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TIKKUN

THE STEM CELL WARS

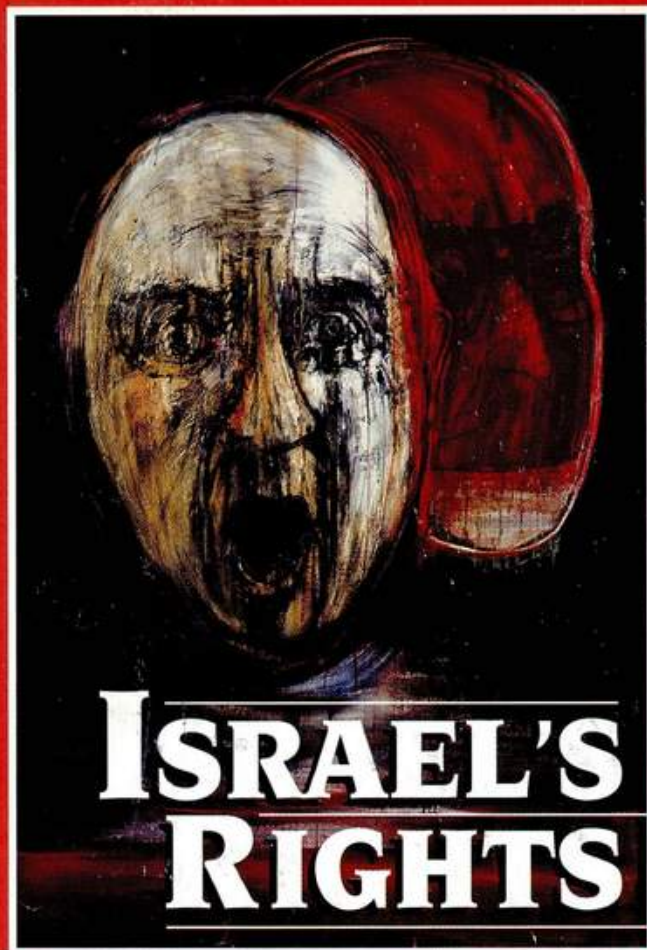
JEREMY RIFKIN

RAYMOND BARGLOW

MARCY DARNOVSKY

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

JULY/AUGUST 2002



JESSICA MONTELL, B'TSELEM

THE GAP BETWEEN ISRAEL'S
SELF-IMAGE AND THE
REALITY OF ITS POLICIES.

ISRAEL'S HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

MORE ON THE MIDDLE EAST MESS:

Adam Shapiro **ON** International Solidarity in Palestine

David Biale **ON** Moral Equivalency • Ian Lustick **ON** Arafat

David Newman **ON** Being a Religious Dove in Israel

Penny Rosenwasser **ON** Anti-Semitism

Yakov M. Rabkin **ON** A New Conception of the Middle East Future

Richard Lowery **ON** THE Prophetic Perspective

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PLUS: Svi Shapiro on Spiritual Education

Debi Barker on Globalization • Joel Kovel on Dying in America

Stew Albert on Racism, Slavery, and the Death Penalty

Kira Bendheim on Thane Rosenbaum

JERUSALEM: Easter, Passover

1.

The first days of April in the fields—
a congregation of nameless green,
those with delicate faces have come
and the thorn and thistle,
trees in purple bloom,
some lifting broken branches.
After a rain the true believers:
cacti surrounded by yellow flowers,
green harps and solitary scholars.
By late afternoon a nation of flowers: *Taioun*,
the bitter sexual smell of Israel,
with its Arabic name, the flowering red clusters
they call *Blood of the Maccabees*,
the lilies of Saint Catherine cool to touch,
beside a tree named *The Killing Father*,
with its thin red bark of testimony.
In the sand a face of rusted iron
has two missing eyes.

2.

There are not flowers enough to tell,
over heavy electronic gear
under the Arab-Israeli moon, the words
of those who see in the Dome of the Rock
a footprint of the Prophet's horse,
or hear the parallel reasoning
of King David's harp,
or touch the empty tomb.
It is beyond a wheat field to tell
Christ performed two miracles: first he rose,
and then he convinced many that he rose.
For the roadside cornflower
that is only what it is,
it is too much to answer
why the world is so, or so, or other.
It is beyond the reach
or craft of flowers to name
the plagues visited on Egypt,
or to bloom into saying why
at the Passover table Jews discard

a drop of wine for each plague, not to drink
the full glass of their enemy's suffering.
It is not enough to be carried off by the wind,
to feed the birds, and honey the bees.

3.

On this bright Easter morning
smelling of Arab bread,
what if God simply changed his mind
and called out into the city,
"Thou shalt not kill," and, like an angry father,
"I will not say it another time!"
They are praying too much in Jerusalem,
reading and praying beside street fires,
too much holy bread, leavened and unleavened,
the children kick a ball of fire,
play Islamic and Jewish
scissors cut paper, paper covers rock, rock breaks scissors.
I catch myself almost praying
for the first time in my life,
to a God I treat like a nettle
on my trouser cuff.
Let rock build houses,
writing cover paper, scissors cut suits.

4.

The wind and sunlight commingle
with the walls of Jerusalem,
are worked and reworked, are lifted up,
have spirit, are written,
while stones I pick up in the field
at random, have almost no spirit,
are not written.

Is happiness a red ribbon on a white horse,
or the black Arabian stallion
I saw tethered in the courtyard of the old city?
What a relief to see someone repair
an old frying pan with a hammer,
anvil and charcoal fire, a utensil worth keeping.
God, why not keep us? Make me useful.

—Stanley Moss

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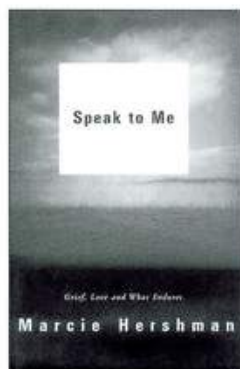
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Self Portrait with Father, 2001 by Leonard Meiselman.
Oil on canvas. www.lmeiselman.com

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Speak to Me Grief, Love and What Endures

Marcie Hershman
Beacon Press, 2001

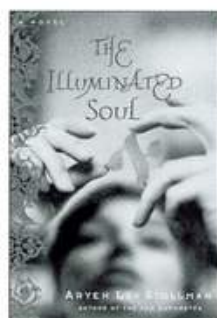
An extraordinary literary memoir of vast emotional complexity and familial love. Novelist and essayist Marcie Hershman has written a poignant valentine to her departed brother, Robert, and in doing so, she teaches us much about the stirring and healing powers of the voice, how it binds us to our memories and keeps us mystically anchored to those who once shared our lives, long after they've gone. It is an invaluable book for those who wish to better understand the nature and magnitude of loss. But it is also a hearing aid for all of us desperate to learn how to listen to the silence. After death, voices still linger, evoking other sensations and memories. Yet, in the absence of fresh speech, other voices—the call of a community—arrive to fill some of the empty spaces, and provide a measure of healing.



The Illuminated Soul

Aryeh Lev Stollman
Riverhead Books, 2002

Aryeh Lev Stollman, author of the critically-acclaimed *The Far Euphrates*, raises the bar on his own evolving literary achievements even higher with his latest novel, *The Illuminated Soul*, an enchanting, mesmerizing tale that once again explores the intersections of faith and science, the mind and the body, the rationally visible, and the mysteries of the soul. When the beautiful Eva Laquedem Higashi, a survivor of the Holocaust and possessor of great post-Holocaust truths and mysteries, arrives at the Ivri home in Windsor, Ontario in the late 1940s, nothing will ever be the same for this grieving family—particularly for the novel's narrator, Joseph. Eva is a compulsively alluring character, haunting the pages of this book and Joseph's childhood memories, ultimately leading him on his own mystical journey of discovery—as both a scientist and Judaic scholar. There are other books within this novel, real and imagined, which illuminate unseen paths in the universe, as well the many forgotten, closed-off roads of the Jewish Diaspora.



Leopards in the Temple

The Transformation of American Fiction 1945-1970

Morris Dickstein
Harvard University Press, 2002

One of the leading literary critics of his generation, and a cultural essayist of high regard, Morris Dickstein has delivered a superbly-written, dynamic book of original ideas that explores the ways in which the American novel was forever transformed in the aftermath of World War II by a number of writers: Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Flannery O'Connor, J.D. Salinger, and Norman Mailer, to name only a few. This group portrait of writers may have descended from the periphery of American culture, but they ultimately went on to shape and define the center of American literature by introducing readers to a fresh landscape of literary themes—from sex, violence, and inhumanity, to the allure of American roadways, to the social upheavals of the 1960s—inspired in so many ways by the freedoms and anxieties of the post-war era, and the suffocations of the Cold War.



Joining Hands Politics and Religion Together for Social Change

Roger Gottlieb
Westview, 2002

TIKKUN columnist Roger Gottlieb has produced a profound and significant integration of spiritual and political concerns. Highlighting the spiritual strengths and weaknesses of the civil-rights, anti-war, and feminist movements, Gottlieb shows that world-making politics and religion can be partners as they inform and deepen each other. As he ponders his role as a father of a physically challenged child, eschewing a perpetually optimistic version of spirituality, Gottlieb forces us to rethink our commitment to "rational autonomy" as central to human identity. Rather than the dogmatic confidence of the true believer, Gottlieb offers faith and hope that leads to individual and collective political action even in the face of sorrow and loss, and without the surety of success.



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Letters to the Editor

A Strategy for Peace

To the Editor:

I have been a supporter of TIKKUN for many years but I believe that your recent proposal for an international force to separate and protect both sides from each other would in effect prevent Israel from responding to those terrorist attacks. What would protect Israel from future terror attack? It would appear that nothing has been learned from the dismal record of the UN and the international community in Bosnia.

Let me suggest a far more rational and possibly acceptable policy.

1. The American government should make all further aid to Israel contingent on a complete cessation of any building activity in the settlements on the West Bank and Gaza.
2. Let all aid to the Palestinians be contingent on their stopping acts of terrorism.
3. Demand that Israel withdraw the set-

tlements since their future cannot be maintained, they are a burden to the defense of Israel, and they would constitute a basis for a peace agreement.

4. If the Palestinian response is to engage in peaceful negotiations and to refrain from terrorism, then a peace agreement can provide a basis for the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Without the settlements, the role of the Israeli Army can be reduced dramatically in the territories.

5. If the Palestinian response is to continue war and violence by a variety of means, then there will be no peace or withdrawal.

I am against the Occupation no less than you are and I support those who refuse to serve in the Occupation.

I would accept your proposals if all sides understood the risk and had to bear the costs of that risk. If the withdrawal from the territories does *not* bring peace, and Palestinian violence continues, then it



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is a natural right of Israel to defend itself. Nor should any international force be allowed to prevent that defense.

There is absolutely no reason that Jewish blood should again become more expendable and cheaper than the lives of others.

ELI BERNIKER
Tacoma, Washington

Editor Responds:

After the ruthless and brutal attacks on Palestinian civilians carried out by the Israeli army, and documented in detail in this very issue of TIKKUN, one thing is clear: Israel's strategy of retribution and continued occupation does not protect the Israeli people from violence or from future terror. It is only when one truly understands that this policy has been in place for 55 years and continues to fail that we can plausibly argue for a whole different direction.

That direction involves a new ethos of compassion and repentance. We have tried everything else but acknowledging our (partial) responsibility for having co-created this mess, and then really trying to rectify it. We ask "what will it take to the end the struggle?" in genuine mystification, as though the Palestinians haven't told us clearly: End the Occupation, end the settlements, and let Palestinian refugees return to their homes. If the latter is impossible, as I believe it is, then we need at the very least to offer very good alternatives, and to do so in a spirit of repentance. Now, the first step on that road is to stop killing Palestinians in order to maintain our Occupation. Get out of the West Bank and Gaza, and get out now. How? With cars and trucks. Get out now. How? With a spirit of repentance.

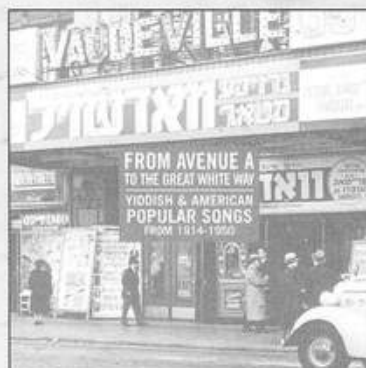
But, you ask, what if terror attacks continue? Well, some will. They continue anyway, even with us there, even with brutal repression. But they won't destroy us, and if we sustain an attitude of generosity and compassion, and really start to unilaterally implement generous steps to rebuild the Palestine we have been destroying, the level of popular support for Hamas and other terrorists will drop dramatically, and the terror will then become more a problem of crime than a political problem. It will never go away totally, anymore than acts of resentment by blacks against whites have gone away in the United States, but today we define that as crime, and we deal with it as such. And yes, that is something that the international force we are calling for would have a mandate to do: to create an international court to which Israel could bring evidence of specific people guilty of terrorists acts, and the court would then be empowered to issue indictments, as well as injunctions to the international force to arrest and bring to trial the individuals so accused. What happens now is that Israel simply declares somebody a suspected terrorist, never has to prove this to any court, and simply proceeds on the basis of the army's own accusations to execute the suspected terrorist without any chance of defending himself, killing all kinds of other people as "collateral damage."

You don't trust the U.N. Well, I don't trust some of the classist and racist assumptions of the American judiciary system. But I far prefer it to allowing any individual or government to take the law into their own hands, as Israel does all the time. I don't trust the UN either, but it's still better than the system of international anarchy we have today which reaches its full expression in the summary executions of suspected terrorists by Israeli gunmen. Instead of us saying, "The UN didn't work in the past," we might instead ask what steps we could take to create a new international order that would work. It's a step in the wrong direction to act as though Israel can place itself above the law, and above the human rights requirements of the

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LETTERS

entire world. In so doing, Israel is generating the very antagonism that it claims is happening irrationally. And when Jews around the world rally behind Israel's policies, is it any wonder that others who detest those policies begin to dislike Jews to the extent that the Jewish people insist that Israel is a good representative of their own values and intentions?

Students Call for Dialogue

To the Editor:

In light of the recent suicide attack on Rishon Letzion, in which many youth died, as American Jewish students, we feel that our unique perspective has been ignored. It has been lost somewhere in the ambiguity that is neither the radical right nor the radical left.

As progressive Jewish youth, we are left in an abyss of wrong answers without a comfortable space to discuss alternatives. While we condemn the violent attacks on Israeli Civilians, we stand firmly in support of basic human rights for the Palestinian people. We are two of the thousands of American Jewish youth that cannot stand comfortably either at pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian rallies. For many of us, the issue is not black or white. The gray where we identify is often silenced by sound bites and rhetoric on both ends of the spectrum. With an aversion to apathy, we open a plea to a dialogue of ambiguity. Young people are looking for a solution, but how can we ever attain that without an open dialogue about our concerns?

While our faith connects us to Israel, our conscience is critical of the means by which we maintain it. It is because of that deep connection to Israel that we realize its safety lies in the Palestinian pursuit of justice. As the trend to create dialogue between Muslims and Jewish students arises, the sad reality that Jews are not talking within their own community becomes more apparent. Rather than relying on pundits and officials, it is time that the dialogue move from the television to civic discussion. Lasting peace can only exist when we can find tolerance and acceptance within our own community.

ELEIZA BRAUN & BERNARD POLLACK,
Washington, D.C.

Editor Responds:

Please invite fellow students and faculty who share your perspective to come to the founding conference of the TIKKUN Campus

Network at John Jay College and The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City, October 11–14. We are pro-Israel, and know that the best way to support Israel is to give it the tough love it needs to get out of the territories, end the settlements, and provide reparations for Palestinian refugees. We are fighting for those goals even as we reject the anti-Semitism and demeaning of the State of Israel that sometimes gets associated with the pro-Palestinian side. And we simultaneously reject the attempts to label those who critique current Israeli policy and insist on talking about the reality of Israel's crimes as "self-hating Jews" or "anti-Semites". To do so, while insisting also on talking about the crime of Palestinian terror against Israel—that is the middle path that we at the TIKKUN Community are following and which we hope to create on college campuses with the TIKKUN Campus Network. More info: marisa@tikkun.org.

Israel Must Be Conquered?

To the Editor:

Forgive an unrepentant "maximalist fantasist" for pointing out the facts, but your article "A Jewish Renewal Understanding of the State of Israel" (found at <http://www.tikkun.org>) contains a big and easily provable lie.

I refer specifically to your opening paragraph: "The Ashkenazic Jews who shaped Israel in its early years were jumping from the burning buildings of Europe—and when they landed on the backs of Palestinians, unintentionally causing a great deal of pain to the people who already lived there, they were so transfixed with their own (much greater and more acute) pain that they couldn't be bothered to notice that they were displacing and hurting others in the process of creating their own state."

Let's call this the "Gosh, we didn't know what we were doing" argument. To demolish this convenient hallucination, one need only repeat the famous—and damning—quote of David Ben Gurion:

"If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. It is normal; we have taken their country. It is true God promised it to us, but how could that interest them? Our God is not theirs. There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They see but one thing: we have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that?"

Sounds to me like he knew exactly what was going on. Unlike you, Ben Gurion had enough intellectual honesty to bypass any arguments along the lines of "Gosh, we just didn't know..." Instead, he justified Jewish theft of other peoples' land with a simple call to irrationalism: "God promised it to us."

Of course, this sort of rationale will never convince those of us who mistrust anyone who considers himself on speaking terms with the Almighty. "God told me to do it" is the self-justification one might hear from the shade of the September 11 hijackers. The same claim has been advanced by Charles Manson and hordes of similar lunatics: "I didn't have a choice. I was under orders from the Invisible Man upstairs." Why should this kooky claim hold any more persuasive power when Jews make it?

For many years, I strongly supported Israel. Then I supported the two-state solution. But now—after reading and re-reading that quote by Ben Gurion—I've experienced *samsara*. You'd call it the maximalist position. I'd call it the belated courage to face a simple, harsh truth.

Israel never had any right to exist.

That country must now be treated the same way Nazi Germany was treated. Israel must be conquered by any and all means—and yes, that includes attacks on civilians: The recent suicide bombings are every bit as justifiable as the bombing of Dresden. Israel's future must be determined entirely by the conquerors—who, after recent events, probably won't be in anything like a forgiving mood.

Calling me an anti-Semite won't change the history that Ben Gurion summarized with such brutal elegance. What part of "We have stolen their country" don't you understand?

MARTIN CANNON
Reseda, CA

Editor Responds:

Ben Gurion was entitled to his perspective. Some leaders of the Palestinian people made outrageous racist claims in the late 1930s and 1940s and publicly embraced Hitler. I don't deny the Palestinian people the right to their own national self-determination on that basis, nor the Jewish people their own national self-determination on the basis of statements from its leaders.

Better to recognize an old Biblical truth, captured by a Jewish anarchist of the 19th

century: Property is theft. The Torah, quoting God, puts it this way: "The entire earth is Mine" (which is to say, not yours). Or to put this in other language, there is no land on earth which isn't occupied by people who stole it from someone else. So if, as you seem to suggest, using a criterion of payback that we have long since abandoned in both the Jewish and the Western world, the punishment of theft is death, then every people on the planet would face the kind of genocide you seem to wish on the Jews.

The Jewish people had their land ripped off from them (just as we originally ripped it off from someone else). Then, for hundreds of years we were at the mercy of non-Jews who raped, tortured, and murdered us. The world, acting through the UN, rightly decided to do affirmative action. And just as there were some white men who felt unfairly disadvantaged and lost jobs, income, and other opportunities when we tried to do affirmative action for African Americans and women, so there were some Palestinians who felt unfairly disadvantaged by the affirmative action that the world did for Jews. And they were right—they did suffer in the process, and that suffering must be rectified. But not by punishing the Jewish people.

Luckily, the Palestinian people reject your hate-filled logic. Most of them are prepared to live in peace with Israel. But there are people in surrounding states who hold your view, and if they had the weapons they would probably act on it. For that reason, we at TIKKUN do not support halting military aid to Israel—because we want Israel to be strong enough to defend itself against those who side with your logic. In fact, while we support Palestinian rights because they are created in the image of God just like everyone else on the planet, we also support Palestinian rights because doing so is in the best interests of the Jewish people and the long-term survival needs of Israel, to which we are committed.

Buddhists Get Angry Too

To the Editor:

I just read Roger Gottlieb's critique of Thich Nhat Hanh's new book *Anger: Wisdom For Cooling The Flames*, and I find error in some aspects of Mr. Gottlieb's viewpoint on anger. To be short, I doubt very much that Thich Nhat Hanh would assert that there is no wisdom to be derived from looking at anger, especially one's own.

It is my view, as a Buddhist, that Thich

Nhat Hanh knows very well that although anger is to be avoided, it does arise in all of us sometimes, and so does the opportunity to observe that anger with objectivity and non-attachment. Typically, once an individual gets good at observing one's own anger (meditation, when not angry helps a lot), he or she finds that the anger goes away more quickly, and with less damage to self and others than might have otherwise been the case.

I have struggled intellectually with the same problem Gottlieb describes in his article. That is, anger can save your life. Anger is a defense mechanism hard-wired into us for self-preservation. However, solving social problems as well as personal problems, it seems to me, can best be achieved after the anger has subsided and the "me" has done the difficult task of walking in the shoes of the source of the anger (the other, the enemy).

Let's take terrorism for an example. How best do we make terrorism go away? I can think of two polar options at present. One, destroy all terrorists, destroy all who we suspect might be terrorists in the future, and destroy anyone who we suspect might decide to become a terrorist. Well, I see a problem with this solution. All this destroying is going to create more anger, hatred, and terrorist revenge. Another option might be to look into what might make terrorists less motivated to be terrorists (a.k.a. self-examination) and shape or re-shape our behavior accordingly. Of course these are only two polar solutions. In any event, I find it rare that anyone disagrees with the cliché that violence begets violence. My point here is that violence typically arises out of anger. Peace typically arises not out of anger, but out of understanding—understanding of the other (the enemy) and also understanding one's self (the enemy within, which is often manifested in anger).

Mr. Gottlieb, in his article, also talks about the value of anger in situations of domestic abuse. I can't imagine anyone not agreeing that the abused person—typically a woman, of course—should look at her anger as a mechanism within her telling her to act. But how should she act? Should she take a claw hammer to her abusers skull? No. She should get the heck away from him and go find help, then stay away from

him (or something along those lines). Again, the violent and reactive response would be an angry response, but the second response would be the less self-destructive and more wise response.

I like Gottlieb's article, but think he's a bit harsh on Thich Nhat Hanh.

GRANT VECERA
Indianapolis, IN

Author Responds:

Thanks for your thoughtful letter, which raises many important issues.

1. Of course as a Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh would "look" at his anger. I am not sure he would think it appropriate to try to "learn" from it. Learn about it, yes. But not see it as something that has its own wisdom. For him, wisdom comes from overcoming it, getting rid of it, letting it dissolve.

2. Anger and violence are not equivalent. That seems to be your premise, and the one I most disagree with. Anger leads to violence for a variety of reasons: the inability to deal with the fear that is part of the anger; the inability to "be with" any strong emotion without acting out; the combination of anger with a desire or strategy of power, control, or exploitation. When we explain someone's violence by saying "he was angry" we are offering a very poor explanation. There are always other factors at work.

3. We always say that "violence just leads to more violence." Yet that is a vast generalization which is often unexamined. Certainly the rise of women's rights and worker's rights had something to do with their willingness to pursue their interest very strongly; the Stonewall riot/rebellion had some excellent effects; Earth First! may have had a positive effect on environmentalism; the ghetto and concentration camp uprisings during the Holocaust were not only justified but beneficial.

4. Buddhism, like much of western philosophy, and (surprisingly) western psychology (e.g., Daniel Goleman) has a simplistic and negative understanding of emotions. I think feminism tells a different story. Much of my perspective has been shaped by the ideas of Miriam Greenspan, whose treatment of these issues will be developed in her forthcoming book *Healing through the Dark Emotions*.

ROGER S. GOTTLIEB
Worcester, MA



What About the Plowshares?

George Vradenburg

There has been much debate of late about the efficacy of an international peace conference to address the security and political elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But there is a critical agenda topic that is not getting the attention it should: jobs. In Clinton-speak, "It's the economy, stupid!," or in Bible-speak, "It's the plowshares, stupid!"

An international conference on the Middle East is, in my view, urgently needed and, if empowered by key Arab states and the international community as an action-forcing vehicle, can be a powerful force for peace. As the Israelis and Palestinians are unable to find the way to the secure two-state structure they both say is their goal, others must actively help bring that structure into being. For widely divergent reasons, the United States, Europe, Russia, and key Arab nations see it in their interests to end Israeli-Palestinian hostilities. The United States wants to put the Israeli-Palestinian dispute on a path to resolution in order to focus on what it perceives to be the globally greater danger of Terrorism writ large and, particularly, Iraq. Russia and the EU, like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf States, want to prevent the incendiary Israeli-Palestinian conflict from spreading into their own states. Short-term, the interests of the critical international and regional players are aligned. So, I say—*carpe diem*, seize the moment, use a peace conference to create the needed momentum toward a stable, guaranteed two-state solution.

But the agenda of an international peace conference should include economic issues as well, not just security and political issues. The biblical aspiration is not simply peace and security but "plowshares"—the historic symbol of honest labor, individual ownership, and economic opportunity. A two-state political structure will not remain stable unless and until the international and regional community provides a realistic path toward economic growth and opportunity in the Middle East. On the economic issues, the interests and the futures of the Israeli and Palestinian people are clearly, inextricably aligned. Both peoples share the cultural norms central to productive economic growth: a strong work ethic, the value of education, a flair for innovation, the desire for intellectual and creative freedom, and the appetite for individual enterprise. Often viewed as the "Jews of the Arab world," the Palestinians at home and in their Diasporas provide the productive energy behind the growing economic strength in the Gulf. In economics the Israelis and

the Palestinians have the vision and skills to make the Israeli-Palestinian bi-state the economic center of a revitalized Middle East region.

More broadly, the next generation of Arab leadership—represented by King Abdullah of Jordan and the younger leaders in Morocco and the Gulf States—see the world through an economic lens, in which economic growth and opportunity provide the path for advancement and well-being. Contrast this with the older generation of Arab leadership which has seen its personal destiny and the destiny of its peoples primarily in political terms. An international conference that includes the issues valued by younger leaders would reflect and reinforce this forward-looking generational shift in values. And for the United States, the EU, and Russia, an economically vibrant Middle East would contribute to global economic growth and begin to integrate Arab-speaking societies into the larger global community, helping to address larger global security issues.

Inclusion of economic issues in a Middle East peace conference would also reinforce, not distract from, the resolution of knotty security and political issues. Peace and political stability are not just the path toward democracy and political reform but also the means to achieve the rule of law, transparency, and accountability demanded by a free and open entrepreneurial market. Inclusion of economic development issues would provide a set of unifying issues around which continuing work efforts could be built, thus providing an action-oriented focus to the conference and a means of ongoing engagement. The international community has it within its power to offer an economic package for Israel and Palestine that could make a Palestinian state economically viable and enable Israel and Palestine, working together, to raise the standards of everyone in the Middle East region. Issues such as rebuilding Palestinian communities, creating jobs for Palestinian refugees, and re-energizing a stagnant Israeli economy have much the same urgency and immediacy as security and political issues. The emerging focus in Israel and in neighboring Jordan on modern information and communications technologies can provide a focus for regional developmental strategies, one that could have positive multiplier effects throughout the Arabic-speaking world. This multi-dimensional approach to an international peace conference could enable the Bush administration to deploy a broader set of tools in its peace-making efforts in the Middle East, and, at the same time, advance what it sees as this country's larger goals of constructive engagement with the Arab world. □

George Vradenburg is husband to publisher Trish Vradenburg.

The Psychodynamics of Denial *about the* Middle East

And How to Break Through It

Michael Lerner

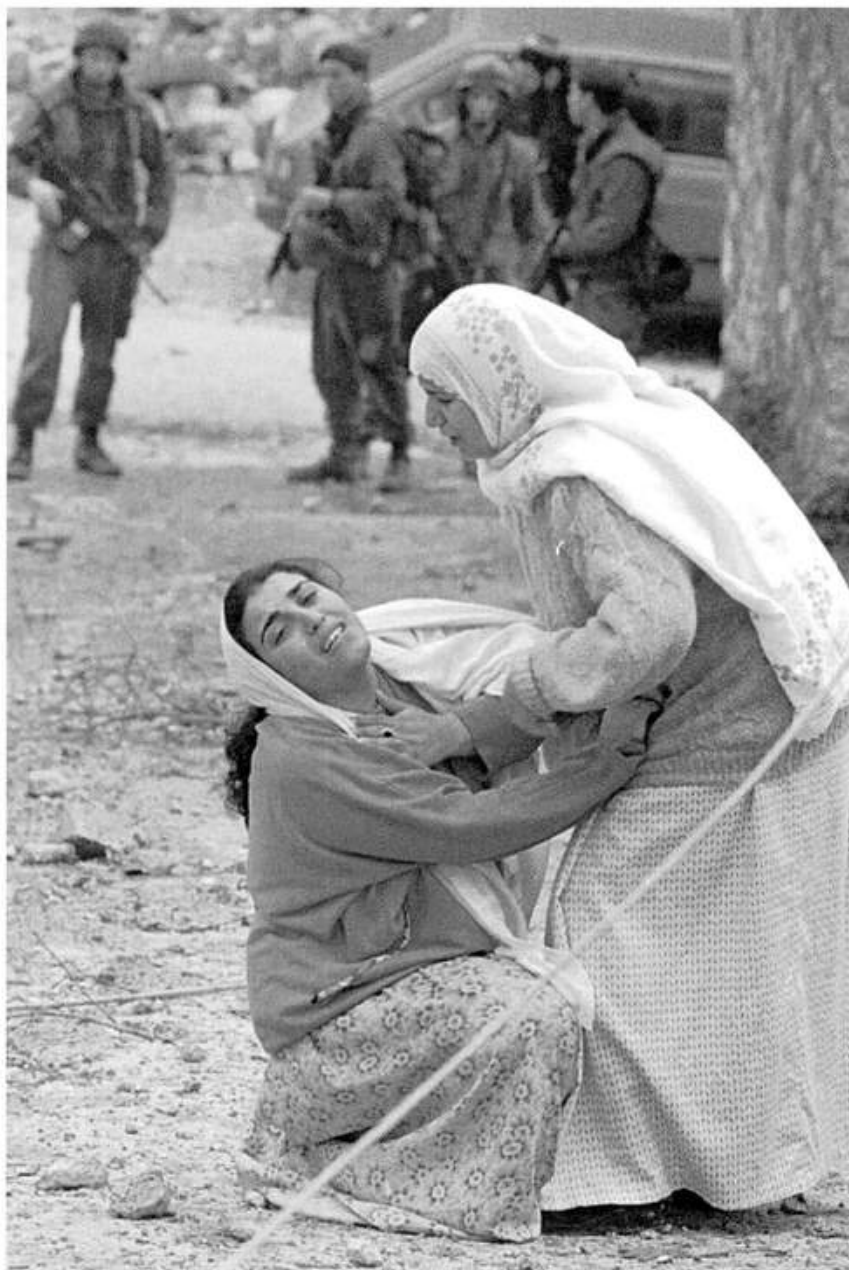
I am writing the day after twenty Israelis were killed in an attack against an Israeli bus. I feel outrage at this latest act of violence perpetrated by an Islamic Jihad group. "This is my people you are killing!" I want to shout. I grieve for the young Israelis who so often are the targets of these attacks from Islamic Jihad or Hamas. I say Kaddish for them.

Then I send off another letter to the editors of some Palestinian newspapers, email lists, and media in the Arab world. I try once again to explain to them what I've told every Palestinian activist I've met in the past few years: The most important priority for any pro-peace Palestinian must be the creation of a nonviolent movement infused with the wisdom of Gandhi and King and Mandela.

They often say to me, "Of course, we realize that what Hamas and Islamic Jihad are doing plays right into the hands of Ariel Sharon and undermines any possibility of peace-oriented Americans getting a hearing in the U.S. administration. But Arafat has been rendered so powerless that he feels threatened and unable to stop them. Some of us actually wish someone would get rid of Arafat anyway, because he has no vision and no leadership, and he blocks the development of a genuine democratic movement in Palestine because he fears democracy almost as much as he fears Hamas and Islamic Jihad."

And I say, "Why don't YOU create the nonviolent movement rather than waiting for it to appear from on high?"

"Because Arafat would simply jail us," they say, "and because the Palestinian people can't be expected to rally around nonviolence at a moment when nonviolent demon-



strations are never reported in the media, and hence have no impact in Israel or the West. But meanwhile the IDF uses live ammunition to fire on us even when we are being non-violent. Amira Hass wrote a story in *Ha'aretz* about her personal experience of watching this very thing happen a few months ago, but most Israelis and Americans never heard a thing about it. The only time you even hear about our nonviolent actions is when some of the internationals come here, stand with us, and get fired upon, and then newspapers report on it, because their injuries are 'important' whereas ours mean nothing to the people in Israel or the West."

"Well, then you need to aim your non-violent demonstrations against Arafat," I say. "Demonstrating for democracy and for changing the Palestinian struggle into a nonviolent movement. Let there be large popular demonstrations against Hamas and Islamic Jihad—in the name of the best interests of the Palestinian people."

And they say back to me, "Try to mobilize people whose homes have been destroyed, who have been occupied and humiliated, whose young men have been daily rounded up for detention by Israeli troops who subject them to torture, when people are hungry because of the Israeli army's blockades. It's just not going to happen right now."

I respond: "If you could create a nonviolent movement you'd give strength to the many Israelis who want to end the Occupation but are too afraid that they are opening the door to yet greater levels of Palestinian violence. Did you know that a new *Ha'aretz* poll released in June, 2002, shows that a majority of Jews would support the abandonment of settlements and the end of the Occupation? It's posted at www.tikkun.org."

And they respond, "Polls also reveal that a majority of Israelis would support transfer of all Arabs out of the West Bank and Gaza, and 25 percent would include transferring the current Arab citizens of Israel as well. Don't underestimate Israeli racism. Yes, they want to be out of this struggle, and that's good, but they don't yet see us as human beings whose needs are equally legitimate with theirs. And until they do, any settlement they propose is likely to reek of the same unconscious racist assumptions that have doomed previous attempts at peace. No, our acts of non-violence would just be dismissed as a trick. Back when Arafat called together the Palestinian National Council and in the presence of President Clinton had them vote to rescind parts of the Palestinian National Covenant that had called for the destruction of Israel—which they did—most Jews dismissed the whole thing as 'meaningless,' even though they had told us that this was what they needed to see to believe us. No, nothing we do will ever be enough. Jewish consciousness is stuck in fear. We will never be seen as anything but a threat. The only way out of this is for the international community, led by the United States, to impose a settlement on both of our peoples. So the real task is not with us—it's with you in the United States, particularly American Jews who have the ability to speak up and challenge Israeli policies."

I'm left to grieve my people's losses, pray for an end to the conflict, and do what I can to build this TIKKUN Community—which is both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine, which insists that both people have co-created this mess, and that both peoples have a legitimate basis for fearing each other. But those fears *must* be overcome, because they are deeply self-destructive and are leading people on both sides to accept policies that only increase the level of violence and brutality around them.

Three times a day I pray *Ve'tech'e'zenu eyneynu be'shu-v'cha le'tziyon be rachamim*—that our eyes will be able to witness the return of the Divine Presence (the *Shechinah*) to Zion, manifesting in its most needed aspect: *rachamim*, or the compassion of those who have nurtured their young in their womb (*rechem*). But since prayer does not seem to be enough, we do what we can through the TIKKUN Community.

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Actually, I don't get to see a lot of *rachamim* these days—it seems as if compassion is in short supply.

Today I read an online debate about the Middle East in which someone pointed out that "the media is always against Israel—look how it sent out information that there was a massacre in Jenin, but now we know that this was just Arab PR. Only sixty people were killed." I told her to read *Operation Defensive Shield*, by Jessica Montell, in this issue, to get eye-witness accounts of the attack on Jenin. But what impact will that have on someone who says "only" sixty people have been killed?

It sickens me to hear people say there was no massacre in Jenin. By this logic, all of the Israeli stories about a Passover massacre at the hotel in Netanya are also not about a "real" massacre, because "only" twenty people were killed. But they don't say this, because when Jews get killed it's a massacre; when even larger numbers of Arabs get killed, it's not.

But it never feels right pointing out the disparity in numbers, the fact that Israel has killed three times as many Palestinians since Intifada II began in September 2000 than Palestinians have killed Israelis. It seems as if I'd be saying the same thing—"only 500 Israelis killed."

What I mean to say is that every single death is a whole world destroyed. As our sages taught, "Anyone who saves a single life, it is as though they had saved the entire world."

One of the great perversities of the current discourse in the Jewish world is the claim that there is no moral equivalence between the death of Israelis, targeted as civilians, and the death of Palestinians, since the IDF doesn't target civilians and only kills them as collateral damage. Somehow this is supposed to make those deaths not morally equivalent. I doubt that many of these people would accept that the blowing up of a bus filled with Israeli soldiers was not really an act of terror, because, after all, Islamic Jihad was targeting soldiers, not civilians, and that the other Israelis murdered were only "collateral damage" and hence no moral equivalence to civilians targeted as such. This whole way of thinking demeans the fundamental claim of the Jewish tradition: human beings are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated as such. Necessary corollary: Palestinian life is just as sacred to God as Israeli life. Every human being is infinitely precious and their lives should be treated as sacred.

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There are so many levels in which the Jewish people are in deep denial.

What is most striking to me is that most Israelis and American Jews simply have no idea of what Israel has done day after day in the West Bank for thirty-five years of Occupation, or even of the brutal destruction that Israel has inflicted on Palestinian society in the past few months. Many Jews don't know, and they don't want to know.

The Israeli Army (IDF) acknowledges much of what American Jews deny: that yes, there were soldiers who used Palestinian civilians as shields; yes, people were held at gun-point in their apartments, sometimes for days; yes, unarmed civilians were shot and killed; yes, there were many, many people killed as “collateral damage” when Israelis targeted “suspected terrorists;” yes, many civilians, including a number of children, died from lack of medical care when ambulances were denied entry into their towns for weeks on end; yes, there was wide-scale destruction brought upon civilian homes and offices; yes, there were soldiers who systematically destroyed every computer they could find in every major Palestinian city in April, for no strategic reason other than the collective “punishment” of the entire Palestinian people; yes, Israel rounds up hundreds of civilians and takes them into detention and uses “physical pressure” (in English: torture) to secure information; and, no, there is no judicial procedure before the IDF labels someone a “militant” and appropriate target for assassination. The IDF tells much more of the truth than the average American Jew when it comes to discussing the reality of the current crisis in Israel.

Then there is a second level of denial. Many Israeli and American Jews believe that anyone reporting on what is happening in Israel is seeking to discredit the Zionist enterprise. In fact, over the course of the past fifty years, the media has repeatedly framed issues in ways that were far more sympathetic to Israeli narratives than to those of the Palestinian people. The reasons for this are complex. They include the guilt that many American Christians have felt about the Holocaust, the increasing influence of Jewish reporters and news editors, the placing of media bureaus in the Jewish section of Jerusalem without any corresponding bureaus in the Palestinian sector or in the West Bank or Gaza, the higher level of English language skills among Israelis which makes it much easier for them to make their case through the media, the higher level of commitment to democratic forms in Israel than in Arab countries, and the economic integration between American and Israeli capital. But the most decisive factor has been Israel’s strategic role in America’s political and military plans—first during the struggle against world communism, and now in the struggle against the Arab world, and against anyone challenging American economic or political hegemony.

The American media tends to be slavishly obedient to U.S. interests as interpreted by our State and Defense Departments, so when President Bush began pressuring Israel for a week in April (prior to capitulating in base subservience before the perceived political power of AIPAC),

We deny what is obvious to almost everyone on the planet—that the Jewish people’s strategy to provide ourselves with safety is not working.

the media actually exposed what Israel was doing in the Palestinian cities it was occupying (to the extent that it could in a circumstance in which Israel blocked access and censored stories). This shocked many Americans because we’re not used to this kind of coverage.

The response from most of the Jewish world was outrage at “media bias,” and a systematic and largely successful attempt to cow the media back into subservience to the lines drawn by the Israeli government. Most Jews are in total denial about the biased free-ride the media has given

us, so they launched campaigns against major newspapers and NPR, calling for boycotts. Some Jewish community-based newspapers critiqued the boycott on the grounds that it seemed inconsistent with Jewish outrage at boycotts against the State of Israel, but they too remain convinced that there is in fact a systematic anti-Israel bias in media.

A third level of denial: We deny what is obvious to almost everyone on the planet—that the Jewish people’s strategy to provide ourselves with safety is *not working*. We said that we needed to hold on to the Occupied Territories to

make us safe, but Israel with 200,000 settlers in the West Bank and Gaza has become the most unsafe place on the planet for Jews. This strategy is not working, but most Jews refuse to recognize this.

A fourth level of denial: Ariel Sharon told us that Israel had no choice but to go into civilian neighborhoods with tanks and cannons and blow apart civilian housing, starve people, and deny them access to food and medical care. This, he said, would create a “defensive shield” that would protect Israel by dismantling the “infrastructure of terror.” So Israel brought pain and oppression to millions of Palestinians for a month, and when it was over, the Islamic Jihad and Hamas continued their acts of violence, this time with new recruits from the survivors of this latest incursion. Yet most Israelis and Jews can’t acknowledge that it’s not working.

A fifth level of denial: Many Jews experience every critique of Israel as a manifestation of anti-Semitism (“why else would people be saying those terrible things unless they were giving vent to their pre-existing hatred of Jews?”).

This response is extremely self-destructive. When people respond to legitimate criticism by silencing the critic, the long-term effect is to actually create resentment that wasn’t there in the first place. And when Jews around the world have marches in “solidarity with Israel” at the very moment that the rest of the world is gasping in disbelief at the human rights violations being committed by Israel, is it any wonder that many people around the world are feeling that if this is what the Jewish people wish to be in solidarity



with, then maybe it's not totally unreasonable to be angry at them? Today, in contrast with most of history when we were much more powerless and were truly victims, we are *creating* the very anti-Semitism we fear. We deny our own role in creating this reality, and perceive ourselves as victims. We Jews are frequently unable to see our friends as friends, to accept legitimate criticism, or to acknowledge the actual power we have.

Obviously, the issues are made complex by the long history of Jewish suffering, by the threats real or imagined from surrounding states, and by the morally abhorrent acts of Palestinian terror. As someone who is dedicated to the survival of a Jewish state, and the well-being of the Jewish people, I feel the need to address this issue from a perspective of compassion for our own real suffering as Jews, and not simply dismiss all of our fears as pathology. The kind of violence that Israelis face daily is unbearable and would drive us insane were it happening here in America. But that should not keep us from questioning why Israelis and American Jews refuse to acknowledge that Israel is far more powerful than the Palestinian people, dominates them and occupies their land, is in no danger of being destroyed by them, and continues to kill them at much higher rates than they are being killed. We must look honestly at the failure of Israel's strategies. We must acknowledge that we are sometimes our own worst enemies.

• • •

But even in these violent times, we believe that peace can be achieved. Here is what it will take:

1. Withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders of Israel with slight border adjustments mutually agreed upon to allow Jewish sections of Jerusalem to remain part of Israel, as well as Gush Etzion.
2. Resettling the Israeli settlers in good quality housing within the pre-1967 borders of Israel.
3. An international consortium created to provide generous reparations for the Palestinian refugees, to guarantee economic well-being for a Palestinian state, and to provide reparations for Jews who lost property fleeing from Arab lands.
4. Recognition of Israel and normal relations with all surrounding states.
5. An international tribunal for crimes against humanity committed both by Israeli soldiers and Palestinian terrorists, coupled with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

All these *must* be coupled with a spirit of generosity and open-hearted-

ness in which Israel, as the greater military power, acknowledges its part (not total) in creating the Palestinian refugee problem, and approaches the Palestinian people with humble contrition, repentance (*teshuva*), and genuine desire to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation. It is only when Israel engages in this process for a period of at least a generation that one can expect the Palestinians to reciprocate, as they ultimately should and must, with their own repentance for the acts of violence and teaching of hatred against Jews.

Of course, some Jews will block any of these steps by insisting that "we will never get an end to the violence no matter what we do." That is true in the foreseeable future. If law-and-order regimes in the United States can't rid us of crime and violence in American cities, neither will acts of violence be totally eliminated in Israel. There will always be some percentage of Islamic fundamentalists who will perpetrate criminal acts for what they perceive as revenge, or to achieve a Middle East that is *Judenrein*. And we and the Palestinian State will arrest them and send them to prison.

But what will become possible which is not possible now is that the Palestinian people will overwhelmingly see those people as criminals to the extent that they are undermining a decent reality for Palestinian life. Although violence did not stop after the signing of the Oslo accord, support for Hamas dropped and support for the peacemakers dramatically increased. That trajectory would have increased had Yitzhak Rabin (and with him the peace process) not been

ILLUSTRATION BY K. BENDIB

murdered by a Jewish fundamentalist. If the steps we advocate are followed, support for Arab rejectionists will decrease dramatically, and we will find the Palestinian people themselves willing to enforce the law and treat these people not as heroes but as criminals. But we can't expect that until each of the points listed above has been achieved. To expect that beforehand, to insist that Arafat or any other Palestinian leadership be Israel's chief law enforcer while the six points above have not been actualized, is to live in denial of the life experience of Palestinians under Occupation.

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Pointing out all this denial, being "right," doesn't change anything. Denial can't be overcome that way. We need a sophisticated psychological, spiritual, and political strategy to break through this. The classic model for breaking through denial is to create enough safety so that the person who feels threatened by the truth can trust that they will not be annihilated by acknowledging it.

When I've worked with clients in individual therapy, or now as a rabbi, I find that creating safety is indispensable.

There is no way to get people to look at aspects of their life that are threatening unless they feel secure and safe. The task of the therapist is to create a relationship that enables the client to experience that safety. But how do you do this on a mass level, and is this the way to get people out of denial when they have power? It wasn't the strategy we used in stopping the war in Vietnam. Then we penetrated the manipulated consciousness and the daily government and media lies through confrontation, forcing people to look at realities they didn't want to see. We blocked their freeways, shut down their universities, and turned many families into battle grounds so that adults felt they were losing their children's affection if they supported the war in Vietnam.

But organizations trying to use Vietnam-War tactics for the Middle East crisis are not looking at the complexity of this specific situation. The Israeli people are facing a real threat—not to their existence—but certainly to their ability to lead normal lives in the face of frequent terrorist attacks (something the American people never faced from the Vietnamese). And the Holocaust adds a whole level of com-

Ten Theses on Terrorism and the Occupation

David Biale

1. The collective punishment of the Palestinians—house demolitions, destruction of orchards, denial of food and medical care—is a violation of their human rights. The bombing of Israelis—deliberately blowing up civilians—is a violation of theirs. One can never justify the other. They are not morally equivalent—but both are wrong. To oppose one does not negate opposing the other.
2. To assign blame is like entering a house of mirrors: for every wrong on one side, there is another wrong on the other. We must fight the Occupation as if there is no terror, and fight the terror as if there is no Occupation.
3. Ends never justify means, but for those whose ends do violence to the rights of others, the means become the end.
4. The cycle of terror and retaliation: Palestinian civilians pay the ultimate price for terrorism; Israeli civilians pay the ultimate price for retaliation. Their leaders' folly goes unpunished.
5. News bulletin: A Palestinian woman and her daughter, mistaken for terrorists, are killed in a "prohibited

zone." Such deaths are not deliberate policy, but both the Occupation and terrorism make them inevitable.

6. He who says that Israel bears no responsibility for the Occupation denies that Zionism gave the Jews political agency. He who says that Palestinians bear no responsibility for terrorism renounces the goal of Palestinian sovereignty.
7. To equate the Star of David with the swastika—but to ignore what Russia did to Grozny or Syria to Hama—is the hallmark of anti-Semites, for whom only Jews can behave like Nazis. But that enemies of Israel have succumbed to anti-Semitism does not mean Jews face another Holocaust. 2002 is not 1933.
8. The battle of Jenin was not a massacre—but the accusation that it was is not a "blood libel." The truth—on both sides—is bad enough.
9. For those who think themselves victims, the media is always on the other side.
10. In the judgment of Solomon, the true mother surrendered her baby, lest it be divided and killed. But the opposite is true for the Land of Israel/Palestine: only if it is divided, will both its peoples be able to live. □

David Biale is Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis.

plexity and trauma to the Jewish experience, as does the still tangible anti-Semitism in a world that still seems to give our crimes more attention than the far worse crimes of many others.

We need a path of compassion for Israel and for the Jewish people, even as we critique Israeli policy. Some people doing anti-Occupation work are so filled with anger at Israel that they have no room for compassion in their consciousness. And they have a powerful critique of what I'm saying: "You may think you are speaking with compassion, but for most people in the Jewish world, any criticism is proof of disloyalty, so your attempt to speak compassionately is futile, because no matter how carefully you articulate what you say, it will still be heard as harsh if you are principled enough to call for an end to the Occupation and for reparations for Palestinian refugees."

But our commitment to compassion isn't only a strategic approach, it is a fundamental principle. Even if the Jewish people are in such deep pain that they can't hear the truth, even if they hear me and TIKKUN as their enemy, there is still no reason to turn on them and act as though they are hopeless. They are not. They, just like the Palestinians, are created in the image of God, and deserve to be treated as such. And that means not giving up, not adopting approaches which convey contempt, not allowing their anger at us to shape the way we communicate with them. Because, in the final analysis, there is only ONE of us here—we are all the same being, just different parts of the ONE. And their suffering is my suffering in just the same way that the suffering of the Palestinian people and the suffering of the people of

Kashmir and anywhere else is really my suffering.

Finding the strategy for breaking through denial is not only a task for Jews. At least part of this inability to look at the current reality is rooted in the long history of oppression by non-Jews, who bear some real responsibility for finding a strategy to convey to Jews today that they no longer want to wipe out the Jewish people. Further, precisely because non-Jews feel more distant from the emotional charge of this issue, they could potentially be more effective in working with some aspects of Jewish suffering.

I'd like you to help me find the people who should be part of this discussion and whose wisdom might help us. I'd like to invite you to create a TIKKUN Community Havurah (local chapter) or a TIKKUN Salon and invite these kinds of people to engage in this discussion. After a few months of discussing these issues, if you come up with interesting ideas, please write them up and we will post them on our website www.tikkun.org.

Please check our website at least once a week, especially the "Current Thinking" section and our Calendar of coming events at various locales around the country (you can list your TIKKUN events here by sending the information to us.) Put your name in our website Directory, so that other people who live near you will know to invite you if they decide to have a TIKKUN gathering. Check out the "Media Critiques" and use them to call media and demand more balanced coverage. And please, please, please send us your email address to: community@tikkun.org. I really want to know what you think and I want you to be involved. We can only do this if we work together. □

Help us Build the TIKKUN Community

Come to our Teach-in to Congress

We want to bring people from every congressional district to Washington, D.C., April 27–29, 2003, to counter the pro-Ariel Sharon indoctrination they learn from the media. Help us recruit people from every corner of the U.S. to be there with us.

Join the TIKKUN Campus Network of Students, Faculty, and Staff.

Our first focus will be on building a national network to end the Occupation. Founding Gathering: October 11–14, John Jay College and Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, NYC. more info: marisa@tikkun.org

Form a local Havurah (or a TIKKUN Community Salon)

Bring your friends and others to meet once a week to support each other's social change activities and discuss TIKKUN magazine and website articles: www.tikkun.org.

Join our Rapid Response Network

Go to www.tikkun.org and learn how to take part in our daily critique of media distortions.

Check our Calendar each week and register your name on our Directory at www.tikkun.org

And please send your email address to community@tikkun.org!

Lessons of September 11

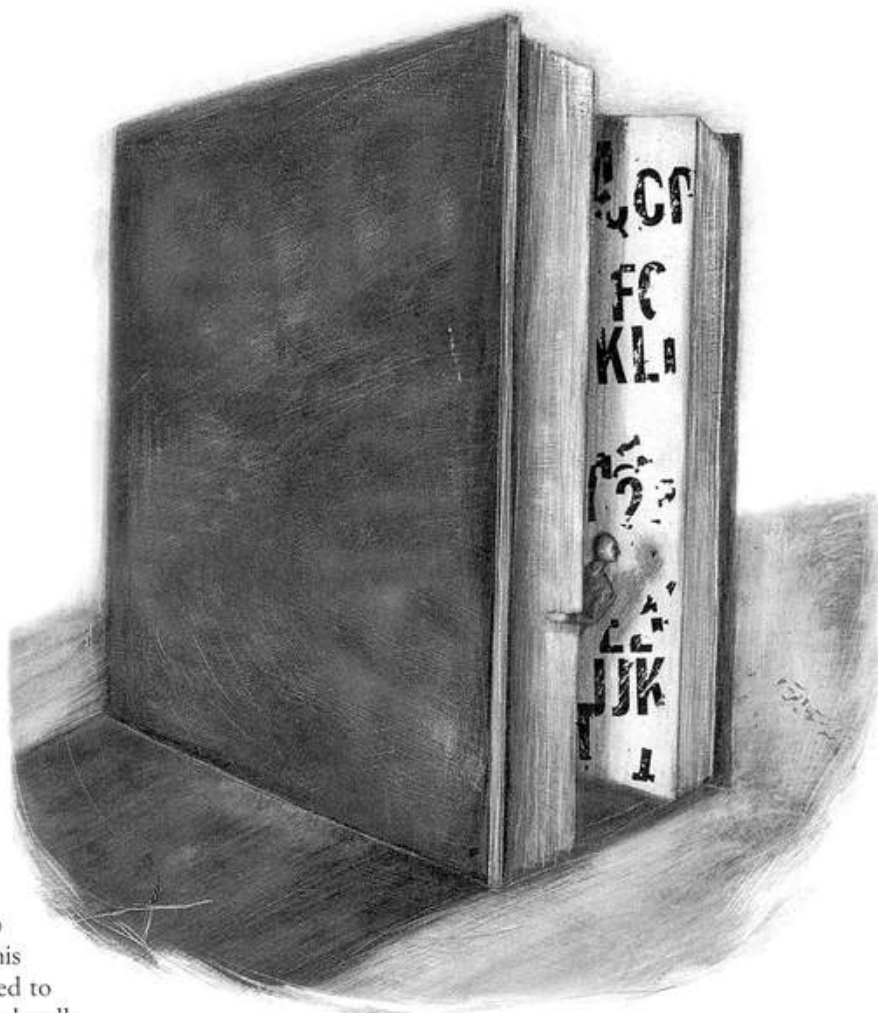
What Should Schools Teach?

Svi Shapiro

The events of September 11, 2001 have left a great deal of confusion and bewilderment in their wake. And the continuing upheaval around the world since then has only added to the general air of fear and consternation. I have found this to be especially so among those with whom I work—teachers and educational administrators. I am frequently asked what it is that we should say to our kids about the horrible and catastrophic events that everyone—including children—has witnessed so vividly. Given our need to make some sense of this tragedy and its aftermath, I have been shocked to find that many schools and classrooms have hardly taken a moment to focus on the events of the past few months. The lessons and concerns that constitute the usual stuff of school life have been little disturbed by war, social turmoil, and the death of thousands. My daughter (a high school junior) reports to me that during this past school year there has been no attempt at her school to seriously study the meaning or consequences of September 11! Lessons focus on the same tired, if iconic, material that is so appallingly divorced from the critical issues that now confront us. The typical American classroom, trapped more than ever by the dead hand of “standards” and “accountability,” is a world that is emotionally, intellectually, and existentially disconnected from the real and pressing demands of the human condition. It is as if educational institutions have enclosed themselves in a bubble, sealing themselves off from the human storms raging outside.

Why has so little of the world made its way into the classroom? On a practical level, teachers need to keep “on task” with state-mandated test materials—a job-determining factor that resists and undercuts teachers’ interest in creating a

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The typical American classroom is a world that is disconnected from the human condition.

more flexible and relevant curriculum. On a personal level, educators may be suffering from emotional denial—like many of us, they may not want to admit that anything has really changed in our lives. On a social level, long before September 11 educational critics like Jonathan Kozol had pointed out that educators shy away from dealing with disturbing and conflictual issues in the classroom, preferring a politically sanitized and emotionally neutralized, if hopelessly bland, curriculum.

Whatever the reasons, there is something very unsettling about the way that so many schools are not facing up to their moral and social responsibility of addressing the most important issues of our time. This is surely a moment when we must begin to ask ourselves whether educators have a responsibility to help students make some moral and intellectual sense of the frightening and enormous events that now face us. If schools have responsibilities beyond training

people for jobs or getting students into college, then we must expect that young people be able to find in their schools a place where they can learn about, explore, and grapple with the critical social concerns of their world. This is surely what it means to educate youth to become citizens in a democratic nation. Perhaps the absence of this kind of engagement in our schools is a testimony to just how little those who lead our nation seem to care about educating young people to be aware, thoughtful, and engaged members of our polity. And just how deeply this outlook has shaped the process of learning.

B'tselem Elohim—In the Image of God

In trying to answer my own students' questions about September 11 and its aftermath, I have suggested to them a number of lessons that I believe stand out as important in a moral, social, and political sense. The first lesson is the way the terrible attacks reminded us of the extraordinary value of human life. Such human slaughter, with its incalculable consequences in personal loss, pain, and suffering, confronts us with the irreplaceably precious and unconditional value that inheres in each individual life. Such an assertion may seem banal until we remember that the firefighters who raced up the stairs of the World Trade Center to save lives didn't stop to find out who they were trying to save—whether they were black or white, Latino or foreign-born, U.S. citizens or new immigrants. Nor did they check on people's religion, sexual orientation, or how wealthy or poor they were. Each life was *B'tselem Elohim*—made in the image of God.

To be more than sentimental cant, however, the lesson of *B'tselem Elohim*, the sacred worth of human lives, must also confront the ways we so often fail to embody this truth. It means attending to the ways we diminish the value and dignity of those we designate as "other" in our world. It means confronting the ways that prejudice works to *misrecognize* the intrinsic humanity of others. And it means learning to understand how such misrecognition functions to legitimate an unjust social order. *B'tselem Elohim* means not just rescuing the poor as well as the rich from a burning building, it means recognizing we too often fault the poor for their own poverty instead of respecting their struggles and working with them to find solutions.

For students engaged in such ethical and critical learning, school itself becomes a good laboratory through which to explore and understand how our society is constantly engaged in making invidious human comparisons. Difficult as it might be, our lessons on the value of human life require us to look critically at the way school itself functions as a "sorting machine"—one that celebrates and affirms some students while at the same time devaluing and marginalizing many others. Schools continue to be places where the experience, language, and appearance of some place them in a downward spiral of low expectations and prejudicial assumptions regarding their abilities and intelligence. Public

education provides us with a powerful example of our society's schizophrenic view of human worth—in our proclamations we affirm everyone's right to dignity and opportunity, yet simultaneously we work furiously to differentiate and rank human beings. In contrast to our culture's pervasive focus on creating hierarchies of human worth, September 11 reminded us, if only for a brief moment, that each and every life must be regarded as of inestimable value.

An Ethic of Caring

A second lesson concerns our society's rediscovery of the value of public service. The past decade or more has been the era of the triumph of Wall Street. We have been inundated with the message that the most admirable and enviable qualities of our culture reside in the values of the marketplace. Simply put, the message says that there is no better goal than becoming rich. The lure of instant wealth has made shows such as *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* the viewers' choice night after night. University resources and enrollments tipped strongly towards degrees in business and marketing. Those who sought out fields that involved caring for others or serving the public good seemed quaintly out of step with a culture that more and more emphasized taking care of oneself. The efficiency of the private sector was continuously touted over the ineffectiveness of public institutions.

Yet in the post-September 11 period we have awoken to another view of reality—one in which a good society is about more than making money and getting ahead. We have witnessed the profoundly moving examples of those whose lives are defined by service to others. It is significant that this alternative to selfishness and self-aggrandizement has, according to recent surveys of students and young people, had its effects in intended career choices. *At the very least we have been reminded in dramatic ways that decent societies are held together not by self-seeking ambitions, but by the ways people serve and care for one another.* Whatever the importance of a marketplace where individuals seek their own advantages, a good society needs a vital "commons" where human beings see each other as fellow citizens whose lives are shared, interdependent, and mutually supporting. We have been reminded that the moral center of our society is about our sense of solidarity as a community, and the extent to which people risk, care for, and concern themselves about the fate of their fellows.

There are important educational lessons here. Such lessons require us to teach our children to question the materialistic and success-driven nature of our "shopaholic" culture. It requires us to challenge our schools' "hidden curriculum" which emphasizes competitive individualism—*my* success, *my* brilliance, *my* honors. It suggests that an education concerned with our moral, as well as our academic, growth is incomplete if it does not insist on some experience of community service. In the post-September 11 world there

is much to compel us to rethink the underlying values of education today, which offer little to young people other than an increasingly test-driven rat race. Education can instead be a powerful vehicle for teaching the enduring wisdom that a purposeful life is about serving others, caring for those in need, and seeking to repair the world we find ourselves in.

Demonizing the Other

Given the brutal and despicable nature of the attack on innocent civilians we witnessed on September 11, it is not surprising that it and events that have unfolded since would unleash angry emotional responses. Most of us have tried hard to distinguish the real perpetrators of these deeds from others who might be blamed by association because they are Muslim, come from the Middle East, or simply have critical things to say about U.S. policy. Our government is to be credited for attempting to make clear that this is not a war with Islam, and as a society, we seem to be far from the mentality that produced Japanese internment camps in World War II. That growth in moral maturity should be celebrated. Sadly, however, not everyone has heard this message. There have been too many cases of individuals taking out their frustrations on innocent people they misguidedly associate with the attacks, or acting in ways that are blindly prejudicial. And our understandable concern for more security has raised the ugly prospect of ethnic profiling.

The lessons here for young people are clear. The world presents us with many causes for frustration, resentment, and anger. We know how easily human beings respond to these situations with blind hatred for whole groups of people who can somehow be blamed for our present unease and fear. Whether in our own country or elsewhere in the world, there is no scarcity of this behavior, as human concerns become rapidly transformed into a misdirected rage acted out against a convenient scapegoat. As educators—whether as teachers or parents—we must acknowledge the entirely human capacity for apprehension and anger, while insisting that these must never be harnessed to the misdirected evil of demonizing whole groups of human beings.

In a similar vein, the flags that have recently decorated so many homes and automobiles as a response to recent events rightly represent an assertion of national resolve and an expression of solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks, as well as those who are asked to defend or safeguard our lives. Yet we must ensure that students are taught the difference between this communal identification and an arrogant and chest-thumping chauvinism in which we somehow believe we are superior to other people, a chauvinism which celebrates our capacity for military or other forms of domination over the rest of the world. And we are seeing again how patriotism easily turns from national pride and communal solidarity into a witch-hunt against those who raise the necessary, if disturbing, questions about why and how

we have become the enemy for other people. Our task is to educate students to know the difference between the suspicion and hostility that characterizes what Zygmunt Bauman recently called “neo-tribalism,” and the justifiable pride and mutual concern of a healthy national community.

Rage and Social Injustice

Clearly those who perpetrated these terrorist acts must be brought to justice. However, we must also consider the more difficult questions about the source of this terrorism—we must ask why there is so much anger in the world against our society. Students on their way to becoming citizens of a democracy surely need to confront and analyze the global conditions that spawn the rage that has become terrorism. They will need to confront the reality of the terrible inequalities that pervade our world. For example, are our young people taught that (as a recent United Nations report noted) half of the world’s population now lives on less than two dollars a day, or that 1.3 billion people must get by on less than one dollar a day? Or that 4 billion people do not have enough food to eat and that 40,000 children die each day from the inability to purchase basic medications or not having access to clean water? Numbers like these give students some glimpse into the degree of hopelessness, deprivation, and misery in which so many people live today. While we have, over the past ten years, been subjected to a celebration of global triumphalism led by the United States, a critically aware citizenship makes it vital that we now recognize the scale of social injustice in the world. Where so many grow up without hope or real possibility for living decent lives, we must expect a growing fury directed at those who have, in comparison, so much. Our students need to understand that social injustice begets anger which in turn becomes terror.

Of course, in many schools the most difficult and controversial issue to address is the fact that for many people around the world there exists a new kind of empire—economic, cultural, and sometimes military—whose epicenter is the United States. If we are to understand the roots of anger toward the United States, we as teachers will have to honestly explore American policies and the extent to which they support, explicitly or tacitly, entrenched undemocratic and repressive regimes. And we will have to address the way that corporate interests, usually supported by the governments of rich countries, exercise power and influence in ways that maintain and exacerbate the imbalances in wealth and living standards in the world. Sadly, I know from my conversations with teachers in the state where I live that raising such issues can often mean putting one’s career on the line.

Modernity and Cultural Disintegration

More than this, however, we will need to find ways to explore with our students the destructive social and psychological effects of modernity itself. Educated

citizens need to better understand what the political scientist Benjamin Barber has called the phenomenon of "McWorld"—the way in which the high-consuming values of the West, and especially the United States, drive so many people's expectations and desires.

Modernity, in its present form, is hugely disruptive to the everyday world of millions of people. Breaking down the bonds of communal support, modernity replaces community with highly competitive and individualistic social relationships. In this new world the primary identity is a self insatiably hungry for more things, pleasures, and experiences. However pitiful their real life circumstances, people all over the world are constantly exposed to the "good life" as it is portrayed through the images of television, Hollywood, and advertising—images that drive home the huge discrepancies in how people live on this earth.

Such images, with their emphasis on materialistic, sexual, and individualistic desires, are also an assault on many people's traditional identities and values. As the traditional anchors of people's life-world are disrupted and dislocated by rapid economic and cultural change, they find themselves in a world saturated by uncertainty and precariousness. Control of the life of one's community moves to far away and unaccountable centers of power. Livelihoods become unpredictable and frequently demand that families be uprooted. And powerful new cultural influences move easily and quickly across national boundaries with the help of instantaneous electronic technologies and mass media, bringing a message of change, flux, and endless desire. In the restless world of capitalist consumption the enemy is any kind of traditional belief system that might constrain the constant "disembedding" of who we are and what we want.

As difficult to grasp as all this might be, we will have to ask our students to explore this complex world in ways that seek to understand how it can produce what we can no longer ignore—the dangerous flows of alienation, dissatisfaction, and anger. Beyond looking at the effects of such a materialist-based modernity, we may want to examine with our students the meaning and possibilities of a more humane and socially just kind of modernity (the TIKKUN Community's own founding statement would be a great place to start). Such an examination is more than critique; it also demands from our students an affirmation of those dimensions of modernity which they hold precious, even where they seem to disrupt communal values. These might include liberal values such as democratic rights and equality, including the rights of women and minorities. Or perhaps the values of the scientific spirit—free and uncontrolled inquiry, skepticism, and a pragmatic attitude towards truth.

However we approach these complex questions, what we must make clear to our students is that, whether we like it or not, their lives as well as our fate as a nation are inseparably connected to what is happening even in what seem to

be far away places. Over the past few years our culture has become increasingly self-absorbed and focused on aberrations and sleaze. Talk shows and news programs have shown pathetically little concern for the seismic social changes affecting so many millions of people. Whether for moral reasons or simply out of enlightened self-interest, we can no longer afford to bring up a generation of young people who have not learned to grapple with the most critical questions of the twenty-first century—our global interdependence, American power, and the consequences of modernity's profound social changes with all of their accompanying suffering, turmoil, and pain.

Educating for Hope

Of course, the goal of all these lessons is certainly not to produce a sense of resignation or of despair. Our lessons are aimed at increasing students' awareness, concern, and sensitivity so that, as citizens of this country and as part of the world community, they have the knowledge and understanding that can help to bring change. The education I am advocating is about hope—the sense that the world can be improved and problems surmounted by concerned and thinking citizens. Of course, teaching students that they can "make history" means teaching a very different sort of history from the abstract and anaesthetized version that students typically get. It is an extraordinary fact that with all the social, political, and cultural storms blowing through the world, schools continue as if it were another spring day. Educating for hope means challenging this institutional stasis. It means challenging students' cynicism, conformity, and sense of fatalism—and it means challenging the competitive hierarchies of our educational institutions which encourage students to channel their ambitions into bettering test scores and rankings, rather than bettering the world.

This lesson of hope requires that we nurture not only the critical capabilities of young people, but also their sense of emotional involvement in the important issues of peace, social justice, human dignity, issues of power, and the quest for lives of meaning. It also requires that we nurture our young people's capacities for imagination and creativity (sadly another casualty of the present school testing mania). In order to remake our world we must first be able to re-envision it—to dream that something different can exist in place of what we now have. It means that we nurture the imagination of the young so that what presently confronts us—violence, oppression, human degradation, war, poverty, materialism, and spiritual emptiness—are not seen as the inevitable fate of humankind. In this sense, schools exist not simply to prepare young people to fit in with what presently is, but to encourage them to be passionate and active agents of change in our world. Education needs to be understood as more than simply a mirror that reflects the existing culture; it may also represent a light that directs our way to a more hopeful future. □

Humans Playing God:

Capital Punishment

And Its Follies

Sunil Dutta



A few months before the birth of Israel, my family lost our ancestral home in the village of Kanjur-Duttan, a village where Duttas had lived since the time of Emperor Babar. Kanjur-Duttan happened to be on the wrong side of the line when India was divided in two (Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan) by British colonialists. The entire Hindu village fled in the dark of the night to escape being massacred by a rampaging mob of Muslim goons who were looting, raping, and murdering. Some did not make it, and were caught and slaughtered.

My great-grand uncle became a dispenser of retributive justice. He joined a roving gang of Hindu vigilantes in the border town of Dera Baba Nanak, where he extracted

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revenge for the murder of his mother and sisters. He killed many Muslim refugees who were trekking defenselessly in the opposite direction from my family—towards the newly created Pakistan from the Hindu-majority India. During my visit to India last winter, I sat across from him and asked if he felt remorse for what he had done during the time when the entire Indian subcontinent had been submerged into a bloodbath in which almost one million people died. He

avoided my gaze and kept puffing at his cigarette. I persisted, "Do you ever think that people you killed were also innocent refugees, just like you and the family members we lost?" The old man looked down and defiantly said, "I may have killed some innocent people, but there must have been some sinners in there too!"

When people play God and dispense the Ultimate Justice, they create Himalayan blunders. Whether they are avenging the blood of their family members by slitting their enemies' throats, blowing them up with bombs, or passing

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orders to execute criminals while sitting on their judge's throne, human beings cannot morally justify taking another human's life.

As a police officer, I often see the results of human depravity. I see incidents of such brutal behavior that my compassion dissolves like a candle flame swept by a tornado. I vividly remember responding to a double homicide scene a few weeks ago. The bodies on the grass were covered with white sheets. As soon as the news helicopters hovering above us left, detectives pulled the sheets off to look at the victims. An elderly woman with a ghostly expression stared at me through hollow eyes. Her neck was almost severed. Her skin was burnt and peeling; her body was giving off smoke. A blood-soaked, semi-burnt shirt was sticking to the torso of her husband. Though his body was badly burnt, the watch on his left wrist was still working.

The murderer had viciously executed his frail victims by slitting their throats, then started a fire to cover up the crime. The gentle couple, loved by their neighbors, had been married for the last fifty years. Now they were dead. I stood silently, shaken by human savagery that no other animal could match.

The crime-scene photographer walked slowly to me and whispered, "I hope they find the guy and hang him!" She sees a lot in her job, but the brutality of the crime and the elderly age of the victims had visibly shaken her. I didn't have the courage to tell her that executing the depraved killers would not turn back the clock and erase this blot on the sheer fabric of humanity. As I looked at the young photographer, I thought, would I have the courage to look into the eyes of the victims' daughter and self-righteously proclaim that the death penalty is immoral? Could I emphatically say that the cold-blooded monster who planned this robbery and viciously murdered these defenseless people could or should be rehabilitated? No. It would be presumptuous of me to tell the victims' families that I feel their pain. It would be even more preposterous to ask them to forgive the murderer and not root for capital punishment.

Nevertheless, although I am deeply aware of the suffering that murder causes, I don't believe the death penalty can be justified. When I find myself faced with murder, I think about my great-uncle, who used senseless murder to justify senseless murder. The practice of capital punishment, particularly by our "justice system," reveals a serious failure in our humanity. We no longer burn witches or keep slaves or have monarchs dictate our lives. Capital punishment is similarly anachronistic.

I am not some soft-hearted ignoramus arguing for going easy on murderers. As a police officer, I am sometimes confronted by vicious people who have so lost their humanity

that they don't belong in any neighborhood. Some are such cold-blooded killers and others bring such misery to the world around them that they should be locked up forever. I want the people who calculatingly and brutally murder others to pay severely for their heinous crimes. Wanting to keep dangerous people out of society is different, however, from wanting to respond to violence with violence. No society can reach a peaceful existence if its people resolve their problems with violence.

I have heard many arguments in favor of capital punishment.

For example, some people argue that if I kill someone, I give up my right to live. That principle would qualify as a moral argument only if it were applied evenly. However, we do not sentence every murderer to death. Why isn't a reckless drunk driver who kills an entire family not sentenced to death? Because murders are different from each other, is the response—some are more cruel than others. But how do we quantitatively measure the heinousness of a murder? When mistake-prone humans send

some criminals to the death chamber and others to prison are we not appropriating God's authority? What could be more immoral?

Not only do we play the role of God by judging who will die and who will live, by supporting the death penalty we send out the dangerous message to impressionable minds that violence is a way to resolve problems. "Thou shalt not kill" cannot be taught by the state-sponsored execution of criminals. To tell others not to kill by killing someone makes a mockery of the message. We need only to look around the world to remember that subservience to violence as a way to resolve problems has brought us perpetual misery and suffering: just look at Israel, Kashmir, East Timor, Rwanda, Serbia ...

Death penalty support in law-enforcement comes from a deeply-held conviction by police officers that it is a deterrent. Demagogues exploit the fear of crime in the community and use their support for capital punishment as a badge of honor. As a police officer myself, I can emphatically state that many of my colleagues are wrong: the death penalty has no deterrent effect on crime. Capital punishment fails to deter those who commit crimes of passion. Capital punishment also has no dissuading power over criminals who are opportunistic, calculating, or overcome by drugs. A person taking a chance that he will not be caught for the crime he is planning to commit does not discriminate between the death penalty and life in prison without parole. Killing a criminal will prevent him from committing another crime—but so will putting him behind bars forever.

The only practical justification for the death penalty is revenge and punishment. I am not one to defend the

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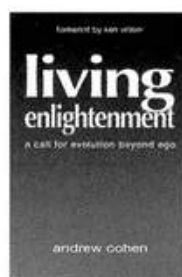
actions of murderers. After seeing the pain and loss faced by the victims' families and the cruelty of remorseless killers, I do not find merit in the argument that criminal behavior can be explained away by childhood abuse or a lack of opportunities and therefore excused. I know countless people who grew up in miserably wretched conditions and turned out to be caring adults. I also cannot fault a victim's family's demand for revenge. Only those who have lost their family members at the hands of vicious reprobates have the right to make such judgements. However, even as a means of revenge, the death penalty is an absolute failure. Candlelight vigils, media coverage, and an endless judicial process turns the criminal into a celebrity while the victim's family seethes with resentment, sometimes for decades! Not only does the criminal become glorified, the taxpayer-subsidized court costs are horrendous. Victims are re-victimized repeatedly as the loss of their dear ones is downplayed and they are portrayed as despicable people because some of them want the execution to proceed. This sort of revenge is not sweet. Despite the hopes of most pro-death penalty victims, executing criminals does not necessarily bring resolution and healing to the victim's family. In a calculated act so depraved that even sick people would deplore it, Reynaldo Rodriguez walked into the wealthy suburban home of his ex-girlfriend Maria Calderon in Simi Valley and systematically killed three of her family members and wounded two others. After his heinous crime, he drove to a campground in Los Padres National Forest and killed himself. Maria Calderon's feelings reveal the profound flaw in capital punishment. She said to the *Los Angeles Times*, "I would have much rather he stayed alive. That way he could face the justice system and live with the fact that he murdered three people, and suffer what we're suffering. Now he took his own life—and he's not suffering anymore."

Even if we were to accept the arguments in favor of capital punishment, the clearest reason to forego killing criminals comes from the inevitable miscarriage of the punishment itself. I shudder at the fact that ninety-four innocent individuals in the last decade were released from death row. They had been wrongfully condemned to death for crimes they did not commit. Some were minutes from execution. For each person exonerated, how many innocent people have we executed? This utter disgrace should make members of the criminal justice system hang their heads in shame. I cannot even imagine the anguish of a wasted life, the years away from friends and family, the disrepute and shame suffered by these poor souls who spent precious moments of their lives locked away in a maximum security prison for crimes they did not commit. What does the sword hanging over one's head do to the psyche of a wronged person who awaits the hand of the executioner while the appeals process is being exhausted? Frank Lee Smith was convicted of a 1985 rape and murder and condemned to

death row. Smith died in prison after spending fifteen years there. His innocence was proven by DNA tests after his death! This is only *one* of many poignant examples that cries out loud against capital punishment.

In many of these cases, nothing in the legal appeals process helped uncover the innocence of these wrongly convicted individuals. Instead, it was investigations conducted by journalists or college students, or the confessions of the true perpetrators of these crimes that helped to exonerate the innocent. In fact, the justice system has at times worked to wrongly criminalize the innocent. Reckless prosecutors and police lab chemist teams like Robert Macy and Joyce Gilchrist of Oklahoma have been criticized for playing with the rules to convict people in murder trials. This makes a mockery of the system when professional enforcers of the law mangle the spirit of the law to get convictions, forcing outsiders to rescue the hapless victims of the criminal justice system.

People also make mistakes; research shows that even eyewitnesses are unable to recall events accurately. Yet we brazenly act as if we were God and condemn people to death, calmly ignoring that we are mistake-prone humans. Furthermore, our history is replete with stories of governments framing people they did not like. Individuals such as Geronimo Pratt can attest to the effectiveness with which innocent people can be framed by a determined



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Foreword by Ken Wilber

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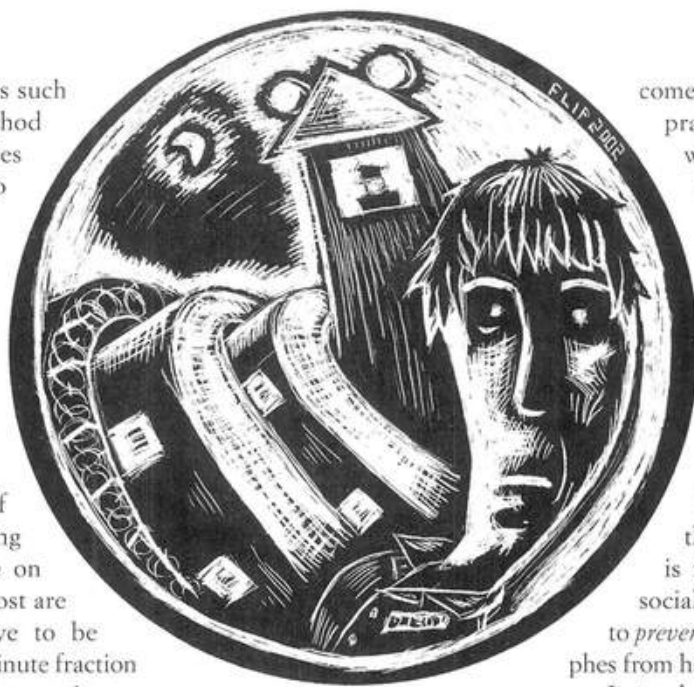
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government. Criminal cops such as Rafael Perez ride roughshod over prosecutors and juries and railroad people into prison or worse. Corruption in FBI crime labs, lying forensic analysts, biased juries, and prosecutors bending to local politics make a dangerous mixture, making the legal process highly unsafe for those on the lower socio-economic stratum of the society. I am not saying that a majority of people on death row are innocent; most are brutal killers who deserve to be there. However, even if a minute fraction of individuals on death row are innocent, it is immoral to support capital punishment. When our government executes an innocent person in our name, all of society is responsible for the death of that innocent person.

At least the members of death row in the United States had the opportunity to go to trial. To see the logical extension of this willingness to kill in the name of the state we need only look to Israel, which in the last year has begun an even more brazen and barbaric application of capital punishment: the selective assassination by the Israeli government of those suspected of being involved in terrorist activities. It is a disgrace that a government can indulge in such a sinister practice. Even in the United States, an argument to execute hard-core gang members in the inner-city because that would prevent them from killing others would jolt the conscience of the most callused hard-on-crime person. The pre-emptive executions of "suspected" terrorists by the Israeli government are based on similarly fallacious reasoning. What about proving someone's guilt before meting out the ultimate punishment? Not only do such executions backfire and lead to more violence against the Israeli people, they result in a complete loss of moral authority for the state; we should take heed from this example of the inherent immorality of the state playing God.

People have asked me whether I would support capital punishment if the criminal is absolutely identified beyond a shadow of a doubt. What if the wickedness of the crime shocks the conscience of everyone? The dastardly bombing in Oklahoma by Timothy McVeigh and the evil mass murder this September of people in the World Trade Center



Life in prison without parole is moral, practical, and far less expensive than the complicated process that leads to the death chamber.

come to mind. Is it moral and practical to execute a terrorist whose sole reason for existence is causing pain and suffering? Well, I don't think that capital punishment would make such terrorists rethink the shallowness of their reasoning and understand the insanity of their behavior. Instead, we would make them martyrs. Capital punishment is not a deterrent to these terrorists, but a goad. It is more important to look to social and political circumstances to prevent such monumental catastrophes from happening.

Instead of using the death penalty to express society's rage at wanton murder, we would be better off forcing remorseless and callous criminals to confront their depravity and make them realize how much pain they cause to others. It would be even more useful to turn our energies away from revenge on the perpetrators of crime and concentrate them instead on community support for the victims, who are often neglected as the criminal justice system focuses on retribution. Those of us who oppose the death penalty should never concentrate our efforts solely on the manifold problems of the death penalty or, as some do, on the humanity of the killer. We must pay equal attention to compassionate support for the families and other loved ones of the victims. We must feel the loss, agony, and anger of the survivors, and build social and institutional support for them. It is as immoral to ignore the pain of the victims as it is to support capital punishment.

An effective alternative to the death penalty exists. Life in prison without parole is moral, practical, and far less expensive than the complicated process that leads to the death chamber. With life imprisonment, the cold-blooded murderer is removed from society and immediately forgotten, so that attention can be turned to the victims and their needs.

Revenge may bring momentary satisfaction, but only the potential to reach into someone's callused heart can bring healing. We cannot be a civilized society while we indulge in hatred and consign forgiveness to the sidelines. Anyone can be a knee-jerk reactionary and demand blood; it takes enormous courage to forgive the depraved who have caused us such enormous pain and sorrow. □

Business as Usual

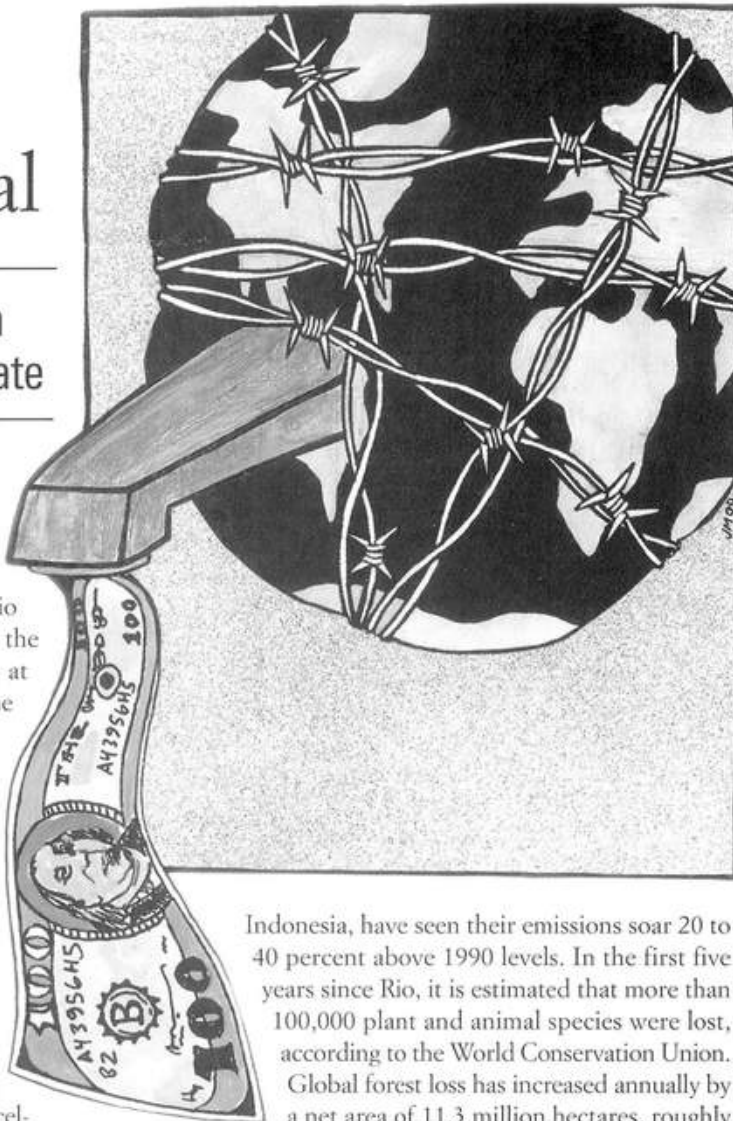
A Decade After the First Earth Summit, There is Little to Celebrate

Debi Barker

This year marks the tenth anniversary of what popularly became known as the Rio Earth Summit, an event hosted in 1992 by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at which governments worldwide acknowledged that the health of the planet was in peril and pledged to work together to save it. At that time, industrial nations committed to assisting developing countries with financial aid and "green" technology transfers and scheduled negotiations for new international treaties that would address climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions, the rapid loss of plant diversity, and other pressing issues that needed international cooperation if there was to be any hope of maintaining the ecosystems of the world.

As the UN convenes this August in Johannesburg, South Africa for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), world leaders will have little to celebrate as they review the progress that has been made since the Rio meeting. Two key multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) negotiated after Rio—the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD)—have been continual sources of conflict and the United States still has not signed either agreement. Pledges of technical assistance and financial aid to developing countries have been left unfulfilled—in fact, aid to non-industrial countries by the wealthiest nations on earth actually decreased in the last ten years, with the United States being the worst offender.

By every measure and according to scientists around the globe, the environmental health of the natural world has continued to rapidly deteriorate in the last decade. According to a report by the Natural Resources Defense Council, since the Rio Earth Summit, U.S. carbon dioxide emissions have increased 11 percent; the European Union and Japan have exceeded 1990 levels by 6 percent; and rapidly industrializing nations, such as China, Brazil, and



Indonesia, have seen their emissions soar 20 to 40 percent above 1990 levels. In the first five years since Rio, it is estimated that more than 100,000 plant and animal species were lost, according to the World Conservation Union.

Global forest loss has increased annually by a net area of 11.3 million hectares, roughly the size of the state of Louisiana. Since 1990, 4 percent of tropical forests have been lost.

What happened since the Rio Earth Summit? And, what are world leaders preparing to do in response to this dismal environmental record?

Some UN officials and world policymakers have cited governments' lack of "political will" to enact their pledges as the main reason for the failure of Rio products and agreements. However, this dangerously ignores and does not address the major reason why the earth is not in balance—economic globalization.

While major environmental accords have been left hanging, trade ministers have ratified and implemented powerful international trade and investment agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) which have accelerated natural resource exploitation and reduced governments' abilities to protect the environment. Institutions such as the WTO have strong enforcement measures to ensure that governments comply with trade rules at the expense of environmental standards. For example, the WTO's dispute settlement body, a legally binding body that rules in closed-door international courts on trade issues, has issued several rulings that have overturned a number of

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nations' environmental and health safety rules and regulations, including portions of the U.S. Clean Air Act and the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allows corporations to sue national governments when offending environmental laws could cause *potential* loss of profits. And, sections of the WTO directly conflict with policies of some MEAs. Thus, nations are forced to choose between two masters—rules of globalization or environmental stewardship.

Unfortunately, instead of addressing this issue head on, the WSSD is instead embracing the globalization agenda being pushed by many corporate advisors and trade ministers as the answer to poverty and environmental degradation. In the latest WSSD parlance, "sustainable development" means business as usual—an integrated global economic system based on access to cheap natural resources (and labor), increased consumption and consumerism, and import/export-based national economies. In short, the WSSD, under the mantra of "sustainable development," is advocating an economic system that has resulted in increasing gaps between the rich and poor both within countries and between countries, and that has wreaked environmental havoc on a scale never seen before.

The preparatory process of the WSSD, which has included two Prep Com meetings in New York and one final upcoming meeting in Bali, Indonesia, has resulted in documents and statements that basically relinquish the UN's original mandate of maintaining the health of the planet and its species. One of the latest position papers of the WSSD, for example, agreed that it should take the recommendation from the WTO's Doha Declaration, a product of the most recent Ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar, that enjoined governments to explicitly assert the primacy of the WTO's trade objectives over any MEA rules. Both the Doha Declaration and the WSSD are using the term "convergence" to describe what they advocate as a meeting between economic and environmental goals, but it is clearly a guise for ensuring that trade and investment rules are not overruled in any way by environmental standards and policies. As a further insult to the integrity of the upcoming WSSD meeting, the UN appears to be caving in to the Bush administration's demand that the Kyoto Protocol not be brought up for discussion in South Africa. As one of the world's leaders in greenhouse gas emissions, and the only industrial nation that has not signed the agreement, such a discussion might prove embarrassing. This World Summit on Sustainable Development, at least as it is currently being planned, might just as well drop the word "sustainable" from its title.

Toward Johannesburg

Globalization is arguably the biggest threat to the future sustainability of our planet. This system requires a massive transportation infrastructure—raw materials are first shipped to manufacturers in countries to be manufactured,

then they're sent to a third country to be packaged, and finally to a fourth or even fifth destination to be sold. The environmental impact of this transportation infrastructure is dramatic: The increased construction of roads and super highways, more and bigger airports, oil pipelines, and the dredging of larger bays and waterways, results in the elimination of plant and species habitats, the destruction of forests and what few pristine or wild lands that exist, the denigration of water systems, as well as other environmental tragedies. Such a mega-trade transport system also demands a huge increase in global-warming fossil fuels, resulting not only in the denigration of air, water, and land but in the destruction of tribal and indigenous people's resources and, eventually, culture (which leads to more social and political unrest). The transportation infrastructure marks only the tip of the environmental destruction caused by globalization. Yet, globalization's devastating impacts to ecosystems are not being addressed by the WSSD—or any other international bodies or policymakers.

Because there is little evidence that the WSSD's final Prep Com meeting in Bali this June will produce any document or policy that will signal a change toward addressing environmental problems head on, some have proposed that environmental and globalization organizations boycott the WSSD meeting in Johannesburg as a statement of protest against the apparent collusion of corporate-led economic structures and the UN process. However, many groups from all over the world are going to Johannesburg precisely to highlight the conflict between an inequitable and environmentally devastating global economic system and the sustainable future we all need.

Johannesburg events are being planned both prior to and during the WSSD meeting by the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), Friends of the Earth International, the European Green Party, Earth Island Institute, Third World Network, and South African organizations including the Rural Development Services Network, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and others. The IFG will hold one of the largest events—a teach-in on August 24 and 25 at WITS University. The teach-in, taking place just prior to the official WSSD meeting, aims to provoke discussion and debate on issues that otherwise might not be mentioned among the media, UN representatives, and world leaders who will be in Johannesburg.

The presence of a civil society in Johannesburg can help to hold governments and our leaders accountable for their endorsement and collusion in creating yet another world body that furthers globalization. We must go to Johannesburg to demand that government leaders take leadership and responsibility to ensure a socially just, equitable, truly environmentally sustainable planet for us all.

(For more information about WSSD events in South Africa, and in the run up to the Summit, visit the IFG's website at: www.ifg.org.) □

Stem Cell Wars

Your kidney fails. You go on dialysis. But instead of looking for a kidney donor, your doctor takes a cell from a strand of your hair and grows you a new kidney. The transplant operation goes smoothly; you don't have to worry about rejecting the organ, because, after all, genetically it is your own.

Can this scenario happen today? No. It may never happen. But this is the promise of technology held out to us by biomedical researchers and the proponents of embryo cloning. In the organ donation scenario, the new organ is produced by first creating an embryo that is a clone of the adult, then that embryo's stem cells are harvested and grown into organs. Proponents even hope to use similar technology to cure disease.

Just like nuclear technology, however, the brave new world of cloning has its dark side. The same technology that might allow us to grow new cells and even whole organs to heal the sick would also provide us with a means to create children in our own genetic image, or, perhaps more frighteningly, the means to create "perfect" children. Even the most conservative use of cloning involves creating new embryos whose stem cells are then harvested. For the first time, we humans would be farming ourselves.

To clone embryos or not to clone them? This is an issue on which progressives may reasonably disagree. Jeremy Rifkin leads off this section with a strong condemnation of all cloning technology. Raymond Barglow responds just as vehemently in support of therapeutic cloning. Marcy Darnovsky advocates a cooling-off period during which regulations on cloning can be implemented. Read them all, then tell us where you stand. —Jo Ellen Green Kaiser



Why I Oppose Human Cloning

Jeremy Rifkin

Up to now, the cloning and stem cell debate has been viewed in Washington and the media as a classic Right vs. Left struggle, pitting social conservatives, right-to-life activists, and the Catholic Church against the scientific community and progressive forces, with Republicans lined up on one side and Democrats

on the other. In reality, however, many of us in the progressive Left are also opposed to cloning, although our reasons differ in some respects from those of the social conservatives. Earlier this year, sixty-seven leading progressives lent their support to legislation that would outlaw both therapeutic and full-birth (also called reproductive) cloning. The signatories of the anti-cloning petition included many of the best-known intellectuals and activists in left circles today.

While the social conservatives' opposition to cloning is well understood, little or no attention has been given in the media or public debate as to why some of us on the Left

Jeremy Rifkin is the author of The Biotech Century: Harnessing the Gene and Remaking the World (Tarcher Putnam, 1998). He is also president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, D.C.

oppose cloning. We worry that the market for women's eggs that would be created by this research will provide unethical incentives for women to undergo health-threatening hormone treatment and surgery. We are also concerned about the increasing bio-industrialization of life by the scientific community and life science companies; we are shocked and dismayed that clonal human embryos have been patented and declared to be human "inventions." We oppose efforts to reduce human life and its various parts and processes to the status of mere research tools, manufactured products, and utilities.

To the argument that medical science needs embryonic stem cells for research purposes, we answer that adult stem cells, which can be taken from individuals after birth, have proved promising in both animal studies and clinical trials. This "soft path" approach to using the new science poses none of the ethical, social, and economic risks of strategies using embryo stem cells.

Moreover, many, if not most, of the diseases researchers hope to cure by using embryonic stem cells are the result of a complex choreography acted out between genetic predispositions and environmental triggers. By concentrating research almost exclusively on magic bullets in the form of gene replacements, the medical community forecloses the less invasive option of prevention—that is, using the sophisticated new scientific understanding of the relationship between genes and environments to develop medical therapies that keep people well.

We are also concerned about the slippery slope advocates of embryo cloning have started down. If using a twelve-day-old cloned embryo for producing cells and tissues is morally acceptable, what would preclude advocates in the future from championing the harvesting of more developed cells from, say, an eight-week-old embryo, or from harvesting organs from a five-month-old cloned fetus if it were found to be a more useful medical therapy? One doesn't have to be a right-to-lifer to feel squeamish about harvesting organs from a second-trimester fetus.

What about the question of cloning a full-birth human being? Today, almost no one supports full-birth cloning. Certainly, most members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, would oppose a clonal birth. But what some supporters of therapeutic cloning don't realize is that for many in Congress, the scientific community, and the biotech industry, opposition to full-birth cloning is solely based on the fact that the cloning technique is still unsafe and could pose a risk of producing a malformed baby. Far fewer members of either party would be opposed to cloning a human baby were the procedure to become safe and reliable. After all, argue proponents, if an infertile couple desires to pass on

their genetic inheritance by producing clones of one or both partners, shouldn't they be able to exercise their right of choice in the newly emerging biotech marketplace? We need not worry about the possibility of producing truly identical people, proponents argue, since, even though the clone will have the exact same genetic makeup as the original, he or she will develop differently because his or her life will unfold in a different social and environmental context than the donor's.

In all the technical and economic talk what both liberals

and market libertarians miss is that the cloning of a human raises fundamental questions that go to the very nature of what it means to be a human being. From time immemorial we have thought of the birth of our progeny as a gift bestowed by God and/or a beneficent nature. We celebrate our generativity and revel in being participants in an act of creation. The coming together of sperm and egg represents a moment of utter surrender to forces outside of our control. We give part of ourselves up to another and the fusing of our maleness and femaleness results in a

unique and finite new creation.

The reason most people have an almost instinctual revulsion to cloning is that deep down, they sense that it signals the beginning of a new journey where the "gift of life" is steadily marginalized and eventually abandoned all together. In its place, the new progeny becomes the ultimate shopping experience—designed in advance, produced to specification, and purchased in the biological marketplace.

Cloning is, first and foremost, an act of "production," not creation. Using the new biotechnologies, a living being is produced with the same degree of engineering as we have come to expect on an assembly line. When we think of engineering standards, what immediately comes to mind is quality controls and predictable outcomes. That's exactly what cloning a human being is all about. For the first time in the history of our species, we can dictate, in advance, the final genetic constitution of the offspring. The child is no longer a unique creation—one of a kind—but rather an engineered reproduction.

Human cloning opens the door wide to the dawn of a commercial Brave New World. Already life science companies have leaped ahead of the political game being played out in Congress and the media by patenting both human embryos and stem cells, giving them upfront ownership and control of a new form of reproductive commerce. Many in the Left worry that the advent of human cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and, soon, designer babies, lays the groundwork for a new form of bio-colonialism in which global life science companies become the ultimate arbiters over the evolutionary process itself.

*We oppose efforts to
reduce human life and
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manufactured products
and utilities.*

We have good reason to be concerned. While heads of state and parliamentarians wrestle with the escalating struggle between right to life advocates and researchers, a far more menacing tale is unfolding behind the scenes with enormous potential consequences for society. U.S. and British scientists and biotech companies are using embryo and stem cell technology to develop the framework for a commercial eugenics civilization with profound long-term implications for the human race.

"Eugenics" is a term coined by Sir Francis Galton, the British philosopher, in the nineteenth century. It means to use breeding to both eliminate undesirable genetic traits and add desirable traits to improve the characteristics of an organism or species. When we think of eugenics, we think of Adolf Hitler's ghoulish plan to create the "master" race. Today, however, a new commercial eugenics movement is being meticulously prepared in corporate boardrooms, far away from public scrutiny, and far different in nature from the kind of social eugenics hysteria that engulfed the world in the first half of the twentieth century.

Our story begins with a small biotech company, Roslin Bio-Med. The company was created in April 1998 by the Roslin Institute, a government-funded research institution outside Edinburgh, Scotland, where Dolly the sheep was cloned. The company was given an exclusive license to all the Roslin Institute's cloning technology for biomedical research. A year later, Roslin Bio-Med was sold to Geron, a U.S. firm headquartered in Menlo Park, California. Then, in January 2000, the British Patent Office granted a patent to Dr. Ian Wilmut for his cloning technology. The patent—now owned by Geron—covers the cloning process and all the animals produced by the cloning process. What the public doesn't know—because it has received so little attention—is that the British Patent Office granted Wilmut and his company a patent on all cloned human embryos up to the blastocyst stage of development—that's the stage where pluripotent stem cells emerge. The British government, in effect, became the first in the world to recognize a human embryo as a form of intellectual property. The UK was also the first country to sanction the use of embryos, and even cloned embryos, for the harvesting of stem cells.

Despite British success in creating a favorable regulatory and commercial regime for the new research, it was the American company Geron that was quick to lock up the cloning technology. Even before securing the embryo



*Will global biotech
companies own the
designs, the parts and the
processes that produce a
human life?*

patent, Geron had been quietly financing stem cell research conducted by two U.S. researchers, Dr. James A. Thomson of the University of Wisconsin and Dr. John Gearhart of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. In November of 1998 both scientists announced that they had independently isolated and identified human stem cells. The breakthrough opened the door to the era of stem cell experimentation in medicine. The researchers' academic institutions immediately applied for patents and sold the exclusive licenses to use the patents to Geron. According to the terms of the Johns Hopkins agreement, Gearhart receives a share of the royalties collected on his patent. Gearhart and Johns Hopkins also own stock in Geron, and Gearhart serves as

a consultant to the company. Geron, once alone in the field, is now being challenged by a competitor. Geron's founder, Michael West, broke away from the company and now heads up Advanced Cell Technology in Massachusetts. West's new company has secured its own patents on non-human embryo cloning and is experimenting on alternative ways to create human stem cells.

By securing patents on the cloning process, as well as on cloned human embryos and stem cells, companies like Geron and Advanced Cell Technology are in a position to dictate the terms for further advances in medical research using stem cells. The mass production of cloned human embryos provides an unlimited source of stem cells. The stem cells, in turn, are the progenitors of all of the 200 or so differentiated cell types that make up the biology of human life. Researchers, institutes, and other companies from around the world will have to pay Geron and Advanced Cell Technology to access either the use of the embryos or the stem cells they produce, giving the companies unprecedented market advantage. If other researchers or companies actually succeed in making specific body cells from the stem cells, they will likely have to enter into commercial licensing agreements of various kinds with Geron and Advanced Cell Technology for the right to produce the products.

What does this portend for the future? To begin with, the granting of a patent for cloned human embryos raises a formidable political question. Can commercial institutions lay claim to a potential individual human life, in the form of intellectual property, at its early stage of development? The British Patent Office has said yes. In the nineteenth century, we fought over the question of whether human beings after birth could be held as commercial property and eventually every nation abolished slavery. Now, however, we have

technology that allows companies like Geron to claim potential human beings as intellectual property, at the developmental stage, between conception and birth. The question of whether commercial enterprises will be allowed to own potential human life at the developmental stage, will likely be one of the seminal political issues of the Biotech Century.

Secondly, should companies like Geron and Advanced Cell Technology be allowed to own—in the form of intellectual property—the primary human cells that are the gateway to the entire biological composition that constitutes human life? Do we risk the dawn of a new era in human history where the creation of human life itself will increasingly fall under the control of commercial forces? Will global biotech companies own the designs, the parts, and the processes that produce a human life?

The commercial implications of embryo and stem cell research need to be examined in their entirety. Failure to do so could trap all of us into a commercial eugenics future we neither anticipated nor willingly chose.

A Personal Note: As a Jew and a progressive, I was shocked at the news that the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and The Rabbinical Council of America had announced their support of so-called “therapeutic” cloning. The very notion that Rabbis would support legislation that authorized the creation of cloned human embryos for the sole and specific purpose of medical experimentation and research, with a legal requirement that they then be destroyed, is aberrant to everything I believed our religious teachings and heritage stood for. As to the argument that the end justifies the means—i.e. that valuable medical advances might flow from the research—I would argue that such thinking is an anathema to Jewish teachings. Who would have believed that just half a century after the Holocaust, our own religious leaders would give their blessing to a new kind of medical research with commercial eugenics implications that are likely to be every bit as evil in the long run as the social eugenics dogma of an earlier era? □

A Reply to Rifkin

Raymond Barglow



In his essay, “Why I Oppose Human Cloning,” Jeremy Rifkin proposes that his view is widely shared within the progressive community: “many of us in the progressive Left are equally opposed to both therapeutic and full birth cloning.... Earlier this year, sixty-seven leading progressives lent their support to legislation that would outlaw therapeutic and full birth cloning. The signatories of the anti-cloning petition included many of the best-known intellectuals and activists in left circles today.” In fact, the petition came from Mr. Rifkin himself (the document became known as “the Rifkin petition”), and two of the petition’s signers, Stanley Aronowitz and Quentin Young, have since withdrawn their support from the petition.

Some of Jeremy Rifkin’s criticisms of reproductive cloning are well taken; I do not have the space here to discuss his argument in detail. But his campaign against therapeutic cloning (known by scientists as Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer, or SCNT, which is explained below) is not equally justified.

In the domain of biomedicine, progressives can readily identify with Rifkin’s opposition to “efforts to reduce human life and its various parts and processes to the status of mere research tools, manufactured products, and utili-

ties.” But despite his assertions to the contrary, few among us can see the link he assumes between the research cloning of embryonic stem cells for therapeutic purposes and the larger doomsday scenario that he lays out. The stem cell issue—which is receiving a lot of attention from the national media—has provided Rifkin with a wedge for introducing his anti-biotechnology agenda to a wide audience at the cost of neglecting the specific intentions and prospects of scientists working with embryonic stem cells to better understand disease processes and to develop new therapies based on that understanding.

In its campaign to discredit embryonic stem cell research, the religious right has blurred the differences between therapeutic and reproductive cloning, creating in the popular imagination nightmare visions of cloned babies born into brave new worlds (evoked as well in popular entertainment like the movie *Attack of the Clones*). But therapeutic cloning provides scant supplies for these science fiction scenarios. This research is already subject to federal regulation, does not involve significant health risks to cell donors, does not alter existing genomes, and takes place in a laboratory setting with a handful of embryonic stem cells that will not be implanted in a womb.

Our task as progressives should be to expose the way that anti-abortion spokespersons twist the facts about this

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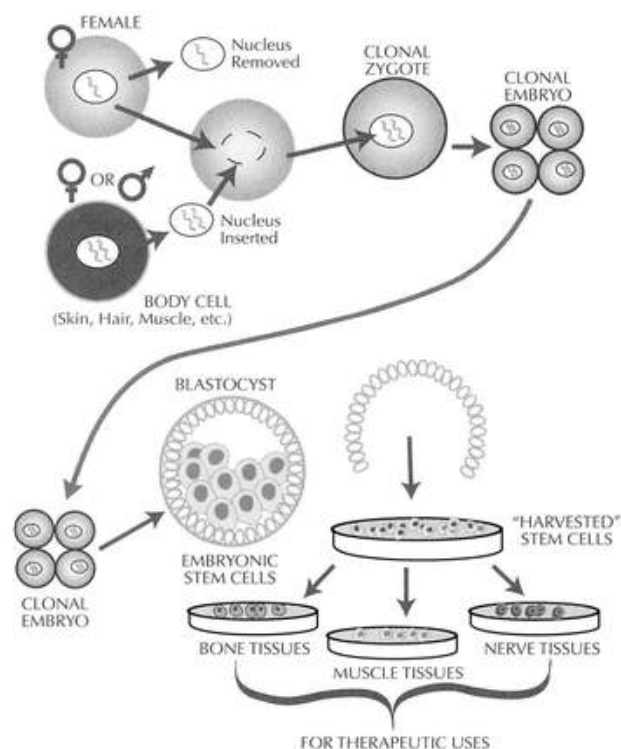
Research Cloning

Research cloning uses somatic cell nuclear transfer to produce a clonal embryo. Sometimes called “embryo cloning” or “therapeutic cloning,” it would begin with the same procedure that would be used for reproductive cloning: the nucleus from a body cell is put into an egg from which the nucleus has been removed. The resulting entity is triggered by chemicals or electricity to begin developing into an embryo.

Instead of being implanted in a womb and brought to term as a cloned child, the embryo would be used for research purposes—for example, to generate embryonic stem cells.

This diagram illustrates only one aim of the research cloning of embryonic stem cells: the development of cell-replacement therapies. But research cloning may also make other valuable contributions such as other kinds of cell-based treatments for diseases having a genetic component, safer testing of experimental medicines, and more ethnically diverse stem cell lines, which receive very little media attention and are often overlooked by critics of therapeutic cloning.

(Images courtesy of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals)



kind of research. Instead, Rifkin has allied himself with these very forces. He rightly points out that biomedical research needs careful ethical evaluation. And in his book *The Biotech Century*, he elaborated a fairly reasonable dialectical approach to such research, recognizing its enormous potential for good, while pointing out also the dangers. But now his blanket opposition to the cloning of human embryos abandons that balance in favor of dubious assumptions and misleading arguments. Banning therapeutic cloning would obstruct research paths that could lead to effective remedies for major illnesses such as childhood leukemia, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease.

Rifkin argues that “By concentrating research almost exclusively on magic bullets in the form of gene replacements, the medical community forecloses the less invasive option of prevention....” This is erroneous on two counts. First, it overlooks what may be the most valuable result of research cloning: A better understanding of disease processes. Researchers can take a diseased cell from an adult (the disease in question could be cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, or another disease in which genetic inheritance or mutation plays a role) and use embryonic cloning to create a stem cell line from it. (The line's originating cells are harvested from the cloned embryo.) Studying a stem cell line of this kind—seeing how the disease develops as the stem cells differentiate—will help us understand that development and find remedies for it. For example, the way in which embryonic stem cells, which have been cloned using

adult cells from an Alzheimer's patient, differentiate into brain cells can be compared with the normal formation of brain cells, thereby providing new information that might help us cure this disease. If SCNT research is criminalized, this entire domain of investigation will be shut down.

Second, research of this kind needn't be counterpoised to preventive measures (which indeed should be medicine's highest priority, as I've argued in an essay published in *TIKKUN* March/April 2002). Consider diabetes for instance. Certainly we need to address the social/environmental factors that may be contributing to its increase over the past two decades. But anyone who has seen a child suffering from diabetes surely hopes also that a medical remedy will be found.

Rifkin is right, however, to ask basic questions about the priorities and governance of biomedical research. Stem cell experimentation, for example, is a complex, multifaceted enterprise that advances at the cutting edge of scientific understanding. How can it be made to conform to democratically-arrived-at norms of social responsibility? How can lay persons, lacking expertise in specialized scientific/technological domains, intelligently evaluate the research approaches that scientists come up with?

Progressives have faced this quandary many times before—in our opposition to the nuclear power industry, for instance. In arriving at our judgments about the advisability of using complex technologies, we rely a lot upon the views of authorities who are respected within progressive/environmentalist circles—upon “our” experts, whom we take to

be more conscientious and less aligned with profit-seeking interests than are the advocates on "the other side."

In the domain of biotechnology, which deploys methods of cellular and molecular investigation that most of us know little or nothing about, how are we to figure out which pathways are ethically and politically acceptable? We may accept the guidance of people like Jeremy Rifkin who have considerable specialized knowledge. Rifkin himself would probably agree, however, that we cannot blindly trust the "experts," even when they espouse values that we believe in.

Here are responses to some of the questions that have been raised about therapeutic cloning research:

What is therapeutic cloning and why do we need it?

The diagram labeled "Research Cloning" illustrates the crucial differences between two kinds of cloning: therapeutic and reproductive. Therapeutic cloning places the genetic material from an adult cell inside an egg, in order to grow therapeutically beneficial stem cells, not to produce a baby. These cells can be used in scientific research to deepen our comprehension of disease origins and development, and to develop new medical therapies.

Many debilitating medical conditions are caused by cell damage. Therapeutic cloning (SCNT), could allow a patient's own genetic material to be used to repair that damage. Replacement cells—neurons, blood cells, pancreatic cells, etc.—generated from cloned stem cells would be much less likely to be rejected by a patient's immune system, since they would be genetically identical to the debilitated tissue they were replacing.

Forty Nobel Laureates recently issued a statement that finds this research promising. They cite the prospect of developing cell-replacement therapies, and also of advancing our understanding of fundamental disease processes: "it may be possible to use nuclear transplantation technology to produce patient-specific embryonic stem cells that could overcome the rejection normally associated with tissue and organ transplantation. Nuclear transplantation technology might also permit the creation of embryonic stem cells with defined genetic constitution, permitting a new and powerful approach to understanding how inherited predispositions lead to a variety of cancers and neurological diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases."

Among biomedical researchers in the United States, there is a broad consensus that the research cloning of embryonic stem cells may lead to new remedies for severe childhood and adult illnesses that afflict millions of people. On February 8 of this year, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that therapeutic cloning "offers great promise for treating diseases.... closing these avenues of research may have real costs for millions of people who now have these diseases."

Research that clones stem cells for medical purposes deserves our support.

Are embryonic stem cells really needed for this therapeutic research? Can't scientists use only adult stem cells instead?

Rifkin suggests that "few, if any, on the Left oppose research on adult stem cells, which can be taken from individuals after birth and have proved promising in both animal studies and clinical trials. This 'soft path' approach poses none of the ethical, social, and economic risks of strategies using embryo stem cells." Most scientists working in this area, however, believe that adult stem cells are less

promising for research purposes than embryonic ones. Embryonic stem cells haven't been damaged by aging, and they show a much greater plasticity—the potential for developing into a variety of specialized cells that could be used in life-saving therapies—than adult ones do. Two recent studies published in *Nature* (March 13, 2002), one of them conducted at the University of Florida and the other by

researchers at the University of Edinburgh, cast doubt on previous claims that adult stem cells could revert to an earlier stage of development. In any event, researchers in this domain need to study and work with both embryonic and adult stem cells. We do not yet know which particular path of investigation will lead to useful therapies.

There is an additional and very important use of cloned embryonic stem cells in medical research that adult stem cells cannot serve. As explained above, stem cell lines that result from the embryonic cloning of diseased cells can help us better understand the inception and development of major diseases.

Will therapeutic cloning inevitably lead us onto a slippery slope to the production of cloned human babies?

No. Federal authority can make it illegal to implant a cloned embryo into a uterus. Our model for regulatory oversight should be the English Fertilisation and Embryology Act of 1990, which limits any experimentation with embryos to the first fourteen days. It is at fourteen days that an embryo first begins to develop the primitive streak, the first indication of a nervous system. It is also at fourteen days that, in all but the most extreme case, an embryo loses the ability to split into two and become twins. The oversight mandated by the English Act has prevented any "slippery slope" in the United Kingdom and there is no reason to assume that a similar approach would not work as well in this country.

Will therapeutic cloning lead to unethical incentives being offered for women's eggs, as Rifkin suggests?

The prospect of an increased market for women's eggs is a legitimate concern. But our aim should be to regulate, not to criminalize, the procedures whereby scientists obtain egg cells for research purposes. Moreover, there are clearly some cases where the concern for improper incentives or

risk of egg donation would not be relevant—when a mother wishes to donate an egg to help her child, for example, or to create stem cells that could be used to save her own life. If a person can agree to participate, for example, in a dangerous malaria vaccine study to help prevent or cure this disease, why should she be prevented from donating eggs for similar (but much safer) lifesaving research?

All of the constituencies that have a stake in the benefits of this research need to devise effective regulations for its continuation. We agree with Jeremy Rifkin that we ought not to trust blindly the scientific community or biotech industry. Legislative bodies—with the participation of scientists, medical practitioners, patients' groups, and other interested parties—need to improve already existing statutes regarding egg donation for any purpose: in vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood, or therapeutic cloning. This is the democratic way to address the relevant social and ethical concerns.

It is also important to note that by researching therapeutic cloning, scientists hope to understand the biological properties of a cloned egg cell that induce it to generate stem cells. Once they learn how this cell “re-programming” occurs, they may no longer need to use egg cells.

Irving Weissman, a biology professor at Stanford, compares the current debate over stem cell research to the 1970s controversy over recombinant DNA technology, which now produces a broad range of medicines, including cancer and diabetes treatments. He points out that “the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans each year are saved or made better by such recombinant DNA products.... I believe the kind of medical research that can follow from nuclear transplantation will have a similar magnitude of medical benefits.”

Because of its therapeutic potential, research that clones stem cells for medical purposes deserves our support. It should be publicly funded and better regulated, not outlawed. □

Embryo Cloning and Beyond

Marcy Darnovsky

As Raymond Barglow's and Jeremy Rifkin's articles demonstrate, thoughtful people of good conscience and progressive politics may come to different conclusions about human embryo cloning.

Rifkin, along with other progressives, believes that embryo cloning could open the door to a high-tech eugenic world controlled and promoted by biotechnology corporations. He points also to the health risks faced by the women who would have to donate the millions of eggs that therapies involving embryo cloning would require. Based on these misgivings, Rifkin supports a permanent ban on all kinds of human cloning.

Barglow, along with other progressives, emphasizes the role that embryo cloning may some day play in medical treatments that would use embryonic stem cells to regenerate damaged tissues and organs. Based on his hopes for “research that may aid so many millions of people who are afflicted by debilitating diseases,” he is dismayed at Rifkin's anti-cloning stance.

And many people, progressives and others, are con-

fused: pulled by both the hopes and dangers, tentative in their understanding of the underlying technical facts and political agendas, put off by the polarized tone of the embryo cloning debate.

The contradictory pulls in the embryo cloning controversy are perhaps especially troubling for Jews. Half a century after the Holocaust, most Jews remain viscerally sensitive to the horrors of an eugenic world view. Yet the Jewish tradition is particularly enthusiastic in its support for healing, medical innovation, and scientific knowledge.

What's the best way forward? How can we prevent a “techno-eugenic” future while encouraging research on promising new medical treatments?

The Politics of the New Human Genetic Technologies

I began paying attention to these sorts of questions several years ago, after reading Princeton molecular biologist Lee Silver's notorious account of the new human genetic and reproductive technologies in his book, *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World*. Silver enthusiastically predicts that well-off parents will one day soon choose their children's DNA from a biotech catalog. This new market-based mode of childbearing is inevitable, he says, and will lead to the emergence first of

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genetic castes, which he dubs the "GenRich" and the "Naturals," and thereafter of separate human species.

At first I assumed that Silver was merely indulging in a bit of mad-scientist headline grabbing. When I learned that his vision of a "post-human" future is shared—and being publicly promoted—by a disturbing number of other mainstream scientists, bioethicists, pundits, and biotech entrepreneurs, I began to look for the progressive response. I expected some combination of alarm, sharp analysis, outrage, and ridicule. I found all that, but far less of it than I'd expected. Meanwhile, new genetic and reproductive technologies were burgeoning, biotech startups were raking in investment capital, and an extreme techno-libertarian ideology was taking root.

Before long, however, a growing network of progressives—scholars, scientists, advocates of environmental protection, women's health, human rights, disability rights, civil rights, and indigenous rights—did begin to mobilize around the threat of the new techno-eugenics. Our work had just gotten underway when the controversy about embryo cloning erupted, forcing us to engage a divisive issue of secondary concern rather than remaining focused on a unifying issue of primary concern.

For the most part, the national conversation about embryo cloning has been dangerously incomplete. It has polarized debate between religious conservatives who want to ban embryo cloning permanently, regardless of any medical potential, and biomedical researchers who want an immediate green light, regardless of the eugenic and other risks that unrestricted embryo cloning would pose. Though neither Rifkin nor Barglow belong in either of these camps, I find both their positions unsatisfying as well.

I wholeheartedly share Rifkin's apprehension about embryo cloning and a new eugenics, though as I explain below I'd emphasize the technical and ideological connections as much as the financial ones on which he rests his case. But I differ with his call for an immediate permanent ban on embryo cloning.

I am very skeptical about Barglow's enthusiasm for embryo cloning. Many of the widely repeated claims about its medical promise are highly exaggerated. They are based far more on the search for venture capital than on any scientific findings. Yet, I would support research on embryo cloning if it were done with the kind of regulatory oversight Barglow endorses. What Barglow doesn't mention or doesn't realize, however, is that the UK-style regulations he describes are aggressively *opposed* by many of the researchers and their allies who back the pro-embryo cloning legislation now being considered by Congress. We've proposed a temporary moratorium on embryo cloning to allow time for effective regulations to be put in place, but to date this alternative has not found a congressional sponsor.

For better or worse, the embryo cloning controversy has set the stage for other debates that will soon be upon us. If

only for that reason, it's worth grappling with its technical and political tangles.

Evaluating the Medical Potential of Embryo Cloning

Stem cells are the undifferentiated cells that give rise to the many specialized tissues in the human body. Adult stem cells are found in particular parts of the body, some capable of developing into several kinds of specialized cells.

Embryonic stem cells (ES cells), found in early-stage embryos, are believed to be capable of developing into every other kind of cell. They are more flexible than adult stem cells and easier to isolate. But their medical potential is complicated by two problems: first, they often cause tumors in animal models; second, they would probably have to be individually tailored to match the immune system characteristics of each patient.

Embryo cloning has been proposed as a way to solve the immune rejection problem. ES cells derived from embryos that had been cloned from a patient's own body would theoretically be immunologically compatible with the patient.

This prospect continues to inspire impassioned support. But it is unlikely ever to be practically feasible because of the cost and difficulty of cloning embryos for each patient and obtaining human eggs in the large numbers that would be necessary. According to a report last year in *Nature*, "many experts do not now expect therapeutic cloning to have a large clinical impact" (Peter Aldhous, "Can They Rebuild Us?," April 5, 2001). A recent story in the *Los Angeles Times*' business section puts this conclusion in dollars-and-cents terms. The article, titled "Clone Profit? Unlikely" (May 10, 2002) quotes several top biotech executives on embryo cloning. "It is not commercially viable," said one. It's a "non-starter, commercially," said another.

Embryo cloning is at present a speculative rather than demonstrated component of ES cell therapies. And research on ES cell therapies is itself preliminary. In fact, these are still early days for both adult stem and ES cell research: No one knows just how much medical value either will turn out to have.

It is certainly reasonable to argue that research on both kinds of stem cells should move forward. But here's a point that's often overlooked: ES cell research could proceed for some time without embryo cloning, because ES cells could be derived from embryos originally produced for *in vitro* fertilization procedures. Support for ES cell research can and does coexist with deep wariness about embryo cloning.

Embryo Cloning and Eugenic Engineering: What's the Connection?

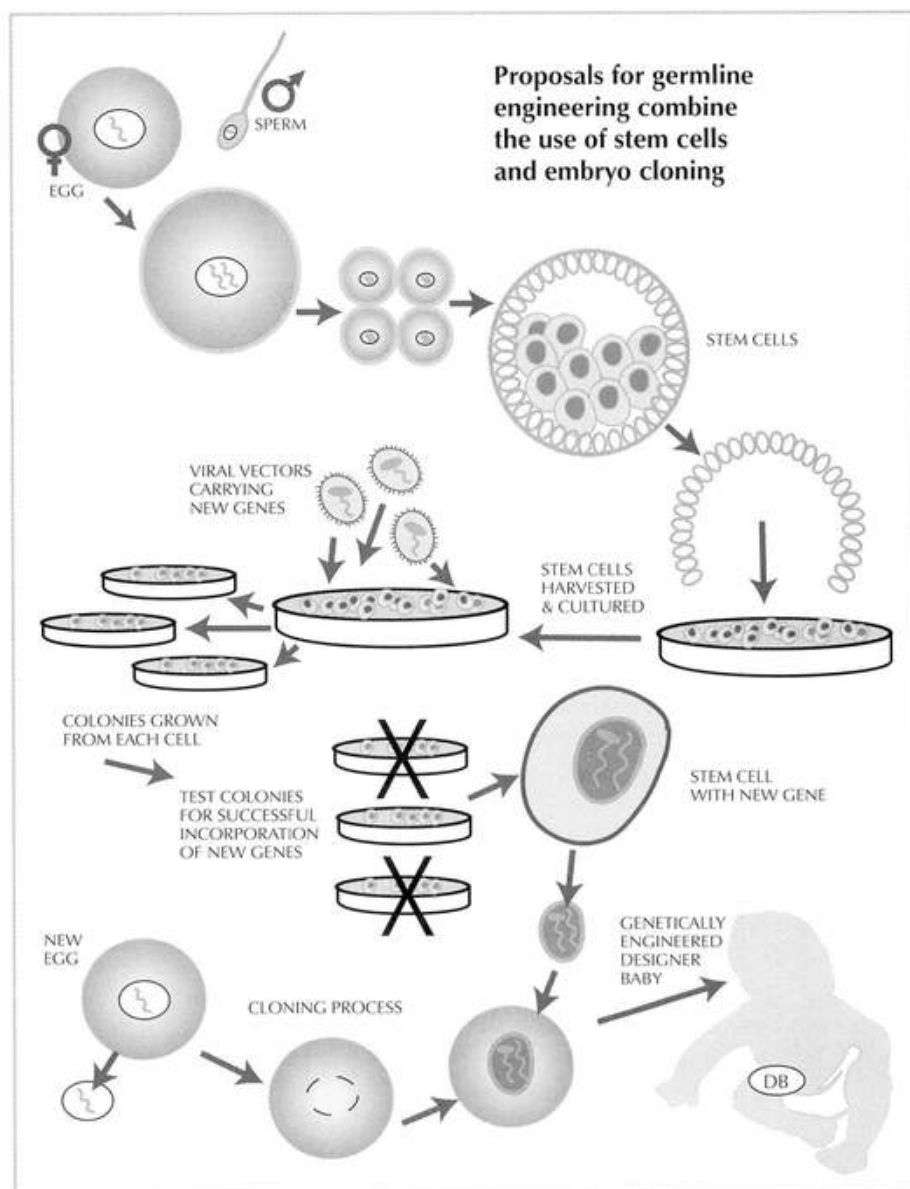
In all the commentary about human cloning, few have noticed the most significant threat it poses: Embryo cloning is the technology that would make the creation of eugenically engineered "designer babies" commercially feasible.

The process of producing a genetically redesigned child would involve creating an embryo through *in vitro* fertilization, culturing ES cells derived from it to provide a sufficient population for the tricky task of inserting the desired genes, and then extracting the nucleus of a successfully altered stem cell to construct a cloned embryo. The resulting child would not be a clone: He or she would have developed from a cell derived from an embryo created with an egg and a sperm, and “improved” in the laboratory. The altered genes would be present in every cell of the child’s body, and would be passed down to any and all future generations. (See illustration at right.)

Many people assume that this kind of genetic manipulation—often called “inheritable genetic modification”—is necessary in order for parents who carry a gene associated with diseases such as Tay Sachs or cystic fibrosis to avoid passing it on to their children. This is not the case, and those who say it is are mistaken or intending to mislead. Using already available screening techniques, parents at risk of having children with serious genetic diseases like these can undergo *in vitro* fertilization and then select embryos unaffected by the condition.

Embryo selection, or “pre-implantation genetic diagnosis,” is itself subject to abuse, and in need of strong regulation. Many disability rights activists argue that it is being used in a misguided search for “perfect” babies, and many feminists voice concern about its use to satisfy “gender preference.” But allowing parents to select from among several embryos for serious medical reasons would have far lesser eugenic implications than would a consumer-based dynamic of “improving” future children by genetic manipulation.

This little-remarked-upon technical relationship between embryo cloning and inheritable genetic modification is a red flag. In the absence of effective regulation, it is very worrisome. And it is truly alarming in light of the ongoing efforts of noted scientists, authors, and others to make eugenic engineering seem both alluring and inevitable.



Is a New Eugenics a Serious Concern?

How seriously should we treat predictions of the inevitable emergence of a genetic elite and “post-human” species? We can hope that technical unreliability will block those who would like to endow future children with manipulated genes or artificial chromosomes. But transgenic animals—goats that secrete spider silk in their milk, rabbits that glow in the dark—now exist. And even if “GenRich”-type alterations remain beyond technical reach, the ideological impact of promoting them is dangerously powerful.

Marketing the ability to specify our children’s appearance and abilities encourages a grotesque consumerist mentality toward children and all human life. Fostering the notion that only a “perfect baby” is worthy of life threatens our solidarity with and support for the disabled, and perpetuates

unattainable standards of perfection. Channeling hopes for human betterment into preoccupation with genetic fixes shrinks our already withered commitments to improving social conditions and enriching cultural and community life. Promoting a future of genetically engineered inequality legitimizes the vast existing injustices that are socially arranged and enforced.

Most advocates of eugenic engineering realize that their project all too easily triggers concerns like these, and evokes associations with Nazi racism and genocide. They counter that while the Nazis' methods were pernicious, and while governmental coercion must of course be avoided, the new eugenics would emerge out of the voluntary choices of parents-to-be who had concluded that pre-selecting their offspring's genes would give their children the best start in life.

This consumer's view of eugenics lends itself to the claim that designing a baby is an "individual right." But rights are always socially negotiated—not long ago, slave owning and marital rape were counted among them. And the value we properly place on individual liberty must always be balanced against our commitments to social justice and solidarity. Changing a future child's genetic makeup, and experimenting with the genetic legacy of humanity, fall outside any acceptable notion of individual rights or parental prerogatives.

The advocates of eugenic engineering are on equally shaky ground when they assert—as in titles such as *Children of Choice* and *From Chance to Choice*—that manipulating a future child's genes is a "reproductive choice." Terminating an unwanted pregnancy is very different from determining the genetic constitution of a future child.

Also suspect are claims that restrictions on inheritable genetic modification and reproductive cloning would trample scientific freedom. The capacity to manipulate the genes we pass on to our children carries social and political risks as momentous as those posed by any technology humanity has yet developed. Surely such a world-shaping technology is a proper subject for democratic control.

A Solution to the Impasse?

At the moment it appears unlikely that Congress will pass any cloning legislation in the current session, in spite of nearly universal professions of support for a ban on reproductive cloning. This would leave us with no legislative protection against even the "cowboy cloners" who say they are about to produce cloned babies. It would put the United States at odds with the dozens of countries—the forty-one nations of the Council of Europe, along with



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India, Peru, South Africa, and others—that have already adopted bans on both reproductive cloning and inheritable genetic modification. And it would be a setback for efforts just getting underway in the United Nations to draft a global convention banning reproductive cloning.

What is to be done? Let's look at the big picture. We believe that there is widespread support, domestically and internationally, for responsible governance of the new human genetic and reproductive technologies.

First, reproductive cloning and inheritable genetic modification should be banned. These technologies serve no overriding positive purpose, and open the door to a potentially catastrophic eugenic future.

Second, we need responsible, accountable regulation of other new human genetic and reproductive technologies, including embryo cloning, pre-natal and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, and sex selection.

Third, we need a commitment to the active development and equitable distribution of applications of genetic technologies that can help prevent disease and alleviate suffering.

Towards these ends, the kind of regulatory structure that Barglow describes, based on the UK's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (HFEA), is precisely what we have in mind. We invite Barglow, Rifkin, and others to work with us to build wide support for establishing such a mechanism in the United States.

In the heat of the Congressional debate over cloning, which has been framed as a contest between Christian conservatives who want to stop medical progress and liberals who want to save dying children, some have come close to suggesting that the "progressive" position would be to affirm the right of the biotechnology industry to do whatever it wants, as fast as it can, under as few regulatory constraints as possible.

Such a position is untenable enough under any circumstances. When the issue at hand involves technologies that could unleash a new high-tech eugenics upon the world, it is perilous.

Decisions about how and where to draw political and policy lines around the new human genetic and reproductive technologies are decisions about the future of humanity. They must not be left to those committed to grotesque visions of a "post-human" future, or with financial or professional stakes in particular procedures. We must ensure that the new human genetic technologies are used to advance health and well-being for all, and not hijacked in the service of a dangerous new eugenics. □

Operation Defensive Shield

The Propaganda War and the Reality

Jessica Montell

The conflict in the Occupied Territories has become a battle over propaganda. There is no dispute as to who has military superiority between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel does. But the question of who has rhetorical superiority is still up for grabs. As Israel attempts to gain the upper hand in this war of words, it is critical for Israeli citizens and those of us who care about Israel to examine the difference between the self-image Israel projects and the reality of its policies. No matter who wins today's verbal skirmish, a resolution of this conflict requires policies that afford human dignity to all.

The website of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is itself an indication of the importance the military attaches to its image abroad, with its eye-catching English updates. The site prominently displays a document outlining its doctrine, which includes something called the IDF Spirit:

"IDF Soldiers will operate according to IDF values and orders, while adhering to the laws of the state and the norms of human dignity." As one of the four sources for this Spirit, the document cites "Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life."

There is also a section in the IDF Doctrine on Purity of Arms, a phrase from the earliest days of Zionism that is still invoked in daily conversation without a trace of cynicism: "The IDF Servicemen and women will use their weapons only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will maintain their

humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property."

Such statements would be welcome, were they not so clearly intended for public consumption rather than a reflection of the army's actual actions. Sadly, the army appears to spend much greater efforts telling civilians about the IDF value of human dignity than telling its soldiers.

On the first evening of Passover, March 27, a Palestinian man walked into a Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya and blew himself up, killing twenty-eight people. This was the culmination of a bloody month for Israel, perhaps its bloodiest ever as far as civilian deaths. Eighty-one Israeli civilians died in almost daily attacks inside Israel and in the Occupied Territories. Palestinians also killed ten soldiers inside Israel and twenty in the Occupied Territories. Among both Israeli civilians and soldiers, the March casualties number almost one-third of all those killed during the entire intifada. Of course, Palestinian fatalities during this same month were much higher—over twice as high. Yet the fact that the casualty ratio—previously five or even ten-to-one—was approaching parity was not lost on the warped accounting of the Israeli (and the Palestinian) public.

The response to "the Passover massacre" at the Park Hotel was quick to follow. Within twenty-four hours, the army had issued emergency call-up notices for 20,000 reserve soldiers, the largest such call-up since the 1982 War in Lebanon, and more followed. The tanks rolled into Ramallah the next day and other cities



rapidly followed. By April 3, the IDF was conducting major military operations in all Palestinian cities with the exception of Hebron and East Jerusalem. So began Operation Defensive Shield, the largest military operation in the West Bank since the occupation of this territory in 1967.

On the eve of the operation, Israel's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz issued a greeting to the troops: "This operation will be waged with determination and wisdom. We will safeguard human dignity and not harm innocent civilians, for this is our uniqueness and the source of our strength." Yet the accuracy of Mofaz' prediction of IDF morality could not be assessed, as the army took steps to prevent civilian monitoring of its actions. All journalists were barred from "military" areas, which included the major Palestinian cities. Human rights organizations were also severely restricted in their access to the affected areas, limiting the possibility of obtaining accurate information.

At the same time, almost no stories of Palestinian suffering were reported in the Israeli media, which was devoted almost exclusively to morale-boosting stories about "our boys in uniform." Holocaust Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day were all celebrated with tens of thousands of troops inside Palestinian cities. The Israeli public did not question the media's spin because almost all Israeli Jews rallied around the flag. Well and truly terrorized by the constant barrage of suicide bombings, the overwhelming majority of Israelis heartily supported the invasions and uncritically swallowed IDF rhetoric.

Thus human rights organizations faced two obstacles: there was no access to verify information, and the standard channels to distribute information were blocked. In response, four leading Israeli human rights organizations joined together to publish a daily briefing of the Palestinian cries for help. Each briefing contained up to ten stories of the suffering of innocent Palestinians, including some of those reproduced below. Briefings were sent to the national press, the foreign press and the Israeli government. After receiving several such briefings, Minister of Education Limor Livnat sent a brief letter to B'Tselem: "We have no interest in receiving these briefings and request that you stop sending them to our Bureau." Similarly, while the briefings received extensive coverage in the foreign media, they were virtually ignored by the local press.

This desire not to know also characterized the response of many in the public. The only newspaper that continued to report on Palestinian reality throughout the military operation, *Ha'aretz*, is currently the target of a consumer boycott for its alleged anti-Zionist tendencies. One-time leftist Irit Linor triggered the campaign by publicly canceling her subscription. "I don't want to be a subscriber to a newspaper

that makes me ashamed of my Zionism, my patriotism, and my intelligence, three traits I hold dear," Linor wrote. The letter, published on a leading Israeli news site, provoked an unprecedented number of responses. Some 300 surfers wrote in, the overwhelming majority to support Linor, and even to announce that they too were canceling their subscriptions to *Ha'aretz*.

In Israel, the desire not to know is feeding a larger, scarier climate of intolerance for dissent. Israel's Attorney General, for example, publicly attacked the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (Israel's oldest and most respected civil liberties organizations) for its advocacy of human rights during the operation. In this he joined right-wing politicians such as Deputy Minister of Internal Security Gideon Ezra, who suggested that left-wing Israelis and human rights organizations should be investigated for treason.

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Jenin

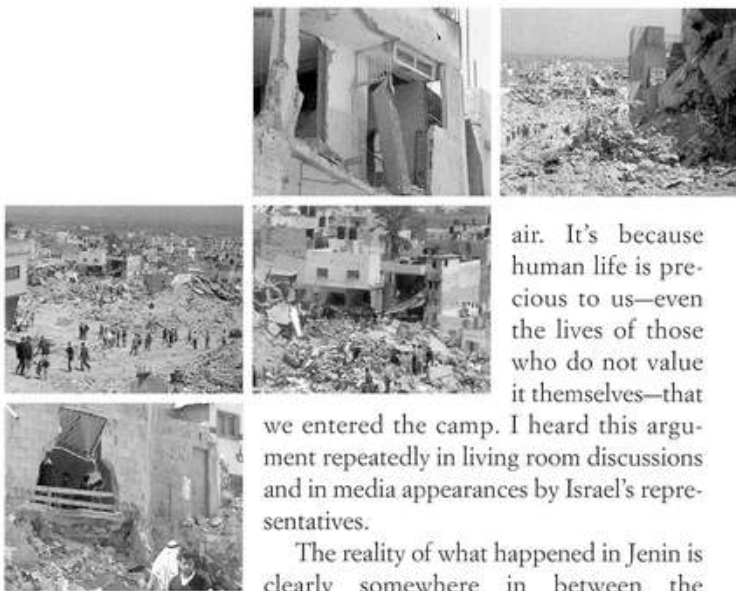
In this propaganda battle, the Palestinians of course have also been active participants—on the other side. The isolation of Palestinians—each family confined to their home under curfew—fostered rumors and even hysteria. Emails reporting massacres and other atrocities were based on noises overheard, a cautious glance from the window, and third-hand reports. At the same time, there were also intentional Palestinian efforts at disinformation, in order to galvanize international censure of Israel.

The rhetoric surrounding Jenin is the archetype of the discourse on both sides. The military operation in the Jenin Refugee Camp was the fiercest of battles on both the military and rhetorical front. For Palestinians, Jenin looms large as a myth of brave Palestinian resistance and Israeli atrocities. Palestinians have described Israeli behavior in Jenin not only as a war crime, but as a massacre and even as a crime against humanity.

In response to the allegations of Israeli atrocities, the IDF and the Foreign Ministry formed a joint PR Center. Allegations regarding Jenin were a central focus of the Center's activity. Gideon Meir, from Israel's Foreign Ministry and the head of the PR Center, explained a key strategy to describe what happened in Jenin: "the fighting was particularly intense because of the IDF's desire to avoid harming civilians.... We endanger our soldiers so that there will be as few Palestinian fatalities as possible."

The relatively high number of Israeli soldiers killed in Jenin—twenty three—was also identified as a PR asset. Israelis responded to allegations of misconduct by pointing out the risks they took in sending ground forces into the camp at all. If we weren't so moral, Israelis repeatedly asserted, Israel would simply bomb the camp from the





air. It's because human life is precious to us—even the lives of those who do not value it themselves—that

we entered the camp. I heard this argument repeatedly in living room discussions and in media appearances by Israel's representatives.

The reality of what happened in Jenin is clearly somewhere in between the Palestinian exaggerations and the Israeli superlatives. Apparently the IDF was caught by surprise in Jenin, as Palestinian fighters decided to make a stand rather than flee or turn themselves in. Thus, rather than ending after a few days, the fighting dragged on, with heavy casualties. No massacre occurred. However, during this time, thousands of people remained trapped in their homes under a stiff curfew, while the IDF conducted intensive aerial shelling and massive house demolitions. There is plenty of evidence, detailed below, that the IDF committed gross violations of the human rights of these trapped civilians during this period.

For Israel, once the question of a massacre is answered in the negative, there is no interest in pursuing the grave human rights violations that did take place in Jenin and elsewhere. Yet, the reality of Israel's military operations in all of the cities is quite different than the story Israelis tell themselves. I provide below a few examples from that reality. As I write this, B'Tselem continues its investigations into human rights issues during Operation Defensive Shield. Given their scope and complexity, making complete sense of these events will take some time.

In describing the IDF's documented actions, I have excluded policies which require a complex balancing of legitimate security concerns with humanitarian principles. For example, I do not address Israeli soldiers' use of lethal force or the policies of house demolitions; as a result, I do not include descriptions of circumstances in which civilians were killed, whether by IDF fire or by house demolitions. I have instead chosen to present those human rights violations that cannot be justified by any military purpose.

Because this article addresses the gap between Israel's self-image and the reality of its policies, I do not address Palestinian human rights violations. Any analysis of the fighting between Israel and Palestinians also requires attention to the methods used by Palestinians, particularly their decision to resist from within civilian houses and to lay

explosives in those houses. Because I am not looking at the issues related to the armed conflict, and because my focus is on Israel's internal discourse, I do not address these issues. (The websites of both the IDF and Israel's Foreign Ministry devote extensive space to these issues, though from the perspective of deflecting criticism from Israel.) The issues I do discuss are the IDF's curtailment of civilian movement, the IDF's decision to block Palestinian access to medical care, the IDF's use of human shields, and the property damage that resulted from the IDF's entrance into Palestinian homes and offices.

Movement Curtailed

During Operation Defensive Shield, Israel's already unbearable restrictions on freedom of movement were dramatically increased. Population centers were placed under prolonged curfews, confining residents to their homes for weeks on end, with all entry into these areas prohibited. This caused severe shortages of food, water and medical supplies. Humanitarian aid organizations were not granted access to the population.

A reserve soldier who served in Ramallah told B'Tselem that "everyone—even our platoon and battalion commanders—said that the curfew was a punitive measure, that the population should suffer so they would know that Arafat was a bad leader. The instructions were to enforce the curfew by shooting in the air. There was a three-to-four hour break in the curfew once every two to three days. The announcement lifting the curfew was delivered through the local media; the method to announce the re-imposition was to shoot in the air from an armored personnel carrier. At this point the soldiers started to shoot randomly at parked cars and water heaters."

A reserve officer told B'Tselem that "at least one battalion commander would shoot when [Palestinians] went up to their roofs during curfew. I saw this at least twice. 'Warning shots'—you shoot to scare, so they know that you're there. You didn't have to justify yourself or be accountable to anyone."

B'Tselem has testimonies regarding men, women, and children injured or even killed for stepping outside during curfews. Such was the case with Basma Kaisia, thirty years old and the mother of four, who was shot and killed while walking to the store to buy candles in her village of Dahariya.

In some cities there were organized breaks in the curfew. In others, the curfew was uninterrupted for a week or more. Throughout the two weeks of fighting in Jenin, and even for a few days afterward, no one was allowed to leave their home. The city of Bethlehem and its environs remained under curfew for five weeks, though there were periodic breaks, until the impasse at the Church of the Nativity was resolved.

Many areas were without running water while under curfew. In some instances, the IDF's heavy machinery damaged

water lines, cutting off the supply. In other cases, the intentional cutting off of electricity, which also powers water generators, resulted in the suspension of water. Whatever the reason, parts of Bethlehem and Nablus were without water for over ten days. The entire Jenin refugee camp was without running water for two weeks. Amjad A-Rifa'ai, from the new Askar refugee camp just outside of Nablus, told B'Tselem that during the period his family had no water, a water pipe located twenty meters from his house had been damaged by IDF tanks and that water was flowing from it. However, he and his neighbors were under curfew for eleven days, with Israeli tanks preventing access to the broken pipe.

Denial of Medical Care

One of the most serious consequences of the blanket curfews concerned access to medical care. During the March military operations, the IDF blocked the movement of ambulances (including those of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and the International Red Cross), making medical treatment and evacuation of the sick and wounded impossible. Soldiers killed five medical personnel while shooting at ambulances that tried to get to the injured. The result of this blocked access, in some cases, was that people bled to death. The gross violations of medical neutrality made even the usually discrete International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) publicly protest these policies.

During Operation Defensive Shield, the situation was even worse. The obstacles to free movement left hospitals unable to obtain essential supplies and impeded the evacuation of dead bodies, posing serious health threats for the local populations. Perhaps the most extreme case of impediments to free movement was in the Jenin refugee camp, where access to the camp was denied to all ambulances and humanitarian organizations for twelve days.

Israel claims that the restrictions on ambulances and medical teams are due to the fact that Palestinians are using the ambulances for hostile activity against Israel and that it is too dangerous to let them go into fighting areas. It is not up to the IDF to decide if an area is too dangerous for the ICRC, entrusted to operate in the world's war zones. Furthermore, no one denies the IDF's right to search ambulances; they are certainly not, however, entitled to shoot at them.

Not only fighters were affected by the paralysis of medical services. Many of those killed and injured were civilians not taking part in the fighting. In addition, hundreds of Palestinians were unable to receive essential medical care unrelated to the fighting. Kidney patients, dependent on dialysis several times a week, had to forgo these treatments. Twelve kidney patients from the city of Jenin, for example, missed a week of treatment with serious health consequences. On April 10, fifty-year-old 'Abd a-Rahman Lidawi, a kidney patient, died in his home in Bethlehem. Due to the curfew, he had been unable to reach the hospital for dialysis

treatment for eight days. Two days later, his body remained at home, as the curfew prevented evacuation.

On April 8, sixty-eight-year-old Fahima Najajra, from Bethlehem, ran out of her cancer medication. The next day she felt severe pain and her family tried frantically to get her to the hospital. The Red Crescent ambulance service did not succeed in getting approval from the army to reach her house and she died later that evening.

On Friday, April 5, 2002, Tahani Fatouh, a pharmacist from Al Msakan A-Sha'abiya in Nablus District went into labor in her seventh month of pregnancy. Her husband, Dr.

Obstruction of medical care provokes no outrage or soul-searching on the part of the Israeli public.

Ghassan Sha'ar, called an ambulance, but it could not reach her house due to the curfew. With the help of a neighbor, Dr. Sha'ar delivered his baby. The delivery went smoothly, but all attempts to get an ambulance to the house to get the baby to an incubator failed. Some thirty minutes after the birth, the newborn's health started to deteriorate. Dr. Sha'ar managed to resuscitate his son twice. On the third attempt, the baby died. Fatouh became pregnant after four years of fertility treatments. The hospital is only two kilometers away from the couple's home.

On April 7, two-year-old Tabaraq Udeh from Deir Al-Hatab in Nablus District, ran out of medication. The infant suffered from cerebral palsy and epilepsy. The medication supply could not be renewed because of the IDF siege and the girl's health began to deteriorate. She ceased to communicate, became unable to stand on her feet, slipped into unconsciousness, and began to have convulsions. Following many attempts to get her to a hospital in Nablus, a Red Crescent ambulance finally made it to the village on April 16 and the child was taken to the hospital accompanied by her mother. She died the next morning. Her attending physician, Dr. Hamid al-Masri, said that Tabaraq's death



would have been avoided had she made it to the hospital sooner, and had she been able to take her medication.

These are only some of the cases B'Tselem documented. There are undoubtedly others: The inevitable result of placing a population of hundreds of thousands under prolonged curfew and siege.

Human Shields

On April 8, B'Tselem spoke by telephone with a Palestinian who saw an unusual sight: Soldiers marching down the street in Nablus with a group of Palestinians marching in front of them. The witness claimed the Palestinians were being used as a human shield. But, he acknowledged upon further questioning, he was far away and only saw them for a minute before they turned the corner. Then another Palestinian, unconnected to the first, reported a similar story, though he also only saw from a distance. The initial reports were registered but put aside. Particularly in light of the climate of disinformation, the allegations were too serious to be issued without clear confirmation.

Throughout that same day, B'Tselem's fieldworkers were in contact with Dr. Zahara el-Wawi at the al-Baq mosque in the old city of Nablus. Immediately following the IDF invasion into the city, an emergency clinic had been established in the mosque. After several days of curfew, the clinic's supply of medicines had been exhausted, and as a result the clinic was unable to take in any additional patients. The supply of water in the clinic had also been exhausted, as had the gas that powers the electric generator. At the time of the call, the clinic housed forty-five wounded persons, four doctors, several volunteers, and ten corpses that could not be removed.

Then Dr. Wawi reported that six IDF soldiers entered the Mosque with their guns resting on the shoulders of Palestinian civilians who were forced to march in front of the soldiers as "human shields." As Dr. Wawi spoke, the soldiers separated the medical staff from the patients, searched the dead bodies, and checked the identities of the injured patients.

These were the first of many reports of soldiers using Palestinians as shields or forcing them to perform dangerous tasks, such as entering houses to check if they were booby-trapped or removing suspicious objects from the road. B'Tselem has since received testimonies from soldiers indicating that they received clear instructions on this practice. A reserve soldier who served in the Bethlehem area told B'Tselem how it worked:

At the first stage, we went house to house. The procedure was that there was a security team outside and a team that went in. You take the IDs from the men and communicate with the General Security Service. There was an organized procedure there: you spread out around the house, knock on the door and identify yourself as the army. You have the men raise their shirts, put all the women and children

into a separate room, and then you take one man and search for weapons throughout the house. The man touches what you ask him to. The rationale: fear of booby traps. Practically, it makes the search easier and you don't turn the house upside down...

After that we moved on to a new assignment—catching specific wanted men, something more complicated. The open fire regulations were strict because of the fear of friendly crossfire. Before the search, you go to the neighbor, take him out of his house and tell him to call to someone in the house we wanted. If it works, it works. If not, we blast the door or use a hammer. The neighbor goes in first. If they're planning something, he'll get it. The orders say to send him upstairs to get everyone out: women and children to one room, men are tied up and taken to another room. You take IDs and then search the house with the neighbor. The neighbor does not have the option of not doing what we tell him to. The neighbor calls out, knocks on the door and says that the army is here. If no one answers the door, you have to tell the neighbor that you'll kill him if no one comes out, and he should tell that to the people in the house.

On May 5, seven human rights organizations filed a petition to Israel's High Court of Justice against the IDF practice of using Palestinians as "human shields." In its response to the petition, the State neither confirmed nor denied the existence of such practices. However, it informed the Court that it had issued an unequivocal order prohibiting the use of Palestinian civilians as "human shields," as "hostages" or to perform any tasks for the army that would endanger them. The State also said that the IDF is conducting a comprehensive investigation of the complaints regarding the use of Palestinians as human shields. B'Tselem will follow up on these pronouncements.

Property Damage

A reserve soldier who served in Ramallah during Defensive Shield told B'Tselem: "Someone decided to destroy the [Palestinian] Authority—the preference was to deal with bodies of the Authority and not of Hamas. I heard one senior officer say that the goal of the Operation was economic-civil destruction of the Authority. I don't know if it's true, but it seeps in." This statement conforms to the clear impression of all who view the damage, particularly in Ramallah.

One stated goal of this Operation was to gather information about "the terrorist infrastructure" and the involvement of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in terror. This could potentially explain the confiscation of documents and computer disks. It does not explain the destruction of these materials. It also does not explain the targeting of offices that clearly provide civil services. In the Ministry of Education, for example, not only was the computer network taken, so were overhead projectors and video players. Other equipment, including televisions and file cabinets full

of records, such as student transcripts, were simply destroyed. This same story is repeated in office after office: the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the al-Bireh Municipal Library.

PA offices were not the only targets. It seems that no office was spared. Human rights organizations, social service and welfare organizations, and radio and television stations were also vandalized. Hard disks were taken from civil society organizations that had invested years of work and millions of dollars to compile this material.

"Nothing happened to al-Haq," Shawan Jabarin told me when he returned to the al-Haq office after Israel's invasion. He is the fieldwork coordinator for the oldest Palestinian human rights organizations. Of course Jabarin is speaking in relative terms. A laptop computer was stolen, furniture was broken and overturned, the contents of filing cabinets scattered all over the floor, three computers broken. But compared to many other offices, Jabarin stressed, al-Haq came out unscathed.

A reserve soldier told B'Tselem: "In one briefing the issue of vandalism came up. It was after the unit had destroyed one certain office and came back and everyone was shocked, though they themselves had done it. The response was, vandalism should not be directed against civilians but against the PA, and the latter should even be encouraged. The platoon commander said, to destroy computers is OK, but don't

wreck the tables. The orders for Defensive Shield were vague—destroy the power centers of the Authority. The interpretation given to this in the field was to destroy offices connected to the PA. Everyone, including the officers, told us to completely destroy PA offices."

It is difficult to separate the destruction related to the operation (the confiscation of material to gather information) from the wanton acts of vandalism and theft. The total picture is one of a vengeful assault on all symbols of Palestinian society and Palestinian identity. This is combined with what can only be described as hooliganism: the result of thousands of teenage boys and young men in uniform allowed to run wild in Palestinian cities with no accountability for their actions.

Dozens of Palestinians have reported money and jewelry missing from houses after soldiers conducted searches. According to one young conscript:

Theft and looting were a big problem.... I don't know why there were more cases in this Operation. There was a feeling that this is war. Maybe the bombing in Netanya pissed everybody off. There was a feeling of some restraint bursting.... TVs and cable boxes were either taken or broken. Computers—it was unbelievable, people simply made an effort to both destroy and rob. Disk drives, sound cards.... People also took cell phones and CDs from people's houses. I didn't find one computer intact. Diskwriters were

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- Sept. 14: Public Talk in San Diego. Tickets: Online: www.ticketmaster.com; Box Office: (619) 570-1100.
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taken like hot cakes, whole computers disappeared. The sergeant major would bring a truck and load up. It was done openly.

Another young conscript told B'Tselem what we have heard repeatedly from the Palestinian perspective: "I saw one tank drive down the street and take pains to avoid a car so as not to damage it. Then the tank behind him would intentionally swerve in order to destroy that same car."

Picking Up the Pieces

A large banner across the top of the IDF website dramatically proclaims that "Operation Defensive Shield is Over." This announcement states the obvious to the Israeli public, yet is far from self-evident for the Palestinians.

Even after the end of the Operation, incursions into Area A—what would have been front-page news a year ago—take place regularly with little fuss. Israel has imposed a siege on every Palestinian community, stricter than ever before. It is likely that these restrictions impose difficulties on would-be bombers. Yet these restrictions are also devastating for the civilian population.

There is little discussion in Israel about these measures, though the fact that the onslaught of suicide bombings has decreased is certainly noted. For the Israeli public, life has pretty much returned to normal. Soldiers are no longer being killed on a daily basis and the reserve soldiers have come home. Human rights organizations and the Israeli press have also largely returned to their routine. The restrictions on the press have been lifted. Movement of human rights organizations, though always a problem, is no longer paralyzed.

For weeks after the Operation, the media featured reports from soldiers who served in the West Bank, and

less than flattering portrayals of the IDF have also trickled into the mainstream media. Israeli society has begun to acknowledge some problems with IDF behavior, though the issues they ignore are as telling as those they choose to confront.

In the March invasion, the issue that aroused the most Israeli public attention was the acknowledgement by the IDF Chief of Staff that some soldiers had written blue numbers on the arms of Palestinian detainees. This was a meaningless act as far as the victims were concerned; for a Palestinian beaten on the way to detention, handcuffed and blindfolded, and held in degrading physical conditions, a soldier with a blue pen writing a number on his arm is the least of his worries. Yet for the Israeli public, keenly sensitive to anything resembling Holocaust tattooing, this symbolic act was more effective than all the acts of brutality in breaking through the mechanisms of denial about Israel's military morality.

During Operation Defensive Shield, the symbolic act for the Israeli public was the widespread reports of theft and vandalism—though, as I have discussed above, the scope of the offenses was far from symbolic. As a result of media allegations, the IDF Spokesperson's Office, as well as other offices, have acknowledged the severity of the allegations and promised to investigate. In fact the Military Prosecutor's Office has already brought charges in five cases of looting, and another fourteen files are under investigation. This number is astounding considering the IDF's reluctance to investigate soldiers for actions against Palestinians. In fact, the number of soldiers already charged with looting just a few weeks after the offense is equal to all indictments brought against soldiers for all offenses against Palestinians





over the course of the past nineteen months. Though I welcome the investigations into vandalism and looting, they only indicate that, were the IDF genuinely interested in holding soldiers accountable for other abuses against Palestinians, they could find a way to do it.

In the case of denying medical treatment, for example, the IDF opened a total of five investigations over the past nineteen months. Two were closed without any proceedings taken against the soldiers and another three are still under investigation. To date, no one has been held accountable for the twenty-four documented cases of Palestinians whom soldiers delayed or denied access to medical care and who subsequently died.

The issue of obstruction to medical care provokes no outrage or soul-searching on the part of the Israeli public or the military echelons. With unbearable ease the public parrots and blithely accepts IDF justifications for shooting at ambulances, killing doctors and paramedics, and paralyzing medical care. In this context it seems fairly clear that the looting disturbs Israeli society not for the damage caused to the Palestinians, but for what it says about us. The widespread evidence of IDF soldiers behaving like unruly thugs, and even common criminals, undermines every myth of IDF discipline and morality.

A public opinion survey conducted shortly after the end of Operation Defensive Shield indicated that the Operation enjoyed the widespread support of the Israeli public. Among Jews, 86 percent think that the operation contributed to Israel's security. Israelis are not unaware that the world does not share their opinion: at least 54 percent think the Operation has damaged Israel politically. However, in the final analysis, fully 90 percent of those surveyed asserted

that the decision to launch Operation Defensive Shield was the correct decision. Even among voters for the left-wing Meretz party, 60 percent supported the decision to launch the Operation. Views among Israeli Arabs are almost a mirror image of this consensus, with equally high numbers against the Operation.

The widespread support for the Operation is not affected by the acknowledgement of military sources that the achievements of Defensive Shield are only temporary. While the deaths, arrests, and weapons confiscations have certainly dealt a setback to the "terrorist infrastructure," every military official agrees that it is only a matter of weeks—six months at the most—until this infrastructure is rebuilt. Indeed we are already witnessing an alarming rise in terror attacks. And there is little doubt that the terrorists now have an unlimited supply of young men and women willing to turn themselves into human bombs to exact revenge for the suffering Israel has wrought.

In the wake of Defensive Shield, we are left with pressing questions regarding the facts and how to interpret them. How could civilian casualties and suffering have been mitigated? To what extent were abuses the actions of individual soldiers and to what extent are they the result of policy? And the largest question of all—was this Operation justified if it bought Israel only a few months of quiet at the price of widespread Palestinian suffering? These are difficult questions, but it is vital that we wrestle with them. Sadly, Israeli society is wholly unequipped to engage with these questions, given the present state of ignorance and denial. Only by confronting the reality behind the propaganda can we address the price our policies have exacted on the Palestinians, and on ourselves. □

Investing in the Language of Peace

David Newman

This year's Independence Day celebrations in Israel took place in a subdued atmosphere. For a change, many people stayed at home and spent their time in reflection about a country still at war, peace as far away as it has ever been, and a future—despite fifty-four years of statehood—which looks even less rosy for our grandchildren than it did for our grandparents, many of whom were proud to be amongst the founders of the State. Would they have believed that fifty years down the road we would still be at conflict? And not only at conflict but a mighty occupier, no longer fearing for our collective physical existence, but continuing to fight because we are not able to rid ourselves of the cursed territories which we occupied in 1967? Would they have believed that we have become the rulers rather than the ruled, the conquerors rather than the vanquished, the deniers of independence to others rather than the denied?

To write a critical article about Israel and the government's policy in the territories at this time is akin to being labeled as a traitor. In writing my weekly column in the *Jerusalem Post*, a paper which has—during the past decade—adopted an increasingly right-wing and hard-line stance with respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, I am no longer surprised at the reaction to my critique of the government's military incursions into the West Bank towns. I receive all the usual labels—a “self-hating Jew,” a “traitor,”—accompanied by the hope of one well-wisher that “I and my family get blown up by the next Palestinian suicide bomber” and the hope that “I return to where I came from because the likes of me do not have a place in Israel.” These comments would be even more sick were it not for the fact that most of them come from a very clearly defined group of super-patriots—right-wing, usually religious, Jews living in North America.

The critique I receive from the right wing and the settlers in Israel is of a different nature. While accusing me of being naïve, while telling me that they fail to understand how, after all the suicide bombings, I can still talk a language of peace and negotiations, they at least recognize that their fate and mine—as residents and citizens of the same country—are tied up together and that our fate—for good or

for bad—will be the same. They at least engage me in dialogue, however tough that dialogue may be. They do not pour on me the wrath of the evangelicals sitting so far away, who would have my sons die for their crusade of a Greater Israel and of a land emptied of its indigenous Palestinian inhabitants.

There are, of course, those who still celebrate Independence Day as though nothing has happened during the past few weeks, as though the blood of this year's Passover sacrificial lambs in Netanya and the resulting military retaliations were not happening just a few miles down the road. The State continues with the banality of secular ritual, such as the fireworks at Mount Herzl, the Bible Quiz televised live on the morning of Independence Day, and the closing annual ceremony of the Israel prize awards. Prime Minister Sharon takes a break from directing the siege of Jenin to shake hands with those who have been awarded Israel's highest honors for their contribution to science and the arts. It didn't dawn on any of the prize recipients to refuse to take the award from such a person, or for that matter from the hawkish Minister of Education, Limor Livnat, who has been at the forefront of the policies aimed at negating any future Palestinian State west of the river Jordan and whose educational policies have focused on how to make Israeli children even more patriotic and more Zionist.

There is another group who had no secondary thoughts about the situation as they continued with their celebrations. The religious Zionists, who only recently have appointed one of the country's most right-wing, most irredentist, politicians—Eppie Fine—as their new political leader, attended their houses of prayer to give thanks to their God who has delivered them from all evil, who has “liberated” the land on their behalf, and who will surely continue with the process of divine redemption. In their eyes, a process which began in 1948, continued in 1967, and will eventually bring about a messianic era in which there will be a return to Jewish monarchy, a restoration of the third temple, and the disappearance of all other nations (Palestinians) and their places of worship (the Al Aqsa mosque), a time when “truth” will finally reign in the world.

These religious Zionists have no qualms about the retaliatory violence visited upon the Palestinian population, not just the terrorists and their infrastructure, but also the civilian population which were injured and killed as a result. For them it is a modern version of a divine wrath being

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visited upon all those who refuse to recognize that the Land of Israel belongs exclusively to the people of Israel, and that all others are usurpers, thieves, and have no place in this land. It is just one more dimension of the moral corruption which has taken over the religious world in Israel, which has transformed religion into an ultra-nationalist and politico-fundamentalist ideology from which such concepts as kindness, justice, or love have been written out of the text.

It's not easy to share religious convictions and to be a peacenik in Israel. I have, on numerous occasions, been the subject of exclusion in synagogues for having had the audacity not only to adopt a pro-peace, anti-Occupation stance, but even to do so in the name of religion and prophetic teachings. It is one thing when you are identified as being part of the secular left, of coming from a world "devoid of values" where nothing better can be expected of you. But it is quite another when you demonstrate a familiarity with the texts, narratives, and commentaries which are normally seen as being the monopoly of the religious right. The fact that they selectively use these texts and narratives to promote their own exclusive political philosophy is, in their eyes, an irrelevance. For them, there is only one teaching—the teaching of irredentism and territory—and this is the absolute and only truth in their eyes.

So what if the word "shalom" appears time after time in the prayers and teachings of the rabbis and the theologians? This, in their eyes, is something metaphysical, does not apply to peoples such as the Palestinians, and cannot be achieved if it requires the giving up of "sacred" territory, territory promised, and delivered, by a Divine Being—the exclusive Jewish divinity. And in the name of religious politics, the National Religious Party has now appointed as its new leader and cabinet minister one of the most racist politicians who has ever graced the Israeli political scene and whose xenophobic and hard-line attitude towards Palestinians and any outsiders disgraces the kippah he wears on his head.

But it would be all too easy simply to blame one right-wing xenophobic sector of society that distorts religious teachings for its own political and nationalist objectives. To understand why the Oslo process failed, why the Camp David and Taba proposals were rejected, and why we have returned to a round of bloodletting and violence of an extent hitherto unknown in this troublesome region, we also have to look at ourselves—in our own hearts, the hearts of the peace camp, of those who professed public support for Oslo and for an end to Occupation and for the establishment of a Palestinian State in which the "other" can also



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enjoy dignity and freedom. Did we do enough to ensure that the talks would not break down? Did we invest our time and energy into educating the peoples of the region—Israelis and Palestinians alike—in the long-term language of peace? Or did we simply leave it to the politicians—always looking over their shoulders at who may defeat them in the next election if they make the wrong, or unpopular, move—to negotiate technical agreements, or to put out yesterday's fire only for a new fire to be lit next week?

Politicians and negotiators spent much of the time between Oslo and Camp David playing games of one-upmanship. Who was responsible for non-implementation? They played the blame game like little children, always expecting the other side to fulfill "their" side of the bargain before they could expect anything in return. And throughout this whole period the process of constructing settlements (Israel) and acts of violence (mostly, but not exclusively, practiced by some Palestinian groups) went on as though there were no attempts at conflict resolution and attaining peace. Forget about CBMs (confidence building measures)—there have probably not been any two protagonists in the history of peacemaking who have been so abysmal at undertaking unilateral actions that would

create a greater feeling of confidence amongst the "other." Plenty of confidence-destruction measures, but hardly any confidence-building ones.

I am used to the idea that many people automatically reject the comparison made in the previous paragraph between the construction of settlements and the continuation of violence and terrorism. True, they are not quantitatively symmetrical—a life of a mother or a child cannot be numerically equated with the construction of another housing unit or the expropriation of another *dunam* of land. But they are comparable in their deeper symbolic meaning. Because the continuation of either activity is, for the "other" side, the surest of signs that they will never achieve their ultimate objective. For Israelis, the continuation of terrorism and suicide bombs means that they are as far away from achieving security and safety in the streets as they ever were in their history. For Palestinians, the building of another settlement, the destruction of orchards, and the expropriation of land means that they are as far away from achieving an end to Occupation and the establishment of an independent state as they ever were in history. And if we accept that both sides initially went into this process of conflict resolution in order to achieve these achievable objectives, but after seven years are as far away—if not further away—from achieving them as they have ever been, it should be no surprise that their respective frustrations erupt like a volcano and bring about intensities of violence and carnage that are the stuff of our worst dreams and nightmares.

What, if anything, could we have done which would have given Oslo a better chance? Are there actions we could have taken which would have provided a buffer against the eruption of violence even when the negotiations at Camp David and Taba failed? Looking back over the seven years, it is very apparent that we did not sufficiently invest our time and energy into creating an environment of peace, a language and discourse of peace through which we could change the structural ways by which each people—especially the younger generations who were subject to their most important socialization during this period—would begin to think differently about the people on the other side of the fence. At the most, we created numerous people-to-people programs, or Track II discussions, usually funded by foreign agencies and governments, in which the political and academic elites spoke to each other, became very familiar and even friendly with each other, but never really succeeded in infiltrating top-down to the "grass roots," the 95 percent of Israelis and Palestinians who have still never met each other and who still see each other as an enemy threatening their respective existence.

In the aftermath of Oslo, the peace radio station ceased its operations, when in fact what we needed was an additional radio station and a regional pro-peace television channel which could beam ordinary Palestinian and Israeli

lives into each others' houses. We did not have mass school visits of Palestinian and Israeli children in each others' homes, nor did we celebrate holidays, picnics, or religious festivals together. And we certainly didn't learn each others' language or history or culture or basic beliefs. It is quite horrendous how little Israelis and Palestinians know about each others' society and culture, despite the close geographic proximity in which we reside—a sort of dual space in which two peoples physically occupy the same space but in which each is often invisible to the other.

Oh yes, there are many good intentioned peace movements that undertook all of these activities. Many friendships and trusting relationships were struck up—but considering the passage of time, and the enormity of the task, we have to admit that these activities touched no more than a small minority on both sides. Had our religious leaders used their privileged positions to preach peace messages from their pulpits, perhaps the message could have reached more people. Instead, theologians largely abused their positions, often preaching messages of hatred and mutual mistrust, and fanning the flames of renewed conflict instead of putting them out.

Often, when the politicians and outside facilitators were approached with the request that they invest more resources into peace education and socialization, the typical response was to say that the idea is good (patronizing) but that there is no time right now because there is an important negotiation which has to be sorted out immediately. Once the agreement is in place, then, and only then, will we have the time and the mutual inclination to teach, educate, socialize, fraternize, and speak the language of peace.

Perhaps it sounded good at the time. After all, the immediate priority was to put an end to violence and occupation. To create an atmosphere where the two peoples would not automatically fear and mistrust the other. But in retrospect it was a false and mistaken policy. How, otherwise, can we explain that when Barak and Arafat were at Camp David, and the news was leaked out that an agreement might be in the cards which would include resolution—through compromise—of such heavy issues as Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements, that the people on both sides did not come out in mass demonstrations supporting their leaders and urging them to go that final step, that final compromise to bring about peace? How else can we understand that when the talks broke down, instead of the people demonstrating in favor of an immediate renewal of talks, they simply shrugged their shoulders as though nothing else could have been expected, and then turned their attentions to accusing each other for the failure, and supporting the return to violent conflict? At the very least, they did not come out in their masses to prevent the renewal of violence.

Simply put, despite seven years of laborious negotiations, the people didn't think in terms of peace and conflict resolution. Conflict remained their default position, and for

many the breakdown of talks and the return of violence was little more than what they expected to happen.

Even now, if we find the way to get back to the negotiation table—and it is hard to see how two such intransigent leaders as Sharon and Arafat will be the people to point the way—we must invest in the long-term language of peace. It is even more difficult to do now than it was in the euphoric days of the Oslo Accords, and it is even more important to do so now than ever before. No doubt the politicians will tell us again that the situation is so critical, that the mutual hatred for each other so intense, that we really don't have time to think about the long-term messages of peace, socialization, and education. But they couldn't be more wrong. For if we don't make this critical investment now, if we don't attempt to change public opinion in favor of the principle of peace and a negotiated resolution to the conflict, we may find ourselves at another Camp David a few years down the road, where the leaders will negotiate and procrastinate over minor issues of relative insignificance, and will not feel any pressure to make that final compromise because the masses of the people will not be there to force them to do so.

The situation has never been so bad as it has been in the past few months. In addition to the violence, the terrorism, and the military re-invasions of the West Bank, the vote in the Likud Party pushed through by former (and future?) Prime Minister Netanyahu rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian State shows the true character of this right-wing party of government. We should not fool ourselves into believing that Sharon's opposition to this vote was anything but tactical. He can now argue that his hands are tied by his own party and that he is unable to negotiate a solution to which his party is opposed. The fact that he has actually used the term "Palestinian State" on a number of occasions during the past year means very little. The sort of state he would offer to the Palestinians falls so far short of even their minimalist demands that it would be doomed to failure from the outset. It would not include the Jordan Valley, would not include settlement evacuation, and would consist of a territory far, far smaller than that of the West Bank and Gaza—to put it simply, Sharon's "state" is a non-starter. Sharon is a man of war, not a man of peace, and thanks to Arafat and the Palestinian bombers, he has been able to revert to what he is good at—making war—rather than pretending to seek a new avenue of negotiations and dialogue aimed at finding a political solution.

Of course, the very idea—as propagated at the Likud Party conference—that one can turn the clock back and no longer even talk about the establishment of a Palestinian State is absurd. It is clear to all that such a state will eventually materialize and that without a state there will never be

an end to the conflict. One of the few things that has changed in terms of the long-term structural discourse in Israel is the acceptance of terms which were for long periods in the past considered to be taboo. Until the early 1990s, one could not—by law—talk to members of the PLO; back in the 1970s and 1980s, the Palestinians were not even recognized as a "legitimate people" and therefore could not be a talking partner. Even as recently as six or seven years ago, the idea of a Palestinian State was a taboo point of discussion. All of these concepts, and others such as the decen-

tralization and sharing of power in Jerusalem and the limited return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, have now become part of the public discourse. They have become part of that discourse because people of good will have insisted on introducing them into the public debate time after time—at first they are rejected, then they become part of the academic discourse, then part of the political chat shows until, eventually, they appear as questions in the public opinion surveys. That is a sure sign that they are no longer taboo and that

they cannot be pushed aside again. This too is part of the longer term language of peace to which all of us who have the gift of putting pen to paper (finger to keyboard?) and the opportunity to appear on political talk shows or make public presentations to community audiences have the ability to help change, so that nothing remains taboo. If there is to be something called "peace" one day in the future, it will only be after both sides are allowed to introduce every single topic to the debate—nothing can be excluded.

Perhaps the most recent taboo to have been removed is the idea that international forces can, and should, be introduced in the next stages of negotiations as a means of monitoring the situation and implementing any new agreements, as well as physically separating the two peoples in situations where conflict may arise. A recent public survey showed that some 35 percent of the Jewish population are now prepared to accept such an eventuality, and this percentage is growing daily as we come to realize that direct discussions or negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority have not worked. Given the fact that Israelis have always vehemently rejected the notion of direct outside intervention, perceiving it as an invasion of their sovereignty and decision-making power, this is a very significant change in public opinion. When the original Oslo Accords were signed, it was facilitated through secret and direct channels, without third party—not even U.S.—intervention. At the time, this was considered the best way to enter into a peace agreement—direct contact and negotiations. Such direct negotiations would have remained the best way had the Accords worked out on the ground, but when they started to come up against problems, there was no third party to help smooth out the

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language of peace.*

differences and find the necessary compromises. Instead, each side accused the other of being the one not to honor its obligations, the language became verbal violence that led to physical violence, and the various agreements broke down.

But third party intervention means much more than simple monitoring and reporting back to an outside authority. It means a party which has the power to implement and, in extreme situations, even enforce certain actions. Israel will only ever accept the United States as a third party force—it does not trust either the United Nations or Europe. Indeed Israel has recently developed an anti-European xenophobia the likes of which have not been witnessed since the immediate post World War II-Holocaust years. But it looks as though the Bush Administration is not keen on becoming involved in such a direct fashion. It has only become re-engaged in the Middle East conflict in the post-September 11 era because it had no choice. Prior to that, Bush had done his utmost to disengage from the Israel-Palestine arena, in part so as not to become as heavily involved in the region as Bill Clinton had been. But now that he has no choice, we would have expected a lot more from Bush than simply to underwrite Sharon's war against the Palestinians as a war against terrorism like his own operation in Afghanistan. To see the American administration so simply manipulated by Sharon is pathetic. It is time for the United States to change its policy—to uphold the fight against terrorism by demanding an end to all violence and insisting much more strongly on the end of Occupation and a total withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But putting these political processes into operation without a parallel investment in the education of peace will be meaningless. They must be accompanied by the introduction of those longer-term structural processes which will help us begin, just begin, to listen, and to attempt to understand what the other is trying to tell us, instead of dismissing it as political one-upmanship. We are all tired, frustrated, and angry because of the events of the past eighteen months. We thought we were so close to a solution only to see everything fall apart and then, worst of all, to see Ariel Sharon return to haunt us as Prime Minister. Somewhere we have to find a new zest for peace activism, however hard this may seem to those activists who have been involved so long. Perhaps last May's peace demonstration in Tel Aviv which attracted upward of 40,000 participants is a start in the right direction (especially considering that all other such demonstrations of the past year have attracted no more than three or four thousand). Given the anti-Palestinian State decision taken by the Likud Party and the indication from the United States and other outside powers that they are ready to intervene and take stronger and more direct action to get an agreement worked out and implemented, maybe more of the ex-peace activists will return to action. Even at the May rally, it was the same old tired leaders—the two "Yossis" (Sarid and Beilin), the Peace

Now leaders from the 1970s and 1980s, but very few young second- and third-generation activists.

Neither can any salvation be expected from the Labor Party, a party which has sold any birthright it may have retained to warrior Sharon in return for a Foreign and Defense Ministry. It is a Labor Party leader and Defense Minister who is responsible for Israel's recent military activities—we must not forget that—and it now makes no difference whether they remain in the party of right-wing unity or decide to leave and set up a formal opposition with an eye toward the next elections. Their days as peacemakers are over. They have no ideological alternative to offer to the people of Israel, and it is time for those members of the party truly committed to peace based on compromise and an end to Occupation to finally leave the Party and set up an alternative left-wing ideological opposition to this reactionary government.

A spiritual renewal of the peace movement, including the focus on some of the longer term activities aimed at introducing a new peace language, must include the mobilization of a new generation of pro-peace activists. The settler population has the ideological zeal which enables them to regenerate continually. It is this same sort of zeal and inherent belief in peace as a value and a principle, not simply as a political solution, which brings an end to violence and conflict. These values must be socialized into a new generation of young peace activists if we are to experience long term change.

The financial experts often tell us to invest long term when the stock market has collapsed, when it has descended so low that it can only move in an upward direction. That is what we should be doing right now—investing in the long term peace process in the hope that this time there will be people out there who will not allow our leaders to find reasons for the next round of negotiations to fail yet again.

I am writing these words on the eve of the Shavuot festival. Our sages tell us that while our ancestors obtained their physical freedom on Passover, when they were allowed to leave the slavery of Egypt, their spiritual freedom was obtained at Mount Sinai when the teachings of the Torah were handed down. Arriving at a political solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is akin to the physical freedom from slavery or occupation, but it is not sufficient. For all of us to achieve long-term freedom from occupation, oppression, mutual mistrust, and fear, we must undertake investment in the long-term changing of values, perceptions, and understanding of the other. Only then will we all be able to cleanse our souls from the evil of conflict and mutual hatred with which we—both Israelis and Palestinians—have become so completely caught up for so many years. Only then will we be truly spiritually free and be able to receive, once again, the Torah which teaches us about mutual respect, kindness to, and love of, the other. □

AN INTERVIEW WITH Adam Shapiro

Mark LeVine

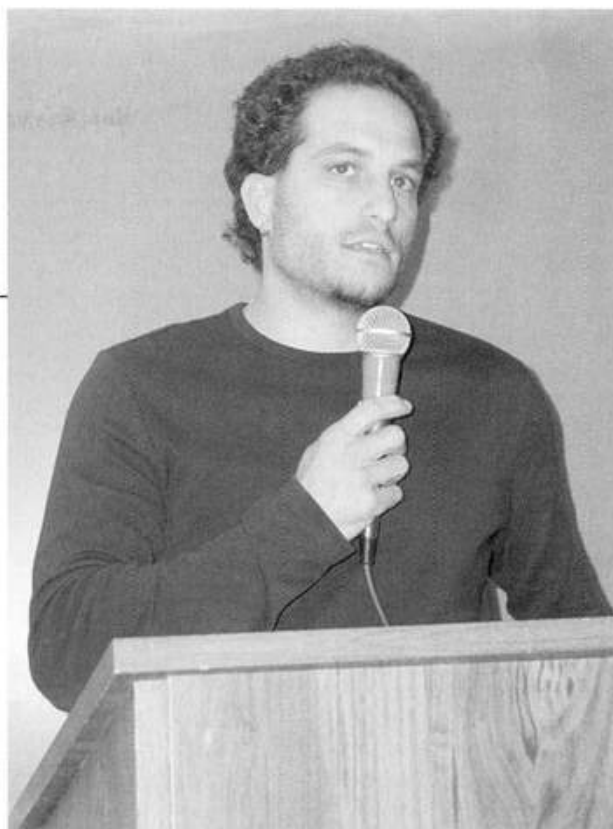
Adham Shapiro is a volunteer coordinator with the International Solidarity Movement based in Ramallah. He has lived in the West Bank and Jerusalem for the past two and a half years. Shapiro holds an M.A. in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and an M.A. in Politics from New York University. He was recently trapped inside Yasir Arafat's presidential headquarters while administering medical aid during Israel's siege of the compound.

LEVINE: To start with the obvious, What's a nice Jewish boy like you doing in a place like Ramallah?

SHAPIRO: I arrived in Jerusalem in September 1999 to work for Seeds of Peace, an American nonprofit organization dedicated to working with youth in regions of conflict to promote peaceful coexistence. I was director of their Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem. As the conflict escalated and Israel began using F-16s, I decided that as an American, I needed to start protesting the use of American weapons against Palestinians, so I got involved with the activities of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM)—especially humanitarian activities and protests against American involvement and support of the increasing Israeli escalation. Last December, I left Seeds and became a full-time volunteer coordinator for ISM to work with Palestinians in struggling against the Occupation—removing roadblocks, replanting trees, rebuilding homes, marching through checkpoints.

When the invasion began we happened to have seventy to eighty international activists in Ramallah who had come for ISM's April Campaign Against Occupation. We were prepared to help in any way we could. We got calls from medical relief people saying they were being shot at by Israelis and they needed help to get through to the wounded, and I volunteered to go in one of the ambulances picking up wounded, delivering medicines, taking pregnant women to hospitals. Towards the end of the day I received a phone call from the presidential compound in Ramallah that critically wounded people were inside and that any

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*What's a nice Jewish boy like you
doing in a place like Ramallah?*

ambulance that came near was being shot at, so we found a Palestinian doctor and went over to the compound. We were shot at as we got there but I got on loudspeaker and spoke to the soldiers in English. After twenty minutes, I got out and stood in front of the tanks, and after another three hours I got access to the compound. Inside there were two critically wounded people and we got them out, but I stayed behind to help the doctor treat wounded people, expecting the ambulance to come back and get me. However, a couple of hours later, my friend and colleague Caiomhe Butterly, an Irish citizen, came back inside and said that soldiers had arrested everyone in the ambulance and had impounded it—so we were stuck there.

LEVINE: What happened inside the compound while you were there?

SHAPIRO: I was in the compound for twenty-four hours, from 7:00 PM Friday, March 29 until Saturday around 5:00 PM. The whole time the shelling of the compound and machine gun fire continued. The soldiers were getting closer, and everyone expected the Israelis to storm the compound. The Israelis knew we were in there ... but there was no communication with soldiers during this time. Our land line was cut around midnight, and our cell phones died by noon the next day. I was downstairs on the ground floor while President Arafat was upstairs. He invited me up to

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join him for a light meal as a token of gratitude for helping his people. I left when a group of activists—this was on all the TV news programs—came with a few ambulances from the Red Crescent to bring humanitarian aid and they marched past the soldiers with Palestinian doctors. I left in exchange for one of the Palestinian doctors.

LEVINE: Describe the International Solidarity Movement, who your comrades are, how it evolved and what its connection is with other groups like the Christian Peacemaker Teams.

SHAPIRO: Internationals come from all walks of life—all races, religions, people as old as seventy or eighty, people experienced in the anti-nuclear movement, or just young college students who want to come and help. We're from all over Europe, from the United States—up to 100 from all over the United States. About 600-700 people from around the world have come, including 200 who were turned away at the airport because the Israelis knew they were coming specifically to work for peace and with Palestinians. We provide training for people in the use of nonviolence, role-playing, etc. We intend to use various groups such as the Michigan Peace Team, the Christian Peacemaker Teams, and Training for Change to train volunteers.

LEVINE: How have you been treated by soldiers?

SHAPIRO: It has changed over time. At the beginning of the recent invasion they shot at us—six of us were hit by shrapnel from a tank shell, and ambulances were shot at; but after a week of seeing us daily the soldiers got used to seeing us around and got a bit more relaxed. On the other hand, a group of twenty activists in Nablus going to a refugee camp to deliver aid were physically assaulted and beaten by soldiers and all of their cameras, tapes, and film were destroyed. Right now [as of May 7] there are seven Americans in prison awaiting deportation because they were delivering food to the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square.

When the soldiers learn that I have a Jewish name, I talk to them and say that Palestinian attitudes towards Israelis are not about being Jewish—if you come as an equal and not as a soldier or settler, you are welcome by everyone. My discussions make some of the soldiers think twice about what they're doing; it forces them to rethink their attitudes.

LEVINE: What do you think happened in Jenin?

SHAPIRO: I think the notion of "massacre" as a term is not useful; it is too vague and could be used to mean only a few or many people. What is undeniable and what I saw was the result of the army completely flattening a wide swath of land with many homes—people who are still alive have no place to live now. Some were buried alive underneath rubble and aid organizations were prevented from going in to help them. People were forced to hide under the rubble of their homes to avoid Israeli attacks, and Apache helicopter attacks were launched in places other than the direct firing zone.

Perhaps some of the fighting was legitimate counter-terrorism, but some was clearly not. That's why we need an investigation, to learn what really happened. In fact, Israeli complaints that there was heavy fighting in Jenin and a great loss of soldiers displays arrogance—what did they expect? To have their army march into a Palestinian city and have the inhabitants just let them march in? In other places around the world defending your home is considered heroic resistance, here it's termed terrorism.

LEVINE: What do you hear now from your colleagues still on the ground?

SHAPIRO: [As of May 7] Well, my main source has been my fiancée Huwaida, an American-born Palestinian who is one of the seven Americans in custody. Since she's in custody I haven't heard much news. Of course, I want her out of prison immediately. Our main focus is bringing attention to those people [in custody] because they've been denied the right to see a lawyer or U.S. consular or embassy official for many days. The Israeli government is trying to have the deportation orders signed without a hearing before a judge—which violates even Israeli law; they haven't even been charged with anything, so why deport them? And the U.S. Embassy is hardly doing anything for them! They are not even properly monitoring the situation—I had to inform consular staff when Huwaida was moved to a hospital—so we're trying to ratchet up media pressure to force them to act.

LEVINE: Why has it been so hard for Palestinians to build a mass nonviolent movement against the Occupation even though violence has so clearly failed to win them anything? Is it just, as right-wingers here and in Israel claim, because they are hate-filled?

SHAPIRO: I would say first of all that Palestinians tell me all the time that everyday existence is by definition nonviolent existence. You have to imagine going to check points and dealing with the violence, brutality, and humiliation they face all the time—pushing, shoving, firing into the air. Just making it through checkpoints without violence is a form of nonviolent resistance. So we must broaden the scope of analysis to explore and explain how Palestinians respond to the violence of everyday life directed against them systematically by Israel.

But that said, it's true that there isn't a broad acceptance of or participation in *strategic* nonviolence because there is no popular leadership willing to commit to this strategy and use it, and also because of the extreme amount of lethal force they face as a society, which makes such a strategy hard to win supporters for and to deploy. That's how we as internationals can help—because when Palestinians march alone they get shot; when we march with them, carrying signs in English, tape recorders and video cameras, etc., Israelis can't respond as violently. They might use tear gas or stun grenades and fire into the air, but they won't fire directly into the crowd. And by our participation we

bring more attention to what's going on because the media will cover when foreigners march with Palestinians, but not when they go by themselves.

LEVINE: But what about the commitment by Palestinians and Israelis to non-violence?

SHAPIRO: On the Palestinian side, we were making very good progress before the series of invasions beginning in March; we were meeting with people in lots of communities to discuss what we're doing, they knew about us and that we were committed and could be trusted—i.e., that we were there to stay and help them. But after the extreme violence of the invasion, there is lots of trauma and rebuilding and that's where energy needs to be focused. Lots of community leaders have been arrested and detained, and there's a vacuum in leadership on the community level. I think this is a deliberate policy of the Israeli government, designed to create a situation in which restraint and leadership are wiped out, so that violence is seen as the only alternative for resistance to overwhelming force and violence being perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

More over, you have to remember that before the March invasions by Israel some segments of the Palestinian political and intellectual leadership were talking openly about the need to develop the intifada into a mass-based, nonviolent movement against Occupation. I do not think it is coincidental that Sharon chose this moment to ratchet up the level of Israeli violence and provocations. But with our actions during the invasion hundreds of Palestinians will be encouraged by us and realize that they can come out and join us and not get killed for nothing.

We don't have an official dialogue with armed groups, but we talk to them and they consider nonviolence as a legitimate strategy, but not the only way to resist. They're not trying to prevent us from doing our work. But the Israeli government is clearly scared of us and will do whatever they can to destroy any chances for nonviolent resistance, like during the last Palestinian cease-fire from mid-December to early January—we had 2000 Palestinians on New Year's Eve march from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. So it was working. The only form of resistance at that time was nonviolent! We took over a check point on December 28 with our bodies—in order to allow Palestinians to travel freely without soldiers—by blocking the road where soldiers were coming down to the check point. However, Israel kept provoking and provoking, killing over thirty Palestinians during the cease-fire, and sure enough there was a Palestinian violent response and the cycle of violence once again spiraled out of control.

LEVINE: Do you see anti-Semitism among the pro-Palestinian forces? And within Palestinian forces? If so, are



Adam Shapiro and his fiancée Huwaida at the Jenin refugee camp in April.

you changing this with your work?

SHAPIRO: I have not seen any anti-Semitism. People are coming to promote Palestinian freedom, not to put down Israel. I haven't felt any anti-Semitism from Palestinians; in fact, we hear more and more from Palestinians that they have no problem with Jews or Israelis, but only with the settlements, settlers, and the Occupation.

LEVINE: Why is it so difficult for the Left to have power in Israel? Why do so many genuinely decent Israelis become moved to become anti-Palestinian?

SHAPIRO: We work more with the so-called Radical Left, such as Rabbis for Human Rights, Gush Shalom, Women in Black, etc., but I think that the main problem is that most mainstream Israelis just don't know what's really going on; that is, what a settlement really means and *is*, how violent the Occupation is on the most basic level.

LEVINE: How would you describe the mainstream media's reaction to you?

SHAPIRO: The western media has been fair with us and we've worked with them to explain what we're doing. One thing that's interesting is that the Arab media do cover what we do more extensively than western media, but they haven't really been helpful in the way they cover us because they show only when soldiers use violence against us, such as when we marched to Bir Zeit with students. Because we were organized and disciplined and had an appropriate strategy, after forty-five minutes of confrontation the army moved aside, confused, and we went through the check point to university. Yet *al-Jazeera*, who was there the whole time, showed only the Israeli violence and *not* us waiting them out and overcoming them. Thus no one watching Arabic TV saw the positive end of this confrontation—which makes it harder to convince people on the ground who watch Arab satellite TV that our strategy is working. It requires educating the media to know what to look for. We've earned credibility with media so in the future they'll cover us as long as we create the right picture. But our goal is not to make a good picture, but to overcome the violence and the Occupation.

LEVINE: I'm surprised that neither Israelis nor Palestinians—nor American or European activists for that matter—state clearly the obvious: that Israel has continuously during the thirty-five years of Occupation, and especially now, been in grave breach of dozens articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Why aren't people being made aware that a *settlement is a terrorist act* by definition? The UN defines war crimes as terrorism; thus settlements, which are war crimes, are also acts of terror. Given the legal and moral realities and implications of its policies, why do you think that Palestinians

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and their supporters don't use the terrorism/war-crime language used by Israel and its supporters vis-à-vis the policies of the Israeli Government?

SHAPIRO: I think Palestinians are not given equal time on the mainstream media and I think that the spin put out by the reporters and hosts of news shows does not reflect accurate information but rather public opinion, which is often ill-informed. Spokespeople like Michael Tarazi and Diana Buttu [legal advisors to the Palestinian Authority] are sending this message, but they are not called upon every day, though Occupation continues every day. However, any time there is a suicide bombing, Israeli commentators and spokespeople are on the air promoting this type of biased and ill-informed language.

LEVINE: When this latest violence broke and the stories of the activities of International Solidarity Movement came out I wrote a piece called "Bring the Turtles to Ramallah," advocating that the U.S. and European global justice movements see the events here as a seminal case of globalization, and thus get involved directly in joining groups like the International Solidarity Movement in the same positive ways that people have been protesting from Seattle to Prague to Melbourne. Do you see this connection as being relevant and helpful?

SHAPIRO: We definitely see this connection being made. We have groups from Italy and France who are active in the so-called anti-globalization movement, and many people are talking about it. However, I think that the globalization movement—or more accurately, a small segment of it—has tarnished its reputation because of the violent action of some key constituencies within the movement, such as the anarchists. As such, it is not necessarily good for the Palestinian issue to get too easily associated with the globalization movement because it can be tainted by the violence associated with it. So we try to explain to people before they come that we are led by Palestinian partners; we're not there as internationals to lead Palestinians—we want them to lead us, and they are. The Europeans who come are staying with the program and not in any way pursuing some of the more violent tactics we've seen in globalization protests.

This issue needs to be negotiated carefully (how to join both movements) because a large part of what happens in the Middle East and what people will or will not support has to do with PR and getting our issues before the public, and the risk of getting lumped together with the violent side of the globalization movement would harm the Palestinian cause. So we need to be aware and careful of this while still welcoming these forces into the struggle.

LEVINE: How has the response been since you returned to the United States?

SHAPIRO: I got back a week ago, April 28. I've been doing lots of public speaking, meeting different groups, and people ask me my perspective on things. I've been given the opportunity to be on TV and radio and I'm using it to

educate people and give them an eyewitness account and to challenge the rhetoric coming out, and in that there is a simple message for American Jews: *You can be a Jew, support Israel, but oppose occupation and oppression.* If people stop and think about it, if American Jews were really to consider what and where their money was going to—for oppression and occupation—I think they wouldn't support it. There is this idea that the American Jewish leadership can be critical in a quiet way, but now is clearly not the time to be quiet! When people here and in Israel advocate population transfer—i.e., ethnic cleansing—we need to be crystal clear in saying that either we're for freedom or we're not, either we're for oppression or we're not, either we're for occupation or we're not. There is no middle ground on these principles.

LEVINE: Some people say we need to cut off aid to Israel. But Congress repeatedly through resolutions and other strategies votes to give Israel, and now Sharon, a blank check to do whatever he wants in the Occupied Territories. Does it make sense to propose strategies that have no chance of working given the political climate in the United States? What kind of strategy do you see working? Is there anything more than just going and putting your body on the line?

SHAPIRO: I would say, don't worry about the elite level—just take direct action yourself. Thus the divestment campaign at UC Berkeley and Harvard, modeled on South Africa during Apartheid is key; or the campaign against the Caterpillar bulldozer company, where activists campaigned against the company's bulldozers being used to destroy homes and crops in Palestine, and appealed to them with evidence of how their image is being tainted. They've responded and asked for more information and will discuss how to deal with the fact that their machines are destroying Palestinian homes—this has wide repercussions. It doesn't necessarily take getting the U.S. government to act, if we can get companies to act first.

LEVINE: Walk us through the steps of volunteering for the International Solidarity Movement.

SHAPIRO: This summer the ISM will organize the Freedom Summer Campaign, designed to target the lack of freedom of movement for the Palestinian people. First you train here [in the United States] for the summer campaign (although in the past people trained when they arrived in the country), and when you get over there you get an orientation about what's specifically happening at the moment—checkpoints, roadblocks, curfews, etc. ... In other words, what actions are most important to take depending on the current situation. We try to organize people into "affinity groups," so they work with the same eight to fifteen people for a long time in order to establish trust so that people feel safe doing this work. While no one has been killed to date, there were six activists injured by shrapnel from a tank shell in Beit Jala recently. However, usually the greatest risk is

(continued on page 52)

Thoughts on Anti-Semitism

Penny Rosenwasser

I've been thinking about anti-Semitism—and I'm still gathering my thoughts—but one thing that's clear to me is that there is nothing inherently anti-Semitic in criticizing Israeli government policy—and there is a lot to criticize.

Having clarified that, at a recent Bay Area demonstration—a demonstration which was so uplifting, seeing 25,000 of us in the San Francisco streets, together protesting Israeli government policies against the Palestinian people—several people came up to me who were frightened at the signs we saw with a swastika inside a Jewish star.

It is not OK to equate the Jewish star with the Nazis. We don't need to compare Ariel Sharon to Adolf Hitler to call what Sharon is doing completely abhorrent. What the Israeli army and government are doing is horrible enough all by itself. Such comparisons don't serve anyone; they only scare Jews and shove us back into that victim place of feeling that the whole world is against us.

The symbol of the star with the swastika also blurs the distinction between the Jewish people and the Israeli government's policies. As human rights activist Susan Freundlich explains, "Where anti-Semitism really shows itself is in the spilling over of the rightful condemnation of Israeli government policies into the hatred of Jewish people as a whole—where the criticism of a policy becomes the blanket condemnation of a people."

But back to those star and swastika signs—why do those signs frighten us?

Because for 2000 years there has been a recurring cycle of anti-Semitism in the world, of Jews being attacked and murdered and exiled from one country, then being invited into another country where our skills were useful, serving as convenient scapegoats when someone was needed to blame for a poor economy or other domestic problems—and so again being forced to leave, or convert, or be killed. It is a history that has left us feeling like victims.

And some of us are frightened because in recent weeks

some Jews have been physically attacked, and synagogues have been desecrated with swastikas here in the United States, even in Berkeley. In France and Belgium, Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized and synagogues attacked and burned. And with France's right-wing demagogue Le Pen getting 18 percent of that nation's vote, some of us start to wonder: is it happening again?

Of course we wonder.

But here in the United States in 2002, our world has

become more complex. Just as we have these fears—and there is good reason for them—we also need to recognize that things have changed. Jews in this country have gained economic stability, civil rights, and political power—and we have many, many allies. For example, this past April African American scholar Cornell West did civil disobedience at the U.S. State Department with Rabbi Michael Lerner, "in solidarity with suffering Palestinian and Israeli brothers and sisters" (italics added). West emphasized, "We must keep

in touch with the humanity of both sides."

And in France millions of people took to the streets to protest Le Pen's racist anti-immigrant platform.

What I think is important for us to realize is that Jews were victimized for a very long time. But we are not victims any longer. We really are not. Even though in the last nineteen months 470 Israelis have been killed—many by Palestinian suicide bombers, which is horribly tragic—in the big picture, the Israeli army is the fourth largest army in the world. It is an army which itself is victimizing Palestinian people, an army which has killed 1,500 Palestinians in the same nineteen months. We have heard of many horrors in Jenin alone: Palestinian civilians being used as human shields for Israeli soldiers, people buried alive under their demolished homes, people drinking out of sewers because no fresh water was allowed in, people bleeding to death in the streets because no ambulances were permitted to reach them.

As Jews who care about Jews here, and about Jews in Israel, we need to consider all these complexities: the reality of past Jewish persecution and how we still carry fear from that experience—especially the Holocaust; the reality of our current relative security here in the United States; and the reality of Israeli government policies that are brutalizing

Anti-Semitism shows itself when criticism of Israel's policies turns into the blanket condemnation of an entire people.

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Palestinians as you read this today—policies that are only bringing more and more Israeli deaths, and less and less security for Israel.

Just as anti-Semitism is on the rise, my Israeli colleague Terry Greenblatt (who directs Bat Shalom) describes how anti-Arab racism is rising inside Israel—we cannot talk about one without talking about the other. For example, there are posters in Jerusalem which read “Don’t hire Arabs.” Do we remember signs like those against our own people? We cannot let ourselves take comfort in the badge of victimization: when we point the finger at anti-Semitism, we must also point the finger at Israeli government policies that target Arabs.

As Jews, let’s notice how our fear can paralyze us; let’s acknowledge that old place inside us that feels “everyone hates the Jews.” It’s not our fault if we feel this way—but this time let’s work through these feelings, so that we don’t take out our fear or grief or outrage against any other people, be they Palestinian, or Muslim, or African-American—or Jewish. Let’s stand against the oppression of Jews *and* the oppression of Palestinians—against the oppression of all people who are marginalized because of their skin color or ethnicity or social class or body size or gender or sexual orientation or age or disability. Let’s do all we can to build a

movement for peace and justice for all peoples, not a movement of hatred toward any people.

Let’s value all lives as precious and worth protecting, and not allow any people to be demeaned or vilified. As a Jewish teacher of mine, Diane Balser, wrote: “It will not work to be for the survival of only one people. The survival of both peoples are important to the well-being of all.” Let’s build alliances and bridges between us, not walls and buffer zones.

As much as it hurts me to see that equation of the star and the swastika, I also see how Ariel Sharon’s policies fuel anti-Semitism—how he and other leaders manipulate Jewish fear, how they feed those feelings of victimization—just as George W. Bush (I refuse to call him “President”) has whipped up people’s fears in this country after September 11. All this makes me more committed than ever to say *no* to Sharon, to say *not in my name!* It helps me recommit to changing what the Israeli government is doing—because if we can do that, the symptoms will change as well.

I want to close with the words we know so well from Rabbi Hillel:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

If I am for myself only, who am I?

If not now, when?

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INTERVIEW WITH ADAM SHAPIRO (*continued from page 50*)
physical abuse from Israeli soldiers or tear gas inhalation. We have also had a number of activists deported.

So this is a well-organized process. But up till now activists have raised their own money to come and we’ve arranged for them to stay with families in refugee camps or in cheap hotels; but now we’re trying to raise money to reimburse Palestinian families because the situation is so bad they can’t afford to support guests. Most important, we need video and camera equipment and laptops and cell phones to document and record what goes on. This is crucial! If you are interested in joining the campaign, please contact us at info@palsolidarity.org.

LEVINE: What role can TIKKUN play in this movement?

SHAPIRO: TIKKUN does have an impact already in Israel/Palestine, but I think it needs to broaden it, to join with other groups—as it seems to be doing through the TIKKUN Community—to come together and join forces behind a common course of action. [The task is] to start to change discourse in the United States, to get the average American of whatever faith to understand that what we’re dealing with here at its essence is not terrorism—at least not Palestinian terrorism, but rather Occupation and settlements, which are themselves terrorism. We’re talking about a people’s right to freedom, dignity, and the like.

We also need to make linkages both within the Jewish community and with other communities like African Americans and Native Americans, who have histories of oppression, and show that what we’re doing *is not* disempowering Israel and making it weak.

When I say this to the mainstream media I think it has an impact. Yet I was invited by the rabbi of a Reconstructionist congregation in the South to talk about my experiences last week, but the board of directors refused to have me. I’ll be back in Ramallah all summer to work on the new campaign and keep up the struggle.

If I have one message to TIKKUN readers it would be that this is a critical time in the history of Israel and of the Middle East, and I don’t think that we the people should leave the fate of all the peoples of the region to Sharon, Bush, and Arafat. My fiancé has a pin on her lapel saying “If the people lead the leaders will follow,” and it’s time for people who want to live in peace and security—that is, the majority of people on both sides—to take direct action. In that sense, I think the refuseniks have been the biggest inspiration to the Left in Israel because they’re taking a clearly noble and moral stand and it’s resonating in Israel. And the timing of the invasion by Sharon was certainly a response to this burgeoning force—to force people into war and rally around flags and beat war drums to combat the moral message of the refuseniks.

LEVINE: Do you have any final thoughts you’d like to share with our readers?

SHAPIRO: Yes, first that TIKKUN and other groups need to keep up the struggle and become even more involved. And also, we need funds and equipment! We have filmmakers and documentarians who want to come now, but we need the funds to widen the movement and document what’s really going on so that the truth doesn’t stay buried in the rubble.

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European Right-Wing Populism and Anti-Semitism

Elliot Neaman

It is by now obvious that the only reason the Bush administration became actively engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the spring of 2002 was because the so-called "War on Terror" had brushed up against insurmountable obstacles that required a re-orientation of U.S. foreign policy. One of these obstacles was that world opinion had shifted to a starkly critical stance towards Israel after the Sharon government responded to relentless homicide bombings by occupying six major cities in the West Bank in March and keeping Arafat under house arrest at his compound in Ramallah. Not only on the proverbial "Arab street" but also at the United Nations, and in Europe, the plight of the Palestinians seemed to evoke more sympathy than for the Israelis, who had endured a rising number of ruthless attacks on civilians.

In the United States, American Jews became particularly sensitive to any critique of Israel because of the impression made in the media here that the United States was just about Israel's last friend on earth. For example, Paul Wolfowitz, a Bush administration hawk, whose father's family died in the Holocaust, was jeered at a pro-Israel rally in March for stating that Palestinians as well as Israelis had suffered during the intifada.

The news from Europe seemed particularly disturbing. In France, the elections for the powerful office of president turned out to be a run-off between the nationalist-conservative incumbent Chirac and the neo-fascist (as was labeled) Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the final vote a popular front from



left to center joined together to give Chirac an 82 percent victory. One was reminded of the German presidential election of 1932 when the almost senile Prussian nationalist Paul Von Hindenburg won as the lesser of two evils against Hitler. In France and elsewhere synagogues were attacked and Jewish gravestones defaced. The reaction here to these events, understandably, was a general fear that European anti-Semitism, never far below the surface, was rearing its ugly head again. But the reaction bordered on hysteria. In a satirical but revealing *Saturday Night Live* sketch, a film of typical French scenes rolled, vineyards, cafes, cobblestone streets, the Louvre, while a voice-over declared:

France, home to the world's greatest painters, chefs and anti-Semites. The French, cowardly, yet opinionated, arrogant, yet foul-smelling, anti-Israel, anti-American and, of course, as always, Jew-hating.... With all that is going on in the world, isn't it about time we got back to hating the French?

Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of European history cannot deny that anti-Semitism has always been part of occidental Christian culture—it presumably always will be

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as long as Europe resists multiculturalism beyond the current lip service given to that social ideal. But to state the obvious, European nations were not founded by waves of immigrants and thus we cannot expect them to be shaped by pluralism in the American mold. But the current rise of right-wing populism cannot be fundamentally attributed to anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism (which are sometimes, but not always, the same thing).

In three short years, Europe has moved decidedly to the right. In 1999, Social Democrats had a lopsided 13 to 2 majority in the European Council of Ministers (the two were Ireland and Spain). Today, middle-right governments rule in Portugal, Spain, Iceland, Italy, and Norway, while France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands have strong right-wing populist parties (winning between 10 to 20 percent in recent national elections).

What has caused this shift? I would argue that Social Democrats (or what we would call "liberals" in the United States) have not paid attention to the real issues that concern middle-class voters. Social democracy was born out of opposition to capitalism, and although that stance has been modified over the years, the European bourgeoisie has become alienated by its anti-bourgeois undertone, its support of ubiquitous state regulation, and its dogmatic moralism in foreign policy issues. The middle classes are also put off by a kind of political correctness that forbids people of "progressive" views to talk about their fears—rising drug use and crime in the cities, the breakdown of families, the relentless commodification of all spheres of life (globalization), and above all, the problems of integrating foreigners into European society. As has been pointed out often in these pages, one of the failings of the modern left in Western societies is its denigration of ordinary people's hunger for cultural, spiritual, and social meaning in a disenchanted world, where technological gadgets count as progress, gated housing projects are sold as community, and endless consumption is marketed as spiritual satisfaction. The European Right has all the wrong answers to these problems. Instead of speaking honestly, right-wing politicians play a dangerous game, invoking nationalism, a mythical past, and homogeneous cultural identity as a feel-good panacea for their voters.

The politicization of the immigration issue is the most sensitive for Jews, because it can plausibly be seen as a litmus test of the limits of tolerance in European societies. But a closer look at the right-wing populists who have raised this banner on their platform very successfully shows that the picture is more complicated than it appears—and has little to do with anti-Jewish sentiment. The Dutch Populist and former Marxist Pim Fortuyn, who was assassinated by a possibly deranged animal rights activist in May, spoke out bluntly about what many Dutch thought but felt uncomfortable saying aloud—namely that many Muslim immigrants refuse to make any accommodations and are hostile to the liberal openness of Dutch culture, while insisting on

receiving the welfare benefits of the state. While one may question the accuracy of Fortuyn's depiction of Muslim intransigence, it is certainly a proper topic for political debate in a once homogeneous society that suddenly finds itself with a ten-percent Muslim population. In any event, this debate about Muslims has little to do with attitudes towards Jews. In fact Jean-Marie Le Pen, who has made anti-Semitic remarks in the past, appealed with some success to the Jewish vote in the last French presidential election by playing the law and order card.

I now turn finally to the case of Germany, where for obvious reasons the declining fortunes of the Left, the resurgence of right-wing populism, a conservative backlash, and suddenly outspoken criticism of Israel portends potentially disturbing political changes. Although the German right has tended, since 1945, to remain on the margins of German political life, from time to time neo-fascist parties have surged in popularity at the local level, but have never overcome the 5 percent clause to gain entry to the German parliament. The recent success of right-wing parties in East Germany, and of a new "law and order Party" in the West, seems to be a repeat of past successes based on protest votes against the establishment. The German elections in the fall of 2002 are going to be very close and Stoiber, the candidate of the conservative Christian democrats, would be, if he wins, the most nationalist, most conservative chancellor since the Weimar republic. But there are some interesting twists to this story. Since Adenauer, the first postwar chancellor, the relationship between Israel and Germany has been based on active reconciliation, which culminated in his 1960 meeting with Ben Gurion. The Christian Democrats bound Germany to Israel to demonstrate loyalty to the West during the Cold War, and out of a desire—at once authentic and self-serving—to make amends for the horrors of Nazism. The result was that except for the United States, Germany became Israel's most important military and economic partner in the entire world. It was the German Left, particularly the youthful New Left of the 1960s that was hostile to Israel, conflating what it saw as an anti-fascist fight against imperialism with a fight against Zionism.

Today the most important defender of Israel among German politicians is Joshka Fischer, a leading member of the Generation of 1968, who has clashed with his own party, the Greens, over his declarations of absolute solidarity with Israel and his criticisms of Arafat. The current wave of criticism against Israel, by contrast, is now coming from the Christian Democrats and the Liberals (who unlike American liberals are free market libertarians). As examples, the Liberal politician Jürgen Möllemann declared that if he were a Palestinian he would resist Occupation with any means necessary, and the Christian Democrat Norbert Blüm compared Israel's military actions to a war of destruction—using the Nazi term *Vernichtungskrieg*. Karl Lamers, of the same party, accused Israel of state terrorism.

What is one to make of these inflammatory statements? First, it should be noted that these remarks caused a huge furor in Germany and the politicians who made them had to go to great lengths to defend themselves against the charges of anti-Semitism. Second, no matter how polemical these statements may appear, they reflect the fact that in Germany a dynamic public sphere exists in which both citizens and politicians engage in serious, usually well-informed debate about crucial issues of the day. Unlike in the United States, where the media is owned by a few large corporations and at least on the issue of Israel are numbingly conformist, political debates in Germany reflect genuinely contrasting viewpoints.

Finally, it is often said here that the Europeans are happy to see Israel in the role of aggressor because the historical guilt of the crimes of the Holocaust are somehow lessened if Jews themselves can be found guilty of war atrocities. Although certainly some *schadenfreude* is felt by Germans who are tired of apologizing for the past, I find this explanation for the new openness with which Israel is criticized to be unsatisfactory. It is true that many Germans would like to see an end to public discussions about the crimes of the Nazis (one third in a recent poll) and some 20 percent of Germans believe that Jews exploit the guilty feelings of Germans for self-advantage. But these sentiments are normal in a society where the current Germans coming of age are already the third generation with no living connection to the crimes of the Nazi past. One can also turn the numbers quoted above around—two thirds of Germans believe that public discourse on Nazi history should continue. A recent, heated debate erupted about the propriety of novelists in Germany writing about the Nazi period from the point of view of the sufferings of Germans, for example the experience of living through the firebombing of German cities or the persecution of millions of German refugees who had to flee Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the war. Although many stupid things are said in this context, such as the novelist Martin Walser's comment in 1998 that Germans are tired of being beaten over the head with the "Auschwitz club," ordinary Germans did suffer during World War II, a fact that in no way minimizes Jewish suffering, but is a perfectly legitimate object of historical and literary representation.

Of course one must not be sanguine about the recent eruption of anti-Semitism in Europe. When Jews are attacked by right-wing thugs, as has happened all over Europe this spring, when editorials and cartoons in major European newspapers castigate Israel, and intellectuals pontificate about the actions of the Israeli army while remaining mute about Palestinian terrorism, when Jewish neighborhoods are defaced by graffiti and Jews become fearful for their lives, one cannot say that business is usual. One must always be vigilant when attacks against Jews rise in so-called civilized societies, not only for the obvious reasons, but also because open aggression against Jews may

signal other shifts in the political geography. Are we witnessing, for example, a general disintegration of the liberal center in Europe, a harbinger of nationalist authoritarianism or worse, as happened during the interwar period of the 1930s? I don't believe that is the case, but no one can predict the future based on the past. Only by understanding the genuine causes of the attractions of right-wing politics can one hope to defend against its excesses.

Stereotypes die hard. Some seem to reside in the mind of Americans as wartime clichés: the German as incorrigible Jew-haters, eternal Nazis, the French Catholics as bigots and Vichy collaborators, the Italians as black-shirted Fascist thugs marching on Rome behind Mussolini. The corollary to the European anti-Semite delighting over images of Palestinians being beaten on television is the American who views every sign of anti-Semitism in Europe as confirmation of the deepest suspicions. But European states have evolved into strong democracies in which the legacy of anti-democracy always plays some role in current politics. The passions aroused by the Mideast conflict are proof of that. As much as some Europeans wish that those painful years of Fascist (and Communist) tyrannies would pass into the past, the collective memory was formed by those events and will not disappear without leaving deep traces. As Kierkegaard once said, life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards. □



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A Glimmer of Hope

A State of All Its Citizens

Yakov M. Rabkin

When the Sharon government refused to receive a UN panel to investigate the violence in Jenin last May, Foreign Minister Peres termed the very intention to start such an inquiry “a blood libel against the Jewish people.” This statement was made against the background of mounting anti-Jewish incidents around the world, all of them immediate fallout of the violence in Israel/Palestine. Peres’ not-so-innocent goal was to emphasize the common fate shared by Israel and the Diaspora in order to suggest that diaspora Jews who disagreed with Israeli policy were being traitors to their people. Yet this connection between the Diaspora and Israel also reflects the obvious, but rarely acknowledged, fact that Israel itself has become the main danger to the welfare of the Jewish people.

As early as 1948, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt warned:

“Even if the Jews were to win the war ... the ‘victorious Jews’ would live surrounded by an entirely hostile Arab population, secluded inside ever threatened borders, absorbed by physical self-defense ... And all this would be the fate of a nation that—no matter how many immigrants it could still absorb and how it extended its boundaries—would still remain a very small people greatly outnumbered by hostile neighbors.”

Her prophecy has sadly come true. The State of Israel has faced incessant violence since its proclamation. Demographically, Israel’s Jewish population is and will remain a tiny minority facing the rapidly growing Arab masses, 40 percent of whom are today below the age of fifteen. An island of wealth facing an ocean of poverty, Israel is condemned to live by the sword if the Zionist structure remains intact. To survive even in the short term, Israel will continue to need significant population inflows from abroad. But even if all the Jews of the world were to move to Israel, this would only delay the show-

down with its more numerous and mostly hostile neighbors.

We must admit that structurally, i.e. independently of the impact of particular policies, the interests of Israel and of the Diaspora are at loggerheads. Israel was created *inter alia*, to offer the Jews physical safety. Today the State of Israel adversely affects the physical safety of the Jews, both within its borders and elsewhere. In spite of the might of Israel’s armed forces, Israel is the only place in the world where a Jew can be killed just for being a Jew. Today the life of a Jew is in greater danger in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv than in Paris or Berlin or even in Damascus or Tehran.

Moreover, the chronic conflict engendered by the establishment of the State of Israel has spread waves of Jew-hatred to most Muslim and Arab nations. The current intifada ignited sparks of anti-Semitism in many parts of the world, including Western Europe, which had been free of anti-Semitism for several decades. Indeed, the chronic character of the Israel/Palestine conflict was an important, albeit not the only, cause of September 11. This observation does not apportion blame or justify terrorism; it simply states an obvious, albeit little articulated, connection between the creation and perpetuation of Israel as a Jewish nation-state and the unprecedented spread of regional violence to the rest of the world. Rwandans, Bosnians, or black South Africans did not spread violence to other parts of the world. Palestinians, frustrated by their fight against Israel, did.

It is not only our physical safety, but also our moral sensitivity, that has been adversely affected by the creation of Israel against the will of the ambient population. The never-ending bloody violence has numbed our sense of compassion, one of the three defining qualities that the Talmud attributes to the Jew—alongside timidity and propensity to do good (BT Yevamot, 79a). It was painful to hear Paul Wolfowitz, one of the most pro-Israel members of the American administration, booed by thousands of Jews assembled in Washington last April when he dared mention “innocent victims among the Palestinians.”

It would be a folly to mortgage the future of world Jewry on the fragile State of Israel. A possible violent demise of this valiant remnant of European nationalism in the Middle East

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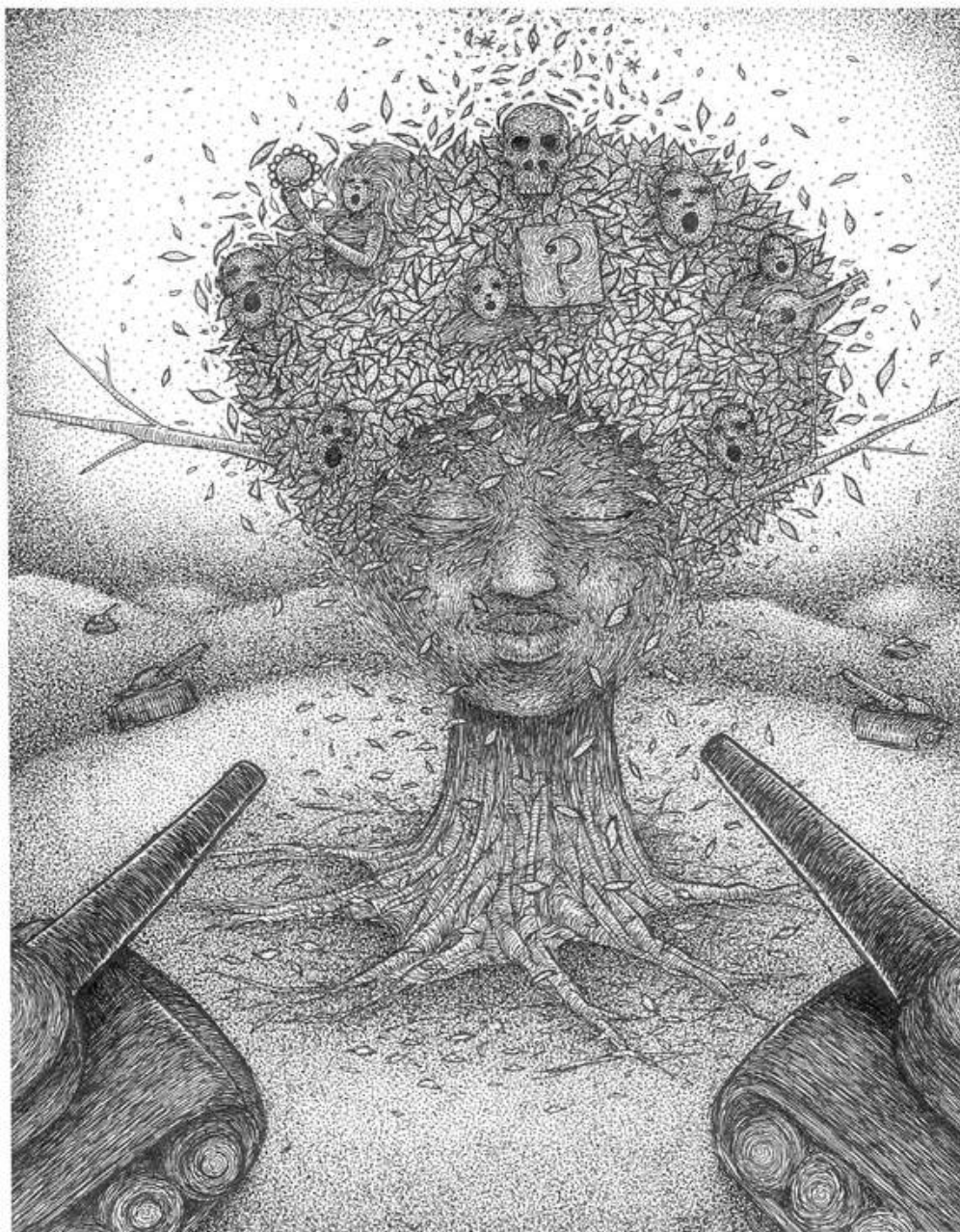
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could spell a disaster for Judaism and the Jews. Diaspora Jewry must acknowledge that it finds Israel's militancy, callousness, and chutzpah repugnant, a far cry from the values of Judaism. Instead of blindly supporting the Zionist ideal of a nation-state for Jews, we should reconsider the best course for preserving and strengthening Jewish life in both the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. It is too early to define the place reserved for the State of Israel and for Zionism in history. While for many Jews the desirability of the State of Israel constitutes an article of faith, this new faith in an ethnic state is not unshakable. It is hard to justify the State of Israel as a tool to enhance the spiritual and material welfare of the Jews and, particularly, to offer them a sense of physical safety. As violence continues, we should find the courage to ask: Was the idea of a Jewish state a viable one? Is it not the very nature of the State of Israel as a state for the Jews that fuels and perpetuates the conflict?

Opposition to Zionism

The most principled criticism of the Zionist idea has come not so much from Arab writers as from Jewish scholars who have opposed the idea of a Jewish state for over a century. The Zionists viewed the Jews as a nation in the modern European sense of the word. In reaction to nineteenth-century theories of race (theories which ultimately led to Nazism), Zionism based its definition of the Jew on biological provenance, and sought to become what one European rabbi called "a purely nationalist-racist movement without the least commonality with religion." Most rabbinical authorities reacted to the emergence of Zionism in the late nineteenth century with undisguised hostility. Prior to the establishment of the Jewish State, rabbis and scholars routinely objected to the political appropriation by the Zionists of spiritual concepts such as "Jerusalem," "Zion," or "Land of Israel."

Zionism postulates that Jewish history is essentially a sequence of expulsions, massacres, and forced conversions. According to this view, the Shoah is the ultimate proof of the untenability of Jewish diasporas, rather than a unique tragedy interrupting the progression towards a more tolerant and pluralistic society. Most Zionists see no intrinsic value in maintaining Jewish continuity beyond the borders of Israel. For them, the traditional model of autonomous diasporas possessing a common spiritual focus has largely



given way to a center-periphery model with the State of Israel assuming political, administrative, and representative functions of a center with respect to diaspora Jews.

Consequently, Israeli policies often convey the impression that Israel represents Jews from other countries. Political use by Israeli leaders of the Judaic term "the People of Israel" (*Am Yisrael*) tends to blur distinctions between Israeli and diaspora Jews, presenting the latter as "temporarily away from the country." Israel has domesticated diaspora leaders to the extent that they now act as lobbyists for Israel rather than as representatives of Jews. For many of these leaders, Zionism has replaced Judaism as a religion.

The characterization of the Jewish people in terms of ethnicity and, particularly, the attempt to cast Israel as a secular European nation-state designated as the home for that ethnic group, mark a major departure from Jewish tradition. Since the Diaspora began twenty-five centuries ago, the Jewish tradition has defined Jews as a nation only in the sense—and to

the extent—that Jews remain loyal to Torah. According to the tradition (solidly based on scriptural evidence), there is little meaning to a Jewish nation without Judaism. Just as the Muslim concept of *umma* is based on the loyalty to the Koran and transcends boundaries of nation-states, the Jewish concepts of *umma*, *Am Yisrael*, or *Kelal Yisrael* refer to communities that have the Torah as their common denominator; they are not confined to any particular territory, let alone to a nation-state.

As for the Land of Israel, the Torah posits that the land is entrusted to the Children of Israel only if the Jewish people live up to the standards enunciated in the Torah: to practice morality, to pursue justice, and to obey certain agricultural rules. The nature of our relationship to the Land of Israel is therefore different from that of other nations to their respective motherlands. Unlike the images common in other cultures, Israel is not a mother who would welcome her son whatever his misdeeds. Rather, Israel is portrayed as a bride who can reject her partner (or even, in Leviticus 18:28, a land that can “vomit its inhabitants”) if she disapproves of his behavior. The best known part of the Jewish prayer book is, perhaps, *Shema Israel*. This is what we read when we recite it three times a day: “Beware! Lest you let your heart be seduced, go astray, and worship alien deities and bow down to them. Then, the Divine anger will be awakened, and he will block the sky and there will be no more rain. The Land will not yield harvest, and you will disappear from the good land that G-d gives you.” The link that the Jews have with the Land of Israel is therefore contractual rather than organic. It is contingent on their loyalty to the Torah, and this can be seen in many synagogues on the day of *Shavuot* (Pentecost), when a special marriage contract drawn between the Jews and the Torah is read for all to hear.

In line with this idea of contract, the Jewish tradition attributes the exile of the Jews from the Land to their abandoning Torah commandments. The tradition does not view Jews as hapless victims, but rather as makers of their own fate. Maimonides and other classical sources indicate that the way back to the Land of Israel is *Teshuvah*, i.e. repentance and return to the commandments. Since the reason for exile is not attributed to the superior strength of the Roman legions, the redress for exile is not and should not be sought in developing a mightier army. In fact, the Talmud (BT Ketubot, 111a) refers to oaths that the Jews were to swear prior to their second exile, in which they are enjoined not to rebel against the nations and to re-occupy the Land of Israel by force. Given this tradition, some Judaic scholars see Israel's military exploits not as a sign of impending messianic redemption but rather as a blasphemous act of rebellion.

Opposition to Zionism has not disappeared since the time when Zionism was a minority movement shunned by most Jews. Most principled opposition continues to come from certain Hasidic groups, centered in Jerusalem and New York. They believe that the Zionist state, born in sin for which it has

never repented, has no legitimacy in terms of Jewish history. They believe that Jews had lived in the Land of Israel before the state, and they will remain there after it comes to an end. According to them, the State of Israel is an impediment to the messianic redemption. While most *Mitnaggedim* (non-Hasidic Jews) take a less militant position, they also reject the legitimacy of the State of Israel. According to the editor of the newspaper *Yated Hane'eman*: “Our participation in the state and its institutions is performed due to the pressures of the time and the force of circumstance, similar to our behavior under foreign regimes outside of the land. It may be defined as stealing into the enemy camp.” It is no wonder that the late Rabbi Eliezer Schach reportedly prayed daily that the State of Israel should disappear without harm befalling a single Jew. It is quite significant that the main street of Bnei Brak, the citadel of traditional Judaism in Israel, was recently renamed from Herzl Street to Rabbi Schach Street.

Uses of Violence

“In the long run,” wrote Arendt when the idea of a Jewish state became dominant in Zionist circles in the mid 1940s, “there is hardly any course imaginable that would be more dangerous, more in the style of an adventure... It will not be easy either to save the Jews or to save Palestine in the twentieth century; that it can be done with categories and methods of the nineteenth century seems at the very most highly improbable.” Indeed, Israel's attempts to suppress Palestinian resistance, which provoke worldwide protests today, would have been perfectly acceptable to European nations of the nineteenth century. The Zionists' refusal to heed the prognosis about the durability of Arab resistance to the Jewish state may be seen as “a triumph of the will” or, conversely, as a major failure. Jews used to believe in the power of their ideas, unsupported by material power. It appears that nowadays Israeli leaders cling to material power for want of ideas.

It is often said that Herzl's vision of a state for the Jews came to life in spite of an inhospitable terrain and the implacable hostility of the local inhabitants. However, it may well be that it is precisely this implacable hostility that forged the new Hebrew nation in Palestine. Since the Zionists discarded the Jewish religion as a common denominator of the ingathering exiles, a shared “fear of the Arabs” became the ultimate factor of national unity. Resorting to education as the primary tool of forging “the new man,” Zionists made consistent ideological use of the military conflict, a natural consequence of their self-serving vision of Palestine as “a land without a people for a people without a land.”

When Jewish babies are killed in the West Bank or Gaza, most Israelis are outraged. However, more than a few also wonder what kind of parents would endanger their children by keeping them in Hebron or Netsarim. This sacrificial rite is beginning to awaken doubts as to the very nature of the State of Israel, which had caused hundreds of human sacrifices from Jews and their neighbors well before

it was established, and tens of thousands since. Was it wise to establish it? Is it worth defending with heavy sacrifices? These questions, quite unimaginable in other countries, are hardly rhetorical in Israel. But it is a fact that the majority of the Jews, on whose behalf the State of Israel was ostensibly established, enjoy more tranquil lives elsewhere and are reluctant to join their brethren in Israel, and not only because of fear of wars. Zionist discourse has convinced many diaspora Jews that it is Israel that ensures their safety and welfare from far afield. This is an erroneous and dangerous belief. Erroneous because it ignores the structural conflict of interests between Israel and the Diaspora, and belittles the progress of human rights that makes Jews equal and active citizens of their countries. Dangerous because it lures diaspora Jewry into a mental and a physical trap.

Residual nostalgia for Zionist exploits largely explains many Israelis' reluctant approval of the settlers, whom they tend to admire from afar. The settlers are indeed "the last Zionists," whose messianic fervor is genuine and impressive. They are "the tail that wags the dog," that makes the retention of the territories the main preoccupation of successive Israeli governments. The settlement momentum is intrinsically expansive, since it relies on religious determinism that deifies the State and sanctifies the Occupation. The settlers accuse those who argue that the conflict can be solved by evacuation of the West Bank and Gaza of hypocrisy. They claim that there is no moral difference between Jewish settlement in Hebron and in Tel Aviv. And it appears that this view is gaining ground. Why should one rid Hebron of Jews but leave them in Jerusalem's neighborhoods of Katamon or Baka, which used to be no less Arab prior to 1948? Why should one oppose Israeli occupation of Hebron and condone the destruction of an Arab village, replaced by the University of Tel Aviv—nowadays, ironically, the citadel of liberalism and pacifism? If Jewish settlement is illegitimate in Gaza why is it legitimate in Jaffa or Haifa? Such questions convey a powerful message: We are all in the same boat. They argue that the legitimacy of the entire Jewish presence in the Land of Israel is in jeopardy once you start to examine its recent record carefully. This polemic strategy, aided by the sense of physical insecurity, keeps large segments of the Israeli population hostage to fear. Yet it also contains a certain truth.

Embarrassment and Double Standards

Israel's military operations, particularly against civilians, have embarrassed Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora for many decades. Since Israel promotes itself as the representative of the Jews, and most diaspora Jewish leaders

enthusiastically support this claim, the State of Israel is often associated with Jews everywhere. Jews outside of Israel are thus put in a difficult situation of defending the morally indefensible, of bending their ethical standards in order to justify Israel's actions in Bethlehem, Jenin, or Beirut. Indeed, Israel routinely, and perhaps inevitably for any state, acts against the morality embodied in Judaism. At the same time, since there is nothing but Judaism that distinguishes diaspora Jews from their fellow citizens in different countries, this blanket defense of Israel seriously discredits Judaism.

Conceptual disparities between Israel and the Jewish diasporas become more pronounced since the countries with sizable Jewish communities have all adopted a liberal system of social and political values. It is quite common in Israel to talk in anti-liberal, anti-democratic terms; for example, there are public discussions about building Jewish neighborhoods or settling Jews in the Galilee so that Arab citizens do not outnumber their Jewish compatriots in the region. Israeli official documents routinely identify the bearer as a Jew or a non-Jew. Structural segregation of Jews

from non-Jews is common in Israel. So is occupational discrimination, all of which is justified by the Herzlian denomination of Israel as a state for the Jews.

However, in the context of Western societies, it would be inconceivable to practice ethnic or religious discrimination in such a manner. One could imagine an international outcry if the *Front National* mayor of a French town were to promote a public housing development designated solely for Catholics. One of Israel's dailies wryly observed that Le Pen would be considered a bleeding-heart centrist in the Israeli political spectrum. Israel's discriminatory practices, while often opposed by the country's Supreme Court, conflict with the liberal values that underpin the stability and welfare of Jewish diasporas around the world. It is only a matter of time before diaspora leaders, at least those who overtly identify with the State of Israel, will face the challenge of explaining their obvious double standard.

The primacy of the State is a dangerous belief to hold. A few decades after the Shoah, Jews remember what happens when the *raison d'état* becomes a transcendental principle that supersedes individual morality. It may be illusory and even dangerous to confuse the profane centrality of Israel with the sacred centrality of the land; in order to affirm the first aspect one has to reject or distort the second one, and vice versa.

A garrison state inhabited by a desperate population and armed with nuclear weapons faces the danger of a regional, perhaps a world war. Zionism has brought about an unending confrontation with Palestinian Arabs. This cycle of violence

has become a serious threat: it may spell the violent demise of the State of Israel and, more importantly, a spiritual and psychological crisis for Judaism. As some foresaw over fifty years ago, it appears increasingly unrealistic to preserve "the state for the Jews," an adventurous idea to begin with, against the violent opposition of the Palestinians, whose nationalist dispossession by the Zionists remains at the root of the conflict. Of course, Israel's army is capable of defeating the Palestinians, but such a "victory" would not bring peace any closer. Many Israeli generals have learned this the hard way, and, once in retirement, openly decry the use of force in settling the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Out of the Impasse

The military gains of the last fifty years seem to evaporate as the situation on the ground between the Jordan and the Mediterranean reverts to 1948, when an ethnic conflict for the control of the land intensified between Jews and Arabs. In 2002, just as in 1948, there is no clear concept of national borders, and it is ethnic rather than political factors that play most potently in the entire area. A growing number of Israel's Arab citizens identify with their Palestinian brethren while the State of Israel often treats Arab Israelis as if they were enemy aliens. The euphoria that followed victory in the Six-Day War, and which seemed to vindicate the Zionists' vision and practice, has vanished altogether.

After decades of conflicting nationalist efforts from both sides, it is the entire area from the Jordan to the sea, not just the West Bank and Gaza, that requires a solution. New Jerusalem suburbs of Gilo or East Talpiot, Jewish cities of Ariel or Emanuel built on the lands conquered in 1967, are hardly different from cities in Israel proper. Their evacuation in an eventual territorial settlement would be a human drama of major proportions. "Transferring" Arab population into Jordan and Egypt, an option accepted by about one-half of Israelis, would be equally cruel, senseless, and probably impossible. The partition or separation that some Israeli policy-makers, including former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, continue to support is no longer feasible since Jews and Arabs are too interspersed across the entire disputed territory.

The frustration of the Palestinian Arabs, who are deprived of most avenues of political expression, has naturally developed into a fixation on national independence *à l'israélienne*. Yet another nation-state—a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza—may only cause more pain and rancor. Dismantlement of settlements, forced transfers of population and other usual appurtenances of establishing nation-states in ethnically heterogeneous areas would likely ensue. Rather than a new nation-state, a liberal political structure based on citizens' equal rights and, consequently, their self-interest, may have more chances to succeed.

Israelis of very different political views, such as the nationalist Moshe Arens, a former defense minister, and the more conciliatory Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of

Jerusalem, agree that separation of the Jews from the Palestinians is just a myth that regularly comes to the surface after major acts of terror. In the same sense, surveys show that Israelis and Palestinians expect to maintain strong economic ties. Moreover, conflicts are easier to settle between neighbors than between nations.

Abrahamia: An Alternative to Ethnic Nationalism

One promising arrangement could be a confederation of independently governed areas or cantons, to be established in the territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. Abrahamia (or Ibrahimia) may be a good name for the new confederate state since it would recall an important common ancestor recognized by Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Such a state could be modeled after Canada or Switzerland. Good use could be made of elements of the Ottoman rule, which had managed diversity and preserved peace in the region far better than most of its successor states (be it Serbia, Turkey, Israel, or Lebanon). Democratic confederate structures tend to moderate ethnic or national tensions. Abrahamia could consist of cantons sovereign in matters of culture, education, worship, internal security, and local law. Such a structure would also enable Orthodox Jews and secular Hebrews, whose relationship is also profoundly acrimonious, to live their lives according to their customs and beliefs, without the irritating interventions of the state.

Foreign affairs, defense, monetary matters, and communication would be entrusted to a confederate government elected by all citizens. The sensitive issue of defense could be resolved by stages. During the first years the armed forces should remain mostly under the control of the Jewish cantons since Jews, not Arabs, have been threatened with the prospect of being "thrown into the sea" by neighboring countries. But the army, a bulwark against foreign aggression, should be prohibited from being used as a police force within the confederation. Cantonal police units and a nominal confederate police, initially aided by an international contingent, should maintain public order and ensure peaceful relations between diverse cantons. As memories of the bitter past recede into history—and this may take less time than many imagine—the defense forces should fully incorporate all citizens.

The Law of Return, which now allows any Jew in the world to become a citizen of Israel upon arrival (and sometimes even before), should be broadened to include Palestinian Arabs who would be entitled to reclaim their homes or obtain compensation for lost property. To do so, the lands held by the Jewish National Fund, over 90 percent of the total territory, should be sold without discrimination to Jews and Arabs. Compensation for lost property would constitute a major source of funds to help Arabs buy real estate and reduce the existing development gap between the two groups. Economic disparities fuel violence no less than

nationalist passions, but when the economic divide coincides with the ethnic one, violence is simply unavoidable. Income gaps must be bridged for such a confederation to take root. Just as a German may now freely buy a property in Alsace after thousands died in wars disputing that territory, a Palestinian Arab should acquire equal rights and obligations, and be free to settle wherever he can rent or legally acquire property. This will give him, currently the most disenfranchised, a real stake in the success of the confederation.

Similarly, those Jews who consider it a religious commandment to populate the entire Land of Israel should be free to settle anywhere between the Jordan and the sea, by legal means of course and without any special privileges. For this to happen, individual safety and individual rights of citizens should become the main priority of the new federation.

The majority of secular Israelis who simply want "to be a free people in our land" (as Israel's anthem now puts it) can continue to live "Israeli style" in their cantons. Confederate authorities should do nothing to ensure their Jewishness, since matters of worship and education will be exclusive privileges of the constituent cantons. Such an arrangement will not only alleviate the conflict between Jews and Arabs, it will also eliminate the tension that the State of Israel has fomented trying to subject its Jewish citizens to the strictures of religious law.

Details of such a confederation may take a while to work out, and even longer to implement. At this point it is a suggestion, an outline of an idea that breaks the cycle of ethnic exclusivity and ends the bloody zero-sum game. It is important to move Israeli and Palestinian political thinking away from the notion of nation-state towards the concept of confederation, an idea that was quite popular in both camps prior to 1948, and, according to recent surveys, is still popular among many Palestinians.

A Role for World Jewry

After five decades of exasperating conflict in the Middle East, world Jewry can play a major role in transforming the current situation along the proposed lines. Many Western Jews have been active for years in diverse rapprochement activities that bring Arabs and Hebrews, Muslims, Christians, and Jews together. They run joint prayer sessions and interconfessional discussions, even a joint Jewish-Muslim program to teach tolerance on the basis of respective religious texts. European and American Jews have brought expertise, commitment, and even-handedness to a number of non-governmental projects that foster understanding and respect of difference. Most of these joint activities have survived the current upsurge of violence, which in itself is a sign of their success. Jewish academics, businesspeople, psychologists, rabbis, and social workers from various countries have helped the cause of tolerance in Israel for years, and their role, as well as that of members of the Palestinian diasporas, can only gain in importance in the new confederation.

Diaspora Jews should help transform the structurally fragile State of Israel into a more stable and viable political configuration. They should make their real voices heard in the European Union, Russia, and the United States. The vast majority of Jews are citizens of these political entities, which gives their governments more than a geo-strategic interest in settling the Arab-Israeli dispute. These governments, particularly when encouraged by their respective Jewish communities, could try to convince the Israeli public to transform the nation-state and the territories it occupies into a confederation that would ensure the safety of all its inhabitants. They can also make it clear to the Palestinians that such a confederation, rather than a quilt-like nation-state criss-crossed by Israeli highways, is in their best long-term interest. The challenge of making this conceptual shift is substantial. But it must be met in order to free our thinking of the murderous nationalist stranglehold.

At the same time, measures shall be devised to offer Israeli Jews a refuge in various diasporas. The feeling that they have nowhere to go, that Israel is the last frontier, that only Israel can offer Jews physical safety, has fuelled despair not only among Israeli Jews but also among many Jews who choose to remain in the Diaspora. These are vestiges of Zionist myths that have to be reassessed in pragmatic, rather than ideological, terms. The possibility of a major military flare-up, perhaps including weapons of mass destruction, together with the current terrorist violence may push many Israeli Jews to look for refuge elsewhere. It would be tragically irresponsible of Jewish communities to insist that Israelis should fight to the bitter end. Those governments that are most likely to offer refuge to Israeli Jews must understand that, by offering a choice to Israel's Jews to rebuild their lives in their countries, they reduce the degree of despair and weaken the incentives for violence in the region.

A two-pronged approach, on the one hand encouraging the transformation of the nation-state of Israel into an Abrahamia based on equality of opportunity and, on the other hand, offering Israel's Jews an option of settling in other industrial countries, is likely to reduce violence and to encourage stability. It will weaken one of the most enduring conflicts of our age and will help restore Judaism as the focus of Jewish existence. Interminable (and sterile) discussions of the latest political and military moves in Israel dominate the daily experience of most Jews. This should cease, leaving Jews the peace of mind to face important issues of Judaism that have been eclipsed by news bulletins from the Middle East. The Jewish return to history on-board a tank has only endangered Jews, in body and in spirit. Shedding nationalist illusions of power should enable Jews to focus on another kind of return to history: a return to the Torah with its manifold interpretations and hope for all humanity. If we believe the Jewish tradition, this will also be the best way to ensure Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. □

Do You Actually Trust Yasser Arafat?

Ian S. Lustick

Do I trust Yasser Arafat? Of course not. Why should I? Why should anyone trust a politician—whether Shimon Peres, Ariel Sharon, Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Benjamin Netanyahu, George W. Bush, or Yasser Arafat? Whether we agree with them or not, politicians aren't for trusting. They are for getting done what can be done to make really horrible problems into plain old lousy problems.

"Trusting" a person means believing that even if circumstances change, his or her promise will be kept. In personal relations, trust is crucial and we honor it. However, if we ever saw a politician actually display that sort of trust in politics, we would be dumbfounded, horrified, and/or deeply disappointed. What idiocy, we would think, that a politician would care more for an out-of-date or miscalculated personal commitment than for the imperatives of his or her constituency, cause, or country. Not that politicians normally announce that they are going back on their promises—of course not. Rather they find legal or "diplomatic" language—recently known as "Clintonese"—which allows them to change policies and break their promises without having to acknowledge that they are doing so. In Machiavellian language, for a Prince it is a mistake to always keep one's promises, but a catastrophe to appear to be someone who does not.

Certainly the Palestinians have little reason to trust the personal integrity of Israeli politicians. From Rabin through Peres, Netanyahu, Barak, and Sharon, they have obfuscated, delayed, lied, backtracked, pettifogged, and cancelled all sorts of commitments under the informal and formal rubrics of the Oslo process. But neither do Israelis have any reason to believe that Yasser Arafat—as typical an example of a con-ning, corrupt, power-focused autocrat as one is likely to find in the Middle East—would sacrifice his own position or an opportunity to protect his people's interests in order to avoid having to "reinterpret" a previous commitment.

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So, if not trust, what is there to rely on in political life? The answer *begins* with the fact that, especially for sovereign states, one never has any guarantees. That is what "independence" means, and that is what Zionism wanted for the Jews, a sovereign state that would relieve Gentiles of having to protect Jews in a world built on interest and not trust. The answer *continues* with the

realization that solving a protracted conflict is not a search for trustworthy leaders but a search for mutually compelling situations. The answer *ends* with webs of interest—personal and party, military and diplomatic, economic and political.

Good and lasting agreements are not based on trust in individual leaders who are, in any event, acting on the political stage only temporarily. A solid agreement is based only on webs of interests—streams of anticipated circumstances which systematically would make it much more costly for those who sign an agreement, or their successors, to break its terms rather than honor them. Peace between real enemies—and Palestinians and Israeli Jews are real enemies, with fundamentally contradictory historical narratives and visions of what total justice would require—means that the deal must be as self-reinforcing as possible. This simply means that Palestinian and Israeli signatories, as well as their successors, must fear the consequences of betrayal and cherish the payoffs of adherence more than they long for any gain they would achieve by breaking the agreement.

As virtually all sides now recognize, the only negotiable framework for such a relationship is the consolidation of two real states—one Israeli and one Palestinian. On the basis of such an agreement, the futures of each people would be "guaranteed" by the interests and abilities of the leaders of these states, in cooperation with regional and international forces, to contain, dismantle, or de-legitimize those still willing to act violently on behalf of visions of total justice not thereby satisfied.

So trust neither Sharon nor Arafat. With something as important as the future of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples at stake, only that which is the foundation of political life can be trusted. That foundation is fear, ambition, and the webs of interest they can be made to produce. □

On Silencing Prophets

Rick Lowery

Biblical prophecy is not easily translated to the twenty-first century. The prophets' absolutist view of truth isn't well suited for democratic dialogue. And their assumption that natural disaster and political catastrophe are "God's punishment" for sin is theologically problematic in a world that has known Holocaust and Hiroshima, slavery and Jim Crow, the often violent domination of women, inquisition, crusade, and holy war.

But the prophets' basic message that peace and security depend on just economic and political practices continues to have cogency and power. As we weigh the words of pundits and officials today, who argue that state violence paves the path to peace, that economic and political justice can be put on hold, we would do well to heed Jeremiah's advice and view such claims with a skeptical eye. When we hear our enemies and even our friends urge silence in the face of atrocity, we should reflect on the story of Amos and Amaziah and consider the consequences of failing to speak.

Amos' Vision

The first chapter of Amos condemns Israel's international neighbors for acts of violence against Israel and one another. The second chapter begins a series of judgment oracles against Judah and Israel focusing on state-sponsored violence and economic oppression. This prophetic critique reaches a crescendo at the end of chapter five, with God rejecting the very idea of religious piety divorced from social justice:

I hate, I despise your sacred feasts.
I take no pleasure in your religious assemblies.
Even though you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept!
The peace-offerings of your fattened sacrificial animals,
I will not look!
Remove from me the noise of your songs, the melody of your harps.
I will not listen!
Let justice roll like waters!
Righteousness, like an ever-flowing stream!"

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"Justice" and "righteousness" are certainly not being practiced by "the distinguished leaders of the first among the nations to whom the house of Israel turns" (6:1). These leaders have built impressive homes with pleasant vineyards by "trampling the poor," "exact[ing] levies of grain," and "push[ing] aside the needy in the gate" (5:11-12). They celebrate a coming day of vengeance when God will help them destroy their enemies. But God's day will be "darkness, not light" for them, because they have lacked compassion and failed to establish justice in the land (5:18). It will be "as if someone escaped a lion only to meet up with a bear; or entered the house, leaned a hand on the wall, and was bitten by a snake" (5:19). Their apparent victories will be short-lived, leading to greater violence and destruction for Israel.

The prophet tells these leaders, and anyone else who will listen, that building a more just society offers the only hope for ending the cycle of violence: "Establish justice in the gate! Perhaps Adonai, God of hosts, will be gracious to Joseph's remnant" (5:15).

Prophetic Vision Saves the Nation

In his first two visions (7:1-3, 4-6), Amos foresees natural disasters—a locust plague and a "judgment by fire"—as Israel's punishment for the sins of economic oppression and violence condemned in the first six chapters of the book. Both passages follow a distinctive pattern: God shows Amos a vision of disaster for Israel, and the prophet, like Abraham outside Sodom (Genesis 18) and Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32), pleads for mercy, because "Jacob is small" and unable to withstand the punishment. In each case, Amos convinces God to reverse the judgment against Israel: "Adonai had compassion concerning this. 'This will not happen,' said Adonai" (7:3, 6).

Each vision unfolds as a conversation between God and the prophet that moves from judgment to intercession to pardon. In each case, the prophetic vision itself becomes the means of Israel's salvation. Seeing and naming injustice is an act of intervention and intercession that finally averts national disaster.

The third prophecy (7:7-9) starts like the first two: Amos sees a vision. This time God is standing on a wall holding a plumbline—a sign, we're told, that God plans to abandon Israel and destroy its sanctuaries.

According to the pattern established in the previous two visions, the prophet should now plead for Israel's pardon.

But his plea is preempted by the complaints of Amaziah, a priest in the royal temple at Bethel (7:10–13). Amaziah denounces Amos as a traitor bent on the destruction of Israel. He accuses Amos of undermining the nation by criticizing Israel's unjust policies: "The land," says Amaziah, "will not be able to bear all of his words" (7:10).

True to the pattern established in the first two visions, a prophetic dialogue follows the vision of the plumbline. But Amaziah's threats derail the prophet's plea for mercy from God. Any hope that Amos might again convince God to call off disaster is dashed by Amaziah's foolish attempt to silence the prophet's call for justice.

When Amaziah orders Amos never again to prophesy at Bethel (7:13), his words prove prescient in ways Amaziah does not anticipate. Later, in chapter eight, Amos describes a disastrous future when prophecy ceases in Israel: "Days are coming, declares my lord Adonai, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but rather of hearing the words of Adonai. They will wander from sea to sea, from north to east. They will run back and forth, looking for Adonai's word, but they won't find it" (8:11–12). God is, in fact, politically active, Amos says, just as Israel's wealthy leaders hope. But Israel has failed to establish justice and promote peace. So God has decided to intervene *against* Israel, not on its behalf as king and priest suppose.

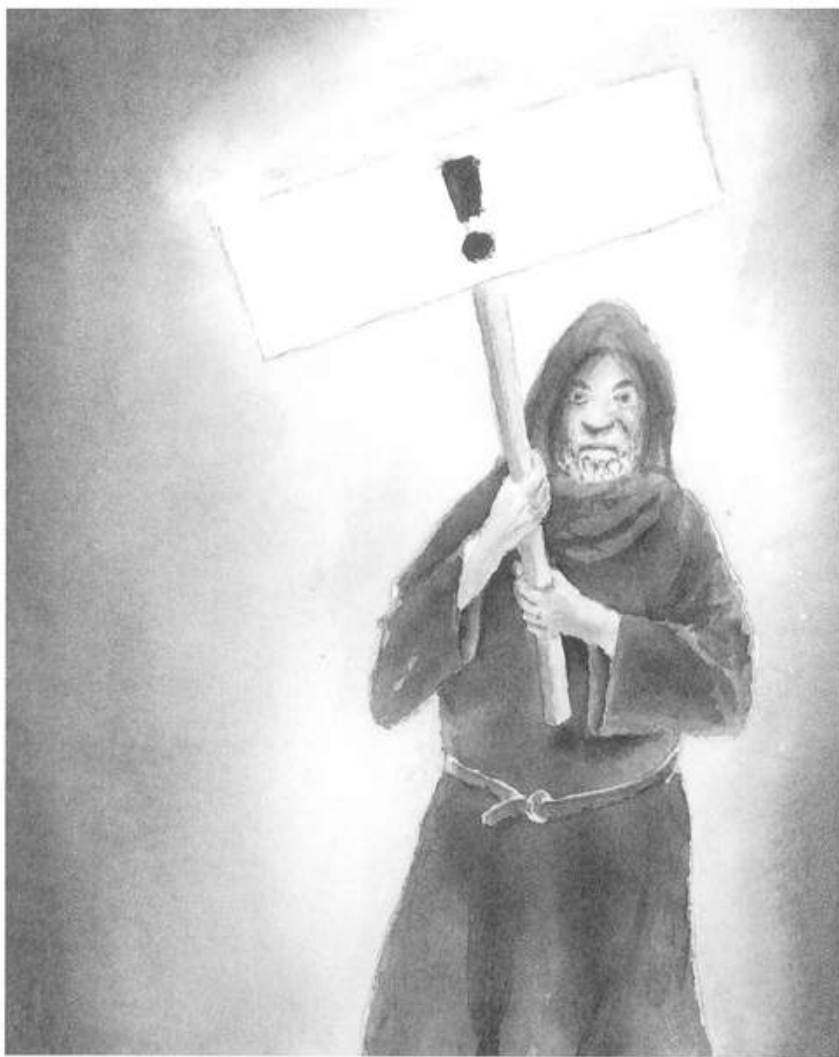
"How Will We Know Which Word is Not God's?"

In Amaziah's defense, it is not always a simple matter to discern the truth of prophetic witness. This is especially true when different "prophets" offer competing visions.

In the days just before Babylonian exile, for example, two prophets, Jeremiah and Hananiah, had visions diametrically opposed to one another (Jeremiah 28). Hananiah predicted that confrontation with the Babylonians would soon bring peace and security. Jeremiah predicted disaster if the nation continued its march toward war. Which of the two prophets should the king believe?

Torah takes a wait-and-see approach: If the prediction doesn't come true, it's not a true prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:22). Fool-proof, but not particularly helpful when you're faced with an urgent choice between contradictory visions! Jeremiah augments the Deuteronomic prescription by looking to past precedent. Experience has shown, Jeremiah says, that predictions of peace and security have always proved wrong when Israel charted a course like the one now supported by Hananiah. When apologists claim that provocations will lead to peace, be skeptical!

Jeremiah had centuries of human experience to back his prediction that the current political course would lead to



disaster. Hananiah, however, struck a popular chord when he said that Jerusalem could stand alone against the world, that peace was around the corner, that an aggressive stance toward their enemies would guarantee security. In the end, the people and their leaders preferred Hananiah's more favorable assessment. Jeremiah was rejected and his vision scorned. Accused of treason, he was vilified, threatened, assaulted, imprisoned, and even thrown into a cistern. When everything collapsed—as he had predicted—he was forced to flee to Egypt where he disappeared from historical memory.

Jeremiah paid a very high personal price for warning Jerusalem of its disaster in the making. But his prediction proved true. And 2,600 years later, peoples of three major faiths read his collected works as sacred writ. Hananiah is a mere footnote in Jeremiah's biography.

Prophetic "Conscience" and Human Rights

Following Jeremiah, we should augment the scriptures and traditions of our faiths with wisdom gained through centuries of human experience. We should emulate the courageous witness of modern visionaries—Jane Addams, Harriet Tubman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and

Yitzhak Rabin. And we should jealously guard the principles of human dignity sifted from the ashes of war and holocaust, and codified in international humanitarian law.

The human ability to empathize with the joy and suffering of others is the cornerstone of human rights. It is celebrated by religious traditions from Hinduism to Islam. And it is codified in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the first of its thirty articles: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and *conscience* and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (emphasis mine).

As Mary Ann Glendon documents in her excellent history, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the word that the committee finally (mis) translated as "conscience" was suggested by the Chinese (Taiwanese) delegate P. C. Chang. He proposed the Chinese word "ren," which literally means "two-person mindedness," the ability to think from the perspective of the other, to empathize, to have compassion. Human beings are endowed with the ability to "walk a mile in the other guy's shoes."

We don't always make use of this ability. Indeed, the persistent recurrence of racist and xenophobic ideologies have shown us that the prophetic witness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is necessary. Its call to *ren*, to compassion, is the lifeblood of prophetic, progressive spirituality.

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In my own Christian tradition, for example, God appears as one who so empathizes with the world as to identify fully with a tortured victim of random state-sponsored terror. This act of solidarity with the lowest of the low in a place of unspeakable violence illustrates the unbounded depth and breadth of God's compassionate presence. In Judaism, Lurianic tradition holds that human beings bear within us shattered pieces of divine light. Recognizing sacred light in others is an act of "conscience" in the sense that Chang intended. It makes healing (*tikkun*) and community (*koinonia*) possible in this fragmented world.

Faith is not measured, in this understanding, by our willingness to kill and be killed as instruments of God's judgment. Rather, it is gauged by the strength of our "conscience," the enduring power of our empathy, the depth of our commitment to justice for all—even those outside our tribe. Faith calls us not to be "martyrs" or "holy warriors," but to have the courage to live and share sacred life, to risk embracing the light of God we see in ourselves and others.

In such moments of faithful empathy, we catch a glimpse of God and live.

A Time to Prophecy and Heal

In a "day of darkness, not light," when the insane violence of fanatics steers the course of government policy and popular opinion, modern "prophets" must shine a light on the bright red lines of human dignity that should not be crossed. We must call the world to conscience—to see ourselves in the faces of others and to see God in daring acts of empathy and compassion.

In a time of insecurity and fear, growing deeper with each assassination, demolition, and suicide bomb, the call to conscience often will not be well received. Officials and apologists will shout "treason" and threaten expulsion. Friends will urge "realism" and caution: How can the prophet preach compassion when the enemy shows no restraint?

But silence now brings shame later. Keeping quiet will not speed the end of violence. And if the visions of Amos are right, it may well lead to disaster.

When the world is caught in a downward spiral of retribution, our best hope is uncompromising, outspoken, active faith in the God who lives within and among us, calling us into communities of healing compassion and urging us to build a world where justice rolls like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Dangerous times call for bold acts of empathy, prophetic visions of justice and mercy. Who knows? In the end, 1 or 10 or 463* people of conscience who dissent from the madness, who dare to speak the truth about basic human dignity, may well save the nation. □

*The number of IDF reservists who have signed a statement refusing to serve in the occupied territories as of May 2002.

The Art of Atrocity

Lawrence L. Langer

Much has been written about Jewish cultural life in the Terezín ghetto, a former garrison town near Prague that the Nazis, in 1941, turned into a Jewish detention camp. Although similar cultural activity took place in a few other ghettos—Vilna, for example—nothing of the scope and achievement of the Terezín artists, composers and performers was to be found elsewhere. At first clandestine, soon their endeavors were tolerated and finally supported by the Germans, who realized that any form of distraction would contribute to the illusion that the place had a permanent future and could help to conceal the truth that it was really nothing more than a transit site to death.

It is easy to misinterpret the cultural life that occurred at Terezín and difficult to assess what it signifies, for us and for the victims whose talents were so betrayed. Much ink has been spilled on the subject of cultural resistance to genocide, though I sometimes feel that the phrase says more about our need to find some solace in the unredeemable atrocity of the Holocaust than to describe accurately the true nature of what happened. Although the ordeal of European Jewry is finished for the murdered victims, it will never be over for us. The impulse to set meaningless death into some form of meaningful context is both natural and understandable, since the alternative is almost too painful to bear. But if only to grant the victims the honesty of their terrible experience, it is a temptation one ought to resist. In the contest between culture and genocide, genocide will always win when force is on its side. Genocide destroys people, not culture, and culture preserves what has been created, not the lives of the people who created it. I am sure no one would vote to protect the



The impulse to set meaningless death into a meaningful context is natural, since the alternative is almost too painful to bear.

art of Terezín if by obliterating it we could restore the lives of its artists. Therefore, instead of speaking about cultural resistance to genocide, we would be better advised to talk about resistance to cultural genocide, because that is what happened in Terezín, and those engaged in that enterprise deserve all the acclaim they have received.

Terezín was originally built in 1780 as a military fortress. It had barracks and houses to accommodate about 7,000 people, though after the deportations began, in November 1941, as many as 60,000 were crowded into its dark, dirty, and ill-heated quarters. It was chiefly intended as a repository for Jews from Bohemia and Moravia, though during its three-and-a-half-year history it also lodged Jews from Germany (42,000), Austria (15,000), Hungary (1,100), Holland (4,900), and Denmark (466). Other prisoners included Gypsies and, especially toward the end of the war, non-Jews.

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Originally planned as a transit ghetto from which Jews would be sent to Auschwitz and other death camps, Terezín also functioned as a labor camp, inmates often toiling as much as eighty hours per week. It led a bizarre dual life, and if one were to search for a single term to describe its existence, the word “deception” would be a leading candidate. Prisoners were encouraged to believe that through obedience and hard work they might survive their ordeal. Because many elderly persons and World War I veterans were sent to Terezín, the Germans hoped to induce outsiders, including neutral nations and citizens of the Third Reich, to think of the camp as a place where Jews could lead a spartan but safe existence. To support this view they set up architectural and drafting offices where prisoners trained in these areas drew plans of buildings and urban neighborhoods that depicted a small but pleasant city where Jews carried on their trades isolated from the rest of the world. Artists were required to sketch, draw, or paint scenes of labor or leisure that would represent a normal but constrained community life. Small albums of those illustrations were assembled and periodically sent to Germany to be used for propaganda purposes.

It is difficult to understand why the Germans expected their ruse about a “paradise” ghetto in Terezín to be believed. By November 1941, when Terezín received its first inmates, hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Soviet Union, including 33,000 at Babi Yar near Kiev, had already been slaughtered. This would have been known to countless German troops in the vicinity of the murders who were not members of the SS. The German leadership apparently had convinced itself that killing on this scale could be kept secret, and that rumors to the contrary would be silenced by spreading the illusion of normalcy that infiltrated their propaganda about the “model” habitation for the Jews that they had created at Theresienstadt.

Jewish artists, architects, musicians, and dramatists performed much of the propaganda work. Although, with few exceptions, they did not have details about the destination of transports to the East, they knew that conditions in their camp were not intended to sustain life for very long, and many had their suspicions about the fate of those who had been sent away. Nearly one quarter of the camp’s inhabitants—more than 30,000—died in Terezín from malnutrition, illness, disease, and exhaustion. Approximately 88,000 of the prisoners who entered Terezín were eventually transported to Auschwitz, including 15,000 children, of whom only 150 returned.

Jewish prisoners, in short, were well aware that their camp was a way station to death and that the work they did fed the Nazi propaganda machine. But who would think of

defaming their labor by calling it a form of collaboration? They met the threats of adversity as best they knew how, using their talents to help them stay alive and perhaps gain some extra nourishment for themselves and their families. It injured truth rather than individuals, a small enough price to pay under such oppressive circumstances.

By night, these same artists drew, sketched and painted ceaselessly, this time choosing their own subjects and hiding the results. This was not a form of resistance (because they knew it could do nothing to hinder German ferocity or save

themselves from deportation), but a tribute to the truth they were forced to malign during the day and a documentation for future generations. It was their kind of counter-propaganda, a visible heritage of the agony they and their fellow Jews endured.

For example, one of the works hidden by Leo Haas, a principal artist of Terezín, depicts a crowd of gaunt men and women in the attic of a house in the ghetto. They are leaning against walls, lying down, dozing, sleeping, or simply staring. They are weary and forlorn, but most of all they seem to be waiting. We do not know exactly for what, but the drawing is called “Expecting the Worst,” and we deduce that they are soon to be deported to the East. Although they are a crowd, no one seems to be in contact with anyone else. The reputed mutual support that helped victims endure their sorrow is nowhere in evidence. Each human being is alone with his or her prospective fate, exhausted in body and spirit, without hope. A glaring light pierces the ceiling to illuminate the wretchedness of the inhabitants, challenging us to witness the spectacle of misery with horrified if compassionate eyes. There is nothing to celebrate, no dignity to affirm, no hidden agenda of defiance, certainly no one to scorn—only a summons to try to imagine what a life bereft of the supports that *we* take for granted must have been like for these forlorn people.

It is an art of *access*, culture as revelation, rather than rapture—for what is exhilarating about waiting to be victimized, old and helpless, without any hope of aid? The only resistance it implies is our own reluctance to examine the paralyzing anguish of its contents. What could Haas have had in mind but to leave a visual legacy of this anguish, since he knew its living exemplars were soon to vanish from the scene? It is certainly not an invitation to rhetorical conjecture about “spiritual strength” or the “dignity of dying.” Haas’s title, “Expecting the Worst,” to say nothing of his stark and gloomy draftsmanship, makes his intention unmistakable: Look and see, and seeing, grieve.

More than fifty years after the event, the issue of representing the Holocaust in art remains a troubling one, although the creative imagination has had less difficulty

*By night, these same
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with it than critics or theorists. The challenge may have seemed overwhelming, but it was not insuperable. In Terezín Czech artists like Leo Haas, Fritz Taussig, and Otto Ungar were driven to portray the reality around them, not bothering to ask whether it was a proper subject for the beauty of art or suitable for its traditional forms. For those trapped by the Holocaust, the question of "propriety" ceased to be a serious question. Life was no longer proper, and indeed its only goal now appeared to be to die, later if possible, sooner if not. Holocaust art is an art of the grim and the abnormal: what else can it be? It seeks imagery of chaos and disorder rather than beauty and perfection. If an odd kind of painful grace nonetheless emerges from this quest, we as audience are left to meditate on the para-

dox of an art of atrocity, which reflects the contradictions that governed the lives of the artists of Terezín. By night their dark visions undid the bright delusions of the day, a formula that one might use to describe the inspiration behind much Holocaust art.

Other kinds of cultural activity flourished in Terezín and need to be assessed from a less somber perspective. Such efforts also signified a resistance to cultural genocide, though their intention was not to document Nazi brutality. Those not familiar with the dismal daily existence of the camp might easily consider it a cultural paradise, and indeed after the war some survivors cynically observed that at no other time of their lives had the opportunities for cultural growth been so rich. Inhabitants could hear regular lectures on a wide variety of subjects from university professors; attend chamber music concerts or performances of operas like Smetana's "The Bartered Bride" or Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro"; or see plays by Gogol, Chekhov, and popular Czech dramatists. But before we leap to the conclusion that this represents a remarkable triumph of the human spirit over adversity, we need to ask some sober questions. If an actor or composer or concert pianist were given a choice between doing nothing but brooding about



After the war some survivors cynically observed that at no other time of their lives was the opportunity for cultural growth so rich.

one's impending doom and sinking slowly into oblivion or using one's talents, however spare and limiting the conditions, to give others some temporary relief from oppression and gain a little acclaim for oneself—who would choose the former over the latter? Is this resistance, escapism, or merely a normal and spontaneous decision to employ one's natural abilities where possible, especially when they might offer a brief respite to their dreary lives and those of their audiences? I suppose our response to this inquiry depends on our inclination to inflate or deflate the reality that surrounds us. Each of us invents the Holocaust that we require.

It is worth hearing the opinion of one qualified authority, the historian H.G. Adler, who survived both Terezín and Auschwitz and in 1955 published

in Germany the first detailed history of a Nazi concentration camp called *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz eines Zwangsgemeinschaft (The Face of a Coerced Community)*. Adler disapproved of the frenzy of cultural activity in the ghetto because he thought it made the participants into pawns of Nazi propaganda. He thought such pursuit "became excessive and undignified, blinded performers and spectators, and often degenerated into an almost dangerous quest for pleasure." The demands of truth frequently seem unsympathetic to individual behavior, and clearly this is the case in Adler's severe judgment of his fellow Jews. He attributed the source of the intense cultural energy to self-delusion, what he called "a flight from the present." "The deliberate deception of the Germans," he argued, "led to the self-delusion of the prisoners," and then, in an illuminating comparison with Auschwitz, he added:

In Auschwitz sheer despair was supreme, and the reality of the situation, says historian Marjorie Lamberti in *Making Art in the Terezín Concentration Camp*,

was unambiguously recognized. And even if some vital, indestructible spark still flickered, or if a person could escape in spirit by some magical transformation into a more pleasant delusion, reality was nevertheless seen for

what it was, and basically nobody was deceived. It was not that way in Terezín, where almost anything could be repressed, where illusion ran rampant and hope, merely dampened by anxiety, suffused everything that lay under thick fog.

Perhaps the most compassionate conclusion is that the majority of human beings do not dwell comfortably in the realm of absolute truth, but intuitively seek ways to rationalize their escape from its harsh glare. In Terezín cultural expression seemed a legitimate substitute.

Under constant pressure from neutral groups like the International Red Cross to disprove rumors that the Germans were exterminating the Jews of Europe, head of Reich Security Heinrich Himmler finally agreed to allow a Commission of Red Cross delegates from Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland to inspect Theresienstadt. The date was set for June 23, 1944. Promptly camp officials initiated a frantic plan to "beautify" portions of the ghetto in order to mislead their visitors.

It is difficult to estimate how successful the German deception was. The Red Cross Commission saw only what the camp Commandant chose to show them. The Jews had been warned that any attempt to convey the truth would lead to grave consequences. Understandably, no candidate for martyrdom emerged. In their report, the members of the Commission wrote favorably about the conditions in the camp. Subsequently some historians argued that they had not been fooled but feared that a critical account might threaten the safety of the current inhabitants. One can imagine the despair of the prisoners at the apparent success of the Germans to advertise Terezín as a model ghetto, a small paradise for its resident Jews.

In August 1944, a few months after the Red Cross visit, camp officials decided to revive an idea they had begun to implement but then abandoned in 1942: to make a propaganda film about the camp which might confirm for skeptical outsiders that the Jews were not being mistreated in the restricted locales where they were allowed to live. Since the film was never shown publicly, we will never know exactly which audiences it was intended for. We also will never understand the process of thinking that inspired the Nazis to undertake the project in the first place. By August 1944 virtually all of European Jewry, including more than 350,000 Hungarian Jews, had already been killed. Allied forces were moving toward Paris in the west, while Soviet troops had already freed the handful of Jews still alive in Vilna and overrun the death camp at Lublin-Majdanek. The war was long since lost. Were worried Germans hoping to deflect postwar hostile judgment by citing this piece

of idyllic cinematic evidence in their defense? How could it possibly counterbalance the visible proof of their crimes spread across the face of Europe? Someone has even suggested that the film was intended as anti-Semitic propaganda, to stir up enthusiasm for the war from a wavering German population, crushed by nightly air raids and a crumbling economy. This idea is supported by a statement attributed to propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who is said to have exclaimed: "While the Jews in Terezín are sitting in the café, drinking coffee, eating cake, and dancing, our soldiers have to bear all the burdens of a terrible war, its miseries and deprivations, to defend their motherland." Whatever the reason, the work was finished and edited in the spring of 1945, sent to Berlin, where it languished in an archive until a portion of it—about twenty minutes worth—was rediscovered after the war.

Today, we witness this charade, this forgery of reality, on two levels of response. First we marvel at the mixture of folly and ingenuity that drove the Germans to record for posterity and themselves the illusion of normalcy in a

locale that was really a way station to death. But on a more painful level we are forced to imagine what this propaganda film must have meant to the people who participated in it. As they sit and watch performances of Verdi's "Requiem" or the children's opera "Brundibar" under the eyes of the camera, what passes through their minds? Do they cherish all the more their own cultural activities, which they enjoy away from German supervision? Or do they wonder whether those activities are merely another form of self-imposed deception, nothing more than a nostalgic yearning for normalcy that is designed to fend off the truth of their doom? There is a dimension of extreme cruelty to the German tactic of exposing the Jews of Terezín to pleasures they knew they could no longer enjoy. Thus added to the propaganda purpose of the film was the side benefit of psychological torture, as victims had to pretend to delight in life when they were really surrounded by the threat of death.

Today we cherish the remnants of Terezín culture because it testifies to the persistence of the creative imagination under literally unbearable conditions. It also restores identity to a few human beings whose names otherwise might have vanished into oblivion. But as we examine the art and enjoy the music that survived the catastrophe, we must not expand the deception at the heart of the camp by allowing ourselves to imagine that these few rescued artifacts compensate for the larger loss in Jewish life and culture that they remind us of. We can only afford to regard them with a melancholy joy—which is probably the spirit in which they were created in the first place. □

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A Jewish Nazi?

Harriette Yahr



■ *The Believer*, written and directed by Henry Bean. Distributed by Independent Distribution Partners. 2002.

The *Believer* is one of those films whose story extends beyond celluloid. Here's a film that won the grand jury prize at the renowned Sundance Film Festival, yet could not get a theatrical release for over a year. It was eventually acquired by Fireworks Pictures, and opened nationwide last month. Showtime aired the film in March.

The Believer gives us a lot to consider, both on and off-screen. The plot follows a yeshiva boy gone (quite) astray—in fact, so off-course that the boy grows into a neo-Nazi. Along the narrative way, issues such as self-hatred, internalized anti-Semitism, and the Jewish people's historical relationship to—if not attraction towards—oppression are touched upon. The film, written and directed by Henry Bean, is based on the true story of Daniel Burros, a KKK grand dragon who committed suicide in 1965 after the *New York Times* reported that he was, in fact, Jewish.

In *The Believer*, Danny Balint is a yeshiva student who questions God's motivation for instructing Abraham to slay Isaac. He challenges God's intention on Mount Moriah: "It's all about God's power," young Danny insists. "God says you know how powerful I am? I can make you do anything you

want because I'm everything and you are nothing." Danny's position escalates into such locked-in anger that his only option is destruction (or self-destruction). As a student, he acts out to the point of expulsion. As an adult, he is a seductively articulate fascist, who often sports a swastika T-shirt. With his knowledge of Torah, Danny is primed to beat the Jews at their own game.

The real power of *The Believer*, though, has nothing to do with the loaded issue of being a Jew-cum-Nazi. At its core, the film explores the essence of the human condition. Danny is, yes, both a Jew and a Nazi. Is it possible to live in such conflict? What does it mean to love so much that you hate, or hate so much that you love? Is not the real challenge of life to stop seeking neatly packaged resolutions and instead accept the beauty of occupying two contradictory spaces at the same time?

There are, obviously, Jewish-themed concerns in the film. *The Believer* explores issues of God and faith (which the story of the binding of Isaac raises), and teases out delicate lines between faith and belief, God and history. The film also offers up the possibility that Jews today are latching on to a story of oppression that is no longer valid. At least that's what I take from scenes in the film which question whether persecuting Jews is passé and further suggest that being Jewish in modern society could even be a commodity. Ultimately, *The Believer* asks

At its core, the film explores the essence of the human condition.

where the Jewish people are located when we give up our collective story of oppression. Where is a Jew without his or her suffering? If we were to let go of our pain, what would we hold on to? Can we begin a new story, or is freedom too scary?

After its stellar reception at Sundance, *The Believer* was well positioned to be acquired by a major theatrical distributor. Bean then brought his film to screen at the Simon Wiesenthal Center. (As a courtesy, filmmakers with sensitive Jewish subject matter may bring work to the Wiesenthal Center or the Anti-Defamation League [ADL] for a screening.) The controversy that had hitherto been occupied in the film's narrative now became a whole other story.

The Believer, which Bean calls "an obvious paean to Judaism," was given a thumbs down by the Wiesenthal Center. Soon after, potential distributors disappeared, for unknown reasons. What happened? Does the Wiesenthal Center have that much power? Or, rather, does the film industry give Wiesenthal too much power? And, in the end, what about freedom of expression? Is *The Believer*, perhaps, a bad film, unworthy of a theatrical release? Or is its content too "objectionable" or even dangerous? It seems clear the Wiesenthal Center did not call Bean's potential theatrical suitors to sabotage his film. But, someone

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FILM REVIEW

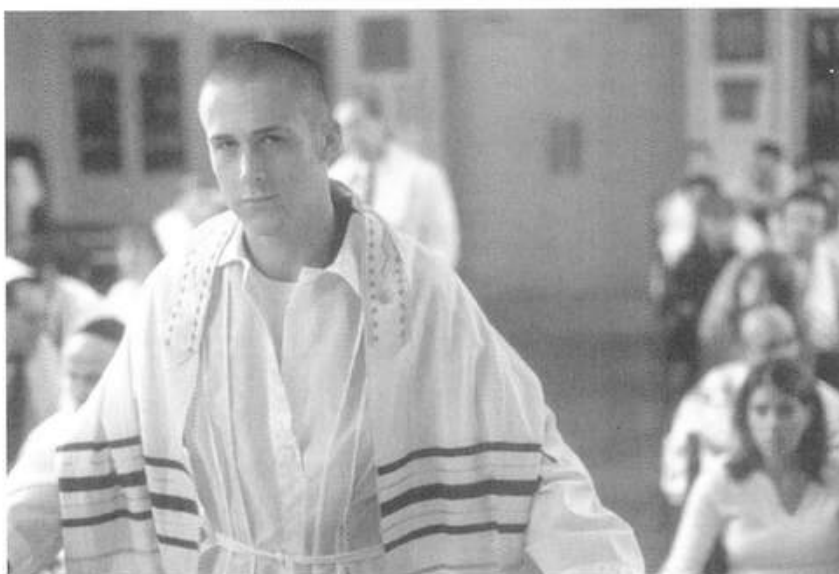
called Wiesenthal. And the opinion of the organization mattered.

Rabbi Cooper, assistant dean of the Wiesenthal Center, has two criticisms of the film. The first is that he thinks the story does not work pedagogically: We never really see why Danny becomes who he is, and never see a clear resolution of character. The second is a Sefer Torah is apparently desecrated.

I agree with Rabbi Cooper that the film's narrative is a bit unclear. We do need to make leaps of faith to comprehend Danny's motivation. But this truth, actually, is a strength of the film. In our culture of cleanly packaged (read: often unchallenging) stories, Bean's work stands out as courageous. Yes, self-hatred is tricky stuff. A yeshiva boy does not become a Nazi because it makes "sense." This subject matter is not easy, clean, or clear. Should not its treatment bear witness to this fact? A narrative form that elucidates its content propels the film into a place of greater truth, as is the case with *The Believer*.

Cooper's second objection inspires multiple conversations. There is a scene in the film in which a temple is desecrated by a band of neo-Nazis, Danny among them. In that scene, what appears to be a Sefer Torah is desecrated. It is at this precise moment, during the horror of his actions, that Danny feels the power of his Judaism—a Judaism that's in him whether he shaves his head or not.

To Rabbi Cooper, though, there is no getting around the fact a Sefer Torah appears to be desecrated, even if the Torah is not real. It's about the message it sends. Ironically, it is the message the destroying of this Torah sends to Danny that brings him closer to his Judaism. So the scene that powers Danny back into his Judaism is the same scene that powers Cooper out of alignment with the film. Bean, even more ironically, went to great lengths to observe Halachah (Jewish Law) with respect to the entire temple desecration scene. The Sefer Torah used as a "prop" was not made of parchment, and the name of God did not appear



anywhere on the fake scroll. Further, in keeping with Halachah, the camera was never pointed in the direction of the open ark, and no cursing occurred at that time.

Cooper seems to be referring to the principal of Jewish Law called *ma'aris ayin*—how something appears to the eye. For example, if an Orthodox Jew enters a store on Shabbat even though he/she does not buy anything, that appearance sends the wrong message. Film, though, is illusory by nature. The medium operates via suspension of disbelief. I question whether the principal of *ma'aris ayin* can apply faithfully to motion pictures, especially when the "problem areas" are the turning points of the film, the core of their being.

Another important concern brought to light by *The Believer*/Wiesenthal reality deals with discourse in the Jewish world. Without a doubt, the film industry cared about what the Wiesenthal Center had to say. For Bean, the concern is this: "The Wiesenthal Center has set itself up as the arbiter of things Jewish in the film industry. Does the Jewish community only want to see films about Judaism that Rabbi Cooper and the Wiesenthal Center have deemed fit for consumption?"

The story outside of *The Believer* raises crucial questions around freedom

of expression and the rights and responsibilities of an artist. Is it safe to put a film like this out into the world? Even though *The Believer* is clearly a paean to Judaism (no one hates something so much unless that something is worth it), could the film be misinterpreted and therefore misused by angry or less educated viewers? Whose responsibility would that be? What is the balance between safety and growth? And who makes these decisions anyway? The ADL's Los Angeles office tipped the scale towards screening *The Believer* as part of its educational program for young professionals. They recognize that the film presents uncomfortable expressions of hate, yet identify the film's ability to expose the anatomy of hate as having essential value.

Like any Jewish text, *The Believer* is a template for exploration which brings us closer to some truths about ourselves, the lives we live, and maybe our God. The narrative arc we see on the screen has holes, and that's more than okay. After watching the film, I am left with a feeling I can't quite name. This is a great marker of the success of Bean's work. After all, as the film points out, God is *Ein Sof*, sort of "without beginning, without end." I'd add "difficult to exactly capture, yet containing some indescribable power." *The Believer* is born of that God. □

Dying in America

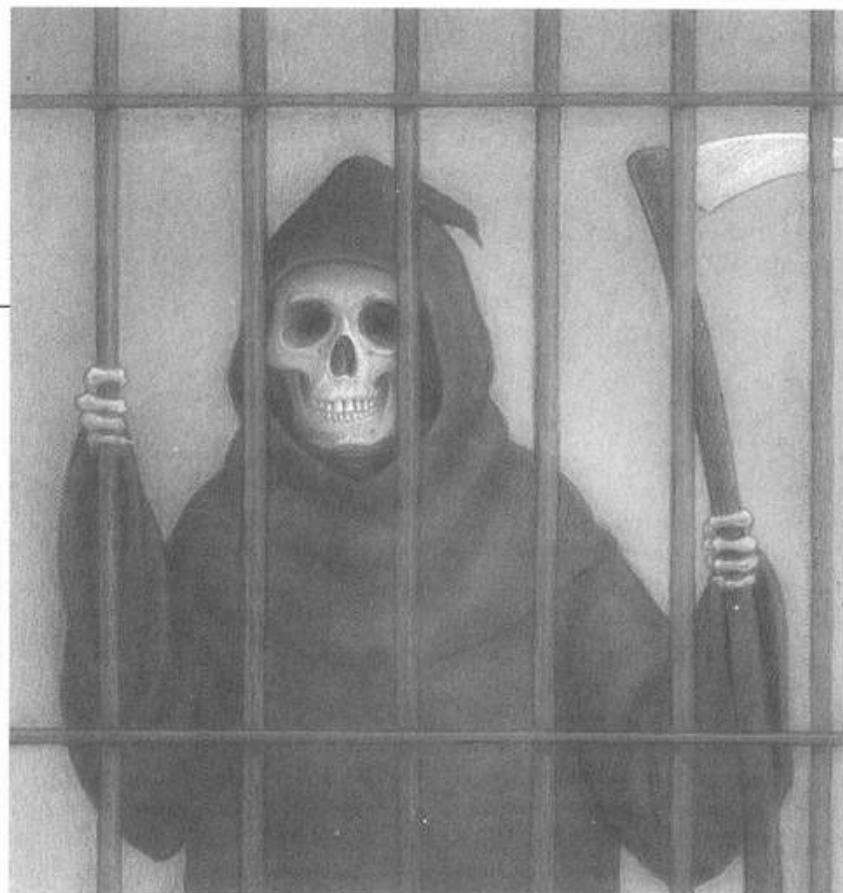
Joel Kovel

■ *Dying in America* by Richard Lichtman. Cadmus Editions, 2001.

It is a commonplace notion that death and taxes alike cannot be evaded. But this is fakery, designed, I think, to bring death down to size by linking it with a mundane reality, trivial by comparison. The rich and powerful evade taxes quite regularly; the poor and marginalized are often outside the state's fiscal net. But no earthly power can exempt us when death becomes due. It is the only fate of which we all are certain.

If something is inevitable, there must be a common level at which all differences dissolve, that moment—so we must infer—when we all die alone. But death is one thing, while dying, death's prelude, is another. The passage out of life is replete with what life has been about. Death is our common lot, but everyone dies in a particular way. Until the last filament is interrupted and the human being is no more, dying is an interpersonal, social, and ontological fact. Until the absolute end of living, dying is with others, the dissolving of ties that have bound the self to others. Thus everybody, within every culture, dies in a specific, socially significant way, just as the mourning process for the living is specific and socially configured. And that is why it makes sense to speak of dying in America.

Richard Lichtman has written a wonderful book about dying and



mourning in present-day America, magnificent in content as well as form, and altogether unique. When did you last encounter a book that combines an almost unbearably poignant memoir with scathing social criticism and philosophical reflection about the ends of life? I could only think of Augustine's *Confessions*, which is exalted company indeed, but as far as the next planet from the Judaeo-Brooklyn world evoked in these pages. From such origins, Lichtman, the only child of petit-bourgeois parents (his father was an insurance salesman), grew up to become a Marxist political philosopher of uncommon courage, and in his later years, thanks in part to blacklisting imposed because of early activism, a theoretician and practitioner of psychoanalysis. In the latter capacity Lichtman has produced a number of brilliant and acerbic studies of the ways in which psychology has become

corrupted under the regime of capitalism. The reader of *The Production of Desire* [1982] would expect its theoretical fire to reappear in *Dying in America*, and would not be disappointed. But it is a deeply moving surprise to see Lichtman's critical powers combined with and enriched by a searing account of the dying of his parents, especially as we witness the last days of his father's life.

All writing is from a lived place, but very little of it expresses the relationship between existence and thought in a more than superficial way. Even the autobiographies of great minds tend toward the banal or self-glorifying. *Dying in America* proves a stunning exception, its discursive flights propelled by Lichtman's realization of an unfolding love for his father and his anguish at seeing his life slip away. Anguish animates reflection, driving the author deeper into his understanding of the ultimates posed by death's facticity and fueling his rage at a society that debases dying and turns it into a therapeutic event.

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Dying in America (an excerpt from which has already appeared in TIKKUN July/August 2001) is a union of two essays: the first centers on a memoir of loss, while a shorter sequel (actually written a decade earlier) resumes Lichtman's scathing critique of bourgeois psychology (in this case, fashionable studies of adult development). The "Psy" fields both represent and, to a degree, produce a self that resigns people to the mutilation of their lives under capitalism while processing them to be cogs in the machinery of accumulation. Severed from its rootedness in social existence, the notion of the self becomes a fetish packaging the illusory hope of fulfilling the cravings of possessive individualism. Such a society blocks confrontation with death and dying, as it does with all radical forms of existence. This inability to contend with death results from a deadening of experience and contributes to that deadening. Hence, the blandly therapeutic treatment of the great existential given of our lives.

The power of Lichtman's text is concentrated in a heroic refusal of this easy option. He argues with harrowing clarity for what Dylan Thomas expressed in poetry, also written at the death of a father: "Do not go gentle into that good night, Rage, rage against the dying of the light." We cannot, in his view, evade the radical Otherness of non-being; hence the obligation of the living is to fight for life at all costs. This conundrum is fought out in a painful conflict over whether to remove his fading and barely sentient father from life support. In resisting the "sensible" advice to disconnect the dialysis machine, Lichtman is aware of and, with characteristic honesty, admits the possibility that he "was keeping him alive for my own sake, not out of consideration for him." Admits, and then qualifies—for while there was no question that his "own interest was strongly implicated, [Lichtman still] could not bracket my sense of the value of his life, of any human life, to think the

matter so simple to resolve." As he argues:

It has always seemed to me that it is an aspect of the deep despair of our time, and of the false consciousness that mystifies its horrors through a manic masquerade, to proclaim an acceptance of death, which then becomes a master paradigm for the acceptance of everything in this world that defeats our human spirit. For death more than any other experience is the quintessential denial of what it is to be human.

Lichtman masters a portion of his despair by transforming feelings of loss into rage against capitalist society through a deepening of his radical critique. This, it seems to me, is an unequivocal good because it expands our sense of the phenomenon of dying and gives dignity to those gone. But he also attempts to subsume the mystery of death into philosophy, and this seems to me somewhat more problematic because of the status of the philosophical project, a central aspect of which has been the interrogation of faith by reason. Death is such an outrage to reason, so incomprehensible according to its standards, that one is led to wonder to what degree the entire modern philosophical project may be built on a radical fear of non-being. In other words, it may be necessary to criticize not just the repressive banalities of capitalist psychologizing, but the spiritual deficiencies of post-enlightenment philosophy.

In pondering this, my thoughts were led to a study of Hinduism by Madeleine Biardeau that I have recently been reading. She observes that in this ancient culture, which, whatever its peculiarities, can scarcely be dismissed as an unworthy answer to the predicament of being human: "the concept of reason [such as was developed by Descartes as the starting point of modern philosophy] never appears." She adds that the "very notion of a concept has no equivalent in Sanskrit vocabulary ... correlatively, human conduct is never considered in the light of an individual moral con-

science," then goes on to say in a note:

But should we not yield to India on this point and recognize the fact that even our most rational philosophy—a philosophy that appears to be free of any postulate that is not grounded or explicated in the light of reason—is still nothing more than a theology, to the extent that it rests entirely and *unconsciously* upon a western view of man? [Madeleine Biardeau, *Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1980]) pp. 77, 171. Italics in original.]

Lichtman is not insensitive to this problem. As he writes: "My parents died in America at the end of the twentieth century. Their lives and deaths were of this time as was my response." Yet there is an unspoken absence behind this response, one felt by many intellectuals but rarely articulated: The extirpation of faith that marks our age. Thus Lichtman does not even mention the possibility of a religious consolation that might assuage his grief; such seems to have simply dropped out as a category of possible experience. It is a measure of the heroism of his effort that he would embark on his journey in a conveyance so designed in advance to be indifferent to his suffering. But it is also the sign of a limit, defined by immersion in "a western view of man," without a recognition of the foreshortening of human possibilities this has entailed. The loss of faith leaves us alone with the self, and the self is not enough.

The issue is not recovery of traditional religion but the reclaiming of our spiritual possibilities from what Marx called the "icy water of egotistical calculation," which is the form, brilliantly dissected by Lichtman, taken by self-experience under capitalism. However, the critique of capitalism need not stop at its effects on psychology. Spirituality, too, was placed, in Max Weber's phrase, in an "iron cage" of rationalization. And what is caged can also be set free, to guide us as we go to meet what St. Francis called "Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape." □

Voices of Hope

Stew Albert

- *Still the Big News* by Bob Blauner. Temple University Press, 2001.
- *The Reckoning* by Randall Robinson. Dutton, 2002.
- *Legal Lynching* by Jesse Jackson Sr., Jesse Jackson Jr., and Bruce Shapiro. The New Press, 2001.

Since September 11, it seems like all activists believe that they have God on their side; even atheists share in this self-righteous belief. It's become darkness vs. light with no one admitting they might be standing just a little bit in the shadows of moral twilight. It is heart-warming, then, to read some pre-September 11 writings about racism, slavery, and the death penalty that are authored in a tone of conciliation and compromise, combined with a willingness to admit personal mistakes and short comings.

Bob Blauner, Randall Robinson, and Jesse Jackson (along with his son Jesse Jackson Jr. and Yale professor Bruce Shapiro) have authored books that call for pragmatic approaches to the continuing oppression of America's blacks. The question is whether this practical approach will prove sufficient in this newly fanatical age of permanent war against absolute evil.

For the last three decades, Berkeley sociologist Bob Blauner has been trying to melt the ice of foolishly-fixed attitudes and stimulate good-hearted thinking on the matter of American

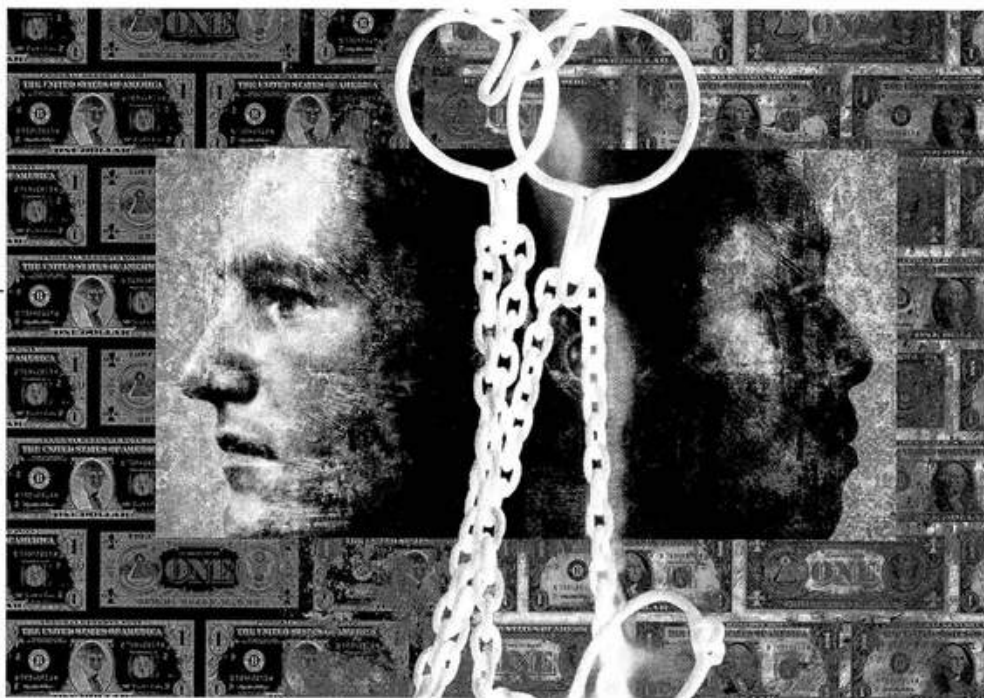
racism. His *Racial Oppression in America* was a trailblazer in 1972 and his newly released update, *Still The Big News*, reprints most of that classic but also reflects on it. Blauner is not one to rest on his brilliant laurels and the concluding portion of his latest work is a valuable critique of his earlier efforts.

In *Racial Oppression*, Blauner compared ethnic groups like the Jews, Irish, and Poles who came to the States more or less voluntarily with black slaves; he found a world of difference. The ethnics kept their old country culture and language, using their past to construct associations of protection. These groups gave confidence to the ethnics and allowed them to assimilate into American culture at their own chosen pace. But the slaves had none of this. The captured Africans spoke different languages and those caught up in the slave trade were divided in a way that kept individuals of the same idiom apart. Because of such separations and the slaves' lack of leisure time to maintain communal bonds, the African tongues were forgotten as was the culture, religion, and social structure of "the old country." Instead, a

new culture, religion, and language were imposed on them by their white masters. Blacks, in short, were not assimilated into America. Rather, they became its domestic colony.

When slavery ended, Blauner continues, the terms of domination were legally changed, but the essence of colonization remained. White privilege and black oppression continued to be the basis of racial relationships. A modern day white worker, Blauner remarks, might not have consciously strong racist attitudes—he might even be colorblind. But would he give up the institutionalized racial privileges and prosperity that are rooted in American history?

Blauner's early writings reflected a heavy emphasis on Third World revolutionary politics. Back then, he described all non-white Americans as colonized. The later Blauner is less drastic in his conclusions. Native Americans remain colonized for him, as do African Americans, but he now declares that Latinos and Asians have been able to maintain their original cultures and use them in the same protective manner as white ethnic immigrants. Blauner's latter-day reevaluations come not so much from a new theoretical position but from a newly pragmatic perspective. Based in part on his work



with classroom-based racial dialogues, Blauner now thinks that concepts about race should be adjusted to promote solidarity and build strong interethnic bridges. Blacks were not able to form into an ethnic group when they were brought here in chains, but they were able to retain certain African roots and cultural styles and blend these with what their harsh existence taught them. In that sense, blacks have become a kind of existential ethnic group. Blauner would now rather stress the ethnic and not racial side of black life and from that perspective promote outreach and a sense of common experience.

But will improved racial dialogue help blacks and their allies to overcome the power and privileges of racism that are embedded in America's institutions? A white person may attend countless sessions of "unlearning racism," but will this make him or her more willing to democratically share wealth or give up the institutional advantages that arise from skin color?

Randall Robinson's chilling description, in *The Reckoning: What Blacks Owe To Each Other*, of America's racist prison-industrial complex, reminds us of just how entrenched racism is in the economics of this country. A black man and a Harvard lawyer, Robinson made the case in his last book, *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*, that racial inequality can only be ended when white America pays off the literal financial debt it owes to the ancestors of slaves. Having given data showing how many of today's wealthiest individuals and businesses were initially financed by the profits from America's "peculiar institution" while many blacks today are still hurting bad from slavery, Robinson called for reparations to be paid both to individuals and to the entire black community. While many find Robinson's call extreme, it is, in truth, a plea for healing, for finding a practical way to go beyond the seemingly permanent scar of slavery and to promote in its place a caring and compassionate community.

Robinson is still calling for reparations in *The Reckoning*, but, like Blauner, he has modified his message in this book, de-racializing it in the hope of enhancing dialogue. Here, Robinson goes after what he calls the "gated blacks," those African Americans who by luck or skill managed to work themselves up into the middle class and who by virtue of severe class segregation have little knowledge and even less contact with those blacks who have become pitiable wage prison laborers in the newly powerful and continuously growing American Gulag.

Robinson's nightmare is an America in which the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and "gated blacks" have less and less to do with their suffering brothers and sisters. In a chapter written in the voice of his granddaughter, he imagines the world in 2050. The world his granddaughter describes is one in which most blacks are either laboring in minuscule-wage prison factories or hustling to survive in super impoverished ghettos. The lucky blacks are the gated ones. They live pretty much like their white middle-class counterparts in shut off and mechanically cozy communities, not knowing their neighbors, much less the victims of prisons and ghettos.

In fact, the "gated ones" no longer even consider themselves black or African American. In 2050 a whole new racial system is legally in place. It is based on the Brazilian model where every shade of black has a different name and status and there is no group loyalty to the whole black community because it no longer conceptually exists. And this keeps the white ruling class ruling. Privileges that accrue to the gated blacks are merely on loan; they can be easily withdrawn should any serious concerns be raised about jail house labor and whatever new pyramids it is building.

For blacks, the way to prevent this 2050 scenario is embodied in the figure of real life former Harlem hustler and ghetto basketball legend named Peewee Kirkland. Peewee, who is the

real center and hero of *The Reckoning*, started garnering loan shark money at thirteen and then graduated to robbing jewelry stores and pedaling drugs. He made and lost fortunes and spent a lot of time in prison. Somewhere along the way, however, Kirkland woke up to the great harm he was doing to himself and his community and formed a self-help group aimed at young blacks who were heading in the same deadly direction he had gone. Because Kirkland knows what he owes to his people and is delivering the goods, he becomes for Robinson the moral model all black people—but especially gated blacks—should aspire to become. Robinson makes clear that Peewee has become his personal model of redemption.

Even if every middle-class black became the community organizer Peewee became, however, Robinson's nightmare would not be averted. First, Robinson never fails to remind us that white America must still pay "The Debt." Reparations are necessary to right the balance of racial injustice. Second, Robinson demonstrates the ways in which white America continues to profit from black oppression. Turning from the black experience to white experience, Robinson shows how white rural regions have succeeded in replacing a prosperity built on manufacturing with a new kind of prosperity built by playing host to all the new prisons that have been created in the past twenty years. In 1982 there were a total of thirty-three state prisons in New York. It took 165 years to build these mean places. In the next 17 years, the Empire State would construct an additional thirty-eight prisons! There are construction jobs and prison jobs and visiting families spending money. And the prisoners are counted as part of the region's population, so that means greater tax breaks and more state money spent on mostly white non-prisoners. Behind the rural white folk is the big business of prison capitalism. There are profits to be made from building and maintaining and even owning prisons, and profits from

all that cheap convict labor working for private and state-owned enterprises, from clothing manufacture to tourism.

The more prisoners, the more prisoners, the more money for the local white folk. And they will probably not be overly concerned that an increasingly disproportionate number of prisoners are black or brown. In fact, three-quarters of all prisoners are black or Hispanic. Robinson might well ask of Blauner, what can racial dialogue accomplish in these circumstances? It's much easier for the newly prosperous white workers to say they are colorblind, "tough on crime" patriots and let it go at that. And yet Blauner's hunt for the sparks of hope that can sometimes be raised in human conversation ought not to be abandoned. In such terrible times a spark may be all we can count on.

According to the authors of *Legal Lynching: The Death Penalty and America's Future*, it was far deadlier sparks that ignited America's love affair with capital punishment. They came from the newly invented electric chair that was first used at the turn of the twentieth century and they gave the whole idea of execution a modernistic glow. Jesse Jackson Sr., Jesse Jackson Jr., and Yale professor Bruce Shapiro point out that, contrary to folk mythology, early Americans, including those of the Wild West, were more likely than modern Americans to be merciful. They commuted a much higher percentage of scheduled executions except when the defendant was black. From the time of slavery through the twentieth century the presumption was that if a black were sentenced to death he would surely hang. And the authors show, in this carefully documented work, that racial and class bias still determine who will be legally lynched and who will live.

If you have the money and can afford a lawyer who will not fall asleep during the trial your chances of avoiding death are better than excellent. Capital punishment is for the poor. If you're black and poor and convicted of

killing a white person you are almost certainly headed for death row. Blacks convicted of murdering whites are nineteen times more likely to be executed than whites who are convicted of killing blacks. As a result of this mentality, there are at present a disproportionately high number of black prisoners on death row, especially those convicted in a federal court.

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The authors point out that there has always been intense opposition to the death penalty. They take note that first-century rabbis were highly critical of courts that employed it. And despite the Torah's being rather gruesome when it came to mandating stonings, the rabbis often opted for mercy, and found fine print excuses to make it nearly impossible for a judicial body to actually carry out an execution. And then there was Jesus, a preacher from the same era, whose famous "cast the first stone" declaration saved an accused prostitute from execution.

Many Americans have begun to reexamine their enthusiasm for death as a punishment, mainly because of the growing evidence that innocent people are legally lynched and others barely escape the "noose." Advances in DNA science have given the lie to the notion of scrupulous and unerring justice. Since 1976, eighty-six proven innocent prisoners have been released from death row. With so many innocent people sentenced to death, it can no longer be plausibly maintained that guiltless individuals don't die at the state's hands.

Although the authors are fully against capital punishment, they, like

Blauner, are willing to moderate their tactics on behalf of practical accomplishments. Rather than calling for the abolition of the death penalty, they choose to support a national moratorium on capital punishment while a thoroughgoing, soul-searching study transpires on whether capital punishment and justice can ever be positively used in the same sentence.

The book ends on a somewhat positive note, but it was authored before September 11. We are now living in a nation of bloody vengeance with George W. Bush as its manic prince. Bush was the contented governor of Texas at a time when his state easily lead the nation in vengeance executions. Bush was even known to mock his victims and boast of the high numbers. This is the same George Bush who, while recently referring to accused Islamic terrorists, asked American soldiers to "Bring em back dead or alive. Will you do that?"

Robinson, Blauner, the Jacksons and Shapiro refuse choices and rhetoric like "dead or alive." Using careful historical, sociological and journalistic techniques, they take the high ground, laying out the sources of racial injustice and proposing evenhanded and compassionate solutions.

Will reasonable voices like these be heard after the World Trade Center attack? In a time when everyone seems to believe in the mad visions of Bush or Bin Laden, Sharon or Arafat, when people are posting anthrax junk mail and putting bombs in mailboxes, can decent voices like those of the authors who advocate compromise in the name of human repair get a significant audience? The old Hasidic rabbis argued that the darkness, pain, and despair of the world was only a wicked overture to a much better world that would be created by those who could no longer bear their alienation. We currently live with such pain and despair. Let us prove, with the commitment of our minds and souls, that the "optimistic-despite-everything rabbis" really made a prophetic point. □

You Gotta Serve Somebody

Roger S. Gottlieb

- *Beyond Idols: The Shape of Secular Society*, by Richard K. Fenn. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- *Global Backlash: Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy*, edited by Robin Broad. Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.

Richard Fenn's *Beyond Idols* repeats, in a more or less intellectualized way, a claim that has appeared and reappeared in the West since the Jewish prophets' critique of religious formalism and in the East since Buddha's rejection of an arcane, inhumane, and unspiritual Hinduism. The heart of this critique is the idea that religious institutions, rules, and authorities, while claiming to give humanity expertly controlled and guided access to the sacred, really obscure and limit that access. There is, Protestant theologian Richard Fenn tells us, a sacred reality which necessarily escapes institutional and social objectification of all kinds. "Every system limits the range of possibility," he argues, "and most systems do so in a way that preserves a particular distribution of power and authority."

Fenn's goal is a "secular" society in which each individual is free to experience the mystery, wonder, and unpredictability of life without being limited by any group, church, creed, book, place, or idea. Like the "religionless Christianity" of the original Disciples of Jesus, Fenn's "secular society" would allow each person to find God

in private and would reject public proclamations of piety and the establishment of religious authority.

Fenn's book has much truth in it. One needn't go far in the world of religion to see practices which, as Abraham Joshua Heschel said of American observances during the fifties, "had everything they needed except one thing: life." Nor, in a world of resurgent fundamentalism, is it hard to see painful and frightening examples of "civil religion": places where those possessing a (self-proclaimed) monopoly on the sacred mix of theology, violence and public policy. From Saudi princes and America's Religious Right to Hamas and the Greater Israel crowd, many folks on the contemporary scene could benefit from Fenn's book. Thinking that some party or nation has a monopoly on the divine is pretty dangerous stuff.

Yet *Beyond Idols*'s truth is really only half a truth, and a lack of balance and perspective deeply mar this book.

Fenn, like others who reject the past and say that only they can judge what is truly holy, ignores a fundamental dialectic of religious life. It is true that free spirits periodically try to break the boundaries of restrictive and ossified tradition. Yet periods of freedom often give rise to a desire to read tradition anew. The explosion of unfettered spiritual energy in the 1960s was followed by an enormous interest in ... tradition!

Fenn writes as if it were not possible that a fourteenth-century monk or a sixth-century BCE prophet might

have insights that remain valid, crucial, significant—sacred—for our time. Yet, what Fenn objects to as the institutionalization of the sacred is in part the record of such permanent insights. The "free spirits" of the Sixties have tapped into Jewish mysticism, Buddhist meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi, Sufi's mystical version of Islam, and medieval Christian mystics because they contain authentic and perennial values, albeit values that have to be experienced and interpreted anew. That people continue to return to tradition is one strong indication that it is neither possible nor desirable for each individual to invent the world—or the sacred—from scratch.

What these permanent insights—what tradition—can teach us is the inescapability of certain aspects of all human life: desire and frustration, vulnerability and the threat of violence, mortality and embodiment, joy and sorrow. If certain aspects of sacred discipline are inflexible, that is a teaching too. If we want the Torah's wisdom, we have to study it slowly and carefully; if we want the insights of Buddhism, we'd better meditate relentlessly, even when it's boring or frustrating. And if we want to be holy, we simply cannot avoid struggling with that roaring lion, our ego. Of course, each generation must discover which spiritual rigidities are real and which are imposed by elites to sustain their own power, but it is always a mistake to think that we can do without the rigidities altogether. If human beings don't live by one structure, they will live by another. As Bob Dylan sang, "You gotta serve somebody ..."

If *Beyond Idols* focuses on the rigidities of the institutionalized sacred, *Global Backlash* reminds us of

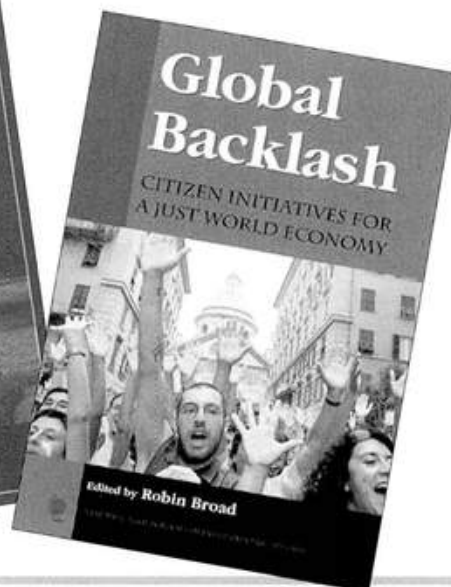
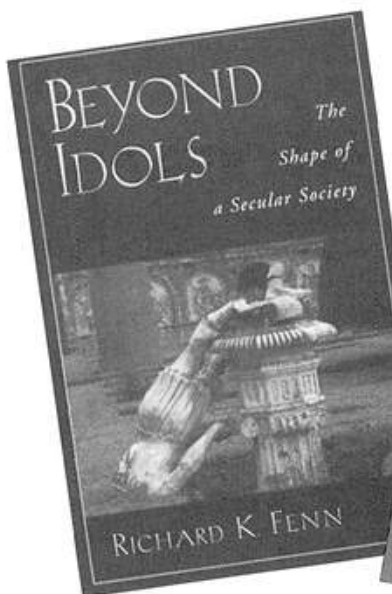
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the ways we are hemmed in, limited, and constrained by institutions of a global economy: by massive corporations, the governments that enable them, and the media that shapes a universal—and universally vacuous—culture of fashion and spectacle. At times, it is precisely in appealing to what Fenn dismisses—to things we hold as holy—that we have some defense.

With *Global Backlash*, Professor of International Relations Robin Broad, author of a brilliant book on environmentalism in the Philippines (*Plundering Paradise*), has assembled a tremendously informative and inspiring collection of documents, analyses, and first-person accounts about what globalization is, what it means, and how it is being resisted. The authors range from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the head of the indigenous people's rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, along with another fifty academics, student activists, trade union leaders, and international NGO activists. These accounts focus, in the words of a Seattle protestor, on "the struggle to determine how economics, environmentalism, and human rights will be shaped for the rest of our lives."

As third world Christian theologian Mary Mananzan says, globalization is itself a new religion: "It has its God: profit and money. It has its high priests: GATT, WTO, IMF-WB. It has its doctrines and dogmas: import liberalization, deregulation. ... It has its temples: the super mega-malls. It has its victims on the altar of sacrifice: the majority of the world—the excluded and marginalized poor."

These global powers are not just political and economic, but psychic. Fenn thinks that if we dispense with the past we can meet the "needs of the present and the future." Yet how, in a world dominated by global capitalism and the ideology of consumerism and escape, are we to be so sure about which needs are real and which false, which sustaining of life and love and which promoting the latest brand name? In the absence of an institu-



Thinking that some party or nation has a monopoly on the divine is pretty dangerous stuff.

tional sacred, of memories that we honor and places we hold inviolable, we may be left to the winds of advertising, peer pressure, boredom and the most trivial of whims masquerading as the "needs" of (God help us) "today's lifestyle."

What is at stake, then, is not the "free choice" of individuals, but whether we will embrace the collective values of the dominant global institutions or those of the resisting groups. We will live under one regime or the other. As this book makes clear, people are resisting in terms of higher values: indigenous peoples facing a dam project do not lament just the loss of their livelihood, but the loss of the culture that grows from that particular geography; activists resist the spread of pollution allowed by the WTO because the earth and the people on it should be treated as holy; activists combat the exploitation of sweatshop workers because of the value of human lives; "casino capitalism" is rejected as beneath the dignity of humanity; water resources are said to have "intrinsic value" and to "belong to the earth and all species"; a "living democracy" to defend biodiversity is also called a "democracy of life." In these cases and dozens more, we find political move-

ments promoting a globalism that "tolerates, respects, and enhances the diversity of human communities and the diversity of life." Without our commitment to the sacred in these cases—to lines we will not cross, to values we will not abandon, to traditions that should be unchangeable—we have nothing to hold back the endless mall.

Fenn's distorted images of personal spiritual freedom and the realities of a pervasive and inescapable globalization are, as radical theologian Dorothy Soelle has argued in another context, flip sides of each other. The more we are hemmed in, the more we fantasize, as Fenn does, of individual liberation. But the forces shaping "economic, environmental, and human rights" will either be Microsoft, Nike, and George Bush or the groups represented in *Global Backlash*. In joining with such groups our sense of the sacred need not be oppressive, for we can indeed realize that even our opponents lives are holy, and we can also realize that part of holiness is a willingness to learn about our own limitations. But if everything is up for grabs all the time, if we've learned nothing from the past, we will have no resources to save either our own lives or the life of our planet. □

Golem Dreams

Kim Bendheim

■ *The Golems of Gotham*, by Thane Rosenbaum. HarperCollins, 2002.

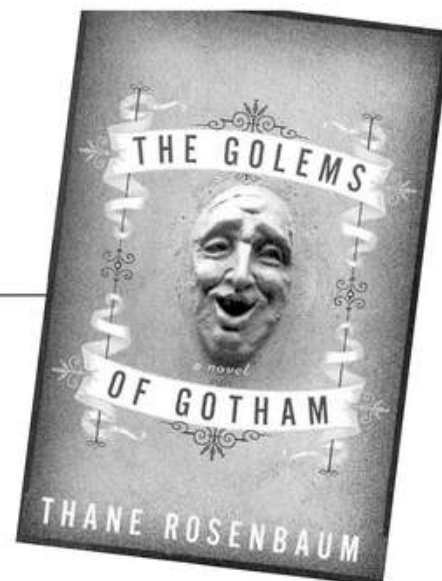
For those of us who have lost anything of importance, whether small or big—a tooth, a ring, a parent—this is a novel of remembrance. It attempts to answer the question, “how do you deal with loss?” And if loss isn’t just that of a thing or a person but of hope, how do you then live? That urgent question haunts survivors of the Holocaust, their children, and their grandchildren.

I know this question to be urgent, not only from reading literature produced by survivors and their children—including Helen Epstein and Primo Levi—but also from personal acquaintance. A friend’s mother survived Auschwitz with the help of two women friends. She came to America, married, and had children. Her son killed himself. Variations on this scenario have been enacted over and over again among survivors’ children who live with the poisonous memories of their parents infused into their very veins, as if these awful memories had been pumped, along with their parents’ blood, into their hearts. *The Golems of Gotham* ambitiously attempts to answer how these children can not only survive, but live. Knowing what they know, can they willfully choose to see the abundance in the world rather than the paucity?

Thane Rosenbaum’s novel opens with two Holocaust survivors killing themselves in temple—the couple leave

no note, and “the bullet wasn’t talking either.” Their orphaned son Oliver has already been left by his wife, leaving him to raise their little girl alone. Oliver lives in a brownstone on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and, in the beginning, is numb. The abandoned son and deserted husband is able to sit in a dentist’s chair without anesthetic. He is a writer with writer’s block. *The Golems of Gotham* is the story of his long road back to feeling, writing, and life. It is also the story of his klezmer-violin-playing daughter, Ariel. An intrepid, aptly named spirit, Ariel fashions golems of her grandparents out of Hudson River clay and brings them to life by playing “Invitation to the Dead” on an old violin she finds in her attic. It is her wish that the grandparents she never knew return to help her revive the stunned soul of her father.

They do, but like the Golem of legend, they slip out of control. At first they do small good things: they haunt their son’s brownstone and assuage his loneliness. They teach their granddaughter the haunting klezmer melodies of their youth. Then they take over Manhattan, transforming the city. Crowded subway cars remind them of death trains, so they cause them to close before they fill to capacity. Cigarettes remind them of concentration camp smoke, so cigarettes, and smoking itself, vanish from the island of Manhattan. Similarly, Manhattanites lose their tattoos, zebras in the zoo lose their stripes. For a time, Manhattan becomes a kinder, gentler place until these big-hearted ghosts lose their



temper and regrettable events occur.

For Oliver and his daughter, however, the golems are a force on the side of life, not of death. One might think that, for a hero, already reeling with grief, descending into a world of fantasy might lead to madness or suicide—but in the case of Oliver, it is imagination, the love of his daughter, and art that free him to hope again. For Ariel, the spirits provide her with a window into another world, far richer than the gloomy one she inhabits alone with her depressed father. Through the ghostly spirits of her grandparents and through her music, she finds a way to reach the orphaned part of herself and of her father.

By the novel’s end, Oliver begins to write again. He reads to his daughter—her humble wish at the novel’s start has been fulfilled. People in the neighborhood are more highly attuned to each other, so that when Ariel plays her sobbing violin outside Zabar’s, traffic stops cold. Perhaps this is the writer’s wish for us, as well as for his characters: that our hearts swell and pause for a moment, entering the world of art and of the imagination. If we do not live in a beautiful world, we can at least, he shows us, create one in our art, an art informed by the memories of our lost loved ones. As the Greeks taught us, memory is the mother of the muses. In the humor and compassion of our everyday interactions with other suffering people, as well as in the expansion of our own hearts, we too can be transformed. Or so the author hints. □

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*Tikkun (te-kūn) ... to heal, repair and
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תיקון

The media's message:

*The Israeli peace movement has collapsed because
there is no point trying to work with the Palestinians.*

THE REALITY:

100,000 Israelis demonstrate for an End to the Occupation, May 11, 2002—
recognizing that the only path to security is ending the Occupation.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KAREL PRINCELOO / AP PHOTO

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