people, so it has been terribly painful and stressful to have been so angry and frustrated about the terrible game-playing by Israel in relationship to their Palestinian blood-brothers. The reason why the pain has been so excruciating is that I was born in Holland and experienced the Nazi occupation with its horrible injustices to us Dutch people and our Jewish citizens. I saw what happened to our Jewish friends. I saw the stars on their clothing. I saw the fear and bewilderment in their eyes. I saw our Jewish neighbors lined up on the street corner to be hauled off by railroad freight cars to extermination camps. I saw that damnable star on the clothes of another little boy who came out to play with me one day; and I was confused and hurt, terribly upset about the fact that he was considered less human than myself. I understood that, as young as I was. I saw Dachau with my family, and cried all the way through the place ... as I remembered. My family and I have seen and experienced The Ann Frank museum; and yes, we have cried there also. My wife and I have seen and experienced The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem when we were the only non-Jewish people on a tour; and, yes, we cried with our American Jewish friends. I remember standing there in Jerusalem with parents and children, wonderful Jewish families just like the ones who stood on the corner of our street. I cried as I remembered. I am crying now as I write this ... remembering it all, all of the hell and horror. That's why it is so excruciatingly painful to see what is happening in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The question has come for those in Israel who sanction the harshness against the Palestinians, "How *can* you, who have suffered so much, who have been so mistreated, who have experienced so

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much injustice, inflict so much suffering on others? How *can* you?" To see those who have been so oppressed themselves become oppressors is to me, who has seen the horror inflicted on the Jews, something that is intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually oppressive and intolerable. It is too hard to bear. Thank you for understanding!

I am a Presbyterian minister; and, as one who has been raised a Christian, I am all too aware of what Christians have done to Jews. That, also, is an awareness that is painful and a burden too hard to bear. Will we ever move past our prejudices and fears?

Thank you for being there. I am now receiving your email weekly. It will be enjoyed.

WALTER G. BRUINSMA
Springfield, PA

Unkindest Cut

To the Editor:

Michael Kimmel's thoughtful and well-informed article on circumcision (May/June 2001) reminded me of my own intellectual journey on this question. Several years ago, when I began research into the history of Jewish circumcision, I was uncertain about its medical and religious value. Now, having read much of the medical, anatomical, physiological, and psychological literature, I feel confident in saying that the time has come to end this practice. Circumcision is not only medically worthless and religiously anachronistic; it is an exceedingly painful, destructive procedure that inflicts serious physical and psychological damage, some permanent, on helpless, non-consenting infants.

Rabbi Zaslow's response to Kimmel gamely attempts to justify the unjustifiable. It's difficult to understand how he can believe that a newborn infant, subjected to the severe shock of genital surgery, can have a "father/son bonding experience." To the contrary, many circumcised infants experience disruption of

the crucial mother/child bond, evidenced by disturbances in breastfeeding, as well as fitful sleeping, elevated blood pressure, pulse, and cortisol levels, and heightened sensitivity to pain persisting for months. These problems, and others, have been thoroughly documented by reputable researchers, and I'm prepared to provide references to interested readers.

LEONARD B. GLICK, M.D., PH.D.
Professor of Anthropology
Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

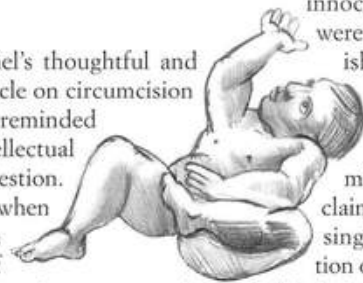
To the Editor:

I found Michael Kimmel's article on circumcision in the May/June issue irritating. It is clearly a polemical rant, filled with emotional assertions. More troubling, however, is Kimmel's inclusion of anti-Semitic statements and images.

David Zaslow's moving essay on his son's *brit milah* begins the necessary critique of Kimmel's false objectivism with a response to Kimmel's hate-filled image of the tardy and sadistic mohel. Zaslow is right that it is a "weird, medieval caricature," but it goes deeper than a stereotype of Jews being chronically late and muffling the cries "from yet another innocent baby" (as if *brit milah* were some sort of undeserved punishment). Kimmel's image is shockingly reminiscent of the blood libel.

Zaslow correctly dismisses Kimmel's outrageous claim that "Circumcision ... is the single moment of the reproduction of patriarchy." Clearly Judaism didn't invent patriarchy, but Kimmel gives those of us who favor the performance of the mitzvah of *brit milah* the direct responsibility for its uninterrupted and unchallenged continuation. Perhaps more amazingly, Kimmel has removed women from the definition of patriarchy. This is an odd type of feminism.

In terms of *brit milah* not being postponed even for Shabbat or Yom Kippur, Kimmel insists that this indicates an enforcement of a ritual out of which "a lot of people were trying to wiggle their way." Certainly it has more to do with the fact that mitzvot coming directly from the Torah (like *brit milah*) have more gravity than those instituted by the rabbis (like the parameters of the prohibition against working on Shabbat and holidays).



Kimmel wants to remain loyal to his secular and feminist-like values. I cannot object to his choices; they are his to make. But it's easier to take seriously a criticism from someone (like Zaslow) who knows and cares about the continuity of the Jewish tradition. Kimmel rationalizes his refusal to perform what is, for him, an uncomfortable mitzvah. It's too bad that he relies on anti-Semitic stereotypes in order to convince the readers of *TIKKUN* that his decision was the right one.

LAWRENCE JARACH
Berkeley, CA

Kimmel Responds:

I write both to reply to these letters and to David Zaslow's response to my article in the May/June 2001 issue of *TIKKUN*.

Since Zaslow, in his thoughtful rejoinder, and Lawrence Jarach in his thoughtless kvetching, make the same error, let me clarify my opening scene. What I described in the beginning was not a "fictitious imagining" of the event. It was a description of the event as it happened. We had a mohel, and he was late. Everyone waited patiently for him, and when he showed up the ceremony as I described it took place. And the next week, we went to a "real" circumcision, a friend's son, and the mohel (a different one) did indeed shove a wine soaked handkerchief into the little boy's mouth. (These may strike Jarach as anti-Semitic slurs, but such perversions are only in the mind of the beholder.)

And let me also be clear that mine is not an anti-circumcision article, let alone a "polemical rant." (Happily, Leonard Glick was able both to read my words and see my efforts at moderation.) What I tried to do is describe one family's decision-making process as we thought through the various issues surrounding circumcision and to share how we came to the decision we did.

Let me reply now to Zaslow directly: I think you have cause and consequence confused in your description of male privilege in Judaism. Yes, of course, we can illustrate that privilege in a number of ways—separate seating of men and women is only one. That is a consequence. Surely you wouldn't argue that separate seating is the cause of male privilege, would you?

The source of that privilege, I believe, in anthropological terms, is the ritual marking of the body, so that it becomes the body of entitlement. This happens in many settings, where a marked, scarified,

tattooed, or otherwise disfigured, body is the sign of entitlement—for example, in the military, or in frats that brand or tattoo their pledges. (Of course, bodily disfigurement can also mark the elimination of any entitlement, such as prison.) As I understand it, it is exactly this bonding you describe—that you and only you (i.e. not your wife Deborah)—can achieve.

Although you didn't acknowledge it, the whole point of my article was that all of the "other" reasons for circumcision—medical, psychological, traditional, etc.—were ultimately not convincing to us, nor to you. (Sharing one's process is not the same thing as listing reasons; we shed those reasons as you do.) The only reason would be religious. And that's where you and I part company. I feel that there is a contradiction between the Judaism that comes from identification as, and therefore with, the oppressed, and the Judaism that reproduces inequality.

I agree that circumcision is a "bonding ritual" as you describe it. But I want to suggest that the "bonding ritual" that you describe is exactly what Amy and I did with Zachary. We all equally bonded our family with the God of our fathers and

mothers. Bonding need not require genital disfigurement. And until Amy can "bond" in equality with me, I want to challenge the nature of that bonding. Spirituality without equality seems to me to be a contradiction.

Alternative Cures

To the Editor:

I was delighted to read Kenny Ausubel's "When Healing Becomes a Crime" (May/June 2001). After seventeen years of nursing, which I have abandoned now, and watching multitudes of patients, including my father and father-in-law, be killed by what I call "Western medicine" and he calls "organized medicine," it is nice to see in print what I have been ridiculed and fired for saying.

However, I disagree with the concession that practicing doctors are not part of this organized medicine. They are in fact the heart and soul of it—carrying out the philosophies of the politicians and business interests. If the practicing doctors "just said no" then the organization would crumble.

SUSAN YOST
From the Internet



Light from the Ashes

Social Science Careers of Young
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Peter Suedfeld

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PUBLISHER'S NOTES

A Note from the Publisher

Trish Vradenburg

It is with great pride that, as of this issue, I become the publisher of TIKKUN magazine.

Therefore, let me introduce myself. My name is Trish Vradenburg. I am Michael Lerner's sister and, like him, I am a writer. However, I suspect our writing falls into slightly different genres. I am largely a comedy writer. While I see the ironic sides of life, Michael sees the important scope of issues.

Although I do not always agree with his take on a given subject, I respect his passion for his beliefs, his intellectual honesty, and his tireless work to leave the world a better place than he found it. God knows that to me it seems an exhausting uphill battle.

There are too many critics who revel in slinging mud and inflicting verbal pain. A brother does not need anything but love and safety from his family. So there will be no "Brother Dearest" in this column.

So what do I do now? Funny you should ask. In June and July my play, *Surviving Grace*, is being produced at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Hopefully, it will be moving Off-Broadway in the fall. *Surviving Grace*, with much comic relief, is about a workaholic sitcom producer and her overbearing mother who contracts Alzheimer's. The play reflects the goal of TIKKUN, which is to heal and repair (yet another reason that I was drawn to this magazine). In this case, it is a mother and daughter who need to repair and reconnect.

In 1987, when my professional life was finally on track and I was writing for the television show, *Designing Women*, my mother's life suddenly began to unravel. At first, we didn't know what was happening. My mother, a powerful, dynamic woman who had the distinction of being on Nixon's Enemy List, had become a confused, helpless person. We went from doctor to doctor, hoping to reverse the situation with a quick fix. But, we quickly learned, there was none.

Alzheimer's, they diagnosed. I barely knew what the disease was. What I did know was that there was no cure. For the next two years, I juggled writers' meetings with desperate calls

from my mother. I cursed those calls, but when they stopped, I longed to have them back because at least then my mother was talking. The next two years were spent shuttling between studio tapings and a nursing home where this elegant lioness, spiraling downward into the chasm of Alzheimer's, was reduced to a glazed-eyed, defenseless old woman in a wheelchair. I watched helplessly as her mind, her dignity, her soul, and finally her body succumbed to this killer.

This past September my mother-in-law died suddenly. Like my mother, both named Bee, she was an incredible life force, larger than life, and profoundly successful at anything she set her mind to do. The church was packed at her funeral and we got literally hundreds of condolence cards. Then I realized that when my mother died, there hadn't been anywhere near such an outpouring. Because by the time my mother died, people had forgotten her. She was merely a footnote. The spiral of Alzheimer's had taken not only her memory, but also the memory that people had of her.

If only she had gotten Alzheimer's now, I thought, when researchers are racing to find a cure. A cure for Alzheimer's: a fantasy, a wish, an impossible dream. The same words that were said to Galileo, Newton, Edison, Einstein, Curie, Salk, and whoever dreamed up the fax machine. Yesterday's dream is today's reality.

It is with this enduring faith that I wrote *Surviving Grace*. Although Alzheimer's is tremendously important to the content and goal of *Surviving Grace*, it is not what the play is about. It is simply the basic story of a mother and a daughter who are forced to learn to accept, love, and, ultimately, separate. And although I am still struggling with the separating part after ten years—my mother is in my dreams three times a week, still telling me I shouldn't wear anything horizontal because it accentuates my hips—I have certainly learned how to love her. That much we did well.

Surviving Grace is a love story and a confrontation story; a story of struggle and reconciliation; a painful and joyous journey.

It's about hope and possibilities, two things my mother instilled in me. And that is what TIKKUN is also dedicated to, which is why I'm delighted to become its new publisher. In the next issue, TIKKUN will be celebrating its fifteenth anniversary!!! I'm proud to be supporting this very important voice. □

Trish Vradenburg is the publisher of TIKKUN.

Spirit Matters

A continuing survey of intellectual concerns, the public square, religion, culture, and our inner lives.

Michael Lerner

My Sister, The Publisher

In an amazing act of generosity and goodness, my sister has agreed to take over as publisher of *TIKKUN*, supporting the magazine now that Danny and Victor Goldberg have moved on to other projects. She is a brilliant writer (I hope you'll get to see her play), a principled crusader for Alzheimer's research, and, together with her equally

generous and wonderful husband George, a philanthropist. She often disagrees with me on political issues and on spirituality, which makes her generosity all the more extraordinary. She has agreed to serve as publisher and to donate to *TIKKUN* on condition that our readers also donate to keep the magazine alive. I'm confident that they will.



Is Spirituality Good for Your Health? (part 1)

There's a whole critique of the contemporary revival of interest in spirituality that goes something like this: "In this age of narcissism, people will put energy into anything that promises them a happier and healthier self. Contemporary spirituality, like the health food and vitamin crazes, is a manifestation of this ultra me-firstism. Just see how few people at the Jewish Renewal *kallah* want to attend courses by Arthur Waskow that link spirituality with social action, and how few people who go to the Elat Chayyim Jewish Renewal retreat center will sign up for Michael Lerner's course on bringing spiritual change into the world of work. It's all an inner trip about "me" with no interest in the well-being of anyone else. And it's that way in all the other spiritual communities, if not even more so."

Whoa. That's a lot of critique. While some is correct, this critique really assumes that caring about self is necessarily opposed to caring about others. But that's not true. So let's go through this more carefully, using the connection between health care and spirituality as a jumping-off point.

There have been a flood of articles in the media publicizing recent medical studies which demonstrate that religion can be good for your health. Some of this material is summarized by Jeff Levin in his 2001 book, *God, Faith and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection*. Among the findings he cites:

- People who regularly attend religious services have lower rates of illness and death than do infrequent or nonattenders.

- For each of the three leading causes of death in the United States—heart disease, cancer, and hypertension—people who report a religious affiliation have lower rates of illness.
- Older adults who participate in private and congregational religious activities have fewer symptoms, less disability, and lower rates of depression, chronic anxiety, and dementia.
- Religious participation is the strongest determinant of psychological well-being in African Americans—even more important than health or financial wealth.
- Actively religious people live longer, on average, than the nonreligious. This holds true even controlling for the fact that religious folks tend to avoid such behavior as smoking and drinking that increases the risk of disease and death.

In a future edition of this column on Spirit Matters, I will explore the supposed mechanisms that make this connection between health and religion happen. Jeff Levin's book is an extremely useful place to begin that discussion. But for the moment I want to return to the critique of the naysayers and ask: should we be exploring this connection at all?

Isn't there a lot of opportunism involved in making the argument that Spirit is good for your health? Should we be any less interested in God or Spirit if it turns out that just as many people who attend religious services get sick as who don't or that religious affiliation has zero impact on the death rate for heart disease, cancer, and hypertension?

I know I felt a moment of opportunistic excitement when I first read some of these studies. “Maybe I can use this to convince people in the Bay Area that they should come to Beyt Tikkun (my synagogue) more frequently—after all, it will be good for their health!” But do I really want that to be the motive for people to come to synagogue? Isn’t that simply playing to the dominant market consciousness that does so much to foster the ethos of selfishness and materialism that I wanted to combat in my book, *Spirit Matters*? Or, to put it another way, don’t people who come to God for a quick fix and good outcomes leave the moment things start getting rough and the outcome’s less assured? Won’t people who enter the promised land hoping for a narcissistic outcome quickly get disillusioned by how much hard work is involved in leading a spiritually conscious life?

In fact, isn’t the whole obsession with health another manifestation of the “me-first” consciousness that makes narcissism the dominant personality character style of market-generated corporate-ruled advanced industrial societies? How many times do you think that the various health newsletters try to mobilize their readers to demand equal access to health care for the poor? How many of those who participate in alternative health fairs, go to alternative health stores, and work out at local health spas and gyms are equally involved in efforts to promote social justice? On this line of thinking, those who come to spiritual communities from an ego-driven desire are likely to remake the spiritual world in the image of the marketplace rather than to remake themselves.

But before we get too elitist in disdaining this kind of a motive, let’s remember that such reward/punishment thinking was given by the Bible itself. The Torah explicitly tells us that the world was created in such a way that an evil society will produce grave ecological consequences: the rain won’t fall, the earth won’t give forth its produce, and we and the animals might perish.

I remember as a teenager reading this kind of exhortation and thinking, “Well, that’s one part of the Bible I can’t accept, now that we know that science governs the physical world, and that God has shown once again in the Holocaust that there is no direct divine involvement in human history any more.”

How wrong I was! Now that I know about ecological science, I know that the Torah was correct—that there is a direct correlation between the level of social justice of our society and society’s ability to sustain itself ecologically. And in my own research as a therapist and then as a rabbi I have learned that psychic well-being is directly undermined when one lives in a society in which our “meaning needs”

and spiritual hungers are systematically repressed. (I document this in more detail in *Spirit Matters*).

Of course, this connection doesn’t work in some obvious one-to-one correspondence between what one does and how one’s health turns out. The old saw that the evil flourish while the righteous find that “no good deed goes unpunished” still has some resonance (just look at John Ashcroft and Dick Cheney). Those who are expecting a shot of lightning from heaven when they eat a bacon sandwich on Yom Kippur or cheat on their income taxes can feel that they’ve “proven” that there is no God once they have survived their minor transgressions. But the spiritual order of the universe holds on a more global level. The sins we commit by allowing injustice, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression contribute to our powerlessness to halt the systematic destruction of the life-support system of the planet; on the macro scale, the spiritual consequences are very direct. Global warming, plagues of cancer and other environmentally-linked diseases, the elimination of the ice caps and destruction of our forests—these are just the beginning of the payback for a glob-

alized capital that has allowed materialism and selfishness to triumph over mutual caring for each other and a wonder-filled response to our natural environment.

But then, spiritual well-being, planetary well-being, and individual well-being *are* intrinsically linked—in which case, it can’t be wrong for people to be attracted to a spiritual community for these reasons. Seeking spirituality for our health only becomes a problem when it leads us to ignore—or not hear—one of the deepest truths of spiritual practice: that we are all connected and mutually interdependent. In *Spirit Matters* I’ve contrasted that egocentric sort of reactionary spirituality with an Emancipatory Spirituality which really teaches us to recognize our interdependence with and love for the entire human race and our responsibility for other forms of life as well. People who approach spirituality for narrowly selfish reasons will find Emancipatory Spirituality “too political” for them because they don’t want to be bothered about the well-being of others.

In fact, precisely those people who come into Spirit for reasons of personal health may be missing a deeper reality: most human beings have a deep set of spiritual needs which are being systematically repressed and denied in contemporary secular society. Many people who tell themselves that they are looking into spiritual concerns because “it’s good for the children” or “good for my health” or “nice to have some kind of community” may actually be unconscious of the deeper reason for being drawn: their deep desire to reconnect to the spiritual intuitions that they had as children which were ignored, ridiculed, and marginalized

*Most human beings
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secular society.*

by parents, teachers, and the entire “common sense” of a materialist society. Giving themselves opportunistic reasons like “it’s good for my health” may actually allow them to overcome the internalized capitalist rationality which teaches us to only pursue things which are in our own narrow material self-interest. It gives these people a chance to feel good about opening themselves to a realm of Spirit which speaks to a soul with which many of us lost contact in our youth.

So the whole conflict between “higher spiritual needs” and “self-interest” has to be rethought. Our fundamental essence is to be spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, economically and politically aligned with each other and with the deepest Spirit of the universe. We are created in the image of God, so of course if we are going to live in a society that frustrates our spiritual needs and makes invisible to us our spiritual links to each other we are all going to suffer pain as a consequence. Caring for our own souls is a valuable and important part of serving God. Only, our task is to make sure that caring for ourselves is the first step in a life of service to others—not only because that is right, but because it is good for our souls, which are intrinsically nourished by loving and caring toward others.

Or, to paraphrase a bit of talmudic wisdom, “You may get people into the tent for a narrower reason, but once they are there and exposed to something spiritually rich, they stay on for a more wholesome reason.” So it’s good to know that Spirit is good for our health.



Celebrating America: A Haggadah and American Seder for July Fourth

We need an American Seder to celebrate all that is good in America—most significantly to celebrate the liberatory elements of the 1776 revolution, and then the struggles of working people, African Americans, women, gays and lesbians, and minority groups like the Jews, Italians, Irish, Hispanics, and Asians which have contributed so very much to the building of a tolerant, multicultural, though still deeply-flawed society. This country has been a miracle in its generosity to Jews and to others. It has created democratic expectations and hopes which are yet to be fulfilled, and which nevertheless have themselves had a revolutionary impact throughout the world. Please don’t think you have to remind me of American imperialism, sexism, racism, etc. I know, and that too has to be acknowledged. But once a year it makes sense to celebrate what’s so good about the United States of America.

I think we should celebrate our achievements with greater seriousness and focus than our society generally does. July Fourth has its picnics and its fireworks, but it rarely has anything meaningful that could reconnect us with what is most wonderful and worthy of celebration: the actual struggles for democracy and human rights which has been at the center of American life since its inception. So we have to create it.

I propose that we create an American Seder—a family meal in which we tell the story of America. To do that, we need an American Haggadah—a collection of readings, rituals, poems, songs, stories, dance and art that together can tell the story in a way that makes it possible for us to remember. Of course, like the Passover Seder, the American Seder should have as part of its focus the telling of the story to our children. But a successful seder does more than that: it reminds us of the deepest truths and inspirations we’ve received from America.

So, would you please try to create your own American Seder this year? Bring stories and poems, inspirational readings and music and art, and then share with us what you did, what parts worked and which parts didn’t. If you think the title “seder” or “haggadah” will make it feel too restrictive, tell us what you think we should call them. Send us your material, and we will try to incorporate it into the American Haggadah which we plan to put together. (Hopefully we can publish parts of a first draft in the July 2002 issue of the magazine.) Send to: American Haggadah, c/o TIKKUN, 2107 Van Ness Ave., Suite 302, San Francisco, CA 94109.

And have fun creating your own American Seder this July Fourth!!!

Death Threats Against Michael Lerner

Here is some of the mail I've received on email:

Date: Tue, 17 Apr 2001 13:29:10 -0700 (PDT)
 From: banzai banzai
 Email: <longliveisrael@yahoo.com>
 Subject: die fucker, die

**you are selfhating little kike.
 one bright day, someone will come
 and kill you. wish you to rot in
 hell, pig**

From: DAVID RAZIEL
 Hebron, Israel
 Email: LEHI@IZL.COM
 To: Rabbi Lerner

**YOU SUBHUMAN LEFTIST ANIMALS YOU
 SHOULD BE ALL EXTERMINATED. YOU
 ARE THE LOWEST OF THE LOW LIFE.**

Ever since Intifada I, I've been receiving death threats from right-wing Jews, because of TIKKUN's position that peace can only be accomplished by ending the Occupation and dismantling the West Bank settlements. Those threats intensified considerably with Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Al Asqa mosque and the outbreak of Intifada II.

But now the issue has moved from "normal threats" to something that is actually scary—the fact that an Israeli website called "self-hate" has identified me as one of the five enemies of the Jewish people, and **printed my home address and driving instructions on how to get to my home.** We reported this to the police, the Israeli Consulate, and to the Anti Defamation League. The ADL said this was not a "hate crime" defined as one directed against someone because of their religion, ethnic, or racial group. But, in my view my position on Israel is a reflection of my religion, which teaches me "*ve'ahavta la'ger*" "Thou shalt love the stranger" and doesn't say "only on condition that they are treating you the way you want to be treated." So the attacks on me are about my religion.

I pointed out to the ADL that TIKKUN was the only Jewish magazine in the world to take a stand that included opposition to the Occupation, a call to dismantle the settlements, and a call for Israel to take partial (not total) responsibility for the plight of Palestinian refugees—and that death threats from right-wing Jews to the editor of such a magazine deserved attention.

In a separate and supportive letter on my behalf, Daniel Ellsberg argued that these threats would never have been sent to a Chinese person who was taking the same stand as I on Israel. And Ellsberg mentioned the case of Salman

Rushdie and the way that the media had focused on those threats against him from fellow Moslems (I suspect in part because it was a way of further villifying Moslems).

What I sought from the Jewish community was some statement of support roughly along the following lines: "We don't agree with TIKKUN's perspective on Israel, but that perspective is well within the bounds of tolerable debate and part of the acceptable discourse within the Jewish community, whereas threats against Michael Lerner and TIKKUN are not." To date, the ADL has refused to put such a statement on their web site or go to the media with this kind of statement.

I am happy to say that the *Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, the *New York Jewish Week*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and *Ha'aretz* did share the information with their readers, and that the local Jewish Community Relations Council condemned threats of violence.

I appreciated some of the support I received when the word got out. Even before these specific threats, the local Oakland chapter of the national writers' organization PEN announced that they were giving me an Award for breaking censorship on Israel, by allowing Palestinian perspectives to be aired both in TIKKUN magazine and on our web site, as well as for challenging the ethos of selfishness and materialism in this society through the ideas I had put forward in *Spirit Matters*. The PEN awards ceremony was a gratifying moment.

When people ask me what to do in response to all this, I have two answers: 1. The best way to fight hate is to put out more love into the world. Even those who hate are people, people who are severely wounded, and those wounds can best be dealt with by compassion rather than by hating back. 2. Publicize these threats and publicly denounce them, because one thing that makes the haters sometimes move from threats to actual violence is when they think that they are merely acting out the larger community's feelings. The climate created by calling Rabin "a traitor" led to his assassination, and the websites that call me a traitor are worrisome for that reason. You can undermine that dynamic when you help people understand that we in the TIKKUN community express our critique of Israel out of love for Israel and the Jewish people, and a deep belief that serving God requires us to insist on the equal sanctity of all people on this planet. Put out love, generosity and compassion—that is the spiritual path of Torah. It's the best defense for Israel. If Israel would trust that generosity would be a more effective defense than repression, it would be much safer to live there. And it's the best protection for me personally, so I send blessings of love even to those who threaten my life.

—RabbiLerner@Tikkun.org

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Strategies for Middle East Peace

Michael Lerner

Stop the violence! We deplore the Hamas terror attack on Israeli civilians at a nightclub in Tel Aviv (and we are glad the PLO and Arafat also immediately condemned them). We deplore the killing of Israeli settlers. We send our love and care to all the families of the victims. We beg the Palestinians to stop these attacks, just as we beg the Israeli government to stop its daily acts of violence and degradation against the Palestinian people (newly documented in a B'Tselem report which you can find on our website, www.tikkun.org).

We've long advocated that the Palestinian people explicitly



Killings on both sides will continue until the Occupation ends.

Concrete Steps for Peace

1 Work to get your synagogue, church, university, community center, or city council to sponsor a public teach-in on the situation in Israel, and make sure that all sides are fairly represented.

2 Challenge media coverage that ignores the kinds of points we make in *TIKKUN*. Call the media (both local and national) and keep steady pressure on them to present the voices of Jews who oppose the Occupation (for more information how to do this, email rabbilerner@tikkun.org). We will send you a list of media people to call if you contact us.

3 Create a local *TIKKUN* Community chapter to work to do education on this issue, while simultaneously developing a core of activists who read and study the issues through *TIKKUN* articles, the *TIKKUN* website, and other material (e.g. reading together Rabbi Lerner's chapter on *Israel in Jewish Renewal*, plus selections from Benny Morris' *Righteous Victims*, etc.)

4 Approach your local elected officials and let them know your stance. Work to get your local city council to pass a resolution asking your elected representatives in Congress to condition further aid to Israel on an end to the Occupation.

5 Help us build an International Peace Corps that would work to end the conflict, enhance reconciliation, and, in the short run, seek to protect the Palestinian people from Israeli violence and seek to stop Palestinian violence as well.

There are several efforts already afoot—you could join one this very summer if you would!!!

- A joint Christian-Jewish group being organized by Rev. Thom Saffold will be active for three weeks in Israel this August. Contact him at Tsaffold@provide.net. Over a

hundred people have already signed up, and many more will be there. His phone: 734-668-1549.

- A specifically Jewish effort: The Jewish Peacemakers Initiative/Rodfei Shalom announces the first North American nonviolent protest delegation to Israel and the Palestinian Territories July 13–August 25 in cooperation with Rabbis for Human Rights, Bat Shalom, *TIKKUN* and many other groups. Details: contact Charles Lenchner, clenchner@foe.org.

- For other such activities, please consult our website www.tikkun.org and join our email list for daily updates (send your name and email address to magazine@tikkun.org and in the subject line say "add me to the email list."

6 Create a *TIKKUN* conference in your community, bringing together people to discuss how progressives can address the challenges of the Ariel Sharon and the George Bush Jr. years.

7 Subscribe to *TIKKUN* and make sure that the voice of the peace forces continues to flourish. And get gift subscriptions for the sort of people who ought to be hearing this kind of talk but are not even exposed to a peace perspective.

8 Become an intern for *TIKKUN* in our San Francisco office (we have no funds to pay, but it's a great experience and a tremendous stepping stone for people who are rethinking their lives and possibly changing their professions, for retirees looking for meaningful ways to spend their time, or for college students who want to spend some time contributing their energies to building peace). Contact us at magazine@tikkun.org. □

EDITORIALS

renounce violence, condemn those Hamas terrorists who have a religious commitment to it, and follow instead the path of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. We believe that the Israeli people still retain sufficient moral decency to change their ways once they feel secure, and a proven record of nonviolence would develop that sense of security. But as long as the institutionalized violence of the Occupation persists, and daily acts of humiliation against the Palestinian people are matched with acts of IDF-protected violence from the settlers, the Palestinian people are not going to be convinced to turn to nonviolence.

Don't be confused by the public relations jockeying going on in the media. All the talk about the Mitchell Commission being implemented or not is irrelevant. We support an end to the violence, but an end to the violence that would leave the settlements in place, a few million Palestinian refugees with no way to get compensation, and an Occupation continuing in all its vicious brutality would not really be a solution to anything. We have to recognize that the Occupation and the settlements are in their essence institutionalized violence, so it makes no sense to ask one side, the Palestinians, to stop their struggle while the occupiers remain in place.

For the time being, both sides are locked in place and nothing is going to change. We are going to face a cycle of violence that will condition fears and hatreds for the next generation.

The only real hope in this context is for some outside force to intervene. If the United States were to use its political and economic muscle, it could stop the fighting, force an end to the Occupation, and a settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem in a way that protects the Jewish character of Israel and yet allows some Palestinians to return. We've previously suggested an international consortium which would offer Palestinians the option of being on a waiting list from which Israel would admit 25,000 Palestinians a year for the next thirty years or instead to receive reparations at a level high enough to enable them to resettle with some significant comforts (an apartment to live in and an economy that was thriving) in a Palestinian state or in the states of their dispersion.

Vice President Cheney and his entourage frame foreign policy in Cold War terms, and in those terms Israel is an important ally which will not be pushed to be more sensitive to human rights concerns.

That leaves us, the ordinary folk who care about Israel and who know that the best interests of Israel and of the Jewish people lie with Israel being pushed to become an embodiment of the highest spiritual values of the Jewish tradition. Toward that end, we need to spend the next few years educating Americans about the need to use American power to push Israel out of its immoral and self-destructive policies.

Will that create anti-Semitism? No—not if the people who are saying this are doing so in the name of the Jewish

tradition, and if our Christian allies are unequivocal in their opposition to the anti-Semitic ideas that sometimes get expressed in the Muslim and Christian world. We need to be equally vigilant against those who label as “anti-Semitic” any criticisms of Israeli policy or Zionism, or those who label as “self-hating” any Jew who talks about the immorality of Israeli treatment of Palestinians.

That's why we need a grassroots campaign. Its first step must be to help fellow Jews and fellow Americans understand why the deal offered by Barak to the Palestinians was unacceptable, and why it was not irrational for Palestinians to turn it down. (See Gush Shalom's *80 Theses* in this issue for such an explanation.)

Second, we need to urge our fellow Americans to make public statements critiquing the Occupation and demanding protection for the Palestinian people and an end to violence against the Israeli people. Third, we need to take acts of nonviolent moral witness that challenge the war machine both in Israel and with its supporters in the United States. □

EDITORIAL POSITION at Tikkun Magazine

We have a job for a brilliant, energetic, creative, and hard-working self-starting progressive Jewish editor. Do everything from soliciting articles and editing and proofreading them to making sure that every aspect of the magazine is functioning well, \$35K/yr plus health care benefits. Send us a self-revealing letter showing your familiarity with TIKKUN and Michael Lerner's *Spirit Matters*, and convincing us why you'd be the perfect person to play a major leadership role and yet not be afraid to do grunt work in a tiny staff that works very hard. What do you like about TIKKUN, what could be changed, what specific ideas do you have for writers, topics, directions for the magazine? What should be left the way it is? And what is it about you that would make this kind of job good for you and you good for us? Email: magazine@tikkun.org or write Editorial Position c/o TIKKUN, 2107 Van Ness Ave, Suite 302, San Francisco, CA 94109.

Lessons Learned in Organizing American Jews

Cherie R. Brown

EDITOR'S NOTE: *On the weekend of May 4–6, a group of some 200 activists met in Chicago and formed JUnity, a loose network of individuals and organizations who wish to bring peace to the Middle East. Cherie Brown was asked to share some of the key lessons she had learned in her thirty-four years of work in the Jewish community as an activist. Here is the substance of her talk.*

In the course of my work, I can trace year to year what I have learned about being a progressive Jewish activist that continues to be helpful to activists today. I invite you to follow me through this history to the proposed practices with which I will conclude.

Creating a New Analysis for Progressive Jews

1968. I was attending the Peace and Freedom Party convention when that party passed the first “Zionism is Racism” resolution. Several of us walked out of the convention to form a Jewish radical movement in the United States. We concluded that the only way to fight the anti-Semitism of the left and the militaristic policies of Israel was to build Jewish progressive organizations, ones that could challenge the right-wing policies of mainstream Jewry while at the same time reflecting a strong, proud Jewish identity.

What did I learn from this break with the Peace and Freedom Party? That we needed a new analysis that had never been put forward previously. We could not let the Jewish community speak for us, nor could we let the left speak for us. We needed a new language and a separate identity as progressive Jews.

Appealing to the Jewish Community through a Common Culture

1969. A small group of us in the Jewish radical community in Los Angeles spent twenty-four hours with Sol Alinsky, the grandparent of community organizing in the United States. As a result of that session, we decided to picket the Jewish Federation. Dressed up as waiters, we interrupted a \$500-a-plate dinner and stood before the leaders of our community, singing “Zog Nit Kamel,” the Jewish partisan

song from the Warsaw ghetto uprising. A number of Jewish leaders at that meeting sobbed as we sang. In that one night we raised \$500,000 from the Jewish community to organize progressive Jewish activities.

What did I learn from this radical activism? That we had to sound like Jews. We did not have to be quiet or non-invasive. We did not even have to refrain from picketing or using revolutionary tactics to win over the Jewish community. But we had to reach their hearts through a commonly shared Jewish language.

Stopping Attacks within the Jewish Community

1979. I attended yet another Washington, D.C. meeting. This time, with the Jewish Defense League pounding down the door and trying to break into the meeting, we launched Breira, a new national peace and justice Middle East organization. “Breira,” in Hebrew, means “choice.” For the first time, many Hillel rabbis from across the country joined in the effort and committed themselves to challenge the policies of the Israeli government. In response, there was an institutionalized campaign in the Jewish press to discredit these rabbis. A number of them lost their jobs. At one point, I got so badly attacked that I was sick for six months, ending up in the hospital.

What did I learn from my work with Breira? That when we Jews are terrified, we can attack our own people quite viciously. I learned that we had to make a solemn pledge to one another: anytime a Jewish activist is attacked, we will leap over any mountain to come to their defense. When an attack is taking place, it is not the time to quibble over whether or not we support that Jewish activist’s politics or tactics (or even if we like that person). If one progressive Jewish activist is being attacked, we are all being attacked.

Overcoming Isolation to Become Effective

1981. The New Jewish Agenda, founded in this year, was one of the best progressive Jewish organizations that we ever launched. The goal of New Jewish Agenda was to be a “progressive voice in the Jewish community and a Jewish voice in the progressive community.” After all the brutal attacks on the leadership of Breira, New Jewish Agenda decided that the policies of the Israeli government would never be challenged successfully without a multi-issue

Cherie R. Brown is the director of the National Coalition Building Institute in Washington, D. C. (www.ncbi.org).

Jewish organization in the United States that could help American Jews break through their Israel-only politics.

However, two weeks before the founding convention of New Jewish Agenda, I started getting urgent phone calls every day from Jewish activists all over the United States. The founding conference had not even taken place yet, but many had already decided that the meeting could not possibly come up with left-enough politics, so they were organizing to set up another fringe caucus! Instead of joining forces and building a unified coalition, these Jewish activists were recreating the all too familiar feeling of isolation by attacking the conference agenda, deciding it would not be left enough, Jewish enough, etc.

New Jewish Agenda was a response, in part, to the attacks from mainstream Jewry on Breira. But what ultimately killed NJA, in my opinion, were not the attacks from the outside, but the attacks on leadership from within the organization. The staff was never completely trusted. Weakened by ongoing bickering and attacks from within, Agenda finally folded.

What did I learn from New Jewish Agenda? That progressive Jews who have functioned in isolation for so long, when given an opportunity to form a national coalition with other like-minded Jews, will find any excuse to recreate the same isolation. For many, it is just too unbearable to imagine that there is an alternative to functioning on the fringes of the Jewish community. However, we cannot build an effective campaign to end the occupation without a strong commitment to support the leadership of that campaign. The leadership must know that they have a mandate to lead—and not be afraid to be creative, to take risks when needed, and to apply the organization's principles in circumstances where there has not yet been time to talk everything out.

In short, ultra-democracy can paralyze effective organizing. Needing a decision from every member before any action can be taken hamstring the leadership, slows action to a standstill, and ends up watering down the activism to the lowest common denominator. The reality is that many people participating in such an "ultra democracy" process end up feeling *more alienated* and less inclined to stay part of the movement.

Using Recognizable Jewish Symbols

1998. Rabbis Arthur Waskow, Mordechai Leibling, and I launched the Break the Silence Campaign to help defeat Netanyahu by letting U.S. Jews know that there was an alternative voice that more accurately expressed their position. At one point, we learned that U.S. negotiators during the Israeli-Palestinian talks in Wye, Maryland, remarked that seeing the Break the Silence ads kept them pursuing peace initiatives when they had been ready to give up. More recently, the Break the Silence campaign placed a new ad in *The New York Times* in support of Rabbis for Human Rights and the Olive Tree Campaign in Israel to replant trees on Palestinian lands and is launching the Sukkah of Shalom this fall. On

October 7 of this year, Jews will gather in Washington, D.C., to call for an end to the occupation and to carry a portable Sukkah to the Israeli Embassy, the offices of the Palestinian Authority, and a yet to be chosen U.S. government building.

What have I learned from the work of Break the Silence? That what worked in 1969 would still work today: organizing U.S. Jews effectively requires the use of simple, easily recognizable Jewish symbols that can inspire Jews, helping them to make a moral and religious commitment to pursue peace efforts. As Jews, we should not be afraid or embarrassed to articulate a Jewish context for our work.

Proposed Practices

At times, over these past thirty-four years, there have been resounding breakthroughs in the peace process, filling us with hope and optimism that we just might be on the right track. At other times, there have been periods of enormous heartbreak when we witnessed all of our hard work and efforts dashed by increased violence and rigid position-taking. We are in this for the long haul—for as long as it takes to achieve peace with justice. And it will take longer than any of us would want. Based on my experience, let me offer four practices that could be integrated into any Jewish progressive strategy.

1. Organizing Coalitions around a One-Point Program

Coalitions like Jewish Unity for a Just Peace can best succeed when there is an agreed-upon one-point program, such as ending the occupation, and an acceptance of a wide range of perspectives on all other policy issues. Twenty years ago, the American Jewish Committee commissioned me to write a practical guide on coalition-building, with a particular focus on Black-Jewish relations. I studied coalitions that worked and those that had fallen apart, and I came up with a set of principles for action. My research indicated that coalitions lasted when they did not require rapid agreement on too many issues before the coalition partners had time to work together to develop sufficient trust.

As best as I can tell, there is widespread agreement among us on the issue of a one-point program to end the occupation. But there is no agreement on the issue of whether there should be a two-state solution—a strong and independent Jewish State side-by-side with a strong and independent Palestinian state—or whether there should be one democratic secular state. Let those of us who want to organize within mainstream Jewry put forward programs based in Jewish symbols and let us advocate a strong two-state solution. And let those who are not inclined to organize mainstream Jewry organize instead within other progressive settings.

There are thousands and thousands of Jews who abhor what is going on in Israel and are not linked to religious or communal Jewish life. Let us get used to working together and build a base of trust on a one-point program to end the

occupation. As trust grows, we will then be able to listen more effectively to one another on other issues.

2. Seeing that We are no Different than Jewish Settlers in Wanting Security

We are they. It is helpful to remember that every single one of us is no different, in many key ways, from the most reactionary settlers on the West Bank. As Jews, many of us carry a number of the very same fears, insecurities, and worries about our survival that we witness in the most right-wing Jews in Israel. We do not live in Israel. We are not desperately holding on to illegal territory. But we are not exempt from Jewish terror. We will not be able to work with U.S. Jews or Israeli Jews if we have not faced and worked through our own similar fears.

Over the past 25 years, I have led about 200 weekend workshops for Jews in Re-Evaluation Counseling in Israel, Switzerland, France, England, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, and the United States. At these workshops, we work together to heal from the scars of internalized Jewish oppression. In each of these workshops, I lead a class for Jews to face their fear, grief, and rage about the situation in Israel so we can think better about how to resolve the conflict. A number of years ago, at these workshops, I began to say that every Jew has a West Bank—namely, that every Jew has at least one place in our lives that we hold onto for security, where we are frightened for our survival. We would fight anyone who asked us to give up that security. For some, it may be prestige, a career, or advanced degrees. For others, it may be a savings account or an anticipated inheritance. For still others, it might be an unhealthy relationship or an addiction to food or alcohol or overwork. How can we work without arrogance and with a sense of integrity to end the occupation if we are not prepared to challenge within ourselves the places where we harbor a need for security, where we harbor our own private West Bank?

3. Challenging Myths Requires Compassion

We will only be able to challenge the widely held myth among American Jews that Israel is a righteous victim when we can reach out to Jews with love and compassion. We want U.S. Jews to acknowledge that Israel has been an occupier and an oppressor of the Palestinian people. And yet, many of us are not prepared to remember that every Jew, no matter how confused they are about Israel, is still deeply good. Since the Holocaust, our people have been a traumatized people. We will not be able to shift policies of American Jews if we are not prepared to organize them with an attitude of compassion.

I will never forget several years ago when my father was visiting me in Washington, D.C. and we decided to visit the U.S. Holocaust Museum. In preparation for our trip to the museum, I began to ask my dad questions that we had never discussed in our family. I asked him when he first found out about the death camps. By 1940, my father was twenty-one

years old and serving in the U.S. Navy. He said that no one in the United States knew what was happening to Jews in Europe. When we got to the museum, I led my dad by the hand to the room with newspaper clippings from all over the world, including the front pages of *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*. Many of the articles dated back to 1938 and 1939. Article after article reported Hitler's design for the Jews, including extermination camps. I walked my Dad through the newspaper room and, hand in hand, we read each article together. He wept after he had finished reading all of the articles, as he courageously faced that some of the information had in fact been available when he was a young adult—it had just been too painful to look at it.

If we do not understand this survival mechanism I saw working in my father—the need to protect ourselves from painful facts, even when it might mean lying to ourselves—we will never be able to organize U.S. Jews around ending the occupation. If U.S. Jews really had to face the depth of the brutality that Israel perpetrates every day against the Palestinian people, they could not live with themselves. And therefore they adopt the myth of the righteous Israelis, always protecting themselves against a hostile Arab population. How do we help our people face this myth with honesty and integrity? What if we thought of every U.S. Jew as a beloved member of our family—someone who has been trying to do the very best that he or she can, no matter how irrational they might be acting. What if we approached every U.S. Jew with firmness but also compassion?

4. Recognizing the Need to Build an Intergenerational Movement

Jewish Unity For a Just Peace can best achieve its goals with an intergenerational coalition that equally welcomes the contributions of younger adults and elders. I have listened to a few of my battle-weary buddies speak out about younger organizers. “Oy!” we say, “Don’t these young organizers know how important it is to organize Jews using Jewish symbols?” And then, I have sat in meetings with a number of younger Jewish activists and I could just sense them thinking, “What you have been doing all of these years has not worked so well, so now it’s our turn to lead.” What if we could commit ourselves to building a genuinely intergenerational coalition, where we appreciate both elder Jewish activists for their wisdom and younger Jewish activists for their innovations?

2001. Today is a moment when it is possible to imagine reconstructing a new national organization of Jewish progressives. There are some who may envision what we are doing as creating a single issue, End-The-Occupation organization whose sole focus is the Middle East. Others may feel that it’s time now to consider a multi-issued progressive Jewish organization. What’s essential, though, is to learn from the past, build on our strengths, and avoid our many prior mistakes. If that can happen, the decades ahead hold much promise for Jewish progressives. □

80 Theses for a New Peace Camp

A Manifesto From Gush Shalom

1. The peace process has collapsed—and taken down with it a large part of the Israeli peace camp.

2. Transient circumstances, such as personal or party political matters, failures of leadership, political self-interest, domestic and global political developments—all these are like foam over the waves. Important as they may be, they cannot adequately explain the peace process's total collapse.

3. The true explanation of this collapse can only be found beneath the surface, at the roots of the historical conflict between the two nations.

4. The Madrid-Oslo process failed because the two sides were seeking to achieve conflicting goals.

5. The goals of each of the two sides emanated from their basic national interests. They were shaped by their historical narratives, by their disparate views of the conflict over the last 120 years. The Israeli national historical version and the Palestinian national historical version are entirely contradictory, both in general and in every single detail.

6. The negotiators and the decision-makers on the Israeli side were completely oblivious to the Palestinian national narrative. Even when they sincerely wished to reach a solution, their efforts were doomed to fail because they could not understand the national desires, traumas, fears, and hopes of the Palestinian people. While there is no symmetry between the two sides, the Palestinian attitude was similar.

7. Resolution of such a long historical conflict is possible only if each side is capable of understanding the other's spiritual-national world and willing to approach it as an equal. An insensitive, condescending, and overbearing attitude precludes any possibility of a mutually-agreed-upon solution.

8. The Barak government, which had inspired so much hope, was afflicted with all these attitudes; hence, the enormous gap between its initial promise and its disastrous results.

9. A significant part of the old peace camp (also called the "Zionist Left" or the "Sane Constituency") is similarly afflicted by these attitudes and therefore collapsed along with the government it supported.

10. The primary role of a new Israeli peace camp is to get rid of the false myths and the one-sided view of the conflict. This does not mean that the Israeli narrative should automatically be rejected and the Palestinian narrative unquestionably accepted. But it does require open-minded listening and understanding of the other side's position in the historical conflict, in order to bridge the two national narratives.

11. Any other way will lead to a perpetuation of the conflict, with periods of ostensible tranquility and conciliation frequently interrupted by violent hostile actions between the two nations and between Israel and the Arab world. Considering the pace of development of weapons of mass destruction, further rounds of hostility could lead to the destruction of all sides to the conflict.

The Root of the Conflict

12. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the continuation of the historical clash between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian Arab people, a clash that began at the end of the nineteenth century and has yet to end.

13. The Zionist movement was, essentially, a Jewish reaction to the emergence of the national movements in Europe, all of which were hostile to Jews. Having been rejected by the European nations, some of the Jews decided to establish themselves as a separate nation and, following the new European model, to set up their own national state where they could be masters of their own fate. The basic Zionist tenet, drawn from the European model, that a minority cannot exist within a nationally-homogenous state, subsequently led to the practical exclusion of the Palestinian national minority in the Zionist state that came into being about fifty years later.

14. Traditional and religious motives drew the Zionist movement to Palestine (Eretz Israel in Hebrew) and led to the decision to establish the Jewish state in this land. The maxim was: "a land without a people for a people without a land." This maxim was not only created out of ignorance, but also reflected the general

Gush Shalom is an Israeli non-partisan grassroots peace movement composed of Jews and Arabs. These theses were drafted by Gush Shalom founder Uri Avnery.

arrogance towards non-European peoples that prevailed in Europe at that time.

15. Palestine was not empty—not at the end of the nineteenth century, nor at any other period. At that time, there were half a million people living in Palestine, 90 percent of them Arabs. This population objected, of course, to the incursion of another nation into their land.

16. The Arab national movement emerged almost simultaneously with the Zionist movement, initially to fight the Ottoman Empire and later to fight the colonial regimes created upon its destruction at the end of World War I. A separate Arab-Palestinian national movement developed in the country after the British created a separate state called “Palestine,” and in the course of the struggle against the Zionist infiltration.

17. Since the end of World War I, there has been an ongoing struggle between two nationalist movements, the Jewish-Zionist and the Palestinian-Arab, both of which aspired to accomplish their goals—which entirely negate each other—within the same territory. This situation remains unchanged to this day.

18. As Jewish persecution in Europe intensified, and as the countries of the world closed their gates to the Jews attempting to flee the inferno, so the Zionist movement gained strength. The Holocaust, which took the lives of six million Jews, gave moral and political force to the Zionist claim that led to the establishment of the State of Israel.

19. The Palestinian people, witnessing the growth of the Jewish population in their land, could not comprehend why they were required to pay the price for crimes committed against the Jews by Europeans. They violently objected to further Jewish immigration and to the acquisition of lands by the Jews.

20. The complete blindness of each of the two peoples to the national existence of the other inevitably led to false and distorted perceptions that took root deep in the collective consciousness of both. These perceptions affect their attitude towards each other to this day.

21. The Arabs believed that the Jews had been implanted in the country by Western imperialism, in order to subjugate the Arab world and take control of its treasures. This conviction was strengthened by the fact that the Zionist movement, from the outset, strove for an alliance with at least one Western power (Germany, Great Britain, France, the United States) to overcome the Arab resistance. The results were a practical cooperation and a community of interests between the Zionist enterprise and imperialist and colonialist forces, directed against the Arab national movement.

22. The Jews, on the other hand, were convinced that the Arab resistance to the Zionist enterprise—

intended to save the Jews from the flames of Europe—was the consequence of the murderous nature of the Arabs and of Islam. In their eyes, Arab fighters were “gangs,” and the uprisings of the time were called “riots.”

(Actually, in the 1920s, the most extreme Zionist leader, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, was almost alone in recognizing that the Arab resistance to the Zionist settlement was an inevitable, natural, and, from this point of view, just reaction of a “native” people defending their country against foreign invaders. Jabotinsky also recognized the fact that the Arabs in the country were a separate national entity and derided attempts made to bribe the leaders of other Arab countries to put an end to the Palestinian Arab resistance. However, Jabotinsky's conclusion was to erect an “iron wall” against the Arabs and to crush their resistance by force.)

23. This total contradiction in Arab and Jewish perceptions of the facts affects every aspect of the conflict. For example, the Jews interpreted their struggle for “Jewish Labor” as a progressive social effort to transform a nation of merchants and speculators into one of workers and farmers. The Arabs, on the other hand, saw it as a criminal attempt by the Zionists to dispossess them, to evict them from the labor market, and to create, on their land, an Arab-free, separatist Jewish economy.

24. The Zionists were proud of their “Redemption of the Land.” They had purchased it for full value with money collected from Jews around the world. “*Olim*” (new immigrants, literally pilgrims) who had been intellectuals and merchants in their former life, now earned their living by the sweat of their brow. They believed that they had achieved all this by peaceful means and without dispossessing a single Arab. For the Arabs this was a cruel narrative of dispossession and expulsion: The Jews acquired lands from rich absentee Arab landowners and then forcibly evicted the *fellahin* who had, for generations, been living on and earning their living from these lands. To help them with these evictions, the Zionists engaged the Turkish and, later, the British police. The Arabs looked on, despairingly, as their land was taken from them.

25. Against the Zionist claim of having successfully “turned the desert into a garden,” the Arabs cited the testimonies of European travelers who spoke of a Palestine that, for several centuries, had been described as a populated and flourishing land, the equal of any of its regional neighbors.

Independence and Disaster

26. The contrast between the two national versions peaked in the war of 1948, a war called “the War of Independence” or even “the War of Liberation” by the Jews, and “El Naqba,” the disaster, by the Arabs.

27. As the conflict intensified in the region, and with the resounding impact of the Holocaust, the United Nations decided to divide the country into two states, Jewish and Arab. Jerusalem and its environs were supposed to remain a separate unit, under international jurisdiction. The Jews were allotted 55 percent of the land, including the unpopulated Negev.

28. The Zionist movement accepted the partition plan, convinced that the crucial issue was to establish a firm foundation for Jewish sovereignty. In closed meetings, David Ben-Gurion never concealed his intention to expand, at the first opportunity, the territory given to the Jews. That is why Israel's Declaration of Independence did not define the state's borders and Israel has remained without definite borders to this day.

29. The Arab world did not accept the partition plan and regarded it as a vile attempt by the United Nations, which essentially was at the time a club of Western and Communist nations, to divide a country that did not belong to it. Handing over most of the country to the Jewish minority, which represented a mere third of the population, made it all the more unforgivable in their eyes.

30. The war initiated by the Arabs after the partition plan was, inescapably, an "ethnic" war; a kind of war in which each side seeks to conquer as much land as possible and evict the population of the other side. Such a campaign (which later came to be called "ethnic cleansing") always involves expulsion and atrocities.

31. The war of 1948 was a direct extension of the Zionist-Arab conflict in which each side sought to fulfill its aims. The Jews wanted to establish a homogenous, national state that would be as large as possible. The Arabs wanted to eradicate the Zionist Jewish entity that had been established in Palestine.

32. Both sides practiced ethnic cleansing as an integral part of the fighting. Not many Arabs remained in territories captured by the Jews and no Jews remained in territories captured by the Arabs. However, as the territories captured by the Jews were by far larger than those captured by the Arabs, the result was unbalanced. (The ideas of "population exchange" and "transfer" were raised in Zionist organizations as early as the 1930s. Effectively this meant the expulsion of the Arab population from the country. On the other side, many among the Arabs believed that the Zionists should go back to wherever they came from.)

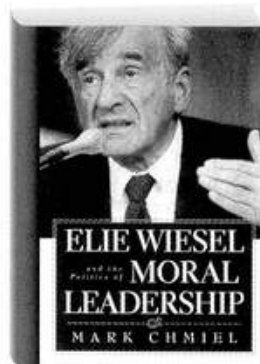
33. The myth of "the few against the many" was cultivated by the Jews to describe the stand of the Jewish community of 650,000 against the entire Arab world of over a hundred million. (The Jewish community lost one percent of its people in the war.) The Arabs painted a completely different picture: A fragmented Arab population

with no national leadership to speak of, with no unified command over its meager forces, with poor, few, and mostly obsolete weapons, confronted an extremely well-organized Jewish community that was highly trained in the use of its weapons. The neighboring Arab countries betrayed the Palestinians and, when they finally did send their armies, they primarily operated in competition with each other, with no coordination and no common plan. From the social and military point of view, the fighting capabilities of the Israeli side were far superior to those of the Arab states, which had hardly emerged from the colonial era.

34. According to the United Nations plan, the Jewish State was supposed to include an Arab population amounting to about 40 percent. During the war the Jewish State expanded its borders and ended up with 78 percent of the area of the land. This area was nearly devoid of Arabs. The Arab populations of Nazareth and a few villages in the Galilee remained almost incidentally; the villages in the Triangle had been given to Israel as part of a deal by King Abdullah and, therefore, could not be evacuated.

35. In the war a total of 750,000 Palestinians were uprooted. Some of them fled out of fear of the battle, as civilian populations do in every war. Some were driven away by acts of terror such as the Dir-Yassin Massacre. Others were systematically evicted in the course of the ethnic cleansing.

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36. No less important than the expulsion is the fact that the refugees were not allowed to return to their homes when the fighting was over, as is the practice after a conventional war. Quite to the contrary, the new Israel saw the removal of the Arabs very much as a blessing and proceeded to demolish totally some 450 Arab villages. New Jewish villages were built on the ruins, and new Hebrew names were given to them. The abandoned houses in the cities were repopulated with new immigrants.

A Jewish State

37. The signing of the cease-fire agreements at the end of the war of 1948 did not bring an end to the historical conflict, which was, in fact, raised to new and more intensive levels.

38. The new State of Israel dedicated its early years to the consolidation of its homogenous national character as a "Jewish State." Large sections of land were expropriated from the "absentees" (the Arab refugees), from those officially designated as "present absentees" (Arabs who physically remained in Israel but were not allowed to become citizens), and even from the Arab citizens of Israel, most of whose lands were taken over. On these lands a dense network of Jewish communities was created. Jewish "immigrants" were invited and even coaxed to come en masse. This great effort fortified the State's power several times over in but a few years.

39. At the same time the State vigorously conducted a policy of obliterating the Palestinians as a national entity. With Israeli help, the Trans-Jordan monarch, Abdullah, took control over the West Bank and since then there has been, in effect, an Israeli military guarantee for the existence of the Kingdom of Jordan.

40. The main rationale of the deal between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom, which has been in effect for three generations, was to prevent the establishment of an independent Arab-Palestinian State, which was considered—then and now—an obstacle to the realization of the Zionist objective.

41. A historical change occurred at the end of the 1950s on the Palestinian side when Yasser Arafat and his associates founded the Fatah movement designed to free the Palestinian liberation movement from the custody of the Arab governments. It was no accident that this movement emerged after the failure of the great Pan-Arab concept whose most renowned representative was Gamal Abdel Nasser. Up to this point many Palestinians had hoped to be absorbed into a united All-Arab Nation. When this hope faded, the separate national Palestinian identity re-emerged.

42. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was created by Gamal Abdel Nasser to prevent

autonomous Palestinian action that might involve him in an undesired war with Israel. The organization was intended to impose Egyptian authority over the Palestinians. However, after the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war, Fatah, led by Yasser Arafat, took control over the PLO and the PLO has been the sole representative of the Palestinian people ever since.

The Six Day War

43. The June 1967 war is seen in a very different light by the two sides, as is every incident over the last 120 years. According to the Israeli myth, the Six Day War was a desperate war of defense, which miraculously placed a lot of land in Israel's hands. According to the Palestinian myth, the leaders of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan fell into a trap set by Israel in order to capture whatever was left of Palestine.

44. Many Israelis believe that the Six Day War was the root of all evil and it was only then that the peace-loving and progressive Israel turned into a conqueror and an occupier. This conviction allows them to maintain the absolute purity of Zionism and the State of Israel up to that point in history and preserve their old myths. There is no truth to this legend.

45. The war of 1967 was yet another phase of the old struggle between the two national movements. It did not change the essence; it only changed the circumstances. The essential objectives of the Zionist movement—a Jewish State, expansion, and settlement—were making great strides. The particular circumstances made extensive ethnic cleansing impossible in this war, but several hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were nevertheless expelled.

46. Israel was allotted 55 percent of the land (Palestine) by the 1947 partition plan, an additional 23 percent was captured in the 1948 war and now the remaining 22 percent, across the "Green Line" (the pre-1967 armistice line), was also captured. In 1967 Israel inadvertently united the Palestinian people (including some of the refugees) under its rule.

47. As soon as the war ended, the settlement movement began. Almost every political faction in the state participated in this movement—from the messianic-nationalistic "Gush Emunim" to the "leftist" United Kibbutz movement. The first settlers received broad support from most politicians, left and right, from Yigal Alon (the Jewish settlement in Hebron) to Shimon Peres (the Kedumim settlement).

48. The fact that all governments of Israel cultivated and advanced the settlements, albeit to different extents, proves that the settlement aspiration was restricted to no specific ideological camp and extended to the entire Zionist movement. The impression that has been created

of a small minority driving the settlement movement is illusory. Only a consolidated effort on the part of all government agencies since 1967 could have produced the legislative, strategic, and budgetary infrastructure required for such a long-lasting and expensive endeavor.

49. The legislative infrastructure incorporates the misleading assumption that the Occupation Authority is the owner of "government-owned lands," although these are the essential land reserves of the Palestinian population. It is self-evident that the settlement movement contravenes international law.

50. The dispute between the proponents of "Greater Israel" and those of "territorial compromise" is essentially a dispute about the way to achieve the basic Zionist aspiration: a homogenous Jewish State in as large a territory as possible. The proponents of "compromise" emphasize the demographic issue and want to prevent the inclusion of the Palestinian population in the State. The "Greater Israel" adherents place the emphasis on the geographic issue and believe (privately or publicly) that it is possible to expel the non-Jewish population from the country (code name: "Transfer").

51. The general staff of the Israeli army (under Ariel Sharon in particular) played an important role in the planning and building of the settlements. It created the map of the settlements—including blocs of settlements and bypass roads, lateral and longitudinal—so that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are chopped up into pieces and the Palestinians are imprisoned in isolated enclaves, each of which is surrounded by settlements and the occupation forces.

52. The Palestinians employed several methods of resistance, mainly raids across the Jordanian and Lebanese borders and attacks inside Israel and everywhere in the world. These acts are called "terrorist" by the Israelis while the Palestinians see them as the legitimate resistance of an occupied nation. The PLO leadership, headed by Yasser Arafat, had long been considered a terrorist leadership by the Israelis but has gradually come to be internationally recognized as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people.

53. At the end of 1987, when the Palestinians realized that these actions were not putting an end to the settlement momentum, they launched the Intifada—a grass-roots uprising of all sectors of the population. In this Intifada, 1500 Palestinians were killed, among them hundreds of children, several times the number of Israeli losses.

The Peace Process

54. The October 1973 war, which commenced with the surprise victory of the Egyptian and Syrian forces and culminated with their defeat, convinced Yasser

Arafat and his close associates that there is no military way to achieve the national Palestinian objectives. He decided to embark upon a political path to reach agreement with Israel and to pursue at least a partial achievement of the national goals through negotiation.

55. To prepare the ground for this, Arafat created contact for the first time with Israeli personalities who could make an impact on public opinion and on government policy in Israel. His emissaries (Said Hamami and Issam Sartawi) met with Israeli public figures, the peace pioneers who in 1975 established the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

56. These contacts, as well as the growing fatigue felt by the Israelis during the Intifada, the Jordanian withdrawal from the West Bank, changing international conditions (the collapse of the Communist bloc, the Gulf War) led to the Madrid Conference and, later, to the Oslo Agreement.

The Oslo Agreement

57. The Oslo Agreement had positive and negative features.

58. On the positive side, this agreement brought Israel to its first official recognition of the Palestinian people and its national leadership and brought the national Palestinian movement to its recognition of the existence of Israel. In this respect the agreement (and the exchange of letters that preceded it) were of paramount historical significance.

59. In effect, the agreement gave the national Palestinian movement a territorial base on Palestinian land, the structure of a "state in the making," and armed forces—facts that would play an important role in the ongoing Palestinian struggle. For the Israelis, the agreement opened the gates to the Arab world and put an end to Palestinian attacks—as long as the agreement was effective.

60. The most substantive flaw in the agreement was that both sides hoped to achieve entirely different objectives. The Palestinians saw it as a temporary agreement paving the way to the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State in all the occupied territories. The respective Israeli governments regarded it as a way to maintain the occupation in large sections of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with the Palestinian self-government filling the role of an auxiliary security agency protecting Israel and the settlements.

61. Therefore, Oslo did not represent the beginning of the process to end the conflict but, rather, a new phase of the conflict.



On the Jewish Civil War and the New Prophetic

Marc H. Ellis

At the turn of the twentieth century, Zionism was a decidedly minority movement among Jews, opposed by most religious and secular Jewish organizations in Europe and America. Even during the Nazi period and after, significant portions of Jewish life remained either indifferent toward or actively opposed to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Opposition to a Jewish state was voiced even by Zionists who opted for a cultural or spiritual understanding of a Jewish homeland.

Since the creation of Israel, there has likewise been no shortage of internal dissent concerning the cycle of violence and atrocity between Israelis and Palestinians. Soldiers under Yitzhak Rabin's command in the 1948 war, educated in "cosmopolitan" ways, refused to cleanse Arab villagers from areas that would become part of the new Israeli state. During the Israeli bombing of Beirut in the 1980s, some Israeli soldiers refused to serve in Lebanon. During the Palestinian uprising, other Israeli soldiers saw, in the policy of might and beatings, images of Nazi brutality once carried out against Jews. For many Jews a transposition had taken place in Jewish life: Were Jews, in denying the rights of Palestinians, acting like those who had denied Jewish rights across the millennia?

As the tradition of dissent has grown over the years, Jewish leadership has become increasingly accepting of Israeli policies which, at different times in the last decades, shocked the Jewish world. The recent Palestinian uprising has now raised the stakes significantly, as reports circulate of Israeli tanks and helicopter gunships surrounding and menacing a defenseless civilian population. This current violence comes after almost a decade of peace talks, as the implementation of the Oslo accords has constantly been delayed and violated, as settlements grow ever bigger and

more provocative, and as bypass roads and tunnels cut through and around West Bank cities and villages. This second intifada has raised both the consciousness of Jewish dissenters and the rhetoric of Jewish leaders.

Even those Jewish dissenters who initially accepted Oslo have emerged in the post-Oslo era with a new voice. Rather than policy implementation, for example, TIKKUN now speaks of witnessing to values in the Jewish tradition that are being systematically violated. Lerner writes most forcefully: "We want the world to know that in this dark period there

were Jews who stood up and proclaimed their commitment to a Judaism that would fight for a world in which every human being is treated with respect and the sense of sanctity that are central to a spiritual vision of the world." At the same time, however, major Jewish organizations have been placing full-page advertisements in papers like the *New York Times*, calling for Jewish unity in the face of Palestinian aggression and what they term the Palestinian refusal to accept

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the "offers" of the Israeli government for a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In these calls for Jewish unity, the helicopter gunships used by Israel are not mentioned, nor is the closure of towns and cities.

The Jewish establishment and Jewish dissenters have been arguing over the same turf—the moral innocence of the Jewish people, born of Jewish suffering. Jewish leadership proclaims this innocence to be self-evident; Jewish dissenters believe an original Jewish innocence is in need of recovery. Forgotten by both sides is the view that Jews were never more innocent than other peoples, an initial Jewish response to the establishment of the State of Israel that explicitly refused to claim a right to a homeland uncontested by another people. In the emergency years of the post-Holocaust world, Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Hannah Arendt, who favored the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine but who opposed the creation of the State of Israel, desired fraternal bonds between Jews and Arabs in a changing Palestine and, whatever the claims of either people, envisioned a mutually interdependent empowerment.

Marc H. Ellis is University Professor of American and Jewish Studies and Director of the Center for American and Jewish Studies at Baylor University. His forthcoming book is *Practicing Exile* (Fortress Press, 2001).

If Israel, like any other nation-state, is not innocent, if its own trajectories have less to do with an ancient ethical tradition than with modern state-building, if it can, again like any nation-state, only use religion and religiosity for its own purposes, then the dissenters' attempt to call Israel to its Jewishness is a lost battle; its Jewishness can only be dimly perceived as traditional and worthy of discussion in a spiritual way. Instead of encouraging dissenters, that is, instead of encouraging those who wish to reform Judaism from within, we must look to a more radical, prophetic tradition. We must be willing to embrace Jews of conscience who are willing to abandon the Jewish establishment entirely and go into exile in order to combat the abusive practices of the Jewish state.

Constantinian Judaism

The Judaism which is presently practiced in Israel and among the Jewish leadership in America parallels the ties that Christianity has had in nation-states after it was elevated from a persecuted sect to a state religion. Historians call the linking of the Christian Church to the state Constantinian Christianity. We must begin to consider that, in the State of Israel, we now have a Constantinian Judaism.

Constantinian Christianity transformed its ethical and spiritual witness into a set of policies that legitimated the state and elevated its own respectability. Though the texts of the Christian spiritual tradition and the symbolism of its deepest impulses remained, in fact a new religion evolved that used the subversive message of its early years as a cover for the development of a theocratic orthodoxy that would have scandalized the early followers of Jesus.

Is not this what has happened to Judaism in our time, the initiation of a Constantinian Judaism in service to the state and to power? Are not Jewish dissidents in the same position that Christian dissidents find themselves? Of course, since Judaism has developed this sensibility only in the last decades, and as its population is minuscule compared to global Christianity, the scope of Jewish Constantinianism is much smaller. At the same time, though, there is less on the line for Christians than for Jews, for the Constantinianism of Christianity has become so widespread and diffused that no one Christian community seems immediately concerned about the other. Nor has the Christian community, at least in the West, come through an experience of suffering like the Holocaust.

What is clear is that the Jewish leadership is fully assimilated to this Constantinianism in Israel and America, and most Jews follow this path to achieve security and affluence.

In concrete terms, Jewish Constantinianism means that, no matter what agreements Israel finally signs with the Palestinians, justice will be distant and secondary. At any moment Israel can declare another emergency, real or imagined, and continue on its way. Jewish dissidents are permanently within a cycle they did not begin and cannot control, for they can only react rather than chart new directions.



What are Jewish dissenters to do? On the one hand, they seek to argue as Jews, within the Jewish tradition and for a Jewish future. On the other hand, by competing for the same terrain as Jewish leadership, dissenters enter into compromise, arguing ethics within a Constantinian Judaism that is beholden to the state and to power. Any ethical challenge, any headway that Jewish dissenters make, will be within a united framework acceptable to and defined by the leaders of Constantinian Judaism.

Trying to prove one's Jewishness in this arrangement is to be on the defensive and destined to fail the test. For how much more can ethics be challenged than the wholesale dislocation of a people, aerial bombardments of defenseless cities, closures of towns and villages for weeks and months at a time, assassination squads and torture legitimated by the courts? How long before an ethical tradition is simply declared dead rather than argued for in compromise?

This ethical challenge is highlighted in the arena that should be the freest from *realpolitik*, the university. Jewish leadership is most often thought to reside within Jewish organizations like the Anti-Defamation League and rabbinic associations. As important, however, is the network of university-affiliated academics in administration, in Jewish Studies programs, and in Holocaust Studies chairs. More than any other group, university-affiliated Jewish administrators and scholars, though mostly liberal in orientation, have stifled debate on university campuses around the country. Competing for their own legitimacy as Jewish scholars, they have often silenced their own voices and voices to the

left of their positions. They, too, have been caught in the bind that forces compromise, twisted into a position which allows them to criticize without effectively challenging the dominant establishment. In fact, dissenting Jews, whether identified with the university or identified with TIKKUN, have not only helped stifle dissent to the left of them, but in doing so have helped shield the Jewish world from a deeper understanding of the dilemmas Jews face as a people and a possible movement beyond the present impasse.

Dissenters have been engulfed by the establishment before; in fact, in our lifetime. Constantinian Judaism arose out of Rabbinic Judaism only through the alchemy of changing historical circumstances matched with a vigorous theology of dissent formulated in response to the Holocaust. A glance back at this recent history explains why we cannot trust the current surge of dissent against the State of Israel's policies to usher in anything other than a renewed establishment.

Holocaust Theology as Dissent

Rabbinic Judaism is a Judaism of textuality and hope framed by a larger society that at best tolerates the presence of Jews, and at worst seeks their removal. It began to break down as a response to the emergence of Jewish power in America and Israel, and particularly with the end of the adversarial character of Western Christianity. Without the ongoing experience of ghettoization, Rabbinic Judaism lost its contextual grounding; correspondingly, the canonical texts of Judaism, formed, affirmed, and studied only within Rabbinic Judaism, lost their hold on Jews and Judaism.

Though the experience of the Holocaust would seem to have reinforced Rabbinic Judaism—after all, what better example could there be of a society eager to purge Jews from its presence than Nazi Germany—the Jewish response to the Holocaust was framed as a dissent from Rabbinic Judaism based precisely on that theology's inability to respond either to the extreme purgation of Jews during the Holocaust or to the growth of Jewish power after the Holocaust. Within Holocaust theology, Rabbinic Judaism becomes a lost world of beauty and limitations; the Torah becomes a place of challenge where the very claims and tensions of the text are used as springboards for a radical questioning of God and God's fidelity found there.

Yet Holocaust theology becomes dominant because it preserves and transforms key elements of Rabbinic Judaism, particularly the rabbinic belief in the chosenness of Jews and Jewish life, a chosenness paradoxically heightened by God's inability to protect Jews and the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Jewish people. Holocaust theology follows the pattern of dissent in which the prophetic—that is, a truly radical reworking of the tradition based on the call of conscience—remains unannounced in specific terms or figures, at least as traditionally recognized by the rabbis. Rather, the “prophets” become the Holocaust theologians

themselves: Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, for example, or those who further Jewish survival and empowerment, such as David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. Israel itself becomes the new center of the canon, invoked with a regularity that is reminiscent of the cycle of Torah readings. A new Torah comes into being, with the tension in the traditional canon replaced by an alternating rhythm of suffering and empowerment in the contemporary world. Of the ancient Torah and the rabbinic framework, only that which speaks to the Holocaust and Israel is relevant. The ancient bends to the contemporary or is rejected.

Neither the Rabbinic era nor the era of dissent following the Holocaust allow room for the prophetic without restraint. Their respective theologies began as subversive and insurgent, only to become orthodoxies that diminish and refuse the context that evolves within their own ascendancy. Rabbinic Judaism initially refuses the Holocaust as a category that is religiously charged with depth and consequence; Holocaust theology refuses the critique of Jewish empowerment as worthwhile of consideration. Rabbinic Judaism refuses to see the contemporary history of suffering and empowerment as defining; Holocaust theology refuses to acknowledge the arrival of Constantinian Judaism, or its complicity in that arrival.

Only in the last phase of Holocaust theology are the ethics of Jewish power discussed, and only in terms of defending an Israel undergoing a relentless critique by a new wave of Jewish dissenters in the wake of the invasion of Lebanon in the early 1980s and the policy of beatings instituted to crush the Palestinian uprising in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Moving beyond the earlier theologies of Elie Wiesel and Emil Fackenheim that saw Israel as an innocent dream and only in relation to the suffering of the Holocaust, Irving Greenberg, an Orthodox rabbi and president of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, sought to reconcile the uses of Israeli power with Jewish ethics. But in an interesting and instructive way, Greenberg, in spite of his orthodoxy, does not surface the tensions of the biblical text important for this discussion. Rather, he divides Jewish history into eras where the determining factor for Jewish ethics becomes the present crisis revolving around the Holocaust and the survival of Israel. This allows Greenberg the freedom to demote the prophetic from a revolutionary model to a fascinating and limited anachronism.

For Holocaust theologians like Greenberg, in an era when the commanding voice of Jewish life issues not from Sinai but from Auschwitz, in an era when the central religious commandment of our time is empowerment rather than the critique of power, the prophetic call to conscience must be disciplined and relegated to a secondary status. For the unintended consequences of the prophetic demand to put ethics before nation-building, when applied to the state of Israel, can only lead in his view to the destruction of Israel and thus a second Holocaust. In what has now clearly

become a Constantinian Judaism, Jewish life takes precedence over the prophetic and the ethics of Jewish power trumps the power of Jewish ethics. After the Holocaust, no one, not even God, can override the Jewish nation-state in understanding and maintaining this mission. A theology of dissent has become the new establishment.

Current Jewish Dissent

In the face of Constantinian Judaism's ban on the prophetic, Jewish dissenters against current Israeli policies are in a difficult, perhaps impossible, bind. Like the Holocaust theologians, they affirm the end of the Rabbinic era, or at least Rabbinic Judaism as it was practiced in Jewish history. Also, like the Holocaust theologians and the Constantinian theology to which they gave rise, Jewish dissenters affirm the centrality of the Holocaust for contemporary Jewish experience. It is true that dissenters use the Holocaust to call for an end to Palestinian suffering, on the basis that if the suffering of the Holocaust justifies Israel as a nation state for the survivors, it also mandates the refusal to cause others to suffer. However, that position traps dissenters into also confirming the need for an Israeli state based on the very ethics of suffering and power that they must also condemn.

Clearly, the critique by Jewish dissenters of Israel is limited to the post-1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the "aberrational" policies that followed. Despite the suffering caused the Palestinians in the creation of Israel, Jews, in the dissenters' view, had no choice but to found a nation-state after the Holocaust. Like Holocaust theologians, Jewish dissenters limit the prophetic in time and tone. They agree with each other that the undermining of Israel's *raison d'être* and the power to maintain its existence is an unpardonable sin to be punished with excommunication from the Jewish world. Where Jewish dissenters of Israel and Holocaust theologians disagree is over the nature of Israel's current policies. To combat Holocaust theology's embrace of the ethics of power, today's dissenters have turned back to religious language. Here talmudic interpretation is found again, but is mixed with a new age sensibility which eclipses the hard judgements and theological intervention of the prophets and God in Jewish life. Torah and Talmud are cited, that is, not in a prophetic manner which would question the very foundation of the Jewish state, but instead to merely shore up that foundation. Indeed, the dissenters' very belief that "Jewishness," rather than the imperatives of the nation-state itself, is determining current policies, shows how deep their denial of the force of Constantinian Judaism is, and how complicit they ultimately are with it.

Like all renewal movements, the current wave of Jewish dissenters seek to renew Judaism by calling it back to its best intentions and possibilities. Constantinian religiosity, however, typically fights this renewal, absorbs part of it, and

then claims it as its own even as the critique is transformed and vitiated. This is the fate of Christian reformers. How will Jewish dissenters escape this fate; how will they be able to avoid losing the battle they rage while becoming fuel for the continuation and expansion of the very establishment they fight? The answer is that the agreed-upon parameters of the civil war, Jew vs. Jew, are obsolete, and can only result in a continuation of a cycle of legitimation and critique that leaves the Palestinian people suffering and the Jewish ethical tradition gutted. To succeed in loosening itself from Constantinian Judaism, Jewish dissent must free itself from the "acceptable parameters" of Jewish dissent. This means that the hoped-for return to Jewish innocence must be left behind.

Prophetic Judaism

Instead of choosing to dissent from within the tradition, Renewal Jews must take the step to prophecy and become Jews of conscience. Jews of conscience refuse the hypocrisy of the Jewish establishment and the compromises of Jewish dissenters. They abandon the rearguard arguments about Jewish identity. In the main, Jews of conscience are secular Jews because religious language itself has become so compromised that the very notion of religiosity, no matter how beautifully rendered and appealingly presented, is anathema. In essence, Jews of conscience flee the Jewish world even as they act and organize against Israeli policies of displacement and occupation. Jews of conscience are in an exile that has no expectation and perhaps, because of their situation, no possibility of return.

What Jews of conscience seem to be saying to the Jewish establishment is that Jewish history *as we have known it and inherited it* is over. The fight is no longer for Jewish survival or Jewish innocence; the very category of Jewishness is now a quagmire that admits of no resolution or forward movement. For these new prophets, a level of hypocrisy has entered Jewish life from which there is no recovery. The Jewish world as it has been known and inherited is no longer able to provide a future worth bequeathing to the next generation.

In 1969, Emmanuel Levinas, the French Jewish philosopher, wrote an essay titled "Judaism and the Present." In this essay, Levinas discerns the central trajectory of the Judaic sensibility and the role of the Jewish prophet. Judaism, he writes, is a "non-coincidence with its time, within coincidence: in the radical sense of the term it is an anachronism, the simultaneous presence of a youth that is attentive to reality and impatient to change it, an old age that has seen it all and is returning to the origins of things." Of the prophetic within Judaism, Levinas writes that the "most deeply committed man, one who can never be silent, the prophet, is also the most separate being, and the person



least capable of becoming an institution. Only the false prophet has an official function." Levinas concludes his discussion of Judaism and the prophetic with this haunting and perceptive challenge: "But this essential content [of Judaism and the prophetic] cannot be learned like a catechism or summarized like a credo...It is acquired through a way of living that is a ritual and heartfelt generosity, wherein a human fraternity and an attention to the present are reconciled with an eternal distance in relation to the contemporary world. It is an asceticism, like the training of a fighter."

This summation of Judaism and the prophetic is for Levinas the essence of the Judaic and its contribution to the world. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, prophetic Judaism is at one and the same time in danger of disappearing and reappearing with incredible force. Constantinian Judaism signals the prophetic's disappearance in an announced Jewish form; Jewish dissenters raise the prophetic possibilities inherent in the Judaic in a fascinating and compromised form; Jews of conscience testify to the survival of the prophetic without being able to articulate this sensibility in symbol or meaning.

The procession of Judaism and the prophetic, this Judaic sensibility which, according to Levinas, refuses idols, mystery, and magic, accompanies these Jews of conscience into exile. Determinedly agnostic toward eschatological claims made by religion and the state, and refusing a predestined and confined pattern of worship and loyalty, Jews of conscience proceed into an uncertain future. The questions of symbolic representation to self and others, of fulfilling and passing the tradition down to their children, of proclaiming a special status or even deriving an ascendant status from the popularity of Judaism and Jewish life in our time—these remain unaddressed by Jews in exile. Unlike Jewish dissenters, who always leave the door open for a return and an inheritance of Jewish establishment life, Jews of conscience are far afield, without signposts or destination. The Holocaust is rarely discussed and Israel is seen as a lost land, a foreign territory. They are the basis of a new diaspora of conscience.

The End of (Jewish) History?

What does this reassertion of the diaspora mean for Jewish life and for the prophetic? Does it mean that Judaism is fundamentally diaspora in its sensibility and that the tensions found in its canonical text make it almost impossible to maintain a faithful religiosity in a nation-state claiming Jewish affiliation? Now that the prophetic has been lifted from the canon, now that the claim of God's instrumentality and voice have been muted, must we acknowledge that the very source of the prophetic and the very claims of the prophets can no longer be made?

Jews of conscience proceed into an uncertain future.

The arrival of helicopter gunships as the witness of the Jewish people, as central to Jewish life as the Torah once was, and the gathering of millions of Jews in a nation-state that in its creation caused a catastrophe for the Palestinian people, do not demonize Jewish history or relegate it only to a colonial and imperial power. The militarization of Jewish life and thought can be recognized and opposed without condemning the struggles and limitations of Jewish history as told through the biblical canon or through a history of rejection and ghettoization.

The idea that a people's history is unidirectional, without evolution of thought and practice, and without choices that have been made and can be made again, is a form of determinism and racism that others have used against Jews and Jews have used against others. So, too, the idea of separation of peoples as desirable and permanent for the protection and projection of identity. That Jewish history has come to an end as we have known it and inherited it does not mean that Judaism, the very touchstone of the Judaic, has lost its force in the world. It only means that the contemporary expression in Jewish life masks a deeper sensibility that in its renewed expression cannot be articulated in language identifiably Jewish.

Militarization of religious discourse, like the militarization of social and political discourse, does not vitiate core values or witness. On the contrary, it heightens the need for such expression even as it severs the language and conceptual framework that has been the vehicle for its expression. Thus the Jewish exile without religious language is absolutely to be expected. It is inevitable that after the experience of Constantinian Christianity, the refusal of Constantinian Judaism in its starkest and most consistent form should be found among secular Jews of conscience who have come into solidarity with the Palestinian people.

For some these exiles are an example of abandoning the difficult path of empowerment and the language that path could embrace beyond oppression. But the experience, borne out again during the Al Aqsa intifada, is that operating within is simply attempting to hold the line on the amount of oppression, the percentage of loss of Palestinian land and freedom, the degree to which militarization of Jewish life will be tolerated.

At this point in our history, only the prophets can point the way forward. Their power is limited, to be sure, and the cycle of violence will, at least for the foreseeable future, continue. In this cycle more Palestinians, and some Jews, will die. Those deaths will be accompanied by the delay of freedom for a people and the destruction of a long and eventful history of suffering and struggle. The prophets have no power to grant this freedom or to salvage this history, only to witness to the possibility of another way that joins Palestinians and Jews in a bond that brings forth life rather than death. □

Dying in America

Richard Lichtman

The call that awakened me in the early morning informed me of my mother's death. By that single device, the fact of death was announced and sleep, that "death of each day's life" which so often portends death itself, was interrupted. I arose in the presence of her death to return to the home where I had lived and grown and from which I had moved away. Now, in returning, I was to commemorate her death and witness the beginning of my father's slow decay.

The enormity of my mother's death remained incomprehensible, undigested in my mind. All our categories are derived from life and being. We can make no sense of that which finally is not. With the help of science, physics, and biology, we can "explain" death, but we cannot understand it. This is part of the terror of contemplating our own death. It is not merely the absolute ontological emptiness of confronting our own nonbeing; it is also the awareness that our categories are constructed in the light of being and that beyond even the penumbra of the shadow there is a darkness which we simply cannot grasp. Of course reason can easily respond: the self as knowing subject and the self as object to be known have both ceased, and so there is no longer any knowing to accommodate; not a knowing of nothing, but nothing to know or be known. This consideration is a comfort to reason, which can entertain the abstraction; but existentially, the assertion of nothingness by a concrete, embodied self remains unfathomable in its import.

So, the trauma that follows the death of a profound formative relationship is not merely personal, not merely the loss of comfort or the end of the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is also the wound at the heart of being that reveals itself, the fecund emptiness from which life comes and to which it returns. I had always been struck by James Joyce's transcendent conclusion to *The Dead*: "His soul had



approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence." That was exactly right; he was *conscious* of but could not *apprehend*.

My father in particular continued to lack any sense of my mother's death. On many occasions when I called he would say, as he always had: "Wait, I'll get your mother." He would then put down the phone and, I presume, leave the apartment to try a neighbor or two. He would return to tell me that he could not find her. In fact, he could find less and less of his life as time passed; things were not where they had always been, where they needed to be. His response was to contract himself more tightly into the womb of his own stark present.

One week, my father comes out to visit us. It is very difficult for him to orient himself in these new surroundings; he often needs help locating the kitchen or bathroom. But he seems quite happy and when "L" comes over to visit he launches into one of his Catskill routines made up of the Marx Brothers, Willie Howard, Gallagher and Sheean, Henny Youngman, and all the vaudeville and burlesque bananas he has caught along the way. I've heard some versions of this shtick so often I can play straight man or comic; one of us begins: "Vus villa?" and the other replies, "I knew

Richard Lichtman teaches psychology at the Wright Institute in Berkeley and is the author of *The Production of Desire*. This article is excerpted from *Dying in America* forthcoming from Cadmus Editions and can be ordered at cadmus-editions.com. ©2001.

his brother Pancho." Followed by, "You ought to be on the stage; and there's one leaving in twenty minutes," and so on and on... The routine just rolls into place. After he has begun my father can dispense with my services and the routine becomes a monologue which moves on its own. There is nothing here that is not familiar, though the pace has become more frenetic. (After all, the first memory I have of anything my father said to me was: "A very funny bird was the pelican/ Its beak holds more than its belly can.") Finally "L" takes me aside, somewhat exhausted. "Is he always this way?" "It's one of his ways."

We spend one day at the aquarium in Monterey. He is completely enchanted and reminds me that when I was a child he often took me to the aquarium at the Battery in Lower Manhattan. His interest goes back even further, to the times he would play hooky from school so that he could visit the museums of New York, particularly the Museum of Natural History. For he was and would always be basically self-taught.

The time with him is extraordinary. On the one hand, he is in some respects the contrary of his former self. His modesty with me had been so extreme that I could not remember ever having seeing him naked. If I entered his bedroom when he was dressing, he would sit on the far side of the bed with his back to me while he put on his underwear, which was, of course, boxer shorts. Only then would he stand up and continue the rest of his routine. But now, he totally lacks modesty. He will take down his pajama bottoms to show me how an infection on his leg is healing. Of course, his penis is completely visible, but he proceeds with total indifference. Has he lost his sense of social propriety, or of self-censorship, or does it simply not matter to him any longer what the world takes for granted?

On the other hand, the basic features of his personhood are more sharply drawn, more completely separated and distilled. Everything about him is clearer, more pristine and isolated from the ordinary context of his character. Seeing him is like viewing the spectral projection of a mineral whose basic structure and fault lines are usually invisible but are now revealed in their permanent articulation. He will become furious with me over the amount of a phone bill, but leave everything to me in his will. His annoyance is bitter anger bordering on rage; his sentiment is mawkish. It is almost impossible for him to pass a baby, an infant, or a small child without stopping and remarking on how cute, beautiful, or lovely it is. He has always displayed a fondness for children so this new characteristic does not appear unannounced. It is simply that it is now so exaggerated in its manifestation.

*Beyond the drudgery and
pain, past the exhaustion
... there radiated a
numinous presence that I
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my awareness of the
value of his life.*

It is the same with his cynical suspiciousness and resentful sullenness. He can acknowledge a neighbor who asks after his well-being only to comment, out of hearing, that the man is a crook and "a bag of shit" whose apparent concern masks only indifference or hostility. It is striking to me how often I share his judgment. Mr. T, who has never shown any particular interest in my father's life, had only recently taken me aside to warn me of his growing senility, in a manner which more clearly revealed the designed display of his own astuteness than any concern for the seriousness of my father's deterioration. My father is not only confused or delusional; he is also freer with the truth.

Now, caring for him took the place of speech. I wanted to be with him, to nurture him as best I could. And though I was relieved that I did not live close to him in Brooklyn any longer, I often wished I could sit and talk with him an hour or so every day. It was right that he be cared for by someone who loved him. I had the sense of a requirement more central than obligation. It seemed wholly appropriate and compelling that he conclude his life with me. It is true that I hoped for my sake he would give me something of the father I could not previously reach. But it is also true that I wished to be something of a mirror to him and so give him back to himself as much as this was still possible. Who else could hold the shards of his life together in some semblance of cohesion? I remembered a passage from Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. The narrator writes:

During the last ten years of his life my father had gradually lost the power of speech. At first he simply had trouble calling up certain words or would say similar words instead and then immediately laugh at himself. In the end he had only a handful of words left, and all his attempts at saying anything more substantial resulted in one of the last sentences he could articulate: "That's strange." Whenever he said "That's strange," his eyes would express infinite astonishment at knowing everything and being able to say nothing. Things lost their names and merged into a single, undifferentiated reality. I was the only one who by talking to him could temporarily transform that nameless infinity into the world of clearly named entities.

My father was not yet in the condition described by Kundera, but he had begun to move decisively along the same path. That, I think, is why, despite the fact that being with him constantly for only several days was tedious and depressing, I could not possibly abandon him. Leaving him to that "nameless infinity" was akin to taking his life from him. I was for these days, for this time, the articulation of his world.

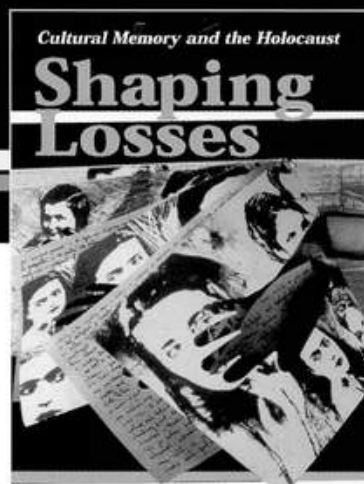
There is a secret in tending to the dying that, out of guilt, is little spoken of. The fact is that the dying provide us with a gift of incomparable value. Through all the depression, grief, and mourning that usually accompanies dying, it is simultaneously an opportunity to see into the ground of human existence. That may be one reason that mourning is not proportionate to the success of one's previous relationship. For long stretches of time in my life I was pleasantly, comfortably detached from my father. I had moved away from home when I was seventeen to go off to college in Philadelphia, and beyond summer vacations which lasted through graduate school, I never returned for any length of time. I knew my father was "there," but the details of his life—of the passing of his life—were rarely significant to me. How radically the fact of becoming a father one's self prepares a different understanding; and how climactically the impending death of one's own father then completes the transformation.

I grieved continually through his dying and his death; I wept for him often and, at times, inconsolably. ("I know my tears will not bring him back, and that is why I am crying.") Yet, beyond the drudgery and pain, past the exhaustion, frustration, and despair, there radiated a numinous presence that I can only characterize as my awareness of the value of his life. How to understand it—"infinite," "transcendent," "unconditional"—was a question I would dispute with myself. I was never so close to the simple fact of the worth of human existence. It is not a question of how pleasantly that life was experienced, or even of how well it was lived. It is, rather, the awareness that a human life, fulfilled or failed, is the ultimate moral consideration.

I had always been opposed to naturalism as an explanation of human existence. Despite the widespread reductionism of our age, it always seemed clear to me that the laws of matter do not exhaust the province of spirit. No conjunction of physical, chemical, or biological properties can account for the simplest acts of human agency. Of course there are correlations of some sort between physical states and the properties of conscious human beings. But then there are also correlations between the physics of sound, acoustical physiology, and Beethoven's late quartets. The music only occurs as a human experience because of the physical properties of the wave structure that make it possible. Nevertheless, nothing in the combined characteristics of physics and neurology can comprehend the meaning of these creations. It seemed clear to me that humanity emerges from the merely natural world into a realm which is marked by wholly other properties and values—self-consciousness, love, moral sensibility, creativity, normative self-reflection, the obligation to honor compassion and justice. This capacity to judge and transform one's self in the light of transcendent values, the calling to one's self from another, non-natural domain—this was ossifying in my father as he declined.

(continued on page 57)

Culture of Loss



Edited by Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz

Shaping Losses

Cultural Memory and the Holocaust

EDITED BY JULIA EPSTEIN
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Spiritual Self-Interest

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

In his recent book, *Shared Dreams: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Jewish Community*, Rabbi Marc Schneier tells of rabbis whose brave participation in the civil rights movement ranged from being beaten and arrested as a Freedom Rider (Israel Dresner) to speaking at the 1963 March on Washington (Joachim Prinz). These men (women were not ordained before 1972) were inspired by the unabashedly righteous nature of the struggle. “My feet were praying,” Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said about marching from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

These rabbis’ actions expressed more than their idealism, however. The restrictions toppled by the movement were also barriers to Jewish advancement into the upper echelons of American society. Today, when that advancement is essentially a done deal, what self-interest remains to motivate Jewish social action?

In a previous column, we proposed a new highest “Ninth Degree of *Tzedakah*” (expanding Maimonides’ traditional eight), which we defined as *partnership with non-Jews, based on Jewish values*. While there is certainly a “community relations” aspect to this concept, more important is the *spiritual self-interest*: the authentication of Jewish values so that Jewish identity becomes central, rather than peripheral, to our daily lives.

Tzedakah has always been seen by Jewish tradition as the principal training ground for spiritual consciousness—as a mitzvah that awakens our souls to the humanity of others, to the ties of community, and to the reality of our partnership with God. To apply this mitzvah to non-Jews is hardly a novel concept, either. “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt,” says Leviticus 19:34—with numerous verses reiterating the idea. Rabbinic teachings associate it with sanctification of God’s name: in the Palestinian Talmud’s Bava Metziah, Rabbi Simeon ben Shetah returns a lost pearl to a non-Jew and declares that he “would rather hear ‘Blessed be the God of the Jews’ than gain any profit in this entire world.”

Modern Jewish institutions generally have pursued the Ninth Degree of *Tzedakah* only inadvertently—by accepting

federal funding, which requires them to offer services on a nonsectarian basis. During the past three decades, however, a number of Jewish philanthropies have been established with the *explicit* purpose of mobilizing Jewish money to assist non-Jewish communities. By capitalizing on the universalist orientation of most American Jews, these foundations do groundbreaking *tzedakah*—and by rooting their work in Jewish values, they revitalize Jewish identity.

- The American Jewish World Service (800-889-7146; www.ajws.org) helps sustain economic development projects in foreign countries. AJWS makes strong connections between “Israel consciousness” and international poverty relief.
- The Jewish Fund for Justice (212-213-2113; www.jfjustice.org) seeks to “address the causes and consequences of poverty on a non-sectarian basis.” JFJ is strongly attuned to the Jewish immigrant tradition as a basis for empathy.
- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger (310-442-0020; www.mazon.org) allocates Jewish donations to hunger-relief projects. MAZON encourages Jews to donate three percent of the cost of life-cycle celebrations.
- The Shefa Fund (215-483-4004; www.shefafund.org) channels Jewish institutional investments into community development financial institutions and makes grants to an array of change-making American organizations.
- ZIV Tzedakah Fund (973-763-9396; www.ziv.org) distributes small grants to dozens of individuals and organizations while emphasizing the spiritual and psychological uplift mitzvah work offers those who perform it.

Two Israel-oriented foundations must also be included on our list, as they use Jewish philanthropy to better the lives of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians.

- The New Israel Fund (202-842-0900; www.NIF.org) was first to break the mold of funding exclusively Jewish/Zionist projects in Israel. NIF pursues civil rights and justice for all Israelis, regardless of religion.
- The Abraham Fund (800-301-FUND, www.coexistence.org) is devoted to improving the living standards of Israeli Arabs.

(continued on page 76)

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

The Political Meaning of Bush v. Gore

Peter Gabel

In the early afternoon of December 8, 2000—five weeks into the national debate about who had won the presidential election and four days before the United States Supreme Court settled the matter—San Francisco's 24 Divisadero bus was making its way along its cross-town route. On the surface, everything seemed normal on that bus—the passengers isolated in their passive roles, staring blankly straight ahead or looking aimlessly out of their windows, each avoiding eye contact with the other, proceeding along on the conveyor belt of social alienation that has imprisoned so many of us so much of the time for the last twenty years.

Then suddenly a big guy in a brown leather jacket got on the bus at Haight Street and shouted, "The Florida Supreme Court decided for Gore 4-3!" Instantly, people leaped out of their seats, threw their arms around each other and began dancing for joy, talking to each other and speculating with new hope that perhaps the forces trying to stop the Florida vote-count could be defeated. Eventually, everyone calmed down and took their seats, but they sat closer to each other than they had before and continued to talk, to connect, about the election.

Peter Gabel is president of New College of California, associate editor of *TIKKUN*, and author of *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning* (Acada Books, 2000).



We need to understand exactly how we allowed ourselves to be disempowered.

Now that we are sealed in the Bush presidency, it is difficult to remember that right below the surface a majority of Americans really cared about the outcome of the election and could have been mobilized to insist that their democratic wish be respected. But that didn't happen. Instead, in part because of what Al Gore and his lawyers did, in part because of the success of twenty years of a conservative assault on our collective hopes and our willingness to believe in the possibility of a new and more caring social order, we succumbed in a resigned and depressive way to an outcome which was neither legitimate nor desired.

Understanding how we got into this mess is an urgent task if we are ever to rekindle hope for social change. As the media bows to Bush and the realities of the current conservative revolution, we have an obligation to not let the embers of our collective hope be extinguished. We need to understand exactly how we allowed ourselves to be disempowered,

how we allowed the spirit expressed in that bus to disappear from public life and from our collective memory of what was really possible. That's why it's important to go back and understand Bush v. Gore.

Most Americans know that there was something wrong with what the Court did in Bush v. Gore, the Supreme Court decision awarding the recent presidential election to

George Bush. They know that we are supposed to be living in a democracy and that it just can't have been legally justified for the Court to have jumped in and peremptorily declared the winner before every reasonable effort had been made to count every vote in every instance where the intent of the voter could reasonably be determined. This widespread sense that the Court majority somehow abused its authority was intensified by the manner in which the Court intervened in the process—overturning the Florida Supreme Court's first seemingly reasonable and brief extension of the certification deadline on the basis of some rarified legal objection that nobody could understand, and then a week later blocking a statewide manual recount of machine-rejected ballots on the basis of a completely different legal objection not even mentioned the first time they tried to stop the count from proceeding. You didn't need to be a legal scholar to know that Justices Rehnquist, Thomas, Scalia, O'Connor, and Kennedy wanted to stop that vote-count and were intent on finding a legal justification for doing so no matter what. It is in fact almost impossible to reconcile the two Court interventions with each other or to find any legal authority for the election-terminating aspect of the final decision.

Yet the meaning of what was "political" about *Bush v. Gore* is not that the Supreme Court failed to follow something called "the rule of law" that is not political. On the contrary. By going so far beyond the legitimate limits of constitutional interpretation, the Court made transparent what is usually mystified—the political nature of all legal reasoning. The political choices made by the Court were possible because Gore and his legal team chose to frame the issues in ways that reinforced a conservative political climate which had been building for the past thirty years. If we ever hope to move beyond that triumph of political conservatism, we need to fully understand how it has become embodied in law and how it manifests in politics. A perfect place to begin is to see how this conservatism shaped Gore's legal strategy and guaranteed its ineffectiveness—and why Gore and others around him couldn't understand how self-defeating that strategy was.

Voting Rights, Not States' Rights

The core of the legal position chosen by Gore and his lawyers was their decision to base their argument for a manual recount in Florida on "states' rights" rather than on "voting rights." From election night on, it was clear that Gore had won the popular vote by about 500,000 votes, a margin far greater than Kennedy's victory over Nixon in 1960 and greater than Nixon's victory over Humphrey in 1968. He had gained this popular democratic majority

through the efforts of blacks, women, and working people who had come out to vote in large numbers between 5 PM and 8 PM all across the country. These constituencies had all won the right to vote through long and difficult struggles over the past 200 years. They did so in the name of the expansion of the ideal of popular democracy as the very foundation of what it means to be an American. Whatever criticisms and even cynicism these constituencies feel toward the American political system, if they share an idealistic belief about anything in their identification with being an American, it is that they've got the right to vote, that they fought for it, and that it's sacred.

Although the text of the Constitution itself does not guarantee the right to vote, the Fourteenth Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment, the Nineteenth Amendment, and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, as well as a long line of venerated Supreme Court cases interpreting them, all affirm that the right to vote is the nation's most sacred political value. Even though the elec-

toral college has retained its place as the means for selecting the president—a power granted to it in the eighteenth century when none of Gore's core constituencies had yet won the right to vote and when states had no obligation to (and sometimes did not) hold popular elections for president—the movement of the last 200 years has unquestionably been toward the expansion of popular democracy carried out by universal suffrage as the basis of political legitimacy.

Against this backdrop, it seems clear that Gore's legal argument for supporting the Florida Supreme Court's decision to allow a manual recount, both in the first and second of his U.S. Supreme Court appeals, should have been that the constitutional right to vote, and to have one's vote counted, is more important than more-or-less arbitrary state deadlines. The central argument of Lawrence Tribe and David Boies should have been to uphold the Florida Supreme Court on the grounds that their interpretation of conflicting Florida state laws—allowing the manual recounts called for in one statute over another statute imposing a deadline on submitting certified vote totals that would have made the manual recounts impossible—reflected a normal and inevitable responsibility of a state supreme court to resolve conflicts in state legislation. That is, the Florida Supreme Court acted in a manner consistent with the Constitution's highest democratic value—that in a national presidential election especially, the right to vote and have one's vote counted should take precedence over certification deadlines that had little practical or moral significance.

This approach would have aligned Gore's political and moral claims with his legal claim and would have mobilized the constituencies that made up his popular majority. He

The meaning of what was "political" about Bush v. Gore is not that the Supreme Court failed to follow something called "the rule of law."

would have been speaking before the Court in support of the universal voting rights of all of us in a democracy, including those of us in the other forty-nine states, rather than making an amoral argument in support of the right of the State of Florida to not be bound by any such compelling universal ethical claim.

If he had done this, he would have spoken, for example, for me, one of millions of Nader supporters who voted for Gore at the last minute to keep Bush out of the White House. He would have acknowledged my stake, as a California Gore voter, in whether the manual recount in Florida took place. This was the time to act—at a moment when the right to vote had a genuinely utopian, Walt Whitmanesque, democratic resonance—when the whole country was on the edge of its seat over a matter suddenly filled with vital political and moral American importance.

Had Gore argued for voting rights instead of states' rights, he would have put the Supreme Court in the position of saying to Gore voters across the country, "No, you don't have the right to vote" because of some technical rule (whether that rule was Katherine Harris's deadlines or obscure statutory provisions). If Gore had argued for voting rights, the Court's reliance on technicalities would have been accorded little legitimacy in the face of everyone's common sense assumption that in electing a president, the right to vote should trump such trivialities.

But it didn't happen. Instead, something quite silly happened—namely, that with the entire country focused on what would be said before the Supreme Court, Gore's lawyers said something that nobody could understand. At the very moment when the simplest of arguments would have mobilized and united Gore's national base, his lawyers took a position before the Court that excluded all non-Florida voters, and was in any case incomprehensible to anyone except the lawyer/law-professor talking heads trying in vain to explain eighteenth- and nineteenth-century technicalities to a baffled population who thought this was about the right to vote.

Why? How could they have done such a senseless thing—and thought that doing so made sense?

The answer to this question is the answer to the election itself, to why the Court thought it could get involved, why it did, and why it correctly sensed it could get away with even contradictory and irrational decisions to put the wrong man in office.

The answer is that over the course of the last twenty years, beginning with the collapse of the social movements of the 1960s and the election of Ronald Reagan, the Right has successfully and gradually capitalized on the doubt pervading the forces of social transformation in such a way as to make people lose faith in the existence of a hopeful and idealistic universal public sphere in which there is a "We"—an activist and more-or-less united public community—struggling for a better world against the fearful forces of the status quo.

The Reagan Revolution

The heart of the Reagan Revolution was a sort of snapping or reversal of the public energy that had given rise to the Labor movement of the 1930s, the New Deal, the multiple and overlapping movements of the 1960s (including the civil rights movement, the student/anti-war movement, the women's movement, the gay-and-lesbian movement, and multiple other transformative efforts). Although all of these movements, of course, continue to have positive effects on the larger society, in their universal "movement" dimension they had begun by the late 1970s to be pervaded by what I would call ontological doubt—by a rotating loss of faith or confidence in their capacity to fundamentally transform the world. The dynamics that brought about this worldwide loss of confidence are complex, and I have explored them elsewhere. But conservatives in America, who had begun to really organize against the ideas—all of the ideas—of the Left following the defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964, were able to seize on this collective doubt and turn it decisively to their advantage. To use a simple but compelling Freudian metaphor, they were able to turn the wrath of the cultural superego against the communal longings of the id.

In the public political sphere, their Revolution found its leader in the benign authoritarianism of Ronald Reagan who, in 1980, was able to unify two idealistic images to

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forge a new national and international hegemonic base. One was the utopian image of the nuclear family, immortalized in the historical sense of the word in Reagan's "Morning in America" ad that showed a mother holding her newborn baby and promising a restoration of the ideal Love that conservatives associate with the family as the only safe location of social trust. The other was a declaration of ideological war against the Evil Empire, which in a formal sense referred to the Soviet Union but symbolically referred to the totality of the movements of the Left as the source of chaos, division, and profound psychic danger.

In the legislative sphere, the Revolution took the form of a new and intense opposition to the entitlement programs, whose expansion had begun with the triumph of the New Deal 1930s and had continued with the vast expansion of civil rights and social welfare programs born of the movements of the 1960s. Government as a carrier of collective hope and care was replaced by the "army of faceless bureaucrats" from whose coercive power "we" longed to be free again by "getting the government off our backs."

But it is in the legal sphere that we find the seeds of Bush v. Gore. While Reagan's election and persona represented the hot moment in which the energy that was the Sixties was reversed, the long-term legitimacy of Reagan's revolution required a much more drawn-out process of converting the initial hot political moment into a passively accepted legal order. This, in turn, required the gradual dismantling of the political assumptions that had for fifty years supported the progressive ideals of the activist New Deal state and replacing them with new conservative assumptions about the nature of "our constitutional democracy" and the meaning of "the rule of law" as seen through the lens of the new conservative worldview.

Beginning in the late 1970s with the replacement of the Warren Court by the Burger Court, this shift in legal paradigm was gradually implemented over a period of more than twenty years through three principal doctrinal strategies.

The first of these was the resurgence of "the jurisprudence of original intention" as central to the process of constitutional interpretation. When I attended law school in the years 1969 through 1972, lip service was always given to ascertaining the intent of the framers when interpreting the meaning of the Constitution, but the dominant consensus was that the intent-of-the-framers' view had long since given way to the idea that the Constitution was an "evolving document" that ought to reflect the progressive values inherent in the development of the nation's developing conception of political morality. That the Commerce Clause

and the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses should be interpreted to require, or at least permit, collective governmental intervention in the service of a new, universally accepted conception of social justice was more or less taken for granted as the basis for requiring (or at least upholding, legislatively-enacted) progressive governmental action. But following Reagan's election in 1980 and continuing with greater conviction after his re-election in 1984, conservatives—such as then-Attorney General Ed Meese and neo-conservative legal intellectuals throughout the legal academy and within the now established, post-Goldwater think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, Stanford's Hoover Institute, and the American Enterprise Institute—decisively challenged this liberal orthodoxy, insisting instead that it was the Original Intent of the Founding Fathers, and not the views of random contemporary judges "applying their own moral opinions," that should guide the interpretive process.

The effect of this largely successful shift to Original Intent theory was to invoke the great Image of Paternal Authority to deny the existence of a universally shared, progressive public sphere that provided a political basis for left-liberal constitutional interpretation. Never mind that the drafters of the Constitution were mainly a group of twenty and thirty-year olds whose consciousness was shaped in and by the eighteenth century; they were the "Founding Fathers" whose sanctity and eternal prescience could be resuscitated with such force that Reagan could openly ridicule anyone who spoke the "L-word" ("liberal," for those of you too young to remember) in support of the constitutionality of liberal entitlement programs or in support of, say, the public right of workers to picket on now properly re-privatized property of the owners of malls and shopping centers.

The second major shift in legal theory and doctrine occurred in the realm of so-called private law with the rise of the Law and Economics movement, providing a new rationale for limits on judicial and legislative decision-making. Against the progressive claims emerging from the social political movements of the 1930s and the 1960s that human beings are bound together by communal, moral, and ethical values that must be central to the development of our legal culture, the Law and Economics movement, emerging from the ascendant conservative intelligentsia, has sought to empty legal doctrine of socially-binding moral content and aspirations by reinstating the primacy of the freedom of the isolated individual, who must be free to do whatever he or she wants unless he or she is paid for any legal constraints placed on that freedom by the community (now reduced to a mere collection of other isolated individuals).

*The Reagan Revolution
contributed to the image
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Although the humanization of the image of the isolated individual as “he or she” has had ideological power, its true economic meaning has been to rationalize the unfettered expansion of global corporate power by serving as a cultural weapon in support of deregulation. And while in its technical aspects the Law and Economics movement has had only a limited direct effect on the discourse of judicial opinions (with notable exceptions such as Judge Richard Posner of the Seventh Circuit), it has become the dominant ideology in American law schools; it has provided the ideological foundation for near-universal pre-eminence of cost-benefit analysis in corporate and legislative decision-making; and it has deeply influenced the increasing dissolution of the use of moral discourse in common-law decision-making in such private law areas as contracts, torts, property, and corporations. In the context of the gradual legalization of the Reagan Revolution, it has contributed importantly to the disintegration of popular belief in the existence of a legally recognizable and public moral community by supporting the image that, apart from the sanctity of the private family and equally private religious affiliations, “we” are a nation of individuals legally bound each to the other only by money, by economic self-interest.

The third major doctrinal shift that has served to gradually legalize the Reagan Revolution—and the one of most direct relevance to understanding the Supreme Court’s interpretive strategy in *Bush v. Gore* and to the political capacity of the Court majority to decide the 2000 election in the way that it did without a popular revolt—has been the rise of the “new federalism.” Emerging originally in the jurisprudence of the Burger Court in the late 1970s and with greater confidence following Reagan’s first election, the new federalism has been, at one level, simply a return to giving much greater deference to states’ rights in constitutional interpretation. But in a deeper sense, the doctrine signaled a shift in the official imagery within American legal culture of how “we” are politically constituted as “a people” within the meaning of the Constitution as an authoritative document, a shift to a kind of eighteenth-century idea of the nation as a confederation of sovereign and separate groupings (or states) who have reluctantly granted limited powers to the whole (the federal government).

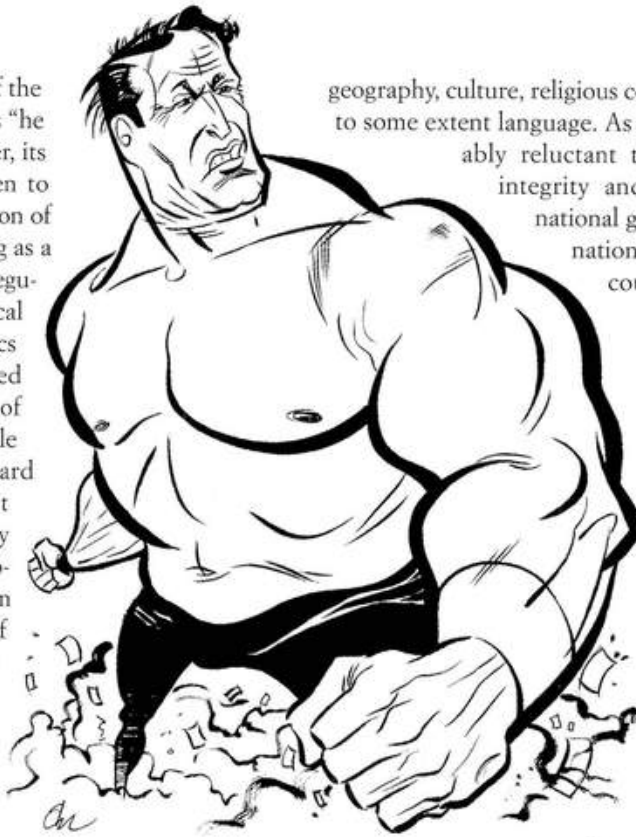
Originally, of course, the states did emerge out of the colonies as organic groups divided from one another by

geography, culture, religious conviction, economy, and even to some extent language. As such, they were understandably reluctant to subordinate their group integrity and sovereignty to a remote national government—that is, a remote national president, legislature, and court system—which, although in principle “representative” in nature, might well come to use its overarching power as the spokesperson for the United States to threaten the moral authority and self-sovereignty of each state. The role of the electoral college in selecting a national president, with its allocation of two senatorial votes to each state regardless of population and its guarantee of a disproportionate voice in presidential selection to smaller states, reflects precisely this

concern (among other concerns, including a fear of popular democracy) about the potential “tyrannical” imposition of an alien national power upon the sovereign states who were the source of that power.

But the rise of the new federalism over the last twenty years has no authentic relationship to this historical reality of eighteenth-century life. Virtually no one today feels distinctively identified in the eighteenth-century sense with the state as one’s organic group. On the contrary, the political history of the last 200 years has been the growing association of democracy with belonging to one nation, to one culturally diverse but nevertheless economically, politically, and culturally integrated group called the United States of America. Wars, technology, geographical mobility, immigration, the socio-economic development of an integrated capitalist market following increasingly uniform legal rules and norms, the development of national social movements transcending regions as well as states, and many other historical influences have forged a new and concrete historical reality that has decisively subordinated the state as the locus of group-identity and belonging to our national identity, to “being an American.”

Thus we invest far more meaning in national elections than state elections and attribute far greater emotional and political importance to American citizenship than to often transient state citizenship. It would be absurd to claim that the core meaning of participation in our constitutional democracy today derives from our connection with the state-based identifications underlying the confederation-based conception of strictly limited federal power of 1789.



The rise of a new federalism which rests on this claim of state-based identifications as the basis of constitutional democracy must therefore be understood as a largely successful attempt to resuscitate the image of 1789 federalism and to imbue the image with the same mystique of cultural authority that has been projected onto the Founding Fathers and the search for their Original Intent. These images draw their fantasy-power from the rituals of our social conditioning since childhood, from the pledge of allegiance to the venerated annual telling of our origin story in childhood civics and American history classes to the sanctified repetition of the names of the Founding Fathers (the side flap of my cereal box once boasted, "TOTAL™ brings you Founding Father James Madison") to the awe and sense of idolatry attached to the Constitution itself as a hallowed document in a glass case whose ideas are somehow 'above' those of us mere mortals who have followed those who penned them.

If we recall that what we are analyzing here is the legalization of a conservative revolution designed to reverse actual flesh-and-blood social movements aiming to give fundamentally new meanings to who "we" are, new meanings to the "constitution" of our political and moral bond, the use of authoritative cultural images that we have all been conditioned to feel we are supposed to invest with "belief" is the legal analogue to Reagan's "Morning in America" ad. In the context of the Reagan Revolution and its aftermath, these authoritative and reassuring images seized upon the anxiety that had come to pervade a real world beset by political/moral/cultural/generational/economic/racial/sexual conflict, especially as collective doubt came to corrode the idealism of the movement that had both generated this conflict through its transformative impulse and vision and given the movement in all its diversity its transcendent and hopeful unity. And because of their power in our shared cultural memory, these images can be and were appealed to in order to persuade "Americans" to come home.

In sum, the common aim of the resuscitation of Original Intent theory, the Law and Economics movement, and the new federalism has been to employ authoritative group fantasies about the origins of America (as the political group to which we each belong) in the service of erasing the constitutional legitimacy of a universal public sphere that leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and the social movements of the 1930s and 1960s claimed was the very essence of true "constitutional" politics. It was in that universal public sphere in which moral questions about our common group life were and are contested. By mobilizing millions of people in the name of "We the People," social change movements became the living embodiments of democratic ideals as they physically and spiritually occupied this public sphere and challenged the political legitimacy of existing arrangements and constitutional doctrines by seeking to give them a new and progressive moral content.

The Collapse of Socialism

In its temporarily successful effort to reverse that energy, the central element of the conservative legal strategy has been to close down that public sphere. The core image of America projected by the new conservative legal order is that of an individualistic society characterized by a private sphere driven by material self-interest and a de-politicized public sphere comprised of morally unconnected and passive citizens, obedient and deferential to the strict authority of their Fathers. The significance of the "legal" character of this image is that calling it "Law" makes it "binding" on our collective national consciousness. Its gradual internalization has legitimized the privatization of American culture post-1980 and has contributed decisively to confirming the collective doubt to which I referred earlier, the sense that if you get involved and go out into public claiming your democratic authority to change the world, no one will be there for you because there is no longer any "there" there, no longer any "constitutional space" where Martin Luther King Jr. and millions of other Americans once stood.

To this legal history one other central fact must be added, an event that cleared the field for the more or less unchecked development of this conservative worldview. That event was the collapse of the Soviet Union and of socialism as an idea. For 150 years, the idea of socialism had been the dominant worldwide metaphor for the possibility of a fundamentally different world based on community rather than self-interest and the separation of self and other. Every progressive social movement of this century in some way defined itself in relation to the idea of socialism because however much labor or women or the 1960s counter-culture or environmentalists or any progressive person agreed or disagreed with the specific tenets of Marx, socialism's basic affirmation that the world could and should be based on social connection and egalitarian community provided a crucial link between any particular progressive reform within the "whole world" of capitalism and the possibility of a radically different universal social vision and "whole world" toward which particular limited reforms were aiming.

In addition, the fact that the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc actually existed and had been able to mount a protracted long-term challenge to the capitalist ethos all over the world provided the idea of socialism with at least some embodied reality, however distorted, anti-democratic and even brutal that reality was in its existing incarnation. As events have shown since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, even the modern Democratic Party had depended since its origins in the New Deal on being able to define itself as the alternative, liberal-democratic path to the humane social vision to which socialism aspired. Without the moral ideal of community that socialism as a metaphor had come to stand for, and without being able to make the claim that it offers the gradual democratic path toward that ideal that is the correct alternative to totalitarianism, the

Democratic Party has no anchoring moral worldview to distinguish itself from the Republican's whole-hearted embrace of capitalist self-interest—except to appear to be the party of half-hearted capitalist self-interest, which is hardly the basis of a compelling moral and political vision that one can expect people to follow.

The fact is that after Stalinism, Mao's cultural revolution, the Khmer Rouge, and the direct experience that millions of people had of the unsafe group dynamics that undermined the (otherwise wonderful, hopeful!) 1960s, nobody could believe any longer that seizing economic and political power from private individuals on behalf of the collective through some apocalyptic revolution could possibly lead to something better than the lives we lead now, however isolated, alienated, and meaningless they often are. So by the early 1980s, the socialist idea had lost its capacity to serve as the unifying communitarian counter-vision that had made the Left a powerful and morally compelling force, and when the principal embodiments of "really existing socialism" vanished from the earth in 1989, the ideology of individualism appeared to have "won." The effect of this was both to give increased legitimacy to capitalism's economic, cultural, and political expansion on an increasingly global level and to greatly weaken the ability of the longing for community (a longing which exists in everyone) to even be seen or heard by the other, much less to be mobilized into a movement based on that longing that could enter public space and make moral claims on behalf of a universal, transformative alternative to an apparently vindicated conservative worldview.

The void left by the collapse of socialism as the dominant political metaphor for community intensified the ability of the American conservative legal intelligentsia to carry out its doctrinal disintegration of the constitutionally-binding public morality that the progressive movements of the 1930s and 1960s had fought for. And, in fact, there is no better testament to the effectiveness of their effort to gradually convert the Reagan Revolution into a new legal order supported by a new and widely accepted conservative "common sense" than the inability of Bill Clinton to make his long presidency stand for anything. Elected and enormously popular precisely because of his ability to recognize and validate our universal longing for community, a capacity that arose in significant part from the effect on him of the civil rights and other movements of his youth, Clinton was forced to rely throughout his presidency on personal charisma and polling data that demonstrated his "private" popularity among otherwise disconnected individual voters to enable him to survive politically in a public sphere totally dominated by his conservative opponents.

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whole-hearted embrace of
capitalist self-interest.*

Bill Clinton embodied hope, idealism, and communal aspirations—as the cliché goes, "he made you feel cared about"—but he could not speak for this ideal and aspiration in the name of a coherent moral and political vision. That is why the Right was able to crush his initially popular call for universal health care; he had no coherent social vision with which to fight for it in a public sphere now dominated by an individualist political worldview, a worldview which the Clintons ended up deferring to by basing their legislative strategy on seeking support from the American Medical Association, the private insurance companies, and amoral, implausible claims of cost-efficiency.

Although things might have been different if Clinton had been able to imagine a new, emerging, spiritual-ecological-communal successor to the now-defeated Left and liberal materialist alternatives, he was, in the end, able to do no more than to cut his party's losses by rejecting the failed communal metaphors of the past ("the era of big government is over"), and, in an act of true political schizophrenia, use his personal capacity to evoke warmth and idealistic hope in the service of expanding the globalization of capital and international trade agreements, like NAFTA, that consolidated the power of international, private corporate power. In response to the uninterrupted progress of the conservative ascendancy in the social/political/legal sphere, he consistently took positions that actually accepted the conservative viewpoint and merely sought to restrain its influence, defending affirmative action, for example, with such morally toothless slogans as "mend it, don't end it," and signing the Republican welfare-reform bill in return for temporary concessions by the Right to ease their assault on remaining elementary legal protections for labor and the environment.

Increasingly during the course of his eight years in office, he was reduced to defining his legacy as "having presided over the greatest economic expansion in history," an expansion that demonstrated America's ability under his leadership to "compete and win in the world market." Taken as a whole, this record actually strengthened public acceptance of the continuing normalization of the Reagan Revolution, precisely because it showed that even a popular, liberal Democrat seemed to accept the inevitability of its basic tenets, and even measured his own success by conservative "free market" criteria.

The Weight of History

By the time of the presidential election of the year 2000, the Democratic Party no longer felt capable of even appealing to its own constituencies on the basis of a

progressive social vision. Having been forced to kneel at the Republican altar for so long, even former participants in the movements of the 1960s like both Bill and Hillary Clinton abandoned the transformative convictions that had shaped them (and that were still visible in both of them as late as 1992), not because they no longer cared, but because they had nothing to say, no way to translate their social idealism into a new political idea.

Non-movement liberals like Al Gore, who were influenced by the 1960s but remained fundamentally loyal to mainstream political values, more fully retreated to the half-hearted conservative worldview. So 2000 found Gore running a presidential campaign that was merely a pragmatic “less bad than Bush” laundry-list of disconnected, centrist proposals, like prescription drug benefits for the elderly, increasing standardized testing to prepare the workforce for the new global marketplace (but requiring fewer such tests than Bush), and touting “cost-effectiveness” and a greater ability to correctly “add up the numbers” as the basis for distinguishing his Social Security and Medicare proposals from those of Bush.

Behind the moral impotence of the Gore campaign was a now thoroughly conditioned acceptance that whatever transformative political ideals once defined his own life personally and the convictions of his party were now irrelevant, that these ideals could no longer move “We the People” to leave their private houses and private self-interested concerns and enter the public sphere to provide a popular base for a contagious and winning campaign. As a result of this long process of devolution that I have described and the popular internalization of a politically passive, conservative political worldview, Gore rightly understood that while he might win the election by a lesser-of-two-evils campaign if he could get his already organized constituencies to get out and vote, he could not rely on anyone to be there for him if he invoked F.D.R., Martin Luther King Jr., and the great egalitarian and communal traditions of his party’s past.

Thus when the amazing occurred on Election Day and woke up the American electorate from the now thoroughly legitimated and seemingly inevitable prisons of their private and isolated routines, Gore was ill-prepared to mobilize a suddenly intensely politicized national community. Like someone who hasn’t gone to the gym for twenty years and is then suddenly expected to be in shape, Gore and his advisors were themselves so demobilized by twenty years of political and moral inactivity that they were incapable of grasping the opportunity that the accident of the election results and the ensuing six-week national debate about the meaning of democracy had handed to them. All over the country, friends were talking intensely on the phone and strangers were talking intensely on street corners about Florida and the right to vote and Katherine Harris’s attempts to stop the vote count. High-school and college students actually focused for the first time in their lives on

the electoral college and its ability to trump the popular vote, intensely discussing and struggling to understand the seemingly anti-democratic justifications for it.

Within a matter of days, a constitutional democracy that had come to see itself as but a collection of privatized, passive, and disconnected individuals suddenly emerged into a fledgling, but genuine, political community hurled into common public engagement by the threat that even the right to vote—the very foundation of American democracy won across centuries through an intense moral struggle and at the cost of many lives—might be denied in determining the outcome of a national presidential election whose democratic legitimacy is supposedly entirely based on it. Within a few days after November 7, and for a period lasting almost six weeks, Americans were galvanized by the one moral imperative and shared moral bond that even the most conservative government could not take away from them—the shared moral certainty that their government’s legitimacy rests on the will of the people. While the act of voting every two or four years can often seem to the isolated individual like the most minuscule act of public self-assertion, the idea that the right to vote could be taken away was a challenge to the deeply held moral ideal of democratic self-determination. During the period from November 7 until December 12, when the Supreme Court ended the matter, the challenge to that moral ideal was sufficient to allow the false “we” of a deferential and isolated people to begin to emerge into a real “we”—an active, collective presence ready to demand its sovereign birthright.

If we now see this dramatic period following November 7 in the historical context that I have described, we can understand the collective “political unconscious” underlying this drama as a struggle between conflicting impulses existing within each individual and within the national community as a whole. One was the fearful impulse that had sought for twenty years to block the desire for social connection and for a just, egalitarian, and erotic community from again becoming a public force. The other was the utopian democratic impulse—the Walt Whitman impulse in “I Hear America Singing”—that was accidentally and spontaneously released by the closeness of the election and the controversy about how it would be resolved.

The fearful impulse was reflected in the frantic efforts by Katherine Harris, James Baker, and others to stop the Florida vote count immediately by strictly interpreting a trivial deadline for certification and by constantly repeating to a suddenly aroused and empowered national community the mantra that “there had already been recount after recount” in order to prevent the manual counting of uncounted votes. This fearful impulse also was reflected in the panicky assertion by some across the country, but especially those in the Bush campaign, that “we’ve got to know who our president is.” I call these “fearful impulses” because they were plainly irrational—there was no pressing need to know the outcome;

at stake was the outcome of a national presidential election, the most important single incarnation of our democratic process. In the past Congress has counted state electoral votes received as late as January 6 (the day of the counting). The Constitution and Federal law even provide for a custodial presidency by the Speaker of the House if there is a delay beyond January 20 in accurately determining a presidential election's outcome. Florida's certification deadline was obviously intended merely to provide a uniform date to guide and coordinate in normal circumstances a schedule for statewide counts, rather than having some substantive importance that might justify certifying an inaccurate result.

But it was the palpable pressing need to "know who our president is" that best reveals the nature of the fear, a fear analogous to, say, "not knowing who our Founding Fathers are." It was the fear that the closure and de-politicization of public space that had been so central to the political imagery underlying the new Right's "constitutional interpretation" would be threatened the longer that the absence of a presidential authority figure left this public space open. This was especially true because the spontaneous release of the right-to-vote popular democratic impulse was creating a sense of passion and excitement with unknown consequences—without quickly "installing a president" and normalizing the nation's political structure, no one could be sure what would bubble up in the vacuum. Thirteen-year-olds might start asking their parents just what the point of this electoral college is, and didn't Gore win the popular vote, and how can Katherine Harris claim to be objective when she was co-chair of the Florida Bush for President Committee, and what about those African Americans I heard were intimidated by the police? The longer the political space remained opened, the greater the risk to the legitimacy of a conservative worldview that for twenty years had relied on the passive acceptance of what I earlier called Paternal Authority.



*It was Gore, and not the
Republicans, who posed the
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the popular democratic impulse.*

However, it was Gore, and not the Republicans, who posed the greatest obstacle to the success of the popular democratic impulse. Having long since left behind the days when he liked to smoke pot, grew his hair long, and went off with his girlfriend in a canoe on a 1960s-inspired journey in search of the meaning of life, Gore had run a campaign that remained well within the reigning conservative paradigm, offering no progressive moral vision of any kind. That in itself made it difficult to rally behind him in the post-election contest as the idealistic champion of the people and of popular democracy. But what made the situation worse was that he had been so demobilized and co-opted by the devolution of idealism of the previous twenty years that he himself did not realize in the post-election period (and I'm sure could not believe or trust) that the people who generated his substantial popular vote majority were trying to cast off the enforced isolation and political inertia of those twenty years

and mobilize to fight for him in the name of democracy, of the right to vote. Most Americans thought the Republican efforts to stop the recount were wrong, thought that Katherine Harris's repeated attempts to stop the count on the basis of a purported objective and neutral exercise of her discretion were patently absurd, and they believed that, with a fair and full count, Gore had probably won.

But instead of emerging publicly and speaking passionately on behalf of democracy to and for his own voters, a known majority of the country, Gore assumed the same posture as Bush, behaving like a remote presidential candidate, making occasional formal public statements at which he took no questions, insisting that the vote-count question was a legal matter to be handled by his lawyers and the courts, and otherwise holing-up in the vice president's mansion and allowing rare photo-ops of family touch-football games. Instead, he could have come out and thanked the working people and women and minorities who had poured out to vote for him after working all day in crucial cities like

Philadelphia and Los Angeles and Miami, exercising their democratic right to vote for which men like Martin Luther King Jr. fought and for which so many had lost their lives. Had he linked their exercise of that right to his fight to have every vote counted in Florida, Gore would have seized the high moral ground, mobilized his constituencies, and thoroughly discredited the efforts of James Baker and the Bush team to use every method—including the threat of physical violence in the case of the Republican-organized riot outside the Miami-Dade county registrar's office—to impede democracy's most sacred principle. He also would have made the Florida state legislature's threatened decision to simply appoint a slate of Bush electors, irrespective of the outcome of the popular vote, appear shamefully undemocratic, rather than being legitimate as technically legal under Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. By opting instead to try to "act presidential" and turn the whole matter over to highly paid lawyers, Gore sacrificed his chance to seize the moral initiative on a matter that he himself deeply believed in, and allowed the media to characterize him as no different from Bush, with both sides represented by an army of lawyers and both motivated simply by their own self-interest. He also left his popular majority rudderless while significantly marginalizing the political importance of his substantial popular-vote victory. By failing to see that his true political community were the actual people themselves who had just voted for him, rather than the version of the people represented in the image of constitutional democracy prevailing in the now decisively dominant conservative worldview, he actually created the conditions that legitimized his own defeat.

Who Are "The People"?

This last point deserves emphasis and provides us with the most important lesson to be drawn from the 2000 election regarding the relationship between politics and law. When the United States Supreme Court made its first intervention in deciding the outcome of the election by taking *certiorari* in *Bush v. Palm Beach County*, it informed the lawyers for both sides that it wanted them to address the question of whether the Florida Supreme Court's first decision to extend the time for the initial recount through the Thanksgiving weekend violated either Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution or the series of federal statutes in 3 U.S.C. governing the federal certification of state electors to the electoral college. That request indicated that the Court majority intended to evaluate the legality of the Florida Court's decision by measuring it against a version of how "the people" were "constituted" according to political values prevailing between 100 and 200 years ago.

In doing so, the Court was calculating, consciously or unconsciously, that the American people of today, who had just voted in a democratic election for the nation's highest office and had elected one candidate by a 500,000-vote majority, would nonetheless accept the legitimacy of a

decision by the Court to decide the election in favor of the other candidate based on its interpretation of a version of the democratic will of the American people drawn from the legal materials of a much earlier and very different time. For example, the dates in the federal statutory provisions regarding certification of state electors, one of which the Court eventually used to award the presidency to Bush without allowing completion of the Florida vote-count, were based on how long it would take to deliver lists of electors from the several states by horseback to Washington D.C. Similarly, the political values shaping the version of "the people" reflected in Article II Section 1—the basis for the Court's unanimous reversal of the Florida Supreme Court in the first case and the concurring opinion by Justices Scalia, Thomas, and Rehnquist in the second case—would have denied the right to vote to a very large percentage of Gore's voters.

The only reason that the Court majority felt they could take the risk of intervening on this basis was that they guessed, at the time of their first intervention, that they could use their fetishized legal authority as the supreme interpreters of the Intent of the Founding Fathers to superimpose their eighteenth-century version of the people on the people themselves, even though the real human beings comprising the people as a living, democratic, national community had just spoken. From the standpoint of any present-day understanding of the political meaning of popular democracy, it was ridiculous to assert that the Florida Supreme Court was prohibited from allowing a few extra days to obtain an accurate vote-count that would determine the outcome of a national election. Of course it was permissible, and even essential out of respect for the will of voters nationwide, to extend a more-or-less arbitrary counting deadline to figure out, in accordance with the statutorily expressed policy of the Florida legislature, which candidate the people of Florida had really voted for. Yet by channeling the political meaning of constitutional democracy into a legal framework drawn from an era when some states did not even allow popular votes in presidential elections, and by then commandingly posing supposedly knotty and abstract legal questions that "smuggled in" these antiquated political assumptions while appearing to be both rational and complex from a legal point of view, the Court majority guessed it could use its twenty years of accumulated conservative cultural capital to "awe" the people into another, imaginary, political world. And because the Supreme Court's authority is precisely to declare what political world is also the legal world, its opinion would be accepted as binding on the community as a whole.

Had Gore and his liberal lawyers been able to see and trust the reality of his own national democratic base—by speaking before the Court for them on the basis of the universal moral ideals of the present day embodied in the right of everyone to vote, and emphasizing in the name of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. precisely the overturning of

states' rights restrictions on that highest of democratic values that had marked the Court's jurisprudence since at least the Civil War—he might have mobilized his really-existing People in a way that would have overwhelmed the images of the “people” relied on by Bush and the Court majority. Against him, he would have had the twenty years of loss of faith that would have made it difficult for his popular majority to believe there was still a hopeful public space to emerge into, and he would have had the media, which until such a popular democratic reality succeeded in emerging, would have projected the inevitability of the Court's image of Authority to speak for the People (consider the media's fascination with the awesome architecture of the Supreme Court's chamber, the fact that we the people were going to be “allowed” for the first time to hear their allegedly devastating questioning of the lawyers, and the frantic scramble to get seats for the oral arguments in which the Great Ones would appear in their full regalia, emerging from their secret and sanctified private chambers where their

supposedly majestic conversations about the nature of our constitutional democracy occur, conversations which the average people actually constituting that democracy could certainly not understand). Overcoming the cultural power of these images would have been difficult; so long as the post-election contest remained mainly a media event in which people could only connect as a people by watching television, these images provided powerful psychological support for the twenty-years-in-the-making closure of and even erasure of the popular-democratic space that the Gore majority would have to reclaim. But had he and Lawrence Tribe and David Boies stood up boldly in the name of Martin Luther King Jr. on behalf of the right to vote, I think the Gore forces would have succeeded in allowing the present reality of the people to defeat the long-dead version of the people on which the Bush forces and the Court's conservative majority depended.

But instead of standing up for voting rights, Gore and his lawyers meekly pleaded for states' rights, the traditional Republican metaphor that has been used for centuries to deny working people, women, and African Americans the right to vote. Of course, in their public statements outside the legal sphere, Gore and his spokespeople did invoke the right to vote as the basis for their call for a full and fair Florida vote count. But by severing this political claim from their legal claim, they decisively undermined their ability to claim that the right to vote was not just their view of the right principle to be followed, but was also the universally binding moral ideal that the Court was obligated to recognize as binding upon a national community founded upon the will of the people.

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So enveloped were Gore and his lawyers in their own belief in the power of the conservative worldview, so weakened was their conviction that there really was a People out here to support their own political viewpoint, that they allowed themselves to think that they had to argue from a position of weakness: to cling to the hope that by being “good boys” and dutifully framing their legal argument in the antiquated version of the People that the Court majority had for so long successfully been constructing, they might have a chance of pleading with either Kennedy

or O'Connor to vote with them and thus eke out a five-to-four victory on states' rights grounds. (“See, Justices, we recognize your authority and your worldview, and we humbly ask that you decide for us on those grounds.”) By doing so, they effectively limited the meaning of the legal debate to morally trivial, technical legal questions affecting only Floridians, and dissolved the emerging unity of their own national democratic base by depriving us of our ability to claim constitutional legitimacy—in the name of our

own national democratic majority—to demand that the Florida vote count proceed.

Once Gore and his lawyers deferred in this way to the conservative worldview and its version of who the People were, we were lost. Ironically, by the time the Court finally ended the election in its second decision on December 12, 2000, the Court itself had to bow to the national popular pressure that had built up on its own on behalf of the pre-eminence of the right to vote over the six-week period of nationwide political debate and shifted its rationale from their initial strict reading of Article II, Section 1, to a rationale based on equal protection theory. Undoubtedly, the Court majority knew that the two Court decisions read together were incoherent and unsupportable. But they also knew that there was no longer any possibility of a unified public majority empowered by a publicly articulated sense of constitutional entitlement that could do anything about it.

Even if Gore could not have changed the outcome of the Court decisions and of the election itself by uniting his political and legal claim under the transcendent banner of voting rights, he would, by doing so, have posed a powerful challenge with significant popular support to the long conservative assault on the very existence of a socially-connected, national community demanding legal recognition in the name of the highest of democratic values. Instead of the political demobilization and universal isolation that so envelops us and separates us from each other today, we and they would know that we exist, that we claim to be legitimately “constituted,” and that by quite a large margin we had and have the votes. □

INTEGRAL POLITICS

A Spiritual Third Way

Gregory Wilpert

In this time of ideological upheaval, when the old ideologies of left and right, of socialism, liberalism, and conservatism, no longer capture the political imagination the way they once did, new political visions are required. Some have tried to formulate a “Third Way” between social democracy and conservatism. Others, such as Michael Lerner, have proposed a more spiritually-oriented approach to transcend left and right. In what follows, I would like to present another vision, that of Integral Politics, which is very compatible with the approach of Michael Lerner but is based on the work of Ken Wilber.

What is a Third Way?

Historically, third ways have usually cropped up when people found the existing (two) dominant political ideologies lacking. In the nineteenth century, socialism was originally intended as a third way between conservatism and classical liberalism (basically free market capitalism at the time). Later on, in the twentieth century, social democracy developed as a third way between socialism and conservatism/free market capitalism. It’s no surprise that today a number of politicians and theorists, such as the Clinton/Gore Democratic Leadership Council and Tony Blair’s New Labor party, have proposed a third way between social democratic and neo-liberalist programs themselves. But rather than representing a true transcendence of the existing belief systems, too often the new program ends up in the ideological center between the two dominant ideologies. Such a centrist third way is actually a compromise rather than a new political

theory that overcomes the old ones by providing lasting answers to unresolved social problems.

A true third way for the twenty-first century should transcend and progress beyond the preceding ideologies. Integral Politics fits that bill. By mapping out the relationship of all major existing ideologies to each other and by clearly presenting a new approach to politics, one that integrates the best of what each has to offer and that transcends their shortcomings, Integral Politics presents a true alternative to politics as usual.

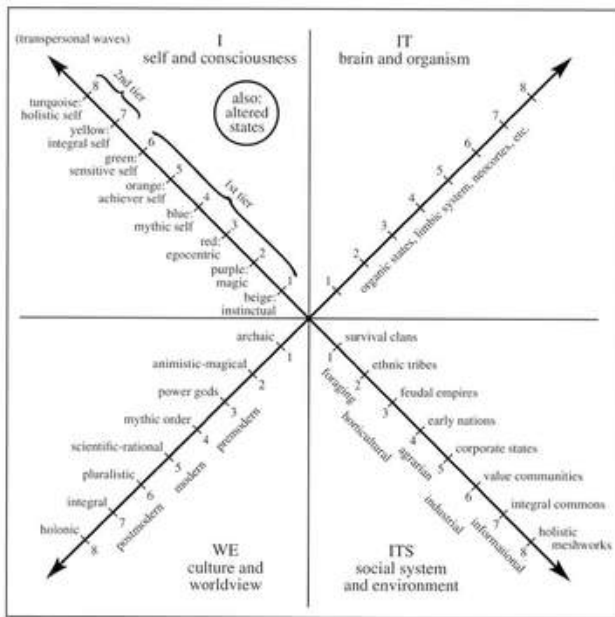
The Integral Third Way

Ken Wilber, particularly in his recent writings, has presented a comprehensive map of the cosmos and its development (see especially *A Theory of Everything; Sex, Ecology, Spirituality; A Brief History of Everything*) that lends itself to the mapping of political belief systems. To summarize briefly, Wilber argues that all systems are simultaneously both a part and a whole: what he, following Arthur Koestler, calls a holon. That is, any system we might look at, whether an individual person, an atom, a society, or a belief system, is simultaneously something that is part of a larger whole, embedded in a larger context, and a relatively independent unit. Further, any given holon has both an inside and an outside. Finally, one can examine the holon as an isolated individual unit and also in its collective context.

Wilber has developed a map that organizes holons conceptually. Like the Great Chain of Being of earlier centuries, the key to understanding this map is that each holon can transcend itself, thereby introducing newer and deeper levels or contexts.

These four quadrants, as Ken Wilber refers to them, correspond to the classical ways of conceptualizing the world in both Eastern and Western philosophy. In the West, ever

Gregory Wilpert is a visiting Fulbright professor at Universidad Central de Venezuela and co-facilitator of the politics branch of Ken Wilber's Integral Institute. He thanks Wilber, Jack Crittenden, and Thomas Jordan for their useful criticisms of this article.

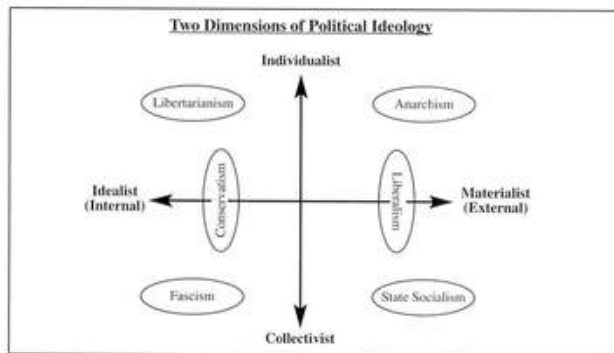


since ancient Greek philosophy, and especially since Immanuel Kant, the realm of philosophy has been divided into the true (objective truth), the good (moral truth), and the beautiful (aesthetic truth). In the East, Buddhism has a similar conception in the form of the Buddha (individual truth), the dharma (objective truth), and the sangha (collective truth). Roughly, objective truth corresponds to science, the external point-of-view on all holons, both individual and collective (the two quadrants on the right). Subjective truth corresponds to art, which is the internal point-of-view of any holon (the upper left quadrant). And moral truth corresponds to ethics and culture, the internal collective point-of-view of any holon (the lower left quadrant).

As sociologists since Max Weber have pointed out, the key achievement and the key disaster of modern society has been to separate these three spheres from one another. This separation allowed each sphere to develop according to its own logic, rather than being subordinated to religion, as was the case during the Middle Ages and before, when the Church determined what was true, what was right, and what was beautiful. The subordination of these realms to church doctrine made the further development of each realm very difficult. With the onset of modernity, the three realms of art, science, and morality were finally able to develop in accordance with the truths of each of their realms. Today, however, this differentiation has become so extreme that it has become a form of dissociation; each sphere has become completely unrelated to the other and the sphere of objective truth, of science, has taken precedence over all of the other spheres. The integral vision tries to overcome this fragmentation of modern society, not by re-imposing a new church doctrine or the dominance of another sphere instead of science, but by recognizing first the autonomy of each sphere and second that each sphere is intimately related to

the other. The integral vision reintegrates the true, the good, and the beautiful in an unforced and holistic embrace.

We can apply this conception of the universe to political belief systems, mapped out on a matrix much like the one at left. On one axis of the matrix we can map the degree to which a political ideology believes that internal or external factors shape us as individuals or as a society. For example, conservatives tend to believe that internal forces shape us; we've all heard their argument that it is the values and lifestyle of the individual that leads to poverty. Liberals, on the other hand, tend to believe that external forces shape us, that poverty, for example, is the result of unjust political or economic forces. On the second axis we can map the degree to which an ideology emphasizes the role of the individual versus the role of the collective. To use some extreme ideologies as examples, fascism typically focuses on the collective and the internal, in the sense that it is concerned with the internal motivations of people, their values or culture, and with the collective orderliness of society. Libertarianism also sees the individual's values as being the key forces for the individual's success or failure in life, but is primarily concerned with the individual. Leftist ideologies, such as anarchism on the one hand and state socialism on the other hand, see the primary causative forces as being external, usually in the form of the economy or the government. Anarchism focuses on the individual, generally opposing collective forces such as the state, and state socialism focuses on the collective. These examples are taken from the more extreme forms of political ideology, but this model also applies to the more moderate forms, such as "new left," "old left," "new right," and "old right." One can diagram the result of this analysis as in the figure below.



However, the above figure shows only two out of four dimensions of politics. The first dimension is the extent to which an ideology focuses on the individual or on the collective. The second dimension is the extent to which an ideology focuses on external or internal causation.

The third dimension of political ideology is of key importance for Integral Politics: its degree of inclusion/embrace. Just as every holon exists in deeper and deeper contexts, so can political arguments or ideologies. While some ideas or arguments take physical need as their only context, others

emphasize emotional truths, traditional/ethnocentric truths, or, at the next level, universalistic truths. In other words, while fascistic ideologies rely on arguments that reference ethnocentric truths, liberal ideologies rely on arguments that reference rational/universal truths. This distinction of truths is hierarchical, going from physical to emotional to traditional to rational, each step transcending and embracing its predecessor, all the way to the top level, that of soul and spirit. It is possible to have a politics that makes reference to this highest level of soul and spiritual truths/contexts. Integral Politics recognizes this nested hierarchy of increasingly deeper and wider contexts.

Finally, the fourth dimension of politics, according to the integral vision, is the type and direction of change that is desired (just as movement or time in the realm of physics is sometimes considered the fourth dimension). Some ideologies argue that social change should occur in a revolutionary manner, others in a reformist manner, and yet others argue that there should be no change at all. Ken Wilber makes the distinction between translation, which is change within any given level or context, and transformation, which is change to a new and higher level/context. This roughly corresponds to the distinction between reform and revolution. Furthermore, some ideologies also differ in terms of the direction of change they seek; some argue that change should move to a higher level, while others argue that we need to return to an earlier level. For example, some radical ecologists argue that society should return to a social organization based on hunter-gatherer tribes, while socialists typically argue that society should find a new form of organization that transcends the current one and has never existed before. Integral Politics argues that all four of these dimensions need to be taken into consideration when developing political analyses and policies. Integral Politics thus provides a "third way" in the sense that it transcends and integrates the existing belief systems in all dimensions.

Integral Politics and Spirituality

The practice of Integral Politics requires a spiritual orientation because it is a vision that lies beyond ordinary rationality. Here, I am making a distinction between religion and spirituality. By religion I mean a specific set of beliefs and practices oriented towards a realm beyond the ordinary; by spirituality I mean an openness towards the non-ordinary, towards the miracle of life and nature, towards the suprarational. Integral Politics is related to spirituality because it requires of its practitioners intuition, a capacity to see things holistically, and an openness to realms beyond the merely rational. The sense of spirituality referred to here is thus very similar to Michael Lerner's conception of an emancipatory spirituality. One can become more attuned to Integral Politics the same way one becomes attuned to the spiritual, through contemplative practices such as meditation. Integral Politics does not merely "add" spirituality to politics.

Instead, it finds a place for spirituality in politics and a place for politics in spirituality.

Historically, Western monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, have been what Nietzsche called "Apollonian." That is, they have tried to push the great chain of being in the direction of God and the embrace of the One, towards Spirit. Basically, they have moved humans in the direction of ascent, up the chain of being. The sad result, however, has too often been a rejection of or dissociation from what went before, of the earlier levels, such as the earth, the body, the sensual, and the emotive. To reverse this process, Nietzsche advocated a different type of attitude, one he called "Dionysian," which would bring people back in touch with their basic desires and their bodies. He advocated a descent back down the chain of being, a renewed embrace of the many, instead of a striving towards the one.

Integral Politics, recognizing the validity of the full spectrum of consciousness, from body to emotion to mind to soul to spirit, does not see ascent and descent as an either/or option, but as both/and. Pure ascent too easily leads to a dissociation from the prior levels of being and pure descent too easily leads to regression. Instead, what is needed is an ascent to higher levels of being that simultaneously and consciously reintegrates the levels that went before. In political practice this means that while we seek higher and more appropriate forms of social organization, probably in the form of a better global polity and global economy, we also need to re-embrace and reintegrate community, individual, and the earth.

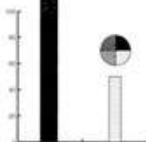
The Principles of Integral Politics

Based on the foregoing, one can outline some of the core principles of Integral Politics. None of these are meant as hard rules, but rather as mutually agreed-upon guidelines for what Integral Politics ought to try to encompass.

1. Integral vision: Integral Politics is based on a vision that is capable of integrating opposites and of holding them as non-dual. Applying this to the four dimensional map outlined earlier, this means that one needs to realize that political reality, just as all reality, involves individual and collective, internal and external, earlier and later levels of development, the embrace of the many and the striving for the one. Every effort to create a greater unity, whether on a regional or on a global level, must simultaneously include a reintegration of what went before, of the national, the communal, the individual, and the earth. Ken Wilber has given this approach the abbreviation "all quadrants, all levels."

Recently, mainstream third way politics, such as those proposed by sociologist Anthony Giddens and the Clinton/Gore Democratic Leadership Council, have suggested that we can realize that an individual's rights must accompany responsibility for the collectivity. But that is just one way to integrate the two. The key lies in finding forms of social organization that simultaneously

preserve and promote individual rights and collective goods. We need a society in which, to quote Marx, "the full development of the individual is a condition for the full development of society."



Left politics typically assumes that we are primarily shaped by external factors and right politics assumes we are shaped by internal factors. Integral Politics would recognize and respect the interiors of each individual and of society just as much as we recognize the external factors that play a tremendous role in people's lives.

2. **Integral morality:** Added to the "all quadrants, all levels" vision is an integral morality, which Wilber calls the "Basic Moral Intuition." It seeks to preserve and promote the deepest development for the greatest number of beings. In practice, since we cannot willfully rearrange the interiors of individuals or of societies, integral politics would take interiors into account mainly by creating the objective (external) conditions that would allow a maximum of subjective (internal) development for individuals and society.
3. **Translation and then transformation:** The integral perspective identifies when progress should be incremental, that is, within any given level of development, and when it should be qualitative, from one level to the next. Transformation (revolution), the move from one level to the next, is only advisable once the options for action on any given level are exhausted and society is ready to move to the next level. If the conditions for transformation are not given, then more translation (reform) within the current level is necessary. Integral Politics recognizes the appropriateness of both reform and revolution, but that each has its place and time, depending on the circumstances and the stage of social development. Integral Politics generally seeks to move society gently ahead to the next higher level, but only when and if it is ready.
4. **Pathologies of development:** Integral Politics tries to recognize when a particular institution or social arrangement has become pathological and is either blocking further development or is actually operating counter to the basic moral intuition. For example, poverty can act as a hindrance to individual and social development if this poverty makes an individual's access to the resources needed for development impossible (adequate medical care, education, food, shelter, etc.). Also, when one group or individual is oppressing another group or individual, this makes the full development of the oppressed impossible or at least very difficult. But just as there can be external blockages to or pathologies of development, so too can there be internal ones. For example, a culture that denies the existence of development, that believes that it represents the ultimate wisdom society has to offer, would reject any transformative or spiritual practices that attempt to bring the culture to a new level of

awareness. Here, of course, education policy figures very strongly because we need to find ways of making sure that everyone, even the least fortunate, has an opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

An Application of Integral Politics: Globalization

Globalization is perhaps simultaneously both the most complex and the most important issue of our times. It is thus worthwhile to see what Integral Politics would say about it.

An important feature of all development is that each movement to a new level represents greater inclusiveness. That is, when atoms combine to form molecules, they include both the features of atoms and add the new features or characteristics of molecules. This goes on, down the line, to cells and multi-cellular organisms. The same goes for individual subjective development (the upper left quadrant), where physical sensations are incorporated in emotions, which are incorporated in the sense of group belongingness, which is incorporated in rationality. Particularly relevant for the concept of globalization are the collective quadrants, where the units of social development expand from clans, to tribes, to nations, to regions, and finally to the globe, each level more encompassing than the

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previous level. However, within each of the aforementioned quadrants there are several developmental lines. This means that the dynamic of increasing inclusiveness applies not just to the four quadrants, but to all social lines of development, whether economic, legal, moral, or political. In other words, globalization, in the sense of global inclusiveness, is a natural consequence of human development. The question becomes at what speed are each of these lines moving towards global embrace.

However, when examining today's world, we can see that the current manifestation of globalization does not represent a globalization along all possible dimensions or lines of human experience. Today, only some aspects of human development are globalized, while others are left out. Specifically, the economic and some elements of the cultural dimensions tend towards the global, while the moral and political dimensions remain largely stuck at the national level (with the European Union potentially representing a notable exception). In terms of Integral Politics one can classify this imbalance as a form of pathology because there is a dissociation among the different lines of development in the sense that the neo-liberal economic project denies any validity to the development of a global polity.

Not only that, the economic globalization that has been occurring is leading to ever increased economic polarization between the different peoples of the world over the past thirty to forty years. For example, according to World Bank data, in 1960 the income ratio between the world's wealthiest 20 percent and the world's poorest 20 percent was 30:1; today this ratio is about 75:1, with no sign of slowing down. This economic polarization represents a dissociation within the economic line of development, where wealthy groups become ever richer while the poor get poorer or at least stagnate economically. The problem with these dissociations, both within the economic line and between the economic and the political lines is that they present serious social justice issues and create blockages for further development. The massive amount of poverty in today's world makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for the poor to achieve their fullest potential. Also, the dissociation between economic and political globalization means that economic processes are divorced from political ones, and thus devoid of democratic oversight, meaning that powerful economic actors can do as they please, while the less powerful suffer the consequences.

Towards a New Systemic Logic: Global Neo-Keynesianism (An Integral Political Economy)

If we take the principles of Integral Politics seriously, we must strive to "preserve and promote the deepest development for the greatest number of beings." In practice, this means that we need to find ways to balance economic and political development through a globalized polity, so that

future economic processes do not lead to even greater economic polarization. Historically, this particular imbalance is nothing new, as economic integration has frequently advanced more rapidly than political integration. In what follows I roughly outline a progression of economy-polity relations that provides an idea as to what the next stage of our politico-economic organization might be.

With the emergence of capitalism and the explanation of its functioning that Adam Smith first provided, one can say that there was a phase in which the economy was primarily national and the polity was not supposed to intervene in the economy. The polity was thus practically non-existent as far as the economy was concerned (except to enforce contracts perhaps). This was the phase of classical liberalism, of the basically unregulated national economy, which began in Western Europe around 1800 and lasted until the 1930s. This phase ended as a result of its own instability, as exemplified by the Great Depression. The next phase was classical Keynesianism, which, in accordance with the principles outlined by Maynard Keynes, gave a significant role to the national polity in guiding the national economy (along with some limited international controls). This phase lasted until the early 1970s, which is when Keynesianism collapsed due to its instability. It was unable to manage the contradictions between the demands of the business sector and the general population. The practical result was the increasing indebtedness of the Western welfare states (and eventually a debt crisis for the Third World). Also, the increase in world trade began to create increasing pressure to bring about a new system of politico-economic management, as companies chose the most favorable locations for investment, whether those were within or outside of the polity which regulated them. The 1970s thus represent the beginning of a global regime of economic neo-liberalism that was accompanied by the persistence of national politics. This is basically the phase and type of globalization we are still experiencing.

The next phase will thus in all likelihood be a catching-up of the polity to the same global level that the economy is already operating at. In other words, because international neo-liberalism is unsustainable, due to the increasing polarization and environmental destruction it produces, we can expect to see a new phase in the near future, that of global neo-Keynesianism, when the polity becomes global too and can regulate the global economy. An example of this process is the European Union, which is currently introducing a stronger regional (Europe-wide) polity, precisely so that it can better deal with its region-wide economic, social, and ecological problems.

Many prominent economists have already floated proposals for creating a global neo-Keynesian political economy, such as former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, Harvard development economist Jeffrey Sachs, economic Nobel laureate James Tobin, and global financier George Soros. Their proposals range from introducing a

global tax on currency speculation (the Tobin Tax) to the creation of a global central bank to international capital controls. The primary objective of these proposals is generally to dismantle the current regime of “beggar thy neighbor” in which countries compete to offer the best investment opportunities by dismantling all national restrictions or controls on investment (ranging from environmental to labor to human rights regulations). Most importantly, such global neo-Keynesian controls can also contribute to a reversal of global economic polarization.

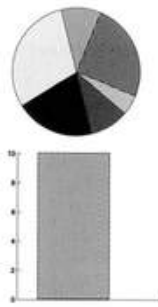
We should be under no illusion, however, that global neo-Keynesianism is an end-point in our politico-economic development. It too will sooner or later suffer from the internal contradictions that national Keynesianism suffered, and we, as a global society, will then have to look for a new systemic logic. However, until then, global neo-Keynesianism is the most likely alternative.

Towards a New Cultural Logic

A key element of Integral Politics is the attention it pays to the internal, subjective, cultural side of things (lower-left quadrant). My discussion about globalization so far has been about finding a new systemic logic; that is, I focused on a discussion of the external, objective, social side of things (lower-right quadrant). The insight of Integral Politics is that solutions that focus exclusively on the external (the social-systemic) will be deficient if they are not accompanied by a focus on the internal (the cultural). In other words, global neo-Keynesianism, as a type of integral political-economy, needs an integral culture if it is to move from a mere translation to a transformation of our society. Governments and their populations will be unwilling to implement global neo-Keynesianism if they don't also feel a certain amount of solidarity and compassion for the world beyond their national borders. The peoples of the world have to be willing to think in terms of humanity, rather than in terms of their own nation, more than ever before.

This expansion of human sympathy to cover the globe, however, is only one part of what integral culture means. Another part implies the ability and willingness to integrate individual and collective, objective and subjective, ascent and descent. Integrating individual and collective, in terms of globalization, means that the benefits many receive from global trade, culture, and interaction cannot impinge upon the integrity of each and every individual on the planet. For example, this would mean that we need to actively protect the rights of indigenous cultures, of minorities, and of the less powerful in general. At the same time, the rights that individuals have cannot be divorced from their responsibility to society and to the environment.

Integrating objective and subjective means, in the global context, the realization that the move to a new global systemic logic has to be accompanied by a new cultural logic.



Finally, integrating ascent and descent means that while we develop a new global consciousness and a new global political-economy—in other words, new higher integrations—we also have to take care of what went before, of our community and of our natural ecology. A global neo-Keynesianism needs to be accompanied by a return to the local (not a local tribalism, but a cosmopolitan one). We need to do this because we are human and have limited human scales of reference, such as the local community and the local environment. These human scales become more important precisely because the global is also becoming more important.

The local becomes more important in the age of globalization not just because of its more human scale, but also in the name of democracy and social justice. As power leaves the national level and becomes a global matter, it also becomes more removed and more abstracted from everyday experience and everyday individual concerns. One way to reinvest the individual with power and responsibility is by returning power to the local community. Practical examples for such a process can include greater local self-sufficiency in the sphere of production (more local trade), the introduction of local currencies (which have many economic and ecological benefits), and greater autonomy in decision-making, particularly as far as the expenditure of state revenues is concerned. The expansion and empowerment of democracy at the local level must, of course, be accompanied by a democratization of power at all levels, from local to global.

Some might say that the observation that globalization is a necessary dynamic that ought to be promoted cannot be combined with a call for localization. This, however, is not necessarily true if we would honor both the local and the global by globalizing such things as sympathy, solidarity, communication, and the production of products that can only be produced in limited locations (e.g., tropical fruit, rare medicines, sophisticated technology, etc.) and localize the production of basic goods (e.g., staple foods, basic household goods, simple electronics, etc.), our connection to the earth, and our connection to our community. Ultimately, Integral Politics means integrating oppositions that were previously thought to be mutually exclusive.

While the Integral Politics outlined here does not constitute a concrete political platform, it is possible to generate concrete policies out of these principles. Integral Politics can help move politics beyond the typical left-right stalemate and present a true “third way,” one that brings politics to a new level and finds solutions that are not just compromises, but are solutions that emerge from a higher understanding, from the unforced unification of opposites. And, Integral Politics can answer our basic human desire for spirit, by recognizing the validity of spirituality and by giving spirituality an important role in formulating a politics for the third millennium. □

Called to Rise

Mordechai Gafni

An orchestra is composed of many instruments, all of them necessary for making music. Each instrument is distinct and special without being “better” than any other. To participate in the symphony, you must be familiar with all the instruments, yet be particularly responsive to the unique call of your own instrument. While you may be a dabbler at many instruments, you must be master of your own.

Every calling is great only when greatly pursued. If everyone played the same instrument, the music would just be loud and boring; it would lack texture and harmony. So it is with life itself. The great diversity of this world requires radical individualism. We contribute to the harmonious symphony of being only when we master our own unique soul prints.

• • •

The third book of the Bible opens with the words, “Vayikra el Moshe.” Literally translated from the Hebrew, the phrase means, “God called to Moses and God spoke.” Is it not enough for God to speak? Why must he call first? The Hasidic master Nachum of Chernobyl explains that only if one experiences the call first can one hear the words. For the kabbalistic reader, Moses stands in for all of us. We are all called. And, as it was for Moses, so it is for us: our life is an adventure in which we answer the call or we do not. Living means being called—and responding.

What would life be like if we heard no call? Jean Paul Sartre and his school of existentialism, which has shaped much of the postmodern sensibility, pursued that path. In a work aptly titled, *Nausea*, Sartre wrote:

Man can will nothing unless he has first understood that he must count on no one but himself; that he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth.

Sartre understands that an unfriendly universe which issues no call to the individual is a place of nausea. Yet, he cannot imagine that he is called. For those engaged in

Rebbe Mordechai (Marc) Gafni serves as Dean of Melitz Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. This column is based on his first English book, Soul Prints (Pocket Books, 2000). ©2000. All rights reserved.



biblical consciousness, however, (*mysterium tremendum* notwithstanding), the universe is constantly issuing invitations for our engagement. For us, an essential energy, a force if you will, courses through the universe, knows our name, and calls us. To live, for biblical man and woman, is to be addressed. To be addressed is to be called by a personal destiny that is profoundly needed by the world and can be filled by you alone.

Too often, we don't hear that address, or worse, we are told not to listen. The discipline of psychology, especially in its classical forms, seeks to undermine our sense of calling. It pathologizes our urge to find our vocation, diagnosing it as character disorder, neurosis, manic depression or grandiosity. One wonders, along with therapist Otto Rank, whether psychology's denial of human grandeur is not itself partially responsible for the symptoms and complexes it then so delightfully labels. All of the psychoanalysis in the world will not allow you to find out who you are, why you are here on earth, why you have to die, or how you can make your life a triumph. When psychology tries to offer itself as a full explanation for human motivation, it becomes a fraud.

• • •

Protestant theologian Frederick Buechner defines the call this way: “Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you to is the place where your

ILLUSTRATION BY JON KRAUSE

deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." A calling is not a job or an occupation: it is a vocation. It is not what you do for a living—it is your very life.

The word "vocation" is derived from the Latin *vocare*, to call. Calling is an issue of voice. You must sense the voice of the caller, then find your own voice, and realize the two are the same. Our vocal expression in the world is melodious only if we sing in response to *vocare*, the call of our vocation. When you find your radical uniqueness, your voice, then you find God.

Often we try to escape from the singularity of our call. The clarion call can be so loud that we go deaf from its decibels. Its voice can shout so directly to our soul prints that it is exhilarating and affirming, yet frightening. The first response of the Hebrews to the calling voice at Sinai—which, according to the Kabbalists, was an inner voice—was to be absolutely overwhelmed and to run. In an earlier story, Moses himself hides his face so as not to be overpowered from the voice calling him from the Burning Bush. When the prophet Jonah hears an inner voice calling him to teach in the Assyrian city of Nineveh, he books immediate passage on a boat—going in the other direction. It is only when going in the opposite direction wreaks havoc on his life and he finds himself trapped in the belly of the whale that he sets course for Nineveh.

We run because we fear we are not up to the job. So we ignore our unique calling. We try to join the magnificent symphony of being without learning our particular instrument. But that strategy never works, for everyone knows that you're not invited to join a symphony without having mastered your particular instrument.

Ever present in us is the temptation to take the Eden Express back to the idyllic oneness of the Garden, to the time before human being was called to action. But the tree of life must be the tree of your life, your instrument, your soul print.

We are all heading in the same direction toward the vocation that comes from the authentic realization of our soul prints. Yet we can only reach our destination by taking our different paths. All-One-Ness is achievable only through aloneness and singularity. Beyond our important ties with a particular spiritual community, we must all create our own religion. Teaching in the time of the Temple, the seer Chabakuk exclaimed, "The righteous live by their faith." Contemporary mystic Abraham Kuk rereads "their faith" to be their particular faith, that is, their soul print. You are called to be the priest in the temple of yourself.

Chaim Vital, a sixteenth-century kabbalist who lived in the Galilee, expressed this idea by saying that every person has his or her own specific letter of the Bible. My letter is not yours and yours is not mine; our sacred text is created when all the unique letters form sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and ultimately, an entire narrative. The paradox of

singularity is not separation but merging, not division but harmony, not conflict but relationship.

You only become your letter in the Bible by reaching down to your deepest level of singularity. It is in the cauldron of authenticity that your letter of the Bible is forged. Your false self, no matter how colorful, idiosyncratic, or ostensibly distinct, can never become a letter in the Bible. It is a misspelling of your soul.

• • •

I once asked a class that I was teaching, "How many people here consider themselves messengers of God?" They looked at me as if to say, "He has finally lost it." Wouldn't we be excited waking up in the morning if we knew we held vital information in our hands—information that makes the very world spin? In the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the great readers of biblical myth, "We are messengers who have forgotten our message."

The Zohar, the magnum opus of biblical mysticism, goes one dramatic step farther. We are not only all messengers, say the kabbalists. We are the message itself. We are the scroll. The Bible, the Koran, the Sutras, are us and we are them. It is heresy to ignore the call of your message or to confuse it with a message not your own. For we all have different pieces of the message, our own unique ideas, character traits, experiences, perspectives, or talents, that we need to realize for ourselves and that the community needs to have to be whole.

That message is encrypted into our individual psyches. The code is accessed through the call to destiny that goes out to each of us. To break the soul's unique code, we need to listen deeply, to hear when our number is called. Only then can we pluck out the tune on our instrument, play the part that is ours alone in the larger symphony.

To deny the uniqueness of your message is to deny your ability to contribute to the community. Genuine community can only emerge when a soul print exchange takes place—when we share with each other our unique letters and piece together first a word, then a sentence, and ultimately, a world.

• • •

What I have been saying has been written before, by the poet Emily Dickinson:

We never know how high we are
Till we are asked to rise
And then if we are true to plan
Our statures touch the skies—

The Heroism we recite
Would be a normal thing
Did not ourselves the Cubits warp
For fear to be a King—

Each of us should have only two great fears in our lives, the fear of deceiving ourselves and the fear of imitating someone else. Both of these prevent us from being ourselves, from being kings. □

Stewardship as a Path

Gail Straub

For all my life I've felt reverence for the earth, but until recently I had given little thought to my responsibility to the planet or how my lifestyle might be destructive to the fragile balance of life that I am part of. Up until the late 1980's I was deeply involved with world peace, citizen diplomacy, and other social causes. Like most people when it came to the ecological crisis I took the out of sight out of mind path. I knew it was important to recycle and I got involved with Earth Day but these were isolated gestures that hadn't really taken root in my heart. Then I had a wake up call. My husband David and I were invited to play the *World Game* a remarkable experience conceived by the visionary Buckminster Fuller.

Bucky's genius was to provide people with a visceral experience of the actual distribution of our planet's resources. The *World Game* was played on a gigantic world map laid out on a gymnasium floor. The players were divided across the map according to the actual population density of each continent. Flash lights were distributed to represent energy, loaves of bread for food, and jugs of water represented drinkable water.

I ended up in Africa, a continent I love and have lived in. We were jammed together on our portion of the globe with a few measly sticks of bread, very little water, and even fewer flashlights. The gym went dark and everyone was asked to turn on our flashlights—glaring light in the Northern Hemisphere, almost dark in the South. Then we held up our sticks of bread—the North covered with bobbing loaves of nourishment while the entire continents of India, Africa, and South America appeared to have less food than the east coast of North America. And so it went with water.

Then we were asked to stand in silence and simply look around the room. Across the world I saw my homeland, the United States, full of space for people to stand, so much bread, water, and flashlights people could barely hold them all. Suddenly, the fact that we Americans are only a tiny five percent of the human family and yet we use an astonishing one third of our entire planet's resources,

Gail Straub is a teacher, writer, and co-founder of Empowerment Training Programs. This article is excerpted from The Rhythm of Compassion: Caring for Self, Connecting with Society. © 2001 Tuttle Publishing.



became heartbreakingly real for me. The longer I stood there the worse I felt—shame, injustice, rage, desire to run away, and finally deep sadness.

For weeks after this event I struggled with the outrageous inequality between the North and South. Why did I get so lucky and how did I get so greedy? How should I live now that I understood the preposterous consumption and waste in the United States? Should I move back to Africa and try to help out? At the deepest level I was asking myself how can I find peace of mind when such suffering and inequality abound in our world?

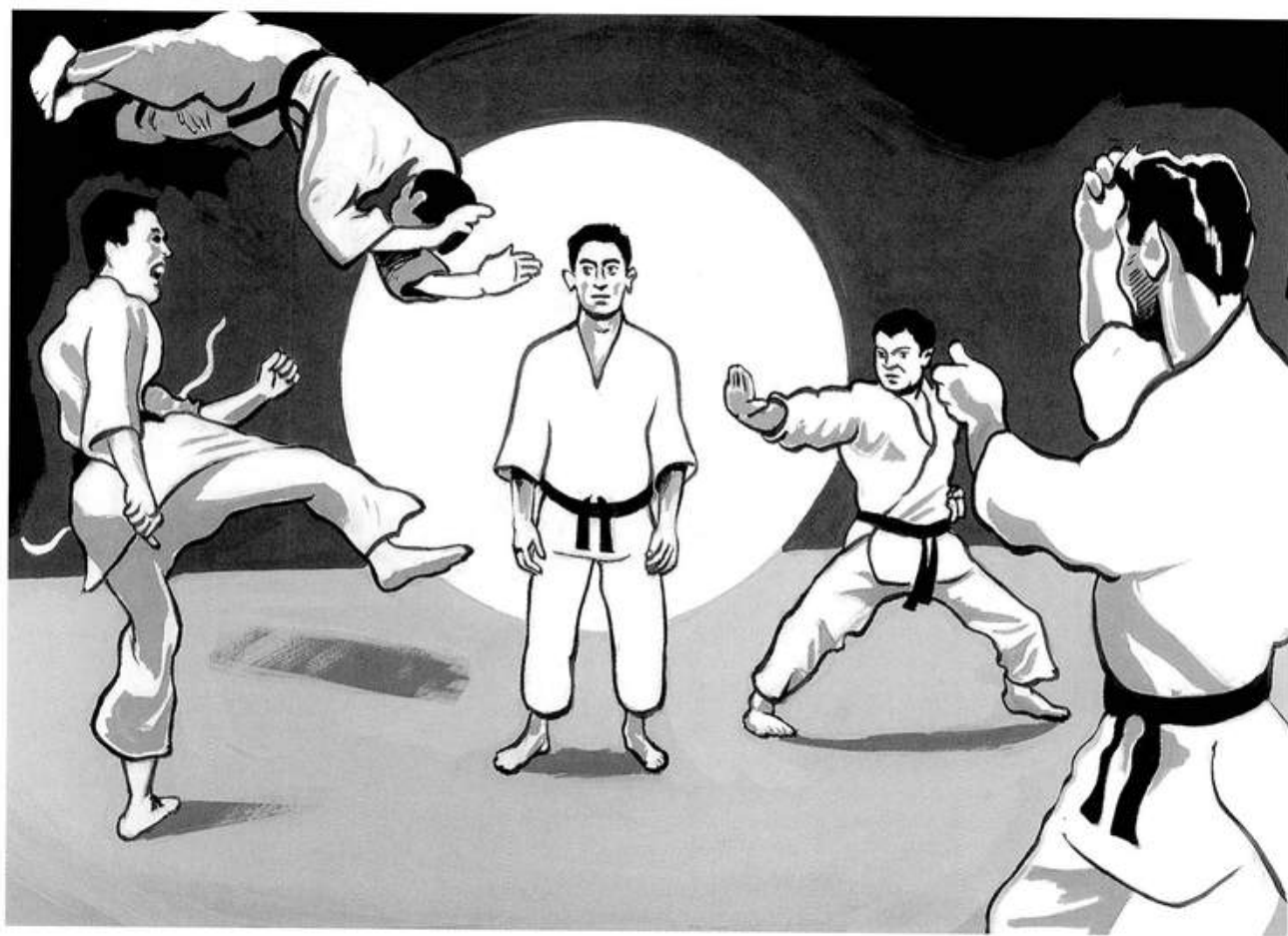
My husband and I returned home deeply affected by our experience. David was inspired to found Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP) dedicated to empowering the average American citizen to create environmentally sustainable lifestyles. With my husband on the forefront of the sustainability movement, I realized I didn't need to move back to Africa to help out. Where I could help most was right here in America—the way we lived was the real problem and changing our consumption habits in our homes and our communities could make a significant difference.

Along with everything pragmatic I was learning about sustainability I became deeply interested in the spiritual dimension of stewardship. As I taught people about sustainable living it became increasingly clear to me that each earth-friendly act—composting, reusing, recycling, repairing, car-pooling, eco-wise shopping, conserving water and energy—was also an act of ecological mindfulness. Sustainable living offered ongoing practice in mindfulness.

(continued on page 64)

ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE SCOTT

The Kabbalah of Aikido



Daniel Kohn

Finding Aikido

As I approached ordination after a number of years of rabbinical school, I looked forward with anticipation to investing myself in a sport or hobby which would provide me with a physical counterbalance to my sedentary professional career. As a fairly typical Midwestern guy, I had long been attracted to the macho side of life, so I was intrigued when a roommate suggested I accompany him to his Aikido class one evening.

From the outside, the *dojo* (practice hall) looked like an old garage rather than the national center of one of the country's largest Aikido associations. Inside, people trickled

onto a long, white canvas mat dressed in white *gis* (traditional martial arts uniforms) and white belts. Looking at so much white, my eyes swam and I momentarily lost my sense of depth and perspective. As people slowly warmed up and began sitting down on their knees in rows facing the front, I noticed a simple but elegant shrine recessed into the far wall at the head of the practice hall which featured a picture of a very dignified elderly Japanese man with a long white beard. I later learned that this was O Sensei (great teacher), the honorific title of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido.

Soon the instructor came on the mat, and after a short warmup, began demonstrating a technique with a volunteer, after which everyone began practicing that movement. This continued throughout the entire class, with the movements growing ever more complicated and energetic. Towards the end of the class, the instructor demonstrated powerful throws, sending his demonstration partners flying

Rabbi Daniel Kohn is the author of *Practical Pedagogy for the Jewish Classroom* (Greenwood, 1999) and *Sex, Drugs, and Violence in the Jewish Tradition* (Jason Aronson, forthcoming). This article is excerpted from a manuscript of the same title.

dozens of feet through the air only to roll out effortlessly at the last minute. I was impressed with the grace and power of the techniques. Despite the vigor and speed of the movements, no one seemed to get hurt. I enrolled that very evening and entered the world of Aikido.

Blending East and West

During the past twelve years, as I trained in Aikido and lived an observant Jewish life, Kabbalah and Aikido began to cross-pollinate. O Sensei once said, "Aikido is truth and truth knows no religious or cultural boundaries." While in the midst of leading prayer on Shabbat, or serving lunch to the homeless in my synagogue, or even in the give-and-take of teaching teens in my Hebrew high school classes, I would suddenly realize that I was acting in accordance with a principle of Aikido either verbally, emotionally, or spiritually. Similarly, while practicing Aikido, I would often make a connection between Kabbalah and a physical Aikido technique. I call this blended consciousness the Kabbalah of Aikido.

Aikido is uniquely suited to serve as a vehicle for Kabbalah because both disciplines seek to perfect and improve our broken world. Just as Rabbi Isaac Luria, known as the Ari and the founder of Lurianic Kabbalah, conceived of Jewish practice as a means to achieve *tikkun olam*, so too did O Sensei, the founder of Aikido. O Sensei (1883–1969) was a master of many traditional Japanese martial arts, including various styles of hand-to-hand combat, sword, and spear fighting. In the aftermath of the disastrous defeat of Japan in World War II, O Sensei realized that the traditional martial arts of Japan would not be relevant or useful in the modern world—that training for conflict would only lead to further death and destruction. As paradoxical as it may sound, O Sensei believed that the martial arts should instead become a vehicle for people to improve and perfect themselves and the world. Rather than bringing about death and bloodshed, the martial arts could be a means to increase peace and harmony among all people.

O Sensei took the aggressive killing and maiming techniques of his many martial arts and transformed them into gentle, defensive responses to physical attacks. Rather than executing forceful strikes, O Sensei smoothed out these techniques into graceful and even elegant flowing movements which blend with the energy of an attacker. Instead of meeting aggression with equal or greater force, an Aikido practitioner responds to conflict with equanimity and calm repose, gets off the line of an attack, joins with the energy and momentum of her opponent, and then softly diffuses the attack by harmlessly pinning the attacker or leading him into a gentle roll. Instead of hurting an opponent, an Aikido practitioner protects the opponent, resolving any potential conflict without inflicting pain and thereby paving the way towards reconciliation and peace.

O Sensei hoped that people who practiced Aikido would

be "part of the infinite growth towards perfection," and that its practice would lead to the "ever-increasing glory of God." This is not mere rhetoric, for Aikido, like Lurianic Kabbalah, is predicated on improving the world through individual concrete actions. The difference is that while Lurianic Kabbalah can be practiced by isolated individuals and potentially have no impact on the community, Aikido is based solely in the realm of social and interpersonal activity. Unlike kabbalistic study, which often encourages self-immersion, in Aikido, if there is no *uke* (opponent/partner) there is no *nage* (thrower/defender). And unlike Lurianic Kabbalah, Aikido can be practiced in every social encounter, no matter how brief or superficial. In fact, as Mitsugi Saotome, a disciple of O Sensei and head of the Associated Schools of Ueshiba, explains, the point of Aikido is to effect *tikkun olam* in ourselves and in our society:

The real purpose of Aikido is to strengthen the quality of your life. If you are strong, with powerful technique on the mat, but cannot learn to communicate with others in daily life, your training is meaningless. If you always escape from stress, you cannot develop a strong and noble spirit. As you refine your reaction to stress and pressure on the mat, you refine your reaction to the stresses of life in your relationships with others. On the mat you cannot escape from the attacks of your partner. You must learn to face them with confidence and control. Through this training you will find the strength and confidence to control the conflict that you face every day. [Such training] will teach you to transcend your own aggressive instincts, to refine your reactions so that you may more accurately mirror the spirit of God. (*Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*)

The Jewish tradition also translates individual action into spiritual development through the practice of mitzvot. One early rabbinic midrash states:

Rav declared, "What does the Holy One, praised be God, care whether we slaughter an animal at the throat or the nape of the neck (for to be kosher, an animal must be slaughtered at the throat to ensure a quick and relatively painless death)? Rather, the purpose of the *mitzvot* is to refine the spirit of human beings." (Beresheet Rabbah 44:1)

In light of this midrash, the category of commandments known as *mitzvot bein adam le'chavero*, (commandments between a human being and their fellow person) takes on new meaning as a collection of individually and socially transformative practices. Yet too often the transformative value of mitzvot has occurred alongside of, instead of being integrated with, the practice of Lurianic Kabbalah. It is only as I have practiced Aikido that I have come to understand that such mitzvot as the giving of *tzedakah* (charity), *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick), *ha'chnasat orchim* (hospitality to strangers), *nichum aveilim* (comforting mourners), and other acts of *gemilut hasadim* (acts of lovingkindness) are the Jewish counterparts to Aikido techniques. For not only

do they impact society, but they can and should lead to spiritual growth in the practitioner. For example, years spent giving will transform the giver into someone who is more generous in spirit and personality throughout all parts of his or her life.

On its own, Lurianic Kabbalah seemed too ethereal to me, too focused on the repair of the spiritual foundations of the cosmos rather than on the repair of our daily interactions in this world. My practice of Aikido has enlivened my love and appreciation for Lurianic Kabbalah precisely because it is embedded in the world of social interactions. It is all too easy to study Kabbalah in the safety of one's own room. It is far harder to bring about *tikkun olam* while living and interacting in the rough-and-tumble world of daily contact with family, friends, coworkers, acquaintances, fellow drivers on the road, and total strangers. Rather than isolating ourselves at meditational retreats, our objective should be to live a life of kabbalistic Aikido in our homes, at our jobs, in our cars, and on the streets of our everyday lives precisely where the need is the greatest and the circumstances most challenging.

Ironically, I learned this lesson in an Aikido *dojo*. Perhaps the most spiritual kabbalistic moment I ever experienced was during my black belt examination, fending off multiple attackers in the practice called *randoori*.

The Ki to Life

R*andoori* (freestyle) practice is an advanced form of Aikido training which is the closest to combat—or everyday life—that is practiced in the *dojo*. In *randoori*, a defender is attacked by multiple assailants from any direction at any speed. I would like nothing more than to claim that I am proficient and skilled in *randoori*, but I am unfortunately far from it. Mastering multiple freestyle attacks remains my greatest ongoing personal challenge in Aikido, and in life in general.

Freestyle training sessions are difficult not because they demand tremendous physical energy; in fact, the opposite is true. *Randoori* is a psychological challenge because the key to learning to successfully confront multiple attackers is to enter into a state of calm so deep that your thoughts and movements flow freely and easily, even while under the greatest stress. You should not even have to consciously decide which technique to execute—it should happen naturally and spontaneously. In such a state, a defender is able to perceive the dynamic energy of the attackers and to visualize the outcome long before there is any physical contact. The defender is always grounded and centered, even while in motion.

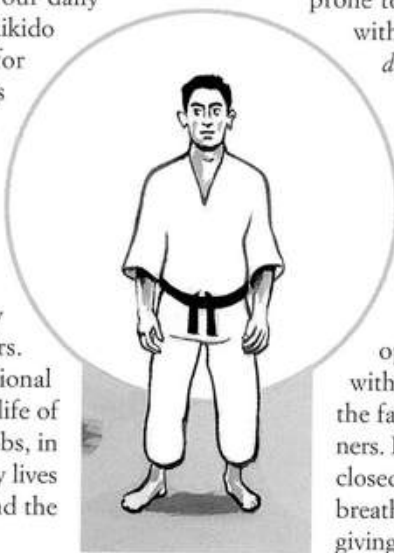
It is not easy to achieve this state of mind because it runs contrary to human nature. It is far more natural for human

beings (myself especially), when confronted with overwhelming odds and strength, to freeze in panic, shrink within ourselves, to “hunker down” and rely on sheer brute strength to see us through. At such moments, we tend to see the world through tunnel vision, focusing on only the closest, most immediate threats to our safety. *Randoori* is so challenging that even the most accomplished Aikidoists are prone to look like Frankenstein ineptly wrestling with a pack of nimble wolves. This is why *randoori* requires years of practice, so that the mind, body, and spirit are functioning in harmony when they are most needed—which is *all* the time.

Just once, at the conclusion of my black belt exam, I achieved this state of flow. After having survived twenty-five minutes of demonstrating an exhausting variety of defensive responses to individual opponents attacking both free-handed and with weapons (sword, staff, knife), I knelt at the far end of the mat facing several fresh partners. Despite the sweat which rained from body, I closed my eyes and attempted to slow my racing breath. Finally, I rose and bowed to my attackers, giving them the signal to begin. They came rushing in, far faster than I was prepared for, and

almost without thinking, I dropped to my knees directly in front of my first attacker, destabilizing him enough to completely throw off his balance and attack. When I rose to my feet again, although I knew my attackers were moving very quickly, my perception of time had changed. I discovered I had the space to take a few steps, the leisure to feign a strike to an attacker, the opportunity to pivot and lead an attacker into a fall. Yet during these chaotic moments I was more deeply attuned to my breath than to my attackers. The sound and rhythm of my breathing filled my ears more than the cries and grunts of my opponents.

Having spent a fraction of a second too long throwing one of my attackers, two of the other opponents converged upon me, seizing my arms at the same time in an attempt to immobilize me. I knew that they were far stronger than I was, and that if I did not do something, the other attackers would descend upon me in a moment. In a fraction of a second of panic, I discovered that I could not dislodge them with my strength alone. In that moment, my panic subsided and I gave up my ego. I did not even try to struggle with them. I ceased caring whether or not I would emerge successfully from this situation; I stopped caring whether my teachers would promote me or what my friends who were watching would say if I failed. I let go of my sense of self and, for the briefest moment in time, I was happy to not care. I centered myself and exhaled deeply, whirling around, shaking all of the tension and anxiety out of my body like a dog shaking off water after a swim.



I could have said “abracadabra” and the effect would not have been any less magical—my attackers flew off me as though we were magnets whose polarities had suddenly been reversed. In that moment of shock and amazement, my trance ended. I found myself gasping for breath and drenched in sweat. My test was over and suddenly, everyone in the room was clapping. My *randoori* demonstration had not lasted more than two minutes, but afterwards I found myself longing to re-experience that briefest moment of complete emptiness again, when all I felt was *ki*.

Ki is the Japanese word used to describe the special, unique energy that all people are capable of projecting and directing. *Ki* is the energy of our bodies, the heat we exude, and the palpable yet invisible essence of who we are and how we are feeling at any given moment. *Ki* is also the animating energy of the cosmos, the background radiation of the universe which suffuses all time and space. The closest equivalent term in Hebrew might be *ruah*, the breath and spirit of life, or perhaps *shefa*, the kabbalistic term which denotes the flow of divine plenum in the universe. It is the animating force within all living creatures and a function of the divine presence. Aikido is all about *ki* training. In fact, the Japanese word Aikido can be translated as “the way of harmonizing with universal energy.” Aikido training teaches us to be aware of and sensitive to *ki/ruah* and enables us to not only sense it in other people, but to access it within ourselves. When controlled and directed, *ki/ruah* can send a partner flying across the room with the gentlest push from a finger, but just as importantly, *ki/ruah* can also be sent and projected to other people in a conversation, providing a non-physical, yet tangible reassurance of our concern, respect, and love for them. *Ki/ruah* is the force that can either repel us from each other, or bind us closer to each other and to God.

Randoori practice is designed to discourage us from relying solely on the physical input of our five senses and to encourage us instead to rely on our ability to perceive and direct other people's *ki/ruah* directly. During a freestyle attack, a defender's five senses are secondary to his ability to spiritually expand his circle of perception and work within this powerful, responsive energy field. It's a practice that allows us to truly actualize the Ari's vision of the goal of Kabbalah—releasing the hidden sparks of the Divine trapped within the stress and strain of ordinary daily life.

Uplifting the Sparks

When I first began training in Aikido, people of higher ranks used to chide me for trying to use my physical strength in a technique, saying, “Use your *ki*!” But no matter how hard I tried, I simply ended up using my muscles. I was convinced that this mystical, elusive *ki* was beyond my grasp, a power too rarefied and hidden for me to be able to comprehend, much less utilize. It was only when I began to despair and actually stopped trying

so hard that I began to catch glimpses of this mysterious, powerful energy, first in other people's techniques and then, slowly, even in my own. When, in the midst of Aikido training, I have been truly able to relax and let my mind go blank, I often experience a sense of connectedness to my training partner and others around me. In this kabbalistic state of *bittul hayesh*, or nullification of the self, I have felt united with all life and the world around me. It must have been just such an experience, on a far grander scale, that led O Sensei to comment in a moment of cosmic connection and insight, “I am the universe.” Because of his profound sensitivity and awareness of *ki*, O Sensei recognized the indivisibility of the *ki* that we as human beings are able to experience and the *ki* of the cosmos. The rare occasions when I have been able to experience this kind of connection have been holy moments, for I have felt as if I were a conduit of divine energy, of *shefa*, helping to lift up the divine sparks of the shattered *sefirot*, the emanations of the One.

According to Lurianic Kabbalah, the task of human beings is to search out and find the shards of the fused broken vessels that hold remnants of the *sefirot*, and to engage in spiritual, religious, and physical acts which will help release these divine sparks. Despite the original cosmic catastrophe which led to the shattering of the *sefirot*, human beings are capable of repairing this spiritual structure and restoring harmony to the world. The sparks hidden within the *klippot*, the husks, will then return to their divine source, further strengthening the connection between the world of humanity and God's unknowable and infinite essence. This process of *tikkun olam* can uplift the realm of creation and repair our broken world.

Despite my intellectual fascination with Lurianic Kabbalah, I have learned that a spiritual path is irrelevant unless acted upon in this world and concretized through acts of *tikkun olam*. In turn, I have found that *tikkun olam* means going beyond simple acts like *tzedakah*, charity. To truly bring God's presence into this world, we must train ourselves to recognize and be prepared to nurture the divine spark in all human beings, even when they are hostile and belligerent. The challenge of the Kabbalah of Aikido is to see the *tzelem elohim* (the image of God) in all people, even when they may be antagonistic, and to choose to protect them even when they may be attacking us. In this way can we release and raise up the divine light which is hidden inside people even when they are showing their least divine face to the world.

Aikido could be just another way to hurt people and inflict pain—unless it is practiced in accordance with O Sensei's vision of universal harmony and cosmic peace. When performed with true *kavanah*, that is, proper intention and devotion, acts of *tikkun olam* and Aikido can help to release the divine sparks and bring the effervescence of God ever closer to our profane world. □

DYING IN AMERICA (continued from page 31)

I am reminded of Michaelangelo's colossal slave figures in the Academy at Florence, so placed that they must be encountered on the route to the statue of David. But if that self-possessed iconic figure is so wholly clear and self-contained in its precise boundary and self-certainty, the slave figures represent a different and more profound reality. These forms define themselves against the dense opacity of the stone from which they emerge. They are both other and inseparable from their massive origin; spirit straining to free itself from the weight under which it threatens to sink and from which, in perpetual rebellion, it struggles for release. At this moment in my father's life the accumulated weight of his condition was drawing him back into nonbeing. He was submerging, but the struggle in which he was engaged reflected back the vibrant energy which had once been his.

What I felt in response to my father's dying was the appropriateness and the need to grieve the loss of his life. I don't mean simply that since I loved him I grieved his loss. I mean also that I came to realize my love for him as I grieved his loss. It was a realization in both senses of the term: a fulfilled awareness and a fulfillment of being. I was in a state of feeling that was revelatory. I became, more than ever, aware that the dichotomies of reason and emotion are merely social stereotypes that function to control the self-scrutiny and self-control of men and women. It may be true in the order of causality that the loss of another, if one has really been attached to that person, is accompanied by the evidence of love, the experience of suffering. But in my experience it was my grieving that informed me of how deeply I cared for my father. In caring, I learned of my care.

There were many stories circulating in Berkeley of "wonderful" deaths in which the dying person and his or her intimate, attendant friends merge in a ritual commemoration of this passing life. I had often heard of these moments in terms so glowing with love and gratitude that it was difficult to realize that a death had occurred at all, and that the locus of value—a human life—had been extinguished. I had for a long time been very suspicious of what seemed to me the new ideology of death, the view of death as simply another stage of life's journey that had to be accepted and even celebrated. The metaphor of "journey" only evoked revulsion in me. A voyage, as ordinarily understood, is a movement from one stage or aspect of life to another. In the process, something is transformed and something persists. How else can it be considered a human process? But death terminates both transformation and identity, and so, to call

death the stage of a journey is only to engage in a gross absurdity. It is not those who fear and condemn death but those who posture to embrace it that are engaged in denial.

Philosophers have often raised the issue of death and its discontents to reveal, cleverly, how our anguish rests on some elementary confusion. Recall Epicurus' observation: "Where I am, death is not; where death is, I am not." So we

are intended to be relieved of the fear that our dying need be a fearful experience. But simply translate this back into human terms and it is immediately absurd: "Where death is my father is not; where my father is, death is not." So death cannot present itself to my father, nor he to death. Nevertheless, he will surely be dead.

For example, at one point in the *Tractatus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein maintains:

Death is not an experience in life; we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live

in the present. Our life has no end just the way in which our visual field has no limits.

To whom is this assertion addressed and what anguish is it intended to allay? Wittgenstein's reflection is provided to those who do not accept the possibility of an afterlife, for the issue is concerned with the possibility of a final limit to experience and people who believe in an afterlife do not accept final limits. The observation is addressed, furthermore, only to those who experience anxiety in the face of a limit to experience, who experience anxiety in the presence of the possibility of ceasing to be, that is, in the consideration of complete cessation.

The reference to the impossibility of reaching the final limit of our visual field is undoubtedly designed to assure us that no final limit of experience is possible. If our life has a final demarcation, it is not one that we could experience. The project of setting a limit is impossible because it requires that we find the other side of the boundary, and this is what the very idea of limit precludes. Just as in the case of the visual field, we would be required to see what by definition cannot be seen. We would be involved in a contradiction, and the point of Wittgenstein's argument seems to be to note the contradiction and thereby assuage our anxiety since it cannot be based on a genuine possibility. Does the argument succeed?

No, because our concern is not with the experience of death but with the death of experience. Why then does death, the complete and irreversible cessation of our experience so concern us? In one sense the answer will vary from one individual to another. In my own case it signifies



the impossibility of redeeming the moral debts I owe to others and the finality of the failure to realize the promise of my own capacities. But if there is a common core to our dread of dying is it not simply in the extinction of human being, either our own or of others we love? But the philosopher attempts to assuage us by noting the impossibility of conceiving of our extinction. How can we conceive of our non-being? The answer is that we cannot conceive of it, and yet we have such very good evidence that it must be so.

We are therefore brought to a profound conflict between two modes of knowing that remain irreconcilable. In regard to the most compelling aspect of our being, the ground of that being itself, its radical contingency, we are required to postulate a condition that is beyond our capacity to understand. We sometimes attempt to imagine the end of our experience by considering ourselves in the third person, in the manner in which we imagine another person coming to an end. We picture that other laid out on a table, devoid of sentience, movement, consciousness—that is, dead. But then, we are not speaking of another person but of the reduction of a person to a wholly material entity, to a mere body. If we have loved this person, the consideration will not assuage us. And if we have loved our own lives, or, more precisely, our living in the world through our experience, the anticipation of its termination may well come with apprehension, anger, or regret.

The dread at the heart of the paradox of cessation is the other side of the wonder at the paradox of birth. Both situations transcend our rational experience. Of course the birth of a child is also quite intelligible according to the laws of biology. But the sense of miracle which rightly permeates birth is an indication that the laws of biology do not exhaust the emergence of a human being or of our response to its transcendence of the merely rational. Both these intimations, at the beginning and the end of the life of a person, are simply our human responsiveness to the transcendence of human being. Our delight or dread are the tribute exacted from our being in the world by the contingent infinitude of the nature of our personhood. That human being, which is the foundation of all we are and experience, is itself without ground, and this is the source of the dread and radiance, the terror and awe, that marks our sense of presence in the world.

What was the value of my father's person as his body continued to dissolve? Whatever the correct philosophical understanding of the relationship between mind and body, in lived experience the two stand in a paradoxical and contradictory relationship. For they are both inseparable and radically distinct. On the one hand, what was my father if

he was not this slight, small, kinetic, wire-framed figure who still revealed the sprinter of his youth, his waved gray hair, dentures, prominent blue veins, and dry, freckled, creviced hands, full of an energy that would take the stairs two at a time, and would gradually come to rest in the evening in a slow quieting that left him limply resting backward with his mouth open and his closed eyes departing the day? Would he have been the father I knew if all his physical traits had been radically different? It seems inconceivable. Had he been significantly different in his body, I would have had a

different father and, to some extent, been a different son. So he was his body as surely as he was anything else that could be called himself.

And yet, there is another, contradictory truth. For what was this merely biological, purely physical, perpetually expanding system of malignant cells, this swarm of bio-physical locusts that moved with

irresistible power through his prostate, altering the function of his kidney, the flow of his blood, the processes of his brain? What was this merely material, physiological fact to him, to him as person? Did it express his life, his will, his stubborn anger, his repartee, his love of his sister Toby whom he took with him to Atlantic City on the proceeds of the sale of chewing gum which he bought and profitably resold to earn the passage for this adolescent adventure? What did the brutally multiplying cells know of this? How dare this mere body, this irrational, disordered body at that, venture into a province so foreign, so antithetical to its nature! What were its laws, reducible to physics and chemistry, to his life and wants and sufferings and, yes, the very meaning of his dying? What did it know of love, caring, guilt, fear, and pride that gave it even the slightest pretext to affect the realm of human life? The body has no claim; it is merely matter, and though from a certain vantage point it is quite necessary, from the realm of spirit it is wholly accidental—the Other to all that participates in the human condition.

If rational spirit entails reason living according to its own laws, then this bodily decay is hideously irrational and inhuman. It is primitive opposition to spirit. I never fully grasped the lived meaning of Immanuel Kant's profound adherence to spirit as its own lawgiver until I was face to face with spirit's disintegration at the hand of this material tyranny. My father's dying was not the act of his will, his reason, his imagination, his spiritual engagement, or transcendence of the world, but of the sheer contingency of physical law. How can one embrace such laws as these that are merely imposed upon us without justification or validity; that merely "are" without the slightest pretext to justification? Even if one rejects the idealism of the Kantian view and its identification of value with creation, its sense of the

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normative order as a human construction; even if one adopts a wholly realistic account of human significance as rooted in independent structures to which our will must learn to conform—still, there is no place for the dominance of matter in this scheme either. My father was being carried away, dissolved, by the unforeseen blindness, the opacity of his material body. It filled me with despair and rage. It was this anger that is conveyed in Jurgen Habermas' reflection on Michel Foucault's death:

Even from a distance, one experiences Foucault's death at fifty-seven as an event whose untimeliness affirms the violence and mercilessness of time—the power of facticity, which, without sense and without triumph, prevails over the painstakingly constructed meaning of each human life.

As his condition disintegrated, the question of continuing my father's life became more urgent. The doctor spoke of "permitting him to die." I could not finally distinguish this euphemism from ending his life, that is, simply stated, killing him. To remove the "artificial" circumstances that maintain life—the dialysis machine, in my father's case—is purportedly to permit a "natural" process to take its own course. But what would our life be from beginning to end if it were not for such "artificial processes," which, in fact, constitute the foundation of medicine? Why was it appropriate to treat him at all from the very beginning? In this world it is wholly impossible to distinguish the natural from the technological. I can receive neither guidance nor solace from the notion of "the natural" occurrence.

The issue, I found, would have to be decided on other grounds. What is my father's interest in this situation, I asked, and how is it to be determined since he cannot choose for himself? Shall I speculate on how he would have chosen had he been asked? But I could only have asked him meaningfully if he were in sufficient health, and in that situation the very choice would have been abstract and remote; in that situation one lacks evidence on which to base an existential decision. Should I consider the whole course of his life and its meaning, his deepest sense of what determines the value of life as evidenced in the particularities of his response to the death of others he cared for and even more, his sense of what justified the maintenance of life under extreme conditions? If I could decipher this conundrum I could maintain him or act to end his life under some cover of respect for his own person. This was

the decision I could not cleanly arrive at. To "B," in the heat of our arguments, it was clear that I simply wanted to maintain my father for my own sake: whether because I needed the intensity of this experience with him which stood in such contrast to the previous distance of our lives; or because I was simply afraid to lose my second parent; or because I felt the power of loving him deeply for the first time; or because, or because... Whatever the reason, I do not know.

In any case, however, the charge that I was keeping him alive for my own sake was too simple and brutal to persuade me, though I certainly do not deny my own interest was strongly implicated. I could not bracket my sense of the value of his life, of any human life, to think the matter so simple to resolve. Often, when I leaned toward removing him from life support, something would intervene to stay my hand. Such was the morning, one of the last mornings he spoke to me with any lucidity, when I entered his room to find him uncharacteristically euphoric. "I can't believe it; so many good things are happening. Everybody is taking such good care of me." And crying: "You are such a good son. Good-bye sweetheart; you're adorable. So many good things around me." Was this consciousness, so suffused in this moment with love

for me and perhaps my mother, however fragmented and sporadic, to be so simply and permanently concluded?

Recently, I heard once more a performance of Mahler's Ninth. What had most struck me in my first experience of the conclusion of the symphony was ontological—the diminution of life expressed in the most extraordinary transformation of music into silence, the conductor standing motionless at the conclusion, baton in place, suspended in a void, not of emptiness, but of the withdrawal of being; between the dissolution of the last faint tone of the ultimate *pianissimo* and the slow relaxing of his body into its normal physical presence in the world of the living. On that first listening I heard the Ninth wholly as a lamentation over lost being, as a disintegration, phase by infinitesimal phase, of the layers of existence. I heard the poignancy of the music in its objective expression.

But this last time I heard the movement more "subjectively," as lamentation, mourning, and relinquishment of the dead by the living. The earlier experience of fading life remained, but it had given way to a sense of fading anguish. The original pain, which could neither be fully



*At the heart of spirit is
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PERSONAL ESSAY

comprehended nor absorbed, was now, in its continuing diminuendo, re-evoked as a persistently receding memory. Now it marked for me the silence in one's self that comes when a great fissure has been, if not healed, at least made inconspicuous in its daily presence. When, midway through the last movement Mahler sets the music out on its final dying course, he constructs the synthesis of a continually rising linear motif and a continually diminishing voice which descends from speech to whisper. The pathos which marks the beginning of the movement is transmuted, finally, into "peace."

But while the peace of my father lay in his absence, the peace of my life could only lie in a slow recalibration of my being, sounding to a basic emptiness at its root. When the other dies, one becomes aware of the reality of their no longer being. It is not a conceptual understanding that is engaged; it is not a logical syllogism from the universality of death to its relevance for this particular individual. It is a "passion," an ontological perception of the persistence and power of nothingness, and it is this rather than any ordinary "feeling" that one experiences through Mahler's music. We who exist in the hearing simultaneously grasp the total absence that the music indicates in its reference to the world as we are engaged in it. Life has been refined, shorn of its heavier elements until it is revealed in its contraction as akin to spirit. For at the heart of spirit is the non-being which among the living makes transcendence possible, that pregnant absence from which new being is preparing to emerge. But whether in the music this transmutation refers to the death of Mahler's daughter, or his own, or even that of all mankind, it is surely still in our own life that we experience the refinement of our own response. So I am now aware that in hearing this work I am more rooted in my own diminishing mourning than my father's diminished life.

I began this essay very many years ago. I have rewritten it from time to time as memory has furnished new material and led me to a continually evolving understanding of my relationship to my parents' lives. And although I have offered these reflections to friends for their comments, I have been reluctant to make them available to a more anonymous public. I have recently come to understand something of my reluctance to depart with this memoir and in this realization I have come to a greater willingness to loosen my embrace.

When I first thought to engage in this writing I experienced a moment in which I imagined that I would make it available to my father, in the fantasy that he retained some imaginary existence and could respond to my account. I thought I could even discern his response. He would either admit, in that Catskill dialect which indicated an ironic or distanced approval, a guilty pleasure in acknowledging the fact of his being loved: "dank you, dank you very much;" or

he would chide me with a mixture of feigned disapproval and genuine puzzlement: "Why do you want to waste your time on something like this?" I am very familiar with these attitudes; they are aspects of myself.

Coming to the close of this reflection I realize what has always been obvious, that this commentary is a failure, that it has, at its original level, been written for those it cannot reach. Address unknown; it cannot be delivered. It is an action that cannot be realized. For the reconciliation I have sought here and achieved to some extent within myself can never come into the possession of its finally intended others—my parents, to whom this account is ultimately offered as a supplication, a gift, a demand to finally be heard, a justification and completion of those severed relationships which in fact retain their incomplete and fragmented existence. An imaginary dialogue has moved this enterprise after all and publishing it finally brings the fantasy to an end. They cannot hear me and I relinquish, if not a continued longing to talk with them again, at least the practice of attempting to will such conversation into a fantasied existence. Nothing I write here will alter them in relationship to me, however much it may have altered me in relationship to them.

The rage of mourning in a blaze of grief exhausts the oxygen of its own consummation and leaves, finally, a soil enriched by the knowledge of finitude that prepares the ground for reentering the larger community. What I have written I therefore offer to those who have lived this experience, or, in the nature of things, to those who will come to live it at some future time. You are the surrogates of the dead who hear on behalf of those no longer capable of hearing. In offering this reflection to you, the living, as a redirected gift and longing, I acknowledge with you the common wish for redemption and reparation, even if conceding simultaneously the likelihood of its failure. It is only with the living that I can finally relinquish my continued longing for the fantasied persistence of the dead. In releasing this work to you whom I do not know, I enter my own being into the common presence of us all, into our common condition, our common limitations, and our common struggles to transcend the vulnerability of our common human fragility.

I am drawn once more to the conclusion of Joyce's *The Dead*.

His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling.... His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

Upon all the living and the dead. □

Poetry, Midrash, and Feminism

Steven P. Schneider

At a time when critics and literary reviews laud the emergence of a "new" Jewish American Fiction, enough so that we began to talk in the late 1990s in America of a Jewish Literary Revival, much of the work of contemporary Jewish American poets has either been ignored by the press or scorned by prominent Jewish scholars. Perhaps the most telling sign of this can be found in Jacob Neusner's review of Steven Rubin's recent anthology of Jewish American Poetry, *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry*. As an attempt to canonize Jewish American poetry of the twentieth century, Rubin's anthology is an ambitious effort. It ranges from turn-of-the-century poems by Emma Lazarus to a concluding section of poems by contemporary poets born after the Holocaust. These latter-day "saints" might be considered emerging writers on the Jewish American scene. Yet Neusner laments the lack of a Jewish message in their work, noting that this entire collection of poets representing the twentieth century in America understands "vaguely or not at all what Jewish is all about, which is Judaism." He notes that "little of the heritage of sanctity and moral regeneration captured by the word 'Torah' affects these poets." So much for canonization.

Yet such a view of their work fails to account for one of the most interesting currents in contemporary Jewish American poetry, the use of poems to create commentaries on the Jewish Bible. This impulse, which I shall call midrashic, is especially strong in the work of contemporary Jewish women poets, who strive to give voice to biblical figures, especially women, whose stories have either been muted in the Bible or who often are represented as flawed, deceitful, or simply a liability. As a mode of writing, postmodern Jewish American poetry by women delights in

creating "midrashic commentaries" as a strategy to counter this silence, to challenge the perception of women as inferior, to strengthen Jewish female identity, and to register political and social concerns.

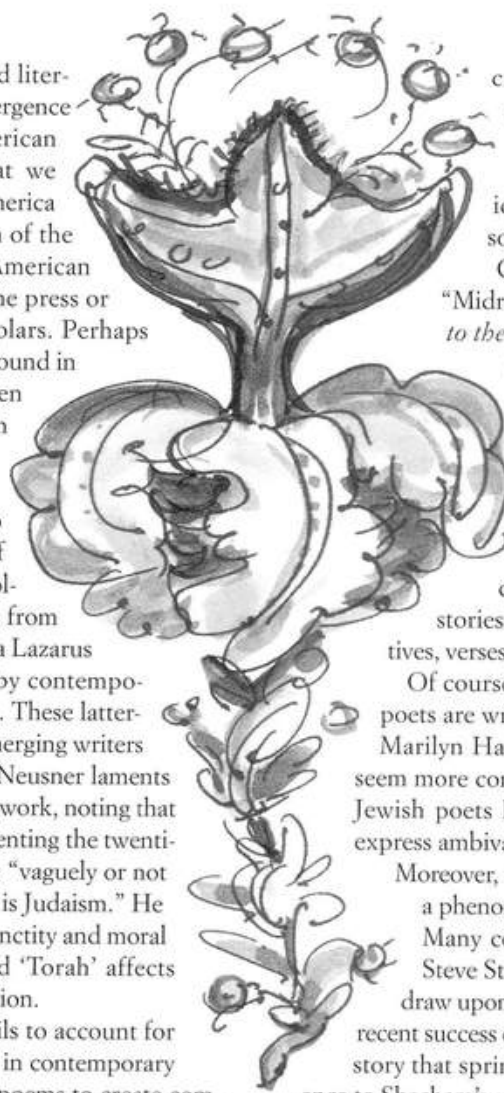
Gerald Bruns, in his now famous essay "Midrash and Allegory" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, explains that "the term midrash derives from *darash*, meaning 'to study,' 'to search,' 'to investigate,' 'to inquire': it means 'to go in pursuit of.'" For Jewish women poets, midrash is a way for them to investigate biblical texts and to pursue new meanings in them. While halachic midrashim are concerned with laws, aggadic midrashim use stories and poems to expand scriptural narratives, verses, words, or even single letters.

Of course, not all contemporary Jewish women poets are writing midrashic poems. Adrienne Rich, Marilyn Hacker, and Robin Becker, for example, seem more concerned with other subjects while male Jewish poets like Alan Shapiro and Robert Pinsky express ambivalence about Jewish identity.

Moreover, the marriage of midrash and literature is a phenomenon not exclusively limited to poetry. Many contemporary fiction writers, including Steve Stern, Allegra Goodman, and Tova Reich draw upon midrash in their stories and novels. The recent success of Anita Diamant's novel *The Red Tent*, a story that springs from Genesis 34 and its brief reference to Shechem's rape of Dinah, is indicative of the vitality of the midrashic imagination in contemporary fiction. Diamant's novel can be read as one long midrash on its biblical source. In Israel, a women's theater group, Theater Company Jerusalem, has had great success dramatizing talmudic and midrashic stories, staging them from the side of female characters like Beruriah, Sarah, and Esther. However, poetic midrash has given women a way to express in concise and lyrical forms their (re)interpretation of biblical texts.

Who, then, are these women poets writing contemporary midrash? And what might we learn from them?

Some of the most prominent Jewish women poets writing midrashic poems today are Alicia Ostriker, Enid Dame,



Steven P. Schneider, associate professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, is the author of *A.R. Ammons and the Poetics of Widening Scope*. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner* and *The Literary Review*, among others.

LITERARY ESSAY

Marge Piercy, and Jacqueline Osherow. These poets have turned to midrash as an interpretive and creative tool that allows them to engage the Torah and Talmud in ways that had been previously restricted to men. Moreover, they have produced a body of poetry that is significantly midrashic, exploring the lacunae in biblical texts and developing poems that give voice to women like Sarah, Hagar, Dinah, and Lilith. According to Marge Piercy, author of *The Art of Blessing the Day*, "for women, midrash is a way to make the texts reflect our experiences, as differentiated from those of the male participants and male readers. Women are present in the Bible, but seldom do they speak. We can give them voices."

Traditionally, Jewish women have been assigned the role of wife and mother and not encouraged to study Jewish texts in a sustained and meaningful way. The authors of classical midrash were men, as were most of the talmudic commentators. The one exception is Beruriah, wife of the great Rabbi Meir, whose opinions are quoted in the Talmud. But even Beruriah, a woman of great scholarly renown, was humiliated by her husband who had one of his own disciples seduce her in order to prove that women were immoral.

Ostriker, who has been a leading exponent of women's writing and midrash, laments the fate of Beruriah in her groundbreaking 1994 book, *The Nakedness of the Fathers*. Although proud of her Jewish identity, Ostriker also expresses anger at the second-class status bestowed historically upon women in Judaism. She declares: "To the rest of the world the Jew is marginal. But to Judaism I am marginal." The question Ostriker poses in *Nakedness of the Fathers* is how she can be a Jewish poet when Judaism repels her as a woman. Her response to this dilemma has been nothing less than iconoclastic. She notes: "we have to enter the tents/texts, invade the sanctuary, uncover the father's nakedness. We have to do it, believe it or not, because we love him."

In the preface to *Nakedness of the Fathers*, Ostriker provides a manifesto for a new kind of Jewish women's poetry. "Throughout the history of the Diaspora, Jewish imagination has flowered through midrash—stories based on biblical stories, composed not for a narrow audience of scholars, but for an entire community. It is to this tradition which I hope to belong. In midrash, ancient tales yield new meanings to new generations. Not surprisingly, many

midrashists today are women; we should expect many more in the future."

"The text is bare bones," says Piercy, "and midrash puts the flesh on those bones." Ostriker, Dame, Piercy, and Osherow are all engaged in a vital effort to make more central women's voices and roles in Torah commentary. They do so by "entering" the biblical texts and imaginatively retelling them. This work is a kind of literary "tikkun," a reparation of the rift women have felt between themselves and Jewish source texts. It is, of course, part of a larger movement which has engaged Jewish feminists on many fronts, including asserting more prominent roles for themselves in synagogue worship and in organized Jewish life.

Ostriker's short poem "Rachel Solo" provides a good example of the subgenre of contemporary women's midrashic poetry. It elaborates on a few terse verses in Genesis that describe Rachel's stealing her father Laban's household idols (Genesis 31:19–36). Laban, of course, had made life difficult for Rachel and her husband Jacob, tricking Jacob into working fourteen years in order to have Rachel.

Rachel Solo

Not getting mad, just getting even,
Papa, I'll say goodbye to you,
I'll load my camel with goods
And take your household idols too,
And should you come in search of them
With indignation red and blue,
I'll sit upon your statuettes
And make good use of a bad taboo.
Papa, I'll say, forgive me but
My monthly's here; don't misconstrue
This failure to get up And you'll
Back off in dread. That's what you'll do.

In giving voice to Rachel, who has repaid Laban with a cunning act of her own, Ostriker's poem takes its place beside the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Rashi suggests that Rachel stole Laban's idols to prevent her father from worshiping them. Ibn Ezra speculates that Rachel stole them to prevent Laban from using them in divination to find Jacob. According to Ostriker's Rachel, however, Rachel's theft was an act of "getting even," a way of paying back Laban for all he had done to swindle Jacob.

Hagar is another woman who figures prominently in many contemporary Jewish women's midrashim. Ostriker's



poem "The Opinion of Hagar," which appeared in Rubin's anthology *Telling and Remembering*, is a good example. The speaker of the poem is Hagar, who presents her side of the story and emphasizes Sarah's betrayal of her.

When my son was born
 She was yellow with jealousy
 Of my round breasts, of my strong healthy boy
 Finally she too had a son
 What a laugh, a thin stick of a baby
 Who whined and spit up his food all day
 Just what you would expect
 From these threadbare sacks of parents
 But that was the end of me
 She threw me away
 Like garbage

In the final third of her poem, the poet imagines Ishmael reincarnated as a radical Palestinian, perhaps even as a member of Hamas.

A wild ass of a man
 He can read and write
 He can run a printing press
 He can shoot an AK-47
 I call him Ishmael, I whisper to him:
 Fight to your dying breath
 But I still wonder
 Why could she not love me
 We were women together

In these lines Hagar comments upon the consequences of a compact betrayed by Sarah. Whether we agree or disagree with the political implications of the poem's ending, that Sarah planted the seeds of hatred in Hagar and Ishmael that have sprouted today in the heart of Palestinian nationalism in Israel, it is clear that Ostriker has compellingly engaged her biblical sources and offered us a new way of looking at them.

One of the little known biblical figures who has attracted contemporary Jewish women writers is Lilith, who in Jewish folklore and rabbinic commentary is described as Adam's first wife, prior to Eve. Enid Dame, a poet and critic, has written extensively about Lilith in a collection of poems entitled *Lilith and Her Demons* and in her co-edited collection of essays and poems, *Which Lilith?*

According to Dame, contemporary Jewish women writers have reacted to Lilith with such enthusiasm because Lilith represents "boldness, rebelliousness, and overt expression of sexuality."

In her poem "Lilith, I Don't Cut My Grass," for example, Dame describes an earthy, sensual Lilith:

Lilith, you smell like the earth
 and marigolds and mulchy leaves.
 Your arms are mud-bespattered.
 You don't look like my mother.

Lilith has been transformed from a demonic figure into an heroic one.

In *The Art of Blessing the Day*, Marge Piercy includes a section of poems entitled Toldot, Midrashim (Of History and Interpretation). One of them, "The Book of Ruth and Naomi," suggests that we consider Ruth and Naomi coequals. Although the Book of Ruth is much "concerned with inheritance, lands, men's names," Piercy avers:

Yet women have kept it dear
 for the beloved elder who
 cherished Ruth, more friend than daughter.

The "beloved elder" is Naomi, whose name means "sweetness." Although she and her husband Elimelech are driven from their home by famine to live in Moab, where their two sons marry and soon thereafter die, Naomi clings to her Jewish faith and returns to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth. In Ruth's devotion to Naomi, and in Naomi's love for her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth, Piercy discovers a model for female friendship that can triumph over adversity. Piercy frames Ruth's famous declaration of becoming a Jew in the context of genuine love.

Where you go, I will go too,
 your people shall be my people,
 I will be a Jew for you,
 for what is yours I will love
 as I love you, O Naomi
 my mother, my sister, my heart.

the world's room

JOSHUA WEINER

"Two powerful qualities lift Joshua Weiner's wonderful first book, *The World's Room*: music and moral generosity. These poems are a true pleasure to read aloud, and they have great human empathy. Weiner's cheerfully candid, fresh voice, his innovative but unfussy way of putting a poem together make me want to read more by the maker of this memorable, distinguished and disarming book."—Robert Pinsky



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LITERARY ESSAY

In the very next stanza the poet describes the deep longing for female friendship in all women.

Show me a woman who does not dream
a double, heart's twin, a sister
of the mind in whose ear she can whisper,
whose hair she can braid as her life
twists its pleasure and pain and shame.

In seeking "a sister / of the mind," Piercy constructs a midrash of unusual beauty and friendship between Naomi and Ruth, "co-conspirators ... making do with leftovers and mill ends ... whose friendship was stronger than fear." Her poem teaches a lesson about female identity and friendship.

The recent publication of Jacqueline Osherow's *Dead Men's Praise* signals her as a major poetic voice in contemporary Jewish poetry. Central to her most recent book is a



sequence of "Scattered Psalms," in which the poet both *talks* to David the Psalmist and *talks back* at him. "Anyone can argue with a psalm," writes Osherow in her poem "Thrones and Psalms." At times, her argument is with David, at other times with God, and still other times with humanity for not praising God, for not singing "hal-

lelujah." She even takes to task the Artscroll commentator and "the wishful Jesuit of the Anchor version" who get wrong, in her mind, their translations of the Hebrew. Each of the "Scattered Psalms" is introduced with an epigraph, often two or more verses from the Psalms of David. Osherow will then investigate their meaning in her Psalm, probing the verses for what they may reveal. In this sense, her composition is midrashic, writing "with" the original Psalms—sometimes incorporated as lines in her poetry—and turning and sifting through the words and verses to discover some new insight.

"Midrash is an entrance to the canon through the back door," says Piercy. "In the patriarchal world of the texts, we miss the voices and the ideas of women. So we put them back in. We replace our parts of the truth received by us when all Jews of that time and future time stood at Sinai. We women who write midrashim are putting our truths into the ongoing oral Torah that is remade, reinterpreted, and added to generation after generation so that Judaism remains alive, and not a fossil or a relic."

It is this dynamism and contemporaneity that makes midrashic poetry so very compelling. For the first time in Jewish history, Jewish women poets are not only entering the texts in a serious and sustained way, but lodging their own midrashim along side those of such great midrashic commentators of the third and fourth centuries as Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Eleazar. As a result, this body of work will constitute a significant role in the continuing Jewish Literary Revival both in America and Israel. □

STEWARDSHIP AS A PATH (continued from page 52)

I found many people were more motivated to maintain their sustainable habits when they were imbued with the context of spiritual practice. The stewardship ethic helped people simplify their lives reprioritizing what really mattered like family, community, and time for long forgotten dreams. As an antidote to the addiction of consumerism stewardship could help heal the spiritual emptiness at the core of so many lives.

Kneeling at the Compost Bin

I came to a deeper experience of the stewardship ethic in my very own backyard.

All year long I lug a small green compost bucket full of leftover scraps, carrot peels, tea leaves, and dead flowers out to the compost bin behind our shed. The old bin has been there for many years, odd-shaped and dilapidated. On snowy winter mornings I throw on my boots and gloves and take all the organic material that we don't eat and feed it to the compost bin. I know the birds, deer, and small creatures enjoy our leftovers during the cold winter months. The rest is left to freeze in the old bin until the spring thaw. During the hot summer the compost is full of flies and you can see, and smell, the decomposing taking place. In the late autumn when I throw my pumpkins into the bin I silently wonder how something so large and dense will transform into fine dark soil by the spring.

Mostly I take the compost bin for granted. But one morning something happened that changed this. It was a splendid May morning with lilacs and lilies of the valley in full bloom. I carried the compost bucket out to the bin on my regular rounds. After dumping the leftovers and stirring the contents of the bin to help the composting process, I checked the bottom layer of the compost to see if the soil was ready for a friend's garden. As I lifted the small gate at the bottom of the bin, rich, dark, moist soil fell into my hands. As I cradled the dark earth in my hands I was overwhelmed with gratitude. It was suddenly so clear that God's presence was staring at me. I realized the old bin contained the mystery of life, and held God inside its dilapidated walls. Life into death, death back to life, over and over the cycle repeated itself silently, faithfully, miraculously.

As I continued to feel the moist earth against my hands I vowed never again to just dump my leftovers into the old bin, but rather to recognize the spiritual practice I was engaged in. This is communion with the mystery as I throw away what I don't eat letting it rot and transform into rich soil that will nourish a garden so that I can eat again. This is daily spiritual practice where I am reminded that my life's nourishment is inextricably linked to the earth that I live on. This practice is a tangible reminder that life and death are a continuous living circle that I am part of. At that moment, intoxicated by the thick spring air and the dark earth alive in my hands, I knelt next to the old misshapen compost bin and offered prayers of amazement. □

Cream of Kohlrabi



Floyd Skloot

I ke Rubin sat on a love seat glaring at the dining room doors. Three minutes before noon. They were double doors and Ike hated double doors. What was wrong with a good, old-fashioned door door, plain and simple? Also without the silly hexagonal windows up there where no one could see through. A door with one of those.

And there Ike had to stop. He hated when that happened. A door with one of those What? Hands. No, damn it. One of those Nopples. The thing you turned to open the door.

But these double doors opened both in and out. Ike hated that. Make up your mind, door. Plus, they're not safe.

Floyd Skloot's most recent books are the poetry collections The Evening Light (Story Line Press, 2001) and The Fiddler's Trance (Bucknell University Press, 2001).

Last month, he'd seen Charlotte Stern flattened by the Activities Director rushing out of the dining room a moment before the doors would be officially opened for dinner.

Actually, that hadn't been so bad. She deserved it, all the time trying to be the first one inside even though everyone had assigned seats, even though they didn't start serving till everyone was seated. What's the rush, anyway, with the crap they served here? If it's chicken on the menu, you can bet it's drumsticks. Never white meat, don't be ridiculous, \$1.39 a pound. Okay, maybe Charlotte Stern wanted a head start on the bread. Still, you wait till the time comes. If Ike remembered anything from the camps, he remembered that.

He looked away, at a shadow moving across his periphery. Waiting was something Ike Rubin was good at. You didn't get to be eighty-nine by rushing. Still, he knew it was

important not to linger either, because the ones who linger are the ones who starve. All right, there was an art to this, and even though Ike appeared to be lolling on a love seat, he was paying attention.

Always pay attention. But as far as he could see, everyone was still outside the dining room and lunch was late again. It figures. He returned his gaze to the doors. A door was supposed to have a transom and a lintel and a keyhole and stiles and a handle. A handle! There you go, that's what he'd been trying to remember.

Across the lobby came Mrs. Astroth. No known first name. Ike hated that kind of pretension. What, he was supposed to call her Mrs. Astroth when she was five years younger than he was and wore hats Ike hadn't seen since 1932? Headed right this way, like he was wearing a sign saying Park Here.

"Hello, Mr. Rubin."

"Hello Mrs." Which was as far as Ike was willing to go. What did the woman want with him? Had he forgotten to say "Hello, Mrs." out loud? He wished she wouldn't stand there blocking his view of the doors.

"Do you know what?" she whispered. "Can you guess who's coming to entertain us this Friday night?" She smiled down at him. "Finally."

"Mott the Hoople?" he said, remember a group his daughter used to listen to. He remembered the name because Mott the Hoople drove him crazy for two entire years. When was that? 1972 or so, he thought, because his daughter Rachel was still living at home.

Mrs. Astroth tottered a little, as though struck by his words. But didn't fall. She raised her hand to her modest chest in shock. Ike blinked.

"What did you say?"

Ike tried to recall. Oh, right; she thinks I cursed, probably, and wishes she could say Mott the Hoople to you too.

"I said, 'what and who,' Mrs. What and who are coming to entertain us Friday?"

Mrs. Astroth turned away, drifting toward a bank of chairs against the wall by the windows, punishing him. So, he would wait till Friday before finding the answer to this mystery. That was all right by him. Then, over her shoulder, Mrs. Astroth said, "only Harry Belafonte. That's who's coming on Friday evening. I've been asking for them to book him since May of 1997."

Ike nodded. Of course, she was a little off her rocker. So who here wasn't? He wanted to say, "and all along I thought you meant the Messiah was coming." Better odds on that. Friday night, in lieu of either Harry Belafonte or the Messiah, there would be another movie projected on that tiny screen no one could see, with the sound so low no one could hear. *Now, Voyager* for the seventy-ninth time, perhaps. Didn't matter, Ike thought, most of us forgot the story by the time the movie ended.

The Messiah. That's who Ike would request, if he felt

like rising to the challenge. Bring on the Messiah, already; I'm almost ninety and I wouldn't mind being here to see Him. But Ike knew that management emptied the suggestion box every week and threw the paltry, futile scraps of paper away. He saw them do it. Harry Belafonte, my foot. What is it with these women, anyway? Shirt open to his navel when Belafonte was old enough to be a resident here by now. Ike shook his head, closed his eyes. Was the man even Jewish? Used to sing "Hava Nageelah," if memory served, and a Yiddish version of "The Jamaica Farewell," so maybe Belafonte was some kind of Caribbean Jewish name. Or he converted.

When the hell are the doors going to open!

He opened his eyes to check, and into Ike's peripheral vision, like a ghost, came the beautiful Rosa Martinez. The woman is receptionist, pill dispenser, assistant manager and postal deliverer all in one. Dressed, as usual, in white, so maybe she was a nurse too; Ike couldn't remember. She was always smiling, and today was no exception.

Ike struggled to rise. Such a person should be greeted with due respect. Also, people who walked right at you were sometimes armed, sometimes up to no good. If he remembered anything from . . .

"Hello, Mr. Rubin," Rosa said. "No need to get up."

Apparently she was right, because Ike's body gave up of its own accord and he sank back into the love seat. He hated when that happened, but what could he do? He gathered his breath, thought about patting the vacant place next to him as an invitation for Rosa to sit, and tried to smile.

"Good morning, yourself. And you could please call me Ike, I've only asked you nine thousand times."

She held something out to him. "It doesn't say Ike on this. It says Mr. Isaac Samuel Rubin. That's you, if I'm not mistaken." She placed the envelope against his hand and he took it from her. "Ike."

He blinked at her and then looked down at the envelope. So who could possibly be writing to him here? It seemed as though the only person in the world who knew Ike was still alive and living at the Shorefront Manor was his son Mel, who lived exactly seven blocks away, which was too close to bother with mail but apparently too far to visit his widowed father more than once a month. There was a fancy, printed return address on the front of the envelope, but Ike couldn't read it without his glasses and he didn't want to put them on in front of Rosa, who had often commented on how wonderful his vision seemed. If she only knew. He could make out the general, hazy contours of things across the room, which wasn't bad at eighty-nine, but he got by on a combination of memory (fading), guile (holding steady), and patience (increasing). If there was one thing Ike had learned in the camps, it was to know where he was at all times, without having to look. Who needed eyes in places like those? He thought he would just tuck the letter away in his jacket pocket and read it after lunch, show Rosa

how carefree and blasé an old man could be. It was more important to talk to a beautiful woman than to read a letter from someone he didn't think he knew.

But when Ike looked up, Rosa was gone. He checked his jacket pocket to make sure there really was a letter in there. Maybe he'd imagined the whole encounter. Letter in pocket. Scent of Rosa's perfume still in air. Good signs.

Just then, accompanied by murmurs as in the first rustling of a theater curtain, the dining room doors swooshed opened. Ike rose, but waited till the first wave faded. When he'd come to the Shorefront Manor a couple years ago, Ike had made the mistake of entering the dining room in the vanguard and was nearly swept off his feet, ending up beached at the far side of the room, well away from his assigned table.

Now Ike settled at his table, across from Charlotte Stern. Soon the waiters were ladling soup from their tureens. Ike couldn't watch. Accuracy was a real problem for these guys. And none of the waiters spoke more than a few words of English, so maybe that's why they didn't respond to the abuse heaped on them at every meal. Where's my tea? This soup is cold! The bread is stale the butter is too hard the chicken is rotten the ice cream tastes like sauerkraut the napkin is filthy you idiot. After placing each bowl precisely before them, their waiter looked toward the windows, contorted his face into a miserable smile that pierced Ike's heart, and said, "Enjoy day's soup cream kohlrabi, please thank you."

As usual, he hadn't understood what the man said. But after the waiter moved on, Ike leaned over his bowl and was suddenly turned to stone. He couldn't budge. The vapors and the color and the texture taken together seemed to throw some kind of switch in his brain, rendering him lost in time and space. All Ike had wanted was the momentary pleasure of smelling the soup, and now he was filled with fear.

Without looking up, he asked, "What is this?"

"Cream of kohlrabi," Charlotte Stern said. "Not bad, for a change."

First of all, it had the odor of soil. Plus an unnatural color, a twilight green that could only be produced, Ike thought, by a dangerous mixture of chemicals. He recognized in himself that familiar, deep uncertainty over what was in the food being served. Dirt soup! There was something foul, something alien here. In the camps, you never knew what they were letting you eat, only that it wasn't good for you. But after a while that didn't stop you from ravening down the poison. Hoarding trading stealing.

Where was all this coming from? Ike thought he'd left them behind long ago. These seizures, or whatever they were. Had clamped down. He didn't talk about his life in

Europe to anyone after 1945, and he'd stopped dreaming about it, stopped having those night terrors; he'd buried it. Mel would ask and Ike would say Sha! Don't worry about it. Now look, everything reminded Ike again. Maybe it meant he was getting closer to death, though he felt fine enough. Instead of going ahead into the grave, it was as though he were drifting back to the grave, back to the camps.

So he did what he'd been trying to do every time, lately, when this sort of thing happened. He reasoned. Kohlrabi is what, a root? Like a turnip, only green. Or, he remembered, sometimes purple.

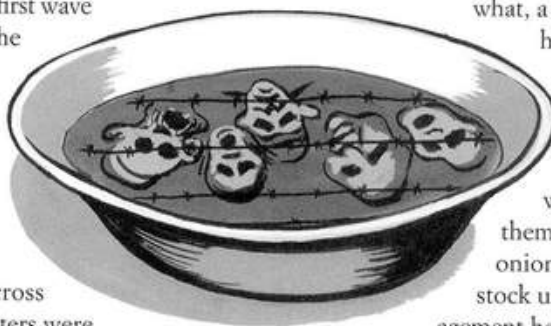
Good thing they hadn't given him purple soup. All right, you take these strange little knobs, pare them down, throw them in boiling water. Then you do something with them, chop mash puree. Throw in some onion and garlic, maybe some chicken stock unless you're too cheap like the management here. A touch of salt, pepper. Ike also

thought he might smell lemon. So that's all there is to it, right? What's to worry?

Cream of kohlrabi, Ike thought. Story of my life.

When the entree arrived, Ike simply shook his head. Never fails. They serve perch that looks exactly like one of Mel's old sneakers from the closet, maybe two spoonfuls of peas and carrots heavy on the peas, and a corn on the cob. The people here, 97 percent of them, have false teeth and management serves corn on the cob. This, Ike thought, was a way they had of amusing themselves. If his eyes permitted, he was sure he would look up and find the staff gathered at the kitchen door watching as everyone tried to eat corn on the cob. Lou Goetz had the right idea; he immediately took out his false teeth, wrapped them in a napkin, turned down his hearing aid and began gumming.

Ike was ready to leave, but he couldn't stand the thought of Belle Wilbur, her Royal Highness, claiming his uneaten ice cream. He'd seen her do that when Charlotte Stern left early to visit with her son, the radiologist. And the time Lou Goetz got sick during lunch and couldn't eat his dessert, she'd snatched the dish off the waiter's tray before he could escape. So Ike sat there. Did Charlotte Stern's hair turn that shade of apricot after visiting her son's office one day? Exposed to a few too many stray roentgens and got mutant hair. Plus, what did Lou Goetz actually do when he went up to Belle's room after dinner? He would always walk in his slow shuffle to the soda machine, buy one Diet Pepsi, then shuffle back to the elevator. He'd been seen by several people carrying the can into Belle's room like an offering, and she'd been heard by several people asking him, "What took you so long?" But then the door closed, the sound of the television obscured whatever else might be said or done, and by 9:30 Lou was shuffling back to the elevator and down to his basement room.



This has to stop, Ike thought. It's like I'm gossiping with myself. He ate his ice cream so fast that it gave him a headache. Then he ran his hands over his shirt to flip the ends of his jacket back before standing, and felt the letter again. No way he was going to open it here at the table.

He walked across the lobby, considered sitting again in the same love seat but thought it was too central, too open to scrutiny, and continued out toward the sun room. Nobody sat in the sun room after lunch because they all went to play cards in the Red Room. Ike liked being out here, and was annoyed with himself for failing to remember the sun room more often. It fronted the boardwalk, the beach, and the ocean, looking south toward, Ike thought, the end of the world. With the windows open, there was always the sound of the surf, a sound that Belle Wilbur had been trying to get management to turn off for the last two years. Plus the smell of the sea, its briny air in the eyes and nose like the memory of crying.

He took out the envelope, struggled and failed to read the fancy embossed return address, then placed the paper face down on his lap. Checking to be sure he was alone, Ike fished out his reading glasses and put them on. Waldman, Widger & Weiss. Oh boy, Ike thought, the three W's. The firm in which his brother-in-law Morris Weiss was a partner. Morris, his darling Molly's twin brother, he of the eyes nose mouth hands hair that were just like hers, the same sweet disposition. Morris Eliezer Weiss, Attorney-at-Law, whom Ike could not bear to see or speak to even now, four years after Molly's death. He had refused to return Morris's calls, refused to give Morris his unlisted phone number here at the Shorefront Manor, refused to respond when Morris found it and called anyway. So now what does he want? This kind, gentle, how-could-he-be-a-big-time-NY-lawyer relative that Ike missed terribly but had banished from his life. Sweet Morris would love the sun room, Ike thought, just as Molly would have.

It was Morris that Ike had met first. Late June of 1947, start of the hottest summer that anyone remembered. Ike had been in America for a little over a year by then, and had found his way to a job on the docks and a bed in an East Flatbush apartment where his uncle lived. The first morning Ike awoke early in his uncle's place, Apartment 6B, and rode down on the elevator with Morris Weiss from 6E. Already, just past dawn, it was so hot that Morris was carrying the suit jacket over his arm.

They talked in the elevator and in the lobby and out on the street and Ike missed his bus. They met again that night after dinner and talked in the hallway between their apartments. By the end of the week Morris, the hotshot young lawyer, was helping Ike get employment in the supply room at the King's County Hospital, enrolling him in night school to study accounting, inviting him to 6E for dinner, schnapps. In early July, Morris was fascinated by reports of Unidentified Flying Objects being sighted all over the country.

"Look at this," he said to Ike, waving the newspaper before his friend's face. "A wingless disc was seen cavorting in the skies above California by an Air Force Captain and his wife. Then an alien craft crash-lands with a clap of desert thunder near Roswell, New Mexico. You have sightings in Wyoming, in Oregon, in North Carolina. All over the country, not just out west where you could excuse this kind of thing. What's happening, mass hysteria?"

"Aliens? You know that's what the British called us? Enemy aliens. We started showing up from the camps, some of us tried to get hold of our bank deposits, our inheritances from those who perished, and the British said we couldn't have them. We were still enemy aliens, after all we went through and with Hitler dead, the war over, the Allies everywhere you looked."

Morris put down the paper. He stared at Ike, looked away for a moment, coughed. "I didn't know that."

"Aliens."

Morris hadn't mentioned his twin sister until then. Molly worked as a nurse at the hospital. She was seeing a few of the camp survivors now as they came in for help with their damaged bones, their organs, their souls. He wondered if Ike wanted to meet some of them, talk to a few fellow survivors.

"For what?"

"It might help, Ike."

"If I never have to look at another face that has the camps written on it, I'll die a happy man." He forced himself to sit facing Morris and to smile. "But your twin sister, that would be another story altogether."

Now Ike turned the envelope back over. Without thinking, he resorted to his habitual letter-opening routine, withdrawing his key ring from its pocket, slipping the longest under the envelope flap, and carefully tearing open the top. It was much better when you did things without thinking. Ike hated anticipation. But he couldn't help himself, and thought: I told him no mail. I don't hear from him for years, now this official correspondence. Ike knew this one was not the banned kind of letter and that didn't make him feel any better. As he unfolded the stiff paper, he felt depressed, as though the document itself had released a wave of despair.

It was not from Morris at all, but from Adam Widger, the youngest of the partners. Ike noticed this right away, his eyes going to the signature first, and he knew in his heart that poor Morris had died. Of course, he was eighty-ish, Ike couldn't quite remember exactly anymore, but still. It was awful. Morris probably died thinking Ike was angry with him, or troubled in a way that their old friendship could not reach, or at least yearning for reconciliation. Nonsense, he told himself. You've almost watched too many movies you couldn't hear down in the Red Room. Besides, now that he read the letter, it said nothing about Morris being dead, only in Switzerland. Same thing, Ike thought.

There was, apparently, something called the Humanitarian Fund for the Victims of the Holocaust. Hundreds of

millions. And there was now in place a procedure for eligible survivors to begin collecting money from this fund. Adam Widger was coordinating efforts for a group on the east coast, Morris Weiss was in Zurich advising a younger partner serving as liaison, and it was thought that Ike might be interested in having the firm assist him.

They send an octogenarian to Switzerland to talk to Nazi collaborators? They send a pussy cat like Morris Weiss to deal with wolves and jackal-asses? Ike folded the letter, put it back in its envelope, put the envelope back in his jacket pocket, stood, sat down, closed his eyes and fell almost instantly asleep. Rosa Martinez found him slumped over on the chair about twenty minutes later and screamed, thinking the worst, but her scream woke him and Ike sat back up, resting his head against the wall. He reached to touch the letter through his jacket, just to make sure it hadn't been a dream, and Rosa said "What is it, Ike? Your heart?"

"I'm fine."

"Maybe it was your lunch, eh? Something didn't agree with you."

"Rosa, the cream of kohlrabi nearly killed me, but I'm dandy now. Just tired." Rosa came over and actually sat next to him. Ike knew he must look bad. The pretty ones never sit beside you unless you're on death's door. She patted his hand. "I'm going inside to tell Mr. Shapiro you're not feeling too well, okay? Maybe he'll want to call the doctor for you."

As Rosa started to get up, Ike reached for her hand. He pulled her gently back and she sat again. He didn't want management getting involved in this one, thank you very much. But he wouldn't mind trying to get something clear in his mind, now that he had an objective observer to work with.

"Let me ask you something, Rosa." He pointed toward the ocean. "What do you see out there?"

"You mean the water?"

"That, and beyond."

She studied Ike's face for a moment and then came to a decision. What a sweet woman, Ike thought. "Well, starting here, I see people on the boardwalk, and bicycles, and a girl running. Mrs. Astroth is by the rail feeding the gulls her leftovers from lunch. Then I see the beach, the empty life-guard stand, the jetties. How am I doing, Ike?"

"Great. What else?"

"Then the waves, and out a ways the water gets smooth. A boat going by. Then the sky, a few clouds that look like maybe cauliflower." She turned to look at Ike. "I've got to go back inside, ok?"

He nodded. "You know what I see, Rosa? I see a haze, mostly. The color of bones, or maybe ashes. Some movement here and there, but mostly haze."

"Well, I know that sometimes happens when you get on in years."

Ike nodded again. "Except everything's looked more or less like that to me for the last fifty years. Ashes and bones. All right, you go back to your desk, Rosa dear. I'm sorry I kept you away. But listen, don't say anything to Mr. Shapiro. I'm all right."

Rosa shook her head and Ike didn't know if that meant she wouldn't mention his little spell or she didn't think he was all right. But then she was gone. He had overstated things there, but not by much. Couldn't see

squat anymore. What, he should go for some of this Nazi money and get his eyes fixed? A kind of reverse Nazi medical procedure.

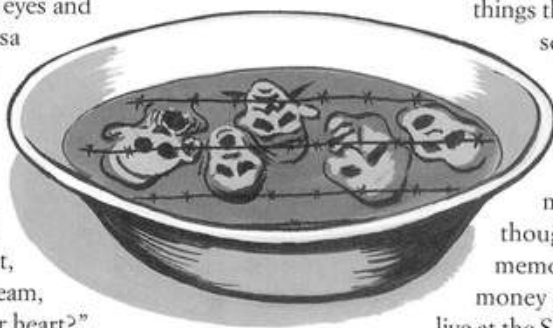
That would be ironic, use their money to clear up his vision as though it could correct what he saw in memory now? What did Ike want with money anyway? He had all he needed to live at the Shorefront Manor; Mel was fine, and

childless; there was nothing Ike wanted to do anymore. Well, maybe he could finance two or three years worth of lunches here so he didn't have to look at any more cream of kohlrabi. Or get in touch with Harry Belafonte's people.

Were the camps just about money, then? Was this some kind of absurd tort settlement? A little moral lapse, we apologize; here's the money we confiscated, with interest, and now we're even, goodbye. It hurt Ike's head to think about it. Right between the eyes, as a matter of fact, and he hated that. But if he didn't go ahead and claim his money, and with most of the survivors dying off now, everybody half dead all over again, suppose the money just sat there in Switzerland?

Ike sensed a sudden darkening and figured that the cauliflower clouds had thickened to cover the sun. Time to go inside and see what was happening in the Red Room. Or go upstairs and lie down for a while. It was good to have the freedom to decide things like this. Ike would at least acknowledge that much. He still had his wits about him.

He entered the lobby and headed for the elevator. When he passed the garbage can near Rosa's desk, he reached into his pocket for the letter. Then he stopped. He remembered the look on his brother-in-law's face that time Ike told him about being an alien in England. Or Molly when she asked about the camps and he refused to talk to her; it was the source of their only real conflict in all those golden fifty years together. Then he remembered, in a terrible rush, face after gaunt face, Mordecai Solly David Max Zvi Abie Charles Howard, and the sight of bones and ashes, and he took his hands from his pockets, walked to the elevator and pressed the button. He would think of something to do with the money. Even if all he could imagine now was to burn it. □



Is There a Jewish Political Tradition?

Julie E. Cooper

- *The Jewish Political Tradition, Volume 1: Authority*, eds. Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and Yair Lorberbaum. Yale University Press, 2000.

The claim that post-biblical Jewish thought is devoid of reflection on political questions has a formidable, if unorthodox, pedigree. Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* features a devastating and influential formulation of the view that, deprived of a state, Jews have been indifferent to the questions of authority, power, and obligation that concern Western political theorists. While Spinoza extols Moses' astuteness as a theorist of mass political behavior and celebrates the contribution of Jewish ritual to the flourishing of the ancient Hebrew theocracy, he also derides the perceived passivity and impotence of his traditional peers. According to Spinoza, the loss of sovereignty marks the exit of the Jews from the arena of political practice and, significantly, political thought.

This account, which limits the possibilities for political organization to sovereignty and the lack thereof, entails a correspondingly narrow understanding of the endeavor that is political theory. The assumption that "stateless" thinkers are necessarily indifferent to political questions reflects the mainstream understanding of political theory as a discourse devoted to and defined by the state.

Contemporary scholars who challenge Spinoza's indictment of rabbinic Judaism not only debunk dominant myths of Jewish history, they also implicitly critique prevailing Western approaches to the study of politics.

The Jewish Political Tradition mounts an audacious, erudite, and important challenge to dominant interpretations of Jewish political history. The project's four volumes (forthcoming volumes explore issues surrounding membership, community, and politics in history) aim to make a distinctly Jewish tradition of political thought available for study, debate, and engagement. Edited jointly by Michael Walzer, a prominent American political theorist, and Israeli scholars of Jewish thought associated with the Shalom Hartman Institute, the volume pairs primary texts from various periods with commentaries written by contemporary scholars—a format that consciously echoes Jewish traditions of exegesis. In volume one, individual chapters explore the various guises—monarchic, prophetic, priestly, communal, and rabbinical—that authority has assumed within Jewish thought and practice, as well as the grounds—consensual or coerced—of religious and political authority.

In their eclecticism, the volume's sources flout generic expectations and thus tacitly rebuke the conventional definition of political theory as a discourse that legitimates sovereign authority. While genres like the treatise, the philosophical essay, and the



An audacious, erudite, and important challenge to dominant interpretations of Jewish political history.

pamphlet populate the Western political theory canon, the editors of this volume discover incisive reflections on authority in the responsa literature, aggadah, biblical exegesis, and midrash, as well as in more familiar tracts and polemics. Foregrounding the political significance of texts previously ghettoized as literary, legal, or theological, *The Jewish Political Tradition* subtly intimates a more expansive conception of the genres—as well as the questions—that count as political theory.

The Jewish Political Tradition also intervenes provocatively in contemporary debates about the significance of the modifier "Jewish" in Israel's self-definition as a "Jewish State." As an anthology of sources paired with commentary, the volume never explicitly advances a political argument or endorses an ideology. Nevertheless, the editors imply that the Jewish political tradition contains resources amenable to the expansion of democracy and pluralism in Israel. Against advocates of a state ruled by Halachah, the volume's commentators argue that Jewish traditions of political thought recognize an

Julie E. Cooper is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, where she studies political theory and Jewish thought.

autonomous realm of secular authority, identifying biblical monarchs and community leaders in the medieval *kahal* (a semi-autonomous governing unit) as secular rulers. Similarly, the editors invoke the interpretive pluralism and indeterminacy of rabbinic hermeneutics as a template for political discourse that accommodates dissent and abjures appeals to absolute authority. Against Spinoza, who condemns rabbinic Judaism's ostensible indifference to politics, the editors hail rabbinic Judaism as the traditional discourse most consonant with contemporary Jews' political commitments.

The cloying romanticism of its dedication ("To the *halutzim*—the pioneers—who paved the roads connecting dream and reality") notwithstanding, the volume evinces a duly restrained Zionism. While the editors deny that Judaism's political vision culminates in the state of Israel, they do contend that Israel presents a unique opportunity for the revitalization and implementation of Jewish political thought. Further, they suggest that an indigenous political discourse—"rooted," as David Hartman explains, "in the historical experience of the Jewish people but capable also of shaping the common life of a modern state"—is in some sense Israel's greatest need. Yet one wonders, with Joseph Raz (whose contribution to the volume rejects "the idea of a Jewish state"), whether a democratic Israel—that is, a state of its citizens—can or should be normatively, as opposed to incidentally, Jewish. While the strategic value of invoking Jewish texts is undeniable, a commitment to pluralism and democracy would seem to preclude privileging the Jewish tradition.

More importantly, one wonders whether the editors' preoccupation with contemporary Israeli debates leads them to foreground certain tendencies within the tradition at the expense of the project's most radical political and theoretical implications. Precisely because the sovereignty/subjection polarity cannot fathom the

intricacies of Jewish political experience, Jewish political thought challenges the statist biases of modern Western political theory. Jewish thinkers approach the political through a unique set of questions, and they reflect upon these questions in an idiom not limited by talk of institutions, constitutions, and states. Yet, eager to both vindicate Jewish political thought in terms familiar to mainstream political theorists, and to elaborate a foundation for pluralism and democracy in a particular nation-state, the editors do not present Jewish political thought in this, its most radical guise. While the anthology boldly recuperates the political dimensions of Jewish life in exile, its orientation toward the state of Israel limits opportunities for developing a political theory concerned with phenomena other than sovereign power.

Indeed, the volume's interpretation of the Jewish political tradition ultimately bears an overwhelming resemblance to modern liberalism. The editors' vision of a Jewish liberalism presents a forceful counter to fundamentalist readings that construe Judaism's political outlook in theocratic terms. However, this vision neglects aspects of Jewish political thought that resist incorporation within, and implicitly critique, modern liberal accounts of politics. Two examples of this tendency to assimilate Jewish texts to liberal categories will suffice. While acknowledging that the covenantal foundation of traditional authority "doesn't press Jewish writers toward some version of liberal democracy," Michael Walzer nevertheless contends that the biblical emphasis on consent "does make all varieties of political authoritarianism difficult to defend." Yet, as the editors themselves acknowledge, the tradition does not unanimously construe the biblical covenant as consensual: a famous talmudic aggadah describes the Sinai covenant as coerced (and therefore as nonbinding), the Maharal rejects voluntarism, and Abravanel characterizes the biblical covenant as a slave contract.

Rather than endorse consent as a principle of legitimacy, this strand within the tradition highlights the conundrums that attend, and the fragility that characterizes, contractual political foundations.

Similarly, a conviction that transparency, principle, and stability are the proper ends of politics is apparent in the anthology's valorization of rabbinic authority. The editors depict the rabbis as reassuringly mundane purveyors of prudence who counter the disruptive, and therefore antipolitical, potential of prophecy. "Radical, impolitic, utopian, and divine," prophetic authority proves untenable as a template for contemporary politics; by contrast, rabbinic interpretation is "more accommodating (though never easily or entirely so) to political considerations." That the volume omits both Maimonides' depiction of Moses as the paradigmatic philosopher-king and Spinoza's support for this Maimonidean position reflects the editors' neglect of the possibility that prophecy is not inimical to politics, but rather offers an alternative conception of the nature and ends of political life.

In his writings on biblical theocracy, Martin Buber (who appears briefly in *The Jewish Political Tradition*) suggests the possibilities for a Jewish political theory that goes beyond liberalism. Given the force of postmodern critiques of liberalism, this possibility bears sustained and serious exploration. While *The Jewish Political Tradition* does not attempt this elaboration, the volume enriches our political discourse immeasurably by making the relevant texts available to those who would deploy them toward a variety of political and theoretical projects. In keeping with the rabbinic tradition, the volume courts debate, dissent, and contestation. Indeed, *The Jewish Political Tradition* issues a compelling invitation to participate in the conversations that it documents, and that take place in its pages; the seductiveness of this invitation is one measure of the volume's achievement. □

62. Because the expectations of both sides were so divergent and each remained entirely bound to its own national "narrative," every section of the agreement was interpreted differently. Ultimately, many parts of the agreement were not carried out, mainly by Israel (for example: the third withdrawal, the four safe passages, and others).

63. Throughout the period of the "Oslo Process," Israel continued its vigorous expansion of the settlements, primarily by creating new ones under various guises, expanding existing ones, building an elaborate network of "bypass" roads, expropriating land, demolishing houses, and uprooting plantations. The Palestinians, for their part, used the time to build their strength, both within the framework of the agreement and without it. In fact, the historical confrontation continued unabated under the guise of negotiations and the "peace process," which became a proxy for actual peace.

64. In contradistinction to his image (as an unequivocal supporter of reconciliation with the Palestinians), Yitzhak Rabin continued many of the practices of the occupation while simultaneously managing the political process to achieve peace on Israeli terms. As he was a disciple of the Zionist "narrative" and accepted its mythology, he suffered from cognitive dissonance when his hopes for peace clashed with his conceptual world. It appears that he began to internalize some parts of the Palestinian historical narrative only at the very end of his life.

65. The case of Shimon Peres is much more severe. He created for himself an international image of a peacemaker and even designed his language to reflect this image ("the New Middle East") while remaining essentially a traditional Zionist hawk. This became clear in the short and violent period that he served as Prime Minister after the assassination of Rabin and, again, in his current acceptance of the role of spokesman and apologist for Sharon.

66. The clearest expression of the Israeli dilemma was provided by Ehud Barak, who came to power completely convinced of his ability to cut the Gordian knot of the historical conflict in one dramatic stroke, in the fashion of Alexander the Great. Barak approached the issue in total ignorance of the Palestinian narrative, showing utter contempt for its importance. He presented his proposals as ultimatums and was appalled and enraged by their rejection.

67. In his own eyes and in the eyes of Israel as a whole, Barak "turned every stone" and made the Palestinians "more generous offers than any previous Prime Minister." In exchange, he wanted the Palestinians to lend their signatures to "an end to the conflict." The Palestinians considered this offer preposterous, since Barak was effectively asking them to relinquish their basic national aspirations, such as the Right of Return and sovereignty in East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Moreover,

while Barak presented the claims for the annexation of territories as a matter of negligible percentages ("Settlement Blocs"), according to Palestinian calculations Barak's offer amounted to an actual annexation of 20 percent of the land beyond the Green Line.

68. In the Palestinian view, they had already made the decisive compromise by agreeing to establish their State beyond the Green Line, in merely 22 percent of their historical homeland. Therefore, they could only accept minor border changes in the context of territorial swaps. The traditional Israeli position is that the achievements of the war of 1948 are established facts that cannot be disputed and the compromise required must focus on the remaining 22 percent.

69. As with most terms and concepts, the word "concession" has different meanings for both sides. The Palestinians believe that they already "conceded" 78 percent of their land when they agreed to accept 22 percent of it. The Israelis believe that they are "conceding" when they agree to "give" the Palestinians parts of that same 22 percent (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip).

70. The Camp David Summit in the summer of 2000, which was imposed on Arafat against his will, was premature and brought things to a climax. Barak's demands, presented at the summit as Clinton's, were that the Palestinians: agree to end the conflict by relinquishing the Right of Return and the Return itself; accept complicated arrangements for East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount without achieving sovereignty over them; agree to large territorial annexations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; agree to an Israeli military presence in other large areas; and agree to Israeli control over the borders separating the Palestinian State from the rest of the world. No Palestinian leader would ever sign such an agreement and thus the summit ended in deadlock.

The El Aqsa Intifada

71. The breakdown of the summit, the elimination of any hope for an agreement between the two sides, and the unconditional pro-Israeli stance of the Americans, inevitably led to another round of violent confrontations, which earned the title of "The al-Aqsa Intifada." For the Palestinians, this Intifada is a justified national uprising against the protracted occupation, which has no end in sight and allows continual, daily pulling of their land out from under their feet. For the Israelis, it is an outburst of murderous terrorism. The perpetrators of these acts appear to the Palestinians as national heroes and to the Israelis as merciless criminals who must be liquidated.

72. The official media in Israel no longer mention settlers but speak of "residents" upon whom any attack is a crime against civilians. The Palestinians consider

the settlers the forefront of a dangerous enemy force whose intention is to dispossess them of their land and who must be defeated.

73. A great part of the Israeli "Peace Camp" collapsed during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Especially after Barak had "turned every stone" and made "more generous offers than any previous Prime Minister," Palestinian behavior was incomprehensible to this part of the "Peace Camp," since it had never performed a thorough revision of the Zionist "narrative" and did not internalize the fact that there is a Palestinian "narrative" too. The only remaining explanation for these peaceniks was that the Palestinians had deceived them, that the Palestinians had never intended to make peace, and that their true purpose was to throw the Jews into the sea, as the Zionist right had always claimed.

74. As a result, the dividing line between the Zionist "right" and "left" disappeared. The leaders of the Labor Party joined the Sharon government and became his most effective apologists (e.g. Shimon Peres); even the formal leftist opposition (e.g. Yossi Sarid) took part. The joining of Israeli Left and Right again proves that the Zionist narrative is the decisive factor unifying all factions of the political system in Israel.

75. There is a notable decline in the Palestinian willingness to reopen a dialogue with the Israeli peace forces. This is a consequence of their utter disappointment with the "leftist government" which had inspired so much hope after the Netanyahu years, as well as a consequence of the fact that, apart from the voice of small radical peace groups, no Israeli outrage at the brutal reactions of the occupation forces has been heard. The tendency to tighten ranks, typical of any nation in a war of liberation, makes it possible for the extreme nationalistic and religious forces on the Palestinian side to veto any attempt at Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

A New Peace Camp

76. The breakdown of the old peace camp necessitates the creation of a new Israeli peace camp that will be real, up-to-date, effective, and strong, that can influence the Israeli public and bring about a complete re-evaluation of the old axioms in order to effect a change in the Israeli political system.

77. To do so, the new peace camp must lead public opinion towards a brave reassessment of the national "narrative" and rid it of false myths. It must strive to unite the historical versions of both peoples into a single "narrative," free from historical deceptions, which will be acceptable to both sides.

78. While creating this new narrative the peace camp must also make the Israeli public aware that along with all the beautiful and positive aspects of the Zionist

enterprise, a terrible injustice was done to the Palestinian people. This injustice, which peaked during the "Nagba," obliges us to assume responsibility and correct as much of it as is possible.

79. With a new understanding of the past and the present, the new peace camp must formulate a peace plan based on the following principles:

- (a) An independent and free Palestinian State will be established alongside Israel.
- (b) The Green Line will be the border between the two States. If agreed between the two sides, limited territorial exchanges may be possible.
- (c) The Israeli settlements will be evacuated from the territory of the Palestinian State.
- (d) The border between the two States will be open to the movement of people and goods, subject to arrangements made by mutual agreement.
- (e) Jerusalem will be the capital of both States—West Jerusalem the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem capital of Palestine. The State of Palestine will have complete sovereignty in East Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount). The State of Israel will have complete sovereignty in West Jerusalem, including the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter. Both States will reach agreement on the unity of the city on the physical, municipal level.
- (f) Israel will recognize, in principle, the Palestinian Right of Return as an inalienable human right. The practical solution to the problem will come about by agreement based on just, fair, and practical considerations and will include return to the territory of the State of Palestine, return to the State of Israel, and compensation.
- (g) The water resources will be controlled jointly and allocated by agreement, equally and fairly.
- (h) A security agreement between the two States will ensure the security of both and take into consideration the specific security needs of Israel as well as of Palestine.
- (i) Israel and Palestine will cooperate with other states in the region to establish a Middle Eastern community, modeled on the European Union.

80. The signing of a peace agreement and its honest implementation in good faith will lead to a historical reconciliation between the two nations, based on equality, cooperation, and mutual respect.

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Drafted by Uri Avnery and submitted by Gush Shalom for public debate. If you generally agree with the spirit of this document, please send comments and remarks to Gush Shalom at info@gush-shalom.org or P.O.Box 3322, Tel-Aviv, Israel 61033. Hebrew and English versions can be downloaded from www.gush-shalom.org. □



Forward—Backward—Forward?

Paul Buble

The *Forward*, a slightly indirect but lineal descendent of the largest-circulation Yiddish daily that the world has ever seen or is ever likely to see, looks vastly improved but also a bit strange these days. Though it still appears to need to extend support to whoever rules Israel and to play down certain definite low spots in the paper's precursor (such as its avid enthusiasm for the Vietnam War) the *Forward* is arguably the most interesting Jewish tabloid—at least in English—in a long time. This may be especially intriguing for TIKKUN readers because for some years, ending in June of 2000, *Forward* columns intermittently bristled with attacks on "Rabbi Lerner" and the assorted peaceniks the paper accused of New Ageism and of giving away the Jewish state to the Arabs, respectively.

Is this a sea change in Jewish life or, like the overblown predictions of Liebermanism, will it turn out to be a mere blip on the radar? The issue goes to the heart of a century of Jewish American journalism. In what then seemed a pace-setting statement from its cultural pages, *Forward* Arts Editor Jonathan Rosen in 1990 argued that the fiddler had fallen off the roof and nostalgia could no longer suffice for Jewish culture or identity. The post-shtetl future beckoned, from Jerusalem to Los Angeles.

But not so fast. Memory hangs thick in Jewish life, and not just because of the Holocaust. What Yiddish pedagogue Itche Goldberg has called the longing for recollection is still kicking. Just witness today's col-

lege kids who eagerly interview their grandparents about vanished radical union days, the early civil rights movement, and the urban neighborhoods abandoned for bland suburbs. It's hard not to look back as the seeming American certainties of "progress" become steeped in the growing awareness of a Cold War victory turned sour, accelerating ecological devastation, and a world of Jews at risk with everyone and everything else.

To go backward for an extended moment: the *Forverts* (in English, the *Jewish Daily Forward*), launched in 1897, owed its existence to a burgeoning immigrant radicalism and to a division in radical ranks over the autonomy of the press and labor unions, specifically the needles trade, from the overweening control of the socialist political machine. Choosing in favor of the machine, the daily *Forward* soon proved a robust child, run (after the first few years) by the autocratic Abraham Cahan, a Lithuanian immigrant who had been one of the very first Yiddish language agitators in the New Land. Cahan was no insular European living inside an immigrant microcosm. He wrote short fiction in English and worked on a major New York daily before returning to the ghetto world. Under his hand, the *Forward* became one of the best papers in any language in any major capital: full of street observations, one-column short stories by brilliant young writers, great theatrical reviews, translated and serialized novels from Balzac to Mark Twain, socialistic editorials, and

the famous Bintl Brief letters column with mostly faked readers' queries in response to which the paper offered advice on getting along and learning to be properly American. No wonder the paper rocketed to a quarter-million daily sales, with rapt Jewish readers in all parts of the world. Like Sophie Tucker, the later Woody Allen and Ben Katchor, Cahan had merged Yiddishkeit with popular culture.

But there was a down side which Cahan's critics never failed to point out and which Cahan's followers just as predictably ignored. It wasn't just that he was a nasty, overbearing guy—in a world of tough characters, that was hardly the great editor's main flaw. Rather, like most of his readers, he aspired to succeed through assimilation, and this idea eventually trumped socialism. Though a purveyor of Jewishness by its very existence, his *Forward* brought a "Potato Yiddish," full of cognates, to a readership still uncertain about the prospects for a multicultural American democracy. By the 1910s, the *Forward's* vision of a cooperative society already seemed like little more than a weekly Ethical Culture Society lecture between six days of striving to get ahead.

Further, before anyone had heard of Bolshevism, Cahan had helped invent the labor and socialist version of bureaucracy. Most especially, he fostered a Jewish labor bureaucracy which used the very autonomy won from 1890s socialist hard-liners to create a cautious, exclusionary unionism indifferent to the unskilled workers, especially to young women workers, of the needle trades. Despite its large female readership, the *Forward* already radiated the gender values that its last great

Paul Buble was an advisor on the documentary film about the Forward, and was a contributor to the English language section of the Yiddish Forverts.

novelist, I.B. Singer, would replay in his columns: women were a distinctly subordinate caste, the young and helpless Yiddishe Maidlakh or an old and annoying Yenta. No one would claim this attitude was Cahan's invention. Among the newer ethnic groups of Southern and Eastern Europe, Jews and Italians shared the dubious distinction of the greatest contrasts between the literacy of males and females.

As a result, however, the *Forward*, which despised the Industrial Workers of the World and embraced the determinedly anti-egalitarian Samuel Gompers, was stunned by the "girls strikes" in the garment trades of 1909.

Soon the young *Forward* was old—at least in the eyes of post-1905 Jewish immigrants—and indifferent to the excitements of the ghetto and its colonies in the Bronx and beyond. But it had little competition. The multiple disappointments of American Communism badly limited the more Yiddish-perfect alternative daily *Morgen Frayhayt*, which had a few of the most brilliant writers but a readership not more than a tenth (and usually less) of the *Forward*. The 1920s "Yiddish Renaissance" on Broadway gave the Jewish world one final, grand look at the immigrant cultural possibilities quickly being lost—leaving in its wake only the *Forward* as exhaustive if definitely prejudiced observer and critic, at once antimodernist, didactic, and dogmatic.

Probably the contemporary summer camps and resorts which sprang up from the Poconos to the Catskills and Adirondacks during this time better predicted the Jewish American future. These camps taught many of the kids Yiddish, with good effects that would last all their lives. Reading the resort ads from the *Forward*, the *Frayhayt*, or even the weekly *New*

progressive and humane. Perhaps the opportunities for upward mobility and/or an unspecifically Jewish bohemia (Gertrude Stein, Artie Shaw, Allen Ginsberg, and how many others) were just too great. Perhaps the continuing mediocrity of the existing Jewish press simply reflected a real downward trend of social apathy and self-congratulation. A different Jewishness had to find itself again.

Finding that different Jewishness, to jump all the way to the late 1980s, was more or less what the Forward Association, subsidized by the still (if vaguely) socialistic Workmen's

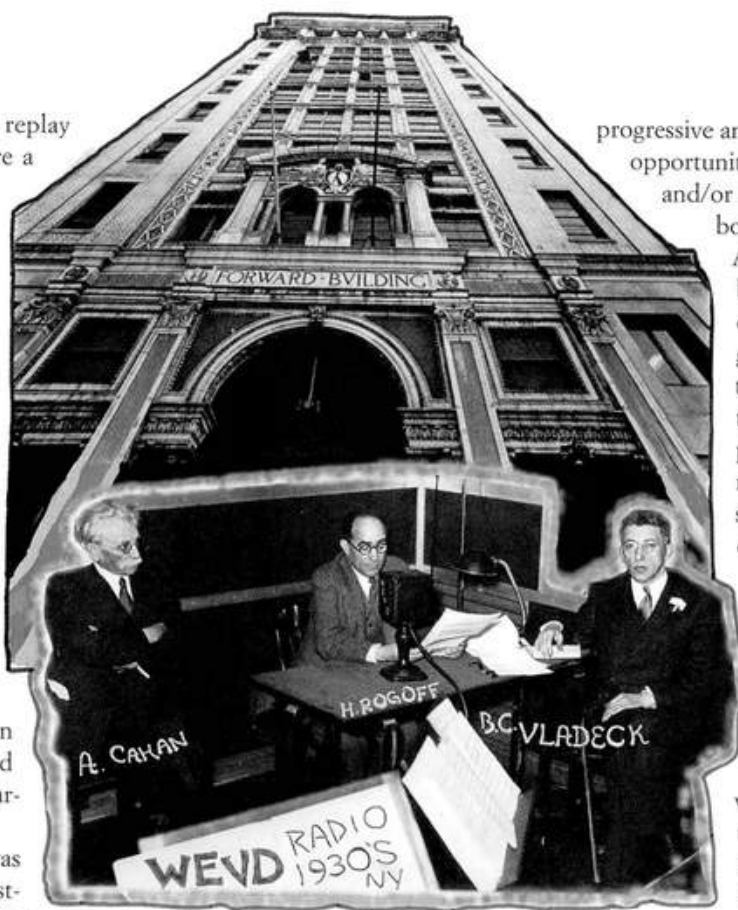
Masses of the 1920s–40s, is like looking at the more open but also more cryptically Jewish future ("Fresh Air! Tennis Courts! Come for the Holidays!").

Younger readers were defecting to the English-language papers, and what did the Jewish press have to offer? The *Forward* launched an English-language section that never escaped, to its very end in 1990, a sort of Yiddish-to-English quality of literary second class for the *goyishe kopf* unable to understand the mother tongue. Some of the local English-language weeklies showed life, but from that day to this, most of them had a Jewish Chamber of Commerce quality: the voice of the local business-and-professional elite busily set upon making Jewishness respectable.

The role of Jews in American journalism is of course a very large one, from the *New York Times* to the lively underground newspapers of the 1960s to, for that matter, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*. But by a rule of thumb, the more commercially successful, the less Jewish—and, with some exceptions, the less

Circle and by ownership of radio station WEVD, decided to do. The Yiddish daily *Forverts* was by that time weekly; even by absorbing its main rival (the literarily distinguished *Tog*), and absorbing most of the readers of the folded ex-Communist and anarchist Yiddish press, it had only taken on more of the same fading generations. The English-language section seemed to be composed mainly by scissors, a patchwork of "service" pieces about "big Jews" receiving major awards (usually from Jewish organizations), obits, limp reminders of Israeli virtue drawn from Jewish Telegraphic Agency wire stories, and, my personal favorite, revelations of microscopic Jewish communities past or present in the most unlikely places, from Macao to Tierra del Fuego. It was a little like reading the old *Chicago Defender* explain that Warren G. Harding, or the forgotten inventor of the smoke alarm, were really disguised African Americans.

At this historic moment, a deeply conservative staffer of the *Wall Street*



MEDIA REVIEW

Journal offered the Forwards Association a deal: Seth Lipsky would undertake a substantial new weekly, if the Association carried half of the bills and gave him editorial freedom. It was a trade-off destined to prompt many regrets, and, a decade later, Lipsky's downfall. In the well-publicized start-up, the new editor made clear that he had crossed the hitherto indelible red line of *Forverts* history. The paper had not resisted McCarthyism nor the transformation of the labor movement from social movement to special interest, in part because to protest either would be against the special interests of powerful Jewish officials of unions with ever-fewer Jewish members. But "Revisionism," the racial and exclusionary doctrines of Vladimir Jabotinsky and his successors in Likud, had nevertheless remained *trayf* all these decades. Lipsky tumbled these walls down: he was eager to be ecumenical, but he frankly favored the iron fist and he wasn't so sure the Revisionists hadn't been right from the beginning.

On other points, Lipsky often announced that the paper under his control had finally achieved its own brand of journalistic integrity. Its cultural pages scored an early coup by serializing the last sections of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and followed that up with the weekly drawings of Ben Katchor (the affable son of a *Fraybayt* booster, Katchor freely let it be known that his work appeared in the *Forward* among a dozen other papers, rather than being expressly drawn for its pages). Film scholar/reviewers Robert Sklar and J. Hoberman regularly graced the pages along with freelance writers and a few prominent right-wingers. Elsewhere in the paper, former *Moment* editor Leonard Fein offered a steady liberal voice; celeb-gossip columnist Masha Leon continued on from the old English-language section, as did former union educator and Vietnam hardliner Gus Tyler, whose column still took its name from the nineteenth-century presidential campaign slogan of a famed Indian-

killer—"Tippicanoe and Tyler Too." The irony apparently escaped him.

But it was Lipsky's muckraking and editorial slant that enraged or titillated new and old *Forward* readers. The paper endlessly covered tactical wars and bruised egos within the various Jewish establishments, tilting occasionally at the Hasidic ayatollahs of Brooklyn, pointing out missing funds and other follies. But its chief joys and principal coups lay in the other direction. It positively bragged about its role in bringing down would-be Clinton appointee Johnetta Cole, a distinguished African American educator guilty, like so many of her age, of the crime of having signed on to late Popular Front causes like an end to the Cuba blockade which automatically made her an enemy of Israel. (Lani Guinier was also high on the paper's shit-list, possibly because her father had been a prominent Popular Fronter.) Similarly, while most knowledgeable observers in the Jewish community continue to feel embarrassment at the ADL's spying on Martin Luther King Jr.'s office, the *Forward* recalled the intervention as admirably clever. If King could not police himself and exile former Communists from his circle, Jewish power brokers would do it for him. The *Forward* positively took the lead in accusing King of having plagiarized his dissertation.

To complaints that the paper was dragging the *Forward* tradition rightward, Lipsky would reprint some particularly ferocious anticommunist editorials from the past and retort that the paper's support was firm for the authorized leaders of the labor movement, especially Albert Shanker and AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland (described editorially as "family"). This was a bit of an evasion all around. With all its warts, the old *Forward* was capable of extraordinary moral moments, as when its long-time editor Simon Weber described the bloodbath in Lebanon as one of the worst events for Jews since the Holocaust, and con-

gratulated Israelis for what remains the biggest anti-war demonstration in Jewish history. By contrast, new *Forward* columnist David Twersky remarked that the Lebanon invasion so carefully schemed by Ariel Sharon had "almost worked," evidently cheated only by fate from Israel's goal of setting up an extended principality beyond its borders.

Likewise in the realm of labor, what the *Forward* celebrated was not so much the tradition of the AFL-CIO, let alone the older legacy of personal sacrifice and social solidarity once exemplified within industrial unionism, as the hijacking of labor's institutions by a small group of hugely paid political appointees. Under George Meany, the labor movement had declined sharply from a grand movement to a job protection agency, acquiring a heavy material interest in military production and the Cold War, emphatically including Vietnam. White-collar unionism, practically the last bastion of Jewish labor outside officialdom (including both conservative leaders and dedicated organizers), temporarily offset the decline of a factory following and the generalized indifference of unions to the rising workforce proportion of female clerical workers and nonwhites. The type of union the *Forward* celebrated offered, as an AFT official sneeringly remarked in it about recent agricultural organizing efforts, a respectable middle-class movement and not one of mere strawberry workers.

Ironically, the end of the Cold War fixed the fate of Lane Kirkland, who never attained 4 percent name recognition, let alone real support, from AFL-CIO members. Union chiefs just as conservative and just as overpaid nevertheless chafed at the leader's obsession with global aims—above all, the replacement of the post-Communist union apparatus throughout Eastern Europe with a business unionism run from Washington—while the home front disintegrated. The ouster of Kirkland's team by John Sweeney's

center-left coalition in 1995 made the *Forward* wild with anxiety and rage. Someone, somehow, had cheated the Cold War social democrats of the fruits of the long-awaited fall of Moscow.

The political atmosphere following the 1991 murder of Yankel Rosenblum in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, when mostly Caribbean immigrants rioted after a driver of a Hasidic limo fatally injured a black child, may also have pushed Lipsky over the edge. Previously, the *Forward* had tried to maintain a balance between centrist Democrats and (in the parlance of the day if hardly in reality) "moderate" Republicans. The paper had even endorsed the reelection of New York Mayor David Dinkins, although critics considered the endorsement insincere, given the paper's other views. By the time Rudolph Giuliani's own reelection rolled around, the *Forward* had begun steadily predicting, although mainly in opinion columns, that Jews had had enough of liberal Democrats and perhaps all Democrats, once and for all. "Old Politics" (by which they meant the 1970s "New Politics" in the likes of former congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, Giuliani's final opponent) was as out of date as welfare checks and historic Jewish hopes for a noncompetitive, noncapitalist future.

The Yiddish *Forverts* (actually revived and pushed somewhat leftward under a talented new editor in recent years) had in the middle 1980s stripped from its masthead "the emancipation of the working class must be made by the working class itself." Now, the English *Forward* came out four-square for finance capital. Indeed, the legal prosecution of figures like Michael Milken—so philanthropic, so intelligent, so much a model for Jews in the tech age—was an object of lament, the public hostility toward a convicted swindler evidently another proof of populist anti-Semitism. Old-fashioned and even new-fashioned leftism (like California's "Redwood Rabbis," considered proper subjects for ridicule) was not only unnecessary and silly but dangerous to

Jewish progress. Indeed, environmentalism of any kind, except perhaps in publicity projects for Israel, earned precious few plaudits here. Tuition vouchers were good—a surprising move away from the AFT leadership, but one endorsed by a number of former AFT leaders like Linda Chavez, greatly admired in the *Forward*. Black conservatives were especially good, and they got

*In the middle 1980s the
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generous coverage in the paper's pages. Because Giuliani was so very good—a bridge to Jewish Republicanism seemingly on the back of the Liberal Party—Hillary Clinton was worse than bad. In fact, she was so bad that she had once listened to Michael Lerner!

In retrospect, the concerted attack upon the politically centrist, emphatically probusiness First Lady may have been Lipsky's biggest error. Editorial enthusiasm for Governor George Pataki, viewed as another painless agent of political conversion, had only raised eyebrows. The unrestrained hostility toward "Mrs. Arafat" (as the Brooklyn Hasids and Long Island investors in West Bank real estate immediately called Hilary) seemed motivated by the expectation that the *Forward* could ride the issue (along with Giuliani) to hitherto unimagined centers of power and prestige. A fatal misjudgment, even before Giuliani dropped out.

Then again, perhaps it was a matter of extreme frustration, not only because Jewish support of Republicans never rose beyond 15 percent, but also because the paper's paid circulation stayed disappointingly low. Despite radio ads, despite free circulation of copies within Jewish organizations, despite the growth of an affluent

Jewish community in all sorts of hitherto distant places, deserts and Dixie alike, Lipsky's *Forward* never acquired a real readership or even much recognition west of the Hudson.

There were good reasons for this failure. Jews as a group have remained stubbornly liberal—except, of course, in the *Forward* "Letters to the Editor" column where the tiniest concession to the Palestinians, or to gay rights, or to intermarriage, is, even now, greeted with cries of treason. The *Forward* certainly had readers eager to support the Lipsky version of Jewishness, but not nearly enough of them. Perhaps they don't exist in those numbers. More likely, they don't need a weekly newspaper. They already have all the influence that money can buy. If AIPAC offers a sterling example, Lipsky-style Jews more generally gain by large financial contributions and threats of negative campaigns than by the elaboration of some brand-new Jewishness amazingly similar to the German-Jewish mixture of wealth, pomp, and emulation of gentile gentility that the original *Forverts* readers condemned a century ago.

In the end (as announced in March 2000), the Forwards Association threatened to pull the plug on the paper before Lipsky sold back his half-ownership to the Association. A decade-long experiment in political conservatism thus ended, to the bitter lamentations of Hilton Kramer (in the *New Criterion*) and others in the usual places—*Commentary*, the *New York Post*, and the *Weekly Standard*. During this final interregnum, Lipsky let it all hang out, in a banner phase of liberal-baiting at home and support of hardliners elsewhere, especially but not only in Israel and the West Bank.

Eyes naturally turned after the Lipsky reign to the new management, headed by the cautiously liberal J.J. Goldberg. In some ways, the changeover was subtle. Today's front page can still run a photo of Norman Podhoretz, a teaser for a literary piece inside which (penned by a writer for

MEDIA REVIEW

City Journal and *Commentary*) is just as laudatory as it was likely to have been earlier. Masha Leon's celeb column still has the rich and conservative jaw-to-jaw at lavish Manhattan banquets with liberal favorites (including my own favorite actor, Richard Dreyfus, in awfully dubious company). The Personals still favors older, "financially independent" men looking for considerably younger, thinner women. But a newer (competing?) Manhattan activities column may recount a recent Rosenberg Committee gathering, something unimaginable in *Forward* history, while the cultural section has warmed somewhat to Popular Front icons like Aaron Copland or Marc Blitzstein.

To give credit where credit is due, the beat of Jewish pop in nearly every venue was always a strong point (a credit to Rosen, who left the paper with Lipsky, albeit with no apparent hard feelings). Jewish identification direct or indirect with the least likely *People* magazine personages (e.g., Gwyneth Paltrow, a rabbi's granddaughter, or David Duchovny, son of a talented and very Jewish novelist, or, most recently, Adam Sandler for the immature crowd) is bound to be a continuing source of fascination and wonderment, if more to the reader perhaps than to the stars themselves. In this mental framework, even Harry Potter can somehow seem Jewish, and there's no harm done speculating.

But of course it's the editorial page and the writers' assignments that tell the difference. Here, Goldberg may weigh in one week urging the nation to unite around George Bush, yet the next week chide Senatorial liberals Russ Feingold and Paul Wellstone for their willingness to support the Ashcroft nomination despite the nominee's fanatical Christian, blatantly misogynist, and arguably racist politics. New staffers seem to cover the same old communal quarrels (with the same old arguments about which Americans seek to influence Israeli elections with money or endorsements), but absent the meanness and will-to-punish of

the Lipsky team. The "Business and Labor" page (formerly the *Forverts'* "Labor" page) is about like before, Gus Tyler stacked against stories of heroic entrepreneurialism. Meanwhile, Fein is fine, and the guest columnists are successively (somewhat) liberal and (often incredibly) reactionary.

Yet telling gaps remain between what the paper is and what it might be. The "Forward 50" influential Jews listed in December, as usual, include few entertainers, the only category of personalities that most Jewish or non-Jewish readers would recognize (although Cynthia Ozick and Dr. Laura somehow rate in "Media"), but ample numbers of millionaires, office-holders, philanthropists, political conservatives, and nary a left-winger. This points to the real problem that Lipsky inherited from the old *Forward's* admiration for needle trades officials and institutional elites at large. Outside the upper circles of organized Jewry, these people are, with few exceptions (like San Jose union activist Amy Beth Dean), little known and even less admired. This world is too small and self-referential by far; they offer the best reasons for unaffiliated Jews to remain unaffiliated.

The printer's devil compels me to add this: I actually miss the revelations of CIA activities bragged about so openly in the Lipsky *Forward* that I could find clues about human rights violations and violators, especially within the labor movement, that I might have missed otherwise. I don't miss the amalgamation of Henry Kissinger (always granted the utmost respect) and Elie Wiesel in the same column, applauding the witness to the Holocaust and the war criminal as similarly heroic Jews—even if the two of them don't seem to see any problem with the association. I don't miss the attacks on Jewish socialists or on African American leaders, the insistence that campus "political correctness" is a left-wing conspiracy to destroy Israel, or that Jewish nationalism is innocent of the nastiness that stains Black nationalism. I certainly

don't miss the eagerness for Jews to go Republican or to drive old-fashioned (Jewish) liberalism out of the Democratic Party. I don't miss the hostility toward environmentalism. And I don't miss the editorial eagerness for U.S. bombing everywhere and anywhere, with depleted uranium shells or not, or that Jewish interests are imagined to be advanced by savage action: it makes about as much sense to me as bombing Tel-Aviv for the invasion of Lebanon or the occupation of the West Bank. Happily, the *Forward* is finished with all that—at least we hope so.

Like so many steady readers, I wish J.J. Goldberg and the staff good luck. Having gone backward almost the whole ten years, the *Forward* can still go forward—if only it isn't pulled further and further into support for Sharon's brutal repression and expropriation of Palestinian lands. Not only for New Yorkers, not only for Jews (and non Jews) with their eyes fixed on Israel, not only for anti-socialists! May it change and flourish. May every page be as interesting as Ben Katchor's comic strip. □

TORAH OF MONEY (cont. from page 32)

Today, the Ninth Degree of *Tzedakah* is more about inspiring Jewish connections than about inspiring Jewish humanitarianism, since the latter needs little inspiration. A recent report by Amos: The National Jewish Partnership for Social Justice (www.amospartnership.org) showed that a large majority of Jews perceive "making the world a better place" to be more central to Jewish identity than faith, Torah study, or Jewish-oriented philanthropy. Eighty percent of those polled urged "more social justice programs and activities" for Jewish organizations—yet only 15 percent expressed strong preference for doing social justice work under Jewish auspices.

The challenge, then, is to re-root the idealism of Jews in the soil of Judaism. That is the spiritual self-interest we cultivate through the Ninth Degree of *Tzedakah*. □

BOOK REVIEW

Creating a Viable Eco-Judaism

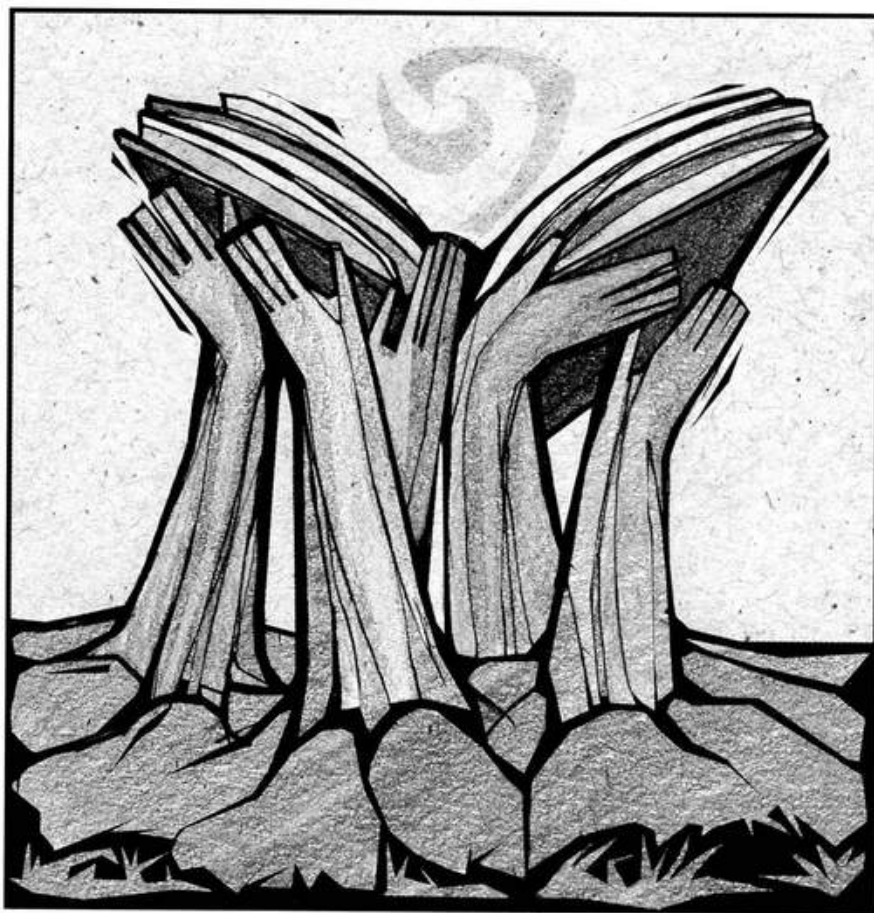
Jonathan Schorsch

■ *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought.* Ed. Arthur Waskow. 2 vols. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.

Readers unfamiliar with eco-Jewish thinking—a despicable term, but I have found no better—will learn a great deal from these creative, welcome pages, gaining both knowledge and wisdom. Readers already familiar with eco-Judaism will find some new gems here and a fresh motherlode from which to draw them. The anthology is divided into four more-or-less chronological sections: Biblical Israel, Rabbinic Judaism, Zionism, and Eco-Judaism. Each section begins with an introduction by Arthur Waskow, in which he frames the pressing eco-Jewish questions and the changes from the previous worldview concisely, thoughtfully, thought-provokingly, and with verve. (I find his various writings here as powerful as anything he has previously written.) Also prefacing each section are brief translations of selected texts exemplifying that worldview, wonderfully setting the tone for the essays that follow.

There are too many essays to summarize or even list here, but suffice to say that the breadth and depth of the collection live up to its promise. The diversity of authors—from the president of Yeshiva University to

Jonathan Schorsch is TIKKUN's book editor.



Reconstructionist rabbis—makes for a pleasurable varied trek and Waskow is to be congratulated for fostering such a multiple perspective. Given the limited number of textual sources available for study, some redundancy between the pieces is inevitable (particularly apparent in the Rabbinic Judaism section), and though irksome, is not as rampant as it might have been. Each volume concludes with a useful resource section. (Assuming that some people might not buy both volumes, the publisher placed in each the same resource section and also, oddly, the same introduction.) The collection will make a great tool for teachers.

One aspect of this collection to be particularly appreciated is the absence of defensiveness. While the seminal and anti-monotheistic 1967 essay of Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," is mentioned here and there, the tone of the anthology for the most part rises above the need constantly to "prove" Judaism's ecological wisdom, a reactive impulse that pervaded many earlier eco-Jewish writings. The general atmosphere is more aes-

thetic, holistic, and joyful, focused on teaching rather than preaching.

At the same time, published by Jewish Lights and coming after much of the eco-Jewish groundwork has already been laid, the vocabulary and spirit of some of the writing, especially that of editor Arthur Waskow, tend to address those already converted. This is, then, not an anthology seeking to sell environmentalism to the mainstream, Jewish or non-Jewish, but an effort to implant a more radical consciousness. These volumes do not push a superficial, feel-good environmentalism based on a sanitized version of a religious system artificially and unconvincingly daubed green for current psycho-social needs—as did much of the earlier waves of eco-Jewish thought—but come from a place of having taken seriously the imperatives of thinking globally and acting locally, of having internalized alternative modes of living, of having been truly informed by pre-modern, non-technophilic cultural norms.

Among the more outstanding contributions, to my mind, is Jeremy Benstein's "Nature vs. Torah," an

BOOK REVIEW

informative survey of the textual history of the rabbinic statement that one who interrupts study to remark on a beautiful tree or field forfeits his/her life. Alon Tal's sobering summation of Israel's environmental record—which he calls “a unsustainable gallop toward ecological disaster”—comprises a must read for anyone interested in getting beyond naïve eco-Judaism. Aurora Levins Morales contributes a luminous meditation on her family's plots of land in Puerto Rico and in eastern Europe, an exemplary exercise in tracing the meanings of place. Also wonderful are Irene Diamond's personal musings on the intertwining of Judaism, feminism, and ecology.

A few minor annoyances could have been avoided. The footnotes to one essay lack page references. Another essay does not contain any references at all to sources which are not rabbinic. These oversights are rather limiting for a text that purports to serve as a sourcebook. Also unfortunate is the fact that some of the pieces are quite dated, as evidenced by their lack of citations to works within the last five years.

Given the diversity of essays and authors, it would be unfair to quibble over problems of interpretation, translation, or accuracy; many of the pieces clearly make better midrash than historiography, which is fine (historiography isn't always so inspiring). But even so, problems inhere in the eco-Jewish approach to the Jewish past which even this excellent collection does not escape. A division between shepherds and farmers recurs throughout these pages, for instance, but seems more mythic than factual, a product more than anything else of our need for generalizable handles with which to grasp immense entities such as civilizations. Because of the segmentation of the topical sections, “Rabbinic Judaism” seems to stretch from the authors of the Mishna and Talmud in the first centuries of the common era to Hasidic masters of the nineteenth century, which implies an unfortunate (and inaccurate) homogeneity and stasis.

Many of the authors mention and assume the importance of the principle that various *halachot* (laws, legal rulings) derive from the divine laws or order of nature. Such an order may indeed be eternal and unchanging, but our understanding of this natural order (which is all we can hope to access) has undergone tremendous historical change, such that we should be squeamish about upholding too literally “the biblical law of nature,” regarding, for instance, the definitions of species taxonomy and their implications for grafting, mingling species, or even interplanting crops.

Another of the authors in this collection states that Halachah shows that “the environment, like man, has certain unalienable rights, and these rights are endowed to it by the Creator.” But this is simply not true. While they may have existed in theory, the notion of rights for human beings did not come into practice until long after the Middle Ages and even later for animal or plant species (if ever—witness the continuing controversy of the work of Peter Singer). The second half of the statement catches the truth better: the environment has no inherent rights (according to traditional logic, it is God, supernatural, who insists that humans need to be sensitive to that which is beyond them, to the non-human Other). Whether the notion of inalienable rights or divine command wields more power to curb human behavior I cannot say, but the error of this author, an error of basic philosophical language and concept, reveals the degree of retrojection involved in certain approaches to the eco-Jewish project.

The greatest limitation of this anthology is one shared by all of the writing that seeks to mine Judaism for a usable ecological past (and in this I may not be saying anything unknown to the editor). For example, one of the authors writes that “Rabbinic texts emphasize that communal concerns—pollution, safety, ecology, public

health, and so on—are a higher priority than ‘private property rights’ or even ‘economic growth.’” But this reading promulgates wishful thinking, based mostly on non-binding Aggadah (loosely “storytelling”) rather than binding Halachah. Indeed, the disjunction between the rabbinic worldview and that of this eco-Jewish author lays precisely in the definition of what constitutes “communal concerns” and an analysis of halachic history after the talmudic period would show that “private property rights” and “economic growth” almost always won the day, as perhaps was inevitable and proper given the overwhelming poverty of most pre-modern Jewish communities (though the bias continues).

The admirable religious or pragmatic sentiments of Jewish eco-tradition may indeed have helped guide Jews to avoid environmental despoliation, but if in fact Jews did refrain from such destructive actions the cause lay not in environmentally-conscious Halachah or Aggadah, but in the historical status of Jews as a minority population without autonomous geo-political power. The proof of this can be found in the deplorable environmental condition of the modern state of Israel, the sole post-rabbinic case of Jews existing thoroughly under their own governmental auspices. Though Israel operates in many ways according to the Halachah coined and enforced by the Chief Rabbinate and the rabbinic institutional world within the state, not once, to my knowledge, has Halachah or even more diffuse Jewish sentiment effectively been brought to bear on commercial or governmental activities when the environment is concerned. Take the horrific litter plaguing Israel, the catastrophic pollution of its waterways, the proven harmful emission of air pollution (as a result of which one in ten Jerusalemites now has asthma), its lack of enforcement against environmental crimes, and so forth—never has the supposedly authoritative body of environmentally-friendly Halachah been wielded by the

orthodox or ultra-orthodox establishment to change if not to end these ongoing disasters.

Waskow and Alon Tal admit the poor environmental record of Zionism, a movement whose thought and action, it is also acknowledged elsewhere, often stemmed from specifically anti-religious motivations. Yet, readers will learn from David Brooks that the Jewish settlements in the territories claimed by Palestine which represent a predominantly religious orientation and are usually situated on hilltops continue to release untreated sewage onto nearby Palestinian farmland. In the course of Intifada 2000, if not before, the Israeli military has routinely uprooted Palestinian olive tree groves as an alleged tactic for eliminating hiding places for snipers, despite the fact that the destruction of fruit trees during warfare comprises an act specifically forbidden by the Bible and later halachists, indeed comprises a prohibition repeatedly held aloft as an example in eco-Jewish writings such as this anthology. I am still waiting for a rabbi brave enough to declare Me'ah She'arim unfit for human habitation until something green and growing is planted there. Eco-Jewish thought suffers, in short, from a certain Pollyanna-ish myopia, which comes across in the unresolved tension between the Zionism section of the book and the rest of its pages.

This is not to gainsay the potential power of neo-traditional Judaism to inspire change in personal and even collective ecological behavior. Some of the specific proposals (I was about to write "concrete," how telling!) in the Eco-Judaism section offer tantalizing possibilities. But the problem, perhaps as always, would seem to be how to get the popular majority, the elites and the institutions of governance, to take this demanding and difficult system of alternative priorities seriously. Here eco-Judaism forgets that rabbinic discourse has always been a counterculture with more or less limited reach, even within Jewish society; or, rather,



eco-Judaism remains stuck in the same position as marginal gadfly. If recent history teaches us anything regarding progress on stemming environmental destruction, it is that whatever small improvements have been made in environmental consciousness and behavior in Israel and elsewhere came almost wholly from secular sectors of the population, using eminently "modern" tools such as scientific argument, legal action, and political protest. While religious groups jumped on the bandwagon at the end of the twentieth century, their contributions so far have not quite proven the efficacy of their tradition-thumping rhetoric. (I write all this as an observant eco-Jew.) Spiritless environmentalism may not ultimately be enough—but spirit-based environmentalism needs to act quickly if it is to show that it has the power to turn swords into ploughshares. May it be soon in our day.

And this, ultimately, is the conundrum; how to instill the most difficult understanding of that which is most simple and not necessarily new? One of the authors cites the never-truer words of *The Ethics of the Fathers*: "Jealousy, desire and pursuit of glory remove man from this world." In our own time, Theodor Adorno refashioned this insight by speculating that the mature society of the future would refrain from storming out in the conquest of strange stars. As the rabbis said: If everyone in the world observed even a single shabbat in a deep and true manner, we would have already brought in the messianic era. May it be

soon in our day! Yet, according to Abraham Joshua Heschel, in a piece included here, eco-Jewish global consciousness seeks "not to reject but to surpass civilization."

Torah of the Earth offers students and teachers of these matters ample food for healthful digestion; food which will no doubt provide energy for many further projects, hopefully for nothing less than a refashioning of the intellectual and institutional landscape of the (Jewish) world. Enough with consumerism as a means of filling emptiness! Enough with the false idol of limitless economic growth! Enough with the insatiable god of through-put economies (where natural resources are slated and valued only for use and then disposal)! Even if we suspect that we know the answers, however, no magic shortcuts await us on the path. As at least one of the rabbis of *The Ethics of the Fathers* knew, "study is not the central thing, but action." To work, to work. □

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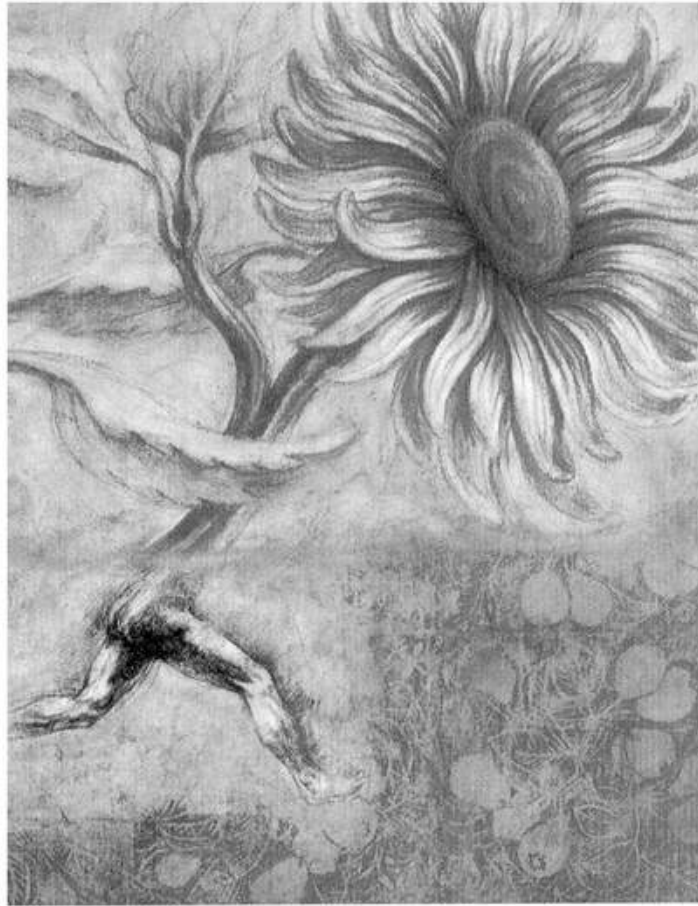
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"There is a love of wild Nature in everybody...."

—John Muir

I once had a very small fourth-grade class that loved to be outside. But two or three of the children didn't receive much spiritual benefit from the outdoors. They were too busy running, yelling, and whacking at plants with sticks.

So I read aloud to the class a book called *The Tracker* by Tom Brown, an expert on nature survival and tracking. The story describes his early training with his best friend and his best friend's grandfather, an Apache. The book is just "macho" enough to appeal to the "tough guys" in the group, but also communicates enormous respect for nature and the importance of taking time to be quiet and observe.

After reading that book, my students emulated its protagonists in our outdoor activities. I remember the time the entire class spontaneously lay down on the ground in the parking lot (!) to watch cloud formations at recess and insisted I join them. Another time we went down to a nearby creek to picnic, and it started to rain. I was all for going back to the classroom, but the children reminded me that the kids in the book wouldn't let a little rain or snow stop them.

So we went down by the water and crouched and huddled along its banks. We spread out to find dry spots and ate silently, watching the birds and insects and the rain on the water. We were all so content just to be there; it was one

Susan Dermond is director of Living Wisdom School in Portland, Oregon, and the editor of I Came from Joy, a spiritual activity book. She writes and speaks about spiritual education and teaches yoga.

of those unforgettable moments. The only word I can think of to describe how it felt is *holy*.

Setting the Stage

How can you help a child have an experience of peace and oneness in nature?

Create the calmness and receptivity needed before starting one of the activities. Take one child at a time if you want him to tune into you and nature. If you take more, the children will probably be more interested in each other than in the natural world around them.

Establish a comfort zone with the child *before* you ask for quiet observation or introspection. Listen to what the child wants to tell you about the day; if the child is restless, take a vigorous bike ride or walk first.

Find a quiet place where you won't see anyone, so you can commune with nature, not other people. Although a wilderness area is perfect, a hidden nook in a city park or your own backyard can work perfectly well.

Almost every child is able to open his heart to different life forms in the natural world. A fundamental goal at the heart of most religions is to expand the awareness beyond one's self to realize oneness with all. In Nature this expansion of consciousness occurs "naturally"!

An Activity to Try

This activity comes from naturalist Joseph Cornell's *Sharing Nature with Children*, a book of exercises designed to help children develop sensitivity through nature.

Blindfold the child and walk him to a tree you have pre-selected. Ask him to hug the tree, feel for lichen, moss, or insects, put his cheek next to its bark, listen to its trunk, and talk to it silently. Give him as much time as he wants to explore after each instruction. Then lead him away from the tree ten or twenty yards down the trail and remove the blindfold. Ask him to find his tree! This is an amazing activity; some children feel such a relationship to their tree that they will want to visit it time and time again. □

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